

December 2024



# 8TH AF NEWS

Volume 24 Number 4 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

NO. \_\_\_\_\_

RECORDS BY SEARCHED REP. DEPOT

PASSED BY  
*Lt J. B. Allender*

REASON CHECKED

TO: *Lt Sam. BALLARD*

0-808902

306<sup>th</sup> Bomb Gp. (H)

368<sup>th</sup> Bomb Sq.

APO 557 ETO USA

1st Flip *tetrip*

1213 SENDER'S NAME 0511

321 Bomb Gp (M)

448 Bomb Sq.

A.P.O. 650 46 P.M.

New York, N.Y.

DEC. 15 DATE 1944

NO RECORD  
701A REP. DEPOT  
DIRECTOR'S SEARCHED

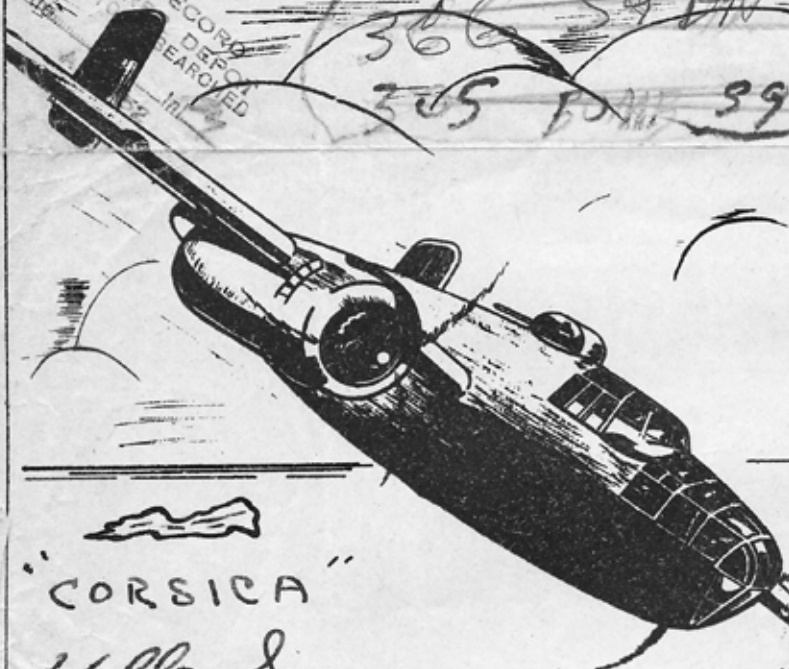
JAN 1945

366 59 DN

305 59 DN

AP0652

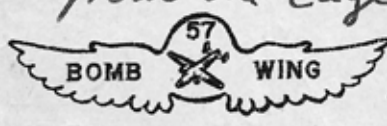
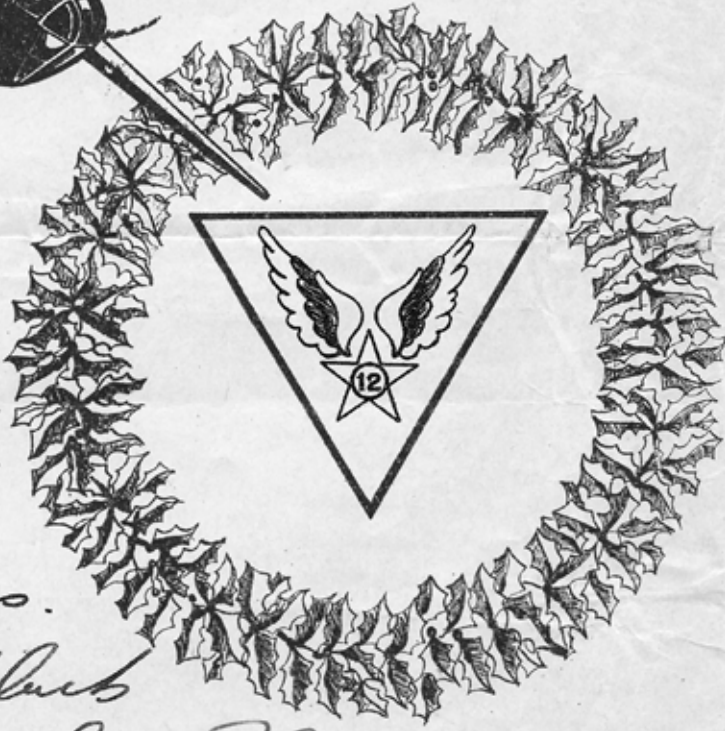
## Merry Christmas 1944



"CORSIKA"

Hello Sam,

Stuck on an island now but having a swell time. Still a God-Damn!! PVT. though. I really got it shoved up from the Eager Beavers.



Best of luck  
You-pal - Flip



# 8th AF News

## Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

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### INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Cover: The ingenuity and creativity of our military members never ceases to amaze and entertain. The Christmas message to Sam Stallard, of the 305th BG from his friend, Flip, made it past the censors! Read the story which begins on p.22.

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

National office is located at:

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

# EDITOR'S NOTES

I love music. More to the point, I love making music. My parents gave me a Hammond organ on my third birthday. After that, my path was pretty much set in stone: I would study music—play, sing, teach, and direct choirs—until I “retired” from that part of my life in 2005. To be clear, being a musician also meant having a “real” job in addition to making music.

So, I worked at banks, a hotel, and volunteered doing marketing and PR for several nonprofit organizations through the years. When I visited the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, I was totally captivated by the story of the Eighth. I knew immediately I wanted to tell it...and I have been blessed with that opportunity for the past 25 years.

While history does not change, the way we share it does. In a relatively short time, we have gone from stacks of books on library shelves and in museums, to movies, TV, computers, and now the internet. The incredible story of the men and women of the Eighth may be at everyone’s fingertips, but it is up to us to ignite that

**“Times and conditions change so rapidly that we must keep our aim constantly on the future.”  
Walt Disney**

spark—that passion to embrace the story and preserve it. Share it. It must never be lost to time.

In October 2025, the Historical Society will celebrate 50 years as an organization! Fifty years of gathering at annual reunions,

publishing amazing stories in the 8<sup>th</sup> A F News magazine, and—with dogged determination—striving to grow and continue as an organization.

Remember: The Eighth was born in WWII, but it didn’t die there. Today’s Eighth Air Force plays a vital role in national and global security and is still making history. Please. Help us keep this history alive. We can’t go it alone.

Wishing all of you a very Merry Christmas and all the blessings of the Season you and your family celebrate!



*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](mailto:ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org)**

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

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  
NR7 9QT  
477623 28575

**JOIN/RENEW ONLINE: [www.8thAFHS.org](http://www.8thAFHS.org)**

# PRESIDENT'S BRIEFING

Paul W Tibbets IV  
President



Greetings Society Members!

Thanks to everyone who joined us in New Orleans for our **50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society Reunion in September. It was awesome! Of the **400+ people who attended**, over **50 were veterans**, including **4 from World War II**. The other named operations represented included Korea, Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. The **National WWII Museum, Higgins Hotel** and beautiful city of **New Orleans** made it a reunion for the record books!

A huge shout out to **Maj Gen Jason Armagost**, Commander, Eighth Air Force and Joint-Global Strike Operations Center at Barksdale AFB, LA, who joined us Saturday night as our Gala speaker. His presentation on the activities of Eighth Air Force today was both enlightening and fascinating!

Many thanks to our three speakers at the General Membership meeting, who provided unique insights and impressive updates on their specific areas:

- **Mr. Scott Loehr**, President and CEO, The National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force
- **Mr. Jim Petersen**, President, Historic Wendover Airfield Foundation
- **Dr. Hattie Hearn**, Curator, American Air Museum, Duxford

Additionally, we can't say enough about the support and care we received from the entire Higgins Hotel team! I would like to personally thank **Diane Riche**, Senior Sales Manager, and **Denise Sarver**, Catering & Conference Service Manager, for going above and beyond the call of

duty to ensure everyone had a phenomenal experience!

It is an honor to continue to serve as your President! At

our Board Meeting following the elections, we made a few tweaks to our five **Focus Areas** for 2024-25. In no particular order:

- Strengthen 8 AFHS relationship with established Society groups and develop partnerships with post-WWII 8th Air Force and like-minded organizations
- Expand 8 AFHS presence on social media and introduce a podcast
- Expand 8 AFHS relationship with the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force
- Recognize and highlight continued long-term membership and develop a new member program
- Strengthen relationship with the post-WWII generations

We look forward to reporting back to you on these areas.

As we look forward to our 2025 reunion in **Colorado Springs**, please know your Society will continue to keep the agenda focused on a **family first, friendly environment** for all to enjoy!

Wishing everyone a joyous and relaxing holiday season, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Respectfully,

*Paul*

Paul Tibbets  
President, 8 AFHS

# 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 October, 2024. The Profit and Loss Statement and the Statement of Financial Position are printed here. In mid-September we sold two stocks, Boeing and Paramount, and transferred \$9K over to our Bank of American account in anticipation of annual meeting expenses. That resulted in a closing balance of \$203K at September's end, still a 10% increase year to date. No other changes are recommended at this time.

The Keep 'em Flying Giving Campaign saw another new

member in September. Currently there a total of 38 contributors, and a total in donations of \$20K. Details of the program appear in AF News, and the individuals and their donation amounts are printed on our website, 8thAFHS.org. Please note that the bigger your donation, the greater your benefits. 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 - October, 2024	
	Total
<b>Income</b>	
4000 Income/Miscellaneous	
4006 Account Processing Fees	437.00
4010 Member Dues Annual	19,893.00
4012 Magazine Subscription	6,200.00
4013 Magazine Income	255.00
4014 Chapter Closings	3,667.40
4015 Keep 'em Flying	15,000.00
4019 Member Contributions/Donations	21,438.28
4022 Merchandise	5,950.00
Total 4000 Income/Miscellaneous	\$ 72,866.68
4050 Investment Income	
4058 Portfolio Dividends & Interest	1,505.07
4060 Unrealized Gain(Loss) on Invest	16,247.20
Total 4050 Investment Income	\$ 17,752.27
Total Income	\$ 90,618.95
Gross Profit	\$ 90,618.95
<b>Expenses</b>	
5100 National Administration Expense	
5103 Officers/Directors Meeting Exp.	159.90
5108 Web Site Expense	1,701.00
5111 Corporation Charges	200.00
5121 8AF History Projects	334.10
Total 5100 National Administration Expense	\$ 2,395.00
5200 Magazine Expenses	
5210 Printing Expenses	22,482.82
5220 Postage Expenses	5,639.88
5240 Layout/Design	162.28
Total 5200 Magazine Expenses	\$ 28,314.98
5300 National Office Expenses	
5303 Telephone/DSL	615.16
5304 Supplies	2,726.34
5305 Abila Software/ Computer Exps	2,219.24
5307 Office Rent	1,000.00
5308 Insurance	306.00
5312 FICA-8AFHS portion	2,773.24
5313 Payroll/ Office Management	36,250.00
5315 Postage & Shipping	1,239.57
5316 Bank Charges/ Returned checks	0.03
5323 Merchant Account Usage Fees	6,117.87
5326 Payroll processing fees	916.00
Total 5300 National Office Expenses	\$ 54,163.45
Total Expenses	\$ 84,873.43
Net Operating Income	\$ 5,745.52
<b>Other Income</b>	
6550 Annual Meeting Revenue	10,865.34
6551 Event Registration	144,851.08
6552 Other Charges/Rebates	1,402.52
6555 Tours	82.00
Total 6550 Annual Meeting Revenue	\$ 157,230.94
Total Other Income	\$ 157,230.94
<b>Other Expenses</b>	
7100 Annual Meeting Expenses	
7101 Supplies & Items for Sale	7,171.70
7103 Hotel Expense/Catering	120,237.13
7104 Tours/Transportation	31,836.00
7106 Reimbursements	1,789.00
7109 Guest Expenses	1,000.00
Total 7100 Annual Meeting Expenses	\$ 162,035.83
Total Other Expenses	\$ 162,035.83
Net Other Income	-\$ 4,804.89
Net Income	\$ 940.63

Thursday, Nov 07, 2024 11:16:46 AM GMT-8 - Accrual Basis

8th Air Force Historical Society	
Statement of Financial Position	
As of October 31, 2024	
	Total
<b>ASSETS</b>	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
1017 Oppenheimer & Co	201,273.77
1040 Bank of America Checking Acct.	6,870.82
1041 B of A Deposits in Transit	0.00
1042 Bank of America Savings Acct.	2,043.80
Total Bank Accounts	\$ 210,188.39
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	\$ 210,188.39
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	\$ 210,188.39
<b>LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	
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	-31,344.65
2051 Payroll payable	2,896.57
2052 FICA & withhold taxes payable	39,087.48
Total 2050 Payroll & Taxes Payable	\$ 10,639.40
2500 Accrued Expenses	0.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$ 10,639.40
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 10,639.40
Total Liabilities	\$ 10,639.40
Equity	
3100 Unrestricted Net Assets	0.00
3200 Unrestricted Net Assets	198,608.36
Net Income	940.63
Total Equity	\$ 199,548.99
<b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY</b>	\$ 210,188.39

Thursday, Nov 07, 2024 11:21:45 AM GMT-8 - Accrual Basis



**“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:

8<sup>th</sup> 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 8<sup>th</sup> 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.

## ECHOES OF EAST ANGLIA:

## HONORING EIGHTH AIR FORCE BOMB GROUPS

by Patricia Midon

The air is quiet and still, feeling like a musky, viscous soup. The hubs of activity are eighty years gone, but the energy remains. If an explorer seeks a connection to the hundreds of thousands of Eighth Air Force personnel who occupied time and space here during WWII, the links are all around. One can imagine and *almost hear* the thrum of engines as the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortresses and Consolidated B-24 Liberators flexed their 4800 horsepower in symphony.

Visitors to the United Kingdom have the chance to see, in person, a vast variety of tangible memorials that honor the overwhelming sacrifice and service of the USAAF Eighth Air Force. In every corner of the UK, there exists a remembrance to be seen, visited or touched. Due to the Eighth's staggering number of WWII losses, there are sobering reminders sprinkled wide throughout bucolic scenery. When looking at specific ways to honor these men, choices are numerous. There are airfields, museums, statues and plaques. There are large, pop-

ular locations as well as simple, solitary memorials located in remote, isolated areas. The best way to enjoy the experience is with a bit of planning: start the trip by deciding which Group(s) to learn about and proceed from there.

Over centuries, East Anglia became geographically ideal for airfield construction, with its large areas of open, level terrain and proximity to mainland Europe. Due to these factors, East Anglia became home to the RAF and USAAF's heavy bomber bases during the Second World War. Today, every one of the Eighth's forty bomb groups are honored by museums and memorials that are tended to by allied members of a grateful nation, one and two generations removed from the Greatest Generation itself. About half of the groups are represented in museums of various sizes, many utilizing the original control tower on their original airfield. Some collections hunker down in Nissen huts, while some exhibits occupy space in larger museums.

If the bomb group you seek does not have its

# News from Across the Pond...

own museum, it has at least one memorial to visit. There are memorials dedicated to entire bomb groups as well as smaller ones honoring a lost crew. They occupy roadsides, gardens, fields and walls. The following list includes both museums and memorials, with each group represented in some way. Keep in mind, what is represented here is only part of the picture. Each group may have a museum, a memorial, both, or multiples. Let it serve as a sample of what is available, should a traveler's desire be to honor the Eighth. Click the link below for an interactive map of memorials and their locations:

[USAAF Eighth Air Force Bomb Group Museums and Memorials Map](#)

**A** 91st Bomb Group: Tower Museum  
Bassingbourn (closed 2020)

**L** 381st Bomb Group: Ridgewell Air Museum



A growing collection celebrating the service of the British and American men and women that were stationed in North East Essex.

**W** 398th Bomb Group: Nuthampstead Airfield Museum



A museum that also features the 55th Fighter Group. Offers a variety of exhibits and items found on the airfield to tell veterans' stories.

**B** 92nd Bomb Group: Memorial at Podington



**G** 305th Bomb Group: Memorial at Chelveston



**H** 306th Bomb Group: 306th Bombardment Group Museum



A museum, housed in an original building, dedicated to the personnel of the 306th who operated from Thurleigh during WWII.

# News from Across the Pond...

**C** 303rd Bomb group: Memorial at Molesworth



**K** 379th Bomb Group: Memorial at Kimbolton



**P** 384th Bomb Group: 384th Bomb Group Museum



The museum is under construction on the original airfield. It is recommended to contact ahead of visiting to arrange an airfield tour.

**J** 351st Bomb Group: Memorial at Polebrook

**S** 401st Bomb Group: Memorial at E. Northamptonshire

**U** 457th Bomb Group: Memorial at Glatton

**482nd Bomb Group - Pathfinders: crash memorial near Brome/Eye**

**C** 389th Bomb Group: Memorial exhibition at Hethel

The exhibit is housed in an original chapel/gymnasium building at Hethel Airfield. There are two reconstructed Nissen huts which have extended display space.

**F** 445th Bomb Group: Memorial at Tibenham

**J** 453rd Bomb Group: 453rd Bomb Group Museum

A collection of 453rd BG memorabilia housed in a WWII-style Nissen hut at the wartime home of the group, Old Buckenham Airfield, now Old Buckenham Aerodrome.

**A** 44th Bomb Group: Shipdam Airfield Museum  
A complex of rooms, including a library, with 44th Bomb Group artifacts and photographs.

**D** 392nd Bomb Group: Memorial at Wendling

**Z** 491st Bomb Group: Memorial at Metfield

# News from Across the Pond...

**U** 492nd Bomb Group: Carpetbaggers Memorial at Harrington

**B** 93rd Bomb Group: 93rd Bomb Group Museum

The museum items are housed in four original Nissen huts, three of which have been renovated, and one brick building. It is on the site of the former Hardwick Airfield.

**H** 446th Bomb Group: building at Norfolk & Suffolk Aviation Museum

The building contains memorabilia from the 446th Bomb Group, former resident of Flixton airfield close by, including aircraft components, equipment, uniforms, personal effects and images.

**I** 448th Bomb Group: Seething Control Tower Museum

Seething Airfield Control Tower, the surrounding grounds and artifacts, documents and equipment connected to the use of the airfield during WWII.

**W** 489th Bomb Group: Collection at Halesworth Airfield Memorial Museum

Houses a collection of WWII memorabilia, including items specific to the airfield, which was also home to the 56th Fighter Group.

**K** 458th Bomb Group: Memorial at City of Norwich Aviation Museum

**L** 466th Bomb Group: 466th Bomb Group Heritage Center at Attlebridge Airfield  
Heritage center and memorial at the original airfield.

**P** 467th Bomb Group: Memorial at Rackheath

**A** 94th Bomb Group: Rougham Control Tower Aviation Museum



Home to artifacts, maps, images, aircraft relics and memorabilia of WWIIs RAF Bury St. Edmunds, with guided tours and refreshments.

**K** 447th Bomb Group: exhibit at Rattlesden  
A private collection of memorabilia displaying the story of the 447th BG, located in a room of the original WWII Control Tower at former USAAF Station 126.

**O** 486th Bomb Group: Memorial in Sudbury

**P** 487th Bomb Group: Memorial in Lavenham

**B** 95th Bomb Group: 95th Bomb Group



# News from Across the Pond...

## Museum in Eye

This museum, known as the Red Feather Club, consists of restored buildings on a site of the 95th Bomb Group. It houses uniforms and memorabilia, as well as a diorama.



100th Bomb Group: 100th BG Memorial Museum near Dickleburgh/Thorpe Abbots



Includes access to the Control Tower as well as numerous artifacts and a cafe.



390th Bomb Group: 390th Bomb Group Memorial Air Museum at Parham



Housed in the original wartime Control Tower of Framlingham, with numerous displays and artifacts, including aircraft engines, uniforms, and photos.



96th Bomb Group: 96th Bomb Group Museum Quidenham

Housed in a building that was part of the base hospital, the 96th BG museum offers artifacts, images and stories of the 96th, which was based at Snetterton Heath..



388th Bomb Group: 388th Collection, Hillside Farm, Market Weston

Located on the grounds of Hillside Farm near the village of Market Weston, the collection is located down the road from the old base in a Nissen hut.



452nd Bomb Group: Memorial at Attleborough



34th Bomb Group: Memorial at Mendlesham



385th Bomb Group: Memorial at Great Ashfield



490th Bomb Group: Memorial at Eye



493rd Bomb Group: 493rd Bomb Group Museum at Debach

Several original airfield buildings have been restored within the complex to house the 493rd's artifacts and memorabilia.

To maximize your touring experience, please be mindful of museum hours and accessibility. Some museums request notification before visiting to manage visitor flow and to arrange for staffing of volunteers. Others have limited hours, may not be open every day, or may be open only seasonally. During trip planning, a quick internet search and contact with the destination is advised. Most of the museums have helpful websites with contact information, as well as social media accounts to keep travelers informed. Check also for wheelchair access. If it is a memorial you seek instead, most stand-alone memorials are located in public areas or easily navigated streets. However, if they are (or have become) located on private property, please be respectful and aware.

Sources:

*Warfare History Network*

*303rd Bomb Group (Eighth Air Force Bomb Group Tail Markings)*

*Steve Snyder memorial images*

*Google Maps "My Maps" for Museums and Memorials created by Patricia Midon.*

# News from Across the Pond...



*Cambridge American Cemetery*

## COME ONE, COME ALL!!

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

Telling the stories of the service members from the ground to the air, you can learn the history of the  
96<sup>th</sup> 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 96<sup>th</sup> BG Museum Curator, at  
[96thbombgroupmuseum@gmail.com](mailto:96thbombgroupmuseum@gmail.com).

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

# Variety is the Spice...

## the story of my Air Force career

Colonel John A. Palmer, USAF (Ret.)



I went on active duty as a “Brown Bar” second lieutenant fresh out of college in June of 1958. Since I had just obtained a degree in Aeronautical Engineering, the Air Force in all its wisdom sent me, without any training whatsoever, to be a Flight Line Maintenance Officer at Shilling Air Force Base in Salina, Kansas, the home of the 40<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. Thus, my introduction to the Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> and the Strategic Air Command!

Not being able to fly because of my eyesight, I planned to get my three-year post ROTC obligation out of the way and return to the company I had served as a coop student where a good job awaited me. However, I rapidly learned my job through OJT and just as rapidly gained a full appreciation, not only of the importance of the SAC mission, but the quality and dedication of everyone involved in the operation. After a year of exposure to the Air Force and SAC, I became convinced I wanted to be part of it, converted my obligation from three years to indefinite and notified my company I would not be back after all. A decision I have never regretted.

In my three years at Shilling, I also gained an appreciation of the many operational and maintenance problems with military aircraft such as those I worked on, the beautiful B-47 jet bomber and workhorse KC-97 tanker. As good as they both were, I

have observed and participated in some pretty interesting episodes with both. I also spent considerable TDY time at Eielson AFB in Fairbanks, Alaska, helping set up their alert maintenance procedures. Luckily, I got the summer shifts while others got winter (80 degrees below zero – all outdoor maintenance!).

In 1961, when my tour was up and through the actions of a friend, I switched gears and moved to the desert at Edwards AFB in Mohave, California, for a special exchange assignment with NASA at their Flight Research Center. This is where Chuck Yeager first flew supersonic in the X-1 and where all the “X” planes have been based since. There I joined the maintenance support team for the X-15 rocket research aircraft that still holds the world’s records for a manned aircraft at Mach 6.70 (4250 MPH) and 354,200 feet (67 miles) altitude. I became the engineer responsible for the preparation and monitoring during flight of the two auxiliary power units, the supersonic ejection seat and the equipment/pilot cooling system. I was able to solve a serious problem with in-flight failures of the APUs that grounded the planes for several months and also participated in over 50 flights at both Edwards and at the radar station in Beatty, Nevada. BTW I had occasion to see and work daily with the test pilots, one of whom was a gentleman by the name

of Neil Armstrong. I wore a uniform only once in my three-year tour, to be sworn in as a Lieutenant in the Regular Air force! My 8<sup>th</sup> AF decision was now permanent.

Having applied for graduate school, the end of my 3 years at NASA sent me to AFIT (the Air Force Institute of Technology) at Wright-Patterson AFB in Dayton, Ohio, for my master's degree in Nuclear Engineering. A wonderful program requiring writing a thesis on a level with PHD dissertations at other institutions.

At that time a nuclear reactor, the NETF (Nuclear Engineering Test Facility) sat unfinished at Wright-Patt as a planned test facility for the Nuclear Aircraft Project (unfortunately cancelled). An enterprising officer convinced Congress to finish it as a test center available for rent by the nuclear industry. My thesis task

was to do a complete stability analysis of the reactor and prove its safety. My success in doing so assured my degree but, alas, the Air Force cancelled the program again! The NETF is now an office building, the reactor filled with concrete.

Again, in all its wisdom, the Air Force now sent me to Ent AFB in Colorado Springs, Colorado, where I joined the Space Track System which keeps track of all satellites and large debris in space. Not quite nuclear physics but it did become interesting. I became involved in the Anti-Satellite Missile System test program. This was a medium range ballistic missile modified to intercept the Russian Fractional Orbit Bombardment System (FOBS), which would put a warhead in orbit, then de-orbit on the target at some unpredictable future time. My job was to travel to the test site on Johnson Island (700 miles south of Hawaii), observe the test firings, pick up the top-secret intercept films and take them back to Ent AFB for analysis. I made many trips to JI but, since I did not have a top-secret clearance, could never look at the films! Since the FOBS never materialized, this program was also cancelled.

Looking for a change of venue, I went up the road and interviewed at the Air Force Academy, where, because of my solid physics background,

they took me on as a Physics instructor. Every cadet must take a sophomore course in general physics and, for the next 5 years, I enjoyed teaching and attempting to convince the cadets that "*Physics is Phun!*" In addition, I became the Department Executive Officer, which included interviewing and bringing in all the new instructors (all instructors were then officers and normally served only 3 years). For my final year I stood in for the Department Head while he was on sabbatical.



Most enjoyable tour but staying at the Academy too long can stymie your career so my boss arranged a transfer back to Wright-Patterson AFB where I joined the newly formed Remotely Piloted Vehicle System Program Office (RPV SPO). RPVs had been completely secret for a number of years as they were deployed

in Vietnam for intelligence gathering. Now out in the open, a wide range of sizes and applications were investigated, from the hand launched "Minis" to high altitude long endurance (days) models with 100-foot wingspans. I was involved in the management of many but soon realized that the Air Force pilots of the day did not appreciate pilotless aircraft. As a result, in spite of the development of a number of most effective and interesting systems, none were produced and the SPO closed after 4 years.

It was replaced by the Strategic SPO, in charge of reviving the B-1 Bomber and managing all Cruise Missile development. I was transferred to this new organization and soon became the Program Manager for a supersonic cruise missile, the Advanced Strategic Air Launched Missile or ASALM. ASALM was designed to fly at Mach 2+ and intercept the anticipated Russian AWACS (Airborne Warning and Control System.). My task was to manage 2 major contracts (Lockheed Martin and McDonnell Douglas) to build and test a prototype as well as coordinate the support efforts of several major research laboratories at Wright Patt. A most enjoyable challenge. However, as the flight test program was about to begin, I received orders to go to Osan Air Base in Korea! (I had the old-

est overseas return date for a LtCol in the USAF). Going to my commander didn't help as he said, "Go John, it will be a good experience!" (BTW, the Russian AWACS never materialized and ASALM, even though fully successful, was eventually cancelled).

So, off I went for a one-year remote tour - dragging my heels all the way - to join a program called "Constant Watch". This was a joint US/Korean Air force project to build a huge, bomb proof, semi-underground control center into a large hill at Osan Air Base south of Seoul. It was being built by the Koreans and equipped by the US to centrally control any future air war. I became the Deputy Commander for the project. We had our own separate office building and reported only to a General officer at Hickam AFB in Hawaii. A small but great group and we made a lot of progress during my one-year stay. I also fell in love with the people and country, hating to leave.

But leave I did for an assignment with the Directorate of Nuclear Surety at Kirtland AFB in Albuquerque, New Mexico. There I became the Chairman of the Nuclear Weapon System Safety Group, a committee with representatives from several nuclear agencies, at that time charged with certifying the B-52 bomber armed with nuclear tipped cruise missiles as safe for operational duty. At last, a direct application of my master's degree! The people working for me were great; and we travelled to a number of SAC bases reviewing all procedures, equipment and facilities and were able to fully certify the system for duty. Most satisfying and the only major project in my career where I was able to both start and finish!

Then, surprise, my boss in Korea called and said his tour was over, would I like to take his place? I jumped at the chance and back I went as Commander of Constant Watch. We completed the bunker, now affectionately dubbed "The Tree House" due to the trees painted all over the one outside wall to camouflaged it. By then the joint forces

had decided to build a 2<sup>nd</sup> similar bunker next to the first one to house all the intelligence gathering equipment then out in the open. At first assigned to someone else, I made the case for letting Constant Watch do it because of our experience and, so, we took on a 2<sup>nd</sup> big project.

Ah me, my tour was again up but I did not want to leave Korea, so I interviewed in Seoul with the JUSMAAG (Joint US Military assistance Group) formed during the Korean War to provide the Koreans with training and logistical support. This would be my only multi-service (Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine) assignment and they took me on as Director of the Air Force Division. Another two years of most interesting and enjoyable interaction with the Korean services and top-notch US counterparts.

And then my final assignment, to Eglin AFB in Ft Walton Beach, Florida, where I became Chief of the Conventional Weapons Division in the Air Force Armament Laboratory. Again, a wonderful group of people to work and achieve good things with. My division handled aircraft guns of all types,



bombs and special deep penetrating warheads. We also developed the Rail Gun (pictured above), now being considered for space duty. At the end I became Commander of the Armament Lab but, since I was nearing mandatory retirement, as interim until the new permanent

Commander could come aboard. Very nice exit.

So, after 30 years of enjoyable, productive endeavor and steady promotions, I was able to retire as a full Colonel and transition to a 15-year career in the Defense Industry (but that is another story). Variety was indeed the spice of my Air Force career, all because I was so impressed at its beginning with the quality of the people and importance of the mission of the Mighty Eighth!

*Photos: p.13 John Palmer; preceding page, US Air Force cadets in front of Chapel; this page, closeup of a rail gun on Eglin AFB.*



# 50th ANNUAL 8TH SEPTEMBER NEW ORLEANS *Laissez les bon*



Our World War II veterans  
(L to R) Al Benjamin (384th BG); [Name obscured] (493rd BG) standing



# 8th AFHS REUNION OCTOBER 25-29, 2024 MONROE, LA *Les temps rouler!*



Veterans in attendance:  
Clarence Kooi (486th BG); Melvin  
; Maurice Berger (398th BG)











# ONE ENGINE...

# ONE

# DETERMINED

# CREW

by Dave Stallard



The excerpt below is taken from, The brotherhood of courage: The history of the 305th Bombardment Group (H) in World War II, by Walter W. Thom.

Up to May 11 the Group had lost no aircraft in six missions, including two (May 7 and 8) to Berlin. In fact, the 305<sup>th</sup> was setting another of its records, this one for successive missions with no crews lost. The last loss had been that of Lt Charles Scott and his crew, over Brunswick, on January 30. The Stars and Stripes and a lot of civilian newspapers carried stories on this string of 58 missions without any casualties; and Gen. Williams, of the First Bombardment Division, gave the Group a commendation for the achievement.

Then the bubble burst. The 305<sup>th</sup> put up four airplanes in a raid on the afternoon of May 11 on the railroad marshalling yards at Saarbrucken.

Flak was fairly heavy, and the plane of Lieut. Alex Thomaides, of the 365<sup>th</sup> SQ, suffered a direct hit and exploded. Thomaides and six other crewmen were killed. Three survived.

The 366<sup>th</sup> SQ lost two planes to flak. Marion W. Holbrook and his crew were shot down, as were

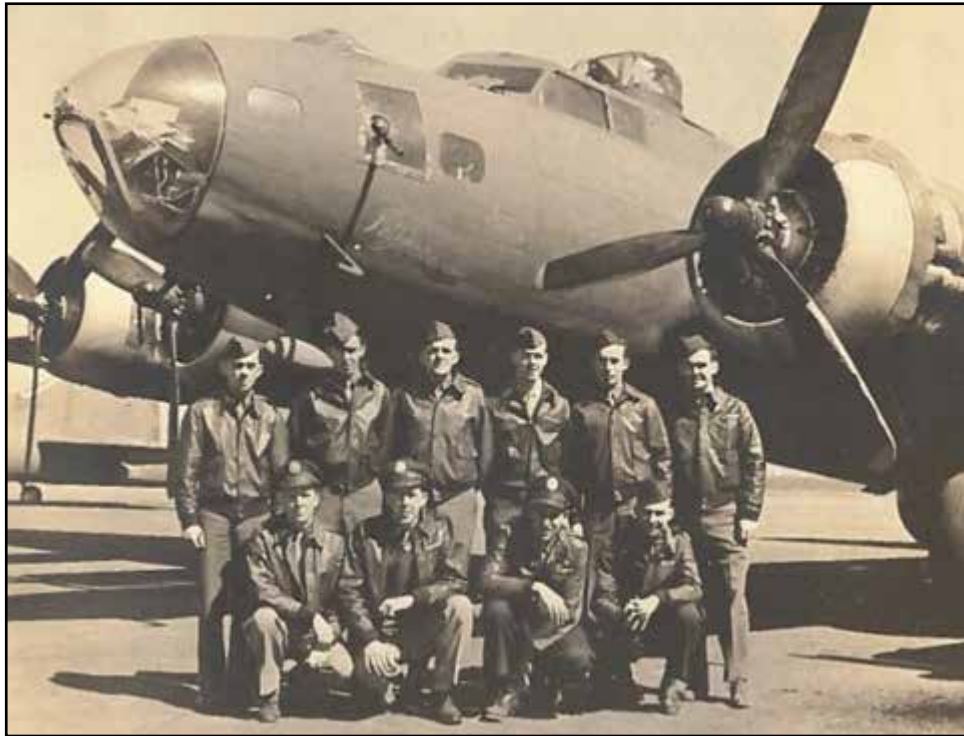
Capt. Maurice S. Thomas and his crew. Thomas's was the lead aircraft, and it carried an extra navigator, Carroll L. Witton. All the crewmen survived, and Thomas got back to Chelveston. He later became the 366<sup>th</sup> SQ commander.

Sam Stallard's plane was also struck by flak, but it made it nearly back to Chelveston. The crewmen had been assigned to the 366<sup>th</sup> SQ as replacements only a few weeks earlier and had flown only a few missions together. The following is quoted from the account of George W. E. Grewe, Jr., the bombardier:

"...The flight to Saaibrucken was rather routine. What happened after we arrived wasn't.

"We flew into the target on a long straight path from the IP (Initial Point) at our assigned altitude. The flak was very heavy, but fortunately the bursts were a little below us. I don't know what happened, but we did not drop our bombs. A large 360-degree turn was made and we approached the target again, from the same heading and the same altitude!

"Again the flak was heavy. The Germans made a slight adjustment. The flak was right on target. I saw one burst right in front of our plane. I dropped my head and felt the shrapnel fragments bounce off



Front row (L to R): Lt. Stallard--pilot, Lt. Rist--co-pilot, Lt. Friedman--navigator, Lt. Grewe--bombardier  
 Back row (L to R): S/Sgt. Soseman--engineer/top turret gunner, Sgt. Townsend--asst. engineer/waist gunner, S/Sgt. Reagan--radio operator/gunner, Sgt. Bickford--ball turret gunner, Sgt. Fisher--tail gunner, Sgt. Craven--waist gunner

of my flak helmet. One piece, mostly spent I guess, hit my knee and left a bruise.

“I dropped my bombs when the lead plane salvoed theirs.

“Hal Friedman, the navigator, tapped me on the shoulder. He pointed to the right wing: one engine inoperative. He pointed to the left wing: another engine not running. He pointed to the altimeter: 19,000 feet, instead of the 23,000 we should have been.

“Lt. Stallard, our pilot, gave orders for the crew to throw out everything to make the plane lighter. We heaved out guns, ammunition, flak vest, and helmets. We felt a little naked up there without these, but it was the only way we could stay airborne. We thought that the two P-51 fighters that were circling us would stay around for protection, but they waggled their wings and left. Short of fuel, I guess.

“Near the French coast, we picked up some more flak. No matter which way we turned, we had flak. We were between two flak batteries. The navigator changed seats with me to get a better view of the ground. He spread his map out in front of him and was looking out to his right when a piece of

flak shrapnel came up through the nose, through his map, and out the top of the plexiglass!

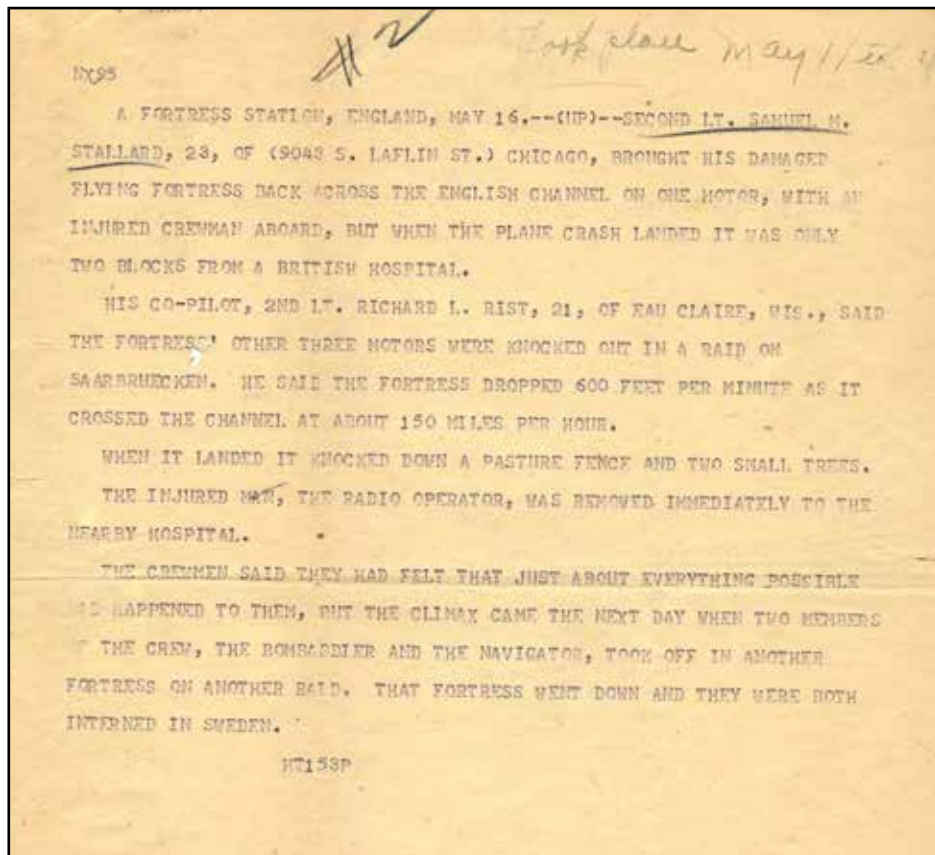
“It was hard to believe, but neither of us was hit. The Germans knocked out another engine, and we went into a dive, to 13,000 feet. By the time we pulled out, they had quit firing and we were over the Channel and out of range.

“I went back to the radio room to see if I could help the radio-gunner, who had been hit. As I walked the I-beam catwalk through the bays, even though the doors were closed, I could see the water quite clearly through the many holes in them.

“First aid was given to the gunner for the wound, which was through the fleshy part of his upper leg and didn’t look too bad.

“Sam gave us orders to loosen the bolts on the ball turret so that it could be dropped in the event of a crash landing. Then he changed his mind and told us not to, in case we had to ditch in the Channel. It didn’t occur to me then, but I really don’t think one hole less in the bottom of the plane would have kept us afloat any longer.

“Anyway, we made the coast and headed for the first farmyard we saw. Our one remaining engine



was revved up once to get us over some power lines. We made a beautiful crash landing, plowing up a field and knocking down one small tree and a fence. After we hit, Reagen, the injured gunner, was the first man up and out the side door. From there, we carried him.

“The farmer, most disturbed and uncooperative, came over to survey the damage to his field. He shook his head, no, to such question as: did he have a phone; did he have a vehicle to transport our wounded man, etc. He did point in the general direction of where a hospital was. An English soldier stationed at the nearby hospital came over to see what had happened. We sent him back for an ambulance.

“We spent the night in the English hospital, and the next day the 305<sup>th</sup> sent a truck over to take us back to Chelveston.”

The crew was a day late getting back, and minus an airplane, but they did get back.

Lieuts. Grewe and Griedman, flying with the Walter Schultz crew next day, the 13<sup>th</sup>, were shot down on a raid to Stettin-Poznan. They were interned in Sweden for six months.

In 12 more missions in May, including two on the 24<sup>th</sup>, 11 more crews were lost, for a total of 14. This seemed a high price to the men in the Group. At Eighth Air Force and in Supreme Headquarters, they took a different view. It had helped prepare for the invasion.

*Epilog: Sam M. Stallard, born in Indianapolis, was a B-17 Pilot in the 305<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group and 366<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron flew 34 missions between April 1944 and April 1945. On his 6<sup>th</sup> mission over Saarbrücken, Germany, his fortress was badly damaged and with only one engine in operation, crossed the English Channel with wounded crewman and safely landed in a farm field not far from a hospital. He achieved the rank of 1<sup>st</sup> Lieutenant during his service being awarded the Air Medal with 4 oak leaf clusters, the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Purple Heart.*

*After the war, he married his second wife, Jane. They lived in the Chicago suburbs and together they raised seven children as “his-hers-and ours.” Sam’s friend, “Flip” sent a Christmas message to him in December 1944. See the cover this issue!*



# 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

## 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion



# Colorado Springs, CO

October 1-5, 2025 | DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel



**Join us October 1-5, 2025  
in Colorado Springs, as  
we commemorate the  
50th Anniversary of the  
founding of the 8th AFHS.**

Look for more information as we plan  
for a memorable Reunion in 2025!

Society website: <https://www.8thafhs.org>

**P**lans are underway for an outstanding Reunion... in beautiful Colorado Springs, CO, in early October, when the fall foliage is at its peak!

Colorado Springs is home to both the U.S. Air Force Academy and the National Museum of World War II Aviation.

The mission of the U.S. Air Force Academy is to educate, train and inspire men and women to become officers of character motivated to lead the U.S. Air Force and U.S. Space Force in service to our Nation.

The National Museum of World War II Aviation houses an extensive collection that includes more than 4,000 artifacts and historical documents from one of the most crucial periods in America's history.



**Cervantes, Henry,** 100, passed away at his home in Playa Vista, April 7.

Henry was a Fresno-born, 19-year-old son of Mexican farmworkers when

the Navy told him in 1942 that he could not fight for his country.

An enlistment officer sent him home, saying the Navy didn't take Mexicans, Filipinos or Black people. Cervantes said he directed a couple of choice epithets at the officer and declared, "I'll prove you wrong," before running out the door.

He found a spot instead in the Army Air Forces, where he flew more than two dozen missions as part of the "Bloody 100th" Bomb Group. He later served as a test pilot and flight instructor, among other roles, before retiring as a lieutenant colonel in the Air Force in the mid-1960s. The centenarian is remembered by his friends as a man with "impeccable diction" and gentle spirit, but he was no shrinking violet. Cervantes was born on Oct. 9, 1923, to a young Mexican couple, María Rincón and Pedro Cervantes. But his father left days after Cervantes was born, and his mother eventually married his stepfather, Ignacio Gutierrez, a Mexican farmhand.

When he was growing up during the Great Depression, his family was so poor they lived in a tent with a dirt floor. He couldn't even afford shoes with intact soles. On one occasion, in fact, he was sent home from school with bleeding feet.

His family moved to Pittsburg in Northern California, in 1934, but times were still tough. Cervantes resorted to stealing a quarter from a stash of tips collected by a nearby market, using the money to buy new shoes — which turned out to be two sizes larger than his feet; 77 years later, he reached out to Times columnist Steve Lopez, whose family owned the market, to

repay the debt.

But racism and poverty did not stop Cervantes from ascending the ranks of the military. The Army drafted him six months after he was rejected by the Navy, and during basic training at the Presidio in Monterey, he took and passed a test for prospective pilots. He went on to fly B-17 Flying Fortress bombers as one of the few Latinos in his cohort.

"During his training, he was called a dirty Mexican," said retired Judge Frederick Aguirre, who met Cervantes in 2002 at a veterans event and grew close to him through Aguirre's work documenting the lives of Latino WWII veterans. He recalled that his friend had faced trouble earning the respect of his white subordinates, and there was "a lot of discrimination against dark-skinned Mexican persons" at the time. Cervantes survived 26 missions during World War II as part of the 100th Bomb Group, which flew over the English Channel and Holland into German skies. Cervantes also flew humanitarian missions to bring food and supplies to Holland, but the bombers still had to survive attacks from German fighter planes — one of which rammed Cervantes' B-17, which somehow made it back to base and successfully crash-landed.

Cervantes also set records as a test pilot for the initial jets that were being integrated into military flight craft in 1945. By the time he retired in 1965, the Air Force had advanced from the B-17 to the B-58s, the first bombers to fly at twice the speed of sound.

Life didn't stop moving for Cervantes, who detailed his life before and after the military in his memoir, "*Piloto: Migrant Worker to Jet Pilot.*"

Cervantes went on to work for the Los Angeles office of Defense Contract Administration Services and for Los Angeles Mayor Tom Bradley, managing Hispanic affairs.

Among other hobbies, Cervantes, who had been a track-and-field athlete in

high school, became an official for USA Track and Field and a officiant at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics. He would often volunteer his services to the L.A. Special Olympics.

Cervantes is survived by his sister, Jennie Gonzalez, several nieces and nephews, and his longtime partner and friend of more than 60 years, Nancy Kahn. The couple first dated in 1964 when they met in the Air Force, staying together for 10 years before they broke up. Cervantes remained single his whole life.

"He used to say he was married to the military," Kahn said. When the two reconnected after the death of Kahn's husband in 2014, she was 75 and he was 90.

"We did everything together," said Kahn of the last decade of their rekindled friendship. They took care of each other and enjoyed the mundane things after a long and exciting life. Hank, as Kahn calls him, was spry and agile even in his last decade.

Kahn said Cervantes died on the same date, April 7, as he'd escaped death 79 years previously when German pilots tried to ram his B-17 bomber out of the sky.



**Exner II, Albert Charles,** 98,

October 14, 2024.

Al was born on October 17, 1925, in Racine, Wisconsin, to Anna Chopyak and Albert Charles

Exner. He was

raised and attended school in Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. The family moved after his freshman year to Racine where Al attended and graduated from Washington Park High School in 1943. When Al was five, his father, a police officer, was killed in the line of duty. This tragic event forever changed him. At seven, Al was working and contributing to his family's income. He swept the sidewalks of the Riviera Ballroom;

by nine, he was selling newspapers on the corner and washing eggs. Because of this life-altering tragedy, Al developed a work ethic, compassion and understanding of the need to help others, a generous spirit, and a reverence for life.

At the age of 17 and right after graduating from high school, Al enlisted in the U.S. Navy and was a pharmacist mate 2C surgical technician. This was a difficult decision for Al and his mother since they had already lost his father. He participated in both the European and Pacific Theaters during World War II. He served at Southampton Waters in England with "SNAG 56" during the Normandy Invasion. After Normandy he was transferred to the USS Lubbock for the invasion of Iwo Jima, witnessing the two American flag raisings, which was one of his proudest moments as an American. Finally, Al served at the Invasion of Okinawa (Purple Beach II). After the war, he was stationed on the USS Wildcat in Manila Bay in the Philippines. Once back at home on November 8, 1947, Al married Norma Mae Slack at St. Joseph's Catholic Church in Waukesha. With their Catholic faith as their foundation, they built a life together raising their four beloved children. Norma and Al were devoted to each other, and he was the ying to her yang. Although seldom separated, when the occasion arose that they were apart, Al called to tell Norma how much he loved and missed her. Al loved, supported and treasured his family. He was always interested in what was important to his children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and he was proud of their accomplishments. He reveled in being together for family gatherings and special occasions. The bigger the party, the more he liked it. Together Al and Norma developed friendships that endured throughout their 77 years of marriage. Al thrived while working for Wyeth Laboratories (Pfizer) for 38 years; he

was a salesman, district manager, and finally in charge of the division. He firmly believed in the pharmaceutical products he sold and enjoyed extolling the benefits of Wyeth products to hospitals, doctors and nurses.

After retirement, Al enjoyed 18 years working as a tour director for Wisconsin Coach Lines. He loved meeting people, traveling to new places and being in charge.

Volunteering was part of Al's nature. He was active at the Tyme Out Youth Center, was past president of the Waukesha Golden K Kiwanis and recipient of that organization's Hixon Award. Al served as a hole captain for the Greater Milwaukee Open and other PGA events and volunteered for Waukesha's Christmas Clearing Council and mission trips to Peru. He was also part of two humanitarian missions to the Philippines under the auspices of the "Free Eye Clinic," a Madison based nonprofit. During those international clinics, Al assisted doctors with actual cataract surgeries. If the cause was worthwhile, Al said, "Yes." During the late 1990s, Al was invited to serve on a panel of veterans at Waukesha County high schools. He was a reluctant participant, but after that event, he became a sought-after speaker who was able to share what he experienced during World War II. He eloquently delivered a message detailing the sacrifices made by members of the military and the horror of war to every high school, retirement home, community group and veterans' organization he addressed. He was adamant about educating future generations about the cost of freedom and the need to respect the flag. Al was proud to have traveled to Washington D.C. with his fellow veterans on one of the Honor Flights. His comments about the moving and emotional experience were included in a trailer shown at Marcus Cinemas in the 2000s.

Al is survived by his cherished wife, Norma Mae; his beloved children,

daughter Susan Exner Ruf; his sons A. Charles (Margaret) Exner III and Thomas (Julie) Exner. He was a dedicated grandfather to Margaret Ruf (Alex) Keresztes, Thomas (Allison) Exner, Daniel (Elaine) Exner, Abby Exner (Michael) Spittler, Sarah Exner (Robert) Horner, Tyler Exner and Garret (Niki) Horton. He is further survived as a loving great-grandfather by Luciana, Elena and Mariana Keresztes, Annie Exner, Margot Exner, Ellie and Ben Spittler, Bobby and Samantha Horner, and Easton and Haisley Horton. He is also survived by his brother-in-law John "Duke" Slack of Lisle, Illinois. Al was preceded in death by his infant children, Suzanne and Robert; his daughter Christine Exner Horton; his brother and sister-in-law, Don and Irene Exner; his sister-in-law, Ellen Slack; and brother-in-law James "Pat" Slack.



**Menard, Normand R.**, 100, passed away on November 18, 2024. Normand was a decorated World War II veteran and fixture of the West Boylston

community and is survived by Irene (Richard), his beloved wife of 77 years and seven children, Ronald Menard and his partner Barbara Shaw of West Boylston; Cecile Lindberg and her husband David of West Boylston; Suzanne Andersen and her husband Robert of East Longmeadow; Diane Keefe and her husband Timothy of Hampton Falls, NH; Paul Menard and his wife Virginia of Kennebunk, ME; Linda Desnoyers and her husband Sylvain of Hudson and Carol Moylan and her husband Kevin of West Boylston. Normand is survived by 12 grandchildren and 15 great-grandchildren. Born in 1924 in Claremont, N.H., Normand moved to Worcester in 1939, graduating from Commerce High

School in 1943. Almost immediately, he enlisted in the United States Army to serve his country at the height of World War II.

Stationed in England as a tech sergeant for the Eighth U.S. Army Air Corps, 457th bomb group. Normand manned a top turret on a B-17 "Flying Fortress" and flew 23 combat missions over Germany. For his many air battles above hostile enemy territory, he was awarded the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. In 2021, he was awarded the French Legion of Honor, France's highest service award, for his bravery in the European Theater.

Normand was honorably discharged in 1945, and on May 10, 1947, Normand married Irene, the love of his life. Devout Catholics, they met while parishioners of Holy Name of Jesus Church in Worcester, and soon found a lifelong parish in Our Lady of Good Counsel Church in West Boylston. Normand, through his successful business and tireless public service since the 1960s, was well respected in the West Boylston community. Menard's Auto Body, which Normand established in Worcester in 1958 and relocated to West Boylston in 1963, is now a third-generation family business. Normand was equally generous with its success, sponsoring town Little League teams for decades and mentoring youth interested in the trade.

He served 30 years on the West Boylston Fire Department, including as lieutenant of Ladder No. 1, and organized and chaired the town's first Conservation Commission in 1972. Normand served as trustee of the Mount Vernon Cemetery for 27 years. He served as a past Commander of West Boylston's Harold N. Keith American Legion Post 204 and was a member of VFW Post 6907. Normand was President of the Central Mass. Automobile Rebuilders Assoc., and for more than a decade served as a director of the Worcester Better Business Assoc.

When he wasn't working or volunteering, Normand was an avid outdoorsman. He fished most of the northern lakes in Vermont and New Hampshire and treasured his annual hunting trips with his friends and his sons. Normand frequently golfed at Wachusett Country Club and was an avid downhill skier with his family and friends until the age of 89. Above all else, he loved being with his family for weekly dinners and Sunday card games.



**Parker, George Edward**, 99, passed away peacefully on Monday, the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 2024.

George was born on the 11<sup>th</sup> of February 1925 to Stevie and Autie Parker in

Idabel, Oklahoma. He was the third of four sons. His father was a Methodist Minister and was commissioned in the Army as a Chaplain in the early 1930's. George and his brothers Jim, John Benny, and Raymond were blessed with an interesting childhood moving around southeast Oklahoma and then around the country with the Army. The Parker boys had unique opportunities to live, camp, and explore when, as part of his father's duties as an Army Chaplain, their travels took them to Yellowstone and Tucson where he provided services to the Civilian Conservation Corps camps. They later lived at Jefferson Barracks, Missouri and Fort Riley, Kansas where he witnessed the transition from Horse Cavalry to Infantry.

He graduated high school from Junction City High in 1943 and immediately entered the Army Air Corps Aviation Cadet program to serve in WWII. Commissioned as a second lieutenant earning his wings as an Air Corps pilot. He was assigned to fly the B17 bomber as a co-pilot on the John Lindholm crew with the 748<sup>th</sup> Squadron of the 457<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group

(Heavy) stationed at Glatton Army Airfield in Conington, England. He flew 17 missions, starting two weeks after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, flying from February 1945 through April 1945. His mission list included two missions that required making a perilous return home in crippled aircraft. Post war he was stationed in Germany where a visit to the Dachau Concentration Camp left a lifelong impression.

After his discharge from the service, he attended school at the University of Kansas, TCU, and SMU with a focus on Geophysics. During this time, he met his first love and wife of 47 years, Laura Conner, III. They were married on the 12<sup>th</sup> of August 1947 in her hometown of Augusta, Arkansas. He started work in 1950 with Southern Geophysical living a nomadic life as a member of a Geophysical Crew in West Texas. After six years of traveling around the state, they settled in Midland, Texas in 1957 and adopted Robert in 1958 and David in 1960. George spent 40 successful years in the Geophysical Exploration business working for Southern Geophysical, Empire Geophysical, Independent Exploration, and Teledyne Exploration working his way up from Computer Trainee to Party Chief, Supervisor, Division Manager, Vice-President, and culminating as President of Teledyne Exploration in the 1980's. He was an active member of the Society of Exploration Geophysicists, Geophysical Society of Houston, and the National Ocean Industries Association. During this period, they lived in Houston in the early 1960's, Dallas, New Orleans, with a return to Houston in 1968 where he remained until 2020. He was a supporter of the Boy Scouts of America serving on the board of the Sam Houston Area Council and working with Troop 642 where both his sons were Eagle Scouts. He made two trips to Philmont Scout Ranch and a trip to Camp Tres Ritos to participate in high adventure back

country treks in the mountains of New Mexico with his sons and the scout troop. He grew to love and follow the Texas Aggies during Robert's time at A&M in the Corps of Cadets.

After retiring from Teledyne in 1990, George was active in the Memorial Drive Methodist Church and Sunday School. He was a member of the Stephen Ministries program serving others in need. He loved spending time with his grandchildren and great grandchildren. George was designated a Living Legend by the Society of Exploration Geophysicists (SEG) and was active in supporting the Geophysical Museum.

Laura passed away in April 1994. George found a second chance at love with Maggie Farris Ryden who was also widowed. She was a long-time family acquaintance and the Director of Children's Education at the MDUMC. They were married on the 7<sup>th</sup> of September 1995. George and Maggie had been married for 29 years. George was preceded in death by his wife Laura, his parents, Chaplain (Major) Stevie and Autie Parker, his son David Parker, and his brothers Jim, John Benny, and Ray.

A loving husband, dedicated father, grandfather, and great-grandfather, George is survived by his wife Maggie, his son Lieutenant Colonel (Retired) Robert and wife Deborah of College Station, stepdaughter Sandra (Ryden) Wilson and her husband Doug of Forney, three grandchildren and six great-grandchildren, Ryan and his wife Lindsay of Houston, Michael and his wife Katie (Emma, Ethan, and Laura) of Dickinson, Sharolyn and her husband Drew of Grand Prairie (Wesley and Grayson), Shannon Wilson of Forney, and Daniel Wilson and his wife Lisa (David Arnet) of Stanford, KY.

**Schonwetter, Fred**, 102, WW II U.S. Army Air Force veteran, a resident of Delray Beach, FL since 1984, passed away on Thursday, September 5, 2024.

He was born on August 6, 1922 in Brooklyn, N.Y. Devoted son of the late Victor and Minnie Schonwetter, dear brother of the late Sylvia, Morris and Gertrude and fond uncle, great uncle and great, great uncle and friend of many. Fred grew up in Brooklyn, N.Y. and attended New Utrecht High School. Fred served as an airplane armorer with the 55<sup>th</sup> FG in the U.S. Army Air Force from 1942 to 1945, stationed in England. After his honorable discharge, he completed his degree in accounting at St. John's University. He was employed as an accountant in New York and California before spending nearly 30 years as an accountant, auditor and chief auditor at the Army Air Force Exchange System (AAFES). For most of his time at AAFES, he was posted in West Germany, but his duties required him to travel internationally, including a tour in South Vietnam during the Vietnam War. He was well-respected for his work ethic and honesty in all that he did. His life, including his service in WW II, and his time at AAFES, provided him with experiences that helped make him an engaging and entertaining storyteller. In his last year he was able to watch Masters of the Air, a miniseries following the actions of the 100th Bomb Group, a Boeing B-17. Flying Fortress heavy bomber unit in the 8th AF in eastern England during WW II. It brought back memories of that war to him, both good and bad. He was a true patriot his entire life, until his passing.



**Shuler, Jr., USAF Retired Lieutenant General E. G. "Buck"**, 87, husband of Annette Maury Shuler, died Friday, October 18, 2024, at Covenant Place. Born in Raleigh, NC, he was a son of the late Ellie Givan Shuler, Sr. and Frances

Alberta Williams Shuler. Surviving is his wife; a son Ellie G. "Buck" Shuler, III and his wife Sharlene Y. Shuler; his children, William G. Shuler, Matthew C. Shuler, Joseph D. Shuler, and her children Hannah M. Rose, Jordyn T. Rose and Charles K. Rose, Jr.; son, Franklin M. Shuler and his wife Allison C. Shuler; their children, Carin S. Warren (Andrew), Anna Kate Sherrill (Zachary), Madeleine Maury Shuler, and their grandchildren, William H. Sherrill, Otto E. Warren, Shuler L. Sherrill, Cooper F. Warren; son, Gray H. Shuler and his wife, Christine L. Shuler; their children, Anna Hays Shuler and Maury Lee Shuler.

Gen. Shuler was a member of St. John's Episcopal Church in Columbia, a life member of the Association of The Citadel Men and a member of Theta Commission Kappa Alpha Order. Past President and Chairman of the Board of The National Museum of The Mighty Eighth Air Force. Gen. Shuler graduated from The Citadel in 1959. He had a thirty-two-year career in the United States Air Force. He was a command pilot with over 7600 flying hours. He flew 125 combat missions in the F-4C Phantom in Vietnam. He commanded two B-52 Bomb Wings, two Air Divisions and culminated his career as the Commander of the 8th Air Force. Gen. Shuler was a graduate of both the National and Navel War Colleges. His military awards and decorations include the Distinguished Service Medal with oak leaf cluster, Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with five oak leaf clusters, Air Force Commendation Medal with oak leaf cluster, the Republic of Korea Order of National Security Merit Cheonsu Medal and sixteen other decorations and ribbons. He was recently awarded the Order of the Palmetto by Governor McMaster.

Gen. Shuler was interred at Ft. Jackson National Cemetery, Columbia, SC.



**Wolman, David Louis, 102,**

passed away on July 5th, 2024. David was born on November 5, 1921, in Brooklyn, NY, where he grew up

surrounded by a loving family. He dedicated years of his life to his career at the FAA, where his expertise and dedication made a significant impact on aviation safety and efficiency. David was a devoted father to his daughter, Nancy Wolman. He cherished every moment spent with Nancy, guiding her through life's milestones and supporting her endeavors with unwavering love.

David, predeceased by his beloved wife Gladys, is survived by his daughter, Nancy Wolman, and a host of extended family members and friends who mourn his loss. Though he has departed from this world, his memory will live on in the hearts of those who loved him.

David Wolman was born in Brooklyn, New York, and was drafted in 1942. After completing basic training, Wolman learned there were openings in the control tower operations field, and he elected to pursue that job path. Wolman subsequently attended a seven-week training course on control tower operations near Champaign, Illinois, and he also completed radio operator school at Truax Field in Wisconsin. In early 1943, Wolman was sent to Hunter Army Airfield in Georgia, where he received advanced training, and he also installed radio equipment in B-26 Marauders. Wolman arrived at Thorpe Abbots in August 1943, where he was assigned as an Air Traffic Controller with the 412th Air Service Group and he held the rank of Corporal. Wolman worked for Captain Vincent Biondino, Group Communications Officer, and Lieutenant James Pound and his work-

station was on the ground level of the control tower. Wolman remarked that his fellow flying control members were "all good fellas" to work with. The flying control personnel worked in the tower during the course of three different shifts, and Wolman primarily covered the day shift. Wolman's duties on any given day included keeping a logbook of planes and recording other occurrences near the runway area. On the day of a mission, the pilots would check their radios with Wolman or with the respective Air Traffic Controller on duty in the tower as their planes lined up on the taxiway, and the tower was referred to over the radio as "clear up". Wolman remarked that it was an "incredible" sight to see all the B-17s line up and take off for a mission. During the actual mission, Wolman remained on duty and monitored the radio in the event a plane had to return to the base early. In anticipation of the group's return to base after a mission, Wolman vividly recalled seeing Colonel Thomas Jeffrey and other senior officers standing against the railing on the second floor of the tower, counting the returning B-17s. Wolman was also on duty at the control tower during some of the 100th's most difficult missions, such as the October 10, 1943, mission to Munster. Wolman said it was always tough to see only a few planes come back from a particular mission, and he recalled one instance that lingered with him in which saw the tail section of an incoming B-17 that was badly damaged, and he later learned that the tail gunner had been killed. Wolman's busiest and most memorable experience at Thorpe Abbots came on June 6, 1944, D-Day, when the 100th Bomb Group flew three missions. Wolman was awoken at 0500, and was directed to immediately report to the control tower. Wolman said the pace of operations during that time "remained busy", and Wolman worked

exhaustively for the next three days. During his time with the 100th Bomb Group, Wolman also assisted with the weekly Jewish service on base. There was only one chief rabbi for the 3rd Air Division, therefore there was not a rabbi permanently based at Thorpe Abbots. Wolman would help conduct the Jewish service on Friday evenings. After the war, Wolman returned to New York where he worked for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as an Air Traffic Control Specialist. Wolman remained in contact with his former Lieutenant, James Pound, for many years. Wolman and his wife Gladys were married for 66 years, and he lived with his daughter Nancy on Long Island, New York.

*While it is truly our honor and privilege to print death notices here, please understand we are NOT automatically notified upon the death of our veterans or other members.*

*Please forward all TAPS to:  
ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org  
912-748-8884  
or mail to:  
8th AFHS  
68 Kimberlys Way  
Jasper, GA 30143-4769*

**\*Please submit ALL articles, etc. at least 45 days PRIOR to the date of the next issue of the 8th AF News to reserve space; content must be received 30 days prior to publishing date!**

**\*Remember: submission does NOT guarantee publication.**

**\*Due to size constraints of the magazine, I am very limited in publishing unsolicited material, however, I will review for consideration.**

**\*Please submit materials via email [preferred].**

**\*Written text MUST be TYPED and sent as a WORD.doc, with hi-res photos attached in jpg format.**

**\*NEVER send originals--they may not be returned.**

**\*If you have any questions, do not hesitate to contact me. I appreciate your help immensely. DDK**

# A MOMENT IN TIME

## The Winds of Change

~ ~ ~

### A Fond Farewell

*JM Pittman, Next Gen 466th BG*



Leaving the afternoon matinee, Louise pulled her coat tight around her waist and stepped out onto the sidewalk. Typical for the High Plains of Eastern New Mexico, the wind raced in and around the buildings that lined downtown Clovis's cobblestone streets. Just a few months before, the sidewalks had been packed with young men as they made their way to and from the base. Buses emptied their cargo of new student pilots, then loaded those who were headed to parts unknown. High above them the sound of Pratt & Whitney engines reverberated across the landscape. Today, the only thing that greeted her were American flags snapping in the wind.

Across the nation the winds of change were blowing at gale force. A nation that had turned out men and material for war, now turned its attention to the business of business. With the same determination they fought the war, Americans set out to win the peace. Louise remembered, "We thought we could do anything."

The war that once dominated every waking moment, every action, and every thought was fading in the rear-view mirror. Some wanted to come home and forget the terrible things they had seen and endured. Others looked for any opportunity to relive the glory days of their youth. Whether quiet or boisterous, the war had shaped them, molded them, and

would forever be the defining event of their lives.

With each passing year the boys began to change. A little older and a little wiser, the days of their youth began to fade. Families, children, and mortgages dominated life. New wars and new crises dominated the headlines. Determined that the deeds

and sacrifices of those who waged war high above Nazi occupied Europe should not be relegated to the scrap heap of history, men like John Woolnough, Earl Wassom, and Ralph Lynn went to work. Through their efforts, the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society was formed and flourished.

As the decades marched on, fewer and fewer veterans remained to do the work. Fewer and fewer gathered at the reunions. As their numbers dwindled family, friends, and volunteers joined the ranks. Today, children, grandchildren and volunteers on two continents work to keep their legacy alive. Prodded by a family member to record my father's war, my path eventually led

me to Earl Wassom.

Over the course of time this man etched a special place in my heart. When he approached me about taking over his column, I told him I just didn't have the time. I offered to help him. He could dictate, I would write. Earl said, "It would be faster if you just did it yourself." Anyone who knew Earl, knows how quickly he could turn a 'No' into a 'Yes.'

The winds of change have come full circle





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now. The December 2024 issue of the 8<sup>th</sup> AF News will contain my last article. While I am not at liberty to discuss the changes that precipitated this decision, I will say that it has become necessary for me to focus on my family. It has been my honor to bridge the gap between Earl's legacy and the amazing future Deb has lined up for you. It has been a privilege to be associated with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society, the 8<sup>th</sup> AF News and those of you who dedicate your talent, your time, and your treasure to keep the dream alive. Thank You!



**J M Pittman**

*Editor: As most of you know, John took over this space when our dear friend Earl Wassom, retired and asked John to "take over" for him. "A Moment in Time" debuted in the September 2021 edition of 8th A F News. While we treasure every single word from Earl as he*

*continued to tell us stories for as long as I can remember, we have also come to enjoy and learn from the stories penned by John.*

*Sadly, John had to make some difficult but necessary decisions--as life often demands of us.*

*He will no longer be able to commit to inspiring us with his "Moment in Time" articles.*

*I want to personally thank John for sharing his writing talent with us these past few years. I know we will miss the stories...but...as you may have noticed on the preceding page, he is excited to share news of the pending publication of his book, "Fearsome Skies" My Father's Journey in the Flak and Fighter Filled Skies Over Nazi Occupied Europe.*

*John is looking forward to announcing the release of his book in 2025, as well as attending our Colorado Springs annual reunion in October 2025! John will also be providing articles for the magazine from time to time. Thank you, John, for sharing your talent with us! We look forward to the next chapter. Deb*