



8th AF NEWS

VOLUME 00 NUMBER 4 Voice of "THE MIGHTY EIGHTH" DECEMBER 2000



**Happy
Holidays!**



AF NEWS

Magazine of

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society

The Eighth Air Force News is dedicated to Lt. Col. John H. Woolnough, founder of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society and editor for sixteen years. It is published quarterly and is the official newsmagazine of the Society.

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MISSION BRIEFING

There were over 600 attendees at the annual reunion in Salt Lake City in October. Many said it was one of the best reunions in recent years. Thanks to the Utah host



Chapter, Donna Lee of Armed Forces Reunions, and Larry Goldstein and his reunion committee for a great time!

The Board of Directors met until the late hours the Sunday following the meeting and are enthusiastic about the direction the Historical Society is taking. The all-important finances are well on their way to being under control; almost one thousand new members have been added to our rolls this year, and Chapters are becoming more and more active. By-laws changes have been approved to help the Society function more efficiently. The mood is definitely upbeat.

My thanks for all who have contributed to the magazine this past year. A special thank you to Roger Freeman for his assistance and use of many of his original sources and photos for articles which have appeared throughout the year. Also appreciation to members such as Harry Gobrecht, 303rd BG historian, for his in-depth knowledge of just about every aspect of the Mighty Eighth. Others easily come to mind: Ken McPherson, Ken "Deacon" Jones, Alfred Lea, Frank McKinley for his artistic contributions, Gordon and Connie Richards in England, John O'Neil, Harold Robinson, Joan Peterson, Ben Smith, our hard-working Membership office staff, the archival folks at the Heritage Museum and many others. My gratitude also goes out for the continuing guidance and advice from all the members of the 8th AFHS Board of Directors and from my invaluable friends of my own "advisory board." The holidays are upon us and we wish a joyous Seasons Greetings! to everyone.

Walter Brown, Editor
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PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



REUNION 2000 - Our reunion in Salt Lake City was one of our most pleasant, thanks to the good planning of our Reunion Committee Chaired by Larry Goldstein, members of the Utah Chapter, but due mostly to the more than 600 persons who attended the reunion. It was capped off at our banquet with a memorable talk by noted author and historian, Stephen E. Ambrose.

Several Units held their official reunions in conjunction with the Society. We would like to encourage more Units to do the same. It saves a lot of effort and manpower for the Units, and they can plan as much time together as they wish, with someone else doing the detail work.

MEMBERSHIP - We need to emphasize signing up new members. Everyone can get involved. You all know the story of the inevitable decline in the number of veteran members, however there are many 8th AAF veterans who are not members of the Society and need to be brought into the fold. **A new membership brochure will be available soon.**

Sign up your children and your grandchildren. Someday they will be interested in what their Dad or Granddad did in WWII, and our quarterly **8th AF NEWS** might whet their appetite.

SPONSORED SUBSCRIPTIONS - The Board of the Society

has set a price of \$10.00 per year for sponsoring a subscription of **8th AF NEWS** for libraries, schools, ROTC units and other organization. We have the best quarterly journal in existence and we need to get it into the hands of the public as one of the easiest ways to help perpetuate the memory of the Mighty Eighth.

President's Award - Each year we plan to honor the Chapter that signs up the most new members. Congratulations to this year's winners:

The Ohio Chapter

The Louisiana Chapter - runner-up

CHAPTERS - We would like to encourage Chapters to emphasize membership this year, and we would also like to see more Chapters "adopt" an area air museum. The Utah Chapter and its members have done a great job at the Hill AFB Museum. Try to get recognition of the 8th Air Force at these museums and have Eighth Air Force Historical Society membership brochures posted in a prominent place.

THANKS TO KEN NAIL - Ken has served on the Board of Directors for the past four years and as Treasurer of the Society for most of that time. He has served with distinction and dedication, but chose not to run for re-election to the Board. We hope that he will run again in the future.

Dick Baynes
Richard Baynes
President

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2001 - EIGHTH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



From left, sitting: Walt Brown, Ivan McKinney, Larry Goldstein, Norm Grant, Henry Hughey
standing: Stan Peterson, Hal Goetsch, Tom Parsons, Dick Baynes, John Pearson Missing are: Craig Harris and Hap Galfunt

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Highlights of Business Sessions at Annual Reunion, Salt Lake City

At the General Membership Meeting on Saturday, October 21, 2000, the election was held for the Board of Directors Class of 2004. Those elected were Richard C. Baynes, Hal Goetsch and Ivan L. McKinney.

On Sunday, the Board elected officers for year 2000-2001:

President	Richard C. Baynes
Vice President	Norman C. Grant, Sr.
Secretary	John S. Pearson
Treasurer	Ivan L. McKinney

The General Membership Meeting featured reports by Vice President Norman Grant, Treasurer Kenneth Nail, John Pearson for Secretary Craig Harris, 8th AF NEWS Editor Walter Brown and PX Manager Mark Copeland. Major General Lewis Lyle of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum gave an informative update on happenings at the Museum.

Treasurer Nail gave a detailed budget report of the need for the dues increase approved by the Board at its March 2000 meeting. A motion to ratify the action was unanimously approved.

At the Board meeting, the 8th AF NEWS Editor reported that

spot research indicates that each quarterly issue is seen by well over 50,000 people. It was recognized that while producing this important journal represents a sizeable budgetary expense, material cuts need to be carefully considered.

The PX Manager reported a good past year and that the PX is in excellent shape. Sales during the reunion were good.

It was reported that there were 578 registrations for this reunion, and 612 in attendance at the banquet. Tour participation was reported as higher than usual. The next Annual Reunion is scheduled to be held October 24-29, 2001, at the Harvey Hotel, Irving, Texas.



John Pearson
Secretary

There are three kinds of people in this world: those who can count and those who can't.

Clyde White

FROM THE UNIT AND CHAPTER ADVISORY AND DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE



Jim Erskine

\$5.00. If they know their original membership number they can keep that number.

CHAPTERS

Again it is time for the annual dues. There has been a dues increase to \$20.00 per year starting with the 2001 dues. At the Historical Society Reunion this was agreed to unanimously at the General Membership meeting. Please impress upon your members that the Chapter will only receive the rebate for members who have paid their dues by Dec. 31, 2000. There will be no rebate for dues paid after Dec. 31.

The Committee requests that **ALL** Chapters send the name, address, telephone and fax numbers and e-mail address of your President to the Committee so we can be sure we have the correct, updated information.

UNITS

There were several Units that held their annual reunions with the Historical Society Reunion. All Units that had 10 or more members in attendance and registered before the 30-day cut off date received \$5.00 for each one. There is a list of those Units and how much each received elsewhere in this issue.

Units wishing to hold their reunions in conjunction with the Historical Society are encouraged to do so. Not only is this a labor-saving device for the Unit but it can be a money maker as well. You do not have to make arrangements for entertainment and meals because that will be planned for you. You may have your own hospitality room. There will be time set aside for Unit business meetings. Units with enough members in attendance may have their own room for the Unit dinner.

Another major advantage in having the Unit reunion with the Historical Society is that it might keep the Unit active a few more years. Most Units disband because there is no one to plan the reunions; let the Historical Society take care of that for you!!

Jim Erskine, Chairman
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NEW BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEMBER HAL GOETSCH

As a new member of the Board, I first want to commend those who served in the past. I'm proud to be a part of this great organization and I'll work hard to achieve our objectives. I'm from the old school that believes that success precedes work only in the dictionary!

As a director, I want to underscore our purpose as stated in the Society's By-Laws which says it is our goal "to perpetuate the history of the 8th Air Force and the memory of lost comrades".

We can not afford to rest on our laurels. "Father Time" will not give us any concessions. Age will take its toll, but out of adversity comes strength! All of us are crew members and this is the time to show our character and fortitude. The "Mighty 8th" never turned back from a mission. This means we must replace our fallen comrades who are leaving us with fresh replacements. This is not a "last man's club" if we plan our work and work our plan.

Promoting the legacy of the "Mighty 8th" is my primary

objective and I believe our Chapters are the best vehicle to achieve this. As a successful Chapter President in New Mexico, I know that marketing must be the engine pulling the train...not the caboose! Our marketing plans must emphasize recruitment on Chapter levels, better newsletters, interesting membership meetings and more visibility in the media of our Chapters' markets.



Hal Goetsch

Here's an old refrain I used with my sales people:
Coming together is a beginning,
Staying together is progress,
Working together is success!
-Hal Goetsch

Hal Goetsch has served as President of the New Mexico Chapter and will serve four years in his first term as a member of the 8th AF Historical Society Board.

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It is important to know where our 8th AF Historical Society members are.
Send us your change - of - address.
Keep the 8th AF NEWS coming!

LIBERATOR SANTA

Christmastime Was Always Special In England

The war did not stop for the Holidays, but men of the Mighty Eighth always took some time to bring a little of home to every airbase and Stalag. Somehow Christmas always brought goodwill and childhood memories of the season and decorations. Gift-giving and celebrations gave a brief respite from the stresses of air combat.

Many of the bases located near British towns joined in with their English friends and invited the neighboring children to special parties. Decorations were put up, dinners with cake, candy and rare ice cream were served and there was always a big Christmas tree and Santa bearing gifts for each child. After D-Day and the liberation, Christmas spirit spread across the Channel to children in France.

That Christmas of 1944 was one to remember.

The Battle of the Bulge had trapped many American ground troops. When the weather lifted on Christmas Eve, December 24th, maximum bombing effort missions were undertaken. Returning from those missions to a socked-in Britain, many 8th bombers and fighters had to land at any base that was available. They missed that Christmas morning at their own base, but were made welcome as part of the Christmas celebration by their new friends at bases where they finally landed. Their next Christmas would be spent at home with their friends and families.



Christmas 1943

by Harold M. Rogers 432nd Air Service Group

I don't know just where or how the original idea started, but it was accepted unanimously at the airbase located in a little English village about 60 miles north of London.

Christmas was only a few weeks away, and in normal times we would be home buying presents for our loved ones. But this was 1943, and things were far from normal. Since Christmas denotes "good will toward all" it was decided that everyone would pitch in and help to give the most needy of the English children living nearby the finest Christmas they had ever had...or the only one for some.

And pitch in we did! I don't believe any project could possibly have had fuller cooperation. Those who were handy with tools spent what free time they had working in both the carpenter and the paint shops making toys.

They didn't have much to work with in the way of materials, but it's surprising what a discarded bomb box can develop into with a little Yankee ingenuity. Others with less talent, or less free time, did as much by either buying toys while on a pass or leaving donations at our Red Cross Club.

With toys underway, a tree was naturally necessary and soon

procured from a nearby farmer who willingly cut down the largest he had. I dare say the whole island was searched for decorations, but due to six years of war, none could be found. Our only solution was to make them. Metal was rescued from the "bone yard" and cut into stars and other popular shapes. The electricians wired light sockets together, and old worn-out flash bulbs from the photo-lab were painted and tied on with string. Of course, Christmas wouldn't be Christmas without refreshments, and this too was taken care of in the same cooperative manner. Each individual G.I. was rationed to the purchase of two candy bars and one package of cookies per week, so several containers were put in our Post

Exchange, and practically everyone threw in his rations. We also wanted ice cream so relinquished our powdered milk (that really wasn't much of a sacrifice) and canned milk. These were transported several miles away to a freezing concern.

Entertainment was next on the list. Santa Claus was a necessity even though the English kids know him as "Father Christmas." A fat and jolly warrant officer volunteered, and an appropriate uniform was dug up somewhere. A few "Mickey Mouse" shorts served for movies, and a couple of fellows who were once a clown



English children at a Christmas party given at the 381st BG at Ridgewell base

and a magician, respectively, offered their prewar talents. With all this preparation, we found ourselves anticipating our greatest holiday as much as we always had during normal times. Unfortunately, all of us couldn't be there to enjoy the actual celebration. Wars don't stop for Sundays or Christmas, and we had a bombing mission as usual. Some of us could be spared without hindering operations, however, so everything went as planned. The Red Cross and the Chaplains had contacted all nearby schools and managed to invite over 500 children. Most of them were between the ages of 5 and 9 and had never had a real

Christmas. All of our efforts were more than rewarded to watch the children eating their first ice cream, to see the tree lights sparkling in their eyes, and I know there was a grand feeling in the heart of every G.I. spectator when they started playing with the dolls, wheelbarrows, trucks, etc. we had either made or purchased. We didn't say much about it all, but somehow, one could just tell that each of us were happier than we had been in a long time...we had the real Christmas spirit.

A CHILDHOOD CHRISTMAS REMEMBERED

by Ann Moore
of Steeple Bumpstead, England

Writing of the arrival of members of the 381st Bomb Group during the reunion in England in 1992..."Elderly men stepped down from the coaches, but we saw young men for we looked at you with the eyes of the heart, and to us, you are forever young.

"We grew used to the sound of your B-17 engines warming up. We counted you out, and we counted you home. We grieved with you and for you, when all too often your friends failed to return. We children remembered the kindness you showed us, the candy, chocolate, and gum you gave us. And Oh! those Christmas parties you gave us. Arriving at the 'drome we entered a magic world of lights and warmth. We had never seen so much food in our lives: sandwiches and cake, and best of all...the ice cream, real ice cream. We quickly demolished the food (I hope you did not think us greedy), and turned to gaze, in wonder, at the Christmas tree, tall and shimmering; it seemed to us a thousand lights lit its branches. Father Christmas handed out presents to every child.

"We appreciated the sacrifices you made to give us those wonderful Christmas parties; now older, we appreciate, even more, the enormous efforts you made on our behalf. Daily you flew into the blazing hell across the Channel. Some of you were undoubtedly grieving over a lost buddy, but no trace showed on your faces as you welcomed us and fussed over us. The word 'Thanks' cannot convey what we felt then and still feel today.

"Today, the aerodome is a peaceful place; skylarks sing and white-winged gliders soar. Somehow a fitting memorial to those young men who bought its peace and beauty so dearly."

The secret of joy out of sorrow and gain out of loss is all there in the message of Christmas.
-Bates G. Burt, in his 1945 Christmas card

CHRISTMAS EVE 1944

Goose Bay, Labrador

A field of bombers, by Arctic runway,
awaits clearing weather.
The tower fires one green flare.

Starting engines smoke, cough,
then roar:
two on the left wing,
two on the right.

Nine men per plane are trained
and ready for lemming's leap.

Full-throttle engines
rush the wind, lift, turn
and track the North Atlantic,
head for Scotland's foggy shore.

Three hundred sixty-eight bombers,
spaced by minutes, attain attitude,
then drone this long night
across a heaving brine.

Eleven aircraft fall short.
Unanswered prayers of ninety-nine
are swallowed in the swells
to remain a secret of the sea.

Wilfred M. Johnson
North Mankato, MN 56003



THE TAILGUNNER'S WAR - EPILOGUE

The Chris Wunnenberg Crew ...

In the September 00 issue the story of Sherman Small's experiences as a tailgunner in the 96th Bomb Group was told. Sherman finished his tour and afterwards returned to the States. Several of his original crew members had missed a few missions due to illness and had to stay over to finish out their tours on other flight crews. Sherman talks about these buddies.

"John DiCicco was a likeable guy who grew up in Camden, New Jersey and knew the ways of life on the street. John was our engineer and top turret gunner. He was outgoing, had some rough edges, made good use of the entire English language, and was known to all as a 'go to' guy. If you needed anything at all -anything - you could go to John and he would soon have it for you. He was a little guy with a permanent smile, and a wild man in town. On our passes to the city, he would usually go off on his



Front L-R: Chris Wunnenberg, pilot, James Setzer, R.O., John DiCicco, Eng.
Back L-R: Sherm Small, T.G., Jame Malloy, B.T., Robert Collins, W.G., Lee Bennett, C.P.

own and have a good time. He often showed up in our barracks after a mission with a bottle or two of 'mission Scotch.' John was the free-spirit of our crew.

"One well-known story John always liked to tell had to do with a girl who told him she was expecting and he would have to marry her. Disturbed, John went to the Chaplain who listened to his tale and told him,

'John, don't worry about that at all. This is the fifth time that girl has used that same story trying to marry a Yank.'

"The other two crew members who flew some make-up missions were James Tasker, one of our waist gunners, and James Malloy, our ball turret gunner. Their last mission was a milk run to France. John DiCicco flew as engineer with them on that flight. Our other waist gunner, Bob Collins, and I were ready to ship out and return home on the *New Amsterdam* when we got the news. Their B-17 had been hit by flak and no chutes were seen. No one got out. Bob and I were devastated. Shortly after that, we learned that our navigator, Ken McVitte, was shot down on his final mission and became a prisoner of war."

It was in 1982 during the 40th anniversary celebration of the founding of the Eighth, that Sherm and Claire Small returned to Snetterton Heath in England. Sherman was sitting quietly in the town church looking at the 96th Bomb Group stained glass window, remembering the days of the war. His lost crew members appeared there in the chapel as clear as day; he could see them in their olive drab clothes smiling; he could hear their voices. They were talking to him. They told him to enjoy himself; to not worry; that they "were okay." Sherman states, "They were there, as real as they ever were. There is no doubt at all in my mind, I saw them that day in the chapel."



John DiCicco and Chris (head cook). John is working on a deal for a Lamb roast.

"Don't tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and let them surprise you with their results."

- George Patton

AFTER DUE CONSIDERATION

We have heard it said that the first American flyer to examine a German aerial rocket is Staff Sgt. George T. Rankin, 29-year-old gunner from Fountain City, Tenn. Rankin's introduction came at the height of a battle when an object came through a waist window and hit the floor behind him.

"It looked like a dry cell battery stuck in one end of a stove pipe," Rankin said. "For a fraction of a second I thought of taking it back to England for analysis. But that fraction was also long enough for me to throw it out. A few seconds later I saw it explode far below."

FIRST EIGHTH AIR FORCE HEAVY BOMBER TO COMPLETE 25 MISSIONS Pilot and Crew Chief Meet for the First Time Since the War ...

The B-17 F 41-24557 "D" for Dog - *Hell's Angels* - flew in to the 303rd Bomb Group's airbase at Molesworth on 24 October 1942. The aircraft was one of the first heavy bombers assigned to the 303rd Bomb Group during World War II. Its pilot, Irl Baldwin, and his crew were the first to complete the requisite 25 missions of an Eighth Air Force combat tour from airbases in England. Their crew chief was a young man from Mansfield, Ohio, Fabian Folmer. Folmer's ground crew sent the aircraft off on its first forty missions without an abort - an unusual record in the early days of the war when replacement parts and tools were scarce.

Of the thirty-four B-17s originally assigned to the four squadrons of the 303rd Bomb Group, twenty-eight did not return. *Hell's Angels* finished a total of 48 missions and was the second B-17 to return to the United States to tour war production plants in appreciation of efforts of wartime workers on the homefront. Its ground crew was the first ground crew to fly home with their aircraft.

The two old friends recently met together at a 303rd Bomb Group Association reunion in Oklahoma City to talk about their experiences for the first time since the war.

I had gone to lunch and we knew we were gonna fly Hell's Angels out of there sometime that day. They said we were going to fly to Land's End, England on the way back to the



On the nationwide war plant tour: from left, Fabian Folmer, John Kosilla, Irl Baldwin, Ed West, John Johnston, Wilson Fairfield, and Kasmer Wegrzyn

States. While I was in the mess hall they announced that if anyone wanted to, they could go up and sign their autograph on the plane. I couldn't even get my baggage in the airplane, there were so many people there. I never saw anything like it in my life. The airplane was covered with signatures. - Fabian Folmer

- 1942 -

Irl Baldwin comments on the early days. "I joined the 303rd Bomb Group two weeks after they formed the Eighth Air Force in Savannah on 28 January 1942. We eventually met another cadre at Gowen field in Boise, Idaho and the whole bunch made up the 303rd. I had some of my crew then, but the final crew was formed at Kellogg Field. I flew over with my crew." Fabian recalls his first meeting

with Irl. "I got out of training at Chanute field and went to Boise by way of Bangor, Maine. I met Irl there in Boise. We had an airplane we were crewing and we were on standby, just hanging tight in case they wanted to do something, so we were together right from the beginning. My contingent went over on the *Queen Mary* and arrived in England a month before the aircrew. At Molesworth, at first we were forbidden to go to town - we were 'grounded' is the way to put it. We had some exercise programs and some training, but mostly got in a lot of sack time. We were assigned to the 358th squadron, but the planes weren't there.

"I remember the day that Irl landed. I remember just like it was yesterday. It was

an early sunny day outside and there were relatively few and far between of those. Then we found out that we were going to be associated 100%.

That seemed to suit both of us pretty well. We knew each other already; it was a natural match. I got to fly quite a few practice missions with Irl and his crew,

before he started flying missions. I used to fly a lot with him. I don't think anything changed after Irl started flying combat missions.



Crew chief Folmer leaving for warplant tour, 20 Jan 44



In the barracks, Irl Baldwin leads a spirited post-mission conversation with crew members; Fabian Folmer is seen standing behind Irl's wicker chair.

The association we had, and the friendship, developed during that period. We just added more people to the family. We had the combat crew and of course more of the ground crew. The *Hell's Angels* was the first plane I crewed in England. We kept the same plane the whole time. When the combat thing started, we just seemed to fit together pretty well. We had no idea what we were getting into, and I don't think we were worried about it."

"I had one big worry going into combat," Irl remembers. "I was afraid I would be a coward. I had never been in such a situation and that bothered me - until we ran into enemy flak and fighters. I found out I did things better and I was cooler and thought faster than at any other time in my life.

I was able to do the right things at the right time. I lost the idea of 'not getting the job done' the first time we ran into fighters and flak. Never worried about it again. I was just confident. I knew I was going to come through. A lot of missions we didn't fly because of the weather. And while I was over there we didn't particularly fly the formation through clouds. We hadn't had a

lot of formal training flying formation in clouds, although we did some training on our own. So we tried to never fly



Four engines revved up; ground crew tents at the edge of the hardstand

Home from number 25!



through clouds in formation."

Fabian says, "I have thought about that crew so many times. The ground crews - one of the many fears we had. You would say "Bon Voyage" when they took off in the morning and you hoped and prayed they would come back that night. Once in awhile I would get a little twinge about it but I never worried bad about it, because it was a good crew and there were so many things I knew about that I had absolutely no control over. It was a little like Russian roulette, so to speak. I never really worried about them getting shot down; never really worried. When those airplanes started coming back, I would scan the skies pretty heavy, but as soon as I saw that plane with the big 'D' up there, I knew that he was fine.

"We got up pretty early - the same time as the flight crew or earlier - they were in briefing. The base only had

one hangar. That was about it. The work had to be done. We had a pot-belly stove in our work tent. We would go in there to try and get warm and then go back out. The cold weather was really the worst thing. And the rain - that wasn't too great. We just had to go out in it. If that plane was on that status board, it had to be in the next day. If there was any way possible it had to be ready to fly, and that was our job. While they were gone, we cleaned up around the dispersal area. We had a tent out there and there were benches and tools and everything. Originally when these guys would take off, we would throw 100 octane gas on the area and burn it off - we had black smoke flying all over the place. That lasted just about one time. We got orders from Headquarters saying: 'Hey! You can't do that anymore! The enemy has people over in England and they will know

when we're coming because of that black smoke all over the dispersal area.' That was the end of that. We had to come up with something different. We knew how long Irl and his crew would be gone and sometimes we would get in a little sack time, but we always would get a little nervous and our nap would be shortened; we would be thinking about them. We were always out there when they returned."

THE COMBAT TOUR THE AIRPLANE

"I flew 23 of my 25 missions in the *Hell's Angels*," Irl states. "One time I was on leave and I raised a fuss with Operations because someone else was flying my airplane. Another time, for some reason I never did know, I was told, 'Alright. You want to go. We have a plane for you.' And they put

me in a 359th squadron airplane. In these two other planes, I think most of my crew flew with me."

Fabian Folmer has the answer to that puzzle: "One time there was a General who came out to fly the airplane on that mission. The CQ woke me up and said that the engineering officer needed me to pre-flight the airplane. 'It has to be in top shape', he said. I said, 'It is, as far as I know.' So I went out and pre-

flighted it and everything was fine. Then it came time to start the engines and I'll be a son of a gun if number three engine wouldn't start. About that time there was panic - real panic. I had people crawling all over that airplane. One of them pulled the front row of plugs out of the engine and this and that and I'm standing there wondering, 'What am I doing here?!' Finally the General walked over and said, 'Sergeant, do you know what is wrong with that engine?' I said, 'I think I do.' And he said, 'Can you fix it?' I said, 'I think so.' He said, 'How long will it take you?' And I replied, 'Within about half an hour or less.' He said, 'Well get it fixed.'

I rode about half a mile down to Tech Supply and all we needed was a booster coil. The coil was up in the engine nacelle and the points had come together and burned up. So I changed that booster coil and the General said, 'Come on up here and help me start this engine.' So I did and it kicked over just like that. He said, 'We're on our way!' and I said, 'Not with me, you're not!' That General was an absolute delight to be around - a genuinely nice guy. I think it must have been General Haywood 'Possum' Hansel, because he was about the only General around that early in the war."



Irl and his crew flew to St. Nazaire a number of times. "Some of the planes got hit pretty hard, but we were never hit too hard. We were real fortunate. We never really had too much damage to the airplane. We never had a crew member earn the purple heart."

Fabian continues, "We had to change the engines a few times.

Crew chief Fabian Folmer in the Bomb Bay of the Hell's Angels



Getting ready to return home: 303rd troops autograph the Hell's Angels

"The only trouble I had with rank," Irl states, "was when they assigned someone of high rank to fly with me as copilot. We would get up to high level and I would turn it over to him and he couldn't fly close formation so I had to fly the whole mission. We had one mission that got scrubbed at the last minute. The whole 8th Air Force got loaded that night. The weather broke and they woke me up at 3 o'clock to fly a 4 o'clock mission. At briefing my bombardier went to pour coffee in his cup and missed it by six inches. I asked him, 'How are you gonna hit a pickle barrel if you can't hit a coffee cup by six inches?' The whole 8th Air Force was in the same boat, but they were all sobered up by the time we got off."

We had supercharger trouble a couple of times and a couple of times the glycol pump wouldn't work. We had trouble getting parts early on. At Molesworth when they were sending new planes over they would land at our base and we would go on a 'moonlight excursion.' We were always running out of tools, so we would steal their tools. We nearly stripped one airplane one night. We always kept the MPs busy so they wouldn't bother us. Other crew chiefs were doing the same thing - parts were really hard to get ahold of. Sheet metal was a problem too. I remember one hole we had in the airplane. We repaired it with a tomato can. The guy - I think it was Kasmer

Wegrzyn - cleaned it up, cut it out, and put it on there.

"Irl said that going over he was afraid he might be a coward, which he proved that he wasn't. Me, I was a little different. I was a kid then but nothing ever bothered me. I took everything just the way it happened. If it's gotta be that way, it's gotta be that way. But we always came up with an answer for something that went wrong. And I think that was just the cohesion of the people we worked with all the time; it was just great. I can't tell

you how much I enjoyed having the men there. I had a real good ground crew - two have since died. Jonny Kosilla and Earnie Touhey. Jon was a sergeant and number 3 engine was his baby. Most guys put their girlfriend's name on their engine, but Jon chose one of his sisters, Helene. I also had Wilson Fairfield; he took care of number 4 engine. Wergzyn took care of the number 2 engine and Ed West took number 1. There was a series at one time that cylinders were blowing. We finally had to start changing the engines. That was the best thing we could do. Instead of messing with it, we would get a new engine to put in. You had to think of course, that the airplane was gonna fly ten guys over enemy territory and you wanted everything to be just so. You could not take any chances of putting something together that wasn't just so. We had to baby those airplanes pretty good."

Irl reflects on the missions. "It took nine months to do the twenty-five missions. I was happy to get near the end of the missions but I never worried about finishing. I thought from the beginning that the B-17 airplane was about the best one ever built. They were wonderful aircraft, built to come back home. I think being the first crew to fly 25 missions was special. There was competition there. We knew some other bomb groups were trying to finish before us. Headquarters

wanted us to fly, but we were not to take any extreme chances. The 91st Bomb Group had the *Memphis Belle* which wound up finishing just a few days after we did. It was the first plane to return home with its flight crew. That airplane and its crew went on a War Bond tour of the United States right before we did. And other 303rd squadrons had planes in the competition. Famous planes such as *Knockout Dropper* and *S for Sugar*.

"Our 25th mission was on 14 May 43 to Kiel. We had perfect bombing that day and flew

group lead." Donald Bone was the crew's bombardier. Bone remembered, "Our bombs absolutely split the target that day. They looked awfully good to me. I also shot a German fighter down. I knocked the cannon out of his right wing and then he went down." This kill was one of fifteen fighters shot down by *Hell's Angels* crewmen. Irl continues, "We saw more fighters that mission than we ever had before. On the way back, they followed us fifty miles out over the water shooting at us. Normally Luftwaffe pilots didn't like to fly over the water, but they probably knew we were on our 25th mission." *Hell's Angels'* radio operator, Russell Warren, said, 'We knocked Kiel right off the map.' Waist gunner Fred Meddaugh concurred, 'It was a good show. We won't have to go back there.'" Irl commented at the end of his 25th mission - the final one of his tour, "I am sorry I have to quit. It was a swell trip. Rough, but worth it."

RETURNING HOME

"One of those things happened that nobody knows much about," Fabian recalls. One day I was sitting there in the tent doing something when the crew's navigator, Parley Madsen, came to me and said that it would be

nice if headquarters would send a ground crew back home with their airplane. We knew that the flight crews got to go home but never heard of a ground crew doing it. He told me he had gone to 1st Strategic Air Depot and kind of rumored that thing around. He started the ball rolling and the terrible thing about it was that some other crew needed a navigator one day and he flew it and got shot down.

"We got orders and on 20 Jan 44 we left Molesworth. They picked six sergeants to come home and there



303rd Bomb Group's B-17B Flying Fortress #41-24577 Hell's Angels

was a rousing send-off ceremony at the base. General Robert Travis and General Robert Williams were there to see our heavily autographed airplane off. We were escorted out by several other notable B-17s of the bomb group. We flew by way of North Africa and landed in Miami in February 1944. From there we flew to Tinker Field in Oklahoma City, our first tour stop. We flew in and I never saw so many people on the ground to greet us. Oklahoma Governor Kerr was there when we pulled up. The Air Force had arranged for Irl and his crew to meet us there and we were reunited in Oklahoma City. We did not know they were going to be there. They had been back home in the States during the final 23 missions *Hell's Angels* flew. Irl stayed on the tour with us to fly with Capt. John Johnston, who flew the plane back to the States."

The *Hell's Angels* crew stayed close to the base and the airplane. Crowds of people from Oklahoma came out to see the plane and meet the crew. The crew was treated like royalty the entire time. A number of people added their signatures to the aircraft and it was said that there were



The Hell's Angels ground crew off the ground for a June 6, 1943 photo. Fabian Folmer is sitting up front on the nose with Wilson Fairfield behind him; Irl Baldwin is standing second from right in front row, wearing sheepskin jacket

more than a few names and phone numbers scrawled in lipstick on the plane. The tour of war manufacturing plants went first to the Wright Aeronautical Plant in Caldwell, New Jersey. This morale-building tour was also a War Bond drive for the country. The tour covered sixteen cities in the United States and lasted about two months, ending at March Field near Riverside, California. One of the tour stops was to the Studebaker Motors Plant in South Bend, Indiana. Fabian recalls, "I



A typical ground crew day in the Mighty Eighth!

met with the plant supervisor and he wanted to know what problems we had over there with the Studebaker engines. We talked awhile and he said that they were aware of the problems and thought they had it corrected. Towards the end, I thought the Studebaker engines were pretty good - I don't remember the last Wright engine I put on the airplane." Both Irl and Fabian were assigned to B-29 training outfits for the remainder of the war, but the war ended before either returned to combat.

The fifth tour stop saw the aircraft and crew land at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. It was a very special tour stop. There Irl met an attractive member of the Womens Air Corps who was assigned to Headquarters there. Irl and Carolyn McDargh hit it off immediately. Carolyn was from Youngstown, Ohio and had graduated from college with a major in History. Carolyn recalls that Irl was a lot of fun to be around, and on several instances while walking around the base with the Commanding Officer of the WAC contingent, he would make Carolyn walk a full six steps behind them. They were married in 1944 and have three children, a son and two

daughters. After Irl's retirement from the Air Force in 1967 they moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico where they now live.

Fabian Folmer had a successful career in oil and gas accounting, covering a large area of the western United States. He tried to keep in touch with his crew after the war. "I tried real hard to get hold of my crew but never had much luck," Fabian states.

"I heard Jon Kosilla was in Reno and I was making plans to go see him, when he had a second stroke and later died. It was a long time before I heard of the 303rd Bomb Group Association and joined." Irl's flight crew has not been able to get together since the Oklahoma tour reunion. He says, "I would see our engineer, James Rodriguez, off and on since the war, but now I think I am the only survivor left of my original crew."

The B-17 was named *Hell's Angels* after its fourth mission. Irl Baldwin originally had proposed the name *Yakima Queen* after his hometown of Yakima, Washington, but the crew

was somewhat less than enthusiastic about that choice. While flying over the Channel after forming up for a mission, Irl called the crew on the intercom, "How about *Hell's Angels*, after that World War I movie?" The crew checked in with a strong affirmative. Later during the war, Irl was interviewed by BBC correspondent Ben Lyons, who commented that he had happened to play the lead role in that particular movie. The 303rd BG soon afterwards adopted the name "*Hell's Angels*" as the name of their Bomb Group.

The "bombing angel" nose art for the aircraft was designed and painted by Bernie Kastenbaum, who also did nose art for a number of other 303rd Bomb Group B-17s. He painted the original artwork on the fuselage sides of the airplane, but in December 1942



Eighth Air Force Headquarters issued a directive requiring that identifying letters and numbers be painted on every airplane fuselage. The original logo was removed and repainted on



Irl Baldwin at the tribute to the Hell's Angels fifty years post-war at the Joint Analysis Center base at Molesworth, England

record of Folmer's ground crew is a tribute to the determination and skill of a group of young men who had no previous experience working on airplanes before the war - determination and dedication which was necessary to enable Irl Baldwin's flight crew to accomplish what it did in completing twenty-five missions without an abort - without ever being turned back.

Dandy, Flying Bitch, and Knockout Dropper, with the intention of their being made into post-war service stations.

Appreciation for extensive historical and anecdotal material for this article goes out to Harry Gobrecht, 303rd BG Historian and author of the 303rd History Might In Flight; to Carolyn Baldwin for her suggestions; and to Fabian Folmer and Irl Baldwin for their fascinating interviews. - Editor

the nose, this time by tailgunner Harold Godwin.

During the aircraft's 48 missions Folmer's crew replaced sixteen new engines on the airplane. They also installed fourteen new superchargers, three horizontal stabilizers, twelve oil coolers, three sets of landing gear, four tires, two tail wheels, five sets of brakes, four generators, eight supercharger regulators, new radio equipment and over two thousand spark plugs, in addition to hundreds of other parts. For his exemplary service, Fabian Folmer became the first ground crew chief to be awarded the Legion of Merit. The remarkable

The Hell's Angels returned to Oklahoma one more time. After being assigned to the USAAF Training Command until the end of the war, Hell's Angels was flown on 7 August 45 to Searcy Field in Stillwater, Oklahoma. There she was dismantled and sent to Downtown Airpark in Oklahoma City along with three other B-17s, Yankee Doodle



Irl and Fabian together for the first time since the war - 303rd BGA reunion Oklahoma City 1999



ROGERS NAMED MOST VALUABLE MEN'S TRACK COMPETITOR

U.S. AIR FORCE ACADEMY, Colo. -- Cadet Second Class Shane D. Rogers has earned this year's Most Valuable Men's Track Competitor Award. The Award was presented by Col. Robert E. Vickers. USAF (Ret.), Director of Awards, 8AF Historical Society, in a presentation ceremony on 29 May 2000 at the U.S. Air Force Academy.

The award is sponsored by the 8th Air Force Historical Society in memory of Mr. Arne U. Arnesen for Rogers' demonstration of superior athletic achievement in men's track and field competition. Mr. Arnesen was an accomplished track coach and associate professor of physical education who dedicated 28 years of his life to the Air Force Academy Athletic Department and all cadets who attended.

Cadet Rogers completes his third year at the academy this year and looks forward to receiving a bachelor of science degree and a commission as an Air Force second lieutenant as the Class of 2001 graduates next year.

This year's graduating seniors will increase the number of Academy graduates who have served throughout the Air Force to more than 33,000.

Since 1959, Academy graduates have served as pilots, navigators, engineers, maintenance officers and as professionals in a number of other technical fields.

The Air Force Academy provides a balanced program of military training, academics, athletics and character development. Recognized as one of the finest colleges in the nation, the Academy's curriculum allows cadets to acquire a broad education in the basic and engineering sciences, social sciences and the humanities, and to choose from among 30 academic majors.



Awardee Shane Rogers seen with the Award Trophy and The Eighth Air Force's Col. Robert Vickers



Adoration

AS LONG AS B-17'S ARE FLYING...

Once
Maximum Effort formations
Filled Europe's skies;
Sometimes a thousand planes each day,
And somewhere in that frenzy,
Wrapped in wool and leather,
Tethered by tubes and wires,
Encapsulated in a ball turret,
Rode an Iowa farm boy.

Now
Half a century later,
Half-a-hundred
Warbirds still fly.
Ghosts!
And my aerial gunner,
War-fighter,
Decorated hero,
Father
Lives on in my mind.

by Steven D. Palmquist
Waverly, IA

Associate member Steven Palmquist's father flew his missions from Thorpe-Abbotts with the 100th Bomb Group. -Editor

THE ANNUAL REUNION CELEBRATION AS SEEN THROUGH THE LENS OF TOM LAWLER . . .

Historical Society members are still talking about the great time they had at the Salt Lake City reunion. The Utah Chapter put on a good show! Tours were all uniquely interesting and fun. The tour guides really enjoyed showing the Society the sights and Donna Lee and her staff from Armed Force

Reunions were superb. Awards presentations to active duty 8th Air Force servicemen and a great Barbershop Music Group capped off another memorable Gala Banquet.

Tom Lawler, 351st Bomb Group, was seen everywhere, stopping folks and getting a smile from them. His photos give some idea of the good times at the reunion.



Dr. Stephen E. Ambrose
Historian and Author



President Dick Baynes and Mark Copeland, center, unveil the new 8th AF Flag available at the 8th AFHS PX.



Front Kneeling: Jack Feller, 493rd BG
Front standing: Doris Lee Files, Margaret Grant, Tina Lindquist & Leone Protsman
Back: Jack Rude, Bill Rawson, Shepler Fitzgerald, Dale Files, Arthur Riggiero, Norman Grant & Norman Protsman, all members of the 493rd BG.



Outgoing Board Member and Treasurer Ken Nail, addresses the general membership meeting.



Claire Small, Polly Turner & Nathalie Ehrenreich by Pilot's Statue entitled "Mail from Home" - Hill AFB



Gloria Rundquist - 493rd BG, Carol Lancaster - daughter of Rose Lancaster 493rd BG, Edith Morrow - RAF

REUNION 2000



Oscar Whitten, B-17 Pilot 92 BG & Edwin Lyskowski 92 BG



Curtis Miller & Richard (Cardy) Farias 493rd BG



Fran & Bernard Kitching 96th BG in front of the Sheraton Hotel, our reunion site.



Jim & Delores Myl 351st BG with Florence & Charles Richards



Five from Texas- Tom Lawler, Jack Rude, Gloria Rundquist and Shirley & Charles Wood



John L. Moore, President Utah Chapter 8AFHS
John Lindquist 493rd BG & host for our visit to Hill AFB.
Nate Mazer, Past President Utah Chapter 8AFHS.

Mark Copeland at Mark & Monica's PX booth.



Maurice Sumney of 385th BG & William Albright of 379th BG Chapter & Unit Development meeting



REUNION 2000



Glennis of Meetings America Tours, and Dorothy & Charles VanArsdale 493rd BG at Kennecott's Bingham Canyon Copper Mine.



Jack Rude, Joe Stilwell, Warren & Margaret Bock at Kennecott Copper Mine



Ralph & Mary Ellen Lynn of 466th BG



Myron Sanchez 385th BG

Leo Battista
56th FG at
"This is the
Place"
Monument in
Heritage Park



Lary Ann Bateman, & Donna Lee of Armed Forces Reunions, both used superb skill, extra kindness and round-the-clock care that pleased everyone

REUNION 2000



Carl & Shirley Taylor & Homer Sheridan
Homer was President of Nebraska Chapter for many years.



Bonnadene & Allen Chapin of 381st BG and Molly & Lou LovEsKy of 466th BG while on visit to Bingham Canyon Copper Mine



Plaque at the Chapel Monument Hill AFB



B-24 cowlings and engine from crash being restored at Hill Aerospace Museum



The B-2 Stealth Bomber flower garden



8TH AFHS BOARD OF DIRECTORS ACTION



November 13, 2000

Mr. John E. Greenwood, Chairman
8th Air Force Memorial Museum Foundation
607 State Street
Alton, IL 62002

Dear John:

The Memorial Museum Foundation through the years of its existence has accomplished many notable goals in promoting and preserving the heritage of the 8th Air Force. The Foundation, through its activities, has helped establish the distinguished legacy of the Mighty Eighth. In this regard it has in the past worked closely with the Eighth Air Force Historical Society and has received financial support amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars from the Society through its annual funding in the 8th AFHS budget. The Society Board acknowledges and respects the effort and dedication of the many individuals associated with the MMF.

During the last several years the MMF Board of Directors has repeatedly stated its independence from the 8th AFHS through presentations by the MMF President and other MMF BOD members before the annual meetings of the Historical Society Board. This stance has also been emphatically promoted through business correspondence by MMF members and its officers. For several years, interaction between the two organizations has been strained by the differing viewpoints of this relationship. Numerous attempts by leaders of both organizations to resolve the problems as perceived by the MMF have not only failed, but have served to worsen the situation.

The 8th Air Force Memorial Museum Foundation was established by the Eighth Air Force Historical Society with the purpose as stated in the original MMF By-Laws:

1. To provide a Foundation to perpetuate the history of the US Eighth Air Force through the establishment and maintenance of a museum, museum collections and/or exhibits that will collect, restore, display and/or preserve memorabilia relative to the 8th Air Force.
2. To provide for the establishment, promotion, and support of educational activities relative to the history of the 8th Air Force. This may be in the form of written material, displays, film shows, museum exhibits, symposia, historical research, courses of study, etc.

The 8th AF MMF By-Laws also state that the organization will consist only of its members of the Board of Directors, consisting of sixteen members of the Eighth AFHS (With no input from the membership of the Eighth AFHS). Because the 8th Air Force Memorial Museum Foundation continues to assert that it is, and I quote, "a completely separate organization" with its own By-Laws and own agenda, it becomes apparent that our differences demand decisive action. It is with some reluctance that the Historical Society Directors are compelled to take official action on this matter.

The Board of Directors of the 8th AFHS at their 2000 annual Board of Directors meeting on October 22, 2000, voted unanimously to recognize and concur that the 8th AF MMF is a distinct and separate organization from the 8th AFHS. That vote will be recorded in the approved minutes of the meeting and will be made available to you.

Since many members of the Society think that the two organizations are one and the same, we feel that it is important that the membership be informed of the official independence of the MMF from the 8th AFHS. Modification will be made in the annual meeting programs and in the quarterly Historical Society publication to reflect this new relationship. In this action, it is understood that the Memorial Museum Foundation will not use the rolls of the 8th AFHS in any mail-outs, fund raising efforts, or publicity and promotional efforts as of the date of the Board action, October 22, 2000. The use of the Historical Society name and logo is similarly restricted.

The Board of Directors of the Historical Society wishes the Memorial Museum Foundation much success in the course of action selected. The Historical Society hopes to work congenially and productively with the MMF in the future to achieve our common goals - **preserving the legacy of the Eighth Air Force for future generations.**

Sincerely,

R.C. Dick Baynes
President, 8th AFHS



Alfred G. Wetmore ©

490TH BOMB GROUP NAVIGATOR - WORLD FAMOUS ARTIST

Alfred Vetromile's creativity showed up at an early age. Before he entered the Army Air Corps he had already freelanced as an illustrator for pulp magazines and had sold artwork to Redbook and Collier's magazines. He had attended New York University and the Art Student League, majoring in aeronautical engineering before becoming a navigator in the 490th Bomb Group. He flew thirty-five missions as a member of the



The crew of the Raidin' Maiden still keeps in touch. At left is the navigator/artist Alfred Vetromile with pilot James Jesse.

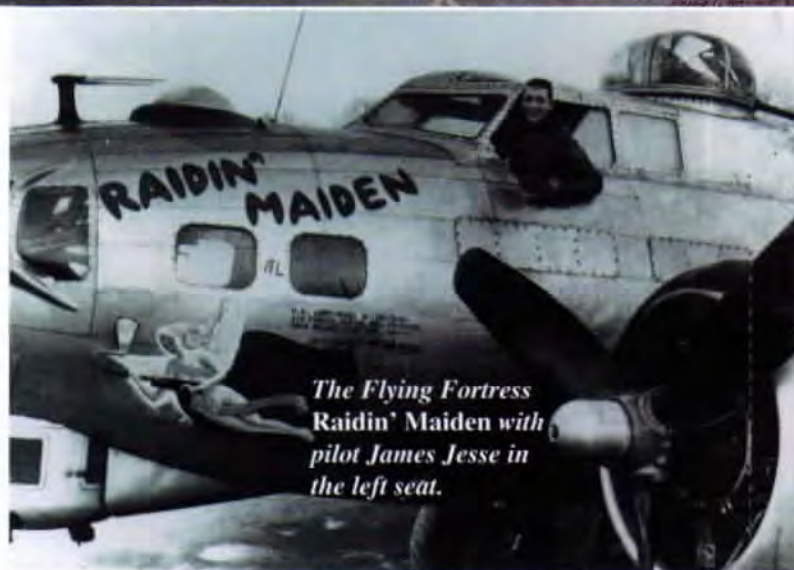
Lt. James Jesse crew in the B-17 *Raidin' Maiden*.

Vetromile's career after the war was based in New York City where he worked with major advertising firms illustrating many of the early trend-setting campaigns for cigarettes, dog foods, colognes, automobiles, and many other prominent commercial products. His television ads featuring the Lucky Strikes "dancing cigarettes" were selected to be placed in the archives of the Museum of Modern Art. He was noted for his ability to create accurate illustrations and artworks from memory, without the use of props. The detail and historical accuracy of his wartime paintings reflect this aspect of his unique talent.

Several missions he was on stand out and have been recreated in two of his noted paintings. The flak, the German fighters, the vapor trails - "I wake up thinking about them. You get emotional about seeing it," Alfred says. "I recreated these scenes mostly from memory." In November 1944, the *Raidin' Maiden* was lead aircraft on a raid to one of the last large German oil refineries near Merseburg - one of the bloodiest missions of the war. German flak batteries had learned, by that time in the war, to concentrate twelve to twenty-four 88mm anti-aircraft guns in one group and fire them together to produce a shotgun-type pattern among the close formation of 8th Air Force bombers.



1944 mission to Berlin - Vetromile's aircraft is shown in the foreground



The Flying Fortress Raidin' Maiden with pilot James Jesse in the left seat.

Centralized fire control, improved radar tracking, and heightened fire ceilings also greatly improved firing accuracy. On the mission to the Leuna Oil Refinery 56 bombers and 36 fighters were lost.

In 1984, Alfred changed his career path from illustration to full-time painting. His talents were directed to the Plains Indians, a passion of his since early childhood. He has collected an extensive library of books about the history of the Western Indian. He states, "I have attempted to show Indian life in the West as it was and should have remained; to go back in time and reconstruct what no longer exists." Alfred's western paintings are now featured in prominent exhibitions across the country.

A HOLIDAY GIFT!

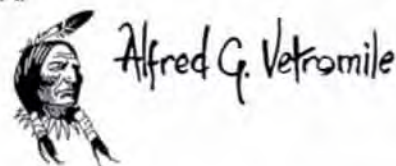
Alfred Vetromile's Mission to Leuna print is presented on page 23 as a perforated tear-out page - great for framing

30 November 1944. The target was the Leuna Oil Refinery in the Merseburg/Leipzig complex. This mission saw the Eighth Air Force encounter the heaviest anti-aircraft fire that was ever thrown up by Jerry flak batteries. The artist Lt Alfred G. Vetromile, a navigator with the 490th Bomb Group, was leading the bomber line in aircraft with tail-markings +V. Merseburg flak defenses had been built up to 720 flak guns. For 17 1/2 minutes the formation plowed through the barrage of fire. The cost of destroying this target was severe. Fifty-six Eighth Air Force bombers and thirty-six fighters were lost. For further information about his artwork, Alfred Vetromile may be contacted at 853 E. Trenton Place, Tucson, AZ 85737

ARTIST (cont'd)...

His home in Tucson keeps him close to his western surroundings which are reflected in his paintings. Alfred Vetromile's works are featured by fine art dealers in nearby Tubac, Arizona and they are found in a current art exhibition now at Hohn Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona. Alfred is one of the original members of the Graphic Artist Guild and a long-standing associate of the Society of Illustrators. He has contributed a number of his war paintings

to the society of Illustrators Air Force Program directed by artist Keith Ferris. His painting of a 1944 Berlin mission was chosen as a commemorative print for the 50th Anniversary of World War II.



HERITAGE MUSEUM NEWS

CHARACTER EDUCATION

In school systems throughout Georgia, character education is now a required curriculum. The Georgia Code requires all students from kindergarten through high school to participate in Character Education programs that focus on twenty-seven character traits: courage, patriotism, citizenship, honesty, fairness, respect for others, kindness, cooperation, self-respect, self-control, courtesy, compassion, tolerance, diligence, generosity, punctuality, cleanliness, cheerfulness, school pride, respect for the environment, respect for the creator, patience, creativity, sportsmanship, loyalty, perseverance, and virtue.

Working in partnership with the Georgia Department of Education and the Georgia Humanities Council, The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum was designated the first Center for Character Education in Georgia. With a Character Education exhibit and exhibit galleries that provide examples of the ethical values that form the cultural legacy of the United

States, the Museum helps other museums develop character education programs.

The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum concentrates on the contributions made by the Eighth Air Force to defeat Adolf Hitler's totalitarian hold over most European Countries during World War II. The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum showcases the World War II generation and their sacrifices made in defense of freedom. It is a key location for students to learn teamwork and cooperation, to observe the value of democracy as opposed to totalitarianism, and to witness examples of selfless courage to help others.

The Museum's Character Education

exhibits use original World War II Eighth Air Force photographs from the Museum Archives to demonstrate what each trait looks like in practice. For example, a debriefing interview illustrates honesty, and students learn that these interviews provided vital information about enemy tactics and weapons. By using the technique of teaching by example, students discover each of the required traits. As this Museum expands its exhibit galleries to encompass the post-World War II era and Women in Aviation, character education will continue to be an integral theme. Young people need role models. Here at The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum we have many to choose from!



TARGET BERLIN 3 FEB 45

by Bob Fitzgerald - W.J. Wilson Crew - 100th Bomb Group Miford, IA

Target railroad station where a panzer division was moving toward the east front. Our navigator was flying with Lt. Grant and Major Rosenthal as lead navigator of the 100th Bomb Group leading the 3rd division behind the 1st division. Our crew was flying as deputy deputy lead. We closed in on Berlin about 10 minutes behind the last bomb group of the 1st division giving the anticraft gunners plenty of time to get their sights on us. The panzers were also using their 105 and 155mm on us. Lots of white bursts. Two planes behind our plane were hit and went down. Next deputy lead went down; then Grust and Rosenthal flying lead took a hit and caught fire but stayed on course. I was the bombardier and was only concerned with the dropping angle. When I saw the lead plane hit I engaged my

bomb sight with the bomb bays, not knowing in what condition their bombardier was in. I kept checking dropping angle, then glancing at lead plane, then back to my bomb sight. I felt our bombs falling and checked lead plane. Their bombs were also falling. I don't know if they dropped on me or if we both dropped at the same time. After bombs away the lead crew slowly bailed out. Our navigator, Lou Chappell, was killed by flak, but I never heard what happened to their bombardier in the lead plane. We flew deputy lead eight times but this was the only time I dropped with my bomb sight. Ernst lost a leg. Rosenthal was picked up by Russians after he convinced them he was an American. He was back at our base in a few weeks with a broken arm. He had been replaced as Squadron C.O. and I don't think he ever flew another mission because of his broken arm. He flew 57 missions.

THE LAST BOMBING MISSION OF THE 8TH AIR FORCE

384th Bomb Group High Squadron Last To Leave the Target Area...

Jack Russell 384th Bomb Group Garland, TX

This is the story of how the 547th Squadron of the 384th BG happened to drop the last bombs on German Occupied territory on April 25, 1945. I was the Radar-Bombardier-Navigator (Mickey) for this Squadron on this day. All members of our squadron that were flying that day were awakened to report to an early morning briefing. Before going into the briefing room I met the crew I would be flying with. The Radar Observers were not assigned to a regular crew. The Pilot was Capt. McCartney, the Bombardier was Capt. Earl Fisher, the Navigator was Capt. George Schold and the Radio Operator was Tech/Sgt. David Lustig. I don't recall the names of the other crew members. The Briefing officer drew back the curtain to reveal the target as Pilsen, Czechoslovakia to bomb the Skoda Armament Works. It was to be a nine to ten hour mission and the orders were to have visual bomb runs only, with each squadron having a separate bomb run. Our position was to lead the High Squadron. The Weather Officer predicted unlimited visibility. After leaving the briefing I got my radar maps and other equipment that I would need and joined the other crew members on a Jeep to drive to our plane, a B-17F named the "Swamp Angel". All crew members boarded the plane and proceeded to check their equipment to see that it was in proper operating condition. The radar equipment was located in the radio room across the aisle from the Radio Operator. The radar antenna was located in the lower ball turret in place of a gunner. Only four planes in the group were equipped with radar: the Group Leader, Group Deputy Leader and High and Low Squadron Leaders.

We had the usual long wait before lift-off, but we were finally off with our 6,000 pounds of bombs. Soon after getting our altitude the Radio Operator fired the flare gun so the other high squadron planes could join us in the formation. After circling until all the planes were in formation we were on our way to join the other bomb groups going to this target. I would continually check the Radar Scope for our location, plotting our course on the maps and confirming locations with the Navigator and later supply data to the Bombardier. The radio operator decided to provide us with some music from BBC, but to our surprise instead of music we received the announcement that Radio Free Europe and BBC was sending a message from SHAEF directly to the 40,000 Czech workers at Skoda not to report to work, as bombers were on their way to bomb the factories. Of course this message was not well received by this bomb group, as we knew the Germans would receive this message also and would have as many anti-aircraft guns as possible waiting for us. Up until now when we reached the target area the flight had been uneventful. We were flying at 22,000 ft. on a beautiful spring day and expecting the flack to start at any time. The radio operator started dropping bundles of chaff out of the small

chute in the side of the plane, hoping to foul-up the German anti-aircraft radar. But as we

approached the IP the flack began and soon became very heavy. The Group Lead of 12 planes made the first bomb run and had visual sighting, dropping the 500-pound bombs, as did the Low Squadron which followed. But when our High Squadron made the bomb run our target was clouded over and our Bombardier, Capt. Fisher, followed the orders of a visual drop only. We had to turn for a second bomb run - it took considerable time for a squadron of 12 planes flying formation to make the circle and return. The navigator, Capt. Schold, and I were really busy keeping our location and getting back to the IP. The target was still clouded over on the second try so a third run was necessary, and we were all wondering if we would have enough fuel to return to our base. This time at the last minute the target was visible and Capt. Fisher was able to drop the bombs. We were finally able to head back to our base at Grafton-Underwood in England. As stated, it took a lot of time for the three bomb runs at the target with the German anti-aircraft guns firing all the time, but luckily no planes of this tale-end Charlie squadron were lost. Several were damaged enough to require forced landings prior to getting to the home base. Only one plane from the 384th was lost on this day, a plane in Squadron 546. Our "Swamp Angel" sustained over 100 shrapnel holes. One shell, apparently a 37mm, had bored completely through the right wing main I-beam without detonating, so we were very lucky.

The 384th BG was the last bomb group over Skoda this day, so due to the time for making the three bomb runs, we dropped the last bombs of the war on German occupied territory.

The Mickey scope and AN/APS-15 receiver installed in a 401st BG B-17

The 384th BG over Coblenz, Dec. 1944. The B-17 at the far right was shot down by flak over Berlin 3 Feb 45.



MISSION #30, DECEMBER 31ST, NEW YEARS EVE

Awakened at 0300 for a 0430 briefing. Target: Hamburg's submarine pens. The takeoff is in the complete dark at 0710.

These nighttime group assemblies are anxiety provoking. Each group assembles on its leader who fires a distinctive colored flare; e.g., yellow/yellow, red/green, etc. Sitting in my seat in the nose, I see a red/green lights heading right for us; it looks exactly like the winglights of another plane. As the red separates from the green it looks like this plane is coming right into the nose. You gulp oxygen thinking it's your last, then it's gone, and you're spared once more. Finally, the pilot finds his group leader and we form up with the others; then head out over the North Sea in a northeast direction.

We were briefed for clouds over the target, but it is completely visual as we approach the German coast. They have covered the docks and pens with a smokescreen to hinder our visibility. We are the first group over the target with the aid of a 110-knot tailwind. The flak is intense and accurate tracking. The concussion from the black bursts buffet the plane. We later count 30 large holes from the sharpnel, one of which came through the nose spraying me with Plexiglas. Another chips the fuse off one of our bombs. Murray tells me. Then "bombs away" and they all go out simultaneously with those of the group leader. Unfortunately, no results were observed, though we could see that the group ahead had hit some oil storage tanks in the area. Just as we turn off the bomb run, I observe two 17's going down aflame, one at the target from flak, the other from an enemy fighter. A squadron of Kraut fighters closed on us, but turned away as they saw our tight, defensive formation - a threat to attacking fighters because of our superior firepower, thirteen .50 calibers on each Fortress. One 17 straggler was seen to shoot down a fighter. Our group lost two planes in

the Hamburg area and we started for home.

There was more flak as we crossed the German coast, and headed out over the North Sea. We had a terrific wind to buck and planes were leaving the formation with feathered props. It was a long, tiring journey to reach our English base.

Just as we were about to land, the pilot noticed we had had our hydraulic system shot out and we had no brakes! I was in the nose, and as we hit the runway, the waist gunner had attached a parachute to the internal structure of the plane and pulled the rip-cord. The chute ballooned out of the open side window and helped reduce our groundspeed. But we were still going at a fast clip when the pilot ruddered left and the plane did a groundloop, heading directly for some

of the groundcrews who had been watching us land. They began running like hell in every direction. We barely missed some trucks and a parked ambulance and we were all ashenfaced from the close shave. Another plane landed with a wounded bombardier and as it hit the runway, a prop fell off. Yet another also had no brakes and needed a parachute to stop; a third, with an engine fire that was extinguished after landing by the ground crews; two men were dead and a dozen others wounded. Kroenig had three toes blown off and Roman was hit in the arm by flak. This was one of the toughest in quite a while. Happy New Year!

-William Duane 388th BG
Wellesley Hills, MA
from his *War Diary*



"It was the winter of 1944. The take-off was difficult due to poor visibility and then into the soup." The long climb, flying on instruments and flying within our radio splasher signal is, in itself, a nerve-wracking experience. Suddenly we break out of the clouds at 10,000 feet and behold this amazing moon-lit scene. It was not unusual for Bomb Groups while circling during assembly to come perilously close to each other or even find themselves on a head-on collision course. Think of the excellent planning it took to organize and get 2,000 bombers with escorts into a 300 mile long bomber stream. Most of all, think of the tireless efforts of all the ground personnel, without which no planes could leave the ground."

-Artwork and text by Frank McKinley Stoneham, MA

Outstanding Member Tribute ... JIM ERSKINE



Most of Jim Erskine's "war stories" are not about the missions he flew as a tail-gunner with the 487th Bomb Group in Lavenham. They have to do with his post-war career as a fire-fighter in the Toledo, Ohio fire department. His department covered the entire city for medical emergency runs and during those years he witnessed practically every aspect of life in the city. In those days before the development of the EMT - 911 emergency system, people called the fire department for any unusual situation that happened to come along. Jim rescued a number of people from burning buildings and was awarded a citation of bravery by the city of Toledo. Many minor emergencies were part of his daily life and he once received a call to make an emergency run to his own address when his daughter, Jane, had a minor mishap.

Accidents involving children were frequent. "One of the hardest things for me was to witness the serious injury or death of a child," Jim states. Risks were a part of his daily routine and he enjoyed the challenges of his job. "In almost everything I did there was an element of risk. I have to admit, I miss the excitement of it all." He not only retrieved an occasional cat from a tree, but also delivered twenty-one emergency babies during his career.

Jim and his wife, Joe Ann, are long-time supporters of state and national Eighth Air Force organizations. For a number of years Jim has spent many volunteer hours as Chairman of the important Chapter/Unit Development Committee of the national 8th AF Historical Society and is in touch daily with Society members around the country. His responsibilities include keeping an accurate list of Presidents and Contacts of every Chapter and Unit organization in addition to helping organize new state Chapters. Jim attends every Board meeting and holds Chapter/Unit meetings at each annual reunion. He wears his 487th "Gentlemen From Hell" Group patch proudly and is an enthusiastic supporter of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum.

The Erskines have six children, and a number of grandchildren abound to keep their time fully occupied. While attending the recent Salt Lake City Historical Society reunion, their youngest grandchild, Allison, was born.

The Erskines have six children, and a number of grandchildren abound to keep their time fully occupied. While attending the recent Salt Lake City Historical Society reunion, their youngest grandchild, Allison, was born.

THE JOHN H. WOOLNOUGH MEMORIAL LIBRARY FUND

The 8th Air Force Historical Society's 2000 Annual Fund Drive is an important one. This endowment fund drive will formally name the Heritage Museum Library after the founder of the Historical Society in honor of his many contributions to preserve the heritage of the Mighty Eighth. The extensive library is located at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah and plays an important part in research and educational activities of those who are interested in the story of the Eighth Air Force.

Educational functions involving the younger generations taking place at the Museum are now receiving national attention, and their educational activities are constantly on the increase. The



Endowment fund for the Woolnough Memorial Library will allow the educational programs to reach many others and will promote the principles and heritage of the Eighth in a most effective way. This is our opportunity to see this mission through. Each contribution will be used to continue these very worthy teaching programs.

Our annual drive has a goal of \$250,000 and will be entered as a donation option on your September annual dues statement. The coupon below may be sent in with your tax-deductible contribution as well. Lets pull together to make the John H. Woolnough Memorial Library drive a great success!

Support the Library!



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WHAT'S IN A 'PLANE' PHOTO?

by Roger Freeman
8th Air Force Historian,
Mays Barn, England

Over the years this journal has carried many pictures of B-17's, B-24's and the three fighter types that were the Eighth Air Force's tools of trade. To the uninitiated a photograph of one of these makes is usually very much like another, apart from the markings carried. And to many, if not the majority of readers, these markings are meaningless—apart from the obvious, that they were applied to distinguish one aircraft from another of its kind. However, to a student of Eighth Air Force aircraft markings and decor the subject of a photograph can not only be identified with its unit but placed in historical context, sometimes even providing the date and occasion on which the shot was taken.

When a warplane was handed over to the AAF from the factory it carried three main identities. The constructor's own serial number for the product, usually on a plate placed on the pilot's instrument panel and generally playing no part in AAF use. The AAF serial number painted on the left side of the fuselage, forward of the cockpit, this number always prefaced by the last two digits of the fiscal year in which the aircraft was ordered. And thirdly, a larger, abbreviated version of the AAF serial number painted on each side of the vertical tail surfaces (but with some models on the rear fuselage): this was first known as 'the designator' but later just as the tail number. These markings gave the aircraft its individual identity.

In combat service markings providing visual identification from greater distances were required, predomi-

nantly to distinguish the aircraft of one unit from those of another. When the Eighth Air Force arrived in the UK a decision was made to adopt the same system of unit markings as used by the Royal Air Force. This consisted of two letters for a squadron code and a third letter for an individual aircraft identity within the squadron, this letter also being used as the aircraft's radio call sign. The squadron code was normally painted on one side of the National Insignia and the individual letter on the other side. It was intended that the code should be read squadron first, individual aircraft last, so that the three letters gave a simple, distinct and unique individual identity. In practice, due to the placing of the National Insignia or a gun window the positioning of the codes varied from type to type and often from aircraft to aircraft within B-17 squadrons. Although all Eighth Air Force squadrons apart from those of the 388th and 457th Bomb Groups (for some unknown reason omitted) were issued with codes, some B-17 and B-24 units chose not to display them. All fighter squadrons used them consistently as did all Ninth Air Force units except the night fighters (for obvious reasons). In 1944 codes using one letter and one numeral were introduced. In the summer of 1943 VIII Bomber Command introduced markings to identi-

fy groups, as its operations were normally carried out on a group basis. Tail fins offered the best location and the three heavy bomber wings (later divisions) were identified by a white triangle, circle and square. The individual group within the bomb wing was identified by a letter painted on the geometric symbol. The same device was also painted on the upper surface of the left wing.

By 1944 the AAF had decided that camouflage paint on its combat aircraft was an unnecessary waste of production effort and that aircraft performance was enhanced without it. This opened the way to bright colour markings, first on fighter noses for group identification, then on 2nd Bomb Division B-24's for group and combat wing recognition. Eventually all units had some form of colour embellishment, the last being the 3rd Air Division groups early in 1945.

But the markings business was overall far more complex, each unit developing its own variations as the days passed.

Moreover, in addition to unit identity markings the unofficial personal markings such as aircraft names, mission symbols all add to the story a photograph can tell. And now, apart from memories, all we have of those long gone aircraft are their photographic images.



The P-47C flown by Lt John Vogt - 56th Fighter Group. Note the "V" marking as the first letter of his surname.



AIR EVACUATION OF STALAG LUFT I

8th Air Force Prisoners of War relates experience...

In response to Newt Moy's letter to Mail Call in the June 00 issue in which he mentioned participation in the air evacuation of Stalag Luft I at Barth on the Baltic coast of northern Germany. What I relate here is by no means all events and details of what took place during the two weeks from May 1, 1945 through the final lift-off on May 14th. Most of what I submit comes from notes, memory and some excerpts from Col. Hubert Zemke's records and his writings. Colonel Zemke, Commander of 56th Fighter Group, was the Stalag's Senior Allied Officer and as such was the commander of Provisional Group X. This group represented all of the Allied prisoners before the Luftwaffe staff operating Stalag Luft I.

Due to the proximity of the Russian forces to us in late April, the German staff asked for a meeting with Colonel Zemke. The purpose of the meeting was to propose to leave Stalag Luft I to us and they would head west to contact British forces who were within 70-80 km of Barth. This was agreed upon. At approximately midnight of May 1, the Germans' departure took place. The camp population was not aware of this operation until daylight when the Stars & Stripes and the Union Jack had replaced the swastika. The flags had been sewn with scraps and smuggled for quiet sometime.

Since the facility was not marked and it was unknown whether the Russians were aware of our existence, a scouting team of our now liberated prisoners who spoke German and Russian were sent toward the east to intercept forward elements of the Russian army. From our location we could easily hear what was probably artillery fire. Hence the importance of making contact.

The original party arrived late on May 1st with a Russian scout who was taken to the Stalag. His information was that the main force of the Russian 65th Army were near Stralsund, about 20 km east of Barth. The ranking Russian officer for this group was a Col. Zhovaniak. Most interaction between ourselves and the Russians was between Col. Zemke and Col. Zhovaniak, later joined by his superior, General Borisov.

Much to the chagrin of almost 9000 liberated POWs, it took at least two weeks to clear our repatriation by air. The Russians' idea was to send us by land to Odessa on the Black Sea, then by ship to the United States and the United Kingdom. This was rejected and further negotiations followed.

Finally on May 11th came authority to use the airport adjacent to our camp for evacuation on the 12th and 13th, within specified hours. A 20 km corridor for travel over Russian-occupied territory was designated. By then everyone had their meager belongings together. The boarding plan was to first take hospital cases and the sick. Next were the British who for the most part had been incarcerated longer than any of the prisoners, back to 1940. Prisoners were marched in barrack groups on the trip to the airport to avoid cluttering the roadway and loading area at the airport.

In early afternoon of the 12th the first B-17 arrived. Aboard was General William Gross, Commander of the 1st Air Division of the Eighth Air Force. A C-46 followed with officers from General Eisenhower's staff at SHAEF headquarters. Two more B-17's arrived with communications



equipment and personnel to establish links with Eighth Air Force. Later in the afternoon 30-40 more B-17's arrived. The fuselages of these aircraft were decked with what appeared to be wooden packing crate material or something similar to plywood. This formed somewhat of a level floor in the fuselage thereby accommodating 25-30 POWs including the few packed in the radio room.

Early on the morning of the 13th the



The tent city at Camp Lucky Strike - LeHavre where POW's were flown from the Stalags. photo: Angelo Spinelli

sick and wounded were evacuated in six C-46's. Dozens of C-46's and C-47's joined the B-17's in this process. The aircraft crept very slowly while the men jumped in and piled up in most cases. Being from the 398th Bomb Group, 603rd Squadron it was a pleasant surprise for me to board in the afternoon in an aircraft not only from my group but from my squadron as well. I have no idea how many groups participated. I do remember seeing some from our 1st Air Wing, the 91st from Basingbourn and the 381st from Ridgewell. I know there were others but I do not know and have not researched it. According to my notes, the total number evacuated for the second day, May 13th, was 6250.

On the morning of the third day, the 14th, the remaining men were all flown out aboard B-17's. The last prisoner to board was Colonel Zemke after having met with General Borisov and Colonel Zhovaniak. According to Colonel Zemke's records, a total of 8487 had been evacuated.

The return trip to France did not seem to be through a corridor. The pilot took us over several target cities to view the destruction. Our particular aircraft landed at an airfield at Laon, France. We were transported by truck to what appeared to be a troop carrier base near Rheims. From there were transported by C-47 or C-46 to

AIR EVACUATION (con'd)

RAMP Camp Lucky Strike near the small town of Fe'camp in the general area of LeHavre. At Camp Lucky Strike we were debriefed, issued clothing and for those of us who had experienced various stomach disorders were given diets like soft food with liquid high calorie drinks. My particular stay there was about eighteen days.

My trip back to the states was aboard a very new and swift Navy troop transport. The trip to New York was 4 1/2 days. From New York we went to New Brunswick, NJ and Camp Kilmer to pick up travel orders and summer clothing. After that, travel was to Camp Shelby, MS. There we picked up pay vouchers

and furlough orders and base assignments after the furlough. From there it was on to my parents home in Lafayette, LA arriving June 15th.

Respectfully,
**Donald M. Menard 398th Bomb Group
(H) 603rd Squadron 4811 Angleton
Court Baton Rouge, LA 70817**

WANDERING WANDA AND IRIS

A war story...a love story

Wandering Wanda led a charmed life. She completed 117 air combat bombing missions. She always came back. A solemn tribute to the dedicated ground crew who gave her tender, loving care and to the Power who was with her on each mission she flew.

Henry Barker was *Wandering Wanda's* copilot, stationed at Old Buckenham, Attleborough - the 453rd Bomb Group airbase in England - flying B-24 Liberators on missions to enemy targets. His crew had some close calls. On Henry's first mission the B-24 on their left wing was shot down by a German Me 163 Komet rocket aircraft. On a subsequent mission, he saw three bombers in the lead squadron just ahead shot down in a matter of seconds by two Me 262 jet fighter aircraft. The Luftwaffe jets took out the Lead and Deputy Lead crews on that attack. On another mission his crew had to fly back to England alone after being hit by flak in the #3 engine, rendering their aircraft unable to keep up with the formation.

After flying a number of missions, Hank Barker got a 48-hour pass and while at a dance at London's Covent Gardens one evening met an attractive English girl, Iris Borrett. She was a great dancer with a sparkling personality and served as a British WAAF in Air Intelligence at the Royal Air Force Headquarters. Hank and Iris became close friends. While they dated in London she told him that she had been seeing a Royal Canadian Air Force "Hurricane" pilot, who she knew had been shot down in combat over the continent. Iris would on occasion come up to Hank's base for social events there, and she would take him on tours of Old London during several of his London "48s". They saw the sights, went to dances and even went rowboating on one of London's park lakes.

After VE Day they parted. *Wandering Wanda*, with her distinguished combat record, was flown back to the United States. Hank remained in the Air Force as a career officer. He entered Dartmouth College in 1945 and kept in close touch with the six other surviving members of his crew after the war. Iris rejoined her old boyfriend after he returned to

England, having survived his bailout and imprisonment as a POW by German forces. They were later married and have two sons, one of whom is now a physician in Redlands, California. The younger son is an artist in London. Iris and her husband, Jack, are presently living in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe.

Henry met his late wife, Marilyn Ackerson, shortly after the war. They were married for 48 wonderful years and raised their three children in Knoxville, Tennessee. Their son, Henry Jr. is an active Associate member of the 8th Air Force Historical Society.

Marilyn and Henry Barker always kept in touch with Iris, exchanging Christmas cards during the years after the war. In April 1973, they both traveled to England and had a grand visit with Iris, re-living the days of the war and events of the 28 years which had passed. Iris and Marilyn hit it off immediately and spent their time in lengthy discussion about their husbands and their families.

A photo of Iris has remained throughout the years as a part of the Barker family's collection of favorite nostalgic photographs on their mantle in the living room of their Knoxville home. Hank and Iris still correspond, exchanging Christmas cards each year.



Henry Barker and sweetheart Iris Borrett at Old Buckenham



The 453rd Bomb Group's Wandering Wanda with the Joe Somers crew in flying gear - Henry Barker, copilot - after returning from their first mission, to bomb Me 262 jet fighter airfields at Wesendorf, Germany. Hank Barker is seen standing second from right next to pilot Joe Somers on the far right.

FLIGHT CREW MEMBERS REUNITE

Lester Steves and Windell Hart had not seen each other since their last mission on the same crew of a B-24 Liberator of the 93rd Bomb Group. Returning from a bombing mission to Czechoslovakia on November 5, 1944 they were approaching their airbase on three engines. Their Liberator ran out of fuel before the pilot, Leo Baumann, could bring it in. At the last minute, his crew was ordered to bail out even though they were at a dangerously low altitude. Their tailgunner, Leo Henry, hit his head on the escape hatch on the way out and was killed. Hart and Steves, the crew's engineer and assistant engineer got out safely. The bomber crashed killing the pilot and copilot.

Lester Steves went on to complete 32 missions with another crew. Windell Hart completed 25 before receiving a neck injury which sent him home. He stayed in the Air Force after the war and later flew bombing missions in B-29s during the Korean war. It was 56 years before the two crew-mates met again.

Steves is a member of the 8th AF Historical Society and from reading one of the recent issues he was able to track down his old buddy. They corresponded and finally were able to visit at Lester Steves' home in Alliance, Ohio. Hart drove up from his home in Shalimar, Florida. They had a great reunion and spent many hours reminiscing and catching up with each other. Steves commented, "Boy, hearing his voice after all these years was the greatest feeling in the world."



Lester Steves and Windell Hart



Steves

Hart

These flight crew members flew with the U.S. Army Air Forces' 93rd BG in WWII.

The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum

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LOUIS FALSTEIN...

The fact was the Italy-based Air Force was suffering from an inferiority complex. And one of these cloudy days this inferiority complex would be the death of me.

The envy of our brass for the England-based air force was no secret. Whenever the boys in England achieved some striking success, our air force worked frenziedly to follow suit. Public relations officers at Group were constantly admonished about the fact that the other air force got more publicity in the States than ours. Press and radio were constantly featuring their achievements, relegating us to the Number Two spot. They made a movie called *Memphis Belle*. The movie was seen by sixty-five million, seventy-five million, one hundred million people. Our men saw it too and they laughed themselves sick. "You call that rough?" they asked. "Twenty-five milk runs, that's what them bums flew." Nevertheless it was good public relations. It made the England-based outfit the Glamour Air Force.

They were always ahead. They awarded more Silver Stars, Distinguished Flying Crosses, and air medals. In fact, the DFCs were being issued automatically in England upon completion of a tour of twenty-five missions, while in Italy a man had to fly fifty missions.

The public relations clerks in each of the four squadron PROs were on a twenty-four-hour alert - looking for heroes. They were driven to put out more copy for hometown consumption. Charts were hung on the office walls to indicate production of copy. There were pep talks all the time. Tonnage. Were we dropping as much tonnage as they? Hell, no. And there was talk among the men, and among the whores in Mandia who seemed always to know, that we were planning a "prestige" raid on Berlin. After all, hadn't they come over from England for a token raid on Ploesti?

Even among the enlisted men - they weren't medal-happy and publicity-hungry like the top brass, who simply looked upon the England-based air force as a rival business corporation with an enviable know-how - there were mutterings about the tough targets we hit, as compared with the glamour boys in England. "Just let 'em try Vienna once and they'd keep their big traps shut!" our men said. But the crowning humiliation was there for the whole world to behold: their commanding officer was a lieutenant-general, while our boss was only a major-general.

- Louis Falstein, who flew combat missions with the American 15th Air Force in Italy.

-from *Face of A Hero*

JOHN OTLEY...

27 May 44. Target: Strasburg. Flying above an altitude where men can breathe normally, the oxygen supply lines to the right waist and ball turret gunners fail. The pilot decides to abort the mission to save these crewmen.

They get an emergency oxygen bottle to the waist gunner, but one won't fit into the ball turret beneath the Flying Fortress. The ball turret gunner volunteers to bail out so

the ship can continue on its mission. His offer accepted, he climbs out of the turret into the fuselage. Two waist gunners hold open the fuselage door against the slipstream. The ball turret gunner bails out over England and lands safely. The aircraft continues on to the target.

11 Jul 44. Target: Munich. After the planes return and park, a ball turret gunner is trying to clear one of his machine guns when, for no reason, the turret begins spinning and the gun flings .50 caliber rounds in all directions. The gunner runs for his life, but is killed. The machine gun fire damages three other planes in addition to its own. One burns after a tracer round ignites its fuel. Three bombers go to the scrap heap.

-by John Ottley in "When Death Comes Strangely"

RAMSEY POTTS...

My first mission targeted the marshalling rail yard at Lille, France, which was occupied by the Germans. By this time, I was Operations officer of my squadron and had been promoted to captain. I was leading an element of three airplanes in a group formation of 24 planes. We headed out, circled around the base, and gathered in formation. We had a tail wind coming from the west, and before we knew it, we were directly over the target area, where we were attacked by German fighters. My best friend, who was flying on my left wing, was shot down. My tail gunner was in shock and wouldn't respond. It seemed as if it took us forever to get away from France and over friendly territory again.

Although a successful mission, we sustained numerous losses. At the base in England, the plane in front of me had to make an emergency landing and skidded off the runway, and broke in two. Afterwards, I went back the Nissen hut I lived in and sat in front of the potbelly stove. I was cold, so I put on extra clothes and eventually went to the officer's club for a shot of whiskey. I wasn't frightened during the mission, but I was shaken afterward. I wondered if I could keep doing this. Just then Tommy Taylor, an officer from another group who was in my graduating class and on the same mission, walked in. I said, "Tommy, that was one hell of a mission." But he laughed and said, "That was a piece of cake." And I thought, "If he can do it, then I know damn well I can too." I was never in that kind of shock again.

By 1943, I had gone from squadron commander to group Operations officer. I was responsible for planning missions, assigning crews, deciding what squadrons flew in what order and running training missions for the entire group. Later that year I was brought to Wing headquarters to be the Wing chief of staff, and in January 1944, the 453rd Bomb Group, a new group, came in. I helped with the group's orientation and battle training. But on one of its earlier missions, its commanding officer was shot down. I received a message to report to division headquarters, which was commanded by Major General Hodges, a salty, West Point type. When I entered his office, he told me he had two colonels from Washington on their way to take

commands, but General Timberlake, who was my wing commanding officer, said he wanted me--not one of them--as the new group commander.

This was beyond my wildest dreams. I looked at Timberlake, who was nonchalantly blowing on his fingernails, looking up at the ceiling-like nothing was happening. Hodges continued and told Timberlake I didn't have the experience and was not a West Point graduate. But then he asked me, "Do you think you can do the job?" I seized the moment and said yes. He looked at Timberlake and said, "I'll give him six weeks."

I had a lot of trepidation because the squadron commanders were older than I was, and many were West Pointers. I shuffled the structure of the group and asked for a new operations officer, somebody from the outside. Low and behold, they sent an officer from another group - a guy named Jimmy Stewart, the actor, became my operations officer.

We hit it off very well, even though he was eight years older than I was. He was a wonderful addition to the group and had the same languid style as in his movies. Everyone loved him. We whipped that group into tip-top shape and it quickly became one of the best groups in the Air Force. But we weren't together long. Sometime later I became the Director of Bombing Operations for the 8th Air Force, a position I held until the end of the war.

-Ramsey D. Potts, 453rd BG
Washington DC

BERNARD NOLAN...

In 1944 Lavenham would become my home for six months. Although I did not appreciate the richness of its history at the time, Lavenham is an ancient Suffolk village that grew out of the weaving trades accompanying Flemish settlers in the 15th century.

Saint Peter and Paul Church with its tall tower stands dominantly on a hill overlooking the town as if placing it under God's protective hand, also testifying silently to the economic richness brought to Lavenham by the weaving trades in those early times. Its imposing Gothic countenance seems more a cathedral than that of a country church. Construction of this prominent church began in 1486 with the raising of the tower and continued until the church complex was completed with the financial support of wealthy Lavenham clothiers in 1504.

What fascinated me in 1944 was the sheer size of this structure in what seemed through the eyes of a New Yorker such a tiny village. Here stands the first of my two towers. As my flying experiences with the Eighth Bomber Command unfolded, the church tower would take on a seemingly non-Christian significance, not only for me but also for the airmen like me who were so often found orbiting around Suffolk looking for their roosts. Returning from missions on several occasions in low visibility without electronic approach and landing aids that tower became vital. Considering the number of airfields jamming East

Anglia and the number of aircraft operating essentially in an uncontrolled air traffic environment, it does not take an Einstein to sense the chaos prevailing under marginal weather conditions. Robert Irving would under such conditions get DF (direction finding) fixes and steers that would get us close, but it was that stately tower that loomed through the murk that told us we were within the landing pattern of our base. Indeed, the church tower was our mute homing beacon. It saved us several times - here in a truly Christian context as if God's hand was extended to guide and protect us.

It's all gone now. Just a few buildings still stand bearing the memory of our presence. Among them is the control tower - the second of my two towers, and the other remaining monument to the American presence in the war that almost swallowed mankind. Yet the control tower is more than just an American symbol. It embodies the culture of the time - the American airmen and their support teams, the farms, the English farmers the village and its people, the pub in the Swan, the church. Moreover, although so many of us are gone, that culture is still intact. It is alive and vibrant. Each time Sunny and I have returned to Lavenham we have been granted with open arms, like card-carrying members of the Lavenham society.

Thus these two towers have invaded my thoughts as I contemplate what all this means both here and in Lavenham.

-Bernard (Barney) Nolan, 487th BG
Alexandria, VA

DR. KARL WILHELM GENTH...

Early in the war and at the beginning of the discussions between the two ministries, there appeared for the first time the term "helpers of the flak" that later on became the standard designation for the boys. In addition, it was demanded to add the Hitler Jugend by the Superior Youth Administration because every German boy or girl had to belong to this organization from the age of 10 to 18 years. And they too had installed a large program to keep the youngsters under their cover. In effect, school lessons were kept up scarcely in the beginning and faded away gradually, because the military service by night and day as well as the maintenance of the flak equipment did not allow room for other activities. The service with the Hitler Jugend sometimes never took place as consequence of the boycott by the boys themselves who hated the brown uniforms and wanted to be regarded as soldiers. It is remembered by almost everyone of the former schoolboys that they found it impudent to be recognized as members of the Hitler Youth when they were proud to do soldiers' duties which quite often resulted in military burial. This was a permanent conflict that resulted in a regulation to wear the swastika band around their left arms. Upon leave therefore most of them put the bandage secretly into their pockets when they were around the corner. This was punishable by military court. In fact, this youth program

Eighth Air Force Historical Society PX Insert

Winter 2000

Happy Holidays to everyone!!! It was great to see so many of you in Salt Lake City for the annual 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion!! Monica and I enjoyed seeing old friends and meeting many new ones too!! For all of those who attended, thank you very much for your wonderful support to the PX.

We are very pleased to offer some exciting new gift ideas for your Holiday shopping. We also have a few fantastic bargains on some wonderful book items too!!! To begin, we are very excited to offer two new titles from noted 8th Air Force historian and author, Roger Freeman. The first book outlines the history of one of the most successful 8th Air Force fighter outfits, the 56th Fighter Group. The softcover, 128 page book entitled, 56th Fighter Group (Item B5), details the history of this magnificent group of brave men, known forever more as "Zemke's Wolfpack." Chock full of excellent photographs and color aircraft profiles, this book illustrates the hard work and dedication that encompassed one of the greatest flying groups the world has ever known. A true Roger Freeman classic!!! Only \$19.95 plus P/H.

Next, we have an old favorite amongst 8th Air Force veterans. *It is like an old friend that has come back to visit.* Now in a new *softcover* edition, "The Mighty Eighth - A History of the Units, Men and Machines of the 8th Air Force" by Roger Freeman has once again been updated and reprinted. We are featuring this excellent book for the amazing low price of \$24.95!!! This is "required reading" for any 8th Air Force veteran. A great gift idea for a son/daughter or grandchild. A perfect way to pass on the history to the next generation. I am going to get one just to use as my "working copy!!!" After all, it is the finest work ever written on the 8th Air Force!! Don't miss out on this special edition!!!

Our next item is a fantastic new

book called "Sunrise Serenade" by Jerry Penry. This softbound, 162 page book clearly reflects the dedication and research of the 34 year old author Jerry Penry. This is the story of one bomber crew (B17) that flew in the 452nd Bomb Group/Third Air Division/8th Air Force. Follow the crew's exploits through their missions and subsequently, as POWs after being shot down May 1, 1944. This is a well documented, factual account and is a testament to the many hours of research by the author. I couldn't put it down!! For more information, refer to the review in this edition of the Journal. This is a great book for a great price!! Only \$19.95!!!

In our SALE ITEMS section you will find a few special bargain items. The classic 8th Air Force Album (Items S3 - formally item B21) has now been reduced from \$29.95 to a new low price of \$23.95!!! It's companion volume, "The 8th Air Force Yearbook" (Item S2 - formally item B15) has also been reduced from it's original price of \$32.95 to an amazing price of \$26.95!!! You can save even more when you buy both as a combination set!!! Get both the Album and Yearbook for one low price of \$42.95!!! (Over a 30% savings off their original cover prices.) We have a limited stock on these great books, so order now to avoid disappointment.

The final item we are featuring can be found in the SALE ITEMS. Item S5 - "Eyes of the Eighth" by Patricia Keen is the story of the 7th Photographic Reconnaissance Group (7th PRG). Flying in unarmed "recon" versions of Spitfires, P-51s and P-38s (F-5s), the 7th PRG was truly the "Eyes of the Eighth," Author Pat Keen has published one of the finest and most detailed Unit Histories to ever be written." Don't miss your opportunity to purchase this out of print book!!! Was \$49.95 - Now just \$32.95!!!

At this time of year, Monica and I

would like to say "thank you" for supporting the PX over the last year. Each dollar you spend goes back into the Society. In a way, by patronizing the PX you are helping yourself.



Both Monica and I turned 40 years old this year. We have *very* full-time jobs, and the 8th Air Force PX takes a lot of our "free time." We feel it is worthy of our efforts to provide this benefit to you and our membership. We had a marvelous year and our profits were good. But in our eyes, this is not what the PX is about. We feel that the PX provides our membership with a link to the past and a path to it's future. I often tell people that we sell three things in the 8th AFHS PX: HISTORY, ENTHUSIASM, AND PRIDE. The monetary profits the Society makes are far overshadowed by the pride that lives in the hearts of our members.

It is our honor to serve you all. Consider our commitment a small payment for the great gift you all have given us, our peace and our liberty. We want to wish each and everyone a Happy Holiday Season!!! May the good Lord bless and keep all of you happy and healthy in the coming New Year. We look forward to hearing from you soon!!!

Cheers!!!

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

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DEBRIEFING

was the most tremendous cheating of a whole generation of youngsters and it was only ending when the frontline drew in closer and the authorities had to fear that the boys would be shot as partisans by the Allied forces in case of capture. Almost all of us look back at those procedures with scorn and anger. Exact numbers of how many youths were involved are no more available because most of the files were destroyed but it is estimated that from the beginning in February 1943 til VE-Day about 200,000 were in action. According to their age, most of the boys were soon after their flak service drafted into RAD or the German army.

The years since German youth had left childhood were mostly composed of propaganda since Hitler had come to power. And it was their world; no man could choose the world in which he wanted to live. The German soldier as model for each boy was propaganda and reality at the same time. Only very bad experiences as soldiers would correct this picture. And many of the youngsters paid for it with their lives. Criticism was not only punishable and dangerous for life but also deemed as a sabotage. After they had gotten Germany, the Nazis held it with power. After they had conquered Europe or its greater part, they tried the same. And for the best, they would have had the whole world - as the Hitler Youth was singing in the streets. Their youthful ambitions and pride did not only serve the authorities but also lengthened the war.

-Dr. Karl Wilhelm Genth
German flak-helper
Wiesbaden Germany, from
Nelson Berger 100th BG
Marshallville OH

JIM FROLKING...

It was time to go.

I radioed Vic that I had been hit and was bailing out. I pulled the canopy release, unbuckled the seat belt, and started to stand up. My oxygen mask hose and radio cord attached to my helmet restricted my attempt to free myself. Time was short, so I just took off my helmet and tossed it aside. Now I could stand. From the seat, I dove headfirst from the right side of the aircraft, pulling the ripcord of my parachute when I had cleared the plane. Since I was wearing a back-pack type parachute which opens faster than the seat-pack type, I neither felt the chute open nor the anticipated jerk we had been told to expect. We had not practiced parachute jumps in training other than jumping off a ten-foot platform, for we knew the first jump had to be right. I reached down to make sure the dinghy seat pack was with me - and it was!

The plane went into a spiral dive shortly after I left her, and I watched as my brand new P-51 exploded on impact in the water below. Suddenly it was quiet. Land was invisible a few miles to the south. As I floated down, I felt secure, although the leg straps of the parachute harness were tight and uncomfortable. During training, we had been instructed that when landing in water, we should

release the leg straps, fold your arms across the chest to prevent the harness from slipping free, and when you are 10 to 20 feet above the water, lift the arms and slide out of the chute into the water. The reasoning was that there was less chance of becoming tangled in the chute's shroud lines if you stayed with the chute. I remember, though, how difficult it was to judge distance while descending over water.

Suddenly, I splashed into the water. While fumbling around in the water, trying to release the chute strap, remove the harness and inflate my "Mae West" life vest, I put my foot down and touched bottom. The water, to my relief, was just chest deep. I unpacked and inflated the dinghy with the CO2 cartridge and climbed in, much relieved. I had landed on a sand bar. As I looked around, I could then see about 300 yards away that portion of the sand bar that was out of the water. I paddled towards it. Vic had watched the entire episode from above. He circled the area, buzzed me, and waggled his wings as I waved to him.

-Jim Frolking, 479th Fighter Group
Shaker Heights, OH

ROBERT BLACK...

Again we asked directions, they really did talk funny didn't they? We were told that the dance that evening was just across the street - "you can't miss it." Away we went. We had arrived at a munitions plant that employed 38,000 females. Dances with great swing bands were held each evening 8 til 12. The girls out-numbered the guys ten-to-one at least.

Brooks and I soon mastered the British ways - you dance in a circle and stop often for tea. Bobby and I fell in love the first night - two cousins - Carol and "Mickey" from Blackpool.

For the next ten nights Brooks and I walked the ten miles back to base on a small country road with a big moon above us.

M.P.'s in jeeps patrolled the area. Each time we saw a Jeep coming in the distance, we would leap over the waist-high hedges along each side of the road.

One night we flew over the hedge and Brooks - poor fellow - landed in a large, fresh cow-pile which covered him from his chin to his knees. Boy did he smell bad!

It couldn't last. Our gunners arrived and we were assigned to the 100th Bomb Group. Actually, our pilot volunteered our crew to the bloody 100th - Can you believe that?

-Robert Black, 100th BG
Hendersonville, NC

"Children today are tyrants. They contradict their parents, gobble their food, and tyrannize their teachers."

- Socrates (470-399 B.C.)

WISCONSIN CELEBRATES EIGHTH AIR FORCE WEEK

The third annual 8th Air Force Week was recognized by Mayor David Kieck, of South Milwaukee, Wisconsin, with a proclamation, beautifully mounted on a walnut plaque. The presentation occurred at the October 3 session of the South Milwaukee City Council. In attendance, representing the Wisconsin Chapter of 8AFHS were:

William Bergner, Jr. President, Robert Pagel, William Zauner, David Brouchoud, Donald Almon, Joseph Longo, Frank Chybowski



Also commemorating the event was a display in the lobby of City Hall. It featured models of B17, B24, and B2 bombers, P38, P47, and P51 fighters; art works from several sources, and an 8AFHS poster. There was also a memorial section which included a group of poems; some photos from the Mighty 8th Heritage Museum, along with an artist's rendition of the proposed chapel; and other photos of the American Military Cemetery at Madingley, England. The display was prepared by Wisconsin Chapter member Don Almon, and was available for viewing throughout the month of October.

Wisconsin Chapter's 8th Air Force Week display.



"Skip bombing enemy objectives"

MARTIN "MARAUDER"

U. S. Army Air Force

B-26 Medium Bomber



Compliments of

YOUR COCA-COLA BOTTLER

CHAPTER NEWS

CONNECTICUT CHAPTER

The Chapter held a general meeting in September. The speaker was Alan Mayhew, retired Lt. Col. Air Force. He was a P-47 pilot with the Tuskegee Airmen during World War II. A most interesting speaker, the 60 members present heard of his experiences flying as escort to 15th Air Force bombers. He also mentioned the obstacles he encountered with the prejudicial treatment which prevailed at the time.

We welcome new members to join our Chapter. Call Art Ruggiero @ (203) 488-1622.
- Robert Valliere, Treasurer

OREGON CHAPTER

The Oregon Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society held its quarterly meeting at the Beaverton Elks Lodge, with 72 Regular and Associate Members, along with members' guests in attendance. President Joe Conroy commented that this was a great turnout on a fine summer day, when a lot of members were off to the beach or mountains. Especially noted was the presence of at least half a dozen new Associate members, boding well for the strength of the Chapter over the long term.

The chow was good, the company congenial, with lots of "There I Was" stories to be heard before and after the short business meeting. The Nominating committee chose to recommend all current incumbents to serve another term, and the members approved.

The program featured a talk by Chapter member Hoy D. "Bud" Embree who related some of his experiences in training which brought nods of remembrance to many in the audience. But, his mission to Wilhelmshaven on 21 May 1943 as a ball turret gunner on a B17 of the 511th Squadron of the 351st Bomb Group captured the full attention and respect of the members. This was Bud's first combat experience, and was destined to be his last. Under constant attack from swarms of German fighters over the target and on the return trip, a cannon shell exploded in his turret. Although in great pain from the critical wounds caused by the exploding shell, Bud continued to man his guns against the enemy fighters until safely over the Channel on the way home. Embree credits the crew bombardier and navigator for saving his life by rescuing him from the turret and giving effective first aid until his pilot set the plane down on an emergency strip in England. Hospitalized for many months, he was eventually returned to a duty station in the States. For his heroic action in this engagement, S/Sgt Embree was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Those members golfing, fishing, swimming, or just enjoying the outdoors in the Great Pacific Northwest missed a most enjoyable meeting, but President Conroy promises another good one coming up in November!

-Joe Conroy, President

IOWA CHAPTER

Our Iowa Chapter Reunion was held in Ames, Iowa August 26th and 27th. We had 103 people at the noon luncheon. Guest Speaker was Colonel Ken Schindele Professor of Aerospace Studies and Commander of the Air Force ROTC at Iowa State University at Ames, Iowa. He presented a slide

presentation of the academic Studies and activities of the Air Force ROTC.

Our general membership meeting was next and the ladies went to a Style show arranged by our own Margaret Picht. Our Banquet was attended by 129 people. Flags were presented by the ROTC Air Force Cadets from the State University of Ames, Iowa and were also withdrawn at the end of our evening activities.

A young lady, Rhonda Minner sang popular songs of the 40's and 50's Era! "Coming in on a Wing and a Prayer" caused us to show emotion. David Lee "Tex" Hill was our guest speaker. He got a standing ovation before and after his speech.

Sunday morning people attended a memorial service conducted by our own retired Lt. Col. R.W. Suckow and his wife Shirley of Newton, Iowa. Robert C. Reeves of Waterloo helped out on the piano and played a song he composed.

We adjourned until next year.

Leon G. Mehring, Treasurer

MISSOURI CHAPTER

The Missouri Chapter of the 8th AFHS was called to order by President Bruce Alshouse. The pledge to the American flag was given by the membership. A minute of silent prayer was in order for our fallen comrades. Mr. Geldersma, President of the Airline History Museum, who is with the "Save the Connie Group", gave a very interesting talk concerning the Connie, and what the group was doing with the Airline Museum. Ed Burnham read the nomination of the Officers which were approved. Fellowship continued with coffee and donuts. Some discussion for future meetings followed. It was reported that 10 members from the Kansas City Chapter and 26 members from the St. Louis Wing met in Arrow Rock, MO. for a good show and good food. Meeting was adjourned.

P.S. The meeting was at the D.A.V. Club in Kansas City, Missouri, September 12, 2000.

Joe Jameson, Membership Chairman

NORTH TEXAS CHAPTER

The past quarter has been very eventful for the North Texas folks. With a background of record summer heat and drought the Chapter was saddened at the loss of our Secretary-Treasurer and long time member Edwin Holmes, on 27 May 2000. He was interred at the Texas National Cemetery with full military honors. He completed his 8th Air Force combat missions with the 384th Bomb Group and one of the highlights of his tour was internment by the Russians after a shuttle mission and escaping a short time later. Dick Atkins will be acting Secretary-Treasurer until



Brig. General Paul Krause



North Texas Chapter at the C.R. Smith Museum

elections are held.

The June meeting was held at the Los Colinas Country Club, with a good turnout of members and featured Brig. Gen. Paul Krause who told us of his adventures as a 9th Air Force C-47 Navigator with the 435th Troop Carrier Group. He participated in the D-Day invasion, the Rhine River crossing and the resupply of Bastogne during the Battle of the Bulge. He flew a total of 26 combat missions. The August session was held at the C.R. Smith American Airlines Museum near DFW airport. It was a great turnout and something the ladies could enjoy as well as the guys. This is one of the outstanding museums of the world, directed by well-known aviation authority, Jay Miller. The Chapter also voted to donate \$200 to the Arlington National Cemetery Monument Fund.

-Dick Atkins, Secretary

WISCONSIN CHAPTER

The Wisconsin Chapter, held its September quarterly reunion, at the 440th Airlift Wing auditorium at General Mitchell International Airport. Sixty-four members and guests were present.

Major business transacted at the meeting, chaired by Vice President William Bergner, Jr., was the election of members of the Board of Directors to serve three year terms. Nine directors were elected by members present.

New Chapter Officers are:

President: William Bergner, Jr., Vice President: David Brouchoud, Treasurer: Robert Abresch, Secretary: John Rosenberg

Vice President Dave Brouchoud conducted the general meeting, which included the following "WHAT'S NEW":

1. Thanked former Chapter Vice President Ed DePreter for the donation to our library of a number of IMPACT books. He also explained the value of our unique Unit Hall of Fame Notebooks, available at reunions to members for their information.
2. Introduced Russ Hanson, who leads a campaign to save and secure the gun cruiser USS Des Moines for permanent mooring in Milwaukee.
3. Introduced Russ King, President of the Air Force

Association, Wisconsin Chapter, and a new member of the 8th AFHS. Russ invited us to join the AFA and offered special incentives to our members to do so.

Following an enjoyable lunch at Sijan Hall, member and former B-17 pilot Howard Traeder treated us to an excellent slide-illustrated account of his recent return to Paderborn, Germany, the site of his bomber's crash landing in early 1945. The interest and effort extended by German friends of his 398th Bomb Group was remarkable. They even found two people who remembered playing in the wreckage 55 years ago, and came to greet him and visit with him for a day and a half!

The meeting closed with a reminder that our next reunion will take place on December 2000, at the 440th auditorium. The displays of memorabilia and the Hall of Fame books remained on display for viewing by members and guests till 1500 hours.

John E. Rosenberg, Secretary

VIRGINIA CHAPTER NEWS

The Virginia Chapter held its October meeting at the Richmond Airport. The featured speaker was Jon Hatfield, executive Director Virginia War Memorial. He is collecting oral histories of Virginia veterans for archival use.

Chapter members also took part in welcoming the arrival of the two Collings Foundation bombers, the B-24 *The Dragon and His Tail* and the B-17 *Nine-O-Nine*. A free ride was raffled off by the Chapter.

In other Chapter news, long-time editors of the *Plane Talk* Chapter newsletter Jesse and Monique Pitts announce their retirement with the Fall issue. They will continue to assist in its publication.

The 8th AF Historical Society Board of Directors has elected member John Pearson, 457th BG, of Richmond to serve as Secretary of the national organization.

SAVANNAH WING - GEORGIA CHAPTER

This has been an active Fall for Wing members. The August meeting featured a guided tour of the Heritage Museum's next-door neighbor JCB, an international heavy equipment manufacturing plant. Sonny Dixon, local TV anchor man and past Legislator, gave an inspiring and entertaining talk at the Chapter banquet. He even picked out a few songs on his guitar during his talk.

At another Fall meeting the Chapter heard from special guests - seventeen ground crew members and four POWs who told of their wartime experiences. The Chapter Wing float will represent the Historical Society and the Heritage Museum in the November 11 Veterans Day parade.

ALABAMA CHAPTER

The three Wings of the Alabama are operating at full speed. The Central Alabama Wing elected as officers for the upcoming year: Edwin Walker, Wing Commander; Bob Uhlich, VWC; and Linda Walter, Secretary. The Birmingham Group heard guest speaker Jim Harris, President of the Birmingham Aero Club speak. The South Alabama Wing held its quarterly meeting in Mobile AL and was entertained by Jim Smith who recounted some of his experiences in the 100th Bomb Group.

The North Alabama Wing was recently honored by a reception given by an area school. Two Wing wives are Rosie the Riveters who shared their stories of wartime on the homefront with the students. Wing members will participate in the annual Veterans Day Parade.

A statewide Alabama Chapter meeting and Luau is planned for this coming April.

MISSISSIPPI CHAPTER

The Mississippi Chapter held its Fall Reunion in Natchez over the Veterans Day week-end, with approximately 85 in attendance. The setting was a hotel sited high on a bluff over-looking the great bend in the Mississippi River.

Starting with an informal dinner on Friday evening (featuring great favorite Southern dishes such as baked catfish and cheese flavored grits), the Reunion consisted of one great event after the other. On Saturday morning, Veterans Day, the Chapter members participated in a super parade, which we had been asked to lead. One of our members, Mississippi born and raised, Major General Robert W. Burns, CO of the 351st Bomb Group at Polebrook during the War, served as Grand Marshal of the Parade and made a splendid patriotic speech in Memorial Park at the end. One of the Chapter members, Phil McGuire had built a model B-17, with a wing-span of 8 feet, which he named "Miss Virginia" in honor of wife who passed away recently. Saturday afternoon, Mrs. Margaret Gratz of Tupelo gave a review of our recently published anthology, *Mississippians in the Mighty Eighth*, to the great delight of all our members and invited public from Natchez. After a spirited book signing by the authors of stories in our anthology, members hurriedly got all dressed up for a Gala Banquet, featuring noted humorist, Clyde Ray Webber, Jr. of the Natchez area.

The Sunday morning Memorial Service consisted of a convoy of cars through the Natchez City Cemetery, stopping at the graves of deceased comrades of *The Mighty Eighth* for a brief eulogy of each. These included the grave of Sam Junkin who, flying a borrowed Spitfire, was the first member of The Mighty Eighth to shoot down an enemy plane. The Reunion then concluded back at the hotel with a Farewell Brunch.

-Ken Nail

GENERAL JAMES H. DOOLITTLE CHAPTER

Air Power, the Chapter newsletter, continues to present fine articles, almost always of an inspiring nature. The recent Fall issue leads off with an enthusiastic but thought-provoking letter from Chapter President Robert Harrington which discusses the hard times of the Depression years, the fight for our country's freedom and the importance of realizing that America is here as a free nation because of what was done by WW II veterans to secure that freedom - freedom which would surely have been taken away by aggressive foreign governments. Bob concludes that every 8th veteran should support his 8th AFHS Chapter - the dues cost only 83 cents per month - and continue to promote the legacy of the Mighty Eighth.

the issue are also informative articles by Dan Raymond on Operation Manna/ Chowhound and by Max Westley of the Duxford Radio Society on the use of fighter drop tanks during the war.

December 2000

WESTERN MICHIGAN WING

On September 13th members of the Western Michigan Wing of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society met with Governor John Engler of Michigan in the Romney Building in Lansing at which time he presented a Proclamation to the group Commander, "Suds" Sumney declaring the week of October 8 to 14, 2000 The "MIGHTY EIGHTH AIR FORCE WEEK" in the state of Michigan.

The Proclamation commemorates the loss of 100 heavy bombers the week of October 8 to 14, 1943 on bombing missions over enemy territory.

Last June Governor Engler presented Senator Bob Dole a check from the State of Michigan in the amount of \$663,000 - \$1.00 for each Michigan resident who served in WWII - to be used as a donation for the WWII National Memorial to be located on the Mall in Washington D.C. The ground breaking is scheduled for November 11, 2000.

-from Earl Krieger



Seated is Governor John Engler presenting the Resolution to Chapter President "Suds" Sumney. Others in picture left to right are: Richard Giesing, Kalamazoo; Unidentified. Earl Krieger, St. Joseph; Clyde Lancaster, Climax; Bruce Helmer, Lansing; Carl Moss, Williamston; Raymond Skedgell, Scotts; and Chapter President "Suds" Sumney, Kalamazoo; Chapter Vice President James Nycum, Parchment. The Resolution declares October 8 to 14 EIGHTH AIR FORCE WEEK.

LOUISIANA CHAPTER

Miss Lee Birchfield has been elected Secretary of the Louisiana Chapter replacing Lorene Tanner. Lee is manager of the Gift Shop at the 8th Air Force museum at Barksdale Air Force Base in Bossier City, La. President Harry Tanner presented his goals for the Chapter. First: An intense membership drive to sign up new members. Second: Develop a state-wide Education Program to teach young people about the 8th Air Force and its role in past wars. Third: Try and get a written history of every person in Louisiana that served in the 8th A.F. Last: To start five Wing Chapters in Louisiana. Tanner stressed the importance of meeting with other Chapters in the future. Tanner also noted that during April of this year he spoke to nineteen high school

American History classes on the air war during WWII. The next meeting will be in February in Alexandria.

-Harry Tanner, President

ILLINOIS CHAPTER

The Illinois Chapter heard from Guest Speaker Dennis Driscoll at their October meeting. Offering a different slant on military experiences than the usual Air Force-type speaker, Dennis related interesting stories from his career in the Special Forces in Illinois and the 85th Division.

The Chapter during its meeting session voted to donate \$200 to help defray the costs of the Eighth Air Force Memorial placed in Arlington National Cemetery.

OHIO CHAPTER

The Fall Reunion was held November 4-5-6 at the Radisson City Center Hotel, Akron, OH.

The festivities began on Friday in the hospitality room followed by going to the 356th Fighter Group Restaurant at the Akron-Canton Airport. A fine meal was followed by an evening of good conversation and fellowship. Then it was back to the hospitality room.

Saturday morning members and guests boarded a bus for a tour of the nationally known Harry London Chocolate Factory and the Military Aviation Preservation Society (MAPS) Museum.

Everyone came away from the Chocolate Factory with a bag of candy (some large and some not so large). Just walking into the factory you could smell the calories. The MAPS museum was next and proved very interesting. They are restoring eight aircraft including a B-26 Marauder, two helicopters and a Mig-17. If you are in the Akron or Canton area these two places are worth visiting.

After the bus trip it was back to the hotel for the luncheon, business meeting and guest speaker. The speaker was John A. Fiocca, a former member of the 454th Bomb Group of the 15th Air Force. He told of the exploits of his former C.O, Lt. Col. James A. Gunn. Col. Gunn was shot down over the Balkans and taken prisoner. It was near the end of the war and the Germans were fleeing the advancing Russians. It was feared that the Germans would kill all prisoners so Col. Gunn managed to get a ride in the cramped radio compartment of a friendly Me-109. He was flown back to his base where he supervised the air rescue of over 1000 allied airmen. Col. Gunn died in 1999 and is being considered for a posthumous award of the Congressional Medal of Honor.

After the meeting it was back to the hospitality room for the rest of the evening. The next morning it was farewell until the Spring meeting in Columbus.

NEW MEXICO CHAPTER

The New Mexico Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society held its annual Fall General Membership Meeting and Luncheon with 156 guests in attendance.

The featured speaker was Major General Edward Giller (Ret.) who related his experiences as a command fighter pilot with the 8th Air Force during the War in Europe. A P-51 pilot with the

55th Fighter Group, he was credited with destroying three enemy aircraft, including a German jet fighter, the ME-262.

Additionally, Major General Giller destroyed six enemy aircraft on the ground and was wounded while on a strafing mission. He also related highlights of his post-war career in intelligence and various nuclear-related programs. Major General Giller is a Life Member of the New Mexico Chapter.

Recently, a story was published in Albuquerque's leading newspaper, the "Albuquerque Journal", concerning the World War II experiences of New Mexico Chapter member, Ray Parker (445 BG). Ray had spent 14 months in Stalag Luft I at Barth, Germany during which time he produced an underground newspaper. Following the war, Ray worked as a comedy writer for such stars as Bob Hope, Art Linkletter, Dinah Shore and Dick Van Dyke. Also, member Frank Cummins (305 BG) made 20 copies of the 8th Air Force Week posters from the "8th Air Force News" and had them displayed at various local businesses. The Chapter has added over a dozen new members in the past six months.



Frank and Mildred Giller with his P-51D Mustang at the New Mexico Chapter meeting.

NORTH EAST IOWA WING

The North East Wing, of our Iowa Chapter, met at the Elks Lodge in Waterloo on Friday Oct. 20, 2000 for a noon luncheon. 54 people attended the meeting.

One of our young associate members, Greg Piper from Iowa City, came dressed in World War II class A Army Air Corps Officer's uniform. It's good to see our young associates taking such an active and enthusiastic part in the history of the Mighty Eighth!

Our program was an aviation story, "ZERO/ZERO" that seemed to hold everyone's interest through the final touchdown. The speaker, Bob Bamsey, kept everyone laughing with his presentation "On The Light Side".

Among our guests were a number of former B-29 people who enjoy coming to our N.E. Iowa Wing Meetings.

Ellsworth captures prestigious Ira C. Eaker Award

By Master Sgt. Rick DelaHaya 8th Air Force Public Affairs



Ira Clarence Eaker

A founding pioneer in strategic air power, he commanded bombing missions against military targets across Europe.

SALT LAKE CITY—An Eighth Air Force B-1B bomber crew stationed at Ellsworth Air Force Base, S.D., was honored recently for their contributions to the mission of the “Mighty Eighth” during the 8th Air Force Historical Society’s annual reunion.

Aircrew members from Buick 42 assigned to the 28th Bomb Wing received the Ira C. Eaker Outstanding Airmanship

Award for 1999 for their “courageous performance during the first Operation ALLIED FORCE B-1 combat mission.” Crew members included Lt. Col. Benjamin C. Leitzel, Maj. Gary Backes, and Captains Thomas McKenna and Gerald Goodfellow.

The Eaker Award is presented annually for an outstanding feat of military airmanship within Eighth Air Force by an individual crew member or aircrew.

The award is sponsored by the 8th Air Force Historical Society, and was presented Oct. 21 during the society’s 26th annual reunion, held this year in Salt Lake City, Utah. Eighth Air Force mobilization assistant Brig. Gen. Bobby Efferson, and 28th Bomb Wing vice commander, Col. Peter Kippie, presented the award.

The aircrew of Buick 42 was cited for their airmanship skills while participating in the first operational combat sortie of the 78-day air campaign against Kosovo and Serbia. The crew, according to Col. Edward Rice, 28th Bomb Wing commander, was pivotal in bringing to bear the enormous combat capability of the B-1 to deter Serbian aggression.

“Not only were they able to showcase the power and lethality of this weapon platform,” Rice said, “but they also demonstrated the rapid deployment,

survivability, and targeting flexibility of the B-1. We are extremely proud of the aircrew and the team behind the scene that made this award possible.”

This is the second year in a row that an aircrew from the 28th Bomb Wing has won the Eaker award. Last year, another B-1 aircrew earned the award for their role in the first operational combat sortie in the 15-year history of the B-1B.

In addition to presenting all the award recipients with permanent commemorative plates, the Historical Society also awarded a traveling trophy to the 28th Bomb Wing, where it will remain on display for one year.



Col. Peter Kippie, Comander 28th Bomb Wing Lt. Col Benjamin Leitzel, Operations Gp 28th, Capt. Thomas McKenna 77th Bomb Sqdn. Bomb Wing, Major Gary Backes, 77th Bomb Sqdn. 28th Bomb Wing

Whiteman NCO earns 8th AFHS award

SALT LAKE CITY—An Eighth Air Force B-2 aircraft and munitions expert stationed at Whiteman Air Force Base, Mo., was honored recently for his contributions to the mission of the “Mighty Eighth” during the 8th Air Force Historical Society’s annual reunion.

Master Sgt. William Mills, 393rd Bomb Squadron was honored when he was presented the Pursuit of Excellence Award for 1999. The award is presented annually to honor the accomplishments of aircraft and munitions maintenance personnel in support of the flying mission of Eighth Air Force.

The award is sponsored by the 8th Air Force Historical Society, and was presented Oct. 21 during the society’s 26th annual reunion, held this year in Salt Lake City, Utah. Eighth Air Force mobilization assistant Brig. Gen. Bobby Efferson, and 28th Bomb Wing vice commander, Col. Peter Kippie, presented the award.

“These award winners here tonight represent the professionalism and dedication that has become the signature of Eighth Air Force,” said Efferson, to more than 600 former Eighth Air Force veterans, society members, and guests. “These awards mean a lot not only to the folks that received them, but to every airman out there.”

“Our airmen work hard and they very much appreciate the fact that there are still people out there who recognize them and, in turn, appreciate their service. I am proud to have people of their

caliber in your ‘Mighty Eighth.’”

During the award presentation, Sergeant Mills was cited for his superior job knowledge of the B-2 *Spirit*. Because of this knowledge, he was selected as the maintenance focal point for the 393rd Bomb Squadron during three periodic cross-section measurement evaluations conducted at Edwards Air Force Base, Calif. During each \$750,000 test, Mills was able to coordinate all the logistic support functions that help validate the B-2’s low observable characteristics.

In addition to presenting Sergeant Mills with a permanent, commemorative plate, the Historical Society also awarded a traveling trophy to the 509th Bomb Wing, where it will remain on display for one year.



M/Sgt William H. Mills of 393rd Bomb Sqdn, 509th Bomb Wing of Whiteman AFB receives the Pursuit of Excellence (Maintenance) Award. He is applauded by Colonel Peter Kippie, and Brig. Gen Bobby Epperson, both attending 8th AFHS Gala Banquet on 21 Oct 2000.

398th BOMB GROUP RETURNS TO NUTHAMPSTEAD

Memorial Dedicated at Anstey Church
by Allen Ostrom Editor, 398th Bomb Group
Flak News

A 20th century B-17 bomb group has been woven into the fabric of a 12th century English church.

Etched "for all time" into a stained glass window at St. George's Church, Anstey, Hertfordshire, are the names of every man killed in action while serving with the 398th Bomb Group. Created by glass architect Patrick Reyntiens and financed by the 398th members and their English Friends, the window was dedicated on June 11, 2000 in a ceremony attended by some 400 visitors including the Duke of Gloucester. The Bishop of St. Albans, Rt. Rev. Christopher Herbert, followed the Duke's unveiling of the window with the words--

"I dedicate this window to the glory of God." One of the visitors, Don Gaddo, said, "As I sat in St. George's church, I couldn't help but hear the sobs of those who gathered together to pay tribute to those who fell from the sky during World War II. As time passes, my mind recalls the faces of those who sat there with me. I saw love in every eye and I recalled these words from Thornton Wilder--

"There is a land of the living,
And a land of the dead,
And the bridge is love."

"It was truly a memorable day."

The artist created a three-section window, with the left section depicting the Old Testament Exodus Pillar of Smoke which led the Israelites by day; the right section depicting the Pillar of Fire, which led them by night. The center section is identified with the 398th triangle W, red wing tips and tail of the 1st Combat Wing to provide a moving evocation of daylight bombing. The same aircraft can be seen in the right panel descending out of the pillar of fire as night falls.

The Year 2000 398th Tour group consisted of 105 members, plus many more who came to England independently. The tour also included a visit to Madingly, where no less than seven widows joined in presenting a Memorial floral wreath at the American Military Cemetery. At the American Museum at Duxford, a dozen English "re-enactment" members mingled with the 398th visitors, displaying their World War II uniforms and equipment. While enroute to a luncheon at Saffron Walden, the two busloads of tour members paused to enjoy a "fly-past" of the B-17 Sally B returning to Duxford from an exhibition at Polebrook. The England portion of the Year 2000 Tour was only half of the



Allen Ostrom, 398th BG caught on the cheek by WASP re-enactor at the American Air Museum at Duxford, England.



St. Georges Church Anstey, England.

398th agenda, an additional week being spent in the Czech Republic.

Headquartering at Pilsen, the tour members visited a museum at Kovarska which was dedicated to the air war over the Czech lands. Also a stop at Lidice, where a 398th crew that was shot down is remembered with a memorial, and a visit to Slauy.

In Prague, twenty-one members of the tour visited a church which was mistakenly bombed by the 398th in 1945. A seminar was conducted at the invitation of the city's Civic Institute.

The 398th has made visits to England and the continent every other year since 1986, plus 1982, when the memorial at Nuthampstead was dedicated. There was also a special tour to the Czech Republic in 1995 to share in the

Liberation and VE-Day celebrations at Pilsen.

As for return to England plans for 2002, one "regular" tour member said--

"I'm going. Just send me the registration form and I'll sign it."



398th Bomb Group Association Memorial window



His Royal Highness the Duke of Gloucester (center) talks with members of the 398th BG outside St. George's Church, Anstey.

Dear Sirs,

It was on a Sunday morning, a bit misty, I woke up as usual to hear the planes warming up, as we called it, around 5 a.m. to take off, when suddenly half asleep I remember hearing this plane making a terrible noise, as I lived in a little bungalow on the edge of part of the moat, I could see through my bedroom window the plane. It first hit the tree in the field beyond and as it came towards us I hid under the bed clothes because I thought it would hit the house; next thing there was a terrific bang as it plunged through the trees and into the side of the great mound. My father and mother were in the next room; we were all shaken. I rushed to our back door, opened it, and quickly shut it again, the heat of the fire was dreadful. Within minutes, we were surrounded by everything and everybody and told to run for our lives as it was loaded with bombs and they could go off. So, still in our nightclothes, we ran across the fields to friends and were not allowed to come back for two days. Luckily the bombs went into the water; most were got out later. It was a sad Sunday - all those poor dears died. I was organist at the church at the time and we had a special service. It is still said that their may be a bomb still in the moat, I do not know. It took a long time to clear it all up.

Where I lived in those days I used to count the planes as they went out, and when they came back; often they would be ragged and torn, with bits hanging off. It was a sad time.

Your sincerely,
 Eunice Fox
 New Farm
 Langley Lower Green
 Essex, England

Eunice was a neighbor of the 398th Bomb Group near Anstey Church.

Allen Ostrom, leader of the year 2000 398th Tour, stopped off in Sweden after the group visits to England and Czech Republic to see the memorial dedicated to the 40 Americans who were killed in Sweden in World War II. Most died in



crashes while trying to land in the neutral country after being disabled over Germany. The memorial is located in Malmo, Sweden's southern tip. The remains of two airmen are still there, guarded by a B-17 propeller.

A message from James T. Duvall, Chaplain, 398th Bomb Group, to be used at the dedication of the Memorial Window

Today we living members of the 398th Bomb Group Association, lift high the flaming torch of freedom passed to us by our comrades whose lives were given in the battle against totalitarianism. We remember those lives that never had the opportunity to grow old with us. They gave their lives that others could live free. Many never had the opportunity to experience the youthful years of life, grow into manhood, have a family and enjoy the golden years. We have all benefited from the gift of their supreme sacrifice. Today we stand in humility and gratitude. We are thankful that we were able to share a bit of life with all those names inscribed on the Memorial Window. We may forget what has been said here, but never let us forget what was done here. May the God of all men keep and bless you.

CHRISTMAS EVE AT "PINETREE" -

High Wycombe Abbey 1944

by Eric Hawkinson, 25th Recon Wing
Vallejo, CA

It was a cold Christmas Eve in 1944 and I felt as though I had been in England for almost a year, but actually at Christmas of 1943 I was on the way to England. Now in December, we had endured the trauma of the D-Day invasion in June only again to suffer the Ardennes breakthrough. Of what was called the "Battle of the Bulge" back home. We lost a lot of troops throughout that ordeal. I was now safely "home" at Pinetree - High Wycombe, England.

At Pinetree I attended church in the Chapel of the Abbey and, when on Daws Hill I chose to forego the long hike to Chapel, I attended church services in a small building near the base theater and the Red Cross Club. Our Chaplain asked how many would like to sing Christmas Carols on Christmas Eve. My hand went up. Our singing was not to be in a building but out in the open.

Probably no more than ten of us gathered on one corner of what in 1944 was a drill field. The winter was cold and there was snow on the freeze-hardened ground. We shivered, but we sang as led by the 8th Air Force Chaplain. Our song service could not last too long even though we all felt enriched. It was just too cold to be out. The tent was not much of an improvement, but it did offer some shelter from the extreme winter cold.

It was no consolation that other G.I.'s were trying to avoid death by German hands in the depth of snows in eastern Belgium and France.



Daws Hill Lodge - part of the Wycombe Abbey Girl's School - 8th AF Headquarters at High Wycombe

On Christmas Eve a bird-colonel Chaplain, the 92nd BG's Melton Ware, was leading a small group of G.I.s in singing songs of peace and goodwill in the midst of a cold winter's night in the middle of the war. We probably could not be heard at any long distance and we might not have sounded like an angel choir, but for a few minutes at least there was a touch of religion, a touch of home, and the chance to forget the miseries of war.

At the time the end of the war was nowhere in sight and no little few wondered if they would ever return home again. Now, years later, I can still vividly remember that experience long ago on Christmas Eve in 1944.

NORFOLK & SUFFOLK AVIATION MUSEUM

Located directly south of Norwich, England near Bungay at the village of Flixton, the Norfolk & Suffolk Aviation Museum has done a fine job of honoring veterans of the Mighty Eighth with its displays and static aircraft displays.

There are sixteen aircraft on site and indoor displays featuring memorabilia from World Wars I and II and modern post-war aviation. The 446th Bomb Group, which flew out of Bungay, and the 56th Fighter Group collection are special highlights of their exhibit. There is a special building devoted to the Royal Observer Corps which is also a major attraction of the museum.

The museum is also open from April to October on Sundays and bank holidays. Arrangements for catering of parties at the museum may be arranged by calling 01502 574119.



OLD SOLDIER

Dear Mr. Brown,

I am writing to express my thanks for your kindness in publishing my letter in the March 2000 issue of "8th AF News" regarding my desire to correspond with somebody who had served at Burtonwood during WW2. A friend in California sent me a copy of the magazine and I was quite pleased to see my name in lights!

In all I received a total of seven responses and I am now busily exchanging letters with five of the writers. You have indeed made an old soldier very happy.

Best wishes to yourself and your staff. Yours sincerely,
John D. Shaw Liverpool, England

POWs

Dear Sir:

The June 8th AF NEWS contains two related items of considerable interest to me. On page 40, Forrest Clark's "Caterpillars Awake" and on page 56, "POWs, 8 May 45" struck resounding chords in me. I bailed-out of my burning B-24 April 11, 1944 and was evacuated from Barth, Germany on May 8, 1945 in a B-17. In the absence of contrary evidence I shall presume that Newt Moy, of the 398BG, provided my escape to **Freedom!** Bless his heart! He and his comrades were overdue, but I learned only recently that the delay was due to the Russians' (our Allies?) holding us hostage for political reasons.

Sincerely,
**Irving M. Day, Jr., 446 BG
Swanton, MD**

HOWARD KIDDER

Dear Sir:

Can you help me? My name is Karen Kidder and I am writing because I am trying to learn all I can about my father Howard Gordon Kidder's experiences during WWII. While I was growing up, he spoke very little about that conflict. I was told that he was a Master Sergeant flight engineer on a B-24 based in England and later based in Europe when his outfit was relocated there. I understand he was awarded a Bronze Star for starting the engines on a B-24 and moving it away

from another which was on fire. Beyond that, I know very little. Our home was totally destroyed by fire. All our family records and, of course, his military records were consumed. He has since died and I do not have either his Army serial number or his Social Security Number. I know that he served in the European Theater but know of no unit identification.

I would be most grateful if any of your members who may have known my father would provide me with information, anecdotal or otherwise, concerning him. Thank you in advance for any help you can give.

Sincerely,
**Karen Kidder 4740 West 41st Ave.
Denver, CO. 80212**

8th AIR FORCE POW PLAQUE

Dear Walter:

In regard to the article on POW plaque at The National POW Museum at Andersonville, credit should be given where credit is due. It was the American Ex-Prisoner of War Association that spearheaded the establishment of the National POW Museum and the sponsor of the plaque was the 486th Bomb Group Association.

The museum honors all Americans that were POWs throughout our nation's history of which were the 28,000 members of the Eighth Air Force.

My compliments on another fine issue.

Sincerely,
**Carl F. Runge, 486th BG
Winter Haven, FL**



Carl Runge and daughters

COURAGEOUS MEN AND WOMEN

Dear Walter:

I understand that you accompanied the 303rd bomb group on its visit to Molesworth AFB in early June and that during the course of this visit you had the opportunity to meet with several members of European underground groups.

These courageous men and women, who universally are great friends of the United States, risked their lives and the lives of family and friends to come to the aid of Allied airmen who had been shot down over Nazis occupied Europe. These Dutch, Belgian and French Helpers were responsible for several hundred members of the 8th Air Force evading capture.

The Escape & Evasion exhibit at the Heritage Museum was originally conceived as a sort of memorial to these same people who had a chance to meet. Each of these wonderful people lost members of their family or very close friends to the Nazis executioners for their efforts to help fallen airmen.

The next time you look at the E & E exhibit at the Heritage Museum I hope that you will feel a personal involvement with these gutsy people. Perhaps your meeting with them will help you further understand why AFEES had to be born, and why it continues to exist.

Best personal regards,
**Ralph K. Patton
Escape and Evasion Society
500 Alden Drive Pittsburgh, PA
15220
email ralphpatton@email.msn.com**

PARADOX OF WAR

Dear Dr. Brown,

I am a WW II pictorial/historical researching material that expresses the paradox of war. War presents many strange variances of experiences - danger, death, misery and then paradoxically there are experiences of romance, excitement, humor. Would veterans of any service branch or time of services please send a narrative of your most unusual, strange, dangerous experience, and/or your most ridiculous, funny

experience. If you have photos, I shall copy and return. All participants will be recognized. I attended the 55 D-Day anniversary in Normandy last year and I help fly a CAF B17G for airshows, etc. and realize that time is closing for those of WW II age and we need desperately to preserve that history. I appreciate any help that is forthcoming.

Sincerely,

Dr. Wm. Van Osdol 2017

Edgewood Dr. Edmond, OK 73013

e-mail vanokc@aol.com

Ph. 405-341-0153

BERLIN

Dear Friends:

In ref. your article "The Berlin Raid 3 February 1945" please note: the Third Division was led by Col. Rosenthal and Capt. Ernst of the 100th BG. They were shot down near the IP and landed on the Russian side of the front lines near the Oder River. I was navigator of a crew that had just arrived at the 100th, but we were not yet operational. I was called to the operations shack early the night before and spent the entire night preparing the briefing room including putting the pins in the map. By mid-afternoon, I learned that the war was definitely not over as our lead crew was missing. Six weeks later, we flew our 14th mission to Berlin and we were shot down at the same general location and we also arrived at a similar location in Poland, but we came down with our plane. Seven days later, we were in the city of Lodz and met Capt Ernst and we were evacuated to Poltava on the plane sent for him. I doubt if anyone who did not fly the Feb 3 mission remembers it more often or more clearly than I do.

Sincerely,

Richard Scroxton, 100th BG

Apalachin, NY

AMERICAN FLAG

Dear Mr. Brown,

With reference to the May 2000 edition of the 8th AF NEWS p. 24, History of the Flag, Betsy Ross who was as legend has it, the lady who made the first American flag could well have done this, but the design

without doubt comes from England. The emblem of the Stars and Stripes can be seen at Thraxton Church in Northhamptonshire where it is carved in stone and was the emblem of the Washington family. Some miles away from Thraxton is Sulgrave Manor, which was the ancestral home of the Washington family and the "Stars and Bars" can again be found. Any veterans visiting Thraxton Underwood, Polebrook, Molesworth or Alconbury are within easy reach of these places and can see the origins of your fine flag for themselves. There is a "Washington" house at Thraxton but this is not open to the public.

Yours sincerely,

**John Degrange Newbold Verdon
Leics England**

FIGHTERS TO BERLIN

Dear Editor:

The article in the June, 2000 issue about the February 3, 1945 Mission to Berlin brought back some old recollections.

I was a P-51 pilot with the 361st Fighter Group, 374th Squadron. On a regular mission, our squadron would put up four flights of four P-51s for a total of 16 planes. The usual total for the group would be 48 planes.

An exception was for a maximum effort mission such as the February 3rd mission to Berlin. On such a mission, a squadron may put up 18 or 19 P-51s for maximum effort, the extra planes being "Black" Flight.

I was to lead the extra Black Flight on the February 3rd mission. For reasons I do not recall I ended up being the only maximum effort plane of the 374th Squadron. I was joined by a P-51 from the 375th Squadron and also, one from the 376th Squadron. It was very unusual to have a flight of planes from more than one squadron.

Getting back to the main part of the story, when over the Berlin area, I got a relay call from the controller stating that a B-17 had been damaged and was heading east toward Soviet occupied territory. We were to try and locate the B-17 and escort it to "friendly" territory.

We flew east out of the Berlin area for quite some period of time but could

not locate the damaged B-17. We returned to the Berlin area as the last box of bombers was coming off the target. We followed up the bomber train, made one 360 degree orbit and when we came to the lead group we were over Holland.

I am convinced that the B-17 that we were seeking was "Maiden U.S.A." from the 401st Bomb Group. That B-17 is the subject of a book by George Menzel entitled, "Portrait of a Flying Lady". They made it to Soviet occupied territory but were treated less than hospitably by the Soviets.

Menzel's book is very interesting from the standpoint of treatment of Allied Airmen by the Soviets.

Very truly yours,

**Thomas J. Moore, 361st FG
Hillsboro, OR**

TARRANT FIELD

Dear Sir:

I would like for you to publish in your Mail call asking for communication from any enlisted men stationed at Tarrant Fields in the year 1942 to 1944 - Ft. Worth, Texas.

Thanks for any help you can give.

**Harry Biancosino
6379 Newport Court
Ft. Worth TX 76116**

3 FEBRUARY 1945 MISSION

Dear Walt,

The "8th AF NEWS" has always been a first class magazine. Keep up the good work. I will gladly pay \$20 to ensure the fine quality of the "8th AF NEWS".

In the June 2000 issue Colonel Lewis E. Lyle's excellent story of the Feb 3, 1945 Mission to Berlin brought back memories of that day. We (the 490th BG) were somewhere in that massive bomber stream. The advantage of my top turret position was the ability to observe 360 degrees of sky. On this day, as far as I could see, were our bombers and fighters in front of us and to the rear. An excellent example of the "Mighty Eighth".

Speaking of fighters, I would like to pay a tribute to the great courage and skill of these young warriors. I was privileged to witness them in action in a huge "dog fight" over Berlin, Dec. 5,

MAIL CALL

1944. They shot down over 80 Luftwaffe fighters and protected our bomber stream. Thanks to that amazing P-51 and the men that flew them.

Sincerely,
Frank McKinley, 490th BG

Frank McKinley is a frequent contributor of his artwork to the 8th AF NEWS.
-Ed.

FATHERS AND SONS IN THE 8TH

Dear Walter:

Upon reading your message from the latest edition, I have an answer for a father and son serving in our 533rd squadron 381st BG. The father was an armorer and loaded bombs on the planes.

The son was a navigator in our group. But I can't recall their last name.

On our return trip after leaving Rejavik, we landed at Gander Bay. We were a little late coming in and his father was waiting for us outside. He introduced me to his son who was the navigator on our plane. We flew in. The trip took 13 hours.

I also remember well the ball turret experience. I think it took about 3 passes to transfer the tools to the crippled B-17; We all cheered.

Best Regards,

**Martin Dejong Crew Chief 381st
BG Wycoff NJ**

NORFOLK AIR RAIDS

Dear Mr. Brown;

Re 8th AF News September 2000- Norfolk War Time, Airfields and The Mighty Eighth, by Roy Barker.

On July 9, 1940 I was a seventeen year old member of the Norwich Civil Defense Ambulance crew. Our first air raid call was to the Carrow Works. Twenty-six girls were killed by the German raid. To my horror some of them and I had attended the same school in Norwich. Bombs struck Thorp Railway Station, Boulton & Paul Plant, and Carrow Works.

Our crew responded on this occasion with many calls served all through the War years.

**Sybil Billings nee Neale
Columbia, N.J.**

submitted by Grand-daughter Susan

Knerr

P.S. Nan was a 56th Fighter Group War Bride.

-Bill Billings sent in the article on the crippled 56th FG aircraft featured in the same issue of the 8th AF NEWS.

THE BRITS

Dear Sir:

Our BAD 2 Association has scheduled a Reunion in Blackpool, England for June 27 to July 2 next year. We will visit our old air base (Warton, in Lancashire) where British Aerospace Corporation now builds military aircraft in our old hangars. I intend to get one of the new 8th AF flags to present to British Aerospace on the day of our visit.

The Brits are big on history and tradition. They consider themselves a continuation of what we did there in 1942 to 1945. At our last two reunions there, the CEO of British Aerospace, Sir Richard Evans, came to greet us and make us welcome. A few years ago Queen Elizabeth elevated him to knighthood, but he is as "down to earth" as can be.

The Villages of Freckleton and Warton are adjacent to our old Air Base. We visit St. Paul's Church in Warton for special Sunday afternoon services and always sit down on another day to a three hour "luncheon" in Memorial Hall, Freckleton as guests of the village. Associate Members attend our stateside reunions every year. A retired British Aerospace employee, Art Talbot, was President of our Association for two terms. To my knowledge, he is the only British subject who ever has been elected president of an American veterans' organization.

At a previous reunion over there we presented an American Flag to St. Oswald's Church near Carnforth, where George Washington's family worshiped since the 1500s. They fly Old Glory above the Church every 4th of July!

During the war American bases had football teams. At White City Stadium, London, the "Tea Bowl" game was played. The BAD 2 "Warriors" won the game, making them UK Champions. They had been

undefeated, untied and had only been scored-on once by the Burtonwood "Bear Cats" who managed one touch-down.

Sincerely,

**Ralph Scott, Secretary
BAD 2 Association
New Castle, DE**

NEWELL MOY

Dear Mr. Newt Moy,

I really enjoyed your letter to Mail Call regarding our recovery of Prisoners of War after the German surrender.

I too, flew my aircraft along with you in the 602 S.Q. - It was a great to get to those guys out of Barth. - I believe I took on 33 POWs.

It was a short runway and we were told to crank up the supercharger. My plane almost jumped off of the runway. I was concerned we would blow a jug, but I cut back once in the air.

And I made a terrible landing in Reims - I tried hard to "grease" it in.

If you hear from others, I would enjoy hearing about the flight.

I've been in the Timber and logging business for 50 years and many years in the Oregon Legislature.

Sincerely,

**Bill Markham House of
Representatives Rt 1 Glenbrook
Loop Rd. Riddle, Oregon 97469**

THE WALLERSTEINS

Dear Dr. Brown,

Shortly after you published my "Uncle Charlie" article in the March 2000 issue of 8th AF News, I received a call from Lt. Lawrence Wallerstein, New Rochelle, N.Y. Mr. Wallerstein was pilot of the *Sweet Patootie* flying side by side with the *Carolina Queen* when the German attack occurred over Berlin. He was also well acquainted with Lt. Wardencki. Lt. Wallerstein almost became #7 downed on that mission, however he was able to make it back to Ridgewell on one engine, a feat for which he won the DFC medal.

Cousin Joan Liepe and I went up to visit Mr. and Mrs. Wallerstein one day and talk about that mission on 24 May 44. He still has the steering wheel from the *Sweet Patootie* hanging in his den. He supplied us with a lot of

MAIL CALL

information and was tremendously helpful. The Wallersteins were very gracious and we have made a strong friendship.

I would also like to acknowledge reading the article "Mid-Air Tragedy" on page 36 of the September issue, written by Mr. Robert Georgen from the 381st BG. His description of that tragedy fits perfectly all the other information we have collected and we are very grateful that he took a moment to re-live a part of that mission in our behalf. The deep and passionate feelings that our WWII Veterans still have after all these years is almost beyond belief. I will always be one remaining to carry their torch, not only for what they did, but also, why they did it.

I am an active member of the Millville Army Airfield Museum here in South Jersey. Millville was America's First Defense Airfield in WWII and a P-47 Gunnery Training Base. As a child I watched the dog fights and the target shooting high above our little chicken farm during 1943, 1944 and 1945. My neck still has a "kink" in it. We are doing some honest and dedicated work at this museum. We have many veterans who are members and keep us amazed with their stories. It is Old Hat to them, but to us younger guys, it's Something Else.

Thanks for the great job you are doing. You are serving a growing audience!

Sincerely yours,

Richard Hansen Mays Landing, N.J.

SLAVE LABORER LIBERATION

Dear Sir:

I was greatly interested in the piece in 8th AF News from Ken Hoddinott 487th BG, describing a Rescue Mission to Linz, Austria in June 1945. I was 1st Pilot on the same mission flying 339045 which had been fitted with a platform in the bomb bay and was loaded with C Rations. DDT insecticide had been thoroughly spread in the plane to discourage disease-carrying insects. It was nice not to wear oxygen masks at our low altitude.

When we had landed and taxied to a waiting area, we got out to stretch our legs. A Jeep cruised by loaded with liberated cameras, hand guns and other items taken from the local population. Ground soldiers had gone commercial.

After our load of C Rations was unloaded, our load of French slave laborers was assigned. They were a scruffy looking lot, long unwashed and clearly not well and under nourished. Their odor was overpowering. It was most instructive as to the terrible conditions under which they had existed at the hands of the Germans.

One man spoke a bit of English about the marvelous food that had been coming in, the C Rations. They were enraptured over the canned peaches which had been given to them. We considered C Rations a notch below what we were accustomed to at the base mess.

Soon we were loaded and had the passengers distributed throughout the plane and took off from the field outside of Paris. It was necessary to fly with the cockpit windows partly open for fresh air. When we had landed every one got out. With my nearly nonexistent French I told them Paris was just over there. They got the message and were clearly overjoyed. When the woman understood, several of these poor souls sought to express their thanks and were about to kiss me. I could not stomach that and beat a quick retreat inside old "Carry Me Back", 339045.

Countless times since that experience I have thought "Count your blessings, Americans, count your blessings."

Sincerely,

Charles M. Judd Inverness, FL

DANNY KAYE

Dear Walter,

When I was in basic pilot training summer of 1943 at Lemoore A.F. Base, California a fellow cadet was Gary Davis who was a talented dancer and singer who had been Danny Kaye's understudy on Broadway and could do all of Danny's routines. I went to advanced training at Stockton Field but Gary was sent elsewhere. In the late 1940's after the

war, he reappeared in the March of Time News Reels in movie theatres. He had married a French lady, headed up a "Our World" organization and was holding Mass Rallies, mostly in France urging everyone to also become "Citizens of the World". Slowly his appearances disappeared. Do any of your readers know if he served in the 8th AF? Or if he is still alive?

Thanks in advance,

**Bob Kelley 4786 Vallecito St.
Shasta Lake City, CA 96019-9348**



Bob Kelley's 91st BG car tag.

THE DUES

Dear Sir:

Just a note to say I have no problem with the dues increase of the 8th AFHS, although I am only an Associate member. I am glad to help out.

Sincerely,

Ron Silva

Dear Sirs:

I would be very interested to know for what reason the dues doubled this year. I hope it is for a good reason but as a member it seems as though there should be an explanation with the statement.

Sincerely,

**Leland Perry
Lawrence, KS**

An in-depth explanation of the Society's dues increase appears in the September 00 8th AF NEWS. The increase was passed unanimously by vote of the general membership at the Salt Lake City annual reunion.
- Editor



The Wreaths at Margraten

MEMORIAL DAY AT MARGRATEN

Invited by Mr. Willis 'Bill' Beasley, Editor of "The Happy Warrior" 492nd Bomb Group, my wife Tiny and I attended thankful the ceremonies at US Military Cemetery Margraten in the South of Holland, on Sunday May 28, 2000, a so important day for all Americans. It was bitterly cold and very windy day; despite that hundreds of special guests and civilians attended the Ceremonies, with in the background the thousands of white crosses, 'protected' by the American and Dutch flags.

The whole Ceremony took about three hours and after

that, when everybody went home again, the silence was witness and covering the so many wreaths honoured to the thousands of young men who gave their lives to give us freedom back.

I made many photographs, met some ex-8th AF pilots in person (!), and we go back soon again to Margraten as we do mostly three times a year. And each time when we go there again, we have our own thoughts while we are surrounded by only the silence 'covering' the graves. We hope you can have the two photographs I made on Sunday, May 28, 2000 at Margraten, as a salute from Tiny and Henry Kwik, A. Dubcekplaats 7, 2332 HX Leiden, Holland.



Memorial Day - US Cemetery - Margraten, Holland



Trouble at 27,000ft. and falling...

By Trey Brandt Scottsdale, AZ

"I hope you never have to hear the shrill whine of a runaway prop in full-flat pitch, and that I never do again, either," he said to me. "When I looked out the window, engine number one was a roaring mass of fire melted nacelle and molten aluminum was falling off." I was speaking with Sid Fouts, a man who was co-pilot in a B-17 that crashed on April 6, 1942.

Was this B-17 headed to bomb Berlin or Cologne and hit by flak? No, it was B-17B, #38-214 that was stationed at Davis-Monthan Field in Tucson, Arizona, a base used for training pilots and crews for combat. Many Mighty Eighth veterans found themselves funneled through this heavy bomber training base which was a beehive of activity, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Here is the rest of the story:

1345 MWT. As the pilot, 1st Lt. Don Johnson and co-pilot, 2nd Lt. Sid Fouts, eyed the instruments and performed a final flap check, the bomber's four Wright Cyclone R-1820 radial engines were idling and provided a loud drone and vibration felt throughout the aircraft. With the check done, the pilots gave a "thumbs up." The throttles were slowly moved forward and the olive drab B-17 started to roll as the engines roared. With the bomber racing down the runway, the pilot slowly pulled back on the control column and felt the plane rise. Once airborne, he retracted the landing gear, gained altitude and took a heading to the southeast. "Lt. Johnson was an extremely capable 'stick and rudder' pilot", said Sid.

"He could also fly the box the B-17 came in quite well. He had spent time in England teaching some high-altitude bombing techniques. I was his student for transition into the B-17 and he excelled in demonstrating how it could, and should be flown. For example, as I would approach touchdown on my very best attempts, he would literally reach up to the wheel with one finger and do something mysterious (to me at the time), and the wheels would just touch the runway and begin turning without a screech. He gave me goals to shoot for."



B-17 - Crash site hours after the crash.

The present day photo lines up the background location contour with the 1942 pictures.



Once the B-17 established the proper altitude of 27,000 ft. and had been flying for about an hour, engine #1 suddenly failed. This resulted in a runaway propeller that was windmilling at very high RPMs causing the plane to vibrate heavily. An attempt to feather the propeller failed since the feathering switches burned out while practicing feathering at high altitude. The pilot contacted the tower at D-M Field and was advised to try and freeze the red-hot, shrilling motor by re-starting it.

The pilot advised the crew what was going to happen and told them that if they heard anything at all on the intercom, it meant only one thing- bail out ASAP! The restarting of the engine resulted in a fire burst that completely engulfed the nacelle and caused greater vibration of the aircraft. The situation was very serious now. At this point, Lt. Johnson told the crew to bail out and that he was going to try and

keep the aircraft steady until they had all left the ship. The flight engineer, Sgt. William Regan, helped Lt. Fouts out the navigator's dome, and they jumped. Sid recalls being carried quickly by the slipstream down the fuselage. Then everything went black. He had been knocked unconscious after hitting the horizontal stabilizer. He awoke moments later only to find himself pinned over the stabilizer from the force of the wind. At that point, he had little choice but to pull his ripcord. Thankfully it pulled him off the stabilizer. His problems were, however, far from over. Sid blacked out again in the air. When he awoke, he was laying face-up on a sandy patch in the desert with Sgt. Regan using his T-shirt to wipe away the blood on Sid's head. His scalp had been lacerated when he hit the stabilizer.

But where was the rest of the crew? Witnesses only saw two parachutes open, but there was a crew of seven men.

Investigation of the wreckage afterwards revealed parachute shroud lines in the back of the aircraft, indicating that one of the crewmen had opened his chute prematurely in the plane, tangling up the four men in the back. Lt. Johnson stayed in the cockpit to try and control the aircraft, hoping the others would get out. Unfortunately, luck was against him. He and the four other crewmen perished in the crash.

Fifty-five years later, I went out looking for the crash site. All I had was the crash report and newspaper articles that placed the location of the crash 22 miles SE of Tucson. I knew it had crashed in a part of the desert that was used for cattle grazing. In 55 years, the land hadn't changed much. After hiking around for hours and finding nothing, I decided to head to a ranch I had seen and ask the cowboys if they had ever seen anything from the crash. Cowboys tend to know their land extremely well and have helped me out in the past. As luck would have it, one was aware of a crash site and gave me great directions to the site.

After walking around the desert for another 20 minutes, I came to an area where I started to see small parts of aircraft aluminum, .50 cal shell casings and a old burn area. This was it. Walking around the site I saw some plexiglas and instrument dials where the front of the aircraft must have hit. Inspection of some of the .50 cal casings revealed a manufacture date stamped on the bottom. 1941.

Today, little is left of Davis-Monthan's first major aircraft crash site. One could almost walk over it and not even know it was there. The only remnants of this rare B model are .50 and .30 cal. shell casings, part of an engine mount and firewall, rubber fuel cell parts, and tons of tiny aluminum fragments. Standing at the crash site, it is possible to line up the large rocks and boulders on the ground with the ones in the original crash photos.

It's a sobering experience to stand in the spot where five young airmen died doing what they believed in while they were training for victory. I thought about how many other people may have come across this site - or any other crash site - and wondered what had happened. As I stood up, there was a light breeze blowing that carried with it the scent of rain from a distant thunderstorm. I took my backpack off, pulled out the miniature U.S. flag, and planted the wooden pole firmly in the ground.

Hopefully, people will appreciate and never forget the sacrifice that was made so today we can enjoy the freedom that they fought so hard for.

Trey would like to hear from any veterans who witnessed or know of any crashes in Arizona. If you would like to see more on this subject, visit Trey's website on wreckchasing at:

<http://members.aol.com/ariztrey/crash1.htm>

Trey Brandt is currently accumulating information for a book he is putting together regarding Arizona's military airbases. If you have any stories or items of interest (photos, base yearbooks, etc...) please contact him at- 4354 N. 82nd St. #260, Scottsdale, AZ 85251. tel. (480) 424-7507



(6-289 2315 HO 31 "A.B)(4-6-42-4:30P)(67-16) B-17B CRASH
DAVIS-MONTHAN FIELD TUCSON, ARIZONA -RESTRICTED

ADVERTISING

The 8TH AF News 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. The 8th AF Historical Society does not endorse or guarantee products or services advertised in this journal, although all have been screened for content and relevancy.

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The print run is 20,000 copies per issue

Mail to: Walt Brown 2340 Sugar Ridge Road
Spring Hill, TN 37174

REUNIONS

BAD 2 ASSOCIATION

Blackpool, England Reunion

June 27 - July 2, 2001

Contact: Ralph Scott- 228 W. Roosevelt Ave New Castle, DE 19720

385TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

April 3 - 8, 2001, Albuquerque, Doubletree Hotel, Hal Goetsch local host. Contact (505) 889-9418 for information

351st BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

June 13 - 17, 2001

Quality Resort Mission Valley CA

Contact: Clint Hammond, POB 281, Mechanicsburg PA 17055 tel. (717) 766-1489

398TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

18th Annual Reunion October 3 - 6, 2001 Radisson Inn, St. Paul MN Contact: wally398th@world net.att.net tel. (301) 762-2213

379TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

October 3 - 6, 2001

Harrisburg PA

contact: Armed Forces Reunions 1-800-562-7226

303rd BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

September 5 - 9, 2001 BWI Marriott Baltimore MD contact: Walter Ferrari, 207 Lake Circle, Hampstead NC 28443-2519 or: Dick Johnson, 5901 Joe Road, Deale MD 20757-9739

**National 8th AF Historical Society Reunion 2001
October 24 -29, 2001
Irving, Texas**

Unit Rebate Report

UNIT	ATTENDANCE	AMOUNT
353 Bomb Group	14	\$ 70.00
379 Bomb Group	12	60.00
385 Bomb Group	10	50.00
392 Bomb Group	39	195.00
447 Bomb Group	21	105.00
466 Bomb Group	44	220.00
493 Bomb Group	102	510.00
96 Bomb Group	106	530.00
Totals	348	\$ 1740.00

Attendance at the Salt Lake City Reunion was determined by Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.

8th AF Historical Society Life Member Fee (U.S.A. only) - others add 50%

15 times annual	60 or under	\$300.00
10 times annual	61-70	\$200.00
6.75 times annual	71-80	\$135.00
4.5 times annual	81 or over	\$90.00
Spouse of Life Member: \$40 less than applicable fee, based on LM's age.		

2000-2001 COMMITTEES 8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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TAPS



Green, Robert, Whiting ME, 94th BG; hunter, fisherman, outdoorsman

Headley, Brice, Tampa FL, 493rd BG; radar navigator; career AF from Robert Miller, B-17 pilot with the 493rd

Crouch, Clyde, Richland Springs TX, 379th BG navigator; artist and writer

Bergholz, Robert, Pearland TX; 390th BG navigator, from Alfred Lea, 452nd BG

Weiss, Norman, Wilmette IL; 401st BG, from James Wells, his engineer and top turret gunner

Fisher, Manuel, Charlotte NC, 91st BG; navigator B-17 *Blue Dreams* from son-in-law Rusty Dowling

Becraft, Myron, Warner Robins; 357th FG fighter pilot from Alice Buchanan

Bruner, Joseph, Milwaukee WI, 389th BG bombardier on *Outhouse Mouse* from Ken "Deacon" Jones

Floyd, John, Shaker Heights OH; 458th BG B-24 pilot; salesman, Gulf Oil

Herbst, Anthony, St. Marys PA; lead navigator; career Air Force; engineer; life-long supporter of churches, veterans affairs and community; from James Auman, 44th and 466th BGs

Morpeth, C.R. "Bob", Lighthouse Point FL; 384th BG, 50 missions as a B-17 flight engineer, from Charles Collins of Rumford RI

Bennett, John, Las Animas CO, 92nd BG

Dunn, Lawrence, Orlando FL, 94th BG

O'Hara, Thomas, 95th BG, Alabama Chapter; B-17 copilot

Doherty, Joe, 95th BG, Fairfield CA; waist gunner on first bombing mission to Berlin

Freeman, Walter, St. Simons Island GA; navigator; Georgia Chapter

Hightshoe, Melville, Memphis TN; 353rd FG fighter pilot; Tennessee Chapter

Heller, Joseph, Hampton NY, 12th AF; author of the classic satirical war novel *Catch-22* which was later made into a major 1970 movie

Euchner, E. Bruce, Avon Lake FL, 94th BG navigator; research and development scientist

Knowles, Harry, Houston TX, Radio operator; a philosopher, a keen wit, and always an optimist, who gave gifts of love and laughter

Cohn, Malcolm, Cleveland TX; navigator; attorney

Shalinsky, Milton, Overland Park KS, 385th BG, Missouri Chapter from Joe Jameson

Browning, Eric, 7th Photo Recon; survived by beloved wife Ruth; from daughter Valerie Fontenot

McConnell, Paul, San Juan Capistrano CA; 381st BG navigator; shot down 4 July 1944, E & E for 8 months; close friend of his co-pilot John Carah; from son Paul McConnell

Bixby, Raymond, San Antonio, 490th BG; loved animals, golf, fishing and he played a little poker, from Charles Harkins, 489th BG

Freeman, J. B., Shelby NC, 392nd BG; and served in Korea and Vietnam; North Carolina Chapter

Smith, Thomas, Belmont NC; 466th BG at Attlebridge; North Carolina Chapter

Cope, Donald, Scottsdale, 350th Fighter Group

RICHARD EGGER

Richard Egger flew missions with the 384th Bomb Group as a B-17 ball turret gunner. His twin brother, Robert Egger, who died 23 years ago from cancer, flew in the same airplane, serving as the crew's tailgunner. On their fifteenth mission they were shot down by an Me 109 over Dusseldorf. Both bailed out and survived. Their German captors handcuffed them together on the way to Stalag Luft 6 and were not aware they were twins. Although throughout their childhood they had always been inseparable, as Kriegies they wore different beards and clothing and stood at opposite ends of the formation during daily roll call. The German guards never caught on. The Egger twins were liberated by General Patton's 3rd Army forces on April 29, 1945.



After the war both veterans married and raised their families in their hometown of Sacramento, California where they had successful careers with the area telephone company.

This past October Richard Egger died from a cardiac arrest while walking the family pet schnauzer near his east Sacramento home.

BOBBIE LEE RUSSELL HARRIS

Bobbie Russell, from Jackson Mississippi, and Craig Harris were married after his return from a tour flying with the 457th Bomb Group. After seventeen years in Oak Ridge, they moved to Durham, North Carolina where she was employed at Duke University. Her most recent position was as the Administrative Coordinator of Health Administration, retiring in 1991.

Bobbie was active in the Trinity Avenue Presbyterian Church in Durham and an endowment for a music education program has been established there in her name. A beautiful memorial celebration of her life and of her love for her family and friends was held at the church following the funeral on October 27, 2000.

The Harris family has three children, Becky, David, and Donald and three grandchildren, Blake, Bryant, and Clayton. Her brother and sister also survive.

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INFORMATION OFFICE

Information concerning activities of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, 8th Air Force history, 8th AF Veterans Associations, or related subjects can be obtained by calling toll-free to the 8th AF Historical Society Information office at:
1-800-982-1942

SPONSORED SUBSCRIPTIONS

The 8th AF Historical Society now offers subscriptions of the quarterly publication 8th AF NEWS to libraries, School ROTC Units, community organizations, and other interested groups. This Sponsored Subscription program will increase awareness of the Historical Society as well as the history and legacy of the Eighth Air Force. The program will certainly attract interested new members from those who read the issues. Early trials of this program have been enthusiastically successful.

The program works like this. Any Historical Society member may send the name of the recipient along with a check for \$10 to the Society's home office. The magazine will be sent for one year to that named organization for one year, after which the sponsoring Society member will receive a bill for the following year to continue the subscription if he chooses to do so. It is suggested that if you sponsor a subscription of the 8th AF NEWS to a library or organization you include the name of a particular person to receive the issues, so that the magazine will be put on proper display.

Send the name and address of the library or organization and your \$10 check to: 8th AFHS Membership Office, PO Box 1787, Savannah GA 31402. The first issue will be sent out immediately.

1st STRATEGIC AIR DEPOT ARCHIVES

Charles McCarson was the athletic director at the 1st SAD base as duly noted in the SPORTS article in the Sept 00 issue. He is compiling a compendium of photos from anyone who was in the 1st SAD. Charles asks that if you have a copy of a photo or negative to put in the publication, please send it to him with the info as to when and where you were assigned at the base.

He plans to publish the volumes and place them in the 8th AFHS archives, the Piedmont North Carolina Aviation Museum, and the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah. Send in to Charles McCarson, POB 1459, Thomasville NC 27361.

AIR FORCE COMMUNITY WEB SITE

Air Force Crossroads, the official community web site of the Air Force, unveiled a new look May 1 featuring job banks, chat rooms, video teleconferencing and telecommuting opportunities.

The site, located at <http://www.afcrossroads.com>, pools Web resources from across the Air Force and the Department of Defense into a single location and provides a virtual community atmosphere where visitors can participate in bulletin board discussions and chat rooms, post resumes online or search for information on a variety of topics.

VETS

A private program offers services to veterans of all services. Forms are available from VETS to obtain Reunion information, register your military listings in their internet accessible archives, find locations of old buddies, and to receive information of various veterans benefits that are available through the organization.

Forms are available free on the VETS website at www.vets.org or they may be obtained by writing VETS, P.O. Box 901, Columbia MO 65205-0901. Include a self-addressed stamped long business-type return envelope with your request.

RICHARD SUMMERS

The five remaining crew mates of S/Sgt. Richard L. Summers would like to contact him, or at least know what happened to him. His home address in 1945 was in Miami, FL. He was the toggler on our B-17 of the 401st Bomb Gp, 613th Sq. The aircraft was damaged over Gelsenkirchen on February 16, 1945 and eventually had to ditch in the North Sea off the coast of Holland. All crew members survived the ditching and exposure, but were captured as POWs. We were liberated from Stalag VII-A on April 29, 1945. Anyone having any post-war knowledge of Summers is asked to contact fellow crew member Bill Jeffers, 3522 Millbrook Way Cir., Greenacres, FL 33463; PH (561) 969-6036; e-mail: robill@aol.com.

8TH AFHS CONTACTS

Need to find the name and address of a Chapter or Unit contact for the 8th AF Historical Society? Want to know the airbase contact in England for trips back to the Group bases? Jim Erskine has the answer. As Chariman of the Chapter/Unit Development Committee, he will be glad to help you out. Jim's address and phone is on the inside front cover of this issue.

With the hard work of Connie and Gordon Richards, the Society's contacts in England, Jim has their list of current base contact in the UK. New British contacts and new Chapter/Unit Presidents should send your specific info to Jim ASAP if you have not already done so.

AMERICAN INTERNEES IN SWEDEN

The Association of Americans Interned in Sweden President James McMahon writes to advise 8th and 9th Air Force veterans of activities of the organization. The Association's first newsletter, *The Flak Burst*, was printed in Rattvik Sweden in June 1944. President McMahon flew with the 93rd Bomb Group and states that information regarding the organization may be obtained from Secretary Samuel Mastrogiacomo at 207 Narberth Ave, Sewell NJ 08080 or by faxing him at 707-525-9707. The organization is open to veterans who were interned in Sweden during World War II, their families, friends, and allies in Sweden. Dues are \$20 annually.

\$5 CHAPTER AND UNIT REBATES STILL IN EFFECT

With 8th AF historical Society dues officially set at \$20 per year, each Chapter and Unit may still retain \$5 of each new member they sign up to join the national Society. Send each new member's vital info and \$15 of their paid dues to the Membership office in Savannah - address on inside front cover masthead.

THE FLAK FARM

Some 8th Air Force crews spent periods of R & R at one of fourteen estates operated to provide a break from flying missions. My parents were with the Red Cross and with US Army personnel had many crews in for a week of relaxation at Eynsham Hall near the market town of Witney. I was 12 years old and grew up meeting the fliers and having a great time taking part in many of the sports offered.

I would like to exchange news and memories with any of the chaps who spent time at Eynsham Hall during the war. I remember a few names of some of the permanent staff: Jack Retallick, John Hannigan, Norman Stahl and "Red" the cook, who taught me how to ice skate. One of our Red Cross girls was Frances Raeburn.

I look forward to hearing from some of the 8th veterans.

With much appreciation,
Malcolm Dyer
8. Rheola Gardens,
Thornbury, Plymouth, Devon
PL6 8UB United Kingdom
phone 01752 700664;
email: dyer@rheola.fsnet.co.uk

THE ROUGHAM TOWER ASSOCIATION

Rougham Tower, as the control tower for the 94th Bomb Group at Bury St. Edmunds, was the nerve center of the air-



base, from which all 94th BG missions were controlled. Built in 1942 of Burwell white bricks with a concrete slab floor, the tower has been occupied since the war. The tower is presently used as a center for air shows, reunions, and related meetings. The Rougham Tower Association, founded in 1993, desires to protect the surrounding land from planned future development and has petitions being signed to gain support of their efforts. 8th AFHS member Lisa Parnell of Norwich, England encourages interested veterans to send their checks of support to The Secretary, Rougham Tower Association, Estate Office, Rougham Bury St Edmunds Suffolk, IP30 9LZ England. Full membership is 15. Pounds - approx \$24 US. Life membership is 125. pounds.

VETS NEWS

The Oregon Department of Veterans Affairs publishes an excellent bi-monthly newspaper, the VETS NEWS, highlighting veteran's activities and personalities of all services throughout the state. Joe Conroy, President of the Oregon Chapter, sends a recent copy that has a full -size page devoted to the Eighth.

Entitled "Did You Wear This Patch 1942 - 1945?" it gives a brief history of the Eighth Air Force and its vital role in the war. The article also explains the 8th AF Historical Society with information on how to join and the contacts for the Oregon Chapter. This page sets the standard for publicity for other Chapters to place in their own state's veterans publications. Contact Joe Conroy at (503) 246 - 2912 for more particulars.

THE "ULTIMATE SACRIFICE" MEMORIAL

Bob Ready is heading up the nationwide drive to complete a memorial to all Army Air Force veterans who lost their lives in World War II. Located in Blue Ash, Ohio, a suburb of Cincinnati, the hanger-type building will house historical artifacts and will be the home of the restored B-17 *My Gal Sal*, recovered from its resting place under the Greenland icecap. An active runway will be adjacent to the building. Wall displays will include the name and unit of every airman killed while in service during the war. A list of these servicemen is currently being compiled.

George Reynolds of Pelham, Alabama, 458th Bomb Group historian, states that 8th AFHS members will be a good source of support for this unique memorial which pays tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice. Bob Ready may be contacted at LSI Industries Inc., 10000 Alliance Rd, Cincinnati OH 45242. tel (513) 793-3200.

THE CATERPILLAR CLUB

The Caterpillar Club was originated at Dayton, Ohio between October 20, 1922 and November 11, 1922 by Messrs. Hutton, Verne Timmerman, J. Mumma and Milton H. St. Clair. This world-wide club is for aviators, military and commercial, who have saved their lives with a parachute in an emergency.

It all started with a young army test pilot named Harold Harris. On October 20, 1922 he was flying a Loening W-2A monoplane fighter in a mock dogfight with a friend. His plane had been equipped the day before with experimental aerodynamically balanced ailerons. After taking off from the test center at McCook field, Dayton near where the Wright brothers tested their plane, his plane suddenly rocked violently and Harris found he could not control it. He had to bail out.

Standing in the cockpit, he was sucked out by the slipstream. After three tries he found and pulled the rip cord. His main chute opened about 500 feet above the streets of Dayton. Looking up he admired the beautiful silk from which the parachute was made and marveled at how white and clean it was. He was the first American known to be saved by a manually operated parachute in an emergency jump from a disabled aircraft.

Two reporters from the Dayton Herald, discussing the event, suggested that since there would probably be more jumps with the chute, a club should be formed to embrace

these intrepid airmen. They considered several names for the organization and selected the Caterpillar Club. The reasoning was simple -- the parachute main sail and shroud lines were woven from the finest silk.

The lowly worm spins a cocoon and crawls out and flies away from certain death.

TO BECOME A MEMBER - Supply a bonafide account of your bailout. Switlik Parachute Co., Inc., PO Box 1328, Trenton, NJ 08607

Thoughts In Parachute Descent

*How wondrous is the caterpillar
Ordained by God to be
A butterfly with beautiful wings
Aloft and floating free.*

*I, too, am as that caterpillar,
'neath blossomed canopy:
In silken, fragile arch o'erhead
God's gift expressed to me.*

-Ray Ward
Author- Those Brave Crews



These life-size World War II aviation insignia were made by Fred Reichel, 303rd BG, while he was a Prisoner of War in German Stalags. Melted Klim cans were used to fashion these pins which are now in the archival collection of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum. Countries represented are: top, USAAF; from left: Russia, Czechoslovakia, France, British RAF, and Poland at the bottom point.



SEMINARS ON THE AIR WAR ONGOING IN BRITAIN

As interest in World War II generation servicemen has escalated in recent years, more exposure has been given to the role played by the Mighty Eighth. Gordon Richards, our 8th AFHS British contact, presented a lecture at Sywell Aerodrome entitled Yanks in Beds - the story of American airmen who flew from bases in Bedfordshire. Thurleigh, Podington, and Kimbolton were included and there was a display of uniforms and memorabilia. The presentation was to raise funds for the Sywell Aviation Museum. Those who wish to be a part of the effort may send contributions to Gordon Richards, address inside front cover of this issue.

THE SUNRISE SERENADE

A World War II Bomber Crew story

by Jerry Penry

Author Jerry Penry lays it out right in the Introduction to *The Sunrise Serenade*: "The crew of the *Sunrise Serenade* does not stand out as having experienced the War any differently than any other bomber crew. Each man left his home and family to train and then commit his knowledge and experience to help win the war." What this book does tell however, is the specific details of what a bomber crew went through to come together to fly missions over enemy territory and to face the harrowing experience of being shot down while flying with their 452nd Bomb Group on a mission to Brussels.

"Just as they were starting to think about plotting a course for home, the crew of the *Sunrise Serenade* was suddenly jolted as four or five direct or near direct hits of flak struck their plane. One hit went through the Number 3 fuel tank, resulting in a hole blown through the entire wing and into the bomb bay area. Flaming gasoline spilled into the body of the plane."

The crew's pilot, Francis Smedley, was killed on this mission.



The last half of the volume is devoted to the months spent by the surviving crew members as prisoners of war in the German Stalags.

This book tells the story of life on the base for a young bomber crew of the 8th Air Force. It successfully imparts a feeling of the crew's first missions, and devotes chapters to the "After the War" lives of the crew members. There are interesting pages of records of the 452nd Bomb Group, a listing of every plane and their names that flew in the 452nd,

and a listing of the 250 missions flown by the group during the war. Author Penry even devotes a few pages to the origin of the B-17's name - a song "Sunrise Serenade" written by Frankie Carle and used as his theme song until Glenn Miller made it a recording hit in 1939.

Photographs follow the storyline throughout the pages and are augmented by illustrations and significant explanatory maps. A fine tribute to every bomber crew that flew with the Mighty Eighth. The book is large format on high quality paper, soft-bound 162pp. Blue Mound Press, publishers. Available from the 8th AFHS PX (see center insert this issue).

AIR WAR AT NIGHT

The battle for the night sky since 1915

by Robert Jackson

British author Robert Jackson has written over sixty books on military subjects and this large format hard-bound volume shows

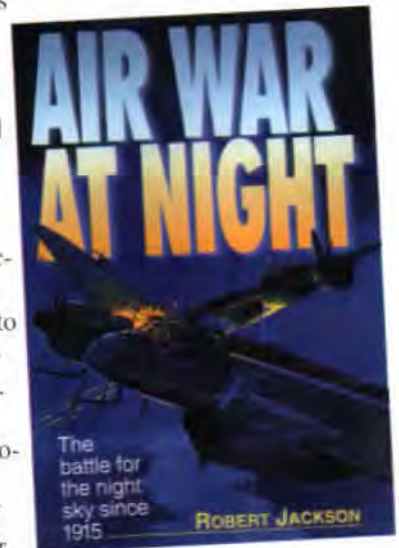
his knowledge of his subject on every page. Air war and night fighters have been part of every conflict since the invention of the airplane. This book is a detailed and definitive essay on the subject of war at night beginning with action during World War I. Separate treatment of the night defence of Britain in 1940-42 as well as the night defence of Germany during those same years precedes the details of night air fighting during the final three years of World War II. Period photographs of airplanes used accompany the text. Post-war development and refinements are covered and the war in Korea is depicted in detail. Cold war era fighters of all countries are described, as well as the ordnance they carried. The final Chapter carries the reader into the strategic fighter era.

Air War At Night is filled throughout with a wealth of factual subject material and offers an understandable chronology to the development of night fighters and night fighting in the air. Photography throughout the book is phenomenal. Large photos show unique aircraft on the ground and in action. Many of the airplanes are British, but for the American readers there are impressive views of the twin-boomed P-82 Twin Mustang fighter and a compendium of in-flight shots of the P-61 twin-tailed Black Widow, dressed up in dark black warpaint. The appendix fleshes out the personnel and the aircraft flown; one especially interesting Appendix lists in detail the particulars of the night fighter victories during the Battle of Britain, July 1940 - May 1941.

This beautiful volume of 157 pages covers a part of the air war which has been present since the early days of flying, but a part about which little factual material has been published. This is interesting and informative reading. You may obtain a copy from:

Howell Press 1713 - 2D Allied Lane

Charlottesville, VA 22903 www.howellpress.com. \$ 34.95 + 3.00 S&H.



"MY THREE YEARS"

1942 Enlistment - Liberation 1945

by Edward Patterson

This small book by Edward Patterson has the qualifier that it is un-edited for content and "tells it like it was." The story is that of one flier's experiences from his enlistment in 1942, through his missions with the 447th Bomb Group at Rattlesden, his capture and imprisonment in Stalag IV, and his subsequent release when American ground forces occupied Germany and liberated the Stalag prisoners.

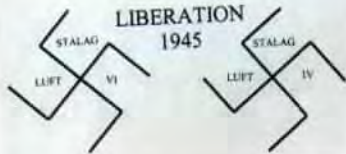
The tale is told from the author's viewpoint - his thoughts, feelings, and opinions flow through every page. It is the very personal story of an 8th Air Force airman and is a perfect volume



1942
ENLISTMENT



"My
Three
Years"



Now this was a thrill and a very proud moment. We didn't know it at the time, but here was a \$316,526 bomber and it was ALL OURS."

The softbound 5"x7" 109-page book is available from Ed Patterson, 5689W. Tice Ct., Homosassa FL 34446 for \$15 post-paid.

VALOR AT POLEBROOK

The Last Flight of Ten Horsepower
by Rick School and Jeff Rogers

More Medals of Honor were awarded to airmen of the 8th Air Force than any other unit during World War II. *Valor at Polebrook* is a gripping account of the most decorated bomber crew of the war and the only crew which saw two of its members receive the Medal of Honor award. It is a story of bravery, those acts of courage which appear by chance, which appear suddenly without warning or expectation, and then are seen to their completion. This story relates the detailed events of a mission of a 351st Bomb Group crew in its B-17 *Ten Horsepower*.

Returning from a mission badly shot up with the copilot dead and the pilot badly wounded, Sgt Archie Mathies, ballturret

This is a cartoon of an actual incident that happened to our crew. We all had a good laugh over it. Needless to say the ball turret was out of business with a frozen yellow window.

Sincerely
Frank McKinley
Stoneham, MA

for those who have never had the opportunity to sit down for an extended interview with a World War II combat crewman.

Waist gunner Patterson recalls his crew's first sight of their new B-17 Flying Fortress - to be named *Scheherazade* - upon its arrival at their training base in Harvard, Nebraska.

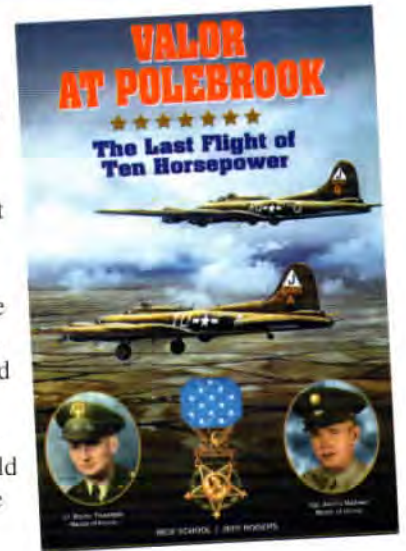
"One day our pilot (Donald MacDonald) got our crew together and we went over to see the 'Forts.' We walked up to one of them and he said, 'THIS IS OURS.'

gunner on the crew, and navigator Lt. Walter Truemper take over the aircraft controls to try and get back home. The story describes their four attempts to bring the plane in for a landing after getting most of the crew to bail out safely over their airbase. Four attempts were made to land the badly damaged bomber safely, three attempts at Polebrook and one try at nearby Molesworth. All attempts failed and the airplane crashed in a big farm field at Denton Hill killing all of the remaining crew on board.

Mathies and Truemper each received the Medal of Honor posthumously for their attempts to save the lives of their injured crewmates.

Authors Rick School and Jeff Rogers spent several years researching all aspects of the event. They write of the attempts of Major Eliza LeDoux and Col. Eugene Romig to assist in the landing by flying alongside in the B-17 *My Princess*. The volume includes a number of photos and dozens of letters from family members and crew of the men who died on the mission. This is an unforgettable close look at the personal side of one of hundreds of similarly tragic events involving 8th Air Force combat crews during the war.

The book is hardbound and softcover. Quality large format. 152pp. 8,000 print run. Available \$24.95 hard or \$17.95 soft. add \$4 s&h or free if ordering two or more books. From Cross Roads, PO Box #83, Kimberly WI 54136 or call 1-800-592-1243.





by Mark Postlethwaite

"When Prayers Were Answered" - An English winter day depicted St. Switlins Church, Old Weston near Molesworth.

Gentlemen,

I have been pursuing leads suggested in your magazine for a year or two until I finally received my WWII medals associated with my stay on Okinawa from Aug 1945 until July 1946. I was with the 1st Photo Recon Squadron based at Kadena Airfield as an Armament Sgt. on B-29's, all part of the 8th AAF for those in the European Theater who don't know this. Upon receipt at those medals I was inspired to write these lines, which probably reflect the feelings of my fellow GI's. Thanks, Al Plueddemann

"The Brown Envelope" September 21, 2000

An envelope came in the mail today,
Big, brown and official
From the US Military Record Center.

With impatient curiosity,
And a strange ennui,
I tore it open.

How old and wrinkled my hands looked,
As I dumped the contents,
On the desk by the sunny window.

Little black cardboard boxes,
Full of World War II medals,
Came tumbling out.

Bright and shiny new medals,
Earned long, long ago,
By a teenage boy.

How strange to see them now,
To feel,
Belated recognition and memories.

All tumbling out,
Reflecting September's light,
Reflecting glory and might.

The Pacific Theater, and W.W. II
victory,
The Army at Occupation, and others,
Now, I too, can reflect.

The big B-29's, the AAF, and I,
All in the mix,
On Okinawa, in nineteen forty-five and
six.

Memories unreeling,
Like an old war time movie,
in faded black and white.

See the devastated island,
Full of destruction and death,
And unholy fright.

See the year of desolation,
In monsoon-shredded tents,
And drab quonset huts.

Killing time at the N.C.O.
Killing drinks as the smoke hangs
low,
Drown the lonesome dreams of home.

Fifty years and a new world later,
I stare at the intruding envelope,
With eyes now dim and moist.

Metal memories:
To prove I was there
That my country cared
To show my grandchildren
Will they understand?
Or strive?
To show my airforce buddies
(If any are still alive)

Now I need to reflect alone,
To commune,
To get ready.

Ready to play the closing scene,
With that freckle faced boy,
Of forever reflective nineteen.

-Al Plueddemann

Eighth AFer's license plates keep appearing from all over the country, and some from England. Here are some of the latest...



Raymond Tompkins of Lake George NY never knew his brother, Alvah Tompkins who flew with the 446th Bomb Group, 704th Squadron. Alvah was killed, after completing his 35 missions, on a shuttle flight to Southport, England in a crash on approach of the B-24 *Ridge Runner*. Raymond's plates are a tribute in his brother's memory.



Associate member James Nehnevaj chose the 91st BG to commemorate after becoming friends with the *Memphis Belle's* Bob Morgan and a neighbor of *Belle* waistgunner Bill Winchell in Bartlett IL.



8th AF license plates are found as far away as Hawaii. Paul Reiox , B-17 pilot with the 306th BG, now lives in Kihei, Maui, Hawaii and has 8th plates on his station wagon and his truck. He says, "I have had many people walk up to me in parking lots and thank me for being a part of that great organization in WW II that helped preserve our freedom and way of life. Most of these people had no idea of the size of the 8th AF and the number of casualties it suffered. They are genuinely interested in learning more about how the massive bombing missions were conducted and listen to every word when I tell them about it."



For ten years the 95th Bomb Group has been remembered on Wisconsin tags on Hank Korol's automobile. Hank states, "I have been stopped innumerable times by 8th AF veterans who knew what the plate meant and by others who were curious as to the meaning."



The 303rd BG's Paul Hershner, Columbus OH, sports a license plate that has been noticed by several persons who have commented that "it is nice to see someone keeping history alive."



Jim Holuj covers all the 8th units with his tag in Manhattan IL. As an 8th AFHS Associate member, Jim has a special room in his home devoted to the Eighth AF. He says, "I thank all 8th veterans for the freedom I enjoy. I will continue to teach future generations about the Mighty Eighth."



Gladys LaParche, Duncan OK, was an Air WAC stationed at "Pinetree" in England assigned to Intelligence Headquarters located in the underground area. She was one of eighty Air WACs of the first contingent enlisted from New Jersey in 1943.



#19 - The radio code name "Acorn 41" belonged to fighter pilot Burt Egge of Mequon WI. He flew in the 55th Fighter Group at Wormingford, England.



My Gal II flew 109 missions with the 351st Bomb Group without an abort. Frank Markut of Ottawa IL worked on that airplane and was one of those who is responsible for the remarkable career of that B-17 Flying Fortress - he has had this proud plate for many years.



The 390th BG tag of Richard Wells, Ordnance Section - Delaware, OH

" You know, I had my annual doctor's appointment and got a checkup the other day. My doctor was just so nice! He asked me all about my medical history and what kind of illnesses I had ever had. The doctor asked me if I had ever been really sick. He said, "Have you ever been bedridden?"

I told him right away, 'Well, yes I have been bedridden several times, and once in the back of a buggy!"

-Minnie Pearl



THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

Twas the night before Christmas and all through the Group,
 The Wheels and Bigwigs were grinding out the poop.
 The aircrafts were parked in their revetments with care
 Waiting for armament soon to be there.
 The airmen were nestled all snug in their beds,
 While visions of milk runs danced in their heads.
 When out of the darkness there came a knock,
 We cursed the C.Q. and looked at our clock.
 "Briefing will be in an hour," he said,
 And we rolled over twice and wished we were dead.
 But time marches on and the minutes fly by,
 So it's out of the sack and ready to fly.
 We rushed to the mess hall and quick as a flash
 Downed some powdered eggs and some hideous hash.

Then along a bumpy road to the briefing room,
 Where the Wheels and Bigwigs have decided our doom.
 The target is told and the first six rows faint,
 For lo and behold, Berlin it ain't.
 The brain has slipped up, Oh! my aching back.
 We're bombing a target that throws up no flak.
 So it's back to the truck and off to the line,
 The road is now smoother and the weather is fine.
 The crew at their stations, the check list is run,
 The engines run smoothly, we give 'em the gun.
 When the pilot cries out in a voice of despair,
 "Look at the tower, they just shot a flare."
 We rush to the windows, our hearts filled with dread.
 The pilot is right, the damned thing is red.
 So it's back to the sack to sweat out our fate,
 A practice formation at a quarter past eight.



John Greenwood, 351st BG and Chairman of the 8th AF Memorial Museum Foundation presents the book "Legends of the Liberator" to John Marsh, Director of the fine Grissom Air Museum, near Peru, Indiana. Grissom Air Museum features a number of static aircraft, exhibitry, and various events throughout the year. Open 10am to 4pm Tuesday - Saturday. Closed in January and on Holidays. Telephone: (765) 688-2654

An old fighter pilot was sitting in his living room reading a book one evening, when he heard a scratching at his front door. Scratch, scratch, scratch - the scratching continued. Finally, rather annoyed, the fellow got up, went over and opened the door, looked down and saw a snail on his doorstep. Angered, his old fighter pilot mentality kicked in and he booted the snail as hard as he could. The snail went flying across the street, hit the curb, and landed down in the gutter.

About a year later the veteran was sitting in his chair reading when he heard a scratching at his front door. The scratching persisted. He got up, went over and opened the door, and there was the same snail at his front door.

The snail looks up at him and says, "What was that all about?!"

- Mark Freeman, Nashville TN



BYLAWS CHANGE PROPOSAL



The following proposed amendment to the Bylaws of the 8th Air Force Historical Society was approved by the Board of Directors on March 4, 2000 for submission to the membership for its approval or disapproval.

[Removed wording is ~~lined through~~, proposed wording is **underlined and bold**.]

Article VIII --METHOD OF ELECTING DIRECTORS

A. A notice shall be placed in the first yearly issue of the official journal by the Secretary of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society informing the membership that anyone desiring to run for the Board of Directors positions that will become vacant (at) the next General Membership Meeting must submit their name to the Secretary no later than ~~April~~ **May 15**.

BALLOT

Mail Ballot Before **February 20th, 2001**
Please vote for or against the change, as you wish:

Article VIII -- METHOD OF ELECTING DIRECTORS:

For the change _____
Against the Change _____

NAME _____ MEMBERSHIP NO. _____

[Ballots without name and correctly matching membership number will not be counted.]

Clip and mail to Secretary, 8AFHS, Membership Records Office, PO Box 1787, Savannah, GA 31402

HOW ABOUT IT?

During his fighting prime, Muhammad Ali boarded a giant 747 jet headed for his next boxing match. The plane began rumbling toward the runway for takeoff. The flight attendant was routinely checking all passengers to assure that everyone was prepared for the flight. She noticed that Ali had not fastened his seat belt. Looking straight at the brash champ, she requested that he fasten his seat belt. With his characteristic cockiness he snapped, "Lady, Superman don't need no seat belt!" Without missing a beat the stewardess responded, "Superman don't need no plane. . . . so buckle up!"

People have mentally created the "superman" image and some have even pretended to be one! But such an idea is merely a false illusion. There is no question that each individual is unique. . . . the Psalmist declares. . . . "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works. . . ." (Psalms 138:14).

The generation who attended movies in the 1930's and early 1940's remember the muscular specimen of a man who's prowess was demonstrated as he moved on vines from tree to tree, performing errands of mercy, saving some hapless person in trouble. Now, he is scarcely remembered and/or little known. A recent survey indicated that people age 30 and below had no idea who "Tarzan" was. He was the WWII generation super-person and was followed by "Superman" and now there are others! But all of them will be forgotten, also!

It is too much for the human mind to comprehend the loss

of the lives of 30,000 human beings of the 8th Air Force taken during the conflict of World War II. Joseph Stalin, the wartime dictator of the Soviet Union, expressed it well, "in matters of human perception." He is reputed to have said, "One death constitutes a tragedy, but a million deaths represent only a statistic." When Stalin lost one of his family members, it was tragedy. . . he experienced it and that loss to him was not a mere statistic. This is really the way of life!

Many have deceived themselves by not dealing seriously and directly with their "superman mentality." We are wonderfully complex and we know it! God is always faithful among the millions but He is also faithful on a one-on-one individual encounter. On some unmarked day. . . at some unnoted hour. . . a God-placed instinct in human hearts becomes alive. When trouble or loneliness or lostness is realized, if we respond to God, He will respond to us. God will intervene in your situation.

. . . at your request. When you call on him he doesn't turn a deaf ear. He listens! He responds! He acts!

Earl Wassom, 466th BG
Chaplain, Tennessee
Chapter



**The time will come, when thou shalt lift thine eyes
To watch a long-drawn battle in the skies.
While aged peasants, too amazed for words,
Stare at the flying fleets of wond'rous birds.
England, so long mistress of the sea,
Where winds and waves confess her sovereignty,
Her ancient triumphs yet on high shall bear,
And reign, the sovereign of the conquered air.**

translated from Thomas Gray's "Luna Habitabilis",
Cambridge, 1797

-submitted by Craig Harris, 457th BG
Durham, N.C.

The Yanks

**We were now Englishmen, not speaking English
and not being understood by the English.
by Alexander Gill, 1619**

THE ETERNAL GOODNESS

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care.

O brothers! If my faith is vain;
if hopes like these betray.
Pray for me that my feet may gain
The sure and safer way.

And Thou, O Lord! by whom are seen
Thy creatures as they be,
Forgive me if too close I lean
My human heart on thee.

- John Greenleaf Whittier
in *Borrowings*



8th AF News

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society

P.O. Box 1787, Savannah, GA 31402

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Washington's Headquarters, Valley Forge, December, 1777 . . . Based on Early Records.*