



June 2025

8TH AF NEWS

Volume 25 Number 2 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

was about 25,000 and temperature was -36°C. We were in the air about nine hours and on oxygen about 5 ½ hrs.

(10th mission) Yesterday Feb. 26 was Peter's birthday. We, that is, the entire 8th A.F. went to Berlin and dropped 3,000 tons of explosives and incendiaries. We bombed from 26,000 ft. pff. with moderate flak and temperature of -35°C. The oil temperature on one engine was too high already when we left England but our pilot hasn't aborted yet and I don't think he will. We barely had enough gas to get back. We had to leave the formation over Holland to save it. (10th mission)

I never saw as many planes as we did on Feb. 26. Well as B-17's there were formations of Liberators which slowly gained on us on the way to Berlin. As the usual P-51 escort. Two P-51's chased a twin engine bomber. I made out some of the wings and tail. They were very nicely divided up into rectangular fields and have. In England at least in eastern England the fields are rectangular. In Belgium and Western Germany the fields have a curvy border and take the cake for canals though. Every field seems to have a regular old Dutch windmill yesterday- turning slowly- from 16,000 ft.

We had an hour of jam- handy and an hour of turret trainer this afternoon and also got paid. (31 pounds)

MARCH 3, 1945 SATURDAY {Our mission #11, 486th mission #155, Feb. 28}

FEB. 28 we went to Kassel to hit the Henschel aircraft engine factory. In case of cloud coverage our secondary target was the heel of a large L- shaped marshaling yard. We hit our secondary target and saw a large amount of smoke come up through the clouds. The bombing was from about 25,000 ft. with a temp. of -35°C. The flak was moderate and also only moderately accurate. We led the entire eighth air force on this mission which set a record for the number of tons of bombs dropped over any period of equal length which I think is about two weeks. We also carried more bombs than usual. By cutting our gas load to some extent we carried 7000 lbs. instead of 5000 or 6000 which is the usual load. We did not see any fighters (enemy).

51st Annual 8th AFHS REUNION
50th Anniversary of the Founding of the 8th AFHS
October 1-5, 2025 ~ Colorado Springs, CO
INFO INSIDE! pp.16-21



th AF News

Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

OFFICERS

President

Paul W Tibbets IV (Angelle) 2025
5422 Cypress Point Lane
Gonzales, LA 70737
(225) 773-1983 cell
p2a2tibbets@gmail.com

Vice President

Eleesa Faulkner 2026
58 Drake St
Pueblo, CO 81005
(719) 252-9170
ekf58@aol.com

Treasurer

Anne A Marek (Rick) 2025
2 Logan Ct
Mendham, NJ 07945
(201) 960-1783 cell
(973) 543-8832 home
majorsoldsack@verizon.net

Secretary

Kevin E Wilson, PhD (Ellen) 2025
5937 Woodfield Dr
Kernersville, NC 27284
(336) 407-3290
kewilsonphd@aol.com

Directors:

Mark Klingensmith (Wanda) 2025
420 Glenmeade Rd
Greensburg, PA 15601-1138
(724) 787-3063 cell
mrkent54@comcast.net

Steve Snyder (Glenda) 2025
601 Seabreeze Dr
Seal Beach, CA 90740
(562) 355-0461 cell
palmsny@gmail.com

Chapter/Unit Liaison

Mark Klingensmith (Wanda) 2025
420 Glenmeade Rd
Greensburg, PA 15601-1138
(724) 787-3063 cell
mrkent54@comcast.net

8th AFHS National Office

Managing Director/Editor

Debra D Kujawa (Joe)
68 Kimberlys Way
Jasper, GA 30143-4769
(912) 748-8884
ManagingDirector@8thafhs.org

INTERNATIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

UNITED KINGDOM

UK Representative/Curator AAM

Hattie Hearn
104 Barclay Road
Norwich, NFK
NR7 9QT
United Kingdom
011 4477623 28575
the8thafhsuk@yahoo.com

8th AFHS UK Historian

Paul Bellamy
6 Station Road
Holme, PTE PE7 3PH
United Kingdom
011 4477623 28575
the8thafhsuk@yahoo.com

Education & Outreach, UK

Sophie Green
10 Saxtead Rd
Framlingham
Woodbridge, SFK IP13 9HE
United Kingdom
011 4473932 08000
sophiegreen95th@gmail.com

BELGIUM

Edouard Renière

Chaussée de Roodebeek 305--Bte 5
1200 Brussels Belgium
Riiren.belsuo@skynet.be

FRANCE

Jean-Paul Favrais

La Haye-Ouisais N. 85
35310 Breal
France
Jeanpaulfavrais1@orange.fr

CHIEF OF VETERANS AFFAIRS & EDUCATION

Joan Garber

112 Birch Tree PL
Daytona Beach, FL 32117
(386) 679-1221
jbey3646@gmail.com

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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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National office is located at:

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

EDITOR'S NOTES

As we continue to put the finishing touches on our upcoming reunion in Colorado Springs, we are pleased to announce an opportunity to listen and participate in a talk given by Judy Gray--daughter of Lt. Harry Bates Price.

World War II recollections of 1st Lt. Harry Bates Price, Ninth Army Air Force, 67th group, 107th squadron. This talk will discuss 1st Lieutenant Harry Bates Price's experiences during WWII. Lt. Price was a tactical reconnaissance pilot, flying P-51 F6 Mustangs, from Charleroi, Belgium, from September 1944 until September 1945.

As part of the 107th squadron, Lt. Price was involved in Ardennes, Rhineland and Central Europe campaigns, earning the Air Medal and Distinguished Flying Cross. Because of his security clearance, Lt. Price was the U.S. officer the concentration camp, Dora-Mittelbau in Nordhausen, was surrendered to in April of 1945.

Judy will be giving her presentation on Thursday, October 2, at 10am in the DoubleTree Hotel, and also at 2pm that same afternoon. This will allow those of you who are going on either of the "Jeep Tours" to attend! The talk is free and open to all reunion attendees.

Judy will be showing photographs taken by Lt. Price (and others) and sharing his personal recollections during his time with the 107th squadron in Europe.

Sadly, you will note that two of our veterans who attended our New Orleans reunion last year, Al Benjamin and Clarence Kooi, recently passed away. A third veteran, Gordon Fenwick, who had planned on attending, passed away shortly after the reunion. Their obituaries appear in this issue of the 8th A F News.

Every veteran we lose is truly an insurmountable loss. While we work desperately to preserve their stories and solidify their place in history--we cannot do it alone. We MUST have your help and support.

During this upcoming reunion we will be electing and/or re-electing members to serve on our Board of Directors. Please consider donating your time and talent to the Society by serving on the Board...

See you all in Colorado!

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)*

Credit Card # _____ CVV: _____ Exp. Date: _____ Amount: _____

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

Please make checks payable to 8th AFHS

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

UK/European Residents PLEASE mail to:
Hattie Hearn, 104 Barclay Rd, Norwich, NFK
NR7 9QT
477623 28575

JOIN/RENEW ONLINE: www.8thAFHS.org

PRESIDENT'S BRIEFING

Paul W Tibbets IV President

Hello Society Members!

Can you believe it...we are only four months from our gathering in Colorado Springs to celebrate the **50th Anniversary of the Founding of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society**, October 1-5, 2025! This will be a reunion you don't want to miss – we have **two active duty 4-star generals** speaking and some fantastic tours of the local area, to include an **inside look at the USAF Academy**. Merchandise is also available – **polo shirts** and **challenge coins** – through pre-order only. Please see the details in this magazine and get your registration in!

As you know, we have five **Focus Areas for 2024-25**, which we have regularly reported on to you. This quarter, let's take a look at **post-WWII, and specifically, Korea and Vietnam**.

One of our recent ad-hoc appointments to your Society Board is **Tom Lacy**, who has been researching 8th Air Force's participation in these conflicts. Also, many thanks to **William Lane Callaway**, the Eighth Air Force Historian, for all his help!

The only unit Eighth Air Force deployed during the Korean War was the **27th Fighter Escort Wing** (27 FEW), which did multiple rotations. Today's 27th Special Operations Wing has the lineage, honors, and heritage of 27 FEW.

As for the Vietnam War, the Eighth rotated units – mostly B-52 bomber units – similar to other Strategic Air Command (SAC) units. Beginning in 1966, SAC created cadre wings equipped with the B-52D "Big Belly" configuration, and these were deployed. Big Belly bombers allowed more conventional munitions to be loaded. These cadre units were rotated beginning September 6, 1966, through April 1, 1968. Many of these forward deployed units were augmented by personnel and crews throughout SAC. The only Big Belly unit assigned to 8 AF was the **99th Bomb Wing**, stationed at Westover AFB, Massachusetts.

On 1 April 1970 Headquarters 8 AF did a flag move from Westover AFB to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam. Although still assigned to SAC, 8 AF had the mission of planning and then command and control of all bomber operations in Southeast Asia with specific role of conventional B-52 air combat missions. While on Guam, the Eighth had assigned to it three strategic wings. These wings included:

43d Strategic Wing (Guam, B-52s only), **376th Strategic Wing** (Kadena AB Okinawa composed of B-52s and KC-135s) and **370th Strategic Wing** (in Thailand, B-52s only). With this strategic wing configuration, ARC LIGHT crews rotated from bomber units in the US to 8 AF in Guam to fly missions. Temporary duty tours for rotating B-52

aircrews was initially 141 days then reduced later in 1970 to 105 days.

The 8 AF headquarters would remain on Guam until 1 January 1975 when it conducted another flag move to a new duty station at Barksdale AFB, Louisiana, where it again took up the SAC nuclear deterrence and alert duties.

If you served in any of these units, or had family members who did, please reach out to us and share some stories and photos.

Looking forward to seeing you in Colorado Springs!

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 April, 2025. The Profit and Loss Statement and the Statement of Financial Position are printed here. So far this year our investment portfolio has decreased approximately 8% from an opening balance of \$217K in January to closing at \$191K. This is due primarily to the recent volatility in the markets. Mr. Gavin Natelli, our account executive, is unconcerned indicating that they will stabilize as the tariff

issues are resolved. He continues to recommend no further changes at this time.

The Keep 'em Flying Giving Campaign was created in March, 2023, in order to stabilize the Society's financial resources. So far this year, our very generous members which includes two of our bomb groups have donated a total of \$13.1K across the various membership levels. 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 1 - April, 2025

	Total
Income	
4000 Income/Miscellaneous	
4005 BOA Rewards	0.05
4006 Account Processing Fees	250.00
4010 Member Dues Annual	25,380.00
4012 Magazine Subscription	5,250.00
4013 Magazine Income	180.00
4015 Keep 'em Flying	13,085.00
4019 Member Contributions/Donations	14,551.00
4022 Merchandise	88.00
Total 4000 Income/Miscellaneous	\$ 58,784.05
4050 Investment Income	
4058 Portfolio Dividends & Interest	585.52
4060 Unrealized Gain(Loss) on Invest	-26,220.50
Total 4050 Investment Income	-\$ 25,634.98
Total Income	\$ 33,149.47
Gross Profit	\$ 33,149.47
Expenses	
5100 National Administration Expense	
5103 Officers/Directors Meeting Exp.	159.90
5108 Web Site Expense	911.49
5111 Corporation Charges	70.00
Total 5100 National Administration Expense	\$ 1,141.39
5200 Magazine Expenses	
5210 Printing Expenses	2,422.00
5220 Postage Expenses	2,336.10
Total 5200 Magazine Expenses	\$ 4,758.10
5300 National Office Expenses	
5303 Telephone/DSL	250.91
5304 Supplies	209.58
5305 Abila Software/ Computer Exps	1,214.11
5307 Office Rent	400.00
5308 Insurance	892.17
5312 FICA-8AFHS portion	1,573.84
5313 Payroll/ Office Management	20,573.17
5315 Postage & Shipping	406.85
5316 Bank Charges/ Returned checks	3.14
5323 Merchant Account Usage Fees	1,556.15
5326 Payroll processing fees	360.00
Total 5300 National Office Expenses	\$ 27,440.22
Total Expenses	\$ 33,339.71
Net Operating Income	-\$ 190.24
Other Income	
6550 Annual Meeting Revenue	
6551 Event Registration	22,569.11
Total 6550 Annual Meeting Revenue	\$ 22,569.11
Total Other Income	\$ 22,569.11
Other Expenses	
7100 Annual Meeting Expenses	
7103 Hotel Expense/Catering	9,000.00
7104 Tours/Transportation	3,120.64
Total 7100 Annual Meeting Expenses	\$ 12,120.64
Total Other Expenses	\$ 12,120.64
Net Other Income	\$ 10,448.47
Net Income	\$ 10,258.23

Tuesday, May 06, 2025 12:54:06 PM GMT-7 - Accrual Basis

8th Air Force Historical Society Statement of Financial Position As of April 30, 2025

	Total
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Bank Accounts	
1017 Oppenheimer & Co	191,147.45
1040 Bank of America Checking Acct.	42,294.92
1041 B of A Deposits in Transit	0.00
1042 Bank of America Savings Acct.	43.83
Total Bank Accounts	\$ 233,486.20
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	\$ 233,486.20
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 233,486.20
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	-40,668.96
2051 Payroll payable	2,896.57
2052 FICA & withhold taxes payable	48,411.78
Total 2050 Payroll & Taxes Payable	\$ 10,639.39
2500 Accrued Expenses	0.00
Total Other Current Liabilities	\$ 10,639.39
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 10,639.39
Total Liabilities	\$ 10,639.39
Equity	
3100 Unrestricted Net Assets	0.00
3200 *Unrestricted Net Assets	212,586.58
Net Income	10,258.23
Total Equity	\$ 222,844.81
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$ 233,486.20

Tuesday, May 06, 2025 01:01:00 PM GMT-7 - 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 2025.

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 _____ CVV: _____ 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.

News from Across the Pond...



The Clubmobilers' mission was to bring a taste of home to American servicemen – and the AAM's mission is to preserve their stories.

By Hattie Hearn, American Air Museum Curator

The American Air Museum is on a mission: to record the lives of a group of women who have all too often been overlooked in the history of the Eighth Air Force, but whose contributions to morale cannot be overstated. During the war the American Red Cross was a constant present in the lives of American servicemen. If you read letters from airmen stationed in Britain, you'll be hard-pressed not to find some mention of the ARC, whether it's an evening spent at the aeroclub, a week wiled away in a 'Flak House', or a cup of coffee delivered from a visiting Clubmobile. Thousands of American women served in Britain with the ARC, assisted by tens of thousands of British staff and volunteers.

The American Air Museum database was set up to record the names and stories of the men and women who served in Britain with – or in support of – the US Army Air Forces. Despite having entries for more than 230,000 individuals, only a handful of these are American Red Cross workers. Launched at the beginning of the year, our project sets out to identify, research, and compile the names of ARC staff onto the website so that their stories can be saved for posterity. Given the enormity of this task, we're starting with one arm of the ARC's work in Britain: the Clubmobile.

**From Airfields to the Invasion Beaches:
The Story of the Clubmobilers**

News from Across the Pond...



(Pictured above)
Clubmobile "Daniel Boone" lands on Utah Beach on 16th July 1944

As dawn broke on 16th July 1944 a GMC 6x6 truck rolled off a Landing Craft Tank (LCT) onto Utah Beach – one of thousands of similar vehicles to arrive in Normandy in the weeks following D-Day. However, this truck was different. The “Daniel Boone” was remarkable for being the first “Clubmobile” to land on the continent. Fitted out with an electric doughnut-making machine and equipment for brewing coffee, the Clubmobile would bring the morale-boosting work of the American Red Cross to the allied forces advancing through Europe.

Also landing on Utah Beach that day was Katherine Spaatz, the 23-year-old daughter of the commander of the Strategic Air Forces in Europe, Lieutenant General Carl “Tooey” Spaatz. Katherine, nicknamed “Tatty”, was one of 31 American Red Cross personnel attached to Group B. Between them, they were responsible for eight

Clubmobiles and one Cinemobile. Group B was one of ten Clubmobile units to land in France in the summer of 1944.

The Creation of the Clubmobile

For another member of the ARC contingent, the Red Cross’s arrival on the continent had an extra layer of meaning. Scottish-born Hope Simpson had been evacuated from France in 1940 while volunteering for the Anglo-Polish American Red Cross. Impressed by Simpson’s proven war record, the Commissioner of the American Red Cross in Britain, Harvey Gibson, approached her in early 1942 to help set up a new service that he had named the “Clubmobile”. By this time Red Cross service clubs were being established in towns and cities across Britain, but these facilities were only available to men on leave. Gibson was convinced that the Red Cross could significantly improve morale by bringing simple home comforts to the men when they needed them most. The idea was simple: Red Cross vans and trucks would travel around US bases in Britain to provide much-needed-

News from Across the Pond...



ed refreshments and good cheer to homesick men on duty.

(Pictured above)

Katherine Spaatz at the rear door of her ARC Clubmobile, February 1944

By October 1942, the first Clubmobiles were in service, manned by a handful of pioneering American Red Cross volunteers, and overseen by Hope Simpson. The British vehicles they'd requisitioned were prone to breaking down, and the women were glad when the fleet was supplemented by converted Bedford trucks and London Greenline buses manned by British drivers. The latter was of a particular relief to the Americans, who on top of their other duties, had been tasked with navigating narrow lanes in the blackout; a difficulty that Ann Newdick experienced firsthand. Ann found herself in trouble with the local constabulary when her clubmobile ran out of gas on a lonely country road. After a British soldier drove her to a petrol station, she was baffled to find that her truck had disappeared on her return. A local policeman informed her that the clubmobile had been impounded due to a missing taillight. Ann was ordered to attend court, where she was given a warning.

Early Pioneers

As the Clubmobilers adapted to their difficult new assignment - fighting flat tires, smoking stoves, and icy roads – several field modifications were made. They requested smocks to cover their uniforms, as well as slacks, waterproof trenchcoats, and fur-lined boots. The rear of the trucks was fitted out with a lounge, containing a Vitrola record player and the latest American songs, hometown magazines, and a map of the USA. American cigarettes, candy and gum were handed out for free.

Clubmobile headquarters were usually located at a central point surrounded by military bases. Usually, a Clubmobile would visit twelve installations a week on a rolling basis. Some days the women would cook 2,000 doughnuts. Coffee was made in the mess halls in huge 50-gallon cauldrons and decanted into urns. As part of their extensive Stateside training at the American University at

News from Across the Pond...



(Above) 'The first Clubmobiler': Hope Simpson serves coffee and doughnuts to American servicemen.

Washington D.C., Red Cross volunteers were taught how to make doughnuts to a precise recipe using a dry mix imported from the United States. This process involved weighing out the water to ensure a perfect consistency. This mundane task inspired the Clubmobilers' motto: "We weigh the water".

In her book titled *"ARC in the Storm"*, Marjorie Lee Morgan reflected on her time as a Clubmobile volunteer in the UK and France, *"Doughnuts and coffee were our props. Our wages were faith and friendship, trust and good cheer. And for those there will always be a need!"* Applicants for Red Cross postings overseas underwent a rigorous selection process. They usually had to be college graduates, with excellent interpersonal skills. ARC volunteer Elizabeth Richardson quipped to a friend, *"Damn glad I have a degree—it helps so much in making doughnuts."*

The Red Cross suffered numerous casualties during the war, including one fatality through enemy

action. Katie Cullen of Larchmont, New York, was killed on 20th December 1944 when a German shell struck the hospital in Belgium where she was being treated for a cold.

(Below) Personnel of the 55th Bomb Group enjoy coffee and doughnuts served up by a Clubmobile.



After the war in Europe had ended, Clubmobile units stayed on the continent to support the occupation forces. Elizabeth Richardson was travelling from Le Havre airport to Paris on the morning of July 25, 1945, when her Piper Cub crashed near Rouen. Liz Richardson is one of four women buried at the American Cemetery in Normandy. Writing to her parents in September 1944, Liz disclosed, *"I consider myself fortunate*

News from Across the Pond...



(Above) Ruth Davis, a native of New York City, weighs the water for the doughnut mix.

to be in Clubmobile—can't conceive of anything else...It's a rugged and irregular and weird life, but it's wonderful. That is, as wonderful as anything can be under the circumstances."



(Above) ARC Clubmobiler Elizabeth Richardson was killed in July 1945.

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 27, 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

FINDING ANSWERS:

Individual Research Unlocks the Kassel Mission

by Linda Alice Dewey
Daughter of a Kassel Mission Pilot

The Kassel Mission of 27 September 1944, once shrouded in mystery, comes to light through individual research—with a lot of help from our friends.

For a battle that, according to most, lasted under six minutes, the Kassel Mission of September 27, 1944, is one heavily documented episode in Eighth Air Force history. Today, if you want to learn about the Battle of the Kassel Mission (abbreviated in this article as KM), all it takes is a few clicks on the computer.

The Internet plays a huge continuing role in researching what for more than 40 years was not even relegated a footnote to history, though the 445th suffered the largest single-day loss for any Air Force group in history. When the 445th Bomb Group's 35 Liberators strayed from the rest of the division over central Germany, the Luftwaffe attacked. Only four B-24s safely made it back to the base.

From the get-go, a shroud of mystery covered the mission.

For those on the 445th base at Tibenham, England, waiting for the mission to return that day, no one could fathom what—or who—had happened. Rumors flew—only three planes made it back. No, four. No, five. Colonel Jimmy Stewart, who had been a 445th squadron commander, saw the initial reports and flew over from Wing Headquarters to talk to the men who did return. What he heard outside the debriefing hall turned his face pale. Any research completed during debriefing—officially called “interrogation”—only served to bring up more questions.

A pall hung over the base that afternoon. The round cement hardstands, where planes sat just hours ago, lay vacant. Huts in crew quarters were empty. Few were in a mess. Most who had been on the mission didn't want

to talk outside of debriefing, although a few shared what they saw, and ground crews whispered stories. Cables between Air Force generals flew across the Channel and the Atlantic as top brass tried to sort it out. What the hell just happened? Why did it happen? Could it happen again? Nobody knew.

What facts about the mission officials did know, they weren't sharing. It was bad.

As operations officers pieced together what they knew, they absorbed the fact that not only had they lost a squadron commander, but, of five crews that had returned, 13 men were injured. Another was killed after his pilot spotted construction on the runway as they approached and was unable to bring her around to the second strip.

By the end of the day, group officials had learned that five of the missing 30 Liberators had crashed in friendly territory and two made forced landings in England. Overnight, one crewman would die in Belgium. Counting the crews they had now heard from in newly liberated Belgium and France, 100 men who had not returned to base were now accounted for, including the two who had died.

Still unaccounted for were 25 planes and crews. All they could do was to wait for the Red Cross reports from Europe.

Early that evening, leaders of the fighter and bomber groups involved attended a mission critique and related their experiences. Usually, missions-gone-awry were followed up with a more in-depth, top-level inquiry hearing, but that is not the case here. There would be no follow-up.

In fact, the event was buried. Crews who had been there were told not to talk about it. Even at the end of the war, group officials did not share what little they did know: that 108 of the 238 men who went down in battle

that day did become POWs. The fate of the rest was still unknown.

Even today, where other mission folders at the National Archives often contain reconnaissance photos taken the day after a mission with detailed written analysis, none of that is in the mission folders for the 445th Bomb Group for 27 September 1944.

Aside from the coverup on base, there was good reason no one would connect to the stories of those who bailed out over Germany. Crews were literally scattered

445th Bomb Group Kassel Mission Stats

Year Reported	# Involved	POW	MIA	KIA
1945	336	108	N/A*	N/A*
2014	336	121	8	109
2025	336	121	4	113

*Unknown/Not Reported/Unavailable

Final tally: 121 POW + 8 MIA + 109 KIA = 238 gone
+98 Returned = 336

to the winds. The lucky ones were rounded up and taken together into captivity. The names of those and the dead were collected and reported to the U.S. by the Red Cross. Inside the prison camps, the few POWs fortunate enough to find one another compared notes and wondered about those they didn't see in the stalag.

When they were released in 1945, the POWs reported their experiences to 445th personnel at camps like Lucky

Strike and answered questions, but, as navigator Frank Bertram said later, the officers did not want to hear any opinions about what happened. There was no giving back and forth of information. The fliers answered questions about who-saw-who go down and when they last saw soldiers who were still evidently missing. But they never received answers to questions of their own.

Then they went home.

Those who had been on base finished their tours and went home, too, all of them taking their stories with them.

What had become known as "*the Kassel Mission*" became sealed up.

Like most combat veterans, they kept it all inside while building families and careers. My father, William R. Dewey, related his story to my sister and me when we were very little. A bedtime story, this was about the miracle of being a pilot during the battle and praying like crazy to get his extremely damaged aircraft carrying men he thought were dying back across the Channel, then making the best landing of his flying career. I can still see his silhouette as he sat on the side of my bed describing his prayers. Other than that, he rarely spoke of the Kassel Mission.

Like most soldiers, veterans of the Kassel Mission looked for a larger picture that might help them understand what had happened. Because the lead plane went down, they could only speculate on what happened. They didn't know that it had diverted the group from the rest of the bomber stream to unload its bombs on the city of Goettingen. They read books written by their

generals, but there was nothing about the battle that took place on 27 September 1944.

So many veterans who are involved in specific events never find out the answers. What happened that day? Did the other guys make it? Their questions became the Soldier's Lament.

A quarter of a century passed. Some crews had stayed in touch. Most did not. A few visits right after the war dwindled to a couple of letters during the year. Eventually, the



Lt. William R. Dewey (standing back row, far left)

annual Christmas card sufficed.

But then, things began to stir. Although many WWII veterans would never be able to look back, by the mid-1970s, others began to feel enough distance from the horrors of war that they could begin to reflect on that moment in their own personal histories. They began seeking out one another.

KM navigator Frank Bertram stayed in touch with his pilot, Reg Miner, and a few others on his crew. Through a little research, George Collar, their original bombardier, found one another, then Bertram put him in touch with the rest. Using the old dinosaurs of research—the telephone and postal system—Bertram and Collar wrote letters, exchanged stories, and looked for others. So many could not be found. Nobody knew if they were alive or dead.

They began to meet at reunions, where, in the absence of hard facts, rumors turned the Kassel Mission into a thing of myths for those who had flown it.

Many veterans sent for their own military records from the official government records to find answers to some of life's biggest mysteries. Some investigated all records available on the mission at the new National Archives. Most missions only consisted of one file folder, but there was too much paper, with 25 crews to report down. For this mission, there were two. They saw that the 25 Missing Air Crew Reports (MACRs) of KM planes that went down behind enemy lines offer lists of crews complete with home addresses of next of kin, albeit in 1944. Others found War Crimes transcripts related to the battle date. They discovered the official mission narrative which told of a possible navigational error by the lead plane, the bomb drop near Goettingen, and a detailed account of the hit by scores of Luftwaffe. They even found the transcript of the critique recorded by Col. James Stewart.

There were problems as the veterans tried to find the files. A fire in the early 1970s destroyed documents at the central records depot in St. Louis. The mission folders survived and were relocated to the new National Archives. Though full of debriefing reports, mission summaries, and those 25 MACRs, they did not hold much in the way of meaty answers. In addition, for at least a decade veterans would not be able to even find that information, because the folders for Mission 169 of the 445th Bomb Group were missing. No one ever found out why, but in 2005, pilot Paul Swofford would report that they were back.

Through all of this, these men realized what the families of the deceased already knew. The only thing grieving mothers and widows learned from the initial government telegrams and letters they had received

was that their loved one had died “somewhere over Germany.” They never learned more than that.

Some gave up. Yet, for others, persistence—following up on each possible contact—paid off. One day, they would find answers. Some would learn that their friends who had been in the next block at the same stagg although they never realized it. One pair of badly

injured buddies—tail gunner John Knox and Radio Operator Howard Boldt from the Baynham Crew—had lain next to each other in a German hospital for months and never knew it. So bandaged up were they, neither could speak to nor see the other. Yet, by reaching out later in life, they would find one another, compare stories, and realize what had occurred.

There began to be a collective outcry. For many men of the Kassel Mission, about which so little was known, two key organizations would fill the gap. The 2nd Air Division Association (2ADA, now the Heritage League) was formed in 1950 to serve veterans of the all- B-24 division. But there was no umbrella organization for veterans of all three divisions of the Eighth Air Force until 1975, when

retired colonel and former Eighth Air Force pilot John Woolnough founded the Eighth Air Force Historical Society (8th AFHS).

One of the great services these two organizations provided was to print letters from its veterans who were looking for information. Woolnough's Eighth Air Force News printed letters from men like bombardier George Collar or navigator Frank Bertram verbatim. The 2nd Air Division Journal printed up reports written by vice presidents for each group, who paraphrased requests for information from anyone on the mission. Both periodicals printed articles submitted by its members, including one by Bertram about the Kassel Mission in 1984. Even so, it is amazing to realize that until English author Roger Freeman published what would become his classic, “The Mighty Eighth” in 1986, the Kassel Mission was not mentioned in a single book on the air war. Freeman gave it two paragraphs, a start.

By the mid-80s, those at the helm of both journals noticed an upswing in inquiries and stories coming in from veterans of this particular battle. Both Eighth Air Force News editor John Woolnough and Frank Dimola, the 445th VP at the 2ADA, commented on it in their articles and asked veterans of the Kassel Mission to



Captain John Woolnough

send in their stories. They began to pour in.

Woolnough's quest took a new turn in September when he received a letter from a German doctor who suggested that Woolnough contact Walter Hassenpflug, who was in touch with the Luftwaffe pilots who fought that battle. Woolnough followed up on everything, and in the October 1988 issue of the News, he also put out a public call for Kassel Mission articles.

One of the best ways to find something out is to ask, ask, ask. Everything Woolnough was doing can be called, "research." When writers or organizations call for stories and recollections, when they interview people who were involved in an event, they are conducting research. The mean searched for answers and then re-searched for more answers.

John Woolnough would later describe the result as the largest response to a call for articles he ever received. He was inundated with accounts of the mission, pleas for information from still-grieving mothers and widows, documents and stories from all over the U.S., England and Germany. Hiring a translator, he poured over everything, circling and making notations in red ink, mapping out the 445th formation with names of planes and crews on graph paper, listing the MACRs with stars next to the names of those from whom he had gleaned stories. At some point, he made the decision to simply carry the stories as they stood, rather than to write articles himself. He ended up dedicating the entire January 1989 issue of the Eighth Air Force News to the Kassel Mission.

In their homes, Kassel Mission veterans read stories for the first time about others like them who had flown that mission. There were accounts from every crew position, from each of the four squadrons, from POWs and those who returned to the base, from fighter pilots—both German and American—and from ground crews and officers on the tower when the few Liberators returned. Among these responses were pleas for information from family members of those who died that day.

Woolnough published one mother's letter to a government official from 1945 that he had found buried in an MACR. She is looking for information on her copilot son, John Willet:

...Now that John has given his life for his country we would like to ask you if it would be asking too much if you could find out a few things for us as I have been ill and my son never wanted to worry me too much...We know...he is a great hero. We hope all of our boys haven't died in vain.

I have waited for Christmas to come as John said he would be home by then. We would like to know how

many missions and combat hours John had in as he said he had little time to write and was very tired. I really can't believe John will never come back home. It just seems impossible. Please excuse the mistakes and the long letter as I've got to do something to find out more about our son. I thought it would be of great help in our hours of sorrow...

On another page, Woolnough published the account of this same man's pilot, William Bruce. In his story, he described what happened to this copilot, Lieutenant John Willet: Bruce had told the crew to bail out. Willet had risen from his seat to help Bruce with his seatbelt while Bruce steered the plane. The Liberator was hit again, severing Willet at the waist. We do not know whether Mrs. Willet ever learned this.

In reading personal accounts, researchers often encounter the blessing and curse of memory, which is hardly objective. I heard recently that visual memory is only 60% correct immediately after an event. Perception is skewed by one's point of view. Throw in the immediate trauma of battle, plus the passage of time, and objectivity goes out the window. Therefore, reliance on a single person's anecdotal recounting alone can lead one into the danger of creating fiction. Red flags pop up when veteran accounts don't line up with one another. Although we respect each individual's right to his own perspective, we find inaccuracies in Kassel Mission interviews and accounts. A POW remembers being on the loose for days when he was actually captured within an hour; a radio operator is sure that his plane as his squadron's lead plane, but the formation diagram and other accounts prove that his Liberator led only the right rear element in the lead squadron; some who made it back to the base remembered being told not to talk after debriefing, while others say, 'Not so.'

Another problem is that recorded facts may not be correct. More than one Kassel Mission POW was accused of being a spy when he gave his name, rank and serial number, never thinking to actually check his dog tags, which were incorrect. Frank Bertram's dog tags had spelled his name, "Bertrum." Another man's number was wrong. Government records abound with mistakes or inaccuracies. Facts and figures in typofilled reports may not be correct. Overworked clerks misspelled names, making it difficult to find accurate records today. Some reports were even known to be doctored.

That said, Kassel Mission accounts continued to roll in to Woolnough after that first issue was published, overflowing into a second issue of the Eighth Air Force News. This gave my father an idea, and he sent in a
(story continues on p.22)

51st Annual 8th AFHS REUNION

50th Anniversary of the Founding of the 8th AFHS

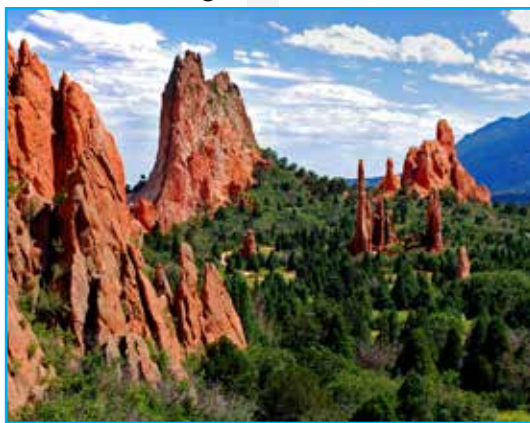
Colorado Springs, CO

October 1-5, 2025

In 1859, Colorado Springs history is marked with the founding of Colorado City, which became the first settlement in the Pikes Peak region. It was the territorial capital for a short period and served as a supply camp for miners traveling to the mining camps west of Denver.

In November 1806, American explorer Zebulon Pike traveled through the area and is credited for “discovering” Pikes Peak. He and his group attempted to reach the summit, but they were neither dressed nor equipped to climb the mountain that ultimately came to bear his name.

General William Jackson Palmer, a Civil War hero from Pennsylvania, ushered in a new era in Colorado Springs history in 1869. During his first visit to the area, he fell in love with its “most enticing scenery.” He predicted that there would soon be a great resort town at the base of Pikes Peak. One year later, he founded the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad and purchased land to create Colorado Springs along its route.



In 1871, the Victorian spa resort town Palmer envisioned became a reality. We invite you to enjoy the incredible beauty of the Rockies “close up and personal” with our first tour offering: **Foothills & Garden of the Gods Jeep Tour.**

Enjoy Cheyenne Canyon with Helen Hunt Falls, God Camp Road with the historic train tunnels, and the entire Garden of the Gods Park—all while traveling in specially modified Jeeps with your personal driver/guide! Snacks and bottled water are included as well as an experi-

ence you will NEVER forget!

Note: This tour is offered either as a “morning tour” (Group A) or if you prefer, an “afternoon tour” (Group B). Seating is limited to the first 100 per tour departure time.



“Group A” Jeep Foothills and Garden of the Gods Tour Thursday, October 2, 2025 Jeeps load at 9:00am Arrive back at DoubleTree at 12:15pm

“Group B” Jeep Foothills and Garden of the Gods Tour Thursday, October 2, 2025 Jeeps load at 1:00pm Arrive back at DoubleTree at 4:15pm



Be sure to have your cameras ready for this incredible tour.

The United States Air Force Academy

The U.S Air Force Academy was established April 1, 1954, the culmination of an idea years in the making. Airpower leaders, long before the Air Force was a separate service, argued that they needed a school dedicated to war in the air, to train Airmen. After September 1947, when the Air Force was established as a separate service, this idea finally had the legitimacy of the new service behind it.

In 1948, the Air Force appointed a board, later named the Stearns-Eisenhower Board for its chairmen, to study existing military acad-

emies and the options for an Air Force academy. Their conclusions were strongly put: the Air Force needed its own school; they additionally recommended at least 40 percent of future officers be service academy graduates.



After Congress passed a bill establishing the Air Force Academy, the secretary of the Air Force appointed a commission to recommend a location.

After traveling 21,000 miles

and considering hundreds of sites, the commission recommended Colorado Springs as its first choice. The secretary agreed and the purchasing of the thousands of acres began. The state of Colorado contributed \$1 million to the purchase of the land.

On July 11, 1955, the same year construction on the Academy began in Colorado Springs, the first class of 306 men was sworn-in at a temporary site, Lowry Air Force Base in Denver. Lieutenant Gen. Hubert R. Harmon, a key figure in the development of early plans for an Academy, was recalled from retirement by President Dwight D. Eisenhower to become the first Academy superintendent.

Two years later, Maj. Gen. James Briggs took over as the Academy's second superintendent. On Aug. 29, 1958, 1,145 cadets moved to the Academy's permanent site from Denver. Less than a year later, the Academy received academic

accreditation and graduated its first class of 207 June 3, 1959. In 1964, the authorized strength of the Cadet Wing increased to 4,417. The present authorized strength is approximately 4,000.

Friday, October 3, 2025
Busses board at 9:30am
Arrive back at DoubleTree at 3:00pm

No visit to "The Springs" is complete unless it includes a tour of the United States Air Force Academy. Our visit encompasses the splendor of the Chapel (*unfortunately, due to ongoing renovations, we will be unable to go inside*); the Barry Goldwater Visitor Center, B-52 display, Honor Court, Doolittle Hall, and more!

Lunch and a program at the Falcon Club is included in this package!



You won't want to miss this soul stirring experience.

National Museum of WWII Aviation

Opened to the public in 2012, the National Museum of World War II Aviation documents the role that

military aviation played in the emergence of our nation as a world power. The museum tells the story of the tremendous technological advancements in aviation during the War and the contributions and sacrifices of the men and women who won the air war.

The museum offers a balanced mix of artifacts, archival material, interpretive narratives, maps and audio-visual systems; all intertwined with the museum's collection of flying World War II-era aircraft.

Saturday, October 4, 2025
Busses board at 12:00pm
Arrive back at DoubleTree at 3:30pm

In the first section of the museum, visitors learn about the events leading up to America's involvement in

World War II and how those events affected an aviation industry in its infancy. Visitors then explore galleries that tell the story of America's early involvement in the European and Pacific theaters of war, and the lessons learned by those fighting on the front lines. Finally, visitors discover how those costly but vital lessons guided the effort on the Homefront to design, develop and produce the aircraft that ultimately won the war.

While our tour is "self-guided", there will be numerous docents throughout the museum adding additional information as well as making our experience unique.

Note: You may want to eat lunch BEFORE this tour as the Museum does NOT have onsite food service.



51st Annual 8th AFHS REUNION

50th Anniversary ~ Founding of the 8th AFHS

DoubleTree by Hilton ~ Colorado Springs, CO

October 1-5, 2025

REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

STOP! WE'VE ADDED AN OPTION!!!

✓RESERVE YOUR HOTEL ROOM FIRST!

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

Canceling your hotel reservation does **NOT** cancel your reunion activities.

✓COMPLETE THE REGISTRATION FORM

Please fill out the registration form completely.

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

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

✓MAIL IN YOUR REGISTRATION FORM

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

~OR~

✓NEW REGISTER DIRECTLY ON OUR WEBSITE!

[a 3% convenience fee will be added]

ALL registration forms **MUST** be **received** by **September 1, 2025**, in order to guarantee your place.

If you have any questions or problems in completing your registration, please contact:

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

ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org

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



51st Annual 8th AFHS REUNION
50th Anniversary ~ Founding of the 8th AFHS
DoubleTree by Hilton ~ Colorado Springs, CO
October 1-5, 2025

DoubleTree Hotel
(Reunion Hotel)

Reservations: (719) 527-4693
Kaitlyn: Mon-Fri 8am – 4pm MST
Group rate code: AFH

Link below for DoubleTree reservations!
[DOUBLETREE Reservations](#)

Or on our website: www.8thafhs.org

—>OVERFLOW HOTELS<—

Fairfield Inn & Suites
(719) 576-1717

and/or

Courtyard Colorado Springs South
(719) 226-5006

Code: AF Historical Society

Link below for either hotel above!
[OVERFLOW RESERVATION LINK](#)

Or on our website: www.8thafhs.org

The **DoubleTree Hotel** is located at 1775 E Cheyenne Mountain Blvd, Colorado Springs, CO 80906. Just minutes from Downtown Colorado Springs, the hotel is a gateway to top attractions like the U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Museum and the breathtaking vistas of Pikes Peak. Enjoy easy access to over 15 restaurants, a multi-plex movie theater, and shopping nearby. We offer 30,000 square feet of meeting space, on-site dining, and an indoor pool! **Airport shuttle: please call (719)576-8900 upon landing to check on availability.**

Because we are anticipating a large turnout for this reunion, we have arranged for two additional hotels as backup:
Fairfield Inn & Suites is located within easy walking distance of the DoubleTree, at 2725 Geyser Drive Colorado Springs, CO 80906. Offers easy access to Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, Broadmoor World Arena, Pikes Peak, Fort Carson, Garden of the Gods, and Cave of the Winds Mountain Park.

Courtyard Colorado Springs South, 2570 Tenderfoot Hill Street Colorado Springs, CO 80906. Also has easy access to Cheyenne Mountain Zoo, World Arena, Seven Falls, Fort Carson, Garden of the Gods, Cave of the Winds, and Peterson AFB.

ALL three (3) hotels offer complimentary parking and are within 15 minutes of the Colorado Springs Airport [COS].

RESERVATION INFORMATION

DoubleTree Hotel

Group Name: 8th Air Force Historical Society

Reunion Dates: October 1-5, 2025

Rate: \$189.00 + 10.27% = \$208.28 per night. Rates are offered 3 days prior and 3 days post reunion based on availability.

Fairfield Inn & Suites: \$139++ per night. Rates based on availability.

Courtyard Colorado Springs South: \$159++ per night. Rates based on availability.

Cut off Date: August 30, 2025

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

WHEELCHAIR/SCOOTERS/WALKERS RENTALS

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

HOSPITALITY SUITES

HOSPITALITY SUITES are *very limited* and will be offered to groups on a first come, first reserved basis. We ask that you reserve your suite as soon as possible and consider sharing with another group! Suites are located throughout the hotel, but we will post location information at the registration desk as to where each group is located!

PLEASE contact Debra to reserve your suite!

Call or email ASAP:

Debra Kujawa
Managing Director
912-748-8884
ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org



REUNION SCHEDULE

51st Annual 8th AFHS REUNION

50th Anniversary ~ Founding of the 8th AFHS

DoubleTree by Hilton ~ Colorado Springs, CO

October 1-5, 2025

Wednesday, October 1

10:00am — 5:00pm	Reunion Registration open***	Academy—Hallway adjacent
5:30pm — 7:00pm	Welcome Reception & Cash Bar	Colorado Springs Ballroom
7:00pm — 9:00pm	Board Meeting	Red Rocks Boardroom
7:00pm — until	Hospitality Suites	Locations TBD

Thursday, October 2

7:00am — 8:30am	Breakfast on your own**	
8:30am — 12:00pm	Reunion Registration***	Academy—Hallway adjacent
1:00pm — 5:00pm	Reunion Registration***	Academy—Hallway adjacent
9:15am — 12:15pm	<i>Garden of the Gods "Jeep Tour" Group 'A' ~Assemble in hotel lobby</i>	
10:00am — 11:00am	Judy Gray Presentation	Colorado Springs Ballroom
1:15pm — 4:15pm	<i>Garden of the Gods "Jeep Tour" Group 'B' ~Assemble in hotel lobby</i>	
2:00pm — 3:00pm	Judy Gray Presentation	Colorado Springs Ballroom
6:00pm — 10:00pm	Cash Bar Open	Colorado Springs Ballroom
7:00pm — 9:30pm	Dinner and program	Colorado Springs Ballroom
	Speaker ~ <i>General Gregory M. Guillot, Commander, United States Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command, Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado</i>	

Friday, October 3

7:00am — 8:30am	Breakfast on your own**	
7:45am — 8:45am	Group Meetings	Locations vary by groups
8:30am — 12:00pm	Reunion Registration***	Academy—Hallway adjacent
1:30pm — 5:00pm	Reunion Registration***	Academy—Hallway adjacent
9:45am — 3:00pm	<i>U S Air Force Academy Tour & Lunch ~Assemble in hotel lobby</i>	
6:00pm — 10:00pm	Cash Bar Open	
7:00pm — 9:00pm	Rendezvous Dinners	Colorado Springs Ballroom (5 rooms)

Saturday, October 4

7:00am — 8:30am	Breakfast on your own**	
8:30am — 5:00pm	Reunion Registration <i>Self-serve</i>	Academy—Hallway adjacent
8:45am — 10:30am	General Membership Meeting	Colorado Springs Ballroom
10:30am — 1:30pm	8th AFHS Board Meeting	Red Rocks Boardroom
12:15pm — 3:30pm	<i>National Museum of WWII Aviation* ~Assemble in hotel lobby</i>	
6:00pm — 10:00pm	Cash Bar Open	
7:00pm — 10:00pm	Gala Dinner and Program	Colorado Springs Ballroom
	Speaker ~ <i>General Stephen N. Whiting, Commander, US Space Command, Peterson Space Force Base, Colorado</i>	

Sunday, October 5

7:00am — 8:30am	Breakfast on your own**
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****The National Museum of WWII Aviation is self-guided!***

*****Breakfast is NOT included in our reunion package...please check times with hotel and/or surrounding restaurants.***

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



51st Annual 8th AFHS REUNION
50th Anniversary ~ Founding of the 8th AFHS
DoubleTree by Hilton ~ Colorado Springs, CO October 1-5, 2025

CUT-OFF DATE IS August 30, 2025	Price p/p	# of People	TOTAL
DUES: The principal attendee MUST be a member of the 8th AFHS to register for this reunion. If you are NOT CURRENT or a member, please pay your yearly dues here:	\$ 60	#	\$
REGISTRATION FEE (non-refundable): EVERY attendee MUST pay registration fee	\$ 45	#	\$
DINNERS			
Thursday, Oct 2 — 7:00 PM~EVENING DINNER: Tuscan Chicken with Creamy Sundried Tomatoes, Mushroom, and Parmesan Sauce	\$ 63	#	\$
Friday, Oct 3—7:00 PM~RENDEZVOUS DINNER: Garlic Herb Roasted Chicken with Wild Mushrooms, Rosemary, and Chicken Jus	\$ 63	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 4—7:00 PM~GALA BANQUET: <i>(Please select ONE entrée per person)</i>			
Grilled Ribeye with Crispy Shallots and Red Wine Aus Jus	\$ 75	#	\$
Almond Crusted Sole with Sauce Meuniere	\$ 75	#	\$
Vegetarian plate(s) Please indicate [how many]: Thurs # ____ Fri # ____ Sat # ____	\$ 63	#	\$
TOUR OPTIONS			
Thursday, Oct 2: 9:15 AM—12:15 PM: Foothills & Garden of the Gods Jeep Tour MORNING TOUR (Includes bottled water & snacks!) Limit: 100 passengers	\$ 113	#	\$
Thursday, Oct 2: 1:15 PM—4:15 PM: Foothills & Garden of the Gods Jeep Tour AFTERNOON TOUR (Includes bottled water & snacks!) Limit: 100 passengers	\$ 113	#	
Friday, Oct 3: 9:45 AM — 3:00 PM: US Air Force Academy <i>(Includes lunch!)</i>	\$ 60	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 4: 12:15 AM — 3:30 PM: National Museum of World War II Aviation <i>(Self-guided — Lunch on your own!)</i>	\$ 55	#	\$
Total amount payable to: 8th AFHS			\$

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

MEMBER NAME: _____ BG/FG (for name tag & seating): _____

VETERAN? If yes—> WWII: _____ Post WWII: _____ (Conflict or Era): _____ (Branch of Service): _____

Additional Attendee: _____ Military service: _____

Name #3: _____ Military service: _____

Name #4: _____ Military service: _____

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

DAYTIME PH #: _____ EMAIL: _____

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(Continued from p.15)

suggestion. Why not compile everything into a single booklet on the Kassel Mission?

Woolnough responded, “Why don’t you do it?” Dewey accepted, and Woolnough sent everything he had—all the correspondence, research, accounts, even his hand-written notes on which he had puzzled out the mission.

In the meantime, Dad had a second idea instigated by a letter to the editor published in that same January 1989 issue.

Backtracking for a minute:

For the past several years, my dad had gone to a few reunions, coming away empty-handed. No one he met had been on that mission which had been so pivotal in his own military experience. He always felt that something was missing, when he couldn’t find other guys who did not share that particular common experience. This must be true for other veterans who also went through specific, harsh experiences but were unable to find many others—if anyone at all—who had been there. One thinks of POWs anywhere, but especially in the South Pacific, on death marches.

A few years before, Dad finally met someone who had also been on the Kassel Mission: navigator Frank Bertram and his pilot, Reg Miner. After meeting Bertram and Miner in 1987, Dad met George Collar, Ira Weinstein and other Kassel Mission veterans at another reunion that year. They men had already found one another.

Dad was awed by Bertram’s meeting with Walter Hassenpflug, the German who, as a boy in the Hitler Youth, had discovered Bertram hiding by a creek. Young Walter went to get his supervisor, and together, the German boys brought Bertram to the nearby town where he was placed under arrest.

Bertram told Dad that Hassenpflug introduced him to one of the Luftwaffe pilots who had actually fought against him on that day. Dewey himself had always felt great respect for the German men who fought against him. Rather than labeling them as “Nazis,” he felt that they were just doing their job, like the Americans were doing theirs. One of Dad’s lifetime dreams was to meet them. So early in 1988, he contacted Hassenpflug to see if a reunion between the German and American air-

men from the Kassel Mission battle might be arranged. Hassenpflug was looking into it.

Then, in that January 1989 News issue, a letter from a B-29 gunner suggested that if a monument were erected to honor those killed on this mission, he would make a donation.

Dewey thought about Hassenpflug. Could such a monument be erected in Germany? He wrote Hassenpflug, expanding his original vision. Was there perhaps an appropriate place related to the Kassel Mission where the Germans and Americans might erect such a monument together. They could reunite at its dedication.

Immediately, Hassenpflug knew where it should go. The site where the lead 445th aircraft had crashed was just 1.8 km east of his hometown, Friedlos. Hassenpflug had seen it go down that day.



Heinz Pappenberg (left) and Bill Dewey at memorial

But now he had concerns. The locals, so crushed by war, were sick of war and might not be interested. Plus, the idea might be too radical. At that time—1989—nothing like this had ever been done. Similar monuments have been erected since, but this was a first. Nowhere in Germany had former enemies ever collaborated on such a project. The closest thing, Hassenpflug wrote to Dewey, was a plaque

recently erected by the German Fighters Association which included names of men on both sides who died in another battle. Plus, there were logistics to consider: How would this be facilitated? Who would keep it up?

In spite of his concerns, Hassenpflug presented Dewey’s idea to his community leaders, who worked it out in a single meeting. “Your suggestion has received a great deal of interest and approval here,” he reported back to Dewey.

The German Fighter Pilots Association agreed to take on the German side of the Memorial while Hassenpflug served as the project organizer on their home front. To raise funds for the American part—the creation of three large brass plaques, the 445th veterans organized into the Kassel Mission Memorial Association (KMMA, now the Kassel Mission Historical Society or KMHS). As the 501 (c) 3 non-profit’s president, Dewey rearranged Woolnough’s articles into one compact 40-page booklet, *The Kassel*

Mission Reports (KMR See below), which KMMA sold to raise funds. That, along with organizational dues, donations and sales of other books funded two large bronze plaques that list the names of the Germans and Americans who died in the battle, along with a third plaque which tells the story of the battle in German and in English.

Collar and Dewey enlisted the help of other veterans like Bertram and Miner and Ray Lemons, along with those two injured hospital buddies from his crew—Knox and Boldt. Weinstein’s advertising firm helped with the logo and ads which they placed in the Journal and News. Everyone pitched in to find survivors. Dewey and Collar assembled all the names, aided by Hassenpflug, for the plaques. They invited the survivors and families of the deceased to join in the effort. Though some still didn’t want to have anything to do with their former enemy, many did and sent in names of others to contact. Collar and Dewey hit the phones and typed out letters and deposited donations, as KMMA took shape.

They even contacted the B-29 gunner to tell him that they were moving forward with the monument idea he had first suggested but would laugh later when they recalled that the gunner never did donate. It didn’t matter. His donation was the idea.

The wives pitched in, too. My mother, KMMA treasurer and secretary Marilyn Dewey, helped Dad organize the project, and then the huge dedication trip, with Hassenpflug organizing the Germans and the ceremony from his side.

The entire project was based upon cooperation. Both the German and American governments took part. The German State of Hesse donated 4,000 square feet of forest at the spot where Major John Chilton’s plane

crashed with Don McCoy aboard. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers donated men and equipment to carve a road through the woods, level and prepare the site. A local construction company imported from Denmark the three twelve-foot stones of Nordic granite; one weighed six tons. The U.S. Army garrison at Bad Hersfeld

kicked in funds, too. But the vast majority of the site preparation and landscaping was paid for and completed by the local German community of Friedlos, whose townspeople planted an island of heather in front of the three stones.

While all this was going on, the wall slicing Germany into East and West came down, opening up the other half of the Kassel Mission crash sites for Hassenpflug to investigate.

Everything culminated on 1 August 1990 in a ceremony attended by over 500 participants and observers. Military generals from both countries spoke as well as dignitaries, and finally, Kassel Mission participants. Dewey spoke for the American

pilots. The German pilot representative marveled in his speech that these men had ever been their enemies.

Then four Americans—Dewey, Miner, Bertram and Collar—and three German veteran pilots from the battle removed the tarps from the three plaques and shook hands. Finding themselves in a circle, the seven joined hands and raised them to the sky in a spontaneous gesture of unity and a new triumph—victory over war. Former enemies had just become friends, and photographers rushed in to catch the moment.

The next day, Hassenpflug escorted two busloads of Americans to the crash sites and chute landing sites of men who, like Bertram, had never known exactly where they landed. They crossed into what had been East



Dedication ceremony in Friedlos, Germany

Germany just a year before, and bells rang in towns whose inhabitants had not seen an American since 1939. Disembarking at each point, the men involved came forward and exchanged stories with the German fliers who had brought them down and the civilians who captured them.

Many learned things from one another in that afternoon they had never known until that moment. The stories weren't pretty. One woman learned that her brother had been murdered.

The tale of this remarkable reunion hit the papers in Germany and in hometowns across the U.S. Detroit radio station WJBK interviewed Dewey by phone from Germany while it was still going on. The Dzenowagis Group, a family of military researchers who created documentaries on the 2nd Air Division, interviewed the German and American veterans and civilians involved. Over the following years, Dewey updated News and Journal readers on KMMA's development with letters and book reviews. Sidebars and ads invited anyone with an interest to join KMMA. Collar and other veterans continued to submit new articles.

In 1996, Dewey began to print KMMA's own periodicals. A Kassel Mission Reports Addendum appeared in the program for the 1996 reunion of Kassel Mission veterans at the Wright Patterson Airfield in Dayton where over 400 people attended. It contained more stories of the mission from men who sent them in after the initial stories were published. The next year, he started up the Kassel Mission Chronicles, carrying recent letters, new accounts and stories as they unfolded. Historians began to be attracted, and Dewey's goal of getting the Kassel Mission into history books became realized.

Even now, families of Kassel Mission participants discover the Kassel Mission Historical Society (KMHS, morphed from KMMA for future generations) for the first time, usually through the website [www.kasselmission.org]. They contact KMHS, then send accounts or diaries or photographs other KMHS members have never seen. KMHS continues to publish them online in the members' newsletter, The Kassel Mission Chronicles, which carries on the tradition begun by John Woolnough nearly 40 years ago.

In 2004, the Eighth AFHS focused on the Kassel Mission as its keynote symposium event for its annual reunion. For an event the men were told not to talk about, this was a miracle, indeed. The Dzenowagis Group premiered its Kassel Mission documentary, "Pride of the Nation," which begins and ends with that August 1990 dedication ceremony in Germany. The film is loaded with interviews conducted by the Dzenowagis

family and archival clips they found through their own research in the U.S. as well as in Great Britain. After the film's presentation that Saturday afternoon in 2004, nine Kassel Mission veterans participated in a panel discussion emceed by soon-to-be 8th AFHS president Mark Copeland. Each participant told his story. This moving tribute is particularly significant because it was generated by the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. No longer covering up the battle, the Eighth—through its Historical Society—was beginning to bring it to light.

Associations such as the 2nd Air Division Heritage League, the Eighth Air Force Historical Society and the Kassel Mission Historical Society hold reserves of information, and volunteers who can help those looking for answers to questions that have lasted longer than a lifetime. Spawned from the need of those who were directly involved to find one another, to share their stories, and to better understand what they had gone through, group organizations continue to serve and help solve mysteries that might otherwise plague mankind for generations to come.

For instance, as a result of pooled information from individual researchers, we now know that, of 132 men parachuting safely to the ground, 11 were murdered. One mystery of the murder of two Kassel Mission airmen was not solved until 2014! Yet what happened to others remains unsolved.

In 2013, KMHS began inquiring with the U.S. government to learn if it was possible to identify the eight American airmen reportedly Missing In Action (MIA) from the battle. Now that DNA testing is available, bone fragments and remains previously unidentifiable could be recovered and tested. As of this date, Spring 2025, four sets of remains have been recovered and repatriated to their homeland over the past 2 years. Another three sets are in the final stages of testing. One airman remains in the ground in Germany—we think. It takes patience and longevity for an organization to fulfill its mission. We are still working on it.

As I write this, I think back on all of the searching and researching resulting in stories told, people remembered, MIAs identified, films shown, books and articles written—all related to this mission gone awry that resulted in the largest loss for one group in a single day's battle in history. And yet, even with everything that has happened since that day, few have heard of it. After all the searching and researching, the mission now is to be sure that the story is told and re-told.

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Contact the Kassel Mission Historical Society

www.kasselmission.org



Toombs and Hurwitz Honored by Veteran Program

by Nancy Toombs, Fighting 493rd BG Memorial Association

W.C. "Bill" Toombs (above left) and Melvin Hurwitz (above right) returned to Normandy, France on June 6th, 2024, for the 80th anniversary of D-Day Celebration. Both veterans were invited to attend an all-expense paid 10-day reunion and festivities which were sponsored by the *Best Defense Foundation*.

They were flown on a special chartered 767 Delta Airlines jet along with 48 other WW2 Army, Air Corps and Navy veterans. The nose art of their jet was aptly painted "*80th Anniversary D-Day & Battle of Normandy*."

The Best Defense Foundation was founded in 2018 by former NFL linebacker Donnie Edwards; and its mission is to honor and celebrate our veterans from past wars/conflicts, including WW2, Korea, Vietnam and those recently retired. The foundation is driven by volunteers who are passionate about supporting and honoring military veterans and returning them to the battlefields where they previously served.

To date the Foundation has taken over 100 WW2 veterans on Battlefield Return Programs to honor the veteran's service and to remember their fallen comrades. WW2 veterans have traveled all over the world including, Normandy, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium, Pearl Harbor, Iwo Jima, Guam, Saipan and Tinian. This was truly an honor for both men and what an honor to have two, 493rd men to represent the **Mighty Eighth**.

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From Ball Turret Gunner to Physicist: an excerpt from the mission diary of Dr. Clarence Kooi...

a chronicle of wartime experiences - 486th Bomb Group

MARCH 1 I went to London and spent the night there coming back the next day. I bought some birthday gifts. This is the part of the diary I kept during my service in World War II. It contains all of the entries from December 18, 1944 to May 7, 1945, the end of hostilities in Germany with accounts of the 28 missions I flew as ball turret gunner on Lt. Stevenson's crew. Our airplane was "Miss B Havin".

Our crew consisted of pilot James W. Stevenson of Hickory, North Carolina, co-pilot Wayne A. Scott of Letcher, South Dakota, navigator Harold C. Burgan of Baltimore, Maryland, nose turret gunner Joseph Ferreri from Baltimore, Maryland, engineer-top turret gunner Bill Rodgers from Ozone Park, Long Island, New York, radio operator-gunner Charles J. Lantz from Salem, Ohio, ball turret gunner Clarence F. Kooi (me) from Sheldon, Iowa, waist gunner Cloyd R. Merk from Smithton, Missouri, and tail gunner Melvin Morley from Belleville, Kansas.

We came together as a crew in August, 1944, at Drew Field, Tampa, Florida. By December 3 we were at Hunter Field, near Savannah, Georgia, where we picked up our airplane. Then, in rapid succession we flew to Dow Field near Bangor, Maine, and Gander Lake AAF, Newfoundland, where we waited four days for the weather to improve so we could fly to Europe. A B-24 crashed while we were there. Then a twelve hour flight from Gander to Valley, Wales; then on to Burtonwood field near Liverpool, England, where we left our airplane; then, by truck to the replacement center at Duncan Hall, which appears to be near Birmingham, and finally, by train to Sudbury and the 486th Bombardment Group, Eighth Air Force.

My daughters, Lynda and Claire-Marie, typed from the hand-written diary verbatim, with no corrections or changes. I added comments and explanations in curly brackets {---}.

DECEMBER 18, 1944 MONDAY

To-day we arrived at the spacious replacement center, Duncan Hall, where we will be entertained with KP, guard duty, processing and meals which any good porker would relish. We do have one consolation, however. That is that we will probably only be here for a few days. We do have very good living quarters with four men to a room and even mattress covers on the mattresses. We came by truck from Burtonwood this morning. Burtonwood is about 75 miles from here. A day ago, Sunday, we came from Valley to Burtonwood Via B-17. We left our plane there and resorted to trucks. The day before that, Saturday, we came, via B-17, from Gander Field. It took us 12 hours and in that time we covered about nineteen hundred miles, mostly over water.

JANUARY 13, 1945 SATURDAY {Our mission 31, 486th mission 131}

We made our first mission to-day. We got up at 4:45 ate breakfast and were at briefing a little late. Since we were a little new and didn't know our way around we didn't get our guns and equipment out to the plane in time so we took off about a half hour late at 8:30. We went on oxygen very soon and after circling over England for almost two hours to form we had only 200 pounds left out of the 400 we took off with. It was cloudy all the way over but in France we could see the ground which was mostly covered with snow. I was very air sick and vomited a few times in the ball turret. We were at about 26,000 ft. by this time and it froze immediately - all over my coat. I couldn't get out of the turret because we were quite near the battle lines and our target which was a small railroad bridge at Mainz. As we went over the lines we hit some flak. I was still sick and the oxygen was down to about 70 pounds. We had two groups of P-51's and one group of P-47's for escort now. We did not see any enemy planes at any time. We were soon over the target

and each plane of the group dropped their five 1000 lb. bombs. There was more flak here and much closer to us. We weren't hit though. My oxygen was down to ten pounds now and I only had a few minutes left. I got out of the turret and broke my oxygen mask while disconnecting it. Merk {Cloyd Merk, our waist gunner} got another one for me out of the emergency kit while I held the broken one together as well as I could. We soon descended so we could go off oxygen. We went over a solid overcast all the way back. It was sunny up on top and the clouds looked like huge puffy white heaps of wool. We made an instrument let-down and came out a few hundred feet off the ground in drizzle and fog - in sharp contrast to the sunny world up on top. I was in the ball turret for about five hours and air-sick every minute of them. We bombed through clouds so we could not see them strike.

JANUARY 24, 1945 WEDNESDAY

We got up at 0330 this morning and briefed at 0430 for marshaling yards just across the front lines in the Ruhr Valley. The flak was supposed to be heavy and a lot of fighters were in the vicinity. We had all our guns in and ready to go when the mission was scrubbed on account of the weather which was closed in right to the ground. We were sorry we couldn't go since it was a very short mission and it would have helped the ground forces on the front very much since a panzer division was moving through these yards. We are alerted again tomorrow. This is the 12th time we have been alerted and we only have one mission yet.

This afternoon five of the crew fired the 45 on an indoor pistol range. I fired six rounds from a Luger 9mm. German gun also.

I am on the thirteenth lesson of my USAFI geometry course now and I'm going to two classes of German a week now.

I went to London for two days starting Saturday and ending Monday Jan. 20-22. I like London much more than I thought I would. I went on a taxi tour sponsored by the Red Cross and saw, among other notable places, Buckingham Palace, House of Parliament, London Tower, London bridge and I went through Westminster Abbey and St. Paul's Cathedral; two of the most beautiful and largest churches I have ever been in. Westminster Abbey has a musty smell that is in perfect harmony with its more than eleven hundred year age. Many famous people are buried there including eleven? kings and four queens. There are statues, busts, and inscriptions on marble or metal plates distributed profusely about the sides of the abbey. St. Paul's is another much newer piece of massive artistic construction. It took the greater part of the builder's professional life to build it and of the painter's to paint the murals on the inside of the dome. During the blitz a five hundred pound bomb

hit it and a 1000 lb. bomb was removed after penetrating the roof and floor and coming to rest unexploded deep underneath the cathedral. The roof has been reinforced with steel girders as a temporary measure. Since the cathedral is built of a special type of Italian marble it will not be repaired until after the war when it will be possible to again import marble from Italy. The next time I go to London I am going to the London Tower for one thing and also to as many other historic landmarks and buildings as possible.

JANUARY 28, 1945 SUNDAY {Our mission # 2, 486th mission #137}

Yesterday we were briefed to hit submarine pens at Hamburg, a long over water hop and plenty of flak at the target along with the very imminent threat of fighters, but it was scrubbed before I had my guns in. A few weeks ago a Lieutenant of the Royal Navy talked to us and said that submarines would soon be a high priority target. He was right-they now are and this is probably due, to some extent, to the sinking of a troopship, and loss of several hundred lives, by a sub.

To-day we hit marshalling yards at Hohenbudberg, where a panzer division is moving through. It was visual bombing but from our usual altitude of over five miles it is very hard to see what damage is done. I did see a brilliant billow of orange fire which was perhaps a fuel dump. The flak was heavy and quite accurate but we did not have any holes in our plane.

I put a bolt switch in wrong this morning and I had to change it in the air, which in the ball turret is a very difficult operation.

This afternoon was a sunny Sunday afternoon in Germany but it all seemed distant and cold from altitude and it is very hard to realize that death and destruction are rampant down below where the bomb explosions are small and seem to expand lazily. The flak up by us seems to appear from nowhere. Suddenly there are a bunch of black puffs in the sky and they go floating rapidly toward the rear, seemingly as harmless as smoke rings. This is my second mission. We had 12 five hundred pound bombs to-day.

Today is the 3rd anniversary of the 8th Air Force. I also saw Holland for the first time today when we crossed the coast south of Rotterdam...

Editor's note: More on Dr. Kooi's contribution to the world of physics is in his obit on p.28. We also encourage you to read further from Clarencs's diary. Simply click the link below:

<https://www.486th.org/Photos/Letters2/kooi.htm>

Many airmen kept diaries of their experiences during the war. It is an incredible, personal glimpse into how these young heroes felt and responded to the challenges and horrors of war.

Kooi, Dr Clarence, passed away peacefully on May 17, 2025, at the age of 100. A remarkable man of intellect, service, and heart, he lived a life defined by courage, curiosity, and a deep commitment to the world around him.



Clarence was born on May 3, 1925 in Sioux County, Iowa, one of twelve children born to Fred and Ida Kooi. He attended a one room elementary school, graduating from the 8th grade as he turned 13 years old. From 13 to 18, he worked full time on the family and neighboring farms, not going to high school. He entered the United States Army Air Force in October 1943 and served in the European Theater as a ball turret gunner on a B-17 heavy bomber. He flew 28 missions over France and Germany, including in support of the Battle of the Bulge. For his service, he was awarded the Air Medal with three oak leaf clusters. (The European part of his wartime diary is online at <http://www.486th.org/Photos/Letters2/kooi.htm>.)

After leaving the Army in 1945, he attended high school and received a high school diploma from Emily Griffith School in Denver, CO. He then entered the University of Denver and received a B.A. in Physics in 1949. He was admitted to the University of California, Berkeley in 1949 and

received his Ph.D. in Physics in 1954.

Upon receiving his Ph.D., he worked as a scientist at the Collins Radio Company Laboratory in Burbank, CA. In 1956, he began his employment at Lockheed Palo Alto Research laboratory where he engaged in basic research in solid state physics for 15 years publishing 35 articles in the major physics journals. The next nine years were spent in various areas of applied physics, including nuclear weapon effects carried out at the underground weapons testing site in Nevada.

During this time, he also received a National Science Foundation senior post-doctoral fellowship and a Fulbright fellowship which allowed him to spend a year at the laboratory of Louis Néel (Prix Nobel) in Grenoble, France (academic year 1966-67). Ten years later he received a second Fulbright fellowship under which he spent a year as professor of physics at the University of Dakar, Senegal (academic year 1976-77). After retiring early from Lockheed Palo Alto Research laboratory in 1980, he immediately went to work as a contractor for the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as the 'new and renewable energy' consultant for the Economic Community of West African States. He spent 3.5 years in West Africa, living mainly in the Ivory Coast and Republic of Cape Verde. In 1984, he contin-

ued the renewable energy work in Haiti and returned to the United States in 1989. In 1998, he founded a student garden at the local elementary school and remained there as the gardener for the next 20 years instructing students in food production. For several years, he also served as a teacher's assistant in science.

He had a variety of passions that kept him busy. He maintained his home garden, where he grew kale, tomatoes, corn, peas, artichokes, asparagus, figs, beans, potatoes, and more. He was the commander of the 486th Bomb Group Association, an association of WWII veterans, their descendants and supporters and attended the 8th Air Force reunion each year. He was also involved in discussions about water issues in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta, regularly participating in scientific and political forums to advocate for a saltwater barrier. Lastly, his love for music endured. He held season tickets to the San Francisco Symphony and San Francisco Opera for over 25 years. Dr. Clarence Kooi is survived by his wife, Marie-Therese Kooi; his children: Linda Kooi, Richard Kooi, Lynda (Kooi) West, and Claire-Marie Kooi; twelve grandchildren; and eight great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his son, Robert Kooi, whom he loved dearly. He is also remembered with affection by many extended family members, former colleagues and students,

and cherished friends around the world.

Benjamin, Alfred David, 100,



of Canton, MA passed away after a very long and productive life on March 13, 2025. He was the devoted husband of

Lorraine Benjamin (z"l) for 74 incredible years, loving father of Ross (Midge), Cary (Susan), and Evan (Kristen), grandfather of Amalie (Daniel), Hallie, Jessica (Christopher), Samuel (Brooke), Ari (Katherine) and Rose (Julian), and great grandfather of Elliott, Reid, Blake, Evangeline, Cameron and Lily. Born in Dorchester, Massachusetts to Samuel and Rose Benjamin, he lived in Dorchester, Newton and Mashpee, MA, and in South Palm Beach, FL. He was predeceased by his brothers Joseph and Herbert, and shared special relationships with his sister-in-law Micky Winn, nephew Steve Winn (Lesley), niece Sharon Quigley (Ken z"l), and cousins Joseph (Ruth) and Jeffrey (Betsy) Benjamin, and Paula Rosput Reynolds (Steve). Alfred led a storied life, enlisting during World War II in the Aviator Cadet Corps and was among the youngest officers commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps. He flew 31 missions as a B-17 navigator and was shot

down over Belgium, earning the Purple Heart for his 13th mission. After the war, he leveraged his insatiable curiosity, along with his ability and confidence, to become a self-taught entrepreneurial engineer/tradesman with a broad portfolio that was perfect for the times.

In the early 50s, he disassembled his parents' newfangled television receiver and studied electronics books to figure out how to help consumers repair their new television sets. This resulted in a business that lasted until the solid-state revolution.

In the mid-50s, he saw that prefab homes were a possibility, so he and Lorraine designed one, built it as the general contractor, and lived in it for 44 years.

In the 60s, he bought into a communications business that had him producing industrial films, videos, radio commercials, and slide and multi-image programs and worked tirelessly for 40 years, while bringing two of his sons into the business.

After retirement, he kept sharp by his interests and avocations: building grandfather clocks in his wood shop, assembling an impressive HO train set, assisting wife Lorraine in framing scores of canvases of her oil and acrylic paintings, running bingo games, and following his beloved Boston Red Sox, who rewarded him in 2004 with their World Series victory. His 2017 theatrical play, *"In the Dark of the Night"* was based

upon a poem he wrote at war in 1944 and was produced and directed by him twice to rave reviews. His book *"Change"* about the difference in life between 1924 and 2024 remains unpublished.

And all this was accomplished while presiding over a growing family which sought his counsel and love at every turn, and who adored the example he continually set for them. He was the loving fixer, the wise sage, and the animated storyteller with a phenomenal memory of the people he loved and the eras he had lived through.

Fenwick, Gordon Edward,



Sr., 101, died December 22, 2024, of natural causes in the presence of family in Savannah, Georgia. Born

in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, on March 21, 1923, Gordon was one of our last surviving World War II veterans, serving with the US Army Air Corp in England and completing 35 missions over Germany as a crew member on a B17 (the Mary Alice). He led an active life as an accomplished sailor, master-rated bridge player, craftsman and golfer. After navigating the great depression and a world war, Gordon embarked on a long and successful career with AT&T from which he was

able to retire before the age of 60. He then enjoyed retirement in Michigan and Florida before settling permanently in Savannah. Gordon was married to the love of his life, Patricia Strong Fenwick, for over 60 years before her passing in 2010. Gordon and Patsy (as she was often affectionately referred to) shared countless adventures in Europe, Canada, northern Michigan and sailing on the high seas. He is survived by his two sons, Gordon Jr. (Nancy) and James; his two daughters, Sally Lawrence and Carol Colburn (John); his dear friend Carol Benefield; eleven grandchildren and nineteen great grandchildren.

McLaughlin, Jerome (Jerry)



J., 81, passed away April 20, 2025 at home in Savannah, Georgia, on April 20, 2025, with his beloved wife of

42 years, Denise, by his side. He was born to William John and Dorothy Ruth (Sullivan) McLaughlin on February 10, 1944, in Queens, New York. Raised in Lynbrook, Long Island, Jerry graduated from Lynbrook High School and went on to study at East Carolina College and Long Island University, earning a degree in U.S. History and Education. Jerry served his country honorably in the U.S. Army before begin-

ning a 30-year career with the Federal government, retiring in 2003 from the Central Intelligence Agency as a member of the Senior Intelligence Service.

In retirement, Jerry moved to Savannah, where he devoted himself to historical preservation at the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force, serving as Project Manager for the restoration of the B-17 *City of Savannah*.

A passionate historian and prolific writer, he authored five books, including *D-Day + 60 Years: A Small Piece of History*, which uncovered the fate of his uncle on D-Day, and *B-17 Flying Fortress Restoration*, which chronicled the restoration project that became one of his proudest achievements. Jerry was deeply devoted to his family, friends, country, and community. A lifelong volunteer firefighter, he served with pride in Lynbrook's Tally-Ho Company 3, the Flood Light Unit, and later with the Southside Savannah Fire Department.

Jerry is survived by his beloved wife, Denise; his brother, William McLaughlin (Marianne); his nieces, Meghan Zelles (Ned) and Kara McLaughlin; his nephew, Kevin McLaughlin; his great-nieces, Margaret, Haley, and Reagan Zelles; and his cousins, Margaret Young (Alex) and Katherine Smith (the late Kenneth). He was predeceased by his parents, his brother Joseph McLaughlin, and his nephew

Brian McLaughlin. He also rejoins his beloved Wheaten Terriers: Duffy, Murphy, Annie, and Oliver-beyond the rainbow bridge.

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**

How About It!

CHARACTER

Earl Wassom

~from his column~

March 1999



Editor's note: Another incredible column from Earl Wassom. Enjoy!

Curled and wadded up in their turrets or standing at the waist window for hours with an arctic wind blasting away at them, gunners on a heavy bomber were indispensable. Without caution, frost bite was almost certain. As their aircraft jostled for position in the formation, as the drone of the engines changed, as violent maneuvers occurred unexpectedly, the constant swaying of the aircraft always left them wondering what was going on up front.

Were these sudden changes normal or was disaster just waiting to happen?

They were always alert, watching the engines for tell-tale signs of smoke or fire, oil and fuel leaks, or damage to the aircraft.

They watched out for each other's safety. Their eyes scanned blinding white skies for enemy aircraft and when an attack was certain, only then did they break intercom silence. They watched as black bursts of flak followed them along in the sky and flinched as the "crump, crump, crump" of bursting shells and the odor of cordite filled their compartments.

They watched as holes appeared in the aircraft and when a buddy was wounded, they became Florence Nightingales, nurses of the air.

Their assignment was demanding and very lonely. How did they stand up to the pressure?

Somewhere in their up-bringing, these airmen learned courage and obedience. Their early military discipline of mastering without question three basic statements: "Yes, sir. No, sir." And "No excuse, sir!" These were tools which strengthened their determination to survive.



A war-time commander summed it up best in five words: "training and discipline pays off."

The wonderful thing about gunners is that they were human. They lost their tempers and became angry, they got cold and hungry, scolded God, were egotistical or testy, impatient, made mistakes and regretted them, admitted their

fear and didn't try to hide it.

Still, they went on, doggedly blundering toward heaven.

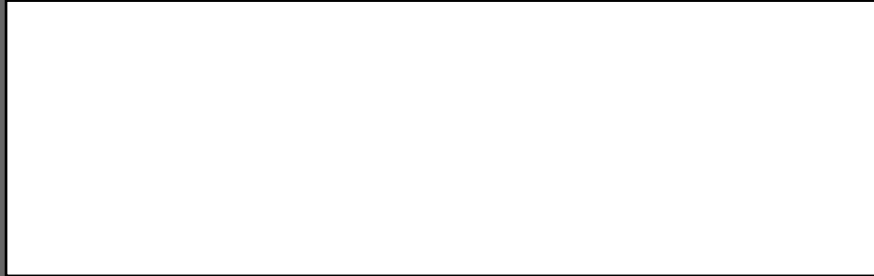
Editor's note: As many of you remember, Earl was a pilot with the 466 Bomb Group. He wrote a Chaplain's column for The Tennessee Flyover for several years along with his "How About It" column in the 8th A F News. I heard from so many of you that you always read his column before reading anything else. Earl had an incredible connection with his faith and the ability to communicate--often quite humorously--sharing wartime anecdotes wrapped in stories often from his childhood.



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*Flags of the Fallen
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