

44th Bomb Group Veterans Association



8 BALL TAILS

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SEEDS OF SATAN BUZZIN BEAR

Seeds of Satan, #41-24229, came to Shipdham in April 1943, a badly needed replacement for the heavy losses which the 44th Bomb Group had been undergoing in the past year. It came to the United Kingdom on 1 November 1942, and was first assigned to the 379th Bomb Group. In April of 1943 it was reassigned to the 44th Bomb Group, 67th Squadron. It was renamed *Buzzin Bear* by the new crew of Lt. William R. Cameron.

Bill Cameron was the sole survivor of the original 67th Squadron pilots. Eventually replacements began coming in. This new crew flew its first mission along the Dutch coast as a diversionary sweep on April 4th. Twelve days later they went to Brest, France with one of the 44th's original navigators: Edward (Mike) Mikoloski.

On May 17, *Buzzin Bear* followed Col. Leon Johnson in *Wing Dinger* on the highly successful mission to the submarine pens at Bordeaux, France. After one more mission into France, Cameron's crew flew to Benghazi, Libya, a jumping off place to attack targets into Italy and Sicily.

On August 1st, *Buzzin Bear* followed *Suzu Q* into the inferno at Ploesti, flying



L-R William C. Dabney, Co-Pilot; William R. Cameron, Pilot; James DeVinney, Bombardier; Thomas Clifford, Navigator.

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Deputy Lead behind Col. **Leon Johnson**. Evading swarms of fighters and small arms fire, miraculously, both planes arrived safely back to Benghazi.

Previous to the Ploesti Mission, **Buzzin Bear** had flown the first mission to Foggia. On August 16, on Mission #45, with Leighton Smith at the controls, they returned to strike the enemy airfield. Disaster ensued. Seven planes went down, **Lady Luck, Black Sheep, Natchez Belle, Southern Comfort, Timba-a-ah**, plus the two revered planes from the Ploesti mission, **Suzy Q** and **Buzzin Bear**. Baldy & His Brood couldn't make it back to Bengazi. They landed in Malta.

The losses were devastating: 38 KIA; 9 POW; 19 became POW but escaped and returned to Shipdham. Eleven of that group were wounded. One managed to escape capture & return.

When **Buzzin Bear** was lost, seven of the original Cameron crew went down. **Leighton Smith**, pilot; **Joseph Milliner**, Co-Pilot, **Thomas Clifford**, Navigator; **James DeVinney**, Bombardier all became POW. **Leroy Winter**, Engineer, escaped and returned; **Gerald Sparks**, Radio Operator, became POW, but escaped and returned. **Ernest McCabe**, Assistant Engineer; **Gola Gibby**, Gunner; **Gerald Grett**, Gunner; and **Frank Maruszewski**, Tail Gunner, were all KIA.

COL. WILLIAM R. CAMERON *LITTLE BEAVER & BUZZIN BEAR*



Bill Cameron

The late Col. William Cameron has been tagged with many descriptive names. General **Leon Johnson** called him the 'finest combat pilot that I know'. Col. **Roy Owen**, Cameron's longtime friend, called him 'a fugitive from the law of average!' No wonder! The averages were truly against him. Nevertheless, he survived the war and lived to be an ongoing inspiration at Bomb Group Reunions. Owen gave a detailed account of Cameron's history in Vol. 1, Issue #6 of the 8 Ball Tails.

Bill Cameron was one of the original pilots to come to the 67th Squadron. His first seventeen missions were as Co-Pilot with **Chester Phillips**. During that period losses were staggering. By March 22nd, 1942, six of the original nine crews had been lost. Only three planes were combat-ready, **Suzi Q, Little Beaver** and a new arrival, **Annie Oakly**.

Capt. **Howard Moore** aptly described the situation at that time when he said, "The Luftwaffe was murdering us".

In his journal, **The Air War in Europe (After I Got There)** Bill Cameron described his feelings: "On the 31st, it was Rotterdam in Holland. Our Group came through these in pretty good shape, but it had not been easy, not without painful losses. By this time **Donald MacDonald, Arthur Cullen, Clyde Price, Rufus Oliphant** and **J. B. Long** were gone, taking with them most of the combat men. The gang who had come over together from the States had thinned out considerably. Those of us who had been lucky enough to still be around just ignored the fact that the rooms down the hall were empty. We also missed many friends from the other Squadrons who also had been lost.



Bill Cameron in pilot's suit with an early version of the oxygen mask.

However, while we didn't talk about it, none of us could not overlook the possibility that we wouldn't be going home to see our family and friends again. The hard thing to accept was the fact that no one at home could really know what it was like — to fly again

over France or Germany the next day, or the following one, knowing that sooner or later it could be you. It was hard to think that you probably wouldn't survive many more missions, then sit down to write home and be cheerful..."

Cameron moved to the left seat and acquired a new Co-Pilot, Lt. **William Dabney**. A new crew was formed. *Seeds of Satan* was transferred to the 67th from the 379 BG. The crew promptly renamed it *Buzzin Bear*, and to celebrate this turn of events, Cameron, Dabney and Howard Moore took a day off and went to London. When they returned to Shipdham, the 67th Squadron was preparing for the May 14 mission to the submarine base at Kiel. Before the day was over, Cameron learned that his entire first crew was lost: *Little Beaver* had gone down!

"This was, without a doubt, the hardest for Howard and me," Cameron recorded. "along with those few of us now left from the gang who had left the States together seven months before. Except for we few 'stragglers", there were NO crews to represent the 67th. Statistically, we were wiped out!"

Eventually replacements started coming in. The next three missions of the 67th went well: Brest. Germany, La Pallice and Bordeaux, France. According to Roy

Owen's account, the morale of the entire Bomb Group improved.

The order came to practice low level flying, and on June 26 Cameron and his crew were deployed to Africa along with 38 other A/C to support the invasion of Sicily. There were three missions to Sicily and four into Italy, but the raid into Naples was Cameron's most unforgettable.

Benghazi, Libya

"Around 5 A.M. on the 17th, we trudged off to the mess — a low and rather small, wooden building sitting alone out in the desert, somewhat removed from both our tents and the airplanes. Most of the 'mess' was used for the kitchen, but there was a small, dark room at one end which served as the Officer's Mess. The windows were covered with gunny sacks to keep out the wind and sand. If you are not satisfied with this arrangement, you had the alternative of sitting outside in the elements.

Breakfast that morning consisted of some thick pancakes, cold and somewhat doughy in the middle. We had cold apple butter to put on them, and we killed the compulsion to be sick by washing it all down with some black coffee. This was a typical meal, about normal, but for some reason it annoyed me that morning.

Bombs in, crew loaded, preflighted, we rolled down the 'runway' amid great clouds of dust. Airborne, we eventually joined in the formation, taking our usual position behind Howard Moore in the *Suzy-Q*, and headed out across the blue and wide Mediterranean, toward our target at Naples, Italy.

As we neared Naples, we became aware that it would be a bit more lively than the usual missions over Italy. There was more flak — and more fighters, both of which we would much rather have done without. On this day, for some odd reason, I can't remember, we had a seventh airplane flying under our box formation of six B-24's. That is, two flights of three aircraft each. This was a most

vulnerable position, as the fighters could attack the low aircraft, staying away from our upper guns on the higher planes.

It is probably that the fighter attacks which we came under were directed at the aircraft, piloted by Lieutenant Griffin. At any rate, our crew blasted away at fighters for possibly a half hour or more, and wrote themselves their own little bit of glory. They destroyed three Macchi 202s, one Me 110 and one Me 109. All of these were officially confirmed. "Old" Gentleman **Jim DeVinney** modestly claimed only one aircraft damaged.

After bombs away, we eventually lost Lieutenant Griffin, both to flak and fighters. Word came back later that Lieutenant Potter, co-pilot for Griffin, was killed by Italian farmers after he had parachuted safely to the ground."

Buzzin Bear had real problems

"But this was not the end of it. We continued out over the Aegean Sea. The fighters pursued, but did not attack us again. Our number three engine cowling had a gaping hole in it, and four engine cylinder head temperatures were running dangerously high, and two generators were out. The oil pressure on number three went so low that I finally had to shut down that engine. A dead engine, feathered, was an invitation to a turkey shoot to the German and Italian pilots. With number three feathered, we slowly fell behind, until finally we were all alone.

Our fuel supply now became our chief worry, as we had consumed a great deal with our attempt to stay with the formation. We lost more yet by keeping the carburetor mixture richer than normal in a desperate attempt to keep the engine from 'freezing up' due to the very high temperature readings.

A hurried consultation convinced us that it would be safer to head for the little island of Malta, rather than attempt the longer trip back to Benghazi. **Tom Clifford** (Navigator) gave me a new course, and we slowly lumbered along toward Malta.

If one looks at a map of the

Mediterranean and draws a line from just off the heel of the boot to Malta, he will note that it passes very near the south-east tip of Sicily. Sicily had just been invaded by U.S. and British troops, with the fighting still hot and heavy. As we struggled along, I kept thinking of only one thing — set it down before the fuel was gone. I surely did not want to ditch.

It was a very hazy day, and we could just dimly see a bit of land ahead. But there were ships — many of them. I immediately thought that we had made it safely to Malta. So I called Tom to ask him for verification, but he said no, it was too soon for that. But I thought IT HAD TO BE! There it was before me — the shape of the land — the ships. He could be twenty to thirty minutes off, I insisted. But Tom was adamant, very hard to convince, even when Dabney and DeVinney agreed with me.

Malta or not, with our fuel so low, we had no choice — we were going in for a landing, even if it was on top of some of Hitler's finest.

We tried radio contact, but got absolutely no results. The standard procedure was then to fly at 1500 feet with our gear down and to circle to indicate to those on the ground that we were friendly aircraft without radio. We saw a wrecked B-17 on the beach as we approached. Then, one engine failed.

Sergeant **Gola Gibby** transferred fuel, and it started again, but time was getting very short. Except for Gibby, Dabney and myself, I got everyone else into the bomb bay with their chutes on, ready to go out if the engines quit. Then we made radio contact at last, trying to get a bearing to the airfield on Malta (I thought) when I saw an airstrip in the distance.

Without any delay, we went straight to it and right on in for a landing without any regard to wind direction, etc. As luck would have it, we made a safe and happy landing.

When we stopped rolling, a jeep came up and an officer in a British uniform motioned us to park off the runway. We later learned that they fully expected to

be strafed that evening by German fighters, and they feared that our bomber, being by far the largest aircraft on the field and parked squarely in the middle of it, would draw most of the attention of the German pilots. Then came the surprise. **This was not Malta**, we were told, but the Comiso Airfield in Sicily, just a few short miles from the front lines! We never would have made it to Malta on our meager fuel supply, and doubly lucky we, at first thought that Sicily was Malta.

They further advised us that we had better get out of there or we, too, would be in the trenches, with or without an aircraft. Having delivered their message, with a "So long, Yanks", they drove off. And we, having no desire for trench warfare, lost no time getting out of the *Bear*.

By now, it was about 4 P.M. and the fuel tanks were so low, I doubted we could have stayed in the air for another five to ten minutes. After the British jeep left us, there was no one in sight. We saw that it was a rather large airfield with several fair-sized buildings nearby, but appeared to be quite deserted, very white in the afternoon sun. In the distance around the edges of the field, we could see quite a few aircraft, including British Spitfires and both Italian and German types. We counted 48 German Me 109s, which did not appear damaged in any way.

At the end of the runway we could see the wreck of a JU87, and later learned that it had been shot down either that morning or the evening before by British gunners. The bodies of that crew were still in it. Another JU 87 had also been shot down and had crashed just off the field. Apparently, the pilots did not know until too late, that the field had been captured the day before by American and British commandos.

But at that moment, it was deserted to all appearances, and we did not like the strange stillness of the place. Out there in the open as we were, and looking for all the world like the most attractive target, stood our airplane and our only way back home!"

Checking out Buzzin' Bear

"Gibby checked over the *Bear*, found that, aside from a few holes, two bad generators and a decided shortage of aviation fuel and oil, she was not in too bad shape! We managed to locate some of our British allies, who told us we could help ourselves to the oil and gas stocked here and there around the field.

Originally these supplies were brought in for the Spitfires, and should be adequate for our needs. The gas was stacked in approximate six-balloon containers (Imperial five gallons). While Gibby continued to check over the *Bear*, bringing in the gasoline, it seemed to me that it took approximately 100 such trips and several hours to get the 600 gallons Gibby estimated we would need. Each container was passed up to Gibby on top of the wing, and then poured into the empty tanks — without the aid of a funnel!

In all of this long mission, we had eaten only a small can of cheese, a few crackers and some candy, and drank a couple cups of lemonade - this on top of that lousy breakfast so early in the morning. So our small repast was long since gone, and we were hungry, thirsty and bone weary. The troops we met on the field could not give us anything at all, and advised us not to drink the water. However, we told some members of our crew that there was plenty of wine around — and it was safe to drink. This later proved to be a rather unfortunate situation and a mixed blessing at best.

There was still some light remaining by 8 or 9 P.M., sufficient for us to take off. We had been asked to evacuate about ten wounded American boys, but as much as I wanted to get them out and to a hospital, I was reluctant in agreeing to do this. It wouldn't be a simple matter to put stretchers aboard, and there would be no Corpsman to look after them. It possibly could have done more harm than good. However, a C-47 arrived shortly thereafter, picked them up and was off

again, all within a few minutes. This was a great relief to me. I will always remember that each one of these kids had a Purple Heart medal, and very little else, other than their underwear. I never did find how they got the medals so quickly.

With the exception of 'Gentleman' Jim DeVinney, who had spent the entire afternoon drinking tea with some RAF pilot, and Dabney, we had all worked our tails off. Finally, at about 11 P.M. and still a bit of daylight, we cranked up the four engines. With us now was a passenger, an army Lieutenant Colonel from General Patton's troops. We roared down the runway and again took up a heading for Malta.

In an effort to be condescending, I had foolishly agreed to let the boys put the Lieutenant Colonel in the tail turret because that is where he wanted to fly. Also, before take-off from Comiso, the boys asked me if they could bring along some wine. They were tired and thirsty, and we had not had a drop of water since we left north Africa, so I said okay, if they would go easy on it. However, my agreement either lost something in the translation, or the wine was just too much for the exhausted men with empty stomachs. In any event, with much singing and the twin fifties going in all directions, it was a wild trip!

Among other things, it bothered me to see the tracers streaming out into the night, as this would draw attention to us. By this time, things were definitely getting out of hand. Then, to make matters worse, if this were possible, Dabney and I were not too sure just how to fly over Malta in the middle of the night without getting shot at. However, we decided to drop down to 1,500 feet, turn on our landing lights, and to circle a couple of times before we crossed the coastline. We finally were relieved to hear a British voice answer our radio calls and to give us landing instructions.

After we were parked and crawled out of the airplane, a truck pulled up and a voice asked us 'chaps' to climb aboard, so that we could report somewhere for interrogation.

Gibby, Grett and a couple of the others

had different ideas. Since we had not exactly been met by a brass band, nor had anyone offered to feed us or show us to a nice soft bed, they decided to stay the rest on the night on *Buzzin Bear*. Although it wasn't very comfortable, at least they could use the oxygen masks to clear up some dandy headaches in the morning.

The rest of us rode off in the truck. In some manner, Sparks, (*Radio Operator*) who had stuck with us, managed to fall out of our vehicle without any of us noticing. The next morning, the other boys found him right where he had fallen, still sleeping in the grass on the side of the road!

Prior to this mission I had never known **Tom Clifford** (*Navigator*) to take a drink, but now he seemed to feel that he was to blame for our fiasco in landing on Sicily, and was completely crushed. Of course, he shared no blame, as all of the rest of us were wrong, and tried to tell him so. So now he did take a few drinks of the Sicilian wine to help him forget his 'disgrace'. Outwardly, he was calm, dignified and as reserved as usual, tried to cover the feelings he held so tightly inside.

DeVinney was his normal, happy-go-lucky self, but Bill Dabney was ill. Apparently the strain and fatigue had brought on a bad attack of Asthma. He simply disappeared. How he did it, I don't know, but he eventually ended up in a hospital with food, clean sheets, adrenalin, and **NURSES**.

The remainder of us were dropped off at the beginning of a concrete ramp, which led downward into a very extensive underground building — possibly two or three stories deep. When we walked down to the bottom of this dark ramp, we were suddenly shocked with the appearance of a guard who leaped out toward us, greeted us with a lusty, "Who goes there?" He carried the sharpest, longest bayonet I have ever seen!

I almost left the island of Malta right then and there with one long leap. We were herded into a small room where a very pleasant young British Officer began

our interrogation. Most of the questions were directed at Tom, such as, "Where was our home base; what was the route, take-off and landing times" etc. DeVinney and I were suddenly and painfully aware that Tom, who was busily fumbling with maps, notebooks, etc., was giving answers to these questions that had no meaning at all. In fact, we all soon realized that poor Tom had had it. He was out on his feet! The British Officer struggled for a while longer — a tribute to his patience and courtesy — but eventually he gave up and dismissed us.

From there, we somehow made our way to a clubroom, presumably the Officers' Mess, where we fell asleep in the chairs — probably from about 2 to 5 A.M.

For breakfast, the best we could do was a cup of tea and one small, thin piece of toast. We then all agreed that there wasn't much to gain by extending our stay, except to invite slow starvation, so within an hour, we had collected our crew, had everyone back at the *Buzzin' Bear* and were on our way back across the remaining miles of the Mediterranean to Benghazi.

By then it was even good to get back onto Benina Main. We soon found out that no one had any idea where we were, and the assumption was that we had gone down in the Med. No one indicated any particular concern! However, before we reported to Howard, we were going to get something to EAT. Even the long walk to the Mess Hall gave us bigger appetites.

After arriving there I had to do some arguing to convince the mess sergeant that he should give us some food. We finally got a bowl of macaroni and some canned fruit. The macaroni appeared to be burned, but by this time I was too tired and mad from arguing with the sergeant to pay much attention to the food. It was dark in that room, and I couldn't see the the macaroni very well. So I took my bowl outside to see if it was burned. The black bits which I had assumed to be charred macaroni turned out to be BUGS.

A few minutes later, when I finally located Howard, my first words to him

were, "For crying out loud, will you look at this lousy macaroni?!"

His reply was classic! "Where in the hell have you been!"

A great to-do was made over the incident. Howard complained to Colonel Johnson, and Johnson discussed the matter with Colonel John "Killer" Kane, the 98th Bomb Group Commander. However, we didn't get anything else to eat, and the food didn't get much better while we were there. Later, I learned that the cooks — all from the 98th — had figured out a scheme to improve their own rations. While both groups were there, the 98th received double rations: by using up the less desirable items and holding back on the best foodstuffs; there would be only the more desirable items left for the members of the 98th after we returned to England,

As hot as it was, I had no trouble falling asleep in our "Locust Lodge". Howard had said that there was to be a briefing that afternoon for a very important target. So about 3 P.M. I started out looking for him and learned he was up flying the *Suzy-Q*. Captain **Rose Hager**, our Engineering Officer, and a couple of other men picked me up in a Jeep, and we drove to the end of our dirt runway to wait for him to return. While we were talking, we watched the *Suzy-Q* enter the traffic pattern and finally start down on the final approach for the landing. Distracted, I looked away for a moment or two, and then about the time I thought they should be touching down, I looked again to watch them land. To my surprise, they were no longer in sight. Before we could even comment on the disappearance of the entire plane, to the astonishment of all of us, *Suzy-Q* suddenly came rolling up over a small rise of land in front of us, bouncing through the rocks, sand and sagebrush across the desert, then out onto the cleared area of the runway.

For some reason, I still don't know why, all four engines had quit on them, causing Howard to land several hundred yards

short of the runway. However, there was, apparently, no damage to the aircraft."

Next: Briefing for the Mission to Rome

The cost of the Naples Mission to the 44th: *Lady Fifinella* went down; KIA -3; POW — 5; Evadees Returned — 2.

Why Naples had to be bombed:

General Clark, commander of the 5th Army, decided to choose Salerno as the doorstep into Naples and onto the boot of Italy. For this reason, General Clark asked the Air Corps to clear the way for landings. Actually, that invasion plan was wholly unsuccessful. General Patton, in his usual tough language, said, "Clark had chosen to be strong nowhere and weak everywhere. The Germans might as well have done his planning."

Source: Eisenhower, A Soldier's Life by Carlos D'Este

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



For those who missed the Tampa reunion and have access to a computer, you can see 30 or so old guys around a real Liberator by going to the 44th Bomb Group Web site and viewing the videos. It was great seeing old friends again, but as my old tail gunner Woody Staples said" It's nice meeting anyone at my age!"

We would not have the organization we have today were it not for the work of two people who recently passed away. First, **Roy Owen**, who was instrumental in forming our present Association and served as president more than once. He came to the rescue when there was no one to fill the position. He and his late wife, Lolly, worked tirelessly for the 44th.

Secondly, Evelyn Cohen, long time Membership Vice President of the 2nd Air Division Association. She was the glue of that organization from which our 44th organizations sprang. Many years ago I remember going with **Joe Warth** to obtain provisions for the 44th hospitality room (which he hosted) at the 2nd AD Convention at the Lake Geneva Wisconsin Playboy Club .Sometime after that he formed the 44th Heritage Group which included the 44th Missile Wing as well as 44thers from the Post WW2 44th Group. Reunions were held for several years and some 16 years ago our present organization was formed. So that is our history and we are deeply indebted to those two who were such a big part of it.

Jackie and Lowell Roberts have produced a new roster that shows some 380 active members and 179 Life members. This roster is the result of a lot of work on their part and involve some 400 phone calls to confirm the status of members. This effort was badly needed and we give them our sincere thanks.

While our 8 Ball Tails editor is reporting on the reunion elsewhere in this edition, I am not sure that , being very modest, she would report on the following. At our formal Banquet, Ruth was presented with a commemorative desk clock in recognition of her 10 years faithful service as editor and secretary. We also presented Perry with a plaque for his work hosting the hospitality room at the reunions. We are indeed fortunate to have this couple!!!

Some of the younger generation have expressed interest in keeping an organization after we veterans have gone. I would suggest that they join the 2nd Air Division Heritage League. They have been organized for a few years now - have their own publication and hold annual reunions. While they do represent all of the 14 2AD Groups, with that base they have a better chance of continuing than any one group would have. I am sure they would welcome new members . Their membership VP is Marybeth Dyer (458th BG) 1020 Glacier Ave., Pacifica, CA 94044 Tel 650-355-8383 smbdyer@sbcglobal.net .

George Washburn

LETTER FROM SHIPDHAM

By Peter Bodle



Hi everyone, the English summer continues and we have had a really decent spell of warm (Hot-ish...28-30 C/ 90 F) weather for a change, and actually have to think of factoring the air temperature into the aircraft take-off calculations. It has also kicked off the Shipdham Flying Club outdoor B-B-Q season so we are really beginning to think summer 2009 is, at last, really shining on your old airfield.

Firstly a nice 'add on' bit from our last 'Letter from Shipdham'. As mentioned earlier, we ordered a nice polished hardwood base to display our prop blade for room three, from a local carpenter. When it arrived it was just perfect. However when I asked what we owed, the carpenter (David Nickerson by name), said ..."I heard this museum was run by volunteers, so I won't be charging for it...that's my bit towards what you folks are doing at

the Shipdham Museum." That just serves as a quick reminder to us all that the kindness of human nature is still as strong and unquenched as ever, despite what you sometimes hear on the news, or read in the papers.

Last weekend we had an "Armed Forces Day" in the UK to celebrate and support the boys and girls in British Army, Navy and Air Force. Events were ranged from the major national events through to impressive regional events right down to ones on the local village green. As you would expect, the Flying Club supported the local Shipdham Village event held in the grounds of the village school. The Flying Club's presence there will hopefully stir a few more locals into driving the short distance up from the village to the airfield and visit both the airfield and 44th Bomb Group Museum and learn a bit more about Station 115 as it was in your days here, and what the 44th's boys did way back then.

On British satellite TV recently, there have been a variety of very excellent programmes covering the Second World War years. For those of us who have only recently come to studying that subject, (as opposed to just reading about it and moving on) it never ceases to amaze me how many mistakes (big-time mistakes that is) were made by both sides, and even worse, how much 'in-fighting' there was between very senior officers, again on both sides, who were mature enough (or should have been) to know better. Thank the lord for the junior officers and the lower ranks that actually pitched up and got their hands dirty getting the job done.

There was also a recent programme on FIFI (The B-29). Again for those of us still on a steep learning curve for the 1940-1950 era, it was a bit of an eye opener to see how much aviation technology had leapfrogged forward from the B17/B24 to the B29. I guess the guys that transferred from the B-24 to the B-29 must have really noticed the change. Just out of personal interest, did any of the boys from the 44th transfer and retrain onto the B-29 and if so did they ever write anything about their flying experiences and the differences between the two aircraft? I, for one, would be very interested to know.

Best wishes as always from Shipdham.
Peter Bodle

From the Editor: Anyone who transferred from '24's to '29's, and I know there are quite a few: please contact Peter Bodle: peter@bodlle.demon.co.uk. WWII was still going on when our men emptied the Shipdham air base, and there is much more to be remembered about that War.

A TRIBUTE TO A DISTINGUISHED PILOT WALTER THOMAS HOLMES, JR.

LT. COL., USAFR (Ret)

A few years ago Tom Brokaw authored a splendid book which he titled "The Greatest Generation". It was a collection of vignettes of fifty men who had served in the various branches of the United States military during WWII. He wrote of their rearing and background prior to the war. He then detailed their individual military experience and completed each story by relating their contribution to society following their service to our nation. It is an impressive collection of stories. Tom Holmes life is not detailed in Mr. Brokaw's marvellous book, but it could well have been.

Tom Holmes grew up in Texas with a love of flying. Prior to Pearl Harbor he qualified for the US Army's Aviation Cadet Pilot program. He was a successful graduate of Class 42B. Upon graduation as a pilot and commissioning as a 2nd Lieutenant in February 1942, he was assigned to the 44th Bomb Group (H) which had just been designated to be the first unit to be equipped with the new 4 engine Consolidated B-24.

Lt. Holmes and his crew were a part of the original flight echelon of the 68th Squadron. They were issued a new Liberator #813, which they named "**Victory Ship**", just prior to shipment to England and the "Mighty Eighth". They arrived at Shipdham in October, 1942. His combat career would be filled with fierce encounters with the German Luftwaffe and their ground anti-aircraft gunners.

Will Lundy's "44th Honor Roll and Casualties" contains three narratives written by Tom Holmes which relate the most challenging and harrowing experiences of his combat tour. I would personally concur that the Kiel mission of May 14, 1943 was a horrible experience and that the Ploesti low level of August 1, 1943 was an

epic land-air battle with traumatic results (I too flew those missions). However, to me the mission he flew on December 6, 1942 demanded uncommon courage and the greatest aeronautical skills.

On this mission, his fourth, to the German occupied Abbeville, France airfield, Holmes' B-24 was attacked by fighters. A 20 mm shell burst in his cockpit, disabling the co-pilot and temporarily knocking out Holmes. The "**Victory Ship**" was out of control, began to barrel roll, and nose down, headed for the English Channel. Upon recovering Holmes struggled to right his plane which was now on its back, nose down. B-24's were not designed to be flown upside down. By superior skill and physical strength, this young pilot was able to recover, after losing several thousand feet, and safely return his crew and his airplane to home base. His superiors were rightly impressed by his heroic conduct, for which he was awarded the squadron's first DFC, and of course the Purple Heart. Our Allies concurred that he demonstrated conduct worthy of their recognition, for he was also awarded the British DFC and the French Croix de Guerre.

When Major **Thomas Cramer**, the 68th CO was lost on 2 July 1943, **John Diehl** was appointed the squadron commander. Diehl chose to make Holmes the squadron operations officer. Despite this responsibility Holmes continued to fly operational missions with his own crew. He had completed his tour shortly before the Ploesti mission. Aware of the importance of this significant target, Holmes and Diehl both volunteered to fly against this crucial target. It should be stressed that Holmes did not have to fly this bold and daring operational mission. In the planning, Diehl

...continued on page 12

was to lead the 44th attack upon the Creditul Minier refinery at Brazi, designated Blue Five. Diehl and his twelve B-24's had one of the two principal aiming points of the refinery. Holmes was to lead his eight ships against the other vital aiming point of this installation, the Boiler/Power House portion of the complex. This attack destroyed the Brazi refiner, the most modern high octane gasoline producer in the entire German industrial complex. It was inoperative for the balance of the war.

Tom Holmes, as the squadron operations officer for this mission, assigned the members of his own highly experienced lead combat crew to fly with John Diehl. Diehl as the squadron commander had not been flying every day combat and therefore had no crew. So Holmes' navigator, **Bob Stine** and his bombardier, **Howard Klekar** provided a veteran team to lead this important effort. Holmes was willing to take as his crew, for this mission, less experienced but very talented crew members. This is but another example of his willingness to sacrifice his own self interest to further the greater interest, the success of the mission.

For his leadership role on this famed mission, Holmes was originally awarded the Silver Star. Recently our **Lee Aston** successfully petitioned the Army to correct, what he believed to be, an administrative oversight in this matter. Last February 4, 2009 Tom Holmes was presented the Distinguished Service Cross for the success that was attained by his superior airmanship, and valor displayed on the Ploesti attack, 65 years earlier. This splendid gentleman was presented this rightful honor on the occasion of his 90th birthday. That day, despite his then frail health, Tom rose to the occasion, his acceptance remarks were of exceptional humility and gratitude.

I first met this amazing Texan in March, 1943 when our crew joined the 68th as one of its' first two replacement

crews. We were warmly welcomed. The pilots were especially kind to me. One of the never to be forgotten pleasures that I experienced involve Tom Holmes. One evening, shortly after evening chow, Tom asked me if I would like to join him for some "relaxin' flyin". I didn't yet know what that was, but I accepted. Tom got his planes' crew chief M/Sgt. **George Bryant**. The three of us went to the flight line, we filed a flight plan, prepped the "**Victory Ship**" and took off. We cruised the Midlands of England at a reasonably low level, enjoying the scenery and in a few instances, inspected rather closely, the activities of some of the English citizens in the countryside. It was delightful. I always felt honoured to have been asked to share time with this tremendous officer, who was also a superb pilot. Together, we enjoyed a few more of these early evening "relax' flyin" sorties before we began the officially sanctioned low level training for Ploesti.

Tom Holmes accomplished his required tour of aerial combat by flying on twenty-five of the 44th Group first forty three missions. When you consider that the Group flew a total of 344 missions, it is obvious that Tom was truly one of the group's pioneers. He was one of three of the squadron's original pilots who completed a tour. (Three were KIA and two became POWs)

A review of his missions and the personnel with whom he flew reveals another quality of his character. He apparently enjoyed being an instructor. Seven of the squadron's co-pilots flew combat missions with him, prior to getting their own crews. **George Jansen, Wilmer Garrett, Mac Howell, Willie Weant** and **Coleman Whitaker** were among his "students". I would judge that he was in effect a "check pilot" advising and approving young men about to be given their own opportunity to lead a crew. Having known and flown with all of these outstanding combat pilots and their talents,

I would consider this list a tribute to Holmes' patience and ability. By observation, while flying with him, I noted that among Tom Holmes' skills was his unusual smoothness in all flight manoeuvres.

Tom Holmes possessed a pleasant, friendly personality that belied his intensity for achievement. He was extremely popular with the ground crewmen. He had an appreciation of the harsh conditions of weather and time that they endured in their task of maintaining the aircraft. They understood his demand for excellence of maintenance. His respect and genuine concern for the enlisted men made his rigid standard acceptable.

While he was unable to attend every function of the 44th BGVA, he was an avid supporter of all that the 44th undertook. By example he was known for his deep religious belief and values and was often asked, when he was in attendance at BGVA functions, to give the Invocation

or Benediction for that meeting. His remarks were always filled with wisdom, hope and the goodness of our Creator. He maintained contact with a great number of our members with whom he had served. He thoroughly enjoyed the frequent phone calls that he made, just checking up, passing on an upbeat thought or comment, concerned for the health and well being of each of his ole friends, or it was just another opportunity for him to tell you that he "loved ya". These calls were a joy and a delight and, sadly, they will be missed.

It is too bad that Tom Brokaw never met Tom Holmes. More of the world would have known this precious human being who achieved so much good.

My friends, America has lost a true Patriot. We have lost a great friend

Robert J. Lehnhausen
LTC USAFR (Ret)

ROBERT J. REASONER ACCEPTED INTO THE NATIONAL PURPLE HEART HALL OF HONOR

Robert Reasoner easily qualified for membership in this esteemed organization. He earned **two Purple Hearts and an Oak Leaf Cluster**.

His first medal was presented when *Bat Outa Hell* went down in Wales after a mission to the Sub Pens at St. Nazaire, France. This was 3 January 1943.

On 14 May 1943 he was struck by a 30 caliber bullet, while flying in *Margaret Ann* on a mission to Kiel, Germany.

On 1 October 1943, flying with **Coleman Whitaker**, he walked through fire to exit *Black Jack*.

The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor, located in Vails Gate, New York, is searching for stories about the awards won in combat. To prove your qualifications, you must show a copy of your discharge. Also proof could be a photo of your name on the back of the medal.

If you are holding a Purple Heart Medal, let your story be known. To apply, contact www.thepurpleheart.com or call 1-877-28HONOR.

Call me, your editor, if you need help to enroll with this group (717) 846-8948. Time is running out for our airmen. Let's make sure your story is not lost.

WHEN YOU ARE DISSATISFIED AND WOULD LIKE TO GO BACK TO YOUR YOUTH,
THINK OF ALGEBRA!!

14th REUNION OF THE 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION IN TAMPA

Thirty five veterans and 54 other folks gathered at the original home of the 44th Bomb Group in Tampa, Florida. Although the 44th unfolded its wings at MacDill Air Force Base, none of the original group were present. However, evidence of their presence could be found on the metal plaque at the Monument on the Base, along with bricks that told of 44thers who returned to pay their respects – **Leon Johnson, Harry Snead** and more.

Standing in the bright sunlight with a wind gusts sweeping across, President Washburn reminded the group that here is where the first eager 44th pilots learned to handle a plane. Captain John Vanderkaay, (Chaplain) spoke to the crowd, extolling the value of those early flyers who came to MacDill to learn about aerial war.



George Washburn



Honor Guard at site of monument. The BG left a wreath to honor lost members.



Captain John Vanderkaay

Col. Lawrence Martin, Commandant of MacDill AFB, greeted the 44th warmly, dining with the group at a sumptuous meal, then joining Lee Aston for the 'belated awards' ceremony.

Report on the Web Page: The 8th Air Force Web Site has gotten 700,000 'hits' by September 2009; 1,200,000 hits in 2008. This Web Site was created and financed by our Web Master, Arlo Bartsch. The 44th Bomb Group Web Page has gotten 42,339 hits in five years.

It is possible to reach the 44th BG Web Site directly; or via the 8th AF Web Site. Now the question has arisen, should all of the stories in the 8 Ball Tails be placed in a new Web Site?

Long ago, I suggested to President Mike Mikoloski, that WWII was so distant, people would someday lose interest. Mike's reply was emphatic: "The Civil War was 150 years ago, but people are still studying it." Mike was right. We have to make the WWII Air War available for the next century of scholars.

44TH BGVA AWARDS, DECORATIONS & MEMORIALS

R. Lee Aston, Director

Funeral & Military Service for Ploesti Target Leader Lt. Col. Walter Tom Holmes

On May 30, 2009, a Service of Remembrance and Celebration for Walter Tom Holmes, Jr., was held at the First United Methodist Church, Jasper, Texas. Lt. Col. Holmes Folded his Wings on Memorial Day, May 25, 2009 at the age of 90. His death occurred four months after receiving his belated, up-graded Distinguished Service Cross for his target leadership in the low-level raid on the Ploesti oil refinery, August 1, 1943. Arrangements were made by the 44th BG Director with Maj. Gen. Floyd Carpenter, Commanding General, 8th Air Force, Barksdale AFB to provide an Honor Guard for the Church Memorial Service. At the end of the Church Service, a flag-folding ceremony was performed and the flag presented to Col. Holmes' wife, Nida. A rifle salute and taps were performed outside the Church's open doors to conclude the Service.



Altar display for Tom Holmes' Funeral and Memorial at Jasper, Tx, Methodist Church



Floral Cross from 44th BGVA



Directors Aston and Dobbs represented the 44BG Veterans Association



An Air Force Honor Guard folds the U.S. flag



Nida Holmes receives Tom's folded flag

JULY 2009 FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL PRESENTATIONS

July 9, 2009, Boston Harbour, Massachusetts: Former 68th Squadron Pilot, 1st Lt. Russell G. Erikson and 68th Squadron Radio Operator T/Sgt. Walter F. Fitzmaurice, after being nominated by Director Lee Aston in 2008, were inducted as Chevaliers of the French Legion of Honor by the Boston Consulate General Francois Gauthier. The Legion of Honor ceremony was conducted on board the French two-masted sailing ship Etoile at dockside in Boston Harbor. The Etoile joined an international sailing ship regatta that crossed the Atlantic Ocean in June-July.



Schooner Etoile at Boston Harbor dockside



French Consul General pins Legion of Honor on Erikson



Erikson and Fitzmaurice installed in Legion of Honor



Fitzmaurice expresses 'thanks' to France



44th BG suncatcher logo presented to Consul General Gauthier by Fitzmaurice and Erikson



U.S. Navy quintet plays 'Yankee Doodle' and other music for French Ceremony

CAPT. GEORGE R. INSLEY, 66TH SQUADRON, RECEIVED THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL, JULY 11, 2009 IN PORTLAND, OREGON

At a ceremony in the Portland Art Museum, France's San Francisco Consul General Pierre-Francois Mourier inducted George Insley into the Legion of Honor as a Chevalier (Knight) after Director Lee Aston nominated Insley to the French Order in Feb. 2008.



Capt. George Insley and crew flew 53 missions with the 44th Bomb Group



George Insley - Knight of French Legion of Honor

FORMER 44TH BGVA TREASURER RICHARD V. LYNCH RECEIVES
FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR MEDAL, OCTOBER 2009



Richard V. Lynch of Conrad, Iowa, a former S/Sgt. and B-24 aerial tail gunner, 67th Squadron, chose to receive his award of the French medal by mail rather than attend the formal Chevalier induction ceremony at the Chicago Consulate. Dick Lynch received his Legion of Honor medal and diploma (certificate) about October 28. Dick was among the group of nine 44th BG veterans nominated by Director Lee Aston in 2008.

CAPT. STERLING L. DOBBS, 68TH SQUADRON, AND 1ST LT. JOHN E. (JACK) BUTLER,
67TH SQUADRON, RECEIVE THE FRENCH LEGION OF HONOR, NOV. 20,
2009 AT THE FRENCH LEGATION, AUSTIN, TEXAS

In a ceremony at the French Legation, Austin, Texas, 44th BGVA members, Pilot Dobbs and Navigator Butler, were inducted into the French Legion of Honor as Knights (Chevaliers) by the Houston French Consul General Pierre Grandjouan for their WWII combat services for liberating France from the Nazi yoke. 44th BGVA Director Lee Aston nominated Dobbs and Butler to the French Order in Feb. 2008.



French Consul General Grandjouan pins the Legion of Honor medal on Sterling Dobbs



French Consul General Grandjouan pins the Legion of Honor medal on Jack Butler



L to R: Houston French Consul General Pierre Grandjouan, 44th BGVA recipient members of the French Legion of Honor medal Jack Butler of Austin, Texas, and Sterling Dobbs of La Grange, Texas.

**44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION'S
TAMPA, FLORIDA, REUNION AWARDS CEREMONY
OCTOBER 23, 2009**

The annual Reunion belated medal awards was held at the Officers' Club, Mac Dill Air Force Base with a deliciously prepared Noon luncheon before the ceremony. Introductions were made by 44th BGVA's President George Washburn of the Mac Dill AF Base Commandant Col. Lawrence Martin, who hosted the 44th BGVA's awards ceremony and made the belated medals presentations, and of Dr. R. Lee Aston, Director of the 44th BGVA, who made the belated medal claims for the 44th BG veterans and conducted the awards ceremony. Five belated medals from WWII were obtained and presented to three veterans and two *post humusly* to the families of two deceased veterans.



Host, Col. Lawrence Martin welcomes the 44th BG Veterans to MacDill AF Base



Director Lee Aston leads the Veterans and families in the Pledge of Allegiance



Col. Lawrence presents the Distinguished Flying Cross and congratulates Richard Lynch



Col. Lawrence presents AirMedal/OLC#5 to Richard V. Lynch



Sterling L. Dobbs, 68 Squadron, receives his third Distinguished Flying Cross, OLC#2 from Col. Martin.



Lt. Col. James F. Wright, Bombardier, 68th Squadron, received OLC#4 to his Air Medal



Mrs. Bernice Bridges, wife of deceased T/Sgt. Donald O. Bridges, 66th Squadron, radio operator-aerial gunner on Pilot Richard Bridges' crew received her husband's *post humus* POW medal from Col. Martin. Shown above in Second photo on right are Col. Martin with Mrs. Bernice Bridges, son Donald O. Bridges, Jr., and grandson Derek Bridges. An interesting note was that Mrs. Bridges gave birth to Donald Jr. on the same day that she received notice that her husband was MIA.

After T/Sgt. Bridges' aircraft, the FACINATIN WITCH, was shot down on 10/01/43, Group Mission No.56 to Wiener-Neustadt, Austria., he spent nearly two years in German prison camps. Three crew members of Donald Bridges' aircraft were KIA, six crew members became POWs, including Donald Bridges; only the Pilot Richard Bridges successfully evaded capture. Only one crew member, the aircraft engineer and aerial gunner, T/Sgt Robert L. DiSalvio of upstate New York remains alive. His testimony that he spent his entire POW period with Donald Bridges was very helpful in securing the POW for Donald Bridges/Mrs. Bridges.



Col. Martin made another *post humus* presentation of the Air Medal for another member of Donald O, Bridges' crew, S/Sgt. Jacob Rosenstein, the aircraft engineer and top turret gunner of the FASCINATING WITCH, KIA on Oct. 1, 1943 when their aircraft was shot down on their eighth mission to Wiener-Neustadt, Austria. Jacob Rosenstein's family received years ago an erroneously inscribed Air Medal for "James" Rosenstein instead of for "Jacob". Nephew Jeff Rosenstein enquired if Director Aston could obtain a correct Air Medal for his Uncle. Lee Aston was able to secure a new Air Medal for presentation to the Rosenstein family. Shown above with Col. Martin are the Rosensteins: L to R : nephew Jeff Rosenstein and son of Jerry Rosenstein, Jacob Rosenstein's younger brother Jerry, and Susan Rosenstein, daughter of Jerry and niece of Jacob. Jerry Rosenstein resides in West Hartford, Connecticut.



THE FINAL AWARDS : Mary Aston presented a stained glass 44th Bomb Group logo of the "Flying Eights Balls" suncatcher to Colonel Lawrence Martin. In return, Mary was rewarded with a kiss from Col. Martin.

A 1942 -STYLE CHRISTMAS & NEW YEAR'S GREETING FROM THE 44TH BOMB GROUP "somewhere in England"



WITH A 2009 PRAYER THAT THEY SERVED NOT IN VAIN.

AND A 2009 JOYOUS CHRISTMAS GREETING TO ALL
OF THE 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION'S MEMBERS, FAMILIES, AND ASSOCIATES;
AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR WISH FOR OUR AMERICAN CONSTITUTIONAL REPUBLIC FOR WHICH
MANY OF OUR 44TH BOMB GROUP WWII VETERANS GAVE THEIR LIVES,
AND FOR ALL OUR MILITARY IN SERVICE.

The 44th Bomb Group VA has its plane recognition experts. No less than four members recognized the improperly named plane in the Spring edition of the *8 Ball Tails*: **Clay Roberts, Bob Vance, Arlo Bartsch and Frank Schaeffer**. It was not a Thunderbolt. According to Bob Vance, it was a Grumman Avenger, either a TBF, which was made by Grumman or a TBM, which was made by a subsidiary of General Motors, Eastern Aircraft. The Avenger was designed as a Torpedo bomber, but proved versatile. It could carry bombs, rockets; and in the anti-submarine role, depth charges. Living in Ontario, CA, Bob developed his 'recognition skills' serving as a docent at the Planes of Fame air museum.

The Tampa Aquarium

The sharks at the Tampa Aquarium avoided the divers, and the divers wisely avoided them. The Aquarium replicated much of the area's sea life, including a mangrove swamp with parrot fish and red snappers swimming gracefully among the roots.

Fantasy of Flight

Across the state at Orlando was the Fantasy of Flight Museum, where members could get a glimpse of the long history of failures that preceded the Wright Brothers trip to Kitty Hawk.

The Museum has a fine collection of planes, including a German fighter that demonstrated its great speed and maneuverability.



L-R Thomas Muff, Frank Scheaffer, Donald Williams, Nathan Woodruff, Perry Morse, Jerry Folsom, George Insley, George Washburn, Bob Dubosky, Richard Hruby.



Early Balloonist prepares for take-off

The Officer's Club was festooned with a nose of a B-24 projecting from the wall and four engines spaced accurately from it with wings painted to give the appearance of a real plane.

However, the real plane was in a distant hangar for maintenance. We went there by bus. With TV cameras rolling, veterans lined up in front of 'Joe', a B-24 named for Joe Kennedy, who had been lost in the war. Channel 10 in Tampa carried the story.

SPREADING THE HISTORY

Through the efforts of Chris Clark, a set of 8 Ball Tails and Compact Disk has been placed in the Library of Wright Paterson Air Base. This is especially meaningful to the 44th Bomb Group, as two members of the 44th were test pilots at WP: **Robert Cardenas** and **Frederick Dent**.

He also made the contact for the WWII Museum in Louisiana, formerly named the D-Day Museum. If we are lucky, his efforts should get copies of the Tails into the Library of Congress.

Chris gave me a question that could go into Trivia Pursuit: *There are a number of Medals of Honor given to airmen who flew out of England, most to pilots of B-17s. Only one was for a pilot of a B-24 – Who was it?*

*The answer: **Leon Vance**. Remember—**Leon Johnson** flew out of Africa!!*

THE BANQUET – a time for recognitions

Two special guests were present – Peter and Margaret Steele from England. Peter is the Curator of the Shipdham Flying Club Museum, a growing project that houses many photographs, books and memorabilia from those unforgettable years when B-24s rolled down the runway and carried powerful weapons to Adolph and friends. Peter had been an RAF pilot, and he can easily identify with the memories of 44th veterans.



Peter Steele

At the Banquet, **Dick & Betty Lynch** were presented a Certificate of Appreciation for their many years of service as Treasurers of the 44th BG.. Jackie Roberts added a glass sculpture, honoring their services.



Jackie Roberts, Betty and Richard Lynch

Next – **Your Editor was honored for plagiarism** - for publishing stories she did not write! Lois Cianci read a beautifully penned narrative about me – my nursing background and the events leading me into becoming Editor of the 8 Ball Tails – written by **Robert Lehnhausen**. Then Jackie Roberts gave me a huge spray of red roses. (Imagine getting them through the



Lois Cianci



George Washburn & Ruth Morse

X-ray on the plane.) Next, George Washburn presented me with a gorgeous office clock. (I didn't have the courage to take a ticking clock on board. Perry's daughter Ellen delivered it to me at Thanksgiving.) I have allocated it a safe place on my crowded desk.

I have to remind you, my dear veteran readers, you lived all those adventures; you wrote all those stories. **Will Lundy**

saved them. **Tony Mastradone** helped collect them, **Arlo Bartsch** digitizes them. Thanks a million for making me feel appreciated....but humble.

George called **Perry Morse** forward and presented him with a plaque, honoring him for special skills in providing liquid refreshments in the Hospitality Room. Now Perry has delegated those chores to his highly skilled and ever-willing family – Ken, Ellen and Nancy.

THE BANQUET – a time for recognitions

Glimpses of the Reunion



Jackie & Lowell Roberts at the Fantasy of Flight



Beryl Apgar, Betty Lynch and Cynthia Harmonoski waiting for a bus.



George Insley found a truly remarkable bloom in the garden outside the Aquarium. He was a TV spokesman at the B-24 hangar, telling of his decision to sign up for a second tour in England. He flew a total of 52 missions.



A pair of Jeans: Jean Benadom and Jean Insley look at a scrapbook of the 44th BG, provided by Frank Schaeffer. Jean Benadom brought a very unique item for display – a fabric map, given to crews going onto missions – in case they are looking for an escape route. In the background is Ken Kelly, tending bar.



Nancy Schmehl holds up a drink with a very risqué name – Hot Sex. Nobody requested a drink from that bottle.



Tom Wolf, **Bill Newbold**, Fritzi Selaski and David Webster enjoy the treats from the Welcome Reception. Bill was a TV commentator at the Fantasy of Flight, describing the mission to Ploesti.



Ken Kelly enjoys the Banquet before the Hospitality Room doors are opened.



Ellen Kelly and Lisa Woodruff chat while Jessie takes a break from her dog-duties – greeting incoming guests.



Jackie Roberts slows down a moment to join the crowd.

The question arose time after time. Will we have another reunion? The answer is an emphatic **YES**. After many weeks of searching and deliberating, the decision was made to go to Dayton, Ohio, the home of Wright Patterson Air Field – one of the biggest in the world. The Spring issue will provide the details.

**IRWIN STOVROFF (506 Squadron)
MADE NATIONAL NEWS
BY GOING TO THE DOGS**

Irwin Stovroff is a National Service Officer, who works with POWs of many wars; but when it came to the Iraq war, he ran out of POWs. That’s because the Iraqis killed their prisoners.

Rather than sitting around, waiting for more people to show up, needing help, Stovroff started providing Guide Dogs for blinded veterans. Now his organization is also providing Service Dogs. They do special chores for disabled veterans, like pulling their wheel chairs safely down sidewalks and across streets. The cost of training one dog is about \$50,000, so fundraising is critical to the program.

He had already raised \$1,600,000 for the cause. After he was featured on FOX News, another \$100,000 arrived at his office. His organization has a Web Site: WWW.Vetshelpingheroes.org

Stovroff was a Bombardier on *Passion Pit*, flying on the **John Milliken** crew. Look for that story in the next issue of the *8 Ball Tails*.

TRIBUTE TO ONE OF THE 44TH'S GREAT LEADERS

ROY W. OWEN

Roy Owen flew 26 missions from Shipdham, and then the war ended. He attended college, flew agriculture aviation on weekends, and stayed in the service as an Air Force Reservist. Then, through the influence of his friend, **Dick Butler**, he returned to active duty. Roy flew a variety of planes in the Strategic Air Command, but the one for which he was most proud was the Blackbird, a/k/a SR-71. Before retiring, he had risen to the rank of Colonel

For a second career, Roy became an Assistant Professor at California State University at Chico. About that time the 44th Heritage Memorial Group closed shop. Then, along with a handful of other determined 44thers, he helped generate the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association.

He wrote the By-laws, assumed the presidency, published the *8 Ball Tails*, and ran several reunions. Twice he passed the gavel to the next president, then accepted it back to help out when tragedy struck President '**Mike**' Mikoloski.

In 1997, Roy arranged a truly memorable trip to Europe, but he arrived a day late in England. After strongly advising all who signed up for the trip to carry their passports, at the airport in New York he discovered that his passport was outdated! It was grounds for many jokes later.

The greatest of tragedies for Roy occurred in 2004 – the death of his beloved wife 'Lollie'. All of his efforts to build the 44th BGVA were accomplished with the help and support of this gracious lady. When Lollie passed away, she left a wonderful treasure for Roy – her daughter Jackie Strong. Jackie has loyally and dutifully stuck by her adopted father until the day he died.

Roy was totally dedicated to holding the 44th BGVA together and to preserving its history. We have lost a true friend and a great leader.

CHARLES HARRISON HAD THE DUBIOUS PLEASURE OF READING HIS OWN OBITUARY.

The Summer 2009 issue of the *8 Ball Tails* reported Harrison's death. The information was derived from a Social Security Death Index. There must be more than one Charles Harrison, but only one in the 44th BG.

When Jackie Roberts first heard of the error, she promised to bring him back to life! He told her the report was not quite accurate. Charles, as Editor, I extend my sincere apology. If you wish to make any corrections on my FW report, please do so, while there is still time!

George Washburn found a Merrill Harrison in an old roster. He had passed away in 2003, and the Social Security Records confirmed that.

Rick Barry, a professional writer, has written a book, ***Gunners Run***, based on a fictional waist gunner, Jim Yoder, who was a member of the 44th Bomb Group. Barry has researched Station 115, Shipdham, the B-24, and the mission to Kiel. His character, Yoder finds himself plodding to Europe, determined to get to back to England, but encountering all the difficulties of real Evadees caught in similar circumstances. The price of the book is \$7.99. The book was checked for accuracy by **Jerry Folsom**. The book can be downloaded or purchased at any book store. Rick Barry can be contacted at BIEMRick@aol.com

THE SECOND AIR DIVISION REUNION

The 2 AD gathered in Chicago, the city of their origin, over the Labor Day weekend. Besides veterans and wives, there were members of the Heritage Trust and 7 Brits, including members of the Memorial Trust Board of Governors. These are the financial guardians of the 2 AD Memorial Library in Norwich.

Dick Butler and **Perry Morse** represented the 44th BG. Dick, a former president of the 2 AD, conducted the Candle Lighting Service, and Morse lit a candle



The Butler Family, Dick and Ardith, seated; son Richard and daughter Kaye standing behind.

for the airmen lost in the missions of northern Europe.

Tours were a study of the history and architecture of the great city of Chicago. One of the highlights was a trip to the Museum of Science & Industry, which houses German Submarine, U 505. Captured off the coast of Africa on 4 June 1944, the government kept it a secret that the plans to sink it or blow it up had been thwarted. On board was a very valuable piece of equipment, the Enigma. This was the decoding machine for messages coming out of the Reich. It helped the American Navy find and destroy German ships and submarines.

Dick Butler noted the passing of Evelyn Cohen, Membership Chairman of the 2nd Air Division. The Museum in Norwich will decide on a proper memorial for this dedicated lady. The 44th BGVA contributed to the Library Book Fund in honor of Evelyn. Three books have been purchased in her honor – concerning history, culture and politics. A bookplate with her name and the 44th BG as donor will be placed in each book.

Evelyn was one of the founding members of the 2 ADVA, and was among those who spearheaded the creation of the Memorial Library.

The next Reunion for this group will be in New Orleans.

Five months after the news of Evelyn's death, we learned that her friend and co-worker, Jordan Utall had passed away. Utall worked with Evelyn to bring the Memorial Library to fruition. During the War, Utall served in an administrative position in England. He twice served as president of the 2nd Air Division Veteran's Association.



British friends viewing the skyline of Chicago are: Matthew Martin, Chairman of the Memorial Trust Board of Governors; Libby Morgan, Librarian of the 2 AD Library and Andrew Hawker, a member of the Board of Governors. Hawker was accompanied by his wife Andrea.

A TRIBUTE TO ROY M. BOGGS

Captain Roy Boggs was a pilot and "A" Flight Leader in the 68th Squadron. Roy folded his wings on September 8, 2009.

2nd Lt. Boggs and his very talented crew joined the 68th on August 3, 1944. After just a few missions, he and his crew impressed their superiors with their talents. This pilot and his Co-Pilot **Joe Vanecek** flew very good formation. His Navigator **Joe Trageser** and Bombardier **John Sutton** both displayed great skill at their respective positions. As a team, they were stand outs.

The manner in which combat crews were assembled in the states had no ability to measure the talents of the individuals prior to assignment as a crew, with the expectation that they would develop into a good team. As flight personnel completed their training programs, they were sent to transition training programs and assigned to a crew. As a result, a replacement crew arriving at a combat duty station required considerable oversight to become an effective combat bomber crew. To get a crew that possessed talent at all positions and had a desire to be 'top guns' were rare indeed. Roy Boggs had that kind of crew. I have always believed that they were a superb lead crew because of their pilot...Roy Boggs.

The Master Database shows that the Boggs crew was given their first squadron lead just two months after their arrival. The record further shows that they were entrusted with three more squadron leads and seven 44th group leads. At the conclusion of hostilities, they were the squadron's premier lead crew.

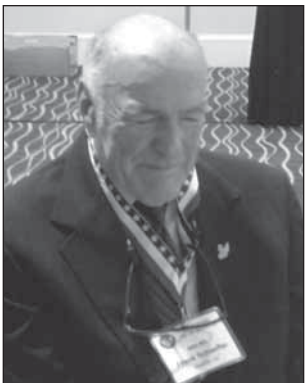
Roy Boggs flew 28 missions. Like so many very fine young leaders who flew most of their missions late in the war, they received very little formal recognition, despite the quality of their contribution to the war effort.

Roy Boggs remained in the Air Force Reserve following WWII and was recalled to duty in the Korean war. In civil life, he was a successful Mechanical Contractor in his native Iowa. Roy's life story could have easily been a subject for Tom Brokaw.

Roy Boggs was the best of men.

By Robert J. Lehnhausen, LTC USAFR (Ret)

FRANK SCHAEFFER RECOGNIZED IN HIS LOCAL NEWSPAPER



Frank has accomplished something many veterans have promised to do, but never did. He documented his dramatic escapades, leaping from *My Peach*, crouching in an underground cavern to escape the Germans, finally finding safety in a home owned by Resistance fighters.

Dressed in civilian clothes, he spent twenty days, briefly listening to radio dispatches from England, to know about the progress of American troops. Finally, he heard jubilation on the streets of the small village of Obias – the Americans were coming through! Riding in tanks, half-tracks, jeeps, trucks, ambulances and other kinds of vehicles and equipment, rode dirty, bearded American GI's.

It was a joyful sight for the man who had been in hiding since his plane went down.

Soon after that, Frank met some of his crewmen and they hitch hiked to Paris for three days of joyous celebration. Then back to England and home.

Frank's careful documentation of his experience drew the attention of the local press. One of his published stories was, "I Never Got to Paris, but My B-24 Did," remembering *My Peach* continuing west with no-one inside.

FROM THE ARCHIVES April 1945

The month of April 1945 was certainly a climax in our history and in the history of the world. It brought the loss of a world-renowned figure – the death of one of the truly great men in history – Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the President of the United States of America and the Commander-in Chief of our Armed Forces. (12 April) This month produced the historic link-up of the great armies of the East with the great armies of the West, in the heart of the Reich. It produced the crushing of Berlin and the utter hopelessness of the Nazi situation. As a result, it produced the evident finale to the operational history of heavy bombardment in Europe, and with it, the apparent conclusion to the operational history of the great and historic 44th in the ETO. The Group flew fourteen missions during the month, to bring our grand total up to three hundred and forty four. Four hundred and twenty three sorties were credited and 817.3 tons of bombs were dropped on various enemy targets. In addition to this, on the 15th, 15,099 gallons of the new and dreaded Napalm were dropped in the Royan Area in an attempt to clear the Gironde Estuary Area of 'Nuisance Nazis'. One aircraft was lost on the 5th, but all but one of the crew returned here at a later date. Thirty-seven Officers and eighty one Enlisted Men completed operational tours and were transferred to the 70th Replacement Control Depot to await return to the Zone of the Interior.

On the 15th of the month, Col. **Eugene H. Snavelly** relinquished his command of the 44th Bomb Group to Col. **Vernon C. Smith**, then Chief of Staff of the 14th Combat Wing.

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.

JERRY FOLSOM'S GRANDDAUGHTER'S VERSION OF A 44TH BOMB GROUP REUNION



The Bieber crew: **Jerry Folsom, Nathan Woodruff, Perry Morse**

Buddies met again with tears in their eyes,
Recounting the stories, forgetting the lies.

Where once there were hundreds, now there's
a few,

The largest crew left is three.

Lost no one to that wretched war, but only to the
course of time,

Perry, Jerry and Woody, the surviving of that crew.

They had no injuries after thirty-five missions
Of dropping bombs in WWII.

They reunited in Tampa, Florida, recounting the
stories

Forgetting the lies.

A Teenager Reports on the Harrisburg/Carlisle Reunion

I love going with my Granddaddy to his Air Force reunions. Last year the reunion was in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.

While we were in Pennsylvania, we went to Gettysburg and drove in a Greyhound bus around the park. It was really cold and windy when we got there, but it has some great views and beautiful statues. There was a museum all about Gettysburg; it had a huge diorama that we got to see, and a big gift shop!

We also went to another Civil War museum that had computers that would find soldiers with a particular name. It had a place where you could sit and learn how to send a message by Morse Code, and a trail outside that led to an awesome view of the Pennsylvania Capitol building.

I also saw two very important people while we were there: I met General Leon Johnson's grandson, and Colonel Roy Owen, who I had met at the previous year's reunion. Colonel Owen is one of only about 100 men who have flown the SR-71 Blackbird. He and his crew flew at Mach 3+, which is over 3 times the speed of sound! Roy Owen and I are good friends and we look forward to seeing each other at the reunions.

I enjoy meeting these amazing men and women that have fought for our freedom. They are so much fun to be around and have great stories to tell. But, out of all these people, I look up to my Granddaddy the most. Nathan Leon Woodruff held the rank of Technical Sergeant and was the engineer and upper turret gunner of a B-24 in the 44th Bomber Group. He and his crew survived 35 missions during World War II, and all came back without a scratch! I love my Granddad, and I love going with him to his 44th Bomber Air Force reunions!

Mark Woodruff (Age 14)



The Woodruff family had the largest number of people present in Tampa: L-R Wayne Benson, Phil Wilson, Taylor Woodruff, Martha Benson, Lisa Woodruff, Judy Wilson, Johnny Woodruff, 2 unidentified guests, **Nathan Woodruff**. (Woodie was the Engineer on the George Bieber crew.)

A Letter from James D. Young to Will Lundy: "I was the Navigator on the **Jim Bunce's** crew (506). Our plane was **Timb-A-A-A-H**. I flew with them on the 13th, but on the 14th or 15th, 1943 I developed throat problems, went to Sick Bay, and was immediately taken to the hospital – U.S. Hospital in Benghazi. It turned out, I had poliomyelitis! Left side.

"You may not recall that at that time, August 1943 - there were 36 cases of Polio from the five bases that the B-24s used. Two cases were Bulba, requiring the Iron Lung. I understand that they subsequently died."

Young was moved to General Hospital in Cairo, then air lifted to the states. He underwent 3 ½ months of therapy at Hot Springs, Arkansas in the Army/Navy Hospital. When he could return to active duty, he was assigned to Air Transport Command, ferrying aircraft all over the world until he was discharged 13 December 1945.

Thanks to Jonas Salk, we don't have to fight polio anymore.

DUANE ESSE'S SEARCH FOR HIS UNCLE

JOHN H. GRINDE

"He was larger than life – seemed to be 7 – feet tall, when I was 6 years old. Uncle John Henry Grinde was saying goodbye to his family, prior to going off to war in Europe in the spring of 1943. He was standing near the front door of my grandparents' home, in full Army Air Corps uniform. Uncle John gave me his Air Corps belt buckle, with wings on it, prior to leaving. That was the last time I ever saw him."

Grinde's nephew, Duane Esse, wrote the following article for

FORWARD IN FLIGHT

Quarterly Publication of the Wisconsin Aviation Hall of Fame

John enlisted at age 31; and after basic training, received gunnery training, then on to school to train for flight engineer on the B-24 bomber. It was then that he was assigned to a crew of ten, with extensive exercises in crew teamwork and coordination. His responsibilities included keeping the airplane mechanicals in top shape, and serving as the top turret gunner.

The crew picked up a new B-24 in Nebraska and flew to England. They were there for a short while before flying to Africa, where they were in concentrated training, including low altitude exercises. This was in preparation for a secret, risky mission, which was to fly from Benghazi, North Africa to Ploesti, Romania to bomb the huge Nazi oil refinery complex.

The date was August 1, 1943. John's crew was assigned to that mission, but was scrubbed that morning due to aircraft mechanical problems. History shows that it was a 'suicide mission'. The Germans knew they were coming, and at 100 to 200 feet, the B-24s were easy targets for the anti-aircraft fire. Of the 177 B-24s that left for Ploesti, 54 were lost...

John's crew was sent on missions searching for the B-24s that didn't return from the Ploesti mission. They were assigned to a different B-24 with a nose art name of **Lady Luck**. Their first mission was to Wiener-Neustadt, Austria, to bomb a German aircraft factory. It was

believed that the Germans would be waiting, and it would be a risky mission. It was not, and the planes returned with little damage.

The next mission, which was the crew's second, was to Foggia, Italy to bomb North Field. **Lady Luck** did not return. It was Monday, August 16, 1943. After weeks, crewmembers' families were given notice that they were missing in action. Much later, news came that the crew was killed in action. Of the 10, only the radio operator, T/Sergeant **Wesley L. Zimmerman** survived.

My grandparents were reluctant to talk about John's demise. I knew very little, and in recent years tried to get more information about John's training, training bases, crew missions, etc. I was unsuccessful until my son-in-law, a computer expert, found a website with a detailed report, which Sgt. Zimmerman recorded before he died around 1995.

On the mission to Foggia, the formation was under heavy attack by German fighters. **Lady Luck** was under heavy attack. **Lady Luck** was in the rear of the formation, which was a vulnerable position for enemy attack. In Sgt. Zimmerman's report of the attack, **Lady Luck** developed a severe oil leak in the #3 engine; and due to less performance, dropped out of formation. German fighters attacked, causing heavy damage, and **Lady Luck** began spinning. The main hydraulic system was damaged, and they

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couldn't get the bomb bay doors open so they could jump.

According to Zimmerman, Uncle John heroically went out the sliding door to the bomb bay area, with the security of a parachute to open the doors. Zimmerman reported that *Lady Luck* probably exploded and he found himself outside, and parachuted safely to the ground. All nine of the other crew members were killed. This report can be read in detail on the website www.Memories of War.com/veterans/buster.asp; Lost in B-24 Explosion.

Uncle John was the first military fatality from the Deforest, Wisconsin area. After the war, the American Legion VFW Post was named for him and another area service member who was killed in action. A street on Truax Field, Madison, was also named for John, but due to construction and changes, the street is no longer there.

Duane Esse also paid tribute to the 44th BG's historian, the late Will Lundy. Esse joined the 44th BG,, honoring the heroes who won the war. As he stated, 'We owe them all so much.' He also credited Arlo Bartsch for providing the research which inspired his story.

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 Escales 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.

*The Midnight Ride of Paul for beer
Led to warmer atmosphere.*

Burma Shave

WILLIAM MAYNOR'S MEMORY OF BAD MISSIONS

506 Squadron

One of the worst missions was to Foggia, Italy, 16 August 1943. It was Lt. **Maynor's** first. He was Co-Pilot, with **Gordon S. Stevens** at the controls. They were flying in *Old Crow*, seven planes were lost, but the Stevens crew made it safely back to Shipdham.

On 18 November 1944, sitting on the left seat, Maynor piloted *Gallivantin' Gal* to Kjeller, Norway. On the way back to England, they had two bombs left, and decided to drop them on a German ship which they spotted. "We missed the ship and hit on each side of it," he lamented.

"The worst was on 20 December 1943 when #42-7630 was shot down by enemy A/C. It was our 11th mission and were hit by fighters as we approached the target. We were knocked out of formation and lost an engine, but continued on to the target through flak, and we bombed. After leaving the target, the fighters again picked us up and shot the plane up rather badly, firing point blank at us. We had only three guns left firing at them.

"We lost altitude to 9,000 feet and flew out over the North Sea at Wilhelmshaven, still losing altitude. We were nearly out of gas, and the plane was becoming unflyable. The German fighters did not follow us out over the North Sea, so I had a decision to make — to ditch or turn back to Germany. If we ditched, it was almost certain death, so I decided our best choice was to return to the coast and bail out. This we did. I was the last one out, and just barely made it due to the centrifugal force of the spin.

"I only know about those of my crew who survived. I was with **Arnold Gray** (Navigator) and **John Gunnel B** (Co-Pilot) in the POW camp."

An official German report concluded that the aircraft crashed at 12:07 near

Langeoog at sea, and that five men parachuted from the aircraft and were driven to the east by strong west winds. It was then seen to bank to the right and go into first a glide, then a dive. Five to nine chutes were seen coming out of the aircraft. The A/C may also have been hit by flak at the same time. It was last seen disappearing into a cloud.

"While I was a prisoner in Germany, I tried to escape and was caught. Germans were waiting outside the fence and would have shot us if we had gone through the fence. Also, a big Russian Cossack wanted my watch. We argued about it. He finally took his gun and shot into the floor between my feet, then shot into cell. I said 'OK, here's the watch.'"

Maynor and Gunnel were sent to a POW Camp in Barth Germany. When liberated, they flew in a B-17 to France, where they boarded a ship and returned to the USA.

After he returned to the ZOI, he became a Pilot Instructor at San Marcus AFB in Texas. Later he became a Budget Officer in several Air Forces Bases, including 315 ABG, Fuchu, Japan. During the Korean War he again piloted planes from Brady AFB in Japan. He retired with the rank of Colonel.

Memories of The Bremen Mission by Other Crew Members

Arnold Gray (Navigator) reported, "Just after dropping our bombs on Bremen, we were struck simultaneously by flak and enemy A/C projectiles. Both waist gunners, **Glenn Stoffel** and **Joe Coonelly**, were badly wounded. Two engines were knocked out and we began losing altitude about 1,000 feet per minute.

"As we approached the North Sea coast, I attempted to learn, without suc-

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cess from the pilot, whether he wanted to ditch, or should we prepare to bail out. Bill apparently decided that we should bail out, as the alarm bell sounded with a series of short rings (prepare to leave the ship). I immediately summoned **Augustus Oho**, the nose gunner, who was in the front of the ship with me. We hooked on our chutes and opened the nose wheel doors, awaiting the final bail out signal, which never occurred.

"When I looked down and saw water below, I decided to jump, and Oho followed me. I learned later that the rest of the crew left the ship after the 'prepare' signal. **Mike Liss**, our radio operator, and I landed in the water and were picked up

by a German Air-Sea Rescue boat. (Liss and **James Corrigan** (Engineer) were picked up out of the water and became POW.)

Lt. Gunnell said that the two men who were MIA, **Augustus Oho** (Nose Gunner) and **Glenn Stoffel** (RW Gunner) probably did not survive the fall into the water. **Joel Parker** (Tail Gunner) and **Michael Scanlon** (Ball Turret Gunner) were wounded and became POW. *The German pilot, Koch, who captured him found a letter addressed to Parker and neglected to turn it in to the authorities. He found it after the war and decided to contact Parker. He sent him a picture of his DO-22 seaplane.*

"A SQUADRON COMMANDER WHO SITS IN HIS TENT AND GIVES ORDERS AND DOES NOT FLY, THOUGH HE MAY HAVE THE BRAINS OF SOLOMON, WILL NEVER GET THE RESULTS THAT A MAN WILL, WHO, DAY IN AND DAY OUT, LEADS HIS PATROLS OVER THE LINE AND INFUSES IN HIS PILOTS THE 'ESPIRIT DE CORPS.'"

Brig. Gen William "Billy" Mitchell,
Asst. Chief, US Army Air Service

THE INTERNET REVIVED AN OLD MEMORY FOR THE BIEBER CREW

The Mission to Bernberg, 7 July 1944

Jerry Folsom, Co-Pilot, **Nathan Woodruff**, Engineer and **Perry Morse**, Tail Gunner, were stunned to see their first mission portrayed on the Internet and in the local newspapers. **Bernard Harding**, a pilot with the 492nd Bomb Group, described the mission, which caught the attention of some newsmen, that he was going back to Germany to find his pilot wings which he buried when he was taken prisoner that day.

His description matched the memories of the three members of the Bieber Crew. They clearly remember the fighters coming straight through the formation; it was their first mission and their most unforgettable. The target was an aircraft factory, and 60 fighters were on hand to greet them.

Bernard Harding described the losses of the 492nd BG –all ten were lost. With the 44th, the 68th Squadron lost **Any Gum Chum**, **Full House**, and **Patsy Ann II**. Eleven men were KIA, seventeen were POW; 1 evaded and returned.

Perry Morse remembered telling his fellow gunner, **Harold Maggard**, "If all the missions are like this one, we won't make five missions, much less thirty five." But thanks to the P-51s and a great pilot, they got through safely.

Flying West

I hope there's a place, way up in the sky,
Where airmen can go when they have to die.
A place where a guy can buy a cold beer
For a friend and comrade whose memory is dear.
Just a quaint little place, kind of dark, full of smoke,
Where they like to sing loud or tell a good joke.
The kind of place where a lady could go
And feel safe and protected by the men she would know.

There must be a place where old airmen go
When their wings get too weary and their airspeed gets low,
Where the whiskey is old and the women are young,
And songs about dying and flying are sung.
Where you'd see all of the fellows who'd flown west before,
And they'd call out your name as you came through the door.
Who would buy you a drink, if your thirst should be bad,
And relate to the others, "He was quite a good lad!"

And then thru the mist you'd spot an old guy
You had not seen in years, but he taught you to fly.
He'd nod his old head and grin ear to ear,
And say, "Welcome my son. I'm pleased that you're here!
For this is the place where true flyers come
When the battles are over and the wars have been won.
Where all hours are happy, and these good ole boys can relax
With a cool one, and a well deserved rest!
This is Heaven, my son, you've passed your last test!"

Captain Michael Larkin

(This poem courtesy of Yankee Museum Publication)

WHEN LITTLE KIDS FINISH THE SENTENCE

(A first grade teacher's experiment with proverbs)

Don't change horses Until they stop running
Don't bite the hand That looks dirty
A penny saved is Not much



MAIL & E-MAIL

E-Mail to Arlo Bartsch: My name is Kathy Beels & I am the youngest of 4 children of James Koontz. I found the wonderful info on the 44th Bomb Sq. on the internet. Please thank all that have a part in this. I have my father's photos & a separation report, and that was all I had. I was 9 years old when he passed away. I can't begin to tell you how special it is to find this info..... Thank you soooooo much. God bless, Kathy Beels

Ed. Note: We can never understate the value of the work of Arlo Bartsch and Will Lundy, who made it all possible.

MEMORIES OF JIM BOYER 68TH and 506 CREW CHIEF

After graduation from A & M School at Chanute Field, IL, I started 1 April 1942 with the 44th BG. As an aircraft mechanic, I arrived at Barksdale Field, near Shreveport, LA. **Howard Foley** and I arrived together, and we were both assigned to the 68th Squadron. We both became Crew Chiefs.

While at Barksdale, the Group performed patrol work in the Gulf of Mexico and were credited with sinking of a Sub or two.

In late July we were transferred to Will Rogers Field, just outside of Oklahoma City, where we trained in night flying. Near the end of August we were on our way to Fort Dix, N.J. and then to England. It was in early October before the Group got together again at Shipdham, our home for another 2 ½ years.

The first B-24 that I crewed was named **Captain and His Kids**. My crew members were **B. D. Cramer**, Assistant Crew Chief; **John Wolfe**, **L. Villemez** and **A. Vaughn**. Cramer was later promoted to Crew Chief, as was Villimez.

On January 4, 1943 the Group received a new commanding officer, Col. **Leon W. Johnson**. He was one of the finest men I have ever met, both as an officer and a gentleman. He made his first combat mission in the **Captain and His Kids**, a B-24D. All planes returned that day OK.

During the first few months of operations, the 44th was making many diversionary missions, which everybody disliked. Then about April or May, I was called for a special assignment in which I was on Detached Service. B. D. Cramer took over as Crew Chief.

I was sent to Scotland to an R.A.F. School for B-24s. Upon my return I was again sent out on Special Duty as a crew chief for a new gunnery school that utilized B-24s for tow target training. Our

B-24 was especially equipped for towing targets, so that new gunners could be trained in aerial gunnery. But about a month later, General Headquarters cancelled the program.

Upon returning to Shipdham, the 506 Squadron had arrived and were short crew chiefs, so I transferred over to the 506 Squadron. My first aircraft was named **My Ever Lovin Gal**, a B-24H that had 28 missions on her before she was lost in action (29 June 1944, collision). She also was equipped for PFF, a lead ship.

The next B-24 that I received was a new "J" series. We named her **My Gal Sal**. She had 14 missions to her credit when lost due to an accident. She crashed on takeoff on 30 August 1944, and I was on board her at the time. The pilot had special orders to fly to London, not a combat mission. The flight engineer was not able to be found at the time of takeoff, so I volunteered to fill in for him. However, just as we were ready to leave, the engineer came out - and took over his duties. Being all set to go, I decided to stay in the ship and go with them.

We were all fortunate as no one received any injuries as the result of the crash. I hated to see the ship destroyed.



The nose gear of **My Gal Sal** collapsed after take off.

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It was too badly damaged to consider the major repairs necessary.

I did fly occasionally, acting as flight engineer – times when slow, testing new engines when we had the pilot take my plane up and check out the engine, making sure it performed OK prior to a combat mission. Also, I flew on practice bombing missions when the flight engineer and gunners were not required to go. As a crew chief, I was trained to act as flight engineer.

After I lost *My Gal Sal*, I helped out other crew chiefs who were short on manpower. I was assigned to **John Schliesman's** plane *Bar S*, and crewed that ship until April '45.

On May 24 1945 I was married to my present wife, Joan, in London. She later joined me in the States, March 1946.

The Group left England about 15 June 1945, luckily getting a cruise back on the same ship that took us over, The Queen Mary.

FROM THE DIARY OF DONALD POTTER
Navigator. 67TH Squadron
March 24, 1945
Flying to Wesel in Three Kisses for Luck

When the Mission Map was revealed during briefing, it showed a course that crossed Wesel on the Rhine River. This was to be a mission to re-supply the troops who had been dropped by parachute or flown by glider into enemy territory. We were to carry cargo only, to be dropped by parachute through the Ball Turret opening while over the target area. Sixty-nine tons of supplies were to be dropped.

We were to leave all offensive or defensive armament. The thinking was that, if we should get shot down over enemy territory, the enemy would not be as likely to 'chop' any captured prisoner of war they might find, since no one had fired a shot. This announcement did not comfort us in the least.

The plan was for Maximum Effort, with a huge number of planes involved. We were to cross the Channel and Allied country at a height of FIFTY FEET, quite low. Actually, we flew a little higher over the Channel, but descended to about fifty to one hundred feet when over the coast. At that height, farms, houses, towns and people passed rapidly underneath, since our

airspeed was about one hundred fifty MPH.

We reached and crossed that critical, imaginary, political line separating Allies from the enemy. As we passed over, flying at an altitude where a well thrown rock tossed by a hundred and eighteen pound weakling would present a serious danger to planes and crews. We could actually see the whites of their eyes as they raised whatever weapons they had handy, to fire on our huge targets, lumbering by just overhead.

Many of the small caliber rounds struck the wings and fuselage. Some of the rounds went right through. However, many of the bullets entered at such an angle that they ricocheted randomly through the plane. The sounds the rounds made as they were skimming off interior multiple surfaces made you want to shrink at a rapid rate. Most of us, all through the mission, were sitting on our flak suits. The logic behind this decision was that almost all of the fire we would receive would probably come from the ground, and no one wanted to risk the very real possibility that one might get hit

in the butt, a very unheroic place to get your purple heart. What could you say when people asked you how and where you got wounded?

Nowhere in the briefing was it mentioned that we might receive fire from tall buildings, actually shooting DOWN at us as we passed by. This happened as we flew over the town Wesel by the Rhine. That tower had to be at least one hundred feet high. As we passed over the town, flying at about fifty feet, a machine gun positioned at the very top of the tower was 'hosing down' every plane flying by. We were no exception.

The situation was doubly exasperating because the only defensive weapons we had on board were our RAF fighting knives, or reasonable facsimiles thereof. We took a few rounds there, and then were over the river and past the town.

We began to see gliders on the ground – hundreds of them. Some seemed to be relatively intact, while others looked like piles of junk. These were the transportation that had been used to drop a large number of British troops and armaments behind the German lines, to clear rights-of-way and secure the bridges for the movement of Allied forces. The story of the boondoggles and successes of that Command Decision has filled volumes.

Our drop zone was coming up, so we did a pop-up to two hundred feet. On command, we started to manhandle the supply pallets and shove them through the ball turret opening. There was a lot of stuff, and it took some time to get it all out. One of the troops in a sister ship flying just behind us had put his chute on during the unloading process, probably thinking that if he fell out of the turret opening, he would save himself by using his parachute. A parachute at one hundred feet altitude is probably one of the most useless things a guy could own.

Somehow, his rip cord got caught on one of the pallets, and his chute opened

in the plane. The chute was sucked down through the opening and opened with great force, pulling him to and through the hole. No one in the crew had time to pull a knife and cut the parachute risers, it happened so fast. He had time to swing once before he hit the ground, and his body was almost parallel to the surface when he hit. He did not survive. (*This was **Anibal Diaz**, L W Gunner*)

We descended to fifty feet again and started our one hundred eighty degree turn to take a reciprocal heading to get the hell out of Dodge. As we steadied on course, **Dick Lynch**, our Tail Gunner, was resting in the waist of the ship after dumping supplies. Someone down below with an automatic weapon got a good sight on us and riddled the tail section. Lynch just happened to be in the right place at the right time; Dame Fortune was smiling. He still keeps one of the slugs from that incident as a memento.

We started to receive light 20 mm flak in addition to massive small arms fire from the ground. **Adelbirt Snell**, Right Waist Gunner, was standing in the waist, just beneath an oxygen bottle. A round came through and punctured the flask, entering at just the right angle so that the bullet spent the rest of its energy circling within the bottle, making spiral grooves on the outside. The bottle ended up looking like a big fat screw. The shrieking noise it made and the fire it caused scared the Hell out of Bud. We had no casualties on board as yet. The fire was promptly killed with a handy fire extinguisher.

We were flying in an element of three, V-formation, on the left. We flew over a gun position which possessed an '88', the most accurate and deadly gun the Germans had, and it was firing... at us. The slow, low, lumbering shapes of the Liberators were targets made to order for anyone with a gun. The B-24 on our

right received a hit on what appeared to be the number one engine, at an altitude of about thirty feet.

The wing dropped and the pilot lost about 25 feet of altitude. With a beautiful piece of handling, he managed to bring the wings level. His bomb bay hit the ground and the craft seemed to give a little bounce, and was flying again. The pilot would have made it, but immediately ahead was a string of telephone or power poles and wire. As I recall, he had to bank left in order to lift his right wing over a pole. In doing this, his left wing dug into the ground, and the plane started cart wheeling and exploded. In a great black and crimson flash, the crew and plane were gone, nothing left but scorched earth and debris. I felt empty.

Leslie Lee, our pilot, was flying as low as he could possibly get. We were over a mature forest of pine trees that seemed to stretch forever. It seemed as if we were brushing the tops of some of the taller trees on our bomb bay. We could HEAR the scrapes. The other plane was also flying on our right, perhaps twenty feet higher. Hardly a minute had passed when he was also hit, on what appeared to be the left wing area. He tried to control it, as his nose went up and he stalled; he turned into his left wing and slowly, ponderously, majestically dove straight into the ground. It seemed to take forever. Time seemed to kick into ultra slow motion. There was another explosion, and another crew and plane lost, another sooty scar on the land.

At that point we knew that we were still in range, since the gun was situated on high ground, and we were not screened. Lee found a road that was cutting through the forest, as straight as a ruler. In order to make our target smaller, he lowered our fuselage down as far as he could just over the road bed. All of our engines were running normally, but it would take only one of those beautiful

fourteen piston engines faltering, and WE would be history. The propellers were making kindling of the tops of the trees on each side of the road, and this may have caused the adrenalin high of a lifetime. We were still receiving flak, but it was apparent the gun could not depress enough to make a hit.

On our way out we lost our tail skid when we hit the highest of several 'high tension' wires strung between poles.

Since I had returned to the nose, I had the best seat in the house when I spied two horsemen up the road riding like Valkyries. As the plane passed over them, our sound and air compression sent them both tumbling and rolling in the roadbed like humpty dumpties, giving us all a little comic relief.

Finally we reached Allied territory and were able to climb to a more comfortable altitude. We had no problems getting back to home base, and we all kissed good old Mother Earth when we deplaned.

I have forgotten how many bullet holes we counted on the plane. It seemed that there must have been a hundred, and no injuries...unbelievable.

We heard that some of the stuff we dropped was recovered by the Germans, but enough of it got into the right hands to make the difference. We (the Allies) won that battle. The Wing lost ELEVEN ships on that mission; expensive. I had always wanted to go on a low level mission; but now that I have, I never want to go on another. The main thing that saved our hides that day was the judgment and execution of our Pilot, **Leslie Lee**, and our Co-Pilot, **Don Wells**; and the work of our superb ground crew.





Movie queens Kay Francis (L) and Martha Raye (R) are greeted by Col. Frank Robinson, CO of the 44th BG, December 1942.



Steve Adams found these pictures in the Life Magazine Library: It was taken when *One Weakness* was ready to leave for the ZOI. Bob Lehnhausen's records show that the *William Warner* took the plane home. However, the identity of officer wearing the impressive jacket remains a mystery. Can anyone identify him?

A guy who drives a car wide open,
 He ain't thinkin', he's just hopin'
 Burma Shave



FOLDED WINGS

*They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted..
At the going down of the sun and in the morning.
We will remember them...*

Laurence Binyon

Boggs, Roy M. #19444 68th Squadron 8 September 2009 Captain Boggs was a Pilot, flying his first mission with Clair Hill on 8 August 1944. Immediately he was assigned his own crew, with whom he flew a total of 28 missions, sometimes as Lead Crew. The Boggs crew flew in *Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch, Jose Carioca, TS Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Lili Marlene, Lady Geraldine* and *Louisiana Belle*. He flew with six different Command Pilots: **Roy D. Crist, William Strong, Harold Stanhope, William Cameron, James McAtee** and **Sterling Dobbs**. His last mission was 21 March, 1945.

Notice of Bogg's death came to **Robert Lehnhauser** from his son Steve Boggs. Boggs, a Life Member of the 44th BGVA, and his wife Aileen resided in Des Moines, Iowa.

Bratzel, Robert B., Sr #19501 67th Squadron 9 September 2009 2nd Lt. Bratzel was a Co-Pilot on the **Ernest Kyle** crew. His first mission was on 16 February 1945, flying in *Sultry Sue*. The crew also flew in *Mi Akin Ass* and *Lady Fifi Nella*. On the mission to the marshalling yards in Neumarket, Germany, he flew with **Harold Stanhope** as Command Pilot and **Arthur Kleiderer** as pilot. They were flying as Lead Crew. He flew a total of fifteen missions, his last on 20 April 1945.

After the war, Bratzel became an attorney; he specialized in Real Estate Law, and was employed by a Title Company. He and his wife, Virginia, were childhood sweethearts, went different directions, then met again later in life at a high

school class reunion. They had a 16 year marriage before his death. Between them they had 5 children, 7 grandchildren and 5 great great grandchildren. The couple lived in Bristol, Tennessee.

Davis, Harold C. #19943 67th Squadron 2009 S/Sgt. Davis was a gunner on the **Richard Thornton** crew; but he also flew with **John Winchester, William Wahler** and **Stephen Harris**. Davis flew in a number of unnamed planes, but also in *F for Freddie, D Barfly, Shack Rabbit/Star Spangled Hell, Raggedy Ann II, Old Iron Corset* and *Phyllis*. Davis's first mission was 30 January 1944; his last was 18 October 1944.

Davis first attended Airplane Mechanics School for B-24's. After his combat experience he went to Gunnery School for B-26's, then Mechanics School for B-29's. In civilian life he became a Transportation Dispatcher for Union Carbide at Oak Ridge, TN.

Edkins, William "Don" Donald #20097 506 Squadron 18 September 2009 1st. Lt. Edkins was a pilot; he flew eighteen missions during the latter part of the War. On his first mission, 25 November 1944, he was Co-Pilot on the **Ivan Lowe** crew; the following day he moved over to the left seat and had his own crew. The Edkins crew flew in *Joplin Jalopy, The Hit Parade, Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Consolidated Mess, Down De Hatch, Sabrina III, Phyllis* and *The Big Headed Kid*. His last mission was 18 April 1945.

During an Air Transport Command Practice Flight in Watton, England, flying



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in #44-50698 Bar C, Edkins feathered an engine, then a second, simulating an emergency, which was a test of the pilot's skill in handling such an event.

Unfortunately, the engines would not 'unfeather', and the plane crashed.

Edkins was the most seriously injured, and spent nine months in military hospital until he was discharged.

After the War he earned a B.S. at the University of Pittsburgh. He moved to Phoenix, Arizona and had a career in merchandising with Sears, Roebuck & Company.

He is survived by his wife Connie, daughter Carolyn, two stepdaughters, five grandchildren and three great grandchildren. The Edkins family resided in Boise, Idaho at the time of his death.

News of his death came from Charles "Chick" Blakley, a member of the H.R. Howington crew that was shot down 21 January 1944. Blakely evaded, returned to Shipdham, then to the ZOI on 14 April 1944. Sent by email Gray-John Allen.

Hagan, Willis #20505 506 Squadron 2006 S/Sgt. Hagan was a Gunner and Toggler on several crews, most with **Donald Ackerman**, but also with **Jack Thorne** and **Trent Ackerman**, who was from the 68th Squadron. His first of twelve missions was on 17 January 1945. He flew in **Down De Hatch, Southern Comfort III** and **Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose**.

Willis's last mission was 11 April 1945.

Haywood, Halden R. #320596 67th Squadron 21 March 2001 Lt. Haywood was a Bombardier on the **Howard W. Moore** crew. He flew a total of six missions, the first on 6 December 1942. He flew in **Suzy Q, Bela/Beck's Bad Boys**. On 14 May 42, flying with **Robert I. Brown** in **Miss Delores**, on a mission to the Krupp Submarine Base at Kiel, the plane was struck by both fighters and flak, and most of the crew bailed out

into the Baltic Sea. Two went down with the plane. Haywood, along with six others became POW; three were KIA.

Knowledge of his death came from Social Security Records. Nothing is known about his post-war activities.

Hellberg, Frank A. #20619 66th Squadron 27 December 1999 T/Sgt. Hellberg was a Radio Operator/Gunner on the **Charles Hess** crew, with whom he flew all 35 missions. His first mission was 5 October 1943. Every mission of this crew was into Germany.

The Hess crew flew in **Fifinella, Jail Bait, The Hit Parade, Henry, Chief's Delight/Chief Wapello, Limpin Ole Sadie/San Antonio Rose, Jersey Jerk, Big Time Operator** and **Louisiana Belle**. Their last mission was 30 May 1944

Information of Hellberg's death came from the Social Security Records..

Hendrickson, Robert H. #20623 68th Squadron 1 November 1998 Sgt. Hendrickson was a Tail Gunner on the **William J. Clower** crew. The crew flew seven missions, all into Germany, the first on 2 November 1944, the last on 5 June 1945. Every mission was an attack on Germany's war-making supplies. The reason for the limited number of missions is not known. Hendrickson's death was found in the Social Security records.

Hobbs, Harold #20679 506 Squadron 23 February 2002 This name came from the Social Security Records. There is no information about his service in the Database.

Holden, Arlie R. #20674 66th Squadron 17 July 2002 T/Sgt. Holden was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on eleven crews with 12 different Command Pilots. He flew in 11 different A/C plus many unnamed, his first on 3 November 1943. He flew with **Richard O'Neill, Sidney Paul,**



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Richard Thornton, William Wahler, George J. Thom, Robert McCormick, Hal Kimball, Arthur Rasmussen, Maurice Steven, Joseph Gillespie and Thompson Daily. He flew with the following Command Pilots: **Charles Benton, Robert Felber, Spencer Hunn, John Gibson, Lewis Adams, Douglas Thompson, James McAtee** (on D-Day to Caen (Vire), **Leon Johnson** (Second D-Day mission to Colleville/St. Laurent), **John Losee, M.K. Martin** (from 392nd Bomb Group), **Eugene Snavely**, and **E. T. Claggett.**

Holden flew in the following *A/C*: ***Poop Deck Pappy, The Shark, 4-Q-2, Lil Cookie, D-Barfly, Shack Rabbit/Star Spangled Hell, Phyllis, I'll Be Back/Feather Merchant, Consolidated Mess, Big Time Operator, King Pin and Flak Magnet.***

Information of T/Sgt. Holden's death came from the Social Security records.

Indelicatto, Diego C. #20781 66th Squadron 23 February 2009 S/Sgt. Indelicatto was a Tail Gunner on the **Amos Alley** crew. Their first mission was 29 November 1944. Their post-D-Day missions were in support of the troops. They flew in ***Glory Bee, Jersey Jerk, Chief's Delight/Chief Wapello*** and ***Fifinella.*** Four of their missions were so strategic to merit Command Pilots: **Richard Wynes, Roblee A. Perrault, David Hurley and William Cameron.**

The Alley crew flew 18 missions; their last was on 10 April 1945. Indelicatto's last address was in Brooklyn, New York.

Jangl, Wenclas P. (Bill) #20811 66th Squadron S/Sgt. Jangl was a gunner on the **Norman Nutt** crew, flying his first mission on 6 February 1945. The Nutt crew flew in ***Glory Bee, Henry, Fifinella, Mi Akin Ass*** and ***Jersey Jerk.*** The Database credits Jangl with sixteen missions, the last on 20 April

1945.

After the war, Jangl attended the City of New York College. He became a Tool & Die maker and designer. In New York City he became a substitute teacher of Machine Shop Practice. He also worked for both the New York Labor Department and Worker's Compensation as a Factory Safety Inspector. He retired in 1989.

Jangl and his wife Otilie had one son, one daughter, 4 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. His last address was in New Britain, CT. This information came from his pilot, Norman Nutt, with whom he has maintained an ongoing relationship since the end of the War.

McPhail, Douglas #21300 66 Squadron July 2009 S/Sgt. McPhail was a Gunner on the Amos Alley crew. His record matches that of **Diego Indelicatto** (listed above.) The two gunners died within five months of each other. They flew in ***Glory Bee, Jersey Jerk, Chief's Delight/Chief Wapello*** and ***Fifinella.*** Four of their missions were so strategic as to merit Command Pilots: **Richard Wynes, Roblee A. Perrault, David Hurley and William Cameron.**

The Alley crew flew 18 missions; their last was on 10 April 1945. McPhail resided in Raleigh, North Carolina.

There are two spellings for this airman's name in the Database. He is listed as McPhee on his missions, and McPhail on the roster. The official record remains unchanged, but his mailing address indicates McPhail to be correct.

Love Roger Maurice #21140 506 Squadron Cpl. Love was a Teletype Operator. He held this position until the war ended, then returned to the states via the Queen Mary on 15 June 1945.

Maurice and his wife Mary made two memorable trips to the UK, visiting many



FOLDED WINGS

old friends. They returned to Shipdham, especially interested in seeing the 506 base. According to Mary, he had treasured memories of his Commander, **Leon Johnson**.

After the War Maurice earned a degree in Accounting from the University of Texas. As an Accountant, he processed Delinquent Tax Records from his office, located on his ranch, 3 miles from Clarksville, Texas.

Maurice and Mary Elizabeth had been married 58 ½ years. They have two daughters, Debbie and Lisa, and two grandsons.

Owen, Roy W. #23163 506th Squadron 19 November 2009 Col. Owen was a Co-Pilot on the **William M. Smith** crew. Their first of 26 missions were 11 December 1944. During the time that the Air Corps was bombing bridges, marshalling yards and Nazi industrial sites, Owen flew with **Dale Brenadon, James Clements, Joy Smith** and **Charles Hughes**. He flew in many unnamed planes, but also in **The Hit Parade, Down De Hatch, Sabrina II** and **Southern Comfort**. Their last mission was 18 April 1945.

After the war Owen earned a BS degree at the University of California; and when the Korean War began, he re-entered the Air Force, later accepting a Regular Air Force Commission. He returned to SAC as a B-47 commander. Following that tour he was assigned to Beale AFB in the initial cadre of the Operations Staff to plan for the operational mission of the new SR-71. At that point he rose to the rank of Colonel. His first marriage had failed years before; he married Charlene LeVoice (Lollie), and she was able to join him in his next assignment – Pacific Air Force Headquarters in Hawaii. By then he had served 30 years in the service. He went back to his alma mater, earned a Master's Degree and joined the faculty as an

Assistant Professor.

Owen is best known to the 44th BGVA as a Founding President. He wrote the By-laws, and only one change has been made from the original. On two occasions he assumed the leadership positions to help out when the current president could not continue. Throughout all his years of service in a leadership position, Roy was always adamant that the 44th would live on in the hearts and minds of generations who followed.

Roy leaves behind two sons, Rick and Tim, daughter Jacklynn, grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Pellow, Russell J. Jr. #21637 67th Squadron 20 March 2008 Lt. Pellow was a pilot, whose combat missions began two months after D-Day. On his first two missions, he was a Co-pilot with **Charles S. Herring** and **Wilbur D. Carter**. Two days later he moved onto the pilot seat and completed thirty six missions. On one mission he flew with **A. J. Hardy** as Command Pilot.

Planes were in regular need of repairs, so the Pellow crew flew in eight named A/C and many unnamed. They flew in **Glory Bee, Myrtle The Fertile Turtle, Gipsy Queen, Corky, Mi Akin Ass, Chief's Delighe/Chief Wapello, Judy's Buggy** and **Lady Fifi Nella**.

Pepper, Carlton D. #21646 23 April 2009 There is no information about this man in the Database. It is reasonable to assume that he was part of the auxiliary staff that provided services for members of the 44th BG. His last reported residence was in Laurel, Delaware.

Raysinger, Francis #21753 506 Squadron Date Unknown S/Sgt. Raysinger was the Engineer/Togglier on the **Erland Jacobson** crew. He flew nineteen missions, the first on 25 February 1945.



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He flew in *Clean Sweep/Dragon Nose, Myrtle the Fertile Turtle, Down De Hatch, Southern Comfort III, and The Hit Parade*. He flew the 44th's last mission of the War, 25 April 1945 to Hallien, Austria.

Raysinger and his wife Olga resided in Baltimore, Maryland.

Scott, Walter J. #21986 506 Squadron April 2007 1st Lt. Scott was a pilot. He flew thirty missions, the first on 13 May 1944. On D-Day he flew two missions – the first to Colleville/St. Laurent; the second to Caen (Vire). On the Caen mission he flew with Command Pilot **Benton Greene**, 68th Squadron.

Scott flew in *Ole Cock, My Ever Lovin' Gal, Gallavantin' Gal, M'Darling, Southern Comfort II, My Peach and Consolidated Mess*.

Scott's last mission was 8 August 1944. He and his wife Esther lived in Prairie du Sac, Wisconsin.

Strandberg, Clarence W. #22185 68th Squadron T/Sgt. Sandberg was a Gunner and Radio Operator; he flew eighteen missions from 4 March 1943 to 16 August 1943. He flew with eight different pilots: **James O'Brien, Walter (Tommy) Holmes, Malcolm Howell, Thomas R. Cramer, George R. Jansen, Rowland Houston, Eunice Shannon**; on the Ploesti Mission, he flew with Co-Pilot **Robert Lehnhausen**. Strandberg flew in no less than nine A/C: *Hitler's Nightmare, Lemon Drop, Rugged Buggy, Victory Ship, Flak Alley, Margaret Ann, Captain & His Kids Ride Again, Natchez Belle* and *Eve/Hag Mag/The Moth Ball*.

Strandberg's last mission was to Foggia. Flying in Natchez Belle, the A/C was attacked by enemy fighters. The pilot and bombardier became POW; 2 members of the crew were KIA; Strandberg and four

others were POW in Sulmona, Italy. When the Allies were moving north in Italy, the prison gates were opened briefly. He and other POWs took off for the hills. They lived there with the help of Italian farm people until October 30, when he was able to reach Allied forces. They were returned to Shipdham; and after hospitalization, he returned to the states 26 December 1943.

When Strandberg first entered the service, he attended Radio School at Scott Field; then attended Radio & Gunnery School in Bovington, England. After the war he attended Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN. He worked for the Post Office as a Mail Carrier until his retirement.

Strandberg and his wife Dorothy resided in New Richmond, Wisconsin. He and Dorothy had been married 64 years. They had 3 children, 5 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

Swank, Robert C. #22223 68th Squadron 20 April 2008 T/Sgt. Swank was an Engineer/Top Turret Gunner on the **Thomas C. Kay** crew. Swank was part of the crew that saw their pilot, Thomas Kay begin as a Flight Officer, rise to 2nd Lieutenant, then 1st Lieutenant during the 32 missions that they flew together. On one mission 44th BGVA President **George Washburn** flew as Co-Pilot; on another, BGVA Director **Sterling Dobbs** was Co-Pilot.

The crew flew in *T S Tessie/Beck's Bad Boys, Jose Carioca, Corky, Gipsy Queen, Flak Magnet, Puritanical Bitch/Puritanical Witch* and *Lili Marlene*, completing their last mission on 21 November 1944.

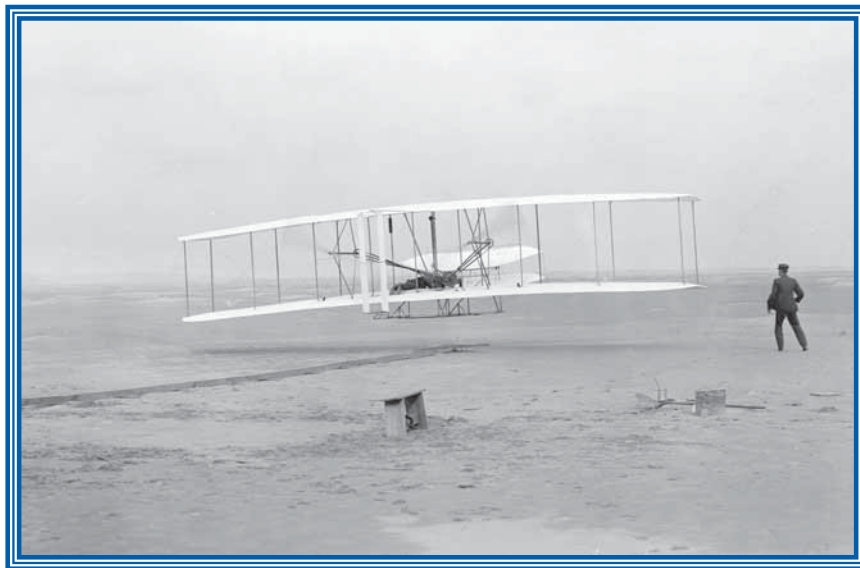
Swank and his wife Alma resided in Ossian, Indiana.



**44th Bomb Group
Veterans Association**
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News Flash: The 2010 Reunion of the 44th Bomb Group will be in Dayton, Ohio, home of Wright Patterson Air Force Base.



Orville and Wilbur Wright's powered flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina inspired the rise of one of the largest air fields in the world. Wright Patterson's engineers have created all types of flying craft, from single engine planes to space age vehicles. Join us, and wander through the National Museum of the USAF. You'll see your cherished favorite, the B-24. Also your Little Friends, P-47 & P-51.

See the Spring Issue of the 8 Ball Tails for details.