

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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LITTLE BEAVER

Little Beaver was one of the early planes of the war. She arrived in Shipdham around 20 September 1942, and was assigned to the 67th Squadron. She flew a total of 19 missions, some of them into the earliest and most deadly missions of that period of the war. All but one of her missions was with 1st Lt. **Chester Phillips** as pilot and Lt. **William Cameron** as Co-Pilot. *Little Beaver* flew to Dunkirk, targeting the German Radar Ship, Tojo. The next day she went to St. Nazaire, France; then Wilhelmshafen, Vegesack in Germany, Rouen in France, Rotterdam in Holland and Antwerp in Belgium, plus a number of Diversionary Flights.



On April 16, with the same crew, Lt. Cameron moved over to the pilot's seat and took *Little Beaver* to Brest, the dock area in France. Major **Howard Moore** flew as Co-pilot.

May 14, 1943 brought *Little Beaver* to the Krupp Submarine Works at Kiel, Germany, located on the Baltic Sea. **Chester Phillips** was flying with a new Co-Pilot, **Wilborn Everett**. *Little Beaver* and four other 44th BG planes were lost; one was abandoned; 25 men were KIA; 4 were WIA, 24 became POW; 1 man evaded, then was KIA. (Will Lundy reported these figures from official documents. They differ a bit from Walter Holmes recollections, reported in Vol. 9, Issue 2 of the 8 Ball Tails.)

Enemy losses were notable: twenty-one fighters were destroyed, thirteen probables, one damaged.

Kiel was the 44th's toughest mission to date. For its success, the Group was awarded its first of two Distinguished Unit Citations.

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LITTLE BEAVER

Sgt. Michael Denny, Engineer on *Little Beaver*, wrote from his POW Camp, "We were hit after we left the target. Two bursts in the back, also knocked out one engine; then a burst in back of our Navigator (**Thomas E. Bartmess**). The entire inside of the flight deck was a mass of flames. It must have hit the hydraulic fluid in the accumulator positioned there. We went into a flat spin – had a Hell of a time standing on my feet and putting on my parachute. Tried to put out the fire, but was impossible. Could not get doors (Bomb bay Doors) open, so I had to fight my way back to the rear windows to get out. Bailed out at about 800 feet. Was the last one to leave the plane, and saw it crash and burn."



Members of Little Beaver's crew, not individually identified.

S/Sgt. **Charles C. Forehand** (Waist Gunner) states, "I remember Tommy Bartmess well – he was a very good officer and navigator. We were looking forward to making the 25th mission soon and coming home. The day we were shot down, the anti-aircraft flak was very heavy and accurate; fighters were everywhere we looked. I was flying as waist gunner that day, and we were hit by flak, were on fire. After that, things went so fast, I don't know what went on in the front of the plane. That night a German officer told me that three crew members survived, but I never saw any of them. I was captured as soon as I hit the ground and was a POW for two years."

Lt. **William E. Hill**, Bombardier, wrote, "I am the only officer from my crew alive, plus three enlisted men. A 20 mm cannon shell exploded right in the nose of the plane just behind me. I believe having a steel helmet on my head saved my life. My navigator (Bartmess) was first to bail out and I followed. He landed in the water, but was caught in shrouds of parachute and drowned. Fortunately, I stayed with the plane about 3 minutes longer and landed on the beach. Was almost knocked cold by a blow on my forehead as chute opened and again when I landed. However, came out of it all with only a scratch on forehead, sore spine for a few days and a little shock. Germans treat us fine and we have plenty to eat."

Captain **Chester Phillips** (pilot) was killed by a flak burst shortly after leaving the target. (This was his 21st mission) 1st Lt. **Everett Wilborn**, Co-Pilot, was last seen standing on the flight deck, and could have had time to bail out, but he did not survive for reasons unknown. (This was his first and only mission.)

T/Sgt **George Price**, Radio Operator; **Edward Phillips**, Asst. Radio Operator; **Dale Glaubitz**, Assistant Engineer, **Charles Forehand**, Waist Gunner; and **Barney Grabowski**, Tail Turret Gunner must have gone down with the plane, as there is no record of the circumstances of their deaths.

Besides the loss of *Little Beaver*, *Scrappy* (66th Sq.), *Miss Delores* (67th Sq.), *Annie Oakley* (67th Sq.); *Rugged Buggy* (68th Sq.); and *Wicked Witch* (506th Sq.) were also lost.

In his Roll of Honor, **Will Lundy** reported that with the loss of the three planes from the 67th, the Squadron was left with only one aircraft, and it was being overhauled in Northern Ireland – and one make-shift crew.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Time sure flies. Here it is early May and our esteemed editor is ready for my president's message for the summer edition, Seems that I just did one and here Ruth is already putting together the next issue. This is, I believe, the tenth year that Ruth has been doing this along with being Secretary. We sure owe her a huge vote of thanks. The 8 Ball Tails and our reunions are the two things that keep this organization going.

Jerry Folsom reminded me that some would like to come early or stay late, if they knew of other attractions in the Tampa area. We do have Busch Gardens Amusement Park which has many animal , bird and sea life exhibits— Great Lowry Park Zoo— Museum of Science and Industry. All are within 8 miles of our hotel. There are dolphin boat tours out of Tarpon Springs on the Gulf and of course, Disney World -about 60 miles east. The hotel will give us the same rate for 3 nights before and after if space is available.

The last 8 Ball Tails had a notice of the Second Air Division Reunion in Chicago Sept 3-7. Our present 44th organization had its roots in the 2nd AD. In the 70's the 44th usually had the biggest attendance at their reunions. In the early 80's Joe Warth who had been arranging the 44th hospitality room started the 44th Heritage Memorial Group- holding reunions and publishing The Fighting 44th Logbook. Here we are today after some 15 + years of the present 44th BGVA. Our own Dick Butler, now 2ADA VP for the 44th and Past President of the 2ADA, would welcome seeing some of us at their reunion this year. Many years our reunion dates have coincided, but this year is our chance to support him. We do plan to attend and hope to see some of you there.

Last chance to sign up for Tampa. Looking forward to seeing many of you in October.

George Washburn

The picture on page 16 in the **Dale Benadon** story was labeled P-47 Thunderbolt. **'Wrong'** says **Clay Roberts**. **'Wrong'** says **Arlo Bartsch**. Both agreed that it was some kind of a Navy plane, probably a Torpedo Bomber.

Gentlemen: Thanks for the correction.



LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



Hello again from your old East Anglian Base, Station 115.

Well, for once we Brits cannot complain about the weather over here. We have just had a pretty decent Public Holiday ...clear skies and warm sunshine for most of the time. But I guess that was not such a good weather scenario for you when you were here and a good bit of cloud cover was always useful until you got to your target, although I bet the ground crews never complained about a few days of decent conditions to work in.

The 44th Bomb Group Museum opened its doors for start of the regular summer season last weekend, and gave the museum support team the chance to start looking at making work lists for things we would like to see accomplished during the year. Steve Adams loaned us a

wide collection of items for display several years ago, and we have never had the opportunity to catalogue and label them. This year that will be done. We have a B-24 Prop blade on loan, and that needs a solid base made so that it can be displayed properly and not left lying in a corner. (Safe but unimaginative). There are quite a number of additional items that have been promised for the museum, and we will let you know about them as they arrive, and maybe include a photo or two. We were told by both Steve Adams and Paul Wilson (from Hethel Museum) when we started this phase of the Museum's life that this influx of artifacts would happen, and I am pleased to say they have been proved right.

The new surface to the runway 21-03 (it was 20-02 in your day) has proved a great success for local flyers and a steadily increasing flow of visitors are using it, bringing with them the appropriate comments on how much of an improvement it is.

The winter has taken its toll on some of the plants in the Memorial Garden, so Mike and the team will be replacing those that didn't make it through the frost and snow. (And the occasional attention of the local rabbits).

Our air-display season has started over here, and we are lucky enough to have a number of the old warbirds housed fairly locally. This means that we occasionally get to see DC3s, Spitfires and Hurricanes grace our skies. Not to mention Maurice Hammond's Mustangs from Hardwick (he now has two...that's greedy!) and the Mustangs and Thunderbolt from North Weald. The sound of a Rolls Royce Merlin, or a Wright Cyclone never fails to make folks stop dead in their tracks and stare skywards. Long may that continue! We are also on the route for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight, between its base at Coningsby in Lincolnshire, and the East Coast area, where several of the annual Air Displays take place, so it is not unusual to see the Lancaster, Spitfire and Hurricane grace our portion of the Norfolk sky in loose formation.

Jets just don't cut it.

Best wishes from all at your old base in England.

Peter Bodle

BOB HOOPER REMEMBERS KIEL

The Spring issue of the *8 Ball Tails* reported that B-17s dropped incendiaries on B-24s which were flying lower!

"Wrong", says Hooper. "Our group was dropping the incendiaries. We were flying above another group of B-24's. We were dropping incendiaries, and they were flying through them. I could look through the open bomb bay doors, and see the '24s below us. I never saw a single B-17."

The best report of the Kiel Mission was written by Roy Owen in the Summer 1999 issue of the 'Tails'.

Quoting Roy, "Kiel was one of the greatest aerial battles of the War. Both B-17's from the First Air Division and B-24's from the 8th Air Force were assigned, the first time both types of aircraft were sent on the same mission. (The plan was:) The B-17' were first to drop 500 pound HD bombs, to be followed by 100 pound incendiary clusters which were transported by the Liberators.

"Compensating for differences in aircraft performance, Col. **Leon Johnson's** maneuver to avoid the dropping bombs of the higher altitude B-17's led the 44th to greater exposure to German fighters. **As it happened, the incendiaries of the B-24's came apart immediately, so pilots following were forced to spread their formation to avoid colliding with the incendiaries.** The Luftwaffe took full advantage of the altered pattern, and five B-24's in the rear echelons were lost in the target area, one on withdrawal."

So Hooper was right that Liberators dropped the incendiaries; the Tails was right that B-17s flew that mission also.

Bob Lehnhausen can testify that Liberators really did drop incendiaries on the Liberators below them. He was flying in *Miss Virginia* as Co-Pilot with **Wilmer Garrett**, and they were among the group trying to avoid the blazing fire sticks.

Will Lundy's ROH states that 109 Fortresses were to drop high explosives; the 44th were to drop 100-lb. and 500-lb. cluster incendiaries or 'matchsticks', as they were called. 17 B-24's followed the Fortresses. 21 enemy A/C were destroyed; 13 probables and 1 damaged. The 44th lost 5; 1 was abandoned, 9 damaged; 12 men wounded; 51 MIA.

For this successful mission, the Group was awarded it's first of two Unit Citations.

S/SGT. ROBERT HOOPER REMEMBERS GOING FROM FORTS TO LIBERATORS

Hooper was a Ball Turret Gunner on a B-17 with the **George Winger** crew. They came to England by the southern route, with a brief stop over in Trinidad for repairs. That took several days, so the crew slept under the wing, ate any food they could scrounge; and, unfortunately, drank the water. Upon arrival to Bovington, England, the plane was taken from them and they were sent to Shipdham, assigned to the 66th Squadron, and the crew was totally separated.

On 17 May 1943, Hooper's 8th mission was to Bordeaux. They flew first to Davidstown, England on the 16th to be closer to the target, as well as to have complete secrecy from German spies, as well as from their radar. On the morning of the 17th, the A/C took off

for the target, which was to be the longest mission in distance to this date, and it's execution demanded exacting work from all the crew members, especially the Navigators. It was necessary to fly west, out and around the Brest peninsula, and then back east to the target. The Germans were taken completely by surprise & the target was hit with excellent results.

Hooper, usually assigned as a gunner, this time was flying as the Photographer with 1st. Lt. **Ray L. Hilliard** in *Avenger II*. The engine began to malfunction, causing fuel problems before they reached the target. They knew they could not make it back to England, so they opted to go to a neutral country, and Spain was the obvious choice.

Lt. **William T. Auston**, Navigator, described the arrival. "We were flying at a high altitude, looking for a field; and finally saw a fighter base way below us. We were losing altitude as we were down to one engine running. We came in for a landing on their short runway. Lts. (**Ray**) **Hillard** and (**Alfred**) **Damron** had to set their brakes very hard, and we skidded along the runway because we saw a steam roller blocking our path at the end of the strip! No one was injured – a successful landing.

"After our crew was split up, I never flew with same crew twice," Hooper remembered. "On our mission to Bordeaux, after which we crashed in Spain, I did not know a single person on that plane."

Americans were not popular in Spain at that time. During the Spanish Civil War, a brigade of American volunteers had fought against Franco. That was the wrong side, as the Communist party was victorious after a four year struggle.

Avenger II crashed at a small landing strip on the northern Spanish coast, close to Santander. "There we were picked up by the Civil Guard and transported to Leone," Hooper remembered. "We were placed in a jail. Then a Catholic priest got permission to take us to a big cathedral, and down in the basement was the original equipment for torturing prisoners! The blood stains were still on the wall. This priest spoke excellent English – he was born in Chicago! Unfortunately, he had to turn us back to the police after our visit to the cathedral."

After the group was interned, they were allowed to visit a tiny town, where Hooper met a Spanish citizen who was eager to learn English. In return, he taught Hooper to speak Spanish. Having grown up in The Lone Star State, Hooper had conversed with many Mexicans, but the only words he picked up were the bad words! His vocabulary greatly improved with his new friend.

At that time unexpected problems arose for Hooper. Malaria and Amoebic Dysentery struck, undoubtedly from his visit to Trinidad with its limited sleep accommodations and bad water. In addition, all the food in Spain was cooked with olive oil, which aggravated his GI problem. Hooper's weight went from 168 pounds to 135. He got in touch with the American Ambassador in Madrid, who got him to a British hospital in Gibraltar. That was interesting...the famous Gibraltar monkeys roamed free in the hospital, stealing any bite of food they could lay their hands on. Hooper remembered that famous belief of the British: "If the monkeys ever go, Gibraltar will go." No wonder they had such freedom!!!

On August 3rd, the detainees were loaded on a C-47 and flown back to 8th Air Force Headquarters in London. Hooper was sent home with the agreement that he could enter pilot training. Unfortunately, his health problems continued, and he was later discharged.

Hooper was a photographer on his 8th mission - the trip to Bordeaux, having been separated from his original crew upon his arrival to Shipdham. When he returned to England from Spain, sadly, he learned that his crew on *Wing Dinger*, flown by his pilot, **George Winger**, was lost at Ploesti. Only one crewman survived to become POW: Assistant Engineer **Bernard Traudt**.

Bob Hooper recently arranged for copies of the 8 Ball Tails and 44th BG's disk to be accepted into the Nimitz Museum and Library in Fredricksburg, Texas. Originally the museum was devoted exclusively to the Pacific war. Recently they decided to include all of WWII.

THE PLOESTI DISPLAY AT THE MIGHTY EIGHTH

Tom Parsons puts his hand on the Collings Liberator, the last flying B-24 in the world. He earned his name on the plane by supporting the Collings project.

When the Mighty Eighth Museum in Pooler, Georgia, was planning meaningful exhibits, the 44th was eager to be involved. On hand was the President of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, Tom Parsons. Tom worked with the artist, and a dramatic diorama of the Ploesti mission emerged, complete with smoking oil wells and B-24s flying into the blaze. Roy Owen, who was President of the 44th BGVA, wrote a detailed description of the mission, led by Col. Leon Johnson. These words were printed under the diorama.

Roy wanted the words on a tape, so viewers could push a button and hear the description. Once again Tom Parsons came forth to assist. He found a professional radioman, who did it without charge; and when the Curator of the museum completes the current project of re-allocation of space, the Voice-over will be accomplished.

George Washburn is in frequent touch with the Museum, urging the completion of this project. *Time is running out for all of us. Getting the 44th history completed is a compelling task.*



UNFORGETTABLE MOMENTS ABOUT SHIPDHAM:

By Fred J. Marzolph

In the first days of one's military life, you can expect many new and different things; but the most unusual, beastly and cruel things was the 'wake up' call by the sergeant, usually with his very loud metal whistle, and the words, 'Let's go, Let's go!' Lucky for him, we had not yet been issued any firearms or ammunition, so he continued Every morning!

Overseas, at Shipdham, at least in the 506 Squadron, we had a CQ that, on his building, would post a list of crews to fly the next day. In the morning his announcement would make me smile, or at least grin, when he woke us up.

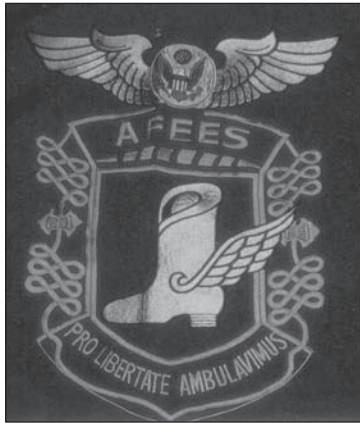
His methods were to open the door and shout out, "Ho Ho, yo ho, you're up to fly the bloody kites today", and then name the crews. Other times it might be his call would say, "Out of the sack, up in the flak' and then name the crews. It was a greeting that made the morning much more bearable.

Marzolph's message came via his old Royal Typewriter, leftover from his years as a journalist in Moline, IL.

"The only difference between a tax man and a taxidermist is that the taxidermist leaves the skin."

Mark Twain

AFEES MEETS AT THE MIGHTY EIGHTH MUSEUM IN POOLER, GEORGIA



AFEES is an organization of WWII veterans, 600 strong, that honors those airmen whose planes went down, but were able to elude the Germans and return to base. It includes families of these evaders and escapees, as well as members of the underground who assisted the airmen.

On 8 August 1944 Scheaffer's plane, *My Peach*, went down approximately 60 miles south of

Paris. He was befriended by the underground who hid him with a family in Orbais L'Abbaye. On 28 August, Patton's army liberated him. Eight members of *My Peach* evaded and returned; 1 became POW, one was WIA.

Dale Lee was also in attendance at the AFEES Reunion. Lee, (also 506 Sq.) was flying in *Southern Comfort* on a mission to Foggia, Italy. The A/C was brought down by fighters, and Lee became POW in an Italian prison. Along with five other escapees, he broke out. They walked 600 miles over the mountains of Italy until they found help from the British, who flew them back to Africa. Jimmy Doolittle pinned DFC's on them for a previous mission — to Ploesti. Of the *Horace*

Austin crew, eight became POW, seven of whom escaped and returned; two were KIA.

Underground members of AFEES who assisted American and British airmen include patriots from Holland, Belgium and France. Most of them have already passed away. Their bravery in helping our veterans should never be forgotten.



Frank Scheaffer (506 Sq.) lights a candle for lost members at the Annual Reunion of the Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society.

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“TOMORROWS MISSION”

By: T/SGT Ernest D. Brown, JR.

WRITTEN SOMETIME IN APRIL 1945 The war in Europe was winding down and soon would be over. Brown was the Flight Engineer/Gunner on a B-24 Liberator Bomber, 44th BG, 67th Sqd, 8th Air Force, flying out of Shipdham, England

It was about 5 o'clock one afternoon when our tail gunner rose from his sack and headed for the door of the "Flack Shack", our humble and modest home. He walked past the Wash Room, Coal Compound, which we frequently visited nocturnally, to illegally replenish the supply for our homemade stove. Arriving at the C.Q. Hut, picked up the mail and a fist full of sulphur pills and returned to the Shack.

Some of us had mail, the rest hopefully looked forward to tomorrow.

But, we all received our sulphur pill to protect us from catching colds. As he entered the door, almost as one, a chorus went up "Are the crews up yet?" Shaking his head, he returned to his sack and started reading a newspaper from home. As the time slowly dragged on, some of the boys returned from the mess hall bearing the glad tidings that Spam was on the menu. One at a time, the boys dragged themselves free from their sacks and rode ¼ mile to "Ptomaine Tavern" on their English bicycles.

About an hour later as the Shack started filling up, the quiet conversation slowly turned from the chow to Piccadilly Circus in London. Some of the boys sat around, a now glowing red stove, writing letters. Others sat in small groups talking about the farm, their girls; but never once did the topic turn to tomorrow's mission.

The evening passed slowly this way, but always pleasant. On the radio drifted out music from the states that had been canned months ago in New York or San Francisco and sent to the Allied Radio Station.

About 10 o'clock, some eggs were frying on the stove and bread along side of it toasting on a conveniently bent coat

hanger. We never stood short when it came to our bedtime snacks. There was always about 5 dozen eggs bought from a near-by farmer for 90 cents a dozen. Along with bread, butter, jam, and peanut butter, stolen from the mess hall.

After we had our full, our radio operator picked up all the letters and carried them over to the pilot's room to have them censored. Stayed awhile to bat the breeze around and then dropped around to mail them. By the time he had returned, most of the fellows were in the sack and thinking. Thinking plenty of home mostly and occasionally their mind drifting off to tomorrow's mission. It's not much fun trying to go to sleep not knowing if it's your turn to fly tomorrow or not. Most of the fellows wanted to be awakened when the crews were posted, even if they were not flying. It seems as though you can sleep much sounder if you know you are not going up.

Usually somebody can't sleep at all, and he'll get up and patiently dress and walk down to once more check on the alerted crews. If any one of us in the Flack Shack were up, he would usually wake up one of us and tell us. It so happens that Kyle's crew was up tomorrow.

Early the next morning, around 2:30 A.M., the C.Q. came charging into the barracks with his little speech. "Brown, Kirby, Lovegren, Rubczak, Rankin, Dye. Briefing 3:30, 2,700 gallons topped off, fresh eggs for breakfast. Okay, let's go!"

It was not until after he had left that these words seemed to linger in the air and slowly penetrated our sleep to once again wake us up into reality. Reality of what? That once again we were to bomb Germany, and that it was going to be a

...continued on page 11

long mission, as foretold to us by the topped off fuel order, max capacity.

We swiftly dressed, quietly we wondered aloud where we were going. Then we stepped out into the fog-led night and quickly realized we were up against the weather as well as the enemy. We caught a truck to the mess hall where we stood in line because it was already beginning to fill up with gunners, radio operators and engineers. Some to eat their last meal and others their last one for about 15 hours.

Our breakfast was very good that morning, consisting of all the fresh fried eggs we could eat, breakfast food, fruit juice, toast and coffee. By this time it was 3 o'clock and we lingered over a second cup of coffee and a cigarette.

Again we walked out into the cold night and caught another truck to the gunner's briefing room where we went inside amongst the rising tempo of excited, but never-the-less, calm voices of crew members.

In the meantime, the officers of our crew had followed much the same routine and were at this time also waiting in the main briefing room.

After a few minutes of waiting and smoking another cigarette, an officer walked in with a piece of celluloid with long red lines drawn on it. This he thumb tacked to a huge map of Europe, thus showing our route to and from the target, which looked like, BERLIN! This caused a considerable amount of discussion, which was interrupted by a sharp command. "Attention! At ease men! Gentlemen, today you are hitting the German headquarters in Zossen just a few miles south of Berlin. This is to be a surprise attack and you should find it very enjoyable bombing the German Brass Hats. Looks like one way to get back at some officers." His joke received no response, so he continued.

"Stations will be at 05:25, you will taxi

at 05:35, take off at 05:45 to the West. Your bomb load is 44 x 100 G.P.'s and 2 x 500 M17's and fuel load is max-max. You engineers watch your fuel consumption closely and be sure all of your gas is out of your auxiliary tanks before you are in enemy territory. Remember this is a long haul. Your bombing altitude is 22,000 feet and the free air temperature is -35 degrees C. You will hit Bencher 21 at 9:20 and start your climb gradually out over the North Sea, crossing the Zider zee at 18,000 feet. Continue to climb out and into the target. Your bomb run is going to be extra long today, lasting 18 minutes. You waist gunners start throwing out chaff at the I.P. + 3 minutes. Chaff code will be "Applejack". Code word for bombs away is "Daisy Mae". Flack today will be moderate to intense and fighters are expected in the area. So, you gunners, pre-flight those guns good and don't forget to test fire over the channel. Your fighter support will be a group of Yellow Tailed P-51's. Don't forget the observer in the Blue Mosquito. Yesterday some trigger happy Joe took a few shots at it. If we can have the lights now, we can show you pictures of the target." After the photos of the target and the surrounding territory, along with the procedure for our let down back into England, the weather officer gave us a brief account of expected weather at the target and our return home.

Both Catholic and Protestant Chaplains were present now, just having returned from the main briefing, they lead us in a short prayer with a blessing. The briefing was now over.

Well, that's over with, I thought to myself as I walked the short distance to the drying room where we draw our flying equipment. Here I headed for the rear of the room where my locker was, walking past the rest of the fellows struggling into their heavy equipment. Getting dressed for altitude flying is quite a job. First came our electrical flying suit, an

extra pair of wool socks, heated shoes, summer flying suit, leather flying shoes, a 45 Pistol slung in gangster fashion around the chest, Mae West Life Jacket, parachute harness, silk gloves, electric gloves, flying helmet, goggles and lastly an oxygen mask strapped to the side of the helmet.

With this tiresome job completed, I slowly treaded out to another truck, which in turn transported us to our waiting plane "D-Dog". Up until this time, everything was done much as a machine would do it, but now we were facing the machine that would be our end or bring us safely back. The gunners went about their job of installing their guns and checking them, knowing that they had to work or else. I climbed up through the bomb bay opening, glancing at the bombs and patting one of them like you would a faithful dog. Eventually I made it to the flight deck where the crew chief met me and told me that the plane was A-Okay. I started the put put, which supplied electrical power to the ship while we were pre-fighting. After installing my two 50's in the top turret and checking them, I proceeded to check over the entire airplane from the nose to the tail.

Part Of Crew.....In Front Of The "Flack Shack"



Rankin(Tail Gunner).. **Lovegren***(Waist Gunner)..**Brown**(Flight Engineer,Top Turret)..**Kirby***(Radio Operator)..**Dye***(Waist Gunner) **Rubczak** (Ball Turret,not shown)
*Deceased.

For some reason, this is either as much as I wrote, or I lost what I wrote. I don't know. I did find one more paragraph in my hand as follows:.....
Brown's Post Mission Report:

I lit a cigarette and settled back, my head resting comfortably on a blanket roll, half asleep, trying to settle my nerves after today's mission. It wasn't too bad. None of them are bad once you're back and safe in your sack. Half in this world and half in the world of sleep, occasionally I would grasp the conversation of today's mission. The talk was always the same once you're back.

My Combat Crew Officers



Kyle*(Pilot) **Bratzel**(Copilot)
Penberthy*(Bombadier) **Atkins**(Navigator)
*Deceased.

More about The Mighty Eight Air Force:

The 8th Air force is listed as the greatest armada of any country in any war. More than 350,000 Americans served in the 8th AF in three years. At its peak, the 8th could put up more than 2,000 four engine bombers and more than 1,000 fighters on a mission. They sustained 47,000 casualties; 26,000 deaths.

REGISTRATION
44TH BOMB GROUP REUNION
SHERATON SUITES TAMPA AIRPORT
October 22-October 25, 2009

Last Name _____ First Name _____

Spouse _____ Squadron _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone _____

Guest & Relations _____

Number to attend _____

Registration for Singles \$248.00
Triples \$744.00

Doubles \$496.00
Quads \$992.00

Sqdrn Dinner Choices: 1) Roast Chicken Breast with Fresh Herbs and Pan Juices or
2) Sourdough & Lemon-Pepper Crusted Cod

Banquet Choices: 1) Baked Chicken with Herbs Provencal
Or 2) London Broil with Mushroom Sauce

Included in the registration costs are Welcome Reception, Dinners & Tours

Make checks payable to and mail Reunion Registration to:

Jackie Roberts, Treasurer 44th BGVA
11910 SE 44th Street
Oklahoma City, OK 73150

ROOM CUT OFF DATE SEPTEMBER 30, 2009

SHERATON SUITES TAMPA AIRPORT
4400 West Cypress Street, Tampa, FL 33607
Tel. 813 357-6145

44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
2009 REUNION
October 22-October 25, 2009

Please make reservations directly with hotel. All rooms are 2 room suites with bedroom (1 or 2 beds) and lounge area with sofas that convert into beds, so can accommodate 4 people.

Rates – Single – \$99.00 Double - \$109.00 Triple \$119.00
Quad \$129.00 (Tax included)

Rates include Breakfast Buffet

Rates are good for 3 days prior and 3 days after reunion if space available.

Reservations to be made by phone, reference the 44th BGVA.

Complimentary Parking; Shuttle to and from airport.

**SCHEDULE OF EVENTS FOR THE
44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION
2009 REUNION
SHERATON SUITES TAMPA AIRPORT**

Thursday, October 22

9:00 AM Meeting of Executive Board

1:30 PM Open Registration

Friday, October 23

Breakfast

11:00 AM Bus Tour to MacDill Air Field

Lunch at MacDill Dining Room

Return to Hotel 3:00 PM (approx)

7:00 PM Welcome Reception

Saturday, October 24

Breakfast

9:00 AM Annual Meeting

11:30 AM Bus Tour to Florida Aquarium

Lunch on you own at the Aquarium

3:00 PM Return to hotel

7:00 PM Squadron Dinners

Sunday October 25

Breakfast

10:00 AM Bus Tour to Fantasy of Flight

Lunch (incl)

3:00 PM Return to Hotel

7:00 PM Banquet

Monday October 26

Breakfast & Farewells

FRED J. MARZOLPH
NEVER HEARD THE LAST OF THIS:
(The day they dropped a bomb on England)

(He was flying with the William Smith/Roy Owen crew, and he says that was more like family than crew.)

The target has been long forgotten, but our flight this day was one to remember. The mission carried on like most of ours until we unloaded on the target. We were carrying 3-2000 pounders this day, and at "BOMBS AWAY" two went out of the bomb bay, but the third one hung up with the shackle partly open.

I informed the pilot of this, and he said to get rid of it. As the armorer on the plane, I hooked on an oxygen bottle, being we were still on high altitude, and headed out on the catwalk with the bomb bay doors still open. I was thinking this would only take a few minutes, being the shackle was partly open. Armed with a heavy duty screw driver, I got from our engineer, **Carl Jacobson**, I placed it in the shackle opening and pushed, pulled, tugged, jiggled and all else until the oxygen bottle was empty and the bomb was still there!

My next step was to hook a long hose from the nearest oxygen station to my mask and repeat what I had done before, but with even more enthusiasm. I also kicked the bomb. It didn't move. I tried to shove it with my feet on it and my arms wrapped around the bomb rack; and still no movement on its behalf.

About this time I began to get visitors in the bomb bay. The bombardier came back and reaffirmed to the pilot, we had a bomb hang up, and then he left. Next the Navigator who I had never met before, came back and made some suggestions like, 'better dump it out' or something like that. I was getting pretty impatient and told him to leave the area, but not in those words. I later found out the substitute navigator was a Major, and not the enlisted man as we had on an earlier mission.

I then saw the pilot, **Bill Smith**, com-

ing out, and I was beginning to wonder if everyone was bailing out of the plane!

By now we were over the bomb dispersal area of the North Sea, where the bombers dumped those bombs that avoided falling on Germany. We circled the area for what was much longer than what we had spent over our target, and all I had accomplished was to drop the screw driver, set of pliers, the wrist watch (which my mother had given me before I went overseas), and the oxygen bottle into the sea and we still had the bomb.

With our fuel and the crew's patience getting low, the pilot told me to wire it up and we'll take it home. I grabbed each and every arming wire I could reach on the bomb rack, and twisted and wound those bomb fuses so much, I could have embarrassed a spider web class!!

Nearing Shipdham, the pilot informed the tower of our excess load, and they spread the alert and told us to come in. With that info, the pilots lowered the wheels and flaps, and we heard a loud "CRUNCH", **There went all 2000 pounds off — right through the bomb bay doors!**

Our nose gunner, **Eddie Tkacik**, later told me he saw a passenger train with a lot of people waving out the windows as the bomb was falling toward them. My last sight of it was when it hit the ground about 50 or more yards from the train, and there was no 'Boom'. I reached down with another arming wire and pulled the bomb bay door up, so it wouldn't drag on the ground when we landed.

I later heard that the farmer whose land it fell on, circled the bomb and its crater until a removal squad arrived. Our officers said they took some 'flack' about bombing our air base, but laughed it off.

COUNTDOWN TO PLOESTI

By an unidentified author

On May 29th (La Pallice, France), Lts. **Richard A. Larson** and **Wayne H. Middleton** chalked up their first mission. This 506th Sqd. Crew was flying in aircraft #42-40606-X, also known as *Timba-A-A-Ah*. When the crew got this airplane in the U.S., they had a discussion as to what kind of nose art to paint on the airplane. Nineteen years old Tail Gunner, S/Sgt. **Steven F. Bugyie**, had done a lot of tree cutting. *"I suggested that they paint a bomb in flight with the call that wood cutters use when a tree is felled. That is how 6-6 Bar-X got its name."*

"After La Pallice, we thought that these missions were going to be a piece of cake."

But the previous losses had been so severe that it was considered to have the B-24's do night bombing with the RAF. Shrouds were installed on the turbo superchargers of some aircraft to reduce the glow. First Lt. **Richard D. Butler** and a few others were sent to an RAF base to fly a night mission. *"I flew in the right seat of a Lancaster. The target was Dusseldorf. It was a very scary experience, as all firing was very visible in the dark. Tracers burned and flak explosions were like big balls of fire. It looked like the whole sky was lit up."*

Then the 44th BG shifted from high altitude bombing to low level formation. First as individual ships, then as elements of three, later in formations at low level, the crews learned the techniques of flying at low level for the purpose of bombing.

One of the new arrivals, 1st Lt. **Shelby L. Irby** experienced a huge rush of alarm: *"It was the sudden roar of a B-24 overhead at tree-top level, as I was walking to the O-Club. At the time, I chalked it off as some foolish pilot doing a dangerous 'buzz-job' on the O-Club,"* he reported.

It was a big thrill for the young airmen to fly just above the treetops. They flew so low over the fields that "Land Army" girls hit the dirt, and frightened cows ran frantically with their tails flying straight out behind them. S/Sgt. **Robert Reasoner** even waved to the people on a train on an elevated track

Some of the farmers were complaining that the 44th BG ships were scaring their cows and chickens so bad, they were not producing much milk or laying many eggs.

Lt. **William Cameron** wanted his ship to be called the *Golden Bear* after the symbol of the State of California, but only Assistant Engineer **Roy Winter** and he were from that state. *"As we were practicing low-level formation flying – referred to as "buzzing" – in true democratic manner, we compromised and agreed to call her the Buzzin Bear."*

Ed. Note: I found this story in my files. It was labeled "The Spirit of the 200 Club. Would the author like to come forward and claim it?"

"The inherent vice of capitalism is the unequal sharing of the blessings. The inherent blessing of socialism is the equal sharing of misery"

...Winston Churchill

Lt. LOUIS TROUVE, BLOWN OUT THE NOSE WHEEL DOORS INTO GERMAN HANDS

Louis Trouve was the Navigator on the **Richard Comey** crew, 66th Squadron. When the Comey crew first came to Shipdham, they were immediately dispatched to Africa, from where they flew the missions to Italy and Sicily; then the awesome missions of Ploesti and the second trip to Weiner-Neustadt.

The target on 11 December 1943 was the boat and rail center in Emden, Germany. They were flying in *Nice 'N Naughty* aka *Princess Charlotte*. The plane received a direct hit on the nose, right above the navigator, Louis Trouve. The force of the explosion knocked him backwards, over the nose wheel doors and out from the plane. Even though wounded, he opened his chute, landed in a bay, and was picked up by the Germans.

This report of his interment was submitted by his daughter, Marianne Trouve. His son reported that he rarely talked about war experience; nevertheless, he wrote a very detailed account of his life as a 'Kreigie':

Written in 1963:

" It has been almost a decade since I became a 'Kriegsgefagen', but still strong in memory is that first view of the camp. We detrained at Barth, a small town on the Baltic, and set out on foot for Stalag Luft I in Frankfurt. Though prisoners, we had marched as soldiers, standing tall, our pride edged by the close scrutiny of German nationals. But there in bleak and windswept northern Pomerania there was no one but the German guards who escorted us.

Guards and Their Dogs

"These men were not of the Prussian militarist mold; they were old

campaigners apparently found unfit for hazardous duty. The watchdogs at their sides were German Shepherds of frightening mien, but fine specimens nevertheless, who obeyed with amazing alacrity the slightest whim of their masters. We were soon to learn that a guard and his dog were inseparable. The guards addressed the dogs by name, and in the inflection in their voices betrayed the closeness of relationship. One guard might lend another his gun, but never his dog.

"We fell silent and struck a slow cadence, each man engrossed in his own thoughts as he marched toward captivity. Presently there appeared in the flat distance, an enclosure ringed by two concentric barbed wire fences, with rolls of barbed wire in between. Even a sure-footed squirrel would have his work cut out for him to get across that barrier. Every few hundred feet, a watchtower of 'posten' box rose to dominate the wire, with searchlights and machine guns clearly in evidence as grim warnings that escape was something more than a matter of mere preferment.

"Some things are common to all prisoners. You live constantly with the yearning for freedom. Somewhere in your subconscious there is always the awareness of the deep concern you know your kin must feel for you. Your future is uncertain at best, and you are solicitous for your own safety. You may from time to time have to cope with dark thoughts that challenge your faith – your faith in your own military, your faith that someday you will return to your homeland, your faith in mankind.

"The area within our enclosure, which measured about a quarter mile square, was pockmarked with barracks, thin tinder-box affairs which afforded

...continued on page 18

reasonable protection from wind and weather. They were partitioned off into rooms about the size of an average living room. At this stage of the war, twelve men were in each room. As the war progressed, conditions became more cramped, and at war's end, it was not uncommon to find thirty men living in these rooms.

Twelve Men To A Room

"We slept on double decker bunks on excelsior mattresses. Each man had a mattress cover which was changed every few months, and a sheet which was changed about once a month. In exchanging the sheets, the old ones were laid flat on the floor and rolled into a column. One time a man was rolled up inside, and in Trojan Horse fashion, he got outside the confines of the camp, but was recaptured and kept without water until he 'talked'.

"Each room contained a coal stove, and weekly the Germans doled out a coal ration. This was used for warmth and cooking, which we did ourselves. The food ration was meager, consisting of bread which resembled roughhewn wood cut with a rip saw, potatoes, soup, jelly, butter, occasional meat. Our doctors estimated the caloric count at 600 daily.

"The bright spot on the food horizon was the Red Cross packages. Under 'normalcy' each man received one a week. When these were received, we knew no hunger pains. But as the ability of the Germans to wage war was neutralized, as their communications were more and more disrupted, their shipments ceased. Then we tightened our belts another notch each week. But our discomfort was counterbalanced by the realization that war's end was approaching.

Two Doctors On Hand

"Some strange things happened during the 'belting period'. Squeamishness or sentiment determined many from indulging, but all the cats in the camp that were kept for pets went on the butcher's block save one, and it survived only because its owner never relaxed his vigilance. Bird traps came into being, and were set up near the rubbish heap. More than one prisoner could say he ate crow and meant it literally.

"We had a community washroom. An improvised shower was in daily use during the warm weather; in the winter months we were taken in groups once a week to the German compound for a shower.

"Two prisoner MD's, one English, one South African, cared for our sick. Their medical supplies were adequate until they were taxed by an influx of evacuees from German camps further east that were abandoned in front of the Russian advance. A special pool of Red Cross parcels was built up to furnish an abundant ration for the sick.

"One case of spinal meningitis broke out. Fearing that the contagion of the dread disease might cause the entire camp to become infected, the doctors appealed to the Germans, and we were permitted to remain quarantined for several days.

"Repatriation was routine and took place every several months under the aegis of the 'protecting power', which in our case was a Swedish national. Loss of limb, tuberculosis, severe burns and other maladies in these categories would qualify a prisoner for repatriation. One, an Englishman, was repatriated for longevity. He had been taken prisoner before Dunkirk, and was imprisoned for over five years.

"We received mail and packages

from home sporadically, and were allowed to write three letters and four postcards a month. Captive chaplains conducted religious services regularly. There was no attempt at indoctrination by the Nazis. A public address system, controlled from German headquarters, was set up with a speaker in each compound, but there was no coercion to force us to listen. Lord Haw Haw broadcast regularly, but performed for a small and scoffing audience. There was a greater interest in the German communiqués.

"Thanks to the inventiveness of Roy Kilminster and Leslie Hurrell, two Limies, the BBC news broadcast was received daily in the camp. The clandestine radio that they constructed was a Rube Goldberg contraption. It contained among other things, pencil lead, shaving scrap containers, toothpaste tubes, silver paper and greaseproof paper.

"I took down the BBC newscast in the dead of each night in shorthand. Copyist made additional copies the following day, and the report was read in every barracks in the camp.

"In order to carry out this morale-boosting activity, for which I was later commended by the War Department, it was necessary to thwart the closest surveillance by the German "Abler" department, the trouble-shooting contingent in the camp. Somehow we survived their blitz raids and their fine comb searches, and the activity went on.

Sports In The Camp

"The sports equipment in the camp was made available by the YMCA. We had a softball league, a hardball league, and boxing. Other things were improvised, like weight lifts.

"Performers banded together, singers, mimics, comedians, and visited

each barracks in turn to put on their acts. The most popular entertainer was a little Italian who had a seemingly exhaustless repertoire of many funny songs, and who accompanied himself with castanets.

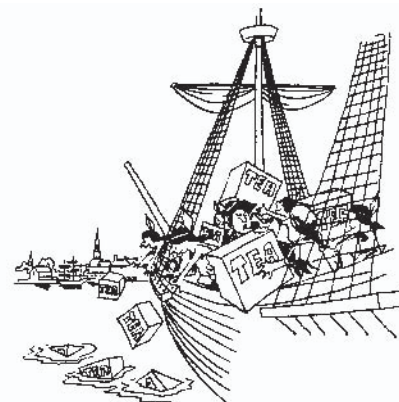
"Musical instruments were eventually procured and a band was formed. More than one full-length play was produced from an original manuscript and original music.

"We had a library and a room was set aside for classes. A prisoner who was proficient in a language or mathematics would teach others interested in learning. I taught shorthand.

"The only out-and-out instance of calculated brutality that I remember occurred near the war's end when all Jewish prisoners were segregated. This move the affected prisoners regarded as a step in preparation for more drastic measure, and their concern showed strongly. But the fears never materialized. They were segregated but otherwise unmolested.

Day of Liberation

"One night the searchlights stopped sweeping over the camp, and we could see the exodus of German personnel silhouetted against the moonlight of May 1, 1945. The gates were thrown over. We had been liberated by the enemy."



"Just between you and me, I'm not too crazy about taxation with representation either!"

44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

JAY STEELE RECEIVES FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL



On April 29, 2009, at a ceremony in the French Embassy, Washington, D.C., former S/Sgt. C .H. (Jay) Steele, 66th & 68th Bomb Squadrons, was inducted into the French Order of the Legion of Honor as a Chevalier (Knight) and presented the Legion of Honor medal by the French Consul General Michele Schaffhauser.

Dr. Jay Steele received a belated Silver Star for gallantry at the 44th BGVA's Reunion, October 2008, at the Army War College, Carlisle, Pa.. His Silver Star Citation read as follows:

CITATION TO ACCOMPANY THE AWARD OF

THE SILVER STAR

TO

CHAUNCEY H. STEELE JR.

Staff Sergeant Chauncey H. Steele Jr., distinguished himself by gallantry in connection with military operations while assigned to the 66th Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, 8th Army Air Force, ETO, on 18 April 1944, during a bombing mission to Berlin, Germany. On "bombs away" at the target, the bomb bay doors malfunctioned and 52 hundred pound armed incendiary bombs released and piled up on the closed bomb bay door. Under intense enemy fire, without hesitation, Sergeant Steele proceeded to the bomb bay, working from the 8 inch catwalk in the bomb bay without flak vest, parachute and oxygen disconnected from a heated suit at 30 degree below zero, started to safety wire the bomb fuses and by himself unloaded 23 of the hundred pound bombs to be jettisoned from the aircraft's rear escaped hatch by another gunner. While on the catwalk, Sergeant Steele rescued the bombardier who had fallen into the bomb bay without a parachute and pulled him to safety on the catwalk. In spite of suffering frozen hands and feet, Sergeant Steele continued lifting the bombs from the bomb bay without any assistance until the reduced weight of the bomb load on the malfunctioned doors allowed the doors to open wide enough for the remainder of the incendiaries to fall through on enemy territory. Sergeant Steele's extraordinary gallant and heroic acts, without concern for his own life, thereby saved ten lives of the crew and his aircraft from certain destruction. By his gallantry and devotion to duty, Sergeant Steele has reflected great credit upon himself and the United States Army Air Corps.





MAIL & E-MAIL

From **Bob Lehnhausen**: "I recently came across an article in the Wall Street Journal, and was captivated by the obituary of George W. Housener."

Housener had been cited as the Father of Earthquake Engineering, but among his many accomplishments was a reference to his activities in WWII. A PHD graduate of Caltech, he joined the Air Corps of Engineers and traveled to the European theater. He devised a bridge-bombing strategy for the invasion of Sicily and Italy. During the 1943 air raid at the Rumanian Ploesti oil refinery, he provided a crucial calculation that the barrage balloon tethers (cables) would snap when low-flying B-24 bombers hit them, rather than slicing the airplanes wings off, as had been learned in planning.

Lehnhausen's evaluation: "Those of us who participated in that mission differ with Dr. Housener's belief that the anti aircraft balloon tethers (cables) would be of no risk to the B-24's airframe.

"It is also to be noted that he devised a bridge bombing strategy for the invasions of Sicily and Italy. The same five Bomb Groups that flew the Ploesti mission also participated in those military events, either in advance of the landings or after the specific action...In all of the reading that I have done that relates to 'Tidal Wave', I have never encountered a reference to him by name."

The complexities of WWII are endless. Historians may spend a lifetime, studying it, and barely crack the surface of everything that took place.

FROM THE ARCHIVES THIS DOCUMENT MARKED 'SECRET'

The 8th of September was a glad day for nine officers and thirteen enlisted men of this group. Today they returned to England after an absence of more than 15 months – 15 months in a Rumanian prison camp. They were part of the men who went down on the first and historic low-level attack on the Ploesti Oil Refineries.

Those who were uninjured in crashing were taken to Bucharest for approximately 50 days, and then up to the central part of Rumania where a small village had been taken over by the authorities to serve as a prison camp. Those who were injured in crashing were taken to a hospital for treatment, and as they became well, they were sent to the prison camp where they were welcomed by their comrades who preceded them. This was their home for nearly a year. Officers were placed in a modern, stucco building which in peacetime years, was the summer villa of town officials. Enlisted men were quartered in small farmhouses nearby. After a first bit of rough handling by ignorant peasants who thought they were Russian airmen, they were treated quite well, and even kindly.

It was surprising to note that even a radio was provided for the officers. Thus they were able to keep up until two months before their liberation. It was via this radio that on 6 June 1944, the news of the Allied Invasion of Normandy was joyously received. When Bucharest was taken, and fighting broke out in central Rumania, trucks were sent to the prison to carry the men back to the Capital. From here, they were ferried back to England by 15th Air Force planes. These men are now assigned to Headquarters ETOUSA, and will be reassigned to this organization for a short time before returning to the Zone of the Interior...

HONORING OUR HEROES AT CARLISLE

The logoed pavers surrounding the Soldier's Walk grew as more of our heroes were given recognition: Squadron Commanders, **Charles Hughes, William Cameron, James McAtee and Robert Lehnhausen**. (Lehnhausen's brick had been placed earlier, along with those who had served as Board President.) Also named in the pavers are **John Gibson** (CO of the 44th after **Leon Johnson**) and **Griffin Goodman**, (Executive Administrative Officer at Headquarters.)

Two rows of red bricks with the 44th logo are lined up on the Soldier's Walk, and the Flying 8 Ball receives more than its share of attention, as no other group has taken full advantage of the opportunity to honor their veterans.

ARMY HERITAGE DAY AT CARLISLE

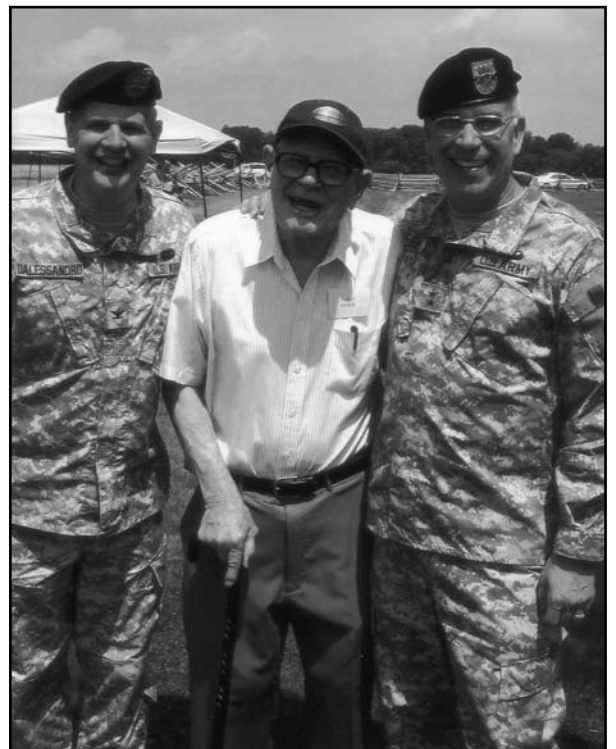


More than 4,000 people visited the Museum and Outdoor Exhibits at the Army Heritage Education Center at Carlisle, in honor of Armed Forces Day. The metal X-shaped bars which General Rommel had placed in the Channel at Normandy to halt incoming vessels were on display, along with a Sherman tank that arrived ashore, once the beach was opened.

A German anti-aircraft gun was nearby, a reminder that the enemy knew the dangers of the planes high above. Children were able to view weapons from every war, reaching

back to the Spanish American.

According to Mike Perry, Executive Director of the Army Heritage Center Foundation, ground-breaking of the Education Building will begin in the coming month. Completion of this project will fulfill the plan of AHEC, to educate the public, particularly school children, of the Army's (and Air Corps's) efforts to make America the great, free country that we all enjoy.



Col. Robert Dalessandro and Major General Robert Williams join Perry Morse in reviewing the exhibits.

When Hitler Phones for Help

By an unknown poet in 1941

Old Hitler called the devil on the telephone one day,
And the operator listened to all he had to say,
"Hello" she heard Old Hitler's voice, "Is old man Satan home?
Just tell him this is Hitler who wants him on the phone.

"What can I do?" the devil said, "My dear old Hitler pal.
If there's a thing that I can do, then help I surely shall."
Old Hitler said, "Now listen, and I will try to tell
The way that I am running on earth a modern hell.
My army went through Belgium, shooting women and children down,
We shot up all her country, and blew up all her towns.

"I started out for Moscow with the aid of my big tanks,
But the Russians, d— 'em, stopped us, and would not let us pass.
My submarines are devils, you ought to see them fight:
They go sneaking through the seas and sink a ship on sight.

"I was running things to suit me, until a couple months ago
When a man named Franklin Roosevelt wrote me to go slow.
He said to me, 'Dear Adolph, we don't want to make you sore,
So be sure to tell your U-boats to sink our ships no more.

I didn't listen to him, and he's coming after me
With a million Yankee soldiers from their homes across the sea.
That is why I called you, Satan, for I want advice from you;
I know that you will tell me just what I ought to do."

"My dear old Adolph Hitler, there's not much for me to tell
For the U.S. will make it hotter than I could for you in hell.
I have been a mean old devil, but not half as mean as you.
I'll be waiting for your coming, I'll keep the fire bright,
I'll have your room all ready when the U.S. begins to fight.
The U. S. A. will get you, I've nothing more to tell—
Hang up your phone and get your hat and meet me down in hell.

FOR SALE—LAPEL PINS

Mary Aston is selling lapel pins of WWII Medals: 8th Air Force, DFC, Air Medal, Purple Heart, POW, European-African Mediterranean Theater and WWII Victory Medal. The price of each is \$9 + 44 cents postage. (Specify pin name and number of each type.)

A large Suncatcher depicting the Flying 8 Ball; a 67th Squadron Pelican or 8th Air Force Logo are available at \$120 each + \$25 UPS (a total of \$145)

A small Flying 8 Ball sells for \$65 + \$18 UPS (a total of \$83) Proceeds go to the 44th BGVA. Contact Mary at 830 Cardinal Drive, Elberton, GA 30635.

BOOKS OF GREAT EVENTS IN 44TH BOMB GROUP HISTORY

BURNING HITLER'S BLACK GOLD is a factual account of the greatest mission of WWII—Ploesti Oil Refineries, Romania. Major Robert W. Sternfels, pilot of the B-24 Sandman, 98th Bomb Group, compiled this book following 2 years of interviews with historians and participants in the mission. The book replicates many official documents, plus the report of an interview with the planner of the mission, General Jacob Smart.

Sternfels group flew alongside **Leon Johnson's** 44th BG, experiencing the same dangerous surprises—the railroad car full of German soldiers with anti-aircraft guns, small arms fire, steel cables, black smoke and fighters.

To purchase this factual, highly organized report on this valorous mission, contact Major Robert Sternfels, 395 Pine Crest Dr., Laguna Beach, CA 92651. The price is \$26.75 with shipping.

If you are looking for a high adventure WWII story, read ***Escape in the Pyrenees***, by the late **Archie Barlow**, Engineer and Top Turret Gunner on the **Hartwell Howington** crew. The mission on 21 January 1944 was to Escalles Sur Buchy, France, to wipe out the V-1s that were striking London. Ram It Dam II went down, and Barlow survived and evaded. He relates his moment by moment escapades of being hidden by the Underground, chased by Germans with dogs, sleeping in freezing haylofts, and finally sliding down a very high hill to safety into Spain.

Barlow's wife Aline has copies of the book. 190 Johnson Drive SE, Calhoun, GA 30701-3941 Tel. 706-629-2396. The cost is \$20.

POST WAR OBSERVATIONS OF THE LATE ARTHUR HARRIS, MARSHAL OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE:

"The major cause of our success in the Allied invasion was the absolute air supremacy of the air forces working with our invading forces. That supremacy was, in the first place, due to the enemy's absorption of airmen and air material in ever increasing numbers in a despairing attempt, which failed – to overcome the strategic bomber forces which were wreaking more and more vital injuries to his entire economic and military systems.

Harris quoted Albert Speer, Hitler's Armament Production Chief: "The effect of the strategic bomber offense has always been underestimated." He added that the bombers opened up a second front long before the invasion of France, because owing to the unpredictability of where attacks would strike next, defenses had to be spread out to cover every city or important factory in Germany and German occupied territory."

According to Speer, German rocket warfare was no more than a feeble and totally ineffective gesture. For example, the maximum production of the V-2 rocket was 5,000 a month. Five thousand V-2 rockets carried less explosive power than one raid by the Allied strategic bomber forces.

Hitler discounted the importance of bombers, putting more funds into fighter planes. That's not the only miscalculation by Der Fuehrer.



FOLDED WINGS

*Lives of great men all remind us
We can make our lives sublime
And departing leave behind us
Footprints on the sands of time.*

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Clark, Forrest S. #22758 24 January 2009 67th Squadron S/Sgt. Griffith was a Gunner, later a Radio Operator on the **Rockford C. Griffith** crew. He also flew one mission with **Richard O'Neill**. His first of eleven missions was 10 October 1943.

Clark was with the Griffith crew on the mission to Kjeller 18 November 1943, in which the battle damaged plane's left landing wheel would not come down. Along with most of the crew, Clark bailed out over Shipdham, while Griffith and his co-pilot brought #41-29161 down safely on the right wheel. On board was a wounded member of that crew.

On a mission enroute to Lechfeld, Germany, Rockwell Griffith found the engine overheating. They managed to drop the bombs over the target, then discovered the #2 engine malfunctioned. Having insufficient fuel to return to England, he turned his plane toward Switzerland. He was greeted there with both Swiss Fighters and Swiss Flak. Despite that, Griffith did land safely in Dubendorf and the crew was interned. Two escaped, Clark and the others were detained. Months later, Clark was able to escape into France.

Clark spent most of his latter years in Kissimmee, Florida, then moved to Bristol, Tennessee. He had earned a degree in Journalism at Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey; then a postgraduate degree in English Literature at the University of Minnesota. He was a

reporter and columnist for a number of newspapers in Florida and New Jersey, and his work appeared in various flight publications, including the 8 Ball Tails. His memorabilia will be donated to the 8th Air Force Museum in Savannah, Georgia. His Swiss Internee collection will go to the Swiss Internee Association.

Clark leaves his wife of 60 years, Ruth Lucille Buck. The couple had two children, a son and a daughter, two grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Graven, Thomas A. #20443 67th Squadron 23 April 2009 1st. Lt. Graven is listed as a Co-Pilot in the 44th BG, but the Database has no record of his combat missions. He lists his arrival date 01 April 1944. Previously he flew with the 492nd, later with the 392nd. His last mission (30th) was with the 392nd, but there is no record that he flew with the 44th. His departure to the ZOI was August 1944.

Graven was a member of the Air Reserve in Illinois, and he retired as a Lt. Colonel. After the war he attended Washington University in St. Louis, Missouri, later joining Bristol Myers as a Medical Salesman.

Graven's death was reported by his grandson, TJ Graven.

Gray, John Allan #25354 68th Squadron 17 October 2007 Lt. Gray was a Navigator on the **Robert A. Peter** crew. His first mission was 30 October 1944.

Lt. Gray flew in *T. S. Tessie/Beck's Bad*



FOLDED WINGS

Boys, Flak Magnet, Gallavantin' Gal and **Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch.**

When GEE/PFF became available to the 44th, Gray qualified for this navigational tool, frequently flying in the lead plane. He flew with **Bob Seever, Roy M. Boggs, Harry Garbade, Frank Kiggins** and with **William Cameron** as Command Pilot. Gray flew on the 44th BG's last mission to Hallein, Austria 25 April 1945.

After the War, Gray earned a BS degree at Penn State University, later a law degree at George Washington University. He became a special agent with the FBI from 1951-1953. His next position was Deputy Regional Director of the FTC. He ended his career as an Administrative Law Judge for the Department of Labor, retiring in 1996.

Gray leaves his wife Donna, two children, three stepchildren and three grandchildren. The couple resided in Florence, SC at the time of his death. He was interred in Arlington National Cemetery on 25 April 2008.

Hamrick, Bazel #20509 2 October 1997 67th Squadron No records available. (Source: Security Death Index)

Hardman, Gene A. #20543 1 March 1996 506 Squadron No records available (Source: Security Death Index)

Harrison, Charles H. #20561 15 December, 1998 68th Squadron. Sgt. Harrison was a gunner flew with many pilots, most with **Ted L. Weaver**, but also with **Charles Gayman, Sterling Dobbs, Herman Eckstein** and **Myron Sesit** as Command Pilot. Harrison's first of 26 missions was 21 May 1944.

Flying with different pilots, Harrison flew in nine different planes: **Flak Alley II, Patsy Ann II, Full House, Battlin'**

Baby, V for Victory, Jose Carioca, T.S. Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Flak Magnet and **My Sad Ass.** His last mission was 29 November 1944. (Source: Security Death Index)

Holmes, Walter "Tommie" #23256 68th Squadron 25 May 2009 Captain Holmes was among the first pilots that came to Shipdham. His first mission, 7 November 1942, was on **Victory Ship**, a beloved plane that saw him through twenty of his 25 missions. On the plane's maiden flight to Abbeville, a shell from a German fighter plane burst above the pilot & co-pilot's head. Even with a head injury, Holmes was able to bring the plane safely back to Shipdham.

Holmes flew with **Wilmer Garrett**, and **Baxter Weant**, but also with **Leon Johnson** and **James Posey** as Command Pilots.

The Holmes crew flew in **Black Jack, Lemon Drop, Captain & His Kids Ride Again;** for the Ploesti Raid, they flew in **Wing & A Prayer.** That was his last mission.

Holmes carefully recorded the experiences of his most memorable missions, providing a considerable amount of literature for future generations to understand. He was also eager to relate his experiences to many young researchers and historians, a trait that endeared him forever to anyone who was seeking pertinent details of his missions.

After the war, Holmes and his father established feed businesses reaching from Louisiana to Texas, called TexLA. Later he entered real estate, and built a subdivision in Jasper, Texas. He lived in one of those homes until his death. With his first wife, Margarete, he had a son who passed away. Ten years ago he married Nida, who was with him until the time of his death.



FOLDED WINGS

Latimer, Lyle B. #21046 2009 67th Squadron S/Sgt. Latimer was a Tail Gunner on the **Joseph Hermann** crew. He arrived in Shipdham in time to join the mission to Caen (Vire). It was 6 June 1944 - D-Day.

The Hermann crew flew 27 missions in four different A/C: **Phyllis, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Fearless Fosdick** and **Three Kisses for Luck**.

Most of the missions were clearing the way for the invasion forces by preventing German troop movements from coming to aid of their comrades at Normandy. Two missions were to St. Lo, in cooperation with General Bradley's plan to keep German troops entrapped. An infantryman looking up, described one attack: "The bombers flew in majestically, and with a dreadful, unalterable dignity, unloaded and made for home".

Latimer's last mission was 15 August 1944.

Mirkin, Edward #21373 66th Sq. 27 April 2009 T/Sgt. Mirkin was a Radio Operator on the **John Winchester** crew; but he also flew with **Charles Armstrong, Saul Fineman, Charles Hughes, Robert Felber** as CP and **Lewis Wright** as CP. Mirkin flew 32 missions, the first on 30 December 1943. On D-Day the Winchester crew flew two missions: first to Colleville/St. Laurent; the second to Caen (Vire).

The Winchester crew flew in **Shoo Shoo Baby and Flak Alley II**, but most in **Limpin' Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose**.

His last mission was 1 August 1944, in which Robert Felber, as Command Pilot, led the 44th to the RR Junction at Amiens, France, as part of the ongoing effort to stop the movement of German troops.

After the war, Mirkin gained recognition as a men's fashion designer. He and his wife Mitzi were married 63 years. He leaves four children, two boys, two girls; and seven grandchildren. Edward and Mitzi resided in Westbury, New York.

Thompson, Frederick F. #22294 66th Squadron 15 May 2007 S/Sgt. Thompson was a Gunner on six different crews, mostly with **J. W. Grow** and **Eustice Hawkins**, but also with **Gail W. Larson, Albert Frank, Bob Cardenas, Henry Borkowski** and **Dean Miller**.

His first mission was 21 February 1944. Most early missions were into the industrial areas in Germany; but after D-Day most activities were in support of the troops. On D-Day he flew with Eustice Hawkins to Colleville and St. Laurent on **Passion Pit**.

Thompson also flew in **The Wasps Nest, Consolidated Mess, Greenwich, M'Darling, Prince/PrincAss/Princess, Ole Cock, Southern Comfort II** and **Cape Cod Special**.

His last mission was 22 June 1944. He was living in Greenwood, Maine at the time of his death.



**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**

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On the third day of the Reunion, we will visit the Fantasy of Flight Museum in Orlando; and yes, they have one of the few B-24s left in the world. There is entertainment for all ages: a ride on the plane that (unfairly) got more acclaim than the Liberator - the B-17!! - or fly in a WWII biplane. (You have to pay for those luxuries.) Those who are technically inclined can play an aerial video game or pilot a state-of-the-art hang glider simulation.

