



December 2012

TH AF NEWS

Volume 12 Number 4 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"



2013 Dues Renewal
INSIDE



AF News

Magazine of

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society

The Eighth Air Force News is dedicated to the memory of 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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CHRISTMAS



President's Message

It is a true honor to be elected as your president and to serve the membership of the *8th Air Force Historical Society*. Two thousand and twelve has been a great year for our society, as we just returned home from another successful reunion in San Antonio. We had 280 people attending this year with 82 veteran members present and 24 Bomb Groups represented. A warm welcome goes out to Mr. Don Casey (379th) on his election to the Board of Directors.

A note of thanks goes out to Director Mike Faley for helping arrange the B-17 "Sentimental Journey" for making a stop at Stinson Field. A lucky few who happened to be outside the hotel on the day the B-17 arrived were witness to her unmistakable silhouette over the skyline. Director Joe Garber (96th BG) and Joe Urice (100th BG) flew on the media flight and both had not flown in the B-17 since their service in World War II. Many of our membership went out to the airfield to view, tour, and fly on that wonderful warbird. Myself, three members of my family, and four friends flew one afternoon and that ride served to make this my most memorable reunion to date.

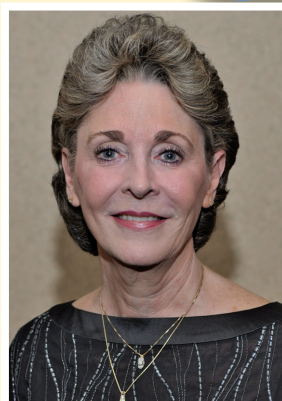
I would also like to thank our reunion speakers Colonel Paul Tibbets and Mr. George Ciampa. Two members of the American Air Museum at Duxford were present as were

historians from the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Texas. Gail Downey, a British journalist, who began the Nose Art and Pin Ups Project was also in attendance to take oral histories from the veterans about the Nose Art on the planes they flew. Each of these special guest help make the San Antonio reunion a big success.

This next year will be one of promise. We have a strong board of directors who are dedicated to honoring the promise of keeping the memory alive for all of those who served the Mighty 8th.

Blessing to each of you and God Bless "The Mighty 8th".

Respectfully,
Nancy J. Toombs
President 8th AFHS



Dr. Nancy Toombs
President

2013 8th AFHS Board Members



Dr. Nancy J. Toombs
President



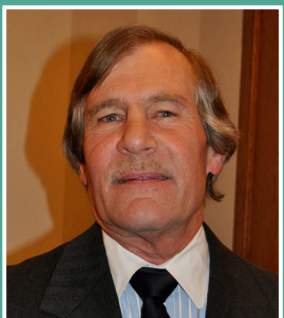
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Joe Garber
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Darrel Lowell
Treasurer



George Hoidra
Public Relations



Michael P. Faley

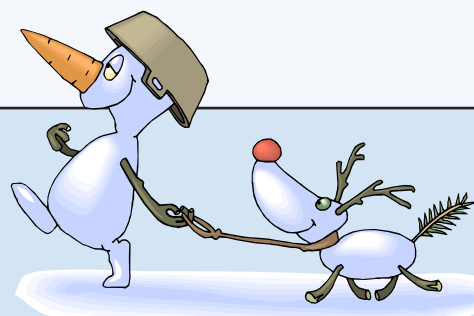


Robert "Bob" Moses



Donald Casey

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**MATERIAL DEADLINE
January 25th, 2013
for the upcoming 2013
March 8th AF News**



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

Stroll through "Reunion Memories" on pages 6-15 of this 2012 December issue for all the wonderful 8th AFHS Annual Reunion photos held in San Antonio, Texas.

Thank you! Thank you!! Thank you!!
Ralph Lynn, Jim Haseman, Richard Baer, William Dubishar and Michael Faley for your photographs

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Pages 16 - 17 - Derry Booher shares her story about her involvement with the R.O.C. Royal Observers Corp
Page 18-19 - "Lest we Forget" touching story about George Balthazor. After the war, George walked away from his family, resurfacing occasionally, basically living the life of a nomad for 35 years.

Page 39 - English Pubs - A reminder of home - to some it was a "home away from home."

PLEASE NOTE: I need all articles to be 1-2 pages (max) of text material (unless approved by the editor). Don't forget to send plenty of photo options

Sincerely,
**Interim Editors
Donna Neely & Telisha Gaines
donnajneely@gmail.com**



ON OUR FRONT COVER

**38th Annual 8th AFHS Reunion
in San Antonio, Texas**

Top left: 8th AFHS Photographer Ralph Lynn, Top Right: Candle Lighting Ceremony, Thomas Perry and Denis Grant. Bottom Photo: Our World War II Veterans

BACK COVER

World War II Veterans with family and friends during the 38th Annual 8th AFHS Reunion in San Antonio, Texas.



Treasurer 2012 Year End Report

As another year draws to a close, there are a couple of changes in the Society's financial procedure that we feel needs to be brought to the attention of our membership.

The first change has to do with our fiscal year designation. When the Society was founded over 30 years ago it established the fiscal year starting on September 1st running through August 31. In the interest of reducing confusion as to what years dues actually apply, we have changed this fiscal year period to a calendar basis i.e. January 1 through December 31. Our membership dues insert in the magazine normally has gone out with the September issue. As a result of our change in the fiscal year the dues notice is included in this issue of the 8TH AF News and will cover dues through 2013. As always, these dues will cover four issues of the AF News, first issue in March 2013, second in June, third in September and the fourth and final edition in December. These dues are critical to the financial stability of the Society so we urge our members to respond to this dues notice as quickly as possible. One final note to the dues notice coming out in December is, it offers a great opportunity to give a membership gift to family, friends and others interested in supporting the Society's mission of remembering those who served our country during the war.

The second issue mentioned above has to do with the serious financial dilemma that the Society has been dealing with during the past few years. As our membership continues to decline, our ability to generate enough cash flow from the dues structure directly inhibits our ability to balance our budget. The last two years for example, we have withdrawn from our Trust Account an average of \$50,000 per year just to cover operating expenses. We have considered many options that we might adopt that would slow or eliminate the financial drain on our reserve funds. After lengthy discussions and debate we decided that the best way to resolve this dilemma was to revise the Society by-laws requiring all Society members—including Life Members—to pay annual dues. This was not an easy decision to make as we were concerned about the Society defaulting on a contract with the membership. However, a survey of Life Members indicated positive reaction to this proposal and a willingness to support this amendment in place of either downsizing the magazine and/or eventually having the Society discontinue operations.

In accordance with the Society by-laws procedure a vote was taken at the annual meeting in San Antonio and this amendment was approved. So, as the dues insert in this magazine outlines, both classes of membership are required

starting in 2013 to pay annual dues.

Decisions of this magnitude are difficult to make and we would have preferred to have left the original dues schedule in place. However, our financial situation is very serious and in serving on your Board we assume the responsibility of taking what we believe to be the most responsible action that is in the best interest of the Society.

In closing, we want to make it clear that if this change in dues policy puts financial pressures of any kind on our aging veterans, making it difficult for them to carry the burden covering this extra cost, they will—without exception—continue to receive the magazine.

We want to extend best wishes to all of you for a Happy Holiday Season and to express the Society's sincere appreciation for your continued support.

Darrel Lowell, Treasurer
8th Air Force Historical Society



Darrel Lowell
Treasurer



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Call: 912.748.8884

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ALERT ALERT
LOOK INSIDE THIS
2012 DECEMBER 8TH AF NEWS

To RENEW or JOIN
USE THE SELF-MAILER OR GO ONLINE
HELP US REDUCE OUR MAILING EXPENSES

THANK YOU!

Debra D. Kujawa
Membership
Manager
8th Air Force
Historical Society

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Debra Kujawa

MembershipManager@8thAFHS.org



8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 38TH ANNUAL REUNION - PHOTO ALBUM

San Antonio, Texas



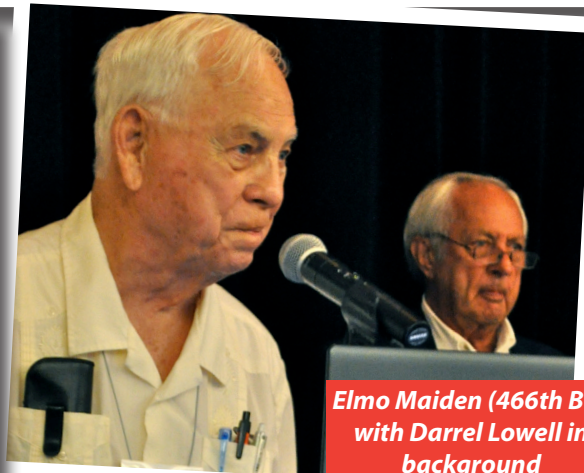
**Thomas Perry (392nd BG) and
8th AFHS President, Dr. Nancy Toombs**



**Joseph Roundhill
(379th BG)**



**Don Casey, Darrel Lowell, Earl
Wassom & Bill Campbell**



**Elmo Maiden (466th BG)
with Darrel Lowell in
background**



**WWII Q & A Session
Return to Attlebridge
with guest speakers
Earl Wassom
Bill Campbell
Elmo Maiden**

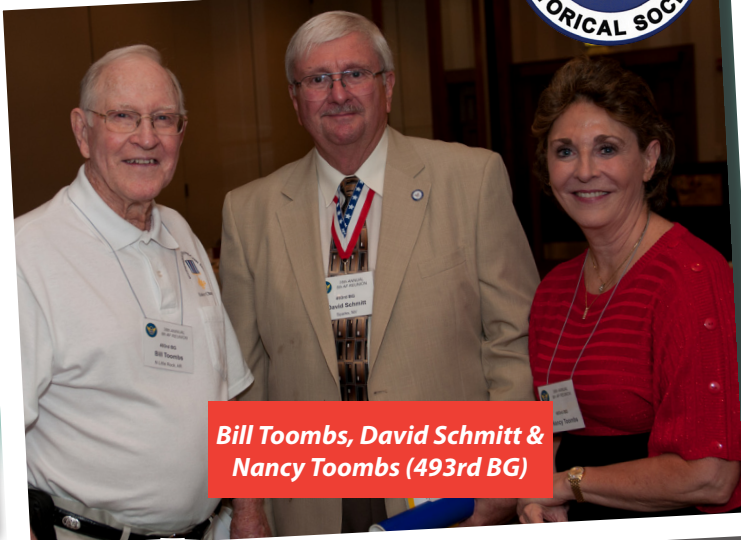


**Jeff Converse & Timothy
Hamaker**

493rd & 303rd Bomb Group



**Shirley and John Glaze
(493rd BG)**



**Bill Toombs, David Schmitt &
Nancy Toombs (493rd BG)**



**303rd BG veterans
with family & friends**



**303rd BG Veterans
Back row: William Yepes & Lee Faulkner
Front Row: Russ Klingensmith, Ralph Page &
Bob Hitchcock**



**8th AFHS President, Nancy Toombs, with her
father, Bill Toombs, Cindy Baumann and
Clay Toombs (493rd BG)**



**493rd BG veterans with
family & friends**

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



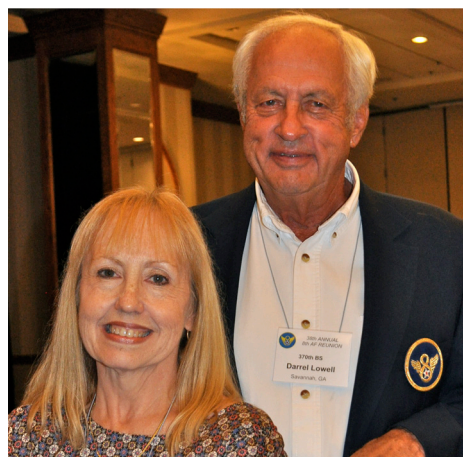
Joe Urice (100th BG)



**Murray Codman
(Big & Shorty) 447th BG**



**Cynthia and Earl Wassom
(466th BG)**



**8th AFHS Office Manager, Debra Kujawa
& 8th AFHS Treasurer, Darrel Lowell**



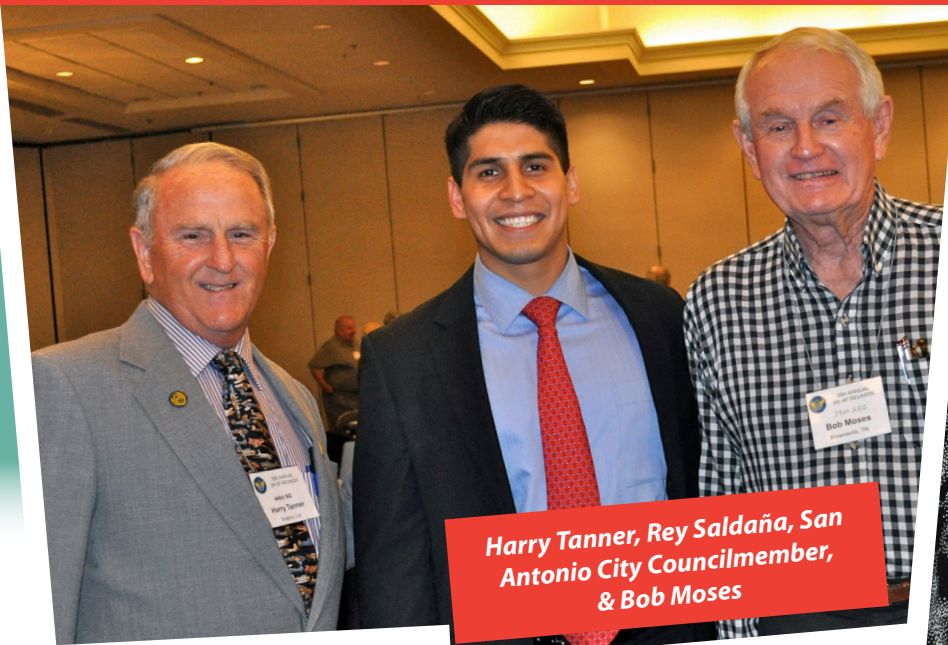
**Howard Chase, Tom Fitzgerald, Russ
Chase & Tim Fitzgerald
(447th BG)**



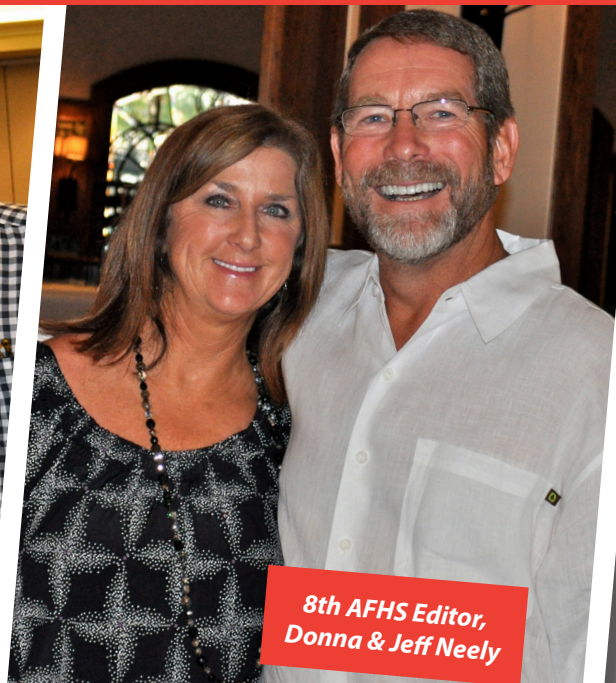
**Mary & Past President, Ivan
McKinney (493rd BG)**



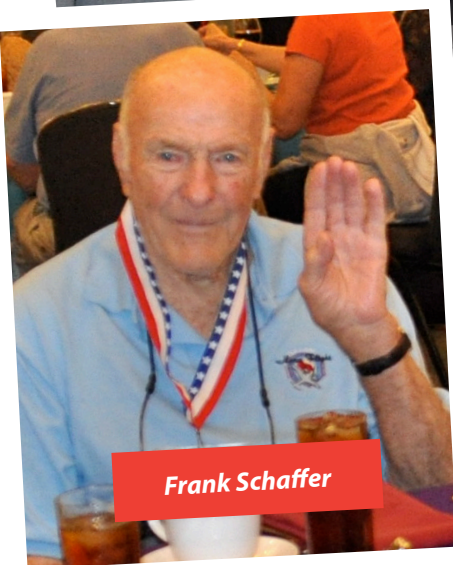
38TH ANNUAL REUNION - PHOTO ALBUM



Harry Tanner, Rey Saldaña, San Antonio City Councilmember, & Bob Moses



8th AFHS Editor, Donna & Jeff Neely



Frank Schaffer



Fellowship with Family & Friends



Donna Lee with Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.



Mary & Ivan McKinney, Jerry Smith & David Schmitt (493rd BG)

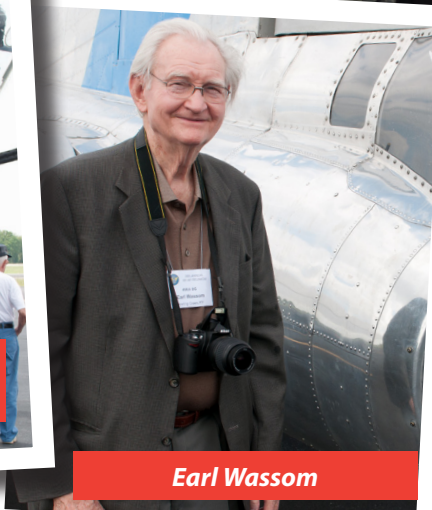


Beverly Baynes Tomb

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



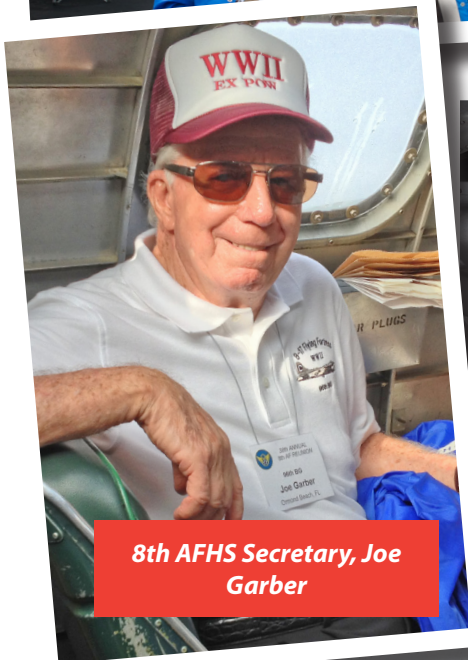
**Mr & Mrs
Councill**



Earl Wassom



George Meshko, 96th BG



**8th AFHS Secretary, Joe
Garber**



Frank Perez (401st BG)



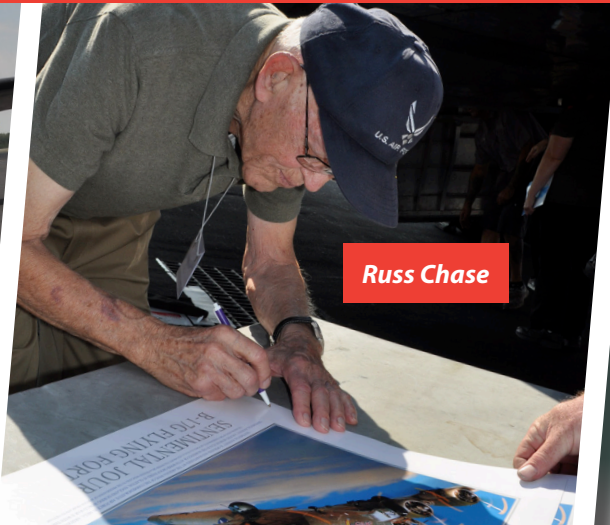
Russ & his son, Howard Chase



38TH ANNUAL REUNION - PHOTO ALBUM



"Sentimental Jouney" tour at the Stinson Airport



Russ Chase



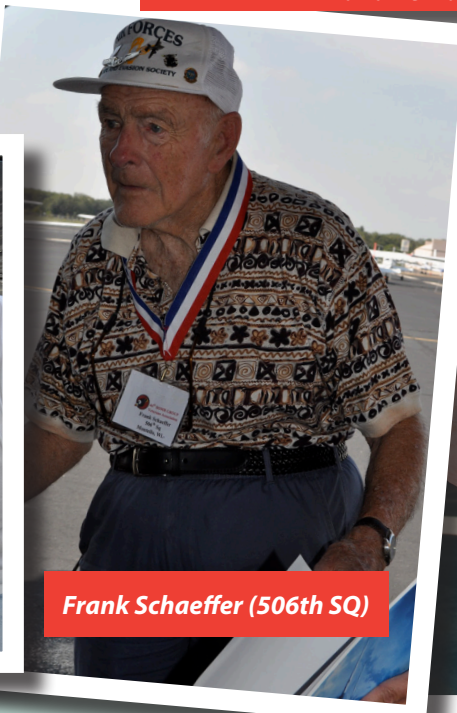
Elmo Maiden & Nancy Shattuck



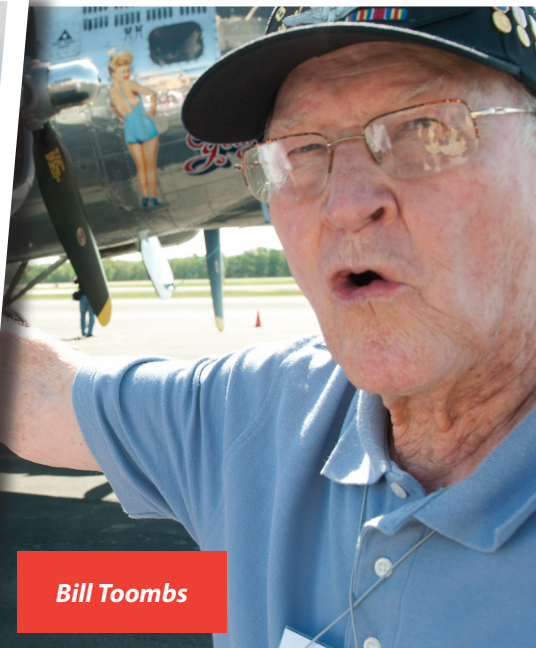
"The Tundra Crew" members of the 493rdBG and 96thBG got together and flew a mission over San Antonio.



Russ Chase (447th BG) sharing stories with Frank Perez (401st BG)



Frank Schaeffer (506th SQ)



Bill Toombs

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Homer Piper and Ivan McKinney



8th AF Photographer, Ralph Lynn (466th BG)



Frank Schaeffe (44th BG)



Harold Dietz (466th BG)



John Horan, Frank Youngquist & Elmo Maiden (466th BG)



Lee Faulkner 303rd BG



Richard Baer & Bud Lindahl



Bill Curtis of Bill Curtis Productions (466th BG)



8th AFHS BOD's, George Hoidra, Bob Moses & Harry Tanner

38TH ANNUAL REUNION - PHOTO ALBUM



Col. Paul Tibbets & Jeff Converse (918th BG)



Col. Paul Tibbets & Capt Brody Tanner



**Guest Speaker
Col. Paul W. Paul Tibbets IV**



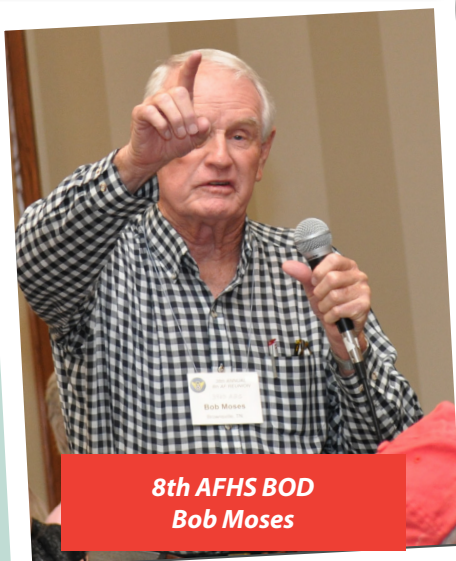
**Bob & Carol Books
(392nd BG)**



Cynthia Wassom



**Guest Speaker
George Ciampa**



**8th AFHS BOD
Bob Moses**



**8th AFHS Vice President
Dave Nowack**



Bus tour

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY



Past President, Harry Tanner & 8th AFHS Editor Donna Neely



Candle Lighting Ceremony



Mighty Eighth AF Museum representatives, Meghan Lowe and Felice Stelljes



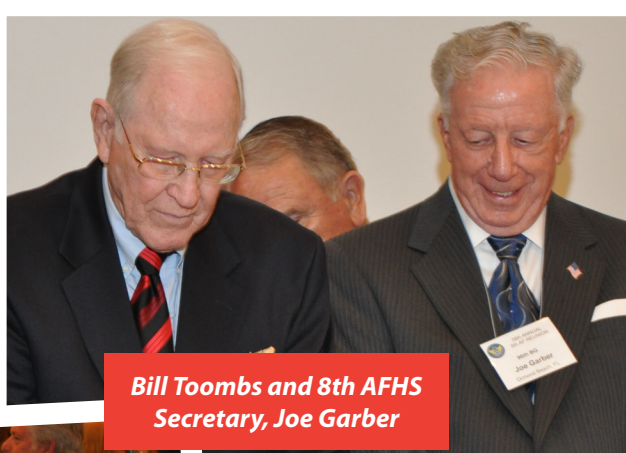
Lois Nowack



8th AFHS President, Dr. Nancy Toombs



8th AFHS BOD, George and Betsy Hoidra



Bill Toombs and 8th AFHS Secretary, Joe Garber



Mighty Eighth AF Museum President, Henry Skipper and 8th AFHS Treasurer, Darrel Lowell (370th BS)



Fred Preller (384th BG)



Mike & Sherry Deibel (100th BG)

38TH ANNUAL REUNION - PHOTO ALBUM



**Fred Preller, Michael Faley,
George Hoidra and Paul
Andrews**



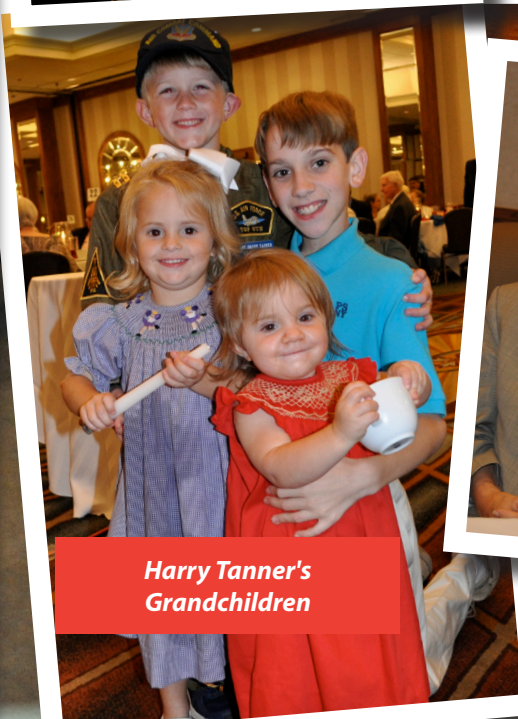
**Carol & Ralph Larson
(100th BG)**



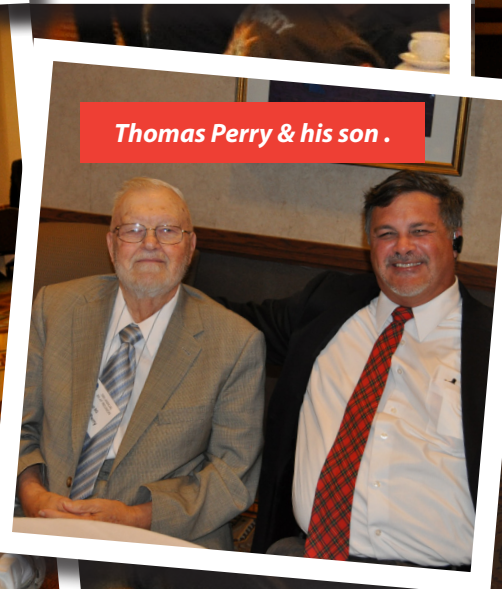
**Cindi Wassom, Earl Wassom
(466th BG) and Harry Tanner**



**8th AFHS BOD, Don Casey
and Timothy Hamaker**



**Harry Tanner's
Grandchildren**



Thomas Perry & his son .



**Kitty VanSickler (303rg BG)
and Jeff Neely**



"FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED"

My experience in the Royal Observer Corps

By Derry Booher, as told to John Lutz, LCDR USN (Retired)



As an English girl who had just turned seventeen the month before, June 6th, 1944 was a particularly eventful day for me. I was awakened to the roar of aircraft engines, as planes flew overhead on their historic mission. Dressed in my "Royal Observer Corps" uniform and ready for work, I pedaled my bicycle towards the Group 17 Watford Royal Observer Corp Center, 20 miles outside of London. In the early hours, the R.A.F. heavies had crossed to the southwest, and after a brief lull, a large group of U.S.A.A.F. Fortresses and Liberators followed the familiar southwest path.

My shift as a "Plotter" at the Group 17 Center began at 0800 hours. By the time I arrived, the skies were thick with aircraft headed for France. When I got to my station, the plotting board was black with markers as now returning waves of bombers were plotted, as were the successive waves that were just heading out. Finally, no longer able to keep track of

the massive amount of air activity, the Floor Supervisor called a cessation of our activities and sent the staff outside to see firsthand what they had been plotting on the board. D-Day was well under way.

The origin of the Observer Corps dates back to the Elizabethan age. A network of the local beacon-lighters sent signals from the coast to London warning of the movement of the Spanish Armada. In 1914, during WWI, a loose network of local constables was organized to report enemy air activity, mainly in the form of Zeppelins, as they headed for London. This network was dubbed, "The Observer Corps" and became a part of the War Office in 1917. Their motto became "*Forewarned is Forearmed*" and the symbol of those early beacon lighters eventually was emblazoned on the crest and emblem of the Observer Corps. After the Armistice, however, the Observer Corps faded away.

In 1924, with the threat of war on the ho-

rizon, interest in air defense arose again, and by August 1939, when the Observer Corps was reorganized and once again mobilized, the greater part of Great Britain was under their watchful eyes. The Group 17 at Watford Center, of which I was a part, was formed in 1931. By 1945, there were 40 Centers throughout Great Britain, each responsible for a local grid of 30 to 40 observation posts. The posts were connected to the Center by telephone lines. The Centers had a main plotting board manned by 12 "Plotters" each in direct contact with up to three observer posts. The plotting board was separated into a numbered grid corresponding to the grid squares covered by the respective observer posts. In the Centers, the posts would report their

contact (either visual or sound) to the Plotters. "Tellers" then relayed plotting information to the various R.A.F. fighter squadrons, A.A. batteries and searchlight stations, for action against hostiles.

August 15, 1940, the Battle of Britain began in earnest for Group 17. The Luftwaffe, followed from the coast, to their target, and back to the coast, were observed, plotted and dealt with. "...7911 West, nine at 15, ME 109s'...'7507 West, five at 12, He 111s'..." Calls like these were plotted on the main board using magnetic holders depicting the grid square of the contact, heading, number of aircraft, altitude, and aircraft type. The plots were tracked across the board and "told" to the appropriate fighter base for action. At the end of the Battle of Britain in April of 1941, in recognition of the invaluable service provided by the Observer Corps, King George VI granted the Corps the title Royal Observer Corps

(R.O.C.). Shortly thereafter, with the drain on available manpower, women were admitted to the R.O.C.

One day in July of 1942, a much anticipated and longed for call came in to the Watford Center, "...5755, South 17 at 3, Forts" the first of the "Flying Fortresses" had arrived. In 1943, a big recruitment drive began. The R.O.C. was looking for "women volunteers between the ages of 17 to 18 ½", to be the eyes and ears of the R.A.F. That is when I answered the call and became a plotter at the Group 17 Center at Watford.

The Center was manned 24/7 with three 8 hour watches, and the watches were rotated every few weeks. All allied and enemy air activity was tracked. Allied raids on Germany were plotted as the bombers and fighters were outbound and again when the formations were returning to base. The Observer Posts refined their sound plotting to the point that they were able to "hear" enemy planes, at night and alert the fighters, as the Luftwaffe tried to sneak to their targets by tagging along with returning allied formations.

The R.O.C. also took on the important task of reporting and tracking damaged allied aircraft on their return to base, allowing for advanced warning to the base crash crews. The R.O.C. "homing service" helped three to four thousand damaged

bombers to safety. On more than one occasion, the R.O.C. was able to track and help lost allied fliers find their way back to their home bases.

Later in the war, we were presented with a new menace, the V-1 and V-2 rockets. The Germans were firing them from bases in France. They were plotted on the board and captured the nickname of "divers" because of the way they dove to the ground after their fuel ran out. One day, a "diver" hit very close to a group of R.O.C. gals and some American airmen as we walked near the Watford Center. The airmen gallantly pushed the girls to the ground and shielded us from the blast. Being saved from "divers", however, wasn't the only contact the R.O.C. gals had with the American airmen.

The R.O.C. girls of the Watford Center had the luxury of being located near the 8th U.S.A.A.F. stationed at the airbase in Bovington. One of the favorite local hangouts was the Watford Town Hall where many of the R.O.C. gals were able to practice their "observer" techniques on the 8th U.S.A.A.F. airmen during the many dances that were held there. We enjoyed stopping by the Town Hall on our way to our mid-watches, all decked out in our spiffy R.O.C. uniforms.

On one such night, I happened to observe one particularly handsome 8th U.S.A.A.F. officer, Lt. William Booher, from Missouri Valley, Iowa. From that moment on, our lives were "plotted" together. When the war ended, and with the stand down of the R.O.C. and my release from duty, on July of 1945, I was free to follow Bill to America where we were married on October 19, 1946. Several years later, our two daughters, Sheila and Laurie completed our family. Bill, the love of my life, and husband of 56 years, passed away on Christmas day, 2002, at the age of 84.

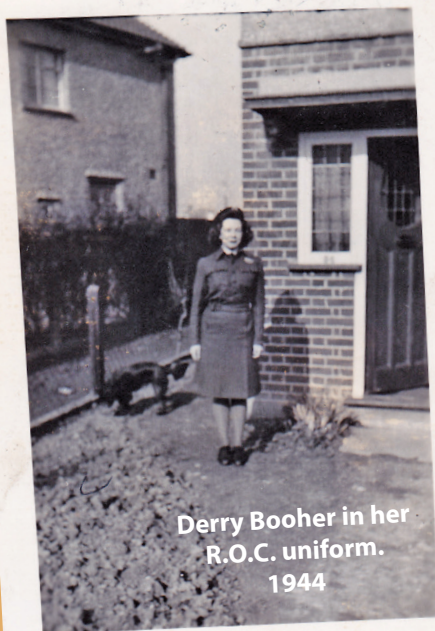
I am particularly proud of my service in the R.O.C. at the Group 17 Watford Center, and the part we played in winning the air war over England, and for the connections we had with the 8th Airforce. Now, at the age of 85, I sometimes smile to myself and wonder about how so much good could have



**Derry Booher
2011**

come into my life from such a thing as war; but it did.

NOTE: Some historical background material for this article was found in the book, *Observers' Tale, The Story of Group 17 of the R.O.C.* by Observer Commander H. Ramsden Whitty, and sources on the Internet



**Derry Booher in her
R.O.C. uniform.
1944**



**Derry and Bill
1944**



Your bravery is not forgotten

GEORGE R. BALTHAZOR

First Lieutenant
U. S. Army Air Corps
World War II



Distinguished
Flying Cross



Pilot



Air Medal
w/3 Clusters

Other MEDALS-RIBBONS: European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign w/5 Stars,
World War II Victory

Flying with the 487th Bomb Group, "The Gentlemen from Hell," he flew support in 5 major operations including the Normandy Invasion and Berlin Raids.



B-17 Flying Fortress



487th Bomb Group



B-24 Liberator

Lest We Forget.

by Don Kilburg Jr.

Lots of things have changed since 1945 when George Balthazor triumphantly returned to his home and family in Fond du Lac Wisconsin from World War II. In particular, the Internet was not even imagined. Post Traumatic Stress Disorder ("PTSD") was not a diagnosed condition.

Lt. George Balthazor successfully flew 32 bombing missions over Nazi Europe from May 1944 until October 1944, first as a co-pilot on a B-24 and then as a pilot on a B-17 in 8th Air Force, 487th Bomb Group (H), 839th Squadron. In 1945, after the end of the war, he returned to central Wisconsin a hero, but definitely a wounded hero. Lt. Balthazor was never physically injured despite the death defying nature of a number of his missions. He earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters and a series of other flight medals, but along the way he suffered serious emotional injury. Gone was the enthusiastic, charming, and engaging farm boy who was enamored with model air planes, flew his own handmade model planes, was a youth member of the National Aeronautics Association, and visited the famous aircraft racer and designer, Steve Wittman in Oshkosh WI.

Gone was the handsome young man who had confidently ventured out five years earlier determined to qualify for the Army Air Corps and serve his country.

Shortly after his return to his family and enrollment in college, Balthazor was haunted by his war experience. He would wake during the night screaming from "night terrors." It was a frightening problem that would not go away and there was little support to help the young man escape it. Finally George walked away from his family, resurfacing occasionally, basically living the life of a nomad for the next 35 years, spending time in mental hospitals, living a drifter's life of temporary jobs and flop houses. Initially he would write from wherever he was in California working odd jobs or being unemployed and usually his letters begged for money. In the early 1970s he suddenly resurfaced and showed up in his brother's house, clean shaven and in a suit and tie. And then, as quickly as he had appeared, he was gone without explanation or farewell. He was not heard from again after his brief Wisconsin visit.

Many years later two of George's nephews, Steve and Frank Balthazor, empowered with the new force of the Internet and driven to know more about their war hero uncle, set to searching

for any information that they could find. Frank had childhood memories of Uncle George and remembered the day that George had taught him to tell time. Their grandmother had carefully preserved her memory of her lost son and the treasure of George's war records and medals until her death in 1969. In turn they were conveyed to her surviving son William and then her grandson Steve. Searching available records, Steve discovered that his uncle's legal name was "Richard George" though he only went by "George." That fact led to a discovery. Checking Social Security death records, they found that a Richard George Balthazor had died in July of 2008 in San Diego California.

As the cousins began to piece the puzzle together they determined they had in fact located their uncle George. Sadly, they discovered that when George died no one knew he had a family or the fact that he was a decorated war hero. In his final years, George had been living in a hotel best described as "a flophouse." When he entered into his final illness he was basically a ward of the State of California and was placed in a nursing home. Upon his death he was declared an "unclaimed indigent." With no known family and no tie to the Veteran's Administration, his body was ordered cremated and his ashes were spread in the Pacific Ocean.

Armed with their grandmother's treasure, Steve and Frank reconstructed their uncle's war record. They shared it with their extended family. They enrolled him in the World War II Memorial Registry and the Distinguished Flying Cross Society Honor Roll. In March of 2012 the extended Balthazor family gathered at Ft. Rosecrans National Military Cemetery in San Diego on a bluff above the Pacific for a memorial service with military honors for the fallen hero, Lt. George Balthazor. The event was highly publicized in the local media and two anonymous donors provided funds for a permanent memorial to honor George and his wartime record.

As a result of the publicity, the Balthazor family has made contact with the 487th Bomb Group Association and learned more about George's war time experience, first as one of the original crews to locate in Lavenham England in WWII as a co-pilot on the B-24 "Chief Wapello" and later as pilot on the B-17 identified as "Flutterbye". They know he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf clusters, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with 5 bronze stars. They know that after completing his required missions in the 487th--"The Gentlemen from Hell"--he was inducted into the "Lucky Bastard Club." Those missions included a flight with Col. Bernie Lay, the author of "12 O'clock High," when Lay and his crew were shot down over France, participation in Operation Overlord--the Allied invasion of the Continent, two bombing trips to Berlin, multiple attacks on rail marshalling yards, ground combat units, ball bearing plants, tank factories, motor factories, armor depots, oil refineries, ammunition depots, and V rocket launch sites. They have learned that, after completing his combat missions, he remained in Europe and he was as-



Front row: Edward D. Crowcroft - Bombardier, Roger C. Preston - Co-Pilot, R. George Balthazor - Pilot & Elwood A. Siefts - Navigator
Back row: Robert W. Huff - Engineer, William D. Gillespie - Gunner, Hudnall, & Harold E. Lassar - Gunner

signed as a pilot with the 5th Strategic Air Depot in France shuttling damaged aircraft for the advancing Allies as they closed in on Berlin--the grand finale of the war in Europe.

In all their efforts to encounter their late uncle George, the Balthazors have not learned what went wrong. They have not learned what denied George peace of mind for most of his 86 years. They have learned that war is hell, and sometimes the wounds of war are not readily apparent until long after the events

that caused them. They have done all that is possible to honor a hero, a man who laid it all on the line for his nation and for western civilization--a man who never quite recovered from the conflict in which he served so heroically.

More information can be found about Lt. George Balthazor at:
 The World War II Registry - <http://www.wwiimemorial.com>
 The 487th Bomb Group Association Site <http://www.487thbg.org>
 And information about Post Traumatic Stress Disorder can be found at: <http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

This article couldn't have been written without the help and assistance of George's nephews Steve and Frank Balthazor, as well as Ivo de Jong, the historian of the 487th Bomb Group.

Submitted by: **Don Kilburg Jr.**
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Ground Crew

KEEP EM' FLYING

Walter Sturdivan - Radio-Operator - 34th BG

Familiar sounds emanated from the heavy bomber base each night as ground crews repaired, tuned-up and tested the giant Curtis Wright engines. Propellers bit the early morning air sending sound waves over the countryside awakening English farmers long before sunrise. The sound of grinding gears echoed from giant hangers as GI trucks roamed constantly from one end of the flight line to the other dropping off flight crews at designated hard stands where B-17s waited, silhouetted against a brightening Eastern sky. Smoke wafted lightly upwards from the smoke stacks sticking out of olive drab tents nearby as ground personnel warmed their hands, numbed from clinging to cold wrenches as the last bolt or spark plug was installed.

Earlier, the C.Q. had flickered his flash light across wool blankets in the Quonset huts searching for still closed eyes, weary and tired from searching for Nazi fighters yesterday. "Captain Smith's crew is flying this morning. Briefing at 5 o'clock."

The clothes were cold as they covered strong, supple young bodies. Boots with open buckles slogged to the mess hall where the smell of frying eggs and bacon permeated the air. False courage was covered by bantering and jostling in line. Behind the serving counter stood dedicated and courteous soldiers fully aware

some of the men in line would not return for dinner. They watched as some of the men ate their "last meal."

At briefing a tall captain in Class A uniform walked to the front of the room and pulled the curtain back, revealing a large map of Europe. Every eye peered through the smoke-filled room and followed the red string as it snaked across the map. As the arrow appeared, pointing to the target, a loud groan swept the room. A few whistles. Eyes shifted aside to a buddy seated on the bench. A few shook their heads - they'd been there before, Merseberg!!

The crew chief was courteous and friendly as the flight crew hopped off the 4x4 truck. "We've been up all night, Captain, checkin' her out. New engine on number 4. Checks out fine. Had some trouble with the Command Set. Radio man just left. It's okay now. Armament finished a-half hour ago. Ten 250 pounders this trip. If you need anything, we're right here."

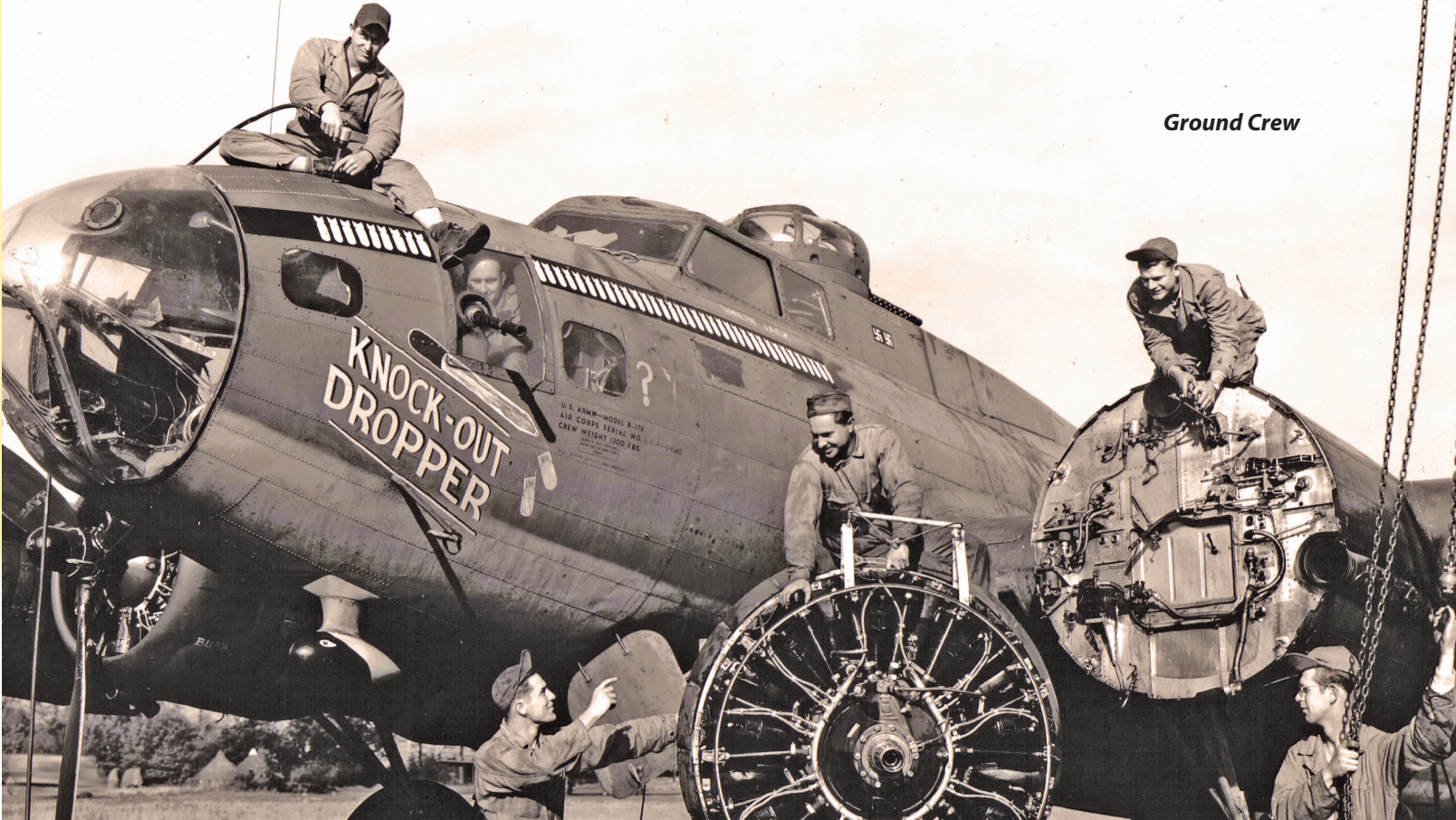
Jeeps continued to circle the perimeter track. Orders, flares, flak suits, parachutes, ammunition, bomb sights, last minute preparations before the giant bombers began to lumber slowly out onto the taxi strip. Then they watched them go, one after the other at half-minute intervals, struggling to lift their wheels

from the tarmac, each ground crew member lifting secretly inside until he could see daylight under the belly of his plane. Only after his bomber had disappeared into the morning dawn did the crew chief turn and walk slowly to his tent on the flight line, then to his Quonset. Now came the waiting.

Eight hours and waiting. Eight and a-half. Nine. The glances at watches are more frequent now. The drifting outside begins. Bicycles begin to populate the flight line as men dismount and rub sleepy eyes. The stairs to the control tower creak as heavy GI shoes stomp upward. Olive drab vehicles with red crosses on the side join fire engines moving close to the east/west runway. Eyes move to the Eastern horizon. It's time for the bombers to return.

First the sound of engines, a distant, intermittent, low rumble. Finally, a steady roar. "Here they come!" Fingers point. Heads turn. Below the overcast, in perfect echelon, parade ground formation, the Fortresses came on.

Now the count begins. 36 went out, 31 returning. 3 missions from lead. 2 missing from low. They may show up later. Let's hope so. The peel-off for landing begins. Red flares arch high. Priority landing, wounded aboard. A glance at the medics. They are ready. The fire engines



move closer.

"How'd it go Captain?" Rough!

The interrogation officer writes slowly, searching the faces of the flight crew. A B-17 shot in two at the waist. No chutes observed. One ship on fire, going down near the target. One chute observed. No fighters over target. Heavy flak-like flying through hail. Some stragglers-duck soup for Nazi fighters. Some P-51s nearby (Little Friends).

The interrogation went on as crews drifted in. Men downed their whiskey allowance. Non-drinkers passed it on. Nervous hands lit cigarettes, one from the other with little fingers hooked together. Parachute harness hung down and open flight boots scrapped the concrete floor. The men were opening up. Talk was louder as backs were slapped and tension eased. Stomachs once churning with fear were now settling. Hunger began to take its place. It was over-until tomorrow!

On the flight line men were busy. A lot of holes to patch. Props needed changing. There were tires to requisition and mount. Turrets to test and fix. And those pesky solenoids to replace. Empty gas tanks needed filling. And generators, always generators going out. Some planes going to the bone yard for scrap, others for salvage. The back breaking work went on. Men swarmed over the planes from end

to end, checking, patching and repairing. Tomorrow will soon be here, there is not much time. The air crews need the best; we can't let them down. They didn't!

At the group hospital men were wheeled into surgery. Some walked in unassisted. All were given special treatment. Frost bite, burns, wounds, lacerations, all given attention. Some would fly again. Some wouldn't. The chaplain is called. Letters will follow if anything changes. The dreaded reports - missing in action. Killed in action.

As night settles in all across the air base men and women, the support personnel, gave their attention to their assignments

with one purpose in mind - Keep 'em flying!

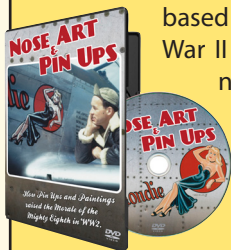
This article is from the introduction of Walter Sturdivan's book "The Red-Tailed Devils From Mendlesham" written in 2000.

Walter was a radio-operator on a lead crew in the 34th Bomb Group, station 156, at Mendlesham, England. They flew 27 combat missions.

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The stories of American servicemen from the Mighty Eighth based in England in World War II are being told in a new documentary which looks at the artwork and images they had painted on their aircraft.



The film - 'Nose Art and Pin-Ups' - is being released this year - the 70th anniversary of the start of the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) joining the Allied bombing offensives against Germany in WW2.

The film explores the various themes of nose art through pin-ups of "gals" back home, and American States as well as some more humorous images of animals and other cartoon characters. Nose art was the name given to expressive images painted on the noses of aircraft used throughout the war.

Gail Downey interviewed nose artist Don Allen who was a crew chief at an American base in East Anglia in England. The result is a fascinating insight into how the lives of military personnel were made that little more bearable with the morale boost that nose art provided.

For further information, please contact:-
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or email gail@whirlwindproductions.co.uk or gail@noseartfilms.co.uk
www.noseartfilms.co.uk.



Wartime artist Donald E. Allen, 4th FG

Created some of the best work of its kind 50 years ago,
but none of them lasted long.

Take *Miss Dallas*, depicting a lusty cowgirl on a map of Texas. It went down in the North Sea early in 1943, along with the P-47 Thunderbolt that it adorned.

Allen created his cowgirl again, and she was destroyed again, this time with a P-51 Mustang. And so it went. Allen was a wartime artist; his "canvas" was the aluminum fuselage of whatever type of fighter plane equipped his World War II outfit in England.

"Most all of them had a very short life span," he said. "They didn't age gracefully."

Most pilots wanted a painting of a girl on their planes. "Most of them wanted plain nudes, period, but I reneged on it," Allen said.

His reputation as an artist spread after a pilot asked him to paint a panther on a P-47.



"After that, I got numerous requests so I had a backlog," Allen said.

He estimates that he did 40 to 50 paintings during the war. The pilots paid him in British pounds, equivalent to about \$35, for a painting that usually required four or five hours.

Allen never copied pinups - the females in his paintings are from his own imagination. So are most of the cartoon characters. Allen did not have models. "Everybody asks me that," he said. "I wish I had."



Front Cover
July 2009 8th AF News Magazine

A TARDY REVELATION

Sam H. Wyroutck, Hurricane, Utah

351st BG/508th SQ



Back row L-R: Unknown co-pilot from another crew, John W. Kihm (co-pilot), Robert Parnell (pilot), John De Laura (navigator) & Michael Carlotta (bombardier) Front Row: Luin Lewis (top turret), Sam Wyroutck (ball turret), Wally Sanchez (radio) & Ivan Kimmel (tail)

Some years ago, I wrote for the benefit of my posterity about an incident that happened during my World War II assignment as a ball turret gunner on Robert Parnell's B-17 crew flying bombing missions into Germany. It was our 35th and final mission and if we got back from this one, we could go home. Our target for that day was a railroad marshalling yard in Southern Germany. Over the target, one plane in our squadron of twelve bombers was hit by flak (anti-aircraft artillery from the ground). The hit bomber lost two engines, and had casualties. They couldn't keep up with the squadron for protection but they thought they could make it the relatively short distance to neutral Switzerland for safety. There is a narrow finger lake on the Swiss and German border and just on the Swiss side is an emergency landing strip. We recently had a briefing that said that the Germans had actually built a similar shaped lake with a similar landing strip further inside of Germany for the purpose of capturing unsuspecting crews. We hoped that the distressed plane's crew knew about this. If they could only make it that far, the surviving crew members would have medical attention and be interned in that neutral country for the war's duration. As soon as that B-17 left the squadron, that crew's radio operator got on the command frequency and told us of being attacked by several F.W. 190 enemy fighters. These "bandits" were always on the lookout for crippled stragglers and they found one. The cripple's radio operator screamed out a blow by blow description of the aerial machine gun and cannon fight. Parnell's (our) radio

operator almost never put "Command" radio business on our planes intercom but on that day, he did just that. We crew members all heard the flight and then all went silent. We figured that crew had been shot down before reaching the safety of Switzerland. That day our crew got home to our base safely. Of course there were some new holes in our ship but no injuries. We cut the grass and then landed. "Cutting the grass" was traditionally reserved only for crews finishing their last mission that allowed them to buzz the field low enough

to cut the grass with their propellers. Well almost. The top brass frowned but tolerated the practice.

The year was about 2001. My wife and I have a daughter who lives in the city of Mapleton, Utah. We visit her often and sometimes go to church with her family. One of her neighbors and church members, Harold Gividend and his wife were introduced to us. Harold and I found out that we were both in the Eighth Air Force during the war but nothing more. I think it was the year 2008 that Harold was taken to the hospital and his wife accompanied him. While the doctors worked on Harold, his wife sat in the waiting room. Harold didn't make it so the doctors walked out to tell her the bad news. She did not receive the news because she was sitting in the chair, dead.

The year 2010, I do not currently have access to the internet. My son-in-law, Tim Gillet, clicked on 8th Air Force, then clicked on 351st Bomb Group, then on 508th Squadron and then wrote my name in. He got a list of my missions and also who were on the same mission. Harold Gividend's name came up and his war record came on the screen. It was then that I discovered that the co-pilot of that ill fated bomber that we all thought was shot down over Germany was my deceased friend, Harold Gividend. For the first time I learned that they did reach Switzerland and that some including the pilot was killed and some were wounded. I also learned that their ill fated mission was their first mission as it was our 35th and final one.

Re: Metfield Bomb Explosions on July 15, 1944 at B-24 Air Base Group 491st, England

I was an Armament Captain with the 448th Bomb Group, when I saw and heard the noise of the explosion, it was the early afternoon on a clear day.

There was a big black cloud in the sky after the explosion, I was on the scene within 30 minutes and saw all the damage. I was advised that the cause of the explosion was that high explosive ROX bombs were being rolled off the bomb carriers - rather than being unloaded by a hoist. The explosion of one bomb set off the explosion of the whole bomb dump. Delivery trucks and bomb carriers were destroyed. Grains of wheat in a field were blown off the stalks.

All the men that delivered the bombs were "blown up." I was advised that this involved 14 men.

Some of the photos show the damage to the equipment and blown up areas of the bomb dump.

About 1 week before this explosion I was the "Officer of the Day" at the 448th Bomb Group. About 5 p.m. that day a black captain advised me that his group of black enlisted men had completed the delivery of the bombs. He advised me that they would be staying on the base. I asked the black captain if he would come to the Officers Club for dinner. He refused. He said he wanted to stay with his men. I was told that they would dine on their K-



rations. These men were not allowed to go to the mess hall for food. They spent the night in separate quarters. I was also advised later that these were the men killed at Metfield.

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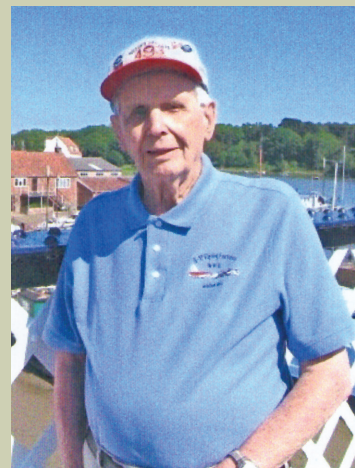
Back to the Bridge at Woodbridge after 68 years

Submitted by Jack Feller - 493rd BG

My wife, Marion and I, together with four other members of the "Fighting 493rd Bomb Group Association," visited the old airbase #152 at Debach in Suffolk, England and the U.S. Cemetery at Madingley during the Memorial Day weekend. We stayed in Woodbridge only 4 miles from the Debach control tower and museum. We could ride our bikes there with a pass and see a movie or drink beer in a pub. I remembered that I had a photo of myself and another GI standing on the bridge at Woodbridge. I had to return and have my picture made on the same bridge. (It is the railway pedestrian overhead bridge to the other side of the tracks.) This was a beautiful warm Sunday afternoon in May with the tide in and many small boats were sailing in the bay at high tide. (The tide rises as much as 12 feet twice a day.) This brought back some old memories.



Jack Feller, 493rd BG



I want to thank everyone who showed up for our Next Gen meeting. It was a pretty packed affair and really underscored the interest from the membership to find ways to increase our educational reach in the future. Much was discussed regarding our next reunion in Savannah and making sure we reach out to educational institutions about coming out to meet our members and learn about the history of the Mighty Eighth! To that end we will reach out to schools in the area about possibly bringing any summer School classes to our function. We also want to look at have a very big Audio Visual presence in Savannah. We live in a visual medium and people want to see images, interviews, etc and we have a ton in our archives. They do no good sitting on a shelf, we need them visible so Jay Hardy303rd stepped up to be involved in coordinating showing DVD's and Documentaries. Our Ace webmaster Bob Books and I will help assist in this matter. We will use the Website to help foster educational opportunities with schools but putting tools up online for them to use in a class. Bob Books says we are getting 125,000 visitors a year to our website!!!!!! AWESOME job! Lot of hard work on Bob's part, a big thank you

Some places we are lacking, a Chapter Liaison person resigned and this leaves big shoes to fill. We need this person so they can keep us updated on the needs and on goings of our Chapters and their long term stability. This person is our conduit and would have loved to see someone at the Next Gen meeting step up but the old adage of "never volunteer" held true hahahahahahaha. If you are interested, contact Nancy Toombs or Dave Nowack.

I also want to thank the CAF for bringing out their B-17G Sentimental Journey: Here is what they had to say about the tour stop:

"Our crew reported that the meeting with the 8th AF Vets was very successful and rewarding to our crew members. AND, they

all told me how well they were received by your members and you. I think you spoiled them, Mike.

Pls. keep me in the loop for any future 8thAFHS activities. This is an important association you and we have. Have a great 2013, Mike."

*Dick Exler-AZ Wing CAF
"Sentimental Journey"*

Now we are averaging about 150 new members a year but could defiantly use more! We did eliminate being a registered member of the Society to attend our reunions and this seemed to help with attendance in San Antonio. We have over 1172 registered users on our Facebook page but we have to entice more to see the benefits of joining the Society, your ideas are welcomed! As for the reunion, here are some observations, It just seems like we have this big room with memorabilia yet few went inside. That should be a focal point of our meeting people, watching DVD's, doing interviews, and sharing ideas. We have become somewhat splintered in our approach, that room is YOUR room to really mingle with others. Yes many have hospitality suites and those are great for the evenings but what about during

the day and early evenings, That room should represent all the groups and each should bring something special they would like displayed on their behalf. With all the B-24 and B-17 groups we have, if each brought out something

about their group, that memorabilia room would be amazing and reflect our membership. To that end, Bob Moses has volunteered to make a huge map of England showing all the 8th Air Force bases. Great center piece of conversation, but will be all that much more important with visual aids and memorabilia. We are more than pictures, paintings and autographs, we are Vets telling stories and relating those to future generations. We have a huge opportunity to shine in Savannah if we take advantage of our greatest asset, our Veterans Heritage and our Museum.

PS Thanks to Gail Downey for bringing her enthusiasm and Nose Art DVD to our reunion and Julia Smith from the American Air Museum at Duxford. I am sure we will be working more closely together with both of you in the future.



**Michael Faley
8th AFHS BOD**



IOWA CHAPTER

Held its 29th annual state reunion on August 25, 2012 at Iowa Falls, IA. Following registration attendees were bused to lunch at The Gathering Place, a floral shop with a dining room. They then had the choice of an Iowa River cruise or bused to Williams, Iowa, where the Hemken Car Collection is located. Sixty-two rare and antique automobiles including a 1926 Rolls Royce touring car and a Playboy car are on display. While there they toured an American Legion museum across the street and cooled off at a restored drug store turned ice cream shop. Evening activities included a Memorial Service at the local National Guard Armory, catered banquet and a "Sentimental Journey" to the 40's with a big band dance to the music of the Al Welsh Orchestra. The Armory was decorated with Eighth Air Force displays and the public was invited to the dance. Despite dwindling membership due to Father Time, everyone enjoyed themselves immensely and were eager for another annual reunion in 2013. Iowa Falls was the site of our 26th annual reunion and has been recruited heavily for "NexGen" members.

The Iowa Chapter is also currently the originator and coordinator for a project to honor an Iowa Falls native who served with the 15th Air Force as a Tuskegee Airman. In May, 2012 a campaign was started to have a statue built and erected of Joseph Philip Gomer, who flew 68 combat missions out of Italy in World War II. Joe was a special guest at our 26th reunion. He was born, raised and educated at Iowa Falls and Ellsworth Community College where he took flying lessons with the "Ellsworth Air Force". With the outbreak of WWII he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and subsequently completed flight training at Tuskegee, AL. He also served in Korea and retired from the Air Force after twenty-two years. He then gained employment with the US Forest Service in Duluth, MN and later retired. Joe has been active in the Tuskegee Airmen Association, air shows and other events and activities. His third war was with racial intolerance until the armed services were officially integrated. To date, two-thirds of the required funds have been raised and the sculptor has nearly com-

pleted Joe's statue prior to making the mold and casting in bronze. The statue will be located on the grounds of Ellsworth Community College.

Charles D Taylor
Iowa Chapter President
8th AFHS

VIRGINIA CHAPTER



l/r - Frank Carlomagno, Gordan Caulkins, John Payne, Chris Bowers, Ron Marchand and Jimmy Harvell (back to camera)



l/r - Sheryl Wolfe (back to camera) sitting next to her father, J.R. Wolfe; George and Carolyn Bergdoll (with backs to camera); Lew Burke (standing); Abe and Ernestine Firestone



President, Lew Burke

BIRTHPLACE CHAPTER

Speakers at the Birthplace Chapter's monthly dinner meetings usually come from outside the Chapter, but for four consecutive months Chapter members

were the speakers. In July, Gil Terry, a helicopter gunship pilot and recipient of both the DFC and DSC, discussed some of his experiences during the Vietnam War. In July, Al Pela gave a presentation about his father's experience as a POW during WW II. Al's dad was a B-17 tail gunner in the 100th Bomb Group. In September, Susan Stephens-Harvey, a member of the board of directors of the National League of POW/MIA Families, reported on activities regarding POW/MIAs, particularly the USA's tremendous efforts to recover MIA remains from all wars all over the world. In October, Col. Ed Wexler, USAF Ret'd, vice chairman of Honor Flight Savannah, discussed that wonderful program which transports WW II veterans, and now Korean War veterans, to Washington, DC, to view the war memorials, Arlington Cemetery, etc.

All presentations were extremely interesting and a reminder that some pretty outstanding people are members of our Chapter.

Submitted by Bill Murdock

NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

Ann Vaughn	President
Traci Calvert	Vice-President
Bill Varnedoe	Secretary/Treasurer

Bill Varnedoe showed the Legion d'Honneur medal the French Government awarded him for his part in WW II in liberating the French. A friend of Bill's is an English lad who grew up near Bill's base in WW II. This man has a friend who was in the British Air Sea Rescue service in WW II. He wrote an article entitled "The Sea Shall Not Have Them". Bill gave a talk based on this article and some experiences of his Group. We were all very interested in the ASR because ditching in the North Sea or the English Channel was almost a daily occurrence for the 8th Air Force in WW II.

Many of our B-17s were damaged by enemy action in combat. Most simply crashed or made crash landings on the continent, where jumping out by parachute was often possible. But the rugged Forts, although crippled, were occasionally able to barely keep flying. However damage could be severe

enough in some cases to make reaching England impossible and ditching was the only possibility. As rugged as the B-17 was, it was NOT a seaplane, plus it often broke apart on hitting the water. But even intact, it sank within minutes. Bill checked records of his Bomb Group, one of 30 or so Bomb Groups, in the 8th AF, and found that in the 385th Bomb Group alone there were 11 ditchings. In these, 72 airmen died, and 48 were rescued. The real culprit, other than trauma from the crash, was the frigid waters. One had only minutes in these waters to avoid hypothermia, paralysis and death. Bill told of a few actual stories of those who ditched and somehow made it to rubber inflatable rafts and were later picked up by Air Sea Rescue. The Air Sea Units used Walrus sea planes, and motor launches.

Our speaker for the November meeting was Mr. Charles Wiley. His topic will be on "Veterans across the Ages". Mr. Wiley is a veteran international reporter and has lectured in 50 states and on six continents. A graduate of New York University, his freelance articles and photographs have appeared in numerous publications. He related his WWII experiences and the coverage of our wars since, plus the cycle of public opinion associated with each.

OREGON CHAPTER

Our August speaker was Mustang Ace, Dr. Clayton Kelly Gross, author of *Live Bait: WWII Memoirs of an Undefeated Fighter Ace*. Here are excerpts from his speech and book. "I took to the air when I was seven years old. Lindbergh flew the Spirit of St. Louis to Felts Field in Spokane and an enterprising guy with a Ford Tri-Motor offered a fifteen-minute flight alongside of the Spirit of St. Louis. Nobody had enough money and my dad said, 'We can only go one.' I was chosen and that was my initiation to the air.

I wanted to fly and the government came up with a program called Civil Pilot Training [CPT]. I joined the Army Air Corps and did flight training at Randolph and Kelly Fields. I graduated with the first class to enter after Pearl Harbor. A few weeks before graduation, the Army called us together, 'Here's a piece of paper. Write your name and

serial number and the four choices of what you'd like to fly. If you are 5'11" or over, you may not request fighters.' I'm 5'11 1/2". I wrote down 'instructor, light bombardment, medium bombardment, heavy bombardment'. They sent me to fighters. I was assigned to the 9th Air Force, 354th Fighter Group which was a great outfit with 701 aerial victories. I was in the 355th Fighter Squadron.

In November, 1944 I was flying the P-51 on a routine RECCE mission when I spotted a convoy of six German trucks, three of which we burned on our first pass. Making another pass, I found myself over a field with about 100 German soldiers who had probably poured out of the trucks. They were on their knees with rifles. I started climbing up and I counted several holes in my P-51, one of which went through the engine and cut my coolant line. We started back for our base and I got up as high as 8000 feet before my engine froze up and began to burn. I pulled the red handle and the canopy fell away. I undid my seatbelt, said a prayer and good-bye to all of my flight and made a lunge, but I hit the shoulder straps and I dropped back into the cockpit. I threw the straps off, said good-bye to the guys again, hung up the radio, made another leap, and got as far as the end of the radio cord which was plugged into my helmet and I dropped back in. I said another prayer, good-bye to the group again, unplugged the radio, made a leap, but the wind caught my goggles and pulled them out six inches which surprised me and I dropped back in again. I finally bailed out and landed in a French field. I saw a German half-track with a crudely painted white star over the German cross. It was a captured vehicle and there were two G.I.s from New York in it. I was so excited that I started running towards them and they both raised their rifles. I said, 'Don't shoot. Don't shoot. I'm American.'

The first guy said, 'Where you from?'

I said, 'Spokane, Washington.'

'Oh yeah? What's the capital of Washington?'

I said, 'Olympia.'

He turned to his buddy, 'Is that right?'

Both were from New York so his buddy said, 'How the hell would I know?'



Dr. Clayton Kelly Gross
[Photo courtesy of Tom Philo]

The first guy said, 'Who da' Brooklyn Dodgers?'

I was a baseball fan and said, 'They're in the National League. My team's the Cardinals. I can give you the starting lineup.'

He said, 'Get in.'

I named my airplane Live Bait. I'd married a beautiful girl who was my Lil' Pigeon. I named my fighters Lil' Pigeon but every time somebody else flew them, they crashed and I thought that wasn't a lucky name. When Bob Stephens and I were coming back from a mission and cruising in mutual support, all of a sudden he said, "You stay there. I'm going to get up above you in the sun. Maybe we can draw some action."

I said, "What do you think I am? Live bait?"

And he said, "Yeah."

I went back and I told the crew chief, 'Name this airplane Live Bait.'

At the end of 1944, they took our beloved Mustangs and gave us P-47s. That's like getting out of a sports car and climbing into a two-and-a-half-ton truck, but there was a lot to be said for the P-47. I was dive bombing at Bastogne in a P-47 and got hit by a 20-mm cannon shell that blew two cylinders out of the rotary engine and I didn't even know I'd been hit. When I got back, I looked out and the whole side of the airplane was oil where the rifle shot, but it still had brought me home. We got our Mustangs back in February '45 and in April I was able to shoot down a jet, the Me-262."

Submitted by Joan E. Hamilton

BEHIND BARBED WIRE

by James Hyland
487th BG/836th Squadron
1st. Lt., Navigator

I am writing with regard to an article in the June 2012 8th AF News, "Strike One Two Three." Included in this article is a photo of a B-17 going down in flames. This plane was not from the 379th Bomb Group. It is B-17 no. 43-37877 assigned to the 836th Sqn., 487th B.G. In command of that ship was 1st Lt. Lloyd Kersten, the pilot. I was on board as navigator on that fatal mission. Seven men of that crew, including Lt. Kersten died when the plane was hit by flak over Merseburg, Germany on Nov. 30, 1944. The 8th AF News used this same photo previously, but never acknowledged the crew or bomb group. I am the only living member of that crew. Maybe some recognition of the supreme sacrifice these men made on their final 30th tour-of-duty mission is in order.



B-17 - #43-37877 836th squadron
Aircraft lost on 30-Nov-44 on mission to Merseburg Germany
Flak hit on aircraft shortly after bomb release.
(photo provided James Hyland through Ivo de Jong)

I'm sure we all recall Dec. 7, 1941 - it's only a short 54 years ago. I was a Freshman in college in Cleveland at the time. I still recall vividly hearing that Pearl Harbor had been attacked and President Roosevelt's words "A day that will live in infamy."

Patriotism ran high and I wanted to join up, but I didn't think slogging in the trenches was for me. So I signed up for Army Air Corp reserves. This allowed me to continue my schooling for another year, when I was called to duty in the Spring of 1943. After a few rather sad attempts at flying a Piper Cub, I decided being a navigator was more suited for me. My Navigation training took place at Ellington Field, Texas. Then after graduation, I met my crew at Dyersburg, TN, where we trained on B-17's. My two brothers volunteered for naval duty.

Our pilot, Lloyd Kersten was from Iowa and the only married member of the crew. The co-pilot, Hank Gerland was from Indiana, the bombardier from Missouri and the gunners were from several mid-west States. Ours was a very close-knit crew and all had great respect for the pilot.

In early Summer 1944 we picked up a brand new B-17 at Lincoln, Nebraska and learned that we were to fly it to England alone - a single flight - not in formation! This meant the Navigator (me), had a very responsible job. Our first leg of the trip was from Lincoln to Gander, Newfoundland, where we awaited the

weather. After a few days, it cleared and we took off for England. Besides directing the pilot on the direct course to take, the navigator had to calculate a point-of-no-return. Depending on winds and weather at some point over the ocean the plane had enough fuel to make it to the destination or failing that, to turn around and return to Gander. Ours was a night take-off and I would use stars to navigate once we left radio signals behind. Just after sunrise we arrived at the point of no return and I detected strong head winds. I advised the pilot that landfall in Great Britain would be tenuous because of the head winds, but it was do-able in my opinion.

We arrived over the Irish coast just slightly off course, but with only a few gallons of fuel. We landed at the first available airfield nearly out of fuel. What an experience for a navigator who had never navigated more than 200 miles before!

We were assigned to the 8th Army Air Force, 487th Bomb Group and the 836th squadron stationed at Lavenham, England. This station is about 40 miles east of Cambridge.

My 21st birthday celebration was one I'll never forget! Our crew was aroused about 3 a.m. on August 8th (my birthday) and briefed for a mission to St. Sylvain, France in support of Gen. Patton's 3rd Army who were trying to break our of the Normandy area for nearly 2 months. A few months later Gen. Patton

would have an opportunity to help me in return.

We went on to fly 29 more missions to France, Holland and Germany. Our 30th mission was to be the last in our tour of duty. When we returned to base after that mission we could be sent back to the States or sign up for another tour.

Very early on Nov. 30 we were aroused and briefed for our second run at an oil refinery at Merseburg, Germany, not far from Leipzig. It was the deepest penetration we had made into Germany.

Our Aircraft was lost on 30-Nov-44 on that mission to Merseburg Germany. Flak hit our aircraft shortly after bomb release.

Life in a POW Camp:

We landed just yards from the oil refinery target. My landing site was on the embankment to a small stream and next to an orchard. This is why I have a knee problem today. In coming down through trees, para jumpers are taught to cross legs to prevent serious injury and hang-up in a tree. Thus I was just able to clear nearby trees, but in landing on the embankment, my feet crumpled under me and the head of the right tibia was fractured. I was just a few yards from a farmhouse and within minutes the farm family was out to get me. Discovering my injured condition, they brought a ladder, placed me on it and took me into an animal shelter adjacent

to the house. I was watched overnight and in the morning a young SS Trooper stopped at the house. While I knew very little German, I couldn't make out the entire conversation, but gathered that the SS Trooper would just as soon annihilate me, but was convinced by the family that I was an officer and a gentleman and therefore should be sent off to a hospital for care.

I was picked up by a military truck along with my bombardier and several other fliers, and taken to a POW hospital in Leipzig. There my broken leg was reset after X-rays were taken and a plaster cast was applied. Later that plaster cast would be a source of entertainment for me as it became filled with little crawly creatures. A daily dousing with an insecticide powder eventually de-loused the cast.

In mid December the German guards at the hospital gleefully gave us the disturbing news that the war would soon be over because German forces had been very successful at the "Battle of the Bulge". Christmas eve however produced a rather somber change to their attitude. What I did not find out until just a year or two ago was that our very own 487th Bomb Group had led the entire 8th Air Force on its first raid since the start of the "Battle of the Bulge". For over two weeks the 8th Air Force was down because of bad weather. On December 24th it cleared and General Frederick Castle came down from the 8th Air Force headquarters to take command of this raid in support of ground troops around Cologne. The 487th led the groups into Germany. General Castle, the pilot and one or two others of that crew would not return to England for Christmas. Enemy fighter singled out his plane and shot it down. General Castle died in the crash.

Our hospital guards were older men, probably not fit for fighting and were a bit more lenient than the young German. On Christmas day they brought a small Christmas tree into our ward, set it up and presented us with a homemade cake to celebrate the holiday.

There was a Christmas gift that day which I didn't learn about until returning home. The pilot's wife gave birth to a baby girl that Christmas.

On Dec. 28th I was marched a mile or

so in bitter cold on crutches to a waiting cattle car along with other fliers. We were loaded into the straw lined car and soon the train pulled out headed for the interrogation center at Frankfurt, Germany. We arrived on Dec. 31, but not before being left locked in the boxcar by our guards in the marshalling yards at Frankfurt when our 8th Air Force came over on a bombing mission.

In late January I was moved to another Lazaret or hospital at Meiningen, Germany where I would remain until Gen. Patton's forces freed us.

The German-supplied food was frequently the left over turnip and potatoe peelings boiled up into some kind of thin soup. While it was life sustaining, it didn't stop me from losing about 25 lbs. during my internment. Red Cross packages were supposed to come each week, but we were lucky to get one a month. That was one of the highlights of the day, as it would contain a chocolate bar, cigarettes, spam and dried fruit. Cigarettes were traded with the Germans for whatever. The prunes or raisins frequently ended up in water and sugar to ferment until we thought it was sufficiently potent to drink.

I spent much of my time writing letters home (which never got there until well after liberation), learning some French from a French primer and several French officers in the camp, and playing bridge or poker. We got exercise whenever the guards would allow us out into the compound yard.

One of our great delights was to confuse "Bedcheck Charlie", the guard who came in each night to be sure all were accounted for. As he would begin his count, we would begin moving about the room for one reason or other. He would count, then count again and again: ein, zwei, drei, vier, funf...

The make up of prisoners in our Meiningen camp was quite diverse: There were a number of U.S. fliers plus French, English, South African, Indian and Sikh.

Early in April the weather turned warm and about April 2 we could here gunfire in the distance and truck traffic at night became very heavy. We knew something was up, but weren't sure just what was happening. The British in the camp had been able to get BBC news broadcasts and advised us that Allied forces

were on the move in Germany. On April 5th at 8:30 there was a bombing and strafing attack by our planes, including a bombing of the bridge just a 100 yards or so from our compound. Light gunfire could be heard through out the day. At 5:30 p.m. Patton's tanks came roaring into town and a few minutes later one tank crew stopped in front of our compound and advised us that we had been freed, but told us to stay within the compound for the night, with American guards.

The celebration that night was indeed a happy one. The hospital was a converted boys school, with an auditorium-gym. That evening we held a stage show in the auditorium, with various prisoners putting on skits, songs, etc. My greatest recollection of that evening was of a British soldier with a beautiful tenor voice singing "Danny Boy".

I was moved by ambulance to a field hospital near Frankfurt, then flown to England on April 12. It was there that we learned of the death of President Roosevelt a few days later. Some 47,000 men of the 8th Air Force lost their lives or were reported missing, which included the 9 men of our aircraft: 2 survived and were POW's and 7 died when the plane went down.

Upon my return to the States, I made it a point to visit the parents of each of the boys of my crew who were killed. Three things sustained me during that ordeal: the power of prayer and a strong knowledge that God answers prayer, writing letters back home, and a positive belief that our Allied forces would conquer the German war machine.

To many people today the American flag seems something to be burned or desecrated. To me it is a symbol of freedom and honor...The U. S. is indeed the greatest country on earth! May God protect this great land and its people!



More Behind The Picture Than The Wall



**Douglas Brewer
"Snooks"
389th BG/566th BS**

During a visit to my grandmother's house many years ago, I saw a picture hanging on the wall of a young man in an army uniform. At the time, I did not pay too much attention to it, although I knew it was a family member.

Time passed and I saw that same picture among some of my mother's old photographs. I inquired as to who it was and was told it was my dad's cousin, Douglas Brewer. His nickname was "Snooks".

Years later, I became interested in researching our family tree. I started in Surry County, Virginia, where my family originally

came from. While searching cemeteries, looking for family graves, I observed a plaque with the inscription of "In Memory of 'Snooks', S/Sgt. Walter Douglas Brewer, Killed in Action WWII, November 21, 1944, Buried Norfolk, England." At this point, I was determined to find out exactly who Walter Douglas Brewer was, how he actually died and why he was buried in England.

Talking with family members, I was told several stories as to how he died. One was that he was killed by friendly fire. Another was that his plane was shot down by a German fighter. I discovered a local newspaper article from 1944, listing him as killed in action but it also stated that his family was not advised of any details about his death. By this time, my grandmother had already passed away. I am sure she would have known more about him. As it was, no one actually knew for certain and I was unable to locate any surviving members of Douglas' immediate family.

I began to search the internet and discovered a website to the American Battle Monuments Commission where I ran a search on his name. Much to my surprise, I found a link which provided me with information about his service. He was with the 389th Bomb Group and buried in Cambridge American Cemetery, England.

I then searched for the 389th Bomb Group and contacted the site's webmaster, Kelsey McMillan. She provided me with a lot of information on Douglas, including the seventeen missions he flew, travel orders, load lists, etc.

I found out that Douglas enlisted in the USAAF in September 1943 at Camp Shelby, Mississippi. He arrived in England in June 1944 and was stationed at Hethel Field. He was assigned to the 8th Air Force, 566th Bomb Squadron, 389th Bomb Group and was a nose gunner on a B-24 Liberator. He flew seventeen missions before his death on November 21, 1944.

According to a USAAF Accident Report, Douglas' B-24J Liberator, "Earthquake McGoon", took off from Hethel Field on a

mission to bomb a petroleum plant in Hamburg, Germany. Shortly after takeoff, while at 13,000 feet, his B-24 and another B-24 from his squadron collided in mid-air and both went into a spin, crashing in a farmers field. Three men from the two B-24's managed to bail out and survive. Seventeen other men including Douglas perished that day. A plaque honoring these men hangs in All Saints Church in Carleton Rode, England, near the crash site.

Douglas was a Staff Sergeant and had earned the Air Medal, Oak Leaf Cluster and the Purple Heart. Douglas was survived by his loving wife, Lois Dawson Brewer. They had no children.

I have shared this information with family members at a recent family reunion and with historical society members in his hometown of Dendron, Virginia. I have also been in contact via the internet and telephone with several surviving family members of his crew.

We can never forget what our brave veterans have done for us and our country and what they continue to do today. There is, "**More Behind The Picture Than The Wall**"

**Robert Clarke
11300 Rochelle Road
Chester, Va. 23831
banjo60@comcast.net**



**Douglas & Lois Brewer
Savannah, Georgia on June 12, 1944. This was the day Douglas shipped out on a train North, to eventually fly with his crew on a B-24 on the Northern route to England. This was the last time that he saw his wife.**



Ralph Lynn, Jr.

Born in Canfield, Ohio 10-26-1919. A barefoot farm boy who drove a team of horses and a tractor before getting behind the wheel of a car. While attending college I enrolled in Civilian Pilot Training and got my license in the spring of 1942. That same summer I signed up with the Army Air Force (we called it Army Air Corps at the time) and was called to active duty in December of 1942. In 1943 (Class 31 I) I went through Primary at Hicks Field, Fort Worth, TX: Basic at Enid, OK: Advanced at Frederick, OK: got my wings October 1, 1943. Was assigned to the newly formed 466th Bomb Group as co-pilot. After training in B-24s at Alamogordo, NM and Salt Lake City, UT, went overseas to England with the 466th. Flew 32 missions over Germany and occupied France. Upon returning to the USA, I was sent first to Instructors School at Smyrna, TN, then to Victorville, CA to fly radar navigators in training which I did until the end of the war. Left the Air Force at the urging of my future

wife; got a Masters Degree; taught in college for a couple of years. Became a textbook salesman -- a job that I held for 34 years. Became somewhat serious about photography after retiring in 1985. Although strictly an amateur, I have tried to improve my photo skills. For several years I have mated my photography with my volunteer work as a Tour Guide at MAPS (Military Aviation Preservation Society) Air Museum, adjacent to the Akron/Canton Airport. My greatest joy is when I get a picture "right."

Sincerely,

Ralph Lynn, Jr. 466th BG
191 Oneida Ave NW
Canton, OH 44708-5726
rhlynn86@msn.com

Editors Note: Ralph Lynn is our "official" 8th AFHS Reunion Photographer. Thank you for all the "Reunion" memories!!



VETERANS DAY MADINGLEY 2012

This time of year has arrived again also the time to remember those that never returned home. The event this year was blessed with such beautiful colors of Autumn and Madingley looked as if God had graced it with his paint brush. The attendance was high with ages across the board from young children to WWII veterans one in particular Mr Rance Rowntree of the 379th B.G. Kimbolton England who served under Major-Gen Lewis Lyle's command. One of the tributes that I made was to a 305th crew member Adolph Lenti 305th B.G. 422nd Sq Chelveston, this was presented on behalf of his son that he never had the chance to love and hold, his son Lou has never

traveled to England to view his fathers name on the wall of the missing so this is the least that we can do. Our friend and veteran remembers the day he saw his friend Adolph Lenti shot down and years later found the son that Adolph Lenti never lived to see. Gordon presented the 8th Air Force Historical Society wreath and I presented the 305th B.G. wreath on behalf of my Godfather (aircrew) and Grandparents who were landlords of the old Chequer's Inn in the village near the base. Sue and I are visiting L.A. this week as a surprise to one of your veterans, Nick Sanchez Ball Turret Gunner 35 missions 305th B.G., it is his 90th birthday and he said to his family that he wished that he could have his birthday with his friends from England so as a surprise we are arriving on his doorstep on the morning of his birthday, what else could we do for what

he and many others gave for us and when we stand at Madingley looking at the white headstones in among the golden leaves of Autumn we are lucky that we can make the journey when those remembered there can not.

**Submitted by:
Brian Francis**

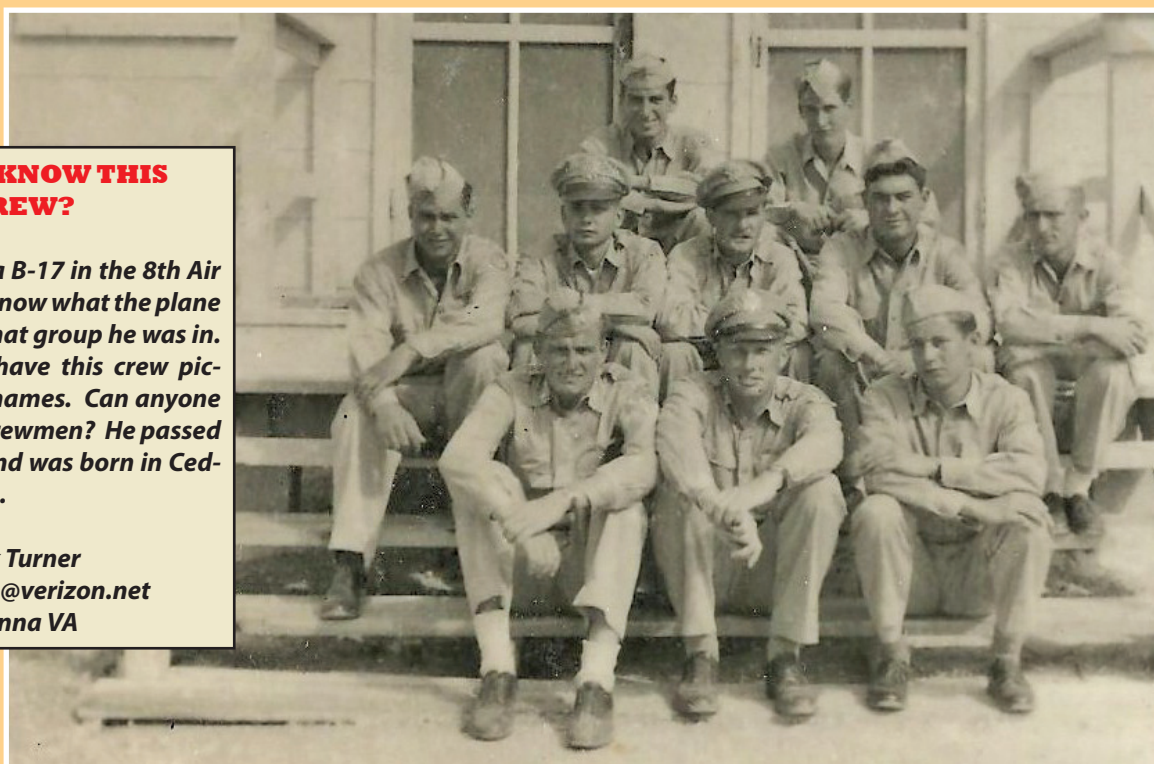


**Mr Rance Rowntree 379th B.G.
Served under Major-Gen Lewis
Lyle's command.**

DO YOU KNOW THIS CREW?

My father flew a B-17 in the 8th Air Force. I do not know what the plane name was or what group he was in. However, I do have this crew picture with their names. Can anyone identify these crewmen? He passed away in 1975 and was born in Cedartown Georgia.

Rex Turner
rturner72@verizon.net
Vienna VA



**S H Rhea - Navigator, Capt Roy Olin Turner - Pilot, F Blotscher - Ball Turret, S T Sikorsk - Tailgunner,
H M Wisland - Copilot, V H Webb - Bomardier, C C Barefoot - Armroe Gunner, M E Groeneveld - Upper Turret,
W M Santonos - Engineer, W B Miller - Radio Operator**

CHAMPAGNE GIRL OR FANCY PANTS ?

It was named both at one time or another but it never had either painted on the fuselage of plane number 42-107075. Many different bomber crews flew on this B-17 plane from our airbase at Basingbourn, England. Evidently the first crews called her "Champagne Girl". Our crew called her "Fancy Pants".

I do remember being advised not to write a record of our missions but I did keep my own brief account of each one. We flew on twelve different planes to make up our 35 missions. Nine of these planes were later shot down, lost, or so badly damaged they never flew again.

We flew eleven missions on our own plane named "Sheriff's Posse" with Captain Bob Sheriff as pilot. We had a few days leave in early May, 1944. On May 7 th we were in London when the buzz bombs exploded in the city. While our crew was in London, another crew, with Lt. Kovachevich as pilot, flew our plane, "Sheriff's Posse", to the Berlin area. The plane returned badly damaged but landed successfully. However, while taxiing in, in a line of B-17's, the brakes failed and the plane crashed head on into a line of G.I. trucks. The truck drivers and air crew escaped unharmed. The plane was salvaged.

On May 22, our pilot, Captain Bob Sheriff, was chosen to serve as Lead Pilot for Lt. Colonel Berry on another mission.



LUGREN Illustration (French Dressing) was used by Toni Starcer as a template for "Fancy Pants" plane art.

Our Co-Pilot, First Lt. John Kerr was named pilot of our crew. Our crew was assigned to Plane # 42-107075. We named her "Fancy Pants". We flew nine missions in her, the last one being to the Hamburg oil storage tanks on the shoreline of the Elbe River. After our bombs hit their targets I saw concentric heat rings emanating from the explosions that day.

Our second plane # - 075 was flown by other crews after 1st Lt. Kerr's crew finished 35 missions. On July 19th, 2nd Lt. Cyril Braund's crew managed to survive a mid-air collision while on the bomb run to an airfield in Germany. Badly damaged, they decided to try to make it to Switzerland. No German fighter planes appeared and they reached Switzerland. The entire crew parachuted safely as they watched plane # - 75 crash. The crew was kept under confinement in Switzerland until the war was over.

Back at our base, I asked another airman, an artist named Toni Starcer, to paint "Fancy Pants" on my A-2 jacket and made plans for the plane to be painted with the same logo. Within a few days we were told that any crews who had flown 30 or more missions would not have to fly any more. So no names were painted on our plane. I asked Toni to remove the name and picture of "Fancy Pants" from my jacket and to re-paint it with the name "Sheriff's Posse". I still have the A-2 jacket and wear it on special occasions.

**Wayne Dennison
323 Squadron
91st Bomb Group**

CHOPIN....CAMBRIDGE....AND THE NOBEL PRIZE

On Thursday, November 2nd, 1944 in the veteran, battle-scarred B-17F named ROUND-TRIP, we took off with the Third Division to attack the Leuna Synthetic OP at Merseburg. The losses were horrendous, we returned to our base at the 447th Bomb Group landing on two engines (My comrade in the 708th, Jimmy Foster had gone down in Holland and I feared that the crew might be lost). But low and behold, after a week's time, he showed up at the base alive! We were rewarded with a 48-hour pass. Jimmy insisting that we go not to London, but Cambridge (he had a girlfriend there).

Arriving in that wondrous University town, as we walked down the main street, Trumpington, we passed a piano store, Jimmy dragged me inside to perform Chopin's Polonaise in A Flat Major. I chose the best concert grand in the store. The piece is very dramatic and showy. As I reached the end, on the last note, there was a burst of applause from the customers inside.

NOVEMBER 2ND, 1945 COMING HOME

The bus stopped two miles from my house.
In the dark, I walked down Springfield Avenue
To Milburn, New Jersey.

(It was one year to the day
My bomber-crew

Barely survived the mission to Merseburg)

As I turned down Whittingham Terrace,
The house appeared at the corner.

A light was on in the kitchen.

(I saw my mother, moving by the window.

My face full of tears,
I reached the front-door trembling.
I knocked so softly)

As mother opened the door, and saw me,
She let out a cry

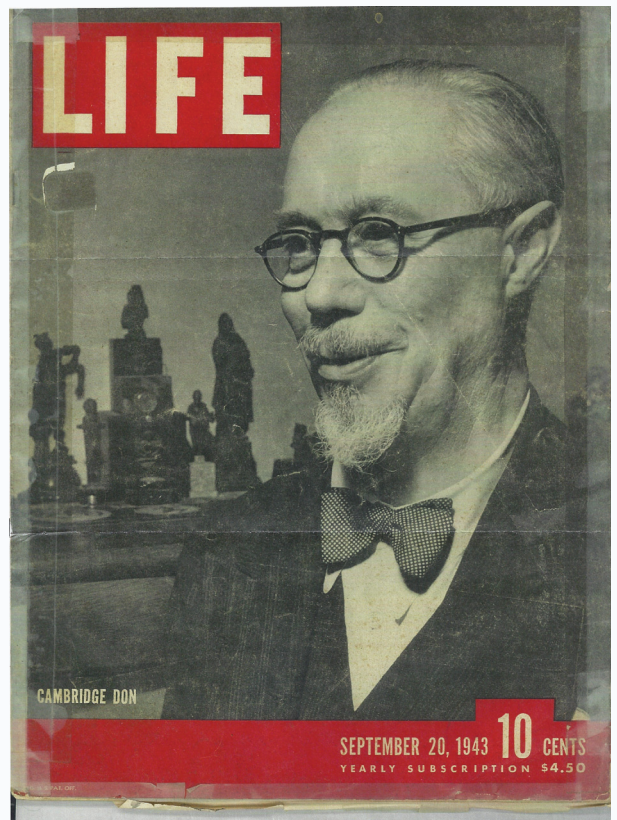
That I will hear until the end of my life
She threw her arms around me
And uttered "Thank God!
Oh thank God, you're home!"

Marvin Silbersher
447th Bomb Group
711th Squadron
Lake Hopatcong, NJ

A tall distinguished older man with a beard came running up to me and exclaimed... "That was simply marvelous young man, you must be on tour here with concerts!" I replied that I was a flier and thanked him for the compliment (I had not touched the piano in over two years). He was accompanied by a charming young lady who asked that Jimmy and I come to their house to have dinner that very evening. As we entered the living room, there was the aroma of a splendid meal that was being prepared, Mozart was playing on the Hi-Fi, our host was none other than Dr. Charles Celtman, winner of the Nobel

prize for archeology in 1943 (his picture was on the cover of "Life" magazine that year). As Charles discussed ancient sculpture with us, hungry to discuss anything besides the Air War, his assistant, Jacquelyn summoned us to the dinner table. What a feast! We slept over that night in their house, the sleep of the saved! Breakfast in the morning and we thought that we had come to Shangri-La. Everytime we had a pass now, we went to Cambridge, to stay with Charles and Jacquelyn. They lived in a beautiful house just off Trumpington on Little St Mary's Lane (on the corner of which there was an ancient church where George Washington's cousin was buried in the wall).

In 1990, at the PENN Conference, at King's College Chapel in Cambridge, I took time to visit their house, and of course Charles, by then had passed away. Jacquelyn, had moved back to South Hampton Long Island.



Knocking on the door of her neighbor's house, a Mrs. Grant opened the door and invited me in. I told her of our wonderful visits with Charles and Jacquelyn during the war. She said, "would you like to see the house? I have a key". And so, entering from the back garden, with a flashlight, we climbed the stairs. First, there was a gigantic portrait of Jacquelyn on the wall, and on the floor, a portrait of Charles.

About ten years ago, on 5th Avenue at 53rd street, a young man was selling back issues of "Life" magazine. As I thumbed through them, suddenly, I came across the issue with Charles's picture on the cover. It was from September 20th, 1943. I couldn't believe I had this copy in my hands as I purchased it and walked away, my face was full of tears.

Marvin Silbersher
447th Bomb Group
711th Squadron
Lake Hopatcong, NJ

**S/Sgt. John F. Curcio – 458th BG
B-24 Liberstor Tail Gunner
458th Bomb Group / 754th & 753rd Bomb Squadrons
35 Combat Missions – 29 missions as tail gunner & 6 missions as nose gunner**



John Curcio of North Bend is pictured standing, second from right, with his B-24 bomber crew. The photo was taken at Horsham St. Faith airfield just before the crew began their World War II combat missions in 1944.

Award of the Legion d'Honneur

Bill Varnedoe 385th BG

Bill Varnedoe - Secretary/Treasurer of North Alabama Chapter

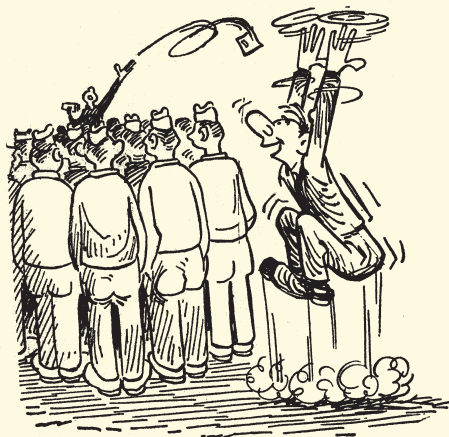
When I got the attached letter, I thought, "Why not go get it." I didn't believe it amounted to much and I thought it was a sort of routine thing. I was mistaken! They made a big ceremony out of it with all sorts of press releases. The French Consul General, himself pinned it on 12 of us, WW II veterans. I had thought the word "highest award" was just press hype, but when the Consul General presented the medal he read the citation and he did use the words "Highest Award of the French Govern-

ment!" He also mentioned my flight ferrying the French slave laborers back into France, after VE Day. Both surprised me!! I wonder how he knew about that ferry flight in June '45?!

Two of the 385th BG Association members who live near Atlanta came to the ceremony. The Association had planned an award for me as Historian at the 385th reunion, so they gave that plaque to me there also, since they knew I'd miss the 385th reunion this year



Bill & Louise Varnedoe



PROMISE KEEPER

The article in the *September 8th AF News* written by Earl Wassom is an excellent description of what Louis Zamperini lived through during his life before and after entering the military.

What is lacking in this article is Zamperini's full story which is contained in the book *Unbroken* Written by Laura Hillenbrand. She is also the author of *Seabiscuit*.

I would place this reading on a "MUST" to know the horrendous brutality he suffered as a POW.

Bob Gross
34thBG (7th sqdn)
rhgross1734@att.net

RE: ENLISTED MEMBERS OF BOMBER AIR CREWS RANK

Author, Stephan Ambrose, made a statement concerning enlisted aircrew members, that the rank of Sgt. - plus, was given to enlisted crews in the event they were shot down, captured and became POWs, would be given better treatment by their captors. This was not a true statement. Those, like myself as an example, were given the rank of Staff/Sgt. and later Tech. Sgt. because I attended Airplane Mechanics School. Assigned to a B-17 bomber crew, I was Eng./Gunner - the same for crew members who attended Radio School and Armament School. Each crew had two enlisted members of the same category.

Treatment as POW's was dependent on the type of camp. Some Luft camps were administered by the German Air Corp. and some by the S.S or Gestapo. I know, because I was in three Luft camps in Germany and Poland.

We were given rough treatment at times by the Nazis.
I hope I have cleared up this mis-statement.

Any questions you may have, please let me know.

Thank you,

**Don Kremper T/Sgt. - 94th BG
331st Sqdn.**

Nov. 43 to Feb 10, 1944

**Shot down and POW until May 1945
(859)619-1214**

MILK WAGON!

A few years ago I submitted and you published an article on how the B17G "Milk Wagon" #337756 got it's name - it flew 128 missions without aborting a mission because of mechanical failure - a record for the 3rd Air Division. I've wondered how many of us that flew missions on the Milk Wagon are still alive. I'm almost 91 years of age and I'm pretty sure that those who flew the "Milk Wagon" missions must be about as old as I am - could you print this request in your next issue and then hope that many will answer as a role call - are we a large or small group



- I think the results would be of interest to your readers.

August Altese
802 Montana Ave
Gladstone, MI 49837-1630
tttttt@chartermi.net
906-428-9654

P.S. It would be necessary to know the number of men that flew it's missions so that a % could be arrived at

UK OFFICE,

Please find below a letter from France, Sophie Dumont. As this office now looks after members in Europe as well as the UK.

For your information - The 801 BG USAAF were the group who dropped supplies and agents to the French Underground Movements and other European Groups by the O.S.S. We know the RAF Halifax from 138 Sqd. was doing the same job for the British S.O.E.

Thank you for your help.

Gordon Richards
Suffolk, England

SEARCHING FOR INFORMATION,

I am looking for any information, documents or photos about eight American soldiers that died during the night of 18 to 19 July, 1944 at Mazignien, Nièvre, Burgundy. Their airplane collided with a British plane.

US plane - consolidated B-24 H30 Douglas Tulsa Liberator crashed between Nazignien and Chalaux.
UK plane - Handley Page Halifax LL364 crashed near Coutolles.

Operation Carpetbagger, code named Dick 28A for the American and Dick 89 for the British.

The name of the American airmen are:

Lt. David Anthony Michelson

Lt. John Portz Shaw Jr.

Lt. Donald Clark Boyde

Lt. Melvin Weiss

Sgt./C. Duncan Locklin Patterson

Sgt. William Joseph Hovanec

Sgt. Enoch (Erick) Kalsie Wooten Jr.

Sgt. Arnold Marinoff. 850th Bomb Squadron, 801st Bomb Group, USAAF Volunteer Reserve.

Could you also provide information or photos on the 7 British soldiers pres-

ent in the other plane. All rest in the Marigny - L'Eglise Cemetery. They were in the 438th Squadron, RAF. But Kenneth Urquhart was in Royal Canadian Air Force. All are volunteer reservist.

Here are there names:

Lt. John Allan Kidd

Flight Sgt. Bernard Stroud

Sgt. Charlie Taylor

Flight Officer Kenneth Robertson

Urquhart

Sgt. Grayham Bancroft Byrne

Flight Engineer Cyril Frederick Thomas Miles

Sgt. James Revill Moody.

This information will help me, because with the Resistance Museum in Saint-Brisson, we will create a new monument in 2014 to explain this tragedy and ensure that no one forgets. If you would like more information about this commemoration let me know.

Your presence would be an honor.

Thank you in advance!

Best Regards,

Sophie Dumont

P.S. My email is - sophie.dumont442@orange.fr

381ST BG

I am a helper at the 381st BG memorial museum in Ridgewell UK. Recently we have had the good fortune to expand the area we have in one of the base hospital Nissan buildings. We have a lot of preparation work to do with limited funds. My reason for me contacting you is would you ask veterans if they are willing to let us have anything relating to the 381st to exhibit. Photos could be emailed, I like to make up personal albums. Other items would be appreciated but postage is unfortunately not an option as we rely on just donations to keep afloat. (rent etc). We open six times a year but hope to open a few days more in the future. Special visits are catered for especially for Veterans and families. Kindest regards.

Alan Steel

a.steel@btinternet.com

TEQUILA DAISY

On page 44 of the 2012 September 8th AF News, there are eight renditions of beautiful "Varga Girls". Unfortunately you missed the "January 1944 Varga Girl", better known as "Tequila Daisy". The "Tequila Daisy Chronicals" is a good read and tells her whole story including the fact that an actual artifact is on display in the Swiss Air Museum in Dubendorf, Switzerland. The "Chronicals" also tell of the tragic demise of the 492nd BG which suffered such heavy losses in less than three months. The losses were so critical that the Air Force removed the 492nd from combat after only 89 days of combat.

Edward Petelle

492nd BG

10950 Temple Ter Apt W414

Seminole, FL 33772



The nose art was inspired by this "Varga Girl" painting by Alberto Vargas. Peruvian-born Alberto Vargas was perhaps the preeminent calendar, movie poster and pin-up artist throughout the war years. His ability to capture the radiant beauty of fantasy American women made his work extremely popular with countless US servicemen.

This same painting was used for the nose art on another 492nd Liberator 42-50279 "Envy of 'em All".

Pictured below is the actual piece of TEQUILA DAISY on display in a Swiss WWII museum. It shows good detail of the battle damage suffered that day.



Reunions



Please send all REUNION updates to:
Donna Neely • 2090 Cairo Bend Road • Lebanon, TN • 37087
email • donnajneely@gmail.com.
Additional contact information on page 4.

THE BIRTHPLACE CHAPTER

Savannah, Georgia
Meets 3rd Tuesday every month
at 5:30pm at the Mighty Eighth Air
Force Museum
Pooler, Georgia
www.mighty8thbirthplace.org

398TH BOMB GROUP

September, 2013
in Sacramento, California
Contact: Sharon Krause
734-416-5993
tink73146@gmail.com

446TH BG ASSN. MEETING

Tucson AZ, May 15-20, 2013
70th Birthday
Contact: Bill Davenport
history446@aol.com
Tel. 714-832-2829

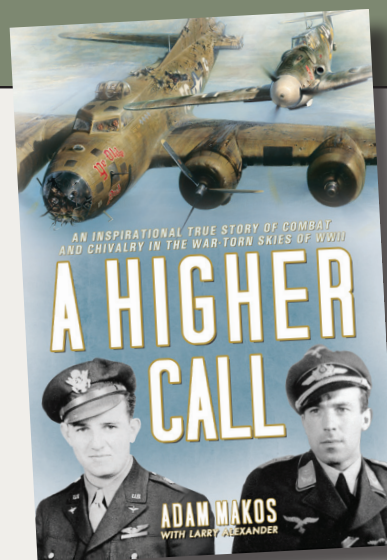
Book Reviews

A HIGHER CALL AN INCREDIBLE TRUE STORY OF COMBAT AND CHIVALRY IN THE WAR TORN

Adam Makos - Author
Larry Alexander - Author
Penguin Publishing
Hardcover - 400 pages
ISBN 9780425252864
01 Jan 2013

This January, Penguin publishing will
release A Higher Call, by Adam Ma-
kos about the famous Franz Stigler &
Charlie Brown aerial encounter over
Germany during 1943. The story of their

encounter is one of the most beloved
stories of World War II—but a story
most people only know on a surface
level, from viral emails, passed from
history buff to history buff. On Snopes.
com the Brown-Stigler encounter has
often been rated one of the top ten
"most inquired about" email forwards
in the world.
Now, for the first time, the true, histori-
cal account will be told, a story of two
pilots from opposing nations who met
in battle but later came to call them-
selves "brothers."



— Form may be reproduced —



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(Dues notices will be mailed INSIDE the December issue annually)



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In service _____ Branch _____ Dates _____ to _____

Were you a former member? _____ Member # if available _____

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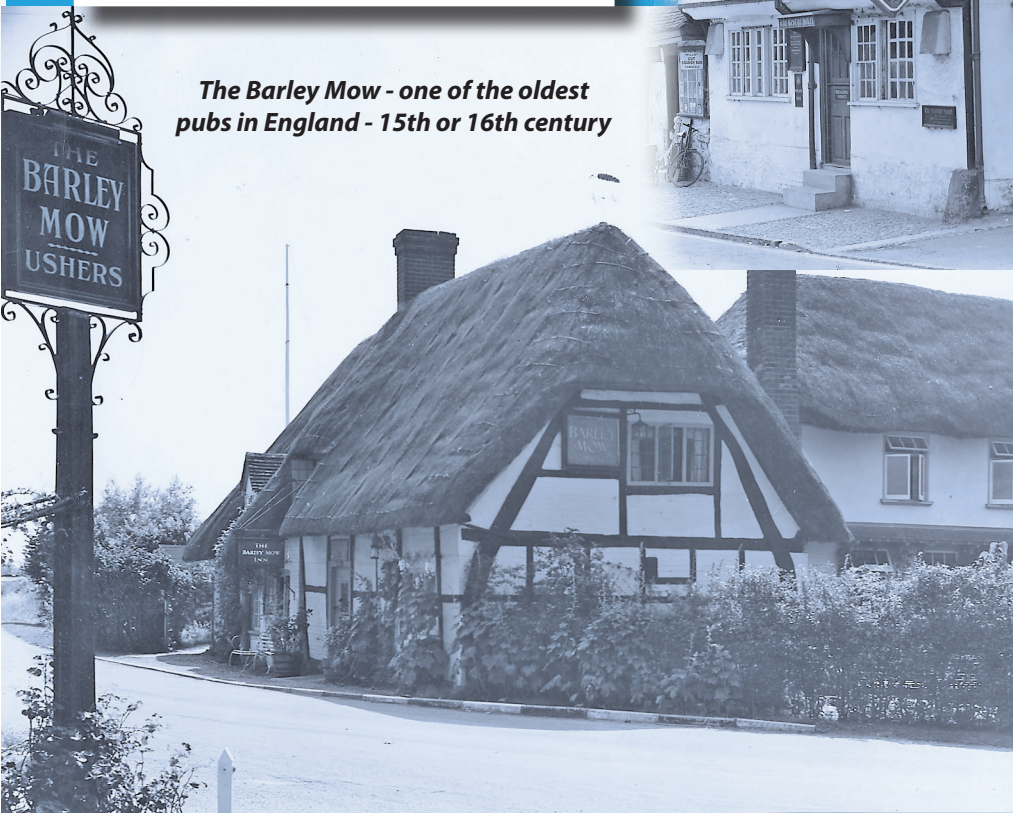
You may also apply online at: www.8thafhs.org

"Give the gift that shares the legacy"

"Give the gift that shares the legacy"

THE ENGLISH PUB

The Barley Mow - one of the oldest pubs in England - 15th or 16th century



The George



The English people took in the Yanks in World War II, not always by choice. The pubs were the place to be. Hours were controlled and the beer wasn't cold, but to many 8th airmen, it was a reminder of home - to some a "home away from home." Most were old English pubs in old English hotels or stagecoach Inns. Every town near 8th airbases had at least one, many of which are presently still operating and are often visited by 8th veterans and their families returning to East Anglia.

The White Hart Hotel



Chequers Inn



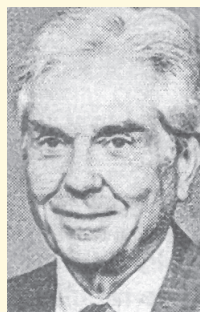
Buckley, Charles, 86, Iowa City, IA died July 3, 2012. Born in Glens Falls, New York he joined the Army Air Corps at 18 years old and was a B-24 tail gunner with the 392nd BG. He flew 30 combat missions and



Charles Buckley

twice had to bail out of his stricken aircraft. The first, on his 19th birthday was the result of "flak hits" and loss of fuel preventing their return to base. The second time, bombs from one of his squadron planes above him, sheared off the rear stabilizer and left tail next to his gunners' position. Because of damage the pilot could not turn back to France nor land in England because of weather. After the crew bailed out, the plane exploded moments later. After WWII ended Charles rejoined the Air Force in 1958 as an electronic warfare maintenance specialist until retirement in 1977.

Davis, Leonard C., 87, of Indianapolis, passed away June 12, 2012. Leonard lived in Wichita, Kansas. He went into the Army Air Corps, where he was a B-17 navigator. He was shot down in Germany and spent 8 months in prison camp until the end of the war. He is survived by his wife of 61 years, Caroline.



Leonard Davis

Flick, Robert, 88 years old, in May of 2012. Robert (RH) was assigned to the 453rd. BG out of Old Buckenham from 1943-44. While in the states he was a bombardier trainer. He was transferred to England, where he continued to train new personnel. Robert completed 26 missions.

Fuchs, Robert passed away on August 15, 2012 of Boynton Beach, FL. (Formerly of Wantagh). Veteran of WW II - 1st Lt. U.S. Army Air Force

Gipson, Bruce, 90, of Ft. Worth, TX.,

died on July 21, 2012. He was a radio operator on Bill Ringler's Crew - 486th Bomb Group - 833 Squadron. His plane was shot down over Germany returning to England on his 26th combat mission and he spent a few months in a German POW camp.

Kenagy, S/Sgt. Glenn A., passed away August 4, 2012. He had been a tail gunner/armorer with the 467 BG, 789 BS.

Laird, Marion E. served with the 390th Fort Worth 94, passed away from this life Nov. 17, 2012.

He served as a flight engineer and top turret gunner on a B-17. He flew 19 missions before being shot down over Germany October 10, 1943. He spent the remainder of the war in Stalag 17b POW Camp. After 19 months he was liberated in May of 1945. He returned to Moultrie, GA, where he married the love of his life, Phyllis Geraldine Goff, December 25, 1945, and they shared 58 years together until her death on July 24, 2003.

McKeighan, Robert Leslie, 91, of Yates City, Illinois passed away May 31, 2012. During WWII, he piloted B-24's and B-17's out of England for a total of 35 bombing missions into Germany. It wasn't until more than 50 years had passed, that he opened up and would discuss his time in the 8th Air Force and the missions that he had flown. In 1997, he wrote a narrative of his time in the service and was surprised at the number of friends and relatives who found it extremely interesting.

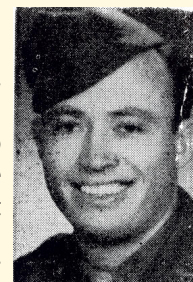
Meyne, Russell V. "Russ", of Irmo, SC passed away on February 2, 2012 at the age of 92 in Cincinnati, Ohio. He was born on June 25, 1919 in Grafton, Oh. He was preceded in death by his first wife, and mother of his children, Marion in 1984 and by his second wife, Marge in 1997. Russ was a proud American Patriot. He was drafted into the Army in 1941 and was stationed in Pearl Harbor when it was attacked on Dec. 7. He then became a B-17 pilot and flew 35 missions over Germany. He was awarded 2 Bronze Stars, Air Medal with 6 oak leaf clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross which was presented to him by the World War I flying ace, Eddie Rickenbacker. He was very active in the Pearl Harbor Survivors As-

soc, as well as the Military History Club. He spoke at several grade schools and high schools about his war experiences. He was one of the subjects in ETV's documentary "Vanishing Generation". Russ kept in touch with his "crew" for the rest of their lives and they celebrated many reunions.

Miceli, John W., 87, of Rio Rancho, NM. Passed away October 5, 2012. John served in the 8th Air Force, 93rd BG as a B-24 nose gunner. John completed 13 missions while with the 93rd BG and discharged December 1945.

John Miceli was a very loyal member of the NM Chapter, 8th Air Force Historical Society.

Mims, Virgil Graham Jr., 89, of Spartanburg, died July 3, 2012, at White Oak Estates. Born August 28, 1922 in Wake County, NC. He served with 452nd Bomb Group where he flew 20 combat missions as aerial gunner on a B-17 Bomber.



Virgil Mims

Mullany, James J., 91, of Eustis, passed away on February 17, 2012. He was a Top Turret Gunner and a Flight Engineer aboard the B-17 Flying Fortress; he was a prisoner of war for 15 months in Germany and East Prussia, a member of the 452nd Bomb Group Association and the Ex-Prisoner of War Association.

Nathan, Gustave (Gus), 92. Gus enlisted on June 14, 1941 in the Army Air Corp. He served with the 9th Antisubmarine Squadron and the 486th BG(H) and was discharged on September 7, 1945. Gus met and married Sylvia and spent 62 wonderful years together and now they are finally together. Gus left us on Wednesday September 26th peacefully while watching his NY Yankees on TV and will be missed. Cheers Gus!



Gus Nathan

Newton, Thomas Jay, 87, a resident of Dallas, Oregon died at his home Thursday, July 5, 2012. 385th BG/549th BS. He had been a flight engineer/top turret gunner.

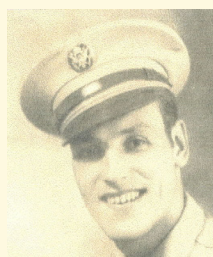
Person, Eugene, 89, Ft Dodge, died July 29, 2012. Gene was a flight engineer with the 466th BG and flew 12 combat missions until the end of the war in Europe.

He was credited with downing 1 ½ enemy fighters on one mission. Gene was one of the founders and organizers of the Iowa Chapter, 8th AFHS. He served on the Board of Directors and later as NW Iowa Wing Commander. He was also finance chairman for the Iowa World War II Memorial on the State Capitol grounds. At 85 Gene wrote an autobiography on his life published in paperback form.



Eugene Person

Picht, Roy, 87, Ames, IA died December 6, 2011. Roy was a crew chief with the 458th BG at Horsham St Faith, Norwich, England. Roy served on the Iowa Chapter Board of Directors, 8th AFHS for many years and was one of the Chapters' founder



Roy Picht

Ramos, Benjamin, 88 years old, Kenmore, NY, passed away Oct 15, 2012. He flew in over 25 combat missions as the radio operator and gunner on the B-17, *Knockout Baby* with the 95th BG. He was honorably discharged with the rank of Sergeant.

Reed, Darrell, 89, Cherokee, IA, died April 29, 2012.

Darrell served as a Radio Operator with the 445th BG, Tibenham, England. He flew the first of his sixteen missions on



Darrell Reed

his first wedding anniversary. His sixteenth mission was a supply drop at low altitude in support of an Allied crossing of the Rhine. At 150 feet supplies were dropped through escape hatches and ball turret openings. At the sound of an alarm bell, crews cut nets over the openings and the supplies dropped from the plane. Darrell lost his balance and plunged toward the ball turret opening of his plane. An Associated Press reporter was able to grab Darrell's parachute harness and pull him back to safety saving his life.

Rohm, David A. Jr. – Age 87 - Staff Sgt. Passed away July, 13, 2012

David was born in Pittsburgh on March 2, 1923. He was in the 8th Air Force, 96th Bomber Group; serving as a radio operator and gunner on a B-17.

Enemy fighters shot down David's plane on a mission to Berlin, Germany. David parachuted into enemy territory and was captured by German soldiers. After spending 14 months as a POW, David was liberated in May 1945.

Sherwood, Robert Henry, 92, passed away May 12, 2012, following a full and adventurous life. Born February 11, 1920 in Manhattan, he was the only child of

Henry Sherwood and Helen Murdoch, successful Broadway actors. During WW II Bob served 3 ½ years with the U.S. Army 8th Air Force Division as a top turret gunner and

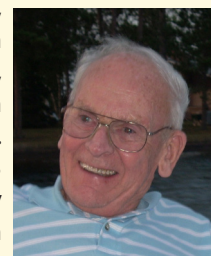
armament specialist. He participated in 30 aerial combat missions, including some of the deepest penetrations made by the 8th Air Force on targets in enemy occupied Europe. He was stationed in England in 1944 with a heavy bomber squadron known as the 389th Bombardment Group, and made his first operational flight on D-Day in the B-24 Liberator. He received six bronze stars for participation in major battles, and was awarded the Air Medal with three oak clusters, and the Presidential Unit Citation.



Bob Sherwood

Bob was deeply affected by the war, and in 2004 he wrote and published *Certified Brave*, a novel about his experiences and the men he fought alongside. After the war he met and married Fay Hines, a journalist who later became Executive Editor at "House & Garden" magazine.

Smith, Theodore Roth, 88, passed away on Sept. 19, 2012, at his home in Hot Springs Village, Ark. Ted was born in Superior, Wis. in 1924. In 1943 he married Lucy August, his high school sweetheart. He was a B-24 pilot.



Theodore Smith

Stellish, Wayne, 92, Cherokee, IA, died February 2, 2012. Wayne was assigned to the Signal Corps, 4th Station Complement Squadron. He attended school at the RAF Airfield Control School before assignment to the 306th BG at Thurleigh. When aircraft took off and landed at Thurleigh they passed over a small checked caravan trailer at the end of the main runway. This was Wayne's haunt for nearly three years to maintain visual contact with the airplanes taking off and landing. He was there to help when it was foggy, help aircraft lineup with the



Wayne Stellish

landing runway using flares or radio and gave Aldis lamp signals to planes without radios in operating condition. The second enemy, English weather, created immense problems and the little checked trailer has several B-17 near misses. Wayne became part of the occupational force in Germany.

Swindell, Charles W. (Bill), passed away August 2012. He was in the 385th Bomb Group and a perennial attendee at the 385th reunions. He was a photographer and made many pictures at the reunions which we all enjoyed.



Williamson, Dorothy McGuire, 84, of Paradise Valley, AZ. Dorothy teamed with sisters Christine and Phyllis for a string of hits in the 50s and 60s as the popular McGuire Sisters singing group. Dorothy is the wife of Lowell Williamson a supporter of the 8th AFHS as well as the Mighty Eighth Museum and

donated the original Pilots Interment panel from the Memphis Belle to the Museum.

Winegarner, Lloyd A., 87 of Dalton, passed away August 28, 2012. He was a POW for 365 days after his B-17 was shot down.

Zachar, William P., 93, Davenport, IA died July 3, 2012. Originally from Philadelphia, "Bill" was a crew chief with the 303rd Bomb Group and became one of the youngest master sergeants in the 8th Air force.



Lloyd Winegarner



Zachar, William P

Please send
ALL OBITUARIES
to be printed in this
Taps section of the 8th
Air Force News Magazine
to:

Donna Neely
2090 Cairo Bend Road
Lebanon, TN 37087
OR
donnajneely@gmail.com

HYMN TO A DEPARTED VETERAN WORDS BY HARVIN ABRAHAMSON

You fought in air, on land and sea.
You fought our fight for liberty,
In battles lost and battles won
Your courage shining as the sun.
Your inspiration and your pow'r
Sustained us through our shining hour.

You were our strength through weary days
Of conflicts long in every phase.
Old friends and new are gathered here
To say, "Good-bye" to someone dear.
Another comrades' passed away.
We wish him Godspeed on his way.

Your tour of duty's at an end,
As we say, "Thank you," Comrade, Friend.
To other worlds you now may soar,
Meet other comrades gone before.
Our prayers are with you in your quest.
God grant you now eternal rest.

Harvin Abrahamson, Chaplain
8th Air Force Historical Society
Wisconsin Chapter

(Former WWII B-17 Radio Operator/Waist
Gunner 837th Squadron
487th Bomb Group 8th Air Force
Lavenham, England)

Salute to WW II Veterans

"Over the hill" or under the sod
Remembered only by family and God
Are the sixteen million who saved this land
For God and country, they took a stand.

They fought a war to preserve our nation
Their battles unknown to this generation.
Few remember their victories or the terrible cost
Of a half million patriots whose lives were lost.

Never ignore history to be politically correct
Remember the sixteen million who stood to protect
Freedom of Religion and Democracy for the USA
Honor them all as they fade away!!!

James Lee Hutchinson 9-5-12
8th USAAF 490th BG

Please send all ARTICLES and PHOTOS to:

Donna Neely • 2090 Cairo Bend Road
Lebanon, TN • 37087
or
donnajneely@gmail.com.



John Curcio, North Bend, PA, B-24 Veteran with the 458th Bomb Group/754th & 753rd Bomb Squadrons, is proud to be an 8th Air Force Veteran. John displays his 8th Air Force collection through-out his front yard. Eighth Air Force flagpole, front yard stone and Painting (by Robert Calhoun).

Have a "Ho Ho Ho"
HOLIDAY



From your 8th
AFHS!!



THE JAMES CROW FILES

In past issues of the 8th AF News, we have published photos submitted for use from James Crow of Elmhurst, Illinois. He has an extensive collection of wartime photographs, many of the 8th Air Force in England and of interest to Historical Society members. Jim has assisted several Unit newsletters in presenting photos of their Group's airplanes.

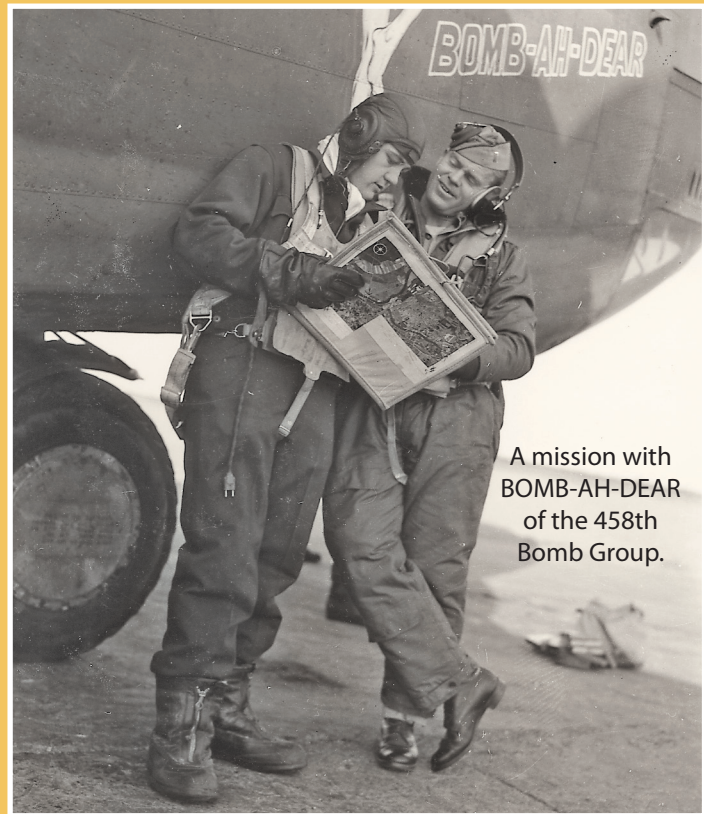
This issue features B-24s of the Second Air Division, many involving the work of the men of the Base Air Depots. Thank you Jim, for your generous contributions.



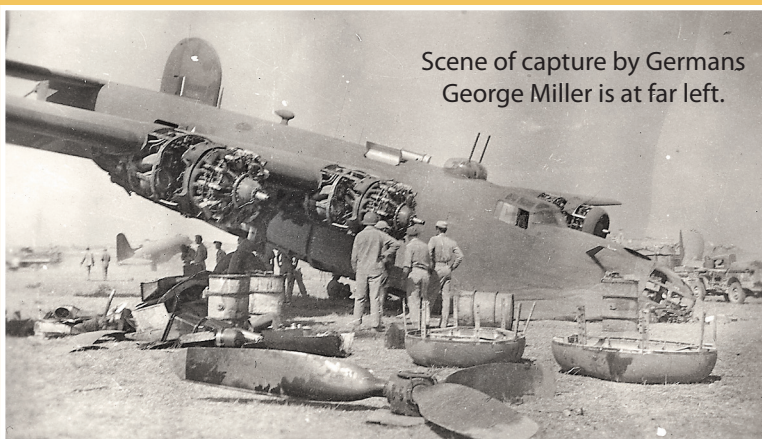
Crew of 467th BG's Witchcraft showing 120 missions. This B-24 totaled 131 missions, more than any other Liberator during the war.



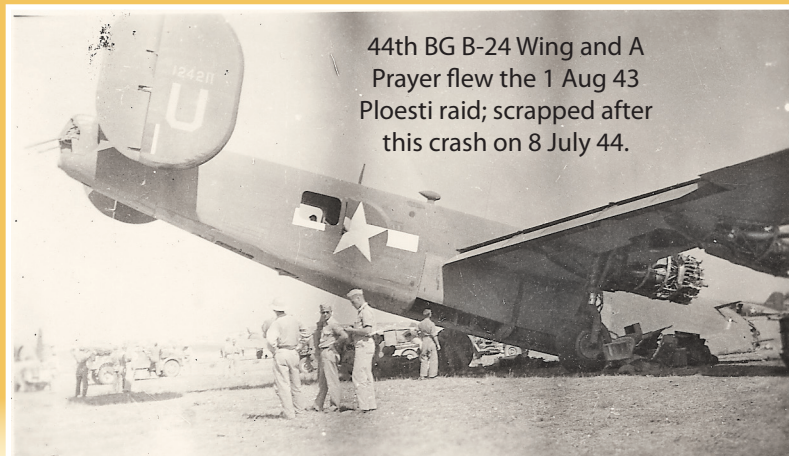
Lyndy - named after pilot Gerald Westcott's wife, Carolyn, of Columbia SC. In the photo is copilot Robert Reeves, killed on a 29 June 44 mission along with Westcott and four crewmen. Three others became POWs.



A mission with BOMB-AH-DEAR of the 458th Bomb Group.



Scene of capture by Germans George Miller is at far left.



44th BG B-24 Wing and A Prayer flew the 1 Aug 43 Ploesti raid; scrapped after this crash on 8 July 44.



Some nose wheel difficulties with the 458th BG's Little Lambsy Divey at Horsham St. Faith.



This Liberator landed at Woodbridge, England emergency field after the #2 propeller spun off, killing the crew's nosegunner and bombardier, 1944. Notice mission markings beneath pilot's window.



At Luneville, France, 1945 - the fabled B-24 wing of this 392nd BG aircraft is strong enough to support a Jeep and several groundcrew troops.



This 453rd BG B-24 was disassembled at Orly Field, France for display beneath the Eiffel Tower in 1945 note the tower supports in background.



Henry's Pride with Lt. Wallace Snedden. This 446th BG aircraft was shot down with a substitute crew in February 1944.

Order your CD or DVD's today!
Make checks payable to: 8th AFHS, P. O. Box 956, Pooler, GA 31322

START ENGINES - 50 YEARS LATER

Review By: Chip Dobson, Wing Commander, South Alabama Wing and Vice President, Alabama.

This DVD, originally produced in 1991 by the Society, is an overview of the history and operations of the 8th Air Force during World War II.

This film narrative is packed with remarkable interviews of more than three dozen 8th AF Veterans. Some of these airmen are legendary leaders and icons of the Mighty Eighth. They share

their insight and recollections of the most significant experiences of their lives. The accounts are interspersed with vintage photographs



and sometimes frightening film footage that graphically illustrates the savagery of aerial combat.

Their vivid and dramatic testimony will evoke the trepidation of the viewer, as if vicariously accompanying the aircrews on those dangerous missions over enemy territory.

\$20 donation for Start Engines 50 Years Later DVD

**Make checks payable to:
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\$20 includes shipping and handling



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Did you miss one of the last 8th AFHS reunions?

2007 – SYMPOSIUM: “The Big B”
 A historical analysis of the air raids over Berlin in early 1944.

Keynote Speaker: Jonna Doolittle Hoppes, Granddaughter of General Jimmy Doolittle, Commander, 8th AF 1944 – 1945

2008 – SYMPOSIUM:
 “Keep them flying”

The story of the 8th Air Force ground operations during WWII.
Keynote Speaker: Maj. Gen. F Dexter Tutor, Assistant to the Commander

Air Mobility Command Air National Guard.

2009 – SYMPOSIUM: POW’s

A discussion of treatment of airmen interned in Germany.
Keynote Speaker: Gil Cohen, Aviation Artist

2010 – THUNDER OVER MICHIGAN AIR SHOW

Seminar: “Target Berlin” with Mark Copeland.

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 Price includes Shipping and Handling**

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 Bill Curtis Video Production
 113 Wagonwheel Road
 Lawrence, KS 66049**

KINDNESS

In the late 1930's and early 1940's, the countries in Europe were being over-run by the military forces of Nazi Germany. These attacks were so decisive that in a short time, Germany and Italy had conquered almost all of Europe. Only two countries stood in their way from having total control over Europe and Africa, (1) Russia on the Eastern Front and (2) England in the west. Victory was clearly in the sights of the Axis powers, that is until Hitler made a crucial mistake, he declared war on the United States early in 1942 while he was also at war with Russia. It took time for England and the American forces to mobilize but when this happened, England was, within months, inundated with tens of thousands of airmen, troops and military hardware and supplies. The Brits had been under attack for years. Rationing and shortages of the necessities of life were evident everywhere. The war had utilized almost all of her manpower as well as the resources required for the population to survive. England was a bleak place and almost destitute. Its cities had been ravished, there were acute shortages of arms, armament and military supplies. The morale of the Brits was depressing.

Soon, the Americans began arriving. They had no combat experiences. They came to England with a swash-backing attitude, had attractive uniforms, were equipped with new military hardware, their bill-folds were filled with money which they freely spent and they had a positive happy-go-lucky attitude. This friendly invasion of Americans came into the cities and villagers filling the pubs and crowding out the locals, they over-ran the theatres, they seduced the local maidens and were generally looked upon as necessary baggage to defeat Hitler.

As both sides began the task of attacking the war together, a mutual bond of friendship emerged which lasted throughout the war years and has continued. It never ceases to amaze me that people living on two different continents have developed such a living close and lasting friendship. Friendship is not about being nice, it's about recognizing another human

being who deserves care and respect. It has been my privilege to 'cross the pond' several times with 8th Air Force Veteran organizations to celebrate special events. One outstanding occasion was when hundreds of Veterans, their wives and children descended on East Anglia to celebrate the Victory In Europe 50th (VE + 50) Anniversary. Flags of both countries waved along the parade route when the veterans of the 8th as well as veterans of different British military units marched past the reviewing stand. The long and colorful parade route lead to the Norwich Cathedral for a service of dedication and commemoration. There were trips to Madingley American Cemetery, 21 gun salutes, taps, feasts and gatherings for the various American Bomb Groups and the simultaneous lighting of victory torches across Britain. The bonds of friendship and kindness that developed are beyond description. Hundreds of expressions of kindness were shown. Everyone gave and everyone received. What an out-pouring of love and respect was shown to us on 'big occasions' like this!

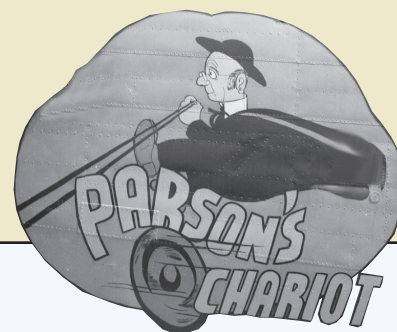
On Memorial Day 2012, we experienced what was called "a return to Attlebridge". On this nine day event, 3 Veterans, 6 daughters, 1 son, 2 sons-in-law and 1 cousin of the 466ers returned to Attlebridge. The three veterans declared that this was the best visit ever. They were proclaimed special guests. During their war-time experiences, (1) one parachuted from stricken aircraft twice, once in friendly and once in enemy territory. He spent the rest of the war in a POW camp, (2) one was seriously wounded and spent months healing in the 77th Base Hospital before he returned to combat status, and (3) one was wounded twice. We were not the macho-appearing-men as of the 1940 's but wherever we appeared, we were met with love, respect and honor. It was the Memorial Day Weekend and the week preceding Queen Elizabeth's Diamond Jubilee celebration. There was lots of flag waving. Our small group placed a floral wreath at Madingley American Cemetery, the following day a memorial service at Attlebridge Airfield with a full color guard was conducted followed by a tour of the old base including the



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runways, the headquarters building and the control tower. We were honored at the Memorial Library located in Norwich's Forum. We were hosted at teas at: (1) the old base control tower, (2) the headquarters of Bernard Matthew Farms, Ltd., (3) a former 'flak house', (4) Wymondham College and (5) the 389th Bomb Group's Museum at Hethel. Throughout the tour, we encountered wonderful, smiling, loving, accepting Brits who turned-out to greet, welcome and thank us. Across the years, this relationship has been mutual. We Vets relished their friendship and they in return lavished kindness and friendship upon us. Is all of this important? Yes, and it is essential for all of us to keep this lasting bond alive. Our wonderful children took part in this event. They went along to learn about their dad's macho youth and were now holding our walking cane, pushing our wheelchair, or steadying our walk on this journey. Three old Veterans were giving and receiving. Solomon, the wisest man that ever lived said. "A man that hath friends must show himself friendly but there is a friend that sticks closer than a brother." (Proverbs 18:24 KJV). How blessed we are to have the kindness of such friends!

Earl Wassom, 466th BG Chaplain, 8th AFHS





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