



March 2015

TH AF NEWS

Volume 15 Number 1 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"



*"They shall mount up with wings as eagles;
they shall run and not be weary; and they
shall walk and not be faint." - Isaiah 41:31*



Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"



FROM THE PRESIDENT'S PEN



I would like to take most of my column in this issue to try and clarify some confusion. Frequently, when talking with members, it is clear that quite a few believe that the **8th Air Force Historical Society** and the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force are the same organization. This, however, is not the case. We are completely separate and distinct entities.

The Museum and Society have cooperated in the past, and will in the future when possible. The **8th Air Force Historical Society** began in 1975 and provided the seed money to get the Museum going—its doors opening in 1996.

Through the years, the **Society** has continued to provide additional financial assistance. During the Society's 2013 reunion in Savannah, we joined with the Museum for a commemoration ceremony for the B-17 "*City of Savannah*" which the Museum had nearly completed restoring. Again, we have a similar mission, but we have different ways of accomplishing the mission.

The Museum does a fine job of safeguarding important artifacts and creating a visual history of the Mighty Eighth. They also have a substantial library of books, documents, photographs, and oral histories available for research.

The **Society** accomplishes its mission in a variety of ways. Our web site (www.8thafhs.org) is unsurpassed for the breadth and depth of information that it provides about the 8th. One can do research here that would take considerably more time to accomplish elsewhere, including having to access multiple websites and/or libraries. This publication, the **8th A F News**,

provides many stories about the men and women of the 8th including individual tales which are often not found anywhere else. The Society provides the opportunity for our veterans and other interested parties to meet, reminisce, share stories, and learn about aspects of 8th Air Force history through our annual reunions as well as through our state and local chapters. We are also planning additional outreach programs. Our efforts reach people worldwide and we now have representatives in over seven countries.

I hope this narrative removes confusion about the two organizations. Your **8th Air Force Historical Society** hopes to continue its efforts for many years into the future. We greatly appreciate your support.

This issue also provides information about our upcoming reunion in Omaha. It promises to be a wonderful event. Due to the excellent turnout we had in Nashville, we have reserved additional hotel rooms to avoid the need for a second hotel. Please read the information carefully and plan to attend. We would love to see you there!

Dave



David Nowack
President

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Nominations for candidates for election to the Board of Directors of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society must be in the hands of the Secretary no later than **May 15, 2015**.

The following information must be included.

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

The Secretary will relay all nominations to the Nominating Committee. Nominations received by the Secretary after **May 15, 2015** or any nominations without complete information will not be considered.

Send all nominations to:

Joe Garber • 46 Coquia Ridge Way • Ormond Beach, FL 32174 • PALJOE2@aol.com



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: **8 Rose Hill Drive, Savannah, GA. 31419 or P O Box 956, Pooler, GA 31322-0956**

Please Pass the Tissue

I have a large box of tissue in my office. Not because I'm prone to colds, or allergy attacks—I rarely have them—but because of the letters, emails, stories, and phone calls I receive on a daily basis. My favorite calls are from our veterans: we share a story or two, a joke, and sometimes they call just to let me know they are still around. But I also get calls and notes and emails informing me (far too often) that another veteran has passed. And I reach for a tissue.

Reading through the stories; the incredible, unbelievable stories of courage in the most harrowing of circumstances; tales of survival and sacrifice among a group of boys forced by war to become men overnight...I reach for another tissue.

Another group of phone calls and emails I receive comes from sons and daughters, the "next gens" who ask me to tell them what their dad did in the 8th. For whatever reason, "dad" never spoke about the war and/or his children never asked, and I find that sad, especially when there are no records to find, nothing to remember. Tissue.

The 8th A F News magazine was created and exists as a way to continue to tell the stories of the men and women of the 8th Air Force, many of whom are no longer with us. It is our fervent hope to be able to continue what we consider to be a very noble undertaking, this mission of remembrance, but we need your continued support.

As our membership ages and declines, we need new

members to join the Society and help us fulfil our promise to preserve the legacy of the Eighth well into the future. Please encourage your family members, friends, neighbors, members of your church or synagogue, teachers—anyone with whom you interact—to become part of this effort by joining the Society.

While I understand that we all lead busy lives, if you have not yet returned your dues payment [\$40] in the remittance envelope [December 2014 issue], please do so at your earliest opportunity. Without your financial support, the Historical Society will not be able to continue.

So please: renew your membership (check, credit card—online or by phone); spread the word about the Society; consider attending the next reunion (all the details are in this issue)!

There are far more stories we have to share. Please pass the tissue.

See you in Omaha! *Deb*



Debra Kujawa
Managing Director/Editor



— Form may be reproduced —



JOIN THE 8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY!

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



FIRST NAME _____		MIDDLE INITIAL _____	LAST _____
ADDRESS _____			
CITY _____	STATE _____	ZIP _____	
Telephone _____		Email _____	
8th AF Unit _____	Not in 8th _____	Educator _____	
In service _____	Branch _____	Dates _____	to _____
Were you a former member? _____		Member # if available _____	

ALL RENEWALS AND NEW MEMBERSHIP ANNUAL DUES \$40.00 ☐

Exp _____

PAYMENT: CHECK ☐ AmEx ☐ MASTERCARD ☐ VISA ☐ CARD # _____

SIGNATURE: _____

SEND APPLICATION AND PAYMENT TO 8TH AFHS P.O. BOX 956, POOLER, GA 31322-0956 TEL: 912-748-8884
You may also apply online at: www.8thafhs.org

REMEMBRANCE

Years later, looking for mementos
Of the bomber crew he flew with in England
Searching all through the house, room by room,
Basement to attic, closet to closet and once again

No luck.
Only stuff piled high.
Articles of clothing never worn.
His children's discarded toys and books.

Was it all a dream?
Did it really happen as he recalled?
The Second World War seemed as remote
To the neighbors as a science-fiction movie on Jupiter

By chance,
A photo appeared of his crew the day
They took off from Hunter Field, Savannah,
Learned over the Atlantic they were headed to England

From Manchester, New Hampshire,
To Goose Bay, Labrador, to Meeks Field, Iceland,
Passing over the ice-cap of Greenland to Valley, Wales,
To the 3rd Division of the 8th Air Force
At Rattlesden, U.K.,

They were all there again.....
The crew that passed through
The Bells of Hell....that the neighbors
Had no idea...that all that...had happened



Marvin Silbersher
711th Squadron
447 Bomber Group
Lake Hopatcong,
N.J. 07849



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

Save the date **October 14 - 18 for Omaha Nebraska!**
Our 2015 March 8th AF News includes six pages packed full of Omaha reunion events, highlights, hotel & activity reservation form.

Look on pages 10-15.

Six months ago I accepted a challenge to work alongside Earl & Cindy Wassom to produce a book/keepsake of unforgettable stories, memories and photographs from Earl's WWII experiences and their family history.

Earl Wassom states, "Cindy and I have a lot of interesting and stored up memories of events that have happened to us. Our job now is to connect those events and relate them to the present" We constantly have times when an event, a phone call, a picture, a word, a name, a song, a scent, will trigger our memory. Earl Wassom's grandson, Ike said, "You should write those stories down. They need to be kept." The Wassom's took the challenge!

Earl & Cindy's keepsake book of memories, "*Until Then...*" is progressing nicely. I have enjoyed reading my advanced copy as I organize and compile their book on my computer. The Wassom's book, "*Until Then...*" will be printed and available for summer reading!

I Challenge you to "Keep Your Memories ALIVE" through this 8th AF News Magazine. Contact information listed below to send articles & photos.

Looking forward to seeing all of you in Omaha

Sincerely,

Donna Neely & Telisha Gaines

PLEASE NOTE

We welcome all of your articles!!!
Please include photos & more!!
ALL file formats are accepted

We encourage you to send
digital images
WHEN possible.

CONTACT INFORMATION

Editor & Managing Director Debra
Kujawa
PO Box 956
Pooler, GA 31322-0956
8th AFHS
8 Rose Hill Dr.
Savannah, GA 31419
(912) 748-8884
ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org

CONTACT INFORMATION

Donna Neely &
Telisha Gaines
2090 Cairo Bend Road
Lebanon, TN 37087
donna.neely@gmail.com

MATERIAL DEADLINE

May 1, 2015
for the June 2015 8th AF News

VIRGO, the Maiden: part of the Zodiac Squadron

By Mack Parkhill



Aircraft commander and pilot
Charlie Macgill is seated, front
row, 2nd from the left.

*Front L-R: Bill Nestle, Co-pilot; Charlie Macgill, Pilot; Monroe Meltzer, Bombardier; Ken Leonard, Navigator.
Back L-R: Paul Jacobson, Waist Gunner; Jim Baker, Waist Gunner; Al Demitry, Radio Operator; Bill Nelson, Ball Gunner;
Cliff Bodin, Flight Engineer; Vester Wilson, Tail Gunner.*

In 1976, the year after the founding of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, Clarence Simonsen, a Canadian WWII historian, joined the Society as an associate member, receiving number #A644. Not only was Mr. Simonsen one of Canada's most dedicated collectors of the history of the war, particularly in

the ETO and Canada's involvement, but he had also assembled a large collection of 8th Air Force stories and photos. Clarence was also blessed with notable artistic talent, much of which has morphed into the reproduction of more than 500 pieces of WWII nose art.

In 1980, Clarence wrote to the

founding member of the 8th AFHS and editor of its publication, The 8th AF News, retired Lt. Col. John Woolnough, asking if Col. Woolnough would like to add to his publication a column or two on nose art. The offer was immediately accepted and for the next five years many editions of this publication carried informative articles on and photos

of nose art applied to war birds from all services, particularly the Eighth A.F. This exposure opened the flood gates for Clarence, and hundreds of letters, photos and information poured in to enhance his work. Subsequently, Clarence published two significant nose art books, one of which he co-authored with the late Jeff Ethell, that became a benchmark on the subject. In 2004, he was invited to preside over a nose art presentation at the Smithsonian Air & Space Museum in Washington, D.C., further enhancing his credentials.

Among the friendships resulting from Clarence's work with the 8th A.F. News was that of retired Air Force Major J. Charles "Charlie" Macgill. At about the time Clarence joined the 8th AFHS, Charlie was co-founding the 486th Bomb Group Association.

In September, 1943, Charlie Macgill was assigned as a pilot to the 834th Bomb Squadron of the 486th Bomb Group as they began their crew training at Davis Monthan Army Air Base near Tucson, AZ. It was there that the 834th Squadron began their several month notoriety, of which Charlie and his crew were a part.

Among the non-flying personnel of the 486th BG was a talented commercial mural artist, Corporal Phil Brinkman. While still at Tucson, Brinkman's artistic talents were discovered and he was asked to paint nose art on some of the aircraft in the group. Phil Brinkman took his artistic talents to a new level for the remainder of the war, while avoiding K.P. and similar less challenging duties of an enlisted man.

The commander of the 834th BS, Major Winfred (Jip) Howell, wanted to set his squadron's aircraft apart and requested that Brinkman paint 12 of the squadron B-24 Liberator bombers with a different sign of the Zodiac. This would have resulted in each of the 12 Zodiac signs being displayed. Corporal Brinkman embraced Major Howell's idea and went to work.

One of the Zodiac signs, Taurus, the Bull, was never completed on a squadron aircraft. Each time Brinkman started painting his versions of Taurus, that particular aircraft did not return to its base. After three starts and three non-returns, he gave up, concluding that Taurus was a jinxed sign. The remaining eleven aircraft completed all of their combat missions without a loss while assigned to the 834th.

In March, 1944, the 486th BG moved to their permanent 8th Air Force base near Sudbury, Suffolk, England, becoming part of the Third Air Division that included bomb groups flying both



Artist, Corporal Phil Brinkman, applying the finishing touches on Aries.



The entire Zodiac "Calendar" for all 12 planes in the squadron

the B-24 Liberator and the B-17 Flying Fortress. Most of the 834th BS Liberators acquired their Zodiac logos soon after arrival at Sudbury.

Charlie Macgill's aircraft was selected to be graced with the sign of VIRGO, the Maiden, displayed on their B-24H, #42-52532, produced in the Consolidated Aircraft Co. plant in Ft. Worth, TX. To depict VIRGO, Brinkman created a typical (for the times) scantily clad beauty. She, along with similar and appropriate Zodiac renderings on other squadron Liberators, achieved Maj. Howell's goal as the 834th began receiving notoriety among other 8th Air Force groups, assuming the nickname, The Zodiac Squadron.

On May 7, 1944, VIRGO's first combat mission was to Liege, France. This was followed by at least 11 more. In late June, the 3rd Air Division brass determined that combining B-24s and B-17s on the same mission routes was unwieldy. They directed the five groups flying B-24s in the Division, including the 486th, to send their aircraft to the 2nd Air Division (an all B-24 Division) and immediately transition into B-17s. Virgo's last mission with Charlie Macgill's crew was on July 5 to Endhoven, Holland. Following its transfer to the 2nd Air Division, VIRGO was again transferred, this time to the 15th Air Force flying out of Italy where it remained until its return to the U.S. at war's end. On July 8, 1945, she was declared as salvage at Albuquerque, NM and likely ended up in an aluminum smelter, as did most of the surplus WWII aircraft.

Charlie Macgill flew a total of 28 combat missions in VIRGO and various B-17s with the 834th BS before returning to the States in November, 1944. Heroic action during one of these missions resulted in Charlie receiving the Air Force Cross. He was discharged in



Charlie Macgill with me [Mack Parkhill] standing beneath a painting of his VIRGO B-24.

1945, reentered the Air Force in 1947 and retired in 1965. Charlie's "final flight", at age 88, occurred on October 22, 2009, followed by his internment with full honors at Arlington National Cemetery.

VIRGO-II and "the rest of the story"...

On August 19, 1944, B-24J #42-78579, produced at the North American Aviation factory in Dallas, TX arrived at Walla Walla Army Air Force Base in Walla Walla, Washington, to serve as a crew transition aircraft. Following their crew training at this base, the normal procedure was for the personnel to move on into a war zone with their aircraft. Six weeks later, on Saturday, September 30, the six-member Flight Crew #22 from Squadron T-2 departed Walla Walla in #78579 on a night cross-country navigation flight. The weather deteriorated into heavy clouds and rain

and the crew became disoriented. At approximately 8:00 PM, their aircraft was heard flying above a U.S. Forest Service lookout tower near Wenatchee, Washington. Shortly afterward, a bright light and explosion was detected on 6000 ft. high Mission Ridge. The following day, the wreckage of #78579 was found, revealing that all 6 crew members had perished as the plane flew into the ridge, 500 feet below the summit.

For many years, the wreckage site was occasionally visited by the curious and collectors after a strenuous climb up the ridge. The area later became an expanded part of the Mission Ridge Ski Resort. A memorial to the

members of Flight Crew #22 is now located near the crash site close to one of the ski runs. It is quite possible that, had they lived and completed their transition training, this crew would have been assigned to the 8th Air Force.

In July, 2013, my brother and his grandson hiked to the site and brought out pieces of the aircraft. Two of these pieces were sent to Charlie Macgill's (and my) friend, Clarence Simonsen in Alberta. One of the pieces from that Mission Ridge Liberator crash was an engine oil cooler access panel with its dzus fasteners still attached. It is upon this panel that, nearly 69





years after the tragic crash, Clarence painted a perfect reproduction of Charlie Macgill's VIRGO, dedicating it to Charlie's memory.

I also dedicate VIRGO-II to the 6 crew members who lost their lives on that dreary September night. During WWII more than 7100 military aviation accidents occurred in the United States, resulting in over 15,500 deaths. The members of Flight Crew #22 are among those losses.

Pilot - 2nd Lt. J.D. Hunt – Louisville, KY
 Copilot - 2nd Lt. Ted R. Lewis – Tulsa, OK
 Navigator - Flt. Officer Robert J. Hennekes – Cincinnati, OH
 Bombardier - 2nd Lt. Francis W. LeQuier, Jr. – Duluth, MN
 Engineer - Corporal Calvin D. Flaming – Capulin, NM
 Radio Operator- Corporal James, R. Manthei – Marshfield, WI

I hope you have enjoyed this story. Let us never forget the many members of the 8th Air force and The Greatest Generation to which they belonged.

Mack Parkhill was a docent for over 17 year at the 8th Air Force control tower and Nissen huts at the National Museum of the U.S. Air Force at Wright Patterson AFB. He and his wife Colleen, currently reside in Dublin, Ohio.

They can be reached via email:
mackcolleenp@msn.com



Here is the tail section on the final crash of the B-24J plane. Crash was in Washington state. The serial numbers are visible.



Part of the landing gear from the ill-fated flight.



Here's a photo of the engine wreckage from the stateside crash of the B-24 killing the 6 on board

8th AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL REUNION



DOUBLETREE DOWNTOWN OMAHA
OCTOBER 14 – 18, 2015



REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

See choices below and complete the Registration Form noting your event choices and personal information. By "WWII GROUP," we're asking for the group or unit in which you served (specific Bomb Group, Fighter Group, PRG, HQ, etc.). We use this information for tallying totals for each group, nametags, and seating arrangements. If you prefer to sit with a different group, please give us that information too. We do not need your squadron. Remit by mail with check or money order payable to Armed Forces Reunions by September 11, 2015. You may also register and pay with credit card online at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2015. A 3% convenience fee will be added to online credit card reservations. Forms received after September 11 will be accepted on a space available basis only. Hotel reservations should also be made by September 11, 2015.

ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. CANCELLATION POLICY

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less a \$5 per person processing fee. Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less a \$5 processing fee. Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9:00am until 4:00pm Eastern Time, excluding holidays. Please call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation doesn't cancel your reunion activities.

MEALS/EVENTS CHOICES

MEALS / EVENTS CHOICES MEAL PACKAGE 1 \$212

Package includes 7 hotel food functions beginning with breakfast on Thursday (4 breakfasts, 3 dinners).

MEAL PACKAGE 2 \$148

Package includes 5 hotel food functions beginning with breakfast on Friday (3 breakfasts, 2 dinners).

The continental breakfast buffets include juice, fruit, cereals/milk, yogurt, breakfast breads, and coffee. The full breakfast buffets include juice, fruit, eggs, meat, potatoes, breakfast bread, and coffee.

CHOICE #3 INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

Thursday's Buffet at \$44 is included in Package 1 but can be purchased separately. Friday's Rendezvous Dinner at \$45 (individual Bomb

Group Dinners for groups of 30 or more) and Saturday's Banquet at \$45 can be purchased separately as well, but are included in both packages above. TOUR OPTIONS
Tours and trips are described on the Reunion Highlights Pages. Prices are listed on the registration form. Driver and Staff gratuities are not included in the tour prices. All trips require a minimum of 35 people. Please be at the bus boarding area five minutes prior to the departure time.



41st 8TH AFHS ANNUAL REUNION

DOUBLETREE DOWNTOWN OMAHA

OCTOBER 14-18, 2015



Wednesday, October 14

1:00pm	-	6:00pm	Reunion Registration open
1:00pm			Memorabilia and Gathering Room open throughout the reunion.
1:00pm	-	4:00pm	8AFHS Board Meeting
6:00pm	-	7:00pm	Welcome Reception, followed by dinner on your own.

Thursday, October 15

7:30am	-	8:30am	Continental Breakfast for Package #1 participants
8:00am	-	11:00am	Reunion Registration open
9:00am	-	1:30pm	CITY TOUR / OLD MARKET
9:30am	-	12:30pm	BRIEFING AT THE BUNKER (STRATCOM HQ)
1:00pm	-	6:00pm	Reunion Registration open
2:00pm	-	3:30pm	Q&A WWII Vets
3:45pm	-	5:00pm	Q&A Cold War Vets
6:00pm	-	9:00pm	Cash Bar Reception
7:00pm	-	9:00pm	Dinner Buffet – WWII Program

Friday, October 16

7:30am	-	8:30am	Full Breakfast Buffet for Meal Package participants
8:00am	-	10:00am	Reunion Registration open
8:30am	-	10:00am	Individual Group Meetings
10:00am	-	11:20am	Chapter & Unit Development Meeting
11:30am	-	4:00pm	BUZZING AT THE BLUFFS MINI AIR SHOW
2:00pm	-	6:00pm	Reunion Registration open
6:00pm	-	9:00pm	8AFHS Cash Bar Reception
7:00pm	-	9:00pm	Rendezvous Dinners

Saturday, October 17

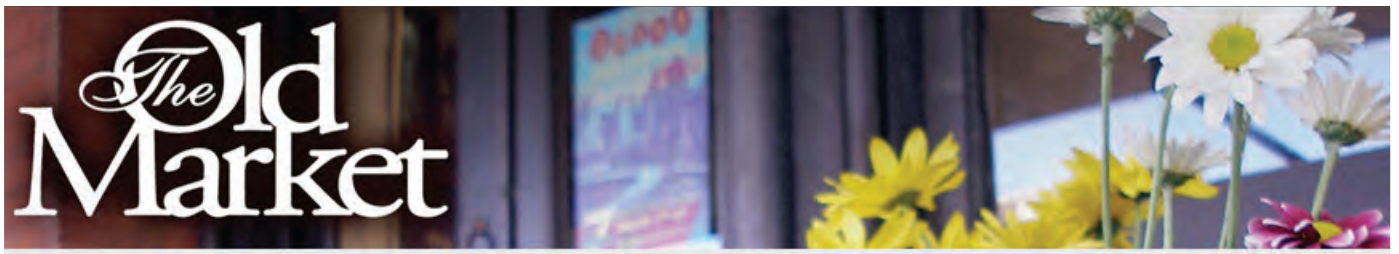
7:30am	-	8:30am	Continental Breakfast for Meal Package participants
8:45am	-	10:15am	General Membership Meeting
11:00am	-	4:30pm	DURHAM MUSEUM / CITY TOUR
12:00pm	-	4:00pm	8AFHS Board Meeting
12:30pm	-	4:00pm	STRATEGIC AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM
5:30pm	-	6:00pm	Reunion Registration open
6:00pm	-	9:00pm	8AFHS Cash Bar Reception
7:00pm	-	10:00pm	Banquet Dinner & Entertainment

Sunday, October 18

7:00am	-	8:30am	Full Breakfast Buffet for Meal Package participants
--------	---	--------	---

Please plan to be at the bus boarding area at least five minutes prior to the scheduled time.
All trips require a minimum of thirty-five people, unless otherwise stated.
Driver and Staff gratuities are not included in the tour prices.

2015 41th ANNUAL 8th AIR FORCE REUNION



CITY TOUR / OLD MARKET

Thursday, October 15

Enjoy a guided driving tour of Omaha's past, present and future, with an overview of Omaha's points of interest. See Lewis & Clark Landing, the Historic Gold Coast District and Creighton University. Included sites include Billionaire's Warren Buffett's residence, 1903 Joslyn Scottish Castle, St. Cecilia's Spanish Cathedral, the Blackstone Hotel (birthplace of the Reuben Sandwich), TD Ameritrade Park (Home of the annual College World Series), Omaha Community Playhouse (where Henry Fonda started acting), and much more. Stop at Pioneer Courage Park to see life-size sculptures of an authentic pioneer wagon train traveling west across the Nebraska prairie. You'll have time for a leisurely lunch and shopping on your own at the Old Market, Omaha's most historic and entertaining neighborhood. The cobblestone streets are home to a diverse mix of shopping, galleries, and restaurants. Shuttles back to the hotel will be offered at 12:15pm and 1:15pm.

9:00am board bus, 1:30pm back at hotel
\$37/Person includes bus, guide, and guide gratuity. Lunch on your own.
OR

BRIEFING AT THE BUNKER

Thursday, October 15

STRATCOM Headquarters on Offutt AFB is home to the historic "Bunker" currently known as the Global Operations Center, the underground facility where officials from each branch of the military and civilians carry out the command's worldwide mission. In the comfort of the briefing theater inside the Headquarters building, learn the history and current missions from the men and women who play a vital role in our nation's defense, from the early crises of the Cold War to the expanded missions including cyber security, enjoy this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

9:30am board bus, 12:30pm back at hotel
\$28/Person includes bus and escort.

BUZZING THE BLUFF MINI AIR SHOW

Friday, October 16

It's time for some real hangar flying during a private air-show at the Council Bluffs Airport. Check out Gunfighter, a beautifully restored P-51 and other fully restored war birds as well as vintage memorabilia.

Lunch will be provided! More details coming!

11:30am board bus, 4:00pm back at hotel
\$29/Person includes bus and escort.



2015 41th ANNUAL 8th AIR FORCE REUNION



DURHAM MUSEUM / CITY TOUR

Saturday, October 17

If you missed the city tour on Thursday, you'll have an opportunity to take one today, but first we'll stop for a quick bite at the Old Market. There are lots of restaurant choices, along with shops and galleries, but use your time wisely. Next stop: Union Station, now home to the Durham Western Heritage Museum. Affiliated with the Smithsonian, the museum is the nation's first restored Art Deco railway station, housing exhibits and memorabilia from Omaha's history. Walk through full-sized train cars, learn the history of Omaha from the Native Americans to present, and enjoy an ice cream, malt or phosphate at the old-fashioned soda fountain. Finally, embark on a two hour city tour, as described above to learn about Omaha's past and present.

11:00am board bus, 4:30pm back at hotel

\$47/Person includes bus, guide, and admission.

Lunch on your own.

****OR****

STRATEGIC AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

Saturday, October 17

More than thirty of the world's most famous military aircraft and missiles are on display at the Strategic Air and Space Museum. This 300,000 square foot facility includes the SR-71 "Blackbird" and the B-36 "Peacemaker," as well as a B-17 and many more interesting aircraft. A special 'Planes, Trains, and Autos' exhibit will be on display during our visit. Save time to see a film in the theater and visit the gift shop. A limited snack bar is available, but we recommend you eat lunch before departing the hotel.

12:30pm board bus, 4:00pm back at hotel.

\$41/Person includes bus, escort, and admission.

IT ALL COMES TOGETHER HERE.



PAST



PRESENT



FUTURE



STRATEGIC
AIR & SPACE
MUSEUM

8th AFHS Activity Registration Form October 14-18, 2015

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each even and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. You may also register online and pay by credit card at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2015 (3% will be added to total). If a valid email address is provided, an electronic receipt will be sent. Otherwise, your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. All registration forms and payments must be received on or before September 11, 2015. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. Your contact information will be shared only with other reunion attendees.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.

322 Madison Mews

Norfolk, VA 23510

ATTN: 8th AFHS

OFFICE USE ONLY

Check # _____ Date Received _____
Inputted _____ Nametag Completed _____

CUT-OFF DATE IS 9/11/2015

	Price Per	# of People	Total
REGISTRATION FEE			
Includes meeting expenses and other reunion expenses.	\$40		\$
Reg. Fee for children ages 8-16 attending more than 1 function & staying at hotel	\$25		\$
MEAL PACKAGES			
<i>Package #1 includes 7 hotel meals beginning with breakfast on Thursday</i>	\$212		\$
<i>Package #2 includes 5 hotel meals beginning with breakfast on Friday</i>	\$148		\$
Please select your entrée choice(s) for the Banquet:			
10oz. Grilled NY Strip		#	
Roasted Salmon with a lemon-herb sauce		#	
SEPARATELY PRICED MEALS (if not purchasing a package)			
Thursday, 10/15: Dinner Buffet	\$44		\$
Friday, 10/16: Rendezvous Dinner (Pan Roasted Chicken)	\$45		\$
Saturday, 10/17: Banquet (please select your entrée)			
10oz. Grilled NY Strip	\$45		\$
Roasted Salmon with a lemon-herb sauce	\$45		\$
TOURS			
Please choose one of the following two tours:			
Thursday, 10/15: City Tour / Old Market	\$37		\$
Thursday, 10/15: Briefing at the Bunker	\$28		\$
Friday, 10/16: Buzzing at the Bluffs Mini Air Show	\$29		\$
Please choose one of the following two tours:			
Saturday, 10/17: Durham Museum / City Tour	\$47		\$
Saturday, 10/17: Strategic Air and Space Museum	\$41		\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

Please Print

MEMBER NAME (for nametag) _____

☐ VETERAN ☐ NEXT GEN ☐ OTHER WWII GROUP AFFILIATION (please list BG, not BS) _____

IF A VETERAN, PLEASE CIRCLE ERA: WWII POW Cold War Era Korea Vietnam Gulf War Desert Storm Iraq Other _____

SPOUSE NAME (if attending) _____

GUEST NAMES _____ ☐ NEXT GEN

PHONE # (____) _____ - _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____ @ _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? ☐ YES ☐ NO (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

DOUBLETREE HOTEL OMAHA DOWNTOWN – OMAHA, NE

(800) 222-8733 or (402) 346-7600

www.doubletree3.hilton.com/en/hotels/nebraska/doubletree-by-hilton-hotel-omaha-downtown-OMAH-DT/index.html

LOCATION

1616 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68102

Located in the heart of downtown Omaha and just ten minutes from the Eppley Airport.

RESERVATION INFORMATION

Call the number above and reference the 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion or please visit www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2015 and click on the hotel reservation link at the top of the page to make reservations and receive the discounted group rate.

Group Name: 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion

Reunion Dates: October 14-18, 2015

Rate: \$105 + tax (currently 18.16%).

Rates are offered 3 days before and 3 days after reunion dates, based on group block availability.

Cut off Date: 09/11/15. Late reservations will be processed based on space availability at a higher rate.

Cancellation Policy: All reservations have a 48 hour cancellation policy, or the attendee will be charged one night's room rate plus tax. All early departures are subject to an early departure penalty \$25 and late check-outs are subject to a penalty of \$75.

UNIT HOSPITALITY SUITES

Hospitality Suites for individual groups will be available on the guest room floors for \$125/night, payable to the Society. This fee includes

ice service and daily housekeeping. "Suites" will be two connecting sleeping rooms (with beds removed). All suites will be located in close proximity to each other so visiting between groups will be easy! To reserve a suite, please contact Donna at DonnaLee@afri.com with your name, unit name, and nights needed for hospitality suites. These rooms follow the same check-in/out pattern as normal sleeping rooms

PARKING & SHUTTLE INFORMATION

The Doubletree Hotel is offering complimentary self parking to all overnight guests. The hotel also offers complimentary shuttle service to and from the Omaha Eppley Airfield. Upon arrival at the airport you will need to call the hotel and then proceed outside to the shared ride/taxi pickup/drop off stand outside baggage claim.

WHEELCHAIR RENTAL

ScotAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call (888) 441-7575 or visit www.scotaround.com for details and to make reservations.

OREGON CHAPTER

We held our General Membership Meeting for Oregon 8th AFHS on February 7, 2015

Alice Miller presented the program, "Beauty and Duty."

Alice brought a small part of her collection of uniforms and spoke about the women who wore them. She has uniforms from World War I onwards to modern uniforms. She brought uniforms worn by WASP, ATC, Flight Nurses – both Korea and Vietnam, and several others.

February is also the meeting where we recognize all women, both veterans and spouses. Corsages were given to all of the women who attended the meeting.

Additional meeting dates in 2015 are: May 9, August 8 and November 7.

Lunch is \$13.00 at the Beaverton Elks Lodge. Contact Tom Philo via email at secretary@8thafhsoregon.com or phone him at 503-591-3227 ONLY if you are planning to eat – again ONLY if you are planning to purchase a meal.

All programs are videotaped and transcribed and put into our archive. You can purchase the DVD of each presentation for \$10.00.

Prior Programs

November 2014 - Salute to Veterans

August 2014 - Dick Foy and Air Tanker Operations w/ WWII Aircraft

May 2014 - Multiple presentations

February 2014 - Beauty and Brains – Women in the Military

November 2013 - Bob Schuberg and revisiting the airfields of the 8th

August 2013 - Frank LaSage – PTs in the Med

May 2013 - Jack Kline and the Vanport Flood

February 2013 - Ben "Flaps" Berry – Tuskegee Airman

May 2013 - Jack Cramer B-29 Navigator of "Going Jesse" in the Pacific

There is no cost to attend the meetings and they are open to the public.

Send Stories and documents to be Borrowed / Archived

If you have items that you wish to share with others, they can be loaned to the Oregon Chapter, scanned and catalogued and then returned to you. You can always

donate them permanently to the chapter if you wish. Contact Tom Philo to make arrangements for the documents.

Tom Philo

Secretary 8th AFHS of Oregon
17502 SW Kimmel Ct

Beaverton, Oregon 97007-6877
secretary@8thafhsoregon.com
<http://www.8thafhsoregon.com>

Georgia: Birthplace Chapter "THE CITY OF SAVANNAH" DEDICATED

On Wednesday afternoon, January 28, 2015, "The City of Savannah" B-17 was dedicated in a moving ceremony in the Lewis Lyle Rotunda at The National Museum of the Mighty 8th Air Force. The ceremony was hosted by Henry Skipper, President and CEO of the museum. Mr. Skipper also gave a stirring talk about the hard work and dedication of the museum staff and volunteers involved in the 6 year restoration project.

Mr. Skipper's presentation was followed by that of Major General Scott Vander Hamm, present commander of the 8th Air Force. The General discussed the continued role of the 8th in defending American freedom and the vital participation of the long range bomber in present and future conflicts.

Jerry McLaughlin, the head of the volunteer restoration team, inspired us with a discussion detailing the 6 year history of the project. In the beginning, according to Mr. McLaughlin, "We didn't know what we didn't know about restoring this plane." The team was able to find the expert resources that were necessary to overcome all obstacles. This was coupled with over 45,000 hours of hard, volunteer work. Jerry cited the following experts and community supporters that were particularly helpful in restoring the B-17. There was Bob Mikesch. He served as curator at the Smithsonian Museum for over 30 years and wrote the book on how to restore aircraft. Tommy Garcia who according to Jerry knows more about restoring B-17s than anyone alive, also aided the museum's team. Dr. Harry Friedman, President of the B-17 Cooperative, was also a valuable resource. The community supporters of this project included Gulfstream Corporation, the 165th Airlift Wing of the Georgia Air National Guard, The LMI Corporation, and FlightSafety Corporation.

We cannot thank Jerry McLaughlin, his team of volunteers, and the museum administration and staff enough for this exceptional gift. The City of Savannah now will take its place as the cornerstone exhibit at The National Museum of the



From left: Jerry McLaughlin, volunteer restoration project leader, Henry Skipper museum CEO/President, Major General Scott Vander Hamm, Commander 8th AF, LT. GEN. Buck Shuler, and Al Kennickell, Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the museum.

8th Air Force.

As an aside: the date for the dedication was chosen to coincide with the 73rd anniversary of the founding of the 8th Air Force, January 28, 1942, downtown Savannah, GA.

Charles Sitrin, President

FLORIDA CHAPTER NEWS

By Ken Sweet

The Florida Chapter of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Historical Society gathered the first weekend of November in Stuart, Florida. We were there for the annual visit to the Stuart Air Show, which welcomes us warmly. This is also a great opportunity to spread the story of the "Mighty Eighth" and recruit new members to the Society. The air show attendees also can take advantage of meeting and talking with members of the greatest generation who won the air war in Europe.

Our weekend opened with our officers and board of directors meeting at our hotel headquarters. President Bill Uphoff called the meeting to order, assisted by Vice President Jim Hart. Board members Bernie Silverblatt, Ken Sweet, Warren Klein, Nic Apostle, and Sid Katz were present. Mark Norman could not attend due to health reasons. Secretary Esther Cheriff read the minutes for the last meeting and they were accepted. Unfortunately, Treasurer Alex Acuti was forced to tender his resignation as pressing business and personal matters preclude him from fulfilling his duties. Jim Hart will serve as interim treasurer until a replacement can be found.

We discussed the business of the Chapter including our weekend plans for the air show, recruiting new members and our financial situation. We also discussed the procedures for sending out dues notices and welcoming new members to the chapter. Dues notices will go out promptly in the fall and those yearly members who have not paid for the year will be dropped from the rolls in the spring. We are also asking life members if they would like to contribute to the chapter in our letters. We will also streamline the procedure for getting the checks to the interim treasure and getting the current members up to date on our roll, as well as getting new members added so



Photos from the Stuart meeting. Top- bottom: Board and Officers meeting, General membership meeting. Presenting plaque of appreciation to Todd Harris who let us use his tent.

they get their newsletters. Sid Katz was able to get some wonderful signs made by a local sign company for our tent at the air show. Sid was also saluted by the officers and board for soliciting some cash donations from local businesses to benefit the Chapter. The Chapter also approved a certificate for Todd Harris, who owns a car customizing business in Stuart, for inviting us to share his tent at the air show. After the meeting, board member Nic Apostle and his lovely wife Jeannette hosted a reception for the officers and board, as well as those attendees who were present, at their home in nearby Palm City. Nic deserves a big thank you for making our meeting in Stuart such a big success, and for all of his organizational efforts on behalf of the Chapter.

Saturday saw us off to the air show after our general membership meeting at the hotel. Stan Peterson attended the meeting and the air show. He brought with him a copy of his new book, and for everyone who purchased one at the meeting, Stan donated the money to the chapter. Stan also made an additional generous donation. Mrs. Harris was kind enough to supply a delicious lunch at the air show, and the hospitality at the air show was very much appreciated. Thanks to Debra Kujawa, Mighty Eighth Air Force Managing Director, we had lots of issues of the 8th Air Force News to pass out and help recruit members.

Our Saturday night banquet was a great success and our guest speaker was David Trail, a local history high school teacher and member of the chapter, who discussed teaching World War II history to his students. In addition, various awards were also given out to President Bill Uphoff and Board Members recognizing their contribution to the chapter. The banquet room then became the hospitality room and some "hanger flying" ensued.

Sunday morning found us having our memorial service. The Martin County High School Junior Air Force ROTC presented the colors. The young women looked very sharp in their uniforms and presentation. We then saluted our members who have folded their wings with a moving candlelight ceremony. In the afternoon, we were back out at the air show and signing up new members. Our recruitment efforts were considered a big

success.

Because of the dwindling attendance at our week-end meetings it was suggested that we move in the direction of holding luncheons around the state instead of a big week-end meeting, and moving in that direction from now on. For news on those meetings, watch this space!

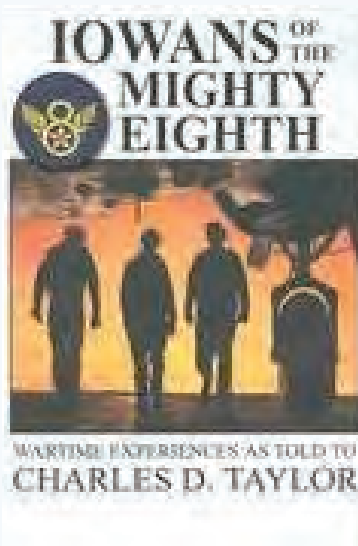
IOWA CHAPTER

On October 27th, 2014, the Iowa Chapter of the 8th AFHS, by consensus of the Board of Directors, ceased to exist. Without our President, Charles Taylor, we would have ceased operations several years sooner. Charles Taylor, an associate member, was the glue that kept us going. He took five years of his time to interview us from Iowa, getting our stories, and then wrote the book, "Iowans of the Mighty Eighth: Wartime Experiences as Told to Charles D. Taylor." The book weighs 4 ½ pounds. Charles covered the cost of 1,000 copies himself and the book sold out in 6 months. He presented copies to the 8th Air Force Museum in Pooler, GA and several Iowa libraries.

We Iowans of the Mighty Eighth want to show our grateful thanks to Charles and share this news with the rest of the world.

Thank you and best wishes in 2015.
Leon G. Mehning
Former Treasurer
Iowa Chapter 8th AFHS

Editor's note: Leon proudly served as a gunner on a B-17G with the 305th BG, 364th BS, out of Chelveston, England.



Sustaining 8th AFHS chapters is becoming increasingly difficult with each passing day. We cannot express our overwhelming gratitude to all of our veterans and their families and friends who have been, and continue to be, such a vital part of the Society's mission to preserve the legacy and memories of the 8th Air Force for all generations.

Iowans of the Mighty Eighth is available through Amazon.com.

"NEW SOUTH ALABAMA CHAPTER GROWING"

Following the folding of the Alabama chapter in Birmingham, the South Alabama Wing meeting in Mobile Alabama on February 16th voted unanimously to continue their quarterly meetings and petition the 8thAFHS National Board for full chapter status.

During their mid-term meeting, February 27, 2015, of the 8thAFHS National Board of Directors voted to sanction the chapter as the South Alabama Chapter of the 8thAFHS.

The new chapter officers are: Chip Dobson, Commander; Bert Hayes, Vice Commander; Mike Mitchell, Secretary. Mike will liaison with the remaining members in the Birmingham area. Appointed are the last five original members of the Wing as members of the Board of Directors. Those names are; George Grau, Chet Nobel, Hip Richards, Frank Schneider and Charlie Wright.

If you would like to join or visit this chapter at one of its quarterly meetings, contact Chip Dobson via email at: mighty8th@bellsouth.net

**Fly for Freedom III, Part 2
at Concordia University
by Cindy Drehmel,
President WI Chapter, 8th AFHS**

Tuesday, 2 December 2014 marked the second half of our third annual Fly for Freedom event hosted by the 8th Air Force Historical Society Wisconsin Chapter. Veterans from across the state gathered at Concordia University in Mequon, Wisconsin. Post WWII veterans and WWII vets who could not make the September meeting were honored and

participated in a question and answer education session with Lincoln High School students.

The students who enjoyed the discussions in September at the Manitowoc Maritime Museum urged their instructors to again work with the WI Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society to continue learning American history first hand. With a bit of encouragement and coordination, the students and instructors were able to go on a field trip to continue their discussions traveling 1 ½ hours to learn from our Wisconsin heroes.

That day, 39 students and their instructors eagerly clambered off the bus to be greeted by veterans and quickly took their seats among Wisconsin Chapter Eighth Air Force Historical Society members. Concordia University's president, Peter Ferry welcomed everyone and that was followed by a question and answer session as well as lunch and informal 1 on 1 discussions with our Wisconsin Chapter 8th Air Force Historical Society vets.

Post WWII Veterans featured were:

Russ Collins, Navy, Submarine

Machinist Mate 1st Class, Cold War

John Farkas, Army 1st Lt,

Communications Officer, Vietnam War

Dave Hansen, Air Force, Air Craft

Mechanic, SSgt Vietnam War

Thomas Hansen, Air Force, TSgt,

Air Rescue Squad, 59-71

Don Hilbig, 8th Air Force, Airman 1st

Class, England based, Korean War

Paul Mc Carty, Marines, Corporal,

Vietnam War

James Keppeler, Air Force, Captain,

Cold War

Richard Schleicher, Air Force, Senior

Master Sgt, Fire fighter Air Force,

Vietnam War through 1992

Norbert Zajc, Marines, Sgt, Korean War

Additionally 4 WWII 8th Air Force veterans also spoke on the panel:

Bob Abresch, 8th Air Force, 1st Lt.,
Pilot, B-24

Doug Holt, 8th Air Force, Co-pilot,
Pilot, B-24

William Meier, 8th Air Force, 1st Lt.,
Lead Bombardier, B-17

Chet Gardeski, 8th Air Force, TSgt,
Flight Engineer, B-17

Dave Hansen's description of the Son Tay Raid in North Vietnam and how 2 of the 5 air craft were significantly damaged was especially riveting. One of the air craft made it back to Udorn, Thailand where Hansen was stationed and was tasked with being the team leader in the repair of the heavily damaged air craft.

The students were also on the edge of their seats when Paul McCarty, recipient of two purple hearts, recounted his story of how he was hospitalized for three



Air Force Korean War and Vietnam Hansen Brothers



Doug Holt, 8th AF pilot



Bob Abresch receiving award from 8th AFHS WI



Bob Abresch and Bill Meyer WWII 8th Vets

weeks after suffering injuries from grenade shrapnel. Upon returning to his unit he was injured by tank rounds, which significantly damaged his hand, face and laid open his chest. McCarty stated he considered himself one of the lucky ones, he made it home alive.

You could hardly hear a pin drop when our 4 WWII Eighth Air Force Fly Boys hit center stage. First, Bob Abresch told of his 33 missions as a B24 pilot. When asked if he was scared, he stated, "Why yes, of course, but we did what we had to do." Bill Meier, explained the importance of being the lead bombardier aboard the B24 and how important it was to get the bombs out on time and accurately especially under harrowing conditions.

Chet Gardeski stated he had the unique opportunity to work on the first computerized gun sites and precision bombing which included the cumbersome rocket guided Disney Bombs which were 16 feet long and weighed over 4500 lbs each. These "Bunker Busters" were attached to the outside of the plane. Pilot Doug Holt discussed his 35th and last mission which was a harrowing experience of just missing oncoming enemy aircraft by mere feet!

Special thanks to Concordia University for their assistance in making the event a wonderful success with over 110 people attending. The students in many other local schools have learned of this event and plan on participating in future Wisconsin Chapter 8th Air Force Historical Society activities. Our brave heroes are still giving back even years after their military service!

A big congratulations to Bob Abresch for his tireless service to the Wisconsin Chapter 8th Air Force Historical Society. As the founding secretary of our group, and later treasurer through 2013, Bob was honored and received an award for his ongoing and dedicated service.

A special thank you to the 18 WI Chapter 8th AFHS members who attended my Christmas 50's Broadway musical "A Little Boy's Prayer" about a WWII veteran and his relationship with his son and grandson. I hope it brought back great memories!



*"Fly for Freedom"
December Panel preparing to
speak at Concordia University*



*Lt. Col Ratsenski
speaking with
Concordia coach*



*Marine Vietnam Vet
McCarty and Navy
Submariner Collins
discussing their
presentations*



*WWII Vet - 8th AF Ralph Anderson, WI 8th AFHS Vice Pres and
WWII Navy Med Corpsman - Al Exner speak with Manitowoc
Highschool students at Concordia University December 2014*

LT. BOEHM CREW AND THE 36TH BOMB SQUADRON

B-24 LIBERATOR NICKNAMED THE **JIGS UP**

By Stephen Hutton

The story of the tragedy began on the evening of Dec. 22, 1944 when eight airmen of the Lt. Harold Boehm crew parachuted from the JIGS UP thinking they were over land only to perish in the Irish Sea after trying to land at Valley, Wales. The JIGS UP was my father Iredell Hutton's regular ship, however, fate would have it that he, along with [the] Lt. William "Mac" McCrory, were not in the B-24 they nicknamed that dreadful day. This tragedy inspired me so much so that it led to the Wales and Fort Fisher, North Carolina memorials plus others as well as my subsequent book *Squadron of Deception* and web site at www.36rcm.com.

Yes, it was in 1992 that Brendan along with two of his diver friends pulled up two propeller blades from the JIGS UP from 40 feet under the Irish Sea that make up both the Wales and North Carolina 36th Squadron memorials. It was there in Wales that my father unveiled that first memorial located along the pathway to Holyhead Mountain back in 1993. The memorial remained there under Brendan's care for over twenty years.

Upon seeing the approaching 70th anniversary of the tragedy, Brendan and friends had a wonderful idea to relocate the existing memorial from the mountain pathway to a more prominent location – to the area

of the Breakwater Park Visitors Center for greater public and visitor visibility. Brendan and his friends encouraged the people of Holyhead, plus local and national officials, and the military to create a new and more appropriate memorial to honor the American airmen.

When I learned of these efforts I immediately notified Donald Burch, Lt. Boehm's surviving co-pilot, two sisters of the lost airmen, and Lt. Col. Jubeck, the commanding officer of the 36th Electronic Warfare Squadron – the bomb squadron's offspring about the new memorial.

Adding a most special touch in

remembrance at 5:30pm on the evening of Dec. 22, 2014, exactly 70 years after the tragedy, Brendan returned to the new memorial with his violin and played a tribute – the song *Danny Boy* in tribute to the service and sacrifice of the American airmen.

How it thrills my heart and soul to see the airmen of the squadron Gremlins of the 36th, being honored with a new memorial. And now with fantastic help from Brendan and friends see what a wonderful thing the Welsh have done - again!

My deepest thanks go to them!



My Welsh friend Brendan Maguire shaking hands with Col. Travis Willis, the U.S. Air Force Attaché from the American Embassy in London.



The new 36th Bomb Squadron RCM memorial with wreaths honoring the Lt. Boehm crew

Book Reviews



Letters from the Heart 1943-1946

The story of a P-51 pilot with the 352nd Fighter Group stationed in Belgium and England during the last six months of the war.

By Carole Webb Slater, 2013

256 pages 6x9 softcover, hardback, and kindle edition

www.P-51Lettersfromtheheart.com

This book is based on 250 letters written during the war years by Cobby Webb to his family and girlfriend/ wife. The following reviews left by readers on Amazon.com provide an overview of this book.

"It is a wonderful read as the letters progress through the lives of "Cobby" Webb, his wife, and family as they deal with "Cobby" working his way through Army induction, flight school, fighter training, his deployment to the European Theater of Operations, and finally coming home. This book is part of the history lesson that doesn't get taught in schools. A beautiful story and terrific read that I recommend highly!" ES

"This is so much more than another account of WWII aerial warfare. What

is so great about this book is that it is primarily first-hand accounts of what it was like to become a combat pilot of what many consider the most important American fighter plane of WWII, the P-51 Mustang, AND what it was like for his fiancée and his parents. It represents not just the physical and mental rigors and challenges of each step in the process, but also the emotional highs and lows of connections to loved ones back home. This is a "must read," especially for those whose knowledge of that war is only facts and dates. Letters from the Heart will make this time "live" for them. BC

"My father was overseas for 4 years during WWII. He never talked about his experiences. Reading this book helped me understand better what he experienced, what his life was like, and probably what he thought about. It was an important walk down memory lane for me. The heart of the story reminds us of the sacrifices that our military and their families made to keep our freedoms. Absolutely loved the book!" KB

This is an "unfiltered" look at heart and soul of America during WWII, when the young and old were all committed to this great nation. The letters are written in a "descriptive prose" that no longer exists in today's English language. It is a great history lesson as well as love story from the "greatest generation"! MM

B-17G QUALIFIED QUAIL

I'll Bring Them Home!

By Patrick Milward

There are many wonderful publications written by veterans of their missions in WWII. However, this book is unique in that it documents 75 missions over Germany from the perspective of the B-17 aircraft itself. It is written in first-person as if the plane is



relating the story to the reader. When the crews were given a plane they put all their hopes, dreams and trust in that machine. Their B-17 became a part of the crew. This is the story of how the plane survived numerous missions to bring the crews home. The history of the plane is well-researched and is kept interesting by additions of various historical facts of the 91BG and 8th Army Air Force and ETO history in general as well. The author also provides background on the nose art and artist. He relates how he came to be interested in the aircraft and the crew members he met as a result and intersperses their stories throughout the book. It is a good addition to your library.

For the moment the book can be found on amazon.com in both paperback and hardback covers.

227 pages

Publisher: Casemate Publishers

Hardback ISBN-13: 978-1320305631

Paperback ISBN-13: 978-1320305648

Mick Hanou

President 91st BGMA

925-425-3220

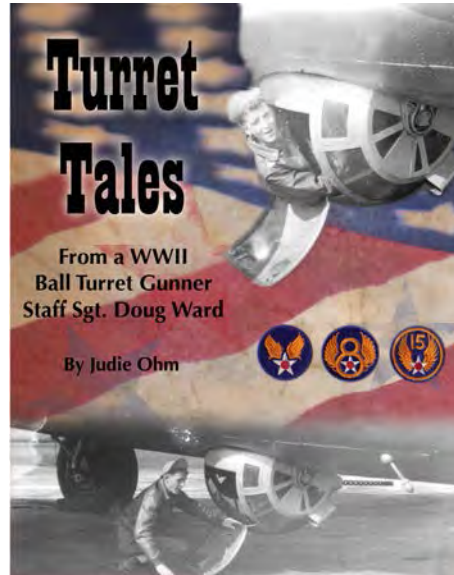
Book Reviews

Turret Tales

From a WWII Ball Turret Gunner
Staff Sgt. Doug Ward
By Judy Ohm

Like many young men his age during WWII, Doug Ward volunteered for the military to serve his country. He signed up for the Army Air Corps in 1942 and was trained as a mechanic. In order to stay with the men he trained with as they went to fight in the European Theater, Doug volunteered to become a Ball Turret Gunner in a B-17. He is credited with 37 missions. With pictures he took while in the 301st Bomb Group, 15th Air Force in Italy and the 305th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force in England, Judie Ohm, author, and Doug tell the story of his life. With over 400 pictures, the book starts with his young life and continues with his life at the Log Cabin Airport. Turret Tales also includes a tribute chapter to his childhood friend, the youngest Ace in WWII from Mondovi, Wisconsin, who was killed flying a P-51.

His mother had saved all his letters he wrote to her. His complete diary is



included along with many pictures he saved. Doug's ability to recall exactly where and when the pictures were taken is remarkable. Many were taken from the ball turret during combat.

Staff Sergeant Doug Ward is credited with 37 missions. He was stationed in Foggia, Italy and on June 6, 1944, he flew to Chelveston, England to finish his missions. His medals include the Dis-

tinguished Flying Cross, WWII Victory Medal, and Air Medal with Four Bronze Oak Leaves, Carbine Sharpshooter, Pistol Sharpshooter, European/African/Middle Eastern Campaign, and American Campaign. Date of entry into active service is Dec. 11, 1942. Date of separation is Sept. 18, 1945.

The book continues with his life at the Log Cabin Airport, Mondovi, WI. He celebrated his 91st birthday on May 10. He owns 6 airplanes and still flies.

On July 2, 2014, Doug Ward received the French Legion of Honor Medal in recognition of his participation in the liberation of France.

For copies of "Turret Tales" please contact:

Judie Ohm
S145 Segerstrom Road
Mondovi, WI 54755
logcabinairport@tcc.coop
Available at Amazon.com
Paperback: 164 pages
Language: English
ISBN-10: 0966752759
ISBN-13: 978-0966752755

Reunions Chapter Meetings

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

359th Fighter Group
368th, 369th, 370th
Squadrons

Indianapolis, Indiana
16-19 July 2015
Contact: Gigi Doersch
Paddock
d-gpaddock@verizon.net
757.566.8856

398th BOMB GROUP
New Orleans
August 12-15, 2015
Westin Canal Place

Ken Howard
(309) 742-8546
KenHoward@Hotmail.com

**306th BG Historical Assn
& Second Schweinfurt
Memorial Assn**

Salt Lake City, UT
Sept 17-20, 2015
Contact: Barbara Neal
(435) 655-1500
barb306neal@gmail.com
website: 306bg.org

**8th Air Force
Historical Society
Videos**

"Behind the Wire"
Interviews with former 8thAF
Veterans held in German POW Camps

**"Start Engines
(plus 50 years)"**
8th Air Force Veterans describe
combat missions over Europe
Both DVD's were Re-Mastered in 2015

DVD's \$20 each includes postage - Reunion Videos and
Veteran Interviews Available
See entire listing at
www.billcurtisvideoproduction.com/8th-air-force-historical-society-videos.php

OR CALL BILL CURTIS at (785) 766-3351
E-MAIL bcurtis419@juno.com

The GENERAL'S Pilot

By Jim Ward



Colonel Robert Kimmel

A classic story—repeated dozens of times during World War II—describes a farm boy from an obscure part of the country who at one level or another rises above his fellows to lead them against the enemy. Two examples at the very highest level make the point. General Dwight Eisenhower, who led the allied forces against Nazi Germany, came from the small town of Abilene, Kansas. Admiral Chester Nimitz, who led the allied forces against the Japanese in the South Pacific, came from Fredericksburg, Texas, a town many miles from any body of water.

At another level, Colonel Robert Kimmel, USAF, Retired, raised on a farm in Mercer County, Ohio, fits



Kimmel's with his crew in front of his B-17 "The Mercer County Special"

this mold. Kimmel, who has resided in Riverside, California since 1968, is known as the "General's Pilot." At age 99, he is one of the last of the "Greatest Generation." He entered the armed service prior to Pearl Harbor and served continuously throughout the war years. He named his B-17 "The Mercer County Special" and flew 50 missions in the Special and other bombers. Known for his flying skills, commanders often asked him to pilot other B-17s on combat mission to train and inspire the crews.

He flew all of his combat missions with the now-legendary 97th Bomb Group, one of the first to arrive in England in 1942 and the first to fly over the channel to bomb Nazi targets in France. That raid, over Rouen, was led by Col. Paul Tibbets, who later dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima. In the right seat was the 97th commander, Col. Frank Armstrong, later of Twelve O'clock High fame. Bob went with the 97th to North Africa flying out of a number of bases there, finally in Tunis where he flew as group leader to Augsburg, Germany. After that flight

in October, 1943, his 50th mission, Bob's wing commander selected him to fly General Carl A "Tooey" Spaatz, Commander of the U.S. Air Forces in North Africa, to Washington D.C. for a conference with General Hap Arnold and the Air Staff. After landing at National Airport, General Spaatz informed Kimmel that he would not only fly the general back to North Africa after the conference but he would remain the general's pilot with the title of Special Assistant to the Chief of Staff. Kimmel stayed in that position until 1948 when Spaatz retired as Chief of Staff of the newly independent U.S. Air Force.

Through his career as a combat pilot and general's pilot, Kimmel became friends and rubbed elbows with the significant commanders of the European Theater. Jimmy Doolittle became a personal friend and often used the extra bed in Kimmel's quarters. In Spaatz's personal B-17, Kimmel transported all of the major Air Force commanders including Doolittle, Hoyt Vandenberg, Nathan Wining, Frank Armstrong, Ira Eaker and William Kepner – sometimes in

very adverse conditions.

After D-Day, Kimmel landed the B-17 in a field that is now the Omaha Beach National Cemetery, to pick up General Arnold and his staff after their inspection of the beachhead. A few days later he flew to France General Eisenhower and British Air Marshals Tedder and Cunningham. He met many other key figures including Winston Churchill. He joined a group of generals to have dinner with President Roosevelt when the President came through Sicily. Kimmel also became acquainted with Elliot Roosevelt, who wanted Kimmel to fly his father on to his next destination. Because of his wheelchair, the President could not negotiate the B-17 and he was flown by others in a C-54.

At the end of the war in Europe, Kimmel transported Spaatz to the Pacific Theater. They were on Guam on the day Col. Paul Tibbets, with whom Kimmel had flown missions in England, dropped the bomb on Hiroshima. As the war ended, the ribbons that Kimmel wore on his dress uniform included the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with two silver clusters, and the Croix de Guerre.



Colonel Robert Kimmel survived the war after four years of continuous flying in combat and other hazardous conditions. The Mercer County Special did not. In Algeria while Kimmel was temporarily assigned to another B-17, German airplanes infiltrated themselves into the landing pattern of the Mercer County Special's flight. One of the Germans dropped a bomb that blew up the plane that bore the name of the remote farming community in western Ohio.

Now known simply as "Bob" to his many friends and his bride of 69 years, Anita, Kimmel is a quiet and

modest man who plays golf regularly at Riverside's Victoria Club. Bob Kimmel worked and fought alongside many of those honored on the famous Fliers' Wall at the Mission Inn; Hap Arnold, Jimmy Doolittle, Hoyt Vandenberg, Nathan Twining, Frank Armstrong, Ira Eaker and William Kepner. When Bob met Anita, she was working as executive secretary for Alexander de Seversky, one of the best-known aviation figures in the war era. De Seversky, who became good friends with Bob, also placed wings on the Fliers' Wall.



George, Spaatz, Norstad, and Hoyt Vandenberg with Robert Kimmel



"Tooley" Spaatz Robert (Bob) & Anita Kimmel with De Seversky



Taken Prisoner

By Steve Feimer, DPA

"Pilot to crew---Bail out now! ---Jump!" The reality of bailing out of an aircraft over enemy held territory is fraught with uncertainty. The first challenge, is to exit an aircraft that is either flying or falling at an airspeed between 150 to 300 mph. Next, you need to clear the tail, remember not to pull the ripcord too soon or too late, land without serious injury, and avoid being shot by enemy troops or angry villagers. Even at this point, the odds of making it to safety are slim at best. Once on the ground you quickly hide your chute, assess your options, and try to make your way back to Allied lines.

Tragically, many airmen were not able to exit the plane and many more simply did not survive the jump. Some airman, either with help from the Resistance, or by their own wit and

courage did make it to safety--most were taken prisoner.

While it is difficult to consider the fate of being taken prisoner as "lucky," it is even more disturbing to know that many captured airmen were summarily executed without ever setting foot in a prison camp. If there was any sense of chivalry toward airman at the beginning of the war, it quickly disappeared as Germany's 3rd

Reich began to realize its final collapse. Any respect the Germans might have had for their enemies, was soon replaced with disdain and brutality.

One such account of Nazi brutality occurred on June 18, 1943 when a B-17G piloted by 1st Lt. Stephen J. King and navigated by 2nd Lt.

Donald E. Casey of the 379th Bomb Group, 526th Bomb Squadron was shot down in route to a target in Osnabruck, Germany. Three of the crew members were killed in action, while six crewmen managed to bail out. One crew member, waist gunner S/Sgt. Zigfried "Ziggy" Czarnecki bailed out, made a safe landing, but was quickly captured by villagers and turned over to Nazi SA



1st Lt. Wilhelm Langeloh.

As a captured U.S. Airman, Ziggy expected to be taken to one of the Stalag Luft prisoner camps. Instead, Lt. Langeloh escorted the airman about 200 yards outside the Village of Appen-Etz, shot him in the back of the neck, rolled him into the ditch, and left him for dead. The flyer, however, was not dead. Local villagers rescued the airman and took him to a hospital in Hamburg, but he died the next day as a result of his wound.

After the war, SA Lt. Wilhelm Langeloh—who was now using the name Felix Bauer—was captured by the Russians, and tried by the Deputy Judge Advocate's Office, War Crimes Group-European Command. Langeloh argued in his

defense that; "In May, 1944 official announcement was made to all Nazi party members, and others, that all flyers were to be killed. I was just following orders." Langeloh was found guilty of war crimes and hanged at Dachau, Germany, on October 10, 1947.

Prisoner of War

For those captured U.S. Airmen the first words spoken by their captors were "Für Sie ist der Krieg vorbei! Sie sind jetzt ein Gefangener des Dritten Reiches" (For you the war is over! You are now a prisoner of the 3rd Reich). While the fight in the air might be over, the fight to survive the brutality, starvation, and harsh conditions of prison camp was just beginning.

DEPUTY JUDGE ADVOCATE'S OFFICE
7708 WAR CRIMES GROUP
EUROPEAN COMMAND
APO 207-1

5 August 1947

UNITED STATES)
V.) Case No. 12-9121
Wilhelm LANGELOH)

REVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. TRIAL DATA: The accused was tried at Dachau, Germany, during the period 10-11 April 1947, before a General Military Government Court.

II. CHARGES AND PARTICULARS:
CHARGE: Violation of the Laws and Usages of War.
PARTICULARS: In that Wilhelm LANGELOH, alias Felix BAUER, a German national, did, at or near APPEN, Germany, on or about 18 June 1944, wilfully, deliberately and wrongfully encourage, aid, abet and participate in the killing of an unknown member of the armed forces of a nation then at war with the then German Reich, who was then and there a surrendered and unarmed prisoner of war in the custody of the then German Reich.

III. SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE: Following a bombing attack in Germany, 18 June 1944, an American flyer parachuted to earth from his disabled plane, landing in Appen-Stz. The flyer was taken into custody and immediately delivered to the local police. Within an hour or so the flyer was taken over by the accused, a party member, led just outside of the town, shot in the back of his neck and left for dead. The flyer, however, was not dead but died the next day in a Hamburg hospital as a result of the wound.

IV. EVIDENCE AND RECOMMENDATIONS:
1. Wilhelm LANGELOH
Nationality: German
Age: 55
Civilian Status: Clerk
Party Status: 1st Lieutenant SA and Kreisorganisationsleiter NSDAP



As a prisoner of war, your first thoughts focus on the uncertainty of your fate and that of the crew. Did anyone else make it out of the plane? Did they survive the jump? Were they captured or killed? What will the interrogation be like? Will I be tortured or killed? Where will I be imprisoned? How will my family know what happened to me? Will I survive?

While these questions point to the emotional and mental anguish suffered by prisoners, the more immediate realities focused on surviving the hunger, starvation, disease, harsh climates, and living conditions. But as one captured fighter pilot remarked, "We had plenty of company; rats, lice, bed bugs, and fleas." (Col. Morris Magnusen, 36th Fighter Group, 23rd Squadron, Stalag Luft VII-A)

At the beginning of the war, Red Cross packages and letters to and from home were more predictable and more reliable. But as the war dragged on, mail became scarce and so did the food packages the prisoners relied upon. The predictable consequences associated with food scarcity and contaminated water were dysentery, malnutrition, pneumonia, diphtheria, pellagra,

typhus, trench foot, and tuberculosis. Often too weak to fight off the effects of disease and hunger many POWs died as POWs. Although the number of prisoners who died while in captivity is uncertain, it has been well documented that a much higher percentage of Japanese held prisoners died as POWs than POWs held by Germans.

While no prisoner of war camp was considered "good," some were worse than others and some groups of prisoners were treated worse by the Germans. As an ex-POW at Stalag XVII-B, Sgt. Howard R. Thornley, 8th Air Force, 91st Bomb Group, 322nd Bomb Squadron gives his account of prisoner starvation, "...The Russians received even less food than the Americans. As a result of the starvation and disease, everyone in the Russian compound would be dead in about two months. Then a new group would be sent in. We saw their burial parties each day. They carried out 15 to 20 dead in the morning and 3 to 5 in the afternoon. Once, while looking through the fence, I witnessed a very loud ruckus from the Russian barracks. The Germans were afraid to enter and instead sent in one of their most vicious German Shepherds. After

a few minutes, something came flying out and landed on the barbed-wire fence. It was the hide of the dog." Freedom

The Hitler propaganda machine claimed the 3rd Reich would last for a 1,000 years; it did not. On May 7, 1945 the instrument of Germany's surrender is signed in Reims, France. The "War" was over.

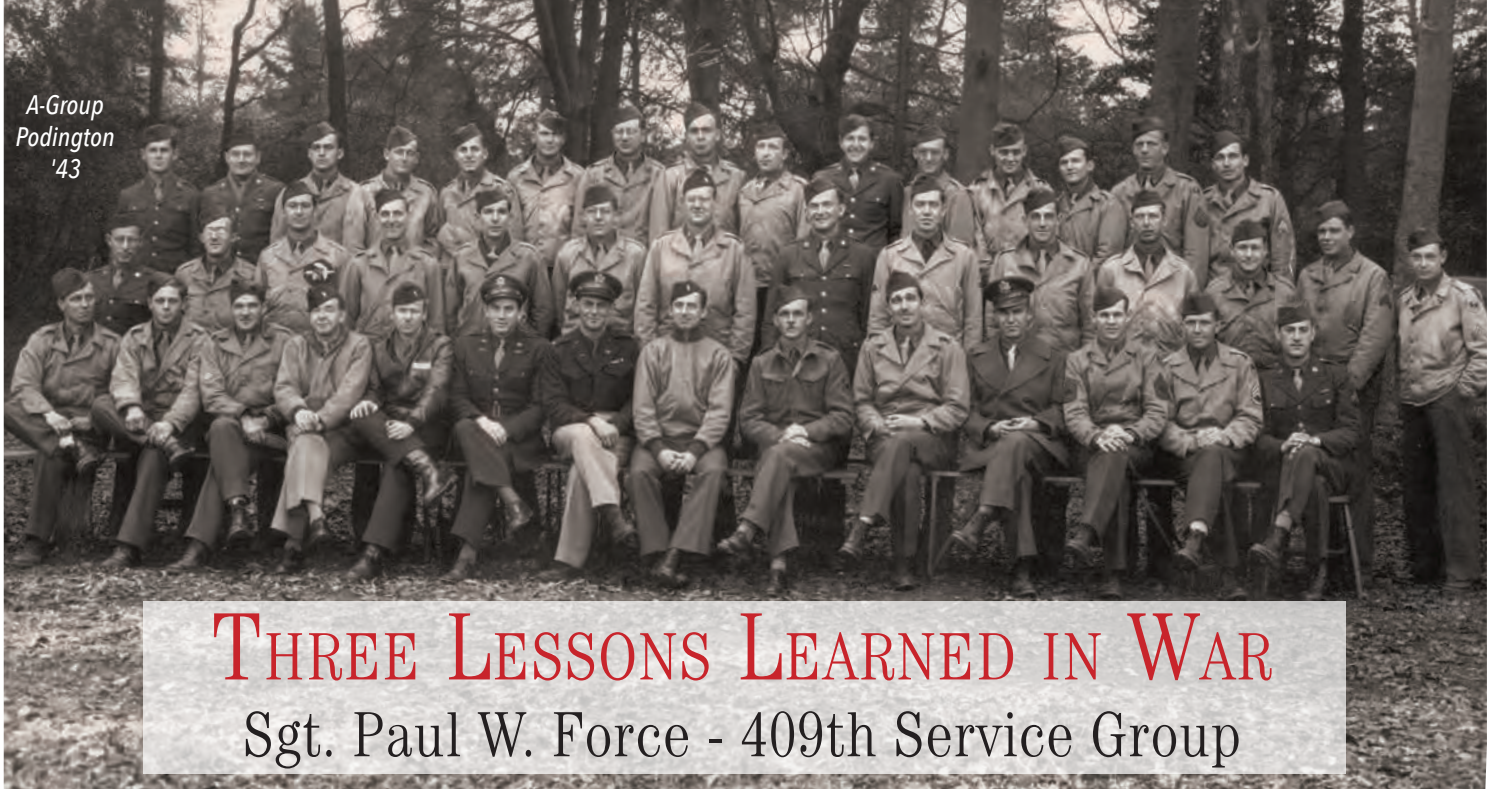
Recently, I asked an ex-POW to tell me about his time in captivity, he first remarked, "I was one of the 'lucky' ones." How so I asked? He replied, "I survived, and the heroes did not."

Those who went to war, and those left waiting at home, know all too well that war is a thief, and a thief does not or cannot give back that which was taken. While most service men and women managed to put their lives back together, develop successful careers, and move on, others continued to struggle with the residual effects of the war and their time as prisoners.

Perhaps no one knows better, or appreciates more, the meaning of freedom than someone who has been a prisoner of war.



A-Group
Podington
'43



THREE LESSONS LEARNED IN WAR

Sgt. Paul W. Force - 409th Service Group

After the ending of WWII in Europe, the 92nd Bomb Group and 8th Air Corp teamed up with the 386th Bomb Group with all 30 vehicles and equipment and headed for Southampton. We were now the 409th Service Group. From there, we loaded onto landing craft tanks or LCTs to ship us across the channel. When we drove southward down the Rhone Valley to Istres, a small city near the Mediterranean Sea, we encountered a warm climate. The sunny base was the perfect place for R & R. After two years in England, the main mission of the armor stripped bombers called, "The Green Project," would now be used for flying wounded army personnel back to the states. This was a gifted policy, which was well deserved for a faster trip home. The operation would last some six months. This gave us time to see places like Rome and Paris. We journeyed to Cavillion, Avignon, and Le Val Duc (our secret cove).

Most of us had lighter

chores to do. I handled part of the water supply and checked it frequently. This base, now back in the French Air Force, was used a few years ago by fighter aircraft to rid Col. Gaddafi's henchmen from Libyan control.

We were located about one mile from the salted bay that was

sandwiched between Marseille and us. Upon entering the orderly room the first day, we read a message by General Patch, the 7th Army Commander of all American military personnel. If we visited Marseille, we had to be in a gang of six to eight persons and stay together until we got back to our

bases or ships. MP's and SP's would pickup anyone defying this order and send them back to his or her units. Our visit gave us the opportunity to meet with members of the Maquis (French Underground), several of whom I met in Cavillion and Paris.

I soon met three infantry soldiers, all privates who wanted a sergeant some three years older in their company. Wherever they wanted to go, I never turned them down. Please allow me to introduce them by their first names:

1. Nick – about the third day we were on base, one airman from the 92nd Bomb Group asked me if I would wake up Nick so he could join us for breakfast. As a former drill and



Quick break at
92nd BG dump

platoon Sgt. in the States, I may have had a slight advantage over the other airmen. Nick was in a barrack next to us. I called out for him to wake up. I had my arms in position to block any punches and quickly and quietly said, "Nick, it's me, Paul. We are at Istres here in France and everything is OK. We're waiting for you to join us for breakfast." He quickly calmed down. In minutes, we headed for the chow hall. The Airmen were grateful for the POW's on base. They prepared all meals for us, then, they ate. We were grateful for good meals and ready to enjoy a new style of life that the R & R of the ambient area would provide.

2. Bob – Bob had been with the 4th Infantry Division. While one of their regiments was crossing a river going into Germany, his regiment was targeted by enemy fire. It lasted for nearly 4 hours. The next four days, Bob was in a daze. He got in chow lines and did not recognize his servers. He slept along side of soldiers he didn't know. On the fourth day, a Sergeant or Lieutenant asked him what company he was in. Then he was escorted to a medical doctor. He wondered if he had done anything wrong. The medic said, "No, you were stunned by heavy firing. It happens in war." For a New Yorker, Bob had a very quiet demeanor, plus, a very friendly attitude.

3. Andy – Andy was from the 90th Infantry Division who got caught in a firefight with the Germans. They attacked his company's position with artillery. That was when Andy got hit in the back with a shell fragment. He could not move at all as he lay flat on the ground. He saw a German soldier crawling toward him with a pair of scissors, which had him thinking that he was about to be stabbed and there was nothing he could do. Even though his rifle and ammo was right next to him, he wasn't able to pick it up. The retreat of his own Company meant

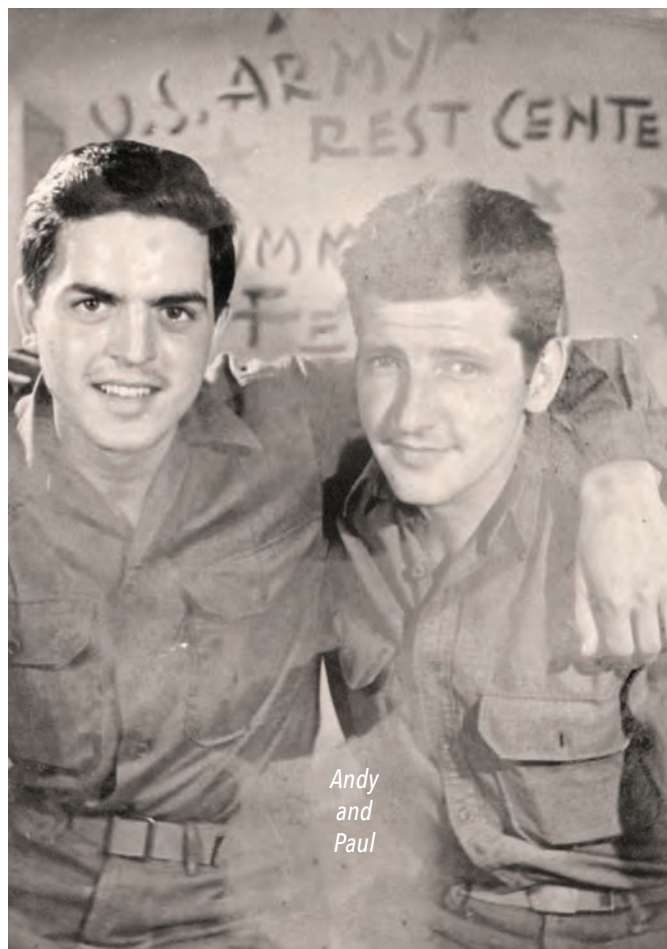
his own troops were back 100 or more yards. The squad leader and others made it to safety and were able to see a German medic cutting away the back of Andy's shirt. The German then removed the first aid kit attached to Andy's canvas heavy belt and pressed the bandage to his back. It didn't take him long. The medic then started crawling back to his own line when Andy saw one of the German enlisted men fire a single, deadly shot at their own medic. He just stopped moving. No one came to his aid from the German position. No one else was nearby from his own squad. Andy had already lost a lot of blood and apparently was quite bewildered lying alone in the

"To kill a medic is like killing a mockingbird. To kill a medic is like killing a good friend"

field of battle. "Is this what it's like to die?" he thought to himself. He finally passed out. Late the next day, he woke up in a hospital in England.

The doctor who attended to him was back on duty. He approached Andy and said, "How are you feeling soldier?"

Andy replied, "A lot better." Then the doctor said, "You lost a lot of



blood, but whoever put that first aid patch on your back put it on nice and tight. If they hadn't, you would have bled to death."

The doctor's words made a radical difference in how we thought and felt toward German POW's who were also on the base. I guess we learned a very valuable lesson in war: to kill a medic is like killing a mockingbird. To kill a medic is like killing a good friend.

You have no idea just how difficult it was for me to tell this story. The saving grace is to weep with him who weeps. That's what Marvin Silbersher, (December, 2007 issue 8th A F News) discovered in later years. Five miles above the target after the loss of close friends he said, "Years later, drop by drop, you weep without stopping."

Three years ago I read an article in Transformation Magazine from a northern college about tears: their biology department discovered a difference between a baby's tears and

adult tears. With a baby, there is a physical need, while with the adult, analysis suggests healing memories. Imagine how that single tear that drops from your eyes and touches your skin begins the healing process. Within a minute or so, with each successive tear, the pain starts to go away. What an amazing gift we have been given to be able to heal ourselves: removing our pain with the drops of tears to handle the terrible memories of war.

Our rest and relaxation continued at Istres, but our world was never the same again. I saw Nick leave with 34 other soldiers. Some of us had to return to the 386th Bomb Group base in England. It was there I signed up for my first trip to Cambridge University, 15 miles from the base at Bury St. Edmunds. It was my first visit

to an historical Christian center that I knew nothing about. A medical team gave us the first flu shot we had in three years. The next day, we were on

“Years later, drop by drop, you weep without stopping.”

our backs for 2 full days unable to get out of bed. I couldn't even remember what the live flu shot did to most of us. I could not remember eating, drinking, or going to the head. The third day, I woke up and felt normal, got out of bed and went to the chow hall along with a large group of airmen—apparently all sharing in a similar experience. In

a few days I would be in my first class at a very famous University. Then, suddenly, we were called to the orderly room where we were informed we were leaving for Southampton, a port city on the south coast, for our trip to the States.

Ten years and one month later, I was ordained a minister in The Presbyterian Church USA serving five churches in the Appalachian Mountains of Virginia with one other minister.

Three lessons which have come from the long venture is to study to show yourself improved, love your enemies and three, never forget your loved ones, friends, and colleagues who never let us give into the challenges we encounter every day of our lives.

Paul & Buddies



AFTER 71 YEARS:

Daughter Follows in her Father's WWII Footsteps

UK , October 20, 1943: USAAF Mission to Düren, Germany

By Co de Swart

Navigator 2 LT. William J. "Bill" Doherty was one of only five to bail out mere minutes before the B-17, piloted by Lt. Charles Geyer, 96th BG/413th BS, crashed in De Bilt, Holland. The other five members of the crew, already dead or seriously wounded in the rear of the B-17 with non-closing bombdoors and its tail shot off, had no chance. Three Dutch civilians were killed on the ground.

Doherty, still in shock after the Luftwaffe's Messerschmitt Bf-109 attacks and his parachuting down, landed in a meadow and was 'welcomed' by Dutch farmer's son, Richard van Nunen, who lead him to a farmhouse owned by the Raaymaker family, who gave the airman food and drink and a place to rest. Doherty remained hidden in the bushes until dark when he was lucky enough to be escorted to a house in the village of Erp. That house later became known as the "Pyama House" of the Otten family—a resistance safehouse with contacts all over the south of Holland.

On the way to freedom, Bill Doherty later traveled to Maasniel-Roermond with the Gorris and Pollaert families and from there to Tilburg (Aunt Coca's safehouse).

It was on his way to Antwerp, however, when Doherty ran out of luck: he was arrested by the Nazi-Germans and became a POW in Stalag Luft 1 (Barth, Germany) until the camp was liberated by the Russians on May 1, 1945. He returned to the States and in 1978, died in Boston, only 59 years old. He



Lt. Charles Geyer's Crew

Back row: Missey, Guillianelli, Killarney, Lantron, Parker, Litke

Front row: Geyer, Surdez, Mills, Doherty

hardly spoke to his children about his war-years in the USAAF.

2004:

Pat Doherty's husband, Tom Leary, a chief of police in the Boston, MA area and highly interested in history, was exploring the Internet WWII messageboards when he came across an older message of mine simply titled "Doherty" in which I was looking for the family of a USAAF 96th BG Navigator. Tom sent a return message: "I guess I'm married to his daughter."

Three months later this Dutch Airwar researcher shook hands with the Doherty-Learys in Dover, MA. There, we were joined by other members of

the 8th AFHS MA chapter veterans including Robert E. "Bob" Doherty, the 96th BG historian and co-author of the book "The Snetterton Falcons." It was truly a wonderful meeting during which we exchanged a great deal of information and ideas.

Staying in contact by e-mail we made a plan to visit the safehouses and families of the Dutch Resistance who had hidden Pat Doherty's father in the near future...

A DECADE LATER:

On April 24, 2014, Pat and Tom landed at Schiphol Amsterdam Airport for one of their most emotional visits ever.

The next day we were all standing in the gardens of “Pyama House”—home to the Otten family. After the war these former Dutch Resistance and Escapeline helpers were awarded the Medal of Freedom. It was here, where Pat’s father had found shelter his first night after bailing out of his crippled plane. It was a very emotional day, especially when the Otten’s biographer, Dr. Frans Govers, presented Pat the original b/w photo, taken in 1943 by the Otten’s, showing her Dad already in civilian clothes in the same location. Tears flowed.

Two emotional days later we were welcomed by Gorris and Pollaert family members in Roermond, visiting the 1943 safehouse location where Pat’s father was hidden for more than a week by the late fathers of these families. It was here that London was contacted and they agreed upon the code, “Yellow is the Moon,” to send to the BBC when Pat’s dad should have returned safely to Great Britain. The little note had been saved all these years.

US Air Attaché in The Hague, Col. John Mc.Devitt joined our party in Roermond which ended with a very tasty dinner on this Dutch King’s Day, a wonderful ambiance for this visit.

After a few days relaxing, Pat and Tom visited her father’s last safehouse, Aunt Coba’s, in Tilburg. Coba Pulskens, was 60 years old when she was arrested by the Gestapo on July 9, 1944. She was deported to Ravensbrück, a concentration camp for women. In February 1945, she died in the gas chamber. According to survivors she voluntarily took the place of a mother with children hoping to save their lives. A monument stands at the former safehouse—the couple left flowers in memory of Aunt Coba.

May 4, Dutch National Mourning Day for the fallen in WWII brought a close to this very emotional trip. Pat and Tom attended the event in De June 2015 (15-2)

Bilt as the first US ‘guests’ ever since 1946. They were welcomed personally by the Mayor of this village. More flowers were also laid at the monument for the five US airmen of the 96thBG/413BS- Geyer Crew, KIA in the crash of their B-17, 71 years before.

For the Dutch former helper families and Pat and Tom Leary, e-mail and Skype will assure a lifetime relationship.



Above: Flowers were laid at the monument for the five US airmen of the 96thBG/413BS- Geyer Crew, KIA in the crash of their B-17

Left: Original b/w photo, taken in 1943 by the Otten’s, showing Pat’s dad in civilian clothes.



L-R: Tom Leary, Pat Doherty-Leary, Dutchmen Drs. Frans Govers and Co de Swart

We Are Free Men at Last...

Herbert Gold, 446th BG 705th BS



B-24 Temptation [42-50477] Crew - 446th Bomb Group, 705th Squadron, Stationed in Bungay, England

Left to right top row: SSgt. Albert Charron - Waist Gunner; Lt. John Watt - Bombardier; Lt. John Mullery - Pilot; Lt. Aubrey Jones - Navigator; Lt. Robert Kallstrom - Co-Pilot Lower row left: Tech Sgt. Herbert Gold - Engineer/Gunner; Staff Sgt. Robert Cochran - B/T Gunner; SSgt. James Haugen - Tail Gunner; TSgt. Bill Booth - Radio Operator Not in Picture: Lt. Isaac Lengel - Lead Bombardier, SSgt. Richard Cotton - Waist Gunner Note: Albert Charron not on mission when shot down

Our crew was assembled in Westover, Massachusetts. One night we went on a training mission—we called it an “astronomical mission” because we had to fly on instruments. Most of the crew was not required to go on this mission. In the bomb bay, Albert “Mo” Charron had been given a camera to take pictures of simulating bombing runs over parts of Ohio, Pittsburgh, back over New York City, and then up the Hudson River,

finally landing back at Westover Field. After we landed, we entered a big, empty hangar where we took off our gear and stowed it into designated lockers.

Lo and behold the pilot asked me, “Where is Mo Charron?”

“I don’t know, maybe he fell out of the airplane,” I quipped. A few minutes later, Mo Charron came into the hangar.

Tipsy. He hadn’t taken a single photograph.

After a few months at Westover, we went by train to Mitchell Field, Long Island. There our B-24 was loaded with supplies, plus the crew to fly over the northern route. We stopped over at Labrador. The weather was really bad. We then went to Greenland. From there we flew across the Northern Sea to Nutts Corner, Ireland. Then we went on an English freighter to England and were

assigned to the 446th Bomb Group based near Flixton, England. We were nicknamed the "Bungay Buckaroos."

It was September 26, 1944 and we were on our 30th mission. After dropping our bombs we realized our plane was in bad shape and we had wounded aboard. We were bombing Hamm, Germany, flying at 25,000 feet; we lost two engines and I had to feather the props so they would not run away. After getting the wounded out, there was only the pilot, John Mullery and Bill Booth, the radio operator on the plane. I bailed out at about 18,000 feet, landed in a farm yard, and a young Polish girl came out asked, "Americana?" I told her, "Yes." She wanted to hide me in the house, but if I let her do that, the Germans would have definitely captured me and killed her. A German soldier came up and asked me, "Wo ist Ihre Waffe?" Where is your gun? I wasn't armed. We used to carry Colt 45s, but brass took them away from us.

After that I was taken to various locations and interrogated. On your dog tags they had your religion; mine had an "H" for Hebrew. The Germans did not like airmen of the Hebrew religion. I was beaten several times before being taken to a camp. Eventually, we were taken by train to Stalag Luft IV at Gross Tychow (Poland) near the Baltic Sea. We were now prisoners of war.

We had almost 9,000 airmen in our prison camp which was divided into four compounds; A, B, C, and D. In the prison camp we were given very little food, and sometimes part of a Red Cross parcel. All of us were malnourished. After over four months in Stalag Luft IV, the Russians were getting too close to our camp. On February 6th, 1945, almost 9,000 POWs were marched out into the worst winter the area had seen in over 50 years. A lot of GIs did not survive this "Black March." We had dysentery, body lice, frostbite, etc. We were fortunate to have Dr. Lesley Caplan with our group. We marched over 600 miles

in 87 days across Germany to get away from the Russians. We were packed into box cars with about 60 men each. Most of the men were sick. We could not sit down, there was no room, so we took turns. We had very little food; we were given bread and a little bit of water. The cars smelled. We were there for two days and then the train's engine was attached to our car, but we did not travel very far before we stopped.

After being unloaded from the box-cars we were marched a short distance to a camp called Stalag XI-B in Fallingb., Germany. There were over 90,000 POWs in that camp: American, French, Russian, Polish, etc. Again, there was little food. We were marched out of the camp and across the Elbe River. The war was all around us, so our Dr. Caplan along with a German officer and also our Lager leader, Troy, went in a jeep to find the British soldiers to liberate us.

We were liberated on May 2, 1945, went to Brussels, Belgium—I remember that's where they have the circle with the boy urinating as a fountain. We wound up at Camp Lucky Strike (Janville, France). All Lucky Strike occupants lived in tents. We were given food with our mess kits. After being there a couple of days, General Eisenhower flew into the camp and gave a speech telling us he would get us home ASAP, even if he had to have us double up on the ship to do it.

The ship I came home on was the SS Merrimac Seam. We landed at Camp Patrick Henry, an army base near Newport News, Virginia. From there I was sent home on a 60 day furlough. My daughter, Gerri, was born while I was in the prison camp. I saw her and my wife at the same time. I also got an extra 12 days leave. Met a lot of my in-laws after not seeing them for a couple of years.

I was sent to Atlantic City, New Jersey—at the same time the Miss America contest was being held. Bess Myerson from New York City was named

Miss America. There were a lot of airmen who were from New York and New Jersey who made a lot of noise when we watched the pageant.

I was sent to Fort Dix and was discharged.

Epilogue:

After 70 years I visited our 446th Bomb Group Base in Flixton, England, and had a very nice welcome from the local people. We saw the American Museum and the British Museum where they had a B-24 on the floor, plus a B-17. They also had Jimmy Stewart's uniform on display and an article about him. We also visited a cemetery where American boys are buried along with a wall of honor. I celebrated my 95th birthday on February 7th! I still go to high schools and colleges in the area sharing my experiences during WWII.

During the "Black Death March" I kept a complete diary which has been digitized and is now on exhibit within the POW area at the National Museum of the Mighty 8th Air Force in Pooler, Georgia.

I'm writing two books; one about my own experiences and another with the possible title of "Why I Love the B-24 and Hate the B-17!"

Herbert S. Gold
406 Highland Street
Cresskill, NJ 07626
201 569-3079
stalagluft4@gmail.com



"I NEVER GOT A GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL"

submitted by Don Kilburg, Jr with help from the 94th Airlift Wing Public Affairs Office and Cindy Neal, author of "Gentlemen from Hell: Men of the 487th Bomb Group"

For most of his life, 89 year old Henry Hughey of Decatur GA has been sharing his WWII memories and experiences.

As a frequent public speaker he has oft repeated not only his recollections as a 19 year old from Memphis thrown into World War II, but also his memories of the brave men with whom he served. So nothing seemed strange when he was invited to Dobbins Air Reserve Base for a Commander's Call on January 10th this year, ostensibly to participate in a ceremony for the deployment of units and to hear about the Ebola control efforts where some might be working. Jean Hughey, Henry's wife of 50 years, was also invited to the event and thought it quite considerate when she was presented with a corsage at the door to the assembly room. Though she did think it a little strange while at lunch she heard Henry's voice, but she couldn't see his lips moving. Suddenly she realized it wasn't Henry speaking, but the words were coming from a video image of Henry on a large screen. Then she heard Col. Brett Clark, Commander of the 94th Air Wing, calling Henry up to the stage. And suddenly a side door and all of Henry and Jean's extended family--their children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren--marched into the meeting room.

Col. Clark read a message from Gen. Mark Welsh, Air Force Chief of Staff and announcing "We have to rectify a wrong, Henry is certainly a pioneer in our Air Force who set the example for all of us." It turned out that the Hughey's were brought to the Dobbins event on a ruse and the event was

especially organized to honor Henry. Through the years he has enthralled all sorts of veterans, school and civic groups with his tales of the war. And typically he ends with a litany of honors and awards he has received.

"Then he adds with a wink and a smile, 'but I never received the Good Conduct Medal'"

Then he adds with a wink and a smile, "...but I never received the Good Conduct Medal."

When Hughey arrived on stage and after an introduction by Col. Clark, he was presented the Army Good Conduct Medal for his service 70 years ago during WWII. Despite his agility 70 years ago as a Ball Turret Gunner, Henry never saw this coming. "I didn't know the Air Force could be so sneaky," joked Hughey. "I am glad, better late than never."

The award was made possible

"We have to rectify a wrong, Henry is certainly a pioneer in our Air Force who set the example for all of us"

through the behind the scenes efforts by Gen. Welsh, Pam Yonkers, CSAF Civic Leader Advisor, and officials at the Air Force Personnel Center. The subterfuge and presentation were organized by Col. Clark and the Cobb Chamber's Honorary Commanders

Association. Henry's family, except for Jean, were in on the plan for weeks, but successfully kept it a secret from the honoree.

Hughey had volunteered for service in 1942 when he turned 18. With the massive response of young men to the call to arms and the resulting training back up, he did not report to active duty until Jan. 1, 1944. "I almost didn't get into the war," he says. His goal was to be a pilot; however, he ended up being a B-17 ball turret gunner.

"If they had let me be a pilot, I could have blown the Luftwaffe out of the sky in six weeks," he said. "Instead, it took me six months as a ball gunner."

Assigned to the 838th Squadron of the 487th Bomb Group, Henry arrived in Lavenham, England in October of 1944. Flying with the crew piloted by Lt. Richmond C. Young, Henry flew 32 missions, the last being the final combat mission of the 487th BG in WWII on April 21, 1944, just 3 days before the last bomb was dropped over Germany by the 8th AF as the war ended.

Hughey recalls many harrowing experiences during his combat missions. Notable was the one time his plane was shot down. It was on a mission to Dresden on Mar. 2 1944. Their #4 engine was hit just prior to the bomb run. Coming out of the run a loss of oil pressure prevented Lt. Young's plane from keeping up with the departing formation. It was a sitting duck for Luftwaffe fighters, so he sought the nearest safe refuge and headed east toward Warsaw. The plane was finally grounded in territory recently gained by Russian troops. Only after putting it on the ground did the crew discover the osten-

sibly open field was full of mines left by the retreating Nazis. Fortunately, none were contacted on landing or during the evacuation of the crippled ship. The Russians quartered the crew in private homes and made arrangements for their return to Lavenham. The long return took them to an American base in Poltava Russia then on to Tehran, Cairo, Naples, Paris, and London. Finally, they arrived back in Lavenham and then flew 5 more missions.

The most memorable of Hughey's missions was on Christmas Eve, 1944, the largest bombing mission in history. After being grounded by weather for a week, while Hitler was moving forward with his Ardennes Offensive or as we know it, the Battle of the Bulge, the 8th AF called for a "maximum effort" assault. The 487th was tapped to lead this fantastic armada of 2034

heavy bombers and 853 fighters aimed at German airdromes, rail yards, and communications centers. Young's

“We lost 13 ships in 13 minutes in that flight. I thought I was going to be dead. I thought if I'm going to go, I'm going to take as many with me as I could, so I got real cranked up”

plane was on the left wing of the lead aircraft containing Gen. Frederick Castle, Command Lead for the mission. Just south of Liege Belgium they came under attack and a quick, but devastating battle ensued.

Planned US fighter protection which had been delayed was nowhere in sight until after the fury subsided. Castle died in that attack. Henry reports a close up and personal encounter with four ME-109s as they came directly

through his squadron. "That big black cross on the side is the ugliest thing you will ever see in your life," says Henry. "We lost 13 ships in 13 minutes in that flight. I thought I was going to be dead. I thought if I'm going to go, I'm going to take as many with me as I could, so I got real cranked up." For the next 50 years on Christmas Eve, Henry called his crew to wish them well in memory of that most significant day in each of their lives.

After the war, Henry returned to the job he had left before he joined the Army Air Corp. There, he met and married Jean Ann Luther and began their family. Life was again interrupted by war when he was called to serve in the Korean Conflict. Henry has served in leadership roles in the Georgia Chapter of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society as well as the 487th Bomb Group Association and the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force.



STOP

and READ

By Nancy Toombs

We have had great response to our last article about the FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL.

Our goal is to reach every 8th AF veteran who is eligible and assist in the application process. Some of you reported that the application was a bit confusing—not to worry. If you have your “Report of Separation /Honorable Discharge”, all you need to do is call me (Nancy) and I will help you fill out the application over the phone. If you can secure your separation papers I will have all the information necessary to complete the application over the phone.

I have mailed out 79 applications to date (not

including those I handed out during the reunion). Of the 12 Bomb Groups (H) in the 1st Air Division, I have received calls from veterans representing 9 of the 12 groups. In the 2nd Air Division, I have had calls representing 7 of the 14 Bomb Groups (H) and in the 3rd Air Division, I have had calls from 13 of the 15 Bomb Groups (H). I want phone calls from veterans representing ALL of the “Heavies” and ALL of the Fighter Groups! I also received calls from the 361st FG, 352nd FG, 84th Infantry and the 101st Airborne.

If you are reading this and believe you are eligible, DON'T DELAY call me as soon as you finish reading this article. Remember, this award cannot be given posthumously, but should the veteran pass away while the application is being processed, his family will become the recipient.

The main criteria for application is that the veteran must have participated in one (1) of the four French Campaigns. Those campaigns are:


- * Normandy
- * Ardennes (includes Battle of the Bulge)
- *Northern France
- *Provence (Southern France)

Please pass this information on to anyone whom you believe may be eligible.

This is the highest honor that France can bestow and we don't want anyone overlooked.

If you have questions or need an application call me: Nancy Toombs (501) 681-3126---evenings are the best time to reach me. If I don't answer LEAVE A MESSAGE and I will call you back!





B-17G 43-38973; Assigned 422BS/305BG Chelveston 5/12/44; ex-Kassel 15/12/44 with Finis Harris, John Griffin, R.L. Mason, Laverne Ridge, Herschel McCoy, Cliff Melton, R.L. Burry, Willie Barnes, Chas Nordland (9 Killed in Action); hit radio mast at Daventry, Nthants, in poor visibility, crashed near Daventry, Northamptonshire, UK; Missing Air Crew Report 149.

FROM ACROSS the Pond

By Brian Francis

Happy New Year to all! It has been a very busy year of events this side of the Pond, as you may have noted from previous editions of the 8th AF News.

It began with Darrel Lowell's visit to the UK including a visit to the American Air Museum in Duxford for the D-Day Air Show as a V.I.P. with Gordon Richards. Darrel took a trip down the runway in Sue's Jeep; he honored the Fallen at Madingley; visited with friends and made a trip to the Roman city of Bath.

Gordon attended the dedication of a memorial for the 381st BG with fellow members Alan and Monica Steel.

Society members Tony Coleman and David Head, along with our new members of the Sywell Aviation Museum have been researching the site of a 305th BG B-17 that collided with the radio transmitter towers at Daventry on 12/15/44 due to poor visibility. A few pieces of wreckage found so far include: parts from the Norden bombsight and parts of the prop pitch governors. These will be carefully cleaned and put on display with the information of the crash. The names of the crew, along with a model of the aircraft in the markings of the 305th BG, will also be on exhibit. Peter Robert Searle and his daughter, Rebecca Saywell (son and granddaughter of SSgt Robert Lennes Burry, the ball turret gunner—a crew member who perished in the crash) also visited the site. Later, we all attended a special service held at Woodend, a small and charming English village, to remember the crew of another B-17 that crashed in the fields where a memorial now stands. Col Douglas Mellars, commander of the 422nd Air Base Group,

501st Combat Support Wing, RAF Croughton, also attended the event. I was honored to represent the USAAF and the 8th AFHS and place a wreath at the memorial.

The next event was to attend the RAF Molesworth Air Force Ball at the request of Col Angela M Cadwell, commander of the 501st CSW. The evening was very enjoyable and the hospitality was first class. The performing "Tops in Blue" gave a fantastic show for the evening. Some friends and I got together to put on a vehicle display in the old WWII hanger. The theme for the event was WWII, so we brought in four (4) WWII Jeeps, an M16 Half Track, a 1937 Rover Saloon, and a 1936 Austin 7 Opal Tourer. Our thanks to Col Cadwell for her hospitality.

From this side of the 'Pond' I hope that you have enjoyed the bits and pieces of news and events; it has been a very interesting twelve months. Gordon and I have received many requests for information—especially regarding those lost in combat and now deceased, most surprisingly from my school friends.

Rebecca Saywell, whose grandfather was SSgt Burry, located the address and a photograph of my godfather, SSgt Ballou, of Dunlap, Illinois. Things happen in mysterious ways: I found that he was in charge of the aircraft tire repair in a requisitioned bus depot in our town, Rushden. I then worked in that same garage from 1981 for 7 years. The floor of that garage still had the ground anchor bolt fixings which bolted the tire repair machines to the floor.

Are we always treading in the footsteps of the past? The history and stories go on even 70 years after the war has ended. We

still have things to learn...sadly not many to listen as they have flown their last mission. The diminishing attendance of WWII veterans at our reunions shows the toll of time. We only have to look at the photos of the handsome young men standing by their aircraft with their crews. Seeing their boyish faces and smiles. They showed no fear—only a bonding with each other—knowing they were fighting a war many miles from home. These young warriors formed friendships that would last for the rest of their lives, but for over 26,000 of them, those lives ended far too soon.

Thanks you to all of you who were part of that struggle, those of you who lost family, friends, loved ones. A special thanks to all of you who are determined we will never forget any of these souls. As the anniversary marking the end of WWII fast approaches, we will look back at the cost in Allied lives—especially those of your homeland: from the red hills and sands of Arizona to the forest of Oregon; the great plains of Texas, and from California and the shores of the Pacific Ocean and beyond. Every year at Madingley England the row upon rows of crosses and the names on the wall of the missing reflect this tremendous sacrifice and to those names the British public give their enduring thanks and gratitude.

On a final note, I must thank my dear friend Gordon Richards, for his help, knowledge and endless source of information that he is always willing to share to pursue the many requests that we have received. Thank you Gordon.

Best wishes and a Healthy New Year
Regards Brian Francis & Sue

Saying 'Goodbye' TO SOME WWII HISTORY

By Sean C. Kelly

Two More USAAF
WWII 'Legacy'
UK Bases Set To
Shutter Gates

Molesworth
Control Tower



LONDON, ENGLAND - Two United Kingdom bases once used by the United States Army Air Force (USAAF) in WWII and in near continuous use by the USAF since then are shuttering their doors as part of the latest drawdown of the US Military across Europe.

The Pentagon announced on 8 January 2015 that RAF Molesworth and RAF Alconbury in Cambridgeshire as well as RAF Mildenhall in Suffolk would be closing.

RAF Alconbury and RAF Molesworth were the last WWII bases in the UK once occupied by the 8th Air Force that were still in active use -- though today neither has airfield facilities. Exact timelines have not been provided, but given their largely non-flight line status they might be expected to close within 12-18 months based on previous USAF/US Navy base closures in the UK over the past decade.

A third base, RAF Mildenhall -- well known as a Military Air Transport Service (MATS) hub as well as home for the KC-135 refuelling tankers from the 100th Air Refuelling Wing, the 501st Combat Support Wing, the 95th Reconnaissance Squadron and the 352nd Special Operations Group. The latter, with its CV-22B Osprey and MC-130J Commando II aircraft arrived at Mildenhall with around 1,050 personnel only in June 2013.

RAF Mildenhall is currently home to 3,200 military personnel and around 500 civilian staff while RAF Alconbury and RAF Molesworth together have some 750 military personnel and 1,200 civilians and support staff. Mildenhall's closure could take around five to seven years according to sources though confirmation of this is still awaited. This might indicate a gradual drawdown -- by comparison the former USAF 20th TFW Wing flight line base at RAF Upper Heyford in Oxfordshire was announced for closure in May 1993 and actually closed in September 1994.

The closure plans follow on from a

European Infrastructure Consolidation (EIC) review and will see losses of 2,000 US Military of the circa 8,000 USAF personnel currently stationed in the UK. However, some jobs from Molesworth and Alconbury are expected to transfer to RAF Croughton, a US Military "Intel hub" base around 50 miles away in Northamptonshire. In mid-2014 the Pentagon announced plans to spend \$317 million upgrading Croughton in order to be able to support up to 1,250 personnel there.

The Pentagon has also announced plans to increase operations at RAF Lakenheath, a USAF combat flight line base just a few miles away from RAF Mildenhall, by basing two squadrons of F-35 fighters there from 2020. That move would see an additional 1,200 personnel deployed at Lakenheath which is currently home to F-15s (though there is no confirmation of the F-15 deployment there beyond mid-2016). Secretary of the Air Force Deborah Lee James toured the affected bases during July 2014.

"The presence of U.S. military

forces in Europe and the relationships built during the last 70 years provide the U.S. strategic access critical to meet our NATO Article 5 commitments, and to respond to threats to our allies and partners,” said USAF General Phil Breedlove, Commander, U.S.

European Command, as the announcement was made.

“The changes announced by DoD will enhance USEUCOM’s operational readiness and mission posture. The United States remains strongly committed to NATO and our forward presence of military forces in Europe. We have invested heavily in our European infrastructure in the last several years in order to ensure that we are ready and able to defend U.S. interests and meet our security commitments to our Allies and partners now and in the future. At the same time, in the context of a challenging fiscal environment, we must seek greater efficiencies with respect to our presence in Europe and ensure we are focusing resources where they can have the greatest effect.”

The announcement was greeted with “disappointment” in the UK – particularly around the surrounding communities. With the closure of RAF Mildenhall alone it has been calculated that around \$258 million of trickle-down benefits to the local economy will be lost even after operations at Lakenheath are enhanced.

“Of course, the US decision to draw-down its presence at RAF Mildenhall is disappointing,” Michael Fallon MP, Britain’s Secretary of Defense, said in response. “However, we recognize that such changes are sometimes necessary.”

George Nobbs, Labour, of Norfolk County Council, told his regional area paper the Eastern Daily Press: “There

June 2015 (15-2)



is no point pretending that this is anything other than a severe blow to the whole East Anglian economy.”

RAF Mildenhall

RAF Mildenhall was opened in 1930 and was used as a RAF Bomber Command base during WWII. It wasn’t until 1952 that it hosted USAF Strategic Air Command Superfortresses as the Cold War intensified. In 1959 Military Air Transport Service (MATS) moved from its base at RAF Burtonwood (halfway between Liverpool and Manchester) down to the Suffolk base, which is almost adjacent to the USAF base at RAF Lakenheath. The RAF Mildenhall Passenger Terminal, known as the ‘Gateway to the UK’ has a Facebook page with more than 13,300 ‘likes’ alone.

RAF Alconbury

The base was originally called Alconbury Airdrome and known as USAAF Station 102. The 357th Air Services Squadron was established there in August 1942 – the same year in which the runways were extended to 2,000 yards and 1,400 yards respectively. Next to fly in was the 93rd Bombardment Group, which became operational on October 9, 1942. The 92nd Bomb Group replaced the 93rd when the former was redeployed to North Africa as part of Operation Torch and soon after the 92nd became an operational training group.

In September 1943, the 92nd also

found itself relocating – to RAF Podington. Instead Alconbury became the home base for the 482nd and 801st Bomb Groups which were deploying radar guided

bombing as well as home to a dozen UB-40s (modified B-17Fs) which were intended to provide long-range escorts.

Other groups including the 95th BG and the 482nd BG (Pathfinder) and the 801st BG (Provisional) also called Alconbury home. Two more squadrons operating from Alconbury as part of the 482nd were the 36th and 406th flying modified B-24 liberators in support of Special Operations and Operation Carpet Bagger.

RAF Alconbury has most recently been home of the 501st Combat Support Wing and 423rd Air Base Group which provided support to operations at Alconbury, RAF Molesworth and Sola Air Station in Stavanger, Norway.

The Alconbury base was once home to the TR-1 and U2Rs - from the 95th Reconnaissance Squadron, and, for a time the 10th Tactical Fighter Wing with its A-10s which had been moved from another USAF base at RAF Bentwaters. Among the base’s facilities was a decompression chamber for the TR-1/U2R pilots and Building 210, a Nuclear Command Post, better known as “Magic Mountain” and costing over \$60 million to construct in 1989m and only operational for around two years! The flight line was closed in 1995 and much of the technical area was handed back to Britain’s Ministry of Defence (MOD). The 1,420 acre base, including the main 8,202 foot-long main runway, was sold to development company Urban & Civic in 2008 who are converting what is now known as ‘Alconbury

Weald' for a major new community development with an estimated 5,000 homes and 8,000 jobs set to be created. The return of the operational element of the base left a USAF base of 197 acres.

RAF MOLESWORTH

RAF Molesworth has an even longer history extending back to WWI (it was opened by the Royal Air Force in 1917). The base would make history as the first UK airfield to deploy an 8th Air Force mission to Nazi occupied Europe after General Ira Eaker inspected it for use as early as February 1942. It was designated at AAF Station 107 and was turned into the 41st Combat Bombardment Wing (1st Bomb Division) Headquarters.

Among units operating from there was the 15th Bombardment Squadron, and it was six crews from this Squadron who became the first USAAF crews to bomb the Nazis in Europe (on 4 July 1942) with a raid on airfields in the Netherlands. Two of the six USAAF crews were lost on the mission and the badly-wounded mission commander, Capt. Charles Kegelman, received the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC) while his crew of the Boston III aircraft, which had returned on only

one engine, received Distinguished Flying Crosses (DFC). The unit relocated to RAF Podington in October 1942 and was replaced by the 303rd Bombardment Group who would dominate the Molesworth turf until the end of WWII in May 1945. The 303rd and its four squadrons (the 358th, 359th, 360th and 427th) carried out 364 missions.

The airfield was deactivated in 1973 with the runway and hangers largely demolished. But it was in the early 1980s that the runway and aircraft shelters were removed and the remaining base operational area reduced to 1,011 sq m (646 acres) in size. Britain's Ministry of Defence then created four bunkers in which to house Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs) and a GLCM Alert and Maintenance Area (GAMA) for the 303rd Tactical Missile Wing which went operational in 1986. But the 303rd was inactivated just under three years later in the wake of the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

Since 1990 Molesworth has been the HQ for the Joint Intelligence Operations Centre Europe Analytic Centre (JAC) and then NATO's Intelligence Fusion Centre as well as the USAFRICOM Intelligence and

Knowledge Directorate.

One of the biggest local efforts now will be to create jobs and attract enterprise 'swords to ploughshares' development for the base. Many will look to both the development going on at the former flight line area for Alconbury as well as the work at another former USAAF base – Greenham Common in Berkshire (which, like Molesworth, had a WWII history and was later a GLCM base) by way of thought leadership on transforming former military sites into either new community developments or using the various buildings as community facilities.

"I have met with the Defense Secretary, and others in government to ensure we can work, together with the American administration, to support the community," Matthew Hancock, West Suffolk MP and Minister of State for Business, Enterprise and Energy, has promised. "We will create a Mildenhall, Alconbury and Molesworth (MAM) Working Group, which I will chair, inviting local LEPs [local enterprise partnerships], councils, the Ministry of Defense and US representatives to ensure no stone is left unturned in supporting Mildenhall and the surrounding area."



Sean Kelly is a London-based freelance writer and the author of a new book Home Bases: Memories & Stories of US Military Bases Around London. www.ushomebases.com

This picture shows the first USAAF crew to attack a target in occupied Europe during the Second World War. From left to right are Sgt. Bennie B. Cunningham, Sgt. Robert L. Golay, Lt. Randall M. Dorton and Major Charles C. Kegelman.

Angevine, Bob, passed away in December 2014, just 2 days short of his 96th birthday. He was a rated bombardier/navigator in the 381st Bomb Group out of Ridgewell, flying over 35+ missions in '44-45.

Ball, Lt. Col. W. Whitney, was a bombardier with the 381st Bomb Group 533rd Bomb Squadron. He was born February 9, 1916 and died September 19, 2014 a resident of Corvallis, Oregon.

Bryan, George Bennett, 91, passed away December 23, 2014. He served with the 398th BG/601st BS in Nuthampsted England. His final bombing mission was Christmas Eve 1944 over Ettinghausen, Germany.

Caruso, Joe, 90, of Niagara Falls, NY, died February 15, 2011. Joseph served as a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division and was the Radio Operator on the Alexander Crew, 385th BG. While serving, he was awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, Distinguished Unit Badge and the Bronze Star Medal for his meritorious achievement in ground combat against the armed enemy. During the war, he met the former Hilda Brownlow and they were married, in England, on January 18, 1945. She predeceased him on January 30, 2011. Joe so enjoyed the reunions with the Mighty Eighth/385th Bomb Group.

Gebura, Stanley Ernest, 90, died on April 8. Born in Buffalo, N.Y., he had lived in Mountain Lakes for the last 49 years. Gebura served with the 493rd Bomb Group. Gebura married Patricia Mae Peach, a violinist and music teacher from Wichita, Kansas. Gebura obtained his pilot's license after moving his family to Massachusetts in 1955. Next to a B-17, his favorite airplane was a Beechcraft Debonair. He liked to fly cross-country or to just go out and do "wing-overs."

Gordon, Paul R., passed away May 27, 2014 in Reading, Pennsylvania. Paul was assigned as a mechanic with the 327th Bomb Squadron/92nd Bomb Group. Paul later volunteered to serve as a ball turret gunner and on his fourth

mission with the Francis Chorak crew. He was shot down during the Lille mission on October 9, 1942. Wounded by shrapnel, Paul managed to bail out from the disintegrating B-17E and survived a harrowing parachute descent where he landed near the village of Mouchin. A village family treated his wounds and hid him from the Germans who eventually captured him a short time later. For the next 31 months Paul was a Kriege initially confined



George Bennett Bryan

to several POW camps and was permanently assigned to Stalag XVIIIB in Krems, Austria. During this time Paul was named a Barracks Chief and remained so until he and his fellow Kriege were ordered on a 300 mile march which ended near Brannau, Germany. There, he was liberated by the 13th Armored Division on May 3, 1945. Paul returned to England to marry

his English war bride Audrey (Timms) whom accompanied him to the United States. Paul and Audrey had two sons and remained happily married until Audrey's passing in 1998. In 2001 Paul married Ruth (Moore) Wintzel. After retiring Paul was an active public speaker and generously shared his wartime experiences with many groups ranging from junior high school students to attendees at the annual World War II Weekend held in Reading, PA. Paul was also an active member of the Stalag XVIIIB Association and attended the association's reunions whenever possible. In addition, Paul penned his memories in a book entitled "Fourth Down: Can't Run, Can't Pass" which was so well received it entered a second printing. Perhaps one of the biggest highlights of Paul's life was returning to Mouchin with Audrey for the unveiling of a 50th

anniversary memorial remembering the members of the Chorak crew who perished October 9, 1942. During the visit, Paul was treated as an honored guest and was presented with his silk flying scarf, his dog tags, and pieces of his parachute all saved by the same family that rescued him. Paul mentioned in his book "my first trip to Mouchin was indeed a memorable one. My second trip in '92 was an unforgettable one".

Grau, George J., a resident of Gulf Shores, Alabama, passed away on 22 January 2015. George had been a founding member of the South Alabama Wing. He was assigned to B-17 bombers in June. On 20 November 1944 Grau sailed for England on the ocean liner Isle de France. George was posted to the 457th BG, 750th BS. On his 30th mission his aircraft was attacked and severely damaged by a trio of ME-262 jets. The enemy aircraft scored hits all over the plane and Grau knew they could



George Grau

not make it home with that much damage. George pushed the plane as far as possible and finally bailed out. Luckily he landed about three miles inside American lines and was back in England in five days. After a week of "flak leave" Grau completed his final five missions and arrived home on 23 May 1945, exactly one year from the day of his Commissioning. That proved to be the most eventful and memorable year of his life. Grau served as Commander of the South Alabama Wing, Alabama Chapter, for many years and hosted several memorable Chapter and Group Reunions.



William Griffin

Griffin, William (Mickey), 91, passed away on June 2, 2014. He was a B-17 pilot with the 306th BG who was shot down and severely injured on his 33rd mission and became a POW for eight months. He received the Purple Heart and Distinguished Flying Cross. He is survived by his wife, Charlotte.

Haines, Colonel Ralph C., age 92, of Arcadia, WI died, December 30, 2014. He was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant and was assigned to a B-24 Liberator Bomber with the 409th Bomb Group, 850th Squadron. He completed 35 combat missions. On March 21st, 1945, he married Eunice Sendelbach. In May of 1974, he was promoted to the rank of Colonel and retired in May of 1979. Among his many awards and decorations he received during World War II were the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters, the European, African, and Middle Eastern Campaign Medal with 3 Battle Stars for Normandy, Northern France and Germany, and the French Legion of Honor.

Harper, C. B. "Red", passed away on December 27, 2014. "Red" Harper joined up in late 1940 and after training was posted to the 350th Squadron, 100th BG. Red flew with the *Bloody One Hundredth* on the first successful daylight mission to Berlin - March 6, 1944, just one of his 35 combat missions.

Hill, Alva L., 94 fighter pilot with the 361st FG...374th FS. Mr. Hill, a Leechburg native, met Mr. Burt at the Carnegie Institute of Technology, where the former World War II pilots studied architecture. Mr. Hill attended Carnegie Tech on the GI Bill after serving as a fighter pilot in Europe, where he flew 56 missions escorting bombers. He is survived by his wife of 34 years, Grace Y. Hill. His first wife, Irene A. (Balawajder) Hill, died in 2004.

Litke, Melvin, 93, Detroit, MI, passed away December 2014. He was with the 96th BG as a waist gunner on a B-17, flying 50 missions over Europe.

Luxner, Richard M., 91, of Stow, MA, formerly of West Orange, New Jersey died

December 24, 2014 in Wayland, MA. He was the husband of 48 years of Ann (Redgate) Luxner.

Mr. Luxner served as a Sergeant with the 18th Weather Squadron.

Mr. Luxner was the producer, editor and publisher of *Vapor Trails*, the semi-annual publication of the Massachusetts

Branch of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. In addition to his wife Ann.

Martin, William (Bill) Enoch, after 94 eventful years Bill passed away May 19, 2014. Survived by his wife of nearly 70 years, Tyleen. Bill received the Purple Heart after *Patches*, the B-17 he helped crew, was shot down over France on Black Thursday (14 October 1943). In time, he and other members of the *Patches Crew* made their way to safety in Switzerland. He never forgot those who assisted them in France and was fortunate enough to return decades later to thank them in person. The small farm community who harbored the *Patches Crew* during the war remembered them in a memorial at the local church in Neubecourt, France on 12 May 2001. Bill retired to Sun Lakes AZ, where he and Tyleen lived for nearly 30 years, returning to Salt Lake in 2013 to be closer to family. Over the years Bill was involved in: *Rotary*, *The Caterpillar Association of the United States*, *The Black Thursday 2nd Schweinfurt Memorial Association*, and *The Air Force Escape and Evasion Society*.

Newton, Fielder Nelson, of State College, passed away October 24, 2014, at age 91. On August 12, 1944 he married Marjorie R. Cherry, who survives at home. He served as First Lieutenant Lead Navigator with the 389th Bomb Group, Second Air Division. He received the EAME medal with four bronze battle stars and the Air Medal with two Oak Leaf clusters. As a member of the WWII Second Air Division, he served on the Executive Committee and was Vice-President of the 389th Bomb Group. He was co-founder and President of the Western Wing and served on the Board of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. Fielder is survived by his wife of 70 years, Marjorie.

Peters, Ralph W., 94, of Auburn, NE, formerly of Falls City, NE, passed away January 1, 2015 at Auburn. Ralph was with the 446th BG. He served in the Rhineland and Central Europe. He earned European, African and Middle Easter Service Medals. He was honorably discharged on October 23,



Ralph Haines



Enoch Martin



C.B. "Red" Harper



Fielder Newton



Melvin Litke



Richard Luxner



Ralph Peters

1945 at Sioux Falls, SD.

Peters, James Francis age 94, born in Detroit, MI. Passed away on January 16, 2015. Loving husband of Eleanor Peters who predeceased him in August. They were married for 66 years and lived in their Beverly Hills home for the last 48 years. 1st Lieutenant in the Army Air Corps standing 5'3" tall. Served in the 467th Bomb Group, 789th Squadron. Survived 30 missions as a navigator of a B-24, the last 19 of which as either Squadron or Group Leader. Recipient of the Distinguished Flying Cross, Navigator's Air Medal with 4 oak leaf clusters, 4 battle stars and the American and European Theatre ribbon.

Petterson, Philip M., 97, passed away December 6, 2014 in Wheaton, MN. After graduation he hitchhiked from Minnesota to Burbank, CA where he worked at Lockheed Aircraft wiring B-17s and P-38s. He joined the Army Air Corps in 1942 was assigned to the 305th Bomb Group. He sailed for England on the *Queen Mary*, arriving at Chelveston. A radio operator/gunner on B-17s with the 422nd, Philip flew a total of 29 missions. Toward the latter part of the war he rewired battle-damaged "Forts" to fly again. He flew missions on D-Day dropping warning leaflets to the French...

"Get away from the beaches! The invasion is on!" Philip spoke fluent Norwegian and after attending a language school in NYC for two months, he was attached,



Philip Petterson

on paper, to the Army Air Corps invasion forces as an interpreter in the event the allies invaded Norway (which never happened). At Chelveston, Petterson became a driver for then Lt. Col Curtis LeMay; personally escorting him to multiple weekend trips to London and back. After V-E Day, the 305th Bomb Group transferred to St Trond, Belgium in July, 1945. From here they would engage in project 'Casey Jones', photo-mapping Europe and Africa. Philip Petterson was actively involved in outfitting the B-17s with cameras and related equipment. Discharged in 1945, Philip returned to Minnesota.

Redmond, Thomas 'Tom' F., 90, passed away September 4, 2014 in Moorestown, New Jersey. He was a mechanic/electrician repairing battle damaged B-17 Heavy Bombers of



Thomas Redmond

the 730th Bomb Squadron, 452nd Bomb Group. He was the loving husband to the late Emma E. (Russell) Redmond. Tom was laid to rest beside his loving wife at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Memorial Cemetery located in Wrightstown, New Jersey.

Reynolds, Walter E., 94, of Hanover Township, Northampton County, died February 7, 2015. He was the husband of Pearl (Koczen) Reynolds. They were married for 68 years in May. Walter served as a navigator on a B-17 with the 390th BG. He completed 35 combat missions. After hostilities ceased, Walter continued to serve his country in the US Air Force Reserve, retiring at the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

Stoinoff, Richard, 89, passed away November 21, 2014 in Palm Springs, California. His parents had emigrated from Macedonia and his heritage became an interest of his later in life. Rick served in the U.S. Army Air Corps as a pilot. He is survived by his wife,

Ellen of Lake Oswego. Richard was preceded in death by his wife of 52 years, Marilee, also of Portland. During his life, he was active in handball, jogging, skiing,

camping, hiking, tennis, golf and travel. He truly valued and deeply appreciated the relationships in his life and we know that each and every one of you had a special place in his heart.

Simon, Taffe, Oklahoma City, passed away December 2014. He was in his early 20's when he took aim at German fighter planes from under the B-17 Flying Fortress. He served with the 445th Bomb Group and 700th Bomb Squadron. He later was assigned as a tail gunner on a newer bomber, the B-24 Liberator, with the turret in the rear, which Taffe said was easier to fire at enemy aircraft. He faced danger and death multiple times when he flew a total of 30 missions over Germany and, upon the return from one mission, crash landed at Tiffany, England. He earned many medals and honors and recently, received France's highest military award for his bravery there in WWII. Taffe found the love of his life and married Ingrid Quitz August 14, 1997. They had a special connection from the beginning. On March 1, 1943, when Taffe was flying on his first mission over a Berlin factory, she was being born in an apartment building that was partly destroyed when it was hit by other American bombers that same day.



Richard Stoinoff



Taffe Simon

MAIL CALL

Searching for more info

My Grandfather was Col. William Howard Stovall DC/S A-1 Fighter Command and DC/S USSTAFE for Gen. Carl "Tooey" Spaatz who was his old instructor at Issoudun, France in WWI and also flew with my Grandfather in the 13th/PS, 2nd/PG. he was the only "Ace" from the State of Mississippi and also knew Frank O'Driscoll "Monk" Hunter in WWI. My Grandfather was also used as the character for the role that Dean Jagger played in the movie "12 O'clock High". Hank knew Bernie Lay and Sy Bartlett very well as they were in the 8th AAF and they used him for the character of Maj. Harvey Benton Stovall in the book. He was one of the old "Retreads" from WWI. My Uncle, his son, Lt William Howard Stovall, was a combat pilot for the 56thFG, 62ndFS and was KIA on 12/31/1944 over Bergsteinfurt, Germany after engaging 7 EA in a 50 mile combat by himself. He was able to destroy 2 EA in this engagement and the MACR claimed he was killed by "friendly fire" but that was not true. He is buried at Margraten, the Netherlands, American Military Cemetery. I am in the process of writing a book about my Grandfather and the WWI pilots who also served in WWII and there are many. They were a tight knit group of men. I have the last photo taken in 1970 of the old warriors who attended the reunion at Jock Whitney's plantation in Georgia. These men were lifelong friends. if anyone has any information on my Grandfather please tell them to get in touch with me. Thank you so very much
Michael Gavin Carter Webster
misuw1204@yahoo.com
901-497-5414
56th/62nd @ 4th

Dick Carboneau Photo

I am one of your members and some of you will know that I have done lots of research about the GIs in the UK for social history in the war and have had a book published. I have to give lots of talks and would love to do more research about them so if you have any veterans who would be OK to contact me I would be pleased to hear from them. The other thing is that Dick Carboneau of the 91st bomb group was wonderful and has a lot of things in my talks. I would love to show a picture of him, but I have never had one. If you know of someone who has a picture of him as a GI perhaps they would email or post it to me to help me. I would be

very grateful.
Jackie Stuart
jackie.s123@btinternet.com
Poppy Cottage, the Common, Hanworth
Norwich, Norfolk UK NR11 7HP
01263 768622

Historic WWII Schweinfurt Flag

**Not Seen in 69 Years
WWII Vet, Tom Creekmore
is making it his mission to find it**

April 11, 12, and 13, 1945—the U.S. 42nd Infantry "Rainbow" Division fought to capture the city of Schweinfurt and the ball bearing plants. They suffered a loss of 60 men. The Rainbow took the city of Schweinfurt and a large 15-by-8 foot Nazi flag as a war trophy from the victory.

When Maj. Gen. Harry J. Collins, commander of the 42nd Infantry Division, received the captured Nazi flag, he told his men that the flag must be sent to the airmen of the 8th Army Air Force in England as they lost almost 1,000 men on bombing missions to destroy the ball bearing plants at Schweinfurt. This was the only time during World War II that an infantry division honored an air force division in this way.

Maj. Gen. Collins sent the flag to Gen. Carl A "Tooey" Spaatz, commander of the U.S. Strategic Air Forces in the European Theater. Upon receiving the flag, Gen. Spaatz flew to England from his headquarters in France and delivered the flag to the commanding officers of the 8th Army Air Force, who then handed over the flag to Col. Henry G. "Mac" MacDonald, commander of the 305th—the bomb group that experienced

the greatest losses in the Schweinfurt bomb raids.

For 69 years the whereabouts of the Schweinfurt flag have been unknown.

Tech. Sgt. Thomas Lee Creekmore, 90, is on one more mission—a mission he hopes to complete in his lifetime: to find the large Nazi flag war trophy given to his bomb group by a U.S. infantry division in World War II. Tom Creekmore, who served with the 305th Bombardment Group of the U.S. 8th Army Air Force, saw the captured Nazi flag for the first-hand only time on May 2, 1945, in a hangar in Chelveston, England. "Someone said to me, 'Why bother, it's only a flag—and a Nazi flag at that.' Well, I say, 'To me, that flag honors all the 8th Air Force boys that died and those that spent two years in a German POW camp. If you have any information on the whereabouts it is my hope that during my lifetime, we will find the 8th Air Force's historic Schweinfurt flag war trophy, to be displayed at the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force, in honor of all the 8th Army Air Force's young men that died bombing the ball bearing plants at Schweinfurt, Germany in World War II.

If you have any information on the whereabouts of the 8th Air Force's missing historic Schweinfurt flag, please contact Tom Creekmore at tcreeky@gmail.com or 724-777-3991.



Tech. Sgt. Tom Creekmore



DANGER, 'HIGH OCTANE'

This was the sign that appeared on the fuel trucks around our old base in England. These large tanker trucks would pull up to an aircraft, the ground crew team would take long hoses and transfer the fuel from the tanker to the aircraft. Airplanes, whether a bomber or fighter type, required 100 octane petrol (as the Brits called it). All trucks, jeeps and ground vehicles required only 80 octane fuel. What is the difference? 'Octane' was a number assigned to gasoline. It had to do with the anti-knock properties of liquid motor fuel. Aircraft had to have engines which were nimble and able to perform flawlessly at high altitude. When combat power was required, the 100 octane fuel was the answer. There was 80 and 100 octane fuel...the two were separate and could not be commingled. Army tanks and trucks only required 80 octane fuel. This was a logistical problem that could never be over-looked.

In the Fall of 1944, the invasion of the continent was history, Allied ground forces were advancing across France so fast they soon out-ran their logistical support. General Patton and his armies were running out of gasoline. They were stalled, not because of lack of equipment or enemy resistance but the gas tanks on all of his armored vehicles were empty. Supreme Headquarters had a solution. If heavy B-24's bombers could carry bombs, they could also carry gasoline. My outfit, the 466th Bomb Group and others of the 96th Bomb Wing were taken from combat status and we became a flying pipe-line reaching from England to airbases formerly used by the Luftwaffe.

Our aircraft were modified, large bomb-bay tanks were installed to carry the 80 octane fuel. The outer wing-tip fuel cells on the plane were also used. Fully loaded, each aircraft could deliver 2,250 gallons of precious fuel. A

crew of 5 airmen, pilot, co-pilot, navigator, radio operator and flight engineer flew these low-level missions to these liberated airbases. Although liberated, the French countryside had pockets of armed German troops who posed a constant threat to our safety. It also gave impetus for us to down-load as quickly as possible and get in the air and fly 'back home'. Although we did not get combat-mission credit, My crew and I flew 8 missions into three different locations, Clastres airfield near St. Quenton, Lille and St. Dizier, France. We made five trips to St. Dizier.

It was there that we met a colorful St. Dizier French citizen, a local policeman. He appeared every time we landed. He showed-up riding a small, which today we would call, 'a moped'. He would arrive, put-putting right up to our plane, always in need of fuel. He was always very arrogant and demanding. At first, we thought his actions were funny but mission after mission, he became more haughty and egotistical. As usual we always filled his tank. The final time we saw him, he was riding away with a great burst of speed. A cloud of smoke followed him. Could this super burst of power be the result of the 100 octane we had put in his fuel tank? We never saw him again. Our assumption was that the engine on his moped melted down with fuel not appropriate for his vehicle. Our hypothesis, wrong fuel for the wrong engine just doesn't work.

God is constantly giving us opportunities to 'fill our tank' with experiences to keep us on track. He knows our octane requirements and will provide all of the direction we need if we will only allow him. There are some principles that will keep balance to our lives and give us the guidance we need.

- Popularity is fleeing. What we know about ourselves is more important than what others think of us.
- Education is a life-long process and a good education teaches us how little we know.
- God is at work even when we

HOW ABOUT IT



Earl Wassom

don't recognize it. Blessings aren't always easily seen.

- Sweat isn't blood. Hard work is a virtue and is not fatal.
- Blessed is the man who knows his own weaknesses.
- The dog with the bone is always in jeopardy. When you do well, you will be attacked.
- A good marriage is a life-long process, not an event.
- Family ties need re-tying once- in-awhile.
- Pay no attention to back-seat drivers, they only have the control which you allow.

"Happy is the man who finds wisdom, and the man who gains understanding." (Proverbs 3:13 NKJ)
 "My son, preserve sound judgment and discernment, do not let them out of your sight; they will be life for you, an ornament to grace your neck." (Proverbs NIV)

Earl Wassom
466th Bomb Group
Chaplain, 8th AFHS





8th AF NEWS
The Eighth Air Force Historical Society
P. O. Box 956, Pooler, GA 31322

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Savannah, GA
Permit #136

