

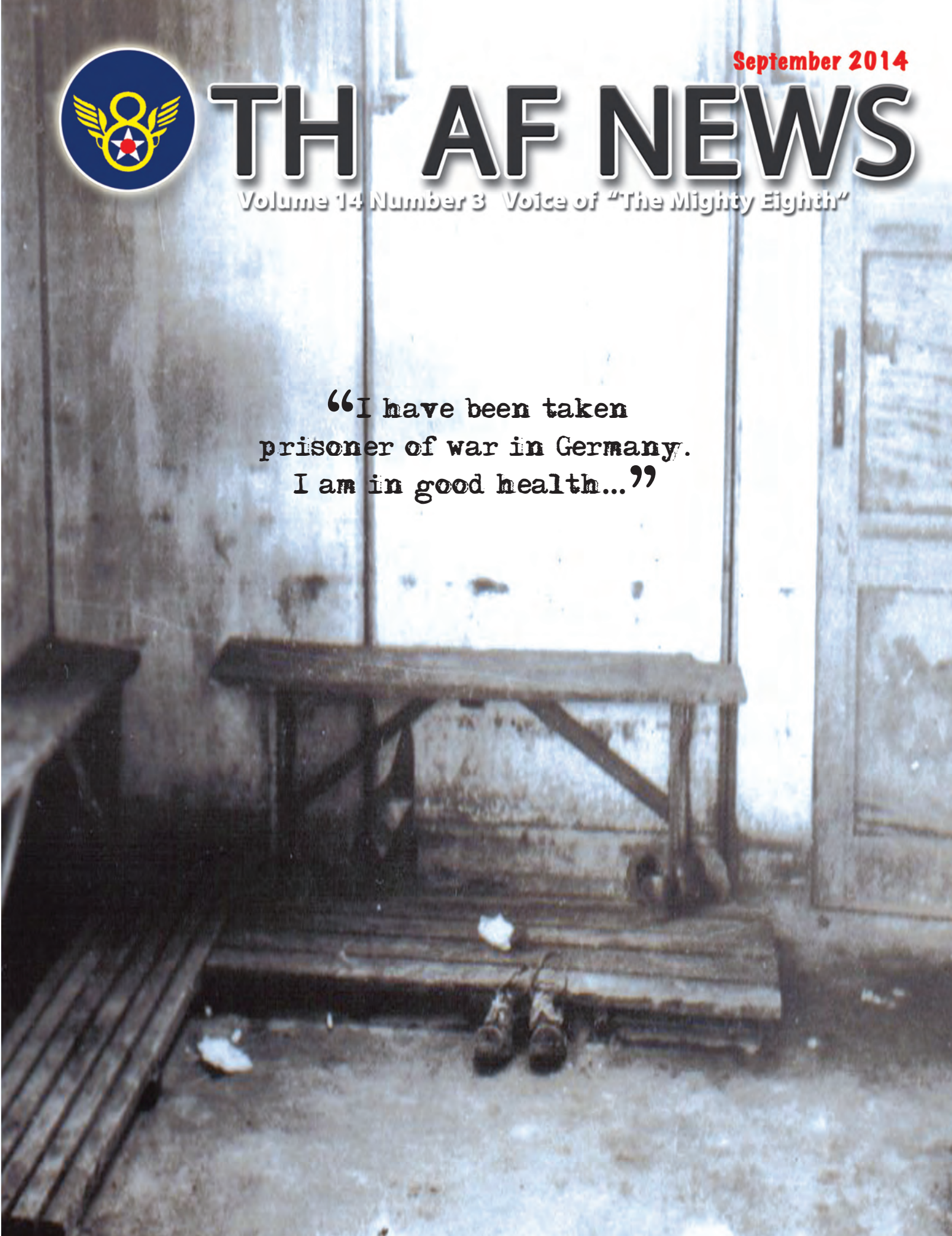


September 2014

TH AF NEWS

Volume 14 Number 3 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

**“I have been taken
prisoner of war in Germany.
I am in good health...”**





September 2014

TH AF NEWS

Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

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Notes From the President's Pen



As we enter the last month of summer it is pleasing to note that registrations for the 40th annual 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion are running well ahead of expectations. The interest has been so strong that we have had to secure additional rooms at an overflow hotel located near the reunion hotel: Holiday Inn Opryland/Airport which is within a mile of the Sheraton. This is a fine hotel and the group rate of \$109 is guaranteed. Free Shuttle service will also be provided for all attendees.

The Reunion committee chaired by Nancy Toombs and Debra Kujawa along with our Board has prepared a very interesting program and symposium following this year's theme of POWs and Escape & Evasion. This was a very emotional and life changing experience for nearly 30,000 members of the 8th Air Force during WWII. We are confident you will find this program equally emotional.

This summer has been a rather active time for me as I have been fortunate to remove two rather large items from my "bucket list". First, a 10 day trip to England to spend time with Gordon Richards and Brian Francis; second, was a 7 day trip up the Seine River on a river cruise to visit Normandy.

The Trip to England was outstanding.

Gordon and Brian made all the arrangements and we had a great day attending the Duxford Air Show—one of the finest such displays of aircraft in the world. We enjoyed VIP treatment and I had an opportunity to visit with the press and promote the Historical Society along with the National Museum.

Later that day I visited with the staff at the American Air Museum and discussed ways our Society might support and be a part of the Roger Freeman website which will launch during our Nashville reunion.

The following day, under Gordon's guidance, it was my honor to lay a wreath at the "Wall of the Missing" at the



Darrel D. Lowell
President

Maddingley Cemetery in Cambridge. Gordon and his deceased wife Connie have taken care of this duty for over 40 years. I must say it was indeed a moving and emotional experience to say the least.

This will be my last message to you as President. We will elect new officers at the Nashville Reunion. I have been honored and privileged to serve the Society for the past 8 years—7 as treasurer and this past year as president. All good things must come to an end and while I will miss not being directly involved as a member of the Board, I will continue to be a strong supporter of our mission.

This organization will be in good hands with

our new officers and Board and I am confident that as a Society, we will remain strong and viable for many years to come.

Darrel D. Lowell
President 8th AFHS



Editor's Message

COURAGE

Of all the words which readily come to mind in describing a character trait of anyone who served (or who still serves) in the 8th Air Force, *courage* has always been uppermost in my mind. I remember a phone conversation several years ago with the editor of a very well-known magazine which caters to Boy Scouts on the subject of *courage*. The editor wanted to publish a story in the magazine illustrating courage during WWII. Having had a conversation with M/Gen

Lew Lyle a few days earlier, I recalled the story he shared of Joe Jones [tail gunner with the 385th BG] and his experience of being trapped in the tail of his B-17 that had been literally torn apart in the sky—as it plummeted to Earth nearly 14,000 ft down. Joe survived with minor injuries. “So, he was just *lucky*,” replied the editor. “There was nothing courageous about that,” he added. Well, as they say, that’s when the fight began...

I unloaded both barrels; told him simply putting on the uniform of the 8th was, in itself, an act of courage. That climbing into ANY WWII aircraft carried with it a very high probability of NOT returning; of being shot down, captured, or worse. For the next several minutes he received a tutorial on hypothermia, anoxia, frostbite, flak, exhaustion, and I was just getting started. By the time I took the next breath I had hoped this ‘editor’ was a bit more knowledgeable on the subject of “courage” and the Mighty Eighth.

The ironic thing about real courage? It goes hand-in-hand with humility.

Through the years I have spoken with hundreds of WWII veterans and every single one of them possess that combination of courage and humility. They truly understand and “get it” that ego could get you and/or your crew killed. Bombers and fighters weren’t all that big and swelled heads definitely didn’t fit. A simple

One of the officers stopped
in front of me and asked:
“Casey, why did you join the Army?”
“To fight for my country, sir.”
Don Casey (at 18)
Navigator/POW 379th BG

less periods of desperation. Instead, it provided them an amazing inner strength to continue—often against seemingly insurmountable odds—to keep going even during the most horrendous situations and circumstance.

As many of you read through the stories in the **8th AF News**, you, too, will recognize the courage, feel the humility, and be inspired by the reality of it all. In each story you may recognize yourself, or a loved one, or friend, but know that within EVERY story, is that indestructible fiber that can NEVER be conquered, which truly is, the Mighty Eighth.

“Courage is being scared to death...and saddling up anyway.” ~ John Wayne

Debra Kujawa



Debra Kujawa

truth, but a crucial one.

Courage did not exempt any of these men from pain or heartache, loneliness, hunger, fatigue, and count-



8TH AF NEWS

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, a 501(c)3. The 8th AF NEWS is distributed to members of the Society and is not for public sale.

The home office is located at:

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REUNION UPDATE! Membership Minute

This just in...The Sheraton Music City—our reunion hotel—is now bursting at the seams! We've secured ample extra hotel rooms (at the reunion rate \$109 per night) with the Holiday Inn Opryland/Airport. It's very close to the Sheraton with FREE shuttle service! **Make your hotel reservations NOW: (615) 883-9770.** If you have not yet registered for the 40th Annual 8th AFHS Reunion in Nashville, please do it now!!

Call Armed Forces Reunions: (757) 625-6401

We are now on a space available basis, so DON'T wait!!! You won't want to miss:

The "(Movie) Memphis Belle" and the "Red Nose"

Phenomenal speakers:

- **Laura Edge**—"A Daughter's Search for Her Father's

Prisoner of War Story"

- **Edouard Renière**—World renowned expert on the Belgian Comète (Comet) evasion network

- **Dr. Steve Feimer**—Researcher, documentarian "Vietnam Veterans Still Coming Home: Their Stories in Their Words"

- **Yvonne Daley-Brusselmans**—"Belgium Rendez-Vouz 127—Revisited: Anne Brusselmans, • MBE—Resistance, WWII"



Debra Kujawa

Enjoy Nashville

Group Meetings and Rendezvous Dinner

Banquet Gala—Music and Dancing

October 9-13, 2014

Deb

For specific reunion schedules and registration details, please refer to the June 2014 issue of the 8th A F News magazine, or go online: www.8thafhs.org and click under 8thAFHS 2014 Reunion mid-way down the home page

Behind the Scenes



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

It's here! Our favorite time of the year - fall, football games, family gatherings & traveling to our 40th Annual 8th AFHS Reunion!!!!

We are counting down the days until we get the privilege to greet and meet with you during our reunion in Nashville, Tennessee!

Camera is charged and ready to take candid shots to be displayed in the upcoming *December 8th AF News* magazine.

Feel free to bring your camera and capture some great memories as well, to share and include in the next issue! Mail or email all reunion photos by November 1st.

2090 Cairo Bend Rd, Lebanon, TN 37087

This issue is packed full of very detailed "POW/Escape & Evasion" articles. You will want to sit back, read and appreciate all the sacrifices that were made and endured through many of these shared articles.

Several of your articles, have been reserved for future issues because of the "Prisoner Of War" coverage in this issue.

**"I have been taken
prisoner of war in Germany.
I am in good health..."**

Safe Travels & Enjoy the Fall weather
Sincerely,

Donna Neely & Telisha Gaines
donnajneely@gmail.com

PLEASE NOTE:

We welcome all of your stories!!!
Please include photos
& more photos!!!

ALL file formats are accepted

We encourage you to send
digital images WHEN possible.

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MATERIAL DEADLINE

November 15th, 2014
for the upcoming Dec. 2014
8th AF News magazine

McVay and the Mighty “Ikky Poo”

Kipling Louise McVay-Stubbs

This is the POW story of Birch G. McVay compiled by his daughter, Kipling Louise McVay-Stubbs, using military records, letters, news stories, a war journal, interviews, and memories. Birch served in the 95th Bomb Group, 334th Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force during WWII and retired with the rank of colonel from the Air Force Reserves. He was a lifetime supporter of “The Mighty Eighth”



Birch (Mac) G McVay

Birch G. McVay, nicknamed “Mac” by his crew, grew up in Cochran, Georgia, fascinated with planes. He built model planes, dreamed of becoming a fighter pilot, and worked part time at his Uncle Frank McVay’s drug store to pay for civilian pilot training.

On June 25, 1942, he enlisted as an aviation cadet in the Army Air Force. After attending Army Air Force Pre-Flight School at Maxwell Field and B-17 flight training in Blythesville, Arkansas, he was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant on May 28, 1943, at age 19. Assigned to the 95th Bomb Group, 334th Bomb Squadron, 8th Air Force, he came to believe that the B-17 was the best and most dependable plane ever made.

At Ellsworth Army Air Force Base in Rapid City, S.D., Birch contracted single pneumonia, and, not wanting to

lose his crew or schedule to England, resisted being hospitalized. Finally, he told the doctor that he would go in if they would put him on the ward “with the best looking nurses.”

In the hospital, bored with confinement, he worked on a model airplane. Gluing on wings and posting the plane to dry, unseen behind the raised head of the bed, a nurse came in and started to crank the bed back down. “Stop!” he cried out. “You’ll break my wings!” Seeing the nurse’s startled reaction, he played on it. Yes! He believed he had wings. The hospital psychiatrist saw the humor and dismissed it.

Almost underweight when he went into the Army, Birch convinced his doctor that his appetite would only improve with a daily milk shake, like those he served at McVay’s Drug Store. Word got around quickly about the spoiled but beguiling pilot with the charming Southern accent. Milkshakes were hand mixed by nurses excited to visit, except for one serious 1st Lt. Luthi, a farm girl from Hawley, MN. She earned her degree at Asberry School of Nursing in Minneapolis, joined the Army Nurse Corps, and trained at Camp Crowder in Missouri. Hilda Verdi Luthi was all business and ignored the flirtatious advances of the good looking young lieutenant. At one point, she “accidentally” left a mustard pack, part of his treatment, on his chest too long, burning Birch. That showed him!

One thing led to another so that when Birch was discharged, he started dating Lt. Luthi, whom he called “Lu”. Other suitors were dispatched, including one he literally threw out of the nurses’ barracks one evening when Birch brought steaks to share. On April 8, 1944, with airmen buddies and nurse



Birch and Hilda McVay

friends in attendance, Birch and Hilda were married wearing their military uniforms in the First Methodist Church chapel, Omaha, NE.

The waiting to fly off to war continued. Many grew impatient, as B-17’s were in short supply and each needed a ten man crew. Many knew Birch had flown cross country and responded positively the day he came into the mess hall and said, “Hey boys, how’d you like to get on a crew?”

In short order, the newly-formed crew consisted of McVay, pilot; Lt. Charles O’Brien, co-pilot; Lt. David R. Kile, navigator (added by Headquarters); Lt. John W. Dugan, bombardier; Sgt. Vincent Blazquez, tail gunner; Sgt. Jasper Clyde Crowley, left waist gunner; Sgt. Carl Slivinski, engineer; Sgt. Robert J. “Bob” Belisle, ball turret gunner; Sgt. Edwin E. “Eddie”

Sopolski, right waist gunner; and Sgt. Gilbert R. Frazier, radio operator.

Before long, Birch and Hilda were expecting a child, something for McVay to think about after the crew left for England. In letters home, Birch expressed his thoughts regarding words to music he heard on the radio. Aug. 3: *"It's love, love, love, as they sing over the radio. Imagine starting on a family tree. We did, didn't we?"* August 14: *"Don't let your sis kid you. Even if you do swell up, you will always be my sweetheart, and you will always remain beautiful to me."* August 31: *"Slivinski beat me to it. He became a father before I did."* October 22: *"To the best of my knowledge, I should know in about two months whether I will be a father or a mother. All joking aside though, it doesn't matter too much whether it is a girl or a boy."*

The crew was stationed at a little airbase outside the village of Horham. Lonesome Birch wrote Hilda daily, declaring his love, noting the number of hours there was sunlight, expressing how her presence in his life was the best thing that had ever happened to him, and enumerating the rationed items which he needed, most importantly, chocolate. Later he would say that he always took a chocolate bar on missions for good luck.

July 24's letter told Hilda that they would be gone for two weeks and *"then we start in with the big league."* One could return home then after 25 missions. *"Well, I hope it won't be too long before I get back and with you where I belong. I want to tell you again, as I have a thousand times, I love you, my love."*

July 29: *"Greenwald, a pilot whom I met, is in my barracks here. He has in 33 missions. It sure is funny or rather pathetic to see guys you know who are almost through and you are only starting. By the way, we have to complete 35 missions now."*

August 2: *"Today I got my first ride out. It was a test hop. I was up with the operations officer, Capt. Harris. He took me, my N, E, and R [navigator, engineer, and radioman] up. We only buzzed around the countryside. This is a very pretty country from the*

air, as well as from the ground. It is so quaint. Everything is cut in very small patterns." [In the same letter, he writes how his left waist gunner, Sopalski, was taken off of his crew.] *"They are using 9 man crews now."*

Many thought Birch was the best at landing and had a particular knack for short approach landings. With typical English weather, one had to know where the runway was and get lined up right. Birch's co-pilot, O'Brien, had difficulty lining up so Crowley told him to try what Mac did, circle the field to get a mental picture of the runway to line up, roll to the end of the runway, and make a U turn. "Birch somehow knew what to do in his mind. He envisioned it," said Crowley.

August 5: [Birch reported that he went up for three hours, "a little practice."] *"I sure hope we start in pretty soon. I'm tired of sitting around. I want to get in the big league and put some ball games in."* [Ball games referred to bombing missions.] August 30: *"I am really tired tonight. We played ball today. It was quite a game, rough I mean, and as usual no one was hurt."* August 31: *"It seems that practice for us never ends. We were supposed to drop practice bombs today, but couldn't because of clouds. It isn't much different than regular phase training in the states except that at times people shoot at us."* September 2: [He thanks Hilda for sending more candy and added:] *"We were in a ball game yesterday. We made 7 runs. We have a good team."*

On August 27, Birch reported that he and some of his crew, Dugan, Kile, Frazier, Belisle, and Blasque, finally got to London for some sightseeing and to attend plays. The letter indicated how close he was with his crew members and how responsible he felt for them.

On September 12, he explained to Hilda that the ships they flew had all been named. *"We usually fly a different one every mission. We've flown in 'Screaming Eagle,' 'Shoo Shoo Baby,' 'Ikky Poo,' 'Wrinkled Belly Baby,' and others."*

Birch, who made 1st lieutenant on September 14, was known for being "gung ho" about taking missions and volunteering. It was no surprise that he

and his crew volunteered for a major relief mission in Poland. On September 18, they were part of a squadron loaded not with bombs but with supplies for the Polish resistance Home Army (Armia Krajowa), the underground forces fighting in a major operation known as the Warsaw Uprising.

The "Drop Supply" flight was considered a suicide mission. With insufficient fuel to return to England, they had to count on a friendly reception to land and refuel in Russia. They landed at a clandestine airstrip in a wheat field near Kiev. After refueling and a short stay, the B-17s went on to Italy where Birch's 21st birthday was celebrated refueling and arming for a bombing mission on the way back to England.

Birch later volunteered to be part of a seven plane night navigational training on November 6, 1944. The student navigator was Edward Fetherston. The planes would carry no bombs and have a stripped down crew. Birch asked for volunteers from his own crew, and O'Brien, Kile, Slivinski, Blazquez, and Frazier agreed to go.

The only plane left that night was *"Ikky Poo,"* B-17G, 42-31760. Clyde Crowley referred to it as a "war weary plane," a "bag of bolts," because it was missing so many parts. They left about 7:25 PM and, as they took off, Birch remembered that he left his lucky chocolate bar in the barracks.

The radio operator called for a bearing at 2030, the last the ground ever heard from them. At 2030 the Weather Officer reported a change in weather conditions and all aircraft were recalled immediately. No acknowledgment was received from *Ikky Poo* because the radio had gone out. An overdue aircraft message was sent to the 3rd Bomb Division Flying Control at 2143. At 2330, the Royal Observer Corps reported such an aircraft in the Norwich area, at 2340 in the Thetford area, and at 0030 near London.

With 2700 gallons of fuel, enough to travel until daylight, in a plane with missing parts, no radio, and navigational failure, the crew became lost and flew into the Continent and over Holland when the fuselage near the right empenage was hit by 40 mm flak. With the

plane damaged and running out of fuel, Frazier and Blazquez parachuted out. The plane was almost to Poland when they had to make an emergency landing.

Around daylight, at 0645, Birch spotted a place to land and put *Ikky Poo* down on a snow covered runway at the Recon Training Airport, Kottbus (Cottbus), Germany, ironically, 53 miles from Stalag Luft III where he would eventually end up. The runway was short but manageable, or at least it appeared so. Unfortunately, the snow concealed a deep ditch, and *Ikky Poo* was greatly damaged, an 80% loss and caught fire.

Despite its "war weary" condition, *Ikky Poo* did manage to fly on engines that had far too many hours on them. Its crew was captured but had only minor injuries. The well-worn plane's days were over, but it had done its job.

The crew was taken off for interrogation. Because he was a squadron leader, Birch was roughly interrogated by the local military, beaten, and kept sitting on the snow so long, he developed frostbite of the buttocks. He was again interrogated in Oberursel, Germany, near Frankfurt, then separated from his remaining crew and sent to Stalag Luft III.

Back in Horham, George R. Myers, chaplain at the 95th Bomb Group Headquarters, wrote to Hilda on November 14, "*The men of this group have asked me to convey to you their deep regret that your husband, 1st Lt. George B. Birch Jr., ASN 0-803842, is missing.*" In a later letter to Hilda to explain information sent to her, Chaplain Myers wrote, "*The mystery of how your husband could be [as described] 'missing over England' is explained by the fact that he and his crew were on a night navigational practice mission, from which they failed to return. Sometime after they took off, they radioed back to the field, asking for directions. They were not heard from again.*"

The adjutant general sent Hilda a notice on December 20, 1944, that

Birch "*was a prisoner of war of the German government.*" Years later, in telling his story, Birch would smile weakly and say that he had been a "*guest of the German government.*"

November 13: A pre-printed postcard to Hilda stated, "*I have been taken prisoner of war in Germany. I am in good health. We will be transported from here to another camp within the next few days. Please don't write until I give new address. Kindest regards.*" In Birch's hand printing were his name, rank, and branch of service which he gave as "Air Corps."

Careful not to offend his captors, a

with a group of British officers, older and wiser, but all intent on escaping. To make an escape, high school French wouldn't be enough. He had to learn German. One Brit in the group took responsibility for teaching it. A German book was used when they were able to sit at the table with him. The instructor spent a lot of time with Birch and his heretofore charming Southern accent. One day, as the Brit sat across from Birch and listened to him recite, the teacher somberly and sadly looked at him, closed the book, shoved it across the table, and said, "Mac, you don't speak German with a Southern accent!"

As time passed, Birch wondered about his expected child, and he inquired cryptically about it in a letter postmarked December 1944, received by Hilda on February 16, 1945.

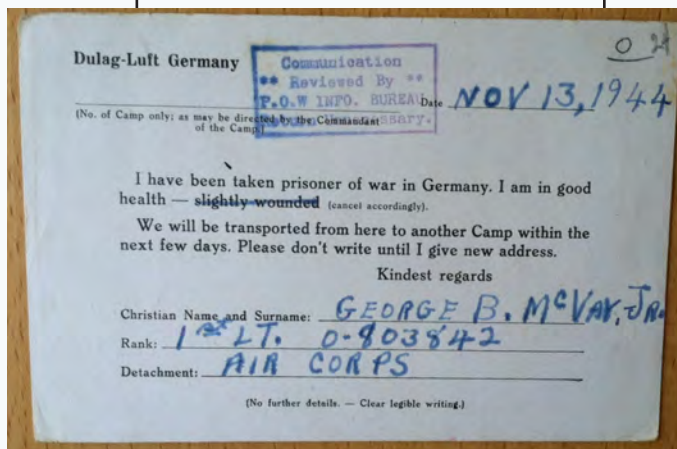
"Dearest Lu, if I remember correctly, this is about the date of our expectations. I hope to be home soon to see the outcome of things. I hope you are in good health and feeling fine. At the present I am in good health except for a slight cold. We still get enough to eat, that is,

enough to live on. The most of it comes from the Red Cross."

Meanwhile, back home, Mary Elizabeth McVay was born on December 26, at Miller Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota, her lungs too weak to breathe. She died the next day. Distraught over the loss of her baby and her husband being a POW, Hilda was not allowed to leave the hospital for the funeral.

With Russians closing in from the east, Hitler gave an order to move the prisoners to avoid their release by the Russians. His plan was to take them south to use as hostages for negotiation, failing that, they would be killed. At the end of January 1945, Birch was among those marched out of Sagan 52 miles to Spremberg, then loaded onto filthy train cars and taken to Moosburg. On April 29, 1945, the 14th Armored Division of General George S. Patton's Third Army liberated the captured prisoners, and they were eventually processed home.

April 30, 1945: "*Dearest Lu, It is a nice feeling to be full again. We were*



letter sent to his parents and published in the Cochran newspaper read, "*Dear Mom and Dad: Just a line to let you know that I am OK and in good health. We get enough food to live on, most of it comes from the Red Cross. They also furnished us with winter clothes. We all hope to be home soon. Love, Birch.*"

The lack of food is clear in a letter sent from Stalag Luft III, received by Hilda on February 8, 1945. "*Arrange, through Red Cross, to send some food parcels. Concentrated food, heavy chocolate, sac. tabs, and dehydrated stuff, nothing fancy, also vitamin tablets, tooth brush and paste.*" Hilda wrote back and paid for packages to be sent by the Red Cross every time allowed but, by the time they arrived, Birch would have been on the forced march to the rail station in Spremberg, Germany, to board the box cars there that would take him to Moosburg, Germany, Stalag VII-A. Germany's delivery system, so late in the war, was in disarray and he never got any of them.

At Stalag Luft III, Birch had been



McVay Crew

liberated yesterday about noon. The old Stars and Stripes is the best sight I've seen in many a day. If reports are true, we will be home in about 3 weeks. We all hope so. It can't come too soon to suit us. There's so much I want to say and can't. I'll be able to tell you in about 3 weeks though. Love, Birch."

Birch arrived back in the USA on May 24, 1945, received rest and relaxation in Miami, Florida, was relieved from active duty at the rank of captain on August 5. He joined the Air Force

Reserves, eventually retiring at the rank of colonel.

In June, 2006, the baby Birch had never known, Mary Elizabeth, was disinterred and moved from Minnesota to Cherokee County, Georgia, where a service was held, attended by her still-grieving parents, Hilda and Birch, before interment at the Georgia National Cemetery. They eventually had two more children and enjoyed 62 years of marriage before Hilda's death in November 2006.

Over the years, Birch kept up with his crew, visited when possible, and traditionally called each at Christmas. After he passed away in 2012, his surviving crew members served as honorary pallbearers. The program noted his numerous civilian and military accomplishments, including his many military medals, but none meant as much to him as the loyalty and friendship of the members of his B-17 crew.

Mother's evening out with Clark Gable

My father, Major Harold C. Smelser, had gone missing in action off the coast of France on Monday, November 23, 1942. His plane had been shot down off the coast of Brittany during a raid on the submarine pens of St. Nazaire. He was commander of a B-17 squadron, the 324th from the 91st Bombardment Group based at Bassingbourn in England.

Two days after Thanksgiving Day, my mother, Mary Laraway Smelser, answered the door to be handed a telegram with the news that my father was missing.

In early 1943, Clark Gable was briefly posted to Fort Wright, west of Spokane, for gunnery training before deployment to England. After the death of Carole Lombard, he had volunteered for duty and completed basic training elsewhere. In Spokane, Gable had a suite at the Davenport Hotel, going every day straight to the gunnery range to avoid local fans and invitations.

Rumor had it that every woman in town wanted to meet him. Now my father had been stationed through the fall of 1941 at Fort Wright and had known the base commander, General Robert Olds (whose wife incidentally was Gore Vidal's mother).



So it was thought that Mother might be cheered up if Gable could escort her out for an evening at the officers' club.

Initially Mother hesitated, saying she did not want to be criticized, but she was finally persuaded to go ahead. Mother said she wore a black dress with high heels, a red turban, and a minkcoat loaned to her by her cousin Aileen Lindsay, with whom we were staying while her husband, a doctor in the army, was stationed in Alaska.

After a friend of Mother and her date, a colonel, arrived, they drove across the Spokane River out to Fort Wright which lay on a low bluff along the river. First they stopped for cocktails at the current general's quarters, a large red brick house on officers' row.

When Gable arrived, he and Mother were introduced and drinks were served. After several drinks and some chatting, the general said they should go on over to the club for dinner. As Gable helped Mother on with her coat, he said "May I look after you tonight, Mrs. Smelser."

The group walked along snow-shovelled sidewalks to the officers' club which had been newly constructed out of logs and overlooked the icy river.

The club was packed, full of officers, local non-military members and guests. When Gable entered, like a cliché, all heads turned to get a look. The general led them to a table by a big rock fireplace in the main room near the orchestra. Before ordering their meals, Gable volunteered to get the drinks.

At the bar, he had to wait and wait just like all the other officers. When he returned, he asked Mother to dance. She said she could feel women watching with envy. When they sat down, he offered Mother a cigarette, pulling out a case engraved from Carole Lombard.

During dinner Gable asked Mother more about my father's status. He said he'd also be going over to the war soon. From time to time, Gable was introduced to other officers. Then a lady came rushing up to the table. With great excitement she said she worked at the Red Cross where she loudly said "We are making itty-bitty bandages for your big chest," poking him hard there. "Oh shit," Gable said under his breath to Mother. "Let's get out of here."

Mother suggested coming back

to where we were staying for scrambled eggs, an idea that appealed to him. So Mother, Gable, and Mother's friends bid goodbye to the general and his wife and drove back through the snow to the house on the South Hill.

Once there, the four of them talked quietly as Mother's cousin was in bed. After scrambled eggs and coffee, and time to hold me up from my crib, Gable said he needed to go back to the Davenport Hotel but would take a taxi. Saying goodbye, he encouraged mother not to lose hope, saying "When your old man comes back, you're welcome at my place anytime."

The next morning, when Mother's cousin found out that Clark Gable had been in the house while she slept, she was furious! Quickly word got around town and the phone rang off the hook. "Who are you..." women said. But they did not know that my father was missing in action.

In years to come, Mother would say that Gable was a gentleman but that he sure had a salty vocabulary!

Laurence L. Smelser
Son of Major Harold C. Smelser
Portland, Oregon
(Copyright 2014)

Editor's note: Gable spent most of 1943 in England at RAF Polebrook with the 351st Bomb Group. Gable flew five combat missions, including one to Germany, as an observer-gunner in a B-17 between May 4 and September 23, 1943, earning the Air Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross for his efforts. During one of the missions, Gable's aircraft was damaged by flak and attacked by fighters, which knocked out one of the engines and shot up the stabilizer. In the raid on Germany, one crewman was killed and two others were wounded, and flak went through Gable's boot and narrowly missed his head.



A MIGHTY 8TH RIDE IN PARIS

By Darrel Lowell



During my recent trip

to Paris my daughter and I had the opportunity to visit the Eiffel Tower. As we were heading back to our boat on the river a young man approached us offering a ride in his pedicab (a kind of bike powered rickshaw). He was rather insistent saying that we needed to at least see his taxi. Why would I want ride in his taxi when the river was close by? "You wait and see," he said. As you can see from the photos, this young man's pedicab, "Bombing Babe," was indeed very special. Guess it was my 8th Air Force cap that caught his attention!

Final word, if any of you ever find yourself at the foot of the Eiffel Tower, take a second to see if this young man is quite literally, peddling his wares!



LT. GENERAL E.G. "BUCK" SHULER, JR., RECEIVES HONORARY DEGREE



From left to right; Lt. Gen. John W. Rosa, USAF, Ret., President of The Citadel; Lt. Gen. W. Michael Steele, USA, Ret., Chairman of the Board of Visitors; Lt. Gen. E.G. "Buck" Shuler, Jr., USAF, Ret.; B/G Sam Hines, South Carolina Militia, Provost & Dean of The Citadel.

The Citadel Board of Visitors presented an honorary degree of Doctor of Aerospace Science to retired Air Force Lt. General E.G. "Buck" Shuler, Jr., during commencement exercises for the South Carolina Corps of Cadets on Saturday, May 10, 2014.

Gen. Shuler was commissioned in the U.S Air Force after graduating from the Citadel in 1959 with a degree in Civil Engineering.

During his 32 year Air Force Career, Gen. Shuler accrued more than 7,600 flying hours, flying 107 fighter combat missions in Vietnam as well as 17 combat support sorties in the Korean Pueblo Crisis, Panama's Operation Just Cause, and the first Persian Gulf War.

He also commanded two non-tactical squadrons, two B-52 bombardment wings, two SAC Air Divisions, is a past commander of the Eighth Air Force and served as the director of operations for the Strategic Air Command.

Gen. Shuler served as chairman of the board and chief executive officer of the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force and was responsible for the museum's construction and operational status. He continues to serve on the board as vice chairman and serves on the board of the Eighth Air Force Foundation.



WORLD WAR II WEEKEND

By David Nowack

This year's 70th anniversary of the June 6th D-Day invasion coincided with the start of the Mid Atlantic Air Museum's 24th annual "World War II Weekend" (WWIIWE). The weekend was dedicated to those who took part in that epic event. The Reading, PA airport is the site for WWIIWE. Appropriate since, during the war, the airport served as a location to prepare B-24 bombers for the trip overseas to England. The weekend honors those who served in the war and is an annual fund-raiser for the Museum.

As a three day event, the weekend is chock-full of living history. Nominally meant to represent an English World War II airfield, it actually hosts well over 1,000 reenactors who portray several nationalities and branches of the military. Visitors can watch soldiers drill (the Scots with their bagpipes draw a lot of attention), walk through encampments and see authentic equipment and weaponry, listen to veterans talk about their experiences, and much more.

Once one walks through the entrance gates, all you see is World War II. Several times a day there are mock battles in a reconstructed French village. Various units put on presentations that recreate WWII experiences. An Army Air Force unit recreates a mission briefing from an actual mission. Following the "mission", they then portray a "wounded airman" scenario where the wounded airman is carried from an aircraft to a field hospital where he receives medical attention.

On Saturday and Sunday, there is a 3 hour airshow featuring World War II era aircraft. This year, guests had the opportunity to see one of only two flying

B-24 bombers as well as a B-17, several B-25s, various fighters, training aircraft and transport aircraft. Particular favorite activities included a flame thrower demonstration and a recreation of the flag raising at Iwo Jima.



It is amazing what one can do with an airplane hangar. One is converted to a very authentic looking civilian house of the era. Many people have commented that it looks like their grandparents' house. My own responsibility is managing the Officers' Club which is another converted hangar styled as a typical O-Club on an 8th Air Force base. There is an authentic looking bar, a camouflage net covering the performance stage, and a wall that replicates the wall at Ridgewell, home to the 381st Bomb Group. The O-Club hosts the weekend's entertainment. There are top-notch impersonators of Abbott and Costello, Frank Sinatra, and the Andrews Sisters. Female vocalist Theresa Eaman rounds out the entertainment. Fashions are also in vogue as the Victory Society mounts a fashion show of authentic 40s clothing.



Friday and Saturday nights feature big band dances in the main airplane hangar, just like ones held on the English air bases.



WWIIWE has proven to be very popular since its creation 24 years ago. Over the years, many veterans have come to reminisce about their experiences in their youth. The event is held each year on the first full weekend in June (next year June 5-6-7). If you are near eastern Pennsylvania at that time, stop in. You will enjoy a very memorable show!



8th AFHS Board Of Directors Nominees



G. Dennis Leadbetter
B/General, USAF
(Retired) - # 25733

Dennis Leadbetter served in the US Air Force on both active and reserve duty for over 35 years. His last assignment was Assistant to the Commander, Headquarters 8th Air Force, Barksdale AFB. He retired at the rank of Brigadier General.

Dennis has been involved in all facets of the 8th Air Force activity in Savannah for over 20 years. He is a founding member of the American Air Museum in Britain; The World War II Museum {New Orleans}, both the Nimitz and Pacific Aviation Museums of Pearl Harbor; and continues to be a Life Member of the 8th Air Force Historical Society.

Leadbetter has served on the Board of Directors of the Birthplace Chapter and is a past president. He has worked in numerous activities of the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force serving for over 10 years as a volunteer docent.

Dennis embraces several passions, among which are: collecting cars—including vintage and imports; real estate investments; and growing and developing local businesses.

Because he believes the Historical Society faces many serious challenges during the next several years, Dennis feels strongly that his experience and background will serve as an invaluable voice in moving the Society forward.

Nominated by Darrel D. Lowell - # 33567



Dr. Nancy Toombs - # 762550

Nancy Toombs currently serves as vice president and immediate past president of the Society and vice president and fundraising chair for the 493rd Memorial BG Association. She is an associate member of the Eaker Chapter of the DFC Society, member of the following museums: Wings of Honor, Walnut Ridge, AR; the Jacksonville Museum of Military History, Jacksonville, AR; and the WWII Museum, New Orleans, LA.

An avid collector of WWII memorabilia with special interest in shoulder sleeve insignia and WWII Cadet Uniforms and insignia, Nancy is a member of the American Society of Military Insignia Collectors, The Association of American Military Uniform Collectors—and frequently contributes to these publications—the Arkansas Military Vehicle Preservation Association and the Experimental Aircraft Association. She is actively working with the Project Leader of The American Air Museum in Britain, Duxford, England, to assist in the identification of 8th Air Force veterans and memorabilia that will be used in museum exhibits.

Nancy's passion is the preservation of all things related the WWII and anyone who has read her "Keeping the Show on the Road" articles knows how tirelessly she works to keep the subject of donation on everyone's mind. Her goal is to preserve the stories, sacrifices, and memories of the men of the Mighty Eighth for future generations through maintaining displays of personal artifacts, collecting oral histories, pictorial reviews, and sharing the legacy of these heroes with generations to come.

What remains of the heavy bomber airfields in England after 70 plus years is the subject of Nancy's book-in-progress. After 33 years, she still practices behavioral medicine 50 hours a week, still finds time to chase B-17s—catching a ride on occasion—and flying a Piper Tomahawk on a nice spring day.

Nominated by David J. Nowack - # 36652

Voting for the 8th AFHS Board of Directors positions will take place at the General Membership Meeting during the 40th Annual 8th AFHS Reunion in Nashville, TN

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PROPOSED BY-LAW CHANGE

The Board of Directors has approved the following by-law change and recommends its approval by the membership at the General Membership meeting at the Nashville reunion in October.

CURRENT BY-LAW

12.2.2 The Audit Committee will conduct at least one audit of the Treasurer's Office every two years and perform such other audit duties as assigned by the President and the Board

of Directors.

PROPOSED BY-LAW

12.2.2 The Finance Committee will consist of the Treasurer and one additional Board member to be appointed by the President. It will arrange for an independent Compilation and Review of the Society's accounts to be performed each year. It will arrange for and review the preparation of any tax returns prior to filing. It will also monitor the performance of the investment portfolio and recommend

changes to the Executive Committee for approval. The Committee shall also perform such other duties as assigned by the President and the Board of Directors.

REASON FOR CHANGE: With the increasing importance of the investment portfolio to the Society, the review of its performance should be formalized. The current by-law is also silent regarding responsibility for the Society's tax return. The name change reflects the other recommended changes.

BIRTHPLACE CHAPTER

The Birthplace Chapter had a great experience at our monthly dinner meeting, attended by 80 people, including guests from The Landings, as well as veterans from Sun City.

Marylyn Sweeney Howe, daughter of Maj. Gen. Charles W. Sweeney, and her husband, Brian, gave a slide presentation, followed by a video, narrated by Maj. Gen. Sweeney. Sweeney was the only pilot in command to fly both missions over Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ending WWII. Then Maj. Sweeney, flew his AC, "The Great Artiste" AC 89, in formation with the "Enola Gay" and Paul Tibbets on the Hiroshima mission, dropping instruments simultaneously with the uranium "Little Boy" bomb. Then, he was the pilot dropping the plutonium bomb, "Fat Man", on Nagasaki in "Bockscar" AC 77. AC 89 was already rigged with delicate measuring instruments so it was used by Capt. Bock for that purpose.

The two events were August 6 and August 9, 1945. If the Japanese didn't surrender after the first bomb, it was vital that they believed that we had an unlimited supply of atomic bombs and would continue to use them. That, of course, was not the case.

Sweeney was in the right place at the right time. He was stationed at Eglin in Florida when Paul Tibbets arrived with a B-29. The 29 was being tested for gunnery systems and for its future use of dropping the bomb. Sweeney requested, and was granted permission, to join Tibbets group because of his love of the B-29 and his flying experience. Massive training followed and, of course, was extremely guarded and top secret. Even CO, Frank Armstrong, ranking above Tibbets, was uninformed of the purpose of this training.

On August 6, the first mission to Hiroshima went exactly according to plan and practice, to the delight of all involved. The mission under the command of Sweeney was a different story. The date, August 9, became critical as long range weather forecasts indicated poor and deteriorating weather over the intended targets. This prompted many decisions. The bomb, "Fat Man", 1000 pounds heavier than "Little Boy",



Marylyn Sweeney Howe & Birthplace Chapter President, Bob Buck

had to be armed before takeoff, unlike the bomb used for Hiroshima. This presented a problem as an accident on takeoff could eliminate the island Tinian, their base of operation. Several B-29s had crashed on takeoff the day before.

A 600 gallon tank of fuel was installed in the rear of the bomb bay and it was discovered before takeoff that the fuel was not transferable, so they had the weight but no useable fuel. It was also discovered a photo technician had no parachute, therefore, by regulation was forced off the Col. Hopkins photo AC causing their delayed departure. Sweeney's takeoff was successful, but then about 4 hours into the mission, around 7:00 a.m., a red warning light on the bomb's fuse monitor started flashing which meant the firing circuits were closed and some of the fuses had been activated. Options were to jettison the bomb or rely on the Weaponers to correct the problem very quickly. If the timing fuse had been activated, they had about 43 seconds to find the problem and fix it. They found that someone on the ground had placed 2 rotary switches in the wrong position, causing the malfunction. So the switches were flipped back and a disaster avoided and monitoring resumed.

Sweeney arrived exactly on time at rendezvous point of 30,000 feet at 07:45, but no sign of the photo aircraft. After waiting over a half hour, using valuable fuel, and a no-show from the photographic AC, Sweeney departed for the primary target, Kokura. Smoke covered that target and after making 3 passes, he decided to go to the alternate, Nagasaki.

Clouds cleared, and a visual successful drop of "Fat Man" occurred. During the confusion at the rendezvous point, the photo plane broke radio silence against orders with Hopkins saying, "Has Sweeney aborted?", which was unfortunately heard as "Sweeney aborted", which then cancelled air-sea rescue for the return trip. "Bockscar" estimated their fuel supply was 50 miles short of an alternate landing at Okinawa. However, Sweeney, using step-by-step altitude reduction and great flying, made it with about one minute of flight time remaining and an estimated 7 gallons of fuel. He met with Doolittle who was at Okinawa with the 8th AF at that time, and actually used Doolittle's communication system to contact Tinian. Even with all of these problems, it was miraculous that Sweeney and his dedicated crew could pull off this successful mission which finally ended the war with Japan.

In 1994, the Smithsonian and others, obviously not familiar with the atrocities of the Germans and Japanese, began to indicate WE were the aggressors using the bombs to end the war, when an invasion of Japan may have only cost the US 250,000 casualties, a very low number by all accounts. Veterans groups protested and that prompted Chuck Sweeney to write his book "War's End". The book is great reading if you haven't done so.

Our speaker, Marylyn Howe, is also widely known for her devoted work with late-deafened adults, disabilities, volunteerism and other community service.

**Bob Buck, President
Birthplace Chapter, 8th AFHS
Savannah, GA**

FLORIDA CHAPTER

The Florida Chapter of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Historical Society held its Spring Meeting in the "Sweetest Little City in America", Clewiston, Florida, Armed Forces Day weekend. Clewiston is so named because of all the sugar that is grown and processed in the area at the south end of Lake Okeechobee. The officers and board of directors meeting was held on Friday afternoon. In attendance were



**Florida Chapter Board Members, Chapter Officers and Attendees
after Friday's Board and Officers meeting**

President Bill Uphoff, Vice-President Jim Hart, Secretary Esther Cheriff, as well as board members Ken Sweet, Mark Norman, Bernie Silverblatt, Nic Apostol, and Sid Katz. Warren Klein could not attend due to health concerns and Treasurer Alex Acuti did not attend due to pressing business matters. Esther Cheriff read the minutes from the previous meeting and Ken Sweet read the treasurers report in Acuti's absence. Topics of conversation included recruiting new members, getting more money into the treasury and procedures for processing those new members into the chapter, including a welcome letter and perhaps publishing their names in the Chapter newsletter. Nic Apostol has taken on the task of making sure all of our tax-exempt paperwork is properly filed with the government agencies we need to be in contact with, and his efforts are much appreciated by the officers and board. Nic is also investigating processing new members through our web site and accepting credit cards electronically for dues payments. We also discussed the possibility of scheduling just one whole chapter meeting and reunion a year instead of two. Other smaller meetings might be held throughout the state as luncheons instead of a whole three-day program. We made tentative

plans to go back to the Stuart Air Show in November because we are always warmly welcomed there and those meetings seem to be the best attended. Nic reported on the status of the web site and Mark Norman shared an update on the chapter's Facebook page. Both are up and running and everyone is encouraged to visit and contribute. Following the meeting, we were joined by a reporter from a local newspaper. She interviewed many of our officers, board members, and chapter members on the history of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in our hospitality room. All of these topics were reported during the general membership meeting on Saturday morning. Then it was off to the Clewiston museum where curator Butch Wilson had organized a program for us. There was a Q & A session that included our members as well as veterans that live in the area. Light refreshments were provided and the discussion was lively and informative. Then we watched a film produced by the local PBS station on Riddle Field in Clewiston. The name Riddle may sound familiar as one of the founders of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. The Clewiston base was not for American aviators however, but for RAF cadets. Even today, three flags fly over the field, which is still in use as a

private aviation and skydiving center. One is the American flag, as well as the Florida State flag, and The Union Jack of England. Many RAF pilots earned their wings over south Florida, in addition to the other schools throughout the American South set up to train British pilots.

The guest of honor at our Saturday night banquet was the Mayor of Clewiston, Phillip Roland, who welcomed our group to the city and read a proclamation to that effect. President Bill Uphoff's remarks included a big thank you to the officers and board members for their efforts on behalf of the chapter.

The Mayor and Clewiston museum curator Butch Wilson both joined us for our memorial ceremony Sunday morning. We were pleased to have the Clewiston High School Florida Public Service Association Honor Guard join us to present the colors and perform a moving flag folding ceremony. Bernie Silverblatt read, "A Mothers Prayer for an Aviator" and Sid Katz read the poem, "Purple Heart". We then honored our recently deceased members with a candle lighting ceremony for Anthony Giambrone, Sheldon Greene, Frank F. Kaye, Edward Hooton, Jr. Eugene D. Stewart, and Mrs. Francis Vogel. We will be planning our fall meeting at Stuart, Florida in the near future for Veterans Day weekend in November. Anyone planning to be in the area that weekend is encouraged to join us. The more the merrier. As the date gets nearer, you can contact Jim Hart at hartklamking@aol.com, or Ken Sweet at ksotown@gmail.com, for more details. You can also contact Ken at 407-869-6693, or Jim at 561-795-4854. By early October, we should have the plans finalized.

Submitted by Ken Sweet

NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

5 August 2014

Ann Vaughn opened the meeting. Harold led in the Pledge to the Flag, and our Chaplain George McGuinness gave Grace for the meal.

The program was a very interesting, well illustrated, slide show and talk by Jon Alquist. He spoke on the

use of homing pigeons from ancient times to today as carriers of messages. These birds can find their way back to their roost no matter where they have been taken, rain or shine. They proved invaluable to the military as battlefield message carriers, difficult to intercept. Jon then went on to talk of other navigational feats of birds, of very long migrations. He discussed several theories of how birds do it, including: sighting landmarks, using sun and star positions, earth's magnetic sensing, light polarization sensing, smell, and others, including having an internal clock to correct for time of day, (or night).

The Early Works Museum announced that it is time to add to their Veteran's Walk, If you want to know more contact: Jeff.stott@huntsvilleal.gov. The POW/MIA Recognition Day Ceremony will be in Montgomery on Sept 20th.

Tuscaloosa will host the First Statewide Veterans Reunion on Sept. 26th at 5 PM. For more information contact: bgarrison@visittuscaloosa.com Our next meeting will be on Friday, 5th September, again at the Sunny Stret Cafe. Luncheon at 11 AM, followed by the meeting.

OREGON CHAPTER

10 May 2014

Our speakers in May were Don Keller, Jerry Ritter, S/Sgt. Jim Miller, and T/Sgt. George Keating. Jerry Ritter is the editor of the Oregon Chapter, 8th AFHS Quarterly Newsletter, Flightlines. Don Keller is a historian and the programs chairman. Jerry and Don are dedicated to the preservation of both the history of the Mighty Eighth and the legacy of its veterans. Don related, "What we try to do is not only help out the veterans and keep their history alive, but also work with their families to develop a general connection to the past. I started out because of the airplanes, but I stayed because of the phenomenal people." Jerry Ritter's father served with the 305th Bomb Group, 366th Squadron based in Chelveston (1944-1945). Jerry conveyed, "Nobody has done more for this organization or to help keep

these airplanes flying than Don Keller. One of the real pleasures I've had is working with him for so many years on these aircraft tours." Between them, Don and Jerry have volunteered with the B-17 ground crews for the aircraft tours of the Collings Foundation, Liberty Foundation, EAA's Aluminum Overcast, and the (Arizona) CAF's Sentimental Journey. According to Jerry, "We help with logistics, fueling, starting the engines on cold mornings, maintenance, answering visitors' questions and wiping down gallons of oil spewed from stem to stern of the airplanes after flying. I got started with the tours because of my fascination with the airplane, but we also do it because of the veterans and the thrill of taking those guys flying when they get this far-away look in their eyes. They're out at some airfield in England. They're going over the Wash. They're going over Germany. That's where they are on those flights."

Recently, Don and Jerry were volunteer ground crew with the Liberty Foundation's "The Movie" Memphis Belle tour stop on which T/Sgt. George Keating and S/Sgt. Jim Miller took their own "sentimental journeys".

T/Sgt. George Keating was a ground crew chief with the 452nd Bomb Group, 731 Squadron. According to T/Sgt. Keating, "It was an interesting experience to get that close to a B-17 again. They're my first love. My experience in the 452nd was to get up in the morning, go out to the flight line,



**T/Sgt. George Keating and
S/Sgt. Jim Miller**



**Don Keller and Jerry Ritter in
front of "The Movie" Memphis
Belle - Permission to use photo
from Don Keller and Scott Maher,
Liberty Foundation**

and work until I could go back to the barracks again which sometimes wasn't even the same day. I took seriously the standing orders from our engineering officer that the crew chief was not to leave the airplane until it was ready for flight again. I've even worked 72 hours straight. Usually when we knew there was a mission going out early in the morning, if the airplane was all finished and ready to go, we would get some sleep and then hit the flight line about 2 o'clock in the morning to warm up and check out the planes. Then the flight crews would get there anywhere from 4 to 7 in the morning and off they would go. We would get some sleep and meet the airplane when it came back. That could be as many as 13 hours later. We had no set hours. It would depend on the destination of the mission and whatever was required. It was rewarding work and I loved it. I still look back on it with fond memories. I had the respect of the flight crews and they had mine. Nobody had to tell a man twice to do a job no matter what their rank was."

S/Sgt. Jim Miller was a B-17 tail gunner with the 379th Bomb Group, 526th Squadron. S/Sgt. Miller related, "We really appreciated our ground crew. They worked all kinds of hours



S/Sgt. James A. Lettenmaier, a Top Turret/Flight Engineer, 461 BG, 764 BS, 15th AF brought a map labeled "Foggia, 1944-1945" detailing his mission routes

and took good care of our aircraft. My duties included making sure the tail wheel was up during takeoffs and landings. I was in tight quarters in the tail section. You didn't have room enough to wear the chest pack, but you did wear the harness. It did get tiresome, sitting on a bicycle seat with your knees bent, though there was room to put your legs right alongside the guns in there too. I flew 17 ½ missions, being shot down on that last mission when we got hit by the 75 fighters. We got 7 holes in the right wing and fire was coming out of those holes. We bailed out over Rugen. The ball turret gunner happened to look up and saw this big explosion and black ball of smoke just seconds after I got out. So I always thought that I got out of that plane just in time. I was a POW in Stalag Luft IV. Years after the war, I discovered a photo that turned out to be the B-17 I'd bailed out of, "Lassie Come Home". Apparently, the explosion blew the fire out because it had crash landed in Denmark on May 13th, 1944 with nobody aboard."

S/Sgt. Donald S. Anderson was a B-17 tail gunner who flew 22 combat missions. He was assigned to the 401st Bomb Group, part of the 94th Combat Wing in the First Air Division of the 8th Air Force, 614th Bomb Squadron and then the 615th Bomb Squadron. He has



S/Sgt. Donald S. Anderson

written a book entitled *Donald* which he describes as "Amusing mostly, but with passages that may also bring tears. It is a story about a gawky farm kid with a great sense of humor who was a crew member on a B-17 bomber in WWII, later owned a radio station, and finally an innovative fire service public education person. An entertaining read." www.Donald-bookreview.com

- The last general membership meeting was August 9, 2014 with Richard "Dick" Foy – Co founder of Aero Union Corporation.
 - Next General Membership Meeting for Oregon 8th AFHS is November 1, 2014
 - A hot type meal, for \$13, will be available at the Beaverton Elks lodge. ONLY If you are planning to eat **contact Tom Philo via email at secretary@8thafhsoregon.com or phone him at 503-591-3227**
- Transcribed and Edited by Joan E. Hamilton**

WISCONSIN CHAPTER

As many of you know we hold our Wisconsin Chapter 8th Air Force Historical Society quarterly meetings in the Sijan Building at the 128th Refueling Wing Milwaukee, which is named in honor of Captain Lance Peter Sijan who gave his life in the Vietnam War. Our March meeting featured Janine Sijan Rozina, sister of Captain Lance P. Sijan. March 4 1976 Captain Lance P Sijan received posthumously the Medal of Honor which read as follows: "The President of the United States in the name of the Congress of the United

States takes pride in presenting the MEDAL OF HONOR posthumously to LANCE PETER SIJAN, Captain United States Air Force for service as set forth in the following" CITATION: While on a flight over North Vietnam, Captain Sijan ejected from his disabled aircraft and successfully evaded capture for more than 6 weeks. During this time, he was seriously injured and suffered from shock and extreme weight loss due to lack of food. After being captured by North Vietnamese soldiers, Captain Sijan was taken to a holding point for subsequent transfer to a prisoner of war camp. In his emaciated and crippled condition, he overpowered one of his guards and crawled into the jungle, only to be recaptured after several hours. He was then transferred to another prison camp where he was kept in solitary confinement and interrogated at length. During interrogation, he was severely tortured; however, he did not divulge any information to his captors. Captain Sijan lapsed into delirium and was placed in the care of another prisoner. During his intermittent periods of consciousness until his death, he never complained of his physical condition and, on several occasions, spoke of future escape attempts. Captain Sijan's extraordinary heroism and intrepidity above and beyond the call of duty at the cost of his life are in keeping with the highest traditions of the U.S. Air Force and reflect great credit upon himself and the U.S. Armed Forces."

Janine Sijan-Rozina grew up in Bay View, Wisconsin. The youngest of three children, her loving family included her big brother, Captain Lance P. Sijan, Medal of Honor recipient and graduate of the USAFA. Their special brother-sister bond has lasted over the decades, not marred by time or death. She travels extensively speaking about his accomplishments. and the hope it gives to many others. Combining this experience and knowledge with her personal story, she is actively working on the development of a feature film about her brother Lance. During our March Wisconsin Chap meeting, Janine shared her fond memories of Lance growing up in an exceptional time as well as becoming the hero that is remembered today.

Our June meeting was also equally interesting featuring Jennifer Rude Klett, author of the book entitled "Alamo Dough Boy." The true story of Jennifer's grandfather, an Army private who served with the Texas/Oklahoma 90th division in WWI. Klett shared the memories and memorabilia of her grandfather who was a WWI Army Dough Boy. Among the items of interest were many photos and her father's WWII uniform.

Our upcoming September 9 meeting features our Wisconsin 8th Air Force Historical Society veterans participating in a question and answer session with area high school American history classes. This is part of our annual Fly for Freedom 3 event which will include the following events:

Freedom Badger Bus ride from the 128th Air Refueling Wing, Milwaukee to the Maritime Museum in Manitowoc, a snack lunch aboard the bus, a guided USS Cobia submarine tour, a guided Wisconsin Maritime Museum tour, Cinema documentary, two question and answer sessions featuring our vets answering questions from area high school students currently taking American history classes, honorary dinner at the upscale Court House Pub, and Freedom bus ride back to Milwaukee area.

(Those wishing to drive their own vehicles to and from the event may do so. Please plan to meet us no later than 11:00am at the Maritime Museum, 75 Maritime Dr., Manitowoc.)

Please make sure you are registered and include all family members that want to attend. Members are free. Family members are \$15.00 per person for all September 9, Fly For Freedom 3 events.

Cindy Drehmel

President

Wisconsin Chapter,

8th Air Force Historical Society

414 573 8520

RAPID CITY, SOUTH DAKOTA

Join us for the 398th Bomb Group's 31st Annual Reunion September 3-6, 2014. It's going to be a great reunion. Please join us this September for the 31st Annual 398th BGMA Reunion! We have terrific set of interesting and educational tours planned for all. They include the Rapid City Tour, the Town of Dead-



Wisconsin chapter board and committee with Jennifer Rude Klett



Janine Rozina Sijan and some of Wisconsin Chapter members

wood and Ellsworth AF Base Tour and the Custer State Park and Crazy Horse Memorial Tour.

In addition to our tour line-up, Wednesday evening's dinner will be at the "Shrine of Democracy" at Mount Rushmore. Thursday's Welcome Dinner and Saturday's Farewell Dinner will be held at the hotel. Our Farewell Dinner band this year will be "New Horizons Music"...and don't forget to dress up 1940's style. We're going to swing!

Hotel Reservations: 1-605-342-8853. Time's running out! Please call the Grand Gateway Hotel for your reservations by August 1st for the 398th BGMA Reunion. No mail-in reservations are required. Telephone the hotel at the preferred number above or call toll free 866-742-1300. Ask for the 398th Bomb Group room rate of \$82.00.

Contact Ken at 105 S. Knox St., Elmwood, IL 61529-9702. Home Phone: 309-742-8546. Cell Phone 815-238-3691. E-mail: kenhoward@hotmail.com

NEW MEXICO CHAPTER

The New Mexico Chapter of the 8th AFHS held its annual Spring General Membership Meeting and Luncheon at Marriott Hotel in Albuquerque, NM., June 14, 2014.

President, Larry Stebleton (8th AF) opened the meeting at 12:15 pm. with a moment of silence in remembrance of departed members, followed by "The Pledge of Allegiance."

The entertainment was provided by "The Dazzle Dolls", a professional ladies singing group who presented a lively program with a wonderful selection of popular, modern and WWII era music and closed the luncheon meeting with the song "God Bless America".

Submitted by:

Al Schwery

Secretary, 8th AFHS NM Chapter

The History of the Winged Boot

Claude C. Murray and Ralph K. Patton

Some call it the “Flying Boot” or the “Winged Boot” but the Royal Air Force who issued this badge in the Western Desert, June 1941, named it the “Winged Boot.” The following is an extract from the book, *Customs and Traditions of the Royal Air Force*, by Squadron Leader Peter George Hering, published in 1961 by Gale & Polden:

“The exploits of aircrew who walked back to their bases after bailing out of their aircraft, being shot down or having force-landed while operating over enemy held territory during the Desert campaigns in the Middle East, were responsible for the initiation of another highly respected war-time badge. Because their return to their squadrons was of necessity much later than that of their more fortunate comrades, they were heralded as a new “corps d’elite” and became known as “later arrivals.” As their numbers increased their experiences became legend and eventually a mythical Late Arrivals “Club” came into being and with it a badge.

A winged boot was designed by Wing Commander (later Group Captain) George W. Houghton, who was at the time the Senior RAF Public Relations Officer in the Middle East. He obtained the permission of Lord Tedder (then Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Middle East) to issue each late arrival with the badge to wear on his flying suit or uniform. The innovation captured the imagination of the war correspondents, who enthusiastically reported the origin of the badge and the experiences of its wearers. In addition to his badge, each late arrival was given a “club” membership certificate on which was recorded the circumstances making him eligible for membership and the words: It is never too late to come back.”

According to the Royal Air Forces Escaping Society Press Officer, Bryan Morgan, “The membership of this Society was exclusive to the

Middle East. It was never available in this country (England) and it doesn’t exist anymore.”

In 1943 when American airmen of the U. S. 8th Air Force started to return to England after having been shot down over enemy occupied territory some unknown American evader started to use the Royal Air Force “Winged Boot” as a symbol of his having evaded capture and having “walked home.” This symbol of evasion was never authorized to be worn on U. S. uniforms in the ETO; therefore evaders wore it under the left hand lapel on their tunic or battle jacket. One of the first stops an evader made after being released by Air Force Intelligence in London was usually a visit to Hobson and Sons Ltd in London to have them make a wire badge “Winged Boot.”

When the Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society was formed in June 1964, it was decided to use the “Winged Boot” as the centerpiece of the AFEES logo. As an extension of this, we approached

Hobson and Sons in London to make several items with the original “Winged Boot” in metallic thread from the original dies. There is no official Winged Boot organization or club therefore eligibility for wearing it is ill defined.

AFEES is the only known organization that uses the “Winged Boot” as a logo or symbol.

Richard Shandor is the Membership Secretary for AFEES and we thank him for sharing this article with us. If you would like more information on AFEES, please contact Richard at: rshandor@hotmail.com and visit the AFEES Website: www.airforceescape.com



Book Reviews

THE STORY OF THE STARS AND STRIPES

By Bud Hutton & Andy Rooney

Paperback: 260 pages

Publisher: Nabu Press

ISBN-10: 1245052950

ISBN-13: 978-1245052955

Product Dimensions: 9.7 x 7.4 x 0.6

Hardcover: \$20.00

Paperback: \$9.29

September 11, 2011



THE STORY OF THE STARS AND STRIPES

BUD HUTTON, ANDY ROONEY

This is a reproduction of a book published before 1923. This book may have occasional imperfections such as missing or blurred pages, poor pictures, errant marks, etc. that were either part of the original artifact, or were introduced by the scanning process. We believe this work is culturally important, and despite the imperfections, have elected to bring it back into print as part of our continuing commitment to the preservation of printed works worldwide. We appreciate your understanding of the imperfections in the preservation process, and hope you enjoy this valuable book.

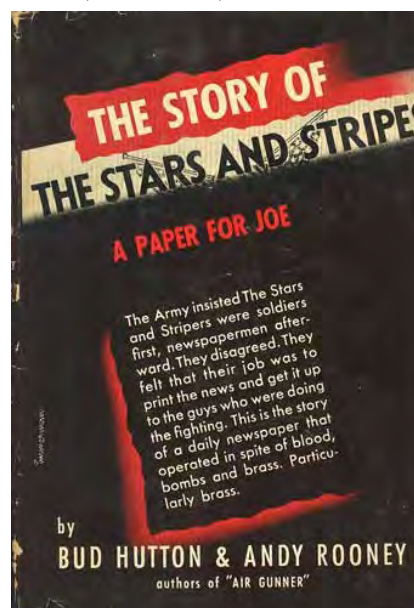
THE STORY OF THE STARS AND STRIPES

Hardcover – January 1, 1946

By Bud Hutton & Andy Rooney

I have an old dog-eared copy of *Air Gunner* by Bud Hutton and Andy Rooney. This classic, printed during the war, is long out-of-print, but gives a first hand account of a combat mission in the 385th Bomb Group. Andy Rooney later became famous on TV as a direct, abrasive, but truthful commentator!

Recently, I discovered this pair of war correspondents also wrote another book, *The Story of Stars and Stripes*. This book, too, was written long ago, just after the war. However, I found that Amazon Books now has copies of a re-print of this book. I thought this one might shed light on our B-17 serial No. 42-3544, named "Stars and Stripes". But, when I read the book, I found it to be an interesting story of a little known aspect of WW II. It told details of gathering information, writing, printing and distributing the newspaper named *Stars and Stripes*. This newspaper was provided to us in a timely manner during the midst of combat confusion!! It was extremely popular with not only us airmen but with all GI's in the war. However, on pages 54-55 of the book, they do, indeed, tell of flying in the 385th Bomb Group, and tell a story of B-17, 42-3544, "Stars and Stripes". We discover from this account that Dick Wingert, who drew the character, Hubert, in cartoons, was the artist that



Dick Wingert nose art creations

painted its nose art in honor of the newspaper.

I checked the author's mission accounts against archival documents and, alas, found that these two books cannot be relied upon for objective truth! Their stories, interesting as they are, simply do not always match known records or facts. For instance, they give a fictitious name for the known crew (pilot) of "Stars and Stripes". They state that Andy Rooney flew over 10 missions. But this is just not so, at least not in the 385th BG, although he may have flown one mission.

In *Air Gunner*, the accounts of the airmen crew match very well the Cerrone Crew and the B-17 they called "Lady Liz", was also very real.

The story of a mission in *Air Gunner* matches 385th mission number 25 target Bremen on 8 Oct 43. On

Book Reviews

that one, Hutton did indeed fly with the Cerrone Crew in 42-5902, "Lady Liz". This is verified by the 385th loading list for mission 25. The stories Bud and Andy tell, sound authentic. Their facts occasionally stray and they blur some details, but they give a very gut-true and authentic flavor of combat in the war. And that was the purpose of these books, not historical records. When they are read with this aim in mind, *Air Gunner* gives a vivid picture of life at Great Ashfield in the 385th Bomb Group. And *The Story of Stars and Stripes* sheds intimate light on the life of soldier war correspondents during WW II.

As a matter of interest, 42-3544, "Stars and Stripes", crashed landed at Badwell Ash in England with the Morris crew on 5 January 44 and was salvaged. Another un-named 385th B-17, no. 42-31349, was promptly named "Stars and Stripes", 2nd Edition. Bud and Andy would be honored!

There can be no doubt that Bud Hutton and Andy Rooney spent time in the 385thBG and wrote interesting stories about it, although they did take some writers liberties' with details. If you can get copies, I highly recommend both books.

Submitted by Bill Varnedoe

A HIGHER CALL

By Adam Makos & Larry Alexander

Hardcover: 400 pages

Publisher: Berkley Hardcover;

(December 19, 2012)

ISBN-10: 0425252868

ISBN-13: 978-0425252864

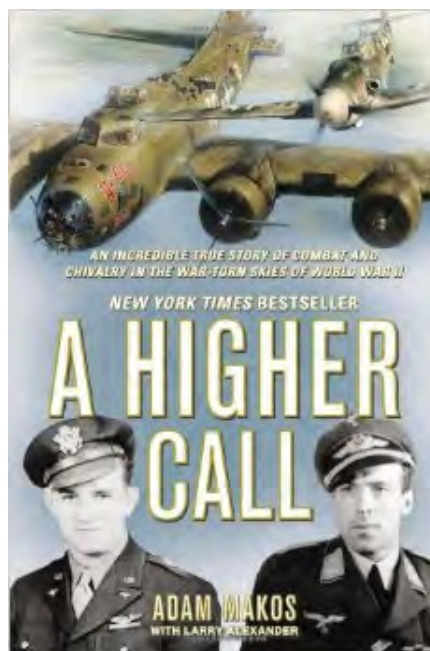
Product Dimensions: 9.1 x 6.2 x 1.4

Hardcover: \$17.04

Paperback: \$10.95

From the Bookshelf

If you knew Charlie, you heard the story. Many of us knew Charlie Brown as a veteran of the Mighty Eighth and a good friend to have. He was active in the Florida Chapter of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Historical Society for many years, serving as a Board of Directors member and doing a stint as the Chapter's vice-president. Charlie was also well known in the national organi-



zation and attended many reunions with them, as well. Therefore, if you knew Charlie, you heard the story. Usually after the day's activities when we retired to the hospitality suite for some hanger flying, Charlie would talk about a rookie bomber pilot, with his rookie crew, being shot to pieces on their first mission. Adam Makos heard the story and wanted to write about it. Charlie's story is the subject of Adam Makos and Larry Alexander's book, *A Higher Call: An incredible true story of combat and chivalry in the war-torn skies of World War II* (Berkley Caliber: New York. 2012).

When he was just a teenager, Makos started a magazine about WW II aviation. The first issues were just a few pages long and were produced on the family computer and printed out on the ink jet printer they owned. After college, the magazine expanded into a full color production with an enviable circulation. Makos had started out hating all Germans. He felt they were all Nazis and deserved his scorn as he wrote about his WW II aviator heroes. Then he began to notice something strange as he read about and interviewed those WW II heroes. They spoke with respect about their adversaries in the skies over Europe. Almost as if, they had some admiration for them or something. Then he heard Charlie's story, or at least a part

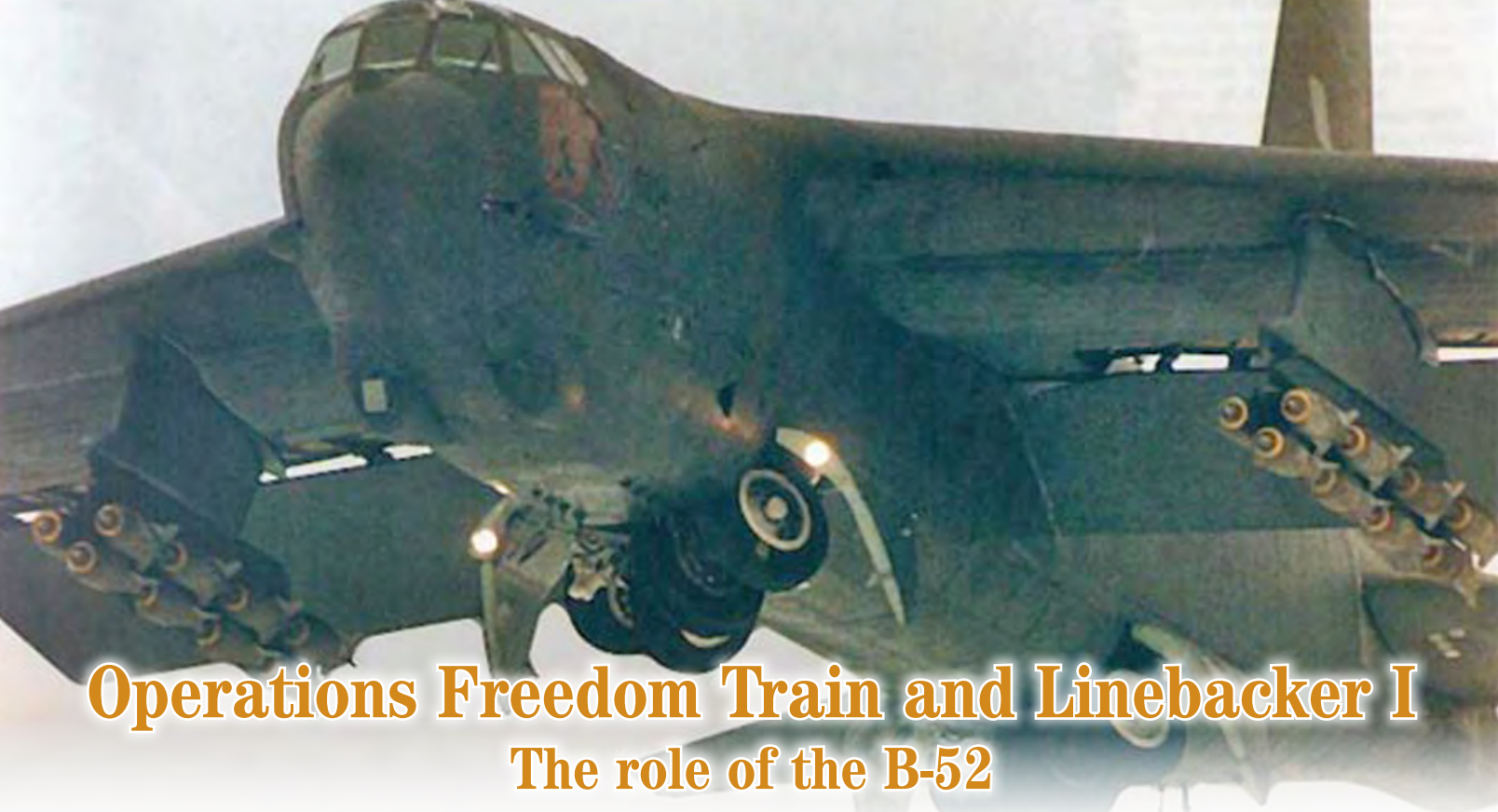
of it, and called him for an interview. Charlie was his usual gracious self and agreed to be interviewed by the young reporter but he offered a caveat. "...I don't think you should start by talking with me...if you really want to learn the whole story, learn about Franz Stigler first...in this story, I'm just a character, Franz Stigler is the real hero (p 5)."

The story is that the rookie crew, on their first mission, was heavily damaged by anti-aircraft fire. After bombing their target, they were set upon by German fighters. With their B-17, "Ye Olde Pub", shot to pieces and dead and wounded aboard, their pilot, one Charles Brown, was determined to get them back home. They almost made it to the North Sea coast when they saw him. A Messerschmitt Me-109 was approaching them. This is it, they thought. A few well placed cannon shells and machine gun bullets from the German fighter would seal their fate. However, the shells and bullets never came. How did the American bomber crew and the German fighter pilot come to meet at this point in time? Why didn't he shoot them down? They were easy pickings for a German aviator who would get another medal for downing another American bomber this day. Franz Stigler had come a long way from flying gliders with his brother and father in his youth. He had a safe job flying transport but volunteered for combat after his brother was killed. What he learned about revenge, and respect for your opponent in the desert with his Luftwaffe peers, would influence him when he saw Charlie's plane over Northern Germany.

If you heard Charlie tell the story, you only heard a very small part of it. This is the whole thing. It really becomes Franz Stigler's story, as told by Makos and Alexander, and the way Charlie wanted it told. The book includes many photographs and a bibliography for further study. It is a very good read and gives one hope that even when total war is raging, there is still respect and compassion.

'Til next time, Keep 'Em Fly'in!

Submitted by Ken Sweet



Operations Freedom Train and Linebacker I

The role of the B-52

by Yancy Mailes Command Historian, Air Force Global Strike Command

Editor's Note: This is the third in a series of articles highlighting the B-52's involvement in the Vietnam Conflict up to Operation Linebacker II. The Anniversary of Linebacker II takes place Dec. 18-29.

In early 1972, American intelligence agencies provided President Richard Nixon and his staff irrefutable evidence that north Vietnam planned a large-scale offensive to attack south Vietnam. In doing so, north Vietnam planned to capture as much of south Vietnam as possible, with hopes of destroying the Army of the Republic of Vietnam and at the same time undermining South Vietnam's fragile government. The North knew because of Nixon's Vietnamization policy that the United States had slowly withdrawn its forces and at the time only had 65,000 troops physically in the south. In response, the Nixon administration planned to call upon the B-52 crews to resume air strikes forcing the North to negotiate a peace settlement.

In early February 1972, a rapid build-up of B-52 forces began under Operation Bullet Shot. Since September

of 1970, the Arc Light sortie rate at Guam and Kadena had dwindled and by the end of 1971 only about forty B-52Ds remained in theater, all based at U-Tapao, Thailand. In order to support the pending operations, Strategic Air Command (SAC) planned to deploy 200 B-52s to the region. Over the course of the five stages of Bullet Shot, SAC rebuilt Guam's B-52 force beginning that February with crews from the 7th, 96th and 306th Bomb Wings. With nearly 50 B-52Ds assigned to the 43d Strategic Wing at Guam and an eventual compliment of 54 Ds at U-Tapao, SAC still needed almost 100 bombers to meet the requirement. So, later in July 1972 as the build-up continued, the Air Force activated the 72d Bomb Wing Provisional and deployed a compliment of B-52Gs to Guam. To support this effort, the 2d Bomb Wing alone deployed nearly 1,500 people and 23 bombers in April of 1972.

On Feb. 14, 1972, the Air Force resumed the Arc Light missions supporting forces inside the borders of south Vietnam with sortie rates rising to 1,500 per month. As the B-52s deployed to Guam and U-Tapao in preparation for strikes north of the Demilitarized Zone, Nixon balked at launching an

all-out bombing campaign against north Vietnam. He had pinned his hopes on the peace negotiations taking place in Paris. Those negotiations failed and on March 30, 1972, under the cover of darkness, north Vietnamese forces launched the Easter Offensive.

A short time later, on April 5, the Nixon administration authorized strikes north of the DMZ and Operation Freedom Train got underway. The B-52 operation began with heavy strategic bombing, which many military leaders had continually recommended since 1965. Many senior USAF officers believed in strategic bombing as a means to bring the enemy to the negotiating table, a belief clearly rooted in the history of World War II.

However, the possibility of losing a B-52 to an enemy surface-to-air missile (SAM) loomed in the forefront of each and every B-52 crew going north. While the occasional SA-2 had been launched at B-52 crews operating over the Ho Chi Mihn Trail in 1967, none had come within range.

On April 9, 12 B-52D crews took off from U-Tapao and bombed facilities at Vihn. During this mission, an enemy SAM smacked into one of the B-52s,



blowing off most of an external wing tank. Even with damage, the crew was able to fly the wounded bomber south and land at Da Nang air base. Several days later, after striking a rail yard and a POL store near Hanoi, bomb crews tested the main ring of SAM sites around that city as well as the defenses near Haiphong Harbor. The enemy launched 35 missiles, all of which failed to inflict damage. However, it became clear that the B-52 was in danger of being hunted by the enemy.

Operation Freedom Train continued until May 8, when the Air Force re-named the operation as Linebacker. The Air Force stated that Linebacker had been put into action to disrupt the huge rail network whereby north Vietnam received supplies and weapons from China. The United States decided it would be better to interdict those supplies before they reached north Vietnam and disappeared on the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The operation continued until Oct. 23, 1972. At that point it appeared that the bombing campaign had brought the north back the negotiating table, so

President Nixon halted all air operations above the 20th parallel. However, Arc Light missions in south Vietnam continued.

During Operations Freedom Train and Linebacker the B-52 community played a major role in bringing north Vietnam back the negotiating table. But unfortunately because SAC had been lucky and the enemy failed to down a B-52, SAC planners continued to employ tactics developed early in the war. A typical mission consisted of a three-ship color-coded cell that was imbedded in a wave. During Linebacker, SAC would launch around twenty-two cells per day. During these missions, a trail of bombers that included two or three waves, separated by an hour or more, would consistently drop bombs from an altitude of 30 to 35,000 feet. In addition, the formation would maintain a constant airspeed of about 430kt over poorly defended targets and 470kt over SAM-infested areas. In most cases, the cells used the same altitudes, headings and departure routes. This consistency allowed the enemy to quickly learn the

B-52 community's tactics and launch large salvos of SAMs. Luckily, they failed to hit a B-52 during Operations Freedom Train and Linebacker, but this flaw would be devastating to the follow-on campaign, Operation Linebacker II.

It was during the bombing pause, which Nixon ordered to give the North time to negotiate, that the enemy finally downed a B-52. On Nov. 22, 1972, the crew of Olive 2, one of eighteen B-52Ds assigned to the 307th Strategic Wing at U-Tapao, Thailand, took part in a bombing raid against targets in and around Vihn. Just after the crew dropped their bomb load, two SAMs streaked up from the ground and exploded beneath the airplane. The crew of the damaged B-52 nursed their bomber for over 100 miles until they crossed the Mekong River and were over Thailand. Once there, the crew bailed out of the airplane and a combat rescue crew quickly snatched the six men from the jungle. Up until this point only 10 B-52s had been lost during combat, but this was the first to be destroyed by hostile fire.

Remembering D-Day

...plus 70

By Nancy Toombs

Many of you may not be familiar with La Porte, TX, but on June 6th—just weeks ago—French Consul General Sujiro Seam paid tribute to 36 veterans of WWII, nine of whom were in the Mighty 8th, on the 70th anniversary of D-Day, awarding each of them the Chevalier de la Legion d' Honneur for their participation and/or military support during that historic event, June 6, 1944.

The stage was the magnificent bow of the USS Texas, one of only two surviving battleships which shelled Omaha Beach during the massive D-Day assault. Our family, including dad, Bill Toombs [493rd BG], made the trek to Texas along with vets representing all branches of the military from Oklahoma, Arkansas, and other parts of Texas, to receive the prestigious award. Veterans also received a beautiful commemorative medallion containing grains of sand from Omaha Beach to further mark the occasion.

Many thanks to Craig Dubishar for his amazing photographs and Dr. Steve Feimer for the photo of the award.

For more information on how to apply for the French Legion of Honor, please contact:

Nancy Toombs (501) 681-3126 or Chase221@swbell.net

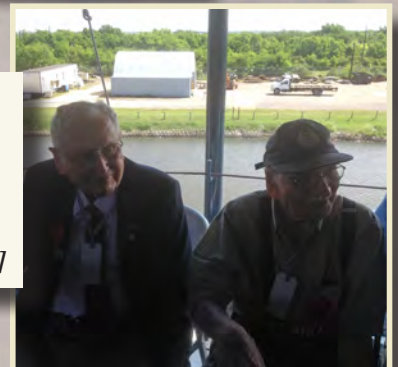
(B-25 Mitchell made several passes over the ship)



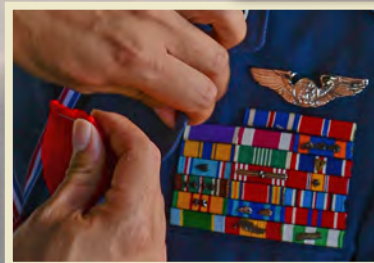
*Honorable Sujiro Seam,
Consul General of France
presented the awards*



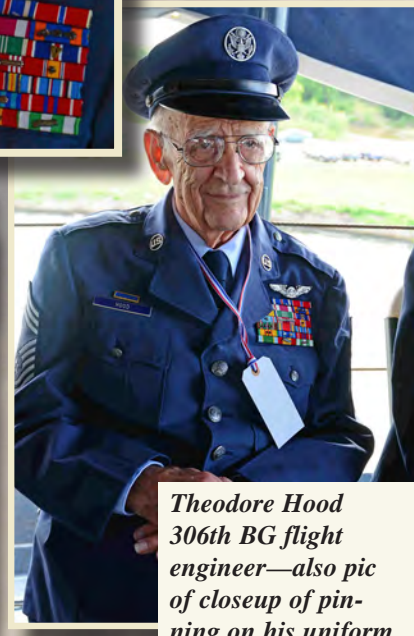
*Leo Bielinski
44th BG pilot
[left] with John
Chopelas 452nd
BG radio opera-
tor/gunner [right]*



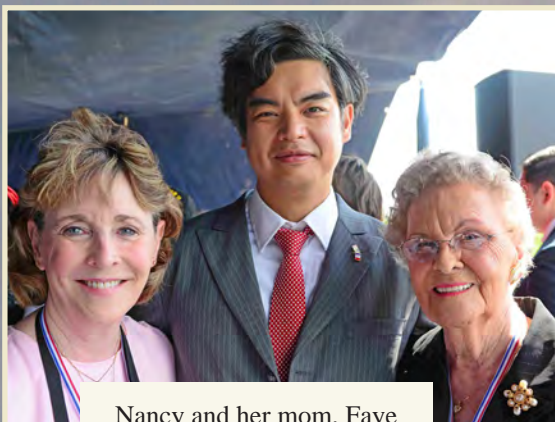
*Perry Kerr 466th BG
nose turret gunner*



*Bill Toombs 493rd flight
engineer receives award
from Seam*



*Theodore Hood
306th BG flight
engineer—also pic
of closeup of pin-
ning on his uniform*



*Nancy and her mom, Faye
Toombs, with French Consul
General Sujiro Seam*



*Horace Shankwiler 445th BG
pilot [left] seated with Samuel
Smith 303rd BG pilot [right]*



*Commemorative
Medallion containing
grains of sand from
Omaha Beach*



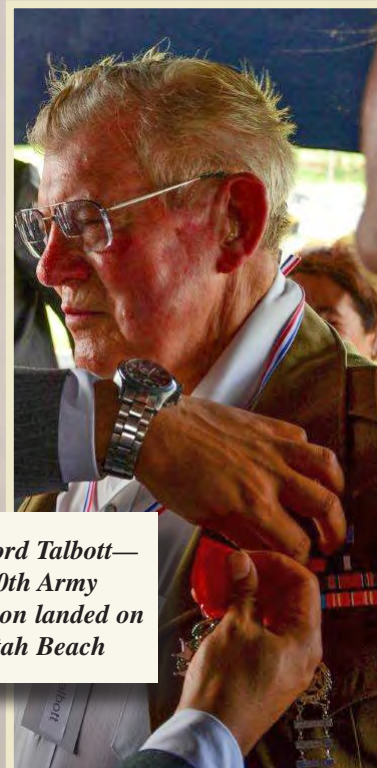
*The magnificent
battleship, USS
Texas, combat
veteran of 2
World Wars*

*Photo of award B/W
by Dr. Steve Feimer*

Steve Feimer



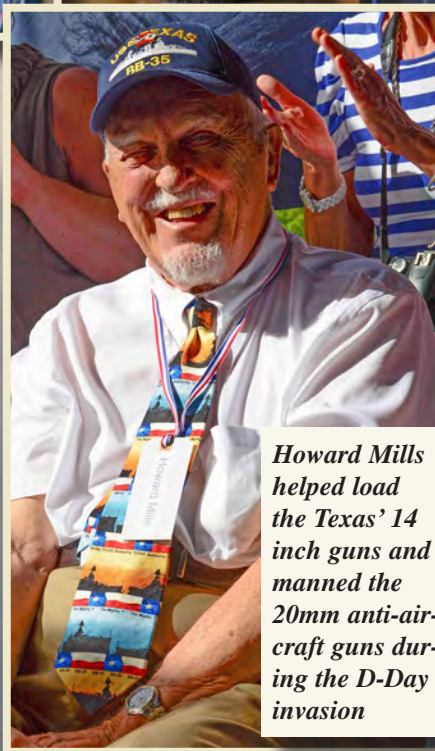
*Harold Dietz
466th BG tail
gunner*



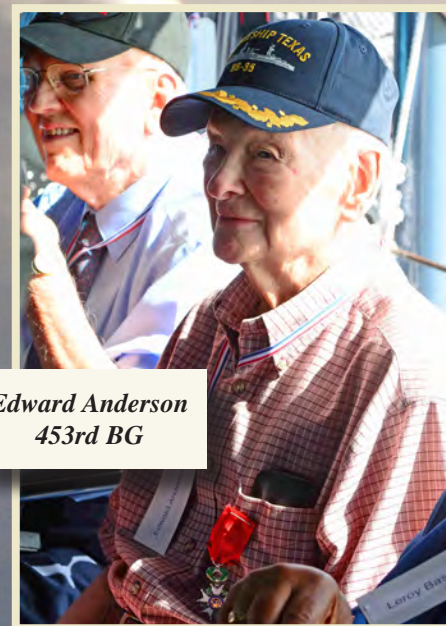
*Clifford Talbott—
90th Army
Division landed on
Utah Beach*



*Bill Creech
stormed Omaha
Beach D-Day +1*



*Howard Mills
helped load
the Texas' 14
inch guns and
manned the
20mm anti-air-
craft guns dur-
ing the D-Day
invasion*



*Edward Anderson
453rd BG*

THE LAST LIBERATOR

Big screen / HD movie project Looking for B-24 Veterans to interview

Some of you might remember Tom Harrison (Author of the book *Kassel*) and the Collings Foundation tried to start the film project two years ago titled *The Last Liberator*. Our grant proposal to the National Endowment for the Humanities did not come through as expected and the project remained in stasis for some time. We are still very hopeful to get this amazing film to the big screen. Recently, the Collings Foundation has been talking with Greg Sheffer at Inversion Productions about the project. Greg has helped produce several videos including *Bud Day Memorial F-100*, *Vietnam Memorial Flight*, *Profile of a POW* and some *Wings of Freedom* videos.

Many believe this is a film that needs to be done! No time like the present to "start cranking the props" again. The *Last Liberator* will be a large screen production to be shown in IMAX, large screen and general theatres. We will produce a stunning high definition film



that captures the dramatic stories of a few B-24 Veterans who flew these aircraft during the war. As we follow these true heroes tales of sacrifice and survival the viewer will be immersed in

spectacular footage of what it is like to fly in the last fully restored and flying B-24J Liberator in the world.

Currently, we are looking for B-24 Veterans who would like to be interviewed and potentially cast in this singularly unique film. We are also looking for any women who worked at the Michigan Willow Run B-24 plant or women pilots (WASP) who ferried B-24s from Willow Run. If you are a B-24 Vet or know one who would like to be a part of the *Last Liberator* film please contact Hunter Chaney at the Collings Foundation.



SEND EMAIL TO:

hchaney@collingsfoundation.org or
call 800-568-8924.

SEND LETTER TO:

Collings Foundation
Attn: Last Liberator
PO Box 248
Stow, MA 01775

FROM ACROSS *the Pond*

This summer's season started with our 8th AFHS President Darrel paying us a visit, unfortunately his compadre Bob Moses could not join him on the visit owing to the availability of a suitable flight.

Darrel arrived at London Heathrow and arrangements were made for his transport to Gordon's home town of Haverhill in the county of Suffolk, home of many of the 8th's bomb and fighter groups during WW2.

On Sunday I arranged for Gordon and Darrel to be VIP guests at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford, for the special D-Day Air Show. Duxford was the wartime base for the 78th and 350th FGs. The air show was a spectacular show with many wartime aircraft taking part. Darrel was introduced to Sally Ellingboe owner/operator of the B-17, "Sally B". He also spoke with the crew and engineers. The next introduction was to the crew chief Mike Lindsay of the C-47 flown in from Geneseo, NY especially for the show and also to take part in the "honor flight" over Normandy on D-Day. The dedicated members of the team have done fantastic work in the restoration of this Dakota at the Geneseo National Warplane Museum, hats off to all involved. The Dak looked resplendent in its war paint and invasion stripes. It sat on the grass with five other C-47s, but stood out in the crowd. It took 25 hours to reach the UK with a tail wind. Let's hope they had a tail wind homeward bound!

Darrel was invited to the control tower to give a commentary to the visiting public then took a buzz down the runway in our WW2 Jeep just to get the wind in his hair.

On Memorial Day, Darrel and I arrived at Madingley, Cambridge to pay homage to the fallen of all members of the American forces that never returned home from the fighting in Europe. The day dawned with a slight rainy mist covering the white crosses row on row, standing as if on duty, standing guard



Brian Francis and Darrel Lowell at the Wall of the Missing

over each fallen comrade. At the base of each cross gently waving in the morning breeze was Old Glory beside our Union Flag a symbol of our two countries comradeship and respect for fallen warriors since WW1. Darrel presented the wreath on behalf of the 8th AFHS and all its members. The wreath was of blue & gold Iris the colors of the 8th. It was laid

at the Wall of The Missing followed by a moment of silence and bowed heads in respect of those who paid the ultimate sacrifice. The finale of the ceremony was a flypast by the C-47 crew from Geneseo, NY. and a Scottish piper playing a lament as he passed the "Wall of the Missing".

Darrel then joined forces with members from the 466th BG and the Heritage Group for their event at Attlebridge. After the reunion at Attlebridge, we attended a special service at St Paul Cathedral, London, for the 8th USAAF.

From "Across the Pond" we thank all those who took part in the greatest Armada ever to take place in the cause of freedom and liberty. From the dawn of D-Day you came to the shores of Normandy by air, sea, and land—not as conquerors—but as liberators. Thank you all for what you gave. You are not forgotten as the attendance at Madingley shows. We may be many miles apart, but we always show our gratitude and thanks every year and will continue to do so for many years to come.

Brian Francis
8th AFHS representative, UK



Sally Ellingboe, owner/operator of the "Sally B" and Darrel

ESCAPE FROM SWITZERLAND

...an internee remembers

George F. Schaub - 92nd BG, 325th BS

One of Fame's Favored Few

I joined the Army Air Corp in October of 1942. I was 19 years old, and my mother had to sign for me in order for me to be accepted into the Air Corp. Our pilot was Clifford Beach....we jokingly called whatever plane we were in "Son of a Beach"! Contrary to common knowledge...we did NOT always fly the same aircraft. We flew whatever was available. We were considered "replacements" for the massive casualties before our arrival.

We weren't supposed to fly that day because we had flown two missions the previous two days. But today, Doolittle called for maximum effort. This was to be the last day of what would become known as THE BIG WEEK. (February 20 – February 25, 1944) a six day long campaign against Germany's aircraft components manufacturing plants. We were awakened unexpectedly at 0300 and told we had a mission. I never really slept the night before known missions, but this one was unexpected. We always ate very well before a mission – fresh eggs and real bacon, since it was assumed to be our "last meal". We would be working hard in bitter cold and little or no food was aboard the aircraft. Following breakfast we would attend a briefing on our target—what civilian areas, hospitals and churches to avoid. We would be briefed on the weather by a meteorologist and given an intelligence report. If we were lucky – it would be a "milk run" from England to France. There were very few of these. And there would be no such luck this week. We were hitting Germany. Trucks took us from the briefing room to our aircraft which was already fueled and loaded with bombs and ammunition. Our missions were never finalized until the last minute, as the weather had been terrible in the weeks prior. Many times we would prepare for a mission, only to be told to stand down. The tower at



George F. Schaub

Podington would shoot off flares – red for no and green for GO. The takes offs were one of the most dangerous aspects of the mission. The crew of 10 carried 2780 gallons of high octane fuel, 6 to 8 thousands pounds of bombs and hundreds of 50 caliber shells. It took all four engines to get the aircraft off the ground and we were lined up nose to tail, taking off within seconds of each other.

The losses of the B-17's at this point were enormous, and we were the replacements. On average, 170 B-17's were lost per day at this point of the war. A B-17 crew consisted of 10 men. Ours was unusual in that our bombardier was not an officer. This was only his 2nd mission with us. The average life span of a gunner was 5 missions and most gunners tended to be boys from rural communities – those who had previously hunted and knew how to handle a gun. Dad was a sharpshooter prior to the war so, of course he was chosen as the left waist gunner. Our crew was placed in formation behind "Tail End Charlie"...

the most dangerous position to be in. It would frequently take us 1-2 hours circling over England in order to get into formation. We would meet up with B-17s from England as well as Italy. A tight formation was the B-17s best protection from the German fighters. Fighter escorts, at this time could only accompany us across the English Channel, before having to turn back. We would fly up to 32,000 feet with temps plunging to -60°F (Yes, sixty below!) Early in the war the waist gunner positions were not staggered and there was no Plexiglas window. As long as the heated suit held out – things were pretty good. The aircraft was not pressurized so we had to wear oxygen masks above 10,000 feet. Condensation on the face and neck would result, and frostbite was the consequence. Our mission on this day, as well as the 2 previous days was to bomb the ball bearing plants in Germany. The American Air Force flew the daytime raids and targeted key German industries directly linked to the Axis war effort, specifically those factories making aircraft or weapon parts. More American Airmen died during these daytime missions than any other American military branch during their respective missions. Without the production of ball bearings, enemy aircraft could not be built. Today's mission, on Friday of "Big Week" (February 25, 1944) was Stuttgart and Augsburg. During Big Week 3300 bombers were dispatched from England and 500 from Italy. Over 225 aircraft were lost. Conversely, the mission was a success as 75% of the targets were accomplished and 600 Luftwaffe planes were destroyed. It was our 13th mission and the Dottie G's (B-17G #42-37755) 12th.

We successfully completed our mission by overflying our target, turning around as was policy and then dropping our

bombs. The idea was at that point we would already be headed back towards our base in England, and would hopefully not take as much flak. The Germans had timed rockets called Bf110s that they were able to fire from their Luftwaffe aircraft. They would fire these timed rockets from behind into the formation. Remember, we were behind "Tail End Charlie" so we were already in the most dangerous position possible within the group. If separated from the formation, a bomber became an easy target, a "sitting duck".

Over Germany we were attacked from the rear and were hit. No. 1 engine was on fire and no. 2 was smoking and disabled from flying debris. Our pilot, Clifford Beach, put us into a 5,000 foot nose dive to put out the fire on engine one. Losing fuel and flying with only two good engines—both on the same side of the aircraft—and the other two engines feathered, the aircraft shook violently. The hydraulic and electrical systems were inoperable. The dive meant that we would not be able to make it across the Alps. We knew that we'd never make it back (6) hours to

Podington. The average mission was 10 – 14 hours. A B-17 could possibly still make it over the Alps on 3 engines, but not on two. We'd have to divert. The navigator gave Beach the heading for Switzerland. We knew at that point we were only 45 minutes to an hour away from neutral territory. Lt. Beach gave us the option of bailing out over Germany or staying with the plane. If one person elected to stay with the plane, the pilot had to try to belly land it. We had not been trained in the art of parachuting so none of us were particularly fond of the idea of bailing out over Germany where we knew we'd either be shot coming down – or if lucky enough to make it that far – on the ground. We would stay with our captain and the aircraft we had faith in, and take our chances. Many damaged Allied aircraft struggled to make it to Switzerland or Sweden rather than land in Germany and be tortured in the POW camps of Nazi Germany. We set course for Switzerland. We weren't certain we'd have enough fuel or altitude to make it to Switzerland so we started throwing out anything that wasn't important or bolted down to lighten the

load.

Those of us in the back squeezed in the radio room behind the bulkhead and prepared for a crash landing. Approximately an hour later we crashed landed in a snowy field on the shores—the border between Switzerland & Germany—of Lake Constance. NOT on a runway as was previously recorded. Since there were no hydraulics, we were unable to get the ball turret up. The ball turret pushed up and forward leaving those of us in the radio room in a very tight squeeze damaging sections 3 through 9 folding them like an accordion. Fortunately, no one was hurt in the landing. Apparently we were the first B-17G to crash land in Switzerland and the Swiss were very interested in seeing what changes had occurred from the previous models.

This was our first time in the "Dottie G" and our last. We exited the aircraft through the radio hatch and came face to face with armed Swiss soldiers, guns drawn. Our side arms were immediately taken from us. A young Lieutenant who had been educated in the states and spoke

George F. Schaub and his crew



fluent English interrogated us for approximately an hour prior to being bussed to Berne. The crew was still together as we took a cog rail train up to the hotel where we were interrogated again and remained in quarantine for two weeks, after which time we were bussed to Adelboden.

Adelboden was a small village nestled in the Alps, a ski resort during peacetime. It was chosen as the spot to house internees because it was away from the populated cities – with only one road in or out. Being some of the first American internees to arrive, we were housed in the Nevada Palace Hotel and placed on curfew. During my time in Switzerland, I was taken from Adelboden and bused to a prison where I spent 10 days in Solitary Confinement on a mattress full of beans – on the floor. An armed guard had turned me in for missing my curfew in Adelboden.

After dark, we were required to wear at least one piece of our uniforms. The Germans, however, were placed in POW camps and not allowed to roam freely. The Swiss were strict about curfew and armed guards kept track of us. In June, the officers were sent to Davos, and only enlisted men remained behind in Adelboden.

A country doctor in Adelboden was treating me for athlete's foot and he wanted me to go to the hospital in Berne for some X-rays and further treatment. The doctor in Berne that was treating me, Hans Frey was also a Major in the Swiss Army. He befriended me and I stayed with him and his family for a short period of time. Dr. Frey's wife had been with the Red Cross during WWI and she was quite fond of the Americans. While there I met "Smitty" from Quincy, Illinois. At this point I'd been there almost 7 months. Smitty and I developed an escape plan and contacted the American Legation for help. I never did make it back to Adelboden.

The American Legation paid money to help in our escape and set us up with a smuggler who would escort us out of Switzerland. It was October in the Alps and getting colder by the day. All I had with me in Berne were a few ski sweaters which were knitted for me by Frau Frey. One night we took a taxi out of Berne to a rendezvous point at

the base of the Alps. There we met our guide. He was a known smuggler, either French or Swiss-French by nationality and working for both sides. In addition to smuggling us out, he was also smuggling out industrial diamonds. We spent 2-3 days walking across the Alps. I remember it being very cold...too cold to sleep. We would walk during the night through the dark, rugged, snowy terrain and attempt to sleep in cold, damp barns or beneath a bush during the day hoping not to get caught. Eventually we arrived in occupied France.

Our guide told us to get on the next bus that came by and head towards Lyon. Smitty and I were dressed in civilian clothes, neither of us spoke French and, had we been found out, would have been shot as spies. We spoke to no one, not even to each other. Luckily no one spoke to us. Smitty maybe could have passed for French – but I could not.

We arrived safely in Lyon (liberated France) and headed towards the airport which was now just under Allied control. Smitty and I reported in and were told that there were no more planes heading towards England that night. We caught a break the next day when a Colonel flew in from Italy on a B-24. I'd never been on a B-24 prior to this. Smitty and I were the only passengers on that B-24 as she took us back to London. I learned later that Smitty and I were only the 2nd or 3rd internees to have successfully escaped from Switzerland. We were interrogated in England, given some uniform pieces and 30 days leave. At this point, I lost contact with "Smitty" and we never spoke again. I arrived in England, was debriefed and received my 30 day pass. After a few nights of being thrown out of bed due to the Blitzkrieg, I made my way up to Scotland and home, arriving first in Washington DC.

Had I completed my 13th mission, I would have returned to start pilot training.

Note: Of the 1740 Swiss internees and evadees, 947 tried to escape, of these 184 attempts failed. Dad was literally one of the first to escape. If caught, they would have been sent to a POW camp. An aviation art print entitled "Safe Pastures" by Mark Postlethwaite

was issued to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the arrival in England of the US 8th Air Force. It is an artist rendition of "The Dottie G" flying low over a river in the springtime. In actuality she belly landed on the shores of Lake Constance in the snow.



Safe Pastures by Mark Postlethwaite. B-17G 42-37755 NV-A 325th Bomb Squadron, 92nd Bomb Group from Poddington crash landing in Switzerland on 25th February 1944 after sustaining damage over enemy territory after a raid on Augsburg and Stuttgart.



George F. Schaub

In search of **Lt Harluf Tom Jessen**

The First-Sergeant stood like Zeus on a dais, with ten hats containing the names of bomber crew candidates.

It was a very hot day in August, 1944, and the First-Sergeant would pick at random from each hat, the names of pilots, navigators, and bombardiers, and enlisted men. I remember that as he called the name of the pilot called Harluf Jessen, I saw him coming toward us and my instinct hoped that he would be the pilot of the crew that was forming at my station. As it happened, he walked right by us and knelt down by the next flag where the crew behind us was assembling.

When we were overseas, we were assigned to the same bomber group, the 447th, and the same squadron, the 711th, (Harluf's enlisted men were in my hut.).

It was a very special day, when a brand new B17/G was assigned to my bomber crew and named "Blithe Spirit". This was the title of a hit "London Play" by Noel Coward. The whole cast and crew of the play came for the christening that day with a camera crew and, as we shook hands with the cast, Peggy Wood, who was playing one of the two principal women, paused and said to me, "Young man, don't I know you?" to which I replied "Yes, Ms. Wood!" She

paused again, and said, "How do I know you?" "Ms. Wood," I said, "I played your son on the radio series 'Sky Over Britain' in 1939." She exclaimed, "Well, what are you doing here?" She asked permission to come in to our bomber with, Clare Luce, the other principal woman in the cast, and on the opposing armor-plates below the waist-guns, they both wrote in huge bright red lipstick. "We love you forever!"

Although we had a number of very narrow escapes on our missions, including having to have our vertical stabilizer rebuilt, we finished our 35.

Blithe Spirit went to Harluf and his crew, they were only 2 missions to finishing. On March 15, 1945, over the armaments factory, at Oranienberg Germany, they were shot down. Only two of the crew members survived and taken prisoner. Harluf Jessen, was among those that did not survive.

**Submitted by, Marvin Silbersher
Crew #80 ("Blithe Spirit")
Radio-Operator-Gunner
711th Squadron
447th Bomb Group
3rd Division
8th Air Force**



Harluf Jessen and his wife, Irene at her family's farm in Hamel, MN, Jessen was captain of a B-17 bomber crew on it's first mission after taking over from the Blythe Spirit crew, which had just completed 35 missions. The bomber took a direct hit in the bomb bay over the target of Oranienburg, Germany. All but two crew members were lost.

392ND BG MEMORABILIA

We had a great show at Briston Village Funday where I was invited to share all of my 392nd BG memorabilia. Everyone really enjoyed the issues of the 8th AF News magazines! As you can see, we had quite a bit of memorabilia from the 392nd. The models of aircraft you see in the photo were all assembled by young Ian Hubbard. He is quite talented. There were over one thousand folks in attendance that day.

**All the very best! Kindest regards,
John Gilbert
adrian@gilberta.freemove.co.uk**



DEATH WAS OUR CO-PILOT

October 8, 1943

By Captain Everett E. Blakely 100th BG - as told to Fred B. Barton

My father, Everett Blakely, flew missions in the 8th Air Force in 1943.

On October 8, 1943 he flew a mission to Bremen Germany and successfully dropped his bombs. On the way back his B-17 lost two engines and sustained over 700 holes. His gunners shot down at least 9 enemy fighters - probably a record. He was awarded a silver star and five of the surviving crewmen earned purple hearts. Following the mission he co wrote "Death Was Our Co-Pilot" for "True" magazine.

(Keep in mind that this article was written while the war was still going on)

THEY WERE ELEVEN MEN AGAINST SUDDEN DEATH. THE TARGET WAS BREMEN. THE GAME WAS FOR KEEPS. HOW THESE GALLANT AIRMEN OF THE 8TH U.S. ARMY AIR FORCE FULFILLED THEIR MISSION OVER GERMANY AND RETURNED IN THEIR FLAK-RIDDLED FLYING FORTRESS, WOUNDED BUT JUBILANT OVER THEIR SUCCESS, IS TOLD BY THE COMMANDER OF THE SQUADRON TO ONE OF 'TRUE'S' CORRESPONDENTS IN THE EUROPEAN THEATER OF WAR.

NINE enemy planes downed for keeps; one damaged and possibly finished; two others seen in bad shape but not officially accepted as having been destroyed: Five of our men wounded, one so severely he died eight days later in the hospital after a miraculous escape from instant death in the air:

More than 800 flak holes in the Flying Fortress, and controls shattered, making a crash landing a necessity but making it also almost an impossibility;

And above all, the bombs dropped smack on the enemy target! That was the story of an enemy raid our crew, handling the U.S. Army Air Force plane known as 'Just-A-Snappin,' turned in when our heavy bombardment group, along with other bombers of the 8th Air Force, made a successful mission over Bremen, Germany, on Oct. 8, 1943.

You asked for the story, and now we can tell it: but tell it chiefly to give proper praise

to the men back in the ship that you don't hear about so often. Those gunners and the rest, they were the real heroes!

All of us knew in advance that this raid was going to be really tough. A couple of days of pre-briefing, with the pilot, navigator and bombardier making secret trips to Air Division headquarters, had assured us that the mission ahead of us ranked in importance with our brilliantly successful, even if costly, mission over Regensburg, two months before, almost to the day. You remember hearing of Regensburg? That was the mission where our heavy bombers completely obliterated the Messerschmitt factory. The cleanup had been so final that the generals in charge of the 8th U.S. Army Air Force here in England announced that the bomber planes our side lost was a cheap price to pay for the day's victory.

As happens when we play the big-time, Major John B. Kidd of New Rochelle, himself a former squadron leader and a brilliant pilot, came with us as acting co-pilot. Our regular co-pilot, 2nd Lieut. Charles A. Via of Clifton Forge, Va., rode that day in the position of tail gunner.

With Major Kidd and myself in the

two pilots' seats our plane led our combat wing. Via, riding in the tail, passed the signals on back to the planes following us; he acted as formation control officer.

Everybody was alert to the bigness of the day's job.

Takeoff and formation in the air were completed in eighteen minutes-record time. The group climbed to 9,000 feet and passed over the small English town given as our control point for the day about forty seconds behind the briefed time of 1246. Here we picked up two other bombardment groups which with ourselves completed the wing. At 1329 all of us, shaped up into our Air Division, passed over the English coast in unquestionably the best formation flown during our entire experience.

Our meteorological data was pretty exact; we were just two minutes behind schedule at a certain checkup point in the English Channel. At 1441 our combat wing started the turn onto land near an island you never heard of but the Germans have. At this time we were pretty much in full formation, with just a few planes that had aborted through motor trouble or other cause. (Aborted means they turned back before completing their bomb run.)

At 1456 we were right on our course. There was a slight haze and a two-tenths undercast of low stratus clouds was present, but it was possible to verify our exact position by pilotage, meaning by sighting and identifying known objects on the ground.

The combat wing ahead of us was riding too close, so we swung to the left and cleared a



This is Blakely's Fortress, 'Just-A-Snappin' which, flak-shattered, came home to a crash landing.

stated German city two miles off course to find freer air. Then we passed over our IP, -- initial point -- at 1521. We were right on schedule.

Our 18th enemy mission, and the 13th for the airplane, was under way.

Up to now everything had been strictly as usual. We were excited but not tense. Any of us who were hungry had taken time to nibble at a chocolate bar or chew some gum. (They issue you sandwiches too, but at altitude food gets hard and tasteless and tough.) We don't eat much in advance of a mission --your digestion ties up a little in knots. But you can stretch your legs a bit and take a drink of water and that sort of thing, and even smoke if you feel like it.

We even had a couple of minutes to reminisce. About the time we cleaned up Regensburg and went straight on to North Africa and stayed seven days, for instance. Seven days where they had put us had been plenty long enough. Food was better back at our home base in England and we were impatient for the return trip. So much so, in fact, that even when our No.4 motor caught fire halfway across the Mediterranean (which scared the planes back of us; they all started winding their movie-cameras, thinking we'd fall in the sea for sure) we just couldn't bother to turn back. So Via and I had throttled that engine very low, so it would just keep turning over and not feather, which would have shown the enemy we were crippled. and we crossed northward over Bordeaux and, even though we lost the formation, did our navigating over open ocean and got back to England, and even to our home field.

The mission to Trondheim, Norway too had been a dandy. That was another time we had led the whole task force. It was the longest bombing mission the 8th U.S. Army Air Force had ever undertaken--2,010 statute miles. It had been an outstandingly successful raid, with not a man killed, and only one crew lost--they landed in neutral Sweden and were interned there.

Trondheim was where the American bombs hit the German soldiers' quarters



*These men were the regular crew of the famous Fortress. Standing, left to right, Sergt. McClelland, ball turret gunner; Lieut. Crosby, navigator; Lieut. Via, co-pilot; Capt. Blakely, pilot; Lieut. Douglass, bombardier. Front row, left to right, Sergt. Saunders, right waist gunner; Sergt. Thornton, top turret gunner; Sergt. Yevich, left waist gunner; Sergt. Nord, tail gunner; Sergt. For-
kner, radio.*

and a German officers' club, killing plenty of them, and also wiped out three and one-half years construction by German engineers and captive labor on fortifications, warehouses and submarine docks. But because Bomber Command had timed our arrival so that our bombs landed fifteen minutes after the work-men had gone to lunch, we killed only a handful of friendly Norwegians.

Our crew received the DFC for that raid: I as captain and pilot, Douglass as bombardier, and Crosby as navigator.

We could talk back and forth to each other over the intercommunicating system. We knew each other well. We had been together as a crew pretty much since July, 1942, at Sebring, Fla. I joined the gang at Boise, Idaho, where I had just finished my pursuit training and three phases of training as a B-17 co-pilot. Because our crew was the initial crew around which the 100th Bombardment Group later formed, they called us "Blakely's Provisional Group." That name later attached to the plane we flew for some time. It happened like this. We lost our Nos. 3 and 4 engines in a mission over St. Nazaire; also our ball turret was out, because a unit in the ball turret was leaking oil which dripped down and froze on the window, blotting out the

gunner's view. With two engines dead we clunked along in an uneven rhythm, but even so we managed to complete our bomb-run and drop our loads on the target, and head for home. We got there too. But coming in alone like that and in a limping plane made us look like a bunch of amateurs, and they pinned a beginner's name on us. We considered that an understatement and liked it.

Douglass (1st Lieutenant James R. Douglass, of Lansing, Mich., and Stockton, Cal.) had joined us at Walla Walla, and then the crew went back to Boise for three months as instructors before going overseas. Crosby joined us, after almost the identical training, on our fifth mission, and his third, over in England. (1st Lieutenant Harry H. Crosby, that is, of Des Moines, Iowa). The Trondheim raid was the first one where this present crew had flown altogether, because McClelland, the ball turret operator, joined us then; on our eighth mission.

We had visited nearly a score of countries, starting with the U.S.A., Canada, and Newfoundland and taking in Greenland, Iceland, Ireland, Scotland, and England; Norway, Sweden and Denmark; Germany, France, Italy, Switzerland, Spain and North Africa. That was a lot of territory for a bunch of ex- college boys to be flying over in a beautiful big \$250,000 bombing plane.

All three of us--Blakely, Crosby and Douglass--had married while instructing at Boise, two of us marrying girls we met while, in training, Crosby marrying a girl he had known for five years. A fourth man who also married at the same time has since been reported M.I.A.--missing in action. We wonder now and then about him--whether he hit the silk safely and is a prisoner of war, whether he got drowned or shot and smashed up, whether he will ever get back to his young wife.

A lot of these things floated through my mind briefly and happily as we moved forward into enemy Germany. We were heading for Bremen, and we didn't need our maps or our dead reckoning to tell us we were getting close. Nor to tell us that

our arrival was expected.

This happened to be our first bombing mission on Bremen, but we had been over other German cities a lot like it. Flying around any of those German towns is plenty rugged. You never want to go there without clouds to protect you. This day the haze cleared away just before we arrived. That was bad.

We could look ahead and see an immense black smoke-cloud hiding most of the business area of Bremen. What was worse, we could see a tremendous carpet of flak coming up to greet us. Not a few individual shots and some small black balls, but so much solid flak you could almost slice it like cake.

It's a temptation in a case like that to give yourself a short bomb-run, which may mean you drop your bombs wide of the target, and get out of there promptly and safely. Our crew was sold on the idea of never doing that. Our idea was, "We don't ever want to come back here again, so let's do it right the first time." That meant taking a long enough bomb-run so we could operate our bomb-sight exactly. You need about twenty-five seconds to do that. Risky business, of course, because the Nazi anti-aircraft gunners down below needed only fifteen seconds to verify their sighting and, let us have it. Matter of fact, they had the advantage, because the "wing" just ahead of us had been flying at almost our same altitude, and the gunners could check back on their computations and use the same data once again.

We Figure about 300 anti-aircraft guns were firing at us. Two minutes before we hit the target our plane was struck by the first burst of flak. Our ball-turret operator, Staff Sergeant William F. McClelland of Omaha, Neb., reported calmly over the inter-com that his turret had been struck but not pierced. Even so, from that minute his turret operated in a queer jerky fashion that didn't help matters any.

Thirty seconds before the bombs were dropped a burst of flak hit our nose compartment, shattering the windows to the right of the bombardier's head. One chunk struck Douglass in the left side, tore through his clothing and ripped the cloth of his flak suit. It scorched the skin but did not draw blood. Crosby, sitting close by at his navigator's charts, thought Douglass had been wounded, and so did Doug.

He made himself remain calm, however, and kept his eyes glued to the bombsight until he toggled the bombs away at 1525 sharp.

That was good work, because the Photo Reconnaissance Unit cameras later showed that Doug's bombs were dropped accurately and destructively. Our own camera may have got some pictures too, but it is at the bottom of the channel.

Of course we started evasive action the instant the bombs were cut loose, but even so they had us.

They got our No.4 engine. The same burst shattered the control wires of our stabilizer and our ailerons. Our left elevator was ripped to shreds. That plunged our plane into a sort of spinning dive, completely out of control. We must have looked bad from the outside, because the Group reported later that we were seen to fall into a flat spin, on fire. They may have been right, too, but maybe were talking about another plane.

The impulse in a crisis like that is to forget everything and save your own skin. Here is where Major Kidd, our co-pilot, used his head. Seeing we couldn't keep in formation he phoned back to Via, in the ship's tail: "Signal the deputy leader to take over." Then we were on our own It just happened that the deputy leader's plane was shot down in flames, which left our Group without a leader. Those that survived tucked themselves into the Group's formation and returned to England under protection.

Nothing fazed our radio operator, Sergeant Edmund G. Forkner of Tulsa, Okla. Amid shot and shell, and all the other po-

etical stuff, he radioed the message back to our Bomber Command: "The target was bombed at 1525."

You can lose altitude awfully fast when one engine goes sour and your controls get chewed into ribbons. We dropped for 3,000 feet before Major Kidd and I could regain control. Thank our maintenance crew for the fact that, with all our damage, the plane was able to right itself. Most of the crew not strapped to their seats were thrown to the floor, shaken severely-but at last the ground was once more back where it ought to be, instead of standing up on one ear. Once more we were in level flight and, at least temporarily, safe.

We held a quick conference over the interphone. What was the extent of our damage, and what was the chance of getting somewhere in safety? For the first time the men riding up front learned we had lost all communication back of the top turret. Our control wires were fraying as far back as the top-turret operator could see. The cowling was falling off our bad engine; we were still losing altitude; we were still 200 miles from home.

Down below were plenty of safe landing places. If we went ahead the plane might catch on fire--might ditch us in the ocean and let us drown--might explode in mid-air. We were in the land of enemy fighter planes. If we made a safe landing we would become prisoners of war, receiving officers' pay and perhaps getting home alive when the war was ended.

Maybe you think we puzzled quite a while over that decision. We settled it in about .0001 second flat. We added ourselves up and headed for home.

Two of our men had been hit.

Saunders, our right waist gunner (Staff Sergeant Lester W. Saunders of Chicago and former bailiff in the Chicago Municipal Court and the Superior Court of Cook County, Ill.) was wounded through the abdomen by a 20-mm. shell that entered his stomach and went out through the back. He braced himself, even though critically wounded; spreading his legs and holding on to his gun. By a miracle of toughness and skill he shot down the plane that had hit him, a Messerschmitt-210. Then he walked to the radio compartment, lay down quietly in a corner, and asked young Forkner to give him first aid.

Young Forkner, a man we had looked on as a kid, lifted Saunders'



As his mates kept up a steady fire, the wounded gunner staggered into the radio compartment, slid down in a corner and asked Forkner quietly for first aid. - Illustration by WILL CRAVEN

hand where he was holding his stomach, and the blood spurted. We give credit to Sergeant Forkner for cool-headedness and intelligent first aid. He laid Saunders down and put a compress on the wound, then spilled in sulfanilamide powder and stirred up a paste in the blood, and pressed it down with the compress. That held the blood back.

The radio compartment was no bed of roses, because on a mission you leave the top hatch at home and, what's more, the doors for the two waist guns stay open. And the sub-zero temperatures you find at that altitude makes things about as cozy as sitting on some railroad tracks during a blizzard. Forkner had to warm the syrettes of morphine in his mouth before he could thaw the stuff sufficiently to break the seal, expose the single-use needle, and inject the pain-deadener into the wounded man's arms. Somewhere along the line a machine gun bullet clipped the visor off Forky's cap, but even that didn't rattle him.

Yevich our left waist gunner (Staff Sergeant Edward S. Yevich) of Scranton, Pa.--was wounded a couple of times in the arm and slightly in the leg, first by flak that burst outside his gun hatch. Then the 20-mm. shell that went through Saunders without exploding hit the side of Yevich's gun, showering metal through the compartment and literally blasting the gun out of his hands. That was a close call for Yevich, and we are grateful to Jerry that he escaped.

More of our men turned up wounded before long.

Our ball turret gunner, McClelland, was wounded twice in the face head and legs, down there all alone in his bottom turret. The flak even slashed his oxygen mask into ribbons, which is enough to make any self-respecting gunner mad. But he stayed in his bottom turret until he was sure all attacks on us had ceased, and then climbed into the radio compartment for first aid.

Funny thing while McClelland was lying there on the floor of the radio compartment, about the time we crossed the Holland coast and came over the English Channel, a chunk of flak as big as your fist



Radio Operator Forkner, left, did emergency first aid on the flight, while Co-Pilot Via took over the tail gun position.

came up through the floor and hit two steel flak-suits he was lying on. That bounced McClelland royally in the air but didn't hurt him. Wonderful stuff, those flak-suits. They're like a modern knight's coat-of-mail, and they save a lot of lives.

Staff Sergeant Lyle E. Nord of Superior, Wis., normally our tail gunner (he was firing the radio operator's gun this day, leaving Forkner free for radio work) reported that the flak was flying off his flak-suit, "like pebbles bouncing off a tin-roof."

We found out about then that Via wasn't doing so well in the tail gunner's position. Fragments of a 20-mm. shell exploded inside his compartment and wounded him in the leg, and later a savage chunk of flak came through the fleshy part of his hip, making an ugly wound and missing his spine by a slim quarter inch. (He was still in the hospital as this piece was being put in the mails from England.)

You get some idea of how potent the excitement of actual battle is when you consider that Via had three shots of morphine from our first aid man, Forkner, without their having much effect. In fact, when later he saw the preparations for a crash landing, he thought we were preparing against a new attack by enemy planes, and someone had to sit on him to keep him from getting back into the fight again. Trouble was he felt himself slipping be-

cause of the morphine and thought he was dying and he didn't want to die.

That's the kind of fighting men we have in our bombing planes going over Germany right now.

If anyone thing kept us in the air it was accurate and deadly gunnery. That plus the coordination that becomes instinct, the result of long and painstaking practice our whole crew had gained in working together as a unit. Every minute of training we had had in our early flying days paid out now in a big way.

There we were, limping back over Germany at a crawling, speed of 120 miles per hour (the plane stalls at 100 m.p.h.). Up ahead we saw a brother B-17, flying all alone. Three Messerschmitts were smelling around it, testing out its fire. The B-17 shot back harmlessly. Suddenly the three Nazi planes swooped and fired and dodged, swooped and fired and dodged, again and again. The lone bomber flopped over, burst into flames, and crashed toward earth. We couldn't see its identifying number, and we probably didn't know the men on board; but it gave us a sick and helpless feeling to see our fellow Americans go down to death like that.

Then those three Me-109's came at a second B-17 also within our view. This one too survived the first couple of attacks but not all of them. It too crumpled up in flames. The men on board went down in a flaming hell that lasted only a few seconds, and then ship and men disappeared in one final explosion.

Our turn was next. The three Nazi planes, confident of a third easy kill, came at us. But our gunners were ready. Probably Thorny--Technical Sergeant Monroe B. Thornton of Newport, Tenn.-- the top turret gunner, got the first, shooting the fellow's propeller off--we could see the pilot bail out. We can't now be sure who got the second one, but all of us saw it too burst into flames and drop toward earth.

The third plane hovered around a little, but he wasn't having any of that medicine for himself. He turned tail and headed for

safety and home.

Our score for the day: attacked thirteen times; and we thought we finished off twelve planes. But the official findings credit you with a kill only if you see the pilot bailout, see the plane disintegrate in air (not just pieces come loose) or see the plane hit the ground and blow up. It helps if your kill is witnessed by others, especially men riding in another plane. At altitude you never see an enemy plane hit the ground, no matter how badly it is injured, because while it drops 20,000 feet you have moved forty or fifty miles ahead. So the score they credited us with was: nine planes definitely destroyed, and one seriously injured. Maybe we had a couple more that were hurt, but they don't count.

You can thank the very careful log kept by our navigator, Harry Crosby, for the record of these kills. Even so, he couldn't be every place at once. All any one man can do is to fire the gun given him and report anything he can see from that spot. Later on you get some further details from men riding in other parts of the ship, but after you've had a dozen missions the details of anyone trip lose distinctness and the whole becomes a haze or a dream.

But here is the score.

Thornton brought down three. One was a Me-110 that came at us high and from the right side. The pilot had a hot trigger-finger and couldn't wait. Thorny held back till he got his distance; then let the Nazi have it. The right engine of the fighter plane caught fire and pieces flew off the left wing. Yevich saw two men bailout and both chutes open. Thornton's second and third planes came near to the Holland border.

McClelland got two, there in his damaged ball turret all alone, and despite a five-inch groove cut in his scalp from a vicious knife of flak.

Via, back there at the tail gun position, got two. Two Me-210's came in together after hovering, for some time at 1,000 yards. Via picked out one of them and clipped it neatly. Both he and our radio gunner, Nord, saw it burst into flames. Via's second hit was a partner of one that Thornton destroyed, and Thorny saw it blow up nearly 500 yards out.

Saunders got one, but if we could hand that Nazi fighter plane back to the Germans and bring back Saunders' life, we'd call that a bargain.

Nord, our tail gunner, got one. Two

Me-210's came in stacked up from about 600 yards out. Nord took one of them and our left waist gunner, Yevich, the other. The plane kept coming doggedly till it was 250 yards away but then slipped to the right and blew up. Pieces of the fighter splintered against our plane. Yevich may have hit the second plane but somehow didn't stop it.

Lieutenant Douglass, our bombardier, is officially credited with damaging one plane, and that's all, though he saw it catch on fire and start toward earth. Maybe that 'plane hit the ground and exploded; we don't know, and Doug doesn't' really care. His attitude, and that of Bomber Command, is that we go into enemy country to drop our bombs and come home safely. Fighting enemy fighter planes is not our business; that's the job of our own fighter planes. We'd rather not shoot down any fighters at all, because if they come close enough for us to hit them, they're close enough to hit us--and they do it.

The plane that Doug hit was a Ju-88 that flipped' around a long time before it came in on us, at about 300 yards and ended up in a vertical bank with its belly toward us. We saw most of its tail assembly shatter off before it fell into a spin, and smoke was pouring from its rear as it went down. Maybe the pilot was killed; maybe he jumped later on; the score is just one damaged plane.

Lieutenant Crosby, our navigator, stopped another Ju.88 that came at us from 10 o'clock. He feels sure his shots registered on the plane's exposed belly, and at least he stopped that plane's attack, but it didn't fall.

Crosby and Douglass remember one brief incident, up there in the air. You probably know it is the navigator's job to dodge all known flak areas. Suddenly, about seventy miles east of the Zuyder Zee, on our way home, Doug saw so many white puffs he felt sure we were over enemy flak. He turned to Crosby with a question. Turned out that two fighter planes were on our tail, one from high and one from low, at the same time. They were the two planes that Thornton and Via brought down, no doubt.

With our three good engines and our one bad one and our torn controls making steering so tough that it took all my strength to steer the ship (I limped around all next day with a lame leg) we had dropped to 8,000 feet at 1620 when we

crossed the coast.

Forkner had put through a call for help before his radio equipment was shattered. Even after the instrument was smashed he ticked off an SOS by touching two wires together, and hoped they would bring help.

The enemy fighter planes left us for keeps when we crossed the channel. Maybe they thought we would soon be picked up by our own fighter escort. Maybe they thought we; were done for, anyway--and well they might.

The first job was to put out the fire in our No.4 engine. Up to now we hadn't had time to bother with a detail like that, But fire in the air is dangerous. If it melts your oxygen lines and starts pure oxygen flowing, the whole aluminum and magnesium body of the plane will burn like paper. If the fire comes close to your bombs and ammunition, or touches off your petrol tanks, that will finish you too.

Fortunately the pilot was able to skid the plane and dash cool air crosswise over No. 4 engine and put out the fire. It cost us altitude, but it brought us peace of mind.

Both Major Kidd and I had been giving the plane evasive action. One would see flak on one side and jerk the plane toward safety. The other would see further flak heading for us and dodge in a new direction. It was rough going, but we got through and that was all that counted.

We were down to 3,990 feet and still dropping when Major Kidd asked Navigator Crosby for the shortest route to England. Crosby gave it to him.

Once more we held a brief council-of-war. Perhaps we ought to land on the surface, inflate the rubber life boats, and wait for the very efficient sea-air rescue boats and seaplanes to pick us up.

But the Nazi bullets had fixed that.

Doug went to the rear and spent two nervous minutes checking our abandonment equipment. He brought back word:

"Both rubber dinghies and three Mae Wests shot to pieces." There was no chance of taking to water unless we left our wounded men to drown. That matter was out.

There wasn't a thing to do but stay with the ship--and hope we could make land.

So those of the crew who weren't crippled and weren't flying the plane started to throw things overboard to lighten our weight. The guns went first. Then the ammunition. Then the radio, the busted camera, the priceless bomb sight, the empty

thermos bottles, any extra clothing. Our men worked fast. Due to the lighter weight we not only held our altitude but even gained 300 feet. We needed it; we were running low on fuel and might have to glide to a landing.

The plane was -listing so badly that our floating aperiodic compass stuck on the side. Crosby figured where the sun should hit the Plexiglas front of the plane and called to the pilots to correct the course every time the sun went some place else. That was crude navigating, but it worked.

Almost as soon as we edged over

England we sighted an airport with room enough for us to crash into the soft turf. We had only about ten gallons of petrol left. Our rear wheel refused to drop down. We had to crash-land, and had to do it right the first time; no chance for a dress rehearsal.

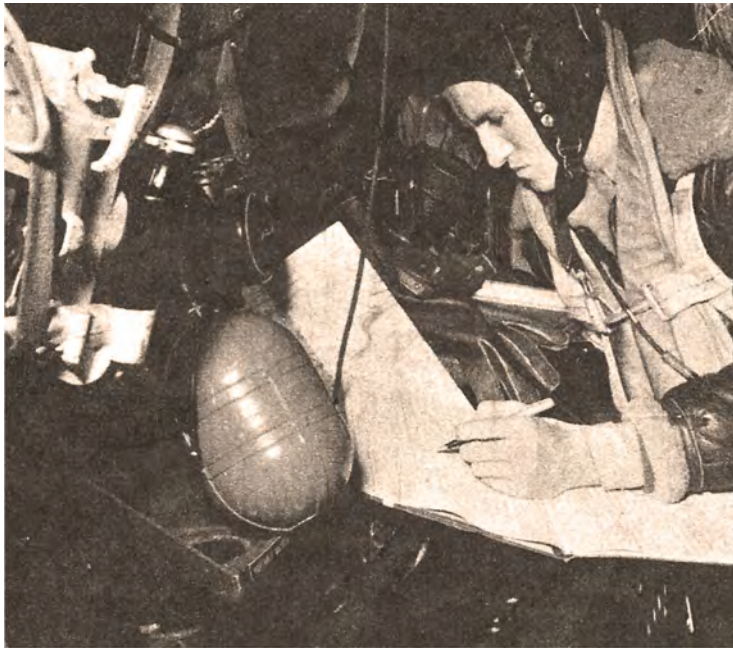
Usually on a crash landing everybody except the two pilots (who are strapped into their seats) gathers in the radio compartment, and you press your bodies against the forward wall so you won't be thrown and your bones broken.

This time our crew had to think first of the men who were wounded.

Thornton cradled Lieutenant Via with his body in the waist of the plane, since Via's condition prevented his being moved. Forkner had covered the other wounded men with blankets, and the rest of the men did what they could to hold the injured ones in place for the impact of landing.

The ship touched the ground. Instantly the cables operating the brakes snapped. Our elevator was useless. The plane wouldn't taxi, wouldn't steer. With the terrific momentum you get even at 100 m.p.h. we plowed down that vacant airport toward a huge tree. And no power on earth could stop us.

The tree crashed us between No. 2 engine and the pilot's compartment: That was lucky, because another three inches to the right and it would have crushed the pilot and co-pilot. We had slowed down to maybe fifty m.p.h. by then. The force be-



When enemy gunfire shattered his instruments, Navigator Harry H. Crosby brought the ship home by dead reckoning.

hind our smash swung the ship savagely around to the left in a half circle.

The nose compartment was completely destroyed. The plane was a wreck; scrap-metal only. The salvage crew counted 700 holes from the rear of the cabin alone! They counted up to 800 and then got tired counting.

You can bet we heaved a sigh of relief when we came to a stop and realized we were safely back in England. Here we were on a friendly airport, and with help close at hand. We waited for the friendly voices, the chug of ambulances, the lifting hands.

Fortunately Doug had been standing between the pilot and co-pilot and had been firing rockets from the instant we approached land to the very end. Fortunately too England in war-time is one vast body of volunteer airplane spotters. Our distress signals were seen and interpreted. A nearby RAF station under Flight Lieutenant Nolan sent us two ambulances and some doctors within a few minutes.

We hadn't waited, Those of us able to walk had already lifted our wounded men out of the wrecked plane. We had to take Saunders out through the roof, and push Via out through a window. We stretched them, out on blankets and tried to keep them warm.

RAF doctors got there presently and freshened the men's bandages, and then moved them to a nearby English hospital.

Our own flight surgeon, Major Jennings, arrived soon after by plane and jeep and found that everything possible was being done.

They couldn't save poor old Saunders. Plucky fellow, he never let on how badly he was hit. All through the scrape he held up his circled fingers to indicate that all was well with him. For eight days he lingered on, some days with a pulse so weak it could hardly be felt. Time and again the doctors gave him up, only to see him rally once again. They marveled that any man's will-power could keep him alive so long, Good old Saunders. We'll avenge 'him properly yet.

Major Kidd got to a nearby phone and called our home bomber station. When word reached our base that

we were still alive a cheer went up. Everybody had thought for sure we were done for.

They promoted some of us; Crosby to be Group Navigator; Douglass for an equally important job in Group Command of the 100th Bombardment Group; myself to be commander of the 418th Bombardment Squadron.

None of us accepted promotion as relieving us from the responsibility of personal flying. Both Crosby and I took part in a mission the day this piece was being typed and mailed. Doug likewise has applied for return to another crew. The staff sergeants who are our gunners are shooting aboard other planes.

That's what we've got to do to finish this war over Germany. It's our job. You can't win 'the war with one mission, no matter how effective your bombs or how accurate your guns. Got to keep on fighting.

That's why, to us who took part in it this mission you have just read about was just another raid. We live, always, for our next mission-and our next- and the one beyond that.

Submitted by:

*The son of Everett E. Blakely,
Jim Blakely MD
3815 Colgate Ave Dallas, Tx
blakely_tx@yahoo.com*

ACKERMAN, Ferdinand, 89, of Bethlehem, died July 31, 2014. He was born and raised in South Side Bethlehem. He was the loving husband to Dorothea E. (Reese) Ackerman who died in 2001. He proudly served his country during WWII in the U.S. Army Air Corp after being drafted in June of 1943 and was deployed to 402nd Air Depot in England. He was a member of the VFW in Northampton.



Ferdinand Ackerman

AYERS, Francis (Frank) H., passed away June 24, 2014 in San Antonio Texas. Born January 18, 1925 in Virginia, Frank was the epitome of those individuals we call The Greatest Generation. Immediately following the attack on Pearl Harbor, Frank attempted to join the Armed Forces, but was told at the age of sixteen to come back after he finished school. Frank did just that and joined the Army Air Force after graduation. He proudly served his country during World War II with courage and distinction. Frank was the flight engineer and top turret gunner on a B-17. He completed 32 missions with the 427th Squadron, 303rd Bomb Group. He received the Purple Heart for wounds suffered on one mission. Frank was recalled to active duty during the Korean War and was assigned to Bolling AFB, Washington D.C. He is survived by his loving wife Robyn of 38 years.



Francis Ayers

Betts, Bert A., 90, died at his home in Sacramento. Bert was a B-24 Liberator pilot, and flew 30 missions over occupied Europe, the last two coming on D-Day. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters. Before he was age 21, he earned an Award for Meritorious Achievement from his 458th BG, which

cited his outstanding performance of duty in the completion of a tour of duty in the European Theater without once failing to complete a mission. The Award said in part: "The tenacity of purpose, determination and efficiency displayed by this officer merit the highest praise, and reflect great credit upon himself and the United States Army Air Force."



Bert Betts

BREDE, James Faris DDS, 89, passed away on June 5, 2014 in his Lewisville, Texas home. He was born on March 16, 1925 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. James was with the 379th BG where he flew 35 missions as a B-17 pilot and obtained the rank of a 1st Lieutenant. He re-enlisted in the Air Force during the Korean Conflict where he went on to serve as a dentist in Suwon, Korea. James is survived by his loving wife, Adele (Konefal) Brede of Lewisville.



James Brede

BRICE, 1st Lt. George, (October 16, 1921-August 1, 2014) passed away recently. He was born in Ferndale, California. George attended the University of California at Davis, but enlisted in the US Army Air Corps before completing his education. He was a navigator with the 457th Bomb Group, 751st Bomb Squadron who flew a total of 32 missions and received several Oak Leaves and the Distinguished Flying Cross. In 1945, he married Grace Curry. They lived in Hillsboro, Oregon.

CULLEN, William 'Bill', age 90, passed away on May 30, 2014. He was born on August 28, 1923 in Arlington, MA. He was a First Lieutenant in the 306th BG, as a navigator in a B-17. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, for heroism and extraordinary

achievement while participating in an aerial flight, a Purple Heart, for injuries sustained in combat flying over France, and an Air Medal for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight. He was predeceased by his wife Christine Joan Cullen

CURRIE, William "Bill" John age 93, of Alabaster, Alabama, passed away on May 19th at home. He was born on March 11, 1920, in Baldwinsville, New York. Bill entered military service on January 18, 1942, as an Air Corp. cadet. He graduated advanced single engine school, Spence Field, Moultrie, Georgia, on October 9, 1942, as Second Lieutenant instructor. He attended central instructor school, Maxwell Air Force base, Montgomery, Alabama. He served as an advanced single engine instructor and gunnery instructor at Marianna, Florida and Eglin Field, Florida, for the southeast training command. Bill served in the European theater with 8th and 9th Air Force. He was stationed with the 357th Fighter Group, 363rd Fighter Squadron, flew P-51 mustang fighter aircraft in combat over Germany. Bill separated with rank of Captain in November 1945. He then married Martha Lanis Ward, 1st Lieutenant Nurse Corp. on November 24, 1945

EGNEW, Robert F., 527th BS – Ball Turret Gunner, passed away April 2, 2014, at the age of 89 in Denver CO. Bob was born October 13,



Robert F. Egnew

1924, in Springfield, Illinois. He served as a ball-turret gunner on a B-17 Flying Fortress and flew 32 missions in 63 days from May – July, 1944, with the 379th Bomb Group. He flew two missions on D-Day. Bob was extremely proud of his service for his country. He was the recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, and the Bronze Star, among other medals. He was an avid reader and historian of WW II ETO. He had a keen memory of his B-17 missions and loved to relate stories of those days to family and friends.

He is survived by the love of his life, Betty his wife of 68 years.

FITZPATRICK., James C. (Jimmy) Jr., age 97, a resident of St. George Village in Roswell, GA died July 2014. Mr. Fitzpatrick was born in Bessemer, AL on October 13, 1916. He was a decorated Bomber Pilot in WWII, was a photographer for the Birmingham News and the Atlanta Journal and Constitution and a long time employee of Williams Printing Company. Mr. Fitzpatrick was preceded in death by his wife of 60 years, Verna Fitzpatrick

FUENFER, Albert J., 93, passed away on July 1, 2014. Born in Chicago, IL on November 29, 1920, 10 days after his family arrived in the United States from Poland. In 1942, he enlisted in the United States Army Air Force and was trained as an aerial gunner and radio operator. In 1944, he was assigned to the 490th BG, 3rd Air Division, US Eighth Air Force, stationed in the ancient Saxon village of Eye, Suffolk, England. He was proud of his service. Mr. Fuenfer was preceded in death by Doris, the love of his life and wife of 61 years.

GRIFFIS, Willis W. III, 91, of Vernon Hills and formerly a longtime resident of Lake Forest, died peacefully, March 28, 2014. Willis served in the United States Army Air Corps during both World War II and the Korean War. Willis was a regular attendee at the 34th Bomb Group reunions. According to one



Willis Griffis

of his friends, Willis was a student of archeology, an avid rock climber, and assisted teachers and scout leaders with their students during outdoor education activities

HOOPER, SGT Robert F., 88, of Newton Hamilton, PA, passed away unexpectedly on August 6, 2014 at his home. He was a B-17 radio operator and served in the 422nd squadron /305th BG involved in photo reconnaissance in Europe and Africa.

He is survived by his wife Lois and son, Robert J. with wife Kathleen.

KNAUB, James R., 91st BG (H), on B-17s - *Outhouse Mouse, Ramblin Rebel and Betty Lou's Buggy* - Radio Operator and Waist Gunner - Flew 30 missions with 7 in the lead plane - he leaves behind a grateful nation and an abundantly proud daughter and family!

LITTLE, Richard H., 91, formerly of Hanover, passed away May 19, 2014 in Colorado Springs. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Louise R. (Thieret) Little. He was a B-17 copilot and attained the rank of First Lieutenant. He was a member of the 401st BG and The Eighth Air Force Historical Society.

MENTZ, Henry Sr., passed away June 28, 2014 at the age of 90. Beloved husband to Mary DiCicco Mentz. He was a World War II veteran who served in the 390th Bomb Group, Eighth Air Force, U.S. Army Air Corps. He was a devoted member of the Eighth Air Force Memorial Foundation, the 390th Bomb Group Memorial Museum, and the D-Day Museum.

MESHKO, George M., was born in Staten Island, New York on March 20,



Robert Hooper



Richard Little

1925 and passed peacefully in Denver, Colorado on April 15, 2014. He served as a gunner and flight engineer on 25 missions in a B-17 "Skyball". George was with the 96th BG and 339th BS. He is survived by his wife Nancy (Pitarresi) Meshko.



George Meshko

MURPHY, Ray, was a waist gunner on the Stalhberg Crew of *Sleepytime Gal* in the 385th BG of the 8th Air Force. He passed away December 2013.

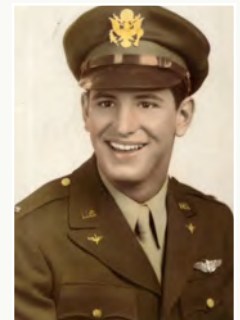
NEWBOLD, William P. 'Bill', 94 formerly of Langhorne, died June 20, 2014. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps and earned an officer's commission as a navigator in a B-24, the 44th BG 'Flying Eight Balls' of the 8th Air Force. His group took part in the daring and costly low-level attack on the German oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania, on Aug. 1, 1943, where one-third of the planes were lost. The 44th suffered even heavier casualties over Vienna Neustadt on Oct. 1, 1943, when Bill's bomber was shot down. He was captured and spent 18 months in a prisoner of war camp until being liberated by Gen. George Patton's army in April 1945.



William Newbold

NICHOL, John William Jr., April 20, 1925-July 14, 2014

John (Jack or Nick) was a bombardier in WWII. Second Lieutenant with the Army Air Corps Eighth Air Force, 96th Bomb Group. John was stationed in Europe and flew in a B-17. He stayed close to his crew throughout his life and they had many happy reunions. He



John Nichol

loved his family and his Catholic faith. His wife Eva predeceased him August 9, 2007 and he missed her greatly. She was the love of his life. They were married for 60 years and after his retirement they spent all their time together for 20 years.

O'DONNELL, William J. "Willie O", age 93, of St. Petersburg, passed away June 4, 2014. He was born in Philadelphia, PA, and moved to St. Petersburg in 1964, retiring from the U.S. Air Force after 20 years of service. Willie O was a P-51 fighter pilot in WWII and flew the F-51 and F-80 in Korea. He was awarded numerous medals including the Air Medal with 14 Oak Leaf Clusters; Distinguished Flying Cross; Croix DeGuerre with Silver Star; Bronze Star Medal with 1 Oak Leaf Cluster and the Presidential Unit Citation. He was preceded in death by his wife, Ruth G. O'Donnell.

PICKETT, John S. Jr., 93, of LA, passed away February 05, 2014 at his residence in Many, LA.

John served with the 385th BG, 550th squadron "Platt Crew". He was an Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on a B-17 and flew 29 missions over Europe.

He is survived by his wife, Joanne Hopkins Pickett

RICHARDSON, Lt. Col. Stanley P. Jr., 91, passed away May 2014, at his home in Beaverton, Oregon. Stan was born in Trenton, N.J. on March 20, 1923. He enlisted in the USAAF on April 6, 1942 and served in England with the 55th Fighter Group, 338th Fighter Squadron, flying P-38s and P-51s.

He was one of the first 16 American fighter pilots over Berlin in wartime, March 3, 1944 and also flew three missions over the Normandy invasion beaches on D-Day. In July of 1944, Stan



John Pickett



Stanley Richardson

was shot down while strafing a German airfield of Me-109s. According to Stan, "I just had a perfect fighter pass shooting up those airplanes on the ground, setting them on fire. The Germans had intense anti-aircraft fire. As I approached the perimeter of the airfield, I was going pretty fast. I saw the guns that shot me down and I shot those guns that shot me down. I went about 6 miles before I realized that I had to put the airplane on the ground. It was beginning to burn and smoke was in the cockpit. I bellied it into a beet field and jumped out and ignited the 2 thermite bombs in the cockpit so the airplane would burn and the Germans would not capture the airplane in whole. I took off running as fast as I could. I wanted to get away from this area because I knew it was going to be crawling with Germans."

A French family allowed Stan to hide in their root cellar and he returned to England with the help of the French Underground and became a flight instructor with the 55th FG and even had the chance to fly P-47s and Spitfires. Stan accumulated over 200 combat hours before his honorable separation from service in September of 1945 and he accepted a reserve commission with the Portland Army Air Force Base and eventually became assigned to the 2343rd AFRTC, Air Force Reserve Training Center unit. In 1949, Stan was recalled to active duty with the USAF and assigned to the 8th Fighter Group, K-13, Suwon, Korea, 1952, as a Materiel Officer. He was honorably separated from the USAF in 1953 and joined the Oregon Air National Guard as a reservist that same year. Stan's highest rank, Lt. Col. was obtained during the Korean War. His permanent rank was Major. His total flying time was 29,980 hours in two dozen different types of aircraft from fighters to airliners and corporate aircraft and he retired as chief pilot for General Telephone. Stan was a lifelong motorcyclist and also a docent at the Evergreen Air and Space Museum. In 2012, he was inducted into the Oregon Aviation Hall of Fame. He was preceded in death by his wife, Carol; and second wife, June.

RODDY, "Rod" Ewing, 89, born August 4, 1924 passed away July 25,

with his family by his side.

Born and raised in Uniontown, PA. He declined a football scholarship to Boston University to volunteer to defend his country in WWII with the eighth Air Force. There he served as a flight engineer on B-17's in numerous missions. He was awarded the Air Medal, Distinguished Service Medal and numerous other commendations for his heroic acts. He spent the past 48 years as a resident of Linwood, NJ, with the love of his life, Dolores "Doe" Roddy, who predeceased him four short months ago.

ROSSER, Wallace David, age 88, passed away May 23, 2014, in North Park Village Assisted Living in Ozark.

He was born June 28, 1925, in Long Beach, California. On June 26, 1948 he and Frances Mariel Shine were united in marriage. Mr. Rosser served his country in the U.S. Army Air Corps 486th Bomb Group, Sudbury England, during World War II, as a ball turret gunner on the B-17 "American Beauty". He was preceded in death by his wife, Frances, in 1998, after 50 years of marriage.



Wallace Rosser

RUSHMAN, Glenn A. 93, Bay City, passed away on June 3, 2014. He was born November 15, 1920 in Harrisville, MI. While attending Michigan State University, Glenn met the love of his life, the former Elna N. Murphy and married her June 3, 1944 in Punta Gorda, FL and celebrated 70 years of marriage. He served as a P-51 Mustang pilot flying 57 combat missions, 352nd FG also known as the "Blue Nosed Bastards of Bodney". He was a member of the 8th Air Force Historical Society and the 352nd FG.

SILVERMAN, Jack, Navigator on the Hayes Crew, 385th Bomb Group passed away

SWINGER, S/Sgt Harry H., born July 30, 1921, and



Harry Swinger

died July 27, 2014, in Poplar Bluff. Harry joined the US Army Air Corps in 1942 determined to be a pilot. He went through training throughout the US and became a gunner on the B-17. He said he was the smallest guy of the crew, so he wound up as a "ball turret" gunner. He was shipped to England in June 1942 and was stationed there leading up to "D" Day. On June 6, 1944, he flew his first 3 missions in support of the "D Day" operations. He flew with the crew on 33 missions prior to their aircraft named the "Fearless Fosdick" being shot down on Aug. 13, 1944. He parachuted right into the enemy German hands and was held P.O.W. in Stalag Luft IV and later Luft I until liberated at the end of the war. He weighed just 77 pounds when turned over to the American forces. He met several times with survivors of that 10 man crew in later years Harry and wife Mary were very active in the Order of the Eastern Star in Missouri and across the world.

VAN KIRK, Theodore "Dutch", 93, the navigator and last surviving crew member of the Enola Gay, the B-29 Superfortress that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima in the last days of WWII, died July 28, 2014 at his home in Stone Mountain, GA.

Early in the war, he flew missions with the 97th BG as part of the Red Gremlin crew with Paul Tibbets.

WHITLOCK, Hubert S., 94, of Charlotte, NC, died on February 19, 2014. Born in Blythewood, SC on May 19, 1919. He served as a B-24 Bombardier with the 389th Bomb Group. While with the group he was assigned to the 564th BS and later was appointed Lead Bombardier for the 566th BS. He survived 30 Missions.

After returning home in 1944 Captain Whitlock instructed B-24 Bombardiers at Casper Army Airbase, Wyoming before being transferred to Kirtland Field, New Mexico to instruct in B-29s. His memoir, "Providence Smiled on Me - A Life Story," was published in 2006.

He was preceded in death by his devoted wife of 65 years Irene.



Hubert Whitlock

WISWALL, Frank A., 94, died in Boonton on May 5, surrounded by family. In 1940, at the age of 18, Wiswall enlisted in the 102nd Cavalry Regiment Army National Guard. In January 1941, Private Wiswall was a horse cavalryman in B Troop where he made many lasting friends. When the horses were to be retired and the squadrons fully mechanized, Wiswall volunteered for the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was commissioned a second lieutenant and became a bombardier in the 8th Air Force, flying 25 combat missions from England in the famous Boeing Flying Fortress - B-17E, F and G models. Captain Wiswall returned to America to develop advanced bombing procedures and training, which enabled more precision, saving lives and reducing destruction. He was decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with Clusters and the Legion of Merit. Lieutenant Colonel Wiswall, USAF retired after over 38 years, which included the Korean War in B-29s.

On Nov. 11, 2009 in a ceremony at the French Consulate in New York, he was made a Chevalier and decorated with the French Legion of Honor. He was a proud member of the 117th Cavalry Association, The Essex Troop Association and 8th Air Force Association. Wiswall is survived by his beloved wife of 60 years, Mae (Beiermeister).



Capt. "Dutch" Van Kirk (left), Col. Paul W Tibbets, Jr. (center) and Maj. Thomas W Ferebee (right) in 1945 after they flew the Enola Gay to Hiroshima to drop an atomic bomb.



"Hello Mr. Maier" Engine Recovery After 58 Years

Heber H. Smith - Bombardier 332nd BS 94th BG



Heber Smith

During World War II, I served as a 19-year-old bombardier on a B-17, in the Eighth Air Force, 332nd Bomb Squadron, 94th Bomb Group, flying 35 combat missions over France and Germany between June 5 and October 17, 1944 stationed in a small village near Rougham.

Like countless other heavy bomber crews, ours went through some very harrowing experiences, including our 18th mission (to Munich in southern Germany) when we lost our two star-board engines to heavy anti-aircraft fire over the target. Unable to make it all the way back to England, we had to ditch our plane 'Hello, Mr. Maier' in the North Sea about 25 miles off the English coast and wait for the Walrus British Air-Sea Rescue to pick us up from Sea.

'Hello, Mr. Maier' was a borrowed plane. Our crew's regular plane, 'Athenian Avenger', was in the shop for mechanical repairs. The crew of 'Hello, Mr. Maier' was not too happy to find out their plane had been ditched in the North Sea!

Another frightening experience occurred on our 24th mission (to Bremen) when, after we released our load, we were hit by the unexploded bombs dropped by the plane above us during a left turn coming off the target. One of the five one hundred-pound bombs killed our tail gunner.

The discovery of our engine from the plane we ditched!

The recovery of the engine was made possible by one of the two P-47s which escorted us out of enemy territory, and got a geographical "fix" on our plane's location just before it sank into the North Sea. That is to say that the fighter pilot obtained the plane's location by flying north/south and east/west coordinates – where the two intersected was our plane's location.

The photo of the engine (below) the day it arrived at Rougham. As you can see, it is badly corroded, but not surprising after all that time in the sea (58 years - from July 29, 1944 until 2002).

The aluminum cylinder heads are gone, but the prop has survived. Looking at it, the prop is not feathered, so they guess this engine was still turning when it ditched.

Today this engine sits mounted at the entrance of the Rougham Tower's 94th Bomb Group Museum, along with a plaque mounted on the low wall surrounding the engine and listing the names of the nine crewmen.

If you are not aware of the museum please take a look at our website. www.rougham.org.

Heber is celebrating his 90th birthday in November, when he will receive the French Legion of Honor for his contributions to the liberation of France.



Fast forwarding to the fall of the year 2005, the thought occurred to me that high school history classes might want to hear about the experiences I had when I was not much older than they are.

I live in Contra Costa County, about 35 miles east of San Francisco, so I sent letters to the heads of the Social Studies Departments in six high schools in the central area of the county explaining my interest in talking to high school history classes when they reach the subject of World War II.

I received enthusiastic responses and wound up talking to 18 U.S. History classes in 2006.

Since that time, through the spring of 2014, I have spoken to 220 classes. With an average class size of 30, that's approximately 5,000 students.





SEARCHING FOR MY FATHER

Editor's note: Sometimes, 'Mail Call' can be both complicated and emotional as you will see from the correspondence below:

I have recently discovered a photograph which I believe to be that of my birth father, taken with my mother. Unfortunately he is not wearing a uniform jacket just shirt and tie etc. I know he was in the UK in 1944 and was attached to the American 8th Air force. I have no other information except his name, Robert Johnson. Can you help me please?

The photo is definitely one of my mother and I believe my father, Robert Johnson. My mother [Rita Noel] at the time was living in Streatham Hill, South London, and my father was probably stationed somewhere nearby, but this could be anywhere really. What about Blackheath which was not far away and I understand was a large base? From what he is wearing he would appear to be an airman. I don't know whether he was ground or flight crew, or even if he survived the war.

I am trying to establish from the photo which I have had enhanced as best we can, whether or not the shirt, tie, belt etc. would be standard issue as I don't even know if the man is American. I realize I have very little to go on to establish his true identity but it would be nice to know if this could possibly be him.

The only other information I have about Robert is that he told my mother he was of Irish extraction, and we believe that he left the UK in the summer of 1945, a few months before I was born [October 14, 1945] either to Europe or back to the States. He was 22 and had not been in employment prior to joining the Airforce.

Unfortunately all the people of that generation on both sides of the families have now passed away so any knowledge has died with them.

Thank you for any help you can give.
Vivienne

If any of you have any possible information or clues which might help Vivienne find answers, please contact me at: News@8thAFHS.org or via phone and/or mail, and I will forward on to Vivienne. Thank you.

VISIT TO FORMER 92ND BG BASE IN PODINGTON

Two years ago when I attended the 8th AFHS Reunion in Savannah I met Brian Francis (and Gordon Richards). I've written a book about my Father and wanted them to have a copy to take back to England. I've stayed in touch with Brian and when I was planning to return to my Father's former airbase in Podington for a 70 year commemoration of the 92nd BG at Santa Pod Raceway. I wrote and told him that I would be there. It was an absolute amazing feeling to be at Santa Pod signing books that I had written about my Dad in the place that he lived and flew missions from. It was surreal to say the least. I could never have imagined it!! On Sunday, July 13, there was the flyover of the majestic B-17 "Sally B," the only flying B-17 in Europe!! It was beautiful and emotional-just glorious to witness; the first time that has happened since the 92nd BG left



Brian Francis (center) with his friends, Tony & David

Podington. Backing up a little, prior to the Flyover, I was making my way to the Pod Shop where I was scheduled for my second book signing of the weekend and who should come driving in but Brian and his two friends, Tony and David, in 2 WWII Jeeps!! What a sight! I have pictures. It was such a thoughtful gesture and after the flyover, they took me and my friend from Belgium, Daniele, for a tour of the grounds. We met Ernie, who now lives in what was the Control Tower of the 92nd and then we drove to a building where you can see the faded 92nd BG symbol painted on the wall as well as faded names of missions that the men flew. This building was part of the 325th Squadron. Brian was an excellent guide in explaining the area as we drove along - you could imagine the sky filled with the beautiful machines!! It was an incredible weekend meeting wonderful thoughtful people who warmed my heart because of their enthusiasm for my Father's Bomb Group and what they stood for 70 years ago - flying dangerous missions to preserve our freedom!!!

I'm so pleased to tell you about how heartwarming that it was that the memory is carried on on both sides of the Pond!! I feel that it was the most productive visit and I witnessed first hand that they do remember. An example of the devotion to the 92nd BG is a photo that I have of a Suzuki that was airbrushed as close as could be to the nose art of the B-17 "Satan's Lady." The lovely couple, SuZe and Phil, whose idea it was to replicate the B-17 and it's story are wonderful and they get it!! They remember!

The entire weekend was uplifting to a daughter of a B-17 ball turret gunner who once flew from those grounds!!

My main reason for writing to you, however, is to express my sincere and utmost appreciation of Brian Francis and his friends in their thoughtfulness in adding a special tour of the area in Jeeps of the era!! The weekend couldn't have been better! It was wonderful to meet Brian and his lovely wife, Sue! I was reunited also with Gerry and Audrey Darnell who had given me a tour of the area 8 years ago when I was working on my book. It was off-season for Santa Pod Raceway at the time so I now feel that my mission is complete! With all of the walking that I did I know my Father's and my path crossed many times. I certainly walked where he did as a young B-17 bomber crewman.

The name of the event was Dragstalia. I can honestly say that if I lived there I would become a fanatic!! Every time I listened to the racing engines and watched them race down the track, tears would come to my eyes and I got goosebumps thinking of the roaring of the B-17 engines that once taxied and took off from this runway en route to enemy territory! It's hard to even put into words that are adequate to describe the feelings!! I may be home now but my mind and a big part of my heart will remain in Podington for a very very long time!!

I look forward to meeting everyone again in Nashville!!

Kind Regards,
Candy Brown
cbrown6126@aol.com

381ST BG MEMORIAL

I am Alan Steel membership secretary for the 381st BG, Ridgewell. We had a new memorial service here for twenty three airmen and one civilian who died on the 23rd June 1943 when the B-17 "Caroline" was being readied for the second mission of the 381st BG raids. Eleven of sixteen bombs blew up killing these men instantly and damaging near-



381st BG Memorial - The men in the photo are left to right, Gordon Richards of the 8th USAAF historical soc; UK, who kindly attended the ceremony, Alan Steel and Paul Bingley organisers of the event along with Allen's wife Monica Steel (not pictured).

by aircraft. There was of course not a lot left of the "Caroline." Many people donated towards this memorial in the three months that it took to do. Our thanks go to all who helped to make this possible.

Alan Steel
a.steel@btinternet.com
381st BG
Membership Sec.

MISSION TO FRANCE APRIL 15, 1945

There has been some in-service-related magazine stories about the French government recognizing American soldiers, airmen, etc. for help in fighting the Germans on French soil during WWII. While I don't expect any special notice of an entire Bomb Group, we did eliminate a German Garrison that had been bypassed after the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944. The target, I should mention, was Royan, France. I understand that it was one of the first uses of Napalm in the ETO and it met with instant success.

The German unit surrendered almost immediately after our bomb run. The

preparation was very sensitive due to the highly explosive nature of the fuel filled cylinders. They were shaped like little dirigibles and the fuses were connected to long spring-like devices in the B-24's bombay. That was to allow clearance before the fuses were pulled. There wasn't any smoking allowed and we all were very careful until bombs away.

We flew one more mission to Landshut, Germany the next day, which I recall was not an easy trip. After a couple Trolley Missions for the benefit of ground personnel we prepared our B-24 (Sonia) and flew back to the States.

Norman R. Dunphe
23 Fairview Ave.
Taunton, MA 02780
Tel: 508-823-4873
Email: dunphen23@comcast.net

(VOLUME 14 NO. 2)

2014 8TH AIR FORCE NEWS

HELLO LADIES.

I am Colonel (Retd) Ellis McClintick, a 92 year old WW II Veteran of the Mighty Eighth (1944). I live in Bellevue, NE (just outside of Omaha). I enjoy the "Voice of our past" and look forward to my monthly copy. Like my fellow members, I appreciate accuracy and professionalism in "our" voice. Maybe, because of my 30 years of service, I am too critical, but in our hope of continued improvement, I submit the following critique for the 2014 June 8th AF News copy:

1. In the first para. the word 'then' should be 'than'.
2. On page 5, in the "PLEASE NOTE" box, the word 'excepted' should be spelled 'accepted'.

In spite of these two errors we welcome the plan for the 2015 Reunion in OMAHA!!

There is NO charge for this contribution! LOL
Ellis B. McClintick

ellismcclintick@hotmail.com

Note from Ed:

First of all, THANK you for reading and enjoying the 8th AF News magazine. Donna and I work very hard to make sure the content is not only good, but accurate as well. As editor, trying to catch any grammatical and/or typos and spelling issues can be very challenging, but we all work toward producing an excellent periodical.

I appreciate you pointing out the mistakes. Please continue to keep us honest, Mr. McClintick!

Debra D. Kujawa

GATHERING OF EAGLES

Two 8th AF WWII Veterans were at Maxwell AFB from June 3rd-7th 2014 for the 33rd annual Gathering of Eagles at the Air Command and Staff College. Please google or yahoo for more info on this wonderful event. Many 8th AF legends have taken part in the Doolittle, Gen. LeMay, Col. William Lawley and many many others... Zemke, Gabreski etc.

Jim McClain was a navigator in the 389th BG and took part in Operation Tidal Wave on Aug. 1st, 1943. After his 25 missions, Jim was Wing Navigator, 2nd Combat Wing on Gen. Ted Timberlake's staff where he reported to Col. James "Jimmy" Stewart! He did two more missions with Gen. Timberlake.

Colonel Clarence E. "Bud" Anderson was a 16 1/4 kill P-51 Ace in the 357th F.G., Leiston, England for 2 tours. Post war he was a test pilot. In 1970-71 he commanded the 355th T.F.W. at Takhli, Thailand flying the F-105.

When Jim McClain was chosen to be a part of GOE 2014 I went with him as his guest. What an exciting week it was with so many activities all day, everyday. So many famous people everywhere you looked!

Many thanks!

Ernie Ley

726 8th Ave North

St. Cloud, MN 56303-3420

490TH BOMB GROUP

We have set up a 490th Bomb Group (H) facebook page plus a web site <http://www.490th.co.uk/>

The web site is being built up as we



Jim McClain- Bud Anderson 2 8th A.F. Veterans at the 2014 Gathering of Eagles. Jim was 389th BG and Bud was 357th FB.



June 6th, 2014 - Col. C.E. "Bud" Anderson USAF, Ret. with a P-51 at Maxwell A.F.B. for the 2014 Gathering of Eagles.



June 7, 2014 - Graduation ceremony for the 2014 Class of the Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell A.F.B. Jim McClain with Major Dyann Schilling USAF who is a 2014 ACSC grad. for the GOE she was assigned to Jim as his aide.

go so more and more information and photos will be added as time goes on

A group has been formed of which I am but one to get a memorial to the 490th erected on the Airfield at Eye. Exact location is yet to be confirmed but a number of sites have been highlighted and planning permission is being sort ect.

More information will be posted on the web site

We aim to have the memorial as a twin to the one that is at Mountain Home, Boise, Idaho and for those who have not seen the original I have attached pictures

Please pass on to anybody you know connected to/with the 490th BG

Eric Swain 490th Historian

eric.490thbg@btinternet.com

A-2 JACKET

This smiling 93-year-old former B-17 tail gunner is proud of his new A-2 Jacket, a gift from last Christmas. He is Allen Ostrom, whose 1944 A-2 jacket was "retired" many years ago after completing his 35 missions with the 398th Bomb Group. The current version is the product of U.S. Wings of Hudson, Ohio. Ostrom recently retired after 27 years as editor of the 398th newsletter, FLAK NEWS. He also wrote the group history called REMEMBRANCES. He was recently featured on the FACE BOOK, 398th Bomb Group.

Allen Ostrom, 398th Bomb Group

11501 - 15th Ave. N.E. #419

Seattle, WA 98125

206-954-7069



**Allen Ostrom - 93
New A-2 Jacket with 398th Bomb Group, 603rd Squadron; and 8th Air Force patches (June 2014)**

ANNUAL REMEMBRANCE CEREMONY

Honoring the Accomplishments of the
351st Bomb Group

Location: National 8th Air Force Museum
Savannah, Georgia
Wreath Ceremony in Memorial Garden
Saturday, November 1, 2014
12:00 NOON

For information contact Bruce Nocera
Phone 718-721-0924
Email bnocera@nyc.rr.com



Reunions Chapter Meetings



PLEASE SEND ALL REUNION UPDATES TO:
News@8thafhs.org and/or donnajneely@gmail.com

398th Bomb Group

Rapid City, S. Dakota
September 3-6, 2014
Grand Gateway Hotel
Ken Howard (309) 742-8546
KenHoward@Hotmail.com

381st BG Reunion

Portland Oregon,
Sept 3-6, 2014,
Contact: Kevin Wilson PhD
(336) 993-3571
kevinwilson@381st.org

306th Bomb Group

September 11 - 14, 2014

Colorado Springs, CO
Embassy Suites Colorado Springs
Contact: Barbara Neal
(435) 655-1500
barb306neal@gmail.com
website: 306bg.org

486th & 487th Bomb Group 2014 Reunion

September 30 to October 5, 2014
Rapid City, SD
Best Western Ramkota Hotel
2111 N LaCrosse Street
Rapid City, SD 57701-7858
websites: www.487thbg.org
www.486bg.org

93rd Bomb Group

October 16-20, 2014
Dayton, OH
Dayton Marriott Hotel
Contact: Jim Root (616) 218-0787
jamesdavidroot@aol.com
website: 93rdbombgroup.com

384th Bomb Group

FINAL REUNION
Dayton, Ohio
October 16-19
Details on website:
384thbombgroup.com

AGING ANXIETY

It is a strange thing. In our younger years, we race to get older and in our older years, seniors prefer to not reveal their age. One of the first things parents teach their child is to know their age. Just ask little kids how old they are. The mother answers for them.... *"tell them you are two years old"* and the little tyke will struggle, then proudly hold up a couple of fingers. In later years, some wish they were younger! But, many folks are completely content with their age regardless of what it may be. Some folks claim they are much happier now that they are old. One person I know retired from a very successful career and decided to set a goal in retirement to do something different every day, something that she had always wanted to. Then, she would perform those activities for the first 30 days, things that she was unable to do while working. Her choices included: attend an afternoon matinee, have lunch with someone and not have to hurry back to the office, volunteer a day as a docent in a museum, write a poem, take a leisurely stroll through an antique store...and on and on. There is freedom in no more 'punching the time clock', attending a conference, keeping appointments or deadlines.

For those who have not found contentment in aging, there are temporary antidotes.

Much time and money is spent in trying to look and feel better, trying to postpone or prolong the inevitable. Special food, nutrition, exercise activity, equipment, medications, plastic surgery, clothing are acquired. There are support groups, weight-loss programs, therapy sessions, you name it and it is out there. You may feel better, look better, act better and the immediate results are worth it all but the same

core issue is still there, we are getting older anyway. I am not trying to discount anything that makes you look or feel better or that can help you cope with your age. I must confess that I am a fan of all of these things and take advantage of every opportunity to live a good and abundant life. We should take care of ourselves for our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, and the temporary home of our soul.

All periods of our life have value and one is no better than another. Age is neutral, it is exactly as it is right now. We are the perfect age. But, when we start to think about the problems of our aging bodies, we identify with those problems and show anxiety and spend a lot of time worrying. There is apprehension and we are always wondering what is going to happen next. This creates a great deal of concern. The earthy approach is always 'how we feel' and what will be the outcome of this phase of our lives and how are we going to be able to get through it? In the spiritual world however, there is no age. Life is nothing more than one moment happening after another. God has given us a body, we are to take care of it, but regardless of how hard we work to preserve it and regardless of its age, it is temporary. The real 'us' lives within and when the end of the ultimate aging process takes place, the Spirit lives on. Here on earth our God-given bodies are necessary. In eternity, we will experience a new existence. Equally then, we should keep in touch with the part of us that survives beyond the body. Many will panic at the thought of leaving this body....This fright can be overcome! One needs to calm down, then deal with the part of us that never ages, our Spirit. Once this Spirit is touched by the Divine, the panic leaves and is replaced with a peaceful sense of acceptance by the Almighty. We need to accept the fact that our bodies are



Earl Wassom

aging without panicking over this fact. Any anxieties over what has happened to us in the past or any concerns and anxieties about our future can be alleviated by our acceptance of the Divine one who cares for us. God is always faithful. He sees our each and every need and has given us this promise, *"...and my God shall supply all your need according to a his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* (Phil. 4:19 NKJ). The remedy for anxiety is trust. Trust in the One who has overcome death, the One who knows all about us and loves us anyway. How should we respond? The wisdom of the writer of Ecclesiastes gives this advice, *"However many years a man may live, let him enjoy them all."* (Ecc.11:8 NIV). Aging anxiety is an exercise in futility. Why waste your time? Trust Him and move on with your life!

**Earl Wassom 466th Bomb Group
Chaplain, 8th AFHS**



SAVE THE DATE for NASHVILLE!!!

**40th Annual 8th AFHS Reunion • Sheraton - Music City Nashville, TN
Oct. 9 - 13, 2014**



8th AF News
The Eighth Air Force Historical Society
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