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TH AF NEWS

Volume 23 Number 2 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"



49th Annual 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion ~ Ontario, CA

DETAILS INSIDE!



th AF News

Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

March 2023

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Front cover: Another incredible print from Roger Stuch: "One More Goin' Home." Pink Lady, B17G S/N 44-8846 assigned to 351stBG then briefly 305thBG. Currently on display in France.

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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 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:

**68 Kimberlys Way
Jasper, GA 30143-4769**

EDITOR'S NOTES

Perhaps like some of you, most memories I have of history classes in my youth consisted of memorizing dates. Any of these dates look familiar:

1620, 1775, 1914, 1941, 2001? Of course, they do. But simply knowing what event took place when, isn't substantive. We didn't—and still don't—really *learn* anything from history unless we dig. Really dig.

All too often we fail to understand the 'why' of an event. We gather the answers to 'who did what, when, and where' yet fall far short on determining the 'why.' When we don't know and/or understand the 'why' something took place, then as George Santayana said so succinctly, "...we are doomed to repeat it [history]."

In every issue of 8th A F News, we try to include not just historical narratives, but personal stories which allow us to feel, to understand some of the 'why.' Admittedly, many of the stories are similar. Planes are shot down. Airmen are killed. Some survive. Some become POWs. But despite the similarities, everyone's story is incredibly unique. Everyone has their own 'why.'

The Historical Society has always embraced the mission of preserving the legacy of those who have served and continue

**"History
is written backwards
but lived forwards."
— Madeleine Albright**

to serve with broad, deliberate strokes.

Recognizing as well, our focus **MUST BE** on the importance of education; encourag-

ing both young and old to go beyond the words on a page and ask the hard questions. **THIS** is the key to not only our survival as an organization, but one way to help instill critical thinking—especially within our younger generations.

We live in a world where it is not always wise to accept things at face value. As the late Madam Secretary Albright reflected on history, isn't it time for us to ask more 'whys' and learn from our past—mistakes as well as accomplishments—and focus on creating a brighter future for ourselves and generations to come?

I believe we can and must.

Hope to see you all in Ontario!!!

With love always,

Deb

Quick shout out to John Gilbert in the UK who is a bit side-lined right now. Sophie Green is volunteering in the interim. Get well soon, John!



**Please JOIN or RENEW with 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: \$60 or £50 *outside US*

Includes digital copy of 8th A F News ONLY~ *Hard copies are \$25 US or £20 outside US (annually)*

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

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.

US Residents PLEASE mail to:
8th AFHS, 68 Kimberlys Way
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JOIN/RENEW ONLINE: www.8thAFHS.org

PRESIDENT'S BRIEFING

Paul W Tibbets IV
President



Greetings everyone!

We are already halfway through the year and just four months from our get-together in California! The Society's plans for our **49th Annual Reunion** are in full swing as you will see again in this issue of AF News. We are very excited about our return to the west and our gathering in Ontario, California, October 18-22, 2023!

Thirty-five miles east of Los Angeles, Ontario is known as the "gateway to Southern California." The city has its own international airport and is near L.A. attractions, Palm Springs, Disneyland and other theme parks, as well as the mountain resorts of Lake Arrowhead and Big Bear.

As you have seen in recent correspondence, our reunion hotel is full for Wednesday night. Don't fret! We have a great option at the **Best Western Plus** right across the street, and there are plenty of rooms still available at the DoubleTree for Thursday through Saturday evening. See the revised information on p.19 of this issue or on our website. Please get your registration(s) in and join us!

The **Keep 'em Flying** giving campaign is in full swing, and we appreciate those who have stepped up and become charter members! Along with dues, this income will create a more defined and reliable source of revenue to cover all our expenses. To date we have 14 people and one bomb group association as Keep 'em

Flying Active Donors, which you can view and join on our website, <https://www.8thafhs.org/keep-em-flying-giving-campaign/>. ***Every member of your Board has accepted the challenge!*** A big shout out to the Fighting 493rd Bomb Group Association for being the first and only group so far to jump in. We humbly ask for your consideration, as well as the other bomb groups, to participate as well!

I want to remind everyone that we will hold elections to the Board during the General Membership meeting in Ontario. If any of our members would like to serve on our Board of Directors, now is the time to step up! I encourage you to give it serious thought. Read the protocol in the March 2023 8th A F News; talk to fellow Bomb Group or Chapter members and give it a go. We welcome all who wish to serve.

Thank you all for your support of our Officers, Directors, and Advisors. It is greatly appreciated. If you have anything you wish the Board to address, please reach out to any of us.

Respectfully,

Paul

Paul Tibbets
President, 8 AFHS

Ontario has an international airport!



TREASURER'S LEDGER

Anne Marek Treasurer

Greetings everyone –

I am including the financial position of the Society for the period ending April 2023. This includes the Profit and Loss Statement and Statement of Financial Position printed here. After incurring a loss last year of approximately \$90K, our investments this year have recouped approximate \$29K of that loss. Our portfolio manager, Gavin Natelli, believes that slowly it will come back. The funds and equities we hold are sound and reported substantial profits through the first quarter of 2023. In addition, through the first 4 months of this year, member contributions and donations totaled approximately \$8,000 which is on par with what we collected during the same period

last year. We are extremely grateful for the continued generosity of all our members.

To date, the Keep 'em Flying Giving Campaign has generated significant contributions from our members. Please visit our website, 8thafhs.org, to see a list of our contributing members and the level of their contributions. I want to thank all of you for giving so generously to enable this Society to continue well into the future. Details of the program are outlined in this issue. Please check it out and give it some thought to join this group of loyal supporters.

If any of you have any questions regarding any of our financial statements or the Keep 'em Flying Campaign, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. My contact information is on p. 2.

Respectfully,

Anne

Anne A. Marek
Treasurer, 8thAFHS



8th Air Force Historical Society Profit and Loss January - April, 2023

	Total
Income	
4000 Income/Miscellaneous	0.00
4001 Amazon Smile	55.26
4010 Member Dues Annual	31,716.21
4012 Magazine Subscription	8,030.00
4015 Keep 'em Flying	10,240.00
4019 Member Contributions/Donations	7,778.00
Total 4000 Income/Miscellaneous	\$ 57,819.47
4050 Investment Income	0.00
4058 Portfolio Dividends & Interest	453.98
4059 Realized Gain(Loss) on Invest	12,612.75
4060 Unrealized Gain(Loss) on Invest	15,250.50
4061 Investment Management Fees	0.00
Total 4050 Investment Income	\$ 28,317.23
Bank Adjustment BoA	0.01
Total Income	\$ 86,136.71
Gross Profit	\$ 86,136.71
Expenses	
5100 National Administration Expense	0.00
5108 Web Site Expense	610.30
5111 Corporation Charges	70.00
Total 5100 National Administration Expense	\$ 680.30
5200 Magazine Expenses	0.00
5210 Printing Expenses	2,335.66
5220 Postage Expenses	1,129.04
Total 5200 Magazine Expenses	\$ 3,465.30
5300 National Office Expenses	0.00
5303 Telephone/DSL	236.56
5304 Supplies	623.41
5305 Abila Software/ Computer Exps	674.93
5306 Accounting Support	493.10
5307 Office Rent	400.00
5312 FICA-8thAFHS portion	1,109.32
5313 Payroll/ Office Management	14,500.00
5315 Postage & Shipping	427.01
5323 Merchant Account Usage Fees	1,096.51
5326 Payroll processing fees	300.00
Total 5300 National Office Expenses	\$ 19,860.84
6690 Reconciliation Discrepancies	2,371.96
Total Expenses	\$ 26,378.40
Net Operating Income	\$ 59,758.31
Other Income	
6550 Annual Meeting Revenue	0.00
6551 Event Registration	6,230.73
Total 6550 Annual Meeting Revenue	\$ 6,230.73
Total Other Income	\$ 6,230.73
Other Expenses	
7100 Annual Meeting Expenses	0.00
7103 Hotel Expense/Catering	24,450.00
7104 Tours/Transportation	1,442.00
Total 7100 Annual Meeting Expenses	\$ 25,892.00
Total Other Expenses	\$ 25,892.00
Net Other Income	-\$ 19,661.27
Net Income	\$ 40,097.04

8th Air Force Historical Society Statement of Financial Position As of April 30, 2023

	Total
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
1017 Oppenheimer & Co	153,619.14
1040 Bank of America Checking Acct.	45,148.75
1041 B of A Deposits in Transit	0.00
1042 Bank of America Savings Acct.	32.46
Total Bank Accounts	\$ 211,800.35
Accounts Receivable	
1100 Accounts Receivable	0.00
Total Accounts Receivable	\$ 0.00
Other Current Assets	
1200 Prepaid Expenses	0.00
1201 Undeposited Funds	0.00
Total Other Current Assets	\$ 0.00
Total Current Assets	\$ 211,800.35
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 211,800.35
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Accounts Payable	
2000 Accounts Payable	0.00
Total Accounts Payable	\$ 0.00
Credit Cards	
Card Assets - Everywhere Card	0.00
Total Credit Cards	\$ 0.00
Other Current Liabilities	
2050 Payroll & Taxes Payable	-5,405.18
2051 Payroll payable	2,896.57
2052 FICA & withhold taxes payable	13,147.80
Total 2050 Payroll & Taxes Payable	\$ 10,639.19
2500 Accrued Expenses	33.48
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$ 10,672.67
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 10,672.67
Total Liabilities	\$ 10,672.67
Equity	
3100 Unrestricted Net Assets	0.00
3200 *Unrestricted Net Assets	161,030.64
Net Income	40,097.04
Total Equity	\$ 201,127.68
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$ 211,800.35



“Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign



The Board of Directors of the 8th Air Force Historical Society is kicking off an on-going Giving Campaign. Its mission is to keep our administrative functions operational. Historically it runs on a \$12-15,000 yearly deficit which has been partially covered by member donations when they send in their annual membership dues. We need the Society to have a more defined and reliable source of income.

We can accomplish our mission by establishing a group of members who are committed annually to keep the Society financially solvent. In this way, the Society will continue to preserve the legacy of our family members and loved ones who continually put their lives in danger and in some cases made the ultimate sacrifice. So please join our “Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign by becoming a Charter Member in 2023. These Charter Members will provide critical financial support for the continuation of the Society. They will receive an appreciation certificate and be recognized on our website and on their Annual Reunion nametag. The first 22 to join will also receive the limited-edition 8th AFHS Ball Cap.

All participating Leaders will receive the premier benefits of their annual membership dues of \$60 being covered, and they will receive a hard copy of AF News which is a \$25 value. Below are the different levels of membership as a part of the “Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign.

- * Level 1 – **Flight Leader** with an annual donation of \$500 will receive both premier benefits.
- * Level 2 – **Squadron Leader** with an annual donation of \$750 will receive both premier benefits plus the registration fee of \$45 to attend the Annual Reunion.
- * Level 3 – **Group Leader** with an annual donation of \$1,000 will receive both premier benefits plus the registration fee of \$45 to attend the Annual Reunion and your Rendezvous Dinner ticket.
- * Level 4 – **Wing Leader** with an annual donation of \$1,500 you will receive both premier benefits plus the registration fee of \$45 to attend the Annual Reunion, your Rendezvous Dinner ticket and your Gala Banquet ticket.

Every member of your Board of Directors has stepped up and joined! We invite you to become a Charter Member in 2023 and help us get the “Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign off to an excellent start. Please use the coupon below to enroll. We thank you for your generosity.

Make sure YOUR name is on our “Keep ‘em Flying” Leader Board @ www.8thAFHS.org
You can now easily DONATE directly online!

“Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign

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

Street: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip code: _____ Email: _____

Level 1 – Flight Leader at \$500 _____ Level 2 – Squadron Leader at \$750 _____

Level 3 – Group Leader at \$1,000 _____ Level 4 – Wing Leader at \$1,500 _____

Please check which level you are choosing and mail with your check or credit card information to:

8th Air Force Historical Society, 68 Kimbberlys Way, Jasper, GA 30143-4769.

Visa, MasterCard or American Express credit cards only.

Credit Card # _____ Exp. Date _____ Amount \$ _____

By joining the 8th AFHS “Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign and sending in this form, I hereby authorize the Society to process this application without my expressed written permission.

HOLLYWOOD 'Over Here'

by Suzie Harrison

American Battle
Monuments Commission
Cambridge American Cemetery
and Memorial

Our protagonists are now arriving in Britain, so let's follow their careers, as they come to terms with life in a country at war.

David Niven

David Niven had lived and worked in Hollywood for some years. As soon as possible, he made his way to Britain, but having been non-resident for so long, joining-up was never going to be easy. However, a chance meeting with a man in the Café de Paris, who said, "Why don't you come to the Rifle Brigade?" was a game changer. That man was Lt. Col. Bosville, Second Battalion Commander.

Yet Niven soon became bored, so he decided to apply to a new elite force being formed: the Commandos! Soon, he was travelling to Inverailort Castle, Western Highlands, which had been requisitioned by the War Office (May 1940) for use as a Special Training Centre for irregular forces. Promoted to the rank of major, Niven spent three years commanding *Phantom* 'A' Squadron, working behind the lines in France, gathering intelligence for the Allies prior to D-Day.

Picking up the strands of old friendships, Niven would often spend his R&R at Ditchley Park, Oxfordshire, owned by Anglo-American Ronald Tree,

MP and his wife, the celebrated decorator Nancy Lancaster. The official country retreat of Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Chequers, and Chartwell, his family home, were considered easy enemy targets, and so Churchill, his wife and other government officials would often spend the weekends at Ditchley. This brought Churchill and Niven together, with the ensuing conversation:

Niven, "Do you think, sir, that the Americans will ever come into the war?"

Churchill, "Mark my words--something cataclysmic will happen."

Pearl Harbor was attacked four weeks later. Reminding Churchill of the conversation at another chance meeting, Niven asked him why he said what he did. Winston replied, "Because, young man, I study history."

Around the time that Niven was preparing with *Phantom* for D-Day, he was also heavily involved as Deputy-Director Troop Broadcasting, Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme in conjunction with BBC and Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Forces (SHAEF). He became Director in October 1944.

News from Across the Pond...

Due to his being a *Hollywood chap*, he was also used as liaison for stars coming over to Europe to entertain the troops; walking the tight-rope between the BBC and SHAEF; and as a consummate PR-man. Also responsible for organizing the physical radio transmission of the various shows throughout Britain and then into Europe for the Allies.

Propaganda

Hollywood stars continued to work as actors throughout the war. Many, even those on the frontline, were released to make propaganda films. In 1942, the iconic film *First of the Few* was released starring Leslie Howard as R. J. Mitchell, the designer of the Supermarine Spitfire fighter aircraft, and David Niven as Geoffrey Crisp, a test pilot. The critics were very complimentary about both the way the film charted the history of the Spitfire and its moral handling of the subject matter. This film was also used to garner support for the British war effort, particularly in America, and released with a new title, *Spitfire*.

Above: Poster for the U.S. release version, 1942, Spitfire. RKO

Many of Hollywood's finest actors were getting involved with the making of propaganda films. Jimmy Stewart's old housemate back in the US, actor Burgess Meredith, had enlisted in the USAAF (1942). Given his fortes, Meredith was transferred to the Office of War Information, where he made training and educational films with his usual light-hearted touch. He is probably best known for *Welcome to Britain* (1943), in which he tries to explain 'over here' and the British people, to the average GI 'over there', waiting to be posted to the U. K. Akin to Stewart, he also made a recruitment short, *The Rear Gunner* (1943).

Clark Gable

Another of Stewart's close friends, Clark Gable, enlisted with the USAAF in August 1942. Born in 1901, Gable was on the upper age limit to serve.



Gable's wife, Carole Lombard, herself a famous Hollywood actress, while doing her part for the war effort by touring America on a war bond drive, warned him, "Hey, Pappy. You better get into this man's Army." Returning home in January 1942, she was killed in a plane crash. Hap Arnold, who knew Gable socially, tried to get him into the forces, but MGM would not release him. Gable volunteered anyway. Gable aspired to be a machine gunner; however, Arnold had other ideas for how to use his talents. He was directed to make a film to recruit air gunners. However, as everyone on board a

bomber had to be able to pull their weight as aircrew, Gable did indeed qualify as an aerial gunner.

He was assigned to the 351st Bomb Group at RAF Polebrook as an observer-gunner. He earned an Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross for his five missions, one of them to Germany. He had no easy ride. On one mission the aircraft suffered significant flak damage and was attacked by fighters. During the raid to Germany two crewmen were wounded, and unfortunately a third lost his life. Gable narrowly escaped when a piece of flak passed through his boot, nearly hitting his head. "The King of Hollywood" earned the respect of the men, and captured some amazing combat footage. Unfortunately, by the time the film was finished, the USAAF had the gunners it needed. Ultimately, Gable narrated and edited *Combat America* himself.

Glenn Miller

When Capt. Glenn Miller arrived in London, immediately after a devastating, post D-Day V1 rocket bombardment, he decided not to stay, but immediately relocated to Bushy Park, SHAEF HQ, to find safer accommodation. His team spoke to the US Director of Troop Broadcasting, whose deputy, Lt Col. Niven, sug-

News from Across the Pond...

gested Bedford. They transferred there on July 2, 1944, and Miller's orchestra shared the recording studio at the Bedford Corn Exchange with the BBC Symphony Orchestra (under Sir Adrian Boult). Miller succeeded in splitting his Orchestra and creating different bands to suit every occasion.



Above: David Niven as compère at an early Glenn Miller concert, Corn Exchange, Bedford, U.K, July 13, 1944. Glenn Miller and his trumbone can be seen immediately behind Niven. Hulton Deutsch

"We have been awfully busy since arriving here. During the month of August we played at 35 different bases and during our 'spare time' did 44 broadcasts. It damned near killed the guys but the reaction to the band's appearances is so great that the boys eat it up despite the ruggedness...we came merely to bring a much needed 'Hunk O' Home' to some lads who have been here a couple of years."

Glenn Miller, August 1944

Miller and the American Band of the Allied Expeditionary Forces (named by Gen. Eisenhower) had a punishing schedule, completing close to 800 individual engagements from July to December 1944. Included, were such charity events as a performance for the London Stage Door Canteen (Bing Crosby sang on the inaugural night). Miller and Dinah Shore recorded discs with HMV at Abbey Road for American and British Army charities. In addition, 83 recording sessions (29

hours) of regular radio slots were carried out between Nov. 25, and Dec. 12, 1944. Miller's music was novel in wartime Britain. Its sophistication was something special for the U.K. and Allied audiences. His bands had amazing morale boosting effects on all who heard it.

"The real enjoyment comes from the moments inside our work. Once we heard the happy sound of a music-hungry bunch of servicemen, yelling for more of whatever we had to offer, we knew that we could never enjoy a more satisfying pay-off in our lives."

Glenn Miller, September 14, 1944

Inexorably, the war moved on; and by November 1944, plans were afoot for Maj. Miller's band to move to France. He had visited Paris that month, in preparation for a six-week tour over Christmas, when the band would play for 30-40,000 fighting GIs, hence the rush to stockpile recordings. Niven felt Miller, rather than the band's manager, Don Haynes, should finalize plans in Paris. After the band's final performance in the UK in mid-December, at a farewell dinner, Miller said he was looking forward to "playing for the guys who are getting killed in the front lines." In a final letter to brother Herb, Miller said, "by the time you get this we shall be in Paris barring of course a nosedive into the Channel."

Meanwhile, Western Europe was blanketed with thick fog. The regular service flights to France from Bovington AAF-112, had a backlog of a week. Miller would be at the back of that queue.

Haynes was at Milton Ernest Hall (HQ 8AF Service Command), Bedfordshire, when he met up with Lt. Col. Norman F Baessell, who made regular cross-Channel flights in his capacity as Commandant, Headquarters Squadron, VIII AFSC. Baessell offered Miller a place on a flight to Paris. Feeling constrained by time, Miller immediately accepted. They drove to Bedfordshire to join the Colonel for a next day departure from Twinwood Farm Aerodrome, just across the road from the Hall.

At 08:00 on Dec. 15, 1944, F/O Stuart 'Pee Wee' Morgan (an experienced wartime pilot, based at Abbots Ripton) filed a flight plan from Alconbury AAF-102, via Twinwood, for Villacoublay, Paris, France – the Beachy Head route. Baessell filed and countersigned his own air transport authorization.

Meanwhile, conditions at Alconbury, which served Abbots Ripton operations, were deteriorating, so

News from Across the Pond...

Morgan was told to leave by 13:30 latest. Because of a number of small misinterpretations in the paperwork approval of Morgan's flight plan – both procedural and engineering – it was erroneously thought that he was cleared all the way to Villacoublay. As Dennis M. Spragg, the author of Miller's biography, wrote, it was '... a perfect storm of miscalculations ...' By all concerned – correct procedures were not followed.

Pictured right: Flight Officer John Robert Stuart Morgan. Glenn Miller Archive, American Music Research Center, University of Colorado, Boulder, courtesy of Edward F. Polic.



off. Stuart had been on the ground for all of four minutes.

On December 17 the weather was improving, so Haynes directed the band to fly to Paris as quickly as possible. Oddly, they arrived to discover that they were not expected. No bus or accommodations had been prepared, and Miller was not to be found. This was the first inkling that something had gone wrong.

A full search was initiated, but everyone knew that, as Maj. Gen. Orvil Anderson stated, "they have had it." The news was put under a media blackout until the military had officially

announced them to be missing. A small AAF delegation visited Helen Miller to hand-deliver the telegram stating her husband was missing. This was immediately followed up with a telephone call from Gen. 'Hap' Arnold, offering his condolences. Miller, in keeping with American Military Policy, was officially declared dead a year and a day after he disappeared. Helen Miller accepted Miller's Bronze Star, awarded posthumously, in February 1945.



Above: Example of Noorduyn C-64B "Norseman", 44-70285, 9th Air Force (with invasion stripes). Army Air Forces photo, AFHRA, courtesy of L. Milberry and N. Malayney.

Pictured below: Lt. Col. Norman F Baessell, HQ Sqn, 9th Air Force. Find a Grave Memorial ID: 56287489/HonorStates.org-25508



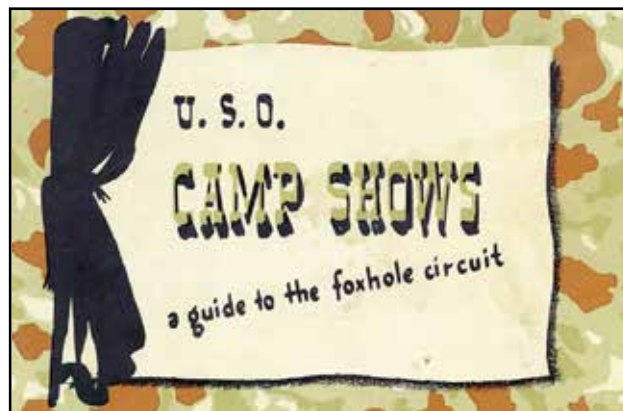
On the morning of Dec. 15, 1944, F/O Morgan repositioned his aircraft from RAF Alconbury to Twinwood, and he left the engines running while passengers Baessell and Miller boarded.

Haynes, who had

driven them out to the aircraft said, "Happy landing, good luck, and I'll see you in Paris tomorrow." Miller replied to his friend, "Thanks, Haynsie, I think we'll need it." Haynes closed the door, and the aircraft took

United Service Organization

The USO Camp Shows were the official entertainment of the U.S. armed forces. They were organized into four circuits. The Foxhole Circuit troupes headed overseas. "It [USO] directed all of its talent towards units in the field due to a shortage of acts." All of the performing production had a full supporting crew of technical staff that could put on shows anywhere, for all types of military audiences.



Above: The cover of the guide given to Foxhole Circuit performers during World War II. USO Archives

News from Across the Pond...

The hangar dances, big band concerts and visits by Hollywood stars were an integral way to boost the morale of service personnel on airfields, ships, or on the front line.



Above: Performers wore army uniform, with insignia. Example, believed from woman's USO Camp Shows Ike Jacket.

By 1942, troops were pouring overseas. Many were being stationed in Britain, and they were closely followed by USO performers. Big stars such as Bob Hope and the Andrews Sisters, eagerly volunteered their time. Indeed, Marlene Dietrich was entertaining troops in Italy, when news came through of the assault at Normandy. According to the New York Times, she gave the men the update and the crowd "went wild and whistled like mad." Dietrich went on to perform in France toward the end of 1944.

Below: Marlene Dietrich France 1944 with USO. NARA



Within a month of D-Day, USO staff were disembarking on Utah Beach. Performers lived in army conditions, wearing uniform, eating army food, and sleeping under canvas; then *glammed-up* for the performances. A service member described that first show in France.

The majority of performers were lesser-known actors, and just like the stars, had to sign official security documents. Many actors also had secondary roles, such as Marlene Dietrich who served throughout the war as a

"They were in wonderful spirits, having had a grand trip in spite of a few mishaps on the route. The engineers on the beach were more than happy to provide dinner for them, after which [they] ... put on a mammoth show right then for the boys who have been operating on that beach since D-Day. These are men who have been living in foxholes for 48 days. They certainly needed that show. This is the very first entertainment of any kind they have had. Some walked two and three miles through sand to see it."

spy for Office of Strategic Services (CIA precursor); Joe and Jane McKenna were captured by Germans in July 1944, then luckily liberated 10-days later by the Allies; Virginia Robinson made propaganda broadcasts from Italy.

By VE-Day, it was estimated that 7,300 performers had been sent overseas to provide 420,000 shows in front of 130 million service personnel. Not a bad achievement!

Jimmy Stewart



Above: Capt. James M Stewart. IWM UPL 21238

On Sept. 1, 1944, The Dance Band led by Glenn Miller was providing much needed morale-boosting entertainment at Tibenham airfield. The Commanding Officer of the adjacent 453rd Bomb Group, based at Old Buckenham, was none other than Jimmy Stewart. He saw, first-hand, what a vital role these concerts played in raising the spirits of soldiers based far from home.

While still stateside, Capt. Jimmy Stewart was Operations Officer of the 703rd Squadron, 445th Bomb Group. Within a few weeks he was promoted Squadron Commander, and it was in this position that

News from Across the Pond...

he brought his Squadron to Britain, and more specifically, Tibenham, Norfolk, on Nov. 25, 1943, after having taken the *warm weather* route across the Atlantic (Puerto Rico, Brazil, Senegal, and Morocco). He had responsibility for 420 men, with whom he maintained a friendly rapport, and twenty-four B-24 Liberator Bombers. His reputation was "... approachable ... and professional. They all knew of his other life in Hollywood, and they also knew he was a crack pilot and leader ..." He always watched out for his crews, literally, staying on the airfield until the last bombers had returned from missions.



Above: Capt Jimmy Stewart at Tibenham airfield. IWM UPL 13138

After six months and a number of missions with the 445th Bomb Group, Stewart was promoted to major, then moved ten miles up the road to Old Buckenham, to be Operations Officer for the 453rd Bomb Group. He was a very capable leader, confident in his own abilities, which inspired his men, so that when he asked them to go on a particular mission, the men recognized that he truly understood what he was asking of them. They knew him to be a calm, yet accomplished combat pilot.

Stewart made two propaganda films: *Winning Your Wings* (1942), a recruitment film for the USAAF and *Tunisian Victory* (1944), an Anglo-American propaganda film about the victories in the North Africa Campaign. However, he very much concentrated on the job at hand while in Britain, only occasionally taking a weekend pass to visit Niven's home.

Woodrow W. Cole

'Woody' Cole, like Stewart, was in Britain flying with the USAAF. He and his wife Meg, a USO volunteer, were only able to enjoy snatched weeks of married life stateside, while he continued his training as a Bombardier. Once completed, 2nd Lt. Woodrow W. Cole was shipped overseas to Shipdham, Norfolk, assigned to the 67th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group. Cole arrived in September 1943, earning a promotion to first lieutenant in December.

On Jan. 21, 1944, Cole was flying aboard the *Liberty Belle*, commanded by Pilot 1st Lt. Keith Cookus. On that day, the aircraft had more than its usual 10-man compliment. Command Pilot Maj. William N. Anderson (on his 25th mission) was aboard, plus Group Gunnery Officer and Group Bombardier as observers. Cole was Cookus's bombardier. They had set an altitude of 12,000 feet to assure better accuracy on what was a small target: the V-1 sites at Agathe d'Aliermont, France, where bombing was required to be particularly accurate over allied lands. They encountered cloud cover over the target, and, after five attempts they turned for home, with their bombs intact.

Just as they crossed the French coast, they ran into concentrated fire from mobile coastal anti-aircraft artillery. *Liberty Belle* was hit seven times and virtually destroyed. The bomb bay was ripped apart; Maj. Anderson was mortally wounded; Trechel, at the Radio Operators table had been blown out of the aircraft; engine #1 was destroyed, along with half of engine #2, plus the controls; engine #3 was on fire, but they needed its power to keep the aircraft flying to the English coast. The group bombardier and gunnery officers bailed out but were blown back to France and captured.

As Cookus concentrated on flying the aircraft, a seriously injured Cole had crawled into the bomb bay, bracing against any solid piece of the ruined plane because the catwalk no longer existed, and attempting to dislodge and remove the shattered bombs by hand. He could not clear them all and moved forward to make a situation report to Cookus before collapsing on the aircraft floor.

Just as they entered the safety of English airspace, the remaining crew were debating a crew bailout. However, at that moment engine #3 exploded! 1st Lt. Cookus immediately began searching for a landing site, and as the aircraft descended below 50 feet (above ground level) he turned off all electronics, made a turn to avoid a farmhouse, and crash-landed *Liberty Belle* on

News from Across the Pond...

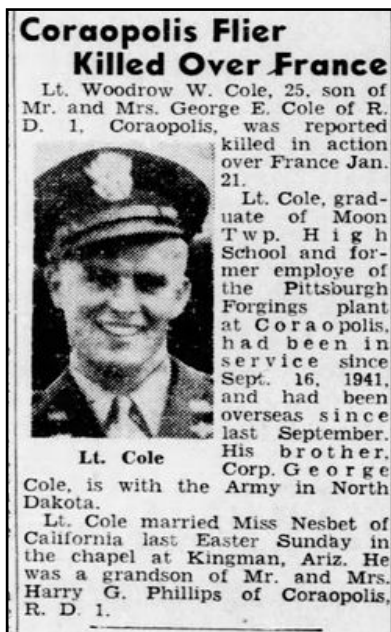
its belly. The stricken aircraft came to rest in a ditch at Wingham, Kent.



Above: B-24 42-99970, Liberty Belle, crash landed at Wingham, Kent. IWM FRE 9026

Some men were wedged inside the wreckage. Cole was crushed on the flight deck floor by the impact. Those who could, freed themselves, and tried to build barriers between the burning engines and fuel, and the trapped crew, using soil, the only thing on hand. The fire brigade arrived to quench the fires, but it took three-hours to cut and pull the wreckage free and release the men. Sadly, it was too late for Cole, who had succumbed to his injuries.

Meg, still a bride, had become a widow at the age of 20.



Merit, honoring his work in setting up SHAEF's Allied Expeditionary Forces Programme. He was a great

raconteur, but rather prone to exaggeration, and borrowing stories. However, it would be churlish to detract from what was the laudable service career of a man who went on to become an international movie star. Niven, was indeed, larger than life!



Photo above right: Meg Nisbet (Right) and movie star, Jane Russell, photographed sometime in the early 1950s.

Stewart had enlisted as a private, and finished his wartime service a colonel, earning a Distinguished Flying Cross with Oak Leaf Cluster; Air Medal with 3 Oak Leaf Clusters; six campaign stars for service in the European Theater of Operations; plus, the French Croix de Guerre. Stewart returned to civilian life and remained in the USAF Reserves, where he rose to Brigadier General. Here was no matinee idol!



Photo above: Courtesy, Alamy Stock Photos

Hollywood film, *The Glenn Miller Story* (1954), is still available today. The similarity of Stewart to Miller is remarkable. They met a number of times, and Stewart's experience of several hangar concerts must have lent authenticity to the film and his portrayal.

The name of Miller, along with those of Morgan and Baessell are inscribed on the Cambridge Wall of the Missing. Cole is buried in the Cambridge plots (D-1-35). ABMC will never forget the service, achievements, and sacrifice of these brave American Hollywood patriots.

CHAPTER NEWS

8th Air Force Historical Society Oregon Chapter 13 August 2022

Edited and photos by:
Joan E. Hamilton



Our August 2022 presentation was an interview of Lt. Col. Frank Heyl (*pictured above seated left*) by Tom Davis (*pictured above holding mic*). Lt. Col. Heyl served his 40-year military career in the U.S. Army Air Force, U.S. Air Force Reserves, and Army National Guard. He flew B-25s on submarine patrols during WWII and flew C-46s in Korea, and helicopters in the National Guard. For 23 years, he was principal instructor and director for training with both military and contract survival schools. During the Alaska pipeline project, he collaborated on the pamphlet, *Staying Alive in the Arctic* and also wrote the book, *Why Some Survive: Common Threads of Survival*, with Richard O. Woodfin, Jr.

Born in White Salmon, Washington, Frank Heyl enlisted in 1943 after graduating from high school. He'd wanted to be a Navy carrier pilot. When he passed the Navy written exam, but not the physical, he was directed to the Army recruiting officer where he was told they'd take anything. Here are excerpts from his presentation.

According to Lt. Col. Frank Heyl, "Off I went into the Army Air Force into the Aviation Cadet Program and flew the PT-17, T-6, and

the AT-10. Because we had too many pilots in 1943, I was sent to OTU, Overseas Training Unit, in B-25s. Everybody wanted to fly fighters, but my instructor pointed out if you flew a twin-engine airplane and lost one engine the other engine would get you to the scene of the crash.

I wanted to be in the 8th Air Force because they were the big bomber command in Europe but was sent to the 5th Air Force in the South Pacific. I did get to meet and shake hands with Jimmy Doolittle along with about 300 other retirees.

I served in Okinawa in the last three months of the war. My missions were flying a B-25 as a sub hunter. Looking for subs, we never flew over 300 feet above the water. On one mission our navigator was sitting in the 'greenhouse' and called, 'Sub.'

It was just breaking daylight and I could see it on the horizon getting ready to submerge and so we opened up on it. When we circled back, the navigator said, "You know, there ain't many subs made out of lumber."

We'd hit a banana crate. On a good mission, you got a bomb painted on your plane, but I had a banana crate painted on the side of ours.

Promotions became slow for me.

I liked the money I made in the military--more than I made as a grocery stock boy--and told the personnel officer I'd really like to stay in after WWII ended, 'What's the first thing I do?'

He said, 'See a psychiatrist. 'If that doesn't work, see the chaplain.'

In the meantime, I got a job with Portland Public School and then a letter from the President, "Greetings. You've been recalled to go to Korea."

Within six months, I got married, graduated from college, and shipped off to Korea where I flew forty-nine missions in C-46s. On one of my early flights into Korea with the paratroopers at night, I asked about the lightning storm I'd observed, but was told, 'That's known as the 38th Parallel. That's Chinese and North Korean fire.'

I thought, "What are we doing here with an unarmed aircraft?!"

After I'd finished my combat missions and tour in Korea, I stayed in the military and my wife joined me as I was stationed in Japan. I became a flying safety officer as well as a ground transportation officer.



I purchased a red kimono and wondered why everyone was making way for me and bowing as I walked down the street only to be told by my houseboy, "Only Shinto Priests wear red."

When we came home, I signed up with the Air Force Reserve and then later joined the Army National Guard and was trained to fly Hueys and assigned to fly search-and-rescue which included missions off of Mt. Adams and Mt. Hood. I met Dick Woodfin, a U.S. Forest Service research analyst who tracked every injury and evacuation by aircraft or death in a national forest and we wrote *Why Some Survive: Common Threads of Survival From Accounts of Survival and*

Tragedy in the Outdoors. One of the greatest stories we wrote about in the book was a four-and-a-half-month-old baby girl who was found alive in a snow cave with her parents after five days near Bagby Hot Springs. Sadly, her mother did not survive, and her father lost parts of his toes due to frostbite. This book gives the procedure for cold weather dress.

I retired from the military on July 19, 1983, forty years to the day after enlisting in 1943, as a lieutenant colonel. The secret to longevity is eat your veggies, exercise, lie about your age and every morning when you wake up laugh and say, "Ah, I cheated death again!"

(Photo this page showing Lt. Col Heyl draped in his Quilt of Valor with Tom Davis.)

Remembering Honor, Heritage, and Sacrifice

B-24 Liberator Keepsake

On Behalf of the

392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association

This ornament is the perfect year-round gift for any B-24 enthusiast! Small enough (3¾" wide x 2" high) to easily mail to relatives or friends, yet large enough to be immediately recognized as a Liberator. One (or more) will look great on your bookshelves or wherever you display your Bomb Group keepsakes. ***They're not just for Christmas!***

Hand-crafted in the USA from fine pewter. Only \$20 each with free domestic shipping; \$30 (includes shipping) for international orders. Click or copy and paste the link below for convenient online ordering!

<https://www.b24.net/itemsForSale.htm>

Send check or money order to:

**Payable to —> 392nd BGMA
Bill McCutcheon
20620 Milton Ct
Brookfield, WI 53045**



49th Annual 8th AFHS Reunion

Ontario, CA

October 18-22, 2023



Thirty-five miles northeast of Los Angeles, Ontario is known as the “gateway to Southern California.” The city has its own international airport and is near L.A. attractions, Palm Springs, Disneyland and other theme parks, as well as the mountain resorts of Lake Arrowhead and Big Bear. While in Ontario, visitors can shop for antiques, find bargains at Ontario Mills shopping center, tour Graber Olive House, have fun at Scandia Amusement Park and visit the local Museum of History and Art.

It takes its name from the Ontario Model Colony development established in 1882 by the Canadian engineer George Chaffey and his brothers William Chaffey and Charles Chaffey. They named the settlement after their home province of Ontario.

While Ontario will serve as the home base for our reunion this year, you might consider arriving a day or two early or staying over a couple of extra days to enjoy all that Ontario and the surrounding area has to offer!

Thursday, October 19, 2023 tour:
Board at 8:15am depart~8:30am
Tour is all-inclusive:
admission and LUNCH!

March Field Air Museum

At March, they like to say, “It’s an airshow every day!” And they’re right!

Explore humanity’s reach for the skies, and the pivotal role of Riverside’s historic March Field in the development of flight. See early aircraft including the 1903 pioneer which launched the era of powered flight, World War II bombing icons and Cold War fighters, an



MQ-1 Predator, and more. There is truly something for everyone in your family at the March Field Air Museum.

March Field Air Museum displays nearly 80 historic aircraft spanning nearly 100 years of aviation history. Their collection includes examples ranging from the frail fabric covered bi-planes of the First World War, to the sleek jet fighters of today, from the rugged helicopters of the Vietnam period to the futuristic unmanned aerial vehicles of tomorrow’s battlefields.

More than five decades after its development, the sleek, futuristic Lockheed SR-71 “Blackbird” remains the fastest air-breathing, manned aircraft in the world. Designed by Lockheed engineers assigned to the Advanced Development Program under the leadership of Kelly Johnson, one of the twentieth century’s most inspired aircraft designers, the SR-71 filled a desperate need for reliable

strategic reconnaissance during the Cold War. The

Blackbird’s unique design evolved from the challenges of meeting the goal of operating beyond the range of interception in both speed and altitude. In 1976, more than ten years after its first flight the SR-71 set two world records for its class with a speed of 2,193.167 mph and an altitude of 85,068.997 feet.

Next stop on our tour:



Planes of Fame Museum

The story of the Planes of Fame Air Museum (*borrowed from their website*) is the story of one man’s vision.

Ed Maloney knew that protecting our aviation history was important. At a time when very few shared his foresight, he understood the need to preserve, inspire, educate, and honor the legacy of what was then an industry less than half a century old.

Today, his vision is reflected in

the extensive collection of the Planes of Fame Air Museum, comprising

aircraft and artifacts that might have been lost forever. His vision lives in the roar and thunder of rare war-



birds flying overhead to the delight of millions. Moreover, his vision perseveres through the efforts of our volunteers and staff to make the experience of each visitor to the Museum unique and memorable.

The Planes of Fame Air Museum collection now numbers close to 160 aircraft. The majority of these are maintained in pristine condition and are on display throughout the Museum. At the heart of the collection are the warbirds of the Second World War. These include aircraft from all sides of the battlefield. We enter the jet age with examples from the Korean War, the Vietnam War, and several important test aircraft of the period.



**Friday, October 20, 2023 tour:
Board at 8:45am~depart at 9:00am
Tour is all-inclusive:
admission and LUNCH!**



Palm Springs Air Museum

The Palm Springs Air Museum is a living history museum dedicated to educating the public about the role Air Power played in preserving American liberties and way of life. The Museum preserves, exhibits, and flies aircraft from World War Two, Korean War, Vietnam War and the Global War on Terror. A good portion of the aircraft in the collection are in flyable condition.

In addition to flyable and static aircraft, the Museum uses permanent and temporary exhibits, related artifacts, artwork, and library sources to perpetuate American History.

Many of their docents are veterans and are willing to share their experiences and sacrifices for the education of future generations.

**Saturday, October 21, 2023
Board at 10:45am~depart 11:00am
Enjoy lunch on your own!**

L A Farmer's Market & Hollywood Highlights

Fred Beck & Roger Dahlhjelm wanted to build a "Village" at the corner of 3rd & Fairfax where local farmers could sell their fresh fare. E.B. Gilmore agreed to give it a go. In July 1934, a dozen farmers and a few other merchants parked their trucks at the corner of 3rd & Fairfax and sold their fresh produce from the back of the trucks.

By October 1934, mere months after it opened, farmers and merchants, including restaurants, grocers and service providers, were moving into permanent stalls and the new Farmers Market was so popular that its founders staged a celebration, the first Fall Festival at Farmers Market.

While it grew to be a must-see destination for travelers from around the world, Farmers Market was always the favorite place for L.A. families to shop for groceries.

Hollywood and Farmers Market have been best friends for more than 85 years. During a fundraiser for the

Red Cross in 1936, many stars worked behind the counters at Farmers Market shops. Shirley Temple, the nation's top box office draw, drew a large and adoring crowd at



Brock's Candies.

Enjoy choosing among the fabulous food options for lunch or simply browse the thousands of items for sale, L. A.'s Farmer's Market has a rich colorful past and present, you won't want to miss.



After lunch and shopping you will re-board your bus for a driving tour of Hollywood. You'll also have an opportunity to see the stars on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in front of Grauman's Chinese Theatre. Great stop for photos!



49th Annual 8th AFHS REUNION

DoubleTree by Hilton, Ontario Airport, CA

October 18-22, 2023

REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

STOP!

◇ **RESERVE YOUR HOTEL ROOM FIRST!**

The reunion hotel has a liberal cancellation policy—in the event you are unable to attend the reunion, you will be able to cancel your reservation without penalty within 72 hours of your scheduled check-in time. However, if you wait until the last minute to book your room reservation, you may not receive the reunion rate or rooms may no longer be available at the reunion hotel.

Canceling your hotel reservation does NOT cancel your reunion activities.

◇ **COMPLETE THE REGISTRATION FORM**

Please fill out the registration form completely.

- ⇒ Fill out your name as you wish it to be on your name tag—and for up to 3 guests registering with you. The principle attendee **MUST** be a current member of the Society to register for the reunion. You may JOIN and/or RENEW directly on the registration form. If you are a veteran, and/or affiliated with a bomb or fighter group, please indicate which group.
- ⇒ ALL meals are priced separately. Please note: Breakfast is on your own! Be sure and select your choice of entrée if you plan on attending the Saturday evening gala.
- ⇒ There are three [3] tour options available during the reunion. Please read the information [here in this issue] on each tour and then make your selection on the form. **Tours have limited seating and are filled on a first come first available basis.**

◇ **MAIL IN YOUR REGISTRATION FORM**

Once you have completed your registration form, please total up the amount owed and include a check, money order, or credit card information on the form, payable to the **8th AFHS** and mail to:

**8th AFHS
68 Kimberlys Way
Jasper, GA 30143-4769**

Or you may **SCAN** your registration form if paying by credit card
[a 3% convenience fee will be added]
and then

—> **EMAIL** to:

ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org

ALL registration forms **MUST** be **received** by **September 23, 2023** in order to guarantee your place.
If you have any questions or problems in completing your registration, please contact:

**Debra Kujawa
Managing Director
8th AFHS
912-748-8884**

ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org

ALL reunion information and forms are available on our website: 8thAFHS.org



49th Annual 8th AFHS REUNION

DoubleTree by Hilton Ontario Airport ~ Ontario, CA

October 18-22, 2023

IMPORTANT HOTEL INFORMATION—PLEASE READ!

DoubleTree*

(800) 222-8733

(Reference 'Air Force Historical' for group rate)
or **ONLINE** hotel reservation link on our website:

www.8thafhs.org

*Our block with the DoubleTree is currently **FULL** on **Wednesday, Oct. 18th ONLY!!!** There are rooms still available on that day, but **NOT** at the reunion rate. We still have plenty of rooms available in our block Oct. 16-17, & Oct. 19-23.

Location

The DoubleTree by Hilton Ontario Airport is located at 222 North Vineyard Avenue, Ontario CA, 91764

Shuttle Service

For those of you flying into **Ontario International Airport**, there is complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport to the hotel. To use the shuttle **TO** the DoubleTree, you **MUST** call for pickup:

909-937-0900 option #0

If You Drive

Overnight self-parking is \$16.75 (inclusive) per day.

RESERVATION INFORMATION

Group Name: *8th Air Force Historical Society*

Reunion Dates: October 18-22, 2023

Rate: \$179+14% = \$204.06 per night. Rates are offered 3 days prior and 3 days post reunion based on availability.

Cut off Date: 9/23/2023

Cancellation Policy: All reservations have a 72 hour cancellation policy, or attendee will be charged one night room rate plus tax.

WHEELCHAIR RENTALS

ScootAround: (888) 441-7575 or ScootAround.com
Reserve chair rentals early!

Best Western Plus

(909) 937-6800 (front desk)

(Reference '8th Air Force Historical Society' for group rate)

You may wish to reserve a room on Wednesday, and then relocate to the DoubleTree on Thursday, or continue your stay at the Best Western Plus.

Location

**Directly across the street from
the DoubleTree Hotel!**

Best Western Plus Ontario Airport is located at 209 North Vineyard Avenue, Ontario CA, 91764

Shuttle Service

For those of you flying into **Ontario International Airport**, there is complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport to the hotel. To use the shuttle **TO** Best Western Plus, you **MUST** call for pickup:

909-937-6800

If You Drive

Overnight self-parking is **COMPLIMENTARY**.

RESERVATION INFORMATION

Group Name: *8th Air Force Historical Society*

Reunion Dates: October 18-22, 2023

Rate: \$129 (K)+13.75%=\$142.75*
\$139 (2Q)+13.75%=\$158.11*

**Includes breakfast*

Cut off Date: 10/11/2023

Cancellation Policy: Reservations **MUST** be cancelled by 4pm day of arrival, or attendee will be charged one night room rate plus tax.

PLEASE contact ME ASAP with any questions!

Debra Kujawa

Managing Director

912-748-8884

ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org



REUNION SCHEDULE

49th Annual 8th AFHS REUNION

DoubleTree by Hilton Ontario Airport ~ Ontario, CA

October 18-22, 2023

Wednesday, October 18

8:00am — 5:00pm	Reunion Registration open
6:00pm — 7:00pm	Welcome Reception, followed by dinner on your own
7:00pm — 9:00pm	8th AFHS Board Meeting
7:00pm — until	Hospitality Suites remain open throughout reunion

Thursday, October 19

7:30am — 8:30am	Breakfast on your own*
8:00am — 5:00pm	Reunion Registration open TBD**
8:30am — 4:30pm	<i>March Field Air Museum & Planes of Fame Museum ~ Includes Lunch</i>
6:00pm — 9:00pm	Cash Bar Open
7:00pm — 9:00pm	Buffet dinner and program: <i>Greg Stathatos ~ B-17 Archaeology Founder</i>

Friday, October 20

7:30am — 8:30am	Breakfast on your own
8:00am — 5:00pm	Reunion Registration TBD
7:45am — 8:45am	Group Meetings
9:00am — 4:00pm	<i>Palm Springs Air Museum ~ Includes Lunch</i>
6:00pm — 9:00pm	Cash Bar Open
7:00pm — 9:00pm	Rendezvous Dinners

Saturday, October 21

7:30am — 8:30am	Breakfast on your own
8:00am — 5:00pm	Reunion Registration TBD
8:45am — 10:15am	General Membership Meeting
12:00pm — 4:00pm	8th AFHS Board Meeting
11:00am — 4:30pm	<i>L. A. Farmer's Market & Hollywood [Includes Grauman's Chinese Theatre]</i>
6:00pm — 9:00pm	Cash Bar Open
7:00pm — 10:00pm	Gala Dinner and Program ~ <i>Col Erik L Aufderheide, USAF AFRC 452</i>

Sunday, October 22

7:30am — 8:30am	Breakfast on your own
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****Breakfast is NOT included in our reunion package...please check times with hotel.***

*****TBD Registration may be closed during the time scheduled
for certain tours and/or group meetings.***

Please pick up registration packets at your earliest convenience.

****It is important that you be in the bus boarding area***

at least ten [10] minutes prior to the scheduled departure times.

All tours require a minimum of 45 participants, unless otherwise stated.

Staff gratuities ARE included in the tour prices ~ Please remember to tip your driver!



REGISTRATION FORM

49th Annual 8th AFHS REUNION

DoubleTree by Hilton, Ontario Airport, CA
October 18-22, 2023

REGISTRATION CUT-OFF DATE IS September 23, 2023 (NO refunds on cancellations past this date)	Price p/p	# of People	TOTAL
DUES: The principal attendee MUST be a CURRENT member of the 8th AFHS to register for this reunion. If you are NOT CURRENT , or a member, please pay your yearly dues here:	\$ 60	#	\$
REGISTRATION FEE (non-refundable): EVERY attendee MUST pay registration fee	\$ 45	#	\$
<u>DINNERS</u>			
Thursday, Oct 19: Dinner Buffet ~ Chef's delightful favorites welcoming you to California!	\$ 60	#	\$
Friday, Oct 20: Rendezvous Dinners—Rosemary Infused Chicken & all the trimmings!	\$ 55	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 21: GALA Banquet (Please select one entrée per person)			
Grilled Flat Iron Steak (beef) with red wine jus de veau and sides	\$ 55	#	\$
Pepper Crusted Salmon (seafood) with amazing sides	\$ 55	#	\$
Vegetarian, vegan, gluten free, etc—Please indicate type: Thurs ____ Fri ____ Sat ____	\$ 55	#	\$
TOUR OPTIONS: <u>LUNCH INCLUDED</u> on Thursday & Friday!			
Thursday, Oct 19: 8:30am-4:30pm ~ March Field Air Museum & Planes of Fame ~ Includes LUNCH*	\$ 44*	#	\$
Friday, Oct 20: 9:00am-4:00pm ~ Palm Springs Air Museum ~ Includes LUNCH*	\$ 60*	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 21: 11:00am-4:30pm ~ L A Farmer's Market & Hollywood ~ LUNCH ON YOUR OWN!	\$ 40	#	\$
Total amount payable to: 8th AFHS			\$

Please PRINT. If registering a veteran, please list their name, first. **MAXIMUM of FOUR [4] persons per registration form!**

MEMBER NAME (for name tag): _____ **WWII VETERAN?** _____

BG/FG Affiliation (for Rendezvous Dinner seating) _____ **Post WWII Veteran:** _____ (**Branch of Military:** _____)

ADDRESS: _____ **CITY:** _____ **STATE:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

DAYTIME PH #: _____ **EMAIL:** _____

SPOUSE or GUEST #1: _____

GUEST #2: _____ **GUEST #3:** _____

ADDRESS if different from above: _____ **CITY:** _____ **STATE:** _____ **ZIP:** _____

DAYTIME PH # if different from above: _____ **EMAIL:** _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT: _____ **PH #:** _____

PLEASE INDICATE IF YOU WILL BE USING A WHEELCHAIR ON TOURS: _____ **NEED HYDRAULIC LIFT?:** _____

IF PAYING BY CREDIT CARD — M/C; VISA; or AmEx (**a 3% convenience fee will be added**):

CARD #: _____ **EXP. DATE:** _____

SIGNATURE: _____

Your contact information will only be shared with attendees.

MAIL completed form with check or credit card info to: 8th AFHS ~ 68 Kimberlys Way ~ Jasper, GA 30143-4769

IF paying by credit card, you may SCAN and email form to: ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org

Questions? PLEASE CALL: (912) 748-8884

The Wright Stuff

Part II

'Small Steps to Giant Leaps'

by David Levitt

Most Americans are well aware that the Wright brothers, Wilbur and Orville, invented then flew the first successful powered aircraft. Few, however, know that the United States' first Army airplane was designed and built by the Wright brothers. The US army actually bought additional Wright aircraft up to and including the First World War. Part I of *"The Wright Stuff"* published in the December issue of the 8th AF News, described the challenges that Wilbur and Orville faced and overcame to create and fly their 1903 Flyer I, the world's first successful powered airplane. Part II in this issue, continues their saga with their difficulties and perseverance to build, test fly, and sell military Flyers to the United States Army and other customers.

The Wright brothers were cheering on March 23, 1908. After years of getting turned down trying to sell a Flyer (the name they gave their powered aircraft) to the U S Army, Wilbur and Orville had just received a pending contract for selling their plane to a French syndicate, this, coming only weeks after finally getting a pending contract from the US Army on February 8, 1908.

Six months later, on September 17, 1908, with securing delivery of their flyer to the US Army within their grasp, tragedy struck. At the tail end of the demonstration flight—which was being held above Fort Myer, Virginia, just across the Potomac River from Washington, DC, a propeller disintegrated with Orville as the pilot. The aircraft plummeted to the ground. Orville was pulled

out of the wreckage severely injured. Observer, Army Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge, the passenger, died about three hours later from a skull fracture. This was the first fatality in history from a powered flight.

The Wright siblings responded with their typical form of true grit. Katharine, the brothers' younger sister, a schoolteacher in Dayton, Ohio (their hometown), rushed by train over 400 miles to be by Orville's side for moral

support and to oversee his medical treatments. She also succeeded in negotiating a one-year extension with the US army for the expedition flights.

Photo left moments after crash.

A friend visiting in the hospital asked Orville, "Has it got your nerve?"

"Nerve?" a perplexed Orville responded, "Oh, you mean will I be afraid to fly again?" The feisty Orville emphatically stated,

"The only thing I'm afraid of is that I can't get well enough for the Army's flying tests next year!"

Orville was the proverbial cat with nine lives. He managed to survive eight major air crashes and dozens of minor ones.

Photo left Katharine ready to fly.

Wilbur was in France at the time of Orville's accident. He was overseas to dispel rumors that the brothers never flew and to drum up customers to buy their aircraft in Europe. Wilbur was deeply disturbed by his brother's crash.

He doubled up his efforts in the ensuing days and weeks to set new altitude and flying endurance records. Wilbur won the prestigious Commission of Aviation prize and the Michelin Cup.



By March 1909, Orville had convalesced enough for he and Katherine to join Wilbur in France. Due to their stupendous flying skill and advanced aircraft capabilities, the three Wright siblings became major international celebrities. While French aviators were barely getting off the ground, Wilbur was flying for extended periods and doing complex, difficult maneuvers for 1909, such as flying tight circles and figure eights.

When Wilbur, Orville, and Katharine returned to the United States on May 13, 1909, they were personally presented with medals and awards from President Taft.

That summer Orville flew the demonstration flights for the US Army at Fort Myer, Virginia. On July 27, 1909, with Army Lieutenant Benjamin Foulois (a future pilot as his passenger), Orville passed the Army's flying demonstration requirements with flying colors. On August 2nd, the US army purchased the Army Aeroplane No.1 (also known as the Wright Military Flyer type A and Signal Core No.1) from Wilbur for the specified

\$25,000 plus a \$5000 bonus for flying two mph faster than the required 40 mph. That aircraft remained in frontline service for two years for training pilots and observation use. In 1911 the War Department donated their first military Wright Flyer to the Smithsonian Institute where it still can be viewed today.

As part of the agreement with the US military, Wilbur and Orville trained army pilots. Among the flying school's students was a young and talented, ambitious army officer named Henry 'Hap' Arnold. 'Hap' rose through the ranks so that the War Department General Staff was organized in March 1942 Arnold, by then a Lt. General, became commanding general of Army Air Forces. In March 1943 he was promoted to four-star general, retiring in 1946. On May 7, 1949, Hap Arnold was appointed the first general of the Air Force, five-star rank by Congress.

The Military Flyer quickly proved its value as an observation platform and pilot trainer. In short order, Wright aircraft were put to use in other military capacities. By January 1911, bombs were dropped on targets. On June 7, 1912, a machine gun was fired from a Wright flyer model B. Model B and later Flyers had elevators: small wings that pivot up and down placed on their tails

instead of on the noses, as had been the style of the earlier Flyers.

The US Navy also bought a single 1911 Wright Flyer model B. The Navy called it the B-1. When taking off from the water, it was fitted with pontoons. The Navy paid the Wright brothers \$5000 to build the B-1 and to train pilots to fly it. Young naval aviator, Lieutenant John Rogers, flew that plane all over Maryland, including the National Mall, Havre de Grace, and College Park. Most of the first naval aviators were trained on the Severn River across from the Naval Academy at



Lt. Henry "Hap" Arnold, who learned to fly from the Wright Brothers, sits in his airplane in College Park, Maryland, in 1911. (Air Force)

Annapolis, Maryland. An exact reproduction of that B-1, built by the "Wright Experience" now hangs in Dahlgren Hall of the US Naval Academy. The "Wright Experience", a working museum, is in Warrenton, Virginia, under the direction of Ken Hyde, a former airline pilot. The museum's staff recreates Wright brothers' aircraft.

Prior to the First World War, the army bought about a dozen Wright Flyers. The last one, the 1914 Flyer model F, the "Tin Cow",

had a rudimentary fuselage in front of the wings, elevators on the tail, and wheels for landing gear. It, however, still had dual pusher chain driven propellers behind the biplane wings.

There was a rash of U.S. Army Wright aircraft fatal crashes in 1912 and 1913. To help the pilots to avoid climbing too steeply, Orville worked with the army to equip their aeroplanes with an automatic stabilizer—a rudimentary flight indicator warning device to prevent aeronautical stalls and inadvertent dives. A U.S. government investigation later stated that the Wright Flyer model C was "dynamically unsuited for flying." The US army and Navy stopped their use of aircraft with pusher type propellers. The last Wright aircraft design, the model L, had an engine and propeller in its nose along with a full fuselage.

During World War One, the Wright Aircraft Manufacturing Company produced the De Havilland DH-4, an excellent World War One era British design under license. These American made aircraft had the famous Liberty engines that were designed by Orville and other engineers.

The Wright Aircraft Engine Company during the 1930s and WWII, manufactured their nine-cylinder air cooled

radial Wright 1820 engines. Many thousands of these engines were used in B-17s and other WWII aircraft. In 1937 the first three Y1B-17s (the very first production B-17s), made a flyby over Kitty Hawk as a tribute to the Wright brothers.

In just one decade the Wright brothers went from requesting information and publications about aeronautics from the Smithsonian Institute in 1899 to selling an aircraft to the US army in 1909. Going from concept to research and development, to construction of a prototype, to test flights, to revisions, to production aircraft, to marketing, to having a sale in 10 years, is a respectable time frame for a modern-day aircraft. It is utterly amazing what the Wright brothers accomplished without computers, slide rules, volumes of previous data, and a slew of aeronautical engineers.

All the Wright brothers had were a handful of pioneer aviators with flimsy, frail hang gliders and a few power aircraft with far too heavy engines that were worse at flying than the hang gliders with very short airborne hop attempts and no flying control. The only formula for calculating lift was antiquated and erroneous. Aeronautical engineering did not exist in 1903. The Wright brothers invented it.

Wilbur and Orville had brilliant analytical minds, resourcefulness, mechanical ability, and resilience. To the local people in Dayton, they were known as the Bishop's Boys. Milton Wright, their father, was a Bishop in the United Brethren Church. The Wright patriarch installed in his children not only religion, a strong sense of family, and distrust of outsiders, but also the idea that learning from adversity is God's way of giving us a means to become stronger. Wilbur and Orville got their mechanical ability and knowledge of how to use tools from their mother, Susan Catherine Korner Wright. A daughter of a carriage maker and wheelwright, she took care of repairs around their house.

The real secret of the Wright brothers' success was that as a close-knit pair they worked together as a team in an enduring, creative, productive partnership. Their sum together was greater than two individual brilliant minds. They would bounce ideas off and argue with each other. Ken Hyde, from the "Wright Experience" pointed out, *"They'd argue all night about something and when they woke up, they would change sides and say, hey, I think you were right! They couldn't wait to get into the [work] shop each day."* As a team Wilbur provided the driving force and Orville, the majority of creative ideas.

Early aircraft such as the Wright Flyers were inherently dangerous. Wilbur and Orville acquiesced to their father's wish that they not fly together. The Wright patriarch could not bear the thought that both sons could be killed in a single airplane crash. The Wright brothers kept

their word. But for one flight only, on May 25, 1910, the brothers were airborne together with their father's permission. Milton's only ride to the heavens was also on that day with Orville at the controls. *"Higher Orville, higher!"* The 82-year-old elder Wright exclaimed with delight.

Both Wright brothers survived numerous crashes, however, early aviation presented them with other hazards. Wilbur prophetically stated prior to the historic 1903 flight, *"For some years I have been afflicted with the belief that flight is possible to man. My disease has increased in severity, and I feel that it will soon cost me an increased amount of money if not my life."*

Being four years apart in age, as youngsters Wilbur and Orville were not particularly close. Wilbur gravitated toward his older brothers: Reuchlin and Lorin. Orville tended to spend time with his younger sister, Katharine.

During a national recession in 1889, Orville dropped out of high school after his junior year to start a printing business with a printing press that he built with Wilbur's help. Wilbur soon joined as editor while Orville was the publisher. A few years later in 1892, the brothers bicycle hobby grew into a bicycle repair shop then a bicycle manufacturing business. Orville actually won some bicycle races. As mentioned in the "Wright Stuff" part one article, it was the Wright brothers brilliant, inquisitive minds, ingenuity, and mechanical ability, which led them to create the world's first successful powered airplane. Wilbur and Orville now excelled as a close-knit team.

Along with their many triumphs in life, however, Wilbur and Orville were no strangers to adversity. Their youngest siblings, twins Otis and Ida, died as infants. When Wilbur was 18 while playing ice hockey with some neighborhood teenagers, he got whacked in the face with a hockey stick that knocked out most of his upper teeth. He gave up his dream of going to Yale University. Instead, Wilbur took care of his ill mother, read books from his father's extensive library, and helped his father during a controversy in his father's church. His mother Susan, died from tuberculosis in 1887 at the age of 58.

One reason that caused Wilbur distress was that as aircraft manufacturers the Wright brothers faced intense competition from individuals like Glenn Curtis and other American and European manufacturers for the very few customers that existed in the early 1900s. Wilbur wore himself out and ran himself ragged fighting Curtis and others in court for patent infringements. He came down with typhoid fever and died at age 45 in 1912.

Without Wilbur's driven personality and business acumen, Orville sold their aircraft manufacturing company. He stayed on, however, a while as director. He gave up designing any additional Flyers. While life without Wilbur would never be the same for him, Orville perse-

vered and flourished in his new endeavors as the elder statesman of aviation. Working on various teams suited Orville's shy personality and desire to let others be in the limelight. In this capacity he continued to make significant contributions. Orville helped design the famous Liberty aircraft engine, the first guided missile, a biplane with a cabin, wing shapes, retractable landing gear, and many other aircraft improvements. He also contributed to designing the DeSoto airflow, the first production aerodynamic automobile. In addition, Orville frequently was a consulting engineer at the Army Air Corps central research and design facility at McCook Field—now Wright Patterson Air Force Base in Dayton, Ohio.

During WWII, Orville contributed to designing a 7 foot high by 11 foot long 5000 pound electromechanical computer that cracked the most difficult German codes. During that time, he also developed a code machine that could generate over 11 million codes. If it had been used by the allies, these codes would likely have been indecipherable.

Both Wright brothers were lifelong bachelors. Wilbur once stated, *"I don't have time both for a wife and an airplane!"* They were, however, family men who enjoyed having their grand nephews and nieces visit them in their shop. At the request of his niece Ivonette, Lorin's daughter, Orville designed, "Flips and Flops." This toy catapult launched a miniature clown that did acrobatics.

The Vought FYU Corsair fighter plane and the Stinson L-5 observation plane, were WWII aircraft whose manufacturers' founders, Charlie Vought and Eddie Stinson, learned to fly on Wright Model B Flyers.

Orville's last airplane flight was on the second production Lockheed Constellation in 1944, piloted by Howard Hughes, the 1930s aviation pioneer. Orville was reported to have briefly handled the controls when the aircraft stopped over Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio. He commented that the wingspan of the "Connie" was longer than the distance of his first 1903 flight.

Two of the Wright brothers' pilot training fields became USAAF bases. Hoffman Prairie was preserved undisturbed, Wright-Patterson A F Base was constructed adjacent to Hoffman Prairie to the north. The Wright Flying School, just outside of Montgomery, Alabama, became the site of Maxwell Air Force Base. The current Wright Brothers' Aeroplane Company is a working muse-

um in Dayton, Ohio.

In a post-war interview, Orville reflected on his thoughts and feeling about WWII military aircraft:

"We dared to hope we had invented something that would bring lasting peace to the earth. But we were wrong...No, I don't have any regrets about my part in the invention of the airplane, though no one could deplore more than I do the destruction it has caused. I feel about the airplane much the same as I do in regard to fire. That is, I regret all the terrible damage caused by fire, but I think it is good for the human race that someone discovered how to start fires and that we have learned how to put fire to thousands of important uses."



Photo above: Chandler & Kirtland prepare to fire a machine gun in a Model B

Orville lived to see the first supersonic flight. Chuck Yeager, an 8th A F ace with 11 ½ shoot downs, including two Me262 jet fighters, was the first pilot to break the sound barrier. He was prominently portrayed in the book, "The Right Stuff" by Tom Wolfe, which was also later made into a very successful movie.

On January 30, 1948, Orville, age 76, passed away—over 35 years after Wilbur, following his second heart attack. Both brothers are interred in their family plot at Woodland Cemetery, Dayton, Ohio.

Wilbur and Orville set the aviation precedent for having the "Wright Stuff." The men of the 8th A F and USAAF continued their legacy of courage under fire, as did the Air Force with their air crews with their flying skill and ground crews with their mechanical skill—all possessing professionalism, tenacity, and determination in the face of adversity.

On July 20, 1969, astronaut Neil Armstrong, a fellow pioneering pilot and engineer from Ohio, brought fabric and wood pieces of the original 1903 Flyer with him on the Apollo XI moon landing. Those artifacts now reside in the collections of the National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian.

It has been nearly 120 years—December 17, 1903—since that chilly

day on the beach at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. Two brothers with a dream and a crude 'flying machine' made history. And the world was forever changed.

Stay tuned for part three of "The Wright Stuff" in the next issue of the 8th A F News, to see which vital group in the Air Force (aside from pilots) was created as a direct result of the "Wright Stuff." dl



A 106-Year-Old WWII Veteran Remembers Things...

By Yvonne Caputo

Joe Haenn recently celebrated his 106th birthday. He was an assistant crew chief for the 467th Bomb Group stationed at Rackheath, England. It wasn't what he originally wanted to do for the war, but he was glad that it turned out the way that it did.

He had wanted to join the Navy, and as a part of the examination process, Joe explained that he was handed pieces of paper with dots on them. He wasn't given any instruction as to what to do with what he was holding.

He knew he saw colors and numbers, and he read the numbers on the page. The

instructor looked at Joe and said, "*The Navy can't use you, you're color blind.*" He wasn't given an explanation as to why he hadn't passed the test.

His reaction to the event was firm, if the Navy didn't want him, then some other branch of service was going to have to come and get him. That summons came in the form of a letter. He was called in for another evaluation and was assigned to the Army Air Force.

After basic training, he was assigned to work on motor vehicles and later to work on B-24s. His introductory course was supposed to have lasted three months, but it was shortened to



seventeen days. It was followed by being moved to Willow Run where he learned to tear down and rebuild the engines. He was sent to Kearns AAF

base and finally to Wendover where the entire 467th trained together in preparation for going overseas.

Arriving at Rackheath, he was assigned as an assistant crew chief alongside Frank Kohut the crew chief. A plane called the "*Wabbit*" was transferred to their squadron. This plane had a reputation for being very difficult to fly. Frank said the crew would check her from stem to stern and fix anything that wasn't working

properly. Joe remembers specifically changing the tension on the cable that operated the tail fin. When they were finished with the plane, her reputation changed to being easy to fly.

Other incidents stood out. Joe was up in the cockpit late at night in the pitch dark, there was an explosive sound, the plane dropped and pitched forward,

making it feel like the plane was taking off. The tire on the nose wheel had blown causing the motion.

The crew was replacing the fuel bladder in one of the wings. The replacement was partially inflated, making it malleable. The crew was able to push down on it to slide it into place. When they removed their hands, the bladder took its proper form. However, one of the crew cried out that his hand was caught. The crew pushed down again allowing the man to remove his uninjured hand.

Joe remembers specifically being asked if he would fly in a plane he was working on. He responded, "*Of course, I would.*"



Remembering 1LT John Allan Wiersema 358FG ~ 367FS

By Michael D. Senneff



(August 20, 2012, Versailles, France) I was standing on hallowed ground. For all appearances, this clearing in a grove of old elm trees, in a remote and restricted area of the Palace of Versailles in Versailles, France, an area where Louis XIV used to hunt for game, was just a wooded area. The sun was shining, the sky was clear, and in this quiet area all that could be heard were the sounds of birds and an occasional aircraft climbing out of Paris's Orly airport. But nearly seventy years earlier, on June 5, 1944, this was a quite different place. On that date, the skies overhead were filled with the sight and thunderous roar of a flight of sixteen American Army Air Force P47 Thunderbolt fighter-bomber aircraft on a low-level bombing mission as they made their way through a treacherous field of enemy antiaircraft fire. And in this very clearing on that day in 1944, a P47 aircraft, struck by enemy fire, would crash and burn, killing its twenty-two-year-old pilot, Fulton native and First Lieutenant, John A. Wiersema.

With each Memorial Day, this is a story of remembrance and tribute written in honor of this fallen airman of World War II.

John Allan Wiersema, his friends and school pals called him Allan, graduated from Fulton High School in 1939. Earlier this year, in the dining room of Barb Mask's home I sat with Allan's cousins, Jan Falk, Dale and Warren Wiersema, and schoolmates and acquaintances Phyllis Jones, Pauline Wiersema, Jackie Pollard, Clara Klavenga and Jim Field, and listened as they talked about their memories of Allan. They recalled the times that they spent with Allan at the Breezeway enjoying cheese sandwiches and malts; having group wiener roasts and pulling a toboggan behind one of their cars on 15th Avenue. It was remembered that by the time Allan left for the service he was engaged to a girl from Savanna

named Ruth. Jim recalled that it was Allan who taught the boys in their social group how to dance, and Jackie told of the time that Allan showed up with a Clinton 'No Parking' sign that somehow ended up in her bedroom. They spoke of Allan's best and closest friend, Richard Mitchell, who lived across the street from Allan. All remembered Allan as a nice person.

On March 14, 1942, at the age of twenty-one, Allan enlisted in the Army Air Corp under its Aviation Cadet Program. Within two weeks of enlisting, Allan began his training at the Army's Aviation Training Cadet Center in Santa Ana, California. Assigned the rank of Aviation Cadet, he was addressed as 'Mister' and was paid seventy-five dollars per month as he began seven months of intense pilot training. While at Santa Ana he would learn about military bearing, the dynamics of flight, train in small single engine trainer aircraft, learn how to navigate, fly at night and fly for long distances. With successful completion of basic flight training at Santa Ana, Cadet Wiersema was assigned to Luke Army Airfield at Phoenix, Arizona, for advanced training. There he would train in larger single engine aircraft, and it was at Luke where he graduated out of the Cadet Program on October 30, 1942, and was awarded his pilot wings and the grade of Second Lieutenant. He was then assigned to the newly created 367th Fighter-Bomber Squadron, where he would fly as a fighter pilot.

From Luke Airfield, 2nd Lieutenant Wiersema traveled to Millville (New Jersey) Army Airfield, where he underwent two months of training in the aircraft that he would ultimately fly with the 367th Fighter Squadron in combat, the P47 Thunderbolt.

The P47 was a single engine plane and one of the main fighter aircraft of the war. It was unlike anything that

Lt. Wiersema had flown in training. With a 2,000 horsepower engine and a weight of over 8 tons, the P47 was designed to be effective for high altitude bomber escort, aerial combat and low altitude ground attack. Its wings housed eight fifty caliber machine guns, and it was capable of carrying up to 2,500 pounds in bombs and air to ground rockets.

After his training at Millville, Lt. Wiersema joined the 367th as an operationally ready pilot, and for the next several months in 1943 the new squadron would undergo pre-combat training as a fighting unit. In September the squadron was deemed ready for combat duty, and on the 25th Lt. Wiersema and the rest of the squadron arrived at Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, to prepare for an Atlantic crossing and a combat assignment in the European theater. After giving up their familiar P47s, the pilots boarded the luxury cruise liner turned troop transport, the S.S. Monterey and joined 6,700 troops of the 2nd Infantry Division for a journey to England, departing New York on October 6. Fellow 367th pilot, Lt. Joe ('Hairless Joe') Holloway, now 90 years old and living in San Antonio, recalls that the ship was in a storm for most of the two-week journey, before arriving in Liverpool on the 18th of October. After disembarking, the squadron went in convoy from Liverpool to Grimsby, a city located on the east coast of England, where after a few days of waiting, the squadron greeted the arrival of their factory new P47 Thunderbolts.

Lt. Wiersema and the other squadron pilots received training in aerial combat, enemy evasion, POW interrogation and other combat related skills before being moved to their first operational location, a Royal Air Force base located at Leiston, on the east coast of England. On December 20, 1943, Lt. Wiersema and his P47, named the 'Lucky Strike', went out with the squadron on his first combat mission - escort of a B24 bomber group that was to attack Bremen, Germany. On his introductory flight into combat, Lt. Wiersema no doubt knew that his training was over when, according to squadron records, the pilots saw their first German fighter aircraft, their first bursts of German enemy anti-aircraft fire, and the explosion and fatal fall of a B24 bomber and its crew of eleven.

For the next six months the squadron would carry out bomber escort missions and ground attacks. During that period the squadron would move in January of 1944 from RAF Leiston to an RAF base at Raydon, England. P47 pilot Joe Holloway recalls that the pilots bunked in metal Quonset huts and recalls that he shared a hut with Lt. Wiersema and ten to twelve other pilots. He summed up his recollection of Lt. Wiersema with the words, "He was what I would call a nice guy."

On April 13, 1944, the squadron moved again, this

time to what was termed an 'Advanced Landing Ground' near High Halden, England. At this location the squadron was approximately 18 miles from the English coast, and the squadron missions shifted in large part from bomber escort to dive bombing missions in preparation for D-Day. Joe Holloway remembers this period at High Halden: "For the six weeks leading up to D-Day we were bombing every bridge between Paris and Normandy." For his part, Lt. Wiersema carried out his duties with distinction. He received a promotion to First Lieutenant, and was awarded the Air Medal for 'meritorious achievement while participating in an aerial flight.' By June of 1944 Lt. Wiersema had been cited four additional times for meritorious achievement in flight, with the last award being received on June 2, 1944.

On June 5, Lt. Wiersema and his P47 Thunderbolt took off from High Halden with fifteen other aircraft of the 367th Squadron. Each aircraft was armed with two 500-pound bombs. Their mission was to dive bomb a bridge near St. Germaine, France. The squadron was grouped into four flights of four aircraft each. Lt. Wiersema was in White Flight. Milford 'Pete' Peterson, now ninety years old and living in Pendleton, Oregon, was on the same mission, flying his P47 'Repeat' in Red Flight. He remembers that the anti-aircraft flak was very heavy as they approached the target. Peterson recounts, *'I was right behind Wiersema when he was hit. His plane just blew up. I will never forget it. He was right in front of me.'*

The leader of White Flight, in an after-mission report wrote, *"Lt. Wiersema was flying my wing as White Four. On our approach to target at approximately 2,000 feet, I glanced back to ascertain if Lt. Wiersema was in proper position, when I observed a large burst of flames coming from the cowl of his engine. The fire completely surrounded his fuselage from the engine to the tail. He hit the ground about two to three seconds later and exploded. It is my opinion that Lt. Wiersema had no chance to leave his airplane because he went straight in."*

The mission was completed and deemed a success, but Lt. Wiersema was officially reported as 'missing in action.' On June 7, in accordance with procedures for missing or killed airmen, Lt. Wiersema's space in his assigned tent at High Halden was cleared of his uniforms and personnel effects for eventual shipment to his designated next of kin. Milford Peterson recalls Lt. Wiersema with these words: *"He was a nice fella."* On June 20 Lt. Wiersema's mother, Mrs. Albert Wiersema, received a telegram from the War Department informing her that her son was missing in action from a mission over occupied France. No other details were given.

But details regarding the fate of Lt. Wiersema would come. As the American Army pushed across France from

the beaches of Normandy, driving the German army before it, the area of Versailles and Paris would find itself liberated on August 28, 1944. With the coming of Liberation, a resident of the village of Versailles by the name of Roger Nicolleau approached an officer of the local French Forces of the Interior (French Resistance) and reported the following:

“On 5 June 1944, at about 2015 hours, as I came back from my garden, I noticed that one of the American pursuit planes composing a group flying over Versailles had been hit by the German anti-aircraft defense and fell down not far from the Porte de Bailly. On the following Saturday, 10 June, while I walked with my father-in-law, I found the exact place where the plane had fallen. The plane, which was totally destroyed, had exploded as it touched the ground. I could see that the pilot had been carbonized. I observed that on the right part of his shirt, which was undamaged, were sewn two metal identification tags. On each of them I read and noted: John A. Wiersema. These tags were separated from each other by a dotted line and I noticed the following name, which seems apparently to be the person to inform in case of accident: Mrs. Forest Cady, 621 1/2 Renchiworth C.T. – Clinton, Iowa. Among the human remains, I found ten coins of English and American money and I could identify a silver dollar coin. I also found a rubberized pocket map made of a kind of rubberized cloth, representing France, Spain, Germany and the French Colonies. Among the same remains I found a charred compass, a charred lighter, a spectacle case, a corner of an O.D. shirt-collar with a white metallic stripe, and a seal ring with the following inscription: NIEW-School –F 1929. At the upper part of the ring was a kind of red colored chaton. In my opinion this jewel was made of gold, since its color was not changed by the heat. Its weight was certainly beyond 20 grams. I would like to inform you also that in a dark-red wallet I found a picture of a brunette woman, as well as an American blank check. After having carefully picked up these items, I dug out a grave and interred the flier’s remains, surrounded the grave with makeshift means and put a cross without any other identification on it, but a tricolored cockade. I always kept up this grave with respect and I adorned it with flowers several times a week. As soon as the Liberation came, I put a wreath of flowers on it.”

In February of 1945 a Graves Registration unit of the U.S. Army, based on a map provided by Mr. Nicolleau, located the site of Lt. Wiersema’s crash, recovered his remains from the makeshift burial site and reburied them in a temporary military cemetery located in Solers, France. A simple white wooden cross with a metal tag bearing the name John A. Wiersema marked the location of the fallen airman in Plot E, Row 4, Grave 74. As a reminder that in death, rank has no privilege, Army records indicate that Lt. Wiersema was buried next to a private from the 38th Infantry Regiment.

By the end of the war, over 330,000 Americans had died overseas, with 40,000 of those being airmen. Most of the dead that could be recovered, like Lt. Wiersema, were buried in temporary military cemeteries. In 1947 Congress passed Public Law 368, which allowed the next of kin of the soldier or airman to decide whether they wished the remains of their loved one to be permanently interred in an American designed and maintained cemetery overseas, or repatriated to the U.S. and placed in a national military or private cemetery. The family of Lt. Wiersema elected to have him returned to Fulton. In mid-October of 1948, the remains of Lt. Wiersema were exhumed from the Solers cemetery, placed in a brown metal casket, and with several hundred other fallen began a return journey to the United States and home aboard the specially fitted Liberty Ship, the Carroll Victory. Special Army rail cars under 24 hour honor guard carried the flag draped coffins from Brooklyn, New York, to destinations all across the United States. The last leg of Lt. Wiersema’s journey took place on November 18 on a Chicago Northwestern train bound for Clinton, Iowa. The military escort that accompanied Lt. Wiersema on that train was his lifelong friend and Fulton native, Air Force First Lieutenant Richard Mitchell.

The grounds in France where Allan Wiersema died are today a private place of peace and solitude. If one looks just below the surface, evidence of what took place there on June 5th, 1944, can be found: machine gun bullets; parts of a machine gun ammunition belt; a portion of an engine cylinder; a section of armor plating. All evidence of a sacrifice made in defense of freedom. Allan was the first of Fulton area residents to die during the war. He would be followed by Paul Heun the very next day on Omaha Beach, and later by Allan’s cousin Stewart Wiersema, and then Byron Snyder and Henry Post. Each of these young men made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom, a freedom that we continue to enjoy during every Memorial holiday. They deserve our honor and our remembrance.

We remember Allan Wiersema.

Hoidra, George Robert, 74,



passed away peacefully in his home in Laurel, MD, on Sunday April 23rd.

George was born October 27th, 1948,

in Greenville, South Carolina to George Hoidra and Corinne (Connie) Young Hoidra. At a young age he was lovingly given the nickname Ship (sometimes Shippa) by his family to differentiate between him and his father. George was born into an Air Force family, which meant traveling all over the world. Besides South Carolina, they lived in Texas, Alabama, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Virginia, Hawaii, Japan, and finally Maryland. He had many fond memories of life in Hawaii, including surfing and earning his pilot's license so that he was able to fly small airplanes around the islands. He had a great love of music, as can be seen by his vast album collection of mostly 70's rock bands and his reel-to-reel tapes that he recorded. George was also very involved with his father's WWII Air Force organizations, the 447th bomb group and the 8th Air Force Historical Society and attended several events over the years. After his father's passing, George continued his involvement with the groups by becoming a member of the board and helping organize reunions. Planning reunions was definitely something he was good at and enjoyed as he was the key organizer for the Hoidra Family

reunions in Pennsylvania.

Most of his career he was self-employed as a home improvement and remodeling contractor around the DC, Maryland, and Virginia area. In his later years, he spent most of his time near home, holidays and birthdays with family, and the occasional bomb group event.

George is survived by his wife Betsy, daughter Cindy (Jason), and son Steven (Sheri). He is also survived by his sister Carolyn (Don), five grandchildren: Lainey, Riley, Keegan, Landon, and Ember, and his niece and nephews. George was preceded in death by his father George and mother Connie.

Kuhnert, Robert Eugene, 102,



passed away peacefully on October 4, 2022. He was born February 8th, 1920, in Harrisburg,

Pennsylvania, to Samuel and Margaret (Wagner) Kuhnert. He proudly served his country as an officer in the United States Air Force, and was with the 355th fighter group in England during World War II. After his time in the military, he graduated from Graceland College (University) and University of Denver, before continuing his government service as a civilian.

He and Bettye Fredrick Kuhnert were married for 53 years, from 1943 until her passing in 1996. They are survived by their daughter and son-in-law, Doris and Bob

Cadman, two grandchildren and their spouses, Kathleen (Eddie Baxter) and Rob (PJ) Cadman, two great-grandchild, Zion Baxter and one on the way, and many other extended family members and friends. He was married to Helen Louise Kuhnert for 20 years, from 2000 until her passing in 2020, and was a stepfather to Dinah, Dallas, and Doug.

***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**

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

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A MOMENT IN TIME

Part II: The Battle on the Ice

JM Pittman, Next Gen 466th BG

In the distance a sinister fog began to engulf the ice. Its relentless approach announced more sinister things to come. The message was not lost on Don Tetley. Rescue attempts would be suspended and contact with the outside world would be lost. Even more ominous, the shifting ice was moving the tail section closer and closer to the edge of the crevasse.

As the survivors began moving supplies and equipment out of the tail section, Tetley went to work. A room just large enough for each man to stretch out on the floor was carved under the Fortress's massive right wing. Space was made for supplies and equipment. Overhead, a single light bulb would provide intermittent relief from the long winter nights.

Told to stay put and wait for the next rescue attempt, the crew instead came up with a daring plan. They would head for Ice Cap Station. Tetley would drive the motor sled. O'Hara would be wrapped in a sleeping bag and strapped to the tow sled. Spencer and Wedel would accompany them on foot. With the first group safe, Tetley would return for those left behind.

With a break in the weather, the motor sled team headed out onto the ice. Mile after mile they made their way through the treacherous terrain. At the base of a steep slope, the men stopped to catch their breath. Less than a quarter of the way to Ice Cap Station and the survivors were already exhausted.

Assuming they had cleared the ice field, Tetley decided it was safe for everyone to ride to the top of the hill. As Spencer and Wedel removed their snowshoes, terror suddenly gripped the group as the ground beneath Wedel's feet gave way. O'Hara "felt Wedel's mittened hands slide desperately over his legs but was unable to grab him. For an instant, Wedel gained a tenuous grip on the tow sled, but it wasn't enough. He dropped through the hole and into the waiting crevasse." With no sign that Wedel had survived the fall, the team had no choice but to press on.

With each passing mile the men became more and more exhausted. With each rest stop the motor sled became

more and more difficult to start. Barely six miles from PN9E the escape attempt ended as the motor sled refused to start. They would have to dig a hole in the ice and wait to be rescued.

Pritchard (left) and Bottoms (right) pictured below. Photos: W. H. Thiesen, PhD, Atlantic Area Historian, USCG.



man in the Finnish Civil War. He had served in the French Foreign Legion and been on Arctic expeditions with Amundsen and Byrd.

Determined to get the survivors off the ice, he would attempt "one last trick to outwit the Arctic," Borrowing two PBV-5A's from the Coast Guard they would land on the ice, retrieve the survivors, and fly them back to Bluie West 2. All that was needed was a break in the weather and a little help from the Coasties.

By the morning of February 5, 1943, the weather was good and Balchen's team was in the air. At the controls of the PBV, Lt Barney Dunlop circled the motor sled camp and set up for the treacherous landing. Slowing to ninety-two miles per hour, wheels retracted, he gently put his bird on the ice. Clouds of white powdery snow filled the sky as the belly of the aircraft carved an eighteen-inch groove in the frozen landscape.

Even before the engines shut down, Balchen and the rescuers poured from the plane and raced to the camp. With everyone back on board, LT Dunlop fired up the engines. Shoving the throttles forward the seaplane refused to move. As if the Arctic had one last trick of its own, Dunlop's PBV was frozen to the ice. It would take another two hours to pry the aircraft loose and get back in the air.



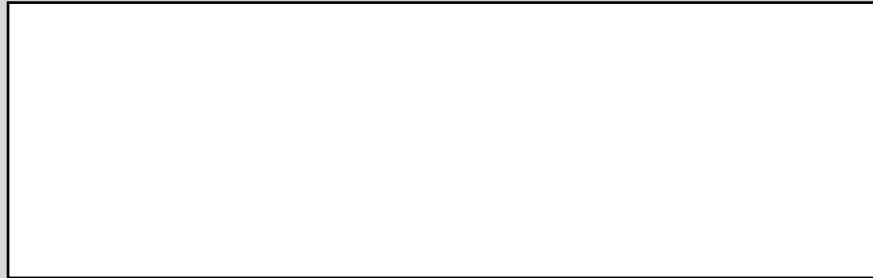
Known among his peers as 'The Last Viking,' Col Bernt Balchen's reputation preceded him. Powerful and muscular, his square chin and thick blonde hair exuded strength and confidence. A champion skier, cyclist, and marksman, he had fought as a cavalry-



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At PN9E Monteverde, Spina and Best continued to wait. They had plenty of food and supplies thanks to the Turner crew's airdrops. Snow could be melted for water. Hope, however, was a commodity in short supply. Storm after storm had battered the men for months. With each passing day their home in the ice felt more like a tomb than a shelter.

To pass the time they took turns reading from the books and magazines included with each supply drop. Their favorite article came from a Reader's Digest selection on the power of prayer. "It is the only power in the world that seems to overcome the so called 'laws of nature,'" and there was no doubt in their minds that the arctic was using every one of those laws to kill them.

When the weather finally cleared on March 17, 1943, Lt Dunlop had his PBY back in the air. Landing near the motor sled camp the rescue team disembarked and headed for the crash site. With another storm on the horizon, Lt Dunlop took to the air and returned to Blue West 2.

On reaching the crash site the rescuers spent the night with the survivors, then moved them to the motor sled camp the next morning. Monteverde and his men would endure one last storm before the rescue could be completed. Spirits, however, were sky high. Each night was spent eating, telling jokes, and reliving stories of their adventures on the ice.

On April 5, 1943, Barney Dunlop and his PBY appeared overhead. Landing on the ice the crew poured out of the seaplane to meet the survivors and take pictures. With everyone back on-board Dunlop began his takeoff roll. Suddenly the right engine caught fire. Once again, the Arctic refused to release her victims. "Monteverde, Best, and Spina couldn't believe their bad luck. They seemed doomed to remain on the ice."

With the fire extinguished and temporary repairs made, Dunlop and Balchen decided to attempt another take-off in

the morning. When the sun broke free of the eastern horizon, they were ready to go. Lt Dunlop started the engines as the crew loaded the survivors on board. Balchen and his trail team broke the PBY free of the ice before heading out for Beach Head Station, where they would finally be airlifted off the ice on April 18, 1943.

For those on the PBY the adventure was just beginning. With a damaged engine the seaplane struggled to climb. When it overheated, Dunlop had no choice but to shut it down and feather the prop. Arriving at Blue West 2 Dunlop lined up on the runway below. One engine out, low on fuel, and no hydraulics, the landing would be tricky at best. As the wheels touched the runway the Catalina suddenly careened to the right, coming to a stop barely fifteen feet from Turners B-17. As the young Lieutenant shut down his one good engine, the mission to rescue the crew of PN9E had finally come to an end.

Its cost had been monumental. Valor, strength, and perseverance had been its hallmarks. Three rescuers, Max Demorest, John Pritchard, and Benjamin Bottoms had perished in the effort. Two crew members, Lolly Howarth and Clarence Wedel had been lost to the ice. The C-53 and its crew, which had been the object of the original search, were never found.

The last survivors of PN9E had been on the ice from November 9, 1942, to April 6, 1943. For one hundred forty-eight days the Arctic had thrown everything it had at the crew and those who struggled to save them. For Armand Monteverde, Clint Best, Paul Spina, Lloyd Puryear, Alexander Tucciarone, Harry Spencer, and Bill O'Hara, they would forever remember the freezing temperatures, the howling winds, and the struggle to survive. They would just as quickly remember those who refused to leave them behind and those who would forever be entombed on the ice.

J M Pittman