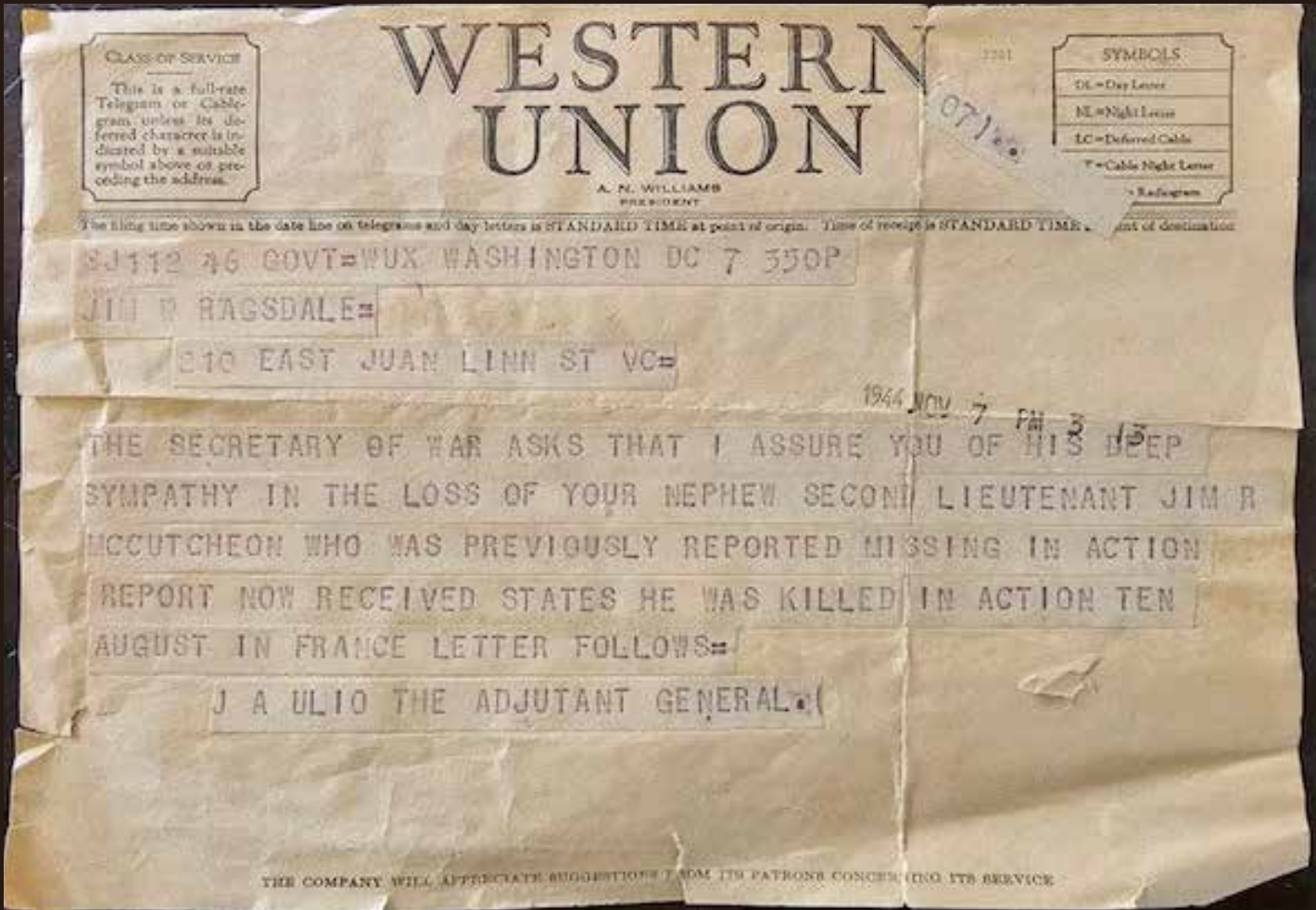




8TH AF NEWS

Volume 24 Number 3 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"





8th AF News

Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Cover: Thousands of families received similar telegrams during the war informing them of the capture and/or death of a loved one. They were a stark reminder of the final sacrifice of service. The telegram says "TEN" August, but the actual date is "TWELVE" August. Read the story which begins on p.18.

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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. EIN: 59-1757631
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**68 Kimberlys Way
Jasper, GA 30143-4769**

EDITOR'S NOTES



As many of you have shared with me, MOST of you turn to the back of the magazine FIRST to read the Taps section. If you are a WWII vet, you check to see if you recognize a name—either someone in your bomb or fighter group, or perhaps someone you met during a previous reunion. If you did that with this issue, then you saw something that has never happened before: there are NO obituaries in this issue. Let me explain why this isn't exactly "good" news...

In 2025 we will celebrate the 80th anniversary of the end of WWII in both Europe and the Pacific. The average age of our living WWII veterans as of this issue, is 99. Two short years ago, there were approximately 200,000 WWII veterans still with us. Today, that figure is slightly less than 100,000; and falling rapidly. As next gens, we are aging right alongside our parents (my mom passed in 1988 and my dad in 2007). So, the question remains: why so few or no obits?

Many next gens are not writing them.

"Dad outlived all his friends... We just had a graveside service for immediate family...No need to spend money on publishing an obit when family was already aware of his death...He didn't want a funeral...He never talked about the war."

Making choices for end-of-life plans and decisions is never easy and should remain personal and unique within every family. That being said, posting obituaries in the 8th A F News has always been and will continue to be a distinct privilege. We will continue to do everything in our power to preserve the memory and legacy of all our veterans as long as we exist as an organization.

With YOUR support, we CAN.

Looking forward to seeing many of you in the "Big Easy!" Celebrating 50 years and counting!

Deb



**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
Jasper, GA 30143-4769
(912) 748-8884

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Hattie Hearn, 104 Barclay Rd, Norwich, NFK
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JOIN/RENEW ONLINE: www.8thAFHS.org

PRESIDENT'S BRIEFING

Paul W Tibbets IV
President



preserved WWII Army Air Force base in the United States.

- **Dr. Hattie Hearn, Curator, American Air Museum, Duxford.** Dr. Hearn will highlight how the American Air Museum documents Anglo-American cooperation during World War II.

- **Scott Loehr, President/CEO, The National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force.** Mr. Loehr will provide an update on the Museum expansion now underway!

For your planning, our future reunion sites:

- October 1-5, 2025: Colorado Springs, Colorado at the DoubleTree by Hilton, home to the U.S. Air Force Academy.

- 2026 (dates TBD): Pooler, Georgia, home of The National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force.
- 2027 (dates TBD): San Antonio, Texas, home of the River Walk and many military organizations.

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 us.

Respectfully,

Paul

Paul Tibbets
President, 8 AFHS

Greetings everyone!

Your Board is very excited for our upcoming **50th Annual Reunion** September 25th-29th in New Orleans. We have a record number of attendees – 400+! For all the latest info please check out our website. If you haven't ordered your merch yet, now's the time! Get your limited-edition coins and shirts at: <https://www.8thafhs.org/store/>.

We have some exciting speakers for your enjoyment. Thursday evening, **Dr. John Curatola**, The National WWII Museum's Senior Historian, will present the history and lore behind the uniquely American *Nose Art*. At the Saturday evening Gala, **Major General Jason R. Armagost, Commander, Eighth Air Force**, will provide an update on our Airmen serving in the command today you won't want to miss!

As you are aware, we don't have any elections for your Board this year. However, please join us Saturday morning for a *rare opportunity* to hear updates from three distinguished speakers during the **General Membership Meeting**.

There are no tours scheduled during this time!

- **Jim Petersen, President, Historic Wendover Airfield Foundation.** Mr. Peterson will outline the importance of Historic Wendover Airfield, the oldest original remaining and authentically



TREASURER'S LEDGER

Anne Marek
Treasurer

Greetings everyone -

I'm including in this issue of AF News the financial position of the Society for the period ending July, 2024. The Profit and Loss Statement and the Statement of Financial Position are printed here. So far this year our investment portfolio has increased approximately 9% from an opening balance of \$193K in January to closing in July of \$212K. Mr. Gavin Natelli, our account executive, notes that over the past 5½ years our investments have shown an annualized return of 12.5%. He continues to recommend no other changes at this time.

The Keep 'em Flying Giving Campaign saw one new member in July. Currently there are 2 Wing Leaders, 2 Group Leaders, 6 Flight Leaders and 24 Crew Chiefs for a total of 34 contributors, and a total in donations of \$14,500. Details of the program appear in AF News, and the individuals and their donation amounts are printed on our website, 8thAFHS.org. I will continue to report on the progress of this initiative.



If any of you have any questions regarding our financial position, please do not hesitate to reach out to me. My contact information can be found on page 2.

Respectfully submitted,

Anne
Anne A. Marek,
Treasurer,
8thAFHS

8th Air Force Historical Society	
Profit and Loss	
January - July, 2024	
	Total
Income	
4000 Income/Miscellaneous	
4006 Account Processing Fees	407.00
4010 Member Duos Annual	18,393.00
4012 Magazine Subscription	5,600.00
4013 Magazine Income	288.00
4015 Keep 'em Flying	14,500.00
4019 Member Contributions/Donations	21,193.20
4022 Merchandise	2,807.00
Total 4000 Income/Miscellaneous	\$ 63,495.28
4050 Investment Income	
4058 Portfolio Dividends & Interest	979.91
4060 Unrealized Gain(Loss) on Invest	19,883.91
Total 4050 Investment Income	\$ 20,863.82
Total Income	\$ 84,359.10
Gross Profit	\$ 84,359.10
Expenses	
5100 National Administration Expense	
5103 Officers/Directors Meeting Exp.	159.90
5108 Web Site Expense	1,404.00
5111 Corporation Charges	200.00
5121 8AF History Projects	480.32
Total 5100 National Administration Expense	\$ 2,244.22
5200 Magazine Expenses	
5210 Printing Expenses	4,910.02
5220 Postage Expenses	4,005.80
5240 Layout/Design	192.28
Total 5200 Magazine Expenses	\$ 9,909.99
5300 National Office Expenses	
5303 Telephone/DSL	426.50
5304 Supplies	798.47
5305 Abila Software/ Computer Exps	1,803.20
5307 Office Rent	700.00
5308 Insurance	309.00
5312 FICA-8AFHS portion	1,941.31
5313 Payroll/ Office Management	23,375.00
5315 Postage & Shipping	849.09
5316 Bank Charges/ Returned checks	-29.09
5323 Merchant Account Usage Fees	3,488.93
5328 Payroll processing fees	650.00
Total 5300 National Office Expenses	\$ 36,308.51
Total Expenses	\$ 47,862.83
Net Operating Income	\$ 36,796.47
Other Income	
6500 Annual Meeting Revenue	10,895.34
6551 Event Registration	88,317.81
Total 6500 Annual Meeting Revenue	\$ 99,213.15
Total Other Income	\$ 99,213.15
Other Expenses	
7100 Annual Meeting Expenses	
7101 Supplies & Items for Sale	2,675.00
7103 Hotel Expense/Catering	20,000.00
7104 Tours/Transportation	4,675.00
Total 7100 Annual Meeting Expenses	\$ 27,350.00
Total Other Expenses	\$ 27,350.00
Net Other Income	\$ 71,863.15
Net Income	\$ 107,619.62

8th Air Force Historical Society	
Statement of Financial Position	
As of July 31, 2024	
	Total
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
1017 Oppenheimer & Co	212,388.62
1040 Bank of America Checking Acct.	36,439.15
1041 B of A Deposits in Transit	0.00
1042 Bank of America Savings Acct.	68,040.50
Total Bank Accounts	\$ 316,868.27
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	\$ 316,868.27
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 316,868.27
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	-27,328.26
2051 Payroll payable	2,896.57
2052 FICA & withhold taxes payable	35,208.20
Total 2050 Payroll & Taxes Payable	\$ 10,776.51
2500 Accrued Expenses	0.88
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$ 10,777.39
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 10,777.39
Total Liabilities	\$ 10,777.39
Equity	
3100 Unrestricted Net Assets	0.00
3200 *Unrestricted Net Assets	198,471.26
Net Income	107,619.62
Total Equity	\$ 306,090.88
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$ 316,868.27



“Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign
Honor your veteran or loved one!



The Board of Directors of the 8th Air Force Historical Society is continuing its on-going Giving Campaign. Our mission is to keep our administrative functions operational. Historically they run 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 to keeping the Society financially solvent. This investment is renewable annually. 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. You are still able to join our “Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign in just your name, but **you now have the opportunity to honor a veteran or loved one as well.** Their name will appear after yours on our “Keep ‘em Flying” online leaderboard. By joining, you will provide critical financial support for the continuation of the Society. In addition you will be recognized on our website and on your Annual Reunion nametag. So please join our “Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign by becoming a Member in 2024.

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 – Crew Chief Leader with an annual donation of \$250 will receive both premier benefits.

Level 2 – Flight Leader with an annual donation of \$500 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.

Your Board of Directors invites you to join with them *today* in participating in our “Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign supporting our Society. Please use the form below to enroll or simply click the link:

<https://www.8thafhs.org/keep-em-flying-giving-campaign/> (or copy and paste into your browser).

We *thank you* for your continued support and generosity.

.....

“Keep ‘em Flying” Giving Campaign

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

Street: _____ City: _____ State: _____

Zip code: _____ Email: _____

In honor of (veteran, etc.): _____ Group, etc.: _____

Level 1 – Crew Chief Leader at \$250 _____ Level 2 – Flight Leader at \$500 _____

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

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

8th Air Force Historical Society, 68 Kimberlys 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.

THE ART OF SPYING...

by Suzie Harrison

American Battle
Monuments Commission
Cambridge American Cemetery
and Memorial

For most of us, our knowledge of spies comes from that portrayed by Hollywood. Perhaps what we don't realize is that it is not so far from the truth.

There are records of the espionage 'profession' dating back to Chinese General Sun Tzu (c.544-496 BC), and Kautilya, an advisor to the Indian Maurya dynasty (c.350-283 BC). Knowledge gained of your enemy can be used to your advantage. How you obtain that material is open to interpretation. Information has always had a strong currency, and as Sun Tzu wrote in *The Art of War* "All warfare is based on deception...a key skill for actors as well as spies."

The concept of spies as actors is an interesting one. Andrew and Green in *Stars and Spies* write that, "The adoption of a fictional persona, the learning of scripts and the ability to improvise are central to both professions; and undercover agents often find themselves engaged in what is effectively an

"If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle."
Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*

exercise in long-term role play."

Not everyone thinks of a spy as a professional, although Elizabeth I was a keen advocate, as was the Spanish Court and Mary Queen of Scots

during the machinations of 16th century Europe. Certainly various writing about spies from the Napoleonic Wars onward mentions them as 'other' and not quite gentlemen. Within the notions of fair play learned on the playing fields of England, the British upper classes did not really consider espionage sporting, but rather looked down on it. Yet, they were secretly keen to profit from the deceptions and reports.

Fast forward to the 20th century and now women are included in the cohort of spies (they probably always were). Among the more infamous was Mata Hari. By the time of WWII people from more ordinary walks of life – Violette Szabo (British/French widow of a Hungarian descent French Foreign

News from Across the Pond...

Legion officer) – were being pulled into the web of intrigue.

Many of us relate our knowledge of spies to the films depicting T E Lawrence (of Arabia) – real, or James Bond – fictional. However, Roald Dahl, Ian Fleming, Noël Coward, and Somerset Maugham are all now known as proponents of the art of espionage.

Special Operations Executive (SOE)

Created in July 1940, the British had the Special Operations Executive (SOE). This secret organization supported Resistance operatives in enemy-held lands, for information gathering, radio communication and sabotage, “to set Europe ablaze” as Prime Minister Winston Churchill put it. Training took place just outside London at Welwyn where training techniques included wireless operation, firearms and explosives, and unarmed combat. ‘Boffins’ ran laboratories to develop new methods of camouflage, special equipment to be used in sabotage, and state of the art weaponry. So far, so James Bond!

Regularly dropped behind enemy lines by parachute, flown in at night using short take-off and landing aircraft, such as black painted Westland Lysander, or delivered by submarine, being a spy could look glamorous. In reality, the terrified operatives were often quickly captured, tortured and executed. ‘Of the 470 agents sent into France, 118 failed to return.’ 13,000 men and women served in SOE by the end of WWII.

Military Intelligence Service (MIS)



The earliest American intelligence gathering corps dates to the Continental Army in 1776, known as Knowlton’s Rangers. By March 1942, it had metamorphosed into the Military Intelligence

Service, when a standing staff of 26 was expanded to 1,000 civilians with 342 officers.

At a Military Intelligence Training Center at Camp Ritchie, Maryland, a group, formed in June

1942, became known as *The Ritchie Boys*. The majority of these men were linguists and highly proficient in European languages. These skills proved invaluable as they were able to eavesdrop when among civilians and interrogate prisoners of war. They certainly earned the insignia of the inscrutable sphinx.

2Lt Henry A S Patterson MIS WOM



Top row, 2nd from left - Henry A S Patterson. CAM



Left: Obituaries, Henry A S Paterson, Democrat & Chronicle, Tues. October 12, 1943

Henry Alexander Sharplers ‘Sandy’ Patterson was born in Rochester, NY on 20 March 1906. He received a BA from

Princeton and an MA from Harvard Universities. As a linguist he spent time at the University of Dijon, France, and also studied at the Universities of Rome, and Palermo in Italy. Once back in the USA he taught French and Italian at Monroe and Jefferson High Schools, Rochester.

Enlisting in the army in November, 1942, his linguistic skills made him a good fit for the Military Intelligence Service. Having spent Christmas at home with his wife Lieselotte and five-year-old son, Alexander, he left for duty overseas and was in New York by the following Sunday. After a last call home he embarked on Liberty merchantman the SS *Jeremiah Van Ressellear*, bound for Liverpool, UK, as part of convoy HX-224.

News from Across the Pond...

Lieselotte was not unduly worried when she did not hear from her husband, as he ... *“had explained before leaving that his assignment might prevent him from writing.”* It wasn't until 30 July 1943, when she received a letter from 'Sandy's' Commanding Officer with Military Intelligence Detachment, expressing condolences, that she had any inkling that all was not well.

The CO explained that *Sandy* had been on board the Liberty Ship, when it had become separated from the rest of the convoy. Having been sailing in the 11/45 position, the *Jeremiah Van Rensselaer* failed to keep up, and so had been relegated to 45/45. Detached from the convoy in heavy weather she was torpedoed three times by U-456. Believing her to be sinking, most of the eight officers, 34 crewmen, 28 armed guards and one passenger abandoned ship in panic. In fact, she did not sink, but in the icy conditions of the North Atlantic in February there were only 27 survivors, 47 souls had perished. Sandy, the sole passenger, was not recovered. He must have been considered important to the war effort to send him to Britain aboard the merchantman.

Lieselotte, wrote to the War Office, to try to establish what had happened to her husband. After a concerted effort to obtain information she received a War Department telegram on 11 October 1943, stating that 2Lt Henry A S Patterson, 36, was listed as ... *“lost in action in the European theater Feb. 2.”*

Office of Strategic Services (OSS)

Prior to America's entry into WWII, there was a special 'intelligence' relationship between the US and UK known as the British Security Coordination (BSC). An office established at Rockefeller Center, New York, enabled a free exchange of intelligence, but also served a role in trying to persuade the US to enter the war. These efforts were driven in part by Canadian WWI fighter ace William 'Little Bill' Stephenson, who impressed Lieutenant Commander Ian Flemming with his martini mix-



ing – 'shaken, not stirred'! Credit for the BSC was also due to General William Donovan, 'Wild Bill', a WWI war hero and lawyer, who after a successful fact-finding mission in 1940 to review British security and intelligence services, had reported his positive findings to President Roosevelt.

The BSC became the forerunner of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS). The OSS remit was to conduct espionage behind enemy lines, propaganda, misinformation, and planning for a post-war world. Set up by Presidential military order issued on June 13, 1942, OSS operated on behalf of all branches of the US military and was manned by US Special Intelligence Service officers (set up by the FBI to gather information in the western hemisphere), alongside British MI5 and SOE officers until the end of the war.

Lt Col Robert Cresswell USOSS C-2-26



Olinsky, Ivan Gregorewitch, 1878-1962 Special Collections. Princeton University Collections - A Alcove 11 South/GC047/ Framed.

Born in Philadelphia on 29 May 1897, Robert was called to serve in WWI, interrupting his education. Afterward,

he returned to Princeton University, graduating in 1920.

As a hopeful journalist aged 25, he joined the New York Tribune (later the Herald-Tribune). Within ten years, he had risen to become the paper's director. A leading member of Friends of the Princeton University Library, he eventually became Chairman and in 1940, Cresswell endowed the funds to create an experimental three-year course in Graphic Arts. Resigning from the Tribune, he bought the Philadelphia Evening Ledger, where, as director, he entered publishing.

In 1942, Cresswell reenlisted and was deployed to Britain with the OSS. Like so many of those who worked with OSS, we shall never know what his actual role was. Some research suggests that he was

News from Across the Pond...

or had been on a 'mission'; however, that seems unlikely given his age. We do know that he died of an infection on September 10, 1943, aged 46. His mother was not informed through official channels that he had died, but instead learned of his demise from a friend's letter.

Robert Cresswell's legacy was that the graphics program was permanently accepted into the academic register of classes.

Tec4 Matthew Ungerleider OSS F-4-10



We have scant information about Matthew Ungerleider who was attached to Headquarters Detachment, OSS. However given his surname, he may well have been working with OSS because of possible language skills – German?

He had married Debora Bernstein in 1940, but was presumably divorced before his death on 19 November 1944, as she remarried in 1942. Tec4 Matthew Ungerleider is laid to rest under a headstone bearing the Star of David. Given the diaspora that was emigration to the USA in the first half of C20th, there must have been a proliferation of service personnel with useful language skills.

TSGT Walter Cabe HQ AND HQ DET OSS E-5-100

Walter Cabe was born on 18 July 1917, the ninth of ten children of Fidelia and Martha Cabe of Webster, Jackson County, NC. By the time he was 20, he was probably married as he had a baby boy. Sadly, Thomas only lived for 4 days (8 October -12 October 1937). Whether he was still married at his time of death is not clear, as his next-of-kin was

listed as his immediate older brother Arthur.

In August 1944, TSgt Cabe was involved with OSS Operational Group DONALD. His 11-man group was aboard one of three Stirling aircraft. Only his plane made it through to the drop zone, in Brittany France. They jumped but became scattered and lost their radio transmitter. Finally, rendezvousing with the French Resistance (Maquis), they holed up in preparation for "maximum guerilla activity." The plan was to preserve east-west roads, bridges and railways in Northern Brittany, allowing the free movement of American troops north-west into the Brest peninsula. The group's task was to secure the Guimiliau railway viaduct, which they did, turning over defense to the Maquis. Moving on to Landivisiau, Lesneven, back to Landivisiau, and on to Guiclan where they captured 22 German soldiers. Their ranks swelled by three lost GIs with a jeep-mounted machine gun, force DONALD headed to Roscoff. On the way they encountered a seemingly impregnable German blockhouse. There followed some parley, which included a garrison runner on a bicycle, and the German unit agreeing to surrender. When they came out armed, the Maquis returned fire. Then, threatened with shelling, the 30 German troops finally capitulated.

Cabe's unit continued to move around Britany minus a radio, until they met up with a JEDBURGH officer (teams of SOE, OSS, Free French, Dutch and Belgian parachuted into France). He let them radio their position, and request arms for the Maquis. When American Civil Affairs arrived, DONALD was able to proceed to Cherbourg and a flight back to Britain after 15 days in France.

After all of that, Tec4 Walter Cabe was involved in a traffic accident in Britain, dying on October 10, 1944.

Lt Col Harley A Twedt OSS B-7-23

We have an issue with Lt Col Twedt's headstone, as he is listed as belonging to SOS – Services of Supply, rather than OSS – Office of Strategic Services. Originally the ABMC database listed him as SOS, but when looking him up on the current electronic database he is OSS. On a very recent visit by his next-of-kin, it was discovered that they know

News from Across the Pond...



Above l-r - South Dakota State College yearbook, 1925.
M&R-Special Fores Roll of Honor

little about him. We are pursuing clarification with ABMC Historical Services.

Born on 11 Jan 1906, South Dakota, to Ivar and Lena Twedt, Harley Alvin Twedt was one of six children. He studied Electrical Engineering and worked at Commonwealth Edison. By the time he entered service in November 1941, he is 37, married to Aletha Haas, with a son, Ronald Irwin. Of southern German extraction (close to Austrian border) he probably had valuable language abilities.

A previous visit by other next-of-kin stated that, *“Regrettably I have heard two different means of death for Capt. Harley Twedt - he was accidentally shot in England (according to his mother’s obituary) and he was killed in a plane crash (per an OSS website).”*

Interesting to note that his family was unaware of his relatively senior rank. Perhaps the different stories are all part of fog of war, and the cloak of invisibility cast over members of covert forces. Lt Col Twedt died on 18 Sep 1943 from an unspecified non-combat related circumstance, such as accident or illness. His name is apparently not on the OSS Memorial.

Carpetbaggers

Resistance fighters in mainland Europe needed weapons and other *matériel* in order to launch strikes against the Nazis. This was achieved by aerial drop by the USAAF in Operation CARPETBAGGER, starting on 4 January 1944. Originally formed at Alconbury from disbanded Antisubmarine units, the *Carpetbaggers*, as they became known, were assigned to the 801st BG based at RAF Harrington. Missions commenced quickly under the auspices of OSS General ‘Wild Bill’

Donovan.

By April 1944 the Carpetbaggers had physically moved to Harrington, Northamptonshire – a safer, inland location - expanding to four squadrons, enabling them to support the RAF, and the planned invasion of Europe. From January 1944 to the end of the war, the Group in liaison with the British SOE and later the Special Forces Headquarters (SFHQ) in London, dropped spies and supplies to the resistance forces of France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway.

All flights were individual, each navigator choosing his route in consultation with the pilot. Sorties were made on moonlit nights so that visual navigation could be made by using rivers, lakes, railroad tracks, and towns as check points. The pilot, copilot, and bombardier all had maps to aid them in keeping track of their location, while the navigator kept position by dead reckoning with all four of these officers staying in close interphone contact.

Their tasks were varied, as were the aircraft used (B-24 Liberators and C-47 Sky-trains). They could be transporting gasoline; dropping propaganda or informational leaflets, returning Allied airmen from the Continent, as well as the more obvious deliveries of war *matériel* to the Resistance, and insertion of US OSS and SOE operatives.

2Lt John M Cronan E-0-50, and 1Lt William E Huenekens B-1-37 801st Bomb Group



Above: 2Lt John M Cronan and William E Huenekens
According to Ben Parnell’s book, Pilot 1Lt Willam Huenekens was on a non-operational training mission at night on 17 June, with his Co-pilot

News from Across the Pond...

2Lt John Cronan. Flying a B-24 of the 801BG, they had taken off from Harrington, but by 02:30 they were spotted by a Royal Observer Corps post with an engine on fire.

They had been intercepted by a German fighter aircraft in the area of Eaton Socon, Bedfordshire. It had all happened so fast. A fire took hold and threatened to engulf the whole plane. Heunekens gave the order to bail out, but he and Cronan stayed at the controls of the burning aircraft in order to provide a stable platform for the other four members of the crew to bail out. The Bombardier 2Lt Sanders found his parachute burned, so he jumped in tandem with Navigator 2Lt Callahan (for which he received the Silver Star)! They both survived with broken bones and minor injuries. The Tail Gunner, Sgt Sadler was badly burned but also survived. Huenekens and Cronan, along with the Engineer, SSgt Adams died instantly on impact when the B-24 finally crashed into the hard-packed soil of the fields.

...and finally, the enigma that is Dorothy!

Dorothy A Stretch, in Britain with the American Red Cross (ARC), seems to have had a very chequered past.



Left: Yearbook - Highland Park High School, 1932. Note Dorothy's youthful experimentation with a different version of her name!

DORTHEA STRETCH

Born to Cecilia J Golda Clark and Elwood T Stretch in September 1908, the eldest of three daughters, she grew up in Highland Park, Wayne, Michigan. Although raised a

Catholic, her mother's middle name, Golda, is a traditional Hebrew name.

A popular girl, and graduate of Wayne University, Dorothy earned an MA at the University of Detroit, prior to working in Detroit public schools as a physical education instructor. Most unusually for a young woman of her time, she travelled extensively in South America, Africa, Europe, and the Far East. Her Brazilian Visa lists her as a teacher. Indeed, in 1940, while in Japan, she was arrested as an American spy!



Above: Dorothy's Brazilian Visa from Ancestry.com/Brazil

Dorothy was the first in Detroit to volunteer for ARC, spending five months as a staff assistant in London. From here on Dorothy's story becomes rather murky!



Left: Dorothy in ARC uniform. Obituaries Miss Dorothy A Stretch, Detroit Free Press September 30, 1943.

Dorothy apparently fell from a Mayfair office building, dying in a London, US Army hospital, on September 18, 1943. According to reports, she was buried the same day, with a Catholic military funeral at the temporary American Cemetery at Brookwood. Apparently, two separate investigations took place. One would have been started by the London Police, who would then hand her case over to the US Military, which may explain why there are no details in British Police records.

The Detroit Free Press tells us, 'Ten minutes after her mother received a cablegram announcing her death, a letter was delivered in which Miss Stretch had written ... "if you don't hear from me for months, don't worry about me. I'm happy and busy and on my way ..."'

Such is the mystery surrounding Dorothy, that we asked to see her Individual Deceased Personnel File. She was admitted to hospital while the balance of her mind was disturbed; then transferred

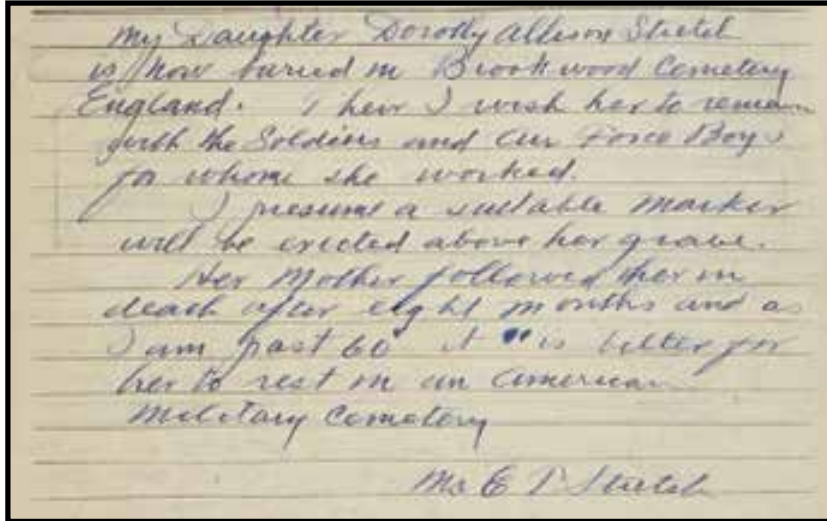
News from Across the Pond...

to the 2nd General Hospital, August 31, 1943, in Oxford; subsequently jumping off the roof of US Army Headquarters, 20 Grosvenor Square, London, 60 miles away! It all seems rather improbable – was this the fog of war?

Another anomaly is the contents of her footlocker. In autobiographies written by other ARC women, they all complain about having to fit all of their clothing in *one* box. However, Dorothy had 354 lbs of effects in four crates/cartons – full of pretty afternoon dresses (unobtainable in the UK due to rationing) with matching hats and purses; 13 pairs of gloves, evening dresses, a great deal of unobtainable toiletries and cosmetics; considerable quantities

of camera and cine film...and, of course, her amethyst rosary.

We wonder what her real story was.



Left: Letter to US Army by Mr Elwood T Stetel (Dorothy's father) written sometime between 15 May and 26 August 1947, from her IDPF.

Elwood's adventurous eldest daughter Dorothy died a day after her 35th birthday. She lies at Cambridge American Cemetery, C-4-33.

Everything we know about these people is confusing and inconclusive. Our research leads us to supposition and conjecture. Yet, the American Battle Monuments Commission continues to care for them all.

COME ONE, COME ALL!!

If you are planning a visit to England in 2025, be sure to include a tour of the 96th Bomb Group Museum!

Telling the stories of the service members from the ground to the air, you can learn the history of the 96th Bomb Group where it actually happened -- situated on the site of what was the base hospital.

The 96th BG Museum will be open on the following dates in 2025 from 10AM until 4PM:

Sunday April 13, 2025

Sunday May 18, 2025

Sunday June 22, 2025

Sunday July 20, 2025

Sunday August 17, 2025 (our main Open Day)

Sunday September 14, 2025

Sunday October 19, 2025



Please note: Private tours can also be arranged for any Saturday or Sunday during the year if a veteran's family member is visiting the UK.

Prior to your visit, please contact Jill Tebble, the 96th BG Museum Curator, at

96thbombgroupmuseum@gmail.com.

Find the 96th BG Museum at Aurora Eccles School, Quidenham, Norfolk, NR16 2NZ



Heavy Bomber Training at Wendover

by Jim Petersen

Standing quietly on the great Salt Flats desert, the lakebed of ancient Lake Bonneville, the remains of what was once a thriving World War II bomber training base hint at its World War II past. Squadrons of B-17 and B-24 bombers once occupied the large ramp, and residents became used to the drone of the four engine planes leaving on training missions 24 hours a day.

The first decade of the 20th century saw the Western Pacific railroad establish a stop here in Wendover to take on water, coal and connect a helper locomotive to move the train cars over the Nevada Mountains on their way to California.

The town had about 100 residents when the US Congress appropriated funds to acquire land for a bombing and gunnery range in 1939. With the potential of a pending war, our inadequate military aviation capability was in desperate need of new aircraft and the crews trained to fly them. Wendover and the desert salt flats provided an excellent training location, a safe inland location but within flying range of the west coast and with the rail access. (Pictured below right is a view of

the bustling Western Pacific rail yard in Wendover.)



Construction began in 1940 with runways and a few buildings. The Wendover airfield and

bombing range would ultimately occupy 1.8 million acres and would become the largest military reserve in the world.

Work on the base continued in 1941, but with the bombing of Pearl Harbor the pace of construction ramped up into what would be a building blitz until the end of the war. From bare ground, the base would grow to 668 buildings by the end of the War. Constructing a major base in such a remote area posed numerous challenges. Water was a problem, and purchasing water from the railroad at 50 cents per thousand gallons didn't begin to satisfy the needs. Eventually the Army provided one million dollars to construct a 32-mile pipeline from a spring in the Pilot Peak Mountain that flowed sufficient water for the base.



A number of the buildings on the newly constructed base were taken from the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) developments and moved to the Wendover to help speed construction. The operations building shown above was typical of the 'temporary' type of construction. Once the building was framed, the outside would be sheathed in tar paper and held on with lath strips. Later, buildings would be covered with horizontal wood siding. (See below.)



In the spring of 1942, the 306th Bomb Group arrived at Wendover for their phase two operational training. They found a lack of military housing, offices, hangars and other amenities needed for their training. Crowding into meager facilities under the watchful eye of then Lt. Col Curtis Lemay, they completed their training. By August 1, the 306th departed in their B-17 aircraft for Thurlough, England, and an assignment to the Eighth Air Force. This group went on to become the first to bomb the heartland of Germany. Staff Sergeant Maynard 'Snuffy' Smith of the 306th was awarded the first Medal of Honor in Europe for his acts of heroism during a fighter attack on his bomber.

Training at Wendover Field was often dangerous and unforgiving. Charles Fruedenthal of the 489th BG said that "lack of experience was a problem in nearly all the skilled positions". On January 2, 1943, a B-17F of the 526th bomb squadron, 379th Bomb Group, took off on a navigation mission



to Pocatello, Idaho, and Ogden, Utah. Due to an advisory of potential weather issues the flight plans were changed to include Elko, Nevada, Burley, Idaho, and return to base. The last radio transmission heard was just before departure. No further contact was made. The plane was declared lost after a 17-day search. On June 24, 1943, as the snow was melting, a crash was located in the East Humboldt Mountains of Nevada, about 50 miles from Wendover Field just below a 12,000-foot peak. The bodies of four officers and six enlisted men were reverently brought down the incredibly steep terrain by William B. Wright and ranch hands. His young son and friends recovered two of the .50 caliber machine guns which have been donated to the Wendover Museum and are on dis-

play as a tribute to these airmen. This wasn't the first of the training accidents and it certainly wasn't the last.



Above: A "Little Boy" test shape being lowered into one of Wendover's loading pits.

Nineteen more bomb groups trained at the Wendover Army Air base after the 306th. Most of the groups were assigned to the Eighth Air Force although a few others were assigned to the 2nd, 7th, 14th and 15th. The final training of the 'Bloody 100th' Bomb Group, the subject of Spielberg and Hanks' recent mini-series, *Masters of the Air*, took place at Wendover Field.

In the early months of 1944, the 494th BG departed for the Pacific as the last bomber group trained at Wendover, and the airfield was turned over to the 72nd Fighter Wing with their P-47 Thunderbolts. This training was suddenly stopped in August and the fighters departed the field. The reason was that a now declassified memo of August 29 from Captain Deery to General Groves advised that Wendover Field was selected for "other phases of the Manhattan District work". A postscript dated a day later noted that General Giles nominated Colonel Paul Tibbets, an Eighth Air Force veteran, as the commanding officer of the new bomber group.

That unit was the 509th Composite Group. They would spend from late 1944 until June 1945 training to accurately drop 10,000-pound bombs from 30,000 feet and then execute a diving turn to escape the effects of the expected blast.

Project W-47 at Wendover resulted in 155 prototype assemblies of both the 'Little Boy' and 'Fat



B-29 "Doc" parked in the Wendover's B-

Man' type bombs. No nuclear materials were used in Wendover but all of the complex fusing mechanisms were repeatedly assembled and tested in these prototypes.

After the war was over, all of the tooling, fixtures and materials were transferred to Kirtland Army Air Force Base in New Mexico. With the end of the war and the announcement of the atomic bombs, the secrecy of Wendover was no longer needed.

Post war use of Wendover included rocketry, guided bomb tests and other military uses such as the Red Flag exercises. A small maintenance group ran the air base until 1977 when the Air Force turned over the land and buildings to the city of Wendover, Utah.

Today, 85 of the WW II buildings remain of the 668 original buildings on the base.



Restoration of a number of buildings is underway by the Historic Wendover Airfield Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit group. Established in 2001, their objective has been to preserve many of the original

WW II training and operation structures. There are museums in the officer's club and operations building where the airport FBO is located.

Other buildings restored or under restoration are a barracks, the airmen's dining hall, Norden Bombsight storage vault, control tower, B-29 hangar, admin building, squadron operations and nurse's quarters. A WWII C-54 cargo plane is also on display and is being restored to the 320th Troop Carrier Squadron's configuration.



This is the most original Army Air Force base remaining in the country where visitors can 'step back in time' and view the airfield where thousands of 8th Air Force veterans trained.

The restoration work is not yet complete and support for projects is still needed. Interested parties can contact the foundation at www.wendoverairfield.org or can contact Jim Petersen at: jimpetersen289@gmail.com.

29 Hangar. Photo by Weston Allen, 2022.

August 12, 1944

by Dominick McCutcheon

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the liberation of France. This year also marks the 80th anniversary of the death of my great-uncle – a man from Texas whom I never met, yet a man whom the United States, my family, Texas, and the French will always remember.

Second Lieutenant Jim Ragsdale McCutcheon was killed in action August 12, 1944, while flying his P-51D Mustang over German-occupied France. Jim had arrived at his base in Wormingford, England, only nine days earlier as a replacement pilot in the 55th Fighter Group - an arm of the 8th Air Force. At that stage of the war pilot losses for the 55th were high, estimated at about 52%.

Besides flying bomber escort missions far into Germany, the 55th and other fighter groups flew across the English Channel into occupied France to engage in dangerous, low-level interdiction missions. 55th pilots dubbed these missions “Railroad Rodeos,” a shoot-‘em-up Western term used to describe their relentless bombing and strafing attacks upon enemy railroad yards, locomotives, oil cars, ammunition cars, troop carriers on or alongside the railroads – AKA targets of opportunity.

For its part, the 55th Fighter Group – identified by green/yellow checkerboard patterns on their engine cowlings - earned a formal Distinguished Unit Citation, and the informal moniker of “Loco Busters” after destroying or “busting” more locomotives than any other fighter group in the 8th Air Force.

On August 12, 1944, a raiding force of 26 “Loco



Busters” was sent to engage in a Railroad Rodeo near Metz, France. Jim rode with this outfit assigned to a new Mustang whose tail the U.S. Government had branded number 44-13744.

Jim was last seen at the target area trailing his flight leader, diving towards oil cars and miscellaneous stock. After dropping his two 500-pound bombs, and for reasons unknown, Jim became separated from his flight. Radio calls to him went unanswered. Jim was nowhere to be seen.

Seventy-three years later, I’m standing beside my idling rental car, sixty-miles west of Metz, on the outskirts of the sleepy and picturesque commune of Revigny-sur-Ornain. During the war this town held strategic significance, especially because of its railway yards. Today this town holds personal significance. This is where my great-uncle was shot down by anti-aircraft flak.

Gazing down from atop a small hill, I imagined Jim leaning-in beside me when he stood 6’ 1” tall, and in his West Texas drawl quietly pointing out the verdant terrain, winding Ornain River, canals, bridges, railways, and quaint town structures - the scene framed in Jim’s hands like a

peaceful, colorful pastel painting, or postcard.

Then, I imagined Jim fighting here during the war, when things weren’t so peaceful, or colorful. Recalling historical newsreel footage from that era, the town was grey, mechanized, and dangerous. Worst of all, Revigny-sur-Ornain was occupied by hostile, uniformed troops rooted like weeds aside their locomotives, rail cars, tanks, trucks, stores of munitions, gasoline, and materials



- targets of opportunity, as aforementioned. Jim must've come upon these targets perhaps while lost, wounded, or prowling a roundabout course back towards England.

Jim weighed up the situation. Although out of bombs, his six machine guns still held ammunition, and Jim still held fight. For a “Loco Buster” trying to bolster his group’s reputation, or a new replacement pilot trying to prove his own reputation, the opportunity to strafe was very tempting, albeit very dangerous.

Jim knew the targets below were almost always protected by formidable and accurate air defenses; and that low-level strafing, even without the threat of flak, was an especially dangerous tactic compounded even further when attacking alone. Yet Jim’s job was to fight the bad guys.

What better way to help France restore its colors than to give the bad guys a well-deserved bloody red nose while on his way back to England? As a Loco Buster, and an idealistic American cowboy, Jim couldn’t pass up a good fight. He loped westward above the railroad tracks, following them towards his targets.

The occupiers heard the distinctive purr of a Merlin engine drawing nearer, cluing them that a P-51D Mustang, the newest, baddest, and most beautiful fighter aircraft of the war, was headed their way. They knew also that the Mustang was much more lethal than beautiful.

An air raid siren screamed and warned of the approaching aircraft. Nervous enemy ground troops stirred into action. Orders were barked. Anti-aircraft guns were made ready. Helmeted heads tracked the sky and listened, watched, and waited.

Saddled up in his cockpit, Jim stepped up the gait of his eager Mustang, finger ready on the trigger of his machine guns.

The encounter began in the waning hour of 1 p.m., when the occupiers opened fire on the Mustang. Jim returned fire, and from behind his bubble canopy watched the tracers hit their marks. The Mustang’s bare

aluminum skin glistened as its engine sucked fuel, sweated oil, and snorted out its exhaust. Jim reined, twisted, and spurred his Mustang as the massive 11-foot propellor pulled Jim above the melee he had so eagerly created – pilot and aircraft in their youthful and fighting prime, very much alive and in harmony, doing their jobs of loco busting.

The duration of the encounter will remain a mystery, but Jim lived up to the 55th’s reputation, as any Loco Buster worth his salt *should’ve* done. Indeed, Jim put up a good and spectacular fight, until at 1:50 p.m. the occupiers finally got lucky, and their flak put down Jim’s powerful and beautiful Mustang.

I wondered about that moment. *While riding his way down, would Jim*

have thought to offer his enemy the final gesture of an upturned middle finger, or a chivalrous, crisp salute?

Jim’s Mustang crashed one kilometer east of Revigny-sur-Ornain, along the railroad tracks by the woods. A sickening thump reverberated throughout town, punctuating the obliteration of fighter plane and

fighter pilot, much to the delight of the occupiers, and much to the dismay of the French for whom Jim – aged twenty - had just died.

A French child who was witness that day wrote of the aftermath, *“At the Maginot Quarter, where the [occupying] troops are stationed, chaos ensues. Farmers with horses and carts are requisitioned to transport whatever can be salvaged. On the Market Square, it’s a hellish scene as Tiger tanks and others seek refuge under the chestnut trees. Some are still on fire, and water from the canal is a welcome relief. I can still see a soldier brandishing a rifle with a burnt stock.”*

“Towards late afternoon, the children of that time had defied their parents’ prohibitions and gone to the rail yard to witness the flames. It seemed the entire rail yard was ablaze. The sky was dark with smoke, stretching over a kilometer, reflecting various colors. [Enemy] voices echoed everywhere. Unrestrained engines still



struggled to move away from the inferno even two hours after the attack.”

“The horses of the requisitioned farmers were stamping their hooves, neighing in convoys loaded with whatever could be salvaged, and heading towards the Maginot Quarter via the Conmissiere road. Meanwhile we young ones scavenged tobacco cartridges here and there, not forgetting the sweets.”

The French took possession of Jim’s badly broken body. Police issued his death certificate and recorded an identification bracelet found on his right wrist. Townspeople wrapped Jim in a mattress cover. A funeral was officiated at the town military cemetery, where the American was buried alongside French heroes. Colorful flowers adorned the American’s grave marker, until the occupiers caused those too, to be destroyed.

My family had only recently learned this incredible history, which compelled me to travel to Revigny-sur-Ornain. So here I was, overlooking the town, unsure of what to do, or how to express my family’s long overdue appreciation for the respectful and honorable manner in which the French treated our family member.

I got back in my rental car, drove into town, and parked along the quiet main street. I had no overall plan, and I couldn’t speak French. However, I came prepared with duplicate photos of Jim posed in front of his Mustang, and translated handouts that explained my purpose. *“Dear Sir or Madame: I am the great-nephew of James Ragsdale McCutcheon, an American P-51 pilot who was shot down and killed nearby here...”*

As I slid the photos and handouts into mailboxes, and under windshield wiper blades, I estimated my odds of finding anyone who appreciated the significance of August 12, 1944, to be about 1 in 2700-ish, which represented the unfavorable ratio of me to the town’s population. I prepared myself for failure. Too much time had passed since 1944.

I came upon a small café and allowed its aromas to lure me inside. Feeling a bit hopeless, I plopped the photos and handouts atop my table, and ordered something by pointing to the menu, revealing myself as a tourist.

I felt a hand on my shoulder. I turned and was somewhat stunned to find sitting behind me a pretty, middle-aged French woman motioning towards one of the handouts. I gave her a photo as well. Her eyes alternated between the handout, and the photo of Jim, who was known to be very handsome. And then, as if

she might’ve been realizing the death of her own son, her eyes began to water. She swallowed hard, then held up her forefinger. Wait. The woman flipped open her cellphone. Other diners gathered around her conversation, and the café came alive with whispers and accented chatter.

Something was happening. The woman had connections.

Moments later, and in through the door came the town Vice-Mayor, Alain Fisnot. Through his broken English, and between his friendly gestures and flattering excitement, I was able to understand that Revigny-sur-Ornain knew the significance of August 12, 1944. There was much to discuss. Could I meet tomorrow at the town hall? Yes!

The next day I was greeted at the same town hall that had been occupied during the war. I was led to an upstairs room. The wooden stairs beneath me creaked. Did they creak like this on August 12, 1944? Who else had looked out these same windows, when different banners hung from them?

The upstairs room felt stately and historic. A stoic portrait of Andre Maginot overlooked a large wooden table where Mayor Pierre Burgain, Vice-Mayor Fisnot, translator Mickael Mathieu, and a small contingent of others, including the local press, stood respectfully waiting – all of them

gathered here by an American fighter pilot whom none of them knew, yet whom they all wanted to remember, and honor.

Vice-Mayor Fisnot showed me Jim’s death certificate, and a copy of his Missing Air Crew Report #7770. (MACR’s from WWII weren’t declassified until 1978). He showed me a copy of the enemy report from that day, as well as the report from when Jim was last seen by his flight leader. He provided me with a copy of the child’s narrative of the aftermath of the fight. We compared notes and dates.

We thumbed through Jim’s squadron records, the 338th, self-described as *“Earthquake McGoon’s Flying Circus.”* One photo showed the Flying Circus posed in front of their Quonset hut at their August 11th chicken fry *“having a jolly good time”* while *“celebrating nothing in particular.”* They were all so young, jovial, and seemingly invincible.

Little did they know that the next day two other pilots in addition to Jim would be lost elsewhere in France - 2nd Lt. William E. McMillan was KIA when he pulled up too late while strafing a locomotive, and 1st Lt. Richard J.



Keough, who was taken prisoner of war after he bailed out of his Mustang, damaged by the explosion of a locomotive he'd been strafing.

I shared family lore how Jim had been a cowboy, and how he'd venture into Mexico for the night to return at dawn disheveled, covered in lipstick, and still a bit tipsy. He'd retire to the bunkhouse, and from inside be heard strumming his guitar while dramatically singing (yelling), an obnoxious version of "Home on the Range," a classic American folksong that romances the life of a working cowboy.

Mayor Burgain pushed the town journal in front of me and offered a pen, inviting me to record my thoughts. I wrote, and announced to all present, and as best I could, my family's appreciation for the manner in which Revigny-sur-Ornain honored Jim's sacrifice and kept his memory alive.

Then, on behalf of the town of Revigny-sur-Ornain, Mayor Burgain formally and posthumously presented to 2nd Lieutenant James Ragsdale McCutcheon the great honor of their town medal. Mayor Burgain's La Bise kisses to both sides of my cheeks ended the heartfelt presentation. (*I later gave the town medal to my father, Bennett Browning "Mac" McCutcheon, Sr., who knew and admired Jim, especially for his sacrifice to the greater good.*)

In the quiet that followed, all of us in that room realized that no words, stories, documents, gestures or gifts could ever supplant our feelings for Jim. I think we could all sense his presence, and we hoped he felt ours. Even the ghosts of the occupiers would've been touched by the ceremony. None of us in body or spirit left that room feeling unchanged.

Two weeks after I said goodbye and left for home, the town rededicated a monument to allied airmen killed in action during WWII. On this 80th anniversary of the liberation of France, the French do indeed recognize the significance of August 12, 1944, and other dates

that memorialize the sacrifice of eight other allied airmen killed in action before Revigny-sur-Ornain was liberated August 31, 1944.

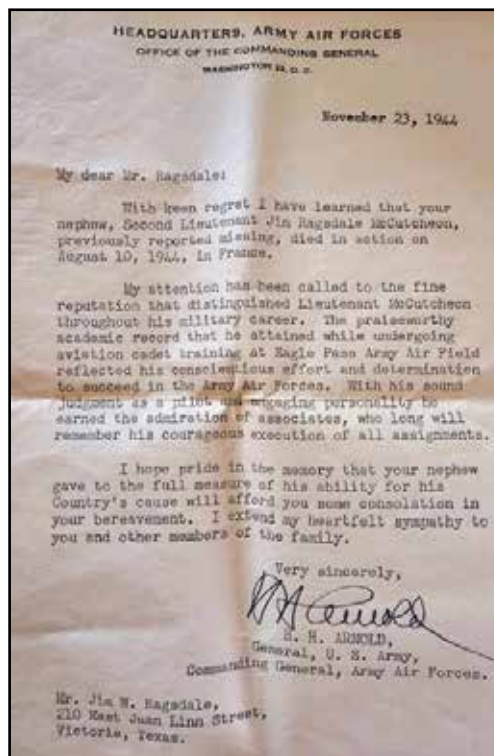
October 14, 1943 - Charles Malcomb Baer (United States Army Air Forces), killed in his parachute after being rammed by an enemy aircraft. July 19, 1944 - John Charles Broughton Boydell (Royal Australian Air Force), Alan Wesley Giles Fripp (RAAF), Beverly Hudson Gifford (RAAF), Harold Newall (Royal Air Force), Philip John Pierce (RAAF), Raymond George Shipway (RAAF), Frank George Spencer (RAAF), all killed in action after their RAAF Lancaster was shot down by a night fighter aircraft.



August 12, 1944 - James Ragsdale McCutcheon (USAAF). Jim is today buried at the Epinal American Cemetery, France.



Epilogue:
Jim Ragsdale McCutcheon was born September 13, 1923, in Fort Davis, Texas, to Bennett Brazil McCutcheon and Celeste (Holt) McCutcheon. The McCutcheons were wealthy cattle ranchers operating approximately 50 sections of land. They lived on the ranch located about 16-miles outside of Fort Davis, on Limpia Canyon Road, in a 10-bedroom, two-bath house (with indoor plumbing!), made of chiseled native stone. I



believe the house still stands and is occupied. Bennett's brother, Willis W. McCutcheon, was also a prominent cattle rancher in Fort Davis. As a child Jim used to build and fly gas-powered balsa wood model airplanes. Jim was orphaned at age 16 after the death of Celeste in 1939, and then Bennett in 1940. The McCutcheons lost the ranch. Jim moved to Victoria, Texas, to live with his namesake, Uncle Jim W. Ragsdale, until the young Jim enlisted in the United States Army Air Forces. Jim was the youngest of four siblings after Bennett Brazil McCutcheon Jr., Martha McCutcheon, and Alfred Holt McCutcheon, who served as an army captain in Tunisia, North Africa, during the war. dm



H + STEM Comes to the 'Mighty Eighth!'

by Dawn Brosnan
Director of Communications and Marketing
The National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force

“For thirty years we went our separate ways with little contact, and I realized that the story of the men of the 8th was going to disappear if we did not have a perpetual home.”

- Major General
Lewis E. Lyle writes to
Lieutenant General E.G.
Buck Shuler

Lyle’s fears initiated the inception of the Eighth’s “perpetual home”, the National Museum of the Eighth Air Force. The Museum serves as the only center dedicated to preserving and presenting the history and stories of the Eighth Air Force from World War II. While the building and its collection have remained, the museum has undergone immense change in its 28 years.

Dozens of World War II veter-

ans held positions from volunteer docents to board members in the Museum’s earliest years. Guests were thrilled to tour the museum and speak with those who had served during the formative years of the Eighth. As of 2023, it is estimated there are just over 100,000 living World War II veterans in the United States. As a result, the Museum, like many of its kind, no longer has any living World War II veterans in its ranks.

Despite this immense loss, their stories persist through collection, preservation, and presentation. The Museum has a dedicated education and volunteer department, headed by Heather Thies, who has been with the museum for nearly two decades. Ms. Thies leads a wide range of volunteers who are the children of veterans, post-war veterans, aviation enthusiasts and mechanics, and

history buffs. All work together to chronicle the Eighth’s history. It would have been acceptable for the Museum to stop where it was, but in 2020 *Maximum Effort*, the capital campaign, began to expand the museum’s facilities and programs. One of the largest pushes was the incorporation of STEM programming.

In the 90s and early 2000s STEM was the cutting edge in the classroom focused on the four core disciplines of **Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics**. Years later educators are looking for fresh ways to approach STEM, and museums are looking for a new way to approach history. Incorporating STEM has been met with great enthusiasm and a modicum of trepidation. Embracing STEM in a history museum can feel like a distraction from its mission. If the Museum is



trying to focus on STEM how can proper attention be given to veterans and their history?

The National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force has hosted STEM programs and even offered a STEM tour, *Science of Flight*, since the early 2000s. For years, *Science of Flight* and STEM days, one-day events held four times a year, were the extent of the Museum's STEM programs. These programs were popular with the public, particularly for young children and families. To capitalize on the program's success, the public's interest in STEM, and the desire to continue to reach new audiences, the Museum is thrilled to announce its H+STEM programming. This initiative is made possible by a multiyear grant given by the Cynthia Lake Charitable Trust.

H is for the discipline of history, and it is placed ahead of STEM.

That is how the Museum will always develop its programming, leading with history. H+STEM will integrate unique primary sources from the museum's extensive collection of World War II artifacts creating a one-of-a-kind experience for visitors who participate. The first H+STEM tour, *Invention and Innovation*, will be available in the 2024 – 2025 school year. The tour will demystify scientific advancements by revealing historical realities and discussing how invention and innovation occurred on the airfields and the Home Front. Using primary sources students will elucidate the long-term effects of these technological advancements made during the war, and how they impacted daily lives.

In the coming years, more programming will be developed to coincide with the opening of new exhibit spaces as the museum grows.

Student tours will be expanded to include more topics related to scientific advancements and grand feats of engineering that influenced the outcome of one of the world's most significant conflicts. H+STEM programs will not only be student-focused. Author talks and specialized tours for visiting adults should be anticipated.

H+STEM deepens our audience's understanding of the war efforts by using a fresh lens to view military history; just as Major General Lewis E. Lyle hoped the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force remains the perpetual home of the Eighth.

To learn more about H+STEM please visit www.mightyeighth.org or message Kristin Singleton at ksingleton@mightyeighth.org



Bréal-sous-Montfort, France, Honors LIEUTENANT R. G. QUINN

by Jean-Paul Favrais

On June 15, 2024, the village of Bréal-sous-Montfort in Brittany commemorated the memory of Lieutenant Russell Gerald Quinn, American pilot shot down on the territory of the city during the D-Day fighting of 1944. On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of his death and the Liberation of France, a beautiful ceremony was organized in front of the Quinn's stele by the municipality and by the association of veterans of Bréal.

First a brief historical reminder. Operation OVERLORD was launched by the Anglo-American Allies on June 6, 1944, in Normandy to combat Nazi forces on European soil. In order to guarantee the success of the operation, thousands of pilots carried out bombing missions on the axes of the German troops to prevent them from transporting reinforcements to the Landing zone.

At the end of the day of June 13, 1944, a shattering noise stunned the inhabitants of Bréal-sous-Montfort and thick black smoke rose from the surroundings of the old railway station. A plane has just been hit by fire from a German anti-aircraft battery installed at an airfield near Rennes in Brittany. The pilot tried to crash land but his plane crashed around 7:00 p.m. and exploded.

Several residents rushed to the scene of the tragedy and left flowers picked there. The next day, many people came to show their gratitude to this pilot who was lying under a white sheet next to the wreckage of his plane. But

his identity remains unknown.

How was the identity of the pilot found?

Among the witnesses to the tragedy, is a young 9-year-old from Bréal, Jean-Paul Favrais, who describes the scene 80 years later: *"I still remember this horrible vision of the pilot who was lying under a white sheet a few meters from the debris of his plane. I saw people laying flowers to pay him a fitting tribute..."*. He grew up with this atrocious vision of the pilot's charred body which would mark him all his life. He wants to know who this man was.

In 1992, close to retirement, he decided to contact a historic center in the United States. His determination fuels his goal: to honor with dignity the memory of this pilot who gave his life for our freedom. After a few months of waiting, a response from the American military archives in March 1993 finally revealed his identity. It was Lieutenant Russell Gerald Quinn, 24 years old, pilot of the 20th Fighter Group of the 8th US Army Air Force (USAAF), originally from Harrisburg, Oregon, where his body now rests.

He thus learned that, on June 13, 1944, the formation of 48 P.38 fighter-bombers to which he belonged, had the mission of cutting a large railway bridge over the Loire river, at La Possonnière near Angers. The mission was successful, but it was on the return journey to England that Lieutenant Quinn was hit and crashed at Bréal-sous-



Montfort. Thanks to contacts established with American veterans, former flight comrades, he also obtained information about his missions and his unit. Then, thanks to the help of an American journalist, Marilyn Montgomery from the Albany Democrat-Herald, he found his family at the end of 1994 and discovered how this tragedy was experienced by his sister Patricia and her unfortunate parents.

A family devastated by the loss of two sons

Indicating in a letter from January 1995 that she was the only survivor of the family, Patricia Quinn wrote to Jean-Paul Favrais: *“I was 14 years old in 1944. My two brothers Russell, 24 years old, and Gale, 22 years old were both pilots in the USAAF and died within a week of each other. Russell on June 13 in France and Gale on June 19 while completing his training in California. One day, after a nighttime training flight, Gale did not return to base. The Ministry of War informed the family that a search was being launched to find him”*.

Patricia then bicycles to the Harrisburg post office every day to retrieve the department’s telegram informing her of the search for Gale’s plane. The family expected the worst for him and wondered how to tell his brother Russell. Ironically, it was a telegram announcing Russell’s disappearance in the fighting in Europe that the family received first. The two sons of Roy and

Irene Quinn died a few days apart, 10,000 kilometers apart. Neither brother ever knew the other was missing. Upset by the sudden death of their two sons, the parents remained immensely sad all their lives. Two Gold Stars symbolizing their loss remained attached to a window of their house for a long time.

How did Bréal-sous-Montfort decide to honor Lieutenant Quinn?

As soon as contact was established with his sister Patricia, Jean-Paul Favrais, then deputy mayor, convinced the city to pay tribute to Lieutenant Quinn. A black granite monument was inaugurated on May 21, 1995, in the presence of numerous authorities, flag bearers, armed soldiers and school children. But it was above all the presence of the Quinn family, who came specially from Oregon, which most moved the audience. His sister, Patricia Quinn Hayworth, accompanied by her husband John and her two children, Mary and Russell, is present to honor the memory of her brother and to thank the people of Bréal-sous-Montfort for having worked so hard to commemorate his sacrifice.

After unveiling the monument which symbolically represents an airplane wing, Patricia Quinn Hayworth gave a speech full of emotion: *“It is always difficult for me to live through these moments because they remind me too much of the pain of my parents, but I am sure that*



what we did for you, you would also have done for us. We thank Bréal-sous-Montfort, all its inhabitants and France for not having forgotten the death of my brother on June 13, 1944. What you did will remain engraved in the memory of our family for generations."

A memory faithfully maintained by the Bréalais and the Americans

Various actions were subsequently undertaken to maintain the memory of Lieutenant Quinn but also that of other American pilots shot down in France. A long research work on their identity and their missions was carried out by Jean-Paul Favrais with the AMLRQ (Association for the Memory of Lieutenant Russell Quinn). Exhibitions and discussions with the families of the pilots, many of whom came to France, made it possible to maintain this duty of memory. The 8th Air Force Historical Society (AFHS) also officially welcomed Jean-Paul during its annual conference in Savannah, Georgia, in July 2013. Their president and members wanted to thank him for all his work which made it possible to pay tribute to the pilots killed in the fighting in France and to welcome their families who wanted to mourn at the crash sites.

A documentary was even made in 2012 by the American producer, George Ciampa. Himself a veteran of the Normandy Landings at the age of 18, he served in a unit responsible for burying dead soldiers. His very moving film, entitled «*Remembrance of the Heroes of the Mighty Eighth Fallen in Combat*», pays tribute to Jean-Paul Favrais and captures the memory of the people from Brittany who witnessed the war and were touched by the sacrifice of the American pilots. It shows the memory of veterans but above all that of families who were very moved when they came to France. This film was introduced and concluded by the famous actor Gary Sinise.

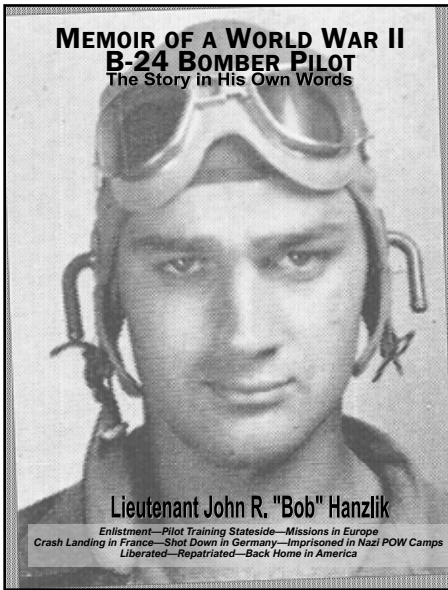
It is in this spirit that, on June 15, 2024, Bréal-sous-Montfort organized a major ceremony for the 80th anniversary of the disappearance of Lieutenant Quinn. At the invitation of the mayor, Mr. Bernard Ethoré, the United States consul in Rennes, Mrs. Elizabeth Webster, was present alongside numerous elected officials and civil and military authorities. Detachments from the Gendarmerie Force, the French Air Force, firefighters, as well as 50 standard bearers enhanced the solemn character of this commemoration. A choir of 60 students from the Bréal-sous-Montfort middle school and a large audience with children testified to the popular fervor of the event.

But the moment was especially marked by the presence of Lieutenant Quinn's nephew, Mr. Russell Hayworth who came specially from Oregon with Marilyn Montgomery, the journalist mentioned above, and her husband Stan. Russell gave a real emotional dimension to the ceremony and touched the audience with a poignant speech which ended with these words: *"When we gathered here 29 years ago to honor my uncle's memory at this newly erected memorial, my parents, my sister and I were overcome with emotion. This remained a very great memory for us because we were welcomed with immense hospitality by all the people of Bréal-sous-Montfort. It is with the same emotion that I am once again here among you on this memorable day. With humility, honor, gratitude and respect, I simply say MERCI!"*

Jean-Paul Favrais is the Official representative of the 8th AFHS in France and Roger Freeman Award winner in July 2013

Photos: p 24: Lt. Quinn; p 25 top, Bréal; left, Russell Hayworth & Bréal mayor; right, children's choir; this page top left to right: laying of wreaths; honor guards; Jean-Paul Favrais at podium.

BOOKSHELF



What is so compelling about this Memoir is reading the aviator's own words literally as he is writing them. Watch him come of age from a young man to a veteran combat pilot and prisoner of war in just three short, yet very long, years. Witness the relationship he had with his Mother and Father,

in what can only be seen as raw, untouched, daily experiences, sometimes guarded, sometimes brutally honest. To rediscover these letters is a gift of providence.

Pilot Training at Clarksdale, Mississippi July 9, 1943

Dear Mother; I came up another step today on my aim to get my wings. I passed my 40 hour check. I have just one more check, my 60 hour one, and I will have passed my Primary Flight Course. I felt so good after passing my check that I went up and did 5 loops...

4-engine Bomber training Casper, Wyoming May 1, 1944

Dear Folks, Boy we sure are a big happy crew! We were just assigned a big new silver B-24H to fly to our next post. \$291,000 worth of gadgets for all of us! Boy are we happy. Just like little kids with a new toy. That is supposed to be the ship we fly overseas and I hope we keep it...

His 12th combat mission in the European Theater of Operations, August 5, 1944

Dear Folks, Our last mission sure was something. I rather expected to spend the rest of the war in Germany. We had over 50 holes in our ship. If the above has been cut out I will tell you about it, when I get home. I sure don't want any more missions like that. Well keep your spirits up. Ours are at a peak...Love to All, Bob

25 months after enlisting, August 9, 1944

Dear Folks, I will be glad when I can get home again and have some talks with you in your "office." I am somewhat reminded of a story about a boy, who when he was 18 thought his parents very dumb. But when he was 21, he was surprised to find out how much they had learned in the last three years...

Prisoner of War Diary, October 15, 1944

Down outside of Heddesheim about 1030. No place to hide. Picked up 45 min later by Wehrmacht and taken to town Mayors House. Stayed until 1500. Searched etc. Also received first aid for burns. SS Soldiers threaten to beat me up. Wehrmacht took me to Langlonsheim (sic) caught train to Bad Kreuzhach + taken to Army Camp. Received further attention for burns + put in cell...

V-Mail as a "Recaptured POW" at Stalag VII-A in Moosburg, Germany, May 5, 1945

Dear Folks, After being cooped up for better than six months it is quite a fine feeling to regain freedom. As you may imagine I have had a multitude of experiences since October 15th the day I was shot down. You will have to wait until I return home to hear the full details...

Compiled by Karen Hanzlik Hoaglund and Madonna Zay Burgard.

For more information on how to preorder your copy, please email: karen.hoaglund@yahoo.com or call the Society office: 912-748-8884.

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B-17s of the 8th US Air Force in their combat formations over the Schweinfurt ball bearing complex.
(National Archives photo)

“BLACK THURSDAY” OCTOBER 14, 1943: THE SECOND SCHWEINFURT BOMBING RAID

*The Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO) in the European Theater
was one of America’s bloodiest campaigns.*

by Military Historian, Dr John M Curatola LtCol USMC (Ret)

The Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO) in the European Theater was one of America’s bloodiest campaigns. Operating from bases in the United Kingdom, the US Army Air Forces (USAAF) flew missions over occupied Europe alongside their Royal Air Force (RAF) counterparts from Bomber Command. The CBO sought to reduce German infrastructure and its capacity to support the Nazi war effort. The campaign also aimed to establish air supremacy over the continent in support of future ground offensives. Targeting factories, naval yards, airfields, and assembly facilities, the Allied air forces attacked German cities, production plants, and industrial areas. While the RAF executed area bombing at night, the Americans attempted precision attacks by

day. In this three-year combined campaign, the U.S. 8th Air Force spearheaded the American bombing effort over Europe, but suffered more than 70,000 casualties.

In response to the Allied air offensive, the German Luftwaffe built a strong integrated air defense system with interceptor aircraft guided by ground based radar controllers. German ME-109, FW-190, ME-110, and JU-88 fighters attacked Allied aircraft as they flew over occupied Europe. Additionally, anti-aircraft artillery, or “flugabwehrkanone,” commonly referred to as “flak,” also targeted the Allied bombers. The Luftwaffe flak arm, eventually numbering over one million personnel, included thousands of 88, 105, and 128mm guns strategically located near potential targets or on recognized bomber

routes. As the two sides clashed, the air war became a test of resiliency with the Luftwaffe and Allied crews locked in a high altitude battle of attrition.

Representing the ferocity of this aerial contest was a mission flown on October 14, 1943. In what became known as “Black Thursday”, the 8th Air Force’s 1st and 3rd Air Divisions flew from bases in East Anglia and attacked German ball bearing factories 400 miles away at Schweinfurt, Germany. Because much of the German war machine relied on low friction ball bearings, air planners believed that destroying ball bearing production would have a cascading effect upon the Nazi ability to wage war. While an earlier strike on Schweinfurt in August cost the USAAF 60 bombers, equaling 20 percent of the attacking force, the raid reduced bearing production by 40 percent. The Germans, however, quickly rebounded and the Allies scheduled a second raid.

Although the Americans initially believed they could fly bombers unescorted into enemy territory, this early phase of the air war provided some harsh lessons. Despite bristling with up to ten machine guns, the US B-17 and B-24 heavy bombers were constantly harassed by German defenses with American losses beginning to mount. Losses became so great that American aircrews would not, statistically, survive their required 25 mission combat tours. While realizing the need for fighter escort to protect the bombers, Allied pursuit aircraft in 1943 lacked the range to fly much past the French and Dutch coastlines.

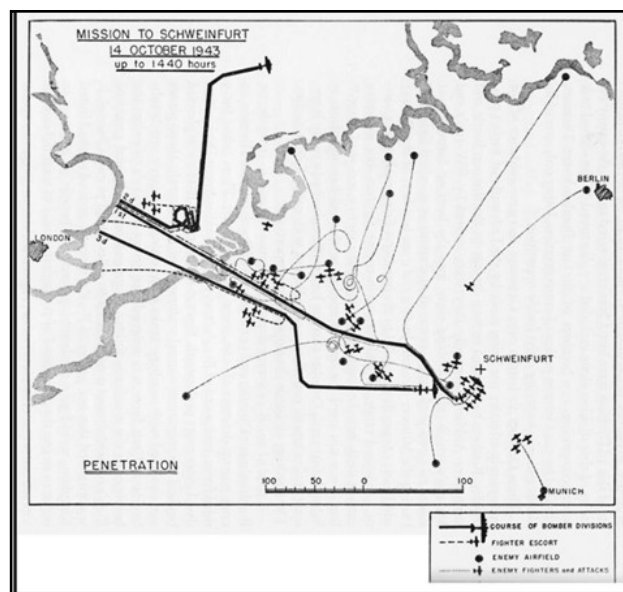
As a result, the October Schweinfurt raid’s 291 bombers were escorted for only the first 200 miles of their trek. For the remaining 200 miles the bombers flew without any fighter protection. With the B-17s in their “combat box” formation approaching Aachen, the USAAF’s P-47 fighters reached the limits of their range of operation. Signaling their departure they wagged their wings at the B-17s in a friendly farewell, peeled off, and returned home. As soon as the American fighters left, the Luftwaffe struck.

Despite a failed attempt to create an aerial diversion using B-24s heading to the North Sea, the Germans tracked the American primary B-17 formation with radar the moment it took to the air. As the P-47s cleared the area, radar guided German fighters came at the bombers. Single engine German fighters, three and four abreast, attacked head-on at American formation and fired 20mm cannons at close range. This first wave was quickly followed by a second consisting of heavy twin engine JU-88 fighters. The larger fighters not only fired heavy bore cannons, but also 21cm rockets launched from beneath their wings. Firing these projectiles from up to 1,000 yards away, the JU-88s could safely remain outside the effective range of the bomber’s defensive guns. Packing

considerable explosive firepower, a single rocket could easily destroy a bomber in only one salvo. Shooting rockets at the lead bomber, the JU-88s forced the American formation to break up as individual B-17s conducted evasive action.

Such tactics ruined the American formation’s mutually supporting defensive fires. The Luftwaffe coordinated their attacks effectively as they focused on individual groups within the formation. Overwhelming the unit’s defensive capabilities, the Germans then turned on the damaged stragglers that fell out of the defensive bomber formation. What made matters worse for the USAAF was that Luftwaffe crews flying from their home bases had time to land, refuel, rearm, and sortie again. This process would continue as the bomber formation flew to and from the target area.

By the time the Americans approached Schweinfurt, their formations had already lost 28 planes. With the 1st Bomb Division in the lead, crews of the trailing 3rd Division reported that their path to the target was easily marked by the smoke and fire of downed B-17s from preceding formations. Before reach the target the 40th Bomb Group, already lost seven of 49 planes with many others damaged. As the bombers reached the “initial point” and started their bomb runs, German aerial attacks abated.



Inbound trek of the Second Schweinfurt Raid on August 14, 1943. German fighters attacked the American formations once the American fighters reached their operational range. (US Air Force)

The absence of enemy fighters along with clear weather was welcomed, but Luftwaffe flak guns now engaged the formations. Aircrews avoiding direct hits

could still hear the sound of shrapnel as it penetrated or ricocheted off their bomber's thin aluminum skin. While gunners could shoot back at pursuing fighters, there was nothing to be done regarding the flak. They had to ride through the barrage. Despite the mauling the formations took, their bombs accurately struck the ball bearing complex. Surviving aircraft of the 40th Group dropped 53 percent of their bombs within 1,000 feet of the aim point. Of the 1,122 high-explosive bombs dropped, 143 landed on the factory area with 88 direct hits. Despite the accuracy of the raid, however later analysis eventually determined that German ball bearing production dropped by a mere 10 percent.

Right: Strike photo of the October 14 Schweinfurt mission. Despite accurate bombing ball bearing production dropped only 10 percent. (National Archives photo)



Having successfully delivered their payloads, the bombers now faced the same dangers on their return home. German fighters again pressed their attacks with one airman claiming:

"...never had we seen so many Germans in the sky at one time and never had their attacks seemed so well coordinated...wherever one looked in the sky there were Germans attacking, and B-17s smoking, burning, and spinning down."

The Luftwaffe continued its attacks until the bombers reached the English Channel. Eventually the surviving bombers lumbered to England, with many landing at the first airfield they could find while some put down in the first level ground available.

By the time the Americans returned home, they had lost 60 B-17s, another 17 were no longer airworthy, and an additional 121 received minor damage. That was only the material loss. The number of aircrew killed, wounded, or missing in action was more than 600, totaling almost 20 percent of the men sortied. These grim numbers were double what 8th Air Force planners consider an accept-

able loss rate. While gunners in the bombers claimed 186 Luftwaffe fighters downed, 27 "probable", and another 89 damaged, such tallies were wildly inflated. Many men often claimed credit for the same fighter passing through a formation with other claims mere wishful thinking. For that date, German records revealed a loss of only 31 fighters destroyed, 12 written off and 34 damaged—hardly what the Americans claimed.

At the time, USAAF leaders lauded the effect and claimed victory despite the high American loss rate. 8th Air Force commander Lieutenant General Ira Eaker

pronounced, "We now have our teeth in the Hun Air Force's neck..." but such a claim was pure canard and wildly inaccurate. While USAAF leadership publicly declared success, privately they expressed deep concern over the losses as morale of 8th Air

Force dropped. The reality was that deep penetrations into Germany without fighter escort were too costly. For the rest of 1943, the 8th Air Force limited its attacks to France, the European coastline, and the Ruhr Valley where fighter escort was possible.

Air planners avoided similar raids deep into Germany until the P-51 "Mustang" fighter with its extended range, excellent maneuverability, and ample armament became operational. However, the experience of "Black Thursday" had a lasting effect not only on the men and the planes, but it also made the USAAF reassess its theory of daylight strategic bombardment. Winning the air war would require new doctrines, equipment, and take much of 1944.

Article reprinted courtesy of The National WWII Museum. Article is authored by Dr. John Curatola, Samuel Zemurray Stone Senior Historian of The National WWII Museum, and originally published on The National WWII Museum website.

A MOMENT IN TIME

A Dirty Little War

Part III

A Black Day Indeed

JM Pittman, Next Gen 466th BG



After the disastrous raid on April 12th, B-29 losses over North Korea began to diminish. Gaps in communist radar coverage were exploited.

Aggressive counter air patrols into Mig Alley formed a shield that protected not only the B-29s, but those who bombed at low-level as well. There were losses to be sure, but Air Force Commanders were confident they could gain ‘command of the air’ over any target in Korea.

Having arrived in China to defend communist forces against UN airpower, Soviet commanders had no intention of letting the Americans push them around. Russian intelligence began listening to Allied communications. Within weeks they were able to identify aircraft types, call signs, force packages and tactics. Radar stations were strategically placed throughout North Korea. Each site paired a radar for tracking and identifying low level aircraft with a second that tracked high flying formations.

Airfields, radar sites, hydroelectric dams, and key installations bristled with anti-aircraft guns. Expertly camouflaged and continuously on the move, two hundred seventy-six 35mm antiaircraft guns and nearly eighty 5mm anti-aircraft guns dotted the North Korean landscape.

By the fall of 1951, Soviet pilots were routinely engaging American fighter sweeps into Mig Alley, attacking close air support aircraft, and working out how to kill the B-29s. On October 21st the 98th came under attack from enemy fighters and lost one aircraft. On the 22nd, bomber crews reported Mig-15s shadowed their formation, ‘but stayed well away.’ It was an ominous harbinger of things to come.

On the morning of October 23rd, the men of the 307th entered this maelstrom of move and counter move.

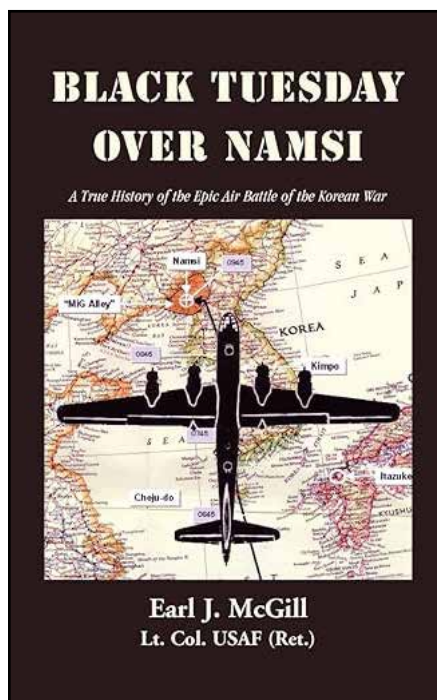
Having been in the air for over five hours, they finally crossed into hostile territory. The two lead flights lined up on the IP, banked northwest, and headed into Mig Alley.

At the tail of the formation Charlie flight turned at a different IP. Francis Kroboth on Charlie 2 listened as someone called over the radio, ‘They went to the wrong IP’. As the nine-ship formation pushed deeper into Mig Alley, Charlie Flight now lagged nearly three miles behind the lead aircraft.

Passing Taechon, the crews watched in horror as a wall of black clouds suddenly blossomed in front of them. Folger in Able 1 would later write that ‘the bursts were deadly big stuff, similar to the Flak he had encountered when he flew B-24s over Europe in WWII.’ Within minutes, razor sharp pieces of metal began ripping and tearing their bombers apart.

With Able and Baker flights exiting the Flak Ball, Soviet gunners turned their full attention to Charlie flight. Charlie 2s radio operator, Sgt Edward Moore recalled, ‘scanning right all I could see was flak’. During WWII, FLAK protection gear had dramatically reduced casualty rates among the flight crews. As the men of the 307th bored through the Flak Ball, they had no flak vests to protect them from a witches’ brew of jagged shrapnel and broken aircraft parts.

By 0940, LT COL Aleksandr Pavlovich Smorchkov and his thirty-eight Mig-15s had made their way south to intercept the American formation. Ahead and to the right, a screen of F-86 Sabres patrolled in arrowhead formation. Splitting his force, the Mig commander detached fourteen Migs to intercept the Sabres. Bearing left he caught sight

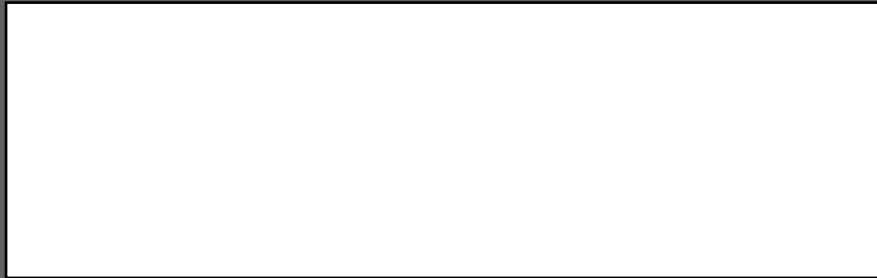




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of a formation of large bombers with its fighter escort ahead and to the right. Smorchkov reported the sighting and then gave the command ~ “To All – Attack the big ones.”

Closing to within 1000 meters, their cannons tore through the thin aluminum skin of the bombers like a hot knife through butter. On the first pass Krumm’s Able 3 was hit. With an engine and wing ablaze, they dropped out of formation and headed towards the ground below.

Aboard Reeter’s Baker 1 a 37mm shell exploded near the navigator’s station. Col Carrol and his radio operator were both hit. Navigator Morton Edwards was mortally wounded. Reeter himself pulled a piece of tubing from his jaw. Aft of the bomb bay, the tail gunner had also been hit. Within minutes Griner’s Baker 3 and Foulks’ Baker 2 were also hit and in trouble.

Behind them, Shields’ Charlie 1 was hit by canon fire in an engine, causing a fire that quickly spread to the wing. Fields’ Charlie 2 was hit in the left wing near the number two engine damaging a fire extinguisher, fuel lines, an oil tank, and the flight controls. Behind them, Dempsey’s Charlie 3 took a 37mm shell to the right wing which punctured the number three fuel tank.

John Wagenhalls recalled later, ‘It was almost as if each airplane was on its own since at least one aircraft from each flight was destroyed almost immediately

in the first attack’. Had the Migs not run out of fuel, none of the B-29s would have survived.

As the bombers retreated from the skies over Namsi, First Lieutenant Ernest R Harden flew a reconnaissance mission to assess the bomb damage. That night he went to the photo interpretation section to review the photos. “His heart sank when he saw there wasn’t a single bomb crater on the airfield.” Three bombers lost, five heavily damaged, twenty-seven men killed or missing in action, and more than twenty wounded, with no results to show for the sacrifice.

One transmission from a group of F-86s seemed to sum up the day. “Catch that flight of Migs as they come off the bombers,” one called out. This was followed by, “a wavering, earnest plea of, ‘Catch them before they get to the bombers.’”

The fight lasted less than fifteen minutes from start to finish. All the advantages enjoyed by England during the Battle of Britain were with the Soviets that day. Close to home, a technological advantage in equipment, and most importantly, early detection by radar which allowed ample time to position their fighters. For the men of the 307th it made for ‘*A Black Day*’ indeed.

Based on the Book:
Black Tuesday Over Namsi, By Earl J McGill
Heritage Books, 2008

J M Pittman

