

MARCH 2011



8TH AF NEWS

Volume 11 Number 1 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"



Pathfinders to Berlin



AF News

March 2011

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 news magazine 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 956, Pooler, GA. 31322.

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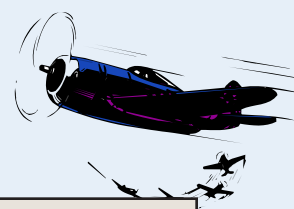
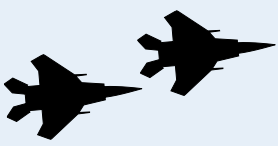
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Presidents Address



Harry Tanner
President

Greetings for 2011 . . . a new year of anticipated goals and dreams. I hope this years proves to be profitable for you as well as the Historical Society.

I just returned from the mid-term Board of Directors meeting in Atlanta. One focus of attention was the 2011 Reunion which is scheduled for October 11 - 16 in St. Louis, Missouri. Armed Forces Reunion representative Donna Lee shared updates and information on our fall reunion which she will post for you in upcoming magazines.

The Board also voted on sites for both the 2012 Reunion (San Antonio, Texas) and 2013 Reunion (Savannah, Georgia).

This is a reminder that donations are still being accepted for the B-17 "City of Savannah" at the Museum in Pooler. Remember, also, the need to renew your membership and recruit new membership to the Society.

Lorene and I extend our wishes for your health and happiness in this new year. We look forward to seeing you in St. Louis in October --- just seven months away! God Bless the "Mighty Eighth."

Sincerely, Harry Tanner
President 8th AFHS

8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion

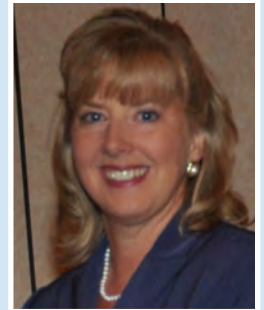
October 11-16, 2011

Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet - St. Louis, MO

Full details about the reunion will be published in the June issue of the 8th Air Force News. For now, just mark your calendars for a great time in October. The room rate is \$104 plus tax; airport shuttle and parking are free! You may call 888-627-7066 to reserve your room or go online at www.starwoodmeeting.com/book/8thairforce . An itinerary and registration form will be published this summer, but you can expect a traditional program with early arrivals on Tuesday,

meetings and private dinners for large units on Friday, business meeting and banquet on Saturday. Of course, popular site-seeing tours will be offered as well. Most will depart on Sunday.

We look forward to seeing you there!



Donna Lee

Donna P. Lee
Senior Event Planner
Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
Phone: 706-356-1905



ELECTION NOTICE

Nominations of candidates for election to the Board of Directors of the Eighth Air Force Historical must be in the hands of the Secretary no later than June 1, 2011. 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.
- Brief resume of nominee.
- Nominating member's full name and address.
- Nominator's 8th AFHS membership number and, if applicable, his unit.

The Secretary will relay all nominations to the Nominating committee. Nominations received by the Secretary after June 1, 2011 or any nomination without complete information will not be considered.

Send all nominations to:

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From the Editor



Mark Copeland
Historian
8th AF News Editor

Greetings everyone! I am very pleased to once again to bring you this edition of the 8th AF NEWS. Donna and Telisha have once again produced another superb issue. This issue features an amazing story about the first 8th Air Force mission to successfully bomb the German capital of Berlin. Brigadier General Richard M. Baughn has shared a terrific story in commemoration of the 67th Anniversary of "Big Week."

We are also very excited to feature two superb articles from Annette Tison and Allen Ostrom.

Walt was a powerful and positive influence to all of us. More personally, his leadership, mentoring and friendship were an inspiration to me. His legacy to the 8th Air Force Historical Society and the 8th Air Force News will live on in each future page of this fine magazine that he composed for almost 12 years. If it were not for Walt's vision, his dedication and hard work, this publication would have never become a reality.

I now walk in the footsteps of Walt. I am honored to make it my personal goal to keep the integrity and quality of this publication to the standard of my esteemed predecessor.

Due to my heavy work schedule towards the end of February and the timeliness of Dr. Brown's passing the March issue got a bit behind and subsequently it went out a tad late. Forgive us; we shall do better on our next issue. Please sit back and relax and enjoy this issue your 8th Air Force News.

On a sad note, Dr. Walter E. Brown the former Editor of the 8th Air Force News passed away in late February. Donna Neely has written a fitting tribute in celebration of Walt's amazing life and his passionate dedication to this publication and the history of the 8th Air Force.

We are proud to have you as a member.
Respectfully in your service,
Mark S. Copeland
Historian/Editor - 8th Air Force News

Behind the scenes



Mother/Daughter - 8th AF News Team
Telisha Gaines & Donna Neely

You will not want to miss the centerfold and back cover pages of this *March 8th AF News* issue. On page 25 & 26 is a "Tribute to Dr. Walter Brown".

I would like to thank Walt's wife; Alice, sons; Kirk and Kerry Brown for the personal photos of Walt with his family through the years and for assisting me with additional information needed to write my tribute about my dear

friend Walt. I am very grateful for the time I spent with Walt weeks and days before he passed away last month. He was loved by many and will always be remembered for his contribution in our life. I hope you will all enjoy Walt's tribute.

Sincerely,
Behind the Scenes Team
Donna Neely & Telisha Gaines



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Spring is just around the corner...and I'm sure with the harsh winter we've all experienced (even south Georgia) we're all looking forward to it. I hope this magazine finds each of you happy and healthy. I wanted to share a little news with you about our membership. We have new members daily through our facebook and website resources. There are daily postings and great stories being shared on facebook so check it out and share your own stories.

Part of our marketing efforts involve you – the members. The 8th AF News makes a great gift for Mother's and Father's Day or even for birthdays. I cannot tell you how many people I speak with who are calling to sign up their children/grandchildren as new members. What a wonderful way to share his-

tory and family legacy with future generations. If our members help to promote the society, we are sure to exceed our membership expectations for 2011.

Thanks for all you do.

**Samantha Reid
Membership Records Manager
8th Air Force Historical Society**



Samantha Litton Reid

Chapter/Unit/Group Liaison Report



Pat Keeley

I think I speak for most of us that this winter truly has been unbelievable with 49 of 50 states having recorded snowfall.

This Spring is highly anticipated.

I want to thank all of you that have contacted me with updates on your Chapter & Group contact information and also with your Newsletters and Events that I keep posted on the Society's website, www.8thafhs.org. Again for you researchers I want to add that our webmaster Bob Books has added Research Help with useful research

websites and Government research resources and also 8th AF Links listing Bomb Groups and Associations websites and much more. Please check it out. If your website is not listed please contact me. The 8th AFHS is now on Facebook which is an excellent media for Chapters & Groups and other related organizations to post their Newsletters and activities.

I recently spoke with the President of the Kentucky Chapter Mr. Frank D. Cassidy. Frank was a tail gunner with the 95th BG. Frank is truly concerned about the future of his Chapter and how to raise funds for their treasury to help promote the Chapter so it can continue forward. If any of you have ideas for Frank please contact me and I will tell you how to contact him. Frank's situation is becoming common amongst our ranks and we need your input on this. I have started a Chapters/Groups Forum on the Society's website under the Events tab solely for the Chapters/Groups BOD's to post their suggestions on

moving forward. I know Tom Davis, President of the Oregon Chapter, has been anticipating the Forum and I invite all Chapter & Group Presidents and Commanders to please mail/email me your input so we can move forward.

Thanks to Board member Mike Faley's 8th AFHS Facebook and thanks to the History Channel's Air War Over Europe the Society has experienced an influx of new members who I welcome and thank. I also want to encourage these new members, if not already, to join their local Chapters. If you have any questions regarding this please contact me. I also have a listing of Chapters/Groups contacts on the Society's website under the **About Us**..contacts tab..

Again if you wish to denote your Group/Squadron patches we are fortunate to have on the BOD of the Society Dr. Nancy Toombs. One of Nancy's passions is her collection of 8th AAF Bomb Group patches and Squadrons patches for each of the 48 groups that flew with the 8th.

I can assure you that Nancy's collection is to be used to honor the 8th and also used for educational purposes and not for any profit or commercial use. Nancy's contact info can be found on the back of the front cover page.

As always please contact me if any Group/Chapter contact changes. I will keep an updated Chapter/Unit/Group Report on the Society's website under the **Events** tab.

My address is posted on the back of the front cover page and my email address.

**Cheers and 'Keep Their Memories Alive'
Pat Keeley
Please support the USO.**



8TH AIR FORCE'S

"BIG WEEK"

BY BRIG GENERAL RICHARD M. BAUGHN, USAF (RET)



General Carl Andrew "Tooy" Spaatz

General "Tooy" Spaatz took command of the United States Strategic Air Forces in Europe on January 1, 1944, knowing his young airmen had to do something the Luftwaffe and RAF had failed to do—win air superiority over enemy territory during daylight. Spaatz also knew the job could be one of the bloodiest campaigns (air or ground) in all of WWII, because of high casualty rates the 8th AF had suffered so far. However, he and his superiors were convinced the Allies had to control skies over the Continent, if the invasion of France and the defeat of Germany were to be successful.

Spaatz had the airpower to do the job and he was ready for the challenge—all he needed was good weather. But for the first ten days of January 1944, either the weather over the critical targets was

"clobbered in" or thick clouds and fog blanketed 8th AF airfields and kept the bomber and fighters from taking off and forming up. During the wait, Spaatz told General "Hap" Arnold in a message that weather was going to be his main obstacle, "...with a few days of visual precision bombing of aircraft plants, a giant step would be taken towards air superiority. Losses will be heavy, but the price has to be paid some time and will result in fewer losses later..."

Finally on the afternoon of January 10th, the weather watchers reported the possibility of a few hours of good bombing weather over the Oschersleben's FW-190 plant, Halberstadt's JU-88 factories and Brunswick's ME-110 factories. But the weathermen warned that the takeoff, en route and landing weather would be marginal and might get worse. In addition to the "iffy" weather, Spaatz's intelligence staff reminded him that some of the targets were less than a hundred miles from Berlin and a strong Luftwaffe defense could be expected. Spaatz knew the lousy European winter weather would rarely be good enough to make an easy call on sending his forces into battle and as a consequence he couldn't overlook this shaky opportunity—he had already lost ten days and time was running out.

There's very little doubt that the decision to attack had to be a difficult one for Spaatz, but it should be remembered that more than 95% of the young airmen in the 8th AF hadn't known the difference between a nacelle and an empennage 18 months earlier. There were no "old guys" who knew the tricks of the trade—it was a "new guy" air force led by "boy" colonels, many of whom had



General Tooy Spaatz, Arnold's Air Commander for Northern Europe, fills in his Boss and old friend.

less than 800 hours flying time. These young tyros had to learn how to fly and fight as a team, while developing and perfecting their tactics and techniques in the heat of battle—doing things their senior leaders had never dreamed possible a few years earlier.

On the evening of January 10, 1944, the young tyros waited anxiously for the order that would launch them into the black pre-dawn sky, with low ceilings and poor visibility, to fly in and out of thick clouds, while trying to join up—with a 1000 plus aircraft. Anything approaching "Positive Control" was about 20 years down the road. As a result, they flew bug-eyed, with white knuckles and prayed like hell, hoping that through some miracle their pre-planned air-

speeds, headings, altitudes and a few seconds spacing would keep them from slamming into one another—in the small piece of the sky jam-packed with aircraft. For most of them this would be the scariest part of a combat mission—comparable to “Russian Roulette.”

While his young tyros tried to sleep, Spaatz sent the warning for all 8th AF units to prepare to strike the Oschersleben, Halberstadt and Brunswick aircraft factories the next day. In his order, Spaatz stated that due to the close call on the weather, he would make the final “go-no go” decision in the morning—one hour before the first bombers were scheduled to take off. Then he and his staff studied the weather reports throughout the night, hoping the lousy weather wouldn’t get worse. The lousy weather held and Spaatz launched 663 B-17’s and B-24’s and their 592 escort fighters into the black and murky sky.

The 291 bombers scheduled to attack Oschersleben and Halberstadt had 177 P-47’s to cover them en route and 44 P-51’s in the target area. The remaining 372 bombers going to Brunswick had 322 P-47’s for enroute protection and 49 P-38’s in the target area. As these two forces headed east into Germany, the weather started going from bad to worse and many of the Brunswick force couldn’t get through and had to bomb secondary targets. But the few that made it to Brunswick managed to get some hits on the target. They encountered light fighter opposition and their P-47 escorts shot down two Germans and lost two of their own, while the P-38’s damaged one German fighter versus the loss of one P-38.

The bombers going to Oschersleben and Halberstadt encountered several hundred Luftwaffe fighters and had to fight their way to the target. Enemy action and mechanical problems caused one wing to miss the target, but other wings got direct hits and severely damaged the factories. The P-47’s shot down 14 Germans and lost two, while the vastly outnumbered P-51’s in the target area shot down 15 without a single loss of their own. But many of the Luftwaffe fighters carried external fuel and didn’t attack until the small P-51 force ran low on fuel and headed back to Britain. In his book “Mighty Eighth War Diary,” Roger

A. Freeman reported that 60 B-17’s and B-24’s were lost that day—42 of them at Oschersleben and Halberstadt (in the melee over Oschersleben and Halberstadt, Colonel James H. Howard became separated from his group of P-51’s and single-handedly continued to drive off several Luftwaffe attacks against a wing of B-17’s. The bomber commander and his grateful airmen reported Howard’s courageous action and he was awarded the MOH.)

For the next five weeks, bad weather kept the 8th AF from attacking Germa-

“While his young tyros tried to sleep, Spaatz sent the warning for all 8th AF units to prepare to strike the Oschersleben, Halberstadt and Brunswick aircraft factories the next day.”

ny’s aircraft industry. During this time, a determined Spaatz and his aggressive operations chief, Major General Fredrick L. Anderson, declared they were willing to take extraordinary risks any time there was the slightest break in the weather. Spaatz was also convinced that attacking aircraft factories alone would not destroy aircraft fast enough. He continued to encourage his fighter commanders to seek out and destroy Luftwaffe fighters wherever they could be found, rather than waiting for them to attack the bombers. He also emphasized the importance of attacking German airfields whenever possible. Spaatz correctly believed that strafing airfields in Germany would blunt the Luftwaffe’s ability to defend against the bomber attacks faster than anything. But he also knew USAAF fighter losses would increase substantially in the process (In fact, 8th AF fighter losses jumped five times higher when they began strafing heavily defended airfields in 1944.) To help encourage his pilots to conduct the extremely risky strafing attacks, Spaatz got USAAF permission to award his pilots equal credit for strafing “kills” as they got for air to air victories.

Finally, on February 19th Spaatz’s weather staff reported two large pressure patterns that were developing, one centered over the Baltic and one west of Ireland, which they believed would eventually move and provide good

weather over central Europe and the 8th AF’s airfields for several days. Spaatz and Anderson hoped this could be the beginning of their plan to strike aircraft factories and assembly plants. The plan called for the 8th and 15th AF’s to attack during the day, while the RAF bombed some of the same targets at night. In addition, the 9th AF would conduct diversionary bombing attacks in France and Holland for the 8th and 15th AF’s.

However, as the preliminary coordination began, Spaatz learned that the 15th AF could not participate on February 20th; they had been committed to support the ground forces in Italy, who were in danger of being forced off the beach at Anzio. Then General James Doolittle the commander of 8th AF and General Lewis Brereton the 9th AF commander and their weather staffs disagreed with the Spaatz’s weather staff. The two numbered air force commanders were convinced the weather on February 20th would not be good enough for a maximum effort mission. Of particular concern to them was the forecast of icing conditions that extended from the ground to 5,000 feet. Not many senior leaders of “the overnight air force” had much experience with in-flight icing and few if any of the “boy” colonels or their new squadron commanders had icing experience. Of course, their recently graduated aircrews knew only what little they had been taught in ground school.

Bomber commanders feared that heavy windshield ice would make it impossible for their pilots to see for join up and fly formation. VIII Fighter Command’s Commanding General William Kepner believed the ice might cut the P-38’s performance in half and also substantially reduce the performance of the P-47’s and P-51’s. It doesn’t appear there was any special concern about how ice might affect the performance of the relatively new “high speed” Laminar flow wings on the P-51’s and B-24’s, which reflects their overall lack of knowledge.

In addition to the aircraft that could be lost in the “questionable weather,” Spaatz was warned that he could lose another 200 bombers in combat. The thought of losing more than 2000 young airmen in a matter of hours had to weigh heavily on his mind, while he followed

the weather reports throughout the night. One can only guess how the sound of the RAF Lancasters climbing through the black sky, heading for Germany impacted Spaatz's agonized thought process.

In the meantime, the aggressive Major General Anderson not only endorsed the mission, but continued planning the largest bomber mission in the history of the 8th AF. He scheduled 16 wings of bombers (this would be 8th AF's first mission with more than 1000 B-17's and B-24's). In addition, he tasked 17 groups of fighters from the 8th and 9th AF's (13 P-47 groups, 2 P-38 and 2 P-51 groups) to provide escort for the bombers. He also obtained 16 squadrons of Spitfires and Mustangs from the RAF for some added en route protection and the 9th AF would bomb targets in France and Holland. The B-17's and B-24's would attack 12 assembly and manufacturing plants that made Me-109's, Me-110's, Ju-88's, Ju-188's, and FW-190's. Most of the targets were in the Brunswick-Leipzig area, but one was in Poland and another was in southern Denmark.

While his subordinates continued to believe the weather was unfit for flying, Spaatz, with encouragement from Anderson, refused to cancel the mission. Brigadier General C.P. Cabell, a former combat commander of an 8th AF Wing, who was on Spaatz's staff at the time said, "Finally, when the last moment for action had arrived, the decision was left in the lap of General Spaatz. The risks were so great and conditions so unfavorable that none of the subordinate commanders was willing to take the responsibility for the launch." General Spaatz finally issued the order in one of his usual laconic messages, "Let 'em go."

Shortly, the 1,003 B-17's and B-24's started taking off, followed by their 835 escort fighters. Although they encountered some icing, it really didn't pose much of a problem and the 1,838 aircraft formed up and headed for their targets in Germany, Poland and Denmark. The bombers striking targets in Poland and Denmark flew a northern route un-



2nd Lt. Richard M. Baughn during WWII. He flew with the 383rd Fighter Squadron of the 364th Fighter Group.

scorted, because it was rightly assumed the bombers attacking German targets to the south would attract most of the Luftwaffe fighters. At the request of General Kepner, the southern bomber force had been instructed to maintain closer spacing between wings en route to ease the escort problem and permit greater fighter concentration.

The bombers attacking in Poland encountered weather over the target and dropped through the clouds, while the bombers hitting the Danish target were also blinded by clouds and struck a secondary target. When the southern force was able to bomb visually, such as

"German records for the five days stated that 131 Luftwaffe fighters were shot down and more than 100 were heavily damaged."

Leipzig, Bernburg and Brunswick, they had good results. Intelligence reported that four aircraft plants in the Leipzig area were severely damaged (however, it was later discovered that most reports

of severe damage to factories was normally limited to the structure, because the machine tools receive much less damage and could be put back in to use.)

At one factory, 40 new Me-109's were destroyed and 450 aircraft workers were killed by the southern force. The attacks on February 20, 1944 caused the Germans to start dispersing their aircraft industry, something that had been suggested sometime earlier.

According to Roger A. Freeman's "Mighty Eighth War Diary," the 835 fighters came from 15 Fighters Groups (668 of which were P-47's, 94 were P-38's and the remaining 73 were P-51's). Three fighter groups were provided by the 9th AF. The P-47's shot down 36 Germans and lost 3 of their own, the P-38's shot down 7 and lost 1, while the P-51's shot down 18 and lost 1. Probably the biggest surprise of all was the loss of only 21 bombers—six on the northern targets.

Because Generals Spaatz and Anderson had stuck by their guns and succeeded, when the majority had wanted to call it quits, the 8th AF began their first of five major attacks in six days. During the five attacks, the 8th launched 3,300 heavy bombing sorties and the 15th flew another 500 bombing sorties. The RAF Bomber Command also flew 2,351 night sorties against some of the same targets.

The 8th AF dropped more bombs than had been dropped during their first year of operation. They lost 137 heavy bombers and the 15th AF lost 89 bombers. Due in part to improved German night fighter operations, the RAF lost 157 bombers, which gave them higher loss rate than the 8th AF.

The 8th fighters launched 2,548 escort sorties, 712 of which were provided by the 9th AF. The 15th AF launched 413 fighter escort sorties to protect their bombers and the 8th and 15th AF's combined lost 28 American fighters. German records for the five days stated that 131 Luftwaffe fighters were shot down and more than 100 were heavily damaged. (Their records also showed the Luftwaffe lost 533 fighters during the month of February.)

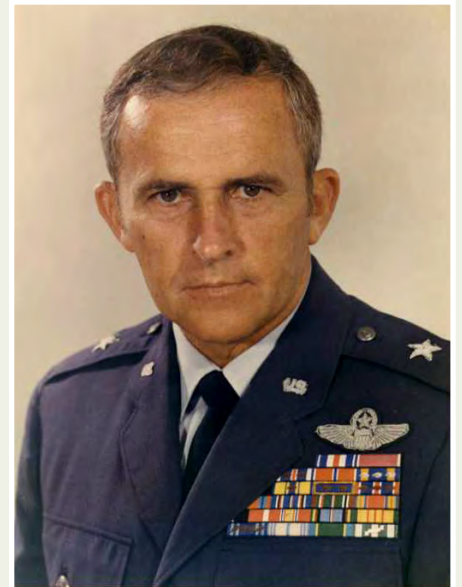
As usual, the B-17 and B-24 aerial gunners' claims were high, because in the heat of battle 10 to 15 gunners could be firing at the same fighter when it went down. One thing is certain: the number of claims by aerial gunner's always reflected the intensity of the battle. But the most important contribution of the fierce aerial combat of January and February 1944 went unnoticed by the Allies: 30 percent of the Luftwaffe's fighter pilots were shot down or severely wounded. Included were many of their experienced flight leaders. By any standard, the five days of bombing and fighting was a huge effort and became known as the "Big Week."

It was the beginning of the end of the Luftwaffe's air superiority. They were fighting on three fronts (Russian, Mediterranean and European), and their pilot training program could not keep pace with their losses. With the jump in pilot losses during January and February of 1944, the shortage of German fighter pilots became critical and the Luftwaffe had to limit their defensive operations. A few months later, the shortage of aviation fuel caused them to reduce combat flying even more and also caused them to reduce the number of flight training hours given their new pilots. Consequently, from February 1944 to the end of the war, the Luftwaffe had to fight with an ever decreasing and inadequately trained fighter pilot force.

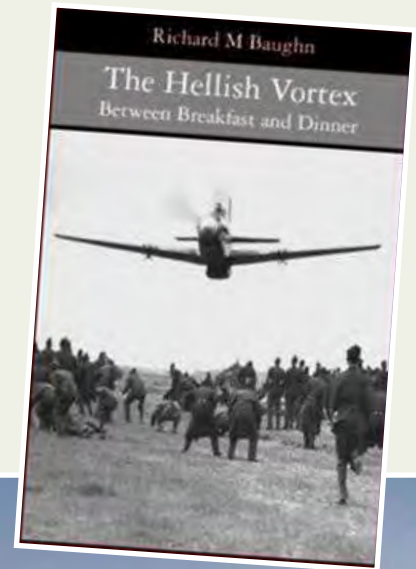
Brigadier General Richard M. Baughn entered the Army Air Force aviation cadet training program in January 1943 and received his pilot wings and commission as a second lieutenant in April 1944. He retired from the US Air Force in July 1975. General Baughn was born in Council Bluffs, Iowa in 1923, graduated from Abraham Lincoln High School and received a BS from the University of Maryland. His military schools include the USAF Air Tactical School, the Armed Forces Staff College and Great Britain's senior military school, The Imperial Defence College. He is a command pilot with more than 7,600 flying hours, including more than 5,000 in jet fighter aircraft. He has flown the P-40; P-51; P-47; F-80; RF-80; T-33; F-84B, F, and G; F-86E,F and H; F-100C,D and F; F-104A, C and D; F-105D

and F; F-4C,D and E; A-6; F-111A and E; FB-111; KC-135; Meteor; Hawker Hunter, Lightning and 14 other types of military aircraft. He flew combat in P-51's with the 8th AF during WWII and in 1965-66 he flew three temporary F-105 combat tours, one at Tahkli and two at Korat, Thailand, before completing a full F-105 combat tour in 1966, as the commander of the 13th TFS. In addition to a full complement of F-105 fighters, the 13th TFS was also assigned all of Korat's F-100 and F-105 Wild Weasels and about half of Baughn's missions were flown with them. In June 1974 General Baughn was appointed deputy defense attaché, Defense Attaché Office, Saigon, Republic of Vietnam, his last assignment prior to his retirement. His decorations include the Silver Star, Legion of Merit, three Distinguished Flying Crosses, Bronze Star Medal, 15 Air Medals and two Air Force Commendation Medals. His book "The Hellish Vortex: Between Breakfast and Dinner," a carefully researched historical novel about a WWII P-51 pilot in the 8th AF, won a 2008 Eric Hoffer Notable Award for fiction and a 2008 honorable mention award for fiction from The Writer's Digest.

The Hellish Vortex is available at Amazon.com in both paperback and electronically in Kindle.



General Richard M. Baughn



Reuniting with an old friend. General Richard M. Baughn stands in front of a P-51D Mustang in 364th Fighter Group markings.



1941 Ford Fire Truck to Arrive at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum

Pooler, Ga. – A 1941 Ford Fire Truck which used to serve at Hunter Army Airfield during World War II is coming to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum. On **Friday, January 28, 2011 at 11 am** the Fire Truck will arrive at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum. The Fire Truck will be escorted by emergency vehicles from Fort Stewart and transported courtesy of A-1 Wrecker Service down interstate I-95 Friday morning. The Pooler Fire and Police department will escort the Fire Truck down Highway 80 to the Museum.

Thanks to the dedication and initiative of the U.S. Army this 1941 Fire Truck has undergone a complete restoration and looks as it would have during its time at Hunter Army Airfield during World War II. The Museum would specifically like to thank **Brigadier General Jeffrey Phillips** the Deputy Commanding General, **Colonel Kevin Milton** Fort Stewart's Installation Commander and their staff for making this event possible. As well as Mr. Buck Meeks the 3rd Infantry Division Museum Curator for being the primary supervisor and

caretaker for this Fire Truck. The Eighth Air Force was founded January 28, 1942 in historic downtown Savannah. **This piece of local history came to the Museum on the 69th anniversary of the Eighth Air Force.** Just as this fire truck served alongside B-17's at Hunter Army Airfield during World War II, it will be placed on display inside the Museum's Combat Gallery alongside the Museum's B-17, "The City of Savannah".

Activated in 1942, only days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, in Savannah, GA the Eighth Air Force was a critical strike element in World War II and remains an active force today. The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum is one of the world's most powerful Museum experiences as it honors the Mighty Eighth's proud legacy by preserving the stories of courage, character and patriotism displayed by the men and women of the Eighth Air Force from World War II to present.



1941 Ford Fire Truck arrives at its new home in Savannah, GA.

For more information, please visit www.mightyeighth.org or call 912-748-8888.

The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum's 15th Anniversary Legacy Ball

In 1983 Major General Lewis E. Lyle, USAF, a B-17 bomber pilot and veteran of over 70 combat missions during WWII & other veterans began planning a Museum to honor the men & women who helped defeat Nazi aggression by serving in or supporting the greatest air armada the world had ever seen - the Eighth Air Force.

On May 14, 1996, the vision became a reality with the dedication of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum.

This year, 2011, marks the fifteenth anniversary for the Museum. Our friends at the Museum are going to celebrate in style by hosting a first class celebration on Saturday May 14th, 2011.

The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum's 15th Anniversary Legacy Ball

Celebrating our Past, Present & Future

Saturday, May 14, 2011 - 6:00 pm to 11:00pm

The evening will include a special recognition of World War II Veterans and Military Personnel from all branches of our Armed Forces.

Tickets are \$125.00 per person or a Table of 10 can be purchased for \$1,000.00.

A special fund raiser for the Museum featuring: Silent Auction.

Hor d'oeuvres, Dinner, Open Bar, Entertainment and after dinner dancing.

Dress: Black tie and formal wear

Limited Tickets are available for this event.

Please RSVP by April 22, 2011.

Reservations can be made by contacting Jane Harper at 912-748-8888 - ext. 107 or at jharper@mightyeighth.org. or Mandy Livingston at 912-748-8888 - ext. 166 or at mlivingston@mightyeighth.org

IT WAS A FORTRESS... COMING HOME!



The pilot, 1st Lieutenant Lawrence deLancey



2nd Lt. Ray LeDoux, Navigator

They Could Hear It Before...

They Could See It!

By Allen Ostrom

Relive some of those dangerous years as told by Allen Ostrom, Seattle, WA - historian for the 389th Bomb Group.

Not all that unusual in those days as the personnel at Station 131 gathered around the tower and scattered hardstands to await the return of the B-17's sent out earlier that morning.

First comes the far off rumble and drone of the Cyclones. Then a spec on the East Anglia horizon. Soon a small cluster indicating the lead squadron. Finally, the group.

Then the counting. 1-2-3-4-5.....But that would have been normal. Today was different! It was too early for the group to return. "They're 20 minutes early. Can't be the 398th." **They could hear it before they could see it!** Something was coming home. But what? All eyes turned toward the

northeast, aligning with the main runway, each ground guy and stood-down airman straining to make out this "wail of a Banshee," as one called it. Not like a single B-17 with its characteristic deep roar of the engines blended with four thrashing propellers. This was a howl! Like a powerful wind blowing into a huge whistle.

Then it came into view. It WAS a B-17! Low and pointing her nose at the 6,000 foot runway, it appeared for all the world to be crawling toward the earth, screaming in protest. No need for the red flares. All who saw this Fort knew there was death aboard.

"Look at that nose!" they said as all eyes stared in amazement as this single,

shattered remnant of a once beautiful airplane glided in for an unrealistic "hot" landing. She took all the runway as the "Banshee" noise finally abated, and came to an inglorious stop in the mud just beyond the concrete runway. Men and machines raced to the now silent and lonely aircraft. The ambulance and medical staff were there first The fire truck....ground and air personnel... ..jeeps, truck, bikes.....

Out came one of the crew members from the waist door, then another. Strangely quiet. The scene was almost weird. Men stood by as if in shock, not knowing whether to sing or cry. Either would have been acceptable.

The medics quietly made their way

to the nose by way of the waist door as the remainder of the crew began exiting. And to answer the obvious question, "what happened?"

"What happened?" was easy to see. The nose was a scene of utter destruction. It was as though some giant aerial can opener had peeled the nose like an orange, relocating shreds of metal, Plexiglas, wires and tubes on the cockpit windshield and even up to the top turret. The left cheek gun hung limp, like a broken arm. One man pointed to the crease in chin turret. No mistaking that mark! A German 88 anti-aircraft shell had exploded in the lap of the toggler.

This would be George Abbott of Mt. Lebanon, PA. He had been a waist gunner before training to take over the bombardier's role. Still in the cockpit, physically and emotionally exhausted, were pilot Larry DeLancey and co-pilot Phil Stahlman. Navigator Ray LeDoux finally tapped DeLancey on the shoulder and suggested they get out. Engineer turret gunner Ben Ruckel already had made his way to the waist was exiting along with radio operator Wendell Reed, ball turret gunner Al Albro, waist gunner Russell Lachman and tail gunner Herbert Guild.

Stahlman was flying his last scheduled mission as a replacement for regular co-pilot, Grady Cumbie. The latter had been hospitalized the day before with an ear problem. Lachman was also a "sub," filling in for Abbott in the waist.

DeLancey made it as far as the end of the runway, where he sat down with knees drawn up, arms crossed and head down. The ordeal was over, and now the drama was beginning a mental re-play. Then a strange scene took place.

Group CO Col. Frank P. Hunter had arrived after viewing the landing from the tower and was about to approach DeLancey. He was physically restrained by flight surgeon Dr. Robert Sweet. "Colonel, that young man doesn't want to talk now. When he is ready you can talk to him, but for now leave him alone."

Sweet handed pills out to each crew member and told them to go to their huts and sleep. No dramatics, no cameras, no interviews. The crew would depart the next day for "flak leave" to shake off the stress and then be expected back early in November. (Just in time to resume "normal" activities on a mission to Merseburg!)

Mission No. 98 from Nuthampstead

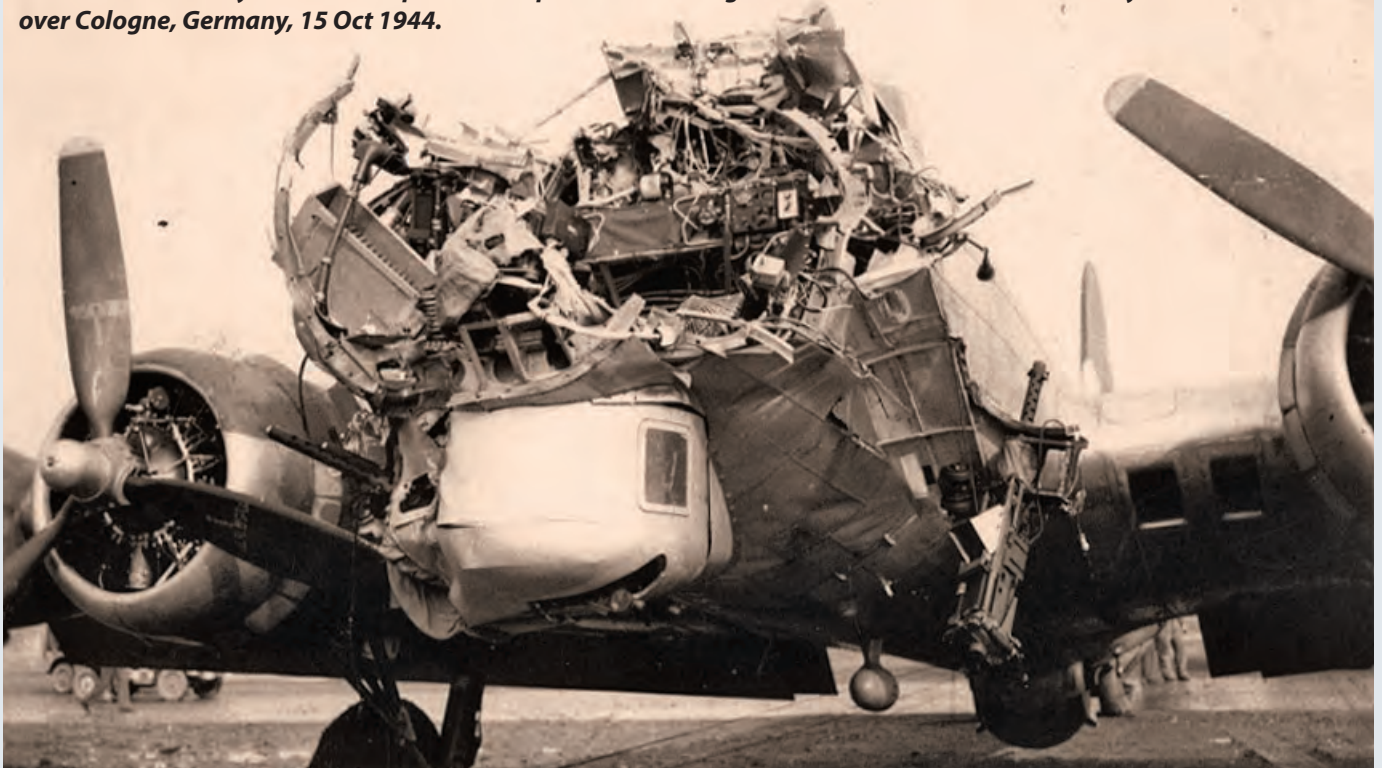
had begun at 0400 that morning of October 15, 1944. It would be Cologne (again), led by CA pilots Robert Templeman of the 602nd, Frank Schofield of the 601st and Charles Khourie of the 603rd.

Tragedy and death appeared quickly and early that day. Templeman and pilot Bill Scott got the 602nd off at the scheduled 0630 hour, but at approximately 0645 Khourie and pilot Bill Meyran and their entire crew crashed on takeoff in the town of Anstey. All were killed. Schofield and Harold Stallcup followed successfully with the 601st, with DeLancey flying on their left wing in the lead element.

The ride to the target was routine, until the flak started becoming "unroutinely" accurate.

"We were going through heavy flak on the bomb run," remembered DeLancey. "I felt the plane begin to lift as the bombs were dropped, then all of a sudden we were rocked by a violent explosion. My first thought - **a bomb exploded in the bomb bay** - was immediately discarded as the top of the nose section peeled back over the cockpit blocking the forward view." "It seemed like the whole world exploded in front of us," added Stahlman. "The

Lawrence De Lancey and his crew piloted this plane back to England after its nose was blown off by anti-aircraft fire over Cologne, Germany, 15 Oct 1944.



instrument panel all but disintegrated and layers of quilted batting exploded in a million pieces. It was like a momentary snowstorm in the cockpit." It had been a direct hit in the nose. Killed instantly was the toggler, Abbott. Navigator LeDoux, only three feet behind Abbott, was knocked unconscious for a moment, but miraculously, was alive. Although stunned and bleeding, LeDoux made his way to the cockpit to find the two pilots struggling to maintain control of an airplane that by all rights should have been in its death plunge. LeDoux said there was nothing anyone could do for Abbott, while Ruckel opened the door to the bomb bay and signaled to the four crewman in the radio room that all was OK - for the time being.

The blast had torn away the top and much of the sides of the nose. Depositing enough of the metal on the windshield to make it difficult for either of the pilots to see. "The instrument panel was torn loose and all the flight instruments were inoperative with the exception of the magnetic compass mounted in the panel above the windshield. And its accuracy was questionable. The radio and intercom were gone, the oxygen lines broken, and there was a ruptured hydraulic line under my rudder pedals," said DeLancey.

All this complicated by the sub-zero temperature at 27,000 feet blasting into the cockpit. "It was apparent that the damage was severe enough that we could not continue to fly in formation or at high altitude. My first concern was to avoid the other aircraft in the formation, and to get clear of the other planes in case we had to bail out.

We eased out of formation, and at the same time removed our oxygen masks as they were collapsing on our faces as the tanks were empty." At this point the formation continued on its prescribed course for home - a long, slow turn southeast of Cologne and finally westward.

DeLancey and Stahlman turned left, descending rapidly and hoping, they were heading west (and also, not into the gun sights of German fighters.) Without maps and navigation aids, they had difficulty getting a fix. By this time they were down to 2,000 feet. "We finally agreed that we were over Belgium and were flying in a southwesterly direction," said the pilot. "About this time a pair of P-51's showed up and flew a loose formation on us across Belgium. I often wondered what they thought as they looked at the mess up front."

"We hit the coast right along the Belgium-Holland border, a bit farther north than we had estimated. Ray said we were just south of Walcheren Island" Still in an area of ground fighting, the plane received some small arms fire. This gesture was returned in kind by Albros, shooting from one of the waist guns. "We might have tried for one of the airfields in France, but having no maps this also was questionable. Besides, the controls and engines seemed to be okay, so I made the decision to try for home."

"Once over England, LeDoux soon picked up landmarks and gave me course corrections taking us directly to Nuthampstead. It was just a great bit of navigation. Ray just stood there on the flight deck and gave us the headings from memory."

Nearing the field, Stahlman let the landing gear down. That was an assurance. But a check of the hydraulic pump sent another spray of oil to the cockpit floor. Probably no brakes! Nevertheless, a flare from Ruckel's pistol had to announce the "ready or not" landing. No "downwind leg" and "final approach" this time. Straight in!

"The landing was strictly by guess and feel," said DeLancey. "Without instruments, I suspect I came in a little hot. Also, I had to lean to the left to see straight ahead. The landing was satisfactory, and I had sufficient braking to slow the plane down some. However, as I neared the taxiway, I could feel the brakes getting 'soft'. I felt that losing control and blocking the taxiway would cause more problems than leaving the plane at the end of the runway." That consideration was for the rest of the group. Soon three squadrons of B-17's would be returning, and they didn't need a derelict airplane blocking the way to their respective hardstands.

Stahlman, supremely thankful that his career with the 398th had come to an end, soon returned home and in due course became a captain with Eastern Airlines. Retired in 1984, Stahlman said his final Eastern flight "was a bit more routine" than the one 40 years before.

DeLancey and LeDoux received decorations on December 11, 1944 for their parts in the October 15 drama. DeLancey was awarded the Silver Star for his "miraculous feat of flying skill and ability" on behalf of General Doolittle, CO of the Eighth Air Force. LeDoux for his "extraordinary navigation skill", received the Distinguished Flying Cross.



LICENSE PLATE

James R. Day's custom Illinois auto license plate. Jame is a Life Member of the 8th AFHS and flew 24 missions as a "Mickey" Radar Operator/Gunner with the 457th Bomb Group at Glatton from December 1944 to the end of the hostilities.

100th Bomb Group (H)



On January 18-19, 2011, the 100th Bomb Group held its annual mini reunion at Palm Springs, California. The reunion included an appearance by the CAF's B-17G Sentimental Journey and a Symposium at the Palm Springs Air Museum. The Museum is home to one of the largest displays in the States for 100th Bomb Group memorabilia and the event drew a standing room only crowd. Twenty-two Veterans of the "Bloody Hundredth"

attended the reunion along with another 76 family and friends. If you are ever in Palm Springs, I recommend you visit the Palm Springs Air Museum and the 100th Bomb Group display.

Submitted by Michael P. Faley
100th Bomb Group Historian



Group Photo - L-R sitting: "Big Joe" Armanini, Robert Wolff, Paul Miller, Herb Grand, Albert Fretias, Russell Engel, Jerry Korman and Leonard Daniels. Standing L-R Hal Higgs, Jim Sorenson, Joe Urice, Lewis Payne, Dewey Christopher, Anthony Schembri, Bob Mathiasen, "Duck" Bradley, Keith Sprague, Joe Straus and Robert Shoens. Missing: Charles Gutekunst, Robert Osuna and Marvin Schultz. Photo Courtesy of "Moose" Peterson

MAJOR GLENN MILLER -

Visits Wendling

By Annette Tison

Originally published in the 392nd Bomb Group
Memorial Association NEWS, December 2010



By 1941, Alton Glenn Miller was a highly successful composer and big band leader. Nonetheless, he wanted to get personally involved in the war effort. In February 1942 he requested a commission in the U.S. Naval Reserve, but the Navy turned him down.

Undeterred, he offered his services to the Army, because he felt his music "would help considerably to ease some of the difficulties of army life." He also wanted to update the military bands because in his opinion they were still playing the same music in the same style as they had in WWI.

The Army accepted. In October 1942, Miller dissolved his civilian orchestra. After completing officer training on 4 December, he became a Captain in the Army Specialists Corps.

The Army Air Force

Shortly after (so the story goes), an alert Army Air Force officer requested the transfer of a Capt Alton G. Miller from the regular Army to the AAF. The reassignment was approved by an unsuspecting Army and Glenn Miller became an airman.

After he was appointed

Director of Bands Training for the AAF Technical Training Command, he began recruiting some of his old musicians. One, Tex Beneke, had already joined the Navy. Miller wrote him, "I was very happy to get your letter and to know that you are all set, even if you are in the Navy. Of course you know the Air Corps is going to win the war, and I had so hoped you could have been in on it."

In mid-1943, Miller started a weekly radio program called "I Sustain the Wings." Broadcast for nearly a year—first by CBS, then by NBC—it featured Miller's full orchestra and a steady recruiting campaign for the AAF.

The band also played at many war bond drives, once raising pledges for over \$10 million in just three shows.

To England

Miller wanted to do more. He begged the War Department to let him take the band to Europe. Finally, permission was granted and in June 1944, the band moved to London. Near misses by German "buzz bombs" led Miller to relocate

the band to Bedford, about 50 miles north of London.

During their five and a half months in England, Glenn Miller and his band broadcast first 13, then 17 radio programs a week. The entire concert orchestra performed as well as smaller ensembles such as the 17-piece dance band led by T/Sgt Ray McKinley, the 7-piece jazz group, the string section ("Strings with Wings"), and a small group highlighting singer Sgt Johnny Desmond. These programs were aired over the Allied Expeditionary Forces Network.

Flying out of airfields at Thurleigh and Twinwood Farm, the band also played 71 live concerts before nearly 250,000 military and civilian listeners. During one performance, General Jimmy Doolittle said, "Next to a letter from home, Capt Miller, your organization is the greatest morale builder in the ETO."

During one afternoon concert, the band had just started playing its first tune, "In the Mood," when a buzz bomb was heard. Miller directed the band to keep playing, but much softer, as he wanted to

make sure that he could hear if the buzz bomb's engine stopped (the sign that it was getting ready to impact). Luckily, it flew past them.

In the Air

It's been estimated that Miller and his men logged about 600 hours of flight time while they were in England, more than some combat airmen. Ironically, Miller hated to fly. The non-pressurized aircraft caused ringing in his ears, often lasting a day or more. He experienced frequent close calls when planes carrying his 62 band members and their gear started to land just as combat formations were taking off.

Capt Miller was also concerned that transportation was



"Maj Miller (left) is greeted by 392nd CO Col Lorin Johnson (right). Transportation for the band may have included the plane behind them, 42-50284, Shoo Shoo Baby, one of the war-weary aircraft Miller was so worried about. In effect, the concert was Johnson's promotion party, as he became a full Colonel on 25 Aug 1944."



“The T2 hangar was literally packed to the rafters with Crusaders who wanted to see Glenn Miller in person.”

usually in “war-weary” planes. 2/Lt Don Haynes, Miller’s manager before and during the war, said Miller frequently asked the brass, “How can you risk the lives of all those musicians? Aren’t they more important than some of the bombs you carry on the *good* planes?”

Visit to the 392nd BG at Wendling

579th Sqdn pilot Jim McGregor remembers that he was on duty when he got a call on 25 Aug 1944 that the newly-promoted Maj Miller had a cancellation in his tour. If some bombers could fly down and get him and the band, they would do a show at Wendling.

McGregor rounded up the pilots and planes to bring the orchestra to Station 118. He was impressed at how “the band unloaded the planes, organized themselves in a military manner and got set up in short order.”

392nd CO Col Lorin Johnson commented to Miller that doing three performances in one day must be pretty hard work. Notwithstanding his routine schedule of 18-hour days, Miller replied, “We haven’t lost a man yet, Colonel.”

The large T2 hangar, usually the site for mechanical repairs on Liberators, became a concert hall. McGregor says the “hangar was packed, men hanging from the rafters, hospital wounded and all.” He was quite concerned “about the guys in the rafters because you just couldn’t sit still during one of Glenn Miller’s shows.”

579th Sqdn pilot Harrison S. Cassell

described the event in letters to his wife Sally. “We are having Maj Glenn Miller & his band here ... what a treat that will be. We will have to hold it in a hangar to get them all in. I’ll probably just stand & listen to him. He...says it is better than the one he had back in the states.” Then, “Maj Glenn Miller and his orchestra played for us for an hour this afternoon... His orchestra has about 60 men in it and members from all big name bands and even a band leader Sgt Ray McKinley is his drummer. Pianist is from Benny Goodman, also a first trumpet from B.G.’s band, sax from Artie Shaw, Vaughn Monroe and others, including a string orchestra 15 violins and 2 cellos from symphony orchestra.... This all happened just after a mission [to the FW-190 assembly plant at Schwerin] landed so all the boys got to hear him. He still uses the same theme song and is his music sweet—boy was it good to hear him.”

The day was especially eventful for the 579th’s 1/Sgt Ted Zeman and S/Sgt Robert A. White. Zeman had a great voice. During the performance, he was part of a duet that sang with the band.

White, a gunner on the Ruvolis and Pardue Crews, was the lucky winner of a \$1,000 war bond. Miller had asked 1st Lt Nancy Luce, a WAC cryptographer, to draw the winning raffle ticket.

Two men in the audience had a personal connection to Miller. Before enlisting in September 1942, 579th Sqdn ball turret gunner S/Sgt Nevin W. Geary had

played alto sax with Glenn Miller’s band. When Miller arrived at the base, he looked over, saw Geary, and yelled, “You son of a ----! Are you going to play with us tonight?” He then ignored the waiting 392nd brass, walked over, and gave Geary a big hug. Geary did play with the band that afternoon.

While growing up, 579th Sqdn navigator 1/Lt David A. Greene was best friends with drummer Buddy Rich’s younger brother. Rich introduced him to Miller, who called him “Buddy’s buddy.” After Greene landed from the mission on 25 August, he learned that Miller was performing in the T2 hangar. He forced his way through the audience until he reached the bandstand. Miller recognized Greene, and after finishing a trombone solo, walked over to Greene and said, “Buddy’s buddy, good to see you!”

Capt Jack A. Teufel, CO of the 1825th Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Co., made sure he was at the concert. He remembers that the band played many of the old favorites as well as some newer songs. He “thoroughly enjoyed the show” and said it was “a great morale booster.”

Even before the program ended, three B-17s arrived to transport the band to their evening performance for the 388th BG at Knettishall.

Going to the Continent

In mid-November 1944, Miller was finally given the offer he’d been yearning for—an invitation to take his band to Paris for six weeks and entertain troops in the hospital or on leave from the front lines. For it to happen, though, the band would have to pre-record the 102 radio programs that would be aired while they were gone.

Over the next 18 days, the band recorded all those shows in addition to performing their regularly scheduled live broadcasts.

The band finished recording on 12 December and then began packing for their trip across the Channel.

Anxious to get started, Miller decided to fly to Paris before the band. He wanted to arrange transportation and billeting for the band and set up their performance schedule.

He also intended to make sure that the band would be allowed to stay on the Continent for six months or until the end

of the war (whichever came last).

General Eisenhower issued orders for Miller to commence travel by military aircraft on or about 14 December. Unfortunately, a period of bad weather had set in, bad enough to ground the 392nd from 13-22 December. It also grounded the military shuttle that regularly flew between London and Paris. However, Lt-Col Norman Baessell, an acquaintance of Miller and Haynes, had business in Paris and had scheduled his own flight. Miller accepted Baessell's offer to join him.

Final Flight

On the afternoon of 15 Dec 1944, pilot F/O John R.S. Morgan flew a UC-64A Norseman single-engine plane to Twinwood Farm to pick up the two men. After completing a combat tour aboard B-24s, he was the personal pilot for General Goodrich at Army Headquarters. He'd flown the England-to-Paris route many times.

Had this been a combat mission, though, it would have been scrubbed. The temperature was just above freezing, there was a steady rain, and the cloud ceiling was about 200 feet. The conditions were ideal for icing yet the Norseman had no de-icing equipment.

While waiting for Morgan, Miller wondered whether the pilot would be able to find Twinwood Farm as "even the birds are grounded." Then, Morgan descended through the clouds and landed.

With the prop still turning, Miller and Baessell threw their bags on the plane and said their last goodbyes to Haynes. Miller then asked Baessell, "Where the hell are the parachutes?" to which Baessell jokingly replied, "What's the matter, Miller? Do you want to live forever?"

They took off at 1:55pm and in less than a minute were out of sight.

On 18 December, the bad weather finally cleared long enough for the band to fly to Paris. It was only then, when Miller didn't meet them, that anyone realized he had not arrived in Paris.

A search was made, but no trace of the men or plane was found.

The Band Played On

On 21 December, the band played its first concert without Miller, for 4,300 combat troops on 48-hour passes from the front. The enthusiastic reaction led

the top brass to realize the band's impact on morale was still unsurpassed. Under the leadership of T/Sgt Ray McKinley and T/Sgt Generoso Graziano (also known as Jerry Gray), the band entertained troops on the Continent until the war ended.

On the 23rd, Miller's wife Helen was notified by telegram that her husband was missing in action; soon after, General Henry H. "Hap" Arnold called to offer his personal condolences. The next day, a press release about Miller's disappearance was issued. It emphasized that no other members of the band were on the missing plane.

The final performance of Maj Glenn Miller's AAF Band was on 13 Nov 1945 in Washington, DC. President Harry S. Truman and Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower and "Hap" Arnold were in the audience. When the band began playing Miller's signature tune, "Moonlight Serenade," President Truman led the audience in a standing ovation for Glenn Miller—the man, the musician, and the patriot.

Impact

The band was disestablished effective 15 Jan 1946. It had been in existence for 1,032 days. Noted music historian Edward F. Polic writes that "During that period it became the greatest band that ever existed and performed fully in every possible way to improve the morale of the Allied soldiers and to help win the war. Glenn Miller gave up everything, including his life, to serve his country."

Theories

Theories about what happened to Miller abound. One suggests that he was a secret agent who "disappeared" in order to perform clandestine work on the Continent. Another is that he really died of cancer and his Missing in Action status was an attempt to make his death seem more noble.

In 1984, the navigator on a British Lan-



"Miller dazzled the 3,000 airmen in the audience at Wendling with his skill on the trombone."

caster bomber said that on 15 Dec 1944 he had seen a Norseman flying well below his plane just before they jettisoned a 4,000 pound bomb over the Channel. The tail gunner then reported seeing the Norseman spiraling down toward the sea. Is the story true? Was it Miller's plane? No one knows for sure.

The official military inquiry decided that the Norseman probably developed icing problems on the wings or carburetor freezing and sank in the English Channel, where the water temperature was about 25 degrees Fahrenheit.

Since no trace of the plane or the men has ever been found, Miller's fate remains a mystery.

Cambridge American Cemetery

The names F/O John R.S. Morgan (35th Repair Squadron, 35th Air Depot Group), Maj A. Glenn Miller (Army Air Force Band), and LtCol Norman F. Baessell (Headquarters Squadron, VIII Air Service Command), are listed on the Tablets of the Missing at Cambridge American Cemetery in England.

Author's note: Information for this article is from George T. Simon's book, *Glenn Miller & His Orchestra*, the two-volume set *The Glenn Miller Army Air Force Band* by Edward F. Polic, and *Sideman: Stories about THE Band* by Paul Tanner. Another source is the conversation in 2008 between 579th pilot James A. McGregor and Allen "Mac" Cassell (son of 579th pilot Harrison S. Cassell). Cassell also gave permission to quote from his father's letters.

LIBERTY BELLE FOUNDATION



CARRIES THE MESSAGE FOR THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

In 1975, John Woolnough founded the **Eighth Air Force Historical Society**. His vision was to promote, preserve and perpetuate the history of the United States Air Force – Eighth Air Force for future generations. At the peak of the Society’s membership (mid to late 1980s) we stood strong with over 25,000 total members. Today, it hovers around 6000.

As time marches on, it becomes increasingly more challenging to come up with new ways to sustain or increase our membership. In order for the **Eighth Air Force Historical Society** to survive for future generations, it takes dedicated members that “think outside of the box” to attract a sustaining membership.

Newly appointed Board Member, Michael P. Faley, has already developed several new ideas to attract more members and to

spread the Society’s message to the public. Mike recently developed a **Facebook** page for the **Eighth Air Force Historical Society**. His next project is to reach out to several owners and operators of touring B-17s and the B-24. Mike has been extremely successful in his endeavors and we currently have **Eighth Air Force Historical Society** membership applications being distributed by four respective B-17 and B-24 owners as they tour across the United States.

In the next few issues of the **8th AF NEWS** we will be featuring stories about each of these special airplanes and a brief history about these special organizations. The first in this series is the **Liberty Belle Foundation** based in Douglas, Georgia.

Sgt. Elton D. Brooks was a tail gunner

on a B-17G Flying Fortress in the 570th Bomb Squadron. Sgt. Brooks bravely flew 37 missions from Framlingham, England, home of the 390th Bomb Group. After the war, Sgt. Brooks returned to his hometown of Douglas, Georgia and continued to develop the business he started in 1937, **Brooks Auto Supply**. Soon after his return home, Elton Brooks and his wife had a son they named Elton “Don” Brooks.

Growing up, Don Brooks always had a fascination in his father’s World War II service and a passion for aviation history. He also had the good fortune of taking over the family business in 1978. The business flourished, so much so, Don Brooks decided to fulfill a lifelong dream. His vision was to purchase and restore a B-17G Flying Fortress to fly-able condition, in tribute to his father and

all the men who flew in the 390th Bomb Group and the Eighth Air Force.

The restoration took over 15 years to complete, but Don Brook's dream finally came true on December 8, 2004 when "Liberty Belle" took to the sky for the first time. It has been touring the country ever since.

In July 2008, the "Liberty Belle" took off on a historic overseas flight to England. Don's dream was to fly the exact route that his father flew to England in World War II. Accompanying Don on this momentous trip was his son, two generations retracing Elton Brook's WWII journey. The highlight of the trip for Don was the opportunity to fly his Fortress over Station 153, the 390th Bomb Group airfield at Framlingham, England where his father was once based. For Don, it was the ultimate tribute.

The **Liberty Belle Foundation** has once again embarked on their 2011 tour across the country. Their mission is to educate the public and honor those brave Americans airmen that paid the ultimate sacrifice during World War II.

During their 2011 tour the **Liberty Belle Foundation** has agreed to carry and distribute **Eighth Air Force Historical Society** membership applications at their tour stops. They will freely distribute our applications and promote the **Society** to thousands of people having an interest in our history.

Your Editor wanted to get some addi-



Elton "Don" Brooks.

tional information for this article. I contacted Scott Maher, Operations and Media Relations Director for the **Liberty Belle Foundation**. At the time, Scott was in Atlanta and was about to take several local WWII Eighth Air Force veterans on a media flight. Out of curiosity, I asked Scott if the veterans were paying for their flight. Normally it would cost \$430.00 a seat.

His response was simply this, "No Mark, they are going up for free. That's the least we can do for them, isn't it?"

The gesture and statement by Scott demonstrates what the **Liberty Belle Foundation** is all about. It speaks volumes about the class and dedication of this amazing organization. But most of all, it demonstrates what owner Don Brooks dreamed all along, the opportu-

nity to honor his father and all those who flew in the "Mighty Eighth."

The members of the **Eighth Air Force Historical Society** wish to profusely thank Don Brooks and his team at the **Liberty Belle Foundation** for their kindness and commitment to **Eighth Air Force Historical Society**.

As aforementioned, the **Liberty Belle Foundation** is currently on tour. Here is a short list of their tour stops in March.

March 19-20 Birmingham, Alabama
Shelby County Airport

March 26-27 Burbank, California
Bob Hope (Burbank) Airport
Atlantic Aviation FBO

Additional information can be found on our **Eighth Air Force Historical Society** website:

www.8thafhs.org

We have provided you a link titled "**B-17 Tours**." This will provide you with a direct link to the **Liberty Belle Foundation** website. Or you can get more information by going to the **Liberty Belle Foundation** website for additional tour stops, B-17 ride information, restoration photographs and historical information.

Liberty Belle Foundation:
www.libertybellefoundation.org



A JOURNEY FOR ANSWERS

The reflections of T/Sgt. Marvin Silbersher – 447th Bomb Group



447TH Bomb Group Crew # 80 1st Lt. Gus Neal Crew. T/Sgt. Marvin Silbersher (Radio Operator / Gunner) is seen on the far left of the bottom row.

In the late spring of 1990, I attended a P.E.N. Conference (Poets, Essayists and Novelists) at Cambridge University in Cambridge, England. During a break, I borrowed a colleague's car and drove out to the American Cemetery at Madingley. As I parked the car, which happened to have French license plates, the cemetery custodian approached me and uttered "*Bonjour monsieur. Puis-je être de service à vous?* (Hello sir...may I be of service to you?) I explained that it was my colleague's car and the reason for my visit.

For years, I had been searching for information about the resting place of our sister crew, the 1st Lt. Harluf Jessen Crew. The Jessen Crew was shot down over Oranienburg, Germany on March 15, 1945. I gave all the details that I could about the Jessen Crew to the custodian. He informed me that he would make a search on his new computer and would see what information he could obtain.

As I walked through the grounds of the cemetery, I paid my respects to my comrades of

the 447th Bomb Group. I also began to reflect on the journey of my crew piloted by 1st Lt. Gus Neal and our brand new silver Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress – 43-38731, named "*Blithe Spirit*" and the events that occurred in November 1944 at our base at Rattlesden, England.

The famed English playwright, Noel Coward had recently premiered his new comic play, "*Blithe Spirit*" in the West



Stage actresses Doreen Lang and Virginia Barton are seen here painting the finishing touches to the nose art of "*Blythe Spirit*." (the "Y" in "*Blythe Spirit*" was later corrected to an "I" in "*Blithe Spirit*" in December of 1944).

T/Sgt. Marvin Silbersher – Radio Operator / Gunner – 1st. Lt. Gus Neal Crew – 711th Squadron - 447th Bomb Group. This photo was taken after returning from a mission to Mersesburg, Germany – November 2, 1944.

End of London at the St. James Theater. A traveling troop of actors from the show made a visit to our base at Rattlesden, home of the 447th Bomb Group. They came to the base, along with a full camera crew, as part of a public relations tour. They did a makeshift performance of the play for the troops. In attendance were our 447th Bomb Group Commander, Lt. Colonel Wrigglesworth and 8th Air Force Commander, General James H. Doolittle.

In honor of their visit, our new B-17G Flying Fortress was appropriately named, "*Blithe Spirit*." At the ceremony when we named the plane, the entire cast shook hands with each of our crew. When Peggy Wood, who played the female lead, reached me, she asked, "Forgive me, young man. Don't I know you?" I replied, "Yes, Miss Wood...in 1940 I played your son in the radio series, "*Sky Over Britain*." "Oh my God, Marvin," she exclaimed.

Our pilot, 1st Lt. Gus Neal, invited the cast to climb aboard the aircraft. As Peggy Wood and Claire Luce, another actress in the play, reached the waist gun positions they asked if they could write a message on the armor-plate below the gun positions. 1st Lt. Neal nodded. Then the ladies promptly took out a bright red lipstick and in huge letters wrote, **"WE LOVE YOU ALL FOREVER!"**

We flew the rest of our 35 missions in *"Blithe Spirit"* and eventually the airplane was assigned to the 1st Lt. Harluf Jessen Crew.

On March 15, 1945, while flying in *"Blithe Spirit,"* the Jessen Crew took a direct hit of flak in the bomb bay over Oranienburg, Germany. They were two missions short of completing their tour.

As I stood in the sacred splendor of our comrades' resting place, I thought of each Memorial Day and the boys and girls of the many colleges in Cambridge. Each of them should annually enter the grounds of Madingley and place a rose on each grave.

When I returned to the custodian's office, he held up a print-out saying, "I found your friends." German civilians brought the remains of the Harluf Crew to U.S. Graves Registration and they were buried in the U.S. Cemetery in the Ardennes in Belgium. I thanked him profusely.

At last, I knew where they were, the Jessen Crew and the final fate of our B-17G, *"Blithe Spirit."* I subsequently flew to the American Cemetery in the Ardennes and paid my respects to my comrades.

Editor's Note: Marvin's story was also featured in the 8th AF NEWS back in 2004. We would also like to share some of Mr. Silbersher's reflective poems in this issue and in upcoming editions of the 8th Air Force News.

Thank you Marvin, for your continued dedication and support and for submitting your wonderful prose to the 8th Air Force News.

Twenty-Third Mission in the dark,
we rose in the realm of heaven
moving in zig-zags
in the furious wind
crashing through the sky
shining notes
climbing the stair to the roof
above Leipzig
flak rolled toward us
swimming in the air
booming along the angel of death;
hurling knee-deep at us
the stars untended,
lightning and thunder
burning in the night and day

Marvin Silbersher, 447th BG
711th Sqdn
Lake Hopatcong, NJ

EIGHTH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY WREATH CEREMONY – VETERANS (REMEMBERANCE) DAY 2010

Soon after the publication of our December 2010 issue we received an email from Michelle Strefford, daughter of our 8th AFHS U.K. Representative, Gordon Richards.

She was kind enough to pass along some wonderful photographs that were taken at the 2010 Veterans Day (Remembrance Day) ceremony held at the American Cemetery at Madingley, England. Gordon Richards took part in the ceremony by representing the 8th Air Force Historical Society in

the annual wreath laying ceremony.

As we all know, we recently lost a true friend of the Society last year, Gordon's wife, Connie Richards. We all want to thank Gordon for representing the Society at the November 11th ceremony, but more so, for keeping Connie's dedication, passion and memory alive for all us.

Gordon, you are a true friend to this organization, sir.



8th AFHS UK Representative
Gordon Richards.

A Tribute to our Past 8th Air Force News Magazine Editor Dr. Walter E. Brown

By Donna Neely

*Walt became editor of this magazine in 1997 and volunteered twelve years of his time through 2009.
This 2011 March 8th AF News issue is a Tribute to Walt Brown for his many hours of work and dedication.*



**Walt & Alice Brown's
Spring Hill, Tennessee Estate**

The coffee shop was mostly empty as I waited to meet the new editor of the *8th Air Force News Magazine*. He walked in carrying his *Mighty Eighth Air Force* canvas bag. He had duct tape wrapped around his brown loafers, baggy khaki shorts, torn t-shirt, and his thick gray hair blown about from bush hogging a short time ago on his 72 acre farm. His canvas bag was stuffed with coffee stained papers, torn cartoon clippings, crumbled newspaper articles, old magazines, World War II photos, Roger Freeman's books with post it notes stuck on precise pages, and a hand written prescription for Z-pak to get me through the next few weeks of

creating our first issue of the magazine. This coffee shop was to be the first of the many meetings we would have over the next 12 years.

Early on, it was evident that Walt was never one to brag even though each magazine issue was usually better than the one before. Together, we worked out difficulties and adjusted to meet the needs of the reader as well as introducing new creative material. Telisha came on board and the three of us became a team. Walt was a voracious reader and had a lifelong passion for writing. He even wrote many articles for which he took no credit. He always addressed his reader's comments, both good and bad. Walt would make copies of all of the remarks and would share them with me saying, "This compliment is for both of us, not just me as Editor." If it was a negative letter, Walt would always say, "This one is on me and I will fix it." Walt stated "I like to get nice letters and also some bad grumbling as well, that tells me they're reading our magazine"

Walt's story with the *Mighty 8th Air Force* began on a fall trip to Tybee Island, Georgia to close his vacation home for the winter. He decided to visit the *8th Air Force Historical Society* meeting that was being held in Savannah, Ga. His friend Jack Hagler a B-17 pilot from Augusta, Ga., had told him about Major General

Lewis E. Lyle and his hunt to find a home for the *8th Air Force* veterans. Since Walt's trip coincided with the 8th meeting, Walt dropped by the meeting and sure enough after inquiring about General Lyle, the two were introduced. Thus sparked an amazing friendship with "My Best Buddy" until Lew's death, April 6, 2008.

As volunteers, Lew, Walt, and Judge Ben Smith worked tirelessly as the dream to have a place for the 8th Air Force Museum gradually became a reality. The site of Pooler, Ga. was chosen with the original home of the *8th Air Force* being near Savannah, Ga. This project launched Walter into another world where he developed life long friendships and exciting adventures through the stories of the *men and women of the Mighty Eighth*. One of the highlights was being CEO of the *Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum* for three years. During his time as CEO he was most proud of the arrival of the B-17. Walt always thought that one of these Flying Fortresses should stand in the Combat Gallery at the Museum and he worked hard to make that happen. It was a proud moment when the acquisition of the B-17 was finally realized. The highlight moment came during a phone conversation from Jerry McLaughlin who is one of the restorers of the B-17 (*City of Savannah*) at the Museum. Jerry called from Douglas Airport where he had gone



"Mr. Jolly" - A Volkswagen Postal Van



Dr. and Mrs. Walter Brown



Walt with sons Kirk and Kerry, hiking near Etna California



Walt and Alice Brown

to oversee the transport of the B-17 to the Museum in Pooler.

Jerry asks, "Walt, guess where I am?"

Walt responds, "Where?"

Jerry says "I am in the cockpit of our B-17!"

If you knew him, you loved his keen wit and depth of understanding. He was always down to earth and treated each person he met with utmost respect. He had a special feeling for the veterans and volunteers. He loved interacting with them and attended as many of their meetings as possible. His door was always open. To Walt, the veterans were the heroes who had made many sacrifices for this great country of ours.

Walt was a man of many hats: He was born on December 11, 1939. He was raised in Savannah, Ga. He graduated from Savannah High and attended the University of Georgia where he was a proud Bulldog. Walt, along with his father and three successive grandfathers, graduated from the Medical College of Georgia. After residence at Chapel Hill, Walt entered the Air Force and served three years in Wiesbaden, Germany at the U.S. referral hospital for all of Europe. He took an over seas out and traveled in Mr.

Jolly, a Volkswagen postal van that was converted into a motor home, equipped with sink, shower, and hammock. His extensive travels took him into Eastern Europe where signs of World War II were still abundant.

On return from his tour he became an Emergency Room Physician at Baptist Hospital, an inner city hospital in Nashville, Tennessee, for 35 years. He was President of the Alumni Association of Medical College of Georgia and later served on the Foundation Board of the MCG on two different occasions. He was board certified in OB-GYN. He was a great diagnostician. One of his beloved nurses said Walter had "the touch." He was always willing to help medically be it an accident on the road or a friend. Walter took on his title M. D. with honor and humility.

He loved being a disk jockey on the 91.1 blues show every Sunday night for two years from the Vanderbilt University campus. Being Editor of the *Tennessee Historical Chapter Flyover* was his first job with *Eighth Air Force* veterans. It was the beginning of many hours of enjoyment. He served on the Board of *8th AFHS*, for two terms and was volunteer Editor for twelve years. During the formation of the *Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum* he served as Vice-president and remained on the board as Vice-President until becoming Chairman of the Board and becoming CEO of the *Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum*.

He attended all the *8th Air Force Historical Society Reunions* and will anyone ever forget "Pearls"? He had a great time giving his "Medical Pearls" about the little things we all can do to live longer, healthier lives. It gave everyone an excuse to eat chocolate.

Walt encouraged many to write their war time stories. He was always available to edit just for the privilege of helping.

It was an honor for me to watch him encourage others behind the scenes.

I will forever cherish the time I had with Walt. A few weeks before he passed away, Walt and I sat and talked about his life for many hours, with family coming in and out and adding facts. He was truly a remarkable man who my family and I shared many wonderful memories with. Telisha stated "I will miss all those coffee stained hand written papers and his sarcastic messages that he would scribble on his post-it notes with his RED PEN, while I was trying to type and translate his handwriting." Walt's note to Telisha would often say, "Tell those four screaming brats to shut up so you can type!"

In 1978, after sons, Kirk and Kerry were born, Walt and Alice bought Confederate General Richard S. Ewell's historic home in Spring Hill, Tennessee. On February 23, 2011 Walt peacefully died in this home surrounded by his family.

We are truly grateful for all of his guidance and most of all his forever friendship. Thank you for all the great memories, Walt. We love you!

Olddocbrown, May you rest in peace.



General Lew Lyle & Dr. Walter Brown



Donna Neely & Dr. Walter Brown at one of the many Starbucks locations to discuss the content for the next 8th AF News magazine.



*The Lt. William Owen Crew - 482nd Bomb Group. The first 8th Air Force crew to drop bombs on Berlin, Germany on March 4, 1944.
Standing: (L-R) T/Sgt. Donald White, S/Sgt. Harlen Sours, T/Sgt. Edward Aken, S/Sgt. George Moffat, T/Sgt. John O'Neil and S/Sgt. Ellsworth Beans.
Kneeling: Lt. William V. Owen, Lt. Marshall Thixton, Lt. Al Engelhardt and Lt. Frank McAllister.*

Pathfinders to Berlin

The amazing story of the first 8th Air Force mission to Berlin

March 4, 1944

By Mark S. Copeland

During the Allied bombing campaign of World War II, dozens of German cities were identified by Eighth Air Force Bomber Command as strategic military targets. Each target was important to the eventual destruction of the military, transportation and production capability of the German "war machine". However, no other city was more desirable than the German capital of Berlin. For Eighth Air Force Bomber Command, it was their number one target. A coordinated and massive daylight strike on Berlin was the ultimate prize. Not only would it be an opportunity to destroy

vital military targets, it would also be a demoralizing defeat to the German people and their military leaders. A successful mission to Berlin would also be seen as a major victory to the American people and a significant step in winning the war.

The German capital had been a target choice of Eighth Air Force Bomber Command as early as November of 1943. But due to the appalling winter weather of late 1943 and early 1944, it was put off until better weather prevailed. The newly appointed Eighth Air Force Commander, General James H. Doolittle had

expressed a deep desire to lead the first mission to Berlin as he did to Tokyo in April of 1942. However his notions were quickly snubbed by General Spaatz and General Eisenhower, due to the fact that he possessed valuable knowledge regarding **Operation Overlord**, the planned Allied invasion of Europe. They feared if Doolittle were shot down and captured by the Germans, he could be tortured to the point of revealing the top secret Allied plans.

In early March of 1944, weather forecasters informed Eighth Air Force Bomber Command that their just might be a

break in the weather, enough so, that a mission to Berlin might just be possible. Eighth Air Force Bomber Command set their plans in motion and on March 3, 1944, Berlin was selected as the primary target. Eighth Air Force Bomb Groups and Fighter Groups throughout East Anglia were alerted that the target was the "Big B."

On the morning of March 3rd, 1944 the Eighth Air Force formed up over England and headed east towards the German capital. However, upon reaching the European coast they ran into a heavy wall of clouds and were forced to return to England. The mission was recalled due to the terrible weather.

On March 4th, 1944, Eighth Air Force Bomber Command once again selected Berlin as their primary target. A combined force of 750 heavy bombers and a full escort of fighters would, for the first time, hit the German capital in broad daylight. The target that was selected was the large **R. Bosch Factory** near the city center.

One of the respective Eighth Air Force bomb groups that participated in the March 4, 1944 mission to Berlin was the 95th Bomb Group (H), based at Station 119 at Horham. The 95th Bomb Group was part of the 13th Combat Bomb Wing which included the 100th Bomb Group, stationed at Thorpe Abbots and the 390th Bomb Group based at Framlingham.

Leading the 95th Bomb Group that day was Lt. Colonel Harry Griffin "Griff" Mumford. Mumford was an eager and capable commander and a seasoned combat pilot. Also flying with the 95th Bomb Group that day were twelve aircraft from the 100th Bomb Group, mainly comprised of aircraft from the 350th Bomb Squadron.

Accompanying the composite group was one Pathfinder ship from the 482nd Bomb Group, stationed at Alconbury. The Pathfinder concept was a relatively new method of bombing for the Eighth Air Force. Their aircraft were equipped with a new British H2S radar system (code name "Stinky") fitted under the nose and housed in a specially designed radome. The radar was designed so the bombardier could see through overcast and more accurately locate the target.

482nd Bomb Group / 813th Bomb

Squadron pilot, 1st Lt. William V. Owen was assigned the task of leading the 95th Bomb Group and the 12 aircraft of the 100th Bomb Group to the target, 31 aircraft in all. The day before the mission on March 3rd, 1st Lt. William Owen flew his radar equipped B-17F from Alconbury to Horham for the next day's mission.

At the morning briefing at Horham of March 4th, the curtain was rolled back to divulge the mission target on a large map of Europe by Major "Jiggs" Donahue, 95th Bomb Group

Boeing B-17F Flying Fortress with H2S "Stinky" radar installed.



Lt. Colonel Harry "Griff" Mumford - Mission Commander - 95th Bomb Group on March 4, 1944.



Intelligence Officer. The crews gasped and groaned when they saw their destination....it was Berlin.

The crews were briefed regarding the target area, route of flight, weather and what they could expect for enemy resistance. Major Donahue explained that they could expect large numbers of enemy fighters along the route. He furthered briefed the group on the 414 heavy flak guns emplacements that were positioned in and around Berlin. The Second Air Division was assigned to fly a diversionary raid over the North Sea which hopefully would divert some of the Luftwaffe fighter threat.

At the close of the briefing, Major Donahue exclaimed, *"Today, Herman Goering will regret his statement that not one bomb would ever be dropped on his beloved Berlin. Good luck and my god be with you. May I add, I wish I was going with you on this one."* An airman in the back of the room exclaimed, *"Major, you can have my place!"* The hall erupted in laughter which surely eased some of the nervous tension amongst the young airmen.

Commander, Lt. Colonel Mumford, then made a critical decision that greatly affected the outcome of the mission. Mumford insisted he would like to use his own 95th Bomb Group crew to lead the formation and have the Pathfinder ship fly in the number two position. Mumford wanted to stay with his crew. Bill Owen agreed. For Owen, it meant he would fly with his trusted Co-Pilot, 2nd Lt. Frank McAllister.

1st Lt. Owen was familiar with the Lt. Colonel Mumford and the 95th Bomb Group, having first been assigned to the Group back in September of 1943 and flying during "Black Week," in October of 1943, before being sent to Alconbury for Pathfinder training.

Mumford's navigator, Lt. Malcolm Durr and Owen's navigator, Lt. Al Engelhardt worked together on establishing their course and radar navigational checkpoints. Engelhardt would follow the course and verify the accuracy of the group's route by checking these predetermined points.

Lt. Colonel Mumford flew along with 1st Pilot 2nd Lt. Al Brown in Boeing B-17G Flying Fortress, 42-31320 - *"I'll Be Around."* The twenty aircraft taxied into



1st Lt. William Owen - First Pilot of 482nd BG PFF Pathfinder aircraft on March 4, 1944.

position for takeoff, including Bill Owen and his crew. The control tower shot a green flare that arced across the sky, the signal that they were cleared to go.

As the Fortresses lifted into the sky they broke out of the overcast at about 3000 feet. Finally, nineteen 95th Bomb Group B-17s finally completed their formation, joined with the twelve aircraft from the 100th Bomb group and headed towards their first check point. One aircraft aborted due to mechanical problems.

A total of 750 8th Air Force heavy bombers formed up over England and began to head east towards the coast of Holland. Navigators checked their course and headings as they flew further into enemy territory. As they approached the German border, T/Sgt. Edward Aiken, Bill Owen's Radio Operator/Gunner, received a message from Eighth Air Force Bomber Command. He abruptly spoke on ship's intercom, "Mission Recalled."

Almost instantaneously, formations of bombers that were up ahead and behind them began to turn around and head west towards England. Soon there were no other aircraft around the fledgling formation, everyone was gone as their formation continued to head east towards Berlin.

What was happening? Why were they still heading east? Didn't Lt. Colonel Mumford receive the recall message? Finally, 2nd Lt. McAllister, Owen's Co-pilot,

tried to reach Mumford in the lead ship. *"Red Leader One, Red Leader One, this is Red Leader Two, do you read me, over?"* Suddenly, McAllister heard a reply, *"This is Red Leader One, we are flying the course as briefed; close up the formation, we can expect enemy fighters any time."*

One explanation as to why the lead ship ignored the recall message was that their Radio Operator believed it to be a fake transmission that had been broadcasted by the Germans. Whatever the reason, the formation continued to head east. Suddenly the group quickly realized why the mission had been recalled....it was just ahead of them. In front of the formation was a solid wall of clouds. It would be extremely hazardous to fly the formation into the thick heavy clouds, so the group began to climb. The Fortresses slowly climbed through 28,000 feet, then 29,000 feet trying to get above the overcast. They were reaching the maximum limitation of their aircraft.

Then, suddenly the clouds parted and below them was a large city. Almost immediately the Germans opened up with several flak guns. The formation hailed through the exploding shrapnel as the shells burst one after the other around them. One thing was certain; they were not where they were supposed to be. This was the first indication the lead aircraft was not navigating on the planned radar fixes. Bill Owen's navigator, Lt. Al Engelhardt knew exactly where the formation was at all times by using the ship's radar. Most regular bomber crews didn't believe in the new invention and knew little about it because of its top secret status.

The clouds began to gather once again as Bill Owen asked for a damage report. The rear gunners reported that one aircraft in the formation was on fire and was going down. They also reported that several parachutes were seen. Another aircraft was smoking badly and was dropping out of formation.

Lt. Colonel Mumford continued to lead his small force towards the Initial Point (I.P.) to begin the bomb run. Upon reaching the area, Mumford turned the lead over to Bill Owen's radar-equipped Pathfinder ship to make a more accurate run towards Berlin. It was 12:45pm, the scheduled enroute time. However,



Well known photograph taken for the press of the Brown (Mumford) Crew as they pose in front of "I'll Be Around."

according to Owen's navigator, Al Engelhardt, the formation was actually several miles away from the actual Initial Point.

1st Lt. Owen knew they were in the wrong place as did his navigator, Al Engelhardt. It was time to make a command decision. Owen took a course bearing from Engelhardt and began to make a turn towards the actual I.P. Suddenly, the radio came alive with the sounds of dissent from several of the other crews in the formation. Bill Owen reached down and turned the volume down on the radio so he could concentrate on getting the formation back on course.

Once the correction had been made, Lt. Owen gave command back to Lt. Colonel Mumford in the lead bomber. However, there was something wrong aboard Mumford's Fortress. The bomb bay doors were frozen and would not

open. Lt. Colonel Mumford radioed 1st Lt. Owen in the Pathfinder ship and ordered to take over the lead.

1st Lt. Owen put his B-17 on autopilot and turned it over to his trusted bombardier, Lt. Marshall Thixton. Lt. Thixton sighted in the target and called, "Two minutes to go." The target was only partially visible through the clouds. "Bring me in on radar and I'll attempt to bring it up on through the bombsight," Thixton exclaimed.

Suddenly a small cluster of friendly P-51 Mustangs appeared overhead. It was Colonel Don Blakeslee and the Fourth Fighter Group, along with additional Mustangs from the 357th Fighter Group. It was not only a very welcome sight for the men aboard the bombers; the Mustangs had arrived just in time to intercept a large gaggle of German fighters that was bearing down on the formation. Approximately 20 fighters began

to make a run towards the bomber formation. Dozens of .50 caliber machine guns aboard the bombers simultaneously opened up on the Luftwaffe fighters. Aboard Bill Owen's ship, Top Turret Gunner, Sgt. Donald White cut loose with a volley of machine bursts towards the enemy fighters. The bursts were so powerful that it put a crack the front cockpit windscreen.

The Mustangs began to chase the fighters with fierce tenacity. The German fighters lined up for another attack as the Lt. Thixton aligned his bombsight. Suddenly, an intense barrage of German flak began to open up once again as the Fortresses tightened their formation. The flak was thick, more than they had expected.

Navigator, Al Englehardt lined up the target using the H2S radar and gave Lt. Thixton the signal to drop. "Bombs Away," Thixton exalted and with that,



Lt. William Owen (Pilot) and Lt. Marshall Thixton (Bombardier) - 482nd BG PFF Pathfinder aircraft on March 4, 1944.

the first American bombs fell on the German capital.

As the formation began its turn to the west towards England, the flak began to intensify. The P-51s had done a superb job of scattering the fighters as the bombers headed to their rally point. Once again, the formation had to face the same nasty weather, which was the very reason the mission was recalled in the first place. They climbed above the clouds skimming the tops for additional protection from further Luftwaffe fighter attacks.

The composite group began their long trip across enemy territory towards England. Finally they reached the English Channel and tensions amongst the airmen began to ease. Upon reaching the base at Horham the 95th Bomb Group began to land, while Bill Owen and his 482nd Bomb Group headed back to their base at Alconbury. Upon landing, Bill Owen and his crew were de-briefed by 482nd Bomb Group intelligence.

Lt. Colonel Mumford's explanation of



Lt. Colonel H. "Griff" Mumford and General James H. Doolittle.

the mission was accepted by General Doolittle and General LeMay. Mumford feared that he might be court-martialed for ignoring the recall message. But instead of being court-martialed, Lt. Colonel Mumford was awarded the Silver Star. The crew of "I'll Be Around" were re-

ceived by the awaiting Press as the first crew to bomb Berlin. Within days, their pictures were in Life Magazine and on the front of newspapers across Great Britain and the United States.

The mission on March 4, 1944 was not the result Eighth Air Force Bomber Command envisioned. They wanted to make the first strike on Berlin a total "maximum effort." A small formation accomplishing the mission for the first time was not what they wanted. However, two days later on March 6, 1944, they got their chance. The Eighth Air Force once again attacked Berlin, but this time with a massive force. While the March 6th mission was successful, it proved to be one of the costliest missions of the war with the Eighth Air Force losing 69 heavy bombers and 14 fighters.

There are some clear facts about the first March 4th mission to Berlin; however there are some questions as well.

Did Lt. Colonel Mumford hear the mission recall? Did he ignore it and simply press on towards Berlin? Did

they actually verify that recall message as a fake? The answers to those questions are something that we shall never know. Mumford knew that continuing on to Berlin with such a small force was extremely risky and the results could be catastrophic. By making his decision, he clearly knew what was at stake.

However, one fact is quite evident and clear. If it were not for Lt. Bill Owen's bravery and fortitude in correcting the course of the formation, the mission could have been a complete disaster.

The accomplishments of the 482nd Bomb Group on March 4th, 1944 have never really been fully recognized. Yes, their radar capability aboard their aircraft significantly led to success of the mission, but the leadership and teamwork they displayed as a crew was the real reason to their success.

It is the author's fervent hope that this article will give proper credit to the William Owen Crew for their courage and valor on the March 4, 1944 mission. Their dedication to duty and the heroism they displayed on that day is a shining example of the commitment and perseverance of the Pathfinder crews of the 482nd Bomb Group.

This article is humbly dedicated to the members of the William Owen Crew, the veterans of the 482nd Bomb Group and all of those who never came back from a mission to the "Big B."

The author wishes to acknowledge Mr. Michael P. Faley, Mr. John O'Neil (son of John O'Neil – Waist Gunner on the Owen Crew) and especially Mr. William



Lt. Colonel Mumford receives congratulations from 95th Bomb Group Commander Colonel Chester Gilger.

Owen, who is now 90 years young, for their assistance in writing this article.

Further reading about the history of the 482nd Bomb Group can be found in the superb book, "BOMBS AWAY" by Marshall J. Thixton, George Moffat and John O'Neil. Copies can be obtained from the FNP Books - Military Division. Go to their website at: www.fnpmilitarypress.com. Also check out the wonderful website about the 482nd Bomb Group hosted by John O'Neil at: www.482nd.org.



A staged press photograph with airmen and ground crew atop "I'll Be Around" following the mission on March 4, 1944.



Mail Call

Crash on Take - off

The recent 8th Air Force News article on page 26 prompts me to enclose the report of our crash on take off and everyone on board survived along with the official report I am enclosing a photo of the plane.

I was standing behind the pilot and co-pilot and fortunately someone turned off the switches, with the only fire generated by the friction caused by the fuselage sliding on the asphalt.

The radio equipment and the top turret came down on my back, but my bombardier pushed me out of the plane. All I could think about was a report of a bomber not having their pitot tube cover removed on an adjacent base and all of their crew were killed. Two of us were hospitalized but we all survived.

We were in the 7th Squadron of the 34th Bomb Group stationed at Mendelsham, UK, the plane was named the "Belchin Bessie". Only three of our crew our still around.

Sincerely, Bob Gross

Always enjoying the 8th Air Force News

State of KY Veterans Cemetery Hopkinsville, KY

These pictures are from the wreath laying Dec 11, 2011. They are from my friend's telephone. . Why is the Wal Mart truck there? These wreaths came from Worcester, MA, then shipped to a warehouse in New Jersey. The local Wal Mart manager sent one of his trucks to NJ to pick them up and deliver them to the



Crash of Consolidated B-24 H-15 41-29559- 7th B.S./34th B.G. after take-off from Mendelsham.

cemetery...at no cost to the cemetery. Think what you will about Wal Mart, but add this to your thoughts. The picture on the left is of Steve Schmoldt and myself. I am wearing the straw hat to keep the rain off my glasses.

submitted by Joe Lawrence

A Memorial to John Harold Robinson, Sr.

The 'running thread' through all these is a man who reached beyond himself to comfort others; to restore memories of lost or wounded former members of the 703rd/445th and others; making each of us feel, 'we were the important one that he wrote or emailed that day'.

I am reminded of something he said recently, after seeing that one's past military records was known, told this wonderful man to write your memoirs,

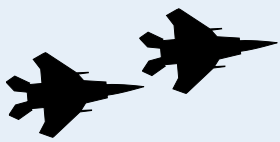
if not for publication for yourself. He said he did not speak of his service for years, many he worked with did not even know his military background. And how the book helped him realize the need to write.

We read the book, rather sanitized, horrifying as parts were and where we had loved ones who died, or barely made it back, sympathized. But "Robbie" lived it, knew the horrors around him on those 30 missions, and managed to give to us, and the world the very best accounts of those times.

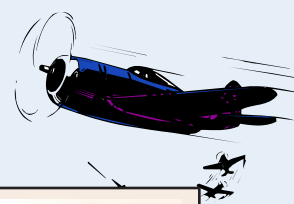
Yes, he will be missed by all, but what a wonderful experience to carry in our hearts and share with others, that would be his tribute. To love our God; our families and this country.

My husband served in Korean/Vietnam era, and went on 22 more years





Mail Call

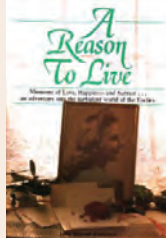


with DOD, and know how we are drawn together as Military families.

Bless the family, we will be there with you in spirit during these days.

**Sincerely,
James and Liz Lancaster
Phoenix AZ**

Note: John Harold Robinson of Memphis survived the war and in later years wrote his war memoirs in a book titled *A Reason to Live*. See John's recent obituary in this issue.



36th Bomb Squadron RCM to Dedicate Memorial in England – May 7, 2011

As we reported in our December 2010 issue (page 26), members and friends of the 36th Bomb Squadron – Radar Counter Measures will dedicate a special memorial to the members of the Lt. Louis McCarthy Crew that perished in a crash just after takeoff on February 19, 1945.

The Consolidated B-24 Liberator "Beast of Bourbon" crashed near the village of Long Marston and took the young lives of three of her crewmen. Stephen Hutton, author of the acclaimed 36th B.S. RCM unit history book, **Squadron of Deception**, has organized this wonderful event along with British friend, Chas Jellis. The memorial ceremony will also have a likely flyover by the 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron (36th EWS). John "Des" Howarth, the navigator from the McCarthy Crew will also be in attendance.

All are welcome to attend this special ceremony. It promises to be a memorable and emotional experience. Further information can be obtained by contacting Stephen Hutton or Chas Jellis directly.

To Stephen and Chas and all the friends and volunteers that have worked so hard to make this memorial a reality, your 8th AFHS family salutes all your efforts! God Bless you all!

**Stephen M. Hutton
4016 Old Sturbridge Drive
Apex, North Carolina 27539-9799**



Consolidated B-24H-25 - # 43-50385 "Beast of Bourbon" taxis at Cheddington Air Base, home of the 36th B.S. RCM Unit.



Lt. Louis McCarthy Crew of the 36th Bomb Squadron – RCM Unit who crashed after takeoff on February 19, 1945. Pilot Louis McCarthy is seen standing in the middle in the center of the photograph. The three airmen who died S/Sgt. Howard F. Haley, S/Sgt. Carl E. Lindquist, and S/Sgt. Fred K. Becker are seen kneeling from left to right in the front row.

(919) 772-8413
smhutton@36rcm

**Chas Jellis:
Chas_jellis@yahoo.com**

One Night In London

Hi Donna:

While turning pages in the December issue of the 8th AF News, I was pleasantly surprised to see "One Night In London" on page 14, but it was odd to read that "whisps of white hair peeped out from edges of the pianist's shoulders", and then the next two sentences were missing. I think they deserved to be includ-

ed, but, hey, the article looked very nice, and I enjoyed seeing it published. It was fun to read, and I hope readers enjoy it. Many thanks!

Dick Sanborn, 94th BG.

Note from Behind the Scenes: Please except my typing oversight. (add to 3rd paragraph p14 - 2010 December 8AF News)

What we saw was a wagon or cart, large enough to hold a small stand-up piano, in front of which was a hunched over figure sitting on a little stool. This figure was a rather old man wearing an overcoat with turned up collar around his ears and what looked like large moth-eaten holes at the elbow.



Mail Call

Our crew

Our crew, the Crow Crew, 385 BG, 550 SQ, agreed when we deplaned after flying back to the U.S. after VE day, that we would meet every five years. We had become such a "family" that we wanted to continue our close friendship. We almost did! None of us stayed in the military, but all of us went back to our various civilian careers.

(Attached are photographs of each reunion we managed.)

But now our numbers have dwindled so that today, 2011, there are only three of us left, and our age precludes making trips. However, we, now including widows and 2nd Gen children, still exchange Christmas cards and letters.

Bill Varnedoe - 385th BG



1944 Overseas



1975



1965



1980



1944 Training



1970



1993

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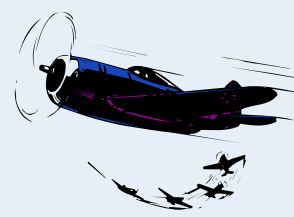
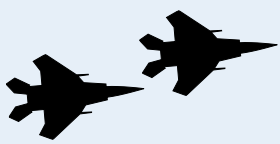
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Next Generation

Continuing The 8th AF Legacy - by Michael P. Faley

Hello Next-Gen, this is my first column for this important arm of the 8th Air Force Historical Society. Don't fret, Norma is still onboard and will help us in any way she can along with stalwarts Earl Wassom and Pat Keely. Norma is a fixture and cornerstone of the Next Gen initiative and all I am trying to do is carry on that tradition. Over the past years the Next Gen has developed many ideas which required committees, internal discussions and BOD feedback/approval before moving forward. This may have hindered the implementation of some good ideas and curtailed some of your enthusiasm. That has to change! We believe that the strength of any



Michael P. Faley

organization is its **Members**. From their boundless energy to their creative ingenuity, these traits are needed in today's world to get the legacy of the 8th Air Force exposed. But to succeed we need well defined ideas that must be implemented. And for that, you need teamwork.

We need your help and involvement if we are to succeed. In the last six months the Next Gen initiative has developed a Facebook presence (<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=116287021754170>) of almost 600 people and our membership drive had the biggest December ever!!!! This year we have secured a commitment from the owners of B-17G Nine-O-Nine, B-24 Witchcraft, P-51C, (Collings Foundation), B-17G Liberty Belle (The Liberty Foundation), B-17G Sentimental Journey (CAF Commemorative Air Force) and the B-17 "The Movie Memphis Belle" (Aircraft Restoration Corp) to hand out our Membership brochures at their PX on each of their stops. We would personally like to thank these fine organizations for working with us and we encourage you to support them when they come to your city. You can do this by getting local 8th AFHS Vets out to these tour stops and

have them tell stories and encourage a new generation to become involved in preserving our legacy. I want to thank Dr Harry Friedman and Linda Morgan for their invaluable assistance in putting this program together.

Bob Books (our webmaster) has been instrumental in helping this cross promotion by putting up a B-17 Tours section on the front page of our website <http://www.8thafhs.org/> . If you want to know the tour stops for each of these planes, just look there. Thanks Bob.

What we need next is a dedicated YouTube page for the 8th AFHS. Is there someone within the Next Gen who can

take on this task? Besides National and Cable TV, YouTube has the most volume of viewers and potential members. Best of all, it is FREE! It will just take a dedicated person with computer skills to take this task on. Contact me at MPFaley@aol.com to discuss.

We would like to also explore more ideas for education in the schools and would like to hear your ideas on how best to achieve this long term. Many years back, the Museum had an educational package that went out to schools, would this work today if we were to transfer that Video package into a DVD?

I could go on but Mark Copeland would yell at me for taking all the space in the magazine. In closing, this is your 8th AFHS and the memories, legacy and its future are in your hands.

Michael P. Faley
8th Air Force Board of Director.



Chapter News



VIRGINIA CHAPTER

Our web site may be one of the newest and maybe not the largest, but if I were a betting man, I would wager that it is becoming one of the most interesting and well designed. All the credit for this has to go to Anne Royster, our Webmaster. The address is "8THAF-VIRGINIA.ORG". Now, please log on and see for yourself all the additions made to our site in the few months it has been in existence.

We now have another volunteer that will perform a much needed task.

It is sad when we are notified that another Vet has gone to the big landing pattern in the sky. Often we know because a simple note is received in the mail. Maybe it notifies us of a member who has belonged and paid dues but maybe we have never laid eyes on the person. Now we can at least let the letter writer that we care and are saddened by the loss of a comrade. Jean Hughes has agreed to write a note to each person who has notified us. It will be the least we can and should do but it may make the letter writer know we care and share in the sorrow of the loss. Welcome aboard Jean!

Now to those notorious "New Year Resolutions!"

1. We should have a minimum of three general luncheon meetings as we have voted to do. Late March, early April should be the first one of the year. The last should be associated with Christmas and should be in December. That can leave us with Summer to schedule the third. One more area we need to help improve is the frequency of issues of Plane Talk. Here again we have voted in the past to issue a minimum of three in a year. We can do this but we cannot just "leave it to Bob" just because he has agreed to publish the newsletter. Bob needs material to publish. Everyone of us can contribute to this. Contact Bob. Lew Burke, President

FLORIDA CHAPTER

The Florida Chapter of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Historical Society

held its fall meeting and reunion in Jupiter, Florida the second weekend in November. The board meeting conducted by President Tom Gagnon was well attended by the membership, as was the weekend. The reunion was planned by Vice-President Bill Uphoff, and board member Jim Hart for the annual Stuart, Florida, Air Show. We had an outstanding turn out for this meeting, with the major attraction of the air show helping a great deal.

Bill Uphoff invited the members in attendance to relate one of their favorite stories from their service in England. The stories came out and they were great. One of the best was a telling of throwing frozen, stale bagels out the bomb bay on a mission over Berlin. Another was the story of Addison Bartush and

Bill jumping into a shelter during an air raid alarm at the 91st Bomb Group's base when they served there together. All were interesting and it was wonderful of everyone to share their experiences.

The Stuart Air Show sponsor was the Road to Victory Military Museum in Stuart. The Road to Victory museum is more than a storehouse of Military relics and history; it is a true living history museum with interactive exhibits and displays as well as fully restored vehicles. Vice President Bill Uphoff had been in contact with the museum's organizers, who invited the Florida Chapter members to be the guests of honor at the air show. The "living legends", as the sign said outside our tent at the air show. Air show attendees were invited

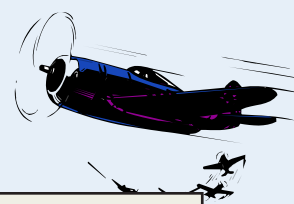
to come by our tent and visit with our members, and be able to learn more about what it was like, "over there". The organizers graciously provided snacks and a bag lunch and made us feel right at home. There was a great deal to see at the air show with numerous war birds on display as well as a collection of current military aircraft and helicopters. Two classic DC-3's were on display. There were aerobatic demonstrations all afternoon, and some formation flying by a P-51 Mustang joined by an F-16 Fighting Falcon. The members had such a good time at the air show and all the festivities we have decided to plan next year's reunion at the same



Florida Chapter Officers and Board of Directors
Standing, left to right: Mike Drake, Ken Sweet, Bill Uphoff, Jim Hart, and Warren Klein. Seated: Bill Miller, Tom Gagnon, and John Guinn.



Ken Sweet in the cockpit of a C-17.



Chapter News

time and location.

If you would like information about the Florida Chapter, please contact Tom Gagnon at teg00@aol.com, (813) 394-0338, or Ken Sweet at ksotown@earthlink.net, (407) 869-6693.

Submitted by Ken Sweet

OREGON CHAPTER

Our February speaker was Captain Greg Wooldridge a Naval aviator of twenty-seven years with 8300 hours and 700 carrier landings in his Navy log book. In 1991, he was selected as the leader of the Blue Angels, a two-year tour. In 1992, the Blue Angels were the first American team to fly in the air show in Moscow. He was called back to lead the Blue Angels in 1993 and 1996.

"Thank you to Tom Philo, our archivist, historian, secretary, and photographer for the photo of Capt. Wooldridge.

Submitted by Joan E. Hamilton

NEW MEXICO CHAPTER

The New Mexico Chapter of the 8th AFHS held it's annual Winter General Membership Meeting and Luncheon at the Sheraton Uptown Hotel, December 11, 2010.

President, Larry Stebleton (Lt. Col. USAF Ret.) opened the meeting at 12:00 pm with a moment of silence in remembrance of departed members, followed by the Pledge Of Allegiance.

The entertainment was provided by "The Dazzle Dolls", a professional singing group of very talented ladies who presented a program of seasonal as well as popular WWII era music and closed the luncheon meeting with the song "God Bless America."

The speaker for upcoming Spring Meeting will be Dee Friesen, a retired Air Force pilot will speak about the infamous Ploesti raids during WWII.

Submitted by Al Schwery - Secretary

OHIO CHAPTER

The Ohio Chapter met on November 5th - 7th at the Ramada Plaza Hotel in Columbus, Ohio. The guest speaker was Colonel (Ret.) Curtis Petrek, who was a 1980 graduate of the Air Force Academy and served thirty years in the Air Force,



Oregon Chapter Speaker - Captain Greg Wooldridge
Photo courtesy of Tom Philo

retiring as commander of the Air Force ROTC at Ohio State University. He related some of his experiences serving his country for thirty years.

Petrek graduated on 28 May 1980 from the Air Force Academy being commissioned at 1 AM, graduating at 11 AM and married at 3 PM. He graduated with the first class of Women Cadets from the Academy.

After graduation, he flew the B-52 until becoming a pilot instructor. Petrek was then assigned to the B-1, becoming part of the initial core of pilots, and also performed flight testing and writing tech orders for the bomber. After a tour at the Pentagon doing budget work, he was assigned to B-2 flight training. Later Petrek was part of the Strategic Command staff, being present during 9/11 where he had to brief President Bush as events developed. He then returned to the B-2, followed by an assignment to the 55th Reconnaissance Wing before going to OSU. When at OSU, Petrek would tell his ROTC cadets three things:

1. Do the right thing.
2. The job you have is the best job in the world.
3. Life is a leadership laboratory.

The Chapter will meet again in May in Columbus.

Submitted by Chris Weber Secretary

NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

During our January meeting, several of our veterans remembered things about their WWII uniforms. Bill Varnedoe said he washed his uniform pants in 100 octane gasoline down on the flight line. This turned his hands white. Doug Garner agreed that he and others had done this too, with similar results. Norman Bradley pointed out that officers had to buy their clothes. One member remembered his company had to turn in their clothes for some reason, but then the order was rescinded and they had to go to a big pile of clothes in front of the orderly room...500 men rummaging through this big pile to find something that would fit...then put what didn't fit (or he didn't take) back in the pile. Bill Howard said when he was rescued at sea he was given a pair of pants by somebody who'd gotten them from somebody who'd gotten them from somebody, etc. Marion remembered going three months in the Sahara without a shower. We all enjoyed hearing each others tales of woe.

The present officers are re-elected by acclamation.

Most have paid their dues, but if not, send or bring your \$10 to Bill Varnedoe, 5000 Ketova Way, Huntsville, AL 35803. The 8th Air Force Historical Society dues (\$35) should be sent directly to P.O.Box 956, Pooler, GA 31322.

Submitted by Ann Vaughn, President



Book Reviews



What I Never Told You

A Daughter Traces the Wartime Imprisonment of Her Father

By Candy Kyler Brown

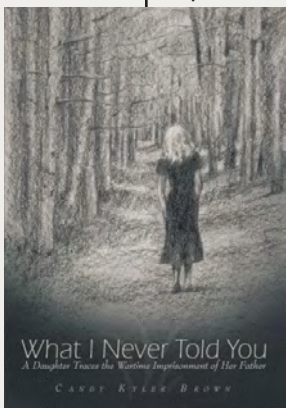
Dust Jacket Hardcover

Perfect Bound Softcover(B/W)

412 pages - 6x9 2010

ISBN: 9781449008871

A Daughter Traces the Wartime Imprisonment of Her Father (published by AuthorHouse), Candy Kyler Brown collects and tells her father's personal account of being a prisoner of war during World War II. Though Brown's father, John Kyler, an Army Air Force B-17 ball turret gunner who served during World War II, died without ever setting his experiences in book form, Brown was able to piece together the events of his heroic, terrifying ordeal through the personal journals her father kept during his captivity. "I was in awe," remembers Brown upon finding the handwritten notebooks. "It took me back in time, and I could imagine so clearly my father as a young boy and picture him, his freedom lost, sketching these pages from his "home" behind barbed wire. I thought of all the boys who were held captive by the German guards and how they must have feared that every day could be their last." Brown's father was shot down February 4, 1944 while on a mission to Frankfurt, Germany. As their damaged ship lost altitude over Belgium, he and the other crew members were forced to bail from their crippled bomber. On the ground, he was quickly taken prisoner. John Kyler would remain a prisoner for 15 months. While Brown was aware of her father's heroic survival, accounts of the ordeal were not easily spoken of by her father. "It never felt comfortable to ask about that time in his life that he had put behind him," Brown says. "I believe that men like my father – men who had witnessed so many life changing events – felt both lucky and guilty to survive when many of their comrades did not. I remember months before his death I told him he should write a book, and I would be his secretary and help him record his memories. He responded, 'What's there



to write about?', and that was it." Brown's father would pass away suddenly soon thereafter. With *What I Never Told You*, Brown has shared not only her father's story, but also the countless other stories untold by soldiers who are unwilling or unable to speak of their traumatic experiences. An engrossing read, *What I Never Told You* tells the war stories that go missing from history books. These are personal odes, each page alive with curiosity, fear, panic, frustration and an unbreakable optimism. It's a read not to be missed. For more information: www.remember-history.com Autographed copy may be ordered by contacting the author.

Candy Kyler Brown

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Kill Buck, NY 14748
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Air Force Cowboy

A World War II Adventure Story

by William E. Finley

500 Pages 6 x 9 Softcover

ISBN: 978-1-4512-4081-8

The day before the daredevil stunt pilot, Black Jack Hosmer, crashed fatally in front of an air show crowd, he launched his 12-year-old son, Lori, into his own risky aerobatics, declaring him "The world's youngest pilot!" Joining the U.S. Army Air Corps in 1939, he became a military test pilot then led an 8th Air Force Bomb Group toward smashing Hitler's ambitions to conquer all of Europe. His ingenious, unorthodox attacks against the Germans forced the American authorities to either jail him or give him another medal.

Lori Hosmer crossed paths and swords with military leaders but recruited President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill to sanction his wild-eyed tactics. After volunteering to obtain Nazi secrets to protect Eisenhower's D-Day invasion, Lori's spectacular victory celebration led the British allies to doubt the sanity of American flyers.

Air Force Cowboy is available on amazon.com and at local bookstores. The

author is available for speaking engagements and media interviews by calling 561.736.8924 or at picb@gate.net

Silver Wings And Answered Prayers

A PILOT'S STORY

By Gaston Chad Efir

Pure Heart Press

Softcover - 5 1/2" x 8 1/4"

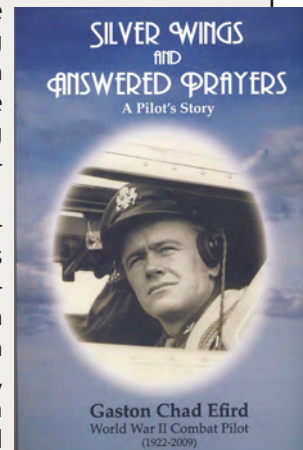
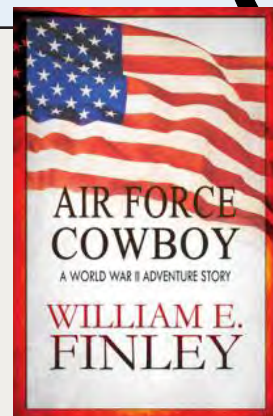
ISBN - 978-1-59948-253-8

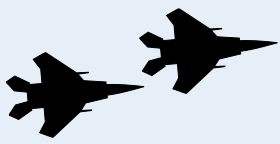
This remarkable story of Gaston Chad Efir is not only an exciting tale of WWII combat flying, but a story about a very charmed life.

Gaston Chad Efir successfully completed 35 combat missions while flying with the 452nd Bomb Group at Deopham Green. Like so many WWII veterans, Mr. Efir decided to record his remembrances for his children and grandchildren. He felt it was important to share his memories of the war, so they would understand what he did during World War II. Chad spent the last eight years, working off and on, compiling his memories and stories into this well written memoir.

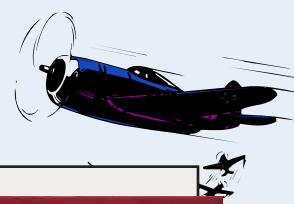
The author's reflections of his training days and his experiences of flying combat with the 8th Air Force are vivid and well described. I really liked the true story telling skills of Mr. Efir. His ability to describe a certain place, time or scene is done in a style that makes the reader feel like you were sitting in a room with Mr. Efir while he was telling you his recollections first hand.

What really makes this book very special begins on sad note. On December 2, 2009, Gaston Chad Efir





Book Reviews



passed away having never seen his book completed. Mr. Efird's family, namely Cheryl Rogers Efird, worked with several of her family members and through their hard work, they brought the book to fruition. Silver Wings and Answered Prayers – A Pilot's Story tells the story of a very brave American patriot, Gaston Chad Efird. It is a story that rings true about so many of the World War II generation. A young man that went to war, returned home, had a successful career and raised a good family. A quiet hero, who believed in his church, his community and his country. *I highly recommend getting a copy of this amazing story for your own library. You won't be disappointed, you will simply be inspired.*

For contact details please inquire with Cheryl Rogers Efird directly.

Cheryl Rogers Efird
16542 Eno Court
Norwood, North Carolina 28128
(704) 474-3847
cefird2@carolina.rr.com

WWII MEMORIES OF A MUSTANG PILOT
By Joseph A. Peterburs
2007 - 5 1/2" x 7 1/2"
Softcover – 73 pages

Joseph A. Peterburs was a P-51D Mustang fighter pilot with the 20th Fighter Group stationed at Kings Cliffe, England. He flew an impressive 49 combat missions, 267 combat hours, destroyed five enemy aircraft on the ground and damaged one Focke Wulf Fw190 in the air. But most impressive of all was that Joseph Peterburs did something not many fighter pilots in the Eighth Air Force accomplished. He shot down and destroyed a German jet.

This remarkable feat is quite impressive in its own right, however, Joseph Peterburs shot down one of the best pilots ever to fly in the German Luftwaffe, Oberleutnant Walter Schuck, who by war's end had shot down 206 enemy aircraft.

Joseph Peterburs describes his days



as a WWII fighter pilot during WWII and his subsequent capture after being shot down himself and his time spent as a POW. What is most impressive about the book is his post war friendship with Walter Schuck, the man he shot down and his remarkable journey back in time when his P-51 Mustang was unearthed after 50+ years.

This book is written "to the point" and was a lot of fun to read. Joseph Peterburs not only tells a remarkable story about the bravery and courage it took to fly as a combat fighter pilot during World War II, but teaches us a lesson in forgiveness and friendship with a former enemy. Highly recommended!!

For more information and to obtain autographed copies from the author go to his website:

www.joepeterburs.com
Or contact him at:
Joseph A. Peterburs
715 Shasta Street
Roseville, California 95678-1200

PHOTO HISTORY OF THE 487TH BOMB GROUP (H)
By Ivo De Jong, Lee Hauenstein, Paul Webber
PRI Communications
8 1/2" x 12" 2010 - Hardcover – 292 pages
2010 – ISBN: 978-90-9025585-9

Like all Eighth Air Force Bomb Groups (H), the 487th Bomb Group left their mark on history during their combat tenure during World War II. "The Gentlemen From Hell," as they were affectionately known, were first assigned the Consolidated B-24 Liberator. Then, they transitioned into the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress during their time in England. Flying from their base near Lavenham, England, the 487th Bomb Group established one of the most impressive combat records in the "Mighty Eighth."

Dutch author, Ivo de Jong has been one of the premiere Eighth Air Force historians of the last decade. His previous titles, *Mission 85 – A Milk Run That Turned Sour*, *Mission 376 – Battle Over the Reich – 28 May, 1944* and his superb unit

history on the 487th Bomb Group all were impressively researched and skillfully written.

Ivo de Jong's latest work, **Photo History of the 487th Bomb Group**, is once again, simply a masterpiece.

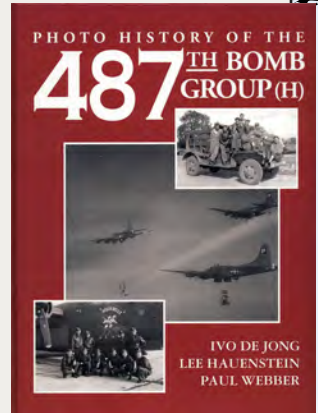
Joining forces with author de Jong are Lee Hauenstein and Paul Webber. These three gentlemen have created a photo document of the **487th Bomb Group** nothing short of amazing. From the first page, this impressive photo history takes the reader from their training days in Alamogordo, New Mexico to their journey through combat flying over Europe. The book contains well over 500+ photographs that were collected from private archives, most have never been published. There is also a wonderful collection of rare color photographs included in this magnificent book.

Authors de Jong, Hauenstein and Webber should be applauded for their tireless work in preserving the history and legacy of the **487th Bomb Group**. This book is the perfect complement to the aforementioned 487th Bomb Group unit history (ISBN-13: 978-1596520189) on the "Gentlemen From Hell." The highest of recommendations.

This book is affordably priced and very limited, so don't delay in contacting the author to obtain a copy.

Mr. Lee Hauenstein
4 Masefield Road
Nashua, New Hampshire 03062-2518
(603) 888-5829
www.487thbg.org

Editor's Note: CORRECTION
In the December issue of the 8th AF NEWS we reviewed the wonderful book, **ELEVEN TWO** by Frank A. Kravetz. We missed a typo in the contact information and wanted to correct the information to learn more about this wonderful story. Website address: www.eleventwothebook.com Publisher's website: www.silverbeargraphics.com/frankkravetz





Reunions

351st Bomb Group Reunion

Norfolk, VA
June 16-19, 2011
For more informatio contact:
Debbie Eason
(478) 453-7388
dbme@windstream.net

490th BOMB GROUP

October 27th-30th, 2011
Marriott Hotel, Savannah, Georgia
Contact: Les Reekers, 762 Lynnmere Drive,
Thousand Oaks, CA 91360
(805).493.1746
email-8thafnavigator@gmail.com

801st/492nd Bomb Group

CARPETBAGGERS
Holiday Inn Downtown Superdome
New Orleans, LA
October 10th ---14th--2011
Contact Bill Becker
Phone (619) 992-6228
Email beebbs71@aol.com

486th Bomb Group

Savannah, Georgia
Riverfront Marriott Hotel
October 26th-30th, 2011
(In conjunction with the 487th Bomb Group Association)

487th Bomb Group

Savannah, Georgia
Riverfront Marriott Hotel
October 26th-30th, 2011
(In conjunction with the 486th Bomb Group Association)

95th Bomb Group

Seattle, Washington
Sea-Tac Marriott Hotel
October 12th-16th, 2011

93rd Bomb Group

Tucson, Arizona
October 20th-24th, 2011

100th BOMB GROUP FOUNDATION – 2011 REUNION

The members of the 100th Bomb Group Association and guests will hold their 2011 Reunion in Cleveland, Ohio at the Sheraton Cleveland Airport Hotel and the 100th Bomb Group Restaurant near the Cleveland International Airport. The dates are September 8th through the 11th. Further information can be obtained on the 100th Bomb

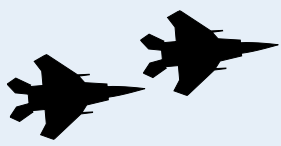
Group website: www.100thbg.com or by contacting:

Nancy Putnam
100th BGF Reunion
P. O. Box 942
New London, NH 03257

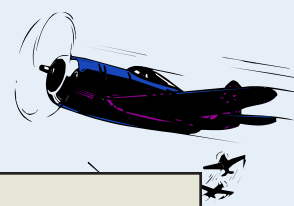


A veteran is someone who, at one point, wrote a blank check made payable to 'The United States of America' for an amount of up to and including his life.

That is Honor, and there are way too many people in this country who no longer understand it.



2011 Ira Eaker Trophy Presented



General Ira C. Eaker



General Ira C. Eaker

The 2011 Ira Eaker Trophy for aircrew excellence was awarded to a B-52H crew from the 5th Bomb Wing, Minot AFB, ND, at a gala black-tie event in Shreveport, LA, on 3 March 2011. Presiding was Maj General Floyd Carpenter, Commander 8th AF, Barksdale AFB. There were approximately 200 attendees, including representatives from the 2nd BW, Barksdale AFB, the 5th BW, Minot AFB, ND, the 509th BW, Whiteman AFB, MO, and Headquarters 8th AF, Barksdale AFB. The 8th AF Historical Society was represented by President Harry Tanner and by former President Lt Col (Ret.) Ivan McKinney.

The winning B-52 crew experienced a major airborne emergency which they brought under control, thereby saving the B-52 and themselves without loss of life or loss of the airplane.

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society annually sponsors this coveted award in memory of General Ira C. Eaker, first Commander of the United State Army Air Corps – Eighth Air Force. We hope that it continues to link our present day service men and women to the lineage and history of the "Mighty Eighth."



Left to right: Harry Tanner, President 8AFHS; Capt Phil Demeter, B52 copilot; Capt David Skelonc, navigator; Capt David Faircloth, pilot; Capt Corrine Hester, navigator; 1st Lt Alex Brewster, electronic warfare officer; and Lt Col (Ret.) Ivan McKinney, former President 8AFHS.

Taps

Armstrong, Henry L. II, 88, of Newtown Square and West Chester, died on Aug. 23, 2010. Henry served in the U.S. Air Force during World War II and was awarded the Purple Heart.



Henry Armstrong

Baker, Warren B., 86 of Portland Oregon. When Pearl Harbor was bombed, he knew it was just a matter of time before he was drafted. He became Engineer and a Top Turret Gunner with the 96th Bomb Group on the "Portland Rose", where he earned his four Oak Leaf Clusters, Distinguished Unit Badge and Good Conduct metal. Warren was a very humble man but spoke often about how very young the crew was - the pilot was a mere 24 years old, Warren 19. What a



Warren Baker

BROWN, JR., Dr. Walter Edward Died peacefully at his home in Spring Hill, TN after a lengthy illness on February 23, 2011. Walter was born and raised in Savannah, GA. Walter was the editor of the *Eighth Air Force News Magazine* for 12 years. He was Vice President of the *Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum Board* where he eventually served as the President and CEO of the *Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum*. He was a lifetime member of the *Eighth Air Force Historical Society*. He served with the rank of Major in the *United States Air Force* from 1969 to 1971.



Dr. Walter Brown

responsibility those young men who flew in the B-17's had! He had a very healthy respect for their responsibility, but was frankly glad when the bombing missions were over. The part he liked the very best were the food drops over The Netherlands.



Buckles in 1917 (age 16)

Buckles, Frank W., February 1, 1901 – February 27, 2011 America's Last Surviving Soldier of World War I. Mr. Buckles lied about his age to get into the Army (Age 16) and was sent to Europe and was assigned as an ambulance driver. During WWII, he became a Prisoner of War in the Philippines and was imprisoned by the Japanese for 39 months. In the last few years of his life he became a strong proponent for the building of a national memorial dedicated to those who served in the Great War. In 1917 and 1918, close to 5 million Americans served in World War I, and Mr. Buckles, a cordial fellow of gentle humor, was the last known survivor. "I knew there'd be only one someday," he said a few years back. "I didn't think it would be me." He was 110 years old. Ninety years later, with available records showing that former Corporal Buckles, serial No. 15577, had outlived all of his compatriots from World War I, the Department of Veterans Affairs declared him the last World War I "doughboy" standing.



1945. Stationed predominantly in England with the Eighth Air Force, 457th Bombardment Group, he served as a specialist in the top secret Norton Bombsight project. He returned to the U.S. in 1945 to retrain in B-29 bombers, achieving the rank of Lieutenant. Following the war, Chuck achieved the rank of Captain in the United States Air Force Reserve.



Bill Bergeron

Bergeron, Willard H. "Bill", 92, passed away August 26, 2010 in San Antonio, Texas. His wife Olga passed away in 2005. Bill was a copilot and pilot in the 360th BS. He flew two combat tours and was dispatched on 42 missions, many of them on lead crews. Bill was one of 46 men who participated in both the first and second *Schweinfurt Missions*. He was appointed 358th BS Operations Officer on 19 December 1944 and 358th BS Acting Commanding Officer on 30 March 1945.



Duane Braun

Brady, Charles Joseph "Chuck", - 87, died December 31, 2010. He served in the Army Air Corps until



Charles Joseph "Chuck" Brady

Braun, Duane M., 89, 303rd BG, passed away August 30, 2010, in Katy, Texas. He survived a difficult childhood (which included military school, witnessing the drowning/electrocution death of his father, and the Great Depression) to join the military in 1940 before the outbreak of World War II. Duane's B-17 bomber crew flew 32 combat missions against heavily defended strategic targets. He was a Aerial Engineer/Gunner on a B-17. He married Marie Elizabeth Sivil, in 1950.

Bryson, Emil M., passed away April 21, 1999. Flight Engineer on the 360th BS 2Lt Robert R. Fowler Crew.

Taps

Burschfield, Darrell, - Radio Operator - Oberembt CREW - 491st BG, passed away on November 27, 2011 - 87 years. Had a successful career as a commercial artist after the war.



Darrell Burschfield

Connelly, Major Ben Lee, 88, who flew 30 missions as a B-17 pilot (2nd Lt. and 1st Lt.) with the 303rd BG "Hell's Angels", 360th BS, passed away on February 11, 2010 in New Bern, North Carolina. He was predeceased by his wife, Norma, 20 years earlier after 44 years of marriage.



Ben Connelly

He enlisted in the Army Air Corps to be a pilot but flunked the vision test. He started a regimen of eye exercises and said he "ate every damned carrot in the county" to improve his eyesight. When he went back to try again, he passed the test, enlisted at Fort Bragg, NC, in July 1942 at the age of 20 and went to basic flying training at LeMoore (Calif.) Army Air Field. He graduated as a pilot and was commissioned as a 2nd Lt. at Lowry Field in Denver, Colorado. After the war, he went into the US Air Force Reserves where he attained the rank of Major.



Ray Derr

Submitted by his son, Richard Lee Connelly, Raleigh, NC

Darling, S/Sgt. Loren F., - 89 years old - 418th BG/100th BG. Served as a Waist Gunner with the *Robert "Rosie" Rosenthal Crew*. Sgt. Darling was awarded the Silver Star and two Purple Hearts. He was the last surviving member of the *Rosenthal Crew*.



Steve Dulick

Dennis, Julian E., 87, a longtime resident of Montgomery, AL and a veteran of World War II, passed away, October 13, 2010. He was preceded in death by his wife, Jennie Dennis.



Ordway Gates

Derr, Ray E., 90, of Nescopeck, PA. Ray concluded his journey in this life Nov. 30, 2010, in Berwick Retirement Village. He served four years with the famed *Hell's Angels*, B-17 BS, 8th Air Force, 303rd BG in



Harry Jenkins

England. He was married to Dora Denn, 61 years.

Dooley, Patrick Charles, age 84, passed away on September 28, 2010 in Prescott, Arizona. He was born in Bellevue, Kentucky. Patrick served in the US Army as a ball turret gunner on the B-17 over England and Europe. Patrick is survived by his wife, Mary.

Dulick, Steve 303rd BG, 93, of Venice, formerly of Youngstown, Ohio died Dec. 19, 2010. He leaves behind his wife of 69 years, Louise. He successfully flew 30 missions over Europe and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and Three Oak Leaf Clusters air medals.

Gates, Ordway B., 89, of Williamsburg, VA, passed away on 12 January 2011. He was a B-17 bombardier in the 8th AF assigned to the 95th Bomb Group stationed at Horham, England. Shot down in 1944, he was aided by the underground in Luxembourg and evaded capture by being hidden in homes for several months until advancing Allied forces reached the town in which he was sheltered.

Goff, Tom, 457th BG. Tom flew two tours of duty and was the squadron bombardier of the 750th Squadron.

Submitted by, James L. Bass
Jeambey, Leo E., 85, passed away April 30, 2009. Pastor Leo was born 8-07-23 in Dewitt, Neb. Leo was the radio operator on the 360th *John A. Matheson Crew*, shot down on 28 September 1944. Five were killed in action. Leo and three others spent the rest of the war as POWs.

Jenkins, Harry F., 359th BS Pilot, passed away March 18, 2010. Harry was the Editor of the *303rd BG Association's Hell's Angels* from 1977-1981.

Joswick, Earl B., 95th BG Ball Turret Gunner - "Ten Aces" Crew POW - Stalag Luft IV. Earl was a very supportive member in the 8th AFHS - Minnesota Chapter.



Earl Joswick

Kaber, Harvey N.,

88, passed away on Dec. 13, 2010, in Anaconda. From 1938 to 1946 he served in the Army and was in the *Hell's Angels* 303rd BG in World War II. He married Esther Fern Brown.

Kever, William I., 303rd BG, (Oct. 9, 1918 - Dec. 13, 2010) was born in Ft. Wayne, IN. He was on his own by age 15 and supported himself through high school to become the first of his family to graduate. Bill was stationed at Molesworth Air Base in England as an armorer with the 303rd BG. He met his future wife, Honor Martin, while on leave in Northampton. They started their life together in Boise, ID in 1947.

Kilgore, Edward J., 398th BG, 89 passed away August 10, 2010, in Marlton, N. J. He was a Technical Sergeant stationed in Nuthampstead, England for three years. He flew 21 missions as a radioman on B-17's. Submitted by his wife Julie of 64 years.

Kremer, Rudolph, - 94, passed away September 29, 2010. Captain and pilot in the 8th Army Air Force, flying 30 missions in WWII with the 453rd Bomb Group, 732nd Bomb Squadron. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross.



Rudolph Kremer

Lund, Jerome "Jerry" O., 88, of Nokomis, Fla., passed away Nov. 2010. Jerry was born Aug. 24, 1922, in Spring Grove, Minn. He was married to Mary Van Beek on Sept. 13, 1947. He was proud of his service as a Mess Sergeant in the 303rd BG.



Jerome Lund

Taps

Miser, John W. 86, of Russell, Ohio, passed away peacefully at home on December 24, 2010. He was a B-17 pilot assigned to the 379th Bomb Group stationed at Kimbolton, England. After the war he flew for American Airlines for 28 years. He was part of the flight crew for John F. Kennedy's presidential campaign in 1960. He is survived by his wife of 65 years, Alice.



John Miser

McColl, Roderick H., of East Orleans, MA died on October 21, 2010. He was a navigator in the 8th Air Force, 34th BG. He flew 35 missions in B-17 and B-24's. He was awarded the DFC and the Air Medal. He also flew in the Pacific Theater and was an instructor during the Korean War.



Edward Prystup

Oberly, Eldridge Charles, 87, of Orlando, Florida, went home to the Lord on August 15, 2010. Born in Bethlehem, PA on October 23, 1922. He served in the Army Air Corps as a Ball Turret Gunner in a B-17. He flew 38 combat missions. He is survived by Bessie Evans Oberly, his loving wife of 65 years.



Robert Rasp

Patton, Ralph K. 90, passed away at his home in Bethesda MD on January 31, 2011. He served as a B-17 pilot with the 331st squadron of the 94th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force stationed in Bury St. Edmunds in southern England. On his 9th mission, on January 5, 1944, he was shot down after bombing his target, a German fighter base at Merignac, near Bordeaux, France. After losing the tail section of his B-17, Ralph parachuted into the center of the Brittany peninsula in western France. He and surviving members of his crew were sheltered by the French underground for nearly 2 ½ months. On the night of March 18, 1944, they were taken to the beach near Plouha to be met by Motor Gun Boat 503, operated as part of the British Military Intelligence Service's Reseau Shelburn. By morning, he was



Jack Rencher

safely back across the Channel in England. Ralph returned to the United States on April 20, 1944. After stopping to see his family in Wilkinsburg, he traveled on to Memphis, where Bette Lou Hopkins was serving with the WAVES. In Memphis, on May 1, 1944, they were married, beginning their 66 year marriage.

Ralph was co-founder of AFEES – Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society and an early supporter of the 8th AFHS.

Prystup, Edward S., 85, formerly of Schenectady, NY died January 18, 2010. Ed enlisted with the Army Air Corp and trained as a bombardier attaining the rank of Staff Sergeant. He served in 25 bombing mission during WWII earning several bronze battle stars. Following the war he married Carmel Fountain in 1949. Ed was proud of serving his country and was a member of the 8th Air Force Historical Society.

Rasp, Robert J., Waist Gunner/ Ground Crew, 389TH BG. He passed away January 2011.

Rencher, Jack P., was born in Los Angeles California. Jack passed on to a pain free world on August 20, 2010, in Boise, Idaho. In 1945, Jack met and fell in love with his wife, Louise Schlotterbeck, a US Army Medical Corps Hospital Dietitian at Brooke General Hospital in San Antonio, Texas. Jack and Louise married in October

of 1947.

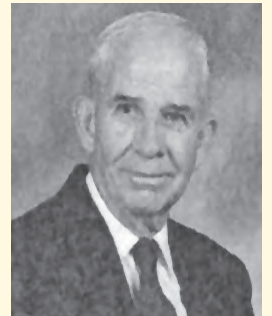
When World War II started Jack enlisted in the Army Air Corps with the goal of flying fighters. After training to become a pilot, he became an instructor in P-38 fighters. He was subsequently trained to fly B-17 bombers and spent a year flying gunnery training at Yuma AZ. In 1944, he was transferred to the 303rd BG, stationed in Molesworth, England. He flew 35 combat missions over Germany with his last mission, December 24, 1944 dur-

ing the *Battle of the Bulge*.

He was very active in the 303rd *Hells Angels* BG organization. Some of his closest friends later in life were and are members of the 303rd. One of his close friends, Harry Gobrecht, who passed on August 10, 2010, shared with Jack the self-appointed title of *"The Best Damn Four Engine Pilot in the Army Air Corps."* No one seems to argue that point.

Robinson, John Harold Sr. - 89, of Collierville, TN, passed away January 7 2011.

He was a World War II Army Air Force veteran, who earned the Distinguished Flying Cross Air Medal with Oak Leaf Clusters, and Croix de Guerre in 3 Campaigns of the European Theater of Operations in 1943-



John Harold Robinson, Sr.

1944. He was an engineer gunner on a B-24 in Jimmy Stewart's 703rd Bomb Squadron. On his retirement from professional life, he wrote "A Reason to Live", a love and war story chronicling his wartime service. "Robbie" or "Harold" as he was known to his friends and associates, was Past President Chapter, 8th Air Force Historical Association. Robinson leaves his wife of 68 years, Virginia Elizabeth (Marbury) Robinson. His son, John Harold Robinson, Jr., was a Memphis police officer killed in the line of duty on 1 December 1999.

Rosenthal, Phillis, - wife of famed 100th BG pilot, *Robert "Rosie" Rosenthal*. Served on the prosecution team, along with her husband, at the Nuremberg War Crime Trials. WWII WAVE veteran.

Susskind, Harold Aloysius, passed away November 2010 at his home in Austin, Texas. He was born August 31, 1915, in New York. He is survived by his



Hal Susskind

Taps

wife of 62 years, the former Rachel Romano of Brooklyn, NY. He received his Bombardier Wings and Navigator Wings in 1943 and was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

He flew his first mission in the 359th Squadron, 303rd BG. He completed his first tour of duty in 1944, but signed on for a second tour in September of 1944. By the end of the second World War, he had completed 41 combat missions and was the 359th Squadron Navigator. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He was then assigned to the Air Transport Command and was stationed in Dakar, Africa. He separated from the service in February 1946 but was recalled to active duty in August of 1949 and was assigned to the Navigation School at Ellington AFB, Houston, TX in 1950.

In 1962, he was the Air Force Information Officer during the nuclear test series off Christmas Island. In 1963, he was assigned to South Vietnam as Director of Information for Second Air Division. In May 1964, he was awarded the Orville Wright Award by the Aviation Space Writer's Association for his work in Vietnam. He also received the Bronze Star for his performance of duty. He retired from the Air Force in 1973.

In 1984, he joined the 303rd BG Association. Hal was the *Editor of the 303rd BG Association's Hell's Angels* from 1985-1998. In 1997, he was elected president of the 2,000 member Association.

Thomas, Earl Newton, 88, died on August 20th in Peachtree City, Georgia.

Born in Bluefield, West Virginia on November 16th, 1921. Thomas completed basic aviation training and advanced training in the B-17 "Flying Fortress". He earned his commission as a Second Lieutenant and his pilot's wings in May of



Earl Thomas

1943. In December, 1943 he ferried one of the big bombers to the *European Theater of Operations*. Upon arrival in the

United Kingdom, He was permanently assigned to the 303rd Bombardment Group (Heavy) at RAF Molesworth, commonly known as the "Hell's Angels." During his tour, Thomas flew 33 credited combat missions in the B-17 including bombing support for the *D-Day invasion at Normandy*.

In late 1944, as a newly promoted Captain, and a lead crew pilot, Thomas flew his last B-17 mission attacking oil refineries at Hamburg. For his role in that attack, he received the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC). Due to his competence as a pilot and his leadership, all of his original crew completed their combat tours without injury. One of his copilots, Ed Miller, said, "Tommy was the best pilot I ever knew. He taught me just about everything I learned, more than in the formal schools."

After finishing his B-17 time, instead of accepting reassignment back to lighter duties stateside, Thomas volunteered to fly the P-51 "Mustang" in an innovative new reconnaissance unit at Steeple Morden airfield. As one of the first bomber pilots to join the First Scouting Force, he would fly ten missions before being assigned as an flying instructor back home. He had earned the DFC with one oak leaf cluster and the Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters.

When the war ended, Thomas hired on with Trans-World-Airlines flying the DC-3 out of New York. It was there that his met his wife of 59 years, Patricia Northington Thomas. When he was later employed by Delta, he piloted at one time or another every aircraft the company used including the last plane he flew which was the L-1011. Thomas retired from Delta Airlines as a Captain in 1981 having amassed over 29,000 hours of flight time.

Van Geyten, John Jacob, 86, died, October 22, 2010 at Clifton Springs Hospital. Maple Court, Newark. John piloted a B-17 complet-



John Van Geyten

ing three combat missions in European Theatre. He completed 750 flying hours in which 29 of them under combat conditions. Mr. Van Geyten was a life member of 303rd BG (*Hell's Angels*) and the *Mighty 8th Heritage Museum*; charter member of the *Webster VFW*.

Mr. Van Geyten will be remembered by his wife Shirley (Wignall) Osterling-Van Geyten.

Vateckas, Coster R., 86, of Cape Coral, Florida, died March 2, 2008. He was the tail gunner on the 427th *Captain David P. Shelhamer Crew*.

Widman, Albert

C., 93, in San Diego, CA, November 20, 2010. He served in the U.S. Army/Air Corps and was a POW at Stalag 17B. He retired from the Army after 25 years and had attained multiple honors therein (Purple Heart, Silver Stars, Presidential Unit Citation, et. al.). Submitted by Ruth AKA "Connie" Cecil



Albert Widman

Wood, Stuart King, 86, of Yarmouthport, died, July 26, 2010. Stu was raised in the Radburn, N.J. Stu entered *Norwich University's Army Air Corps Air Crew Training Program*, and served overseas as a Second Lieutenant in the 8th Air Force 303rd BG (H) "*Hell's Angels*" 359th Squadron, navigating B-17s in nine missions over Germany in the final months of World War II out of Molesworth, England, and

was awarded the Air Medal and an honorable discharge. Stu fell in love with "Dee" Gates, married her on July 15, 1950.



Stuart Wood

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	8 th AFHS plastic license plate	\$3.95	NA	
	8 th AF logo silk tie	\$27.99	Red	
	8 th AF 3" patch	\$3.98	NA	
	8 th AF 3/4" pin w/clutch back	\$3.50	NA	
	8 th AF logo grey T-shirt	\$12.99 \$14.99	S, M, L, XL 2X	
	8 th AF logo white T-shirt	\$10.99 \$12.99	S, M, L, XL 2X	
	"City of Savannah" B-17 T-Shirt	\$15.99	S, M, L, XL,	
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	Flyboys (Paper Back)	\$7.99	N/A	
	The Mighty 8 th (Paper Back)	\$7.99	N/A	
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	8 th Logo Tervis Tumbler Mug	\$19.99	N/A	
	Honoring the American Past Teachers Guide	\$1.00	N/A	
	Airplane Clock	\$59.99	N/A	
Insert picture	Spotter Card Mugs	\$9.99	B-17, P-40, F-4U, P-51, P-38, B-29, B-24, B-52	
	Executive Compass	\$29.99	N/A	
Insert picture	U.S. Military Travel Mugs	\$14.99	Army, Air Force, Marine, Navy	
	Globe Paper Weights	\$49.99	Lapis, Mother of Pearl, Onyx, Aqua Marine	

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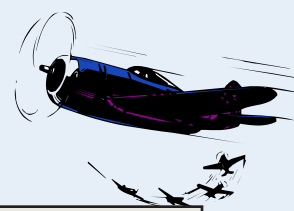
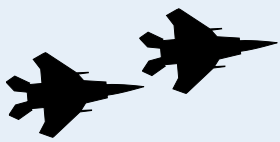
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How About It?

AGELESS OR ARE WE?

How old would you be if you didn't know how old you were? I am hard pressed to believe that I am closer to ninety years of age than eighty. But when I feel my feet dragging after a short walk from the parking lot to a store inside of the mall or when it takes real effort to get up out of a chair or when I have to cup my ear with my hand to hear conversation going on around me or when I have to use a magnifying glass to read the fine print on my pill bottles, then I can come to the conclusion that I have been around for a long time! But, I don't feel that old.

When I associate with younger folks around me, I forget my age and start trying to act their age. But when I do, I fail. There is a decided difference---I don't get around like they do, my fingers and brain are unable to make the 'new tech gadgets' work like they are supposed to and produce the results they advertise. The youth are more active, energetic, and they are using their talents to tell the same story the old Vets of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society have been telling for the past 65 years. However, regardless of the age of the participants, the theme is the same, honor, brotherhood, servant hood, respect, patriotism, integrity, passion, accountability, duty to God and country. One writer has told the story about American GI's who served in the war, he called it the *Band of Brothers* and a movie has been made of it. Well, the organization I have been hanging around for years has gone one step further and their story could be called, *The Band of Brothers* and their Kids.

For decades, the 'Brothers' were silent about war-time experiences they had as young men in the 1940's. For years they were busy getting educated, marrying, establishing a career, having

a family, just living. They were good citizens, they lived life and would tell a funny story now and then about happenings during those war years. They never shared with anyone the gore, fear, or trauma hidden in their memory of those missions into enemy territory. They knew that only those who had been there could possibly understand. Then, something wonderful happened that opened the flood gates of stored up memories and emotions. A small group of these 'brothers' got together and talked old times. More joined them until there was a great organization of them and they formed a brotherhood. They laughed together, joked with one another, did 'hanger flying' and spun their tales over and over until their hero stories were refined to the point where they were almost believable. Then Tom Brokaw, a journalist, studied the dust-bowl period, the great depression and the war-time era these men lived through. He wrote a book calling them *The Greatest Generation*. They did not think of themselves as 'great'. This was an humbling description which they thought was an unworthy portrayal of themselves. They felt they were a bunch of daring, reckless and foolish youth who had more heart than brains. They had a barrel of patriotism and were asked to do an impossible job and were fools enough to believe it could be done. But Brokaw's book did get them to start thinking. He reminded them of the episodes of life they lived through and had just about forgotten: the moments of need, fear, joy, peace, frustration, love, anger, excitement, sense of achievement and gratitude. During these trying times, they were given the strength, bravery and determination to cope. And the impossible task was successfully completed by the Grace of God.

Thomas Jefferson, the third President of the United States, instructs us to give



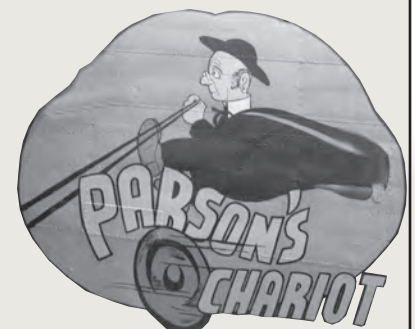
Earl Wassom

praise to the source of our super-human strength when he said: "If God brings you to it, He will bring you through it." He prescribed the following method:

"Happy moments, praise God.
Difficult moments, seek God
Quiet moments, worship God.
Painful moments, trust God.
Every moment, thank God."

It is rewarding to note that as the "*Band of Brothers*" declines, the 'kids' are using their energy, talent and skills to remind future generations of the cost of war and the benefits of freedom that it bought. Their loyalty and patriotism is an inspiration.

**Earl Wassom, 466th BG
Chaplain, 8th AFHS**





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