

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS



Vol. 7 Issue #1

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Spring 2006

Non Profit Veterans Association

EIN #68-0351397



The Beiber Crew, L-R Top: **William Uvanni**, Radio Operator; **George Beiber**, Pilot, **Gerald Folsom**, Co-Pilot; **Harold Maggard**, Waist Gunner; **William Rebhan**, Gunner.
Front: **Nathan Woodruff**, Engineer; **Carl Miller**, Armorer –Gunner; **Perry Morse**, Tail Gunner; **Alfred Wilson**, Navigator; **Paul Boensch**, Bombardier.

After the war, *Joplin Jalopy* sat in a field in Joplin, Missouri, unloved and unattended, cannibalized and eventually scrapped. It had been named for the town that had purchased \$300,000 worth of War Bonds. The city fathers purchased it in 1946 for a few hundred dollars, intending it to be a memorial; but found that they couldn't afford the project.

Sixty years later an English-born researcher resurrected her memory; and suddenly the town remembered. The local paper contacted members of the George Beiber crew, **Bob Vance** from the **Chandler** crew and others. Before long Robert Smith, a researcher and blogger, was sending the story around the world.

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD 2004 - 2005

President: Robert Paul Kay
Summer address:
10411 Brook Lane SW
Tacoma, WA 98499
Phone (253) 584-4420
Winter address:
206 Lakecrest Lane
Palm Desert, CA 92260
Phone: 760 341-0064
E-Mail: RKay1017@msn.com

Vice President: George Washburn
11505 N. Armenia Avenue
Tampa, Florida 33612
Phone (813) 932-6425
E-Mail: liberatorpilot@msn.com

Secretary/8 Ball Tails Editor:
Ruth W. Davis-Morse
2041 Village Circle East
York, PA 17404
Phone (717) 846-8948
E-Mail: rdavismorse@aol.com

Treasurer: Richard (Dick) Lynch
109 Jason Road, Box 518
Conrad, IA 50621-0518
Phone (641) 366-2414
E-Mail: r_blynch@netins.net
(first 3 letters r_b)

Immediate Past President:
Roy Owen
108 Wawona Place
Chico, CA 95928-8429
Phone (530) 891-9157
FAX (530) 891-9157
E-Mail: rwowen44bg@sbcglobal.net

Archivist: C. W. "Will" Lundy
2519 Westville Tri.
Cool, CA 95614-2008
Phone (530) 886-8636 (Winter)
P. O. Box 315, Bridgeport, CA 93517
(Summer)
E-Mail: willundy@aol.com

Director: William Ward
120 B Heritage Hills
Somers, New York 10589-1317
Phone (914) 277-5830

Historian: Roger D. Fenton
4311 E. Sunrise Drive
Phoenix, AZ 85044-1010
Phone (480) 893-3761
E-Mail lomadanger@aol.com
E-Mail bhward8@aol.com

Decorations & Awards:
Robert Lee Aston
830 Cardinal Drive
Elberton, GA 30635-2606
Phone (706) 283-1337
leeaston@elberton.net

U. K. Representative:
Steve Adams
28 Bassingham Road
Norwich, England NR3 2 QT
Phone/FAX 011-44-1603-400221
E-Mail: s.p.adams@btinternet.com

*(Web Page courtesy of
X-Mission, Salt Lake City, Utah)*

Visit our website @ www.44thbombgroup.com

The 8-Ball Tails[©]

Official Journal of The
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association,
Inc.[©]

Compiled, written and published tri-yearly at 2041 Village Circle East, York, PA, by Ruth W. Davis-Morse, Editor. Printed and mailed Bulk Rate at York, PA under USPS Permit #323. All original written material such as letters, stories, excerpts from personal diaries or memoirs, drawings and photos submitted to this journal will become the property of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association and will be copyright protected except where noted. The text and photos are otherwise reproduced from official USAAF and USAF documents and photos which have been released for publication. Permission is granted for the contents of this journal to be reproduced specifically for personal archives. Otherwise,

copyright material herein may be reproduced by the journal of other incorporated non-profit veterans organizations so long as this publication is properly credited and prior permission is granted by the editor. (June 2003)

Those submitting letters, stories and photos to the editor or historian must do so with the understanding that this material will most likely be published in this journal as a matter of interest to the members/subscribers of the Association and this journal. While every attempt will be made to answer all of the material received, there is no explicit or implied guarantee that an answer will be provided or published. Except for specific requests for the return of original documents and photos, all material submitted will become the property of the 44th Veterans Association, Inc., or its successors.

JOPLIN JALOPY FLIES AGAIN IN SPIRIT ONLY

The crews that flew in *Joplin Jalopy* can testify that it was a 'lucky plane' – with one exception. Bob Vance, gunner on *Southern Comfort III*, remembers unloading supplies for the British paratroopers at Wesel, Germany, when a body flew down past him and bounced off the ground. It was Anibal C. Diaz. While standing between the well of the open ball turret and the bomb bay, Diaz's chest chute opened and pulled him from the plane. The low altitude and excessive speed of the plane provided no time for the chute to open. He was Joplin Jalopy's single loss in its 66 missions.

Jerry Folsom remembers returning home from a mission, and was close to the Channel when the plane suddenly lost power. Simultaneously, there were four blasts of flak in front of Joplin Jalopy. Immediately they dropped out of formation, and Jerry discovered that they had a blown fuse in the supercharger. Miraculously, another fuse was available; he inserted it, and the plane flew on.

If the plane had not suddenly stopped functioning, they would have been a direct hit.

On another mission, Perry Morse remembers a burst of flak, and he felt something hot hit his neck. "I'm hit," he declared. He put his hand to his neck, and what he found was not blood, but Spam. His can of Spam and an orange had been

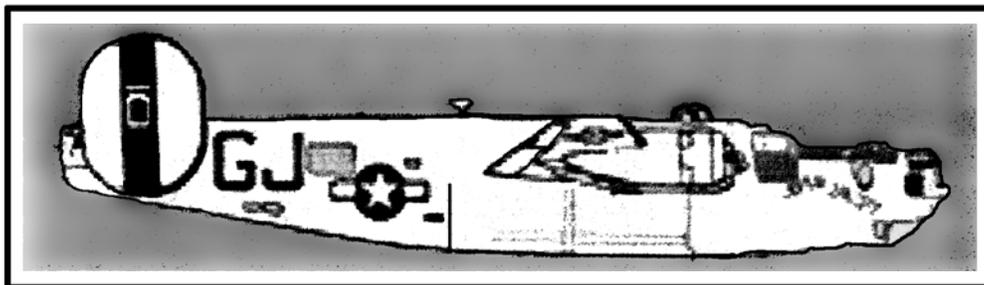
safely tucked in his cubbyhole. The flak ruptured both, so he returned to Shipdham hungry but alive.

In their seven flights on Joplin Jalopy, both Folsom and Morse believe that a Higher Power was watching over them.

The English-born researcher, Robert Smith found the story of Joplin Jalopy in the city's public library. He informed the local paper and the Joplin Globe reminded the town of that piece of its history. The son of an RAF Pilot, Smith had a life-long interest in the WWII air war. He searched the Internet and found Peter Bodle's article in 'Fly Past', in which it became known that the Jalopy and other planes in the 44th had transported British cadets on missions, along with Ursel Harvel, the photographer assigned to Station 115.

Roy Smith, Robert's father, was born in Attleborough, Norfolk. One of his happiest memories is meeting members of the 44th BG in the Abbey Hotel at Wymondham, Norfolk at the 50th Anniversary celebration. (If anyone remembers him, he sends greetings.) He flew in a Spitfire, and was poised for the attack on Japan, but was spared by the dropping of the A-Bombs.

Smith's grandfather, 'Bill' Smith, ran a barbershop in Attleborough. He had the unique experience of giving Jimmy Stewart a haircut, not aware that his customer was a celebrity.



PRESIDENTIAL BRIEFING

By now you have received our computer disk containing the historical record of the 44th Bomb Group, including many of the individual biographies which you submitted. This is a one-of-a-kind piece of history. No other group has their records preserved so well.

During a recent conversation with Arlo Bartsch, he informed me that he had received 36 calls about the disk from 44th BG members or their families, asking questions. They mention how proud they are of their husband's or father's service in WWII with the 44th.

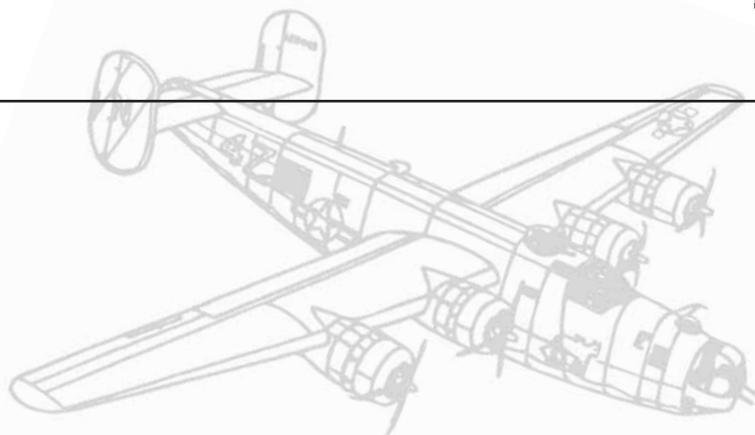
I recently met with a friend and I regaled him with stories about all of you and the group's many accomplishments. He reminded me, how fortunate we were to have maintained our camaraderie for 60 years, and still get together annually to visit, share stories and honor those members who have Folded Wings.

I do not know if we were the Greatest Generation, but I do know we were toughened by the Great Depression, and were proud to serve a country that before and since, has never been as patriotic and as supportive of its Armed Forces.

I am looking forward to seeing you at the Washington Reunion. It is not what we had originally planned, and it is rather pricy; but we will be joining the largest gathering of past and present Air Force personnel that have ever come together in one place. It is a blessing that the long-overdue Air Force Memorial is built in time for WWII veterans to enjoy the unveiling.



Paul Kay

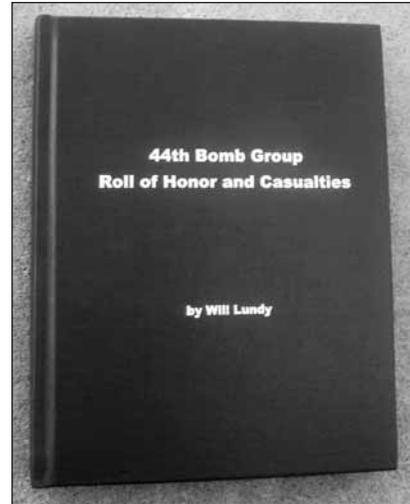


STILL AVAILABLE --THE ROLL OF HONOR

One of the stated goals of the 44th BGVA is to honor those who were lost. There is no greater way to honor the men who are buried at Normandy, England, France, Belgium, Holland and in many graveyards across America, than to make this book available, any place where families might visit.

Will Lundy's Roll of Honor is truly unique. It is a record of every combat death or injury that took place during the War years. In each case, there is a full description of the details of the mission, burial sites and what happened to other members of the crew.

The Roll of Honor is a treasure for researchers, historians or other 44thers who cannot forget their buddies. It can be a tax-deductible gift to a public or college library or historical society. The price is \$50, which includes postage and handling.



Will Lundy's book

Contact: **WILL LUNDY**
 2519 Westville Tr.
 Cool, California 95614 -2208
 Tel. 530 886-8636 E-Mail willlundy@aol.com

.....

A LAST HOORAH TRIP TO SHIPDHAM & EUROPE IN 2006

The 44th BGVA Board is wondering how many of our members would be interested in making a trip in 2006 to rekindle memories of our Shipdham Air Base during WWII. Also, to visit some of the outstanding sites in England and possibly another look at significant places on the Continent.

This is a survey to indicate whether enough members are sincerely interested in a last Hurrah Trip. The off-spring generation is urged to accompany their parents. We need a tentative head count. If interested, please contact Mary Aston, 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635 or e-mail to leeaston@elberton.net. Please check the sites that would interest you, or make some suggestions. Return to Mary Aston.

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Shipdham Air Field/Norwich ___ | Cambridge American Cemetery ___ |
| American Air Museum (Duxford) ___ | Ruth-less Crash Site, Eastbourne ___ |
| Site of Leon Vance MOH Mission ___ | Roman Baths, Bath, England ___ |
| & ditching in Eng. Channel | |
| Stonehenge ___ | Roman 4-walled city of Chester ___ |
| York, York Minster Cathedral ___ | Imperial Museum, London ___ |
| British Railway Museum ___ | |
| Aston-Martin auto factory @ Newport Pagnell (Hand made/custom autos; _____ | |
| priced @ \$100K+, the type James Bond, Agent 007 drove in Movie Series.) | |
| Normandy (Invasion) Beach ___ | American Cemetery in Belgium ___ |
| Bastogne ___ | Shaeffer grave & crash site ___ |
| Other Suggestions _____ | |

THE TREASURE THAT CAME IN YOUR MAIL

The 44th Bomb Group Has Taken The Lead...AGAIN

Your 44th Bomb Group Board of Directors has taken a step unparalleled by any other Veterans Group.... All Group Members have been provided with a piece of history that must never be forgotten—the War years. It is encapsulated within the 44th Bomb Group Database Program.

In the mail you have received a four inch disk that contains the Military and Personal records of the 44th Bomb Group during World War II. There is no other view of History to compare to this documentation.

World War II is an event that will be studied for centuries. Your personal Military Heritage has been preserved for Future Generations to "*Remember and Share... With Those Who Were There*". Everyone had a story. For those who chose to write their story, it can be found in the Legacy Pages of the 44th BG Database CD.

The following information is available in the Database: Names & Duties* Voices and Pictures* Missions & Targets * Crews & Aircraft* Biographies * Personal Stories & Diaries * Legacy Pages * Roll of Honor * Folded Wings* Prisoners of War * Missing or Killed in Action* Escaped or Evaded * Burial Sites* Unlimited Search & Retrieval Options.

****DO NOT DISCARD THIS DISK. ****

If you do not have a computer, pass this disk on to your son, daughter, grandchild, another family member or any friend who does have a computer. Let them pull up your name and print your history. Offer to share the disk with your local library, college, school system, VFW, American Legion, an appropriate Museum, or any place where the knowledge of history is important.

Your Board of Directors started the Database Project over five years ago. The intent was to preserve the History and the Legacy of the 44th Bomb Group. Many who contributed money and information to the project are gone...but their history lives on. Treasure it!

This Database was Conceived, Designed and Developed by Arlo F. Bartsch and his son, Peter Lincoln Bartsch. For technical support or help in the use of the Database, call:

Arlo Bartsch
44th Bomb Group Veterans Association
Database Custodian
Phone: (501) 922-5247
E-Mail: afbas@aol.com

IF YOU DID NOT RECEIVE YOUR COPY, CALL ARLO.

Should you want additional copies of the 44th Bomb Group Database, they are available for \$25 from the 44th BGVA (Taxes, Postage, Shipping & Handling Included)

BACK COPIES OF 8 BALL TAILS ARE AVAILABLE

Our printer always has over-runs of past issues of the 8 Ball Tails, which I pass out to anyone who needs one. They are available to any member for only the cost of the postage.

Some members report that they give them to friends in Nursing Homes; others pass them on to children and grandchildren. Do you have a friend who is a historian? A researcher? An aviation buff?

Call me if you would like some back issues. (Ruth W. Davis-Morse, 717 846-8948)

BLACK JACK'S LEFT VERTICAL STABILIZER



It has been said that WWII will not be over until the last veteran is gone. Perhaps it won't be over then, as there are crash sites all over Europe, and eager researchers carry their shovels and metal detectors, ready to circulate

old bomber parts to collectors around the world.

Charles Runion, Sr., one of the newest members of the 44th BGVA, has spent nearly 30 years researching, collecting and preserving aviation history from 1935-45. He was able to acquire the left vertical stabilizer from *Black Jack* which had been unearthed from the crash site in Austria where it was shot down on that fateful mission of 1 October 1943. The vertical still retains the original color along with the serial number 123816 and the large letter X.

Runion attributes his success in identifying this piece of *Black Jack* through his contact with **Will Lundy**. After that he was delighted to talk to two crew members, **Bob Reasoner**, Tail Gunner and **George Guilford**, Bombardier. Bob posed an interesting question: How did *Black Jack* get its name? The answer, "add the numbers (serial) on the vertical together 123816 they equal 21, a Black Jack."

Runion continues to search for original photos of each of the crew members, along with any other 44th BG memorabilia. All will eventually be displayed with the vertical. He plans to have a museum in the middle Tennessee area, where this accumulated history can be viewed by many.

Every crash had its own unique stories.

The MACR reports that this aircraft was observed to be hit in the bomb bay by flak shortly after turning away from the target. It fell back and peeled off to the left, losing altitude, then passed directly under another aircraft. It was burning in the bomb bay section. Three chutes came out at this time. It drifted back to the left and passed over the top of another a/c in the formation; then swerved to the right and seven more parachutes were observed. Then the plane turned to the right and broke into two pieces.

T/Sgt. **Guilford** was among the survivors. He remembers the Navigator, **Eugene Vikery**, tapping him on the shoulder and saying, "I'm bailing out." A few seconds later, the plane got a direct hit from flak and went into a nose dive – and Vikery could not bail out. Next the plane exploded and blew him out. "I was knocked out for a few seconds; when I came to, I was falling - I opened my chute. I could see small pieces of the plane floating around."



Black Jack

Black Jack was one of 25 planes that made it to the Messerschmitt plant. This was Tail Gunner S/Sgt. **Robert Reasoner's** second trip to Wiener-Neustadt, and he was already planning what he would do when his next three missions were finished. Then ME 109s flew straight to his formation, and his life was forever changed.

Reasoner's recollection of that fateful moment are very vivid. He remembers before jumping, ducking down to look under the flames to see M/Sgt. **Robert M. Smith**, Waist

Gunner and Asst. Engineer **Wilson A. Richie** lying on the floor.

He had to walk through fire to the waist window to bail out. His chute got caught in a tree. In the hospital he learned that Gunner **Anthony Damico** had died from internal injuries. After German doctors attempted to get him help for his head and neck burns, and after many months in POW camps, he was repatriated.

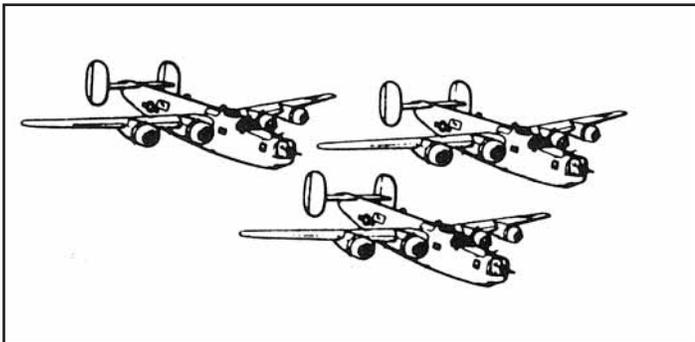
Later in the States, Engineer **Edwin Carlson** told Reasoner that he had tapped Pilot **Coleman Whitaker** on the shoulder and

motioned for him to get out. Sitting on the floor and leaning against the side of the A/C was Radio Operator **Francis A. Bauman** with a strange expression on his face. At that time Carlson was blown out of the plane.

Upon returning to the States, Reasoner received his third Purple Heart. After many months in the hospital, he returned to civilian life, a true survivor.

Crew friendships are eternal. Reasoner and Guilford continue to enjoy a warm relationship that, truly, was forged in fire.

A B-24 DISPLAY In the MIGHTY EIGHTH HERITAGE MUSEUM SAVANNAH, GEORGIA



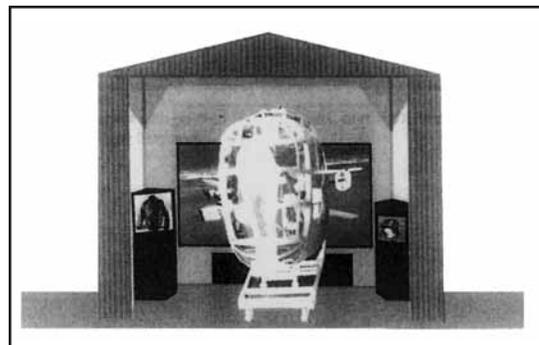
The 2nd Air Division has set a new goal, to establish an exhibit featuring the B-24. On display will be the nose of *Fighting Sam*, a plane from the 389th Group. This nose will be part of the 2 AD display which will feature all bomb groups; protruding will be this authentic nose piece. Visitors can enter this section of the 60 year old bomber, giving them a glimpse of the plane that flew in every theater of WWII.

THE SECOND AIR DIVISION NEEDS YOUR HELP

This venture will cost \$120,000. At this point they are \$19,000 short. Will you contribute to this cause? This is the last opportunity for the legacy of the 2 AD to reach across to future generations.

Perry Morse, the 44th BGVA representative to the 2AD, will collect the funds and present them to the 2 AD as a contribution from the Flying Eight Balls. Make out checks to 2nd Air Division.

Send them to:
Perry Morse
2041 Village Circle East
York, Pennsylvania 17404



LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

Last week I got talking with a British army veteran (84 years young) who still has a very keen and active interest in the USAAF involvement in WWII. During the course of the chat he produced some pictures of Diamond Lil doing a low level pass over Shipdham Aero Club on June 17th 1992 on the last visit of a B-24 to the country. It was truly a beautiful sight and brought back many vivid memories, but reminded me that we don't have a Flying B-24 here in England any more, and that is sad. We do have the B-17 Sally B and that is great, but not quite the same, if your interest is with the 44th BG and Shipdham. Never mind. The main theme of this wistful reminiscence is to remind you guys (as if it were really necessary - to really look after your flying heritage. Enjoy it while you can, it can disappear far too quickly.

At the Shipdham clubhouse we have refurbished the kitchen so we can produce some better snacks and drinks for our members and visitors, as well as keeping the British food-safety authorities happy. Since the Church Army coffee and do'nut vans stopped running when you guys left Shipdham, the catering on the airfield has become very much a self help operation. We may still be pretty good at making tea, we are much better now at making coffee than we were when you tried to drink our attempts at making it. For those whose taste buds remember those far off days, we still have a hulluva long way to go in the do'nut department. Sorry guys, you should have stayed a bit longer and given us a teach-in on do'nuts!

Our spring will be well under way when you get to read this, and our second runway, 13/31 will be active with a side by side grass or concrete surface. (That's the second of the cross runways in your day). Pilots will be able to choose which surface they need for their type of aircraft. We started looking at the project and talking it through with our landlady, Mrs. Paterson, about a year or so ago; and as soon as the grass section dries out a bit more from the winter snows and rain, Geoff, our hard working grounds-man will roll and prepare it some more, ready for use. By mid-summer we will have the choice of six runways, a situation unheard of at Shipdham since the days when the last of the 44th's B-24s lifted off in 1945.

Talking of the approach of spring, one of our gliding instructors reported he was able to complete a soaring flight in his sailplane for just over 45 minutes last week. That for us is the first indicator that winter is relaxing its grip on the Norfolk countryside. It may still snow again before it's fully springtime; but you remember, late spring snows are usually light and short lived, nothing like the monster amounts you guys had dumped on you in the Northeast in February.

Many thanks to those of you who have contacted Ruth and bought a copy of the booklet about the 44th that Steve and I put together. We hope you liked it. The next booklet in the series covering the 389th at Hethel is on the presses as I write this, and the final one in the series for this year, covering the 492nd and the 491st at North Pickenham is due out by early summer.

Warm wishes from Shipdham,
Look after yourselves
Peter Bodle

Peter can be reached at peter@bodle.demon.co.uk

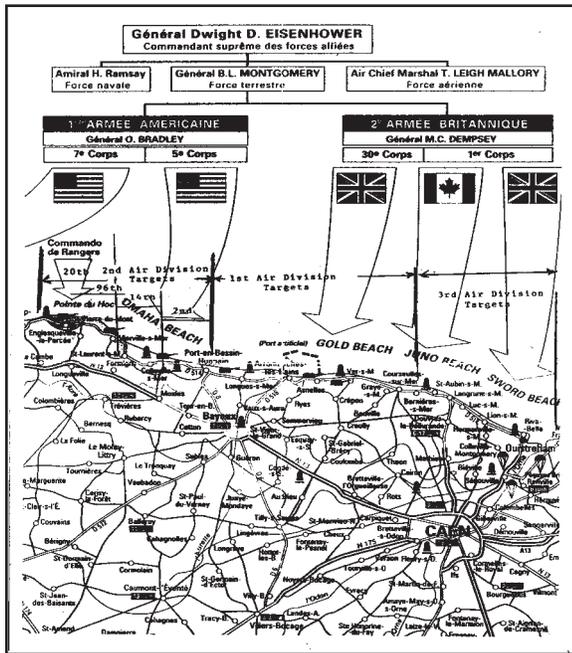
Peter Bodle and Steve Adams have created a booklet, "The 44th Bomb Group in Norwich." It is a pictorial history of the three years you served your country and help crush a vicious regime, making a safer world. On the cover is your beloved plane, the B-24, and inside are glimpses into the life you lived over there. If you wish to purchase this piece of your own history, contact me and I will place the orders.

Peter's and Steve Adams' booklet is available for \$5 plus postage. Peter is sending me copies. If you wish a copy, call Ruth W. Davis-Morse at 717 846-8948.

GEN. EISENHOWER'S MAP OF BEACHES

This is a detailed and scholarly study of D-DAY 6 JUNE 1944

By Will Lundy



wounded, very little flak damage. Even before these first crews returned to base, another formation was already in route to other targets inland from the beaches. Everyone was preparing for additional missions that day; and in fact, a total of four were to be flown.



D-DAY

For me, it is difficult to watch the TV re-runs of the valiant attempts of our troops to make the difficult landing on Omaha Beach in France. It is difficult to watch, to view our soldiers being under such intense and accurate fire. Seemingly, they did not have a chance to gain a foothold under such withering streams of projectiles that were cutting them down. There were no bomb craters or protection of any kind for these men to gain shelter, so they were forced to run through it all, headed for possible shelter of the cliffs. It appeared to be nearly hopeless for anyone to cross that wide expanse of beach and get out of the direct line of enemy fire.

At the same time my stomach always gets that weak feeling as I cannot forget that my 44th BG had been assigned to bomb this same general area at 0600 earlier that morning. Had we really failed so miserably to knock out any of those strong enemy defenses? It surely appeared so, as the slaughter continued. When our planes returned that morning, our airmen were elated that they had done a fine job of bombing, no one was

Looking for the Bomb Craters

I and both of the bomber group associates had strong recollections that the 2nd Air Division Bombers had been assigned to hit the strong German defenses, starting from the surf on up to include the heavy guns and fortifications on the higher ground. These beaches, as far as we could determine, showed no evidence of exploding bombs, no bomb craters, nothing. Surely there must be answers somewhere, some reasons why our assault troops were getting pounded so badly, although we had bombed the German fortifications there. What really happened to the very heavy air support that should have destroyed or badly damaged these defended fortifications? What really did happen earlier that morning? We had to find out.

Shipdham Prepared

The 44th BG's historical records and memories told us that our Shipdham Air Base was closed at noon on the 5th. No one could leave the base; and those off base already, were to return immediately, if located. Ground crews were at their respective aircraft

dispersal, having heard the rumors flying that D-Day was imminent. But what was not known ahead of time and even afterwards, was how much more unique and complicated it would be from all the other missions flown out of England. (It appears now that only the low-level Ploesti mission of 1 August 1943 was similar to the first D-Day missions, so far as the large number of individually assigned targets – and that one was flown out of North Africa.)

The Search for Records

It was learned that the special order for this mission, Operation No. 394 and Field Order 727 could provide us with the official plans for this opening attack on D-Day. It was necessary to obtain #394 from the Eisenhower Museum, which dealt with the long time planning for this mission. Field Order #727, which covered the actual detailed orders for the Heavy Bomber Activities, was furnished by Roger Freeman, bless him. He was kind enough to supply us with this Order several years ago when we first began this endeavor. For complexity and special details, as well as for specific, multiple targets, it resembled only Ploesti in our experiences. Field Order #727 included planning for all three Bomb Wings – both B-17s and B-24s – all having the same overall bombing strategy; but for simplification, only the Liberators of the 2nd Air Division are covered in this article; and at times, only the 44th BG.

The Pathfinders to Lead

The planners for this mission had determined that the relatively new Pathfinder, or PFF equipped aircraft must be utilized as lead aircraft in the event of bad weather. The best and most practical tactical unit was the formation of six aircraft – one PFF leading only five others. The word 'pod' is used here to identify them. There would be 225 each Squadron pods overall (1350 a/c) including the 75 Squadrons of B-24s for the 2nd Bomb Division (450 aircraft). The 44th BG would provide 6 Squadrons of 6 pods (36 a/c) to lead the 14th Combat Bomb Wing. Similar arrangements were planned for the other three Liberator Combat Wings in the 2nd Air Division.

Better accuracy and control would be maintained by having only five closely bunched aircraft bombing on one leading PFF aircraft. Studies also confirmed that by using the PFF equipped aircraft, approaches to the target would be directly from the sea, as the new equipment would give a clearer, more dependable indication when crossing from water to land, rather than flying parallel to the sea. Too, by having PFF aircraft, and in the event of cloud-covered targets, there should be far less possibility of bombing short and hitting our own troops. This possibility was uppermost in the minds of the planners, and was the common thread in all of our planning. However, the fault with this planning for PFF – leading pods of five regular Liberators was the CRITICAL shortage of this equipment. The plans called for the 44th BG to utilize six of their PFF equipped B-24s for their own formations, as well as to supply four additional PFF aircraft and crews to other Groups. However, the 44th did not have them! In fact, the 44th BG had lost one PFF plane and crew while on a mission flown on the 5th of June.

To get the most bombers over the many assigned targets in the least amount of time (20 to 25 minutes), the planners dictated that there must be four columns utilized, rather than the standard (much wider one) used in conventional bombing. So the Liberators within this 2nd Bomb Division were assigned a separate column for each of the four parallel columns! Each of the Combat Bomb Wings would establish the sequences of their respective Bomb Groups within their own column. In the 24th CBW, the 44th BG would lead that column, as they had the PFF aircraft and crews. The 392nd BG would follow the 44th, and the 492nd BG would follow behind them in that order.

Each PFF aircraft, both B-17s and B-24s, had two types of special Pathfinder equipment. One was the Gee box used for very accurate navigation from the English Coast to the target. The second one was the H2X Pathfinder scope instrument which could identify their specific target locations. Both

instruments required a separate operator. Each Pathfinder aircraft in each pod had a Command Pilot on board, a high ranking officer, who had combat mission experiences; and had the authority to alter plans if he deemed it necessary. Standard PFF bombing practices, prior to this one mission, would have had but two PFF aircraft per Group.

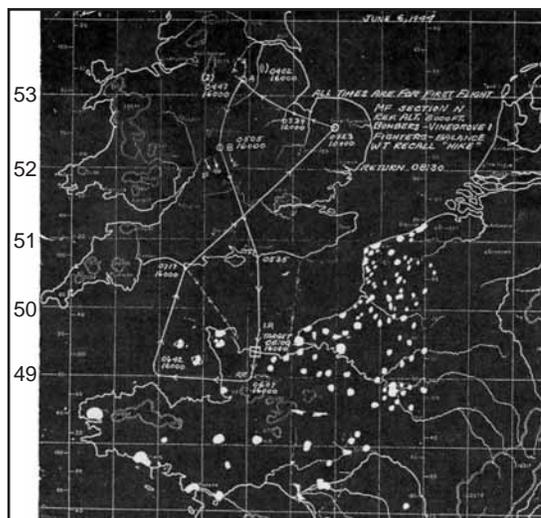
Timing and Airspace Were Critical

Normal assembly plans had to be altered considerably due to the lack of sufficient air space between London and Norwich. With most of the Liberator bases of the 2nd Bomb Division being located closer to the selected air assembly area, as well as to lessen the congestion in the assembly of so many bombers (1350 of them) the Liberators were to take off first, fly to the selected large assembly area in the 'midlands' of England, north and west of Peterborough. B-17s of the 1st Division would then follow 30 minutes behind the last of the Liberators. They, in turn, would be followed after another pause of 30 minutes by the 3rd Air Division with their B-17s and Liberators.

Due to this very early bombing schedule for the 1350 four-engine bombers involved in this very congested bombing plan, it was necessary for the 2nd Bomb Division Liberators to take off in the dark (roughly 0230 to 0300 hour), fly northwest to the assembly area north and west of Peterborough, and with some bombers traveling as far west as the Irish Sea. There they must find their assigned Group Pod, then the pods had to move into their assigned position in their Combat Wing. All of this assembling activity to make four column formations had to be accomplished in the dark. Some units reported that they were so far west that they were over the Irish Sea. This assembly, in itself, was a dangerous and difficult assignment.

First Mission Routes

However, when the 2nd Air Division assembly was accomplished, and at the assigned time and at the assigned altitude, the four columns began their assigned route to their targets. To understand this plan, visualize looking southeast from the English



Midlands area, hold up your right hand in front of you, palm down, and with thumb extended. Each of your four fingers would represent one of the four 2nd Combat Bomb Wing Groups. Each knuckle segment will represent an individual Bomber Group within that Combat Wing. Two of the columns had three Groups, two had four Groups – due to the 14 Groups involved.

Your little finger could represent the 20th CBW, being led by the 446th BG (with PFF aircraft not necessarily their own) and would be the western most column. Your fingernails would indicate that group was led by PFF aircraft in all four columns. Their four targets were in the Pointe du Hoc area, and were the westernmost specific targets on that portion of the French coast. The next finger would represent the 2nd CBW which was assigned four specific targets in the Pointe du Hoc area and St. Laurent areas, just east of the 20th CBW targets. Your third finger (longest one) would be the 14th CBW with their four specific targets being in the St. Laurent and Colleville areas. The fourth finger would represent the 96th CBW which was assigned specific targets in the areas of Colleville, Bessen and Caen – all four targets east of the other CBW's. It should be noted also, that at the target areas, one target area could be within the same close area as leading PFF pods from neighboring columns.

Every Minute Detail Was Carefully Planned

At the assigned time, the four columns of

Liberators flew south-eastward in separate formations as detailed above, but parallel to one another, still in semi-darkness. Various searchlights and beacons were stationed on the ground as visual aids for the four bomber streams to follow. These aids would help simplify the difficult jobs for the Navigators to follow along the established routes. All of these targets were specific 'Defended Locations', and NOT THE BEACHES THEMSELVES. Even the bomb loads and fusing were planned specifically for the various types of targets assigned.

Your thumb would represent the following two Bomb Wings, the 1st and 3rd, whose targets were those farther east from the Omaha Beach area. Their bombing was to commence less than one half hour from the last of the 2nd CBW bombed.

The 2nd Bomb Division Liberators were scheduled to bomb their targets within the time period of 0555 to 0614, bombing within the altitudes from 14,000 to 17,000 feet. (The formation sketch shows the altitude to be 16,000 feet). The 1st Bomb Division was to follow approximately 30 minutes behind the Liberators of the 2nd Air Division, and to bomb their assigned targets east from the Liberators at Gold Beach and the Western section of Juno, from 0658-0730, etc. The 3rd Division's targets followed in time of bombing, for a short interval, eastward from where the 1st Division's assigned targets ended.

When the 2nd Division's four columns reached the southeast coast of England, east of the Isle of Wight, they were to make synchronized turns to fly nearly due south. Their specific assigned targets on Omaha Beach would be spread out along the French coast directly in front of the four leading Groups with their PFF navigational equipment. Each of the leading Bomb Groups, those with the PFF aircraft, would be first to bomb their respective targets spread out from west to east along the French Coast. So it would be a simultaneous bombing all along the Omaha Beach Targets. The following Groups in each of the four columns were to utilize their navigators with conventional equipment, to

locate and then follow the leading PFF pods to their respective targets. They would be using the flares dropped by the leading PFFs to determine the specific location to release their bombs.

The IP

In essence then, the English coastline was the Initial Point to begin the individual bomb runs on their specific targets. From there on, all of the leading PFFs zeroed in on their assigned targets, fanning out as necessary, flying directly and individually to these beach targets. So, from the southern English coast to the coast of France, each PFF aircraft and his pod was on his assigned 'bomb run' of approximately 25 minutes. Then the following two Groups (or three) with their six 'pods' were to line up on these same targets of the leading Pod groups, utilizing their conventional navigating procedures. To be specific, the 14th CBW would be leading the third column with six pods. The 392nd BG was to follow the 44th BG with their six pods, and the 492nd BG was to follow the 392nd BG with their six pods. Both of these trailing Groups had been assigned the exact same targets as the 44th, so they would have to spread out and navigate from the English coast to get in line with the correct 44th BG's six PFF pods.

However, with all targets in the Omaha Beach area being obscured by cloud cover, their bombing could not be visual. All four columns then had to depend on their respective PFF aircraft for the initial bombing on their assigned targets. Due to favoring winds aloft, the leading PFF bombing took place approximately five minutes early in all four columns and the following aircraft continued to bomb for about 25 minutes. The orders were very specific that no bombing would be made after 0625 hour. If any aircraft arrived later than that, they **MUST NOT BOMB**.

But why was there no evidence of damages or destruction to these German 'Defended Localities'? Surely it had to be due to these critical items in the Orders. To quote: "In conjunction with Headquarters A.E.A.F., it was decided that if cloud covers should prevent visual synchronization, bombs would be

dropped on Pathfinder indications in the normal manner, EXCEPT THAT THE RELEASE WOULD BE DELAYED SO THAT THE MEAN POINT OF IMPACT WOULD BE NO LESS THAN 1000 YARDS FROM THE FORWARD WAVE OF THE WATER BORNE ASSAULT FORCES".

Cloud Cover Was a Determining Factor

This seems to guarantee that no target within a half mile of the sea would be hit! No wonder the beaches were clear of bomb craters! It appears that this delay was established in the official Orders, but also was given to each of the PFF navigators in their briefing for this mission. The PFF navigator on the crew with Command Pilot General Leon Johnson recently sent me a copy of his typed orders. This typewritten slip included these instructions, identical to the instructions in this Order:

"If the cloud cover prevents synchronization on target or shore, bombs will be released normally on PFF. Bomb release will be delayed as the landing craft approach the beach. No less than 1000 yards (over half a mile) from the forward wave of the assault forces. This will be accomplished by the following schedule:

Zero minus 75 to Zero minus 20 --

No delay, bomb on target

20 to	15	5 second delay
15 to	10	10 second delay
10 to	5	15 second delay
5 to zero		30 second delay
		-- Division

1st. Lt. **Harold Morrison** had retained vivid memories of what took place on this historic morning. He flew in the #2 position within Capt. **Charles Armstrong's** pod of six, with this pod being the lead pod for the entire 14th CBW. Lt. Morrison stated that there were no airplanes ahead of them as they approached the drop zone. Nor could he see any other pods ahead or beside them. Capt. Armstrong, the most experienced PFF pilot in the 44th BG, reminded his following five pilots of the very specific instructions as soon as the briefing ended. He stated that when they were approaching the drop zone, he wanted them to move in as close to him as

possible, two on each side of him and one to follow directly behind him, Lt. Morrison stated that when nearing the target, they closed in so tightly that their pod was almost five abreast, and one was nearly on Capt. Armstrong's tail turret. By packing so tightly on Capt. Armstrong's lead, their assigned small target surely should have been badly damaged by them as well as by all of those following in line behind him. Capt. Armstrong's PFF Navigator stated that they 'bombed over', missed, only because of this ordered delay.

Leading the Last Group—Leon Johnson

General **Leon Johnson's** PFF aircraft was leading the last two 'pods' of six 44th BG aircraft because the PFF equipment in the other pod had failed. Apparently General Johnson chose this trailing position and not the Group Lead specifically to assure compliance with these orders and to be absolutely certain that none of the assault forces were hit. (This was the reverse of his position when he led the entire 44th BG at ground level over Ploesti Oil Fields, for which he was awarded the Medal of Honor). Then, both the 392nd and 492nd BG pods of six Liberators which were following in trail, but had no PFFs (that we can identify), would also bomb 'over'. Their very specific instructions were to bomb on the drops by the PFF's 'markers' in front of them. So, every one of the following aircraft should have made their drops on the markers of the PFFs ahead of them. They all bombed 'over' on all assigned targets – if they bombed at all. Records show that well over 100 Liberators did not release their bombs.

Many thanks are owed to **Tom Brittan** for his detailed records for PFF aircraft activities on this first mission of D-Day. Here are parts of his records covering the assignments for the 2nd Air Division that early morning:

The 389th BG supplied the six PFFs to lead their own Group, as well as six more to lead the six 'Pods' of the 446th BG. They also provided more PFFs to lead pods for the 458th BG. (The 389th was the first Group in the 2nd Air Division to train in PFF aircraft).

According to Lt. Col. **John Woolnough**,

Robert Taylor was to have taken Col. Steadman in the PFF lead of the 446th BG, but they were scrubbed when one engine wouldn't start. Col. Steadman had to go with a standby crew.

Tom also lists the 93rd BG as probably having nine PFFs available, so six of them surely flew the leads for themselves, but we have no further data or confirmation from them.

This report does not cover the procedures utilized by the other three columns of the 2nd Air Division so far as their actual bombing is concerned, but the leading PFF for the 446th BG (per their records) bombed near 0555 hours. From all of these results, it appears that all four columns must have had similar records. The reports made after the Omaha Coast was secured, stated that there was little evidence of bombs hitting any of the assigned fortified targets on Omaha beaches. The videos and photographs taken of the assault forces conclusively proved the enemy had not been weakened to any degree. D-Day planning appears to shout: **it was better to miss completely than take any action that could possibly result in damages and injuries to those ground forces and their equipment.**

Field Order #727 results show that the 2nd Bomb Division had 446 B-24s airborne, 423 of them were credited with sorties, but only 329 actually executed their assignments. They dropped 895 tons of bombs with no loss of aircraft. However, the 44th BG had two of their aircraft involved in a collision during assembly. Both aircraft were damaged, but continued to complete their sortie. The top of the right vertical stabilizer on one aircraft was bent inward to near a right angle, while the other aircraft was damaged under the navigator's compartment (front end) where the vertical stabilizer struck it. The tail gunner on the lower aircraft must have had a terrible few seconds when the number 1 & 2 engine propellers of the other ship were within a few feet of him.

Before these first airplanes and crews returned to base, the second mission was

already underway. They, too, could not bomb, because their targets were not visible, and no PFF aircraft was available to lead them, as all PFF aircraft were utilized in the first mission. In fact, there were four missions planned and executed this day with additional bombs dropped via PFF.

Official secret reports indicated that: "The immediate beach areas showed only limited evidence of bombing damage, as was to be expected in view of the extra precautionary measures taken to avoid short bomb falls when the through-the-overcast bombing technique was used. (These precautions included the arbitrary time delays on bomb releases). Areas behind the beachhead, ranging from 300-400 yards to three miles, revealed extensive evidence of concentrated bombing patterns.

Unexpected Benefits

"The principal contributions made by this bombing effort included the demoralization of enemy troops and the disruption of signal and transport communications which could have hindered the deployment of immediate reserves."

There was negligible enemy opposition to the bomber attacks, consisting entirely of ground defenses. Only one bomber was lost to enemy action, and there were few instances of battle damage, although four aircraft sustained Category 'E' (salvage) damage in a collision and landing accidents.

Contributors to this study include: 1st Lt. Harold Morrison, Capt. Charles Armstrong, Tom Brittan, Tony Mastradone, Chris Clark, Stephen Adams and others.

64 years is a long time, memories weaken. So if there are readers that question why this Omaha Beach (and others) were not bombed prior to the early hours of D-Day, thereby destroying at least some of the weapons and weakening their defenders. The reason is that Eisenhower's strategy was to not tip his hand until the very last hours. It worked because Hitler was convinced that the Allies would land in the Calais area of France, and had his reserves in the area. He did not release them until it was too late.

A TRIBUTE TO HIS PILOT, ROCKFORD GRIFFITH

By Forrest S. Clark, 67TH Sq.

I wanted to do this a long time ago, but never got around to it. Too bad it was not done while he was still living.

It is a small tribute to him and some notes about the crew members. Some are still living, and others are in the wild blue yonder. But it speaks for all of them.

I took what I remember about the crew members and incorporated it into this memorial tribute. For me, personally, I have come to fully appreciate what he did for us in the tragic times of WWII. He saved our lives on more than one mission. He was among the best pilots the 44th ever had, a friend and combat colleague and a great American patriot who deserves the tributes of all his 44th friends and comrades in battle.

I think all of us recall a few figures in life who stand out, and he was one of them. Too bad we did not communicate more to him.

WAR WEARY FLIGHT JACKET FINDS A HOME

Lee Aston's flight jacket served him well through his 36 missions as Navigator in the 67th Squadron. However, 60 years of hanging in a closet loosened the threads, and one sleeve was loosely drooping. Nevertheless, the 67th Squadron symbol on the front and beautiful Liberator on the back were still intact. According to Aston, the 67th was the only Squadron that had its own symbol. He recently presented his cherish jacket to the U.S. Army Heritage Museum and Education Center in Carlisle, PA.

"Don't you repair it, let us do it" said Jay Graybeal, Curator of Uniforms.



L-R Jay Graybill & Lee Aston



Lee Aston's flight jacket

Please Note: Renewal Dues for the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association is \$25. It was raised two years ago to meet rising costs of mailings.



MAIL & E-MAIL

From William J. Meyerriecks:



Crew Picture

The picture on page 17 of the winter issue of the 8 BTs is mislabeled. It is not the **Raymond Clarey** crew.

"The crew shown in the photo is the **Carl Rhodes** crew. Carl Rhodes is the first man standing on the left, Pilot. Next, **William J. Meyerriecks**, Co-Pilot; **George Forrest**, Navigator; **Glenn Hinkle**, Bombardier; **Raymond Shirley**, Engineer. Bottom Row, far right, **Leslie Lytle**, Nose Gunner; **Paul Chagnon**, Radio Operator; according to Meyerriecks, other identities are correct—**Martin Rieger**, RW Gunner, **Allen Phillips**, LW Gunner; **Charles Youse**, Tail Gunner.

"The crew picture was taken in late 1943, just before we were sent, as a crew, to Topeka, Kansas. In Topeka we received a new B-24, which we ferried to Prestwick Scotland via the southern route, South America, Africa, north along the European coast, landing at Prestwick. The B-24 was taken to be readied for combat. We, the crew, were sent to Northern Ireland to a holding camp. We were there about a week, then we were sent as a crew, to Shipdham to join the 67th Sq., 44th BG.



William Meyerriecks

"As seemed to be the custom, the crew was assigned to fly five missions with an experienced combat pilot, **Howard A. Cleary**, with

Carl Rhodes as co-pilot. William J. Meyerriecks, the crew's co-pilot had to sit it out. On their 4th mission they were shot down. I understand that the Engineer and Radio Operator were the only crew members to get out of the A/C, but the Engineer was the only survivor. The original co-pilot, me, Merriecks, was assigned to Frank Ward's lead crew as Co-Pilot. I completed 30 missions, part as co-pilot and later as pilot.

It was both sad and pleasant to see the crew being recognized in the Journal. They gave their lives for the cause. All are heroes. Sincerely, William J. Meyerriecks, Jr.



This comes as a true story *Air Force Gunners Publication*: "A buddy of mine was flying from Seattle to San Francisco. Unexpectedly the plane stopped in Sacramento along the way. The flight attendant explained that there would be a delay, and if the passengers wanted to get off the aircraft, the plane would reboard in 30 minutes.

Everybody got off the plane except one gentleman who was blind. My buddy noticed him as he walked by and could tell the man was blind because his seeing eye dog lay quietly underneath the seats in front of him throughout the entire flight. He could also tell he had flown this very flight before because the pilot approached him, calling him by name, said "Keith, we're in Sacramento for almost an hour. Would you like to get off and stretch your legs?" The blind guy replied, "No thanks, but maybe the dog would like to stretch his legs."

Picture this: All the people in the gate area came to a complete quiet standstill when they looked up and saw the pilot walk off the plane with the seeing eye dog!

The pilot was even wearing sunglasses. People scattered. They not only tried to change planes, but they were trying to change airlines!

Have a great day and remember, things aren't always as they appear.
(Story supplied by Gary Heinz)

...continued on page 18

In his database, **Cyril Nierman** reported an interesting occupation-cryptographer. He graduated from a cryptography school at Pawling, NY in 1943, then attended the RAF code & cipher radio school #5 at Worchester, England. He was in the 44th, and his duties are listed as 'communications and cryptography'. He later joined the Reserves and attained the rank of Captain.

The cryptologists were the first to recognize Hitler's activities. When the British got the first Ultra machine, the Allies could predict all their attacks.



Letter from an English Father

"My son Chris has had a fascination with the history and bravery of so many of the personnel who were based on the site where we live now. As he is only 14 years of age, he shows that he has much respect and admiration for all the people who were involved with the 44th.

"He has started to gather bits and pieces of artifacts at the site and has placed them in the museum at the airfield. However it is extremely difficult to find any real original items from those days, and replica items are easily obtained, if you have the spare cash. My point of the letter is to ask you if you could help Chris in finding original items to go into the Museum at Shipdham. It would really make his day.

Regards, Rod Barrett, (Chris's father)
Chris has recently joined the 44th BGVA and has just received his first magazine.



From Bonnie Brown: The family of the late **Raymond Shirley** donated a huge collection of WWII model airplanes built by Shirley to an AF ROTC unit at a high school in Splendora, Texas.



From **Paul Boensch** (Bieber Crew): We had a lot of jokers around our quarters in Shipdham. One time I put on a pot of coffee and laid down for a little nap. Somebody sneaked in and put something into the pot. I woke up to a lot of loud noises. Whatever it was, it cracked the coffee pot. I still don't know who did that.



From **Jerry Folsom** (Bieber Crew) We were given coke for burning in the pot bellied stove, but it was in short supply. We got a box of it once a week, and it would generally be gone in a few days.

There was a telephone pole close to our barracks, and there had been some comments about the use of it. It wasn't connected to anything. If I were to guess, I would think **George Bieber** or **Willis Edgecomb** might have had something to do with chopping it down. I don't know where the axe came from. I came into the barracks and there it was, cut into about four foot lengths, lying on the floor.

I helped split it up so that it could be readily put under the bunks. Instead of tucking the blankets under the mattress as was normally done, it was left hanging over the edge so that it would reach the floor, concealing anything under the bunk. As I recall, soon after the floor was cleaned, there was a knock on the door and Captain McAfee stuck his head in and an English officer right behind him. He looked around briefly and said, "There is no wood in here," and closed the door.

It burned real well in the stove.



From an unknown source: Peter Emmerick, the 16 year old German boy who carried ammunition to the anti-aircraft guns at Wesel, passed away recently. In 2001 Peter met with Joe Crandell, brother of **Leonard J. Crandell**, pilot of K-Bar, who had been lost along with his entire crew on that low level mission. The following year he met **Louis DeBlasio**, waist

gunner on *Southern Comfort*, one of two survivors of that plane. Peter Loncke had arranged these two gatherings, acting as interpreter when Peter Emmerick tearfully apologized and explained the circumstances of his assignment, to be an ammo carrier.



From **Robert Dubowsky**: For about 21 years, Bob has been a volunteer at the Space and Missile Museum at Cape Canaveral Air Force Station. In light conversation, a young man told him of his father, who flew in a B-24 out of a place called Shipdham. It was Chuck Hand, son of the late and unforgettable **Art Hand**. It was Art, who spent a lifetime, finding members of the 44th BG and urging them to become members. A short time before his death, he was presented the **Leon Johnson** award.



Jerome Wilner, (68th Sq), Bombardier on the **William Dolan** crew, remembers a crash landing in Paris on *Gipsy Queen* after a mission to Metz.

"At that time officers wore their dress uniforms under their flight suits. It was my bad luck that during the crash I was rolled around pretty badly, and my uniform pants tore from the waist to my ankle. The rest of the crew were able to go out on the town in Paris, which had already fallen to the Allies. I was left in a hotel bar with only a chambermaid for company. Wilner remembers fondly that like in all good movies, the gang had a rollicking good time in blacked-out Paris, but Wilner got the girl!!!



From **Bob Vance**:
Ships sail east and ships sail west
While the selfsame breezes blow;
It's the set of the sails and not the gales
that determine the way they go.
Like the winds of the sea are the ways of
fate as we journey along through life;
It's the set of the soul that determines the
goal, and not the calm nor the strife.
(Author Unknown)



From an Unknown Source: In preparation for D-Day the British stashed 4000 pound bombs among fields of grazing sheep to deceive German spy planes flying overhead.



In the Database, Captain **Harry Orthman** reported leading the 492nd BG on the first mission on D-Day, flying with Col. **Eugene Snavelly** as Command Pilot. Later he was transferred to the 44th BG, flying missions ahead of the advancing Allied troops.



From the Diary of **Tom S. Parsons**, LWG on the **Ted Weaver** crew: "After briefing we went to the planes (which were already lined up for us on the perimeter), and as soon as the time came, we took off. Of course a great amount of difficulty was encountered in making formation since it was very dark (about 2:00 a.m.) and there was a terrible overcast.

In trying to find the formation, we crossed a little too close under another plane and, due to a sharp updraft, we ran into it. However the only casualties were a mangled fin and right rudder and ten sets of jangled nerves...

(The plane that was bumped by *Battlin Baby* was *Wendy W*, piloted by Charles Gayman.)

To form up the bomber column for this first mission,, it stretched nearly all the way from the Scottish border to the midlands of England.

Parson's account continues: "Since we were the first formation to bomb the invasion coast, (Colleville & St. Laurent) I thought we might have been lucky enough to see the landing of the troops, but the overcast was so thick that all I saw was a few bursts of shell fire along the coast line before we dropped our bombs.

"Five hours after they returned to Shipdham, Battlin' Baby and the Weaver crew flew a second mission to a vital communications center at Vire, near Caen. By that time he could see that the soldiers had cleared the beaches and were several miles inland."

"All the men were eager to be a part of D-Day" **Robert Lehnhausen** remembered. "Their spirits were high; nobody wanted to miss that historical event." Major Lehnhausen, who commanded the 68th squadron, led the second mission, flying with the **Robert A. Edmonson** crew in Flak Magnet. "Our target was Ferets-De-Ceirsy, but we had to bring our bombs back to Shipdham. The sky was so overcast, we couldn't see a thing, even at 12,000 feet.

"At times we have heard complaints that we weren't any help on D-Day; but the truth is, we did our work before D-Day. In April 1944 we implemented the Transportation Plan of bombing, devised by Prof. Solly Zuckerman. The Plan targeted 79 German-held rail and transport centers. RAF Bomber Command was assigned 37 targets; the 8th AF was assigned 42. The Plan was overwhelmingly successful. It isolated the Normandy battlefield for the Invasion. The Germans had extreme difficulty in transporting replacement troops and supplies to the battlefield. We bombed 70 cities, hitting rail and transport systems. It was a costly enterprise: 2,000 heavy bombers were lost. That amounts to 20,000 men. "On one mission we bombed a Naval Luftwaffe Station. A large number of fighters rose in response, and they lost half of them. Because we had achieved air superiority, the Luftwaffe didn't

show up for D-Day.

According to Walter J. Boyne's book "Clash of Wings" subtitled "WWII in the Air", on April 14, 1944, the Combined Chiefs of Staff placed both Bomber Command and the Eighth Air Force directly under Eisenhower's control. He decided to proceed with the Transportation Plan, which critics called "Zuckerman's Folly".

In March 236 planes from Bomber Command devastated the major railway center south of Paris. This was the beginning of an offensive that would confound the enemy railway network with 22,000 British and American sorties and more than 66,000 tons of bombs dropped before D-Day. Credit for success in this huge undertaking was credited to the fact that by 1944, crews and leaders were more experienced, better trained and had developed improved techniques.

Roger Freeman's report on D-Day Missions: **First Mission:** 1,805 B-24s and B-17s dispatched. Three B-24s lost.

Second and Third Missions (apparently both of these missions were a part of the same Field Order): 782 B-24s and B-17s dispatched. One B-24 lost.

2587 sorties by our heavy bombers were airborne, only one of the four losses were due to enemy action. Two of the four lost were involved in a mid air collision. That is the achievement of air superiority.

Sadly, all four of the bombers lost that day were B-24s. Three belonged to the 493rd Group. The 493rd was the last Heavy Bomb Group to join the 8th AF; they were added to the 3rd Division. D-Day was their first operational mission. Their attaining operational status marked the completion of the commitment by the Air Corps to have 40 Heavy Bomb Groups within the 8th AF.

No-one can minimize the heavy loss of life to the invasion forces, but air superiority and destruction of the rail system were certainly factors in the success of D-Day.



Who was the smiling gentleman whose face appeared on the cover the winter issue of the 8 Ball Tails? Bob Lehnhausen thinks it is **Charles Pigg**. Unfortunately, Charlie's vision is limited, and he could not be sure. **Jim Craddock** suggested Wesley Mitchell, but that name could not be found in the Database. It remains an unanswered question.

Charlie Pigg was considered an outstanding Maintenance Man. He oversaw the work on four planes. His favorite was *Lemon Drop*. Battle weary, *Lemon Drop* was ultimately painted with 'tiger stripes', and used as a formation A/C.



From Roger Fenton: COMBAT FOR DUMMIES

1. Always aim towards the enemy.
2. Cluster bombing from B-52s is very very accurate. The bombs are guaranteed to always hit the ground.
3. If you see a bomb technician running, try to keep up with him.



From the Archives: One of the B-24 airmen killed in the spectacular low-level raid on Ploesti on 1 August 1943 was S/Sgt. **Albert H. Oser** of the 93rd group, a gunner credited with six enemy aircraft destroyed. This ranked the highest score for 8th Air force Liberator gunners and was only equaled by two 44th Group Men. T. Sgt. **John Pitcovich** and Lt. **William G. Morton**. In fact; only five gunners achieved the unofficial accolade of becoming an 'ace' through shooting down five or more enemy aircraft while flying in Liberators from England or on detachment in North Africa. In addition to the top scorers, T/Sgt. **Willard W. Scott** was credited with 5 1/2 and T/Sgt. **Ravelle A. Bennett** with five; both were top turret gunners, and also served with the 44th Group.



Invasion group enjoying the arrival of Sten Guns, dropped to them from the AC. Marquis de la hue des Meuliers near Oabois, Montmoat, France, Summer 1944

Is it possible that sixty years after the War, the very scarcity of B-24s has made these planes more lovable? In the TV program 'War Stories', Oliver North recently pointed out that the B-24 was harder to fly than that highly publicized B-17 and extremely more perilous to ditch. None of this was a secret to the men who flew those planes. It is notable that two 44th pilots ditched without a loss of a crew member.

Among those who appeared on the show was Richard Butler, a survivor of Ploesti. However, they made a serious error in identifying photos: on the left was Dick, our great 44th hero; on the right was not young Butler, but his pilot, Walter Bunker.

The number of '24s that are still flying can be counted on one finger; the number available for viewing can be counted on less than ten fingers. 60 years after the war, nearly all have been shredded, they are still revered and unforgettable.



Shipdham through the lens of Ursel Harvel



Poster at Air Force Museum in Dayton. Ohio

2006 REUNION SCHEDULE 44TH BOMB GROUP

Wednesday, October 11, 2006	Executive Committee arrives
Thursday, October 12, 8:00 A. M.	Meeting of Executive Committee
	Registration Desk opens
Friday, October 13, 8:00 A.M.	Registration
	Bus Tour of Washington, DC
	(includes Arlington Cemetery, WWII Memorial, Korean & Viet Nam Memorials
	Trip to White House (limited to 100 people)
7:00 P.M.	Cocktail Party - Cash Bar
	Squadron Dinners
Saturday, October 14, 8:00 A.M	Buffet Breakfast
	44th BG General Meeting
	Bus Trip to Air Force Memorial event
	Bus Trip to Memorial Concert
Sunday, October 15, 8:00 A.M	Buffet Breakfast
	Tour to National Aerospace Museum, Chantilly, VA
7:00 P.M.	Cocktail Party - Cash Bar
	Banquet
Monday, October 16	Buffet Breakfast & Farewells

REGISTRATION **44TH BOMB GROUP 2006 REUNION**

Please note: Because we are joining the Second Air Division for this Once-In-A-Lifetime event, the unveiling of the Air Force Memorial, we will be registering through the 2 AD Executive Secretary, Evelyn Cohen. Fourteen Groups of the 2nd Air Division, 8th Air Force and current members of the AF will be participating in this celebration-possibly the largest gathering of Air Force personnel - old and new, that Washington has ever seen.

We will be staying at the Fairview Park Marriott Hotel, 3222 Fairview Park Drive, Falls Church, VA 22042. very close to the Memorial. Seating for the celebration will be arranged; therefore it is important that you **REGISTER EARLY.**

44th BOMB GROUP REGISTRATION

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse _____ Squadron # _____ Life Member? _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____ E-Mail _____

Guests & Relations _____

Number to Attend _____ (Fill out a separate form for each room needed)

Costs: Single Room 3 nights \$692.00 _____

Double Room 3 nights per person \$542.00 _____

Tours:

White House Tour (Friday 10/13)

(100 persons only) No Charge

Bus Tour of Washington, DC (Friday 10/13) 37.00 per person _____

Buses to Natl. Aero Space Museum (Sunday, 10/15) 17.00 per person _____

Extra nights-\$92/night AMOUNT OF CHECK _____

Make out check to 2nd Air Division.

Mail to: **Evelyn Cohen**

Enjoy Hospitality Room

6410 Delaire Landing

Food Court at Hotel, Park Bistro, Club Lounge

Philadelphia, PA 19114-4157

IF YOU WISH TO JOIN THE WHITE HOUSE TOUR

Buses are rapidly filling, so we cannot guarantee that a seat is available.

However, with your registration, include this information:

Name _____

Date of Birth _____

Social Security Numbers _____

Place of Residence _____

Country where born if not a U. S. Citizen _____



WILL SEZ

The 01 August 1943 low-level attack on the Ploesti Oil Fields was one of, or actually was our toughest mission of the war. However, except for the two books compiled by Webb Todd and Norman Kiefer, very few personal experiences have been printed. Even in my 67th Squadron Book, for several reasons, I chose not to research or ask for personal stories because many had previously been included in Dugan & Stewart's book, "Ploesti".

Recently I took the time to re-read William R. Cameron's JOURNAL after Bill and a friend spent several months to update and complete it. It was then that I learned that they had added several personal stories from our men who had participated, stories that, apparently never before appeared in print.

Several years ago Bill had asked me to help him finish his Journal, but I had to decline, as I had too many projects unfinished. However, at the present time I am not that busy, and I would like to finish it for him and for his memory. As he has these stories already, all that must be added, I believe is that I should ask our airmen who survived that terrible mission if they would like to have their personal stories included as well.

So.....could I ask you veterans who have not already done so, to look back to that mission and jot down what you remember, what happened in your plane and with you personally? Many of Bill's stories include much praying, as well as personal observations – bombs hitting targets, seeing our planes getting hit, breaking barrage balloon cables, etc. Include anything that still stands out in your memories – please.

I should have asked you long ago, but thought that most of you had already recorded your experiences. But after reading the stories that Bill had collected more recently, there surely must be more experiences that you could share with us all. Perhaps at this time of your life, it might not be so difficult to put your memories down on paper. I urge you to do so now. Send them to me via e-mail if you wish, or by letter, or whatever. But do it as soon as you can, so that I can wrap up Bill Cameron's own stories into his Journal.

One other item: To clarify what previously was reported, I could not get my papers in good enough order, so I had to defer their transfer to the Army Heritage Library and Museum in Carlisle. The files still have my 'war room' bulging, but I am slowly putting some of it in better order. Part of my problem is that requests for information continue to arrive in large numbers. I do enjoy being able to answer some question for which these people have searched, unsuccessfully. However there must be a stopping point shortly, as the Army is quite eager to get it and to have it in a safe place. Sometimes I think that Paul Kay is more eager than the Army is, for it all to be deposited in Carlisle. They will take excellent care of your, our history.

Will Lundy



FOLDED WINGS

GRIFFITH, ROCKFORD C. (Rocky) #22749 67th Sq. 2005 His death was reported by **Ralph Jackson**. 1st. Lt. Griffith flew his first of 22 missions on 10 October 1943. He and his crew flew in *Calaban*, *4-Q-2*, *Shack Rabbit/Star Spangled Hell* and *Judy's Buggy*. Griffith is fondly and admirably remembered for his skilled landing on 18 November 1943 when, returning from Kjeller, Norway, it was discovered that flak had damaged the right landing gear. Griffith had a wounded tail gunner aboard. He directed all crew members except his co-pilot Lt. **Lawrence Grono** to bail out; then the two brought #41-29161 to a perfect landing with only the left wheel down, arriving among a group of cheering ground men who held their breath until they knew that everyone was safe. For that performance he was awarded the Silver Star.

On 13 April 1944 the mission was to Lechford, Germany, a Twin Engine Fighter Plant. After completing the bomb run, it was discovered that they had engine malfunction and were too low on fuel to make it back to Shipdham. Griffith flew it safely to Switzerland where all were interned. Griffith and his Tail Gunner escaped and returned to England. All other members of the crew were kept in internment until the war ended.

HINSHAW, C. R. # 20676 66 Sq. 2006 1st. The crew of 1st. Lt. Hinshaw flew their first mission on 27 September 1944. Most missions were flown in unnamed planes, but also in *Scotty Mac*, *Jail Bait*, *Big Time Operator* and *Peace Offering*. On one mission to Magdeberg, they flew with Capt. **Sterling Dobbs**, Command Pilot. Their last mission was on 15 March 1945. At the time of his death, Hinshaw was residing in Liberty, North Carolina.

News of Hinshaw's death came from Robert Fisk, son of **Robert Fisk**, Navigator on the Hinshaw crew. Fisk, Jr. also reported on the death of one of Hinshaw's close friends, 1st. Lt. **Thompson Daily**.

MILLER, WAYNE A. #28353 2005 506 Sq. 1st. Lt. Miller was the Bombardier on the **John Docktor** crew. His first of 33 missions was 7 May 1944. The crew flew in *Passion Pit*, *Limpin' Ole Sadie*, *San Antonio Rose*, *Southern Comfort II*, *My Gal Sal*, *Flying Log/Pregnant Pig*, *Three Kisses for Luck* and in many unnamed planes. On D-Day the Docktor crew flew to Colleville/St. Laurent in France. All missions were supporting the advance of the Allies who were moving east. Their last mission was 3 August 1944. According to **Walter Dunbar**, Navigator on the Docktor crew, Miller left the service after the War as a Major. Later he rejoined as an enlisted man, spending 20 years altogether. He leaves his wife Mary. The couple had been married many years.

REINHART, ELMER #321778 23 December 2005 67th Squadron. Lt. Col. Reinhart, pilot of *G I Gal* arrived in Shipdham and was immediately assigned to the group that went to Africa. His first mission was 6 July 1943. In preparation for Patton's invasion of Sicily, his first two missions were to Gerebina and Catania. After that were four raids to Italy, and then he began the low level practice flights at Benina Main. On 1 August 1943 he was a participant in the famed mission to Ploesti. *G I Gal* was the last plane to leave Target Blue, and was beset by German fighters. One member of the crew was KIA; all others became POW.

Upon returning to the States, Reinhart transported military aircraft until the War ended. After that, he became a computer programmer. His last residence was at Air Force Village, Riverside, California.





FOLDED WINGS

RENDALL, WILLIAM A. (Scotty) # 21779 16 September 2005 66th Sq. 1st. Lt. Rendall was a Navigator, flying most of his missions with the **Donald Heskett** crew. He also flew with **John Y. Reed**, **Shelby Irby**, and once with **James W. Kahl** as Command Pilot. He flew in *Fascinatin' Witch*, *Helen B Happy* and *Bull of the Woods*.

On 11 October 1943, after the awesome mission to Wiener Neustadt, the Heskett crew was part of the group returning to England. The first leg of the journey was to Marrakech, Morocco. An engine malfunction in Libya forced a crash landing with Helen B Happy plowing a 150 foot furrow through a meadow. Rendall reported that when he put his feet down, it was into soil. The crew survived with only one serious injury, but missed the group flight to England.

On 30 December 1943, the Heskett crew was bombing in Ludwigshaven, Germany, bombing via PFF through heavy clouds. A group of German fighters brought Bull of the Woods down with 2 crewmen KIA; seven evaded successfully. Because of his French-speaking skills, Rendall was retained by the Resistance to help move American and English evadees. The Gestapo infiltrated the group, and he became a POW at Stalag Luft III. He was part of the group liberated on 30 April 1945 by the arrival of General Patton. Rendall and his wife Millie spent their last years in Grapevine, Texas. Report of his death came from his son, Richard Rendall, USMC (Ret)

STEWART, MARTIN V. #22163 25 December 2005 67th Sq. Lt. Stewart was a Co-Pilot on the **Robert Gunton** crew, later with **Wilbur D. Carter**. At times he flew with Command Pilots Captain **Frank Davido** and Capt. **Howard McCormick**. His first mission of twenty-seven was to Brussels on 31 May 1944. On D-Day he flew to Colleville/St. Laurent in defense of the troops that were landing in Normandy. From

there, his missions took him to chemical factories, fuel storage area, airdromes and marshalling yards, all efforts to keep the enemy from moving toward the Allied troops. He flew in *Old Iron Corset*, *My Gal Sal*, *Mi Akin Ass*, *Glory Bee*, *Judy's Buggy*, and many unnamed aircraft. His last mission was 27 August 1944.

WHITEHOUSE, JAMES M. #22540 26 February 2003 1st. Lt. Whitehouse was a Copilot, flying first with Oscar Leonard, then all other flights with the John Titter crew. His first of 36 missions was 24 May 1944, just when the Allies were preparing for the Normandy invasion. On D-Day the crew flew two missions, one to Caen, the other to Colleville/St. Laurent, both Invasion Targets. On 19 June they went to Autheux, bombing the V-1 sites in France. Whitehouse flew in the following a/c: *Passion Pit*, *Shack Rat*, *Feudin' Wagon*, *Southern Comfort II*, *Ole Cock*, *My Ever Lovin' Gal*, *Full House*, *My Peach* and *Joplin Jalopy*. Their last mission was 8 August 1944.

He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Lavonne E. Pierce; daughter Valerie and son Dr. James M. Whitehouse, Jr. He was preceded in death by daughter Carol. The couple had four grandchildren and two great great grandsons. Whitehouse was born in Canada; he spent his last years in San Bernardino, CA. After the war he became a supervisor of electrical maintenance at Kaiser Steel Company.

WICKHAM, WILLIAM G. #22553 68th Sq. 2 February 15, 2006 William Wickham was a member of the Ground Crew. He passed away in Erie, PA, and was buried with full military honors. His death was reported by his son Joel, Commander USNR (ret.)





JOIN US IN WASHINGTON, DC
THE MOST-VISITED CITY IN THE USA
FOR THE BIG AAF CELEBRATION

**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

P.O. Box 712287

Salt Lake City, Utah 84171-2287

NONPROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
YORK, PA
PERMIT NO. 323