



# 8th AF NEWS

VOLUME 04 NUMBER 1 Voice of "THE MIGHTY EIGHTH" March 2004

## Forming Up



392nd. Bomb Group - WENDLING  
B-24D-1-CO 41-23689 ('Minerva')



445th. Bomb Group - TIBENHAM  
B-24D-20-CO 41-24215 ('Lucky Gordon')



453rd. Bomb Group - OLD BUCKENHAM  
B-24D-1-CO 41-23738 'Wham Bam'



458th. Bomb Group - HORSHAM ST. FAITH  
B-24D-30-CO 42-40127 'First Sergeant'



489th. Bomb Group - HALESWORTH  
B-24H-1-FO 42-7552 'Lil Cookie'



491st. Bomb Group - METFIELD/NORTH PICKENHAM  
B-24D-90-CO 42-40722 'Little Gramper'

Models by George Wright, 8th AFHS - United Kingdom





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. The 8th AF NEWS is sent to members of the Society and is not for public sale. The home office is at 175 Bourne St., Pooler GA. 31322 - P.O. Box 1787, Savannah, GA. 31402.

### OFFICERS

**President** William C. Rawson 2005  
1417 Currant Way  
Flower Mound, TX 75028-5108  
Tel: (214) 513-1788  
FAX: (214) 513-1688  
wcrawson@aol.com

**Vice President** Lawrence Goldstein (Rose) 2005  
707 Continental Circle Apt. 1521  
Mountain View, CA 94040-3315  
Tel. (650) 938-2474  
lgoldie01@aol.com

**Secretary** John S. Pearson 2007  
1900 Lauderdale Dr. C-315  
Richmond, VA 23233  
Tel. (804)740-2635  
jonpearson@att.net

**Treasurer** Ivan L. McKinney (Mary) 2004  
331 Greenacres Blvd.  
Bossier City, LA 71111  
Tel. (318)742-0895  
ivanmckinney@direcway.com

### STAFF

**Finance Manager** Jeffrey R. Tucker, CPA  
400 Mall Blvd, Suite K  
Savannah, GA 31406  
Tel. (912)354-6321  
FAX (912)351-0226  
jeff@cpa-ht.com

### 8TH AFHS NATIONAL OFFICE

**Membership Records Manager** Connie Metts  
PO Box 1787  
Savannah, GA 31402  
Tel. (912)748-8884  
eafhs@hotmail.com

### 8TH AFHS UNITED KINGDOM CONTACTS

Gordon & Connie Richards  
U.K. Office 14 Pavenham Road  
Oakley, Bedford  
MK43 7SY, England  
01234 823357

### 8TH AFHS PX

Julia Smith  
175 Bourne St.  
P.O. Box 1992  
Savannah, GA 31402  
912-748-8888 store@mightyeighth.org

### 8TH AFHS HISTORIAN

Roger A. Freeman  
Mays Barn  
Dedham Colchester  
Essex CO76EW England

### BOARD OF DIRECTORS

R.C. Dick Baynes Class of 2004  
71 Nighthawk  
Irvine, CA 92604-3693  
Tel. (949)552-3889  
FAX (949)551-2151  
rcbaynes@hotmail.com

Walter E. Brown, MD (Alice) 2005  
**EDITOR 8AF NEWS**  
Ewell Farm, 2340 Sugar Ridge Road  
Spring Hill, TN 37174  
Tel. (931)486-2968  
FAX (931)486-9974  
olddocbrown@msn.com

Mark S. Copeland (Monica) 2006  
16264 Goodview Trail  
Lakeview, MN 55044  
Tel. (952) 953-0121  
moke388@isd.net

C. Craig Harris Class of 2006  
2701 Pickett Road Apt. 2035  
Durham, NC 27705-5649  
Tel. (919)489-5685  
FAX (919)419-1705  
charris4@nc.rr.com

Gerald J. Miller 2007  
360 Burroughs Drive  
Amherst, NY 14226-3909  
Tel. 716-839-3472

N. Kenneth Nail (Ethelda) 2005  
1211 Eugene Street  
Tupelo MS 38804  
(662)844-1553 (662)844-2488  
Fax (662)842-4531  
cotbooks@netbci.com

Earl E. Wassom (Cynthia) 2007  
548 Brentmoor Drive  
Bowling Green KY 42101-3772  
Tel. and Fax: (270) 842-0412  
email: e.wassom@att.net

Belton C. Wolf (Mary Anne) 2006  
4032 Twyla Lane  
Campbell, CA 95008-3721  
Tel. (408)374-4723  
belmaw\_49@hotmail.com  
bel49maw@attn.net

### DIRECTORS EMERITUS

Aida Kaye Sherman Small  
Norman C. Grant Robert Vickers

### CHAPTER/UNIT DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Jim Erskine (Joe Ann)  
568 Colima Drive  
Toledo, OH 43609  
Tel. (419)382-8595  
Fax (419)382-4242  
jimjake2@juno.com

### Operations



Fighter Ops at Suffron Walden

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## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

It is not too soon for members to plan for attending Reunion 2004. Your Board has been working on this year's gathering since the close of our 2003 Reunion in Colorado Springs. Reunion 2004 will be held at the Westin Crowne in Kansas City, Missouri, October 5-9, 2004.

I am still receiving complements on our Colorado Springs get-together. A large attendance, wonderful tours, and excellent weather combined to make the Reunion everything members could wish. This success reflects past President Craig Harris' splendid planning and hard work which made Colorado Springs one of our most memorable Reunions. Craig is managing this year's event as Chairman of the Reunion Committee.

Vice President Larry Goldstein, chairman of the Membership Committee, and Unit Advisory Committee chairman Jim Erskine are coordinating a vigorous campaign urging Units and Chapters to schedule their respective 2004 reunions with the 8AFHS in Kansas City. The Board has approved a program of incentives to encourage the Units and Chapters to come to Kansas City this year. Units and Chapters having 50 or more members registered with the 8AFHS and the Westin Crowne Center hotel will receive their own hospitality suites during the Reunion, free. Smaller Units can participate in this incentive program with 25 or more members attending and registered with the 8AFHS and the hotel. The response to Larry and Jim's efforts has been very encouraging.

Membership is an issue of great importance to our Society. As we lose members, especially the veterans of the Mighty Eighth of WWII, we lose income from their dues, their dedication to our Historical Society, and their leadership. When addressing our declining membership, the financial impact of this loss is obvious. At our Colorado Springs reunion members were asked to approve a \$5.00 increase in annual dues. Without new members, we still will have to reduce expenses, reductions that will impact the quality of our *8th Air Force News*, our educational projects, and the operation of our Membership Office at the Heritage Museum. Increasing dues is a difficult decision to make and it is

never popular. Your Board is keenly aware that you veterans were more than generous in answering the call for voluntary financial support two years ago. We are financially healthy today because of this generosity. We however, should not, can not rely on gifts to sustain us. We need dues-paying members.

Beyond pure financial interests, we must recruit post WWII members to assume the leadership positions within the Units, Chapters and our national organization. Board members Walt Brown, Ivan McKinney and Mark Copeland are from the post WWII generation, and they are serving our members with distinction. This trend must continue if we are to have the leadership necessary to guide our noble Historical Society into the future. I ask every member to recruit a new member. *It is our future.*

Regarding your generosity: you are to be congratulated for your continuing support to the Woolnough Library at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum. Last year, and again this year, when annual dues notices were mailed, members were asked to contribute to the Library. At the same time requests for contributions to the Library were sent to all our Life Members. In 2003 the 8AFHS presented more than \$44,000 to the Museum. Most of this sum was in support of the Library; \$2,000 was for unspecified purposes. Thus far in 2004, \$22,000 in gifts for the Museum have been received as members pay their 2004 dues and Life Members demonstrate again their unending support to the preservation of the History of the Mighty Eighth.

Our veterans are indeed a "Great Generation."

**William Rawson, President**



**William Rawson  
President**

### **ANNUAL REUNION 8TH AFHS REUNION 2004**

**OCTOBER 5-10, 2004**  
WESTIN CROWN CENTRE  
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI  
Information in June 04 issue

### **Forming Ship Models**

The models on the covers of this issue, are the handiwork of a devoted English model maker, George Wright, who brought a model of the 445th BG forming ship to a 2ADA meeting in Norwich. He asked if the 2ADA was interested in having models of each of the Groups forming ships for display in the Norwich Library 2AD Memorial Room. The answer of course was a resounding yes.

George completed the models over the next two years and they are permanently installed in place of honor in the Memorial Room.



## MISSION BRIEFING

I have received a few notes questioning the recent \$5 raise in Society dues for 2004. As a member of the Board of Directors, I can state that we are looking far down the road as an organization that will make a significant difference in the growth of the younger generations in America. We are operating professionally and watch every penny spent. We must remain financially stable and this last dues raise will ensure that.

Our \$25 yearly dues do much more than produce a full-color quarterly newsmagazine – the Society's international vehicle of communication for everyone who served in the Mighty Eighth. There are important programs which your dues dollars support.

- 🍏 Our national educational programs and materials bring the 8th AF history and 8th AF Character Values to over one million school children in 15,000 schools across the country.
- 🍏 Funding of the John Woolnough Library programs and 8th Air Force historical research archives at the Heritage Museum
- 🍏 Project fund drives such as the \$600,000 8th AF Memorial Chapel in the Heritage Museum Gardens
- 🍏 Annual awards programs recognizing accomplishments and heroism of active duty 8th AF service personnel
- 🍏 Maintenance of our 8th AFHS PX and our National office with our records, membership files and day to day services
- 🍏 Support of our 34 Chapters and interactions with all

8th AF Unit Associations

- 🍏 Sponsorship of Seminars and programs at our annual reunions
- 🍏 8th AF News, 20,000 copies per issue, is read by a number of the younger generation, telling what the 8th AF did and preserving memorable stories from those who did it.

We have members of all ages around the world; 40,000 readers per each issue of the 8th AF News. Our news-magazine does not fill its pages with advertisements as are found throughout the pages of most newsstand aviation-related magazines.

These and other valuable 8th AFHS programs are all about your history and our Historical Society's future; programs which by the way, are expanding each year because we support them with our dues and donations. As Casey Stengel said, "There's lots of stuff going on out there."

Together, we are Keeping 'em Flying.



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

Walter Brown, Editor

## Cover Story

### FORMING PLANES OF THE SECOND AIR DIVISION



**F.C. "Hap" Chandler**  
491st Bomb Group

The Second Division of the Eighth Air Force grew from one group, the 93rd Bomb Group, to fourteen groups by D-Day. Theoretically, the 14 groups could deploy 504 B-24s on a single mission. Having this many aircraft airborne at one time presented a major problem in "forming" - having each group's aircraft in its proper position by squadron, Group and Wing.

The Second Division identified each Group and Wing with various color combinations. A major problem arose in the identification of a single aircraft associated with each group. War-weary B-24s were painted in garish colors, making them easily recognizable in the air. These were known as "forming ships". Their function was to remain airborne long enough to form each Group and

await the arrival of the Group lead ship. "Group leads" usually were the last aircraft airborne, having delayed for last minute instructions, weather target changes, and so forth.

When the Group lead ship arrived, the "forming plane" moved out of formation and returned to base, their critical function of serving as a rallying point now complete. Combat crews sometime referred to these garishly-painted airplanes as the "Judas Goats", recalling the goats that led the cattle to slaughter at packing plants in America's Middle West. The lead goats escaped via a trapdoor while their followers continued to the slaughter pens.

The original and innovative use of "forming planes" was one example of the ingenuity of the 8th Air Force Staff in deploying the maximum number of bombers on the deadly missions over Germany.

F.C. "Hap" Chandler  
491st BG, Atlanta, GA





## HERITAGE MUSEUM ACTIVITIES

Dear Friends:

My purpose in writing to you today is two-fold. First, I am writing to say Thank You on behalf of the 5th grade students of Waldo Pafford Elementary School in Hinesville, Georgia and the 14,000 other school children from around the country who visited the Heritage Museum this year as participants in the museum's education programs. Thank you to the veterans who served and thank you to those whose financial support has built and maintained the Mighty 8th AF Heritage Museum to honor them. Second, I am writing to ask for your support of the museum's 2004 Annual Campaign.

In a 1951 letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Lovett, President Eisenhower stated "Freedom is something that must be earned every day that one lives!" While we at the museum agree completely with President Eisenhower's statement, we take it a step further and believe that freedom should not only be earned daily, but should also be *learned* daily. The children who explore this museum use our unique resources, powerful artifacts, interaction with veterans, oral histories, archives, and moving exhibits to experience history and learn about the price that was paid and continues to be paid, for freedom. They leave not only enlightened, but also grateful.

Past support from donors have enabled us to employ a top-notch educator who brings the story of the Eighth Air Force to life in a way that inspires and captivates our student-visitors, to purchase much needed supplies, build new exhibits, conserve the rich artifacts and archival documents in our collections and preserve the history and heritage of the Eighth Air Force in an honorable and engaging fashion. The museum receives no federal or state

funding for this important work. Our operating funds come from paid admissions, museum store/restaurant sales, memberships, and contributions to our annual campaign. Your generosity directly reflects the level of programming that we are able to offer. Our appreciation and thanks go out to all of you.

Sincerely,

**C.J.Roberts**  
**President & CEO**



**C.J. Roberts**

*The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage is truly the home of The Mighty Eighth; The support of the members of the 8th Air Force Historical Society has made the Museum, it's Memorial Gardens, Memorial Chapel, and Archives unique in America. -Ed.*



**Waldo Pafford Elementary School in Hinesville, Georgia**

### **The Captain Had 35 Angels...**

#### **B-17 CREW WENT TO HEAVEN**

The Army released today the adventures of an Army Air Corps officer who drifted for 16 days on a life raft in the southwestern Pacific and then landed on a tropical Paradise populated by 35 women and the island Chieftain. Capt. Balfour C. Gibson, of Berkeley Cal., and his B17 crew lived on mouldy K rations, sharks, and sea gulls for more than two weeks after being shot down by the Japanese. Finally, Gibson related, they sighted a string of seven small islands and found them populated by friendly natives, mostly women.

Because of the food shortage, he said, each crewman was assigned to a separate island, and on Gibson's were the Chief and 35 pretty girls and women who stuffed him with chicken, lobster, and other dainties. His landing weight of 100 pounds increased to 160 during his stay on the island.

Gibson is married.

**Stars & Stripes; 1945**



## GOING BACK

### AN 8TH AIRMAN RETURNS TO OLD ENEMY TERRITORY

*Myasis Dragon was brought down by a direct hit. The first of a salvo of three shells took out the #3 engine. As the second exploded under the radio room, Gene Girman loosened his flak vest and clipped on one of his parachute rings. The third came right into the bomb bay, exploding between the two bomb racks. The B-17 immediately became an inferno, and Gene remembers seeing the aircraft melting before his eyes. Within seconds Myasis Dragon disintegrated in a large explosion that showered several other aircraft in the formation with debris. One piece of the falling wreckage included the ball turret with gunner Reid Bishop inside. Gene Gurman was unconscious and his foot was caught in the runner of the ball turret hatch, trapping Bishop inside. After some time, Gene fell free and Bishop was able to open his hatch, grab his parachute, connect it to his harness, and free himself from the wreckage. Gene regained consciousness as he hit denser air. He remembers seeing Bishop's chute opening at almost the same time as his, 1500 feet above the ground.*

*The crew from Myasis Dragon came down over a seventeen kilometer-wide area. The airplane itself crashed just northeast of Bergliebenau, Germany five miles from Merseberg. As the German troops were looking around the crash site for Gene's crew, they came across an American airman who had been shot down a month earlier, and executed him.*

Gene Girman was radio operator on the Jack Hillary crew of the B17 *Myasis Dragon*. On an earlier mission, this same crew had flown the 303rd Bomb Group's *Thunderbird* to Wiesbaden, Germany, a bombing raid now depicted on the Keith Ferris mural at the National Air and Space Museum in Washington, DC.

The mission was to heavily defended Merseberg on 15 August 1944. German flak batteries hit the crew's bomber with two bursts. Only two of the crew survived, Gene and ball turret gunner Reid Bishop. Gene and Brian McGuire, long-time 303rd base contact at Molesworth JAC headquarters, with Brian's wife as navigator, returned to the site of his shootdown and to the hospitals and POW camps that Gene remained in until the end of the war.

They left England and visited Albert Postma, Dutch Resistance helper, at his home in Steenberg, Holland. Arriving in Germany, the group found their way by automobile to the town of Bergliebenau, five miles north of Merseberg, where Gene's plane had gone down on a mission to bomb the Leuna synthetic oil refineries. After his bailout, Gene landed near the bridge at Torgau on the Elbe river - the bridge where U.S. and Russian troops were to link up at the end of the war. Stalag IV D was within sight.

On their journey Gene and Brian found the abandoned hospital near the Lazarette chocolate factory where

Gene's wounds were treated. They visited Oberusal, the infamous German Interrogation center. They went to another hospital site at Meiningen, where Gene had been treated for over a month. Gene's wartime trail passed through Stalag Luft IV in Pomerania and finally to Nuremberg - Stalag Luft XIII D, and his final march with fellow prisoners to Moosberg. Many of the old prison camp buildings are now used as office buildings; many of them are in ruins or have been torn down. Gene invariably recalled the buildings and their surroundings of his war years.

During his wartime months as a POW, Gene met a number of wounded airmen he knew from the 8th AF. On this return trip decades later, he and Brian talked with a number of German citizens, young and old, who showed interest in Gene's experiences and greeted them with European hospitality, some with emotional and sympathetic reactions to meeting them. After his liberation by American forces, Gene had returned home through Camp Lucky Strike, as did many of the American POWs.

Both trips through Germany are a memorable and unforgettable part of Gene Girman's life. His younger years in the 8th Air Force and his experiences of 1944 and 1945 have remained vividly alive to him, as they have to most all of the airmen of the 8th Air Force. Both of his journeys traveling through Germany may appropriately be termed "trips of a lifetime."

Abstracted by the editor from a booklet written by Brian McGuire, 8thAFHS

*With deepest regret we have learned from his family that Gene Girman passed away in early March 2004 -Editor*



Gene Girman, left, with Brian and Dina McGuire, at Albert Postma's home in Steenberg, Holland. Albert is a Dutch Resistance helper and a member of the 8th AFHS and AFEES





Over 1000 anti-aircraft guns defended the Leuna oil refineries near Merseberg



Some German war equipment found in a barn



Gene at the grave of *Myasis Dragon* flight engineer George Paul, American Cemetery in Margraten The Netherlands



A "Hitler Madchen" and her son showing the entourage around town at Obermassfeld



Building Gene was held in - Obermassfeld



Wide streets and prison barracks at Moosberg camp



Wiesbaden Air base, now American, usually seen from 25,000-foot altitude



Speaking with a German resident at the present-day center of the prison camp at Moosberg



Church at Paulushofen where the POWs were allowed to worship on the march to Moosberg



## TO THE THIRD GENERATION

### Earl Wassom, 466th Bomb Group

How very excited we of the 466th Bomb Group were to have our own special "dooley" guest at the annual 8th AF Historical Society Banquet. She was the center of attention and everyone wanted to have their picture taken with this beautiful and charming young lady. And how did this all come to pass? Well, it's a long story that had its beginning in July, 1943.

At Victory Field, Vernon, Texas, Wassom had completed his primary flight training (Class of 43K) and D. R. "Duncan" Miller, his flight instructor, was wishing him and his three other student cadets success in their military careers. All of them succeeded, all four finished their Cadet training, were awarded their wings and commissions as second lieutenants, and went to war, three as B-24 pilots and one as a P-51 pilot. All survived the war, followed by successful civilian careers.

Recently, Wassom heard of Duncan Miller's 82nd birthday party and contacted him. In their telephone conversation that day, Miller revealed that his granddaughter was a first year cadet "dooley" at the Air Force Academy. Quick phone calls and arrangements were made and C4C Kathryn "Katie" Miller became one of the invited Air Force Academy guests to attend the 29th Annual Reunion Gala Banquet on October 19, 2003.

It was love at first sight. Wonderful and charming "Katie" was accepted by the fifty 466ers present at the banquet.

She brightened up photos with many old "geezers" and received a hug from Lt. General Bruce Carlson, Commander of the 8th Air Force.

Katie spent her previous six years in Japan and is fluent in the Japanese language. She also speaks other languages. She wants to be an Air Force pilot, having already soloed in a J-3 Cub and Cessna 140.

Who was her instructor? It was none other than her very proud grandfather, Duncan Miller!



Earl Wassom and Katie Miller

## THE FIX

Re the Gremlins: Alan Senior writes with the mislabel in the Dec 03 issue 8th AF News stating that the new CAF name is actually the Commemorative Air Force rather than Contemporary AF as was printed. I guess the name is somewhat contemporary in itself, in that for over 50 years CAF carried the name The Confederate Air Force.

Also glad to correct the cutline of Birdie Schmidt's photo in the annual reunion section. She served in wartime England and had her name and face on the nose of a bomber during that time. She forwards some interesting material which will appear in the 8th AF News.

An erroneous hotel phone number crept into the NCAC article on the upcoming WW II Memorial events in Washington this May. Wrong hotel. Check the Chapter News in this issue for all the correct details.

—Editor

## HONORING THE AMERICAN PAST

The stories of America's World War II Veterans. The history of the Mighty Eighth is preserved and presented in this fine set sponsored by the 8th AFHS and the Heritage Museum, and funded by the 8th's Frank DeCicco family with Prentice Hall Publishers. For further information and to order one or several kits - the entire set goes for \$24.99 - call Julia Smith at the museum: tel. 912-748-8888 or email:

[www.mightyeighthgiftshop.org](http://www.mightyeighthgiftshop.org)





## REUNIONS

### 351ST BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

May 27 – 30, 2004  
Washington DC  
HQ hotel: Sheraton-Reston VA  
Contact: Clint Hammond  
POB 281; Mechanicsburg PA 17055  
tel 717-766-1489

### 398TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

June 3-15, 2004  
Normandy/England Tour  
September 8-11, 2004  
Marriott Hotel  
Falls Church VA (Washington)  
Contact: Wally Blackwell  
tel. 301-762-2213; email  
wally398th@worldnet.att.net

### 1ST STRATEGIC AIR DEPOT ASSOCIATION

May 20-23, 2004  
Radisson Hotel Schaumburg  
(Chicago)  
Contact: Warren Stanley  
390 N. Winchester 5-1-G  
Santa Clara CA 95050  
tel. 408-248-8627  
Email: wstanley@neteze.com

### 390TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

September 7-12, 2004 Tucson AZ  
Contact: Ken Rowland, POB 28363,  
Spokane WA, 9928-8363  
Tel 509-467-2565  
email rkenrow@aol.com

### BAD 2 ASSOCIATION

Sept 30-Oct 2, 2004  
Romulus MI  
Contact: DickMcClune, 527  
Quarterfield Rd; Newport News VA  
23602  
email BAD2TRSR@msn.com

### 352ND FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION

October 9-12, 2004  
Savannah GA  
Contact Bob "Punchy" Powell  
1545 Ranier Falls Dr.  
Atlanta, GA 30329 tel 404-636-3747

### 3RD STRATEGIC AIR DEPOT ASSOCIATION

October 7-9, 2004  
Golden CO Holiday Inn  
Contact Ed Keller  
2873 South Gray Way  
Denver CO 80227 tel 303-985-7750  
email csed@msn.com

### BURTONWOOD ASSOCIATION UK REUNION

May 24-30, 2004  
Contact Jim Bentley  
3236 Stonebridge Trail  
Valrico FL 33594

### 446th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

May 26-30, 2004  
Washington D.C.  
Contact Bill Davenport  
13382 Wheeler Place

Santa Ana CA 92705-1934

### PILOT CLASS 44-D REUNION

Oct 11-14, 2004  
Branson MO  
Contact Lloyd Johnson  
5011 Sugar Creek Rd  
Lincoln NE 68516  
Tel 402-423-2304

### 56TH FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION

June 17-19, 2004  
Fairfax VA Holiday Inn  
Contact Ron Brubaker, POB 57  
Red Creek WV 26289  
Tel 304-866-4415

## SOUTHEASTERN 8TH AFHS CHAPTERS REUNION

A big reunion of all Southeastern 8th AFHS Chapters and friends will be held at the Read House Hotel, Chattanooga, Tennessee. Events begin Thursday March 25, 2004 and run through Sunday March 28. Activities in Chattanooga, hospitality rooms, and a banquet are part of the festivities. Individual Chapter meetings will be held.

Contact: James Bass, TN Chapter President at tel 615-735-1122; address Box 500, Carthage TN 37030.

## IF YOU DON'T TELL, WE DON'T KNOW

When there are new officers in the Units or Chapters or address changes, please send the information to the Unit and Chapter Committee Chairman, Jim Erskine – address is on inside front cover.

## U&C CHANGES AND ADDITIONS

### CHAPTER CHANGES

#### New Presidents:

**Florida Chapter James C. Hart** 114 Monterey Way Royal Palm Beach, FL 33411 561-795-4854  
e-mail hartklamking@aol.com

**Massachusetts Chapter Alfred E. Dusey** 18 Algonquin Ave. Andover, MA 01810 e-mail alfred3159@aol.com

**Oregon Chapter Eldon Bevins** 561 S.W. Levens St. Dallas, OR 97338-1848 503-623-3697 e-mail eebevebs@aol.com

### UNIT CHANGES

#### New Unit Contacts:

**55 FG Robert M. Littlefield** P.O.Box 3644 Carmel, CA 93921 831-624-5293

**385 BG Art Driscoll** 4500 Post Rd. Apt. H-75 Nashville, TN 37205 615-352-3530 Fax 615-352-6995  
e-mail artdriscoll@hotmail.com

**448 BG Edward M. Schultz** 1089 Rancho Santa Fe Rd. Encinitas, CA 92024-6834 760-943-1641  
Fax 760-943-0771



## UNIT AND CHAPTER COMMITTEE TO ALL CHAPTER MEMBERS

The Committee has made several requests for a copy of each Chapter's roster. So far some of the Chapters have not submitted their rosters to the Committee. It is necessary for the Committee to have these rosters so the Chapter may receive its annual rebate. If the Committee gets **NO ROSTER** the Chapter gets **NO REBATE!** As the Great Bard said in Julius Ceasar "Beware the Ides of March." Your roster must be in to the Committee by March 15, 2004. It's your Chapter's call.

### TO ALL UNIT ASSOCIATION MEMBERS

The Committee has invited all Unit Associations to attend the Historical Society annual reunion in Kansas City, MO in October. Some Units have accepted the invitation and will attend. If you belong to one of these Units be sure to get your reservations in early so your Unit will receive the Unit rebate after the reunion.

### TO ALL MEMBERS

For those of you whose Unit will not be attending as a Unit or do not belong to a Unit Association but wish to attend the Historical Society reunion, please come and

join the rest of the Mighty Eighth members. The only ones who do not have a good time are the ones who do not wish to have a good time. The Committee does not want to hear "I don't know anyone there." Yours truly didn't know anyone when I went to my first reunion. Joe Ann and I have many friends now. Everyone wears a name tag, so introduce yourself and you will be surprised how many friends you will have at the end of the reunion.

### "Why don't I ever see anything in the 8th AF News about my Chapter or Unit?"

The answer is simple; nobody sent anything to the Editor. Dr. Walt Brown, MD can and does save lives and edits a great newsletter but there his miracles stop. He just can't guess what happened someplace else. You have to tell him!

For the Committee  
Jim Erskine, Chairman

*If you are looking for perfect safety, you will do well to sit on a fence and watch the birds; but if you really wish to learn to fly, you must mount a machine and become acquainted with its tricks by actual trial.*

-from a speech by Wilbur Wright

## ELECTION NOTICE

Nominations of candidates for election to the Board of Directors of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society must be in the hands of the Secretary no later than May 15, 2004. The following information must be included:

- \*Full name and address of person being nominated
- \*Nominee's 8th AFHS membership number
- \*8th Air Force unit in which nominee served, if applicable
- \*Short resume of nominee
- \*Nominating individual's full name and address
- \*Nominator's 8th AFHS membership number and, if applicable, his unit

The Secretary will send all nominations to the Nominating Committee. Nominations received by the Secretary after May 15, 2004, or any nomination without complete information will not be considered.

Send all nominations to: John S. Pearson, 8AFHS Secretary  
1900 Lauderdale Drive, Apt. C315  
Richmond, VA 23233

## Visiting Hours

To confront their madness  
is to face your own.  
Just as they spend hours plucking lint  
from their stained dressing gowns,  
and raise imagined food to toothless mouths,  
you also find your actions void  
even as you look for omens, hope,  
in gestures of whoever else you meet.

While great aunt Eleanora counts the pearls  
that she no longer wears,  
great uncle Ramsey checks his toes  
amputated years ago.

Now you catch yourself adding up  
your weightless pocket change.

You are no longer  
merely visiting.

Elisavietta Ritchie  
Washington, DC



# JIMMY STEWART, THE MAN

by John Cunningham, 445th Bomb Group

May I tell you about Jimmy Stewart, the man? His long life has been a legacy for good. In the strife between good and evil, he was a hero. His acting and his leadership during WW II would not have been convincing if he had not believed in the concept he portrayed.

This concept was most convincing in his movie *It's a Wonderful Life*. I observed the audience as they watched the movie. Everyone seemed deeply moved, as Jimmy acted out the deepest of human emotions, vulnerability and strength.

**"The airplane sinks fast. Get your ass out as quickly as possible."**

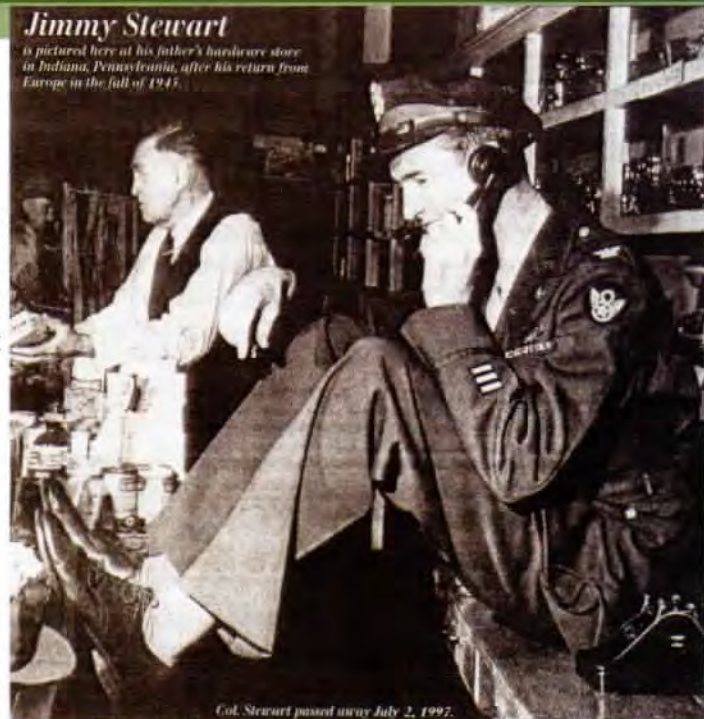
We first met during our third phase training in Sioux City at the 2nd Air Force training base. My personal contact continued with this great individual in the 445th Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force, based in World War II Great Britain. I was a member of one of the crews which flew out of England to bomb targets in Germany

in 1943 and 1944. Jimmy Stewart was lead pilot on many of our raids over Germany.

As a pilot and squadron operations officer, he considered his job important to the war effort and wanted each man in our outfit to feel the same way about himself. Later he became Squadron C.O. and then went to Group Operations. Because of his reputation for doing things right, the fly boys felt safer when Jimmy was in the lead plane. He worked hard to keep the Unit focused on the job to be done. He seemed to want to forget that he was a celebrity.

Some of Jimmy's mystique evaporated when he was getting prepared for a mission. His drawl was paced a bit faster as he explained the fine points of landing in the North Sea.

"Now after you are in the water, you don't have much time. The airplane sinks fast. Get your ass out as quick-



Col. Stewart passed away July 2, 1997.

ly as possible. Don't inflate your Mae West until you are free of the plane." He delivered his message on ditching and others with a soft authoritative voice which gave military bearing to his lanky frame with small arms and legs. His slightly round face formed a smile with the message of importance he delivered. "What you learn here

**"In the strife between good and evil, he was a hero."**

may save your life. Please ask questions if you don't understand," he said. We already liked Jimmy Stewart, but his individual concern for the crew touched us.

In flying into Sioux City on a night training mission, a thunderstorm was in progress over the field. As per regulations, the pilot flew a landing pattern at 1,000 feet. The procedure was to line up with the runway, fly downwind keeping the lights of the field in view, then turn and fly upwind to land. Jimmy elected to land the B-24 Liberator from the co-pilot side. On this occasion, because of low visibility, he flew a close-in pattern to



John Cunningham kneeling at far left



## JIMMY STEWART, THE MAN cont'd

keep the lights of the field in view. Close-in, the approach angle of descent has to be steep. On the final approach, it was my job as chief engineer to call off the air speed as a precautionary measure to alert the pilot if the aircraft's flying speed dropped below 95 miles per hour, the B-24's stalling speed with full flaps. Flaps were fully extended and we made preparations for landing. Just before the plane touched down, a flash of lightning turned night into day, then night again. The plane hit the ground on the nose wheel just as I called out 150 mph. The plane rocked back on the strut under the tail and again became airborne. To keep the plane on the runway, Jimmy pushed the stick forward. The nose touched the pavement. Our nose wheel had been knocked off. The bomber skidded down the runway on its nose and the two landing wheels. Sparks generated by aircraft metal sliding over the pavement made the plane appear to be on fire. The tower saw what they thought was a fire and sent out two additional fire trucks. Any minute I expected the

plane to blow. Lt. Stewart kept his cool and also kept the plane on the runway. I turned off the generators and electrical system so as not to

**"He raised our spirits by demonstrating what can be done with the right mind-set."**

contribute to the already critical fire hazard. There was no release of fuel. During the accident, the rain had been coming down hard. When the plane finally came to a stop, the rain stopped. As the crew piled out of the airplane in a rush, we were met by the three fire engines rushing to the plane to put out a fire. There was no fire. Our group commander Col. Terrell, also appeared. "Are you hurt, Jimmy?" he asked. "Is anyone hurt?" Jimmy said, "Only my pride." The plane was placed in class 26 and never flown again. By his actions throughout his long life, Jimmy Stewart proved his worth with dedicated productivity. His

excellent profile has been an example for us all. He raised our spirits by demonstrating what can be done with the right mind-set. How does a man of this fame and fortune accept his own shortcomings? With humility.



**John Cunningham**  
2003

**John Cunningham, 445th BG**  
**Atlanta, GA**

Stewart photo submitted by Alan Senior

*Starr Smith, 8th airman and author, has written a volume on Jimmy Stewart's war years entitled "Jimmy Stewart's Greatest Role - Combat Bomber Pilot in WW II," soon to be released. -Ed.*



### **STRATEGIC AIR COMMAND REUNION 12-15 MAY 2004 Shreveport/Bossier City/Barksdale AFB, Louisiana**



For 45 years after WW II, the Strategic Air Command led our country's defense during the Cold

War. If you flew, maintained or supported any of bombers and refuelers, you belonged to SAC. Great opportunity to enjoy the fine camaraderie and fellowship with your former SAC members. "Peace is our Profession" and we led our country in the Cold War. Let's get together for what may be the last time. We will visit and have a Memorial Service at the 8th AF Museum on Barksdale AFB. Dinner with Lt. General Bruce Carlson, Commander 8th AF and a Banquet with VP Cheney (tentative) and former AF Chief of Staff, General Ron Fogleman. The reunion site is the Isle of Capri Hotel and Casino, Bossier City, Louisiana. Rates are \$79 to \$89 plus tax.

There are five casinos in the area and the entertainment rivals Las Vegas! The horse racing season will be well

underway at Louisiana Downs! The roses will be blooming at the American Rose Center with over 22,000 bushes in America's largest park dedicated to roses. In addition, the R.W. Norton Art Gallery features the largest collection of Charlie Russell and Frederick Remington paintings and sculptures in the world--a must-see while in this area!

Peyton Cole, Reunion Host  
Steve dePyssler  
2004 Reunion Chairman  
Barksdale Retiree Office

For information and invitations call toll free 1-866-544-2412, commercial 318-456-5976, fax 318-456-3520 or e-mail rao@barksdale.af.mil. Host is BGen Peyton Cole, USAF, (Retired). The Barksdale Retiree Office, headed by Col. Steve de Pyssler, USAF (Ret.) is handling the details.



## MID AIR COLLISION - A REMINISCENCE

After climbing to 17,000 feet and at the beginning of our Group's assemblage, several events occurred almost simultaneously. There was a sudden severe lurching drop of the aircraft, downward and to the left in the attitude of a beginning spin. The emergency alarm bell went off and flight engineer, Vernon Hatler, bailed out of the front escape hatch next to my navigator table, and just a few inches from my left elbow. He had witnessed another B17 crashing into our plane, very narrowly being missed by the propeller that shattered the top turret as well as taking off the vertical stabilizer and rudder. The right elevator was torn off, the left elevator was jammed in the down position causing a continuous right nose over tendency. There were no tail controls available as the control cables were severed and curled up on the floor of the waist.

What happened in the cockpit during the seconds following this crash proved to be our redemption.

Somehow, pilot Les Hull in that crucial period of time, realized there was no control from the tail assembly and sensing the violent start of a tail spin, increased the power on the #3 and #4 engines and pulled the power to the #1 and #2 engines. The ailerons were the only flight controls remaining. By this time I had clipped on my chest pack parachute and Hull was on the intercom informing the crew that it would be possible to ride the plane down to a lower altitude, engage the automatic pilot and head the plane out over the English Channel. With

a derelict plane fully loaded with gasoline and incendiaries, there was no decision. At 4,000 feet the remaining crew bailed out.

The most striking sensation after going out the nose hatch was how it was utter silence. I counted the mandatory 1-2-3 and pulled the ripcord. This was followed by a horrific jerk. I floated down and landed heels, butt, head, with a painful groin from a wayward parachute harness buckle.



**B-17 Flying Fortress - the Les Hull Crew**

Very shortly, in the gray morning, a helmeted Home Guard on a bicycle rode up and we proceeded to a small police station just outside Ipswich. All of us were picked up and transported back to base within an hour or two. The Flight Engineer actually had landed on a runway of

our base. The entire episode from collision to landing, took only 7-8 minutes. The crew was up flying a practice mission the following day and we flew our next combat mission (#2) five days later. We did not receive a mission credit for the mid-air collision. We completed our 35 missions in the next five months.

The other B-17 crew was able to feather the #3 and #4 engine props damaged in the collision, salvo their bombs over the Channel and land safely at our home base. A hearing board determined that the other pilot caused the collision and he was removed from 1st pilot status.

**The date: September 27, 1944**

**The weather: The usual solid English overcast at about 6,000 feet.**

**The place: Sudbury, Suffolk County, England**

**Station 174 486th Bomb Group  
832nd Bomb Squadron  
8th Air Force**

**The mission: Southwest Germany - our crew's second**

**The Crew: Pilot - Lesley Hull  
Co-Pilot - William Roberts  
Navigator - Murray Hunter  
Bombardier - John Hardy  
Waist Gunner - Buford Addington  
Tail Gunner - Richard Stevenson  
Flight Engineer - Gunner - Vernon Hatler  
Radio Operator - Wesley Thelander  
Ball Turret Gunner - Howard Lowe**

Some of this material, and the photo, was obtained from Les Hull's notes of missions extracted from my navigator's log and surreptitiously kept. These then were written up posthumously by his friend D.F. Plummer in 1998.

**Murray H. Hunter, MD  
486th Bomb Group  
Emily, MN**

To remind myself of the old days, I bought my wife a slinky nightgown for her birthday. She looked great in it standing there at the top of the stairs.

**Clyde White, 390th Bomb Group**



SECRET

APPENDIX D  
Direction of Attacks and Hits on B-17's  
by Enemy Fighters

July - November 1943

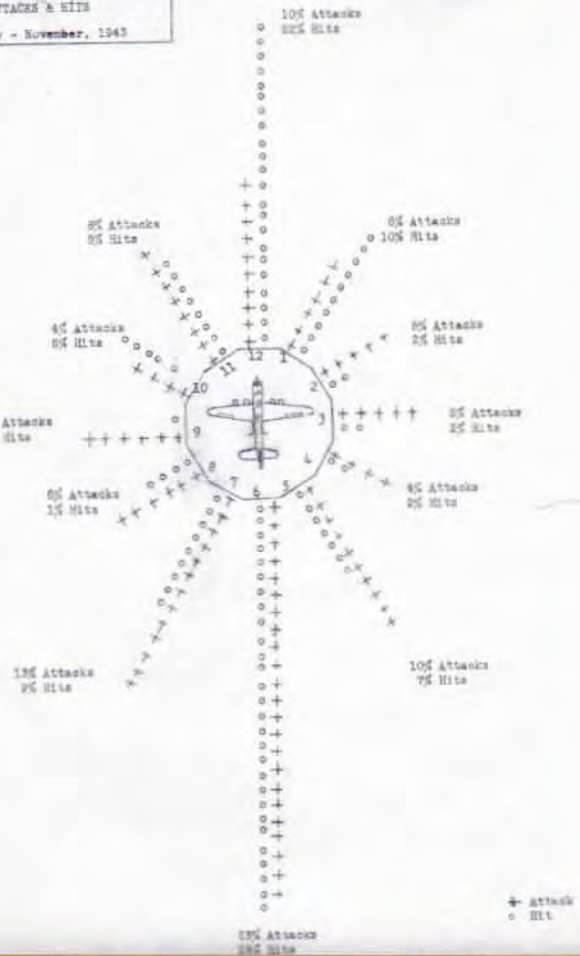
The frequency with which our bombers have been attacked and hit, from each direction, and the relative effectiveness of our defensive gunfire against enemy fighter attacks from various directions, can be inferred from the following:

The data on hits are taken from a tally of the direction from which enemy cannon fire and small calibre machine gun fire entered the exterior surfaces of heavy bombers, as reported in ORS forms between July and November 1943.

Since these reports of encounters are connected with claims, and often no reports are made when no claims are made, the frequency of "attack" from each direction may more nearly represent the frequency with which enemy fighters, which were hit by our defensive fire, attacked from each direction. Any directions from which they attack, but are faced by inferior defensive fire, may be understated. However, our relative advantage or disadvantage against enemy fighter attacks from any direction can be gauged by the ratio between reported "attacks" and hits from that direction.

Of course, these attack figures represent only those B-17s that returned home. -Editor

Relative Frequency  
ATTACKS & HITS  
July - November, 1943



Containers Away



"They're gone!"

(O-486A/421, X:5-4-45) 53-65(5000)



**HEADQUARTERS VIII BOMBER COMMAND**  
**APO 634**  
**Operational Research Section**  
**SECRET**

**25 December 1943**

MEMORANDUM ON CERTAIN PROPOSED  
MODIFICATIONS TO THE B-17

This memorandum was prepared in response to a request made by the A-4 Section, VIII Bomber Command, and is concerned with certain proposed modifications of the B-17 aircraft, which appear desirable on the basis of studies made by the Operational Research Section of the losses and battle damage suffered by aircraft operating under VIII Bomber Command.

The modifications suggested relate to:

- I. Protection of the power plant.
- II. Protection against fires and explosions.
- III. Protection against enemy fighter attacks by means of armament.
- IV. Protection against self-inflicted damage.
- V. Protection against damage from empty shell cases.
- VI. Other possible modifications, originating from interviews with certain combat crew members.

The primary sources of information have been obtained from ORS Battle Damage forms. At present we have detailed records of the damage to more than 5000 aircraft.

Personal interviews with first-hand witnesses of aircraft lost in combat. At present we have the details of the losses of about 130 aircraft, obtained from interviews with over 260 of their crew members.

From analysis of the information thus obtained, together with other data available within the Command, the following facts and conclusions have emerged, which we submit as being relevant to the current reconsideration of modifications to the B-17.

**I. Protection of the power plant**

Our experience in this Theatre indicates that the greatest defensive weakness of the B-17 consists of inadequate protection of the power plant.

1. Most of the bombers we lose are lost because they are stragglers, unable to keep up with the rest of their formation.

2. Most of the straggling is caused by battle damage to the power plant, which renders it impossible for the aircraft to maintain formation.

(a) Hits from the front, from enemy cannon and machine gun fire, from flak, and from collision with empty

shell cases, penetrate the prop dome, or the cowl, or enter the flat plate area of the engines. The oil sump is punctured, the push-rod housings are damaged, or the propeller governor is jammed; oil is lost, the propeller cannot be feathered, excessive vibration starts, and the engine catches fire. Most of the hits which disable engines are found from the ring cowl forward and originate from attacks coming from the 10 to 2 o'clock zone within 30 degrees of horizontal.

(b) Hits from the bottom, almost all from flak, frequently hit the supercharger and cause sufficient loss of power so that the aircraft loses formation. Alternatively,



**B-17F "I Got Spurs" sports a nose gun. Notice multiple damage repairs on tail and fuselage.**

fragments from below may disable the engines or they may enter the nacelles and puncture fuel lines, causing leaks, and ultimately fires.

(c) Hits from the rear seldom disable the engines; their principal danger arises in the possibility of severing fuel lines and starting fires.

**We reiterate and recommend armor plate of sufficient weight to prevent penetration of all but high velocity or large fragments against which armor would be inadequate.**

1. On the leading edge of the ring cowl, on the curve, and for at least six inches to the rear; on the propeller dome; on as much of the flat plate area of the engine as can be protected without interference with cooling; on oil coolers, against hits from the front; and on superchargers, against hits from below.

We believe that it is demonstrable that, if weight considerations are paramount, more aircraft would return, and fewer serious casualties would result for crew members, if protection of the power plant by armor were given preference over protection of crew positions by armor.

**II. Protection against fires and explosions**

Virtually equal in importance to armor for the power plant is the provision of the maximum precaution against fires and explosions.



A large proportion of the aircraft which are lost are on fire in one or more places. The existence of fire, and fear of subsequent explosion, is the primary reason for most bale-outs. Explosions are almost always the result of fire; they rarely occur instantaneously with a hit. The principal areas where fires occur are as follows:

(a) In the nacelles, generally as a result of hits which caused oil leaks and inability to feather engines.

(b) In the cockpit, almost always as a result of hits which simultaneously punctured oxygen and hydraulic systems. Fires of the hydraulic fluid, spraying out under pressure, when fed by leaking oxygen are almost never extinguished by combat crews.

(c) In the wings, generally from hits in fuel lines.

(d) In the radio room, the nose, or the bomb bay, but those are more likely to be extinguishable with the present equipment.

**We extend our earlier recommendations that the following measures be taken to reduce the fire hazards on B-17s.**

1. The installation of the most efficient, extensive extinguisher system possible to enable the pilot to put out fires which start in the engines, or in the nacelles.

2. The use of non-inflamable hydraulic fluid.

**III. Protection against enemy fighter attacks means of our armament**

One of our most effective countermeasures against enemy fighters is our armament and our gunnery.

1. A preponderance of the enemy attacks and hits on our bombers comes from the tail, at 6 o'clock. A tendency towards an even higher proportion of tail attacks can be expected as the proportion of bombers equipped with nose or chin turrets rises, and if the enemy increases the number of rocket-carrying aircraft. Attacks on stragglers are predominantly from the tail. Next most frequent are attacks from the nose at 12 o'clock.

2. Probably because of the tendency to attack from the sun, and because attacks are typically more intense on the flight home when the sun is on the left of our bombers except for afternoon attacks on Norwegian targets; our bombers are attacked and hit somewhat more frequently from the left than from the right.

**We recommend that any modifications of the type and location of the armament of B-17s embody the following principles:**

1. Provide the fullest long-range protection against attacks from the rear quadrant. This implies the advisability of a tail turret with a wide arc of fire.

2. Increase the protection against nose attacks where our relative disadvantage is greatest. This implies the advisability of nose turrets.

3. Re-explore the feasibility of providing horizontal fire in the nose and tail quadrants of the upper and ball turrets to eliminate the present dead zones.

4. As to the location of extra flexible guns for aircraft destined for use in this Theatre, give the preference to the extra gun protecting the left rather than the right.

**Protection against self-inflicted damage**

**A.** A significant amount of serious damage has been caused to B-17s by fire from their own guns.

The evidence shows that virtually all of this damage is caused by waist guns firing to the rear and hitting the horizontal stabilizers and elevators of their own aircraft. Infrequently damage is caused by waist guns to wing tips, radio guns to vertical stabilizers and ball turret guns to bomb bay doors (when open).



**.50 caliber tailguns in the Cheyenne modification**

A remedy for the major part of this type of damage was developed in this Theatre, in the form of interruptors for waist guns when firing in the critical directions.

**B. We recommend that:**

Every effort be made to expedite the design and installation of interruptors on waist guns on aircraft with the modified waist.

**V. Protection against damage from empty shell cases**

A large amount of minor damage is being caused by aircraft being hit by empty shell cases being ejected from ball and chin turrets and from the tail of aircraft ahead and above them in formation.

Like spent flak fragments, empty cases collide with the aircraft, damaging all parts of the structure which first "strike the air."

A serious hazard exists whenever these shell cases strike the nose, breaking glass, the pilot's windshield, the oil cooler, knocking out an engine, or the prop dome and flat plate area of the engine, hitting oil sump or prop governors.

While the velocity of these shell cases is usually only that of the speed of the aircraft striking it plus the force of gravity, sometimes it is much higher either because they are caught in a slip stream, or are hit by propellers and driven into whatever part of the aircraft they damage.

**We recommend protection of the power plant,**



through armoring prop domes, cowls, and oil coolers, be such as to reduce this hazard, a temporary device be developed for installation on aircraft now in this Theatre to contain empty shell cases, a more permanent modification to eliminate this form of damage be expedited for aircraft not yet delivered to this Theatre.

**VI. Other possible modifications, originating from interviews with certain combat crew members.**

Gunners felt strongly that a solution be sought for protection against attacks from the sun. Light filters, where

**B-17 Top turret metal panels were later replaced with clear perspex top turret**



available for the sight of the upper turret, are of only limited help, since search of the sky is not done through the sight, and the optical adjustment of staring at the sun, then looking through a filter is very difficult. Many gunners felt that they would be substantially helped if long green eyeshades were issued to them.

**Protection for parachutes.**

In numerous instances, there are no extra 'chutes on the plane and crew members preparing to bale out have found their 'chutes riddled with holes or burned. Sometimes they have jumped safely; in other instances the 'chute has ripped in descent. They report a substantial number of deaths from this cause. A number of men in combat crews, instead of wearing their flak suits, have chosen to place them over their parachutes to protect them from fragments. Although it is not general, some carry extra 'chutes in the aircraft. All want at least one extra 'chute in each plane and a reinforced rip-proof construction of the fabric.

**Clasps and clips for emergency equipment.**

Numerous complaints were made by men, in all crew positions, that on occasions when split-second action was of critical importance, they had difficulty in using various types of emergency equipment. The principal difficulty, no doubt magnified by their sense of urgency, was with the clasps holding fire extinguishers and emergency oxygen bottles. They were so stiff or so tight that precious seconds were consumed getting them loose. In some instances, pliers had to be sought and used to pry them loose.

Interviews with combat crew members, particularly of men whose aircraft went down, have provided evidence on the following points:

**Modifications of bomb bay doors.**

A number of crew members, especially pilots and bombardiers, were anxious to have changes in the bomb bay doors that would minimize malfunctions, that would permit jettisoning or salvoes without requiring that doors be cranked back up by hand.

**Modifications of waist windows.**

There was general agreement among waist gunners that improvements were needed in their position. They were enthusiastic at the prospect of staggered windows and closed windows, and claimed to have great difficulty when windows were open, both in avoiding frostbite and in hearing over the intercom.

**Protection against attacks from the nose and tail.**

A consensus of opinion among the crew members interrogated is that the armament and gunnery should be improved in the nose, and that the tail gun should have a larger cone of fire. In this connection, it was frequently stated that the nose needed a turret and a computing sight, and that the bombardier should not have the primary responsibility for defending against nose attacks when his principal function at the target is to bomb. In a number of groups, tail gunners have slightly increased the cone of fire of tail guns by removing the canvas covers.

**Emergency door releases.**

Similar to the above is the problem of the design of emergency door releases. Here the difficulties which were frequently reported were twofold. (1) Wherever the handle was protruding, crew members complained of snagging their clothing, or their parachute harness. (2) When the release was used, frequent difficulty was found in getting the door open. In several instances, at least, men were killed because they were unable to get their escape doors open; when their oxygen masks are off, they cannot afford to struggle with a door for long. Their instinct, under stress, is apparently to push on the door rather than to kick it out.

To facilitate bale-outs, they ask for a redesigned escape door which has no protruding handle, which is unlikely to be opened by accident on regular combat missions, but which will open and fall away immediately when bale-outs are necessary. Various, they have suggested cartridges to blow the doors open, or wind vanes attached to the release handle to use the force of the slip stream to open the door.

**Ball turret problems: Removal of catwalk, oxygen system, parachute.**

At a number of stations, engineers, at the request of ball turret men, have cut away the catwalk above the ball turret, to facilitate exit regardless of the direction of



the last turn in azimuth. Ball turret gunners in general feel that they are at a disadvantage in leaving the aircraft, especially in the case of turret failure and short bale-out notice, and agree that the removal of the catwalk is desirable.

Several complaints and suggestions have come from ball turret gunners regarding their oxygen equipment. Chief among them are: (1) Desire for an extra three inches of hose; (2) Desire for an extra hour's supply of oxygen; (3) Complaints that demand type oxygen line interferes with visibility.

There have been several demands that ball turret gunners be equipped with flying suits having built in back 'chutes packed flat and running from thigh to neck. Such a 'chute, by enabling the ball turret gunner to bale out directly from the turret instead of climbing back into the fuselage, should in part compensate for his relatively disadvantageous position.

A final difficulty lies in the bale-out warning system. At present, crew members are supposed to be warned by intercom and by the bale-out alarm bell. But in many cases these devices have been unsuccessful. The greatest problems arise from the following causes.

Men in the waist, which is particularly noisy when

windows are open, fail to hear the warnings; the intercom frequently fails, or is shot out for one or more crew positions;

The alarm bell is not heard or fails;

Communication or passage from nose to cockpit to tail, is blocked, and men in one or more of those sections of the aircraft fail to get out for lack of warning.

The most promising suggestions thus far made have been to remove radio doors to provide visibility from cockpit to tail, to install periscopic devices to provide visibility between different parts of the aircraft, especially from cockpit to nose, or to devise a mechanical warning to use in the event of failure of the electrical warning systems.

### Operational Research Section

Prepared by

R.G. Gettell,

G.P. Shettle,

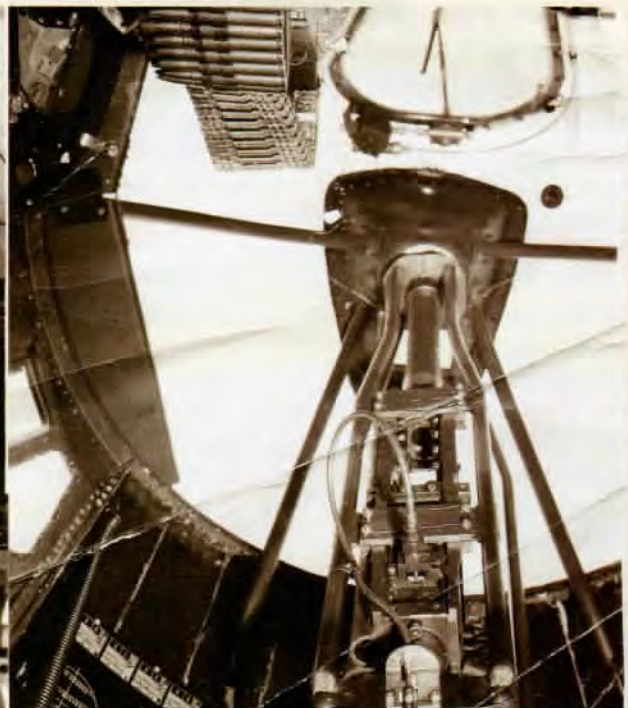
W.P. Pilat,

O.R.S. Consultants

Approved for release by:

John M. Harlan, Lt. Col.,

A.C. Section Chief, O.R.S



### YANKS AT WAR

Ingenuity of American 8th AF airmen demonstrated itself early in the war. Nose guns began to be a fixture in the noses of B-17Fs. When G-models arrived they were well protected with chin turrets and blister guns.





Jake Fredericks is chauffeured by 8th AF navigator P. G. Moore. Both flew missions with the 303rd BG and were among the first assigned to investigate the war industrial factories in Japan shortly after the surrender in August 1945. This photo was taken in front of the Daiichi Building in Tokyo, General Douglas McArthur's headquarters. Jake was convinced that his car was longer than Gen. McArthur's and when they drove up alongside of his, it proved to be true!

Vapor Trails



Night Landing



## BULLETIN BOARD

### SMITHSONIAN MUSEUM OPENS NEW ANNEX

It's called "America's Hangar" but it is named after aircraft leasing businessman Steven F. Udvar-Hazy who donated \$65 million to construct it. It houses aircraft restorations of all wars and has a central control tower and catwalks to give visitors a bird's eye view of the exhibits. There are 81 airplanes and several rockets alongside explanatory exhibits. The main hangar floor is gray with blue accents and a white ceiling. There are no skylights.

An Air France Concorde is there and the B-29 Enola Gay has been restored and placed on exhibit. This famous Superfortress exhibit has its plaque with only one sentence to explain it:

"On August 6, 1945, this Martin-built B-29-45-MO dropped the first atomic weapon used in combat, on Hiroshima, Japan."

No explanations found there telling of this U.S. Air Force bomber's important role in the capitulation of the Japanese enemy or its part in ending World War II.

The new Museum is 28 miles from Washington at Dulles International Airport in Virginia. There is an IMAX theater, a Space Station simulator ride, and there is bus service from the downtown Smithsonian. Hours are 10 AM to 5:30 PM. Their website is [www.nasm.si.edu/museum](http://www.nasm.si.edu/museum).



The Udvar - Hazy Hangar



# BULLETIN BOARD

## BURTONWOOD HERITAGE CENTRE NOW OPEN

Those interested in visiting Burtonwood, the home of Base Air Depot 1 for the 8th Air Force there is important news. The Burtonwood Association announces the opening of its new Heritage Centre located at the base off motorway M62. This nine-gallery museum displays the activities of the USAF and RAF at the site and honors the memory of those who served in the 8th Air Force. Video and audio history areas and additional displays by the RAF Association and South Lancashire Regiment flesh out the story of the air depot. A meeting room, snack bar and gift shop add additional amenities to the visit.

BAD/Service personnel prepared 11,575 aircraft for service in WW II.

The ninth UK reunion will be held in Liverpool this May, and the Stateside reunion will be in Santa Maria CA in October. The Association will meet in Savannah GA in 2005.

Entrance to the Burtonwood museum is free and it is open each Sunday at 2:00 PM, or by appointment. Call 01925 725469 in the UK. Email to Alden Ferguson is [aldonpf@aol.com](mailto:aldonpf@aol.com).



## 446TH BOMB GROUP DEDICATES MONUMENT AT FLIXTON-BUNGAY AIRFIELD

Over 200 American and British people attended the Memorial Dedication ceremonies to honor those who flew from the base in WW II. After posting of the colors by British and American Honor Guards, the audience was welcomed by British coordinator Alan Hague, followed by an Invocation by Rev. Sam Lee of St. Mary's Church. Link Veazy, President of the 446th Bomb Group Association presented the opening remarks.



The monument was draped with two American flags, one of which flew over the base during the war. Alan Senior, 446th project officer for the event, and John Farrington unveiled the monument which honors the Units who served and remembers in perpetuity the 456 airmen killed while at the base. A chorale group of British ladies sang "The White Cliffs of Dover" during the unveiling, followed by remarks of Alan Senior. The ceremony closed with a benediction and the singing of "Taps."

A number of British dignitaries and historians were among the attendees, including Matthew Martin and David Hastings of the 2nd AD Memorial Trust; Roger Freeman, 8th AFHS Historian; Mark Haddingharn of the family which donated the land for the monument; Aviation artist Matthew Bailey; and Dinky Payne, "Doughnut Dolly" who served coffee and donuts to airmen of the 446th returning from missions.

## POLISH MISSIONS BEING DOCUMENTED

A Group of Polish historians, the Aircraft Missing In Action Project (AMIAP) are constructing a book of all Americans who flew to targets in Poland during WWII. Their purpose is to remember the sacrifice and heroism of wartime airmen and preserve their stories of the war in the sky. They have already published two books and numerous articles for the Polish press. They also were active in the building of the American Airmen Memorial near Biala Podlaska, Poland at the crash site of a 452nd BG B-17 during Operation Frantic (previously reported in the 8th AF News). Their website is [www.sserwatka.prv.pl](http://www.sserwatka.prv.pl).

The group would like to be in touch with anyone who flew missions to Poland or who landed in Poland behind Russian lines from Oct 43 to Mar 45. Contact member Szymon Serwatka, Koenigsteiner Strasse 124, D-65812, Bad Soden Germany or email [sserwatka@yahoo.com](mailto:sserwatka@yahoo.com).



**American Memorial in  
Woroniec Poland**



# BULLETIN BOARD

## WWII REGISTRY OF REMEMBRANCE

The WWII Registry of Remembrances is now online for the general public to access. Besides the names of veterans the Registry also includes the National Archives list of those killed in service in WWII and the names of those buried in overseas WWII cemeteries.

One can simply go to this web site

[www.wwiimemorial.com](http://www.wwiimemorial.com) and click on the "WWII Registry" link to view the Registry or enter a new name. The Registry will also be available for viewing on site at the WWII Memorial dedication in Washington in May 2004.

Speaking as a veteran of the war, I believe that every man and woman veteran of WWII should go on record and register as a proud patriot and participant of the mightiest and bloodiest war in the history of this planet.

Now registration can be done online at the above web site.

For those who do not have a computer, call **1-800-639-4WW2**. The name of the veteran can be also registered by a member of the family.

I would like to see every member of the 8thAF on the WWII Registry.

Jack Keller Sr., 486th BG

Belleair Bluffs, FL

Charter Member - National WWII Memorial Society

## 352ND FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION FLIES OFF WITH AWARDS

It's called The Last Reunion – *A Gathering of Heroes* and it has appeared on over 150 PBS TV stations across the country. To date, it has won top awards at four film festivals.

Best Documentary – Palm Beach International Film Festival

Best Documentary – 23rd Annual Breckenridge festival of Film

Best Documentary – New York Independent Film and Video Festival

At the Florida Motion Picture and Television Association competition, it won the awards for Best Music Competition, Best Director, and Best Documentary.

The 55-minute video of the final reunion gathering of the 352nd Blue Nosed Bastards of Bodney Fighter Group features live appearances of many 352nd veterans and is introduced by Gen Norman Swartzkopf. Directed by Brent Wilson, it is an excellent story of a proud 8th Air Force WW II fighter Unit and pays tribute to its present-day lineage and to the 352nd FG Association. For information contact Robert "Punchy" Powell at email [bluenoserbob2@juno.com](mailto:bluenoserbob2@juno.com).

## Subject: Understanding

Nancy Reagan tells the story of how President Ronald Reagan was once challenged by a college student who said it was impossible for Reagan's generation to understand his.

"You grew up in a different world," the student said.

Today we have television, jet planes, space travel, nuclear energy, computers."

Taking advantage of a pause in the student's litany, Reagan said, "You're right. We didn't have those things when we were young. We invented them."

submitted by

F.C. "Hap" Chandler, 491st BG

## AFEES ANNUAL REUNION TO MEET IN THE HOME OF FREEDOM

In April 2004, the Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society will hold its annual reunion in Philadelphia PA. There will be a lot going on, with many guests and escape helpers attending. David Eisenhower will speak to the group at the Union League Club. General Duncan McNabb from the Pentagon has helped with the arrangements which will include a tour of the Military Academy. Yvonne Daley-Brusselmans' email is [afees127@webtv.net](mailto:afees127@webtv.net) or you can reach AFEES news-magazine editor Larry Grauerholz at email: [afees44@hotmail.com](mailto:afees44@hotmail.com)

## A GREAT TRIP IS READY FOR TAKEOFF!

The successful D-Day invasion of June 6, 1944 is the focus of an exciting trip planned for this year. Experienced guides will lead attendees to England visiting D-Day museums, Naval launch locations, and a number of other 8th Air Force-related sites including Norwich, Bletchley Park, and the Battle of Britain Ops Rooms at RAF Uxbridge. Engaging talks by renowned author and 8TH AFHS Historian Roger Freeman are the highlight of this trip over. The dates are May 30 - June 7, 2004 for this 60th anniversary D-Day event.

Previous years have seen this Return to England event as a highly successful tour of wartime facilities and Museums. The Duxford Air Show featuring D-Day aircraft and a trip to the American Cemetery at Madingley will be memorable features for those on the loading list for this one. It's Eagle Tours at 800-624-6579 and ask for John Shumate for all the detailed information. In addition, there is a trip to Normandy and other battle sites planned for June 7 - 11 which can be included as an add-on event. Email contact is: [johns.get@wspan.com](mailto:johns.get@wspan.com).



## JUST ANOTHER 8TH AIR FORCE DAY

### MISSION 376

Battle over the Reich: 28 May 1944



Ivo de Jong



It was May 28, 1944 and the 8th Air Force was over five months deep into the campaign to ensure the success of the Normandy invasion by allied ground forces. Orders came down from Headquarters and the 8th AF prepared to go into the air over Germany. Just another day of combat missions.

Ivo de Jong has spent years researching the events of that single day and has published his book entitled MISSION 376 Battle over the Reich: 28 May 1944. It tells in

detail what happened that Spring day – how ordinary men on both sides showed extraordinary courage and ability fighting the war in the air.

That early morning 1282 B-17s and B-24s took off from their English airfields heading for targets at Ruhland, Dessau, Magdeburg, Merseberg and Zeitz, Cologne and other enemy locations. They had support from over a dozen fighter Groups. One aspect of the mission was unique in that it was the first one to use "Glide Bombs" against the enemy, a new weapon that was enthusiastically approved by bomber crews, but proved ineffective upon subsequent examination of films of the attacks on Cologne.



(60-7-1-303)(27-OCT.'43) GLIDE BOMB

Glynn Shumake sits in the right seat of a 303rd B-17 in a photograph taken in October 1943. Note extended Glide Bomb wings behind the wheels. It was six months later that the "Grapefruit Mission" to Cologne was on.

Chapters are devoted to each designated target, telling the story in words and pictures of the men who flew. Extensive coverage is included detailing events involving fighter squadrons. There are a number of personal and historical stories of the day's events.

Lawrence Casey, wingman to the 78th FG's Alwin "Max" Juchheim, whose story appeared in the March 03 issue of the 8th AF News, witnessed Max's last mission.

"The day was beautiful without a cloud in the sky. We were in the Hannover/Dummer Lake area. Juchheim, who had the eyes of a hawk, called out four specks in the sky as P-51 Mustangs. Suddenly I saw a ball of flame and broke right. One of the 363rd Fighter Group Mustangs had pulled up in his flight a little late and collided with Max, and had exploded. A parachute blossomed out, and we assumed Max had bailed out. We circled him down and it was my intention, if a landing site was available, to pick him up. It had been done before, even against all regulations, and I suppose, common sense.

Suddenly we spotted an Me-109 in the area. I had the first chance and hit him with a burst of .50 caliber gunfire. He eluded me but our other two completed his destruction. After the mix-up with the German fighter we went back and searched the area where Juchheim would have landed, but not having much gas we had to climb back to altitude and head for England. You can imagine three heartsick fighter pilots on the way home."

This incident and many others of bomber and fighter crews that day, are extensively presented through the author's interviews with participants and after research of records, both 8th Air Force and German. Photos of the day accompany events throughout the book.

The glide bomb had been developed in an attempt to defend against flak batteries, especially on the bomb run over the target. The idea was to release the glide bombs and then turn off, thus avoiding flak fire over the city. A B-17 carried two, one under each wing, with the objective to head them into specific target points. The 41st Combat Wing,



**Lt. Edwin Heller flying his P-51B Hell-er-Bust downed a German Me-109 on May 28th**



this mission's "Grapefruit Wing" comprised of the 303rd, 384th and 379th Bomb Groups, took the lead in this experimental trial of a new weapon. The three Groups left their bases at Molesworth, Grafton Underwood, and Kimbolton and headed towards Cologne on the Rhine river. They were accompanied by 49 P-38s of the 364th FG, along with four F5 photo P-38s of the 7th Photo Recon Group.

Leonard Ratherman, ball turret gunner in our old B-17 friend *Bonnie-B*, had a front-row seat and recalls, "Our two glide bombs sailed to the target. I did see a couple of bomb blasts in Cologne. I could see the fields below and I saw 95% of the bombs fall straight down below, and a few exploded in Cologne. The idea was a good one, if only it had worked." During Debriefing at the 379th base at Kimbolton, a number of men stated that they 'liked this mission very much.' "More trips with glide bombs; more grapefruit; more raids of the same type" were some of the comments relayed in post-mission Debriefing sessions. Wing Lead pilot Lew Lyle summarized the glide bomb mission, "The thing didn't work. The glide bombs went everywhere, all over the place. They cancelled the program and we didn't fly them again."

Throughout the book chapters are devoted to preparations from the various Groups which took part on that day. Individual interviews personalize the experiences. A number of chapters include interviews and photographs from German war files, such as those included in the 94th Combat Wing's raid to Dessau. Chapter Three in the volume is devoted to German defenses, with impressive photos and stories of the German flak batteries. Ivo de Jong closes with an examination of the aftermath of the day, addresses post-war investigations of war crimes committed against downed 8th AF crewmen, and includes numerous appendices of lost aircraft and of the 107 8th AF crewmen killed in action, German aircraft losses and US fighter pilots combat victory credits.

Mission 376 stands as a fascinating definitive volume of what took place in a day in the life of the 8th Air Force



**Standing left to right: William Hooper - GCC, John Eckhoff - E, Jack Sutherlin - P, David Schwartz - N, Ray Sullivan - CP, and Guy Feranti - B. Kneeling left to right: Tony Valdez - WG, George Samuelian - TG, John Du Pre - RO, and Joe Warner - BTG.**

of World War II. The extension of the reader's thought and understanding of this one 8th AF Mission 376 which took place on May 28th imparts a sense of the complexity of preparation for a mission, the unpredictable events from minute to minute throughout the day, the tragic losses on both sides, and the immensity of the 8th Air Force itself as the greatest air force in war history.



Author de Jong holds the rank of Lt. Colonel in the Royal Netherlands Army and has a Masters Degree in History. He conducted hundreds of interviews, traveling extensively researching archives and film in his preparation of this book. The large hardback 220- page volume is published by Hikoki Publications Ltd, Friars Gate Farm, Mardens Hill, Crowborough, East Sussex TB6 1XH UK; tel 01892 610123; email info@hikokiwarplanes.com -- Contact the author at Ruijsstraat 8, 6712 ED ede, The Netherlands; email ivodejong@telekabel.nl

**Walter Brown, Editor**



## MEMORIAL SERVICES AT AMERICAN CEMETERY MARGRATEN THE NETHERLANDS



**The Honorable Clifford M. Sobel**



**A deathlike hush, the Standard-bearers leave the Cemetery. The only noise came from the wind and the birds in the trees. Margraten, Holland**

Occupying 65 acres of gentle farmland, the Netherlands American Cemetery is the resting place for 8,301 American soldiers and includes 40 sets of brothers who are buried side by side. The Court of Honor and reflecting pool of the Memorial lead to a tower and chapel. American oaks and rhododendron line the central mall.

The most recent memorial services featured a speech given by The Honorable Clifford Sobel, USA Ambassador, which followed a Church Call and the playing of the Star Spangled Banner. Lt. General A.J.G.M. Blomjous, Adjutant General of Her Majesty the Queen and Chief of the Military House received "Honors." The Royal Walram Society Choir presented a musical programs as part of the ceremonies. General Charles Wald, Deputy Commander of the United States European Command, spoke of the heroism of American soldiers in the fight for freedom for all nations. After an impressive laying of wreaths ceremony a volley was issued and Taps was performed. A flyover put a fine closing touch to the day's events.

*Photographs by Holland representative Bert Kloots give an indication of the significance of this yearly memorial service to the Veteran Groups and to the appreciative people of Holland.*



**A blanket of flowers**

## HALL OF FAME TO HONOR AVIATION AND SPACE PIONEERS

The National Aviation Hall of Fame in Dayton, Ohio will honor four aviators to be enshrined into their roster of 178 honorees. For 2004, the selected honorees are Apollo 8 astronaut William Anders, pilot and journalist Harriet Quimby, Jackie (Jack) Ridley, and National Aerobatic Champion Patty Wagstaff.

Harriet Quimby was the first woman flier to cross the English Channel solo. She died in a tragic air meet crash in 1912. Jack Ridley served as an engineer, instrumental in the 1947 Bell X-1 project in which Chuck Yeager flew the rocket-powered aircraft, breaking the sound barrier. Patty Wagstaff has set the standards for aerial acrobatics in air shows and competitions since learning to fly in 1979.

Enshrinement ceremonies will be held July 17, 2004. Call 937-256-0944, ext 10, for information or website [www.nationalaviation.org](http://www.nationalaviation.org).

The NAHF Learning Center features six galleries tracing the history of flight and those who made it happen. The Center is located adjacent to the USAF Museum in Dayton.



## POWs

8th AF NEWS,

I have just read a new book on WW II POWs: "The Last Escape", by John Nichol and Tony Rennell.

I spent almost a year in two of the POW camps - Sagan, Stalag Luft III and Moosburg, Stalag IV - covered in this excellent book and I'm sure there are thousands of Eighth Air Force vets who would love to know about it. A review of this book in your "AF News" would be welcomed by many of your readers.

My congratulations on an excellent publication!

Sincerely,

Jim Golden 361st FG  
Former President, P-47  
Thunderbolt Pilots Association

P.S. Thanks for your article on The 2004 WW II Memorial event in Washington, D.C.

## Hi!

Received the two copies of the December 2002 8th AF News, with the *Little Warrior* on the cover. What a thrill! It's almost 60 years ago that I walked into the Operations office and signed for receiving aircraft B-24H #42-94812. Hope that they didn't keep the papers! It seems like yesterday! Thank you, thank you, thank you!

Warmest regards,  
J.J. Oling, 493rd BG

*J.J. Oling flew the Little Warrior over and chose the Indian nose art for the Liberator. -Ed.*

## 8TH VETERAN HONORED

Dear Dr. Brown,

In September of 2003, I was honored by the University of Alabama for my devotion to my alma mater and for my military service with the 8th Air Force during WW II. Just prior to the kickoff of the Bama - Arkansas football game at Bryant-Denny Stadium in Tuscaloosa, I stood at the 50-yard line with the "Million Dollar Band" and an announcer read a brief biography of my life. When he said that I had flown 35 combat missions as a ball

turret gunner aboard a Flying Fortress, the crowd of 85,000 applauded. However, when he said that I had seen 450 Crimson Tide football games, the crowd ROARED!

At the end of the ceremony, an R.O.T.C. cadet saluted me when they presented me with an American Flag. Wherever I went, following the ceremony, people were shaking my hand. I did not know, at the time, that they had placed me on the big Jumbotron screen on the scoreboard.

A few days later I celebrated my 88th birthday.

Sincerely,  
Alexander Ingram 94th BG  
Tuscaloosa, AL

## GLENN MILLER

### To 8th Air Force Historical Society Savannah

Ladies and Gentlemen,  
As a member of both Glenn Miller Societies I am very interested what happened to the Major Glenn Miller, Director of the American Band of the Supreme Allied Command in 1944 in England.

I am also a Friend of Connie and Gordon Richards in Oakly, and so I read by the time the 8th Air Force News. What I want to say, I miss the name of Major Glenn Miller, who was a morale booster for the air men.

As you know, Miller disappeared on December 15, 1944 and next year's is on March 1. It would be the one or other air men can remember the great man and his concerts.

With best regards and very sincerely,  
Dr. Otto Buttron  
Erlenstrasse 34  
27777 Ganderkesee  
Germany

## SHOOTDOWN OVER HAMBURG

Sir:

I enjoyed many things in the December issue, especially having experienced the Dutch hospitality too. When my wife and I visited the



farm where we crash landed our B-17 near Medemblik, North Holland, they treated us royally, and the farmer gave me the gyro compass out of our *Lady Jane* he'd been saving to give to a crew member. I was a navigator.

On Nov. 6, 1944, 401st BG, 8th AF, hit over Hamburg, #2 engine out, back over North Sea, #1 engine out, getting low trying to make it to American lines in Belgium, turned down Zuider Zee to stay over water longer, #3 engine out, flew 5 min. on just #4, pilots made a great landing in plowed field. When we nine crew members were captured we were taken to a radar station nearby. We were put in a room with two 18 yr-old-looking guards, who asked for chewing gum. Then I realized one of them was whistling "In the Mood." Glenn Miller had a wide audience! Have a good Christmas!

Fred Campbell, 401st BG

P.S: I'm an American Ex-POW National Service Officer and really appreciated your item on p. 28 about the VA outreach to Ex-POW's; so many have not come forward for their benefits.

## ROYAL OBSERVER CORPS

Dear Sirs:

I was in the Royal Observer Corps during WW II, at the center in Wutford, Herts. We plotted friendly and enemy aircraft 24 hours a day (shifts of course). My husband to be was in the 8th Air Force - an engineering officer at Bovington AFB near Hemel Hempstead, Herts. I was married to him in October 1946 in Missouri Valley, Iowa, 56 years ago.

He was very proud of his association with the 8th and always enjoyed your magazine, as did I.





Sincerely,  
Richard McClune,  
BAD2

**POLICEMAN  
AND  
THE WATCH**

Dear Walt,  
I was delighted to find

He was honored with a military funeral at Pope AFB in Fayetteville, NC, Dec. 28th, 2002.

Please keep up the good work.

Sincerely,  
Doreen Booher  
Pinehurst, NC

*Doreen's note expresses the opinions of many 8th veterans' families. It is a privilege to pass her feelings for her husband on to you. -Ed.*

**THE TAUBER  
CEREMONY**

Dear Walter,  
Johnny Stinger of England sent you a few photos covering the Tauber Family Memorial Ceremony involving the burial of Sol & Pauline Tauber on Warton Air Base where the men of BAD2 were stationed during WW2. I attended the Ceremony during June 2003 and I felt very honored to be invited.

As I was speaking during the Ceremony I realized there was a 60 year span, to the month, when I arrived on that living site.

Johnny Stinger was the offspring of the marriage of one of our fellows to an English Lady. In fact he was actually born on the Air Base after WW2, when Warton Air Base provided schooling for Americans before they returned to civilian life.

Johnny has dual citizenship and does a great service by establishing a Web Site to preserve the history of Warton Air Base. Photos and text are transmitted through the US and England to all who are interested in WW2 history and Warton Air Base.

Johnny established the Memorial Ceremony at the request of the Tauber's son & daughter. They stated the Memorial Ceremony exceeded their expectations and were very thankful for the Association with the English people, who attended.

my article "The Policeman and the Watch" in the December issue. I have long wanted to make some public expression of my admiration and appreciation of the Hollanders for their gratitude and devotion to us for nearly sixty years after the war--and the article provides that opportunity. Thank you for including it, and for the fine work you do in making the News such a good read.

Is it possible to obtain a few extra copies of the Dec. Issue? I know that the Hollanders would want to place one in their *Baggy Maggy* museum, and I expect a couple of the key organizers for our support over there would greatly appreciate a copy. Will be grateful if you can help in this. Thanks again, and have a Merry Christmas.

Regards,  
Larry Hewin, 93rd BG  
Williamsburg, VA

*A great use for some of our "spares". Issues are in the mail to you! -Ed.*

**THE POLICEMAN AND  
THE WATCH**

Dear Larry,  
Thanks for the copies, which you sent me. Very attentive of you and well appreciated not only by me but also by my associates from our committee. I kept one by myself. I have forwarded one of the others to Ed Ragas, as being a publisher he probably will publish your article, translated, in our local newspaper. He also considers publishing it in an issue of a newsletter of a Dutch association named "Bulletin Airwar 1939-1945". You can find their site on the web; <http://www.airwar39-45.nl/> It's remarkable to say but I saw a send-in letter from the founder of our

association in the magazine which you sent me. His name is Mr. Henry Kwik and you will find his letter on page 19, a letter with subject Fooddrop missions. He is specialized for this subject. With interest and somewhat proud I read your splendid article about the watch and the local policeman. We all agree with the magazine's editor that it was appropriate for the Christmas issue. The whole story keeps amazing all the more of the fact that we know the "leading people" personally which we consider as being an exceptional privilege.

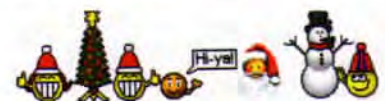
In coming days I would like to take efforts to trace the daughter of the policeman. I would like to forward her a magazine. I think that she should have a copy, not only as a memory but also as a tribute to her father. I'm convinced that you will agree.

To conclude, we are grateful and flattered by the nice words that you have written about us, Dutch people. But we have to keep thanking you all for your efforts for liberating us; we are fully aware that we owe you so much. That's why you will be in our minds in eternity.

All the best to all of you,  
Jos van Roozendaal  
The Netherlands

**FROM OUR FRIENDS  
IN GERMANY**

Dear Mr. Brown,



I wish you merry Christmas and a happy new year.

God Bless you and your great Country.

Viktor Jagodics  
Kreuzwertheim, Germany

**MERRY CHRISTMAS  
PIN-UP**

To: Santa Brown,  
Wishing you a holiday filled with joy and a new year rich in happiness and many more excellent editions *8th AF News* for the new year.



After all the furor about the pin-up girls in a previous edition I admire your nerve to run the Merry Christmas picture in the Dec 03 issue!

Sincerely,  
W.B. Griffith, 306th BG  
Beallsville, MD

*Thanks for the good wishes, William. And you're correct: most of the Pin-up issue furor among the troops was positive! -Ed.*



feat comes around. With a free America, you can bet it will be an awe-inspiring time. Sincerely,  
Bill Heller, 303rd BG  
Las Vegas, NV

### **MAXWELL AFB**

Dear Walter,  
This is just chat, if I may. On page 24 December issue of 8th AF News, Earle Nase is named/pictured. I've always had a fairly good "recall" of names/faces. I dug out the photo of the May 1952 Class of Squadron Officer Course, Air University/Maxwell AFB...12 of us officers.

Therein amongst us is Earle Nase, then stationed at Randolph AFB, along with later Lieutenant General Freddie Poston, then stationed at Turner AFB. It was during a soccer game there that our class instructor, Captain Adams, in some breach of discipline allowed his forearm to be on the ground at the wrong time and received a dropkick that broke both bones in it with a *K-rack!* that could have been heard in downtown Montgomery.

Keep up the good work, Editor!  
Billie B. Boyd, Jr.  
386th BG (B-26s)  
Rutledge, TN

### **8TH AFHS REUNIONS**

Dear Dr. Brown,  
I've had the opportunity to attend the past two 8th AF reunions, held at Norfolk, VA and Colorado Springs, CO. My father is a "Mighty Eighth" veteran - Bill Nevitt, 350th FS, 353rd FG.

I've always been interested in and discussed the WW II experience with my folks, both from the military and homefront aspects. However, to be able to meet the members of my father's and other 8th AF groups and hear their stories first hand has been a terrific, yet sobering learning experience. I've also been able to meet the wives of these brave men and learn of the hardships they endured



while their men were stationed in the far corners of the world defending our freedom.

I sincerely regret having not attended these gatherings with my parents until my late 40s, as I've missed out on meeting many wonderful people and becoming even closer to my folks. These past two conventions have been a wonderful opportunity for me to share a part of my parents' early life.

Other adult children of the 353rd vets will also be working to encourage more people of our age group to become involved in learning more about our folks and their place in history. I strongly encourage all 8th AF vets to give this issue of the 8th AF News to their children to read and to invite them to learn, first hand, about a pivotal era in the history of our country and the world. As "The Greatest Generation" ages, we "40 and 50 Somethings" don't have many opportunities left.

Sincerely,  
Bill Nevitt, Jr.  
Gansevoort, NY

### **THANKS WRIGHT BROTHERS AND AIR UNIVERSITY - ANTIQUÉ PHOTOGRAPH**

Hello to you Mr. Brown,  
I am a member of the 8th HS over here in England. Today I visited an Antique shop in a small town in Buckinghamshire called Wendover. In this shop I came across the most amazing photograph of a gentleman named - Staff Sgt. D.W. Dailey of Youngstown, Ohio. The photo is dated 1-1-1944 and states that D.W. Dailey flew the B-17 bombers - nothing more about Unit or base. Just the most amazing photograph beauti-





Sincerely,  
James Liakos, 447th  
BG  
Riverside, CA

**TONY  
STARCKER**

Dear Walt,  
That December 2003

issue of the 8th AF NEWS has to be one of the best...of a hell of a lot of GREAT ones!

I caught the references to Tony Starcker in the article about the "Bride of Mars". Tony as a Corporal in the 91st Bomb Group did do the art work on a lot of their planes. Many years after the war, he came from California to Dover AF Base to re-paint the art work on *Shoo Shoo Baby* which was being restored to flying condition. I put in a lot of Saturdays over a ten year period, as a Tour Guide in the restoration hangar and was delighted to meet him and watch him re-paint the Varga girl on *Shoo Shoo*.

I had always wondered about the significance of his art work on the *Memphis Belle*. On one side of the *Belle* he had painted a girl in a red bathing suit but on the other side, the girl was shown in a blue one. I just knew that there had to be a deep significance but had never come up with an answer till Tony arrived at Dover. While he was busy painting, I asked him about it. He said "I ran out of red paint"! So much for deep significances.

On another note: In Freckleton, England, August 23, this year, villagers and BAD 2 members will remember those 38 little ones and the adults who died as the result of a tragic B-24 crash, when a plane on a test flight from our Depot was struck by lightning in a terrible storm and crashed into the village school. On the same day, at the Memorial Garden on the grounds of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum, near Savannah, GA another group will also observe the 60th anniversary of the crash, with a service of remembrance.

"All the best" to you,  
Ralph Scott, BAD 2 Association

New Castle, DE

**8TH AF NEWS**

Dear Doctor Brown,  
I received the copies of the subject magazine with Lee Kessler's Taps notice in it today. Although I requested four copies you provided me with seven. The other three will be sent to Lee's very close 306th fellow POW's, who are not members of the AFHS.

I want to thank you for the help you gave me in this matter of great concern to me and Lee Kessler's family. God Bless,  
Bill Houlihan  
Farmington, WI

**GROUNDPOUNDERS**

Sir:

Let me express my sincere thanks for your kindness and courtesy in printing my article *Groundpounders* were very busy at 8th AF Strategic Air Depots.

The weather was bitterly cold during the winters of the war and mechanics who worked on the planes repairing battle damage or doing endless modifications, often on the ramp or a revetment, and only occasionally in a unheated hanger sometimes felt that they had one of the most difficult and unrecognized jobs in the 8th AF. I was pleased that you left those feelings in the article.

I married Rosemary Peters, an RAF WAAF radio wireless operator after the war. She had for a time been stationed in Whitehall, one flight of stairs up above Churchill's office. At night, the WAAF's were sending coded messages to British posts throughout the Empire, and to keep awake and alert, they started smoking. She was never able to quit. She joins me in thanking you for printing the article and the splendid job of editing. Our son, William Brekke, is the Minister/Counselor for Commercial Affairs at our Embassy in London, and he represented me at the rededication of 8th's museum last year where he met Roger Freeman. Sincerely,  
Gerald Brekke, 4th SAD  
Saint Peter, MN

fully mounted and displayed with the 8th AF insignia above the photo. It is a wonderful picture and the information says it is the only one of a few photos taken at that time -- it depicts D.W. Dailey sitting at a table in the mess after a mission.

My question is, would you have this man on your list of 8th Members and to me it seemed that the place for this piece of history/nostalgia was with his family. It really is a wonderful picture - must have been done for something special I think.

My warmest wishes to you from a cold, dark England,  
Sally Vincent  
<salvin@lineone.net>

**COVER  
PHOTO**

Dear Walter,  
This mission to Babenhanssem, depicted on the Sept 02 8th AF News cover, on Dec. 24th, 1944 was the 188th for the 447th Bomb Group field order #526. Our target was the air field that was being used by the German Luftwaffe jet fighters. Our 711th Bomb Sqdn was to lead the group. Our crew was Major F. Lt. Bonham, command pilot, Capt. R. Mitchell, pilot, Capt. R. Moe, navigator, 1st Lt. J.L. Liakos, bombardier. It was on this mission Brigadier General Fred Castle was shot down. Major Bonham called on the intercom to be on the lookout for any chutes. As we approached our I.P. we were met with a barrage of flak. It was then the Major called and related that Lt. King's plane was on fire. I believe it was the deputy plane flying off our right wing. Again, we looked for chutes but no avail. We did release our bombs with good results.





Our sympathy to the Brekke family in the recent passing of their beloved Rosemary. -Ed.

### D-DAY SERVICES

Dear Mr. Gordon Richards:  
I'm trying to check a special occasion my father, the Rev G.A.R. Thursfield, told me about many years after the second World War.

From 1936-1955 he was Vicar of St. Michael and All Arpels, Sunninghill, Berkshire. During the war many military bases were set up all around. There was a large USAAF establishment at Sunninghill Park, actually in the parish.

My father was asked if the church could be "borrowed" under conditions of strict secrecy. Large numbers of U.S. Army Chaplains gathered there for a service of Dedication before the Normandy landings.

Local residents that I am still in touch with know nothing about this special occasion. My father left no written record, so it would be good to have verification - including the actual date of the service!

With the 60th Anniversary of D-Day ahead this would be of great interest in the parish.

With many thanks for any help you may be able to give.

Yours very sincerely,  
Barbara Scarlett Smith  
bscarletsmith@onetel.net.uk  
34 Eton Ave.  
London, NW3 3HL  
071 4357967

### HIS EIGHTH

Dear Sir,  
My husband loved the Eighth Air Force. He had many memories and he loved to talk about them. He was a good man when he went into the service. The service gave him more confidence, he came out a better man and lead a successful life. The WWII soldiers were real men. He raised 10 children. His constant phrase was "Personal Responsibility." Quite a gang! We stopped at the museum many times. The girls in the library are wonderful. He found out a lot about his crews. It meant a lot to him. I

hope school buses visit often.  
We buried him in Arlington July 25, 2003. A great family reunion and a super way to say good bye. Thank you,  
God Bless You  
Paige Lorenzi

### DECEPTION

Gentlemen:  
I have received a copy of your AFHS September, 2003 from a friend, which I found very interesting. I am a WWII POW from the 94th Bomb Group. On page 39, there is a statement of interest and I quote "during WWII, the Germans were masters of deception. One of the first attacks they employed against novice airmen was the use of false radio transmissions to lure newly arriving airmen into enemy territory. Airmen were directed into the paths of their fighter aircraft. Some were given false signals to lure them to unfriendly air-dromes built specifically to encourage them to land in unfriendly territory."

I have spoken with one of my crew that was also a POW in Stalag II and while there he was told of a happening as I described above. It involved 19 B-26s (?) that all suffered that fate.

Can any AFHS members corroborate any stories similar to the one I told and do they have any information on the one I mentioned above?

I would love to include this kind of information in my book that I am presently writing, which is a true story of my life in the Air Force, including my POW experience following the Schweinfurt raid on "Black Thursday", October 14, 1943.

Any information will be much appreciated.

Enclosed is my application and a check for a subscription to your AFHS magazine.

Thank you for your assistance.  
James A. Mullinax, 94th BG  
338 W. Rolling Hills  
Conroe, TX 77304

*Anyone who has had similar expe-*



*riences should contact James at the above address. -Ed.*

### MY BUDDY

Dear Sir,  
End of an era for me. While on a trip from New Zealand to the U.K., I chanced to remark to an elderly gentleman seated in a Scottish hotel lounge. I noticed he was wearing an 8th Airforce tie and he seemed amazed that someone from so far away in the Pacific would be aware of this.

I told him I had been an aviation enthusiast from a very young age, and was very familiar with the achievements of the 8th and 9th Airforces in WWII.

From this chance meeting there developed a very deep and continuing friendship from 1988 until 2004. Over this period a frequent exchange of letters, magazines, family photos, books, airforce insignia etc.

My life was enriched by this lead bombardier who gave me an insight and real understanding of the close bond and culture of the Mighty Eighth and the 306th Bomb Group in particular.

His passing on Jan. 12th has left a gap in my life which cannot be filled, and this patriot of the Greatest Generation will be greatly missed down-under in this 'neck of the woods' My dear friend.

**Hollis Baker** Col. U.S.A.A.F., Ret.  
423 BS 306 BG (Thurleigh, U.K.)

Yours most sincerely,  
S.B. Gregory  
Glen Eden  
Auckland New Zealand



**HEINZ KNOKE...**

**May 14, 1943:** Today the Yanks bombed the Germania shipyards. I am impressed by the precision with which those bastards bomb; it is fantastic! I dive for a frontal attack upon about 30 Fortresses and my salvo registers hits right in the control cabin of one Fort. It rears up like a great animal that has been mortally wounded and drops away in steep spirals to the right. At about 10,000 a wing breaks off and it crashes near Husum at 12:17 Hrs. Today my flight shot down five heavy bombers and one was our flight's 50th kill of them.

**Heinz Knoke, Luftwaffe Ace**

**MOSES GATEWOOD...**

I was flying a B-26 medium bomber, *Holy Moses!* in the number four position behind Captain Swartzrock at

10,000 feet on 24 June 1944, about 1900 hours.

The target was a rail bridge

aileron cables were cut. I attempted to regain control as we dived almost vertically towards the ground, but all controls were completely useless--even the trim tabs refused to take effect. At this point, I rang the alarm bell and over interphone gave the bail-out order, but no one was able to leave due to forces on bodies and escape hatches. Still vainly playing with the elevator trim tab, I was rewarded by a slow reaction, then a violent pull-out at 3000 feet which shot us back up to 4000 ft. almost stalling out. The crew were still in the plane and the engines were running, so we turned for the beachhead 180 miles away through flak that became heavier and more accurate since control of the plane was very sluggish using trim tabs only. Friendly Lightning escort was notified of our position and dilemma as two ME 109's

were seen low to our left by the tail gunner who had been wounded painfully in the shoulder and jaw. About this time, two or three minutes

after recovery from the 6000 feet uncontrolled dive, we skidded into predicted flak in front of us which knocked out the right engine, some of the instrument panel, and badly ruptured the right wing gasoline tanks. The engine would not feather and we began to lose altitude. Again we could not turn quickly enough with the trim tabs, and flak bounced us around, this time cutting internal gas lines and probably hydraulic lines because smoke, gas, and oil fumes filled the ship. I think this burst also nipped a large hunk of flesh from the radio operator's thigh because he had been in the top turret reporting visible outside damage to the ship when he suddenly announced he was hit hard in the legs somewhere. (This picture was gained in July 1945 when all of my crew returned home from POW Camps).

At this stage of the game, I could get no sense from the remaining instruments on the instrument panel and I could not maintain altitude and flying speed, so I gave orders to prepare for immediate bail-out. I gave this order at 2500 feet when the plane was stalling, shuddering, streaming gas from the wing tanks, and was losing altitude at the rate of 800 feet per minute. The three crew members in the rear checked by interphone on leaving. Then the bombardier and co-pilot pounded through my head that the bomb bay door would not open as they were shot up. The co-pilot and I worked on lowering the nose wheel which was stuck until the bombardier forced it down by jumping on it. They left immediately and I followed - noticing the the altitude meter read 1500 feet as I removed flak suit, helmet, head phones. I started to count three but suddenly realized that I was awfully low so I pulled my rip cord immediately. Behind me I could see the other parachutes. Then I saw the ship strike the ground, explode and burn. Next I began to doubt if my chute had opened because I had felt no jerk, but a glance above showed a whipping chute slowly opening and I also observed relative forward motion to the ground which I immediately hit, and rolled along for at least 100 feet between a row of apple trees. I disengaged myself from the chute and shroud lines and to my surprise I was in one piece and all limbs functioned.

**Moses Gatewood, 9th AF Columbus, GA**

*The B-26 aircrews got their share of enemy action on their raids into enemy territory. Moses Gatewood was awarded the Silver Star for his actions. The early B-26 fliers were part of the 8th Air Force in England. -Ed.*

**LAWRENCE PRINCE...**

Then we started flying as a regular crew. We checked the squadron bulletin board every evening to find out who was flying the next morning. On our next several missions we flew as



**The B-26 Marauder was one of the most heavily armored bombers of the war**

at Maison-La Fitt which is on the west suburbs of Paris. For the last ten minutes, heavy flak had been intense and accurate as the crew had reported numerous holes appearing in the fuselage and wings. Finally starting on the bombing run, the ship was hit by a close burst which knocked out most of the plexiglass nose and all of the co-pilot's windshield. No injuries were sustained by the bombardier, but the co-pilot was cut and bleeding from numerous plexiglass wounds about the face and arms. The plane still functioned properly and was held in formation on the bomb run and bombs were dropped on the target. Suddenly, while turning off the bomb run, the ship received a hit which threw it out of formation and out of control as elevator, rudder, and



a wingman. The first few we were "Tailend Charlie" meaning the lowest and furthest back position. It was also known as the "Purple Heart Corner" because the attacking planes could sneak up on the formation from the rear if there were contrails. That's where we were on our first mission. Take off was in the dark. Assembly was in the dark and we had to climb to altitude immediately because of heavy clouds over England. This used up more gasoline than usual and by the time we had bombed Nurnberg many of us were running low. We dropped out of the formation and descended through the clouds over the Zuider Zee and on home over the North Sea all alone. I instructed the crew to start throwing out excess baggage. All extra ammunition, steel plates (I had two under my seat) parachutes, etc. went out the back door and into the ocean. Johanson guided us to a small Spitfire base in northern England. We didn't know it, but it had just been activated and didn't have a radio. I was calling them

repeatedly because I figured we didn't have enough gas to do a "go-around". We had one shot at the landing. As we approached with flaps and wheels down we saw a pair of Spits taxiing out to takeoff on the same runway. Since I couldn't reach them by radio I yelled for Yeager to fire off some flares. Either they saw them or saw me because they had started their take-off and then immediately moved to the grass to get out of our way. It was close. Then we barely got our plane stopped before we got to the end of the runway. The plane was OK, just a few holes. We had completed our first mission as a crew. The Brits put us up for the night and had a gas truck out the next morning and we returned to base about 24 hours late. We had been listed as MIA (missing in action). My footlocker was opened and my

bunk mates were trying to decide what to keep and what to send home. The plane we flew belonged to a crew that was on leave. I met their pilot later and he was very upset to find that his plane had been cleaned out while he was gone. But we were extremely happy to be alive and back on the base.

**Lawrence Prince, 379th BG**

## FOR YOU THE WAR IS OVER

Harry Graves my copilot, and I were members of the 493rd BG, 861st Bomb Squadron and went down on Nov. 2, 1944 on a mission to Merseburg. I was head pilot that day - the infamous day when commander Col. Whitlock was killed. The last line "Für sie, der krieg ist über, is translated "For you, the war is over." I have many other items in the diary I kept while confined and also on the prison march. Also, have completed a 12 hour oral history of our complete journey over the North Atlantic until our return to the U.S. It is recorded in the "special collections" at the University of Kentucky.

Regards,  
**V. Gayle Alexander, DVM, 443rd BG  
Lexington, KY**

## THEN CAME WAR

Remember the thrill of the feminine touch;  
And the warm understanding that meant so much  
Or maybe the cokes at the soda bar  
Or even dry jokes from the gang in the car  
The spaghetti dinners where there was more  
Sure - but then came war.

The basketball games, or out at the park;  
The great many dames, all yours in the dark  
A lake for a canoe, or a sail boat ride.  
Those innocent moments when two confide  
Recall blind dates that were a bore  
Oh yes, but then came war.

And remember the surprise of a five-dollar bill  
When at the mercy of dad's good will  
Or that special girl back there in school  
That made you feel like a very young fool  
The floor burned knees that were always sore  
Certainly you do - but then came war.

Recall how you would borrow the family car  
And your first visit to a cocktail bar  
How your arm used to tire from the weight of a gun  
While your dog searched around for a rabbit to run  
Or perhaps the new clubs that lowered your score  
Or course - but then came war.

Sure you remember a great deal more  
When all took place before the war  
And don't forget, there shall be more  
To add onto the final score  
Für sie, der krieg ist über!

Written by Harry Graves, 493rd BG  
POW - Sagan, Germany

From Gayle Alexander, 493rd BG  
Lexington, KY





Michel Lugez, President of the American Memorial Association of St. Nazaire is seeking information of B17 *Suicide Susan* of which he has a photo marked 1-85 (601B) (8-23-43) crew c-7. Also workers at Orly airport in France need a Norden Bombsight for their restoration of their B17 Pink Lady B17-G-FAZDX. Contact Alain

Charles at [archi.charles@libertysurf.fr](mailto:archi.charles@libertysurf.fr) - or the 8th AF News editor.

The Royal Air Force Museum on Grahame Park Way in London pays special tribute to brave men and women from all services in ceremonies 12 May 2004. Interactive Search and Rescue tributes will be on 31 May-4 June and reenactors and veterans will be on hand for the 60th Anniversary events on 6 June 2004. For info call Ajay Srivastava at 020 7393 3822 or email [ajay@rafmuseum.org](mailto:ajay@rafmuseum.org).

George & Michelle Welsh offer a complimentary copy of the premier issue of *Bomber Legends Magazine* to those interested when it comes off the press this spring. Call tollfree 1-866-788-3624 or email [subscription@bomberlegends.com](mailto:subscription@bomberlegends.com). This magazine is the continuum of the long-standing B-24 Liberator Club. They also – for the first time, and to some, about time – have published a B-17 Flying Fortress calendar 2004 to augment their popular B-24 calendar, both available at those contact numbers.

Always remember that you are a unique individual, just like everybody else.

Tim Erskine, Toledo OH

From Connie and Gordon Richards, the following notice found in the 21 April 1944 edition of the Peterborough Advertiser newspaper in England:

Lost, wire-hair terrier, one year old, black and tan marking. Collar engraved "Duke" –Major J. B. Caraway USAAF 511th Sqn. 351st G.P. APO 637 U.S. Army.

Connie asks, "Did Major Caraway make it through WWII and did he ever find his dog?"

The history of the 446th Bomb Group was first compiled and published by Ed Castens in 1946 using records and numerous period photographs of the wartime Group. It was added to in 1988 by Helen Tate and a recent reis-

sue with further rosters and records has been printed by editor Mary Nell Roos and Janice Higdon, with help from Frank "Hoot" Gibson. This 282-page spiral volume is a treat to read. Cover art is Mike Bailey's *Ronnie and Red Ass*. Info contact of this Ed Castens original is Janice Higdon, 102 William Classen Dr, San Antonio TX 78232-1321.



With revitalized interest in WW II history, many of the younger generations would like to visit the sites and airfields their parents and grandparents flew from in the war. An especially good tour is scheduled from May 28 – June 7, 2004, led by professors and war historians Dr. Donna Eichstaedt and her husband Dr. Carl Eichstaedt, who live in Las Cruces NM. After attending the WWII Memorial Dedication ceremonies for several days in Washington, they will cross over and visit airbases in East Anglia including the 95th BG, 94th BG, 91st BG, 390th BG, and the 100th BG base at Thorpe Abbots. The American Cemetery at Madingley, Churchill's war rooms in London and other related stops will be featured on the tour. Author Ian Hawkins will talk on war missions. A fantastic educational and enjoyable tour, led by two of our 8th AFHS supporters.

Get in touch with Donna Eichstaedt at (505) 382-8679 or [donnacarl@zianet.com](mailto:donnacarl@zianet.com) for more details.

From HS member Jean-Paul Favrais, comes a 670-page book by Roger Huguen entitled *La Bretagne dans la bataille de l'Atlantique* in which he notes that the volume is "in homage for all the aviators Americans. And in gratitude for their sacrifice for our freedom." It covers the early years of German naval bases in St. Nazaire, Lorient, Brest and others and the bombardments of these and German U-boats and naval vessels during the war. Photos and impressive maps of the thousands of ships sunk by Nazi submarines in the North and South Atlantic illustrate the necessity of the dangerous early missions flown by the 8th Air Force.

It's best if you can read French, as the book is written in French. For info email [coopbreizh@wanadoo.fr](mailto:coopbreizh@wanadoo.fr). Fax 02 98 93 87 97.





Most people can keep a secret. It's the ones they tell it to who can't.

R. Ballinger - 904th Signal Company Association News

**Only In America...**

- \* can a pizza get to your house faster than an ambulance
- \* do drugstores make sick people walk all the way to the rear of the store for their prescriptions, but healthy people buy their cigarettes at the front.
- \* do banks leave both doors wide open and then chain their pens to the counter
- \* do we leave cars worth thousands of dollars in the driveway and put our useless junk in the garage
- \* do we "Stop" Windows 98 by clicking on "Start"

The 2003 annual fund drive in support of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum stands at \$235,000, with 1100 hundred of the 2600 total gifts coming from members of the 8th AF Historical Society. Great work, Troops!

There will be a Mortgage Burning ceremony at the Heritage Museum following the Board of Trustees meeting this May 6th. The Museum's \$20 million Bond Debt has been paid off and the Heritage Museum is now debt-free! From here on, all funds contributed will be used for our exhibit expansion programs such as the Gunner's exhibit and the post-WWII wing, youth education programs, Science Saturdays, and many other ongoing initiatives at the Museum.

Plan to attend the Heritage Museum's 8th Anniversary celebration and Military Appreciation Day activities the weekend of May 13 - 15, 2004. You'll see lots of friends there, and it will be Springtime in Savannah.

Connie and Gordon Richards, the Historical Society's UK contacts for many years, report that they mail 256 copies of each 8th AF NEWS to their paid-up members in England. These members represent some of the strongest supporters of the 8th AFHS and its programs, many also being involved with care and preservation of 8th airbase sites.

Don't forget! Our 8th AFHS PX is still successfully going at full throttle. Lots of new items and 8th logo clothing and materials are now available. Check the Dec 03 issue 8th AF NEWS or call Julia Smith at 912-748-8888 for current info.

Websites of interest, courtesy of the Birthplace Chapter Swiss Internees Association - <http://swissinternees.tripod.com>

From Whiteman AFB, 8th AGF B-2 bombers over Iraq <http://www.invisible-defenders.org/programs/b2/b2war03.htm>

The Veterans Administration is in the process of building 54 veterans cemeteries, with a goal of having one cemetery within 75 miles of every American veteran. Applications have been received for 20 more memorial locations. A new cemetery facility has been built near Fort Campbell, Kentucky with 27,600 burial sites available. Many of the servicemen killed in Iraq are interred there.

Award-winning author writing book about WWII. Interested in talking to men (and women) about their wartime romances. Please contact: Jane Leder, 847-869-4612; [j.leder@comcast.net](mailto:j.leder@comcast.net)

**At 46, Sgt. Wells N. Gardner of Erie, PA., Air Gunner in an 8th AAF bombardment group. He has flown 26 missions and holds the air medal with three clusters.**

from YANK 4 Mar 45





An 856th BS black B-24D



## B-24 CARPETBAGGER MODIFICATIONS AT BURTONWOOD

from 59th Memorial Group Alumni  
Newsletter  
In *Burtonwood Times*, Journal of the  
Burtonwood Association

Minor modifications probably occurred throughout the life of the project but most accommodations necessary seemed to have been developed during the period between November of 1943 and April of 1944. Most of the first planes were the obsolete B-24Ds; it was not until early spring when H and J models arrived.

- Remove armament and associated equipment except upper and rear turrets. The nose guns and waist guns could not be retained due to space restrictions. Even the top turret and tail gunner turrets were "retained more for morale factors than anything else..."
- Remove bombardier's windshield wiper if installed. Unsatisfactory service and low likelihood of use during low-level operations, and additional compartment space were cited for this removal.
- Remove bombardier's heater on right side of the fuselage and plug lines in nose wheel well. Not needed at low altitude, provided better egress for the crewmember, and reduced the possibility of fogging the Plexiglas were the reasons for removal.
- Remove fuel transfer pump and hose from bomb bay in aircraft where the pump was not used to transfer fuel from an auxiliary tank.
- Remove D-12 Compass, which navigators considered excess because it could not be easily read at night,

The Carpetbagger missions were unique in the wartime history of the 8th Air Force. Preparations for their missions included vital modifications to each aircraft assigned to the Units. In October 1943, the Base Air Depot at Burtonwood was designated to modify 32 B-24Ds for night missions dropping men and supplies to resistance organizations, intelligence units on the continent, and to forward American troops.

Initially B-24 D models were used for the over 70 modifications necessary for their missions. H-models were used later on. Carpetbagger Liberators were painted matte black and flew low level missions, frequently at altitudes of 500 feet at night. The 801st BG eventually had 80 B-24s available.

A portion of these modifications performed by the crews at Burtonwood give an indication of the complexity of the equipment and of the thoroughness of the service depot engineers and mechanics.

especially on the zig-zag courses flown by the Carpetbaggers.

- Remove VHF radio set. Not needed.
- Remove all transmitter tuning units from command deck. Not used in Carpetbagger Operations from the command deck, some were remounted on the flight deck.
- Remove external bomb racks. Not needed.
- Remove oil-slick release, used by daylight crews ditching over water, considered to be of little benefit for Carpetbagger work.
- Remove all oxygen bottles, brackets, regulators, and flowmeters used by daylight bombing crews.
- Remove all armour plate mounted in the rear of the aircraft. Deemed

not needed and added to the tail-heaviness of the plane.

- Remove all unused radio antennas to reduce aeronautical drag on plane as much as possible.
- Remove bomb sight. Supply

drops were made visually and required no bombsight. The stabilizer was retained so that the autopilot could still be used.

### Replacement of Existing Equipment

- Replace American type bomb racks with British conversion shackles, this to accommodate the supply containers, which were from British sources and used British suspension lugs.
- Replace ball turret with Joe-hole, consisting of a metal shroud opening from 38 inches to 48 inches in diameter with a taper. The most satisfactory size was found to be a 44-inch inside hole tapering to 48 inches on the outside. On top of this hole was placed a plywood door, circular in shape, divided and hinged in the middle. It was then hinged on extension hinges to the aircraft from the left side so that when it was opened it folded back under the control cables, out of the way. The door was held shut by a latch mounted thereon which could be operated by a lever on top of the door, pushed two bolts into fittings provided in the wall of the Joe-hole. While other types and sizes were tried, this seemed to be the best combination and still allowed packages to be stacked in the hold.
- Replace pilot and co-pilot windows with blisters to allow low-altitude sight of the ground and DZ lights.

### CARPETBAGGER...

#### Specific to the Mission

- The Joe-hole was mentioned above but other mods were also necessary in this area of the aircraft. Two



strong points for static lines also had to be attached. This was set flush with the floor in the aft side of the Joe-hole. Each set consisted of two strong-points approximately 75 inches apart. Each strong point could accommodate eight straps, allowing a "jump string," of eight Joes maximum at one time. In practice this allowed two men in front of the Joe hole and six in back of it. All projections in jump area were removed, ground down or covered up.

- Install strong-point for static lines in rear of each bombbay, presumably for the container chutes, was accomplished by using a large parachute snap placed near the catwalk about six inches up from the bomb-bay doors in each bomb-bay.
- Install jump lights (one red, one green) at Joe-hole with a three-position switch in the bombardier's compartment by the bomber panel. Hereby, the bombardier could notify the dispatcher when to dispatch men or material out the Joe hole. Red meant "Action Station" and green meant "Go".
- Blackout curtains for the waist gun windows to prevent light escaping from these during the mission.
- Install flash suppressers on upper turret and tail turret guns. Standard procedure for Operations, to hide the gun flash.
- Refinish exterior of the plane. For a time, planes were painted black matte all around, later when light-reflective paints were developed, they were painted a gloss black anti-searchlight synthetic enamel below and black matte above. If olive drab, the above part was left olive drab.
- Install FI Air Speed Indicator - pilots quickly learned that this instrument was the easiest to use when having to watch airspeed and the ground at the same time drops.
- Mount airspeed, altimeter, and free air temperature indicators so as to be readily accessible to navigator in flight. This modification improved DR flying and the navigator's mobility in case of egress.
- Install blackout curtains between the Navigator and Bombardier compartments.

- Mount B-16 compass in nose compartment at center piece in front of bombardier and clock under part of the compass mount. This compass was installed as a tracking compass so the bombardier could tell if the pilot was swinging off course. It also acted as a check compass for the navigator. Most aircraft also had the remote reading compass with repeater either in the pilot or navigator's compartment but few depended on it. The clock, not always available, allowed the bombardier to readily check his time with check points when map reading.
- Mount bombardiers interphone box on right hand side of compartment and install a knee-type microphone switch. This removed an often clumsy bundle of wiring in the compartment and allowed the bombardier to switch on the intercom when map reading if necessary or during the run-in from the IP.
- Blackout curtains between pilot and navigators compartments. These were loose curtains hung down in back of the navigator table to keep reflected light from the navigator's lamp from hitting the pilot's eyes.
- Paint all metal surfaces in bombardier's compartment a non-reflecting black. This relieved eyestrain due to moonlight reflections.
- Install I.F.F. radio - if not already installed. Necessary to discriminate friend from foe in the air.
- Install 0-400 ft and 0-4000 ft dual altimeter, if not available install 0-44 ft altimeter. Mounted between the front and rear bomb bays on the left side. Necessary for the low altitudes being used.
- Install GEE radio. Allowed accurate readings of latitude and longitude regardless of the weather or conditions at night (if not being jammed).
- Install S-phone. Another homing device, this one requiring an operator on the ground, it could be homed in on by voice, signal, or both. Allowed voice communications with the reception committee.
- Install flame-dampers. First tried with tail pipes, these were satisfactory but the tail pipes caused an undue

increase in manifold pressure and were not used. Without tailpipes, no flame was visible at night by actual test.

- Install night-type gun sights in turrets. Daylight computing sights were useless at night so ordinary reflector sights were installed on the machine guns.

#### **Safety of the Crew and Passengers**

- Install hand rail on right side of fuselage at Joe-hole and hand rail on left side of fuselage at rear hatch. This gave the dispatcher something to hold on to when the Joe-hole or rear hatch were opened.
- Move interphone jack-boxes for waist gun windows to top and front of waist gun windows, if not already in this position. Some aircraft had these mounted on the floor, where the connecting cords could be a nuisance.
- Modify one waist gunner interphone to have a microphone switch and a 14 foot extension connected at chest level with the dispatcher. This allowed the dispatcher freedom of movement while working.
- Remove all brackets from interior and exterior of the plane not being used. This was a safety precaution for crewmembers and passengers to prevent snagging them up in the dark.
- Install red dome lights in the rear of the fuselage. This allowed night vision for the dispatcher, saved it for the jumpers, who had very little time to see the ground below them, and had the added psychological benefit of allowing jumpers to see what was going on. The British, who blacked out the compartment at jump time, had many instances of "jump panic", not often recorded in Carpetbagger missions.

*A number of other B-24 modifications took place on each Carpetbagger aircraft - an excellent reiteration of the hard work expertly performed by The Air Depots and ground crews. -Ed.*



**BIRTHPLACE CHAPTER**

At our regular membership meeting in December, the following Officers and Board members were approved by the membership, to serve for the year 2004. They are as follows: President: Bud Porter, Vice-President: Jay Yost and Secretary/Treasurer: Gene Buttle. Board members chosen for 2004 are Dick Evans, Dennis Ledbetter, John Lewis, Marg Langston and Jack Marvin. Our number one priority is the continued growth of the Chapter, which now numbers 78 with an average monthly attendance of 75. With interesting and informative meetings, this will further assist in gaining new bodies.

All are reminded of the upcoming Warbirds Ball which will be held on April 17th at the Jepson Hanger. This will be Ball Number 3 and they keep getting better all the time, and what a great opportunity to support the museum. More complete info will be forthcoming, but you may also make advance reservations by calling (912) 748-8888 and ask for Judy Walker.

In closing, the Chapter provided the poinsettias for the Holiday look as you entered the Museum.

Jay Yost  
VP & PR Chairman

**ST. LOUIS WING CHRISTMAS PARTY**

The St. Louis Wing of the 8th Air Force Historical Society had their annual Christmas Party December 11, 2003. The membership gathered at The Columns Convention Center in St. Charles, Missouri. The attendance was the largest to date. New members,



St. Louis Wing Christmas Party

Mr. & Mrs. Irvin Rieger, and several members who had never participated in any of our social events were in attendance. Mr. Al Villagran states that he is sure that the write-ups in **The Missouri Chapter Newsletter** and **The 8th Air Force News** has contributed to this added attendance.

Prior to the dinner and after the pledge of allegiance to our flag, a prayer for deceased comrades, a short business meeting was held. The buffet dinner was as expected--Excellent! On each table, lapel boutonnieres of yuletide design were placed for the wives.

After dinner a popular St. Louis Magician and great comedian entertained the group. A number of the membership participated in his magic tricks. This was followed by our



It's Magic!

usual drawing of attendance prizes which were gift certificates to various restaurants.

At the end of the festivities many of the membership stayed around visiting and fellowshiping with friends. All agreed that good times were had by all. Joe Jameson, Editor, *The Rally Point*

**MICHIGAN CHAPTER**

Having flown on missions to Big "B" (Berlin) and Big "D" (Dresden), members of the Michigan Chapter are embarking on Big "E" – Education. Starting a fund for the project, President Suds Sumney and Dick and Ruth Gieising have ordered copies of the 8th AFHS Curriculum Guide *Honoring the American Past* from the Heritage Museum store and are distributing the entire 3-piece educational set to every Kalamazoo County high school, middle school and library. Volunteers from the Chapter will go into schools for live interviews with the kids. Suds states, "We plan for all of our members to take part in this important mission. This should be a Milk Run Fun Mission."

The Chapter has had a busy year joining in on Michigan Day July 27th with visits to the Veterans of Foreign Wars National Home for Children and appearing at the air show *Thunder Over Michigan* with the Collings B-17, B-24 and a number of other warbirds on display. A Chapter banquet was held at the Ypsilanti Willow Run Air port and Yankee Air Force Museum that evening. The Yankee Air Force continues to proudly keep its name and heritage intact.

**LOUISIANA CHAPTER**

The annual meeting of the Louisiana Chapter will be held April 2-3, 2004 at Best Western Motel Alexandria, La. Many events are planned. Main speaker of the meeting will be Col. Hiram Mann (Ret) former fighter pilot with the Tuskege Airmen. A forum is planned for Saturday



morning. Along with Col. Mann, a B-17 Pilot, a current Army combat pilot from Ft. Polk, a current B-52 pilot from Barksdale Air Base will answer questions from the public and news media. A large raffle is planned for Saturday afternoon. President Harry Doug Tanner will have his World War II airmen collection on display. All 8th AFHS members and friends are invited.

## NATIONAL CAPITAL AREA CHAPTER



### May 29, 2004 WWII Memorial Dedication Event

Our Event Weekend is shaping up nicely and plans are going along smoothly. The deadline for registration with the NCAC has been extended to March 31, 2004. (However the Hotel

Room Block is Sold Out). If you have not received an Information and Registration Package for the event weekend from NCAC, please contact George Hoidra at 301-953-2813 or on line at ghoidra@yahoo.com. **You must be registered with the NCAC** in order to receive your Dedication Ceremony tickets, attend the event on our transportation, and attend our dinner and tours. It is extremely important to reserve your tours by March 31, as it is unlikely that you will be able to "add on" tours when you arrive at the hotel. This is the busiest weekend in Washington, DC; tours are limited, and everything in town is selling out very quickly.

Information updates, helpful hints, itinerary time changes, a map of Old Town Alexandria, along with a list of local restaurants of interest, and pictures of the hotel shuttle buses will be sent out USPS and e-mailed in early April to all who are registered with NCAC. You may also keep track of updates and view pictures as they become available by late March at: [ww2.447bg.com](http://ww2.447bg.com) DO NOT TYPE THE USUAL "WWW." as our address is a sub-domain and not a web page address.

This will be a very interesting and enjoyable weekend for all who choose to attend. It is an opportunity for many of you to reunite with old friends, and a new opportunity for all of us to meet and enjoy the company of old friends whom we have not yet discovered. Prepare for a good time.

## NORTH CAROLINA CHAPTER

The NC Chapter is planning their 20th Annual Reunion to be held Saturday, April 3 at the Statesville Holiday Inn I-77. Our guest speaker is Ken Hyde. Ken and his engineers at the Discovery of Flight Foundation were the team picked to develop, build and fly the "Flyer" at Kitty Hawk on December 17th for the 100th anniversary of the Wright brothers' historic first flight. We ask all who plan to

attend to please notify your Wing Commander to register by March 2 so the Holiday Inn can accommodate us for lunch.

The METROLINA WING Winter meeting was held at the Red Rocks Cafe in Charlotte. Thirty-six members were in attendance. Our guest was Mac Jones, B-17 pilot with the 384th BG. Wing Commander Brody Duke officiated during our regular order of business. James "Jimmie" Basinger was elected as the new Wing Commander and Ed Halliburton Sr. was appointed Vice Wing Commander. No official speaker was scheduled so we just enjoyed the fellowship following a delicious meal. Everyone was in the Christmas spirit.

The WESTERN WING monthly meetings continue to be well attended with 25 at the December meeting and 31 in January. Our December speaker was member Sam Maxwell who told us about some of his experiences as a B-17 gunner. He also brought along some great memorabilia to share. The January speaker was member Les Warren, bombardier in the 92nd BG. He spoke about his first mission jitters and how everything that could go wrong, did. Great story. Members and guests are welcome to join us for our meetings at McGuffey's Restaurant, Blue Ridge Mall, Hendersonville every third Thursday of the month at 11:30 AM.

## NEW MEXICO CHAPTER 8TH AFHS WINTER MEETING

The 8th AFHS NM Chapter held the winter meeting at the Albuquerque Petroleum Club, Saturday Feb. 14, 2004; members and guests totaled 136.

The meeting opened the members in the Pledge Of Allegiance, followed by an invocation led by Air Force Chaplain, Captain Crumpton. President Hal Goetsch then introduced guests and new members. The new members are: Harry & Joan Gogen,



The New Mexi-chords "Finishing Touch" Quartet



## CHAPTER NEWS

12thAF, 57thFG. John & Frances Gruver, HQ Barksdale AFB. Raymond Gonzales, 376th LAFB. Boyd & Betty Stephens, BAD #1. Dewitt & Ruth Tucker, 445th BG. Members who have recently departed: Kenneth Beckstrom, 398th BG. Alan Magee, 303rd BG. The highlight of the meeting was the musical performance by the New Mexi-Chords "Finishing Touch" quartet. Members of the quartet are: Jim Law, Phil Middleton, Dennis Ledbetter and Steve Cooper. The summer meeting will be held Saturday, June 5, 2004. Al Schwery  
Secretary

## NEW YORK SOUTHERN WING

President Gustave Nathan announces several new initiatives for the Southern Wing. The Chapter is seeking a permanent home for their display material and for members' autobiographical data. Pat Keeley, Chapter Historian, is in charge. Greg Hatton is updating the comprehensive Chapter website [www.ny8thafhs.org](http://www.ny8thafhs.org). Stanley Goldstein and David Greene are consolidating membership rolls and are investigating a regional concept for HS meetings. The March Chapter meeting will be held at the Crowne Plaza, La Guardia airport at 12:30 pm on March 20th. Associate members will be inducted as full members at that meeting. The Chapter voted in an increase in the "Target Awards" program for deserving students. Joe Minton proposed a \$500 contribution in support of the Heritage Museum in Savannah, enthusiastically approved by Chapter vote.

## 8th AFHS MINNESOTA CHAPTER BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Members Present: Al Anderson, Larry Bachman, Mary Berg, Wes Borgeson, Bob Clemens, Junior Gossell, Dick Hill, Mark Holmes, Earl Joswick, Dick Kaminiski, Don Kent, Dwight Olson, Ray Peterson, Liane Sparrow, Pete Backlund, Gary Bircherm, Wally Forman, Vincent Parker, Oliver Anderson, Alan Bloomquist and Clyde Thompson. The meeting was called to order by President Clyde Thompson.

Treasurer's report was presented by Al Anderson. A written Treasurer's report was given to those in attendance. Total funds in checking account and money market account is \$10,863.52 as of December 31, 2003. Motion made, seconded and passed to approve the Treasurer's Report.

Discussion of the 8th Air Force Historical Society by-laws took place. A letter was read from the National 8th AFHS. Motion made, seconded and passed to establish a committee to look at our By-laws and to contact National 8th AFHS about our By-laws, Charter and membership and make recommendations in six months. Big Bombers weekend was discussed. Tentative plans are not to sponsor Big Bombers weekend in 2004.

Those who speak at schools and any other organization should let the President be aware of their speaking engagements.

Annual Meeting is set for Wednesday, October 13, 2004 at 6 p.m. Dick Kaminski will take care of the Christmas Party in December, 2004.

Membership tip: Recruit your replacement from younger generations.

We will look at Memorial Fund Projects.

Respectfully submitted,  
Bob Clemens

## LICENSES

James Day, Sandoval IL, writes "my license plate travels with me every day. I am proud to have served as a radar armor gunner in the 457th Bomb Group. ( note spacing as per Illinois tag regulations!)



"My good business training didn't allow me to finance the costs of a flyable P-51 to recapture the spirit of my youth, so now I fly around the streets of Chicago and Tamarac, Florida in my personalized "Mustang". I get a lot of horn greetings and thumbs-up gestures from other motorists. At the Dayton 357th Fighter Group reunion, I got as many photos



taken of my Mustang as did Chuck Yeager and Bud Anderson sitting on the wing of a flying P-51 restoration!" This from 357th FG pilot J. B. Schlossberg, with photos certainly from his snow-less Florida home.

362nd. FS - 357th. FG



## WATTISHAM 1943 DAY COMMEMORATES 60TH ANNIVERSARY

Wattisham airbase was the home of the 4th Strategic Air Depot, in charge of maintenance of all 8th Air Force Fighter aircraft. The 479th Fighter Group's three squadrons of P-38 Lightnings arrived at the base in May, 1944 - the last FG to be deployed to the UK during the war. They converted to P-51 Mustangs in September 1944. The Group participated in deep penetration escort missions and tallied 155 enemy aircraft shot down and 279 destroyed on the ground, in low-level strafing attacks.

Recently veterans, families and friends of the 479th gathered at the airfield to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the official hand-over of the base by the RAF to the U.S. Army Air Corps. Wattisham 1943 Day ceremonies included the arrival of two P-51s and the raising of the Stars and Stripes by the color guard at nearby Lakenheath. Remembrance



**Jim Frolking, 479th pilot, with Roger Freeman**

services for the 63 pilots of the Group who were killed in action were conducted.

Jim Frolking, 436th FS, Cleveland Ohio, was the guest of honor and received a certificate of appreciation, after being introduced by Roger Freeman. He spoke about the significance of the base and those who served, recognizing British friends in the UK. Group COs Kyle Riddle and Hubert Zemke were also recognized in the day-long memorial event.



**Jim Frolking**



**Wattisham Airfield 60th Anniversary Color Guard from USAFB/Lakenheath opening ceremony**



**Wattisham Airfield 60th Anniversary  
10 May, 2003  
479th Fighter Group veterans with family and friends**





# BOOK REVIEWS

## Development of the P-51 Long-Range Escort Fighter MUSTANG by Paul A. Ludwig

The Foreword by Eagle squadron and 4th Fighter Group pilot Col. Don Blakeslee, speaking



of the difference the arrival of the P-51 Mustang made to 8th Air Force missions, sums it up: "It was the beginning of the end."

Author Paul Ludwig has done extensive research on the accelerated development of fighter aircraft during the war years, culminating in the production of the P-51 in 1943. Using National Archives and contacts with many original members of the 8th, he covers with fascinating photos and text the endeavors of the Aviation industry to produce a fighter with long range capabilities, speed, and durability to escort 8th AF bombing missions and also destroy the enemy's air and ground transportation abilities, especially in the days before the invasion in June 44.

The 222-page book contains examinations of problems faced by the pilots and ground crews, including engine failures, repairs, range and fuel tanks, command decisions, and placement of the P-51 when it became available. Personal stories of missions and events with accompanying period photos add depth to the story of what many called the premier fighter of WW II.

This slick-print large format volume with its 16-page color photo section tells the detailed history of the Mustang and its importance in America's defeat of Germany. Get in

touch with Specialty Press at 1-800-895-4585 or email karinh@cartechbooks.com for complete information.

## "TEX HILL" FLYING TIGER by David Lee "Tex" Hill with Major Reagan Schaupp, USAF

This volume will be of interest to 8th airmen and the younger generations as well. It tells the life story of Tex Hill, known to many who are familiar with WW II history. Not just a combat book of air battles and heroism of American Volunteer Group fliers against Japanese forces, the books tells a heart-warming personal story of a young American who met and married his girl after the war was over. Written by author and Air Force Major Reagan Schaupp, the



chapters indicate a close personal knowledge of the author and Tex Hill: he is Tex Hill's grandson.

After attending McCallie School near Chattanooga, David Hill went through aviator training, and recalls in detail a number of his experiences during that time. After eventually arriving in Burma he began flying combat missions with General Claire Chennault's famed Flying Tigers, piloting the P-40 fighter plane. Tex Hill downed 12 1/2 enemy aircraft in his seven months of combat with the AVG's "Panda Bears."

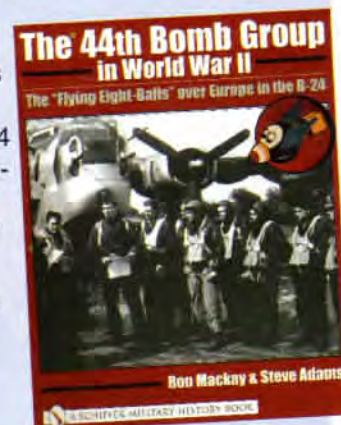
The story tells how he returned to the south, met Mazie Sales, an attractive student at the University of Alabama, and shortly thereafter married her. Tex continued flying in the Air Force and served in a number of Air Force Combat Training command positions. He later had a suc-

cessful career in the oil industry and in international businesses. He was always a special guest at reunions of the AVG veterans group.

There is a lot more in this book - a great story of a true American patriot. Published hard-back with photos by Honoribus Press, POB 4872, Spartanburg SC 29305, info can be obtained from them or from Ed Hall email genhalley@charter.net.

## THE 44TH BOMB GROUP IN WORLD WAR II The "Flying Eight Balls" over Europe in the B-24 by Ron Mackay and Steve Adams

The history of the 44th Bomb Group is unique in the annals of 8th Air Force B-24 combat flying. The group had left Barksdale Field, LA and Will Rogers Field,



Oklahoma in late 1942, arriving in England with its B-24Ds just seven weeks after the 8th had started its air offensive, having only about a dozen missions under its belt at that point. This Schiffer Publishing Ltd. Volume chronicles the history of the 44th, with many reknown figures of the war being found here, including CO Col. Frank Robinson, John Diehl, Dexter Hodge, Howard "Pappy" Moore and Col. Leon Johnson.

The proud history of this unit spans the entire war; it played a major role in 8th missions from 1942 right up to VE Day. The Flying Eightballs achieved honor early on, flying the first low level mission over the Ploesti oil fields from North Africa in August 1943.

This is a very fine book, a big book; one which grabs and holds the reader's interest. It imparts a detailed



# BOOK REVIEWS

impression of what a B-24 Bomb Group did, as the war evolved. The authors have presented photos with subtitles which include a wealth of personal and historical information of the men and airplanes of the 44th BG. Text materials relate the Group's history and tells the personal stories of its airmen.

Anyone who flew B-24s in the 2nd

Air Division, the Italian campaign, or in the Pacific Theater will appreciate the story this volume presents. It tells the history of the 8th AF's war. Extensive Appendices list the history of every 44th B-24 and every name, crew, and mission date of the almost one thousand men of the 44th who did not return. In addition all 344 mission targets and dates flown by the

group are recorded. The volume is large format high quality 275 pages. For information call Schiffer Publishing at tel (610) 593-1777 or email [www.schifferbooks.com](http://www.schifferbooks.com), or at usual bookstore sources.

## B-17 CREW FEATURED IN THE NEWS

submitted by Cal. Smith  
and Ken Nail, 457th BG  
Tupelo, MS

The 2 fellows Sergeants John Carvello and Leo Labonte were original crew members on a B-17 which was piloted by my uncle; 2nd Lt. Leonard Smith. My uncle's plane *Rowdy Rebel*, went down 9-11-44 over Merseburg, Germany. Carvello and Labonte were on this flight and went on to be featured in this cartoon.

I am also enclosing a picture of them as they were crew members of my uncle's B-17.



**Leonard Smith Crew**

**Standing from left;** pilot - 2nd Lt. Leonard Smith, Bombardier - Guy Cobb, navigator Judson Whitman, co-pilot Ralph Rogos, **Seated from left:** right waist gunner - Leo Labonte, ball turret gunner - Terry Holland, Radioman - Vincent Eggert, crew chief - Carroll Tieglend, waist gunner - Kenneth Burton, tail gunner - Jack Cararello



## KENNETH L. GILBERT B-24 CHAMPION

by Roger A. Freeman, 8th AFHS Historian

Some months ago I asked for information that might identify the B-24 Liberator crewmember who flew the highest number of missions with the Eighth Air Force. The response indicates that the champion is Kenneth L. Gilbert, a pilot of the 409th Bomb Squadron, 93rd Bomb Group who completed 75 combat missions, astonishingly in six months and what amounted to three consecutive tours.

Ken Gilbert was born July 5th, 1923, a native of Rhode Island. He enlisted in the Air Corps in 1941 and became a flying sergeant before being commissioned in May 1943. Sent with a replacement crew to England at the end of January 1944 he was assigned to the 93rd Bomb Group at Hardwick, flying his first mission on April 12th. A first tour of 25 missions was completed July 12th but Gilbert then volunteered to continue flying combat. During this period he flew 26 missions in 29 days and

dent -- "Flying didn't bother me. The more I flew, the better I felt" -- and planned to return to operations after his leave.

Gilbert's whereabouts between November 1944 and June 1945 have not been ascertained but it is known that he professed an intention of flying fighters. Apparently, it was not until some six weeks after VE-Day that he finally achieved this ambition, being assigned to the 504th Fighter Squadron, 339th Fighter Group, based at Fowlmere, near

Cambridge, England. Equipped with P-51 Mustangs the 339th was, along with several other Eighth Air Force fighter groups, waiting to be redeployed in the fall of that year. Meanwhile flying training continued and Gilbert



Photograph of Ken Gilbert that appeared in a wartime issue of Stars and Stripes.

504th FS, 339th FG dispersal area



then went on to better this record by flying 29 missions in 32 days. On October 9th 1944 he completed his 75th combat mission and although he wanted to continue flying and had no obvious signs of fatigue, the authorities considered this was more than enough concentrated combat for any flier and sent him home. A large number of his missions were flown in a B-24 called *Missouri Sue*, in which he had his most telling experience. On a bomb run to a target at Munich the Liberator got caught in turbulence and, avoiding another aircraft in the formation, fell off into a spin. Some 15,000 feet of altitude were lost before Gilbert and his co-pilot were able to regain control, and this with the bomb load still in place.

In addition to 75 combat missions, Captain Gilbert had also flown 11 sorties hauling fuel and supplies to Allied airfields in France for the ground forces, and 6 sea search sorties endeavouring to locate downed airmen. In total he flew nearly 600 operational hours and no member of his crew was ever wounded. Well-built, chubby, blond-haired and 5 feet 7 inches tall, Gilbert was only three months past his 21st birthday anniversary when taken off combat flying. He remained supremely confi-

dent -- "Flying didn't bother me. The more I flew, the better I felt" -- and planned to return to operations after his leave. Gilbert was one of the trainees, hopeful of seeing action against the Japanese in a Pacific war front. Bomber pilots often had difficulty in adjusting to fighters and Gilbert was no exception, despite his flying experience. On the afternoon of July 17th he and another pilot had returned from a sortie, the latter landing but Gilbert did another circuit of the airfield and then flew low, onlookers expecting him to pull up and turn for his landing approach. Instead, when about three-quarters of a mile past the airfield, his Mustang suddenly rolled over and crashed in a field. Gilbert was killed instantly. The cause of the crash was never identified although it was unlikely to have been pilot error.

Although his record was extraordinary, Gilbert never received the acknowledgement one would have expected. A Rhode Island VFW post was named in his honor yet few of its current members know much about the young officer whose portrait hangs among the various plaques on the post meeting place wall.

Roger A. Freeman  
Dedham Essex England  
RAFMAYSBARN@aol.com



## TRUTH DRAMATIZED

**Stanley P. Friedman**  
493rd Bomb Group

"Pass the mashed potatoes, Nick."  
"Dad, what's that funny look you get in your eyes sometimes?"

"Which look?"

"It's like you're far away."

"Oh, that one? You know what DaVinci said? 'When once you have tasted flight you will always walk the earth with your eyes turned skywards; for there you have been and there you will always be.'"

"So you're still up in the sky? After sixty years?"

"Nick, not a day has passed that I haven't thought about flying missions. I never reach for it. It just comes to me. But, I'm not alone. Others at the reunions have said the same thing."

"Everyday? So how about a little dinner table entertainment. Tell me my favorite. Your fabulous bail-out story."

"Oh, lay off, man. You've heard that one too many times. But I have something you've never heard."

"Hey, I thought you told us all of them."

"It's a part of a story. And this is summer, so it's in season."

"I told you our saying, didn't I? 'Going in, you're working for Uncle Sam, but coming back you were work-

ing for yourself.' Need I say the idea was to come back alive?"

"So did you come back alive?"

"No I died."

"Gee, that's too bad."

"You remember we went to Brussels to hit synthetic oil. Six hundred guns but only five hundred and fifty could shoot at you at once."

"Yes, I remember that story."

"Coming back, at the Channel we dropped down to ten thousand feet. We were over Ghent on the coast. And we took a direct hit."

"An 88?"

"Yes."

"Where did you get it?"

"It came in under the left wing. Went through the gas tanks. And out the top. And the friggen thing didn't go off. If it had, you, your brothers, your mom and I would never have dinner conversations. Because I was sitting at the navigator's table on the left side in the nose, right next to the hit. The gas tanks would have exploded, and I would have been blown out of the plane with no chute."

"And it didn't it go off?"

"No."

"Why?"

"It's a mystery. But maybe I should thank

your grandmother. When I went overseas she cut a deal with God. She said, 'I will fast every day if you bring my Stanley back alive.' And she didn't eat dinner for six months. Now is that a mom or is that at mom?"

"Dear Grammy in heaven."

"But here's the kicker. The reason why I say I tell it to you because it's summer."

"Sometimes at about two in the morning, when everybody is asleep in this house, I go outside on the front porch. I take a deep breath of warm country air. Light up my one cigar a day. And I lean on the porch railing and I look up."

"I stare at that big, glorious, orange moon. And I think, imagine, guys actually walked around on that thing."

"If I remember rightly, it was seven missions and twenty-one astronauts. So despite the disparity of distances traveled - their 450,000 mile round trip, and my 100 mile round trip - I feel a bond with them."

"Why a bond?"

"Because, we all got back alive."

**Stanley Friedman, 493rd BG**  
Yorktown Heights, NY

### LIFE MEMBERSHIP DUES

Age	60 or under - \$300	*Spouse of member \$40 less than applicable amount for LM's current age
	61-70 - \$200	Annual Dues - \$25.00
	71-80 - \$135	
	81-100 - \$90	



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Website: www.8thafhs.org email: eafhs@hotmail.com



## TAPS

**White, Joseph**, Woodburn, OR; 381st BG  
**Ward, James**, Lilburn, GA; 479th FG  
**Renzi, John**, Cranston, RI; 44th BG  
**Smookler, M.D., Lawrence**, San Francisco, CA; 447th BG  
**Wolfer, Leonard**, Benicia, CA;  
**Clarke, Mack**, Tulsa, OK; 92nd BG  
**McCallum, Jr., John**, Anderson, SC; 52nd BG  
**Turner, Edward**, Lakeside, CA; 93rd BG  
**Magraw, Gilbert**, Pittsford, NY;  
**Rumbold, Chester**, Thornton, PA; 392nd BG  
**Barry, Thomas**, E. Greenwich, RI; 305th BG

**Cripps, Faber**, Palm Springs, CA; 91st BG  
**Reagan, Penrose**, West Chicago, IL; 401st BG  
**Rockett, Thomas**, Putnam Valley, NY; 379th BG  
**House, Rodney**, Sacramento, CA; 384th BG  
**Boisineau, Gerard**, Empire, MI; 351st BG  
**Gallagher, John**, New Hyde Park, NY; 303rd BG  
**Labreche, George**, St. Louis, MS; 31st FG  
**Breen, Samuel, Metairie**, LA; 447th BG  
**Bolociuch, Chester**, Cicero, IL; 401st BG  
**Rahn, Marshall**, Ft. Lauderdale, FL; 306th BG  
**Solenberger, Cleve**, Sacramento, CA; 385th BG  
**Kline, George**, Burnt Hills, NY; 34th BG  
**Foss, Norman**, Pittsburgh, PA; 95th BG  
**Howell, Horace**, Wayne, PA; 357th FG  
**Marson, Frank**, Saint Marys, GA;  
**Waldron, Norman**, Massapequa, NY; 453rd BG  
**Bohn, Jack**, Colorado Springs, CO; 398th BG  
**Miller, Harry**, Tempe, AZ; 490th BG  
**Gannon, Morris**, Smiths, AL;  
**Maffei, Antone**, Eurkea Springs, AR;  
**Young, Jr., Jay**, Catlettsburg, KY; 448th BG  
**Collins, Jr., John**, Alexandria, VA; 305th BG  
**Davis, Jerald**, North Richmond Hills, TX; 398th BG  
**Jakab, John**, Dayton, OH; 466th BG  
**Curry, Terence**, Sioux City, IA;  
**Delmerico, Frank**, San Diego, CA; 490th BG  
**Griggs, John**, Lincoln, CA; 303rd BG  
**Whittaker, William**, New Braunfels, TX; 351st BG  
**Ferenczi, Joseph**, Binghamton, NY;  
**Mundy, Vivian**, Minerva, OH; 100th BG  
**Lani, Edward**, Finleyville, PA;

**General Robert W. Burns**, Lynn Haven FL; Commander 351st BG at Polebrook and command pilot. Born in Ecu, Mississippi, he frequently attended 8th AFHS and Unit reunions, riding his motorcycle to some of them.. Bob Burns was the first elected President of the 8th AFHS and helped form the organization's policies during the early years. He often said that the 8th AFHS reunions were opportunities to get friends together and to have a good time. - from his daughter Becky  
**Kogswell, Kirch**; 381st BG pilot; shot down over Liepzig 20 Feb 44; from his copilot William "Bugs" Borrego  
**Thompson, Robert**, Manchester TN; 493rd BG navigator; from crewmate John Lindquist  
**Anderson, Adrian**, 7th Recon Group from Whitey Hawkinson  
**Studer, Irvine**, Toledo OH; 487th BG; Ohio Chapter - from Jim Erskine  
**Redmond, Lawrence**, Houston TX; 7th PRG, 14th PR Sq  
**McQueen, Thomas**; 388th BG intelligence - from his daughter Joni Martindale  
**Smith, Stanley**; 487th BG; -from his wife Miriam and his six

very proud sons!

**Hanley, Thomas**, Chicago IL; group lead navigator - from Jim McClain  
**Rosenoff, Wayne**, Monterey CA; 55th FG P-51 pilot; POW  
**Carroll, John**, East Tawas MI; 55th FG P-38 pilot; POW for 2 years; career in broadcasting  
**Matlavish, John**, Mulkeytown IL; HQ 442nd Air Service Group  
**Gallagher, John**, Jackson Heights NY; 458th BG lead navigator; flew first mission on testing "smart bomb" technology with Buck Rogers Boys; career as NYC detective - from his son Raymond  
**Prince, Lawrence**; 379th BG pilot -from his son Bob (see Debriefing in this issue)  
**Barnett, William**, Rabun Gap GA; 384th BG at Grafton-Underwood Georgia Chapter  
**Ketcham, Herbert**, Freeport NY; 447th BG from his buddy and Blockbuster Band friends Anthony Steven  
**Kinnard, Loftin**, Nashville TN; 55th Postal Unit, 91st BG; career in US Postal Service  
**Porterfield, Wyatt**, Athens GA; 489th BG 30 missions; career in construction; a patriot and expert horseman, he exemplified devotion to duty and love of family and wife JoAnne; from Hap Chandler  
**Hild, William**, Linthicum MD; 361st FG clerk  
**Heacox, Philip**, Greensboro NC; 361st FG Photographer  
**Young, William**, St. James City FL; 361st FG Tech support



**Porterfield  
Wyatt**

**McCandliss, Robert**, Mosspoint MS; 361st FG pilot  
**Thompson, Dr. Russell**, Willmar MN; 466th BG pilot; career in Ophthalmology; from crewmember bombardier Herbert Leopold  
**Benson, Richard**, Shawnee MO  
**Foresman, Leroy**, Kansas City KS; 8th AF P-38 mechanic, served in Operation TORCH in North Africa  
**Engle, George**, Blue Springs MO; from Ken Wilson  
**Martin, George**, Kansas City MO; mechanic 1942-45; lover of KC baseball  
**Michalski, Paul**, Elgin IL; U. S. Marine; Illinois Chapter  
**Reagan, Penrose**, Wheaton IL; 401st BG ttg/engineer; Mayflower descendant; Illinois Chapter  
**Vinton, William**; 445th BG ttg with 34 missions; flew the last 445th mission 25 Apr 45  
**Gardner, Eldon "Bud"**, Houston TX; 305th BG from Al Lea  
**Pullen, Marshall**, Houston TX; 351st BG navigator; shot down in Stormy Weather; POW  
**Robbins, Charles**, Kansas City MO; tailgunner  
**Hammond, Thomas**, Navato CA;  
**Solenburger, Cleve**, Sacramento CA; 385th BG  
**McQueen, Thomas**; 388th BG, Intelligence; from his daughter Joni Martindale  
**Parrott, Robert "Red"**, Houston TX  
**Redden, Joe**, Houston TX; 30 missions with 8th AF, 20 as lead bombardier  
**Arstingstull, Robert**; 96th BG tailgunner from Sherman Small  
**Fielder, Robert**, Roanoke VA; 95th BG waistgunner from Ed Morrison  
**Russell, Jesse**, Conroe TX; 339th FG mechanic 1942-45  
**Evans, John**, Houston TX; B-17 pilot, over 50 years of service with the Boy Scouts, YMCA, Lions Club and his First United Methodist Church



**Albert Pugh** died in St. Petersburg FL at age 108, ten days short of his 109th birthday. He served with the 77th Infantry Division in World War I and was wounded in the 1918 bloody battle of the Meusse-Argonne offensive on the European continent. Pugh was the last known combat wounded veteran of WW I. He often told visitors his secret to a long life was "to keep breathing."

**Clarke, Mack Edward**, Tulsa OK; 35 missions as a B-17 pilot from his wife Beverly

**Redmond, Lawrence**, 7th Photo Recon Group from Al Lea

**Butler, Frank**, Americus GA; 22 missions as a B-17 pilot

**Sudderth, Ralph**, Little Rock AR; 303rd BG bombardier



**Carville Lloyd**

**Carville, Lloyd**, Baton Rouge LA; 379th BG btg on OI Gappy, the B-17 that ended the war having flown more missions than any other bomber. His wife Ruth says he was known as "Curly" to his crew, whom he called every Christmas Day. Lloyd was a faithful visitor to and supporter of the Mighty 8th AF Museum in Savannah.

**Rumbold, Chester**, Thornton PA; 8th AF bomb sight technician

**Krack, Rudy**, Garfield NJ; 493rd BG ttg/eng

**Brekke, Rosemary**, St. Peter MN; born in Birkenhead England, she served as a radio wireless operator with the RAF WAAFs during the war. from her husband Gerald

**Majka, Walter**, Camillus NY; 44th BG; career as Chef at Gilbert's Corner House from Robert Fisk

**Smith, Hunter**, Santa Rosa CA; 486th BG

**Kelley, Kevin**, Shelton CT; 94th BG navigator; member Rougham Air Base Assn from his wife Harriet

**Pernia, Mary**, Ocoee FL; Women's Army Corps from her daughter Marian Gardner

**Codman, LaVerne**, Marina Del Rey CA; 447th BG Association; attended all reunions with husband Murray "Big Shorty" Codman

**Guest, Mrs. C. Z.**, New York NY; horticulturist who headed the American Garden section of the International Garden Festival in Liverpool England, honoring members of the Army Air Forces killed in WWII

**Bell, Pearl**; Oregon Chapter from her husband William

**Candon, Michael**, Providence RI; 55th FG Armament

**Collins, John**, Washington DC

Yandian, Joseph, Muskegon MI; 489th BG

**Baker, Alvin**, Portland TX; 8th VTN

**Anderson, Fred H.**, Springfield Ill; SAD V

**Koussa, Habib**, Narragansett RI; 386th BG (M)

**Owsley, Dee Kemp**, Lee's Summit MO; 457th BG

**Gray, Jack**, Charlotte NC; 8th AF gunner

**Roemer, Howard**, Eau Claire WI; 35 missions as a bombardier, the last being over Mannheim August 1944; career in education, administration, and touching the lives of innumerable people along the way from his wife Margaret

**Conners, Robert**, Mason OH; 55th FG pilot

**Broderick, George**, East Meadow NY; 303rd BG ttg/engineer

**Goebel, John Harold**, San Antonio TX; B-17 navigator; life-long Texas Aggie fan; enjoyed cruising on his boat "Queen of Jacks" from Charles Hawkins

**Weber, Jim**, Groves TX; 487th BG crew engineer; flying low, low squadron in the 487th 8th AF lead Group shutdown on the Christmas Eve mission to support Battle of the Bulge ground troops in 1944, one on which the 487th lost 13 bombers; 5 crew

members KIA, he was rescued by the Army Rangers; from his comrade and friend Mike Quering

#### BYRON SCHLAG

Byron Schlag, Pittsburgh PA, flew nine missions as a tailgunner with the Charles Bruckman crew in the 447th Bomb Group's B-17 *OI' Scrapiron* during which he was credited with a German Me 262 jet fighter kill. On his final mission, Byron's aircraft suffered a mid-air hit by another wounded B-17 and went down. He stayed in the plane's tail section to the ground before leaping out. The only other surviving crewmember was Eddie Shibble who, discovering that his parachute was missing, crawled back down into his ballturret and rode it to the ground. After being captured, escaping and being recaptured and nearly executed, Byron was sheltered by some sympathetic German citizens before being rescued by Gen. George Patton's troops near the end of the war.

Byron Schlag was active in 447th Bomb Group Association activities in the States and at the 447th airbase at Rattlesden, England. He served as President of the 447th BGA. Throughout his years he was very prominent in educational affairs, going into schools with other 8th

veterans and establishing educational history programs for younger generations, who were impressed by his presentations. Byron's enthusiasm was contagious and his love of the 8th Air Force was a major part of his life. In tribute to his friend, Jack Keller, fellow tailgunner who also flew missions in *OI' Scrapiron* states, "Byron was a 'doer,' and he always had a smile on his face and in his voice."

**Sessoms, Perry**, Savannah GA; 389th BG pilot; President Savannah Wing 8th AFHS; Volunteer Director and supporter of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum

**Magee, Alan**, Angel Fire NM; 303rd BG btg; wounded and thrown out of his stricken B-17 *Snap! Crackle! and Pop!* without his parachute on a 3 Jan 43 mission over St. Nazaire, he crashed through the glass roof of the local railroad station and survived after months of treatment by German medical doctors

**Davidson, Fred**, Little Rock AR; 381st BG pilot with 31 missions; distinguished career in the USAF; personal pilot for Pres. Bill Clinton for 7 years in Arkansas; after the war Col. Davidson met his future wife, June Porch, on the ramp when she landed her first solo flight in a Piper Cub, failing to yield a right of way to Fred's approaching aircraft. Their first meeting was to discuss just that issue. from Theodore Hood

**McClure, John**, Atlanta GA; 56th FG pilot; from his son Jim

**Robustellini, Joe**, San Bruno CA; 96th BG Quartermaster from comrade and friend George Wolfe

**Barnard, Donald**, Evanston WY; 20th FG pilot; from fellow pilot



**Byron Schlag**





Bud Crutchley  
**Wolfer, Leonard**, Benicia FL; BAD 1  
**Semelveis, Wilbur**, 448th BG noseunner from  
 Norm Dunpke

**Clark Byers**, barn painter, died at his home in  
 Rising Fawn, Georgia at age 89. In 1935, he  
 was hired by Lookout Mountain attraction owner  
 Garnet Carter to paint **SEE ROCK CITY** on the  
 roof of local barns near rural roadways. He chose  
 large white lettering on a shiny black background  
 covering the entire roof of each barn, eventually  
 painting in 19 states and Canada. Letters were  
 sketched in chalk and Byers used  
 brushes for the painting. Barn owners  
 were paid \$5-10, but got a free paint  
 job and free repairs. During WWII, the  
 three words of his signature art  
 appeared in frontline areas of ground  
 troops located in the South Pacific and  
 in Europe, and on an occasional air-  
 base. Signs such as "See Rock City -  
 2567 miles" stood among tents and  
 foxholes of American soldiers - a taste  
 of home. Clark Byers' wife lives in  
 Trenton, GA, near their large north



**Clark Byers**

Georgia family.

**Sutch, Creston**, Blue Bell PA; 96th BG radio operator; from

### A LOVELY HAND

Last night I held a lovely hand,  
 A hand so soft and neat,  
 I thought my heart would burst with joy  
 So wildly did it beat.

No other hand into my heart  
 Could greater solace bring;  
 Than that dear hand I held last night,  
 Four aces and a king.

submitted by Jim Erskine, 487th BG  
 Toledo, OH

### A BALL TURRET GUNNER AT 77

When I was young, Death touched me  
 Time and time again:  
 Touched and--teasing--passed me  
 As if indifferent then.

My seasons sown for harvest,  
 The snow deep on the bough  
 Death, I think, will be amused  
 By my indifference now.

Jim Facos  
 Monpelier, VT

crewmate and friend Wayne "Whit" Whitlock  
**Steininger, John**, Mechanicsburg PA  
**Rader, William (nee William  
 Raper)** Alexandria VA; 306th  
 BG pilot and 303rd Group CO;  
 flew "Looking Glass" missions  
 with SAC; 10,000 hours flying  
 time; career as Aerospace  
 engineer with Hughes Aircraft  
**Brown, Harley Lee**, Big Bear  
 Lake CA; 55th FG Ace from  
 buddy Bill Sharpe in England  
**DeGiacomo, Joseph**, Woburn  
 MA; 385th BG tailgunner from  
 Al Audette



*William Rader*

**Cox, Luther**, Orlando FL; B-24  
 navigator; author of *Always Fighting The Enemy*, POW and  
 camp Medic for 29 months from his wife Jeanene  
**Radus, Sidney**; 100th BG pilot of B17 Milk Wagon from his  
 wife Jackie

### LAST FORMATION

I'd like to have a moment, Sir  
 Up here so close to you  
 To talk about the things I've done  
 And things I've yet to do.

At times I've left Formation,  
 To peel off and slip away,  
 When "Move In. Close that gap up!"  
 Was the order of the day.

I didn't need my compass.  
 No, not me. I thought I knew.  
 So, I've cursed and made excuses  
 When my field was overdue.

But each time I've lost my way, Sir,  
 From my flight of fellow men,  
 You've found and brought me safely  
 To formation once again.

And I know that you are watching, Sir,  
 As I walk your halls of air  
 For the majesty of Heaven  
 Is about me everywhere.

And when You form Your squadron, Sir,  
 And lead those men who fly  
 On their last and final mission  
 To Your airdrome in the sky.

I ask that I may be there, Sir  
 To make that journey too;  
 With throttles to the firewall  
 Sir, Let me follow You.

found in England 1945, anonymous,  
 by HillerSmith, 447th Bomb Group



## MAGICAL MOMENT

Our time on earth is spent a moment at a time. Moments come to us automatically and with regularity, one after another with no effort on our part, and they disappear just as quickly. A simple errand we are called upon to perform often turns out to take a moment or an hour or perhaps a half a day. That simple task can turn out to be nothing more than a moment killer. As a result, these moments are used up and we become frustrated at our loss of them, for they are forever gone.

Everyone has legitimate goals and specific events set for himself that are scheduled to occur later on. This is good! But what about the moments spent while we wait for and anticipate that "magical moment" which is coming up sometime in the future? Those who wait for their "special moment" may never have it but those who find life in the moment-at-hand will discover that their moment is here, at this very time!

Aging is a process that is immedi-

ately attached to everyone when they are born. Proud parents record in their memory baby's first smile, first step, first tooth, first scratch, first haircut until these precious moments total up to a 12 month period and the "magical moment" of the one candle birthday cake. This appears to the child in the photographic record of his life. Of course, the child does not remember this celebration but as candles are added to the cake, the child becomes "hooked on this aging process" and looks forward to the next big celebration.

Like it or not, aging celebrations do occur along the way. There is usually a cake, some gifts, perhaps a card from some long-lost or almost forgotten relative. The 21st birthday seems to stand out as important. I spent my 21st on the flight deck of my B-24 aircraft in France, guarding it from sabotage from possible prowling German patrols. There was no cake that night.

More than fifty years later, it seemed like a good time to celebrate, so two hundred or so people decided to give a surprise party for the Boss. I was somewhat aghast at their enthusiasm over my age accomplish-

ments. Now it was really a surprise when my children, grandchildren, their peers, and friends gathered when I hit 80. They caught me completely off guard. Their greetings I could hear in spite of my weakened sense of hearing, but the visual impact was unbelievable. With that many candles on the cake, it looked like a fire-bomb had been set off; a real smoke-alarm activator.

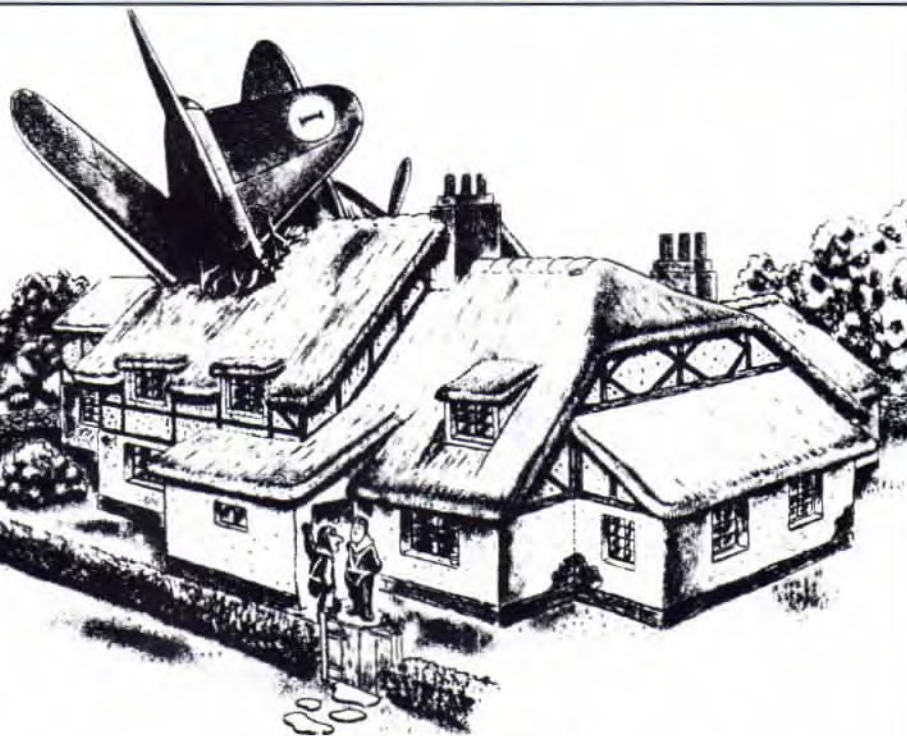
A prophetic but truthful word was spoken by one of the youngest present at my celebration. "Grandpa" she innocently remarked, "you're so.....old." Talk about a wake-up-call. I realized once again, that it was impossible to kick the habit of aging. The alternative to old age we do not like to talk about! I determined that although more birthdays may come, I will just take life one day at a time and relish that "magical moment" when it is given to me.

Jesus addressed the idea of the "magical moment" when He said, "Your heavenly Father already knows all of your needs, and He will give you all you need from day to day if you live for Him and make the Kingdom of God your primary concern. So don't worry about tomorrow." Matthew 6:32-34 NLT

Earl Wassom, 466th Bomb Group Chaplain, Tennessee Chapter



Earl Wassom



"I HATE THIS APOLOGIZING BUSINESS."  
—Pvt. Tom Flannery YANK







**8th AF News**  
**The Eighth Air Force Historical Society**  
 P.O. Box 1787, Savannah, GA 31402

**Dated Material Inside**



**44th. Bomb Group - SHIPDHAM**  
 B-24D-1-CO 41-23699 'Lemon Drop'



**93rd. Bomb Group - HARDWICK**  
 B-24D-1-CO 41-23667 'Ball of Fire'



**389th. Bomb Group - HETHEL**  
 B-24D-1-CO 41-23683 'Green Dragon'



**446th. Bomb Group - BUNGAY**  
 B-24D-1-CO 41-23737 'Fearless Freddie'



**448th. Bomb Group - SEETHING**  
 B-24D-5-CO 41-23809 'You Cawn't Miss It'



**466th. Bomb Group - ATTLEBRIDGE**  
 B-24D-20-CO 41-24109 ('Ready and Willing')



**467th. Bomb Group - RACKHEATH**  
 B-24D-53-CO 42-40370 'Pete the POM Inspector'



**492nd. Bomb Group - NORTH PICKENHAM**  
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