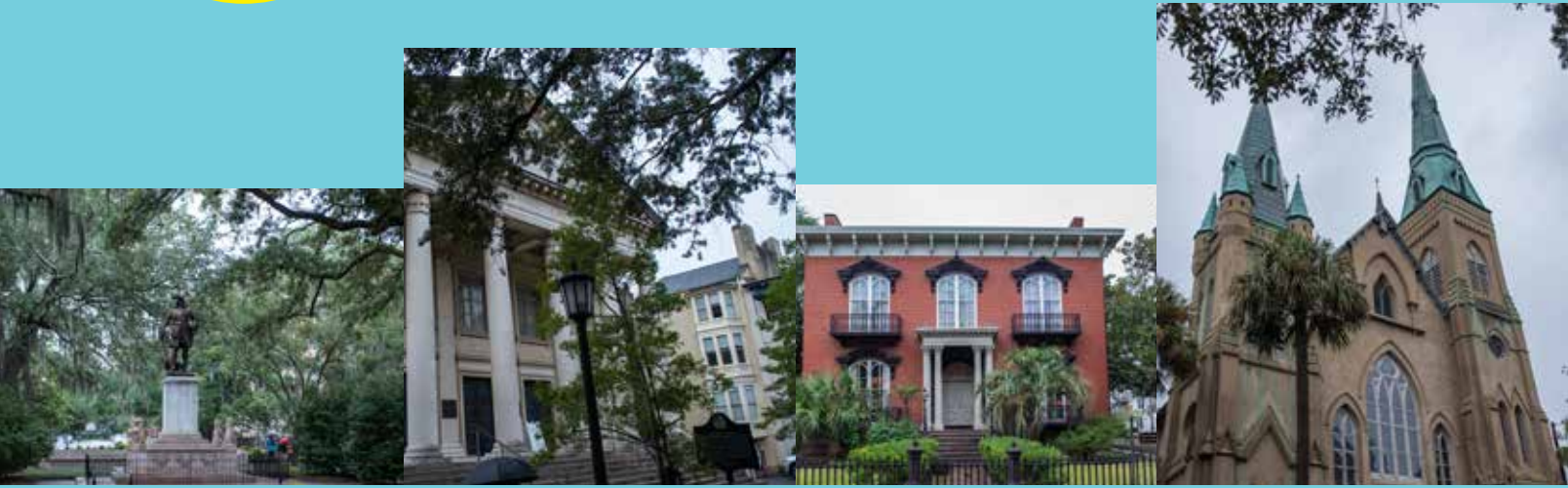


December 2021



# 8TH AF NEWS

Volume 21 Number 4 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"



*Memories of Savannah*  
47th Annual 8th AFHS Reunion ~ October 27-31, 2021



# 8th AF News

December 2021

## Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Front cover: Our WWII veterans gracing our cover are identified on p. 22!

Contacts.....	2
Editor's Notes .....	3
President's Briefing .....	4
Treasurer's Ledger.....	5
Noteworthy.....	6
News From Across the Pond.....	7-11
Say Little Do Much.....	12-17
Student Corner .....	18-21
Reunion Photos .....	22-28
TAPS.....	29-30
A Moment in Time.....	31-back cover

### 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 not for profit corporation..

The 8th A F News is distributed to members of the Society and is not for public sale.

National office is located at:

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Jasper, GA 30143-4769**

# EDITOR'S NOTES



***“We must remember that one determined person can make a significant difference, and that a small group of determined people can change the course of history.” ~ Sonia Johnson***

Unlike many of you, I did not grow up surrounded in the history and stories of the “Mighty 8<sup>th</sup>”, I learned as much as I could during my amazing time at the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, GA over 20 years ago. During all that time, I realized that there was always one, intrinsic, unifying element in every single story and/or situation: determination.

With Pearl Harbor being the major catalyst, young boys—most of them still in high school—crowded enlistment centers, ready to serve their country at any cost. Filled with patriotic fervor, all of them sacrificed their youthful innocence; circumstances forcing them to become men overnight. But it was a willing offering of self towards a global effort of good verses evil. They knew they were part of something so much bigger than themselves. And they were committed.

These young men were hardly fearless...I’ve listened to their stories time and time again. They were absolutely

afraid before nearly every mission. What set them apart? They replaced their fear with determination and pushed through every single time. They did everything asked of them.

The price they paid was incalculable. Far too many never came home. Those who did return came back far wiser and older than their years. Yet, they still carried that sense of determination that got them through the hell that is war.

It was that same determination that I saw on every single veteran’s face—WWII and later—during our reunion just a few weeks ago in Savannah. Many were wheelchair bound, but they came! It is this same determination that will fuel our Society so we can continue to honor and preserve the legacy of the 8<sup>th</sup> from WWII to the present for many years to come.

It was incredible seeing so many of you in Savannah! May you have the most wonderful Hanukkah, Christmas, or other holiday celebration, ever! Until we meet again...

With love always,

*Deb*



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



First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Middle Initial: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State/County: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip/Postal Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Country: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ 8th Affiliation/Interest [optional]: \_\_\_\_\_

**Membership Annual Dues: \$40 or £30 GBP**

Payment: Check /Credit Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Amount: \_\_\_\_\_

*Visa, MasterCard, or American Express ONLY--A \$2.00 processing fee will be added to all credit card purchases!*

**PayPal: [ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org](mailto: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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**JOIN ONLINE: [www.8thAFHS.org](http://www.8thAFHS.org)**

# PRESIDENT'S BRIEFING

Anne Marek  
President



## President's Briefing

**G**reetings everyone! The 47<sup>th</sup> Annual 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society Reunion in Savannah, Georgia, was a huge success. The tours were filled to capacity and all seemed to enjoy them very much. We had over 300 individuals attend with eleven WWII veterans. There were also many Post WWII veterans present as indicated by the bright red lanyards they wore holding their name tag.

The Birthplace Chapter of the 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS did a fabulous job in welcoming all of us. Their hospitality was unparalleled. I congratulate and thank all of them for a job very well done.

The National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force also did an excellent job in welcoming us and opening up the Museum for all of us to enjoy. We had a very full day there.

Your Board has moved forward on revamping, updating and modernizing our website. We hired Garrett Jaxon who is the owner of Flint & Flux Creative Group to rebuild our website and database. Our meetings with him in Savannah were very successful. He and his team have worked diligently to get everything in place to create a new look for your Society. Please go on-line, check it out and let us know what you think.

As this year ends, I want to wish all of you joyful holidays with family and friends and a very Happy New Year.

## Treasurer's Ledger

I am including in this issue of AF News the Financial Statements for the period ending October 31, 2021, 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 still growing since my last report to you in September. It is currently at approximately \$302K thanks to the wise management of our Financial Advisor, Mr. Gavin Natelli. He discusses the Society's financial position with me on a regular basis and continues to make sound decisions as to what investments we should make to continually grow our portfolio. I am pleased to be able to report this to all of you. Our investment portfolio and the income it generates continue to only be used on an individual case basis and only when deemed absolutely necessary.

I'm also glad to report that our membership continues to be very generous. Through the month of October 2021, we have received donations totaling \$11,181. These donations do not include contributions to our SAV\*2\*SAV (Send a Vet 2 Savannah) Program which has now reached a high of \$6,060. Since no one applied for assistance from the fund, it will be rolled over to our Reunion in 2022 in the greater Washington D.C. area. I thank all of you for your continued financial support of our Society.

# TREASURER'S LEDGER

As a member you can personally help bring revenue into the Society by registering with Amazon Smiles when shopping online. It's quick and easy to do. So far this year, Amazon Smiles generated \$159 in additional income. 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 can be found on page 2.

Respectfully submitted,  
Anne A. Marek  
President, 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS

Remember,

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

Anne

<b>The Eighth Air Force Historical Society Profit &amp; Loss January through October 2021</b>	
	<u>Jan - Oct 21</u>
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>	
<b>Income</b>	
4000 · Income/Miscellaneous	
4001 · Amazon Smiles	158.92
4003 · SaV*2*SAV	6,060.00
4005 · BOA Rewards	115.54
4010 · Member Dues Annual	29,915.30
4014 · Chapter Closings	16,953.01
4019 · Member Contributions/Donations	11,181.46
<b>Total 4000 · Income/Miscellaneous</b>	<u>64,384.23</u>
4050 · Investment Income	
4058 · Portfolio Dividends & Interest	3,025.68
4059 · Realized Gain/(Loss) on Invest	0.00
4060 · Unrealized Gain/(Loss) on Invest	39,910.76
4061 · Investment Management Fees	0.00
<b>Total 4050 · Investment Income</b>	<u>42,936.44</u>
<b>Total Income</b>	<u>107,320.67</u>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<u>107,320.67</u>
<b>Expense</b>	
5100 · National Administration Expense	
5104 · Awards, Gifts & Grants	150.00
5108 · Web Site Expense	12,500.00
5111 · Corporation Charges	70.00
5121 · 8AF History Projects	708.74
<b>Total 5100 · National Administration Expense</b>	<u>13,428.74</u>
5200 · Magazine Expenses	
5210 · Printing Expenses	9,522.15
5220 · Postage Expenses	3,276.29
<b>Total 5200 · Magazine Expenses</b>	<u>12,798.44</u>
5300 · National Office Expenses	
5303 · Telephone/DSL	583.40
5304 · Supplies	1,154.38
5305 · Abila Software/ Computer Exps	1,709.80
5307 · Office Rent	1,000.00
5308 · Insurance	317.00
5312 · FICA-8AFHS portion	2,780.59
5313 · Payroll/ Office Management	36,250.00
5314 · Local Travel/Miscellaneous	211.14
5315 · Postage & Shipping	396.86
5316 · Bank Charges/ Returned checks	691.41
5323 · Merchant Account Usage Fees	2,002.98
5325 · Miscellaneous Expense	13.99
5326 · Payroll processing fees	3,461.80
<b>Total 5300 · National Office Expenses</b>	<u>50,573.35</u>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<u>76,800.53</u>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<u>30,520.14</u>
<b>Other Income/Expense</b>	
<b>Other Income</b>	
6550 · Annual Meeting Revenue	
6551 · Event Registration	86,428.66
<b>Total 6550 · Annual Meeting Revenue</b>	<u>86,428.66</u>
<b>Total Other Income</b>	<u>86,428.66</u>

<b>The Eighth Air Force Historical Society Statement of Financial Position As of October 31, 2021</b>	
	<u>Oct 31, 21</u>
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
Checking/Savings	
1017 · Oppenheimer & Co	302,442.90
1040 · Bank of America Checking Acct.	41,063.04
1042 · Bank of America Savings Acct.	36,331.48
<b>Total Checking/Savings</b>	<u>379,837.42</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<u>379,837.42</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u><u>379,837.42</u></u>
<b>LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	
<b>Liabilities</b>	
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	
<b>Other Current Liabilities</b>	
2050 · Payroll & Taxes Payable	
2051 · Payroll payable	2,896.57
2052 · FICA & withhold taxes payable	10,370.02
<b>Total 2050 · Payroll &amp; Taxes Payable</b>	<u>13,266.59</u>
2500 · Accrued Expenses	225.47
<b>Total Other Current Liabilities</b>	<u>13,492.06</u>
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<u>13,492.06</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<u>13,492.06</u>
<b>Equity</b>	
3200 · *Unrestricted Net Assets	256,407.11
<b>Net Income</b>	<u>109,938.25</u>
<b>Total Equity</b>	<u>366,345.36</u>
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES &amp; EQUITY</b>	<u><u>379,837.42</u></u>

# NOTEWORTHY



Meet your Board of Directors! Starting top left and clockwise: Anne Marek, President; Eleesa Faulkner, Vice President; Paul Tibbets, Treasurer; L Travis Chapin, Secretary; Mark Klingensmith, Board Member; Steve Snyder, Board Member; and in the middle, Kevin Wilson, Board Member. All contact info for the Board is on p. 2 in this issue.

## Support Eighth Air Force Historical Society Inc.

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Amazon donates.

[Go to smile.amazon.com](https://smile.amazon.com)



Or, simply type the URL below into your browser:  
<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/59-1757631>

\*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].

\*Written text MUST be TYPED and sent as a WORD.doc, 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

## What did the Americans Bring to the Table in WWII?



(Above) *American lease and lend food, UK, 1941: Dock workers take a break from unloading American Lend-Lease cheese from a ship to enjoy a lunch of American cheese sandwiches. IWM V 59.*

(Right): *Lend-lease Orange Juice: Little Elizabeth Rothwell, who had become anemic and vitamin-deficient was failing to thrive. She became Britain's "Lend-Lease" War Baby, as the concentrated orange juice from California had helped to save her tiny life. IWM V 161*



### Lend Lease

During the early years of World War II, America remained officially neutral and isolationist. The American people had no appetite for becoming embroiled in another war back in the 'old countries.' However, US President Franklin D. Roosevelt, an internationalist, was inclined to be sympathetic to the Allied cause in 1940, even though America had yet to become an active participant.

Winston Churchill, when he became British Prime Minister in May 1940, was fully aware that without economic and financial support from the US, '...we do not think we could continue the war with any chance of success.'

Always a vulnerable island, Britain was a trading nation that relied on import of food and raw materials. Indeed, the UK imported much of her non-ferrous metals, half of her food, and all of her oil. Churchill later reminisced that, '...the battle of the Atlantic was the dominating factor all through the war...'

Britain had always relied heavily

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

on foreign trade for her wealth, and anything that might destabilize global trade posed a serious risk to the British economy. Predatory U-boat attacks on shipping introduced that exact disruption, and as predicted, Britain's economy began to falter. Even though British farmers had been able to increase food production, it wasn't enough. Living standards declined, and rationing was implemented from January 1940. Two months later supplies of meat were being controlled, but even with rationing, some provisions became unobtainable.

The Lend-Lease Act of March 1941 – sold to the American people as *An Act to Further Promote the Defense of the United States* – enabled Roosevelt to legally provide war materiel to Britain; payment to be made later.

Goods were mainly transported by sea, in large, slow-moving convoys across the North Atlantic Ocean. In

# News from Across the Pond...

addition to military kit, fuel, and raw materials, there were also consignments of agricultural equipment and food. The first shipment of cheese, bacon, beans, and canned meat arrived in the UK on 31 May 1941; these foodstuffs endeared the Americans to the average British family. In fact, such items constituted one-fifteenth of all food consumed in Britain in 1941. By war's end, nearly half of British food arrived in the UK by this route.



Above: **Hot chocolate at Burton Bradstock, Dorset, 1944:** Betty 'Freckles' Mackay and Chris Kerley stand outside the cookhouse of the American camp at Burton Bradstock, Dorset and drink the cocoa they have just been given by Corporal David Roberts (of RR4 Albia, Iowa), who is leaning out of the window to chat to them. According to the original caption, these two children are big favorites in the camp and call at the cookhouse regularly after school. Betty's nickname was given to her by the GIs. IWM: D 20144.

## A different view of food

When Americans began arriving in numbers – after the attack on Pearl Harbor that drew them into WWII – they knew that after two years of war the British Isles would not be able to support their army. They had to bring everything with them, including their own food rations.

American logisticians and leadership were taken-aback by the sheer drabness of the stodgy diet that had been formulated by the British Government, which they believed sapped vitality. Brig. Gen. Ira Eaker, arriving in February 1942, was shocked by the lack of food: meat, fish, vegetables, jam, margarine, eggs, and condensed milk were all heavily rationed. However, once established, the troops got to know the villagers close to their camps, and they often shared their food rations with them, which helped to supplement the meagre stores of the civilian population.

The GIs did not generally enjoy the British wartime diet. For example, they found that eggs were strictly rationed and generally unobtainable. The substitute was a form of powdered egg, loathed by British and Americans alike. Those living on bases out in the country soon learned that they could barter with the local farmer's wife for fresh eggs. However, they did find the Fish and Chips delicious, and so sent out regular orders – for up to 40 portions – to the local shop. The messenger, usually one of the nearby village children, would be loaned a bike for the trip, and then rewarded with their own package of steaming hot food for their efforts.



Above: **Festive Cheer:** With British soldiers away in Europe, war-hit families were

issued with an urgent plea to invite their US colleagues to share their Christmas celebrations. Hulton-Deutsch Collection.

American service personnel, being sent overseas, were presented with a series of pamphlets to help enable them navigate the choppy waters of international relations with civilian populations. The serviceman's '*Short Guide to Great Britain*' was full of useful hints and tips on how to get along with the British, and it explained a few facts about a country that had been changed by war:



Above: **"Got any gum chum?"**, two small English boys stop to ask an American. This official photograph was taken for propaganda purposes. IWM CH 12995

## 'Got any gum chum...'

GIs were a long way from home and missing their own families. On the other hand, local children were drawn to investigate the bases on their doorsteps. The Americans would often find themselves drawn into conversation with them. Sweets were heavily rationed in Britain, and so the young locals always wanted to see if the GIs would share their own. '*To feed and spoil the children was the obvious and uncomplicated way to help these vulnerable members of society...*' and then get to know their parents. Many friendships formed in war lasted a lifetime.



# News from Across the Pond...

American service personnel, being sent overseas, were presented with a series of pamphlets to help enable them navigate the choppy waters of international relations with civilian populations. The serviceman's 'Short Guide to Great Britain' was full of useful hints and tips on how to get along with the British, and it explained a few facts about a country that had been changed by war:

*'It is always impolite to criticize your hosts; it is militarily stupid to criticize your allies.'*

*The famous English gardens and parks are unkempt because there are no men to take care of them, or they are being used to grow needed vegetables. The British people are anxious for you to know that in normal times Britain looks much prettier, cleaner, and neater.*

*The British are [warm] beer drinkers – and can hold it. The beer is now below peacetime strength, but can still make a man's tongue wag... [Loose lips, sink ships!].*

*The British have reserved much of the food that gets through solely for their children. For they have been fed at their schools and impressed with the fact that the food they ate was sent to them by Uncle Sam. You don't have to tell the British about lend-lease food. They know about it and appreciate it.*

*For the last two years the British have been taught not to waste the things their ships bring...food represents the lives of merchant sailors...when you destroy or waste food you have wasted the life of another sailor.*

*One thing to be careful about – if you are invited into a British home and the host exhorts you to 'eat up there's plenty on the table', go easy. It may be the family's rations for a week spread out to show their hospitality.'*



Above: GIs and British Children: Two hundred British children who had suffered as a result of the war were guests of a United States Unit on Thanksgiving Day in London. Photograph shows a view of the party with

Americans serving the children food. The United States and British flags hang together in the background. IWM: EA 25885 (US Embassy, London – Library).

The kindness of the young American servicemen to local children knew no bounds. From sharing candy and chocolate bars to GIs laying on lavish parties, crafting toys, and playing Father Christmas; it seemed as if American servicemen never ceased from their efforts to bring some sunshine into the unremittingly grey and drab little lives. Looking back on their childhood, many elderly British people declare, 'I don't really remember the Yanks; but I remember the food!'

## Operation Chowhound

In 1945, the Allies worked together to help bring much needed foodstuffs to the Dutch people.

# News from Across the Pond...



When Allied armies attempted to flank the German Army in September 1944, the Dutch rose up in revolt against the Nazi occupation. However, the failure of **Operation Market Garden** to liberate the Netherlands, led the Nazis to instigate harsh reprisals. This included flooding the low-lying farmland and cutting off food shipments from outside the country, leaving the Dutch people to starve. The non-combatants ate what they could – vile sugar beet, tulip bulbs, even boiled shoe leather – but for many there was simply not enough food. Approximately 20,000 Dutch died during **The Hunger Winter**, with another 3.5 million suffering from malnutrition. As Allied Armies crossed the Rhine River to invade Germany in March 1945, an entire German Army was left isolated and cut off in Western Netherlands – still commanding the power of life and death over the Dutch.

Gen Dwight Eisenhower realized that he was about to have a catastrophe on his hands, so he ordered a **Humanitarian Assistance** mission to prevent a genocide. Allied air-



craft would fly food to the starving population, dropping K-rations instead of bombs. The terms of a verbal cease fire with the Nazis stipulated that aircraft were to fly a pre-designated corridor, below 400ft. If the Allies followed the “rules,” German anti-aircraft artillery would not fire on them; and likewise, Allied air gunners would hold their fire. The Governor of German-occupied Holland agreed, and thus was born the American **Operation Chowhound** and the RAF’s **Operation Manna**.

Ingenious contraptions of wooden pallets, hinged doors, rope, and pulleys were rigged in the bomb bays of the aircraft of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Air Division. Chowhound was to start on 28 April 1945, but the weather had other ideas. Instead, the first flight, consisting of only two RAF Lancaster Bombers, lifted off on 29 April. It was a moment of great anxiety for the crew, who considered themselves to be ‘sitting ducks,’ but fortunately the Nazis kept their word and held their fire. A larger group of Lancasters went the next day, and then, on 1 May the first

contingent of USAAF aircraft flew in their rations to cheering Dutch crowds. Formation flying resulted in poor accuracy, so emboldened, the pilots decided to fly the next drop in single file. Rather than holding rigid formations, the crew could concentrate on getting the food to the target airfields and racecourses, where German soldiers had fabricated ‘targets’ made of hospital bedsheets, laid out in large crosses. There was little looting, and distribution by local organizations was fair and equitable.

Nutritionists warned that it wasn’t healthy to eat K-rations for more than about 10 days, so USAAF crews began including burlap sacks of flour, coffee, and margarine. Unfortunately, the bags sometimes burst, and on one occasion Schiphol Airfield was plastered with yellow margarine splats!

On the way home, many of the pilots went on low level sight-seeing tours to Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague, skimming the fields and clearing the trees by just feet. They flew along Dutch boulevards below the tops of buildings to rapturous

# News from Across the Pond...

applause from a grateful nation. Even normally staid pilots let loose. 21 year-old Pilot, Ray Hobbs reminisced, *'This was Holland, so when we dropped down to within 10 feet of the ground we were flying below sea level!'*

Chowhound finished on 7 May, after which Canadian ground forces overran the area and began delivering food using trucks. Peace was declared that same day, but when pilots were told that it would not come into effect until 8 May, they were naturally more than a little nervous about a resentful Nazi Army taking aim at them.

Below: TSgt Robert W Korber, Photographic Unit of 95 BG – (E-3-32)



Everyone wanted to fly these special missions, including five men from a Photography Unit attached to the 95BG. On board B-17 *Queen of the Skies* was Tech Sgt. Robert W. Korber, veteran of 9 combat missions. The food drop over Utrecht on 7 May went according to plan, and 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Lionel 'Spider' Scurman, took the tourists, including Robert and the redundant gun-crew for a

*'joy ride.'* All was fine until crossing the English Channel when an engine fire broke out. Fighting to climb to a safe jump altitude, 'Spider' rang the bell to signal the crew to bail-out. Those who could, did; but *Queen of the Skies* wal-



lowed toward the waves, catching a wingtip, and then cartwheeled to a traumatic end. The crew had opened the bomb-bay doors to parachute out, but this led to 'Spider's ship sinking rapidly. Dave Cordon (Navigator) was picked up after 30 mins by an American PBY-Catalina. Jim Schwartz (Co-pilot) and Robert Korber (Photographer), spent 55 minutes in the sea before rescue by an RAF Walrus. But the North Sea in May is still extremely cold, and unfortunately, Korber died of hypothermia as he was flown back to England.

Of the 13 souls on board: two survived; two are buried at Cambridge American Cemetery – Staff Sgt. John Keller (Ball Turret Gunner, F-2-54) and Korber (Photographer, E-3-32); three are listed on the Wall of the Missing at Cambridge American Cemetery; and six were repatriated

to the US at the request of their Next of Kin.

*Queen of the Skies* has the sad honor of being the last 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force aircraft lost in the ETO during WWII. Using the "bomber boys" for a Humanitarian Assistance mission in the dying days of the war provided them with a greatly needed psychological boost.

Operation Chowhound by the numbers:

- 2,268 US sorties
- 900 bombers per day
- At the height of Chowhound = 4,000 tons of food per day
- USAAF and RAF delivered 11,200 tons of food

Hank Cervantes (100BG) – 26x bombing missions; 3x Chowhound, *'Among all my wartime experiences those*

*three missions are among my most treasured memories.'*

Bill Richards (493BG) – *'It was a marvelous experience to bring people food instead of death and destruction.'*

Ray Hobbs (95BG), who only arrived in England in time for Chowhound, declared after the war, *'I did good, and I didn't have to drop any bombs on anybody. I dropped food.'*

The final Lend-Lease bill to Britain was \$31 million, for which the debt, at 2% interest, was finally paid in full only in December 2006 – a debt of honor – through a mixture of reverse lend-lease (leasing land to the Americans to build air bases), payment in kind, exchange of valuable technologies, and cash...with thanks from a grateful nation.

# Say Little—Do Much

## Operation Market-Garden: 4 veterans' stories

By David Levitt

This past September 17-27, 2021, marked the 77<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Operation Market-Garden, considered to be the largest airborne campaign in history.

The USAAF in England served with distinction in this endeavor. They succeeded despite many obstacles stemming from the operations' top command, which led to very little time for planning and practice. Two important factors: an overly optimistic response to the weather forecast, and substantially underestimating anti-aircraft fire.

Many air crews flew in planes never designed for the missions they were assigned. Most of the missions were flown in limited to zero visibility as well as constant anti-aircraft fire.

This is the story of four USAAF veterans who participated in Operation Market-Garden. LTCOL James "Jim" Mahoney, 467<sup>th</sup> BG/788th SQ, a B24 pilot and squadron commander; SSgt Irving Goldstein, 439<sup>th</sup> TCG, C47 crew chief; SSgt Theodore "Ted" Parker, 491<sup>st</sup> BG, gunner; and 1LT Earl Wassom, 466<sup>th</sup> BG, B24 pilot.

First, some historical background on Market-Garden.

British Field Marshal Bernard Law Montgomery's plan was to send three airborne divisions from west to east in the Netherlands: two American—the 101<sup>st</sup> and the 82<sup>nd</sup>—and one British, the 1<sup>st</sup>, along with a Polish parachute brigade. Under British auspices, over 20,000 paratroopers planned to capture key bridges spanning rivers and canals in the Netherlands from the Belgian border to Germany: Operation Market. Montgomery would then have the British Army, led by their Armor XXX Corps, fight their way across a 65-mile-long road to establish a foothold in Germany: Operation Garden. To continue their momentum after a rapid advance across France, this was to become the spearhead for invading the Rhineland—ultimately spreading through the rest of Germany resulting in Hitler's defeat and the end of the

Nazi regime.

Despite high hopes at the onset, Operation Market-Garden resulted in defeat for the Allies.



As was depicted in the book/movie, "A Bridge Too Far," the British paratroopers failed to capture the crucial bridge over the Rhine River at Arnhem, Netherlands. Nearly out of ammunition with an over 70% casualty rate, and under constant heavy German artillery fire, these courageous men were forced to abandon their mission and make their way back through enemy

lines or face surrender to the Germans. After eighty hours instead of the expected forty-eight, the British Armor XXX Corps still did not arrive; they were pinned down only a few miles away by German tanks.

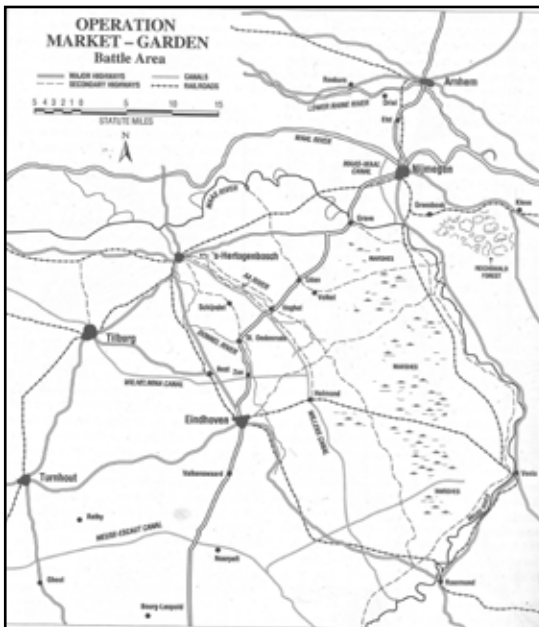
Much of the failure of Operation Market-Garden points to a single individual: Field Marshal Montgomery. He dismissed confirmed intelligence reports that more German troops and armored vehicles were near Arnhem than initially estimated. Montgomery insisted that the British paratroopers, the least experienced of the three airborne divisions, be assigned the most difficult 'Market' objective: capturing and holding the Rhine River bridge along with their drop zones; holding on until the British Army arrived. Anticipating a victory, Montgomery wanted credit to go to the British forces. He selected Major General Robert Urquhart, a personal favorite of Montgomery, who had minimal combat experience and no airborne experience, to be the CO of the British 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division. Montgomery had also been incredibly over optimistic regarding weather forecasts which were most unsuitable flying conditions.

Besides Montgomery and Urquhart, the British Army in the Netherlands had other problematic leaders. Due to a gross lack of leadership, the British 1<sup>st</sup> Parachute Brigade of the 1<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, failed to seize and hold objectives in Arnhem. In addition, the CO of the

British XXX Armor Corps missed an opportunity to reach Arnhem some 18 hours earlier.

In contrast to Montgomery's deadly blunders, the USAAF in England continued to serve without fanfare. They quickly and proficiently implemented plans for their aircraft and crews. Their rank and file—despite many difficulties—performed their duties optimally.

The USAAF in England played a central, critical role. Besides the constant flow of bomber missions attacking FLAK concentrations and marshalling yards, fighters were providing escort and ground attack missions. Large numbers of American aircraft and personnel were unique and pivotal components with their involvement in Operation Market-Garden. Over 1400 C47 Skytrains carried paratroopers and towed gliders. But their missions



General Dwight Eisenhower approved Montgomery's plan, notification spread through the commands like wildfire. Teletype machines throughout the chain of the USAAF command in England chattered nearly non-stop as the news came through.

Right away the troop carrier and ground army units turned to the might, skill, and versatility of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. Both the air and ground units needed the 8<sup>th</sup> to function in both conventional and not so conventional ways. Many of the 8<sup>th</sup>'s heavy bombers were converted—temporarily—

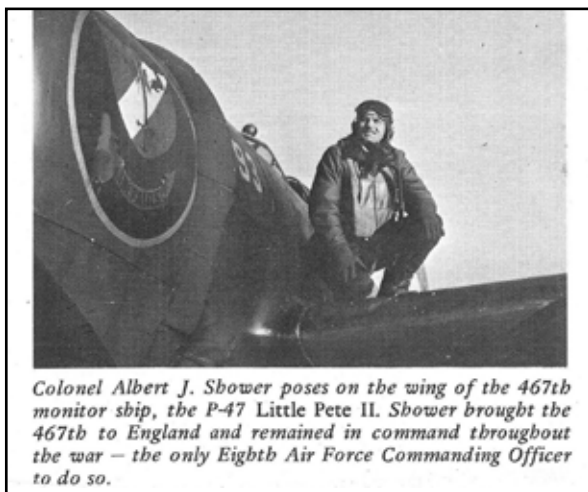
to carry cargo, others became fuel tankers. Here, the B24 became the plane of choice due to their two bomb bays and spacious interiors. Still, the B17 continued to play an important role as a heavy bomber during Market-Garden.

The British tanks and other vehicles used in Operation Garden were expected to consume upwards of a million gallons of fuel a day. Even running fuel trucks 24 hours a day on the supply line that stretched back to Normandy on the coast, could not keep up with demand. During the summer of 1944, C47 troop carriers air-lifted fuel to General Patton's fast advancing tanks on the front lines daily.

During Operation Garden, the C47 Skytrains were tasked in the primary role of dropping paratroopers and towing gliders. Hence, the B24 became critical in supplying fuel to the British Army tanks and other vehicles.

The responsibility of setting up and running the fuel air delivery operation to front line airfields fell on Colonel Albert "Al" Shower, the CO of the 467<sup>th</sup> BG. Colonel Shower had the distinction of being the only CO who remained in the same 8<sup>th</sup> A F bomb group from arrival in England until returning to the States after VE-Day. He, along with his staff, was known to run a very proficient and organized operation on his air base.

On or about September 19, 1944, Colonel Shower gave LTCOL James "Jim" Mahoney command of the 788<sup>th</sup> squadron. The assignment was to scout out an airfield for receiving air-delivered fuel to be used in Operation Garden for tanks and other vehicles. This gave Colonel Shower an opportunity to test the abilities of his new squadron leader. Just a month earlier, the entire 859<sup>th</sup> SQ of the disbanded 492<sup>nd</sup> BG,



*Colonel Albert J. Shower poses on the wing of the 467th monitor ship, the P-47 Little Pete II. Shower brought the 467th to England and remained in command throughout the war – the only Eighth Air Force Commanding Officer to do so.*

ramped up quickly. They had to prepare for three days of solid missions with only 48 hours of prep time. Due to casualties from Operation Neptune, which was the sea and air assault phase of Operation Overlord (D-Day), there was a severe glider pilot shortage. Many copilots had to fly as pilot in command to fulfill the missions. Typically, on the Operation Market mission, the empty copilot seat was filled by the senior ranking paratrooper on board, who received his first flying lesson enroute to the landing zone in the Netherlands!

While Montgomery's plan provided the bare-bones structure for Operation Market-Garden, it was up to the CO and his staff in each of the main units to plan the details. As soon as



was transferred intact with Jim as the squadron's CO—a vacancy left from the original 788<sup>th</sup> SQ at the 467<sup>th</sup> BG.

Jim became squadron commander on his own merits. He was an excellent B24 pilot and a natural, organized leader. He led by example. Jim was highly respected and like by his men. They knew that they would be asked to do only what their squadron CO would do himself.

With a map draped over his lap, Jim took off from Rackheath Air Base flying "Little Pete II," the P47 that was kept and used by the 467<sup>th</sup> BG. Typically, 8<sup>th</sup> A F bomb groups had a fighter plane that was flown by a high-ranking officer as an aerial observation post. The pilot would radio messages back to the airfield to aid in forming the bombers' formation. Jim flew to Clastres, near Saint Quentin, in eastern France to scout out the airfield there. The latest reports indicated that the field might have been captured by American forces.

Flying over the Clastres Airfield verified that the US Army was there. Jim made a few low-level passes over the field to ascertain positively that the Americans had secured the area. When Jim flew close to the control tower, a Luftwaffe officer stepped out, stood at attention, and saluted him! Out of mutual respect, Jim did not shoot the German officer. Rather, he waved his USAAF issued pistol over his head. Brian Mahoney, Jim's son, recently told me, "My father wanted to give a clear message that 'We Americans are coming in!'"

As Jim circled the airfield preparing to land, German troops still in the area opened fire on him. Trigger happy American troops, mistaking him for a German FW-190, joined in the aerial maelstrom. Thankfully, Jim managed to avoid both the bomb craters in the runway and most of the gunfire, making a safe landing. *(Ironically, the bomb craters, about five feet deep and twenty feet across, were courtesy of the 367<sup>th</sup> BG bombing mission the month prior!)*

Once, Jim was challenged by an American tank. After giving the tank commander a satisfying response, he inspected the air field's facilities. The Germans had literally left in the middle of a meal. Jim looked around to determine the feasibility of using the airfield for air-lifted

fuel deliveries. The buildings used by the Germans had already been rummaged through by American GI souvenir hunters. But Jim managed to find a bottle of cognac.

An appreciative Colonel Shower incorporated Jim's detailed written report into plans to have the airfield serviceable for fuel deliveries in just a few days. Eighth Air Force Historian and author, Martin Bowman, in his book, "Fields of Little America," wrote that the operation's officer of the 467<sup>th</sup> BG, LTCOL Allen Herzberg, quickly set up Clastres as a fully functioning airfield—including air traffic control, meteorology, and communications personnel. A pumping station was also set up to fill fuel trucks from B24 flying tankers. In the next month, October 1944, Colonel Shower appointed Jim to be the 467<sup>th</sup> BG's operations officer when Herzberg was promoted. By now, Operation Market-Garden plans were quickly completed and ready to be implemented. On September 16, 1944, the weather report came in for three consecutive days of clear weather beginning on the 17<sup>th</sup>.

The invasion was on!

The first airborne mission was set for September 17<sup>th</sup>.

SSgt Irving Goldstein, 439<sup>th</sup> TCG (Troop Carrier Group) C47 crew chief (pictured left), was very proud. The troop carrier groups had managed to pull off the impossible. With only two-days' notice and no practice, they had assembled the largest airborne armada to date. Now, in every direction as far as Irving could see flying over the North Sea—with the midday sun glinting off them—were hundreds of C47 Skytrains. As with the

other TCGs, the 439<sup>th</sup> had recently been awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for their superb performance during Operation Overlord on D-Day night of June 5-6, 1944.

Now, once again, their commanding officer, LTCOL Charles Young was leading the 50<sup>th</sup> TCW (Troop Carrier Wing) in the "Agonia." Their serial

*(a serial is a large formation made up of multiples of nine plane smaller formations, called a flight element) and others in view were carrying the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division paratroopers. The serial following behind was the 439<sup>th</sup> TCG, 93<sup>rd</sup> TCS (Troop Carrier Squadron),*



Line-up of the 50-glider mission of D-plus-1, Operation MARKET, by the 439<sup>th</sup> Group. Destination: LZ N, near Groesbeek. Crew in foreground near end of glider wing are, L-R, 2d Lt. Bob Sienkiewicz of the 91st Squadron, co-pilot of *The Argonia*, and Capt. Bernie Parks, Group Glider Officer, who flew this glider on the mission. Farther back are 82d troopers. On this mission we carried primarily artillery outfits from the 82d Airborne Division. Also included as passengers in this serial were some of the command echelon of the 307th Airborne Engineers.

Irving's squadron, led by LTCOL Robert Barrere. The 93<sup>rd</sup> TCS and the others in this serial were the only ones towing gliders.

Irving volunteered for the D-Day missions, now, after crossing the North Sea, flying low and slow for the first time in broad daylight above the German held Netherlands, he knew they would be facing intense ground fire.

While C47 crew chiefs were responsible for the maintenance and repair of their aircraft on the ground, in the air, they functioned as flight engineers. They monitored mechanical functions and effected emergency repairs in flight.

In order to avoid areas of heavy FLAK, the TCGs flew over the North Sea as long as possible. Making the turn inland, they were met by a barge just offshore, loaded with German anti-aircraft guns. However, a quartet of British Spitfires descended on the barge and thoroughly neutralized it before a single shot could be fired at the American planes.

Earlier that morning, 8th Air Force B17s and fighters had attacked multiple German concentrations of the German 88mm cannon "FLAK" guns, they didn't get them all. By now, the sky was filled with the all too familiar heavy black smoke of the exploding canon balls and shrapnel.

The C47 Skytrain was roughly half the size of a 4-engine bomber and its 10-man crew. With only two engines and five crewmen, they would bounce and shudder—often violently—when engulfed in FLAK. Even a near miss "...sounded like a chain gang beating our aircraft with sledgehammers," Irving recalls. He went on to remember, "The crescendo got accentuated with sounds reverberating like buckets of gravel being thrown against the aluminum skin of the aircraft as shrapnel hit your plane. A direct hit would blow a hole the size of a sewer manhole cover through an aircraft. We flew under 1,000ft to avoid FLAK, as it was usually set to explode at higher altitudes. Flying that low however, makes you an easy target for every German soldier and his brother with a rifle or machine gun!"

Approaching the landing zone, anti-aircraft fire



increased. Irving's TCG flew directly over a 20mm four cannon gun emplacement. "We were flying so low that I could see the German soldiers loading their guns and muzzle flashes as they fired at us," Irving recalled. Each one of the shells could blow a fist size hole through an aircraft. Despite the ground fire, the 93<sup>rd</sup> TCG released their gliders right on target.

Ground fire continued on the return route. After landing back at base and while his plane was being repaired from battle damage, Irving learned that three C47s and their crew—in another TCG—had gone down that day. It was a hard-faced reality.

The next day, September 18<sup>th</sup>, with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division paratroopers already

on the ground, the 439<sup>th</sup> and other TCGs towed gliders filled with a variety of supplies: jeeps, small artillery and anti-tank weapons, fuel, food, and medicine to name a few. After waiting hours for dense fog to clear so the planes could take off, except for slightly more intense ground fire, this mission was just like the previous one: successful.

Major Joseph "Joe" Beck, commanding officer of the 94<sup>th</sup> Squadron, led the 439<sup>th</sup> TCG fifty plus serial towing gliders. He was shot down on his way to the landing zone. As Irving recalls, "With his left engine out I saw him skillfully make a wheels up belly landing. Even his glider landed safely nearby!"

About twenty minutes after the last C47 behind Irving released its glider and headed back to England, the B24s of the 20<sup>th</sup> BW of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division stormed the drop zone. Flying over 30mph faster than the slower C47s, the Liberators needed to arrive separately. Due to the heavy ground fire, the air crews wanted to clear the drop zone quickly. Several of the Liberator crews had also flown the Ploesti mission. For them it was déjà vu—low altitude in heavy smoke. The 93<sup>rd</sup> BG/20<sup>th</sup> BW and the 44<sup>th</sup> BG/14<sup>th</sup> BW flew during both Market-Garden and Ploesti.

Meanwhile, 30 miles to the east, B24s of the 14<sup>th</sup> BW were crossing the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne drop zone, 491<sup>st</sup> BG in the lead. SSgt Theodore "Ted" Parker (pictured left) was in the plane just off the lead plane's left wing. Although usually a waist gunner, Ted was



assisting the trained drop master in successfully off loading the supply bundles in flight.

Due to the limited number of C47s available, over 250 B24s were commandeered into service as supply planes. They carried bundles of ammunition, food, and other necessary supplies to waiting paratroopers. The giant bombers were retrofitted to airdrop supplies—not bombs—as needed. Belly turrets were removed and replaced with chutes which enabled supplies, parachutes attached, to slide out of the plane and safely land below.

“Right after take-off, the drop master started to shake like a leaf,” Ted Parker recalled. “The drop master was then out of commission for the entire mission. All I could do was wrap him in a blanket to keep him warm while he lay curled up behind the bomb bay.”

As the plane rapidly flew over the drop zone in an attempt to minimize exposure to ground fire, Ted worked quickly to off load the supply bundles before they reached the German held area.

“In my haste, my leg got caught in a bundle strap,” Ted recounted. “Luckily, I managed to grab the metal chute before being completely pulled out of my aircraft! The drop master was too paralyzed with fear to heed my cries for help as my legs dangled outside. Fortunately, the tail gunner heard me and was able to pull me back in.”

The sky, even after the B24s left the drop zone, continued to be filled with peril. Ted was wounded in the cheek by a German bullet. “It could have been a lot worse,” he reflected. “I was extremely fortunate in getting just a flesh wound. It must have been a rifle shot fired at long range with most of the impact absorbed by going through the side of my B24.”

Still, the danger over the Netherlands persisted. “The lead 491<sup>st</sup> BG plane got hit by ground fire. Flying alongside it, I saw it go down. Other than the right-wing tip scraping the ground, it actually made a pretty good landing in a field. However, the aircraft exploded when it hit a haystack. Maybe the Germans were hiding something in that haystack,” Ted recalled. Only the tail gunner survived. He was hidden by Dutch monks until the Allies liberated the Netherlands from the Germans.

After returning to his airbase at North Pickingham, Ted learned that two other B24s from the 491<sup>st</sup> had been lost. Another four from other bomb groups were shot down and six, damaged beyond repair. An additional 154 planes had sustained battle damage as well.

Ted was awarded the Purple Heart for the wound he sustained and an Air Medal for his bravery and skill

under fire. He was also promoted to Technical Sergeant.

The next day, September 19<sup>th</sup>, the C47s were grounded due to weather—limited visibility. But the weather to the north was slightly better, meaning the bombers were able to fly.

Approximately 800 B17s with 240 fighter escorts were dispatched, targeting the rail marshalling yards in western Germany in an attempt to prevent additional German troops and tanks from reaching the Netherlands. Weather prevented about half the planes from bombing their primary targets, but most were able to bomb targets of opportunity.

Second Air Division B24s from the 96<sup>th</sup> CW were also flying that day. But instead of bombs, they were flying “trucking” missions to Clastres Airfield. These Liberators had been converted to flying fuel trucks, airlifting fuel for the British Army during Operation Garden.

It was on this day, 1Lt Earl Wassom, B24 pilot with the 466<sup>th</sup> BG (pictured left), was flying his first “trucking” mission. His plane was filled with hundreds of gallons of gasoline in five-gallon cans, all squeezed tightly together on makeshift plywood racks. The banging and clanging noise had been constant ever since they left England. Liberators had a reputation of sometimes exploding just prior to landing. Apparently, fuel lines sometimes leaked in the bomb bays, and sparks from an electric motor that was activated when the landing gear was lowered

could easily ignite the highly flammable fumes. To alleviate the buildup of fumes, pilots would open the bomb bay doors prior to lowering the landing gear.

As Earl was on his final approach, he instructed his co-pilot to lower the gear—well after they had opened the bomb bay doors to reduce the fumes on board the aircraft. He skillfully landed his fuel laden aircraft—carefully navigating around the bomb craters in the runway. “There were black soldiers filling in the bomb craters. All they had were shovels—no other equipment,” Earl remembered. During WWII the US military was segregated and black soldiers were often assigned menial tasks. But Earl, and the other air crews, engaged the young men in conversation. “They were so full of questions,” Earl recalled. “Most of them didn’t realize they were in Europe—much less in France. And they had certainly never seen a B24 before. Their jaws dropped open when we taxied near them.”

Because of the danger of flying with the individual fuel-filled gasoline cans on board the aircraft, most pilots

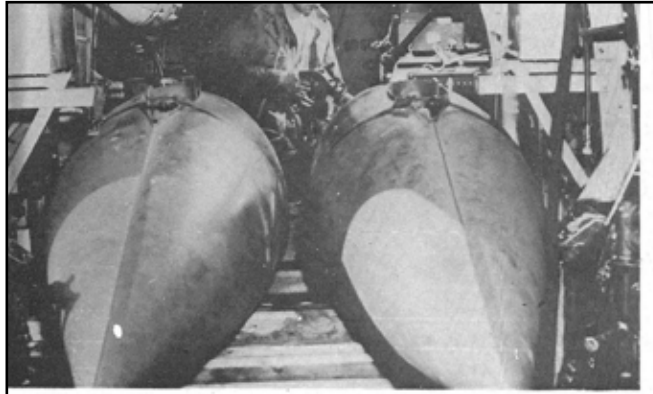




refused to fly the “trucking” missions. In response, the fuel storage/delivery issue was quickly modified. Ground crews removed the plywood platforms from the bomb bays and then installed actual fuel tanks carefully attached to the bomb racks. Each B24 utilized for “trucking” now had four of the rubberized fuel tanks. Once the bombers landed, the fuel was carefully pumped out of the “tanks” into waiting fuel trucks. American ingenuity at work!

“From mid-September to early October, we flew “trucking” missions exclusively,” Earl pointed out. “We did not return to bombing until Operation Market-Garden was over.” The low altitude “trucking” missions were also in danger from other sources. “Once, shortly after take-off back to England, we spotted some just-liberated civilians waving at us. We flew in a circle above to acknowledge them. Germans, still in the area, shot down one of our B24s,” Earl remembered. Another time, Earl’s plane was hit with ground fire. Fortunately, he was able to make a safe, forced landing. Earl and his crew returned to Attlebridge via train and boat.

During Operation Market-Garden, B24s airlifted over 2.1million gallons of gasoline to airfields near the front lines. Colonel Shower and others from 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division erroneously believed that the fuel they delivered “...was for General Patton’s tanks.” That fuel airlift operation was classified. Most likely, the personnel who delivered the airlifted gasoline from the airfields via fuel trucks to the British Army tanks and vehicles, did not tell the American airmen of the fuel’s destination. Apparently, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division personnel made a faulty assumption they were delivering the fuel to Patton’s tanks just as the



*A Liberator of the 458th Bombardment Group with fighter drop tanks installed for ‘trucking’ petrol in September 1944.*

C47s had done the previous summer.

The weather conditions were so bad on September 20<sup>th</sup> that 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force missions were cancelled. However, the situation with the British paratroopers near Arnhem was so desperate, it was imperative to get more paratroopers there as reinforcements—regardless of the weather. Both the 314<sup>th</sup> and 315<sup>th</sup> TCGs carrying the Polish Paratrooper Brigade had been grounded by weather for the past two days. On September 21<sup>st</sup>, they took off in poor visibility conditions. Of the eight squadrons which got off the ground, two squadrons from the 314<sup>th</sup> and a few C47s from the 315<sup>th</sup> missed the recall notice to return to their airfields due to zero visibility. Ultimately, they climbed through 8,500ft of cloud cover under intense antiaircraft fire over the Netherlands to deliver their Polish paratroopers to Arnhem.

At the drop zone near Arnhem, the paratroopers jumped in spite of the barrage of German machine guns and rifle fire. The surviving paratroopers then watched helplessly as the American C47s were blasted out of the sky. Throughout the onslaught, the American planes never broke formation. Ironically, there were more American casualties that day than those suffered by the Polish paratroopers.



Considering all the danger, obstacles, and difficulties USAAF air and ground crews faced during Operation Market-Garden they performed superbly. They never wavered. They displayed courage beyond comprehension. They said little and did much.



# ★ THE STUDENT CORNER!

**W**e are proud to announce the winners in the first 'Student Corner' essay contest! As a reminder, our first contest required students to interview or speak directly with a World War II veteran. Students were divided into three (3) categories by grade level:

Reprinted below are the winners in each category. We are so proud of all the students who entered!

## Elementary (3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup>) 200-400 words

### Divine Providence

**World War II Veteran, Mr. Dan Bodiford**  
Interviewed by Finnegan Cortez

I got to speak to a World War II veteran! Me, Finn Cortez, just a regular 5<sup>th</sup> grader, got to speak to a real World War II Veteran, Mr. Dan Bodiford. Mr. Bodiford was a Radio Operator on a B-17 Bomber. This interview is the exciting and inspirational conversation I had with Mr. Bodiford.

**Finn:** What made you enlist?

**Mr. Bodiford:** No, I didn't enlist, I was drafted. I flew on a crew of 9 men. I was on a B-17 Bomber.

**Finn:** During basic training, what exercise would you do the most?

**Mr. Bodiford:** Well, I had 2 basic trainings. I went to Camp Wolters, Texas and I had Infantry Basic Training. And then I went to Amarillo Air Force Base and I had Army Air Force Basic Training.

**Finn:** What was it like being on a B-17 Bomber? Were

you scared, did you get nauseous, and was it very claustrophobic?

**Mr. Bodiford:** Well, in a lot of ways it was claustrophobic except that I was a Radio Operator. The radio room on a B-17 was just aft of the bomb bays, and it was actually the best place on the airplane to ride because it was right over the center of gravity.

**Finn:** What unit were you in?

**Mr. Bodiford:** I was in 487<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group that was stationed in Lavenham, Suffolk County England. We were in what's called 'Buzz Bomb' alley, because the buzz bombs came over us quite often, nearly every day.

**Finn:** What years were you there?

**Mr. Bodiford:** I flew my first mission, August 11, 1944. I flew my 34<sup>th</sup> mission, November 29<sup>th</sup>, 1944.

**Finn:** What equipment did you have in a B-17?

**Mr. Bodiford:** Well, I had what we called a liaison radio set, which was pre-tuned with 6 different receivers. I had a 100 foot trailing antennae that had a lead ball on it that weighed about 5 pounds. Now the actual radio set that I worked with was up on a desk. This desk also had a Telegraph key; we worked in Morse Code.

**Finn:** What kind of equipment did you wear?

**Mr. Bodiford:** Well, we wore a heated flying suit that plugged into a 110 outlet. Then underneath that we wore a regular flight jacket and pants. And on top of the heated flying suit we had a Kevlar vest and on top of our heads we had a flak helmet. Then we had our parachute harness and what we called a 'Mae West' which was an inflatable life jacket. So, we had a lot of weight.

**Finn:** How much do you think it all weighed?

**Mr. Bodiford:** I don't have any idea! [laughter]

Every man was also issued one piece of quarter inch steel plating that was about 12" X 12". I chose to sit on that because, pardon the expression, I wanted to protect the family jewels! [laughter]

The waist gunners had theirs propped up and they were behind the waist guns. The ball turret gunner sat on his and the tail gunner sat on his.

**Finn:** When you took off on your missions how many planes flew in your formations?

**Mr. Bodiford:** There were always 39 ships to a group. Each group had 13 echelons of three ships each. And each combat wing had a lot of different groups. And of course, the 8th Air Force was anywhere from 1000 to 2000 airplanes.

Most of the time we bombed with 1000 airplanes and each group with 39 ships would start bombing a particular target, and by 9:00 o'clock in the morning. And then 1:00 o'clock that afternoon there were still bombers coming over. There were 39 ships at a time crossing over in formation, hitting the same target.

It was called 'saturation bombing'.

**Finn:** If your plane got damaged by flak fire, what was the worst damage?

**Mr. Bodiford:** We had damage to our aircraft every mission. More in certain missions than other ones. We had damage, we had one 88-millimeter shell hit just aft-board of the right aileron. Those anti-aircraft shells were set to go off at certain heights. Like 26,000, 28,000 feet--or on contact. This particular 88-millimeter shell, hit the right wing just aft board of the right aileron and kept on going. Thank goodness!

They had a lot of sabotage in the German factories and this was evidently a result of sabotage. Because the size of the hole was exactly 88 millimeters around.

We had one other occasion when we came back, I don't know if you have any experience with regular old 'sparklers'? We had probably 20 to 30 sparklers stuck inside of the underside of our airplane, and they did not go off. They were messed with at the factory - they were meant

to be magnesium. Magnesium goes right through the aluminum of the aircraft. It didn't burn in.

**Finn:** Do you still have anything from the war?

**Mr. Bodiford:** Well in the way of decorations, I got the French Legion of Honor Medal, the French Liberty Medal, the Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters, then four combat ribbons for various missions, Good Conduct Medal, Air Force Liberty Medal.

**Finn:** When you were in the ship when the flak bullets went through the wing, did you almost pass out from fear? Were you nervous?

**Mr. Bodiford:** Well, I'll tell you how it was, and I'm going to tell you exactly how it was. I was scared on every mission. The German's sent up a lot of anti-aircraft, they wanted to kill us. They wanted to do away with us. They wanted to disrupt our formations. They were very intent, and...they wanted to kill us. So, if you were not nervous and scared... you were off your tree!

The second thing is on my 4th mission we flew to Zeitz, Germany. We were heavily attacked by fighters, we lost 13 ships out of 39. From my radio position I could see B-17's going down in spirals. I saw them with wings shot off.

I made the mistake before that mission, for breakfast I ate three huge pancakes. They were the size of dinner plates!

By the time I got into Germany proper these pancakes were passing through the elementary canal, and in the midst of all of that going on, bombers going in circles and being shot down and fighters hitting everywhere... I peed my pants! No other way to put it... I peed my pants! [laughter]

So, if you ask if I was ever scared... I was scared on that mission.

We were all scared. We were all begging the pilot to get us out of there, yelling:

'Wally, get us out of here!'

He did his part. He had all four engines firewalled, he had them doing all they could do.

You know, we had 9 men on our crew. Our bombardier took a direct hit on his flak suit, on his vest. He never got a Purple Heart for it, because it didn't break the skin.

It left a bruise about the size of your head on his chest, but it did not break the skin.

I saw my waist gunner get his oxygen mask shot off and the next thing that I saw was a helmet sitting on top a pair of flying boots. I got a walk around oxygen bottle and went back and thought when I lifted his head up, I would lift up blood, and guts and brains and all that. It turned out that his oxygen mask got shot off at the clip that held it to his face, he reached and grabbed it with his hand and pulled it to his face. And that's what I saw. But I thought he had his head blown off.

We flew 34 combat missions, and not a single man was ever hurt. I called it 'Divine Providence'. Had to be more than luck. We had a crackerjack good crew... they were the best.

\*\*\*

*The fact that I got to talk with a World War II veteran is amazing. It is so interesting to hear what Mr. Bodiford really felt and what he actually saw while on bombing missions. I watch documentaries and read about World War II, especially reading about aircraft like the B-17 Bomber, or the 'flying fortress', a lot. Being able to talk to someone who served on a B-17 crew has given me a deeper understanding of that time, and of the courage it took to fly missions over enemy territory.*

*I am very honored to have had this conversation with Mr. Bodiford. What I learned from Mr. Bodiford is that if you just have faith, patience, bravery, and guts, you can get through anything. FC*

**Middle School (6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>) 350-600 words**

## **Land of the Free, Home of the Brave:**

**Interview with Dan Bodiford**  
**By Daniel Deese and Austin Dugan**

**D**id you know that 75 million people died in WWII including approximately 420,000 Americans? Dan Bodiford was one of the men who served during WWII and survived this tragic incident. I had the privilege of interviewing Mr. Bodiford during my history class.

There are many ways veteran Dan Bodiford, in Ft. Worth, Texas, impacted my life and the lives of my classmates. He helped us understand what he went through while protecting Americans and fighting for our

rights. He impacted our lives by teaching us that when there is tragedy, we fight harder than ever. He also taught us that there were dangerous missions he flew, but he still flew them. According to Mr. Bodiford, "It's better to race and lose when you may not race at all." Dan flew 34 missions in his career in the Air Force. Although he was in a B-17, he was a skilled Radio Operator inside the bomber.

First off, Dan impacted my life by telling me about all the tragedy he went through. He witnessed the death of his friends and most of his entire squadron while in combat. To date, he is the last surviving member of his crew. When you are stuck in a bomber with the crew, you form a strong bond with the crew, and when your crew dies, you lose that bond with them. He flew two missions in France and thirty-one in Germany, and 3 in Holland. While flying all these missions, he witnessed many of his men die. His fourth mission was over Nazi Germany, which was his most dangerous mission to date. When he returned home, he married a woman and was married to her for fifty-five years. They had two children and three grandchildren and a few great-grandchildren! Almost everyone in his family has survived except his son who, unfortunately, died in the Navy caused by Agent Orange.

Secondly, he impacted our lives by telling us that when you succeed in life, there are rewards like going home to see family and friends. During the war he knew that if he gave up, some bad things could happen to him and others' families, and then everything would crumble. This man taught that we may not have freedom right now if he and his crew gave up.

Lastly, he explained to us that believing in religion gives you more faith to survive and hold on. Mr. Bodiford said, "Faith helps others, knowing that there is someone watching over them." This is why Dan kept going throughout the war, "The secret to having a long life is to believe in something." - Dan Bodiford (a WWII vet). He also told us "You should vote, because you can change the world in the U.S. by doing so."

In summary, he helped give us everything we have in the USA such as: freedom, liberty, the right to vote, and that we should not be afraid to fight. Also, another way it impacted our lives was by teaching us about the tragedy during WWII, and how having faith can help people in a war scenario situation.

Dan Bodiford is a heroic and stoic soldier. Interviewing Mr. Bodiford was one of the highlights of my life. ~  
"Thank you, sir!"

## Lessons from a Ball Turret Gunner Interview with Bob Yowan

by Margaret Kirkpatrick

I was initially nervous to interview a World War II veteran. Admittedly, the impact of his generation made me feel slightly embarrassed of my own. I felt as if I did not deserve to hear his story. It would have been a shame if I had let this fear discourage me. For I recall during our talk shifting from nervous to grateful, from halfhearted to awestruck. My conversation with the veteran Bob Yowan has and continues to impact me in many ways.

His story brought my studies of World War II from the abstract into the tangible, and it has inspired me to live my life differently. Yowan offered his response to the question: “What advice do you have for my generation?” I found his answer to be powerfully relevant, as it speaks to a number of contemporary issues. His credibility comes from his experiences in war. These I want to share before anything else.

At age eighteen, Mr. Yowan became a ball turret gunner. The spherical firing weapon in the belly of a B-17 bomber was a dangerous position in the Army Air Force, and Yowan nearly met death in one. A “screw up in timing” led to Yowan’s plane getting shot down, along with two thirds of his squadron. He narrowly escaped with a parachute, and landed on a farm in Belgium. The next day he was transferred to a field hospital where his wound was treated. This was on Christmas day, 1944.

Yowan told me his story with a spirit of hope and gratitude. His war experience sparked no resentment. Instead, he claimed that it helped him to develop certain values, and advised that my generation practices them as well. Yowan mentioned the importance of family, associating with good and “competent” people and developing strong moral principles. I am especially interested in the last of these, as I feel it holds unique relevance in my time. Particularly amid the challenge of Covid 19, we could merit greatly from maintaining strong morals. The pandemic has bred and uncovered a pungent division in America. There has been widespread disagreement over the correct handling, or even the legitimacy, of Covid 19.

Most agree that a divided country is weaker than a unified one. If we have found ourselves to be in the former state, Yowan’s advice may serve as a cure. A shared set of strong morals can both protect against division and help to heal from the vulnerable state that it creates.

That is one way that Yowan’s advice applies perfectly to my time. Another lies in its philosophical implications. His belief directly contradicts the modern trend of moral relativism. Relativism comes in varying degrees. In mild forms it primarily manifests itself as tolerance, which is a healthy practice. However, there is a more extreme degree that sacrifices morals all together. Our culture’s increasing preference for moral relativism may result in the latter. Yowan’s advice can protect us from this too. It warns against the deterioration of morals.

All of this is to demonstrate what struck me most about the veteran’s instruction. That is its relevance. I have hope for our future, but we are in many ways vulnerable. The rise in division and lax morals make us susceptible to mistakes. So, what Bob Yowan has said is exactly what my generation must hear. This project has rallied me to live as Yowan suggests, in the interest of my generation and generations to follow. The goal of this essay has been to spark that same motivation in others. I hope it has succeeded.

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A HUGE Mighty 8th 'CONGRATULATIONS' to ALL of our student winners and their teachers for their support in this project!

Here is what each of our winners received:

**Elementary School ~ \$100 gift card**

**Middle School ~ \$150  
(\$75 gift card to each winner since dual project)**

**High School ~ \$200 gift card**

We would love to hear your ideas and/or suggestions for future projects!

Please email me at: [ekf58@aol.com](mailto:ekf58@aol.com) or call Debra Kujawa at the Society office: 912-748-8884.

Again, thank you all!

*Eleesa Faulkner*

# THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES...

## 47TH ANNUAL 8TH AFHS REUNION

### SAVANNAH, GA ~ OCTOBER 27-31, 2021

*On the front cover, WWII veterans from left to right: Dr. Martin Raber 91BG; Bill Hennessy 447BG; Ted Kirkpatrick 379BG; Gordon Fenwick 401BG; Alfred Dusey 447BG; Allan Hallett 389BG; Max Minear 446BG; Don O'Reilly 305/491BG; William Yepes 303BG; Bill Roche 452BG; and Edward Earl Zesch 34BG.*





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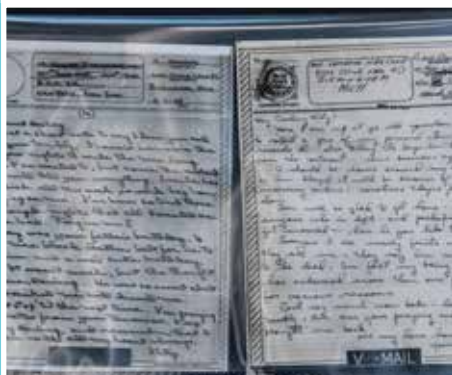














**Audette, Albert E.**, 99, a longtime resident of Woburn, died on July 5, 2021. He was the beloved husband of 75 years to Priscilla (Babs) M. (Plogman) Audette. On July 11<sup>th</sup> they



would have celebrated their 76<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

Born and raised in Pawtucket, RI, Albert was a son of the late Armand and Eva (Aubin) Audette. In 1942 at the age of 20, Al enlisted in the Army Air Force where he served with the 385<sup>th</sup> BG in Europe and earned numerous medals including distinguished flying cross medals. He was so proud to have been a part of the Army Air Force and even later being involved in the Mass Chapter of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society.

Al went on to complete and receive his bachelor's degree from Rhode Island School of Design in Engineering. For many years, Al worked as a mechanical engineer for Western Electric/AT&T until retiring in 1985.

Al was a proud member of the American Legion Post 109 and Elks BPOE #908. Al was a long-time member and usher at St. Joseph's Church. He was an avid golfer and member of numerous golf leagues, having served as President for two. When his children were young, Al volunteered as their Little League coach. He was a generous, outgoing, and determined man who was passionate about life and his beliefs. He will be greatly missed but left an imprint on all those who had the pleasure of meeting him.

Along with his wife Babs, Al is survived and will be deeply missed by his children Sharon Flynn and her husband Rodney, David Audette, and his wife Nancy, and Debra Cook and her husband Donald. Devoted Papa of Sheri Baker, Jeffrey Audette,

Jonathan Audette, Lauren Cook, Amy Lynn, and Christine Cook. Adored great-grandfather of Grace, Annabelle, Jaxon, Flynn, Chloe, and Emma. Dear brother of the late Rene and Richard Audette, Yvette Robidoux, and Dorothy Poole. Also survived by several nieces and nephews.

**Ford, Lt. General Phillip Jack, USAF (Ret)**, 77, passed away



Friday, May 28, 2021. Born in Fort Worth, TX, General Ford was active in his youth with sports and the church.

A 1961 graduate of Birdville High School of Haltom City, TX. He was inducted into The Birdville Alumni Hall of Fame in 1988. He went on to graduate from Arlington State College in 1965 with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration and Management. He was named a Little All American in football while attending. He also received a Master of Science Degree in Counseling and Human Development, Troy State University, in 1978. The General completed Squadron Officer School in 1973, Air Command and Staff College in 1978, and the National War College in 1984. In 1993, he attended the National and International Security Program, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA.

General Ford enlisted in the Air Force in 1966 and was commissioned through Officer Training School in 1967. Following graduation, he was assigned as a training officer at the Basic Military Training School, Lackland AFB, TX. In June 1969, he departed for Vance AFB, OK as a student pilot. After graduation from undergraduate pilot training and Combat Crew training at Castle AFB, CA, the General was assigned to

the 343rd Strategic Reconnaissance Squadron, Offutt AFB, NE, in September 1970.

After graduation from Squadron Officer School in April 1973, General Ford was handpicked as a 15th Air Force spotlight officer, assigned to the Reconnaissance Division, at March AFB, CA, from April 1973 to May 1974. The General volunteered and was selected for transition into the bomber community. After training as Castle AFB in California, he became a B-52 aircraft commander and instructor at the 5th Bomb Wing, Minot AFB, ND, in September 1974. The General returned to Maxwell AFB to attend Air Command and Staff College in June 1977. After graduation, he was assigned as a staff officer and Executive Officer to the Commander, Headquarters Air Force Military Personnel Center, Randolph Air Force Base, TX, from June 1978 to September 1981. General Ford followed with his first command, the 524th Bomb Squadron at Wurtsmith AFB, MI, from May 1981 to June 1983.

After command, General Ford attended the National War College at Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington D.C., from May 1983 to June 1984. Following war college, he transitioned to Headquarters U.S. Air Force as the Chief of the Strategic Offensive Forces Division, until January 1986. He returned to bombers after his headquarters assignment to serve as the Vice Commander of the 2nd Bomb Wing, Barksdale AFB, LA. In June of 1987 he became the commander of the 384th Bomb Wing, McConnell AFB, KA, until January 1989 when he assumed the duties of Inspector General and Assistant Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations for Headquarters Strategic Air Command, Offutt AFB, NE until May 1990.

He returned to Maxwell AFB as Commandant of the Air Command

# TAPS

and Staff College until June 1991, when he was assigned to Headquarters, United States Strategic Command to assume the responsibilities of Deputy Chief of Staff for Operation. In January 1992 the General transitioned to Headquarters Military Airlift Command, Scott AFB, IL, where he was the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans and Programs. He continued at Scott AFB, serving as the Director Plans and Programs during the airlift community's transition to Air Mobility Command.

In February 1994, the General returned to U.S. Strategic Command as the Director for Operations and Logistics until March 1996, when he was assigned as the Commander of Eighth Air Force, Barksdale AFB, LA. He assumed his final position as the Deputy Commander of the U.S. Strategic Command at Offutt AFB, NE in August of 1998. General Ford retired as a Lt. General in June of 2000.

His military awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal, Defense Superior Service Medal, Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, Meritorious Service Medal with two oak leaf clusters, Air Medal with oak leaf cluster, Aerial Achievement Medal, Joint Service Commendation Medal, and the Air Force Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster.

General Ford was a command pilot with more than 4,200 flying hours. Aircraft flown: KC-135R, RC-135, B-52G/H, B-1 Bomber, T/CT-39, KC-10 and the B-2 Bomber.

Upon retirement from the US Air Force, General Ford assumed the duties of the General Manager/CEO of the Brazos River Authority from April 2001 to April 2018. As general manager, he was responsible for more than 275 employees in multiple locations throughout the Brazos River

Basin, while managing the System's water supply, water treatment projects, and water quality initiatives under the direction of the 21-member Board of Directors. He made an impression on the water industry in Texas serving on numerous boards including Region G State Water Planning Committee and as President of the Texas Water Conservation Association.

General Ford was preceded in death by his father, Jack Ford, and his mother, Johnnie Lucile Ford (White) of Gustine, TX.

He is survived by his wife of 52 years, Kristen Ford (Ogden) of McGregor, son, Jeffrey P. Ford and wife, Amy of Bulverde, TX and daughter Meredith Williams (Ford) and her husband Eric of Keller, TX. He is also survived by his sister, Diana K. Starnes (Ford), and her husband, Michael of Plano, TX as well as his sister-in-law, Sandra Ogden (Allen) of San Antonio, TX. He leaves behind five beloved grandchildren, William Ford, Mary Catherine Ford, Elizabeth Ford, Phillip Williams and Kortney Williams who all lovingly called him Pawpaw. His extended family includes a nephew and two nieces and their families.

## **McClain, James Hudson**, 98, of



Waterloo, died Sunday, October 10, at MercyOne Waterloo Medical Center.

He was born March 10, 1923, in Des Moines, son

of James Henry and Ila Alice Hudson McClain. He married Sylvia May Shreeve on December 7, 1969. She died April 4, 1989.

Jim graduated from St. Mary's High School in Waterloo in 1940 and received his B A degree in Economics from the University

of Iowa in 1948. He entered the U. S. Army Air Force in 1942. He was awarded three Distinguished Flying Crosses, four Air Medals, Presidential Unit Citation and ETO Service Metal with five Battle Stars. He served until 1945 and was in the Air Force Reserves until 1973. Jim was named a Golden Eagle by the Air Command and Staff College, Maxwell Air Force Base in Alabama and in June of 2017 he was inducted into the Iowa Aviation Hall of Fame. He held sales positions with several companies following college graduation. He joined Helene Curtis Professional Division in 1958 and retired in 1990 as National Sales Manager. He then worked an additional 10 years as a sales/marketing consultant to the professional beauty industry.

Survivors include: two sisters, Patti J. Kuebler of Waterloo and Pamela Ann Kemper of Fishers, Indiana; a sister-in-law, Mary Eaton McClain of Dayton, Ohio; and many nieces and nephews.

He is preceded in death by his wife; his parents; a brother, Paul F. McClain; two brothers-in-law, Eugene John Kuebler and James Kemper; and two nephews, Kurt Kuebler and J. Robert Kemper.

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

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~  
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# A MOMENT IN TIME

## Remembering a Friend

JM Pittman, Next Gen 466th BG



*“It’s easy to be nice boys, when everything’s OK. It’s easy to be cheerful when you’re having things your way. But can you hold your head up and take it on the chin, when your heart is breaking, and you feel like giving in? It was easy back in England, among the friends and folks. But now you miss the friendly hand, the joys, and songs and jokes. The road ahead is stormy, and unless you’re strong in mind, you’ll find it isn’t long before you’re dragging far behind. You’ve got to climb the hills, boys: it’s no use turning back. There’s only one-way home, boys, and it’s off the beaten track. Remember you’re American, and when you reach the crest, you’ll see a valley cool and green, your country at its best. You know there is a saying that sunshine follows rain, and sure enough you’ll realize that joy will follow pain. Let courage be your password, make fortitude your guide; and then instead of grousing, just remember those who died.”*

(An aviators poem written on the wall of a solitary confinement cell: Dulag Luft West)  
*Anonymous*

Having survived the 466<sup>th</sup> Bomb Groups first mission to Berlin, Lieutenant Ralph Lynn (pictured right) felt like he had jumped out of the frying pan and into the fire. Mission 298 for the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force started like all the rest. Take-off, form up, and head for the continent. Crossing the German frontier 121 B-24s headed for the Junkers JU-88 aircraft plant near Oschersleben, Germany. Aboard ‘Our Baby’ Lieutenants Hayes and Lynn started the turn that would line them up on the IP.

Over the intercom, excited voices called out ‘Bandits’ as ME-109s slashed through the formation, their cannon and machine gun fire tearing holes in the thin skin of the Liberator. Ralph watched in



stunned silence as, “Two 20mm shells came through the windshield and narrowly missed Hayes. One buried itself in Malo’s parachute laying on the flight deck but didn’t explode. The other bounced into the nose where it exploded next to Cochran’s leg. The #1 and #4 engine were hit, knocking out the oil cooler and two push rods in the #4 engine... After we landed George Malo counted over 200 holes in the skin of our plane. Grant Cochran had 27 holes in his leg. (Ralph Lynn, Attlebridge Arsenal, 2005, page 127)

The days mission had seen 12 B-24s lost to enemy action. Another 63 were severely damaged. Five men had been killed, 63 wounded and 122 were listed as Missing in Action. Like hundreds of thousands of other young men, the love of aviation and the thrill of flight had brought Ralph face to face with danger and death. Like hundreds of thousands of other young men, he would face the task ahead with courage and valor. Completing their 32-mission requirement the Hayes crew returned to the United States. After a short stint as an instructor pilot, LT Lynn would finish his military career flying training missions for navigation students.

With the war over, he joined millions of service men as they returned to civilian life. Earning a master’s degree he became a teacher, then settled into a life selling textbooks, raising a family, and putting the war behind him. Retiring in 1985 Ralph now had time for a new passion in his life, photography. “Although strictly an amateur, I have mated my photography with my volunteer work as a tour guide at MAPS (Military Aviation Preservation Society) Air Museum, adjacent to the Akron/Canton Airport. My greatest joy is when I get a picture “right.” (8<sup>th</sup> AF News, December 2021, page 31). Friendly, sociable, and sporting a smile that no one could for-



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get, his photographs would find their way onto the pages of the 8<sup>th</sup> AF News.

I met Ralph in 2006 while doing research for a book. Within minutes, it was as if we had been friends for years. Kind and eager to help, his sharp mind was a treasure trove of information. Phone in hand I was making my way through a B-24. On the other end of the line ~ my new friend Ralph. Nose to tail he guided me through turrets, pulleys, hydraulic lines, instruments, cockpit controls, switches, crew stations and procedures. With the war 60 years in his past, he answered my questions with the clarity of a young co-pilot stepping off his Liberator after a long mission.

Ralph left us in March of 2016. He was a man few would forget. His family said their goodbyes and laid him to rest. His 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force family will always remember

his love of country, his commitment to keep aviation history alive, and his willingness to help others. I will always remember the friend who encouraged me to write.

He would want us to keep the history of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force alive. To gather together not just to recount the deeds of the past, but to keep alive the dream of America at its best. In a time when division and strife are the order of the day, I can almost hear him say:

*"Remember you're American, and when you reach the crest, you'll see a valley cool and green, your country at its best. You know there is a saying that sunshine follows rain, and sure enough you'll realize that joy will follow pain. Let courage be your password, make fortitude your guide; and then instead of grousing, just remember those who died."*

**JM Pittman**