

September 2020



8TH AF NEWS

Volume 20 Number 3 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"



V-J Day
15 August 1945
Piccadilly Circus

46TH ANNUAL 8THAFHS REUNION

CANCELLED/POSTPONED

****DETAILS INSIDE****



8th AF News

Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

September 2020

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Front cover: American soldiers and British civilians parade the United States' flag - the 'Stars and Stripes' - in London's Piccadilly Circus after hearing news of the Japanese offer of surrender.

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THE 8TH A F 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 in 1975, and Editor of the "News" for sixteen years. It is published quarterly and is the official news magazine of the Society, a 501(c)3. The 8th A F News is distributed to members of the Society and is not for public sale.

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EDITOR'S NOTES



If these past 10 months have been a blur, the last six have been a nightmare.

I remember celebrating in St. Louis during our 2019 reunion with so many of you. We all hugged, kissed... embraced each other with a love that is beyond special, and always present at every single one of our reunions. Those hugs...those incredible hugs, especially from our WWII veterans, are filled with a kind of urgency—an intense feeling of finality—as if this may be the last hug, the last ‘hello.’ For far too many, it is.

We have lost so much with the cancellation/postponement of our 2020 reunion in Memphis. Our hugs and kisses will be virtual, or emails, phone calls, etc. For me, my heart is breaking. I mourn the loss of so many whom I have come to love and embrace as my special family; time and now this horrible COVID-19 virus has robbed me—all of us—from being able to be together.

During the past 300+ days, we have

lost several of our friends, our heroes. Many of their obituaries have appeared here in TAPS, but many more have quietly passed away with no obits or memorials. And we grieve them all.

We grasp to save their memories, their stories, their legacy; desperate to assure that none are ever forgotten. It is, however, a herculean challenge; a continuing struggle to find the information and then preserve it in a way so that generations to come will have easy access.

Several years ago, the American Air Museum at Duxford began an initiative to collect and amass information on our 8th WWII veterans. They created a massive, digital database and uploaded an incredible amount of information on not only individuals and their stories, but the planes, the groups, the bases, and more. They made ALL of this totally free and accessible online. The BEST part? It is totally interactive.

Simply go to: www.americanair-museum.org and register. There are no subscriptions, fees, etc. Simply

register so that you will be able to upload information on your veteran directly into the database.

This includes the ability to scan and upload photos, documents, etc. There is no limit on the amount of information you can upload, and this will enable you to preserve and share information with a global audience into perpetuity.

The AAM database is NOT limited to just 8th WWII veterans, but includes 9th, 12th, 14th, 15th, and the 1st. I encourage you to please check it out. Enlist the help of a son or daughter, grandchild, friend or neighbor, but PLEASE, don't allow these precious, priceless memories of our heroes to disappear.

For now, <<HUGS>> to all of you. You will forever be in my heart.

Deb



Please JOIN the Eighth Air Force Historical Society TODAY!!!



First Name: _____ Middle Initial: _____ Last Name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ State/County: _____

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Membership Annual Dues: \$40 or £30 GBP

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PayPal: ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org

By renewing or requesting membership in the 8th Air Force Historical Society, I hereby grant permission for the Society to hold and maintain my information as contained herein, indefinitely, with the stipulation that my information not be shared nor be made public to any other entity without my expressed written permission.

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PRESIDENT'S BRIEFING

Anne Marek
President & Treasurer



Greetings everyone! When I wrote my Briefing in May for the June issue of AF News, it appeared that COVID-19 was in a downward spiral on the bell curve and would surely be a thing of the past. As I write this Briefing in August for the September issue, that is far from the case. It seems that it won't just give up its ugly hold on the world and go away. Sadly, this directly affected the Society's moving forward with our planned Memphis Reunion.

As you all must know by now, the Board of Directors made the decision to postpone our Memphis reunion until 2022. We cannot have such a large gathering and social distance at the same time. The health and safety of all of our members, especially our veterans, remains our first priority. We [all the members of the Board] reached this decision because the preparations had all been made, and the contracts had already been finalized and signed.

As a result of this postponement, we are planning a "virtual" reunion for Saturday, October 24th, 2020, through ZOOM. There are many details to iron out, but we hope to have a moderator who will be able to forward your questions to the panel and/or speaker during the various presentations. While this will never take the place of

meeting your friends and fellow Society members in person and enjoying the hospitality suites, but you can at least attend the speakers' programs and veterans' panel that we had planned. You will be receiving detailed information as to how to sign in and enjoy the day once everything is in place.

Please reach out to me, any of the other Board members, or Debra, should you have any matter you wish us to address. Our lines of communication are always open, and our con-

tact information appears on page 2 of the 8th AF News.

I am including in this issue of AF News the Financial Statements ending July, 2020, for your information. This includes the Society's Profit and Loss Statement and Statement of Financial Position. In examining these reports, you will notice that our investment portfolio is coming back and, in fact, growing since my last report to you in June. This is very encouraging, and I am pleased to be able to report this to all of you. Our investment portfolio and the income it generates continue to not be used to fund the Society's administrative expenses and daily operating costs.

As a member you can personally help bring revenue into the Society by registering with Amazon Smiles when shopping on line. It's quick

*Doing the right
thing isn't always easy,
but it is always the right
thing to do.*

TREASURER'S LEDGER

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society Profit & Loss January through July 2020	
	Jan - Jul 20
Ordinary Income/Expense	
Income	
4000 · Income/Miscellaneous	
4001 · Amazon Smiles	73.05
4010 · Member Dues Annual	43,173.37
4019 · Member Contributions/Donations	12,785.88
Total 4000 · Income/Miscellaneous	56,032.30
4050 · Investment Income	
4058 · Portfolio Dividends & Interest	2,867.96
4059 · Realized Gain/(Loss) on Invest	0.00
4060 · Unrealized Gain(Loss) on Invest	-11,537.21
4061 · Investment Management Fees	0.00
Total 4050 · Investment Income	-8,669.25
Total Income	47,363.05
Expense	
5100 · National Administration Expense	
5111 · Corporation Charges	70.00
5121 · 8AF History Projects	141.26
Total 5100 · National Administration Expense	211.26
5200 · Magazine Expenses	
5210 · Printing Expenses	4,660.00
5220 · Postage Expenses	4,531.62
Total 5200 · Magazine Expenses	9,191.62
5300 · National Office Expenses	
5303 · Telephone/DSL	400.00
5304 · Supplies	250.62
5305 · Abila Software/ Computer Exps	1,189.79
5307 · Office Rent	650.00
5308 · Insurance	317.00
5312 · FICA-SAFHS portion	1,941.15
5313 · Payroll/ Office Management	25,802.14
5315 · Postage & Shipping	481.64
5316 · Bank Charges/ Returned checks	70.00
5323 · Merchant Account Usage Fees	1,066.15
5325 · Miscellaneous Expense	201.24
5326 · Payroll processing fees	1,372.52
Total 5300 · National Office Expenses	33,742.25
Total Expense	43,145.13
Net Ordinary Income	4,217.92
Other Income/Expense	
Other Income	
6550 · Annual Meeting Revenue	
6551 · Event Registration	12,680.74
Total 6550 · Annual Meeting Revenue	12,680.74
Total Other Income	12,680.74
Other Expense	
7100 · Annual Meeting Expenses	
7103 · Hotel Expense/Catering	5,000.00
7104 · Tours/Transportation	5,512.32
Total 7100 · Annual Meeting Expenses	10,512.32
Total Other Expense	10,512.32
Net Other Income	2,168.42
Net Income	6,386.34

and easy to do. So far this year, Amazon Smiles has generated \$73.05. While this is not a large amount, it does help. Thank you all for your participation. You can find the link on page 6 of the Magazine.

If any of you have any questions regarding any of our financial statements, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. My contact information is on p. 2 of every issue of the 8th A F News magazine.

Remember,

*“Our focus is on our veterans,
preserving their legacy,
and keeping the memories alive!”*

Anne

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society Statement of Financial Position As of July 31, 2020	
	Jul 31, 20
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Checking/Savings	
1017 · Oppenheimer & Co	182,440.93
1040 · Bank of America Checking Acct.	5,944.08
1042 · Bank of America Savings Acct.	16,025.57
Total Checking/Savings	204,410.58
Total Current Assets	204,410.58
TOTAL ASSETS	204,410.58
LIABILITIES & EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
2050 · Payroll & Taxes Payable	
2051 · Payroll payable	2,896.57
2052 · FICA & withhold taxes payable	2,509.10
Total 2050 · Payroll & Taxes Payable	5,405.67
Total Other Current Liabilities	5,405.67
Total Current Liabilities	5,405.67
Total Liabilities	5,405.67
Equity	
3200 · *Unrestricted Net Assets	192,618.57
Net Income	6,386.34
Total Equity	199,004.91
TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY	204,410.58

Important Reunion Update!

**Memphis Reunion 2020
CANCELED/POSTPONED TO:
OCTOBER 19-23, 2022**

**Full refunds (less dues renewals) will be issued
to all who registered.**

**At press time we are trying to arrange a mini
"virtual" reunion for October 24, 2020.**

**Information will be mailed as well as posted to our
website and FaceBook page.**

**Support
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Historical Society Inc.**

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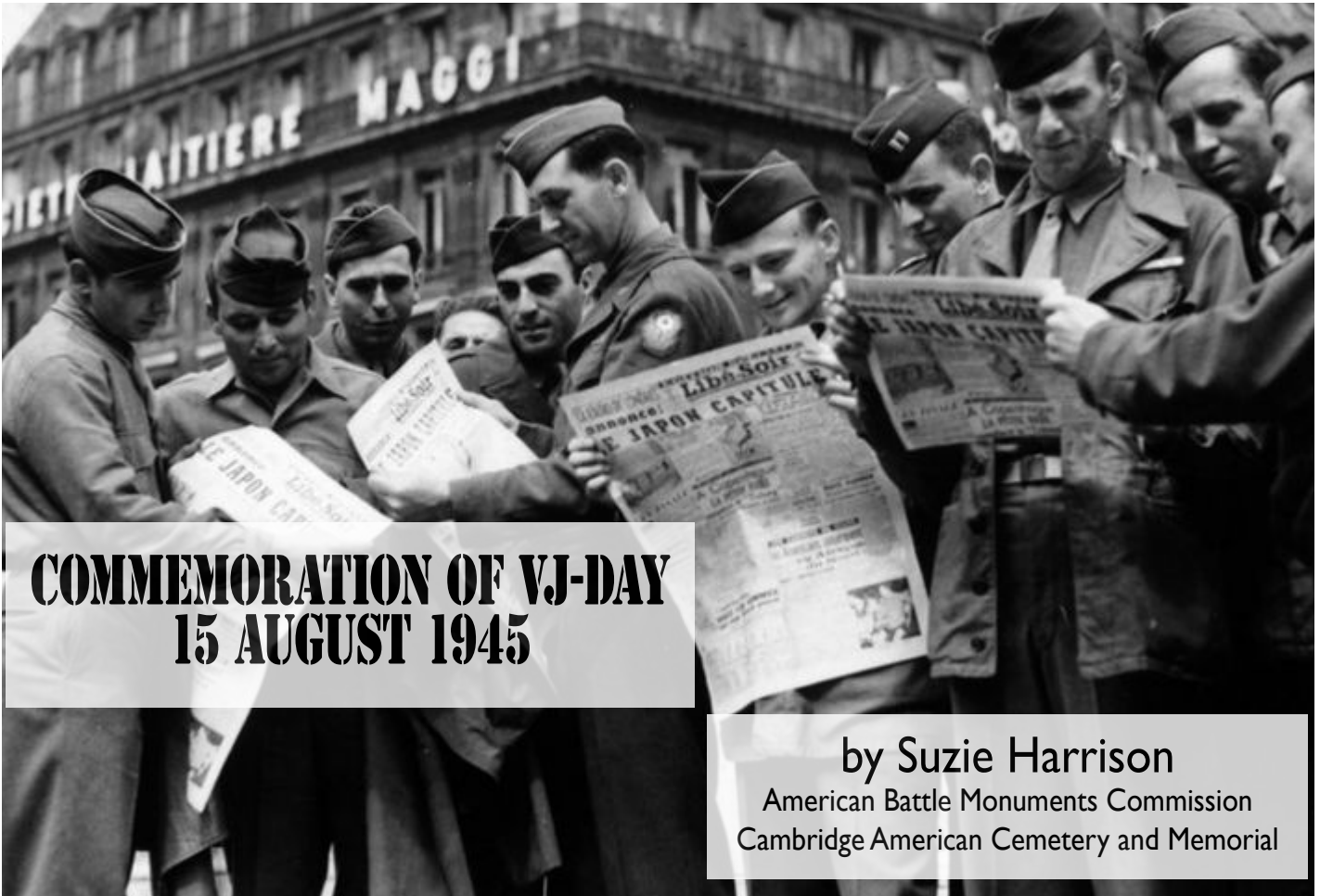
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<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/59-1757631>

**DON'T FORGET:
MEMBERSHIP INTO
THE SOCIETY MAKES A
GREAT GIFT FOR ANY
OCCASION!**

*Please submit ALL articles, etc. at least 45 days PRIOR to the date of the next issue of the 8th AF News to reserve space; content must be received 30 days prior to publishing date! Remember: submission does NOT guarantee publication. Due to size constraints of the magazine, I am very limited in publishing non-solicited material, however, I will review for consideration. Please submit materials via email [preferred] with hi-res photos attached in jpg format. NEVER send originals--they may not be returned. If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me. I appreciate your help immensely. DDK

News from Across the Pond...



COMMEMORATION OF VJ-DAY 15 AUGUST 1945

by Suzie Harrison
American Battle Monuments Commission
Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial

World War II was really a war of two parts: the war in the West, fought around the Atlantic and mainland Europe; the war in the East, based among the Pacific islands. One might be forgiven for wondering what connection Cambridge American Cemetery has to a war that took place half a world away.

A few months ago, on 8 May, we commemorated the 75th anniversary of Victory in Europe Day, which saw the end of World War II in Europe. On that day in 1945, Allied world leaders spoke to grateful nations about a hard won peace, but in their speeches and proclamations they acknowledged that the job was only half done. The war in the Pacific raged on, and the Allies continued to support their armies in the field, where fighting had not yet reached a conclusion.

King George VI: *'In the Far East we have yet to deal with ... a determined ... foe. To*

this we shall turn with the utmost resolve and with all our resources.'

Winston Churchill: *'We may allow ourselves a brief period of rejoicing, but let us not forget for a moment the toils and efforts that lie ahead. Japan ... remains unsubdued. The injuries she has inflicted upon Great Britain, the United States and other countries ... call for justice ...'*

President Harry S. Truman: *'Our blows will not cease until the Japanese military and naval forces lay down their arms in unconditional surrender ... Much remains to be done. The victory won in the West must now be won in the East.'*

For the Americans, war in the East started on Sunday, 7 December 1941: Pearl Harbor Day. The

News from Across the Pond...

USS Tennessee had reported fine, clear weather with few clouds. In fact, it was a perfect day for an attack. It was a fateful day for one young airman, John Robert 'Bobby' Runnells. John was born (1921) and raised in Chester, Delaware, PA. In September 1939, John and a friend had tried to enlist in the Canadian Army but were not accepted. John then enlisted in the US Army Air Corps on 29 January 1942, and he was assigned to the 19th Transport Squadron in Hawaii. He worked with "tow-targets" drones used for target practice by fighter aircraft.

Photo right: Christmas was coming and Bobby excitedly sent the Christmas Dinner menu home to share with his family.

John was at Hickam Field on that apocryphal day. His family, would have heard of the attack on the radio. Days and weeks passed without any news of Bobby's fate, but then a letter arrived on Christmas Day to let them know that he had come 'through without a scratch'.

As America mobilized for war, John applied to, and was accepted for flight training, graduating in June 1943. Newly commissioned as a Flight Officer in the US Army Air Forces, he married his sweetheart, Virmadella Jester. *Photo right.*

Once fully qualified for combat, he was deployed to England with the 27th Air Transport Group, where he joined the 310th Ferry Squadron at Warton, near Liverpool. His critical mission was to move aircraft around the English airfields to USAAF units to keep them operating at full capacity.

On 6 February 1944, Flight Officer Runnells was piloting a P-47 Thunderbolt from Wretham, Norfolk, back to Warton, when, disorientated by the foggy conditions that day, he crashed on Pendle Hill, Lancashire. John had an eventful life, surviving the war in the Pacific only to die in the European Theater, aged 22.

While John experienced the attack on Pearl Harbor, 5,000 miles away, another young man, Damon 'Rocky' Lance Gause was eating breakfast in Manila when they heard the news. Damon, serving in the 27th Bombardment Group (Light), had arrived to the Philippine Islands only the week before.

When he heard the news of the attack, Damon immediately reported to HQ, where he was ordered to assemble a team to defend the islands. He had just briefed his team when 72 enemy planes arrived



News from Across the Pond...

overhead, destroying the airfields and aircraft. The men struggled on until December 22, when 43,000 Japanese troops landed on the beaches of North Manila.

Damon and his men then had to retreat and fight

Damon would not have survived this and what was to come, if it were not for his upbringing. His was described as a “Huckleberry Finn” childhood that included living off the land in the backwoods of Georgia and learning to box. He grew up stocky, resilient, and tough.



their way through the jungles of the Bataan Peninsula. The Japanese eventually captured Damon, but he escaped and swam to join General Douglas MacArthur’s final bastion on the island of Corregidor, Manila Bay. After recovering his physical strength he joined a band of Marines to defend the island to the end. He escaped in a boat and then swam to the mainland.

Above: Damon Gause (right) and William Osborne with the ‘Ruth Lee’, named after their respective wives.

Perhaps, this background played a part in his decision to find a boat and sail for Australia. Teaming up with another escapee, Capt. William Lloyd Osborne, the two men island-hopped over 3,200 miles to Darwin in a leaky boat with a cranky engine. Damon’s escape from the Bataan Peninsula took 159 days, and at MacArthur’s Headquarters in Australia,

News from Across the Pond...

the great man presented Lt. Gause with the Distinguished Service Cross. Damon Gause was sent back to the USA where he reunited with his wife, Ruth. The decorated hero had a new mission - selling war bonds - his war was over. However, Damon became restless, and eventually appealed to General 'Hap' Arnold for another adventure. On the day his son Lance was born, 7 December 1943, he was promoted Major. A week later he was shipped out, aboard the *RMS Queen Elizabeth*, with the 365th Fighter Group, bound for England.

Between January and February 1944, Major Gause flew five missions in P-47 Thunderbolts, from Gosfield, Essex, and he was awarded an Air Medal. Transferring to Beaulieu, Hampshire, he was tasked with testing a P-47 modified to support the ground troops on D-Day. The aircraft's wings and flaps were adapted to enable it to fly at low altitude as a dive bomber. Sadly, on 9 March 1944, Gause's aircraft went into a dive from 30,000 feet and never recovered.

Unlike Damon Gause, John Edward Havey (pictured right) was one of those fighter pilots who saw the war in Europe all the way to VE-Day. Born in 1916 and raised in Rockville, Indiana, he enlisted in the Army



Air Corps in 1942. Training complete, Lt. Havey was assigned to the 375th Fighter Squadron, 361st Fighter Group, based at Little Walden Airfield near Cambridge.

He affectionately named his P-51 Mustang, "Libby" after his fiancée, Elizabeth Wolfe. With the war in Europe finally over, many pilots from the 361st Fighter Group returned home. However, rather than return Stateside to marry Libby, 1Lt. John Havey elected to stay in England with his unit to prepare for combat against Japan.

Sadly, on 23 May 1945, 1Lt. Havey and colleagues took off on a training flight from Little Walden to conduct aerial gunnery over the shallow mud flats of the Blackwater Estuary. The wings of their P-51s were loaded with 260 lb. dummy bombs for this occasion. As the flight of four aircraft rolled into a steep dive, all pilots immediately realized they were having problems



controlling their aircraft. The heavy bombs caused the aircraft to become sluggish and unresponsive, and the flight broke off the training manoeuvre. One aircraft lost several fuselage panels, and another suffered a warped airframe. They were the lucky ones. John was

never able to recover his aircraft from the dive, and he was tragically killed when the aircraft crashed

News from Across the Pond...

into the mud flats that morning. Sadly, John's wingman, who had managed to recover from the dive, joined him in death that day when he turned back to make a pass over John's wreckage. The stress of the dive had damaged the aircraft, and a wing separated from the fuselage in flight.

Despite the tragic loss of young life, training had to continue. The war in Europe was over, but there would be no respite until the war in the Pacific reached a conclusion. Another of those who brought about that closure, in August 1945, was 1Lt. Lloyd Burns. (Photo: top)



he had swapped places with Fred Kauffman. The collision had trapped Fred in his seat, but Lloyd had been free to evacuate and lived to remember his friend and colleague.

After completing his 30th combat mission in July 1944, Lloyd Burns returned home for two weeks Rest & Recuperation and to await reassignment. He requested to train in the B-29 Super Fortress, and the USAAF assigned him to the 426th Bomb Group of the 20th Air Force – the 'Hellbirds'. Lloyd flew five combat raids over Japan in the Pacific Theatre of Operations.

The third mission of brand new B-17 Flying Fortress, 'Heavenly Bodies II', was to be Lloyd's 29th combat mission. On 19 June 1944, the mission was to strike a suspected V1 rocket site at Zudausques, France. Lloyd's co-pilot, 2Lt. Fred S. Kauffman, was preparing for his check-ride to become an Aircraft Commander, so Lloyd suggested they swap seats to provide Fred some additional experience. As the formation returned home from the successful bombing raid, the flight flew through hazy weather conditions, and Lloyd's aircraft collided with another aircraft that was out of formation. The collision caused both planes to lose control and crash. Heavenly Bodies II broke apart in the air, and in the confusion only four of the ten crew managed to bail out.

Lloyd Burns survived the incident only because

Lloyd Burns was there at the end. He had survived to witness Victory over Japan Day on 15 August 1945.

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Why I Never Spoke of the War

by Richard Frohm

Millions of Americans served in the armed forces during World War II. They have been called the Greatest Generation. The following is the story of one such man from that generation and his B-17 crewmates.

Jack Flynn's wartime story started like any other Sunday for a seventeen-year-old in December of 1941. However, this Sunday was December 7th. Jack, along with a group of his buddies, were playing basketball at St. Mary's Star of the Sea school gym on City Island, Bronx, New York. Their basketball game stopped when a friend rushed into the gym, telling them the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. The boys all went back to their homes to find their families. Their world forever changed that afternoon.

War with Japan was declared the following day. On December 11th, just three days later, Germany declared war on the United States. Jack, like so many young men, would soon be fighting in the Pacific or Europe.

Jack graduated in June 1942 from Cardinal Hayes High School. After graduation he worked for his father who owned and operated a supply boat that provided fuel for the many ships that moored off City Island in the Long Island Sound.

Turning eighteen in August, he became draft-eligible. Knowing that he wanted to join the Army Air Forces, rather than being drafted. Jack and his good friend Wyatt Pick had, for some time, been talking about enlisting. On Wednesday, November 25th, 1943, the day before Thanksgiving, the two childhood friends walked into the Army Air Forces recruitment office in the Bronx and enlisted in the Army Air Forces. Thanksgiving that year was a day the Flynn family

took the news the worse. Even though he was proud of his son and knew the cause was just, he had the memories of the horrors he had seen in World War I. The thought of his oldest son going to war was exceedingly difficult. Jack's father Eugene Flynn, in 1917 at the age of twenty-four, volunteered for the American Field Service, providing medical care for the French Army. He would be wounded by machine-gun fire and injured in a German gas attack on a French position.



Standing: S/Sgt Jack Flynn, Sgt Doug Aldrich W/G, Sgt Charles Agantovich BTG, Sgt Anthony DeMarco R/O, Sgt John Lafferty, Jr W/G, Sgt Ralph Corning T/G

Kneeling: Lt Charles Norris CP, Lt Raymond Buthe P, Lt Curtis Chapman B, Lt Marvin Brawer N

Photo taken after completion of training in Tampa, FL

would never forget. Jack told his parents and family he enlisted, explaining that it was better to join. He was able to be in the Army Air Forces.

Within Jack's family, his father

For his heroism under fire, the French awarded Jack's father, the Croix de Guerre, with a silver star.

Jack entered the Army Air Forces that December and immediately began training. Over the



L to R Sgt Charles Agantovich, Sgt Ralph Coming, and Sgt Jack Flynn (taken prior to completing training)

next nine months Jack received extensive and specialized training in all areas of the operation of a B-17 bomber. During that time, he was promoted to the rank of Staff/Sergeant and selected to be a Flight Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on a B-17. As they neared the end of their training, the bomber crew's pilot, Lt. Levine, was replaced by Lt. Raymond Buthe. Aircrews were tightknit groups, and a change just as training was ending and assignment to England could be devastating. Lt. Buthe could not have been a better fit. He was outgoing. Some said he was a "talker." His transition into a crew that had been together for several months was incredibly seamless. Although only a few years older than the crew, Buthe was considered the 'old man', married, with a child. The crew completed their final training in early October 1943 at Drew Field, which is now Tampa International Airport in Tampa, Florida.

They were ordered to Hunter Army Airfield in Savannah, Georgia. The ten-man crew led by pilot Lt. Raymond Buthe, co-piloted by Lt. Charles Norris, left Hunter on October 17th, 1944.

They were ferrying a new B-17 loaded with spare parts and headed for England. Their flight route took them near New York City. Lt. Buthe said to the crew, "*Let's go take a look at the Statue of Liberty.*" They all told him they would get shot down. Lt. Buthe went ahead and circled the Statue of Liberty, and to Jack's excitement, flew over his home on City Island. Jack said jokingly to Lt. Buthe, "*Oh boy, can I jump out?*" We can only guess at Lt. Buthe's response to Jack's request. From there they made one stop at Grenier Field, New Hampshire, for fuel. The next stop was Iceland, where they would spend the night getting some badly needed rest and fuel for their bomber.

Leaving the next day, they flew to RAF Valley, Wales. From there, another crew would fly their B-17 to the Army Air Forces base in Burtonwood, England, for modifications. From RAF Valley, Wales, they traveled by train to an Army Air Force base for incoming aircrews in Stone, England. Here they spent a few days awaiting assignment to a permanent base.

The Buthe crew received their orders on October 24th to report

to RAF Rattlesden. There, they were assigned to the Eighth Air Force's 447th Bomb Group, 708th Bomber Squadron.

Upon arrival and prior to their first actual combat mission as a crew, they had to complete a concentrated ground school introducing them to Eighth Air Force and most importantly, air combat against Germany. It ensured aircrews learned everything they would need to be ready before actual air combat. No one could fly until they completed the training.

And there were the practice missions. It was during this period that the crew—like all the other aircrews, developed a strong bond. In many ways, they were closer to each other than their own families. There was also a closeness unique to the AAF among officers and enlisted. They knew everything about each other and knew they could depend on the other guy.

On November 21st, they were awakened at 3 am. They were going on their first combat mission. Their training was over; this time in the air, they would be together as a crew. Each man knew they needed the other if they were going to make it. The other planes in their bomber formation would be depending on this young and inexperienced crew. They had enough time to get dressed and go to the mess hall for breakfast. Jack, a Catholic, would receive communion and a blessing from a priest before the mission briefing. Even non-Catholics would seek a blessing of forgiveness for all their sins from a priest. After the mission briefing, the crew drove together out to their plane.

Once they took off, each bomber would circle until all aircraft were in the air. That could take anywhere from one to two hours, sometimes longer depending on the number of bombers going on the mission. When all planes were in formation, the lead pilot would say “go,” and the bombing mission was underway. Their target that day was the oil refinery and marshaling yards in the German city of Koblenz located approximately 200 miles from the Belgium border. The young crew managed to get through both the German fighters and heavy flak to drop their bombs on the target and make it back safely to England.

The next mission was on November 26th, with the target being the railroad marshaling yards in Hamm, Germany, located northeast from Cologne. This time they made it back to their base at Rattlesden a lot more aware of the dangers of their job. In a letter to his family after their second mission, Lt. Curtis Chapman, the bombardier wrote, he “...felt like a veteran now.” He also wrote of their bombing mission that the squadron had been shot up considerably, but he and the crew returned home safely.

Their last bombing mission was November 30th. This began

as the ones before: up at 3 am, the mess hall for breakfast, church, briefing, take-off, and into formation. Their target that day was the Lutzkendorf Oil Refinery near

were minutes from the bomb drop. At approximately 1318 hrs, only one minute from the Lutzkendorf oil refinery, Jack, in his top turret position, was horrified when he saw the tail section explode.

Sgt. John Lafferty, the waist gunner, later reported that they had been receiving flak and set afire. Fortunately, he had one side of his parachute fastened. There was another explosion that blew him out of his gun opening. Jack believed the tail section had completely blown off, killing Sgt. Ralph Corning the tail gunner immediately. Sgt. Anthony Demarco, the radio operator who, at the time, was acting as a waist gunner, and the ball turret gunner Sgt. Charles Agantovich both died at the same time the tail section

was struck. The forces of the tail section exploding knocked Jack out of the top turret, and he landed behind the pilot, Lt. Raymond Buthe, and co-pilot Lt. Charles Norris. Since the top turret was too small to wear a parachute, Jack was not wearing his. Miraculously he landed on top of his chest parachute and was able to hook one strap. The plane then started to turn almost entirely upside down into a downward spiral. Jack looked up and saw Lt Buthe and his co-pilot, Lt. Charles Norris, struggling frantically to



S/Sgt Jack Flynn with Lt Buthe & Lt Brawer in background with parachutes

Merseburg, Germany.

However, they would be one crewman short that morning when they found out their waist gunner Sgt. Douglas Aldrich would be flying with another crew. That would be a blessing for Sgt. Aldrich, who would go on to finish the war and return home.

The flight across the English Channel and France was uneventful. That changed as they neared their target as German anti-aircraft became intense. All bombers had to maintain their positions as they

get out of their seats. Still, with the plane in a downward spin, the centrifugal forces held them in their places, making it impossible for them to free themselves. Suddenly, the plane was ripped by another explosion. This one blew Jack through the opening leading into the bomb bay and out through the open bomb bay doors. The fact the bombs were still in place only left a small opening for him to fit through, making his escape even more miraculous. Jack would later write, *"Don't tell me there is no God."*

As he headed downward, he was able to pull the ripcord on his parachute. To his horror, the chute did not fully deploy. With only the one strap hooked on, he was spinning and making things worse when he looked, up he could see falling pieces of plane debris. With only one strap on and falling debris, he thought he was not going to make it. As he headed downward, he continued to look up watching as debris fell, but his main concern was his crewmates. Was he the only one to escape? Finally, he saw two parachutes and knew at least two of his crewmates had made it out.

With his chute not fully opening, his descent was fast, and his landing hard. Jack was knocked unconscious for a short time. When he came to, he began to hide his parachute when a shot rang out over his head. Jack looked to where the sound of the gunshot had come from and saw a group of German soldiers with their rifles out running towards him. He knew that his only option was to surrender. The soldiers grabbed him and brought back to a vehicle where they kept him

under guard.

As he stood next to the truck, he noticed other German soldiers heading towards him with two American fliers. It was Sgt. Lafferty and Lt. Chapman. Jack learned from Lt. Chapman that he had been in the nose, preparing to drop the bombs when there was an explosion. Lt. Marvin Brawer, the

*"...you start
to go out of
your mind."*

navigator who sat only a few feet away from him, was killed. Lt. Chapman knocked unconscious but fortunately came to and found himself in a free fall from the plane. He had just enough time to pull the ripcord of his parachute. Like Jack and John Lafferty, he was caught by German soldiers as he was attempting to bury his parachute. They were all captured near the German town of Zeitz. The Germans put them in the back of one of their vehicles. As they drove, they passed through a city still on fire from the bombing. A German soldier sitting in front of them turned around and spit on the three. They immediately knew the Germans hated them.

The three were transported to Frankfort arriving the next morning around 8 am. From there, they were then taken by train to Oberursel and held at Dulag Luft (Durchgangslager der Luftwaffe), a transit camp for captured members of the Army Air Forces. The

primary purpose here was to be a collection and interrogation center for newly captured aircrews before being transferred in groups to permanent Prisoner of War camps. The three were separated when they arrived. After being photographed and fingerprinted, Jack was taken and put into a windowless cell.

He would spend the next ten days in solitary confinement. Jack described those ten days as horrendous. He said, *"...you start to go out of your mind."* The Germans would do things to him, such as, at midnight, turn on the cell lights, and three soldiers would come in and make him get up and stand. He said this was to exhaust him and make any interrogation go easier for them. The Germans would not take him to the bathroom, so in his cell, all he had was a bottle to use. His German capturers gave him little water, and when his thirst became unbearable, he had no choice, he had to drink his urine to survive. During those ten days of confinement, the only food he received was bread.

Jack was the type of man that would never say anything about being abused by the Germans for information. However, since the end of the war, numerous POWs have come forward to tell about the physical abuse they suffered during interrogations by the Germans while in the Oberursel Dulag Luft.

After his tenth day of being held at Dulag Luft, Jack, along with a small group of other Americans, was taken to the Dulag Luft near Westlar. Here Jack was able to locate Lt. Chapman and Sgt. Lafferty. The



Sgt Ralph Coming

three crewmates were all that was left from a crew of nine. They were not together long before they were each transported to a different Prisoner of War (POW) camps.

That would be the very last time the three sole survivors would ever see each other. Lt. Chapman went to Stalag Luft I, while Sgt. Lafferty to Stalag Luft III, and Jack was transported by train to Stalag Luft IV near Gross Tyschow in eastern Germany, in what today is Poland. This prisoner-of-war camp held over 8,000 American airmen along with several hundred prisoners from other countries. It was overcrowded, barracks were in poor condition, little if any heat, inadequate food, clothing, and medical supplies. An International Red Cross report from October 1944 described the camp conditions as generally bad. Jack arrived at the camp in mid-December. At age twenty, Jack would find himself away from his family for the first time at Christmas. His future was

uncertain, would he live to see the end of the war, would he come home to marry his fiancé? Jack, after the war, would attribute his survival to his faith in God and his desire to get back to his fiancé and family.

The Russians were advancing from the east, and by early February were only 40 miles away from the camp. With the Russians advancing, the Germans decided to abandon Stalag Luft IV. The sick, injured, and disabled prisoners were transported by train to prison camps in western Germany.



Sgt Anthony DeMarco

Prisoners such as Jack considered fit to march left the prison camp, on February 6th, 1945, on what later would be called the "Death March." They had the clothes on their backs, and a Red Cross food box. Their German captors said the walk would last only three days, the march would eventually cover over 600 miles and last 86 days, in some of the worst weather seen in years. About the 86 days, he later would write, "... if we were fortunate, we spent a night in a barn giving us shelter from the cold, snow or rain." But

most nights, they had no shelter at all and were forced to sleep on the ground. Jack contracted dysentery, diarrhea, along with trench foot, as did most of his comrades. Since no medication was available, Jack, like his buddies, ate charcoal from the bonfires they had the night before to battle dysentery and diarrhea.

Those prisoners unable to walk for themselves or too ill to go for food were helped by those prisoners who were healthy enough to help care for them. Food was minimal, mostly potatoes or a vegetable. Malnutrition was the norm. Jack, who was thin, to begin with, was extremely fortunate to survive. Exhaustion, exposure, and other illnesses took their toll on the prisoners. The fates of those who fell behind were in the hands of their German guards.

At one point, the prisoners were placed into boxcars, ninety men per car. All of the men had to stand, except for the seriously ill. There was no water and only one small hole in the floor to use as their toilet. Prisoners believed their German captors were using them as targets for allied fighters.



Sgt John Lafferty, Jr

In fact, during the approximately 30-mile journey, the train did come under attack from allied fighter planes with several of the boxcars hit, leaving an unknown amount of prisoners dead. After the attack, the prisoners knew they were being used as targets. For Jack and the surviving members of the "Death March" the nightmare would come to an end on May 2nd, 1945, near Lübeck, Germany. Their German captors fled the day before. The group sat exhausted and ill, waiting, not knowing what was next for them. Off in the distance, the sounds of military vehicles could be heard, to Jack, and the rest of the POW's joy, it was British and Canadian soldiers. Like most POWs, Jack was pencil-thin, exhausted, and ill.

The sight of the Brits and Canadians made him realize that his nightmare was over. He knew he would be going home. The liberated airmen were treated by British medical services, able to shower, receive clean British uniforms, eat, and finally sleep on real beds. On May 8th, Jack, and a large group of former POWs were transported to Brussels, Belgium. From there, they traveled by train to Camp Lucky Strike northeast of Le Havre, France, where they were processed and waited for a liberty ship to return to the states.

Jack, like so many veterans, came home from World War II, buried the memories of the horrors he suffered and witnessed, the friends lost, and the pain he

endured. He had a life to start living again. He married the love of his life, Dolores McGrail. Together they had four chil-



Standing: R to L, Jack Flynn, Charles Agantovich, John Lafferty, Jr.
Sitting: R to L, Ralph Corning and Anthony De Marco

dren. Jack went to work for the New York Police Departments Emergency Services Unit in the Bronx. Talk of the war was rare. Although over the years, bits and pieces of his story would slip out of him. It was only later in his life when his children sat down and spoke with him about his wartime years, they found out about his miraculous story of survival.

Even though six decades had passed since the war ended, three words he spoke during his 2005 interview with his children said it all, "You never forget." Jack joined his crewmates in 2009.

Like Jack Flynn, Lt. Curtis Chapman returned home, married,

and would raise a family. Sadly, he died in July 1963 at the age of 43.

Sgt. John W. Lafferty Jr. would return home as well, marry, and raise three children. He passed away in 1995.

The Germans recovered the remains of Lt. Buthe, Lt. Norris, Sgt. Corning, and Sgt. DeMarco shortly after the crash. They were buried by the German military in the Michaelis Cemetery in Zeitz on December 2nd, 1944. They were later disinterred and reburied at Henri-Chapelle American Cemetery in Hombourg, Belgium. The bodies of Lt. Brawer and Sgt. Agantovich were recovered later and transported to the American Military Cemetery Ardennes. After the war, the families of the six fallen airmen were notified of the recovery of

their remains.

This story is more than about one man. It could be written about thousands more American military servicemen. Their generation is leaving us daily, and soon there will be none of them remaining to tell their stories. That is why we must preserve and pass onto current and future generations of Americans, the accounts of Jack Flynn and his comrades.

Young people need to know of the sacrifices of the men and women of that generation. The freedoms they enjoy today were paid for by the Greatest Generation.

The Flying Chaplain



Top: B-52 & KC-135 during mid-air refueling; above: Rabbi Earl Fishhaut

“Tell it to the chaplain!” was the friendly advice most often given when someone had something to get off his chest. This advice proved especially crucial as the Eighth entered a new era of warfare in what would come to be called, *“the Cold War”* of the 60s.

The Eighth Air Force was founded in 1942 with very modest beginnings. To counter the extremely brutal Nazi Germany and the Luftwaffe, the Eighth Air Force quickly grew into the largest and most powerful non-nuclear force ever to grace this planet. By the 1950s, the downsized (post World War II) Eighth Air Force evolved into the heavy bomber wing of the Strategic Air Command (SAC).

By decade’s end, B-52s named *“Stratofortresses”* continued the legacy of the B-17 *“Flying Fortresses”* by carrying nuclear tipped cruise missiles, with their KC-135 aerial flying tankers, providing a crucial deterrent to the Soviet Union starting a nuclear

war with the United States. *“Operation Chrome Dome”* sorties remained part of the daily operations of the Air Force for over seven years.

The giant bombers were rotated on shifts, so that some were always airborne, 24/7, while others were on standby—ready to bomb the Soviet Union on a moment’s notice. These bombs, however, were thermo-nuclear, and the knowledge of their deadly payload often weighed heavy on the crews during these stressful missions. Not just aircrews, but the groundcrews, too, would often find themselves subjected to working at remote, isolated locations where they were exposed to a brutally cold climate. Once again, it would be the critical role of the chaplain to provide counsel and advice to the crews to help keep flying operations on track, and men solidly focused on their mission at hand.

This is the story of one of those dedicated “flying” chaplains, Rabbi Earl J. Fishhaut.

In 1959, Rabbi Earl Fishhaut, then 26, enlisted in the US Air Force to become a chaplain. He felt that it was a patriotic way for a newly ordained Orthodox rabbi to gain valuable experience in ministering to a congregation.

The young rabbi was assigned to a SAC airbase in Goose Bay, Labrador, Canada, about 300 miles north of Maine. He was also assigned as chaplain to air bases in Newfoundland, Greenland, and Nova Scotia. Noted for their long, severe winters, these airfields were major refueling hubs during WWII for aircraft flying to and from England.

As the new chaplain, 2nd Lt. Fishhaut made the best of the situation. A St. Paul, Minnesota native, he was accustomed to sub-zero temperatures, and it would be his warmth, sincerity, devotion, determination, and humor that would quickly earn him the respect and admiration of men of all faiths and denominations. Chaplain Fishhaut led the Jewish Sabbath evening service, liturgy, and songs, every Friday night. In addition, he would give a brief sermon relating the weekly Sabbath Torah reading to a topic relevant to the airmen. As was also typical practice in most stateside synagogues, the “*Oneg Shabbos*,” literally “*Sabbath delight*,” right after the service with light refreshments and Sabbath songs, was well appreciated. His Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services were well attended. The rabbi also gave a weekly class on a variety of Jewish topics.

Before being sent out into the field, new chaplains were issued a “chaplain’s kit.” The Jewish chaplain’s kit, courtesy of the JWB—Jewish Welfare Board—included a handful of items needed for performing basic rituals for the Jewish Sabbath and holidays, and military issued bibles and prayer books (olive drab for Army and blue for Air Force & Navy in pocket size) along with a few Jewish reference books. Thanks to previous Jewish chaplains, most airbase chapels had adequate supplies of military and civilian Jewish prayer books and bibles along with a Torah—a scroll containing the five books of Moses that is read aloud during the Jewish Sabbath and holidays. For locations that did not have one,



SAC base at Goose Bay, Labrador

Chaplain Fishhaut took along his own small Torah.

As chaplain, Rabbi Fishhaut was able to order a limited selection of kosher food from the JWB. Using available chaplain funds from the JWB and the USAF, he would order kosher food from US and Canadian cities nearby with sizeable Jewish populations.

Chaplain Fishhaut organized and officiated at the first fully kosher Passover Seder in Goose Bay, Labrador. As chaplain, he invited Jewish servicemen from the SAC base along with others from nearby US Navy, Army, and RCAF (Royal Canadian Air Force) bases. Top ranking officers along with Protestant and Catholic chaplains were also invited. Even several non-Jewish service personnel attended the Seder when news of the special celebration spread throughout the base. For many, though, it offered not only a taste of home during this special holiday, but spiritual nourishment at a time when young men were hundreds or thousands of miles from home. Jewish personnel were particularly eager to do this, to show appreciation for being granted time off to attend religious services and for other help they had received from the non-Jewish authorities. It was not long before servicemen of all denominations sought out Chaplain Fishhaut for a variety of reasons. Perhaps it was his approachable and warm demeanor, or maybe his practical, yet friendly advice. Airmen knew their chaplain would always have a sympathetic ear and understand their concerns and problems.

In order to be able to truly understand the issues of flight crews and be able to better identify with their concerns, Chaplain Fishhaut took the unusual step of going through flight training. He regularly flew on the giant B-52s and tankers (KC-135s). He joined flight crews as they were awakened from their sound sleep to being airborne in a matter of minutes. These “scramble” drills were scheduled to practice honing response times to possible Soviet attacks—a practice that would last several years.

The now ‘Flying Chaplain’ experienced first-hand what it felt like to fly aboard a B-52 for 10-12 hours on most missions, during what would come to be known as ‘the Cold War.’ Adding to the stress of

each mission was the knowledge that these B-52s each carried a nuclear bomb on board; a bomb that would be dropped over the Soviet Union on whatever target was assigned at that moment. The chance of anyone on board being able to survive such a bombing run, was negligible at best.

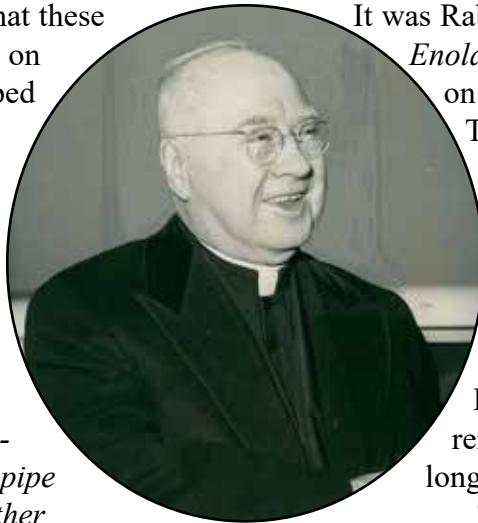
Flying in SAC did, however, have its lighter moments.

“When a KC-135 would disconnect their refueling boom (the fuel pipe that connects the two aircraft together during the fuel transmission) from a B-52 after mid-air refueling, residual jet fuel would spill over the B-52’s windshield. The B-52 pilot would then turn on his aircraft’s windshield wipers,” Rabbi Fishhaut recalled with a smile.

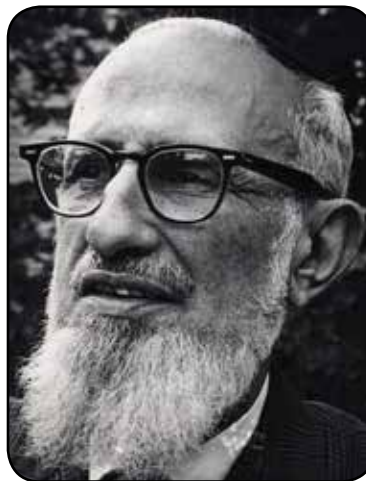
The ‘Flying Chaplain’ also enjoyed flying in the co-pilot’s seat with his commanding officer in the unit’s WWII vintage C-47. The Colonel needed the hours in order to stay current as a C-47 pilot and often asked his chaplain to join him. It was on many of these flights where Chaplain Fishhaut had the opportunity to pick up kosher foods he had ordered from nearby Canadian and US cities.

For the sheer love of flying, the chaplain’s favorite aircraft was his unit’s nimble single piston engine WWII vintage AT-6. The ‘Flying Chaplain’ also took part in training airmen. He would often sit in the co-pilot’s seat while traveling to various air bases to give training talks.

During a stopover visit at McGuire AFB in New Jersey in 1960, Chaplain Fishhaut asked to speak with an Orthodox Jewish chaplain so he could obtain kosher food. He was taken next door to Ft. Dix US Army Base, where he met with Chaplain Mordechai Daina, a career Army officer. Chaplain Fishhaut enjoyed the company and hospitality of the delightful Daina family. Rabbi Daina began his career as an Army Air Force Chaplain in 1944. Near the end of WWII, Chaplain Daina was transferred to the enormous B-29 base on Tinian, in the Pacific—PTO.



Cardinal Francis Joseph Spellman



Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik

It was Rabbi Daina who blessed the B29 *Enola Gay* just prior to her taking off on her historic mission to Hiroshima. The iconic photo of the blessing was printed on the back cover of post-WWII Army-issued Jewish prayer books.

Perhaps even more life-changing for the young Rabbi Fishhaut, was reacquainting with Chaplain Daina’s daughter, Roberta, and renewing their friendship. It was not long before the couple became engaged.

The young Rabbi had adapted to the remote and frigid location and climate in Goose Bay, but he was concerned for Roberta.

Chaplain Fishhaut began inquiring about a possible transfer to another base. He found that Westover AFB in central Massachusetts had an opening for a chaplain. The rabbi had gone to flight training at Westover and knew of an Orthodox Jewish community nearby in Holyoke. By then, the chaplain had enough seniority to fill the new position. He had planned on the transfer taking place shortly after his upcoming wedding to Roberta.

In order to be able to take care of the wedding arrangements—including all of the requirements prior to, as well as all the festivities afterwards

for a proper, Orthodox Jewish wedding, Chaplain Fishhaut had asked for two weeks of leave from his chaplain duties at Goose Bay. His CO denied the request as being too lengthy.

Well, they say that *‘God works in strange and mysterious ways,’* for it was during this time period that Cardinal Francis Joseph Spellman, then Archbishop of the Diocese of New York, was visiting the air base at Goose Bay. The esteemed church leader immediately recognized the young Air Force officer wearing pins of both the Ten Commandments and the Jewish Star on his lapels, and a yarmulke on his head as a Jewish chaplain. Upon seeing the troubled look on Rabbi Fishhaut’s face, the cardinal asked, *“Chaplain, you look down. Is there anything you would like to talk about?”*

“Well, yes there is...” The rabbi went on to explain his predicament to the cardinal who asked him if the leave time needed for the wedding could possibly be reduced. Chaplain Fishhaut explained that the religious requirements dictated the need for two weeks.

Upon hearing this, Cardinal Spellman immediately replied, “*I will speak to the head of SAC...I’ll also speak with the Chief of Chaplains of the Air Force...if need be, I will speak with the Joint Chiefs of Staff or even President Kennedy!*”

Cardinal Spellman was true to his word. Within a very short period of time Chaplain Fishhaut was granted three weeks of leave for his wedding!

Rabbi Fishhaut and Roberta had a beautiful and lively orthodox wedding with all of the wonderful observances and festive meals which followed the week after the wedding. Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, the head rabbi of the yeshivah [a Jewish educational institution] where Rabbi Fishhaut was ordained, officiated at the wedding. Rabbi Soloveitchik was a world-renowned Rabbinic authority of that generation, and a major influence in the Jewish world.

The transfer to Westover Air Force Base worked out well for the newlyweds. Rabbi Fishhaut continued in his beloved position as the ‘Flying Chaplain.’ He was always thrilled to officiate at the occasional Jewish wedding as well as the circumcision ceremonies of the baby boys. Living in an orthodox Jewish community afforded the Fishhauts the opportunity to participate in everyday life—something they both treasured. By having a weekly Friday afternoon service for the Jewish airmen on base, the Rabbi was able to be home with his bride; enjoying the sanctity, serenity, spirituality, and joy of observing their Sabbath at synagogue with friends.

In 1962, Chaplain Fishhaut’s enlistment contract with the Air Force was due to expire. The Cuban Missile Crisis [Oct 16-28, 1962] along with the uncertainty of another commitment added even more pressure to the decision of the ‘Flying Chaplain’. He loved flying, the camaraderie, ministering to his troops—helping others. But now, the Fishhauts were excitedly awaiting the birth of their first child. The thought of having a stable Jewish family life was paramount to the young couple. The rabbi decided upon a compromise: he left active duty as a captain and joined the Air Force reserves.

Rabbi Fishhaut left Westover AFB and relocated

to North Adams, MA where he began his new career as a pulpit rabbi, drawing on his broad experience as a USAF chaplain. The congregation quickly became their newly adopted family and rejoiced when the Fishhauts welcomed their beautiful daughter into the world.

By 1968 Rabbi Fishhaut’s family grew and the young family felt the need to move to a community with an orthodox Jewish day school. The Rabbi left the USAF reserves with the rank of major.

Of all the congregations Rabbi Fishhaut led, his favorite had to be Newport News, Virginia. It was here that he once again served as a chaplain, although this time, as a civilian chaplain at Langley AFB in Hampton, Virginia, as well as Ft. Eustis Army Base in Newport News where Chaplain Fishhaut ministered to patients at the Veterans’ Hospital as well as the psychiatric hospital there. It was a good fit. The Fishhauts enjoyed the warmth of southern hospitality and closeness of their Virginia congregation.

In 1979 Rabbi Fishhaut was in Minneapolis, MN, where he officiated at the unveiling of a grave stone for his friend and predecessor chaplain at Goose Bay, Rabbi Harold Gordon—ironically, both of whom were natives of the Twin Cities. The elder Rabbi Gordon—also a ‘Flying Chaplain’—served at 18 air bases from Iceland to Bermuda during WWII. Well into his ‘golden years,’ Rabbi Fishhaut continued to officiate at funerals of USAF Jewish veterans.

Fast forward several years and Rabbi Earl Fishhaut is now retired in Queens, NY. The Fishhauts enjoy keeping in touch with their extended family—20+ descendants which include great-grandchildren—and enjoy attending numerous family celebrations.

Rabbi Fishhaut will gladly oblige when asked to cantor the weekly Sabbath Prophetic selection after the Torah reading during the Sabbath service, with his strong and beautiful singing voice! He enjoys going to Talmud and other Jewish classes, lectures, and programs. He continues to be an avid reader of Jewish topics and current affairs. Always remembering his time as the ‘Flying Chaplain’, Rabbi Fishhaut proudly displays his American flag on the front of his home.

And of course, the ‘Flying Chaplain’ never misses an opportunity to help others as he often exclaims, “*I served in the Mighty 8th!*”

CHAPTER NEWS

8th Air Force Historical Society Birthplace Chapter, Savannah, GA By Andy Steigmeier President

During these unusual times I am more grateful than ever for our Birthplace Chapter and the 8th Air Force Historical Society. This may seem odd since all Chapter events have been canceled since our monthly dinner in February.

However, the downtime has fostered an unexpected and creative connection with our members through our monthly newsletter, *Contrails*. Specifically, the new “Just Do’n” column, where our Chapter members share some of their “ordinary” moments, creations and doings of everyday life.

This communication with our members has not only helped pass the time but proved to be educational, creative, fun, and yes, even therapeutic.

We are blessed to be part of such a caring group of friends, which include many vets, four from WWII. Let me take a moment to introduce you to our four local heroes — Betty Roberts, Harry Katzman, Gordon Fenwick and Paul Grassey.

Betty Roberts enlisted in the Navy WAVES in 1943 and soon found herself working on the top secret decoding machine “The Bombe” in Dayton, OH, that broke the German naval code. She received the Exceptional Service Award from the National Security Agency. While in Dayton, Betty married aviator Ed Roberts who flew 35 missions as a B-24 co-pilot. Betty is a long time Mighty Eighth Museum volunteer.

Harry Katzman was trained to fly the B-17, B-24, and B-29. He flew 24 missions with the 458 BG, 753 BS. Harry’s last flight took heavy flak, wounding him and several crew members. Crash landing in England



Betty Roberts



Harry Katzman



Gordon Fenwick

with more than 100 flak and bullet holes in the plane. After the war he had a successful career with the USAF flying the B-47, F-102 and F-104. Harry is also a long time Museum volunteer.

Gordon Fenwick, a B-17 Radio Operator and Gunner, flew 35 missions with the 401 BG including raids over Dresden. *“There was today, maybe a tomorrow. That was it. ...the horror of it all. I had an adjustment period. ...I had to get on with it.”*

After the war he graduated from the University of Michigan with a BS in accounting and economics. Gordon had a 30 year career with Bell Systems and AT&T headquarters in NYC.

Paul Grassey was a B-24 Pilot and flew 13 missions with the 446 BG. He graduated from Lafayette College and had a 37 year career with Burroughs Corp. Author of the book *It's Character that Counts*, and recently came out with a musical CD, “Songs to Victory.” Paul is a

The Chapter's Greatest Generation poster series presented to American Legion Post 135 by Andy Steigmeier (center). At right is B-24 pilot Paul Grassey the subject of the inaugural poster. Post 135 is located in the building where the 8th AF was activated, and is also the location of Betty Bombers Restaurant, where the poster proudly hangs.

Docent and Board Member of the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force.

We are indeed fortunate to have developed lasting friendships with so many of our vets and their families through our local Savannah Chapter as well as the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. We're excited that the 2021 reunion will be right here in Savannah, the birthplace of the Eighth Air Force, and the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force.

For information on our Chapter, monthly dinners, *Contrails* or what not to miss when in Savannah, contact Carolyn or Andy Steigmeier 914-787-9542 or email Andy at: andy.acsdesign@gmail.com

**8th Air Force Historical Society,
Oregon Chapter
10 August 2019
Woman in Aviation**
Edited by Joan E. Hamilton

Once again, our February 2020 presenter was Alice Miller, a nurse and collector of military and service uniforms and the history surrounding them. Here are modified excerpts from her speech.

“It has been 100 years since women got the right to vote and so much has changed for women since then. We’re going to talk about aviation and two things that emancipated women 120 years ago: the bicycle and the airplane.

**School Teacher
(1898)**

In 1898, my grandmother wore this uniform, with a long skirt that goes all the way to the floor, working as a school teacher in a one-room schoolhouse in Wisconsin. It was a time when women wore constrictive clothing with bustles and corsets.



One thing that emancipated women was the bicycle which women start riding in 1895. Suddenly, a woman didn't need a horse and buggy and someone to transport her, or even a chaperone. By 1910, women were losing their corsets, their underpinnings, and starting to wear bloomers and even

showing their ankles.

The airplane also emancipated women. The first woman to get her pilot's license (1911) in the United States was Harriet Quimby, a newspaper and magazine writer and the first woman to fly across the English Channel. Harriet expressed a belief that aviation would be a beneficial occupation providing extensive income for women.

**BAT [Boeing Air Transport]
Uniform [left] and Army Air
Corps Flight Nurse's Uniform**



These are the uniforms of Ellen Church. Ellen Church was the first stewardess and first flight nurse. Her Boeing Air Transport uniform is specific to the Boeing 80-A, a fabric and wood airplane with 3 big, radial engines. It was an aircraft which held a maximum of 13 passengers. A stewardess brought sandwiches and coffee and took care of her passengers, but she also brought a screwdriver to screw the seats back down to the airplane after the bumpy ride.

Ellen loved flying and she loved being a nurse. The Army Air Corps approached her about medical air



Alice Miller speaking to the Oregon Chapter

evacuation; and she became the first flight nurse, serving with the First Army Air Evacuation Unit in North Africa. During WWII, Army nurses wore the two-tone blue resembling a Civil War uniform. Over 3000 flight nurses serve in the Army Air Corps. Their duties included loading the planes and taking care of the wounded in flight.

I am wearing the British ATA, Air Transport Auxiliary uniform. The ATA was a women's ferrying service established by Pauline Gower. Female pilots from around the world were encouraged to join. Led by Jackie Cochran, 25 female American pilots joined the British ATA. These pilots consulted a book of pilot's notes for instruction about each plane that they ferried. They couldn't fly at night or use their radios and took off no matter the weather conditions.

“Rosie the Riveter” Mabel Loe

Here is the ‘Rosie the Riveter’ outfit worn by my Grandmother, Mabel Loe, who worked on aircraft



CHAPTER NEWS

at Boeing. So as not to get caught in the machinery, these women wore clothing with tight cuffs and used a scarf to completely cover their hair. No earrings jewelry, or watches were allowed.

To house the influx of the military and military workers in Tacoma, Washington, my Grandma and Grandpa Loe along with other people in their area-built quarters onto their houses for people that needed places to stay.

1944 WASP Uniform



Jackie Cochran organized the WASPs, Women's Airforce Service Pilots and almost 1200 WASPs finished the program and received their wings, though the program disbanded after a year and a

half in 1944. These women were amazing and skilled pilots. The uniform is a gorgeous Santiago blue.

1968 TWA Air Hostess Uniform of Mary Bowdle (left) and Paper Uniform (right)

Next to Mary Bowdle's TWA



uniform is a rare paper uniform used to promote TWA for international flight.

From 1945 until 1974, women were pilots in private aviation only, but in 1974, the U.S. Army qualified its first female helicopter pilot, Sally Murphy, which led to other branches of the military qualifying female pilots.

Luckily, despite people, tradition, and clothing working against them in the early 1900s, women evolved and emerged, in part, thanks to the bicycle and the airplane.”

8th Air Force Historical Society Georgia Chapter Atlanta, GA Brent Bracewell President

The GA Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society met July 11, 2020, for our monthly luncheon at our regular venue, the 57th Fighter Group Restaurant located on the Peachtree Dekalb Airport property in Atlanta. If you are ever visiting Atlanta, I would highly recommend a visit to the restaurant, named and themed in honor of the famous 57th Fighter Group featured in the William Wyler documentary film “Thunderbolt”.

When you walk into the 57th you meander around a sandbagged entrance into what appears to be an old bombed out barn and cottage which could have been turned into an Officers Club complete with unit photos and aviation items throughout. The restaurant was

the brainchild of former WWII 8th Air Force B-17 Pilot, David Tallichett, Jr., turned successful businessman who created many such themed restaurants. The back of the restaurant is located right beside the taxiway so you can easily sit at your table and watch the activities of the airport. With only a little imagination you can picture the 57th FG P-47 pilots sitting around this re-creation of how their O' Club may have looked when they flew out of Corsica in WWII!



As wonderful as our venue is, our speaker for July was even more amazing. We had the honor of having as one of our long-time members, USAAF Pilot, 1Lt Dick Bailey. Dick did not fly in the 8th during WWII, but he was close. He flew the sometime loathed (first called the “Widow Maker” or “one a day in Tampa Bay”; B-26 training was stationed near Tampa Bay during WWII); but more often, very much





loved B-26 Marauder in the 9th Air Force, 450th BS, 322nd BG, first out of England, and later out of France after D-Day.

Dick flew 65 missions including two on D-Day and several supporting missions, beating the Germans back during the “*Battle of the Bulge*” after the weather cleared. Although Dick turned 98 on July 31st, his recall was excellent and his voice strong. Using slides made from pictures from his photo albums, and his sharp memory and still quick wit, Dick entertained our audience of 25 for over 45 minutes. Dick’s stories included the difference in how the 8th bombed strategically (deep strikes into Germany from 30k feet) while the 9th supported the Tactical Mission (close strikes along the front lines of engagement from 10k feet). Dick addressed serving in aerial combat and the pain of losing friends and commanders on missions. He told of flak ripping through his cockpit leaving fragments on the floor, and German Me-109s flying into his formation so close that he could see the square goggles worn by the pilots. He even had an Me-109 approach his squadron from the front, and he slid out of formation to give the aggressor a burst from his four forward facing 50 caliber machine guns located

in the blisters on the side of the B-26. Dick said he was just trying to scare the guy, but amazing enough, he struck his target and the Me-109 started smoking, and disappeared in the overcast below. Dick may be one of the few bomber pilots in Europe to shoot down a fighter plane! Of course, the most entertaining stories I enjoyed were just the antics that young men will pull on each other to relieve stress when flying daily in combat knowing their lives were very fragile.

At 98 years young, Dick is still very busy. Later in the month Chapter Member Steve Hoofnagle arranged a huge



birthday party for Dick on his 98th Birthday at the Dixie Wing of the Commemorative Air Force located on Falcon Field (Peachtree City Airport) in Peachtree City. Dick once again regaled us with stories and laughter.

As this Greatest Generation slowly passes into history, we are so blessed to still have Dick among us to inspire us to be the best Americans we can be.

The GA Chapter meets

monthly for a luncheon (second Saturday of the month) at the 57th Fighter Group Restaurant at Peachtree Dekalb Airport, Atlanta, GA. If you are in the area, please reach out to me, Brent Bracewell, 678-416-5749 and attend! You will be among family.

**8th Air Force Historical Society
NY State Southern Wing Chapter
By Joseph “Pat” Keeley
President**

At press time, we are hoping to have our November 8th, 2020 luncheon meeting at the Holiday Inn Plainview on Long Island, New York. Our theme will be Veterans Day, honoring all who served. To celebrate V-J Day, we are planning a talk on how the 8th Air Force influenced winning the air war in the Pacific. Our speaker, a Gulf era Air Force veteran who was stationed at Okinawa Air Base, will describe the base complex where the 8th was initially scheduled to move following V-E Day.

Please check our website for current information which could change subject to our pandemic situation:

blogs.ny8thswcafhs.org

We meet from 11am to 3pm if you will be in the area and are interested in attending. please contact Pat Keeley [info on p.2].

Hope to see you there!

Biel, Albert H., 97, passed away



on November 8, 2019. The oldest living WWII veteran in Los Banos, Albert was born in San Jose, CA on September 8,

1922, to Herman A. and Eunice (Murphy) Biel. Bert grew up in San Jose where he attended Catholic schools, graduating from Bellarmine High School. Bert's family enjoyed the family ranch on Eylar Mountain, south of Livermore. New Year's Eve, 1940, he went with a friend to the neighboring Gerber Ranch's party and met Claire Lynch, who was also visiting the Gerbers. The two were married in San Jose on April 11, 1942. Bert was drafted a few months later, inducted into the army on December 9, 1942, in San Jose, and was sent for training as a pilot. He received his wings at Seymour, Indiana, on December 23, 1943, and, after further training in B-24s, was assigned to the 453rd Bomb Group at Old Buckenham, (near Norwich) England. He flew 35 missions over France and Germany, his last on March 1, 1945. The most memorable was on November 21, 1944, when his plane was hit by flak causing damage to the tail, the right rudder, and destroying the fuel cell on the right wing. For his heroic flying in getting his plane and crew safely back to base, Bert received the

Distinguished Flying Cross, and was promoted to 1st Lieutenant. Bert found out that his first child, daughter Irene, was born in San Jose the same day. He was discharged from Camp Beale, (near Wheatland), California, on June 14, 1945. His certificate of service states that he participated in the campaigns of Northern France, Germany, and Ardennes. He received decorations and citations of the European African Middle Eastern Theatre Service Medal with 3 Bronze Stars, and the Air Medal with 4 Oak Leaf Clusters, in addition to the DFC. After the war, Bert, Claire, and daughter moved to the Biel Ranch on Mines Road south of Livermore where Albert worked for his uncle. A second daughter, Christine, arrived. In 1948, Bert was offered a job working for Claire's grandmother, Clara Waggoner. Bert and family moved to her ranch near Los Banos on Pioneer Road. In time, Bert took a job as a carpenter for Ted Falasco. He became a foreman for the company, overseeing construction of many homes, offices, schools, and buildings in the area. Biel also built his own home on Idaho Avenue to accommodate his growing family (daughters Barbara and Rosemary joined the family). The last project completed, before retiring after 30+ years from T Falasco, Inc., was the parish hall at Our Lady of Fatima School, where he was honored for his military service

at its Veterans Day Program the morning of Nov. 8, the day he passed away.

Bert took an active interest in his adopted community and became a volunteer fireman, eventually rising to Captain. Even after retirement, he continued to attend monthly gatherings at the fire hall. When Bert's eyesight failed, he was forced to retire from many activities.

He and Claire divided their time between the Biel Ranch on weekends and life in Los Banos. After retirement, Bert became a full-time rancher, running cattle with his daughter Rosemary, doing business as Biel Cattle Partners. Claire continued working as a library technician for the Los Banos Unified School District during the week, visiting their cabin on weekends. After Claire retired and Bert sold the cattle, the routine didn't change. He was a past-president of Biel Properties, Inc., served on its board of directors, and was always willing to share his knowledge with everyone.

In 1981, Bert joined the Second Air Division Association, and the 453rd BGA. He and Claire attended many annual reunions across the United States and in England. He served as secretary of the 453rd BG for ten years, and, when he retired from the position, was recognized for his service to his fellow veterans. A member of St Joseph's Catholic Church, a life member of VFW Post 2487, and a

life time member of the United Carpenters and Joiners Local 152, he also belonged to the American Legion Post 0166, Los Banos Volunteer Fire Department (retired), the Heritage League of the 2nd Air Division (USAAF), 8th Air Force Historical Society, the California Farm Bureau, and Los Banos Golden Age Club. Bert was preceded in death by Claire, his wife of 76 years, his daughter Christine Argentieri, grandson Morgan Argentieri, son-in-laws Craig Lighty and Keith Hurner, grandson-in-law Jay Derbidge, and his brother Terrance J Biel. He is survived by his daughters Irene Hurner, Barbara Mello (Tom), Rose Biel Lighty, and son-in-law Sam Argentieri, grandchildren Phillip (Diane) and Gregory Hurner, Gretchen Derbidge, Michael (Amy), Patrick, Matthew (Melinda), and Andrew Argentieri, Amanda (Randy) Bourbon, Aaron (Brooke) and Eric (Rachelle) Mello, and Sarah Silva, 22 great-grandchildren, 3 great-great-grandchildren, and sister-in-law Marjorie LeDonne.

Halliburton, Ed, Sr., 95, passed



away August 7, 2020. A long-time Charlotte, NC, resident, WWII Eighth Air Force veteran, and a former prisoner

of war, Ed enjoyed a notable career in marketing following

the war. His lifelong love for his wife, Dorothy, as he liked to tell people, was the source of his warmth and good humor.

Born on November 5, 1924, in Nashville, Tennessee, Ed's family moved to Charlotte, NC, when he was five years old and settled in across the street from where four-year-old Dorothy Propst and her family lived. Ed and Dorothy quickly became inseparable friends, attending local schools together up through Central High School. In high school, Ed was Commander of the ROTC unit, a member of the marching band, and President of the Boys Good Sports club.

Following graduation from Central High in 1942, Ed enrolled at Clemson College. He was again active in the marching band, as well as the Enlisted Reserve Corps. In March of 1943, he was called into service with the Army Air Corps and was trained to be a gunner and a radio operator on a B-24 with the 492nd BG. He and Dorothy married on April 7, 1944, shortly before his deployment to England with the 492nd Bomb Group.

On his third mission over Germany his bomber was heavily damaged by flak and, with only one-and-a-half working engines, quickly lost altitude. The crew headed toward Switzerland and was forced by an escort of Swiss Air Force fighters to land at a small, fighter aircraft airfield near the border. The crew was

taken into custody. It was forty-five days before Dorothy, his true love back home, received word that he was still alive. Six-and-a-half months later, together with two other POWs, he made a harrowing escape to France, assisted by the American legion and the French Maquis. For his service, he was awarded the POW Medal, the French Croix de Guerre, and the ETO (Europe, Africa, Middle East campaign Medal) with two battle stars, among other medals.

Following the war, Ed worked for Sherwin Williams as a branch manager in North and South Carolina, including Charlotte. He earned recognition as the second-best Branch Manager in the South Atlantic Region. He later joined True Value Hardware and became the number one True Value paint and coatings representative for three consecutive years. Continuing with True Value Hardware, he worked his way up to Marketing Supervisor, overseeing 330 stores. He retired from True Value in 1994, at the age of seventy.

He and Dorothy raised three sons and were active members at Providence United Methodist Church in Charlotte. Both were in the first "Stephen Ministries" class offered at the church. He served a term as president of the Men's Wesley Bible Class and always emphasized that his experiences during the war imbued him with a deep and abiding faith in the grace of God.

Ed was a longtime member of the Charlotte Sales Executive Club. Following his retirement, he was active in a number of veterans' associations. He served as Commander of the Metrolina Wing of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society for several years before being elected to serve as President of the North Carolina Chapter. Ed was also Commander of the Metrolina Chapter of the American Ex-Prisoners of War and also served as State Commander of the North Carolina Department, consisting of eleven chapters at that time. In addition, he was elected Commander of the Veterans Group at Plantation Estates for several years. People remember him for the levity he often added to the gatherings with an ever-ready list of humorous anecdotes and jokes. He also became a popular speaker, addressing various veterans' groups and church gatherings, and speaking at other civic events in and around the Charlotte area. He always ended his talks with a note of thanks to the Lord for taking care of him and bringing him home safely. Ed was preceded in death by Dorothy, his beloved wife of 76 years, who passed away in June of this year; survived by son Edward, Jr., son David, and son Richard and his wife Kathy, three granddaughters and four great-grandchildren.

Leadbetter, B/GEN G. Dennis, USAF (ret), 87, passed away



peacefully in his home in Ponte Vedra, Florida on May 29, 2020. Dennis was born March 1, 1933, in

Norman, Oklahoma. He graduated from Norman High School in 1951 and earned his Bachelor of Business Administration from the University of Oklahoma in 1955. He completed Air Command and Staff College in 1972, Industrial College of the Armed Forces in 1974 and Air War College in 1977.

Enlisting in the Oklahoma National Guard in 1947 as a Private First Class, the General served in the 45th Division, "D" Company, 179th Infantry Regiment, attaining the rank of master sergeant before being discharged in January 1954. He was commissioned through the Air Force Reserve Officer's Training Corps program in November 1955, at the University of Oklahoma. He completed primary pilot training at Bartow Air Force Base, FL, and basic single engine jet training at Greenville AFB, MS., where he received his wings in December 1956. He received advanced pilot training at Tyndall AFB, FL., and was subsequently assigned as a mission pilot with the 3631st Support Squadron and was also an aircraft instrument instructor

at the F-86 school.

From 1959 to 1962, he was assigned to the 3504th USAF Recruiting Group, Lackland AFB, Texas. While there he assisted in developing the Officer Training School Commissioning Program.

In September 1962, he studied law at the University of Oklahoma. During this time, he was also a reconnaissance flight commander, flying RF-84s with the Arkansas Air National Guard's 188th Tactical Reconnaissance Group, Fort Smith, Ark. In September 1968 he transferred to the 187th Tactical Reconnaissance Group, Dannelly ANG Base, AL, where he continued to fly RF-84s. He joined the Air Force Reserve and was assigned to Maxwell AFB, AL, from November 1970 to August 1976, he held positions of forward air controller, flight commander and squadron commander of the 357th Tactical Airlift Squadron, later becoming deputy commander of operations for the 908th Tactical Airlift Group, and then commander. General Leadbetter left Maxwell AFB in September 1977, for Dobbins AFB, GA, as vice commander of the 94th Tactical Airlift Wing. During the fall of 1978, he commanded the first squadron of Air Force Reserve short-takeoff-and-landing cargo aircraft to deploy to Europe for the NATO's Reforger Exercises. In May, 1979, he was assigned as vice commander of the 14th

Air Force at Dobbins. General Leadbetter assumed duties as a member of the Air Force Reserve Objective Planning Council and deputy director of the Air Force Reserve Management Assistance Group in June 1981.

He was a command pilot with more than 100,000 flying hours. His military decorations and awards include the Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal, Combat Readiness Medal with four oak leaf clusters, Air Force Outstanding Unit Award ribbon with three oak leaf clusters, National Defense Service Medal, Air Force Longevity Service Award Ribbon with Six oak leaf clusters, Armed Forces Reserve Medal with hourglass device and Small Arms Expert Marksman Ribbon.

In his civilian capacity General Leadbetter was a captain for Eastern Airlines flying Boeing 727s, Convair 440s, A-300s and Lockheed L-101s during his commercial flying career. His civic affiliations include life member of the Reserve Officers Association, National Guard Association, and Air Force Reserve Association, Rotary International, past member of the board of directors and former Director of International Relations of the Atlanta Airport Rotary Club, and member of the First Christian Church. He also served as President of Savannah West Rotary Club, past President

Porsche Club of America Coastal Empire Region, and life member and past treasurer, Eighth Air Force Historical Society.

He is survived by his loving wife Janet Leadbetter; his sister Dorella Remy; his daughters Jennifer Hamilton and Denise Bennett; his son Grant Leadbetter; his stepdaughters Meredith Kreis, Kelly Kreis, and Jana Weaver, and his 12 grandchildren.

Screws, Lt. Col. Charles Beverly, (Ret.), age 98, born in



Sipe Springs, TX, passed away at home on May 3, 2020, with members of his family at his side, and his loyal dog,

Jaxon, at the foot of his bed. Charles was preceded in death by his wife, Clara Marguerite Screws, parents Charlie and Vern Screws (Wyatt), and sisters June Roach and Mozelle Barron. Charles was born on December 7, 1921, and shortly thereafter, he moved with his family to Little River/Academy, TX where he graduated from Academy High School in 1941, at which time he enlisted in the Air Corps as a Private, then became a Flight Officer, graduating in 1943, as a Warrant Officer. He was a skilled P-47 pilot flying bomber escort for the 8th Air Force, stationed in Bottisham, England. Charles was shot down

over Nazi occupied France on January 29, 1944. He evaded capture by Nazi soldiers with assistance from the French Underground Resistance for over 4 months as he made his way to Gibraltar, Spain, a 1,500+ mile trek which included hiking over the Pyrenees mountains. He was returned to his group in May 1944, where he was awarded the Air Medal and Purple Heart, amongst many other accolades and was promoted to 2nd Lieutenant. As much as Charles wanted to stay and continue the fight, military regulations prevented him from doing so, and he was forced to return home to the United States in June 1944, where he immediately married his sweet heart, Marguerite. After the war, Charles was assigned to training command as a flight instructor at Craig Field, AL, Stewart Field, NY, and then Williams Field, AZ. While at Stewart Field he instructed cadets in escape and evasion classes at West Point. After completing Officer's School in 1948 Charles began a 22-year stint in the USAF Strategic Air Command (SAC) starting with the 307th Bomb Wing at MacDill, FL. He flew a total of fifty-five (55) B-29 missions over Korea from Okinawa, returning in March 1951, to Mac Dill, FL as a B-29 instructor. Then from 1952 to 1958, Charles transitioned to flying B-36 bombers at Rapid City, SD, Ramey AFB, Puerto Rico and Travis AFB,

CA. He then transferred to Beale AFB, CA, to fly B-52 bombers, including extensive combat action in the Vietnam War, until July 1964, then attended Air War College. After graduation he was assigned wing staff at Larson AFB, WA, Plattsburgh AFB, NY, and Dyess AFB, TX, where he retired as Lt. Col. on May 1, 1971. He lived in Abilene TX the rest of his life.

Charles was a highly decorated Air Force veteran and top of the class of the greatest generation. He was requested (and gladly obliged) to fly in multiple national air shows showing off his immense talent for piloting aircraft. He continued to attend annual Air Force reunions nationwide with his son David each year all the way through 2020. He has been the subject of multiple articles in newspapers and magazines worldwide and has appeared in TV shows and a couple movies as a pilot. In 2015, the tail of the P-47 that he was shot down in was found buried in Germany and presented to him at his home in Abilene TX to see and sign, then dedicated to the Texas Air Museum where it remains today as a memorial to a true American hero. On Veterans Day 2016, on the steps of the Texas State Capitol, he was awarded the French Legion of Honor. In 2017, while accompanied by his granddaughter, Lacy Strelec, on a honor flight for Veterans to Washington DC, Charles was selected to lay the wreath on the tomb of the

unknown soldier at Arlington National Cemetery which he later spoke of as being one of his highest honors. In addition to the Air Medal, Purple Heart and French Legion of Honor, Charles was also the recipient of numerous other medals and awards. Charles was an extremely friendly and social man who sincerely valued friendship and camaraderie. He loved the outdoors and especially fishing. In the 1970s he partnered with 3 other retired high-ranking military officers to buy land on the Colorado River West of Lampasas, TX, and build an amazing red brick cabin by hand. The cabin has been a source of happiness and relaxation for multiple generations of family and friends over the last 40 years and Charles loved going there often.

Following his retirement from the USAF, he and his friend Willie collected spare parts of a T-6 Texan which they assembled and restored to flying condition. Flying in the Texan with Charles was a major highlight in the lives of countless kids, grandkids and great grandkids. Even after Charles' flying days came to a halt due to vision problems, he could always be found at the hangar in Abilene talking flying with local pilots and friends. Everything took a backseat to Charles' dedication and immense love for his family, and devotion to his wife, Marguerite. They were inseparable, and their love spanned the better part of a century. His grandkids and great

grandkids brought him incredible joy. He was the ideal husband, father and grandfather. He made time for everyone in his life and there was never a dull moment. He was the rock of his family, the pillar of strength and support and catalyst for its growth and success over the years. He was a remarkable man, who lived a truly spectacular life filled with both monumental challenges and triumphs and produced an incredible family who will preserve his legacy for ensuing generations.

Charles is survived by his son David Allison and wife Betty. His daughter Beverly Pirtle. Grandchildren Katie (Jeff) Elliott, Lacy (Jon) Strelec and Josh (Tracy) Cochran. Great-grandchildren Kelsey (Steven) Reynolds, Molly Luthy, Allison Wonser, Logan Strelec, Liam Strelec and Jake Cochran. Great-great-grandchildren Lily Lester, Harper Reynolds and Cadence Reynolds.

We are NOT automatically notified upon the death of our veterans or other members.

Please

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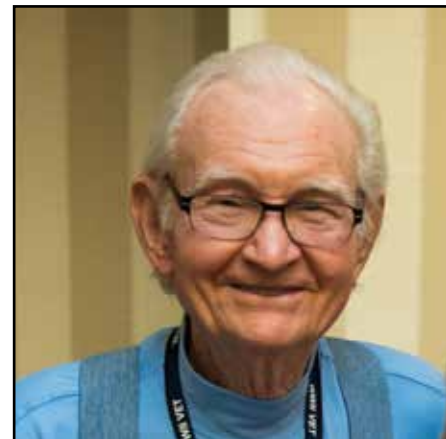
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HOW ABOUT IT!

Unashamed

Earl Wassom 466th BG, Chaplain 8th AFHS



The High School Auditorium was filled with students. A few teachers were also in attendance. There was a special section reserved for the ROTC Cadets, all of whom were beautifully dressed in their spiffy uniforms. Appropriate music was played by the band, the color Guard presented the Colors, and I, as speaker, was introduced. Today was Veterans Appreciation Day and I was not only a veteran, but was the only WWII veteran and the oldest one present as well.

My introductory remarks to them were: The history of humankind has been documented by the fact that wars happen and have been around for a long time. Conflicts come about as a truth, that there are two opposing forces at work, the clash of which is always between the belief of one party and/or their philosophy, which is driven by the compelling urge to gain power and the opposing force which is bent on stopping them. These movements have been around since the beginning of time. A quick tour around this planet we call earth gives visual proof of this fact. Visit the continents and you will observe evidence—verification going back even to prehistoric times—located on every continent. Sprawling villages have been hewn in the sides of sandstone bluffs. Fortresses and castles have been erected along rivers and the mountains. Stone images are formed as a tribute to some deity. Massive pyramids exist as burying sites for Royalty.

Exquisite structures are surrounded by broken marble statues lying in piles of rubble. Historic aqueducts and waterways once existed to deliver life sustaining water.

All of the above and countless others attest to the fact that kingdoms and empires have existed over time. They had a form of governance to provide protection, a food and water supply, and a common purpose. They devised a set of standard beliefs acceptable to the populace and established a religious faith-building trust and a strong purpose of unity and belief in one another.

These Kingdoms or Empires existed for decades and centuries yet they faded and eventually fell. WHY? The citizens and their leaders lost their sense of purpose and in their greed and quest for power, they forgot their principles and goals. Standing by was the opposition offering fuzzy compromises and meaningless promises. These ‘take-overs’ come subtly and quickly. A 20th Century personal experience will *warn* but *not eradicate* a threat we now face.

During a late Sunday evening walk from the movies to my home, I was musing the scenes of the movie I had just seen. My thoughts also included my recent 18th birthday, my graduation from high school, my enrollment in college, my strong desire to become an aviation cadet and become a pilot in the Army Air Corps. This was why I was in college, *to earn the needed academic degree*. My thoughts were interrupted when the

voice of my next-door senior citizen neighbor called my name and remarked “*Well, I guess your work is really cut-out for you now!*”

“*What’s this all about?*” I asked myself. The answer came when I entered the house. Clustered around the battery-operated radio were Mom, Dad, and three older sisters listening to the garbled message coming through air-waves. Silence...the announcer shouted that Pearl Harbor had been attacked, that the Pacific Ocean fleet of our Navy lay in ruins: the Empire of Japan had declared war on the United States!!! The announcer was in emotional tears; we were all stunned. Questions were asked by us and everyone else: What? Who? How? Why? How are we responding?

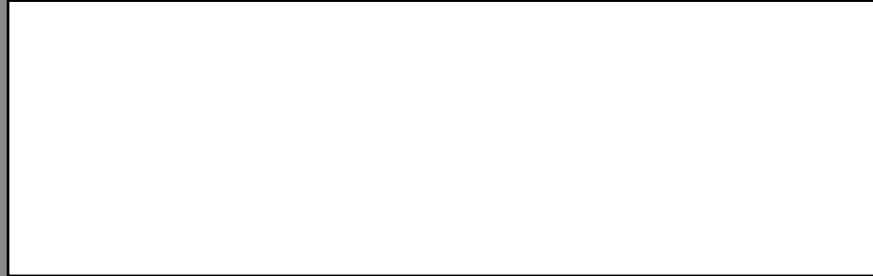
The facts were slowly coming in. Americans were not aware of the history or geography of the Pacific Ocean. They were asking where is Pearl Harbor? What are the Japs up to? Who do they think they are? They have deceived us, caught us off guard. Japanese diplomatic representatives were in Washington, D.C. at the time saying peace, peace, peace and at that very moment, a huge flotilla of naval vessels was headed towards our Pacific Fleet Command Center to destroy it. This was a surprise
(continued on back cover page)



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8th Air Force Historical Society
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(continued from preceding page)

attack!!! They succeed in the surprise. They damaged much of America's Pacific Fleet but they only strengthened America's resolve!!!

War was declared. America was ill-prepared to defend itself. But, ready or not, the citizens arose to the occasion. Patriotism flourished. Flags were displayed as never before. Army and Navy recruiting offices were swamped with young citizens volunteering to serve. Washington responded as well, as did our military power (whatever existed). Keen minds developed strategies; new industries were formulated. Steel mills, mines, refineries, ship yards, factories, transportation, food production, and agricultural enterprises all grew and flourished. The cusp of innovation created new technology. Women entered the workforce. Young people encouraged recycling, seniors grew victory

gardens, farmers and dairymen fed the world. Our military forces fought sacrificially to preserve our way of life. All of them succeeded. They won the war, they saved the world, they came home to rebuild the world they wanted and they gave the world new economic strength, new innovations, a better way of life, dreams of the future to make the world a better and safer place in which to live!!!

They were true Patriots. They were AMERICANS. America came to know itself better through these experiences.

This is the world they left for the millennial generation. It has not been perfect, but it has provided the opportunity to pursue the dream of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Hopefully these PATRIOTS will unashamedly share the wisdom experience has given them.