

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 8 Issue #7

Journal of the
44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association

Summer 2008

Non Profit Veterans Association

EIN # 68-0351397

Tinker Belle's name but not her number got lost from the Database; Steve Adams and **Will Lundy** kept her in their records. She was first assigned to the 492nd Bomb Group, then transferred to Shipdham, 506 Squadron, 13 August 1944. Three days later she went to Kothen, Germany. Between the two Bomb Groups, she flew a total of 53 missions. On 14 January 1945 after a mission to Hemmingstedt, she landed in Merville, France with #1 engine out, choosing a safer landing than Shipdham where the weather was bad. By 2 March she was back home; but a month later, was shot down by flak and crashed near Wipperfurth on a mission to the Marshaling Yards at Plauen, Germany.



TINKER BELLE

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD 2007 - 2008

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

Vice President/Historian:
Roger D. Fenton
21539 East Alyssa Court
Queen Court, AZ 85242
Phone (480) 893-3761
E-Mail: lomadanger@aol.com

Secretary/8 Ball Tails Editor:
Ruth W. Davis-Morse
2041 Village Circle East
York, PA 17404
Phone (717) 846-8948
Fax (717) 846-6688
E-Mail: rdavismorse@aol.com

Treasurer: Jackie Roberts
11910 SE 44th
Oklahoma City, OK 73150
Phone 405 732-5838
E-Mail mywings@cox.net

Immediate Past President:
(Holding position of the late Paul Kay)
Roy Owen
240 Estates Drive #1
Chico, California 95928
Phone (530) 891-9157
FAX (530) 891-9157
E-Mail: Rowen1115@att.net

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Visit our website @ www.44thbombgroup.com

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

Director: Richard Lynch
109 Jason Road, Box 518
Conrad, Iowa 50621-0518
Phone(641) 366-2414
E-Mail r_blynch@heartofiowa.net
(first three letters r_b)

Director: Sterling Dobbs
P. O. Box 825
LaGrange, Texas 78945
Phone 979 249-3838
E-Mail b24dobbs@yahoo.com

Director: Charles W. Tilton
912 Scenic Drive
Charleston, WV 25311-4165
Phone 304 346-4165
E-Mail ctilton4165@suddenlink.net

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

Custodian of the Web Site:
Arlo Bartsch, Webmaster
42 Promesa Drive
Hot Springs Village, Arkansas 71909
Phone 501 922-5247
E-Mail: afbas@aol.com

The 8-Ball Tails[©]

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

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TINKER BELLE

AC # 44-40158 was last seen at 1217 hours, 5 April 1945 at 14,000 feet, 22 miles northeast of Frankfort, accompanied by three P-51's. Radio Operator **Travis Nash** was in contact with formation which was flying at 18,000 feet and approximately three miles ahead of *Tinker Belle*. The pilot had feathered one engine, and was trying to reach an airdrome in friendly territory. They were flying at approximately 3,000 feet over the Ruhr pocket when anti-aircraft fire opened up. Both Nash and **George Brown**, pilot, sustained head injuries.

Howard Burkhart, Engineer, stated that the plane lost one engine before reaching the target due to mechanical failure. They lost altitude after reaching the target, then #2 engine caught fire. **George Brown**, pilot, was wounded; **Travis Nash** was KIA; and #3 & #4 engines were smoking. The decision was made to try to land at Brussels, Belgium, but they couldn't make it. Flak & small arms fire took its toll. Burkhart was busy transferring gasoline when the 'bail out' bell rang, so he was still shooting. He looked around and saw the plane empty except for Nash, who was dead. He jumped out, his chute was caught in a tree, and he hung there until a German soldier cut him down.

James Barry, Bombardier, had three bullet holes in his chute, shot by a German soldier; **Robert Sampley**, Waist Gunner, also was caught in a tree; he managed to break free, but immediately found himself surrounded by bayoneted rifles. **Ernest McAlpine**, Tail Gunner, landed among a group of Hitler's Youth. They saved his life, protecting him from a band of angry civilians.

Five airmen from the Brown crew ended up in a large prison camp that had French and Russians slave laborers in it. Lt. Barry reported that "The French and Russians were wonderful to us. They couldn't do enough for us. Some of the Frenchmen had been there five years, and when we arrived, they broke out food they had been saving all that time, and gave us a party. They even told the Germans they wouldn't work the next day."

On the morning of the ninth day, the first platoon of American soldiers, members of the 78th Division, arrived in camp and set them free. Two days later, the men were in Paris.

Ten days after the crash, Lt. **James Barry**, Bombardier, telephoned the 44th base, asking for a plane to come and pick up the returnees. **Hari Flowers**, Co-Pilot, and **Robert Thomas**, Navigator, followed soon after. By April 18 they were all back in England.

Nothing is known of the fate of **George Brown**, Pilot. There is speculation that perhaps his chute did not open, he was killed by civilians or possibly died from his head wound.

Tinker Bell is the last recorded combat casualty of the War. Other losses occurred, but not from combat. Twelve days after Tinker Belle went down, President Roosevelt died and Harry Truman became President. Thirteen days later (25 April 1945) the 44th BG flew its last mission of WWII. On that same day the U.S. & Soviet forces met at the Elbe River; and in California, the San Francisco Conference on the United Nations began.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



LAST CALL!!! SIGN UP FOR THE HARRISBURG-CARLISLE REUNION BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

This is, I believe, the farthest North and East that a 44th Reunion has ever been held. The 68th Squadron has had three in past years – Cape Cod –Connecticut and Erie, PA. All were well attended.

This is not a long journey for those of you from New England, New York and the rest of the Northeast, so we look forward to seeing many of you in October. Let's make this a big one. Time is marching on. Who knows how many more we will be able to have. By your attendance, you will also make all who worked so hard organizing this year's reunion very happy. So fill out and send those forms that appear elsewhere in this issue and in the Spring issue.

As I write this on Memorial Day weekend, many of you are not aware that our good friend Arlo Bartsch is having some health issues. Arlo, although a B-17 Pilot, in recent years is probably closer to we Libarator guys than to his own. Due to his tireless work in putting together the CD Data Base Program, we 44thers have a unique program. As Webmaster, he also does a fine job with our web site. We are all praying for his recovery and looking forward to the time when he is back to his usual activities.

Work on the Memorial Garden at the Shipdham Airfield has started this spring. The Shipdham Flying Club has a nice Web Site with a good description of the 44th Bomb Group Museum by Peter Steele, Curator and ex-RAF pilot. It was good to hear in Peter Bodle's last "Letter from Shipdham" that their future at the airfield is now quite secure. Thanks to all our good friends over there for keeping our memories alive.

George

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

"We don't like their sound, and guitar music is on the way out."

Decca Recording Co., rejecting the Beatles, 1962

"Airplanes are interesting toys, but of no military value."

Marechal Ferdinand Foch, Professor of Strategy
Ecole Superieure Guerre. (*School of Superior War, France*)

TO OUR MEMBERS:

The cut-off date for registering for the Reunion is September 10, 2008, 5:00 PM. **After that the price will be higher.** Please register early, as our transportation costs are based on the number of attendants. If a crisis in your life causes you to cancel, you will be reimbursed.

If you plan to stay longer in the area than the four days of the Reunion, add an additional \$100 for each additional day and each additional room that you will be needing.

The Heritage Museum was designed to feature all wars, from Revolutionary Days on. The Army Air Corps is a unique addition to the complex, and the 44th BG Board is challenged to draw attention to our contribution to WWII victory.

You will note one change in the registration: We will not be eating lunch in the Mess Hall. **Lee Aston** has contacted some prestigious guests to this event, and it was decided that a more formal setting will be needed. We will be eating in the Community Center, which is inside the secured Carlisle Barracks.

What else can you do in the area? The Capitol Building is the most beautiful in the nation. It was designed to emulate St. Peter's Cathedral in Rome. The William Penn Museum located close to the Capitol features, nature, history and much more.

The Sheridan Hotel in Harrisburg is close to good shopping areas. If you have a car, you can tour the Hershey Park and Factory which is 35 miles east. Southeast is Lancaster, home of the Pennsylvania Dutch and Amish. Amish buggies compete for space on Route 30 and other highways. Lancaster has good Outlet Stores; and if you want to drive farther, the greatest outlets are in Reading, PA.

Register now. This Reunion will be unlike all others. You don't want to miss it.

The Shipdham Flying Club's Museum is dedicated to the 44th Bomb Group. Three rooms tell the 44th story.

Room One shows photos, mostly taken by the airmen, the chain of command of the 8th AF and the history of that great A/C, the B-24 Liberator.

Room Two is the Will Lundy Memorial Library. It is a study area where guests can sit at the desks and read any of the many books that tell the air war story.

Room 3 houses the audio/visual materials. DVD's are available, showing early footage shot at the airfield in the early 1940's.

Ed. Note: The 44th is so fortunate, that an ocean away and sixty five years later, the memory of their WWII heroism is still being heralded.

On behalf of every member of the 44th BGVA – Thank you, Thank you, Thank you Shipdham Flying Club. Thank you Mrs. Paterson.

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR THE
44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
HARRISBURG/CARLISLE REUNION
SHERATON HOTEL, HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA**

Thursday, October 16, 2008

Registration 1:00-5:00

Dinner on your own

Friday, October 17, 2008

Registration 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM

General Meeting 9:30 AM

Lunch on your own

1:00 Bus Tour to the Civil War Museum

7:00 PM Welcome Reception

Saturday, October 18, 2008

Breakfast

9:00 AM Bus Tour to Army Heritage Museum, Carlisle, PA

Lunch in Community Building inside Carlisle Barracks

7:00 Squadron Dinners

Sunday, October 19, 2008

Breakfast

8:00 AM Bus Tour to Gettysburg

Lunch on your own

5:00 Return to Hotel

7:00 Banquet

Monday, October 20, 2008

Breakfasts & Farewells

If you plan to stay additional days at the hotel, please note that when you register, in order to get the reduced price. If you decide to leave early, please indicate that to the hotel upon your arrival. Otherwise you will be charged for extra days.

**REGISTRATION FOR REUNION OF THE
44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
SHERATON HOTEL**

**4650 Lindle Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111
October 16-20, 2008**

Please print or type. All information must be complete.

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse/guest _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

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Please indicate bed preference: King _____ Queen _____

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Squadron Dinners, Banquet.

SQUADRON DINNER: Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Chicken _____ Cod w/wine & spices

BANQUET: Please indicate choice of entrée:

_____ Delmonico Steak _____ Chicken Wellington

PAYMENT

Number of Registrants (See Prices Above)

Single _____ \$ _____ Double _____ \$ _____

Triple _____ \$ _____ Quad _____ \$ _____

Please send checks to 44th Bomb Group Treasurer:

Jackie Roberts, 11910 SE 44th, Oklahoma City, OK 73150

A VISIT TO THE MIGHTY EIGHTH MUSEUM POOLER, GEORGIA

Situated on the right side of Rt. 95 (S), not far from Savannah, is a museum that tells the WWII story, mostly through the eyes of B-17 lovers, but also in areas that feature the B-24. The Ploesti exhibit is highly visible; but unfortunately, the Voice-over has not yet been installed. Tragically, much about the Holocaust scene has been removed. *(I think the grim truth of WWII should always be remembered, but I have been told that the pictures upset certain tourists.)*

A new display of the nose of a B-24 (*Fightin' Sam*) has not yet been completed. Walter Mundy of the 2nd Air Division initiated this exhibit. When completed, a person will be able to sit in the cockpit and test the instruments. The Norden Bombsight will be available, and a visitor can simulate a bomb drop.

The Memorial Garden is very beautiful, as is the Chapel of the Fallen Eagles. The Chapel is dedicated to 'those who served in the Eighth AF for the cause of freedom.' One window features a B-24 flying among the clouds, accompanied by a 'Little Friend'.



Fightin' Sam



Memorial Garden

Visitors can experience a recently installed new and awesome version of a combat mission. The Museum Library is very complete. Historians, researchers and school children can learn the details of WWII in this unique facility, created by the 8th AF Historical Society. The 8th AF originated in Savannah; Roger Freeman, an English author, named it the 'Mighty Eighth.'



Chapel Window

MEMORIES OF A FINANCE OFFICER MORTON WEINSTEIN

Lt. Weinstein enlisted in the AC on 22 July 1941, attended Finance O.C.S., and in August 1943, found himself paying pounds and shillings to airmen at Shipdham. At that time there was only one Jewish Chaplain for the entire 8th AF. Weinstein visited him at 8th HQ in High Wyckam, near London, and was equipped with several Hebrew Prayer Books and two miniature Torahs, whereupon he started holding Friday night services each week. Attendance was fantastic.

Soon he became friendly with a Protestant Chaplain, **Wesley Cain**, and they played softball together, frequently on Shipdham's Squash Courts. Weinstein lost track of Wesley Cain after the War, but he is eternally grateful for the sermons he graciously delivered to the Jewish airmen, every Friday night.

One time General **Leon Johnson** came to the Finance Office for his pay. Weinstein had a note on the door, 'Closed for Lunch 12-1' Johnson said to his driver, "We'll come back later." Luckily Weinstein was nearby, and he said, "No way." He opened the door and paid the General. His memory of his General, "He was the greatest."

In June 1945, after everybody was paid, he climbed on the Queen Mary and earned a few bucks, playing poker all the way to New York.



Maurice Weinstein
At the Shipdham
Finance Office



AN ENGLISHMAN REMEMBERS THE CREW OF *BALDY AND HIS BROOD*

Brian Peel of Norfolk, UK remembers when his friends on *Baldy and his Brood* came back from Foggia. A teenager during WWII, he developed a kinship with several of the airmen at Shipdham, and has corresponded with them all these years. His mother did the laundry for a number of the crews.

After reading about Foggia in the last issue of the *8 Ball Tails*, Brian sent this picture of his friend, Sgt. **Oliver R. Germann**, who had received seven awards, the Silver Star, DFC and Bronze Cluster and Air Medal with Three Clusters. The picture appeared in *The Eastern Daily Press* in 1943. Germann had been wounded at Foggia.

LT. JAMES TOMBLIN REMEMBERS A VERY SAD MISSION INTO HOLLAND

A mission I remember very well was a re-supply mission to paratroopers who had just been dropped near Arnhem, Netherlands. To practice for this mission, we had flown in formation over the English countryside at an extremely low level. I lay on my stomach next to the bombsight and looked through the plexiglass nose. We were so low, I could see the ground between blades of grass. We had to pull up to get over small picket fences.

On the actual mission, we flew at tree-top level. A 4-engine bomber traveling at 200 mph that low is pretty exciting. German soldiers on the ground were firing at us with rifles. The bombardier in the nose turret would spot a rifleman and then tell the waist gunners and the tail turret gunner where the rifleman was (e.g. 10 o'clock, 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock, etc.) but we were traveling too fast for that tactic to be very effective. At that speed, we traveled the length of a football field in one second.

At the drop site, we cut throttle, pulled up 500 feet, and the jumpmaster (our special 11th crew member) kicked out the supplies. I was looking through the plexiglass nose and saw a paratrooper crossing the field with his arm around a girl – and they had just dropped yesterday!!!

A rifle bullet hit the hydraulic reservoir tank, located in the top of the fuselage above the flight deck, and the red liquid spilled all over the Engineer, **Bill Wright**. **Eddie Sharp**, the Radio Operator thought Bill had been shot. Scared him to death.

When we got back to the base, we had to manually crank-down the landing gear, and stopping the plane was a little difficult, but we managed OK.

(The story of this immense effort by the paratroopers is in the book "A Bridge Too Far" by Cornelius Ryan and in the movie of the same name.) A plan by General Montgomery was to drop 35,000 paratroopers 64 miles behind enemy lines and capture the bridge across the Rhine River at Arnhem, Netherlands. To accomplish this, 3 bridges had to be captured intact, by paratroopers, to enable a relief column to advance the 64 miles to Arnhem.

The paratroopers captured all the bridges, including the one at Arnhem, but the relieving division of tanks stopped 5 miles from Arnhem. The paratroopers there were captured. They had held the Rhine Bridge 7 days, and Montgomery said only 2 days was all that was required. In my view, this was the biggest boondoggle of the War, and certainly the most tragic.

The total 7 day casualties for all the forces involved – killed, wounded and missing amounted to more than 17,000. (In comparison, the 24 hour period of D-Day had 10,000-12,000 casualties.)

After the mission, our 6th, everyone got an Air Medal.

The date of this mission was 18 September 1944. Lt. Tomblin was the Navigator (66th Sq). Other members of the crew, unnamed in this narration were: Arthur S. Ledford, pilot; Harold Arnold, Co-Pilot; Richard Pascal, Bombardier; Fred Wiener, Right Waist Gunner; Pervis Bertolio, Left Waist Gunner; Harry Starr, Tail Gunner; R. J. Movin, Jumpmaster. Twelve days later the Ledford crew went to Hamm, Germany and was shot down. Check the next issue for that story.

The Roll of Honor reports two 44th BG members on other planes were WIA.



SAM CERVERELLA'S SIXTH MISSION

(506 Squadron)

9 May 1944 Target: St. Trobud, Belgium... Visibility Poor... 18,000 ft. Temp. minus 20...

We were to hit the night fighter base at St. Ohmar with 100 lbs. GPS...We encountered the usual flak coming in and it knocked us about quite a bit. We almost lost the target and had to hunt all over for it because of navigation, and we were late. We dropped our bombs and did a good job on the field and hangars. It was a visual bombing. Four of ours were frozen in the shackles, and we could not drop them until we got to the Channel and let down. Over the target a couple of B-24s blew up. In one, four chutes opened. Some bombs blew up as they left the racks and knocked the formation about. We are really giving it to them in earnest now, every day for three straight. We got up at 2 AM...24 more to go...

This mission to the St. Trond/Brrustrem Airfield in Belgium was to go after the night fighters that were attacking RAF formations. Cervella was the Radio Operator on the Fred Stone crew. They were flying in Shack Rat.

*The 68th lost one plane on this mission, **Northern Lass**, when bombs exploded prematurely over of the target. Five members of the crew bailed out and became POW. Lt. **Arnold Larson**, pilot, was able to bring the plane to England, crash-landing at Attleboro.*

Did you know that more U.S. Servicemen died in the Air Corps than the Marine Corps? While completing the required 30 missions, your chance of being killed was 71%.

Col. D. G. Swinford, USMC

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LT. STANLEY GERASIMCZYK'S UNFORGETTABLE MISSION

As Bombardier on the **Maurice Steven** crew, 66th Squadron, Lt. Gerasimczyk remembers the mission to Schwabisch-Hall, Germany. "We formed to Group – Wing – Division, but kept losing the formation. Over Germany the pilot reported the problem to the Flight Commander. He got back and advised us to join a B-17 formation flying over to our left. We did. (Tail End Charlie). The group went through Frankfurt, Mannheim and Weimar. Heavy flak found our A/C. The Top Turret Gunner, **Albert Chisman**, was struck under the flak helmet in the right temple. (*He Survived.*)

"At the Base we counted over 420 holes. On this mission we had a replacement A/C. Pilot Stevens named it **King Pin**, and we flew 30 missions in it.

Lt. Gerasimczyk was on the mission to Best, Holland, as described by Lt. **James Tomblin**. He remembers seeing the Germans aiming guns at them as they were flying at ground level. He reported,



Picture L-R **Stanley Gerasimczyk, Maurice Steven, Gino Bisons** with **King Pin**.

"A slug found the O2 bottle in the May West, behind the ammo bin, which had only 75 rounds. The metal from the tank went through the Navigator's desk and Weems Plotter, on which he had his hand. Right between his forefinger and thumb, a hole 1" deep." *How's that for a close shave?*



Front L-R **Maurice Stevens**, Pilot; **Finis Cross**, Co-Pilot; **Gino Bisons**, Navigator; **Stanley Gerasimczyk**, Bombardier.

Top L-R **Jack Kendle**, LW Gunner; **Albert Chisman**, Engr/Top Turret Gunner; **Donald Braman**, RW Gunner; no identity here (transferred to 15th AF); **Robert C. Niles**, Tail Gunner.



Crew Chief for **King Pin**. Can anyone identify him?

MY BIRTHDAY GIFT FROM HEAVEN

From the diary of Earl P. Wikle (68th Squadron)

I was new in the ETO, just completed my ground school before coming into combat duty, flying the big ones...The B-24 Bomber.

One Tuesday night 15 March 1944 I looked at the schedule and saw where my crew was slated to make our first combat mission. I usually spent the evening in a poker game, then making the Red Cross before they closed for a bit to eat and a cup of tea. This night, after seeing the schedule, I decided to go to bed early to try and get all the rest I could, because I knew I would need it.

After getting undressed in my bunk and getting warm enough to stop shivering, they announced on the Loudspeaker System, 'an enemy Air Raid, planes within fifty miles.' Just a few minutes later came another announcement, saying the enemy planes were in the nearby neighborhood. Up I got, put my clothes on and went out on top of the Bomb Shelter, which was opposite my barracks door.

This being my first actual experience of warfare, naturally I was somewhat nervous and scared.

Looking Toward Norwich

My base was located west and within sight of Norwich, England. This seemed to be one of the German's targets for the night.

I never in my life witnessed such a sight. It seemed just like a movie with sound effects and all. You could hear the dull roar of the German's heavy bombers there, with a loud fast moaning roar. I could hear our fighters making attacks on the bombers. There were thousands of powerful searchlights lighting up the sky, all moving in different directions, searching for the enemy planes. In the direction of Norwich, you could see a reddish flare up; then in a few seconds you could hear a thud of the exploding bombs. In the sky, along with the search lights, you could see hundreds of bursts of flak shells being fired at the enemy bombers.

Over the base, luckily, the Germans only dropped flares, which lighted the whole sky and countryside, as if it were day! No doubt they were taking pictures of the base and bases around in this part of the country.

A Jokester

To give you an example of how scared I really was, one of the boys stood by the barracks and started to whistle – just like I thought a bomb would sound when falling. Some of the boys ran madly into the bomb shelter; but me, I stood there as if frozen stiff. I couldn't move a single muscle. I could feel cold chills running up and down my whole body. As that boy's wind became exhausted, we were standing on the bomb shelter.

Then we realized it wasn't a bomb, but this boy playing a joke on us newcomers. It was one hell of a joke; but after it was over; and those who weren't still under the spell of fear, had a good laugh over it. I did not laugh.

As far as I can remember, the raid lasted for about one and half hours. That was one of the experiences I will never forget. It was nearly one o'clock in the morning when I got back to bed and try to get some sleep and rest. What a send-off for my first combat mission!

Wake Up Call

Three-thirty came, the CQ calling the ones that were scheduled to fly that day. Being half asleep, cold, damp, hungry and very tired from the bombing, everyone was very disagreeable, and didn't care much whether school kept or not. We went up to the orderly room to check our names off the flight roster, and waited for the base bus to take us to the Mess Hall for breakfast.

Here I ate a heavy meal consisting of eggs, bacon, pancakes, orange juice and coffee. Finishing my meal, I went outside to get a bus to take me to the Briefing Room. The enlisted men went to one room and the officers to another.

...continued on page 14

Here they gave us plans of our mission, such as the name of our target, bomb load, time of take off, time over the target and the arrival back to the base, also, all codes of the day.

Being a radio operator, I had to go to still another Briefing Room to pick up the latest codes of the day and find out the Lead Ship and Deputy Lead. With all of this completed, I was ready to go to the drying rooms, where all my flying equipment was kept, such as leather flying clothes, Mae West, parachute. I stopped in the parachute room to pick up a bag of K-rations to eat on the trip.

Packing up my A-3 bag, which had all my flying equipment in, I went to the road to wait for the bus to take me to the plane.

Upon reaching the plane, I set my bag down and climbed into the plane, started my radio equipment inspection. When the check was completed, I helped the engineer put the guns in the upper turret, which sometimes was a very hard task.

Out of the plane, I gathered up my heavy flying clothes and began to put them on; then I was ready for the signal to start engines. This was quite an exciting time of the day, many large bombers with engines running, loaded to the gills with bombs and gasoline, waiting their turn to take off down the long runway. The weather was quite soupy, or in other words, a bit hazy.

Down the Runway and Up

Our turn came; we lined up with the runway, with super chargers and gas throttles full on, we started. Faster and faster we went until we reached the speed of about 120 mph, to pull the big plane off the runway into the air, circling the field until we reached a given altitude, then we started to form our element and get into flying formation. This took a long time because of such a great number of planes, plus other bombers from nearby bases. This caused very much difficulty in trying to get the group assigned to you. We used

flares to identify ourselves. Each squadron had a different flare signal.

When we were all in our proper position, right time, right altitude and everything working OK, we took our heading, which took us eastward over eastern England, Holland and into Germany.

By the time we reached the enemy's coast (at this time Holland), we were at our bombing altitude, wearing oxygen masks and our flak suits, and with every member at his proper position, wide awake.

Looking for Trouble

Being the radio operator, I had no given position. Since we were not flying Lead or Deputy Lead, I did not have very much radio work to do. So I stood between the Pilot and Co-pilot, keeping a sharp eye out for anything that might happen or go wrong with the plane.

Some of these tasks were calling out fighters (ours or enemy), calling flak, and keeping the pilot informed of the position of the bombers in our element, as to how close to the side or top of us.

This is a hell of a place to be in! As the Old Saying goes, 'Where you are looking for trouble, you usually find it', and we did, but nothing very serious.

Looking out through the pilots' windshields, I could see our fighter escorts scouting all around us, looking for enemy attackers. Looking down, I could see lower elements of our formation of many bombers, and a blanket of solid clouds. We were flying about seven thousand feet above those clouds.

While on watch, I could see quite a few bursts of flak coming up through the clouds, but they were too low to do us any harm.

Due to the solid overcast, we were flying by instruments, and were forced to bomb our target by instruments.

Bombs Away

We lined up for our bomb run, everything going well and peacefully, except for a few bursts of flak. Orders came for bomb bay doors to be opened. This was

one of my duties. I opened the door and reported 'Bomb Bay doors open'. We were carrying a load of 52 bombs. I nervously waited the call from the Bombardier, 'Bombs Away'. Finally I heard the call. I quickly checked the racks to see if all had cleared, then closed the doors. This, I will say, is quite a relief to know your bombs were all clear and on their way down, and that our plane had taken up that heading for our return trip to our base.

But just a few minutes after this great relief, ALL HELL POPPED LOOSE. Flak began to come up by the thousands, and they were very close and at our altitude. I, as well as every other member of our crew, seemed to hold his breath and pray to God to guide us safely through this hot bed of anti-aircraft gunfire. Our prayers were answered, thanks to God. Although this lasted only for about twenty minutes, it seemed like two hours.

Again, after getting out of that mess, we seemed to automatically relax and breathe more easily and regularly.

An Enemy Fighter

I was looking out the windows, glanced to my left and saw a fighter coming in for attack. Not having seen an enemy fighter all the way in, and this was out, I never gave it a thought it was a Jerry fighter after us.

Then I noticed blue puffs of smoke coming from the engine. My brain relapsed. I became stiff, cold, goose pimply and shocked, as if I were going to fly apart. I realized these blue puffs of smoke were not vapor, which usually comes out of a plane at high altitude, but was smoke from twenty mm. cannons; and this plainly was a German fighter attacking us. I couldn't move or talk, but just stood there as a blank. He went by like lightning and missed us with his guns. No one got a shot at him. I was very happy he missed us, and hated it that we didn't get a shot at him.

We saw a few more bursts of flak on the way to the coast of Holland, but nothing close. Than at the coast they let us have it again. They fired at us until we

were about fifteen miles out over the Channel. After getting out of the range of the enemy anti-aircraft fire, we could let down to where we could take off our oxygen masks. We were out of danger here of fighters and flak; what a relief this was.

We soon saw the coast of England and over our base again. It really was a good feeling to be back on good old earth again.

I never was so tired in all my life as I was when we got out of the plane. I could have laid down on the ground and slept until morning, but we had to report to the Intelligence Office and tell them of our trip.

Debriefing

Upon entering the Briefing Rooms, we were greeted with a cup of coffee. Me, not liking coffee, took it just the same. It was warming to me and did taste good. From here our crew went into the Intelligence Department where they asked us a lot of questions regarding our mission. Here they brought us a quart of Scotch and some sandwiches. We ate and drank and answered questions for about a half hour. After completing all this, it was time for an early supper, in which all of us took a part.

We ate like we were starved, and how good it seemed. We left the mess hall and went to our barracks, shaved, washed up and hit the sack. The first thing I knew was the CQ calling us again. I pulled one arm out from under the covers to look at my watch, which read three thirty. This was the morning of 16 March, 1944.

The same procedure we went through as the day before, only I was more nervous and jumpy. I think everyone else felt the same as I.

*This mission is not recorded on the Database for Wikle, but it appears it would have been to Brunswick, Germany. The one mission for which the Database credits this airman was to Friedrichshafen, Germany. He was on the same plane with **Sydney Bolick**, whose story has been written in segments in previous issues of the 8 Ball Tails.*

In his dissertation about his first mission, Wikle did not add that it was also his birthday.

AN AIRMAN'S SISTER REMEMBERS WWII AND HER BIG BROTHER

WORLD WAR II HERO

By Jeanette Howeth Crumpler

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My brother, Glenn W. Howeth, was only 19 years old when he enlisted in the USAAC. After training at Harlingen, Texas, Glenn was assigned to fly as a Radio Operator in a B-24 Liberator bomber from RAF Alconbury in England. He flew 30 missions in the B-24 Bombers, and was deeply concerned on how essential it was to win the war. My grandmother, mother and I thought he was winning the war almost single-handed. We were convinced he was the bravest hero of WWII. I was nine years old in 1942 when he left, and I faithfully wrote to him often. We were to remain close until he died in 1983.

Wichita Falls, Texas, like many other towns all over the United States, had young men and women in all of the services. I also had two half brothers serving as well. They were my dad's boys from his first marriage. That generation was faithful in signing up to stop the awful Axis of Germany, Italy and Japan from enslaving the world. Those of us who were too young to serve did our part by buying United States Savings Stamps and Bonds and collecting grease, rubber tires, tin cans and anything else that could help the war effort.

My dad and mother had divorced in 1942; and my dad was too old to serve, but had gone to Alaska to work on the AlCan Highway. My mother worked as the head of the legal department of Panhandle Refining Company, but also volunteered with the Red Cross. They were always serving coffee and doughnuts at Sheppard Air Force Base, and also welcoming troop trains, as well as helping at the USO. I felt I was 'helping' too, by tap dancing in the USO shows in Freer's Furniture Building in downtown Wichita Falls. Of course, our talent shows

sometimes were pretty corny, but we were enthusiastic, and thought we were boosting morale. More than one serviceman would comment that "Surely the front couldn't be any worse than Wichita Falls Kickapoo Lake Water and the local talent." They had a point.

I had learned to knit, so I felt obliged to knit my brothers wool scarves. Glenn's was bright pink and was four inches wide and two feet long! He later told me it almost glowed in the dark, and definitely didn't go with their flight suits. They used it to tie the door of their Quonset hut shut on windy nights. He said they used to shoot the rats in the Quonset hut too, which I thought was awful until he swore the rats were the size of Terriers.

Once Mother and I scrounged for weeks to find coupons to purchase cigarettes to send him, not realizing the Army Air Corps furnished better brands than we could find. We had a Victory Garden in our backyard as part of our war effort, and we also took in boarders during the War. These were married couples that needed lodging, since Sheppard had limited facilities for married couples at that time.

Glenn told me several stories after the war about funny things that had occurred on their base in England. One was about an accident flag that was flown so long, it became a pale remnant. The 'Accidents' were mainly because there was a long yew hedge separating two cement sidewalks, and the men used to race bicycles along each side of the hedge. Bets were placed on who could reach the end of the hedge first and knock the other cyclist off his bike.

Once on a bet, Glenn rode a bicycle backwards, resulting in a broken rib. He swore he was not tipsy at the time.

...continued on page 17

Another funny story was about the tail gunner on his bomber who had a 'snootful' one night and went ahead and got into the tail turret, deciding to sleep it off, since he knew they would have a mission the next day. Sadly, he woke up the next morning and didn't hear any engines. The fog was so heavy that the mission had been scrubbed. After trying to talk to each member, but receiving no answer, the gunner thought, "My God, they've all bailed out and left me up here all alone." He bailed out and broke his collarbone. He took a lot of ribbing on that occasion.

They flew at high altitudes and wore heavy suits and gloves that were heated. Glenn was the radio operator, but also served as the Medic. They had to wear oxygen masks of course, and the planes weren't pressurized. They talked to each other through microphones in the masks. Once Glenn was frantically summoned by one of the crew who thought his ear had been shot off. Glenn crawled to him in the midsection of the plane, took off his glove and reached up under the man's helmet. The guy's ear had been more or less folded over and had gone numb, but thankfully there was no wound.

My brother only told us these funny stories, but never talked about the horrors he and the others saw. He came home at age 23 much changed. He didn't laugh as much, and he seemed depressed and quick to become angry. We didn't realize the depth of his troubles. One lovely thing happened when he took me to the Minute Inn for cheeseburgers and cherry Cokes, then we went to the drugstore and he bought me a Sundae, and we took a long walk all through our neighborhood. He said that's what winning the war was about, being able to go to the drive-in and drugstore with his kid sister and the freedom to enjoy it. I never forgot that, and I told my own children about his time in the service.

After Glenn's honorable discharge, he stayed home about four weeks, getting

back in touch with friends and quietly enjoying the town. But he was anxious to return to the University of Texas to finish his education and get on with life. Marriage and two sons followed. He became an excellent geologist, but his deep troubles persisted.

He still laughed at times and was called 'Hap' once again, but there was a terrible sadness that never left him. The ties of friendships from high school and college he kept, but there were many friends who had died during the war, and he grieved for them and their families. In time his own tolls of tragedies and nightmares took even more joy from him. One of his sons died at age 7; and my oldest son, Bruce Crumpler, died in 1979. Bruce had been stationed at RAF Alconbury during his time in the Air Force, and he and Glenn had corresponded often about that.

Glenn and I remained close through those sad times, and a month before he took his life in 1983, we spent several days, just talking about the old days before WWII and some of the happier times we had had growing up.

After his death, when I cleaned out his storage place, I found boxes of letters he had kept for years, letters from me and Mother, letters from friends and others; and it made me realize once again, what a precious and caring person he was. I found his Air Medal and other decorations, his discharge and some photos from those war years.

I remembered the last time I saw him; and while he had laughed, his eyes were so sad. The World War II hero finally went home and was at peace.

*T/Sgt. Howeth flew five of his 30 missions with the 44th BG. Roger Fenton believes his other 30 missions were with the 392nd. In the short time he was with the 44th, he flew with **Donald L. Clark, M. H. Keilman, J. E. Pennypacker; and with John Delach as Command Pilot.***

THE SICILIAN CAMPAIGN FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF A NAVY MAN

The 44th 'stood down' on the day that this event took place, but it involved a B-24, so here is his story: Bill Elder served with a USCG crew on LCI (L) 89 in the Mediterranean and Normandy, so he looked up and at different times and saw lots of B-24's. Here is what he wrote about an incident in the Sicily Campaign:

About D+1730 (D-Day), Flotilla 4 departed from the transport area with 20 of our vessels, returning to Bizerte to bring in more troops. We sailed unescorted by naval ships, leaving the Gala Gulf waters under the cover of darkness.

On our return trip the next morning, I was on watch again, sighting one of our bombers, a B-24 Liberator, at 0915, 11 July 1943, flying low over the water. I reported it to the O.D. on the fly bridge. They also had spotted the bomber limping home. As we watched the bomber, escorted by a fighter plane, a Spitfire with American markings, it finally ditched into the water several miles from us. The fighter plane came over to our convoy, circled around us, and flew back to the ditched bomber. It kept circling around us and the ditched bomber.

The Captain and Commander Unger came to the bridge and directed us to depart from the convoy to rescue the downed airmen. We changed course to our port on the bearing I logged. As we left the convoy the fighter plane swooped down over us with a burst of fire from his guns, dipping his wings, banking around and then flying off to the south. We were just off the coast of Tunisia's Cape Bon.

Approaching the area where the bomber ditched, we found the airmen with their yellow rubber raft. They were waving their hands. Boy, were they happy to see us! The water was very choppy, a fresh breeze with two- and-a-half to three foot waves. This condition made it hard to maneuver the flat bot-

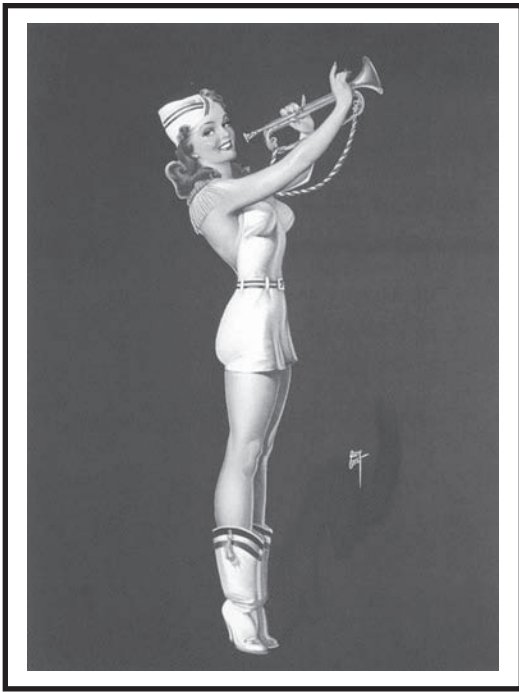
tommed ship near enough for us to get a line to the airmen. I said to the Captain, "Let me swim out to get them". He gave me the OK to do it.

Getting down on the main deck, kicking off my shoes and getting out of my coveralls, I directed Karner, as I tied a heaving line around my waist, to keep tying heaving lines to my line as I swam out to the rafts, and told him I'd signal him when to pull us in. As I got to the first raft, one of the airmen, injured, lay in the raft. His legs had the flesh torn up from the shrapnel, bleeding, with the flesh floating with the movement of the water in the raft. It made me sick; but I got control of myself, pulling that raft as I swam over to the other raft. There was another airman badly injured in this raft. I got hold of it, lying on my back, holding the two rafts, signaling Karner to pull us in.

When I got to the ship, the crew had the rope ladder over the side. Doc had the litter ready to pick up the injured men. The five airmen not injured scrambled up the ladder. Karner jumped into the water to help me get the injured airmen into the litter. Doc treated the injured men. The crew got the other airmen out of their wet and into dry clothing. They settled down with hot coffee and something to eat.

We finally caught up to the LCI's as they were entering Port Bizerte. At 1330 we tied up at the dock. The air force ambulance was waiting, and they took the airmen up to the base hospital. Our good deed for the day had been completed.

These men must have been with the 9th Air Force, which was also involved in the Sicilian Campaign. I hope one of that crew will read this, and learn who was their savior that day. Bill Elder is writing a book about his war experience. Perhaps more encounters with B-24's may surface.



Arlo Bartsch, Webmaster of the 44th Bomb Group's Web Page, and creator of the 44th BGVA's Database, wishes to thank all the members who sent kind messages to him through his recent illness.

Because of Arlo and the late Will Lundy, the history of the 44th BG has gone around the world, and will be available for historians centuries from now.

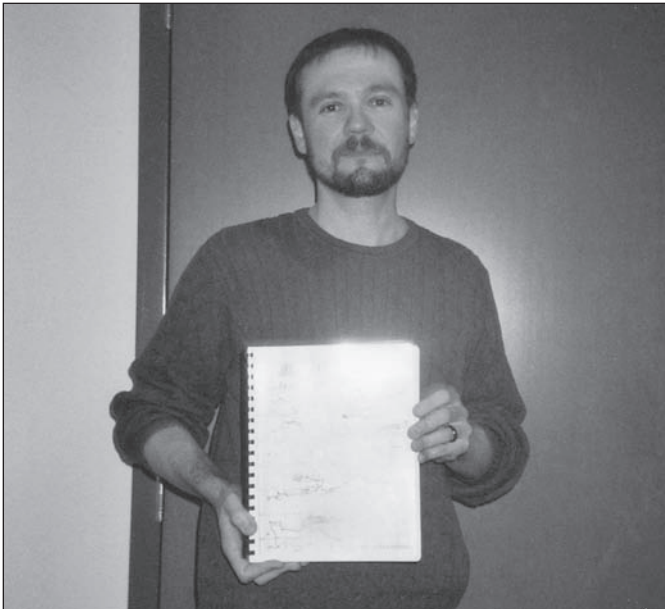
At this late date, other groups are trying to capture the memories of WWII veterans. Both Will and Arlo were both visionaries who could look into the future and see a need for their knowledge and skills. We all pray for Arlo's return to health.

Remember these signs?

She kissed the hairbrush
By mistake;
She thought it was her
Husband Jake.
BURMA SHAVE

Speed was high
Weather was not
Tires were thin
X marks the spot.
BURMA SHAVE

'THE LIBERATORS THAT NEVER RETURNED'



Gregory Statler, Registrar at the Heritage Library in Carlisle, accepted Peter Loncke's well-researched book about the casualties at Wesel on Easter Sunday, 24 March 1945. Loncke's book, 'The

Liberators That Never Returned', encompasses not only the losses of the two planes from the 44th, but the losses of every plane from every bomber group that participated, along with a personal account of every airman involved.

The 44th lost all members of the **Leonard Crandell** crew, flying in K-Bar. In **Max Chandler's** crew, flying in *Southern Comfort IV*, seven were KIA; **Bob Vance** and **Louis DeBlasio** were injured and became POW. *Joplin Jalopy* lost one crew member, but returned to Shipdham.

One P-47 pilot, John Delaney, lost his plane, was injured and became POW. He was diving at the anti-aircraft guns that were knocking out the B-24's.

Loncke is a Belgium airman who began studying crash sites and contacting the families of those who were lost. Later he married the niece of **Leonard Crandell**, and has become an American citizen.

Peter Bodle, correspondent to the *8 Ball Tails* for the Shipdham Flying Club, sent copies of two signs that have been erected at the 44th BG's old airfield.

This Garden was created with the kind permission and participation and participation of Mrs. Eileen May Paterson.

THIS MEMORIAL GARDEN IS DEDICATED TO THE MEN WHO SERVED AT SHIPDHAM (Station 115)

1942 – 1945

**From the History of the 68th Squadron by Webb Todd:
2 March 1944 Frankfurt/Main, Germany
It was not a good day...**

The site of a piston ring factory here was attacked by only a portion of the planes from the 44th. Bad weather caused the failure. A Target of Opportunity could not be located to be bombed, so many of the A/C came back with their bomb load; ten had bombed the briefed target with unobserved results. Some accurate flak was encountered near the target area, and several A/C landed away from the base due to the damage sustained. One aircraft piloted by Lt. **Robert E. Rose**, crash-landed with four dead engines, caused by a failure of the fuel transfer system. The crash was not marred by any injuries, and the A/C was in repairable condition.

Here is the report from the Co-Pilot on that mission, Lt. James Williams:

We were on our eleventh mission. Shortly after passing the French coast on the way home, the No. 4 engine suddenly quit, causing us to fall out of the group formation. After switching to cross feed, we finally got the engine operation over England, so it was too risky to dump the bomb load. We headed for Shipdham, maintaining 7,000 ft. just under the existing cloud layer. Approximately 30 minutes later, all four engines quit. Three airfields were in sight that an emergency landing could have been made. Just about a 1,000 feet from the end of the runway, a B-17 taxied onto the runway we were lined up on, so our only alternative was to land on the grassy infield. Just as we touched down on the grassy infield, the B-17 broke ground on its takeoff some 20 feet between wingtips. Even though the brakes were locked, there was little, if any, braking action. We hit a hedgerow on the airfield boundary, then a rock fence which folded the left landing gear and brought the aircraft to a stop. All crew members immediately

abandoned the aircraft safely. Since all of the fuel had been used or lost, the likelihood of a fire was diminished. To my knowledge, no other aircraft ever successfully made an emergency landing with 4 dead engines and a load of bombs. This occurred at Thorpes Abbott, England, the home of the *Bloody Hundredth* B-17 Bomb Group.

And speaking of 'close shaves', here's another colorful memory of James Williams:

Lt. General "Jimmy" Doolittle assumed command of the 8th Air Force near the 1st of January 1944. Considerable changes were made in the operating procedures immediately. Some which affected the combat crews were: 1. Bombing missions would be permitted to make predawn takeoff. 2. 30 second intervals between each aircraft taking off. 3. Maintain radio silence.

Each aircraft was permitted to have his HF radio tuned to the tower frequency. However, with radio silence, there was no method to verify that the HF radio was set on the control tower frequency. Always there was at least two aircraft lined up behind the take-off aircraft ready to go at their 30 second interval.

Such was the case of the aircraft in front of me. He had added full throttles; which indicated to me, it would mean a normal take-off was being made, but such was not the circumstance. He decided to abort his take-off, but no word was forthcoming on either our HF or VH radios.

Our crew procedures on blackout take-offs were to have the pilot keep an outside view of the runway and the dimmed runway lights. The engineer would be located immediately behind the pilot and co-pilot to continuously call our airspeed until the 'gear-up' command was given.

In this instance, the engineer had just called out one hundred when the cockpit was lit up by a red light from the control tower. I immediately looked down the runway, and sure enough, there was a B-24 right in the middle of the runway! The blue lights on the horizontal stabilizer were so close, there was not room to do anything other than to haul back on the control wheel.

Although there was no indication that we had made contact, there sure was some doubt in my mind. Our aircraft reacted immediately and was airborne instantly; so obviously we were above flying speed. We went on to complete the mission without further incidence. Upon our return, and immediately after the engines had stopped, our engineering officer was quickly examining each propeller blade for nicks or any other damage. I saw him, poked my head out the cockpit window and told him, "We saw

the aircraft on the runway, and was sure we missed it."

In the final analysis, the third aircraft behind us nicked the horizontal stabilizer of that aborting aircraft on the runway. The tower made no further effort to warn any other aircraft that was behind us.

There were other incidents during my 50 missions that, other than with the Grace of God, could we have survived.

*The crew that flew through these events were: **Robert E. Rose**, Pilot; **James Williams**, Co-Pilot; **Max Zuckerman**, Navigator; **Alfred Shella**, Bombardier; **Frank F. Fara**, Radio Operator; **William Kustinavage**, Engineer & Top Turret Gunner; **Frank Sammarco**, Waist Gunner; **George Belsky**, Waist Gunner, **Vincent Lopez**, Ball Turret Gunner; **Carlos Collins**, Tail Gunner. The Original Navigator **George Blumenthal** was killed in a bicycle accident on the first day of arrival to Shipdham.*

WAR IS GETTING MORE EXPENSIVE

According to the Wall Street Journal, the Pentagon is considering buying 2,458 of the F-35 Lightning II aircraft for the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps from Lockheed. The cost will be \$300 billion plus \$650 billion to maintain and operate them well into this century. The average cost will average \$122 million each in current dollars.

Consider this: according to **Bob Lehnhausen**, the cost of one F-35 would nearly buy 35 B-24's @\$350,000 each. That is exactly the number of B-24's that made up the original 35 aircraft of the 44th. The 66th, 67th and 68th each had nine aircraft per squadron as part of the original air echelon. The 506th joined the group later in early march, 1943, with eight aircraft.

As Commander of the 68th Squadron, it was Lehnhausen's duty to 'sign off' on each B-24 that was lost. Small wonder, the cost of a Lightning II astounded him!

A BIT OF TRIVIA

When General Eisenhower was planning to invade Sicily, he felt the need to first take the small island of Pantelleria. Winston Churchill bet there would be only a few Italians on the island, and said he would pay five centimes each for any over 3,000. Actually, there were 11,000. Churchill figured out one twentieth of a cent for each of the over-age and paid Ike at their next meeting.



1.
They came over to England
From their land across the sea,
To help defeat an enemy
In the fight to make us free.

2.
Old England became an airfield
With twenty thousand planes or more,
To help ease the burden
And even up the score.

3.
Those who came to fly them
Young ones from city and every town,
Said, we may still be boys
But we wont let you down.



4.
Across the whole of Europe
Nazi evil spread its threat,
Engulfing many nations
Its will, they had to accept.

5.
The aim itself was simple
Destroy the Nazi scourge,
But achieving the objective
Required more than easy words.

6.
Each day began with breakfast
Before the breaking of the dawn,
Then came the tension of the briefings,
To determine the target they had drawn.



7.
They flew missions each and every day
Not knowing which would be their last,
They fought to ease the pain
Of a world in war's vice like grasp.

8.
For freedom they flew on bravely
Daily risking limb and life,
Hoping to bring about deliverence
From an agonising strife.

9.
Their effort was unswerving
They did not turn their backs,
They took off every morning
To press home their attacks.



10.
To Hell and back each and every day
Flying in mist fog or sun,
The young men of America
Fought till the battle was won.

11.
The price some paid for victory
Left families without father or son,
But each and every man
Knew the duty had to be done.

12.
When peace at long last came
And the sun began to set,
All the people of England said
The mighty Eighth, had given of its best.

Composed by Geoff E Draycott

44th BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

By Lee Aston, Director

NEW ASSISTANT SECRETARY OF THE AIR FORCE IS 44TH BOMB GROUP'S FORMER (1944) C.O., COL. JOHN (JACK) H. GIBSON'S SON



Col. John (Jack) H. Gibson,
C.O. 44th BG (1944)

Although Brigadier General Gibson folded his wings on January 19, 2005, his wife, Ruth Gibson and the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association take great pride in announcing the appointment of Brig. Gen. Gibson's son, the Honorable John (Jay) H. Gibson, II, as the new Assistant Secretary of the Air Force, in January 2008.

AF Asst. Secretary Gibson has accepted the 44BGVA's invitation to make the belated WWII medal awards at the October Reunion at the Army War College.



Asst. Sec. AF John H. Gibson, II
and AF Sec. Michael W. Wynne



Brig. Gen. John H. Gibson
1918- 2005



Present at the Pentagon installation ceremony L to R, back row: Air Force Secretary, the Honorable Michael W. Wynne; AF Asst. Sec., the Honorable John H. Gibson II; front row: (mother) Mrs. Ruth Gibson, son Davis Gibson (12), wife, Laurie, son Holden (15).

CAPT. HOLMER RECEIVES DFC/OLC#1 AND AIR MEDAL FROM NEVADA GOV. GIBBONS

On December 2, 2007, at an annual awards event at the Nevada Air National Guard Base, Reno, Nevada, December 2, 2007, the Governor of Nevada Jim Gibbons presented Capt. Ernest C. Holmer, of Reno, Nevada, 67th Squadron and a Lead Pilot (1944-Feb.1945) with his second DFC and Air Medal/OLC#5.



* * * *

LT. COL. W. TOM HOLMES RECEIVES FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR FROM HOUSTON, TEXAS CONSULATE

On his 89th birthday, February 4, 2008, Col. Tom Holmes was presented with the highest French combat medal and was inducted into the French Legion of Honor as a Chevalier/ Knight. Col. Holmes flew 25 missions with the 68th Squadron, including Ploesti on which he was a target leader. Following Tom's accidental fall in 2007, the presentation was made at Tom's rehabilitation center in Austin, Texas, by the Vice Consul General Matthieu Clouvel from the Houston, Texas Consulate. On the day of the medal presentation, Tom's wife Nida gave a birthday party for her husband. A number of family members and friends were present to help make it a joyous occasion.



Major Tom Holmes
1943-44



French Vice Consul Matthieu Clouvel pins the Legion of Honor medal on Tom Holmes as Nida Holmes watches.



Capt. Tom Holmes
1943



Nida and Tom Holmes with French Vice Consul Matthieu Clouvel
at Tom's 89th birthday party, Austin, Texas, February 4, 2008.

* * * *

BABETTE BRANDON RECEIVES MAJOR GEN. WILLIAM H. BRANDON'S FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL *POST HUMOUSLY*

Maj. Gen. William (Bill) H. Brandon, was approved to receive France's highest combat medal, the Legion of Honor. Due to his demise, February 24, 2007, a *post humous* presentation to his wife, Babette Brandon, had to be arranged. The *post humous* presentation to Babette Brandon was made at the French Consulate in Houston, Texas, on February 26, 2008 by the Houston French Consul General Pierre Grandjouan. Former Captain Brandon flew 22 missions with the 68th Squadron starting in December 1942. Maj. Brandon was Pilot for Col. Johnson's lead ship on the Ploesti mission and received the Distinguished Service Cross for that mission.



Bill Brandon
ca. 2002

Capt. Brandon
ca 1942-43



Mrs. Babette Brandon receives Maj. Gen. Brandon's
Legion of Honor medal from French Consul Gen.
Pierre Grandjouan.



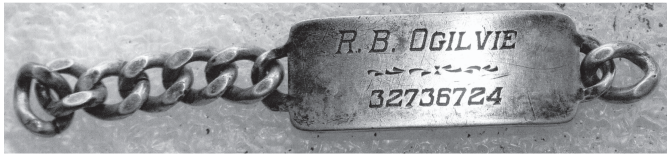
MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Peter Loncke:**

The story of B-24 K-Bar from Lt. **Leonard Crandell** and his crew is well known within the 44th family. The whole crew had lost their lives on Operation Varsity, the low level supply mission in support of our airborne troops at Wesel on 24 March 1945.

Last spring, however, a new chapter was added.

A young German boy called Mario Bollarth had been searching the crash site with his metal detector. He had found a silver bracelet with the name and service number of **S/Sgt. Ogilvie** engraved on it. **S/Sgt. R. B. Ogilvie** was the engineer of the crew.



As Joe and Barbara Crandell from Groveland, Illinois had left a memorial plate dedicated to the crew at that crash site, they also had left their home address on the back of the crew photograph that was placed next to the memorial plate.

Mario wrote a letter to Joe and Barbara and included photographs of the bracelet, and asked if they had an address of the Ogilvie family, so he could return the bracelet to them.

Unfortunately, the Crandells never had the pleasure of meeting the Ogilvie family, but that was soon to change...

Peter and Connie, Joe and Barbara's daughter and their son-in-law went back to Germany in March 2008 to visit Mario and bring the bracelet back to the USA.

Once home, they put all their efforts in tracing back any relative of S/Sgt. Ogilvie. With the help of the historical society of Auburn, NY they were able to locate his only sister Elizabeth, who still lived, well in her 80's now, at the same village for all those years.

The reactions of Elizabeth hearing that her brother's bracelet was found in

Germany left her dazed and confused at first. As she and her brother were only a few years apart in age, she still has a lot of memories of her brother. All these emotions were suddenly brought back to her, without any warning, when she got the news that his bracelet was found.

The bracelet, together with the full story of her brother's last mission, was sent to her by the Crandell family. Elizabeth got it in the mail, just before Memorial Day 2008.

Connie and Peter made a short stop in July at the Ogelvie's residence in Auburn New York. It was the first time that the Ogilvie family met a family member of one of her brother's crew. Peter donated Elizabeth and her husband Earle a copy of his book "The Liberators Who Never Returned.", including the detailed story of her brother's final mission. Photographs were brought to light which had been stored for years, letters were re-opened and read. The visit ended with a trip to the local cemetery where S/Sgt. Ogilvie was buried. It was an emotional and warm reunion with the satisfaction of returning the bracelet home.

Thank you Mario Bollrath...!!!



From **Forrest S. Clark:** A new book about WWII is sweeping the nation as a best seller, based on research by British author Martin W. Bowman. *Clash of Eagles* tells the story of the US 8th AF in the battles with the German Luftwaffe in WWII.

Bowman's research included interviews with German and American fliers in the Orlando and Kissimee area. He flew in a WWII A/C and attended air shows in the area. Clark's recollections are included in the book.

The book is available from Amazon.com for discount \$19.65





FOLDED WINGS

*Long I've been tossed like the driven foam;
But now, proud world! I'm going home.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Delaney, John 406 Fighter Group 513 Sq. 25 April 2008 Lt. Delaney became a member of the 44th BG after being introduced to the membership as a defender of B-24's on Operation Varsity. At that time bombers were dropping supplies to British Paratroopers who had just crossed the Rhine River on 24 March 1945. Delaney was a P-47 Fighter Pilot. His leader had been shot down and was murdered by German civilians. Although other members of his group had turned back, Delaney decided to make one more strafing pass at the anti-aircraft guns that were bringing down the B-24s. The flak gunners hit his A/C, he was flown from the plane, was caught in the slipstream, then thrown back into the cockpit head first. He struggled free from the rolling plane, but his leg was broken when struck by the tail. Immediately he was captured by the German infantry.

Delaney was joined by two gunners from *Southern Comfort III*, **Robert Vance** and **Louis DeBlasio**. They were POWs for ten days until Patton's Army came through Achmer and liberated them.

After being freed, Vance and DeBlasio had no knowledge of their fellow prisoner until a Belgium airman, Peter Loncke, began studying the crashes of Operation Varsity. He located the three participants, and they met for the first time at the 44th BG Reunion in Washington, D.C.

Delaney and his wife Margaret resided in Asbury, New Jersey. They have two daughters and one son who is in the Air National guard.

On the mission to Wesel, two 44th planes were lost, seventeen men were KIA; 3 became POW, counting Delaney.

Dregne, Bernard C. Lt. Dregne does not appear in the 44th Database. **Frank Schaeffer** found his obituary in the Wisconsin State Journal. The article says that he was a Flight Control Officer with the 44th BG, so he must have told his family of his wartime record. Does anybody remember him?

Dunkle, Ernest J. #20078 67th Squadron 23 June 2007 T/Sgt. Dunkle served as a Waist Gunner, Ball Turret Gunner and Nose Gunner/Togglier in his 28 missions beginning 27 April 1944. In most of his missions, he was reported as 'Other' in the Database.

Most of his missions he flew in *Old Iron Corset*; a few in *Sabrina III*. He flew with a total of fifteen different pilots: **Charles Arnold, Lewis Vance, James Struthers, Clarence Inman, Joseph Kuklewicz, R. W. Bethel, Louis Confer, Christopher Spagnola, O. Collins, Ernest Kyle, Robert Chaille, Leslie W. Lee, Jr., Raymond Zamoni, Leonard Louik and Milton Mauro.**

Dunkle flew on the last mission of the 44th BG to Hallein, Austria, 25 April 1945. His death was reported by his wife and son.

Figus, Fred #20488 68th Squadron 27 January 2008 Sgt. Figus was a Gunner. He flew a total of three missions, the first on 15 September 1943, the last on the awesome mission to Wiener-Neustadt, 1 October 1943. He flew in *Avenger* and *Margaret Ann* with the crews of **Ben H. Gildart and W. D. Hughes.**



FOLDED WINGS

Guilford, George W. #20488 68th Squadron 28 May 2008 **Robert Lehnhausen** remembers George as one who had an unusual term of distinguished service with the 68th Squadron. "He joined the 44th while they were stationed at Barksdale Field, LA. While in training mode there, they were also assigned submarine patrol over the Gulf of Mexico. On one of these patrols on 10 July 1942 the crew of **Robert Norsen**, with Guilford as the bombardier, spotted the wake of a sub periscope. They responded immediately and Sergeant Guilford delivered a stick of bombs that resulted in their claim of success. This attack is described on Page 10 of **Webb Todd's History of the 68th**.

"George was one of the five enlisted bombardiers that served in the early months of the war with the 68th. All of the nine original crews of the 68th had a commissioned officer as a bombardier. When I arrived in mid March 1943, only three of those nine were still on combat status. (*La Fleur, Klekar* and *Light*). Of the other six, three had been KIA, **Crawford, Grant** and **Keilman**. **Glass** was a POW, while **Flynn** and **Gavin** had been WIA and never returned to combat. **Bob LaFleur** was later KIA on 2 July 1943. You might ask, 'Does anyone want to be a bombardier?'

"I relate this sad tale to emphasize that the five enlisted bombardiers became very valuable to the effort. All served with distinction. None came with the air echelon. While I have not researched the others, Guilford came to the UK with the ground echelon on the Queen Mary.

"George flew his first four missions as a gunner. On the Diversionary Mission of 1 May 1943 he flew his first mission as a bombardier. He was assigned to the crew

of **George Jansen**. That must have been a very good relationship. George was a superb pilot and very demanding of his crew members. Guilford remained Jansen's bombardier until Jansen became the Squadron Operations Officer and no longer had a crew.

"Guilford, as a member of the Jansen crew, flew both of the brutal missions, Kiel and Ploesti, for which the 44th was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation. This significant honor was only awarded 27 times in the 8th's WWII European history.

"**Coleman Whitaker** had become Jansen's co-pilot. After Jansen ascended within the Squadron, a few more of the senior pilots flew as pilot of that crew. The real purpose was to 'check out' Coleman. After two such check rides, there was agreement that Whitaker should succeed Jansen as the pilot of that fine unit. They were on their third mission under Whitaker's leadership when they flew the 1 October 1943 to Weiner-Neustadt.

"Coleman Whitaker and the fine young crew took a direct burst of German flak over the target. The famed **Black Jack** which they were flying exploded. This tragic end resulted in five of the young Yanks being KIA. Guilford and four others survived and became POW's.

"I salute the uncommon courage of George Guilford. In my eagerness to relate the above, I almost overlooked that on 27 January 1943 mission to Wilhelmshaven, while flying as a gunner on the crew of **Jim O'Brien**, Guilford was wounded. Here I would like to stress that he continued to fly when scheduled in whatever role his superiors deemed necessary, never complaining.

"We bid farewell to an heroic patriot."
According to the Database, T/Sgt. Guilford flew in *Bat Outa Hell, Rugged*



FOLDED WINGS

Buggy, Victory Ship, Margaret Ann, Lemon Drop, Margaret Ann II/Satan's Hellcats, Calaban and Black Jack. The crews with him he flew on his 24 missions were: **Roy Erwin, James O'Brien, Robert Norsen, Walter Holmes, James Jansen, Baxter Weant and Coleman Whitaker.**

Guilford resided in Ocala, Florida.

Hansen, Joseph L. #20539 506 Squadron 15 February 2008 Sgt. Hansen was a gunner on the **Thomas McGuire** crew. His first of eight missions was 1 August 1944. The crew flew in **Flying Log/Pregnant Peg, My Gal Sal and Ole Cock.** On a mission to Juvencourt, France 12 August 1944 the plane was hit by flak, causing #3 engine to fail. Loss of fuel forced the plane to crash. Three members of the crew were KIA; five, including Hansen, were POW, two were able to successfully evade.

Holman, Frank Gormley #20703 68th Squadron 12 March 2008 T/Sgt Holman was the Radio Operator on a number of crews. He flew with **Joseph V. Principe, James R. Collins, Jack R. Liebrich, Wyman M. Bridges, Ray Suddreth and Herman J. Eckstein.** He flew in **Battlin' Baby, Patsy Ann II, Fearless Fosdick, Channel Hopper, V for Victory, T. S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Flak Magnet, Lone Ranger and Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch.** On D-Day Holman went on two missions; Colleville/St. Laurent and Caen/Vire. His last of 32 missions was 29 November 1944.

After WWII he attended the University of Texas at Austin. After completing his education, he and his brother opened the Holman Airport (now Kickapoo) and Holman Aviation in Wichita Falls, Texas.

He eventually went into the oil and gas business.

He and his wife, Jean Gathright, had three sons, eight grandchildren and ten great grandchildren. They resided in Dallas, Texas.

Hunn, Spencer Simmons #23237 66th Squadron 27 June 2008 Captain Hunn's first mission was January 5 1943, flying with the **Robert Abernathy** crew in **Forky II.** That crew, with **Leon Johnson** as Command Pilot, went to Kiel; later he flew with **Dexter Hodge** as CP, to the submarine base at Bordeaux. On his fifth mission he became Co-Pilot on the **Charles Hughes** crew. Among his many missions with Hughes was Ploesti. After leaving the target, enemy fighters and small ground fire damaged the left stabilizer of **Flossie Flirt**; fuel was low, and the pilot was forced to opt for Turkey and captivity. Six weeks later they were able to escape and return to flying status.

Upon returning to Shipdham, Hunn flew with **Kenneth Jewel** and **John H. Diehl** as CP, after which he became a Command Pilot. On D-Day he flew as CP to Colleville/St. Laurent with Captain **Paulino Urgarte.**

In all, Hunn flew in eight different A/C: **Forky II, Queen Anne, Flossie Flirt, Pistol Packin' Mama, Big Fat Butterfly, Chief & Sack Artists, M'Darling and Phyllis.**

He remained in the Air Force, retiring with the rank of Brigadier General. He graduated from the University of Utah, later earned a Master's degree at Purdue University. After retirement, he worked for the Federal Aviation System, and was in charge of Air Traffic Control Systems. Hunn and his wife Mary have two living children. They resided in Orem, Utah.



FOLDED WINGS

Kelly, Absolam Harrison #20901 68th Squadron 31 March 2008 T/Sgt. Kelly was a Radio Operator/Gunner on the **Arnold Larson** crew. His first of nine flights was 11 April 1944. The Larson crew flew on *Mary Harriet*, *Patsy Ann II* and *Northern Lass*.

On 9 May 1944, on a mission to St. Trond/Brustrem Airfield in Belgium, bombs exploded prematurely over the target, setting the bomb bay on fire. Five members of the crew bailed out, Kelly included. Along with four others, he became POW. (The Engineer was able to evade capture, and returned to duty.)

The remaining crew managed to put the flames out. 1st Lt. Larson was able to bring the plane back to England. Some of the crew bailed out over England. Larson crash-landed *Northern Lass* at Attelboro.

Taylor, William Barrett #22275 Group Adjutant 21 March 2008 Major (later Colonel) Taylor served first with the 93rd Bomb Group, later was transferred to the 44th BG and the 14th Combat Wing.

Taylor's history is not on the Database. **Bob Lehnhausen** remembers him as being extremely well groomed and with exceptional military bearing. He came to the 44th as a Captain, but when the group returned from Africa, he had moved up to Major.

Lehnhausen stated that when **Leon Johnson** was made commander of the 14th Wing, and he established that command headquarters on a living site at Shipdham, Barrett became the Adjutant for that unit, presumably until the end of the ETO conflict.

"In January 1944, I was sent to 44th Group Operations and a few months later was named to lead the 68th Squadron," he explained. "The transfer to headquarters changed my mess assignment for the balance of my stay in Shipdham, or through

May 1945. The norm was that the flying officers mess, at the Colonel's table. In the evening those same officers were expected to eat at the Colonel's table in the ground officers mess, in class A uniform.

"The exception there was if you had flying duty at that time of the evening meal, you were excused.

"It was only then that I got to know Barrett Taylor. I had occasion to visit with him. I found him to be dedicated to his task, and that he exhibited admirable loyalty to General Johnson. I had to assume that the General was pleased and impressed with his abilities.

I was aware that Barrett had chosen to remain in the Air Force and assumed that he spent a great deal of that time with General Johnson. I believe this relationship was beneficial for both and also for the Air Force. We did have a chance to visit during the times that he attended the 44th reunions in recent years. His striking appearance and military carriage had not declined. Barrett Taylor was a very impressive person."

Colonel Taylor became Assistant Chief of Staff at the Air Force Academy, having been very involved in the legislation which led to the separation of the Air Force from the Army. Later assignments involved work in Washington DC, Spain and the Middle East. After retirement he was employed by Douglas Aircraft, retiring in 1975.

Taylor graduated from the University of Tennessee in 1941; later the University of Florida College of Law; he also attended Oxford University.

While in Europe he married Gwendoline Madge Abbott who expired 18 January 1991. The couple resided in Tampa, Florida. They had one daughter and three sons, one of whom is a Marine Corps Captain. He left ten grandchildren and three great-grandchildren. He will be buried at Arlington.

