



Volume 12 Number 1 Voice of "The Mighty Eighth"

# THE 8th AF NEWS

March 2012



**Celebrating 70 Years**

70th Anniversary of the founding of the Eighth Air Force

# President's Address

Greetings for 2012! OK, it's three months into the new year. How are those resolutions you made working for you?

Truthfully, most of us made personal resolutions/goals for the new year. The Society has renewed its goal to preserve the legacy of the Mighty 8th with more dedication than ever before. Is it becoming more of a challenge to reach this goal? You bet --- most goals worth reaching come with a challenge and require a plan to see it through. So, here's the plan:

**1. Annual Dues** --- To reach our goal, we are all going to have to reach deeper in our pockets. The AFHS 2012 dues notice for Regular Members in the December issue of the magazine reflected a \$10 increase from previous years (\$30 to \$40). In addition, Life Members may also be required to pay annual dues. Following lengthy discussions of this topic in St. Louis, Treasurer Darrell Lowell introduced this resolution in his message in the December magazine as well as the required modification to the existing by-laws that will be necessary through vote in order to change this Life Member status. He will address this topic in detail in the 2012 June issue of the magazine.

**2. New Memberships** --- To reach this goal, we are all going to have to work harder to solicit new members. All of us need to commit to sign-up at least one new member this year. This could be a friend or family member. Why not present a Society membership to someone as a gift?

**3. Advertisement** --- To reach this goal, we are all going to have to advertise/sell our Society. I'm talking about free advertisement. Put extra copies of our magazine in the waiting area of your Doctor's office, the lobby of local businesses, etc. Be sure to wear your 8th AFHS cap or shirt when you are out --- not just at group/Society events. I've noticed several

of the individual groups within our Society wearing matching logo shirts. Just about every time I wear my 8th AFHS hat or shirt, I get a comment or question from someone, which leads into a conversation. Maybe you could volunteer to speak to a local organization or school and get some newspaper/press coverage. Maybe you could volunteer to set up a table at a local festival with handouts and information about the Society. We've got to sell our organization as one of the best there is! It's amazing how many people don't even know we exist!



**Harry Tanner**  
President

**4. Reunions** --- This one is just the icing on the cake! I know it's not possible for everyone to attend the annual reunion, but this provides the best opportunity to connect with friends, have your voice heard, and renew your commitment to the Society. The 2012 Reunion will be October 3 - 7 in San Antonio, TX. Donna Lee from Arm Forces Reunions Inc, will be providing more information concerning the reunion registration, events, etc. in the next *2012 June 8th Air Force News*.

Lorene and I hope that you are successful in reaching your personal resolutions/goals for 2012. With your help, I know we can continue the preservation goal of the 8th AFHS. God Bless the "Mighty Eighth."

**Sincerely,**  
**Harry Tanner**  
President 8th AFHS



## CALL FOR NOMINATIONS

Nominations for candidates for election to the Board of Directors of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society must be in the hands of the Secretary no later than **May 15, 2012**. The following information must be included.

- Full name and address of the person being nominated.
- Nominee's 8th AFHS membership number.
- 8th Air Force unit in which the nominee served if applicable.
- Brief resume of the nominee.
- Nominating member's full name and address
- Nominator's 8th AFHS membership number and, if applicable, his unit.

The Secretary will relay all nominations to the Nominating Committee. Nominations received by the Secretary after **May 15, 2012** or any nominations without complete information will not be considered.

**Send all nominations to:**

**David Nowack – 4878 College View Court – Schnecksville, PA 18078**  
**DLNowack@ptd.net**

# Interim Editors



**Mother/Daughter - 8th AF News Team  
Telisha Gaines & Donna Neely**

**New 2012 DEADLINE DATES!!**

**APRIL 25TH, 2012**, will be the NEW deadline for the 2012 June 8th AF News Magazine

Please send articles, photos and all material that you would like published in this magazine to:

**2090 Cairo Bend Rd, Lebanon, TN, 37087 or email - donnajneely@gmail.com.** Additional contact information is in the yellow box on this page.

Here's a sneak peek of what you will find in this 2012 March issue:

- ★ Page 5 - Darrel Lowell has some good news about "missing magazines".
- ★ Page 15 - Michael Faley has a GREAT

opportunity for you to take that "once in a lifetime" ride with your father, grandfather, uncle or a friend in a Flying Fortress.

★ Page 19 - The True Story of Death Takes a Holiday by Dr. Nancy Toombs.

★ Page 26-31 - Mail Call has a variety of photos, request, updates and corrections that you will enjoy reading.

Special "thank you" to Eddie Deerfield and Allan Dalglish. Look under "Mail Call" for Eddie and Allan's questions and corrections.

*The Editors of this magazine always appreciate and invite readers to make suggestions or correct any information that is published in this magazine. You will notice a couple of corrections placed in Mail Call of this issue. This just proves to us that you are reading our magazine!!*

*We also want to encourage any member that is looking for information about a crew member, plane name, etc. to send us your request and we will place it in "Mail Call" in an effort to help you connect with another member that could have that important informa-*

**SEND ALL MAIL  
AND/OR  
EMAIL TO:**

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**New 2012 JUNE DEADLINE ★**

**★ April 25th, 2012 ★  
for the upcoming 2012 June  
8th AF News**

*tion that you have been searching for. Please continue to tell us your story and share your experiences with us.*

**Sincerely,  
Interim Editors  
Donna Neely & Telisha Gaines  
donnajneely@gmail.com**

## Chapter/Unit/Group Liaison Report

Greetings my fellow Mighty Eighth Air Force Historical Society members. With the new year here I have begun contacting all the Chapters and Bomb/Fighter Group's. If you have not heard from me you will. I need to update the Society's Chapters and Groups listing plus also find out how each of you are doing. Please contact me if possible.

As each year rolls around we are confronting the issue of existence. I have spoken to some 8th Veterans who believe in the last man standing rule and once gone so should the Society but on the other hand many that encourage the Society to continue to 'Keep Their Memories Alive'

I would also like to say to the standalone Groups that this is a new and different Society and welcome you if you ever decide to join our ranks. The Society respects and honors your individuality.

I also want to encourage new and renewed members to also

join their local Chapters and their fathers and uncle's Bomb/Fighter Groups. This is where you will be able to sit and talk and listen and learn. This never ceases to fascinate me as it will you.

The 8th Air Force will never be forgotten.

If you have any comments or ideas on how we can move forward my address is posted on the back of the front cover page and my email address.

**'Keep The Memories Alive'  
Pat Keeley  
Please support the USO.**



**Pat Keeley**



8th AFHS • Box 956 • Pooler, GA 31322

Call: 912.748.8884

Email: membershipmanager@8thafhs.org



### UNCLE SAM WORKS AGAIN

As a result of a computer glitch several months ago many of our Society's members were inadvertently dropped from the master 8th AF News mailing list. We have been busy for several weeks trying to develop a program as to how we might recapture these missing names.

Thanks to Samantha Reid, the final plan resulted in calling back into action that famous image "Uncle Sam". A post card bearing his patriotic image was mailed two weeks ago to what we thought were the affected members and the result was astonishing. Within a few days the phone was ringing off the hook. When people saw that stern looking "Uncle Sam" pointing that finger at them they re-



acted immediately. Some may have thought they were being re-drafted back into service, others knew that this post card notice required their immediate attention

The final result is that many of the missing members have been re-instated to the mailing list and the problem is basically solved. However it is rather ironic that in time of need your Society turned to that famous "UNCLE" to help solve a problem. Sixty years ago, that very same "UNCLE" played a very important role in helping our country protect the liberties and freedoms that we so enjoy today. Thanks again "Uncle Sam".

Darrel Lowell

Treasurer 8th Air Force Historical Society

# 70th Anniversary

Submitted by Mandy Livingston Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum

January 28, 2012, marks the 70th Anniversary of the founding of the Eighth Air Force. Seventy years ago, the 8th Air Force was activated in Savannah, Georgia in what is now the American Legion Post on Bull Street at the south end of Forsyth Park. A historical marker marks the founding. The Eighth Air Force was a critical strike element in World War II and remains an active force today. The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum is one of the world's most powerful Museum experiences as it honors the Mighty Eighth's proud legacy by preserving the stories of courage, character and patriotism displayed by the men and women of the Eighth Air Force from World War II to present.

### ON OUR 8th Air Force News FRONT COVER:

56th FG and 93rd BG - Photos submitted by The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, Pooler, GA.



## BIRTHPLACE OF EIGHTH AIR FORCE

On 28 January 1942, the Eighth Air Force was activated in the adjacent building, a National Guard Armory at the time.

Having moved to England, the Eighth was ready on 17 August to test the theory that daylight bombing raids could be made with profitable results. Twelve B-17's participated in this mission, striking the railway marshalling yards at Rouen, France, and returning safely to their home base. This highly successful mission established the pattern for the strategic bombardment of Nazi Germany -- the Eighth Air Force by day and the RAF by night.

Under the leaderships of Generals Carl A. Spaatz, Ira C. Eaker and James H. Doolittle, it flew over 600,000 sorties delivering over 700,000 tons of bombs and destroying over 15,000 German aircraft. On one single mission, December 24, 1944, it was able to send 2,000 B-17 Flying Fortresses and B-24 Liberators and nearly 1,000 fighters in the Battle of Germany.

The renowned winged-eight, the emblem of the Eighth Air Force, was designed by former Air Force Major Ed Winter, a native of Savannah.

025-86

GEORGIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

1983

# Twins From Cotton Fields in Louisiana - *THE YEAR WAS 1922*

They were born in East Point, a small town in northeast Louisiana, the youngest of five children. They were twins, identical twins, James and Warren. There is an old photo of their father holding them, one in each arm, as he beams at the camera. He had a daughter and two other sons, but the twins, well, they were pretty special.

Unfortunately, their father would not be able to see them grow up. A successful land and railroad man, he was just coming in to his own when he was murdered, shot by a man living on part of his land, over some long forgotten dispute. The twins would now look to their mother, sister, and brothers to learn life's difficult path.

Like most kids in the deep south, one of their first jobs was picking cotton. Fifty cents for one hundred pounds, tough work, yes, but they also got to experience what would be their passion, flying.

The crop duster would sweep down over the fields, guided by his flag-man. Skimming just above the ground to spray the cotton and then pull up and make this majestic arc to turn around and do the same thing over and over. The twins were mesmerized. They knew they would someday fly. Many years later, one of the twins would take one of his own sons to the cotton fields of northern Louisiana to witness the same spectacle. They would wave at the pilot as he made that same arc. The pilot would wave back.

The twins' brother, John, joined the Army Air Corps in the late 1930's. He would train as a bombardier in a B-24 in the Pacific. The twins, only eighteen, were envious of their big brother, and happy for him. They wrote letters back and forth. Someday, it will be their turn to fly.

Pearl Harbor. . . Suddenly, life is much more serious. Older brother John is on the front lines in the Pacific, flying three and four sorties a day. The Japanese prove to be a formidable foe. On one mission, 24 bombers leave, 20 return. John's plane goes down, he is listed as missing in action. He is never heard from again.

The twins grow restless, and like most men at the start of World War II, they

enlist in the Army Air Corps at the age of twenty. They both sign up to be pilots, but the Army has the final word. James will be a pilot, Warren will be a co-pilot. Both will fly a B-17, the Air Corps best bomber. They take their training together, and being identical, have some fun as they go through boot camp. When James has to pull guard duty, the sergeant coyly suggests that he should switch out with his brother for some relief. The response is "no sir, I wouldn't dream of doing something like that". The sergeant shrugs and walks away, not realizing he is talking to Warren. The twins had already made the switch.

They are shipped to England, a few weeks apart. They are separated for



**Twins - Warren and James Butler**

the first time in their lives. They fly and fight for our country, James flying 28 missions and Warren flying 33. They are part of the "Greatest Generation", men and women who sacrificed so much so you and I can live as we do today. The twins are only twenty-two years old, they grow up quickly in the war and learn life's valuable lessons. They learn what it means to be hard working, to be faithful to their family, to serve their country, to do the right thing. After the war, they both participate in still more missions for the Air Corps. James flies mapping/reconnaissance over Germany, while Warren flies food drops to the people of Holland...men, women and children who were eating tulip bulbs to survive. Years later, Warren

would meet some of these people. With tears in their eyes, they would recall the joy in seeing those beautiful boxes of food falling from the once menacing bombers. Warren would cry too.

Their military service over, they would settle down. They would both raise families in Louisiana. They would also be recalled to the Korean War, where they would once again serve their country with honor, now flying B-29 tankers. Back in Louisiana, friends would see Warren and call him James, they would see James and call him Warren. Still mischievous, the twins would carry on a conversation with their unsuspecting victims before revealing their true identity, with much good-natured surprise and laughter to follow.

Years go by, and now the twins are separated again, one in Texas, one in Louisiana. As it was in their youth, the identical traits remain, when one picks up the phone to call the other, the line is busy because each one is doing the same thing. People from their small area in north Louisiana might not remember them at first, but when they tell them they are "one of the twins", they know exactly who they are. Their values and strong character have shaped and maintained their strong reputation as good men.

The twins are gone now. As they both grew older, many family members knew that when one of them passed, it would not be long before the other would also. Like everything else in their lives, death would be no exception.

My Dad, J. Warren Butler passed away November 9, 2011. My uncle, James H. Butler, passed away November 28, 2011. Two men, twins with strong morals and values, who never griped about hardships in their lives, who believed in God, believed in a strong family and did their best in life for the short time they were here. Part of the greatest generation, two men who made America what it is today.

Men we must never forget.

We will miss you both.

**Submitted by  
Craig G. Butler**

**Order your CD or DVD's today!**

**Make checks payable to: 8th AFHS, P. O. Box 956, Pooler, GA 31322**

Reviews by Chip Dobson, Wing Commander, South Alabama Wing and Vice President, Alabama Chapter.

### Utah Man, Wing and a Prayer

This is the chronicle of Walter Stewart, a Utah native and pilot assigned to the 93rd Bomb Group. His aircraft, appropriately named Utah Man, was a B-24 heavy bomber. Stewart flew his missions very early in the air war; a time when heavy losses of aircraft and crews threatened to halt the American daylight bombing effort. The main focus this episode is the low level bombing mission to Ploesti, Romania, in August 1943. Included are interviews with other veterans, notably, Col. Jacob Smart, the architect of the Ploesti Raid, and renowned 8th Air Force Historian, Roger Freeman. Freeman gives interesting background information on Germany's oil needs



and Ploesti's facilities. Stewart's recollections are delivered in very lively and animated dialogue. He describes how he dealt with the fears and anxiety of facing death in the sky, the bloody Ploesti mission, and the final fate of Utah Man.

### Target Ploesti

This DVD features a film of the Ploesti mission narrated by Walter. Included are 1940's films on VE Day and VJ Day with film footage of ground combat leading to those events.



### Schweinfurt & Regensburg

The first "Double Strike" deep penetration missions to these two vital targets are given a fair amount of coverage, ending with the statement "the results justify the cost". Considering that both facilities were back

in operation very soon after the bombing, many historians will debate that. The DVD continues with combat camera footage of operations of the 10th AF in Burma and 5th AF at Rabaul. Both are interesting but not related to the 8th Air Force. The third portion titled "Max Effort" is a collection of dramatizations of planning sessions, weather briefings, crew briefings and post mission debriefs that give good insight into the workings behind the scenes of bombing missions.



**\$20 each includes shipping and handling**

## DID YOU MISS ONE OF THE LAST 8TH AFHS REUNIONS?

### 2007 – SYMPOSIUM: "The Big B"

A historical analysis of the air raids over Berlin in early 1944.

Keynote Speaker: Jonna Doolittle Hoppes, Granddaughter of General Jimmy Doolittle, Commander, 8th AF 1944 – 1945

### 2008 – SYMPOSIUM: "Keep them flying"

The story of the 8th Air Force ground operations during WWII.

Keynote Speaker: Maj. Gen. F Dexter Tutor, Assistant to the Commander Air Mobility Command Air National Guard.

### 2009 – SYMPOSIUM: POW's

A discussion of treatment of airmen interned in Germany.

Keynote Speaker: Gil Cohen, Aviation Artist

### 2010 – THUNDER OVER MICHIGAN AIR SHOW

Seminar: "Target Berlin" with Mark Copeland.

**Get the symposium and keynote speaker on DVDs from the 8thAFHS Reunions.**

**\$30 each reunion year contains 2 DVDs for each reunion year. Price includes shipping and handling**



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# My D-Day



Author, Stephen Ambrose, states in his book on **D-Day**, that the allies flew 1400 sorties that day. Before we bombed on the morning mission of June 6, the British landed 130 men near Pointe du Hoc, who used a homing device called Eureka to get to their target, which was our target also. On that famous day, 2,876,000 Allied troops were involved, and there were 10,500 planes and 5,000 ships crossing the English Channel. By the time we took off for our second mission, there were already over 100,000 troops on the French beach. The U.S. Air Corps put in the air the largest Air Force ever committed to battle in a single day.

For me, **D-Day** was the continuation of an unusual three-day episode. June 4 was a Sunday and there was some kind of celebration going on at the base so we got little sleep for that mission to Wissant, France. On June 5, we were supposed to go on the invasion, but it was postponed, so we bombed Cape Gris Nez, France as a diversionary target. Again, little sleep.

On **D-Day**, during the navigators pre-briefing, I received all the maps and general instructions concerning flak batteries, and I was told that our target was a 16 inch gun on the coast near Point du hoc that was encased in tons of concrete on a hillside. Briefing for all crews for the first **D-Day** mission was at 2300 hours, and during the briefing we heard General Eisenhower tell us that we were embarking on a "Great Crusade."

Hour was scheduled for 06:30 a.m., when the Higgins boats, with just two feet of draft, were to land. After we bombed, the 2nd Ranger's Battalion was scheduled to use steel hooks to scale the 100 foot cliff to get to the 150 millimeter gun if we failed to take it out.

The Colonel told us that there was no place to ditch, so all pilots were to

make sure that they could make it to France and back before heading over the Channel. Ordinarily, if you had trouble getting back to the base you could ditch in the Channel, usually nose up, and air-sea rescue would pick you up from your last position, after you gave a "mayday mayday" signal.

During navigation training, we practiced ditching, and we were supposed to evacuate the B-17 in 30 seconds, the average time it would float. We were also told during briefing that "Guns will be manned but not test fired. Gunners will not fire at any planes unless attacked." Also, "No secondary runs will be made on any primary target."

After briefing, we took the jitney to our plane. In 1978, when Thora and I met George Stebbins for a tour of the old base, I mention this jitney. He had never heard of it before, and I think he questioned whether the jitney really existed. Later, he wrote that I was correct about it.

For the first mission, the 388th supplied two groups. Our group was headed by Lt. Colonel Cox, with Lt. Col. Henggeler as deputy leader. You might be interested in knowing how Leavitt described Col. Cox. He wrote, "Lt. Chester C. Cox, of Superior, Wisconsin, strolled around operations with his hands in his pockets. This morning flying in the lead ship of the earliest formation of American heavy bombers to cross the enemy coast on **D-Day**, had given him the honor of being the first U.S. bombardment pilot to drop bombs in direct support of the landings in France."

It was a very epic occasion but a very routine mission. We took off at 02:19 and was assembled over Buncher 10 to 20,000 feet. Our pilots, Dan Houghton, and co-pilot, Julian "Tex" Carr took us up in aircraft 666, which, I believe was an old plane named "Quarterback." We

were part of the A Group of 16 aircraft and 2 PFF planes. As I said, our objective was a German battery, which could fire as much as 13 miles off shore.

The take-off was over four or five trees that were at the end of the runway, which was another story. When we took off with bomb loads about one-third heavier than normal, we needed the whole runway to just make it over those trees, and we often hit the leaves. I believe that Colonel Goodman had gone earlier to the local constabulary to ask if we could cut them down, but apparently you needed approval from the crown. When we returned to Knetishall in 2003 for the 60th anniversary tour that I sponsored, those trees were still there.

At 03:58, we headed for the English coast at Beachy Head, which is a triangular piece of land about 15 miles east of Brighton Beach in Southern England. We made it to the target on a heading of 238 degrees. The flight was a milk run, and because it was 10/10ths undercover, the targets were attacked by PFF methods. Bombs were away at 06:56 hours from 15,050 feet. After bombs away, according to the official mission statement, "An excellent pattern of release was noted." We encountered no flak or enemy aircraft, although there were 25 ground rockets fired at us near the target. All aircraft returned over Beachy Head for letdown and landing." We landed at 10:00 a.m.

According to Stephen Ambrose, in the two months before **D-Day**, the Allied Air Forces lost 12,000 men and 2,000 planes. Nevertheless, we were able to put 1,200 Flying Fortresses in the air for the **D-Day** landing. I remember very well standing at the astrodome and looking in all directions and seeing nothing but contrails. What an impressive sight. In that one day, The 8th Air Force dropped more tonnage

# Missions

in two hours than all the bombs dropped on Hamburg in 1943 - the most heavily bombed city of Europe in World War II.

After we returned, we had a very quick de-briefing and we all hit the sack totally exhausted. Very soon after, our sleep was interrupted by a sergeant with a flashlight who yelled "Mis-

sion." In this audience, I can't tell you the exact words I shouted at him, but it meant "go away." He said, "The mission is in jeopardy, you have to go back." We dragged our "you know whats" to briefing, where we were told that "the Germans are pushing us into the sea." We had to go back on a tactical mission to support our troops.

For me, this was a more difficult mission. As you know, the B-17 has a nose hatch that is above your head. When I first saw a Flying Fortress, I learned why we had to do all those chin ups in navigation school. Well, on the second mission of June 6, I couldn't make it up wearing my flying suit, Mae West jacket, flak suit and carrying a parachute. You might remember that Gregory Peck had the same problem in "Twelve O' Clock High." I got to the nose by the rear door, crawling through the bomb bay.

Colonel David led our second mission, which took off at 17:37 p.m., and we assembled over buncher 10 at 12,000 feet. The instrument assembly was achieved at 24,000 feet over Knettishall. We flew next to buncher 12 and we circled waiting for the 452nd A Group that was 5 minutes late. Lt. Kneemeyer was lead pilot in aircraft 627, and we were just behind him flying in 666 again. There



were 17 aircraft and only 1 PFF airplane that started out.

We left the English coast at 15,000 feet at 19:55 hours, and we reached the IP (the initial point of the bomb run) at 20:15 at 20,000 feet. We did not bomb the primary target, however, and after several turns, we found a "target of opportunity" a "railroad choke point in the southern part of Flers."

The mission report tells us that we bombed at 22,000 at 20:58. It was a visual bomb run at Pont L'Eveque on a heading of 160 degrees. The target is on the Touques River, about 20-25 miles east of Caen. Bomb Kerns, our ball turret gunner, said that on the second bomb run, he returned his guns straight down and he could see the structure of the bridge that we bombed. He said he heard the "clack-clack," those were his words, of the anti-aircraft guns that were firing at us. He also mentioned all the gliders that were on the ground in various positions, some crashed into trees. I can confirm that we could see gliders.

The June 18 Yank magazine, wrote that on our second mission "There were broken clouds below us and through them the first real glimpse of the invasion. You could see the mile-long columns of ships moving the herds across the waters." This is confirmed by the

388th at War, which cloud cover. So we were able to see the ground.

The mission statement tells us that there were only 12 planes that reached the IP at 20,000 feet on a mag heading of 148 degrees, and the strike photos showed that we did not hit the MPI, but we did hit a choke

point and a road intersection.

We returned to Knettishall at 23:40, which was over 25 hours later than when we first started out on June 5. Six of our aircraft landed at other fields, probably because of bad weather. When I talked to our bombardier, Charles Kemp, about the second mission he said that using a B-17 for tactical missions is a mistake, because of the great danger of hitting your own troops and pattern bombing is too wide for close engagement. This is confirmed by author, Stephen Ambrose, who wrote that the B-17 raids were a bust "because of the weather and the airmen not wanting to hit their own troops...most blockbusters came down in Norman meadows."

When we finally returned to our barracks, we were allowed to sleep all day on June 7, but we had a mission on June 8 to Tours, France.

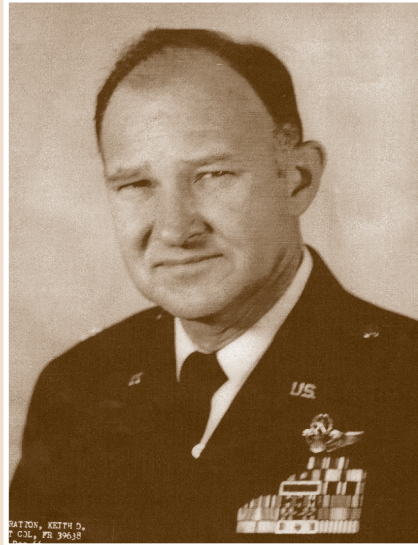
Thank you for listening.

**August C. Bolino**  
**Former President**  
**Navigator**  
**Dan Houghton's Crew**  
**388th Bomb Group Assoc., Inc.**  
**8515 2nd Ave.**  
**Silver Spring, MD 20910**



# WORLD WAR II COLD WAR STORY

by Lt. Col. Keith D. Bratton, Ret. 393rd BG



Lt. Keith Bratton

bit superior with my extra flying ability, I said, "Yeah, lets take it for a spin." I asked the crew chief if we could take it around the traffic pattern and he said it wouldn't make any difference to him. I hadn't forgotten how to fly the beautiful, old bird. We tooled around for fifteen or twenty minutes and I made a nice, greased landing.

If one of your old buddies from Cadet or training days flew a fighter or some other aircraft into your base, you could take it up for a spin and no one said anything.

Finally some B-24's showed up, they were modified a little, having a heavy board, flooring installed over the catwalk in the bomb bay. Then, some brass told us what we were going to do and what we were there for. General Patton was just starting the drive with his tanks through Belgium and France and we were going to keep him supplied with gasoline. We were going to land as close as we could to his tank column and keep him supplied with gas. Seems like we could haul about 500 GI cans of gas. No problem weight wise, but not

There doesn't seem to be too much written about little side adventures or small missions that 8th AF pilots performed along with their bombing missions. Here is one that just a few pilots participated in.

After I finished my bombing mission tour in B-24's with 392nd Bomb Group, known as "Rendal's Raiders", I had to sit around a while with nothing to do. After a few good days of rest and meals at normal hours, just sitting around became pretty darn boring. Especially after the hyper activity of flying a bombing mission. Three other crews that were good friends of mine had also just finished their solo tours. The two pilots and flight engineer from each crew were held over and the rest of the crew members were sent home. I don't remember just how many of us there were. I just remember two other first pilots from my squadron, and maybe four or five from the other two squadrons. We were bussed down to Chippen - Onger RAF Base.

since Chippen-Onger was a fighter base, the B-17 was a novelty. The pilots headed for the O Club and the crew chief was tying it down. Bill Dick, another pilot said, "Boy, I always wanted to fly a B-17!" Before I got into B-24's, I had graduated from Hobbs AAF B-17 School and had 96 hours in the bird. I was feeling a little

One day a B-17 came in, and



enough capacity for any more.

Well, this sounded like a snap as there wouldn't be any one shooting at us and no formation form-ups to fight. The flak and fighters we encountered on a bombing mission did raise our blood pressure considerably.

Again we moved, only this time we took our planes with us. We didn't have any crew set up. Just two pilots and a flight engineer. A few of the pilots still hadn't been checked out as first pilots. Our next base was Lynham RAF, a nice comfortable base in Dover. We didn't receive any briefing like we did for our bombing missions. We were not in any kind of squadron or unit that I can remember. It seemed like some ops officer type said, "okay guys, here's what you are going to do today. Take this gas over to Dreux, France, off load it and come home." I can't remember who the other pilot was for this mission or the crew chief. Could have been Joe Demmers, or Bill Dick, or Hubert L. McMillan. The map showed one airfield at Dreux, just a grass strip and we found it without any trouble. No one there to help us unload. We just pulled out of the way of the other landing B-24's and the three of us started tossing the cans out. Just tossed them in a heap.

We noticed a mess kitchen across the road by the field so decided to go over and have a bite. The road was guarded by two pretty French gals, but we decided not to bother them. They were carrying machine guns and looked very business like. The chow was excellent.

Our next haul was to Villa Colble, at Paris. We thought this would be exciting. It was! Bill Dick was with me on this trip. Paris had just been liberated ten days earlier, so we thought we would head "into town" and check things out. After much walking around we finally



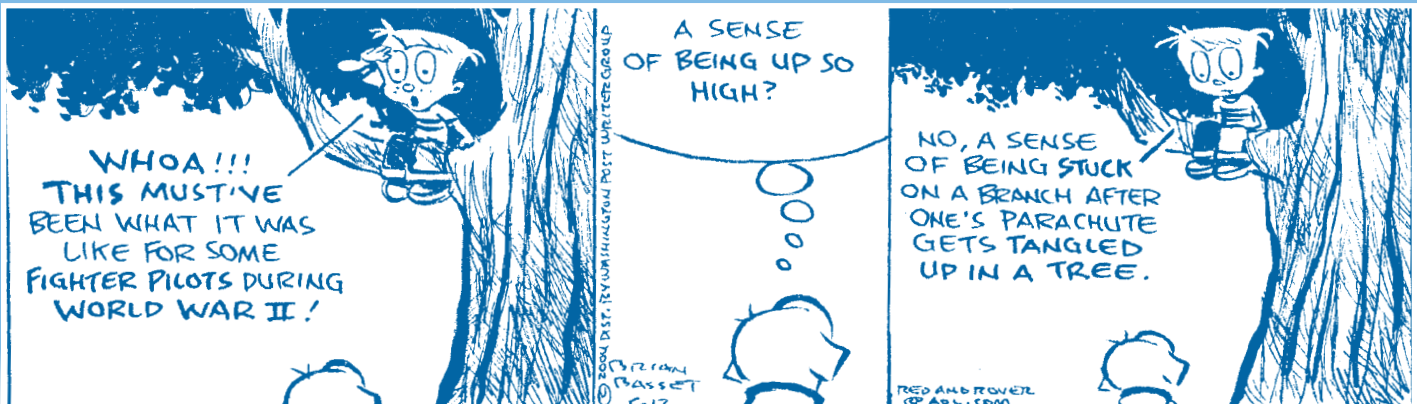
**Lt. Joe Demmers acting co-pilot on one of our gas loading trips. Notice GI cans in background. Captured FW-190 in good condition. France - Nov 1944**

found a gate. Two very large French "ladies" were just strolling by and wanted to bum cigarettes from us. Neither Bill or I smoked, but the crew chief had some. The two French ladies took a liking to him and since chief was small in stature they just picked him up and carted him away. He never did tell us what happened to him that night!

We finally flagged down a GI truck and rode into Paris and hopped off by the Eiffel Tower. Looked that over and then found a newly opened USO tent. They didn't have a single thing to eat and by this time it was getting dark. The USO found us a hotel, but there wasn't any

electricity yet, so they gave us a candle and we walked up four floors and found our room. No water either, but a nice bed. Got up at day-break and made our way back to the field where we cranked up and headed back to England.

I made two other trips, to Reims and St. Dizer. Altogether I made 12 flights to Belgium and France. All fun flights, good weather, and best of all, no one shooting at you. We all headed back to relocation centers and I was able to make it back home to Knoxville, Illinois for Christmas, 1944.



June 23, 1943...

# Ridgewell Bomb Explosion

By Derek J. Sherwood

*Author's Note: One of the most rewarding parts of working with historical documents is the off chance that you find something that hasn't been published or discovered before. The following article is centered around a document that I uncovered in my grandfather's files in 2010. My background is in history, and I've written a book about a cold-case investigation I conducted over the past three years. This article combines the best parts of an unsolved mystery, 8th Air Force history, and personal narratives.*

## A BIT ABOUT BOMBS

The key ingredient in the 8th Air Force heavy bombing campaign over Europe during World War II was explosives. The 8th Air Force alone dropped 692,918 tons of high explosive ordnance on the European Theater during World War II. Every pound of explosives first had to be loaded on board the planes by hand, secured and fused, and then taken over the target before being dropped.

There were two main types of explosives that were used in the 500-lb bombs that would have been common among the 8th Air Force B-17s flying from Ridgewell, England as part of the 381st. One of these bombs, designated type AN-M43, was filled with a mixture of TNT (dynamite) and ammonium nitrate, known as amatol. The explosives in these bombs could either be pressed into shape, or cast by mixing the ammonium nitrate with liquid TNT and pouring the resulting compound into shaped molds.

The type AN-M64 bomb used RDX, a later high explosive that got its initials from the British description of it: Research Development Explosive. RDX was a granular compound that could

be plasticized, or made pliable, with the addition of other components. Combinations of TNT and RDX were also common, such as Composition B, a 60/40 mixture of TNT and RDX that could be cast, like plastic explosive.

There seems to be no hard information about which bombs were used at what time, although the type AN-43 TNT bombs seem generally to have been used earlier in the war. There are refer-

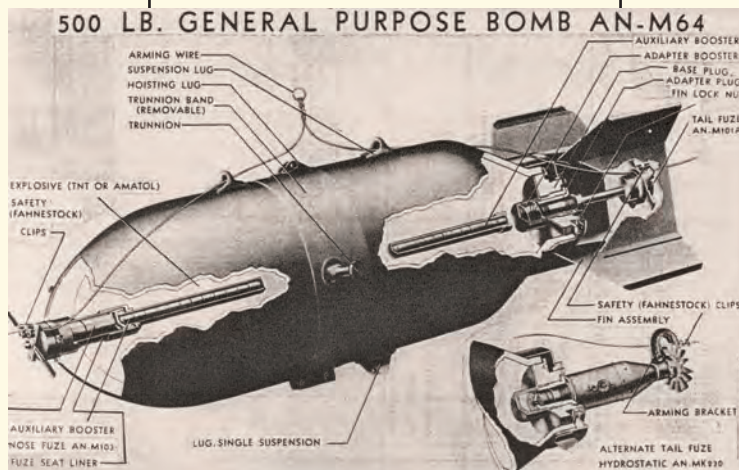
were required to time the explosion as well as to initiate the explosive reaction inside the bomb shell. Fuses were particularly dangerous, and the operation of fusing the bombs was only to be performed once all of the bombs had been secured in the shackles on-board the plane.

A World War II bomb fuse typically used a primary explosive, such as mercury fulminate, which was triggered by a chemical reaction using nitric acid in a glass vial. Mercury fulminate is in itself a powerful primary explosive that can be detonated by striking it with a hammer, and is only completely inert when damp. Fulminate crystals are often stored in water to prevent accidental explosions.

Bob Bilbruck, in a short memoir posted on the 381st Bomb Group web site, remembers the following about the explosives in the bombs:

"If you remember the explosives that we used, you could drop the bombs or rough handle them and everything would be OK but banging them together was not a good idea."

Bob Gilbert from the 381st remembers:



ences to AN-43 bombs being dropped on missions well into 1945, although it seems safe to say that in general, the type AN-M64 RDX bombs (which were more powerful but also more stable) had replaced the earlier AN-43s by the end of the war.

In order to insure the proper explosion of the bomb once it hit the target, fuses

"We did drop RDX bombs on more than one occasion. They were either compound B or B2 which was the more sensitive of the two I believe. It seems to me we had an incident in our bomb dump area of an RDX exploding when accidentally dropped.

We were told that the RDX could detonate by impact alone and were very wary when carrying them. We had a mission when carrying RDX where our bomb bay was severely shot up by many flak penetrations, without detonation of the bombs (obviously)...so I don't know the truth of the danger carrying them."

Jim Peters from the 99th Bomb Group remembers being instructed to ditch their bombs over the Adriatic Sea if they did not drop them on a mission:

"The runway was not smooth, and a solid jar could have set them off. In addition and also according to my memory, we used delayed action fuses which were composed of a small very fragile vial of Nitric acid, separated from the Fulminate of Mercury, by a variable thickness of a metal plate, which by the thickness dictated the actual time delay. So we could not afford to bring back to our field, the very sensitive RDX bomb or the delayed action fuse."

Ground crews became adept at handling these dangerous devices on a daily basis – moving them from bomb dumps far from the hardstands on the base, muscling them into the bomb bays, shackling and securing them, and fusing them. It was certainly a dangerous job, with potentially deadly consequences, and it is a testimony to the men required to perform this job day in and day out that very few accidents took place.

## TRAGEDY STRIKES

When a bomb explosion did occur on a base, the results could be tragic. One such explosion took place on June 23, 1943, while B-17 42-30024 of the 533rd BS was being loaded with ordnance. It was only the second day of the 381st Bomb Group's combat tour, the group having been recently activated at Pyote,

Texas. The 533rd had just flown their first mission the day before, June 22, to Antwerp, Belgium.

The 533rd had suffered enough casualties over Antwerp that they had to sit out the planned mission to Fecamp, France, scheduled for June 23rd. As the planes were being loaded up and checked over in preparation for whatever came next, things seemed to be going well, according to the 381st BG War Diaries:

"The first explosion took place shortly after 11.00 hrs. It was followed, between 30-40 seconds later, by another blast. In addition to those killed, Pfc Glenn W. Burkland suffered a compound leg fracture. He probably owes his life to the quick thinking and heroism of S/ Sgt Francis E. Owens, who dragged him from the danger zone between the first and second explosions."



The Squadron Ordnance Officer, Lt. Julius Eichenbaum, had been at the plane "three minutes before the first explosion," according to testimony given after the fact.

"I then went to the ammunition area, about 150 yards from the plane. The first thing I saw was flame and black smoke and then I heard the blast. I jumped into my jeep and told everybody to clear out of the ammunition area and I started towards the plane. I heard another explosion. I saw an MP and told him to keep everybody away from there." Eichenbaum and several others went on to defuse bombs in a neighboring plane that had already been mounted on the racks and fused.

Another nearby eyewitness, and one of the heroes of the day, was S/Sgt Francis E. Owens. He was quoted in the 381st War Diaries as well:

"I was cleaning guns in Lt Ballinger's ship, which was parked right next to 024. I was standing right by the rear entrance when the first explosion happened. All this stuff was flying through the air. Everyone was running. I started running towards the tail, too. Everything was coming that way, so I started beating it away from there in another direction.

I got about 25 yards away when I saw this fellow under the wing, right by the bomb bay. He (Pfc. Glenn W. Burkland) had been helping to load bombs on our ship. He was lying under the wing trying to crawl away. I went over, grabbed him by the shoulders and dragged him away and laid him behind a little piece of concrete curbing. We just got there when the second explosion went off. I thought maybe he needed a tourniquet. He wasn't bleeding that bad, though. A little while later some other fellows came along and helped me carry him to the runway where a car was waiting."

At first, many of the men believed they were under enemy attack, or perhaps that a fuel truck had exploded. This was not the case, though. A bomb or bombs had gone off either just underneath or inside of, plane 42-30024. The results were devastating. In all, 23 men were killed in the bomb explosion that day. B-17 42-30024 (in which the accident took place) was completely obliterated, and two other planes had to be scrapped as a result of damages sustained during the explosion. A number of historians have covered the bomb explosion, including Chaplain James Good Brown in "Mighty Men of the 381st," and Ken Stone in "Triumphant We Fly." Ron Mackay also mentioned the bomb explosion in his book "Ridgewell's Flying Fortresses."

## MORE IS REVEALED

After the war ended, the bomb explosion was largely forgotten, except as an historical occurrence, part of the

cost of winning the war. The men of the 381st Bomb Group, rather than fading quietly into history along with the bomb explosion and their other exploits, banded together to remember their war experiences as the 381st Bomb Group Memorial Association. As the founder and long-time president of the 381st Bomb Group Memorial Association, Thomas Paxton Sherwood wrote the semi-annual newsletter, the "Intercom," and would often issue calls to BGMA members asking for more information about particular events. He hoped to write a unit history of the 381st, and so any information about the bomb group was of interest to him, especially if it pertained to major events in the Group history, such as the bomb explosion or the Isle of Man tragedy in 1945. Sherwood also corresponded with many of the men in the group as friends. When he died, over 2,000 letters from various members of the 381st were found among Sherwood's files. In 2010, while going through these letters and cataloging them, my father and I found a number of fascinating pieces of information. One of the letters that jumped out at me, however, was the following eyewitness description of what had happened shortly before the bomb explosion at Ridgewell on that June day in 1943. I have not been able to find any reference to this information in any of the published or official accounts of the bomb explosion, leading me to believe that the contents of the letter consist of completely new information.

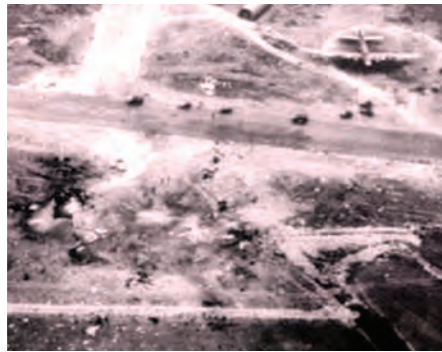
The letter was dated August 1st, 1978. Since his letter to Sherwood does not indicate his wishes, I have removed the name of the writer, as well as the name of the man who he says can back his story up. I have not yet been able to verify whether he is still alive or would want his story to be told after all of these years.

"As we settled to a regular routine of work in Ridgewell, we had our jobs set up by Sgt. Aukerson. Today [name changed to Dave], from Steubenville, Ohio, and I went to inspect the LIME huts, where we kept our supplies, in case of an emergency.

We were on our way back when Dave said "Look what those guys are doing." The men were loading an aircraft, but the guys on the ground, were rolling the bombs with their feet. While we were watching one man came by with an arm load of FUSES.

I squatted down by the bomb to see the guys load them on the aircraft – about that time Dave said to me "Come on, let's go, we have some paperwork to do. "We kept a log on the condition of the huts, as to how much spoilage there was, etc., etc. So we got on our truck and return to our office to write our log. About the time we got inside the hut, a tremendous explosion shook up the hut.

Everyone inside immediately ran for cover – Dave and I headed for the bunker at the same time, we saw part of a wing floating in the air – so we took a dive into the bunker, as more explosions continued.



**Remains After Bomb Explosions at Ridgewell**

There was a big black cloud of smoke from oil and gas burning and ammunition exploding. Meanwhile, a fire crew did what they could do to put the fire out. Twenty-three men were lost and a civilian, too. Three months later, a farmer who was plowing a field, a quarter of a mile away found part of an arm. He knew it was a GI because the sleeve was one of the fatigue jackets the guys were wearing when they were loading the aircraft.

I told Dave, should we tell them we saw the men kicking the bombs, and that perhaps that could of set the explosion?

He said "No, accidents will happen, besides, your job and mine is to take care of something else – so I said nothing to anyone either. This happened around June 23, 1943."

The letter writer had not been questioned by the Public Relations officers, since he had not been on the bomb loading line or near the planes when the explosion took place. As a result, his testimony remained unspoken; languishing in fine ballpoint handwriting on a thin piece of paper for almost 70 years.

Unfortunately, the letter raises more questions than it answers. Could the infamous Ridgewell bomb explosion have been caused by rough handling or careless behavior of the ground crew? It is certainly possible. Familiarity often breeds contempt, and often men who work dangerous jobs – whether around guns, saws, explosives, or machines – become complacent to the real danger that they face, and accidents result. It is not in any way an indictment of their skill or knowledge to suggest that such an accident could have taken place that day at Ridgewell.

Whatever the cause of the bomb explosion at Ridgewell, the 381st Bomb Group was able to recover and continue their mission of bombing German industry and defeating the Luftwaffe in the air. The men didn't even have time to attend the funerals of their friends – they flew their mission the next day. The events of June 23rd, 1943, continue to be debated to this day, and we may never know the real truth behind what happened there.

*Editors Note: Derek J. Sherwood is the grandson of 1st Lt. Thomas Paxton Sherwood, and author of the book "Who Killed Betsy? Uncovering Penn State University's Most Notorious Unsolved Crime." He is currently working on putting the finishing touches on 1st Lt. T. Paxton Sherwood's memoirs of his time in the 8th Air Force, in both the 305th and 381st Bomb Groups.*

# Next Generation

*Continuing The 8th AF Legacy - by Michael P. Faley*

*Would you like to take that once in a lifetime ride in a Flying Fortress?*



## Hi Next Gen and Vets alike,

We have the opportunity to have the CAF B-17G *"Sentimental Journey"* at our upcoming reunion in San Antonio, TX. **This would be a GREAT opportunity for you to take that once in a lifetime ride with your father, grandfather, in a Flying Fortress.** The CAF and especially Dick Exler has worked diligently to try and ease the costs involved for the Society but we have to accomplish the following if we are to have this plane at our reunion: Our Members have to have book at least TWO full rides for the B-17G while she is in San Antonio. That means we need 16 people to sign up for rides between October 5-6, 2012. Here are the details.

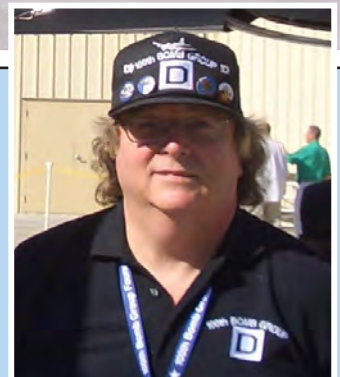
**Costs: 6 rear seats cost \$425 each  
2 nose seats cost \$850 each**

(The Commemorative Air Force is a 501c3 so a certain amount of the cost of the ride is tax deductible. You would need to consult with your tax accountant to see how much.)

**Contact: Allen Arnold at 602-448-2350 or email him at [rides@azcaf.org](mailto:rides@azcaf.org)**

Allen will handle all scheduling and payments with you. Remember to say you are with the 8thAFHS. We have to sell out these two flights in ADVANCE of the appearance

otherwise the CAF will have to cancel their appearance. Hopefully we can sell even more rides. It will be the responsibility of the passengers to make transportation accommodations to and from the local airport where the B-17G will be on display. This should not be very far from our hotel.



**Michael Faley**

For the rest of us, there are plans being made by Armed Forces Reunion to schedule a trip to see the plane on Friday Oct 6th, which will include the opportunity to go through the Fortress. It is not easy to coordinate an appearance of this magnitude much less have the opportunity to fly on a B-17G with your loved one. Help make San Antonio special for the 8th AFHS and yourself by taking advantage of this wonderful opportunity. Thanks for the support and the help.

**Michael P. Faley**

Eighth Air Force Historical Society Board of Director

# Book Reviews

## The Childrens Crusade:

### The Eighth Air Force Series Book 1

Cheryl Pula - Author

Published by Whitehall Publishing,  
Yellville, Arkansas.

ISBN 978-1-935122-29-6

346 Pages Soft Cover

\$19.95

This novel traces the story of a United States Army Air Force B-17 bomber crew during World War II.

Reviewers of the book have stated that finally, this is a World War II novel which is both realistic and factual, even though it is fiction. It makes the reader feel

he or she is right in the plane in a flight, in the thick of battle, dodging flak and German fighters. One also stated the characters pop from the page. The same reviewer is a pilot, and was unable to locate any mistakes in the text as it pertained to flying a B-17.

Author Cheryl Pula has based the events cited in the story on face to face interviews with actual 8th Air Force veterans. Every incident cited in the book happened to someone she personally interviewed, and received permission to use the events in the story, only with names changed, so through fiction, it is based on actual events. She spent over ten years researching the subject and interviewing veterans to make the book accurate and true to life as possible. She embarked on the project due to a life-long interest in, and love of, B-17 bombers.

#### Contact

Cheryl Pula

<http://www.8thmilitary.com>

## Fear No Evil

### True Stories of the Mighty Eighth

By Charles D. Hamlin

Paperback: 150 pages

HIS Publishing Group

ISBN-10: 0615513654

ISBN-13: 978-0615513652

9 x 6 x 0.4 inches

This book is about the U.S. 8th Army Air Corps from 1943 to May 1945 - more specifically, it is about the incredible B-17 bombers and the brave men who

flew them. It is an attempt to put the B-17 into its proper place in history—and to bestow upon it the esteem it so richly deserves from our country.

The B-17 comprised two-thirds of the United States bomber force, and the men of the

8th who flew them suffered catastrophic losses, in terms of percentages. The crews managed to complete only 27% of their assigned missions before being killed, wounded, taken prisoner or suffering some kind of breakdown.

Both the B-17s and the B-24s were equally responsible for the success of America's bombing campaign that played such a major part in the defeat of Germany. However, the B-24, which was one-third of the force, should be covered in a separate publication—one that can do justice to the noble aircraft and its crews.

These stories are true accounts of actual combat missions, as told by the crews that flew them while stationed at the 385th Bomb Group in Great Ashfield, England. (There are also some accounts of missions flown by other groups.) The missions flown were from England to various parts of continental Europe.

#### Contact:

Charles D. Hamlin

5500 Shadow Crest

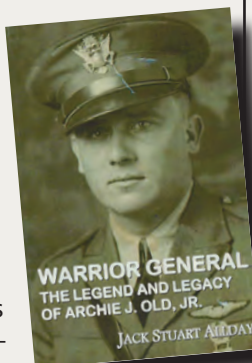
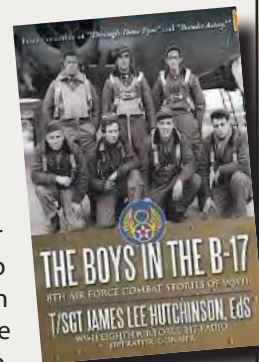
Houston, Texas 77096

## Warrior General

### The Legend and Legacy of Archie J. Old, Jr.

By Jack Stuart Allday

Relentlessly demanding, often profane, always leading from the front. Archie Old played a pivotal role in winning World War II and fighting the Cold War. The story of this colorful son of East Texas and how he rose to become one of America's most respected war-



rriors is as fascinating as it is inspirational.

#### Contact:

Jack Allday

4349 Westside Drive

Dallas, TX 75209

Phone: 972.293.5478

[www.jackallday.com](http://www.jackallday.com)

## THE BOYS IN THE B-17

### 8TH Air Force Combat Stories of WWII

By T Sgt James Lee Hutchinson Eds

Product Details

ISBN-13: 9781467060493

Publisher: AuthorHouse

Publication date: 11/21/2011

Pages: 260

6.00 (w) x 9.00

(h) x 0.59 (d)

James has published his third book, "The Boys in the B-17" which relates to his experiences as a member of the 490th Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force, when he served as a radio operator/gunner on 20 combat missions in a B-17 Flying Fortress. This newest book, "The Boys in the B-17," contains 90 stories about the Mighty Eighth bombing missions from 1942 to 1945, the survivors, prisoners of war and those who lost their lives. --"they were too young to vote, but old enough to fight." Like the author, World War II veterans who survived to tell of those great air battles are rapidly passing into history and their stories will be lost forever.

Hutch says, "My crew members, my lucky Air Cadet ring, thirteen .50 caliber machine guns and a tough B-17 Flying Fortress contributed to my survival. However, I'm sure my mother's prayers and God brought me through it all."

#### Contact:

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Bedford, IN 47421

1- 812-275- 4308

See a free DVD at

<http://video.smithville.net/?p=17>

For interviews of the author with actual WW II combat film footage.

# B-17 "City of Savannah"



The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum is at a stage in the B-17, *City of Savannah* restoration where particular parts are needed to complete the project. The Museum is in need of: a top turret, a ball turret, front nose piece, as well as 50 caliber machine guns. If you are in possession of one of these items or any other objects you think will be needed, and would like for it to be on display inside the Museum's Combat Gallery for visitors of the world to see, please contact Henry Skipper at 912-748-8888.

In addition to parts, the Museum would appreciate any financial support for this restoration project. If you would like to become a part of this historic restoration please make checks payable to the B-17 Project and mail to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, 175 Bourne Ave., Pooler, GA 31322. The B-17 Flying Fortress *City of Savannah* will be restored to its full combat configuration, including operational systems and components, with the goal of making it the finest static display B-17 in the world.



# Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum's Garden of Folded Wings Columbarium

This magnificent columbarium is located behind the Museum Chapel in the Memorial Gardens. The columbarium features solid granite construction, a flower garden, and benches set amongst the natural beauty of the memorial garden.

The Garden of Folded Wings is truly a final resting place worthy not only of those who served in one of our country's most renowned and gallant military organizations, but also those connected to it by family and friendship.

If you or anyone you know has an interest in learning more about the Museum's Columbarium, please call the Museum at 912-748-8888 and ask for Henry Skipper, President and CEO, so that he may answer any questions you may have.



# ENGLISHWOMAN WAS BRUSSELS PIMPERNEL

sure no search parties were out and that the way was clear."  
The women treated Berry like their own son, clothed him, fed him and sheltered him, always without a thought of reward.  
"There was nothing I would not dare," said I.  
When any Americans shot down on a daylight, the Belgians mobilized, fought it out with the H, get the crew coming down parachute."

S/Sgt. W. C. "Bill" McGinley

## THE TRUE STORY OF DEATH TAKES A HOLIDAY

Submitted by Dr. Nancy Toombs - 8th AFHS Board of Director



W. C. "Bill" McGinley

I have known Mr. McGinley for many years as he is a long time friend of my dad and always a frequent visitor when B-17's or B-24's make a stop here in Arkansas. I have talked with Bill over the years and often heard my dad speak of Bill's "unique story" of being an evadee. But I never really knew the particulars of Bill's ordeal until 2008 when my dad and I attended a veteran's lecture series at the Jacksonville Museum of Military History here in Jacksonville, Arkansas just outside of Little Rock. Bill spoke there in October of 2008 and it was then that I heard the harrowing details of his incredible story of escape and evasion. Since then, I have seen Bill at all of the B-17 stops and have told him that I

really felt like he should consider writing a book, that he had one of the most unusual stories that I have ever heard. He just simply smiles and tells me that "everybody has a story to tell." I agree everybody does have a story, but I am not sure that everybody has one quite like Bill McGinley. I called Bill and asked if I could interview him for a story in the 8th Air Force News, and in his modest quiet way he told me that he did not think that there was a "whole lot to tell". Bill enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Corp in May of 1941. Bill states "they needed pilots pretty bad back then and they couldn't wait for all those guys to get out of college, so the next thing I knew I was flying airplanes." After 30 hours of flight training, he states "I got washed out." There were several unique accidents that happened which led to Bill's separation from pilot training (most of them humorous). He states that they flew three months together as an intact crew preparing for overseas. In September of 1943, they were sent "on a cattle boat, all they did was clean it up a little bit and made it into a troop ship and boy did that thing stink." The airmen were all placed on the British cattle boat which had been hauling cows from Argentina. The boat took them down through the Azores and then headed toward Great Britain. "We had to lay out one night off the coast of England because the German submarines were looking for us." Then finally they were able to get to Glasgow, Scotland and then boarded a train on to Norwich. From there, he was assigned to his new base at Wendling



S/Sgt. W. C. "Bill" McGinley

where he was assigned to the 392nd Bomb Group, 579th Squadron of the 2nd Air Division. In November 1943, Bill flew his 1st mission to Bremen where they were to bomb sub depots. The famous American actor Jimmy Stewart, although not a member of Bill's bomb group, flew lead ship on this mission. Bill was shot down on his 9th mission January 29, 1944 on a bombing run over Frankfurt, Germany. His B-24 "Sallie Ann" had a history of engine problems, and on the 29th they began to experience problems and were unable to stay with the formation. After they had dropped their bombs, the B-24 had fallen out of formation which made them an easy target for fighters. "We made that circle after the bomb drop; the next thing I know we had lost the forma-

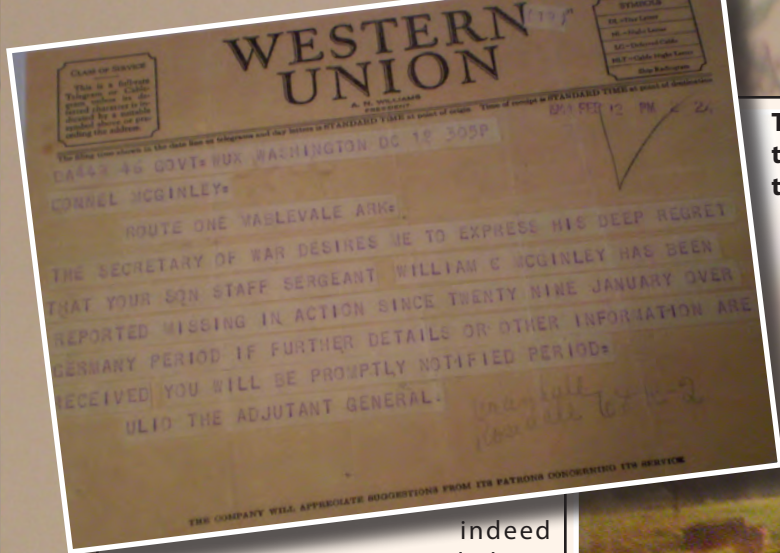


**Bill's crew photo, he is 2nd from the left top row**

tion." "I looked around and five fighters came after us and we were having to fight and, in fact, me (the tail gunner) and the ball turret gunner eventually all ran out of ammunition." During one of the attacks the fighters made a direct hit and Bill's bombardier and navigator both were killed. As the fighters continued their attack, communications were shot out and the bomber began rapidly losing altitude. "I knew something bad was wrong; I could see gasoline and oil pouring off the end of the ship and I knew something bad was happening." He left his position of tail gunner, made his way to the waist of the B-24 and one of the waist gunners had already jumped. "I helped the other waist gunner get out the window and I was getting ready to jump when I remembered that I needed to get the ball turret gunner out." As he was pulling the ball turret gunner out "the fighters strafed the side of the B-24 and bullets were popping around the inside of the plane and everywhere a bullet hit it started a fire; I guess it was hitting all those places that were full of oil and I told the ball turret gunner that this ship was going to blow up." He helped the ball turret gunner get out the waist window and "if I had not been bent over pulling him out of that belly turret, I would have been killed; had I been standing up when those fighters strafed the plane, they would have cut me in half." Once

Bill helped the ball turret gunner out, he states "I'm not sure what happened next; I remember pushing that 50 cal. to the side and, the next thing I knew my chute was open and it caught the slip stream." He does not remember pulling the handle, but suspects that the handle got caught on the machine gun and luckily for him, the chute went out the window, got caught in the slip stream and immediately pulled him out of the bomber. "The next thing I knew I was laying on my back as I was traveling underneath the tail of the airplane and I watched it go down." He was lucky that that chute did not get caught on the horizontal stabilizer which would have certainly dragged him to his death. By the time Bill was able to escape his doomed ship, he was the last man out and the plane probably was somewhere between 1200 and 1500 feet off the ground. Landing with "a jolt," but at that time he was just simply glad to be alive. A B-24 usually carries a crew of 10, but on that day "a lieutenant jumped aboard our ship just as we were getting ready to take off telling us that he was going to try to catch another mission." "I bet if he had it to do over again, he wouldn't have chosen our bomber to jump on." Nine of the eleven men on the plane bailed out and landed in German occupied territory. When he hit the ground in Belgium he was not immediately aware of any of his other

crew members. He landed in Waterloo and remembers that when he landed in the field he noticed that a farmer was waving his arms motioning for Bill to lay down on the ground. "I got rid of my flight suit and my parachute and laid on the ground covered up by a blanket." He laid on the ground for maybe 4 to 5 hours stating that he could hear German soldiers talking and walking nearby. They were searching the ditches and Bill thought to himself "I sure am glad I didn't choose to hide in the ditch or they would've found me." Bill states that after several hours some individuals came and secured him and took him to a nearby house. When he arrived he noticed that one of the other men on his crew had also been secured. "They wanted my parachute because of the silk, but I didn't have that, so I gave them some soap and I gave them my 45 caliber." The farmer gave him some food and they stayed in a hut for the next 2 or 3 days. About 4 days later they were secured and given civilian clothes. He states "the Countess of Waterloo came to visit me; she talked with us and she was an allied supporter." "But they were unsure as to whether or not we were actual airmen or if we were spies." Unfortunately for Bill, he had left his dog tags hanging in the shower back at the base at Wendling. "You know it's a court-martial offense to fly without your dog tags, but there was nothing I could do, I had left them there and there wasn't time for me to go back and get them." Not having any dog tags made him a suspicious candidate and the interrogators suspected that Bill may very well be a spy. Germans often dressed in allied clothing and would infiltrate areas and play themselves off as downed airmen in attempts to locate safe houses. "All I knew is that they had a 45 caliber to my head and was asking me a lot of questions." At the time, Bill did not know it, but one of the interrogators was a Mrs. Anna Brussleman who was the head of the Belgium Underground. Bill was given a pencil and paper and was asked to write the names of all of the crew members on his plane and their position. "This is what saved my life; they had a radio operator who could communicate with London and they were able to verify that was



**Telegram sent to Bill's parents that he is MIA**



**Shack where Bill was hid for 3 days in Waterloo, before he was moved to Brussels by the underground.**

indeed my crew and that I wasn't a spy." However, to complicate matters further, since Bill had no dog tags, he had given them his service number to communicate with the allies that he was a downed airman. "When your serial number contains a 7, you're supposed to draw a line through the 7 which distinguishes the 7 from the numeral 1." However, when he verbally gave them his serial number, they did not make the cross mark through the 7s and his serial number was then recorded as having the number 1 instead of the number 7s. When this serial number was communicated back to London, no such airman could be identified. However, time was of essence and this issue was not pursued. They were satisfied that he was an American airman since he was able to identify all of his crew members. The Belgium Underground then put him and the other downed airmen on a train headed for Brussels. They stayed in a safe house in Brussels and states "the larger the city the easier it is for you to hide." "In the countryside it's too easy to catch people; there's no places to hide and the Gestapo always knows where to look." "But if you're able to get these airmen into the cities, there's always places to put people and it's easier to keep them out of sight." They took about an hour train ride to Brussels. When they arrived the area was full of German soldiers and the escort from the Belgium Underground, told the Americans "be sure you put your fork in the left hand and your knife in the right hand; they're going to be watching you when you eat." However, the use of utensils was the least of Bill's worries at this time. The German government reported all

downed planes and downed airmen for record purposes and they had already reported Bill's plane crashing and had also reported that all the crew had been killed. Since Bill's serial number could not be verified, the United States government had placed Bill as missing in action and a telegram had already been sent to his family notifying that he was MIA. In a few days, his family would receive a telegram stating that Bill was killed in action. It was, in fact, February when his mother and father received a telegram stating that their son had been killed in action.

Members of the Underground would accompany small groups of airmen, taking them to various safe houses around Brussels. "One night they gave us a banquet; we had pigeon head soup." "When I dipped my spoon in and pulled up that pigeon head, all I can tell you is as hungry as I was I didn't have much of an appetite." They spent 2 nights as a group and then "everybody went their separate ways putting people in different houses." Bill's first safe house was owned by a woman who asked him the first morning of his stay "go wash your feet; we're going to make bread." "All I know is that I washed my feet and we started stomping dough and out of the oven came the most beautiful loaves of bread you've ever seen." "You know, those people fed us everything they had; sometimes they would feed us and did not feed their own children." "They risked everything to keep us alive knowing full well that if they

got caught the Gestapo would kill them all." Bill recalls that in civilian clothes he was allowed to walk around Belgium as long as he did not speak, no one knew that he was an American. "The German soldiers weren't interested, they weren't looking for prisoners, the only people you had to watch out for was the SS and the Gestapo." "The German soldiers, they didn't care, they were just trying to stay alive themselves; they all knew that things were bad and they were afraid that they were going to get shipped to the Russian front." He tells me that he was moved frequently from safe house to safe house, and that on one occasion he had been moved and the next day the Gestapo had raided the house he had just left and arrested the airman that they found there. "I was lucky again, had I stayed there one more day that would've been me." He also reports that on a trolley ride he and another evadee were traveling when the trolley came to an abrupt stop because "a farmer had some sheep that were crossing the road and the trolley had to stop as he was getting his sheep to the other side." "I could see that the conductor was acting funny; he was doing things to stall our departure; I felt like that was a signal, so I told the guy that I was with we need to get off of this thing." As they slipped out the back of the trolley he later found out that the Gestapo had just gotten on and that more than likely the conductor was a member of the Underground who was sending him a signal to get off the trolley. Bill states

"again, I was lucky; if they'd caught us, we would've certainly gotten shot." He tells me that he was moved anywhere from 20-25 different houses in his 8½ month stay with the Belgium Underground. He never knew that Mrs. Brussleman was the head of the Underground and that the Gestapo had been looking for her for over a year. Mrs. Brussleman was educated in England and spoke fluent English. The information that the Gestapo had was the Mrs. Brussleman was an English woman living in Brussels hiding U.S. airmen. They did not know that she was a native Belgium. In fact, the Gestapo had been in and out of her house more than once, but since she had Belgium papers, they never made the connection that she was the one running the Underground.

Bill tells a story of three sisters who worked with the Underground and "they had a couple of brothers, and one of the tricks they would do is that the brothers would dress in German uniforms, tie up one of the sisters, put them in the trunk, that way they could get past checkpoints and they were able to travel between Brussels and Paris and they could go back and forth to pass information." The Underground would need to get to France to provide information and pick up information and this would be one of the safer ways to do it would be to travel as German soldiers with a female prisoner. Again, Bill talks about how these people openly risked their lives to communicate information back and forth to London about the airmen they were hiding.

Bill finally met Mrs. Brussleman formally at a safe house in September. The Gestapo was rapidly leaving Belgium as the allies had made a big push and Belgium was liberated. He states "the city was wide open, the Germans were fleeing, everybody was leaving and the word got out that the area was going to be liberated." "Me and some other airmen were taken to the Metropolitan Hotel in Brussels; there we sat and I watched the whole thing take place; I watched all the German army retreat as



**ANNE BRUSSELMANS**  
*Beloved Helper*

they knew that the English were hot on their trail." He states that Patton arrived with "a bunch of 10 wheeler trucks," picked up the airmen and they were then transported to Paris. Once they got to Paris they knew that it was just a matter of time they would be able to travel to England and then back to their base. Bill told story after story of the people that hid him in their homes, risking their own lives and the lives of their family to hide U.S. airmen. "I know one time I saw a gentleman who had hid me in his house a week earlier, and when I ran into him again, he had been beaten so badly that I didn't even recognize him." "The Gestapo got him and they beat him trying to get him to reveal names of airmen and addresses of safe houses, but he did not give any of us up." Bill has nothing but admiration for the Belgium people and what they did for airmen like himself who had been shot down. There were many times "that they got me out of a jam" in order to save his life. "It would've been so easy to just turn us over to the Gestapo and save themselves, but as far as I know, I never heard of anyone doing that."

Once he was able to make it to Paris, it was off to London. His 8½ month ordeal had finally come to an end. On

September 14th he sent a telegram to his parents telling them that he was alive. "My mom and dad knew the postmaster, we lived in a little small town in Arkansas and everybody knew everybody." "The postmaster had already delivered the telegram to my folks telling them that I was MIA and then that I had been killed." "When that telegram came through, he ripped it open and read it; he knew that I was telling mama and daddy that I was alive; he states that he jumped in his car and drove out to the house, and mom and dad were outside picking peas." "Dad said that as soon as he jumped out of the car he started screaming that I was alive." "You know, my mom and dad said they never did think I was dead; my dad said if Bill jumps out of that airplane and he hits the ground alive, I know he'll make it." "They said they never stopped praying for me; daddy

always had a feeling that I was alive and that I would make it." "But when the postmaster brought that telegram that day, I guess that was a celebration for everybody." Bill's GI insurance had paid his dad after the government had declared him killed in action. He states that later when he had been assigned to a base in Stuttgart, Arkansas some time around the summer of 1945 that he was approached by a lieutenant telling him that he "needed to pay the money back." Bill did not want his father involved in any kind of incident like this, so he told the Lt. that "all I had was my back pay that the government had given me for my time when I was in hiding and that's all the money I had." "I just gave him my back pay and he said we were square and I never heard anymore about it."

Bill arrived back in the states in September of 1944. The Air Corp moved him around to Nashville to Cincinnati to Atlantic City on to California and finally back to Stuttgart, Arkansas. It was there that he asked his girlfriend to marry him and he and his lovely wife, Bonnie, have been married for 65+ years.

Spending a day with Bill McGinley was an absolute joy and delight. For someone who has been through such an ordeal, he has an unbelievable attitude



**Bill and some of his crew after they were moved from Waterloo to Brussels and given civilian clothes by the Belgium underground. Bill is 4th man from the left.**

toward his experience. He feels honored to have served his country and feels lucky that "I didn't get shot." He is a true American Hero by anyone's standards. He speaks softly and at total ease about his experiences and accomplishments. He does not see himself as anyone who is particularly special or out of the ordinary. He is just a fellow who joined the war effort and "did my job." He had so many close calls, but each time was able to cheat death just one more time. Our interview concluded with him showing me a large notebook that contained multiple newspaper clippings and photographs of his unbelievable story. Bill belongs to the Escape and Evasion Society and tells me that some time in the 1980s he went to an Escape and Evasion Society meeting and Mrs. Brussleman was there as the guest speaker. I asked Bill if she recognized him, and he stated "oh yeah, she knew immediately who I was." And with her, she had the piece of paper where Bill had written down the names of all of his crew members and their position that was taken the night of his interrogation. She had kept this through the years hoping that at one of the society meetings that she would meet again the airman that had written down these names. She was living in Canada at the time, but because she was not a U.S. citizen was only able to come and visit her daughter six months out of the year who was living in Florida. However, a newspaper article that was written about the society meeting was then picked up by the Wall Street Journal and at that time President Reagan read about Mrs. Brussleman and her ordeal

with the U.S. government. He tells me that Reagan immediately got involved and she was given a permanent visa to live with her daughter who was residing in Miami, Florida. Mrs. Brussleman was a frequent attendee at the Escape and Evasion Society meetings for many years until her death. Bill's notebook is filled with various treasures such as photographs of his crew and airplane, the telegrams to his family indicating his declaration of death, letters written from congressman consoling the family about the loss of their son, letters from the government of declaring Bill officially dead and making the family aware of his GI insurance. He

also has a stack of letters where he has corresponded through the years with the people of the Underground who sheltered him during his months of evasion. While sitting with him I realize that I am looking through a book of living history and that I am in the presence of a national treasure. I know there are many stories of the ordeals that our World War II veterans had to suffer and endure, but I am not sure that there is a story quite like this one. Bill is certainly the unluckiest/luckiest gentleman that I know. I also know that on January 29, 1944, death took a holiday.



**Mrs Anne Brusslemans - head of the Belgium underground  
Newspaper article naming Anna Brusslemans as underground leader**

# Nashville Man Helps Bring Crippled B-17 Back from Raid

Ten seconds before "bombs away" things were going fine. But two seconds later the flak gunners of Berlin had turned the B-17 "Cisco's Kids" into a potential death sentence for its crew, who had plenty of reason to doubt that they would be seeing the familiar runways of the 305th Bombardment Group's base again.

Flying as navigator that day was 2nd Lt. Maurice J. Weinstein, 28, of Nashville, Tenn. Coming in on the bomb run over Berlin, the crew was alert and waiting for the signal to drop the 500-pounders in the bomb bay. With the suddenness of a thunderclap out of a clear blue sky, flak rocked the B-17, throwing it out of its place in the formation. Struggling to maneuver the plane back to its slot, the pilot assessed the damage with anxious eyes, unaware of the fact that the sergeant-bombardier had been wounded by flying fragments of shattered glass. The checkup revealed that flak had torn into the left and right wings, knocking one engine out and setting another on fire.

Meanwhile, in the nose of the plane Lt. Weinstein had just started to give the wounded bombardier emergency first aid when the order came to drop the bombs. Leaving the sergeant, Weinstein turned to the bomb release switch and started the load on its descent into the heart of the German capital. Then he went back to do what he could for the bombardier's badly cut face and eyes.

By this time gas was leaking rapidly out of the tanks, which had been punctured by the flak, and the engineer began switching the fuel supply to save as much as possible for the long return trip.

By skillful handling the co-pilot now had the burning engine under control and the fire died out; but the inter-

phone was not working, and to tell the pilot what was going on on his side of the plane, he had to lift his oxygen mask (at 26,000 feet) and yell in the pilot's ear.

There was still more damage. "The radio-room was a sieve; the flak tore the floor-boards right up." Said the radio operator. But thanks to an extra flak-suit which he had put on the floor, he wasn't injured.

After bombs away, it was no longer possible to keep "Cisco's Kids" in formation. The best the pilot could do was keep in the bomber column as they swing off the target. One by one the other group formations drew abreast and passed them until the three-engined Fortress found itself following a formation of B-24s. This was okay until the B-17 crew saw the Liberators dropping their bombs and realized that they were in the middle of another barrage of flak, stirred up by the attacking B-24s!

From that point on "Cisco's Kids" played a lone hand, keeping strictly to themselves. Even so, they saw flak come uncomfortably close four more times on the way out of Germany. Lt. Weinstein, with his special aids out of order and solid clouds obscuring possible check-points on the ground, was doing the best he could by dead reckoning.

With things more or less under control, the engineer set to work and rigged up a crazy sort of substitute for the co-pilot's useless interphone. "There were wires all over the plane to make that thing work," he said.

The ball turret, wrist and tail gunners kept constantly alert for Jerry fighters, knowing only too well the Luftwaffe's predilection for straggling American bombers.

And when the B-17 came down to something less than 10,000 feet, the

12 THE NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN, Monday Morning, February 19, 1945

## Nashville Man Helps Bring Crippled B-17 Back from Raid

The story of how Lt. Maurice J. Weinstein, 28, of 2223 Blair Boulevard, helped to bring the B-17 "Cisco's Kids" back to its base in England after two of its engines were shot away and the body riddled with flak was told in an army release received here yesterday.

Lieutenant Weinstein was flying as navigator that day over Berlin and just as the pilot was coming in on the bomb run, flak rocked the plane, threw it out of its place in formation, wounded the sergeant-bombardier, tore into the left and right wings, knocked one engine out and set fire to another.

In the nose of the Flying Fortress Lieutenant Weinstein started to give first aid to the wounded bombardier when the order came to drop the bombs.

**Shout Their Orders**  
By this time the gas was leaking out of the punctured tanks and the engineer began switching the fuel supply to save as much as possible for the long return trip.

The pilot had the burning engine under control but the interphones weren't working so the co-pilot and pilot had to lift their oxygen masks at 26,000 feet and yell in each other's ears for orders and instructions.

After "bombs away" it was no longer possible to keep "Cisco's Kids" in formation. The best that the pilot could do was keep in the bomber column as they swung off the target. One by one the other group formations drew abreast and passed them until the three-engined Fortress found itself following a formation of B-24s. Suddenly the crew saw the Liberators drop their bombs and realized that they were in the midst of another barrage of flak, stirred up by the attacking B-24s.

**Play Lone Hand**  
From that point on the "Cisco's Kids" played a lone hand, keeping strictly to themselves but even so

saw flak come uncomfortably close four times more on the way out of Germany. Lieutenant Weinstein, with his special aids out of order and solid clouds obscuring possible check-points on the ground, was doing the best he could by "dead reckoning." Somehow he managed to come out only five miles north, of course, the release declared.

In spite of having one engine out and not much gas left, it looked as though the veteran ship of 85 missions was going to make it, when suddenly another engine turned over one last time and died for want of oil.

**Throw Everything Overboard**  
"We thought we'd have to ditch right there in the North Sea," the Nashville airman said. "We threw everything that we could lift overboard—guns, flak suits and ammunition and we were all set to drop the ball turret if necessary."

The battered B-17 finally cleared the English coast and Lieutenant Weinstein was all ready with an emergency landing field picked out for it to land on. When they saw that the two remaining engines were still doing fairly well, however, the crew elected to bring the plane back to its home base, "mainly on account of the wounded man," they said.

It wasn't until after a beautiful landing and the co-pilot was checking the plane on the ground that they discovered another flak hole right through the number four engine, one of the two that had brought them home.

pilot crawled forward into the nose to see how the wounded bombardier was making out. "He was mighty game," the pilot said. "He didn't talk, but we'd ask him questions and he'd answer us with hand signals to indicate that he was okay."

Finally, the weather cleared enough to give Lt. Weinstein a checkpoint as they crossed the coast leaving the Continent. "And somehow or other," he said, "we came out only five miles north of course!" Weinstein seemed rather surprised by this accuracy, but the other members of the crew attributed it solely to his skill and sound judgment.

It looked for awhile as if their worries were nearly over, in spite of having one engine out and not much gas left. But the man with the scythe made one more sweep in their direction. Another engine, labouring for lack of oil, turned



over one last time and died.

"I thought we'd have to ditch right there in the North Sea," the pilot said. "We threw everything that we could lift over-board – guns, flak suits, ammunition. And we were all set to drop the ball turret if necessary."

"That waist compartment was clean as a whistle when we got through," the waist gunner agreed.

But somehow or other "Cisco's Kids" refused to give up. After sixty-eight combat missions she evidently figured this was no time to check out. At any rate, the battered B-17 finally raised the English coast, and Lt. Weinstein was all

ready with an emergency landing field picked out for it to come down on. When they saw that the two remaining engines were still doing fairly well, however, the crew elected to bring the plane back to its home base, "mainly on account of the wounded man," the tail gunner explained.

At the 305ths field, the men sweating 'em out in front of the briefing room spotted the two feathered props and held their collective breath as the pilot brought "Cisco's Kids" in to land. They needn't have worried, though. "It was a beautiful landing," said the ball turret

gunner, and the rest of the crew agreed that it was as smooth as satin.

The joker in the pack of trouble they met on that mission only came to light when the co-pilot was checking the plane over on the ground. He found a flak hole clean through the number four engine, one of the two that had brought them home. "But it didn't do any damage," he said,

"If it had, brother . . . !"

**Submitted by the nephew of  
Lt. Maurice J. Weinstein (deceased),  
Ronald J. Levy  
Tallahassee, FL**



## Reunions



Please send all REUNION updates to:

**Donna Neely • 2090 Cairo Bend Road • Lebanon, TN • 37087 or email • donnajneely@gmail.com.**

Additional contact information is in yellow box on page 4.

### The Birthplace Chapter

Savannah, Georgia

**Meets 3rd Tuesday** at 5:30pm at the  
Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum  
Pooler, Georgia  
www.mighty8thbirthplace.org

### 446th Bomb Group

**May 2-6, 2012**

Washington D.C.  
Crowne Plaza Tysons Corner  
Contact: Beverly Tucker  
919-280-1249  
b.t@mindspring.com

### 446th BG

**2- Scheduled Reunions**

**May 2-6, 2012**

Washington D.C. Area

Contact: Beverly Turner  
Tel. 919-280-1249

**May 15-20, 2013**

Tucson, AZ  
Contact: Bill Davenport,

### 95th Bomb Group

RETURN TO HORHAM UK

**May 10-May 16, 2012**

Contact: Nancy Freemantle  
P.O. Box 6154  
Eureka, CA 95502  
707-442-8624  
bnfreem@olfreegenes.com

### 351st Bomb Group

**June 14-17, 2012**

Holiday Inn Cincinnati Airport  
Erlanger, Kentucky

### 388th Bomb Group

Savannah, Georgia

**August 29-Sept 1**

Embassy Suites, Pooler GA

### 95th Bomb Group Stateside

**August 29-September 3, 2012**

(Labor Day Weekend)  
Hyatt Regency Cleveland at the Arcade  
Contact: Nancy Freemantle  
707-442-8624

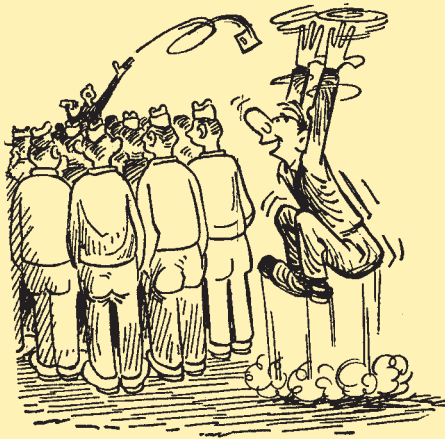
### 306th Bomb Group

**October 25-28, 2012**

Savannah, Georgia  
Marriott Savannah Riverfront  
Contact: Barbara Neal  
435-655-1500  
secretary@306bg.org  
www.306bg.org



# Mail Call



## AVID 8TH AF FAN,

Although I was never in the *Mighty Eighth*, I have been an avid "fan" of what the 8th Air Force has accomplished. After 40 years in the broadcast news business, I retired in 1994 and have been active as a free lance writer. Several of the pieces I have had published, included stories involving military aviation in WWII. Two or three were about men of the *8th Air Force*. One, detailed the disaster that befell the 445th B.G. in the skies over Kassel, Germany.

I was a tad too young for "The War", until recently, I became a member of the *Western Pennsylvania 8th Air Force History Society*. I joined primarily to obtain face to face interviews with men who "were there". At this point in my life (83) I have slowed down considerably. I still write magazine articles and in fact, will soon have one published in the March edition of *Aviation History Magazine*.

I have been to Pooler several times. In fact, it was there I met the men of the 445th, who staged their reunion there several years ago.

Watch for the March edition of "*Aviation History*" magazine, it will contain my latest published piece.

It is with great love and unbounded respect that I will always remember "*The Mighty Eighth*".

**Most sincerely,  
Adam Lynch  
2301 Haymaker Rd.  
Monroeville, PA 15146-4325**



**Andy Rooney in the U.S. Army in 1942.**

## ANDY ROONEY AND 'LADY LIZ'

**Dear Editors,**

As a fairly new British reader of your magazine, I was interested to note in your *December, 2011 8th AF NEWS* issue, that the late Andy Rooney, WWII war correspondent, flew at least one mission with the 385th Bomb Group, Great Ashfield, Suffolk, as "a Waist Gunner" aboard B-17F '*Lady Liz*' who is in my records as G square/H/25902.

Well, on the late afternoon (almost twilight) of November 29, 1943, I was walking with my father around the munitions factory site at Beccles, Suffolk, when '*Lady Liz's*' group came in low. As they passed over the south side of the town, she suddenly banked steeply to port and made for the then unoccupied new airfield close by at Ellough.

Next day, I learned that she had overshoot the runway and had ended up in a sugar beet field, after running across

**Andy Rooney flew with the 385th BG, in a B-17, named "*The Fighting Cock*".**



a ditch that tore off its ball turret and starboard undercarriage wheel.

Seeing me looking at the smashed Ball Turret, from which I had taken the gun elevation warning plate for the two barrels when the plane was on the ground, the USAAF guard invited me to look inside where, in the radio room, I noted a full length pin-up picture of a girl!

Apparently, the pilot that day was a Lt. Bostick, but when Mr. Rooney flew in '*Lady Liz*' as described in his book, *Air Gunner*, it was "with the Cerrone crew". On the day of the crash landing, she had been to Bremen, when the 8th lost 13 bombers and 16 fighters with a lot of damaged planes as well.

'*Lady Liz*' was among the first of a number of sketches I made of crashed planes on the ground, and passing overhead in a damaged state; in the Beccles area whose airfield, the nearest to German territory, was widely used by planes in trouble.

Yours sincerely,

**Christopher Elliott  
Flatt 4**

**77 South Park Rd.**

**Wimbledon**

**London**

**SW19 8RT**

**England**

**Tel: 020 8540 5382**



**ANDREW AITKEN  
ROONEY**

**CORRECTION FIX** on information that was supplied to the Editor for publication under Taps, in the 2011 *December 8th Air Force News* magazine

# Mail Call

The **correct** mission that Andy flew was with the 385BG, on 8 Oct 43 in a B-17, serial No. 42-3397, named "The Fighting Cock", with the Rummans Crew. This is backed up by records in the National Archives!

Andy did **NOT** fly on the mission with the 385th BG as a waist gunner on the Cerrone crew a in B-17 serial No. 42-5902, named *Lady Liz*.

It was Bud Hutton who flew on *Lady Liz*. Bud was Andy's co-author on the book, "Air Gunner."

Andy Rooney continued as a well known broadcaster on TV. Many of us awaited his comments on CBS's 60 minutes. He expressed a philosophy that WW II & 8th AF veterans could very well relate to and endorse!

## DONNA & TELISHA,

Thanks for the best Military magazine in the world!!! I'm a paid up member (622) and would like to know what I must do to order five copies of the 2011 December 8th Air Force News magazine. We love you girls, and really appreciate your dedication to our Society!!!!

**Sincere appreciation,**

**William M. Thorns**

*Editors Note: Mr. Thorns your magazines should have been delivered.*

*Mission Accomplished!*

## THESE B-17 GUYS,

I recently learned that my dad was "The Bombardier on the Lead Plane" for the largest mission in history when 2000 B-17's bombed the German Jet factory in Staargard Poland. He told me that he was on the mission CDR, departed as a COL and arrived back in England as BGEN. He never actually told me that he was "The Bombardier on the Lead Plane", he just said that he was "Lead on a Major Mission".

*"Unbelievable these B-17 guys!"*

**Kenn Riordan**

**lordstrider@earthlink.net**

## "DUCHESS"

The September 2011 issue of the 8th Air Force News (Taps) listed the death of Sgt James C. Hicks crew chief of the B-17 "Duchess" I personally did not know Sgt Hicks, but I was also a

member of 1st Lt Marvin Q Brooks crew and we flew 13 combat missions on the "Duchess" 297333. We were members of the 94th Bomb Group (H), 410th Bomb Squadron. We flew 13 combat missions on her from 8/16/44 to 10/06/44. Our last combat mission on the "Duchess" on 6 October 1944 was to Berlin. If memory serves me right 297333 was lost in combat while our crew was on stand down sometime between 10/07/44 and 10/18/44. Crew members of the "Duchess" were:

**Lt. Marvin Q. Brooks** - Pilot;

**Flight Officer Peter Perniciaro** - co-pilot

**Lt. Thomas Guilfoyle** - Bombadier

**Lt. Neil** - Navigator

**T/Sgt Kessler James** - Top Turret gunner

**T/Sgt Leslie Bridger** - Radio Operator - gunner

**S/Sgt Raymond McBride** - Ball turret - gunner

**S/Sgt Gustave Jacobsen** - Waist gunner

**S/Sgt Robert Douglas** - Tail - gunner

**Gustave Jacobsen**

**3680 Abbey Heights,**

**Colorado Springs, CO 80917-2647**

**ijacobsen3680@hotmail.com**

**C/Msgrt USAF (ret)**

## AL ISRAELSON

Hello Al, I enjoyed reading your article in the December 2011 8th AF News, as it related to the 34th BG flying on D-Day. Especially as it described (my crew) "Bob Doell's Crew". The plane called "MISERY AGENT", a superb description of the day, except the mission being a shorty, they only required 1 Navigator per Squadron.

Looking to contact Al Israelson??

**rhgross1734@att.net**

**Bob Gross**

## DID IRA WEINSTEIN FLY 25 OR 30 MISSIONS?

The June 2011 8th AF News issue was another winner. I am curious, though, about one aspect of the article about the life and times of Ira Weinstein, a 445th Bomb Group bombardier. The 445th flew B-24 bombers. The tour requirement on July 10, 1943 when I flew my first mission on a B-17 bomber with the 303rd BG was 25. By the time I flew my last mission on May 11, 1944 the requirement had been raised to 30. The pivotal point in the article was Ira's determination to complete his 25th and presumed final mission on September 27, 1944. Unless the tour requirement was different for B-24 crews than for B-17 crews, Ira would have needed to fly at least 30 missions in September, 1944.

I have always assumed that when the Eighth Air Force increased the total mission requirement from 25 to 30 for heavy bomber crews, it applied to both B-17 and B-24 Groups. If it remained at 25 for the Liberator crews, I would be interested in any information you have on HQ's reasoning for that decision.

**Regards and best wishes,**

**Eddie Deerfield**

**LtCol, USArmy (Ret.)**

*Editors Note: Eddie was editor of the 303rd Bomb Group's "Hell's Angels Newsletter," a 20-page quarterly magazine in color, for nine years. Walt Brown use to call it*



*Ira Weinstein and his original crew (Horton Crew) 445th BG  
Ira proudly stands in the middle of the photograph.*

# Mail Call

the most professional of all Bomb Group newsletters.

Mr. Deerfield, the Editor is reaching out to our 8th Air Force members and readers to answer your question? We always appreciate accurate information from our 8th AF News veterans.

Any veteran readers want to help Eddie?

## ARNOLD M. MILLER SCRAPBOOK

I recently contacted Bill Varnadoe, former Historian for the 385BG concerning the scrapbook that my father, Arnold M. Miller, kept of his time in the Army Air Force. Dad passed away in 2006 just a month shy of his 90th birthday and I had some questions as to the names of the aircraft that he had flown missions in. My father was a B-17 waist gunner in the 385BG. In his scrapbook, is his official list of combat missions numbering 1-30, complete with date, mission length and target. Armed with that information, I was wondering if you could determine which aircraft he would have flown those missions on. Also, most of those missions were flown with his 2nd aircraft which I believe was "Mr Lucky" which was commanded by a Lt. Corcoran. They completed their tour before dad reached the magic "30 Missions" number so he flew his last missions with one or more other crews.

The crew which he had trained with and went by ship with to England crashed on takeoff for just their second combat mission on, I believe, January 5th, 1944. The pilots were named Zeebarth and Morris, I believe. The bombardier and navigator had been Stetson and Dickson, but they had been transferred to a lead crew just before that mission so they survived, as did the tail gunner, Burwell (Barney) Hamilton, dad's best friend on the crew, although he suffered severe injuries and I don't believe ever flew again. Dad survived because he had been sent to the hospital with a severe head cold and thus missed his crew's first two (and final) missions. He then went to Lt Concoran's crew.

Lastly, I was wondering if you could verify whether that first crew, the Morris/Zeebarth crew, had ever been



**Uniform Patches - Captain Marcus Youngquist with his crew.  
Marcus is sitting in the left seat (with the blond hair)**

assigned to a plane named the *Pistol Packin Mama*. Dad always said that was their aircraft's name and I seem to remember seeing it on the back of his leather flight jacket which was hanging down in the basement of our home in Decatur, IL as I was growing up there in the 50's. Thanks for any help you can provide.

**Stephen Miller**  
Lt Col, USAF Retired  
10321 Camino del Oso NE  
Albuquerque, NM 87111

## UNIFORM PATCHES

My son, Captain Marcus Youngquist, was deployed til November at Al Udeid Air Force Base in Qatar. He is a Command Pilot flying the C 17.

He had told me that there is a great source there that make uniform patches by hand. Since I needed a large 466th BG patch for an A-2 jacket and some smaller ones to have on hand for later projects, I had him order some to be made.

A few weeks later I received a picture of his crew all sporting the patch on one of their missions into Afghanistan with this caption "My Uncle Al Reynolds' 466th patch is going on a mission again. We are not hauling bombs but are dropping 40 bundles of fuel for our comrades."

I wrote back to him that his Uncle's first missions were flying fuel into France for Patton's Third Army but they didn't drop it out of the B-24.

Thought you might find this of interest to use sometime in the AF News.

**Thanks,**  
**Frank Youngquist**

*Note\* My brother-in-law, Al Reynolds, was the pilot in the 466th BG and is the reason for my involvement in the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. I found out that he was Earl Wassom's bunkmate.*

## TOM "PINKY" FUNDERBURK

On page 32 of the 2011 December 8th AF News issue, there is a request by Tom Funderburk for information on "Operation Manna". However, there is no address or email contact listed. I have some information for him. Can you help?

Bill Varnadoe  
billvar@comcast.net

*Editors Note: I have included the email that you requested and for anyone else that may need information on Food Drops.*

**Tom "Pinky" Funderburk**  
**Pinkyfun@comporium.net**

## CONCERNING MAIL CALL (OPERATIONAL MANNA)

I was co-pilot on D.W. Taylor's crew and we made two trips across the channel with food on consecutive days. We dropped at a race track on the outskirts of Amsterdam. The Dutch knew we were coming and were there by the thousands and waving like crazy.

I do not know the exact date we flew but it was before the Germans surren-

# Mail Call



**Memphis Belle**  
**Staff Sgt. Clarence E. Wichell**

der. As we left one of the missions we flew over a German out post on the beach and saw German soldiers.

Years later I went to an Air Force reunion and went to a tour of down town Chicago, during the tour our guide mentioned he had grown up at Amsterdam. After the tour I asked him if he remembered the food drop. He said he sure did. He was 4 years old at that time and stood on the top of their apartment building and watched the planes come in. His mother got enough flour to take bread and he remembers how good it tasted. They had nothing but grease to put on the bread. He knew what it was to be hungry.

It was an experience I shall never forget. Sincerely,

**LaVerne Sedore**  
**3000 West Madison Avenue, Apt. 314**  
**Fairfield, Iowa 52556**

## HISTORY OF THE MEMPHIS BELLE

**Subject: December 2011 Issue 8th AF NEWS pages 26-27**

Your Note of "Not Pictured" - you list S/ Sgt Wichell. S/Sgt. (Bill) Wichell is the man on the far right. There are ten men pictured but only nine listed (he is the tenth). I had the opportunity of spending about an hour with S/Sgt. Wichell on August 6, 1993. He appeared at Palwaukee Airport just north of Chicago for a day that a B-17 and a B-24 stopped over. S/Sgt. Wichell told me he was at the filming of the movie Memphis Belle

**The crew of the B-17 Flying Fortress "Memphis Belle" is shown at an air base in England after completing 25 missions over enemy territory on June 7, 1943.**

### Left to right:

**Tech. Sgt. Harold P. Loch** of Green Bay, Wis., top turret gunner; **Staff Sgt. Cecil H. Scott** of Altoona, Penn., ball turret gunner; **Tech. Sgt. Robert J. Hanson** of Walla Walla, Wash., radio operator; **Capt. James A. Verinis**, New Haven, Conn., co-pilot; **Capt. Robert K. Morgan** of Ashville, N. C., pilot; **Capt. Charles B. Leighton** of Lansing, Mich., navigator; **Staff Sgt. John P. Quinlan** of Yonkers, N. Y., tail gunner; **Staff Sgt. Casimer A. Nastal** of Detroit, Mich., waist gunner, **Capt. Vincent B. Evans** of Henderson, Texas, bombardier;

### Not pictured: Correction (standing on far right)

**Staff Sgt. Clarence E. Wichell** of Oak Park, Ill., waist gunner.

### CORRECTION FIX

"The Memphis Belle was NOT the first B-17 to fly 25 missions for the Eighth Air Force, as printed in the December 2011 8th AF News magazine. "The Hell's Angels" were the first B-17 group to complete 25 combat missions in June 1943, going on to fly more than 300 combat missions, more than any other group.



in an advisor capacity. The jacket he has on was a gift from the film Director of the movie. He also gave me the signed picture of the crew.

He added "In Memory of Billie" for my uncle Bill (T/Sgt. W.C. Depuy) KIA March 23, 1944. My uncle was Engineer/ Right Waist Gunner of the "Fritzi" his plane was part of 458th Bomber Group, 752th Squadron stationed at Horsham - St. Faith Air Base. Their plane was hit by A/A through open bombay doors. They were loaded with "Fire Bombs" -

not good.

Hope this info is helpful.  
Love your magazine.

**Best Regards,**  
**Capt. (Afres) Allan Dalgleish**  
**514 W. Haven Dr.**  
**Arlington Heights, IL 60005-3623**

*Editors Note: Thank you for your great signed photo and S/Sgt. (Bill) Wichell's MIA name/photo addition. Receiving "Correct" information has "ALWAYS" been welcomed and appreciated.*

# Mail Call



**"Preserving The Legacy"  
Graham Jones and Beverley  
Sheridan's motorhome.**

## WHAT MAKES A NEXTGEN?

I am also not the son of an Eighth Air Force Veteran. I am not even American (as far as I know) but I was born in 1944, born under the shadows of B17s, the drone of Wright Cyclones lulling me to sleep. As a young boy we were lucky to have American neighbors who were serving on our local R.A.F. / U.S.A.F. Base. Together with their son, I would accompany them to the base, most weekends to watch baseball, and whilst my pals suffered sweet rationing, me thanks to my U.S. buddy Tommy, did not. Alas, in the mid 50s the Americans left our town and the base became air traffic control for Heathrow. Fathers and husbands breathed a sigh of relief, lots of girls cried, me, I missed the sweets and the big flashy cars that used to cruise up and down our high street. But the seed had been planted, slowly at first, but gathering pace I wanted to learn everything about the men, the planes and the missions of the Eighth. I read many books, went to the air shows at Greenham common and Duxford, then in the mid 90s I visited the 390th base in Tucson. Back in England as a volunteer I joined the 390th base museum in Framlingham Suffolk, we still have the control tower, most of the perimeter track, a couple of hard stands and a type two hanger plus some other old buildings still exist albeit a bit dilapidated. The control tower is now our museum with many interesting and poignant exhibits. Beverley and I help out one Sunday per month. We would love to attend more often, but work and other com-

mitments plus a round trip of 300 miles limits us. The debt we owe the men, or boys as they were then, is immense and can never be repaid. Getting out of bed long before day break, mission after mission, the terror, the cold, flack, fog, if this were not bad enough some other guy is trying to shoot you down. On this side of the pond we will not allow them to be forgotten.

Whether they are ground crew or air crew their stories will be told and passed on. Hence the photos on the rear of my motor home, keeping the legends alive, unfortunately history does not appear to be an important subject these days and on seeing the images of the B17s people will remark "are those Lancasters?" or "are they B-52s?". I then give a short history lesson on the greatest Air Force (put together in a very short time), that the world has ever seen, ending with "and it is one of the reasons why you my friend are not asking me these questions in the German tongue". To sum up we are not "Next Gen" we are just proud to preserve the legacy. A special thanks to all the volunteers at our 390th museum Reg, Allan, Barry, Richard, to name but a few and of course their wives. Some of these guys give up one, two or more days a week, year in year out, for maintenance and to ensure the smooth running of the museum. Any vets or "Next Gen" planning to tour East Anglia from any Bomb Group, please give us a visit. Admission is free and a warm welcome awaits.

Thank you!

Regards to Darrel Lowell and my dear

friend Jack Hubbard 306th vet and author of "Patriots Will".

**Regards,  
Graham Jones and Beverley Sheridan.**

**capandball1@hotmail.com  
110 Shirley Avenue  
Reading, Berkshire  
RG28TD, U.K.**

*Submitted by Darrel Lowell, 8th AFHS BOD. "I have known Graham for 4 years he came to a reunion here in Savannah, GA. He is a great supporter of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society as well as the Nex-Gen program".*

## DONATED WWII-DOGTAGS"

95th BG Bombardier's "dog tags" of the late Lt. Col. Hank Sarnow recovered. Last year they were donated as a gift to the *Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum*, by his twin-daughters.

This story was printed on page 24 in the *2011 June 8th AF News Magazine*. I would like to add a link to complete the story of the plane and it's crew.

[www.mighty8thaf.preller.us/gallery/OurBayBee](http://www.mighty8thaf.preller.us/gallery/OurBayBee)

Enjoy the story,  
Best wishes from Holland,

**Co de Swart  
Researcher Airwar WWII ETO.**

*P.S. Binnebose (95thBG/335BS) was the gunner on the same B-17 (42-30274 ) crashed over Mol/Desschel, Belgium on Aug 17-1943 and who downed one of his Luftwaffe attackers and met him some hours later, both wounded taken to the same hospital in Belgium. Binnebose' experiences can make a good story in the 8th AFHS Magazine.*



**Roberta Sarnow Strom (left) and Regina Sarnow Brand (right) hold their father's dog tag and photographs of their parents, with Yvonne Daley-Brusselmans.**



## Mail Call

**The Experimental Aircraft Association's B-17 "Aluminum Overcast"** came to North Little Rock Dec 5th, 6th and 7th. Bad weather kept the plane grounded until the 7th. The local EAA chapter #165 sponsored this visit and one of the perks for the sponsoring chapter is to allow members to travel with the crew to the next destination. The next stop on this tour was Olive Branch, Mississippi, just outside Memphis. Dad (Bill Toombs) and 2 others flew with the crew to Mississippi. This is Dad's 3rd destination flight (2 on a B-17 and 1 on a B-24) and he has enjoyed 6 or 7 media flights. At this rate he will fly as much in his 80's and he did in his 20's! He loves these war birds and has been so very fortunate to become a frequent flyer.

*Submitted by*  
**Dr. Nancy J. Toombs**  
*Board of Directors 8th AFHS*

*The Experimental Aircraft Association's B-17 "Aluminum Overcast" with snow on the wings.*



*Bill Toombs 493rd BG and Milton P. Crenshaw WWII Flight Instructor, Tuskegee "Red Tails"*



*L to R*  
**Phil Seaman--Pres. of EAA Chapter 165**  
**Bill Toombs 493rd BG**  
**Bill McGinley 392nd BG**  
**Jerry Homsley--V. Pres of EAA chapter 165**



*Bill Toombs boarding for a flight*

## OREGON CHAPTER

2012 Meeting dates:

February 11; May 12; August 11;  
November 3

The February meeting was the annual meeting where we honor women.

If you have items that you wish to share with others, they can be loaned to the Oregon Chapter, scanned and catalogued and then returned to you. You can always donate them permanently to the chapter if you wish. Contact Tom Philo to make arrangements for the documents.

There are many members who can no longer drive due to age so we are trying to find out those who are in need of transportation so that we can find other members who live nearby who can pick you up and then take you home afterwards.

If you would like to come to the meeting and need a ride please contact any chapter officer or board member and let them know.

Tom Davis, Bob Dean, Tom Philo, Sharon Campbell, Charlie Gallagher, Wally Groce, Bob Schuberg, Jerry Ritter, Joani Hamilton, Bert Campbell, Warren Caldwell, or Don Bourgeois. Via e-mail you can send the request to [secretary@8thafhsurgeon.com](mailto:secretary@8thafhsurgeon.com) if you do not have the phone numbers for the people listed above.

## THE NEW YORK STATE SOUTHERN WING

Chapter Board of Directors will be having a meeting in March to discuss the May's Luncheon to be held in Long Island. The location will be announced later. Also a new 2012 Roster has been addressed and is available. For further Chapter news please check our website, <http://blogs.ny8thswcafhs.org>.

Please 'Support Our Troops' & the USO  
Pat Keeley

## FLORIDA CHAPTER

By Ken Sweet

The Florida Chapters Southeast Wing welcomed the Collings Foundations' Warbirds to the Boca Raton airport on Saturday, January 28, 2012. Director Warren Klein made all the arrange-

ments to make sure the Florida Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society was out in force to greet visitors as the planes were open to the public at the airport. We had some beautiful South Florida weather that morning as the clouds burned off by 10 o'clock and the day was sunny and warm.

As we arrived, "Witchcraft", the B-24 Liberator, was just warming up for take-off and taking passengers on a ride. Also on the tarmac were the "Nine-Oh-Nine" B-17, and "Betty Jane", the Collings Foundation's P-51. The P-51 is a unique model in that it is set up for training purposes with a back seat. Warren Klein and Alex Acuti were already set up to catch the early morning visitors and letting them know that an organization was in attendance honoring and preserving the memory of the great job the Mighty Eighth did in Europe during the war, and I joined them. Director Jim Hart soon brought along our Treasurer Shelly Greene, and Dorothy Guinn, representing husband John Guinn, our Secretary, was there, as well. Vice-President Bill Uphoff arrived later with wife Kay and daughter Diane. President Tom Gagnon and his wife Janet were unable to join us because they were traveling at the time, but were with us in spirit. We were able to greet many of the visitors as they headed for the entry gate. We were also happy to see a few members of the 12th and 15th Air Force's out to see the planes they flew, as well as at least one veteran of the Pacific campaigns against Japan.

After the festivities at the airport, we gathered at a local Ruby Tuesday's for a luncheon. The restaurant prepared a special reduced price menu and furnished us with a dining and meeting room, all arranged by Warren and Sid Katz. The membership was invited by Warren to make any remarks they felt moved to make for the occasion, and many did. Our guest speaker for the luncheon was Ron Bloeser from the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office aviation unit. Ron is an Air Force veteran, and described to us the aviation unit's mission and its history of law enforcement duties in the county. Ron's partner, Tom Brenaman, also joined us for lunch.

It was very gratifying to see the turnout for the event. We saw some old friends like Stan Petersen, and made some new ones like Andrew Panchura and his family, and Chris Bolzano and his son. Over 40 people were there for all or part of the events. Our south Florida membership has been very active the past two years or so and have been hosting successful events in that area of the state. Our hats are off to them for another great time.

## NORTH ALABAMA CHAPTER

**ANN VAUGHN**  
**DOUG GARNER**  
**BILL VARNEDOE**

**PRESIDENT**  
**VICE-PRESIDENT**  
**SECRETARY/TREASURER**

Chapter purpose is to perpetuate and preserve the story of the 8th Air Force during World War II.

Ann Vaughn welcomed several guests: Randy Millen and his daughter, Moriah and his son, Jeremiah, Don Pence, Friends Chaplt, George and Margaret McGinnis, Monika Carrell, and Daniel Kearley.

Shirley Mohler was our speaker, she dressed in period costume of the 1860's gave a vivid picture of how Christmas was celebrated in those Civil War days. Although not a National Holiday, Christmas was, and is, celebrated in both the United States and the Confederate States by Hymns and Carols. The carols were the same on both sides. The singing of carols by groups visiting neighbors was called Wasseling. (Wassel was cider.) This Wassel was shared while making the rounds. She even pointed out that the Americans were beginning to imitate the English in the sending of Christmas Cards. She told of a story that right in the middle of the war, on Christmas, a Union Captain brought a cart of food and supplies to the Rebel Georgians. The cart was pulled by mules festooned with tree limbs on their heads to look like antlers!! Also, Mistletoe is not new. It was popular then, too. She read Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's poem, "Christmas Bells," all three verses. It was written during the war. It has been put to music and is now called, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." Jennie Scott brought a tape player and played this carol, which we all enjoyed!

# Chapter News

It is impossible to give an accurate flavor of Shirley's talk and her rendition of it with a typed summary. Her renowned ability as a story teller is well known and today she was her usual excellent self! Thank you Shirley!!

January's program will be given by Chapter member Nancy Mullin. She and 3 other 6th grade teachers from the Academy for Science and Foreign

Languages won a scholarship trip to New York City, Ellis Island, Paris, Normandy, Belgium and other historical places. They've created a teaching plan based on what they learned during this trip. Nancy's dad flew in both the RAF and the 8th AF.

Please send all  
**"Chapter News"** updates to:  
**Donna Neely • 2090 Cairo Bend  
Road • Lebanon, TN • 37087 or  
email • donnajneely@gmail.com.**

Additional contact information is  
inside the yellow box on page 4.

## Remembrance

Years later, looking for mementos  
Of the bomber crew he flew with in England  
Searching all through the house, room by room,  
Basement to attic, closet to closet and once again

No luck.  
Only stuff piled high.  
Articles of clothing never worn.  
His children's discarded toys and books.

Was it all a dream?  
Did it really happen as he recalled?  
The Second World War seemed as remote  
To the neighbors as a science-fiction movie on Jupiter

By chance,  
A photo appeared of his crew the day  
They took off from Hunter Field, Savannah,  
Learned over the Atlantic they were headed to England

From Manchester, New Hampshire,  
To Goose Bay, Labrador, to Meeks Field, Iceland,  
Passing over the ice-cap of Greenland to Valley, Wales  
To the 3rd Division of the 8th Air Force . . . at Rattlesden

They were all there again.....  
The crew that passed through  
The Bells of Hell....that the neighbors  
Had no idea . . . that all that . . . had happened

**Submitted by, Marvin Silbersher  
447th BG 711th Sqdn  
Lake Hopatcong, NJ**

## 8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 38th ANNUAL REUNION

*San Antonio, Texas*

*Details will be in the June 2012 issue!!*

Plans are well under way for the 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion in San Antonio, TX. Official dates are October 3-7, which is a Wednesday to Sunday pattern (one less day than past reunions). The headquarters hotel is the Crowne Plaza Riverwalk on Pecan Street, ideally located along the tranquil north area of the famed Riverwalk. The hotel is just a quick stroll to shops, art galleries, restaurants, the Rivercenter Mall, and more.



**Donna Lee**

Make sure you read Mike Faley's column here in the newsletter to learn about one of the highlights of this reunion – The B-17G Sentimental Journey will be on hand for flights and tours!

Feel free to make hotel reservations now at this website:  
<https://resweb.passkey.com/go/8thAirForceHistorical>  
The rate is \$109 plus tax.

Complete reunion details will be published in the next 8th AF News due out in June. The activity registration website should be active by late May: [www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2012](http://www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2012).

**See ya in San Antonio!**  
**Donna Lee - Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.**  
**DonnaLee@afri.com**



# They Got Smitty Today

## Big Week and the Loss of the Bermondsay Battler

By Derek J. Sherwood

On February 20th, 1944, the United States Army Air Force had launched the "Big Week" initiative, planned to run from February 20th-26th, 1944 and intended to cripple the German aircraft production capabilities and to force a decisive battle with the Luftwaffe. It was believed that if the US could establish air superiority and remove the threat of the Luftwaffe, the path would be clear for an all-out invasion of Europe. A description of the outcome of Big Week at USAAF.net describes Big Week:

*In six days, the Eighth Air Force bombers flew more than 3,000 sorties and the Fifteenth Air Force more than 500. Together they dropped roughly 10,000 tons of bombs and seriously disrupted German fighter production, denying the enemy hundreds of aircraft at a time when they were badly needed. The United States lost 226 heavy bombers and 28 fighters.*

*The weeklong offensive also seriously eroded the morale and capability of the Luftwaffe. U.S. aircrews claimed more than 600 German fighters destroyed and achieved almost immediate air superiority. The Luftwaffe never recovered from the downing of so many skilled fighter pilots. In effect, the Germans conceded air superiority to the Allies.*

One of the pilots participating in Big Week was 1st Lieutenant Lee W. Smith, a personable 21-year old from Battlefield, Indiana. 1st Lieutenant T. Paxton Sherwood had "checked out" Smith and crew as co-pilot on their first real mission in the ETO on December 5th, 1943. The plane was B-17F "Tinker Toy" -- a plane Roger Freeman called "the jinx ship of the 381st." "Tinker Toy" had been featured in a film, "Hers to Hold," shown as it came off of the assembly line. A number of crews who flew it later met untimely and gruesome ends. The December 5th mission to Amiens had been uneventful, though, as the

'Forts had been escorted by P-51s and the target had been obscured, causing them to return home and drop their bombs over the English Channel instead of on target. "And as for "Tinker Toy" -- she was never called a jinx in my presence," Sherwood recalled.

On February 21st, Sherwood and the Smith crew were fresh off of several days of R & R at one of the "rest homes" in Salisbury, England - palatial mansions in the English countryside that had been converted into crew quarters where airmen could go and stay to recuperate from the stress of flying constant missions. It was a much needed rest -- already approaching his 13th mission, Sherwood was suffering from duodenal ulcers and was in nearly constant pain.

Sherwood was flying with the Smith crew acting as co-pilot to replace James W. Sweeney, their original co-pilot during their training period, who had gone down on December 1st, 1943, while serving as a replacement for another crew. Sweeney would spend the war

as a POW, giving Sherwood the opportunity to fly with the Smith crew as a replacement until someone else could be found.

They were flying the brand-new B-17G "Bermondsay Battler," which had been delivered to the 8th Air Force as one of four planes that had been purchased with money raised by a donation drive sponsored by the city of Bermondsay, which had been heavily damaged by German bombing raids earlier in the war. The town wanted to raise 800,000 British pounds, but was actually able to raise 845,113 pounds, which allowed for the purchase of four aircraft, called the "Bermondsay War Loan Fleet of American bombers."

The four planes were delivered in June of 1943. Each plane was named after a suburb of London or an area of England that had experienced the terror of German bombing: "London Avenger," "Bermondsay Battler," "Rotherhithe's Revenge," and the "Bermondsay Special". The "London Avenger" had been assigned to the 379th Bomb Group,



while the remaining three aircraft were assigned to the 381st Bomb Group. In February of 1944, the "Bermondsay Battler" was only eight months old, and had only been assigned to the 381st since December 23rd, 1943.

Rounding out the Smith Crew, which had been flying on and off since their permanent assignment to the 535th Squadron on November 16th, 1943, were Harold Kaufman and Leonard P. Meier as bombardier and navigator, respectively; Technical Sergeant Harold C. Kemper manning the top turret, and John C. Zappala as the radio operator, Staff Sergeant Lester P. Larson in the ball turret, and Sgt Reginald C. Solway, and Staff Sergeant Andrew F. Manning as waist gunners. Staff Sergeant Lawrence V. Eden worked the twin Browning M2 .50 caliber tail guns.

On February 21st, 1944, the 381st Bomb Group was scheduled to bomb Gutersloh, Germany. According to the 381st War Diaries, they found the target at Gutersloh "hidden under a solid cloud overcast." Instead, they moved to Achmer, Germany, an airfield northeast of the city Onasbruck and about fifty miles north-northwest of the original target. They reported "weak fighter opposition" and a "good bombing of hangars, runways, workshops and dispersal areas." Sherwood mentions that he had "sorta" bawled" em out (Eden & Kemper), over Gutersloh, for kinda being slow on locating & firing on some ME-109's & F.W. 190's that attacked us." This simple verbal disciplining of his crew would soon come back to haunt him.

Surely, there was always room for improvement in the top turret and tail gunner positions when it came to target identification and speed of response, but the three-month old crew was already gaining experience in air combat. For his part, Kemper had already been credited with damaging one enemy aircraft on a previous mission.

After returning from Gutersloh, Sherwood and the crew retired to their quarters in order to rest for the following morning, when they were scheduled to bomb the FW-190 factories at

Oschersleben.

A series of seemingly innocuous events that had taken place months earlier, however, had conspired to intervene against Sherwood's scheduled flight with Smitty and his crew to Oeschersleben. In a letter to the widow of a fellow pilot and friend, Lieutenant Nicholson, written in November of 1981, Sherwood explained why he was pulled from the mission that day:

*It was a cold and rainy evening in the winter of '43-'44. For some reason, we were late for "chow." "Nick" said "Let's go down to the pub in Great Yeldham instead of tramping across that muddy field!" I replied that it would suit me, but that I had no required slotted bike headlight cover. (Headlight covers were required to comply with blackout regulations in place at the time.) "Nick" shrugged that excuse off with "Oh, I can fix that. Wait a minute." He proceeded to cut out a suitable cover, got some tape (he was always resourceful) and soon my bike was "up to specs!!"*

*When we got settled in at the Inn, "Nick" heard some guys from the base talking quite loudly about the losses the group had sustained - especially the bomb explosion 21 June, '43 when some 23 men lost their lives on the base while loading bombs on the plane. After a second warning, "Nick" said "I'm going to court-martial those guys," and went over to their table and informed them.*

*Weeks later, on 22 Feb, 1944, I woke up and heard the plans climbing, in formation, over the base. They were already at about four or five thousand feet altitude. I threw on some clothes and rode my bike as fast as I could to Captain Tansey's Nissen Hut - he was the 535th's Adjutant - and asked him why I wasn't flying on the mission. He answered that this was the day I had to witness in the court martial of those men "Nick" and I had heard talking too much that night.*

Another co-pilot from the 381st took over for Sherwood on that fateful mission to Oschersleben - a Lieutenant Evans, who had a Ph.D. in Religion and had joined the Air Corps to experience war first-hand. It was

Evans' first mission as a co-pilot, and he and Smith were still unused to the B-17G. "Tinker Toy," their previous ship, was a B-17F, and the B-17G "Bermondsay Battler" included some new features -- including electronically controlled superchargers instead of the old liquid actuated superchargers. The electronic superchargers "could and did cause pilot problems," being "hard to adjust and they often froze in position and/or ran away at critical times, such as at take-off," according to Sherwood.

As they left Ridgewell with Major John Fitzgerald of the 532nd in the lead, the thirty planes fielded by the 381st BG hit rough weather and missed the rendezvous point, causing 18 of them to abort. Twelve of the initial bombers decided to proceed with the raid, and they rendezvoused with fifteen Forts from the 91st Bomb Group, creating a small bomber stream of their own, continuing to head towards the target. Reports of whether or not a fighter escort was available for the small group of bombers are varied. The 533rd Bomb Squadron records for the day indicate that P-51s were able to provide limited support as the planes neared the target:

*The group's contingent, led by Major John E. Fitzgerald Jr, went through to bomb a target of opportunity near Oschersleben after they found their primary completely cloud-covered. Clouds at the Fortresses' altitude lifted just over the German coast and the upper air was immediately clear until Major Fitzgerald's crews were about an hour and a half from their target. Then, as cloud layers began forming again, they were hit by hordes of Nazi fighters which far outnumbered the bombers' P-51 escort.*

The 535th Bomb Squadron war diaries mention only that some of the planes missed their escort that day:

*Thirty one Forts took off this morning but some of the filthiest weather conditions over not a high altitude prevented the majority of them from bombing. Nineteen of them aborted, three of them out of the six sent by this squadron. Twelve, including Lts. Smith, Hustedt and Downey followed Major John Fitzgerald*

of the 532nd, to a rendezvous with 15 Forts from the 91st BG. These 27 ships, late for their escort, proceeded over the German coast alone, headed for Oschersleben.

Regardless of the question of whether fighter escorts were available to them or not, the outcome of the battle was devastating to the 381st. Roughly one hour into the mission, a group of German fighters consisting of as many as 200 FW-190s and ME-109s pounced on the bombers.

In what must have been a hellish scene, the air-to-air fighting raged for almost an hour. Smith was hit hard right from the start, losing two engines to the German fighter's 20mm cannon fire, and his plane was seen to break formation, along with planes piloted by Lt. Henry Hustedt and Lt. Charles Downey. A total of six of the twenty seven planes that had continued beyond the aborted rendezvous were shot down, three of which were from the 535th Squadron. The surviving 21 planes were later able to successfully drop their bombs and return to base, providing an account of what had happened to the missing Smith crew.

In the Missing Air Crew report filed for the Smith crew, right waist gunner Donald Perdue from the 532nd reported that he had seen the Smith crew "getting it."

*"Lt. Smith was flying on our right wing. During our first attack by fighters, Lt. Smith's ship was hit by 20mm shells and the number three engine caught on fire and there also appeared to be a small fire in the nose of the ship. The pilot put the ship in what looked to be a controlled slip to the left and behind us out of my sight."*

After the plane passed out of Perdue's sight, tail gunner Ralph Rosato, also from the 532nd, observed the "Bermondsay Battler" attempting a controlled dive:

*"I was flying with Major Fitzgerald and Captain Hecker in the lead ship of the second High Squadron as Tail Gunner (Observer) on the mission of 22 February 1944. When we got our first fighter attacks, Lt. Smith, in B-17G A/C 42-39895, was attacked by ME-109's which hit his number 2 and 3 engines and set them on fire. He was flying on our right wing and when this happened he side slipped*



*his plane under our tail and dove down about 3,000 feet, probably in an effort to put out the fires. He then leveled off and appeared to be under control. After this I did not see him any more."*

It is here that the mystery of the "Bermondsay Battler" begins. Looking at the times on the MACR, it seems that Smith was able to continue flying for nearly half an hour between the time he was last seen leaving formation on fire, and the time he was claimed as shot-down. Not only that, but he had begun to turn around, as the flight map shows almost a 180-degree turn from his original position. German reports claim the "Battler" as shot down at at 1:42 PM, while

the crash report shows a final disposition at 2:09 PM – 27 unaccounted for minutes. Why weren't any members of the Smith crew able to bail out? What happened in the plane during that half-hour?

At 2:09 PM or shortly thereafter, the "Bermondsay Battler" plowed into the ground near Hiddesen, Germany, with all ten crew members aboard, killed in action. The parachutes seen that day must have come from Hustedt's crew, as eight of the men on his flight were reported as parachuted and captured, while two – waist gunner Leslie "Lucky" Hanna, and Staff Sergeant Abelardo Rodriguez, were killed in action. None of the men on board "Battler" had survived.

Captain Gunther Specht of the German fighter squadron JG-11 claimed responsibility for shooting down "Battler." He was flying a Focke-Wulf 190, serial numbered 205-033. Specht, known as the "Flying Pencil," for his exhaustive after-action re-

ports, which sometimes took dozens of pages, was a one-eyed ace among the Luftwaffe. He was credited with 34 kills on the Western Front – a notoriously difficult achievement than that of aces from the Eastern Front, where untrained Russian pilots were known to be much easier to shoot down than their American and British counterparts. On February 22nd, 1944, Specht claimed a P-51 just 17 minutes before he shot down the "Battler."<sup>1</sup> Specht's own untimely end would be shrouded in the same mystery as that of the "Battler." On January 1st, 1945, Specht took off in full dress uniform with 65 other fighters for an attack on American air bases as part of Operation

Bodenplatte.2 After encountering flak and American P-47 and P-51 squadrons, he and 25 other pilots of JG-11 were confirmed or reported shot down. Specht was never seen again. Officially, he is listed as "missing in action." His true fate is unknown. Specht's own records of the "Battler" seem to have disappeared from history as he did – destroyed in the mass Luftwaffe records burnings of May, 1945.

No one from the 381st base at Ridgewell knew this at the time, and everyone waited for the return of the bombers, as was the custom – hoping to count their friends and their planes in the number of men returning alive and unharmed. Sherwood remembered in a letter after the war:

*After the court martial, I wanted very anxiously for my crew of Lee W. Smith, to return. Recently acquired Lt. Col. Fitzgerald, from Coastal Command B-24s – as was Leber and Halsey – led the mission. They took off with 30 B-17s. Due to high, thick overcast Fitzgerald had eighteen (18) plans "abort" (return) the mission. With only twelve, he made the tragic error of proceeding on to the heavily defended target by tacking on to another group. German fighters saw the discrepancy at once and shot down half of the twelve crews, including the Lee Smith crew which I had taken on their first mission to "break them in" as was my job. I had flown with fifteen or more new crews as such, but "Smitty" was a great favorite.*

From Sherwood's diary, after he found out:

**Tuesday February 22, 1944**

**They got Smitty today**

*I feel so badly now. I had "sorta "bawled" em out (Eden & Kemper), over Gutersloh, for kinda' being slow on locating & firing on some ME-109's & FW. 190's that attacked us." --- Smitty was last seen - #1 & #2 engines in flames – 8 chutes were later seen – that's all reported – even worse – the group lost total 6 out of 12 that followed Maj. Fitzgerald after 18 "aborted" due to losing rendezvous point.*

Sherwood long felt that the death of Smitty was a preventable one on the part of the 381st. "I say the error lay with Wing in assigning a ranking officer (Fitzgerald) with absolutely no experience to command and lead a complicated bomber group into action and be responsible for command decisions when so unqualified." Coastal Command B-24 experience (mainly picking up downed fliers or patrolling for U-Boats) such as that provided by Fitzgerald was vastly different from combat bombing experience. Continuing on without a fighter escort was, to Sherwood, an unacceptable risk of men and machinery.

Officially, Lt. Smith and his men would be listed as Missing in Action that day, as no definitive firsthand report existed yet that indicated that he and his crew had been killed. On February 25th, 1944, 1st Lieutenant Lee Smith and his crew were buried by the Germans in the Hiddesen Cemetery. After the war, they were disinterred and removed to the American War Cemetery in Belgium. Eight of them remain there to this day. Fifty years later, a German whose family remembered the Battler would provide Smitty and his men with a fitting memorial.

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**The second part of this article was written by Axel Pieper, the man who created the granite memorial to the men of the Bermondsay Battler pictured in this article. With limited corrections based mainly on language/translation differences, the article has been presented here just as he sent it to me. The Jeep in the photos belongs to Axel. He has since visited us in the United States and brought along pieces of the wreckage of the "Bermondsay Battler" recovered from the crash site.**

**My Way To "Bermondsay Battler" --  
By Axel Pieper**

When I was a little boy, at the age of about 10 years, my father told me about an airplane that crashed close to my home, many years before. He

saw the plane came down until it disappeared from his sight and crashed in the woods. He was also 10 when it happened. My grandfather (mother's side) confirmed this. Again, I was ten when I heard this. Since this time this ghost-plane haunted in my mind.

In the following times I remember asking my Dad to tell me more and he explained that it was a military plane that was shot down in the late years of WW2. He couldn't remember the date but he was sure it was an American one.

Together with his older brother and some other kids from the village he hurried to the crashplace. They crawled through the wreckage, removed switches and other items for souvenirs. Around them the .50 cal. ammunition, maybe a remained unexploded bomb and let's not forget the bodies of the unhappy crew. (What a extremely dangeous horrorscene that was! ) Unbelievable today, that kids were among this.

Shortly later the scene was closed off by soldiers of the Luftwaffe (from the Airfield of Detmold) and SS from a training and replacement camp nearby. Later a parachute was displayed at the schoolyard. I don't know the fate of it, but guess it disappeared in some ladies wardrobe as underwear. The liferaft was also used by some of the boys on the pond near the crash-site. One of the younger men took one of the B1 leatherjackets. Unfortunately he proudly wore it, when he went in a saloon, where some Luftwaffen-officers had a drink. Needless to say that he quit wearing the jacket immediatly.

Years later I tried to find out more in the local newspaper archives. Because I didn't know the time when the plane went down, I went through the years 1943, 44 and 45. Day by day! I spent two full days with no success. It was a dead end for me this time. Of course, incidents like crashed enemy airplanes were not easy to find in newspapers, but that I learned much later. No idea how to continue.

In the mid to late 90's I contacted the former leader of the local bomb disposal team, that is responsible for removing and destroying remaining ammunition and unexploding bombs. He told me that he and his team cleaned up the crashplace and he gave me a copy of an american paper: The missing aircrew report! Just a piece of paper for others, a main key for me. Now I had the date, unit, names of the crew, target, home base ... wow.

With this information I started my researches on the internet and found the website of the 381st BGMA. I learned the nickname of the plane for the first time: "Bermond-say Battler". And there was a crew photo. Now the men who lost their lives in my ghostplane have faces. Not a ghostplane anymore, after all the time.

Now I thought about how to bring the crew back in the mind of the people. The ones who knew what happend became less and less in the years and the younger didn't know anything about it. So the incident will be forgotten in the near future.

That was the time the idea grows to erect a memorial for the ten men. The first attempt I tried in 1999. I needed to get permissions from two different authorities: The local goverment as the landowner and the nature preserve board. The latter gave its ok to my application, the first did not. Even I offered to make all the payments they are needed. No costs for the community. That was the end of the road now!

In 2004 a friend of Angela (my wife) asked me if I still be interested to build up the memorial. What a question. She told me the responsible man of the goverment has changed and I should make a new application. What I did! I get the

permission to erect the stone in April 2004. All needed papers were together in July. The "Bermondsay-Battler"- memorial was built up in October 2004.



The men of the crew were buried on the American War Cemetery at Bruxelles, Belgium. Except the navigator 2nd Lt. Leonard P. Meier, he is now resting on the local cemetery at Batavia, NY, and S/Sgt. Andrew F. Manning (RWG), he found his last resting place in Boston, MA.

During my researches I get contact with some people that I called my friends now:

Mark Mahan from Ohio, his cousin, T/Sgt. Harold C. Kemper, was the engineer and top turret gunner of "Bermondsay Battler"

John Sherwood from Pennsylvania. His father, 1st Lt. Paxton Sherwood, was one of the pilots of the plane. Fortunately not on board when it crashed. I was happy (and proud) to be able to talk to him on phone.

Larry Russo, son of Sgt. Rocco F. Russo, Ball turret gunner of a B-17 from the 535th BG that crashed on the same day, same mission. Sgt. Russo survived and became POW. We visited this crashsite together.



# Eighth Air-Force Project Preparing For Take-Off

Twenty-six thousand airmen killed, twenty-eight thousand taken prisoner and over six thousand aircraft destroyed; seventy-years on the story of the Eighth U.S. Army Air Force dominates the recent history of Eastern England and is now the theme of a major community project which has just been awarded a development grant of £14,500 from The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The project has the working title: "The Eighth in the East", and its aim is to ensure that the story of the so-called 'Friendly Invasion' during World War 2 is kept alive for people to understand in the future and local communities to benefit from today. Inspired by a team of archaeologists, archivists and museum curators the project is aimed at helping local people of all ages who live close to one of the sixty-seven wartime airfields, to take ownership of this rich legacy by recording oral histories, mapping each airbase and putting together events which will engage everyone with a three-year period which changed the course of history.

The project is a cross-regional partnership involving museums from across the East of England, the Norfolk Record Office, UEA, the Second Air Division Memorial Library and a new social enterprise company from Suffolk, New Heritage Solutions started by the Artistic Director of Eastern Angles Theatre Company, Ivan Cutting, and BBC programme-maker Nick Patrick. "It's almost shameful" said Nick Patrick "that, were it not for a handful of dedicated volunteers and museum professionals, this history has almost been allowed to die. We feel that it's as important to the East of England as Boudica, Bunyan or Benjamin Britten." The project team already has wide support from aviation museums, town and parish councils and organisations such

as the Council for British Archaeology (East). Now the task is to secure further partners and funding with the intention that later this year it can roll out a three year programme of research, interpretation and events across the East of England.

"The Eighth in the East has huge potential to engage people with their past and deliver key benefits today", said Nick Patrick. "This history can be central to supporting the leisure and tourist industry; it can help develop research and media skills; get people out into our wonderful countryside; support the school curriculum; and, maybe most importantly, encourage a stronger sense of place".



lecting the stories of those who experienced the 'friendly invasion', ensuring this fascinating story can be passed on to future generations."

Dr John Alban, the County Archivist of Norfolk, said, "The Norfolk Record Office and the Norfolk Sound Archive are delighted to be associated with this project, especially since it has a very strong element of oral history attached to it. Local people's spoken recollections can provide extremely powerful testament to historical events which took place within living memory, but unless they are properly recorded for posterity, they will be lost forever."

If your organisation can help in any way do get in touch. A meeting of all interested parties will be held at the 95th Bomb Group Museum at Horham near Eye in Suffolk on Sunday 26th February.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said, "We are delighted to be able to support the further development of the Eighth to the East project. The presence of the 8th United States Air Army Force during the Second World War has left a huge legacy on communities and landscape across the East of England. Part of the strength of this project lies in the partnership of organisations that will be working together to unearth this history, whether it be through exploring the landscape or col-

For further information please contact: Nick Patrick 01986 873516/07966 508305 or Email [nick.patrick@btinternet.com](mailto:nick.patrick@btinternet.com)



**Anderson, Jr. Paul D.**, passed away on Nov. 28th, 2011. Paul served as a radioman in the 34th BG/7th Sqn. After the war he was employed by Boeing for 32 years working on the B-52 bomber, Minuteman missile, Saturn V/Apollo, 747 and 767 programs. After his retirement in 1985, he was a volunteer with the Seattle Museum of Flight for another 20 years.



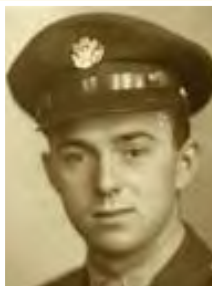
**Paul Anderson**

**Baudier, Herbert L.**, of the 385th Bomb Group, 550 Squadron, died Jan 11th 2012. "The best dad a girl could ever have," from Anne Baudier, RN.



**Herbert Baudier**

**Cope, Wayne E.**, 87 of Homer died October 4, 2011 at Canterbury Ridge, Urbana. He married Dorothy M. Endsley on September 20, 1947 in Homer. He was an Air Force veteran of WW II, where he was a P.O.W. for eleven months and was liberated by the third Army led by General George S. Patton.



**Wayne Cope**

**Damato, Cono J.**, born July 27, 1925, in Tuxedo, NY, passed away, January 9, 2012. Cono was married for 58 years to Jean Strait Damato. He was a B-17, lead Navigator on Martin Hobza's crew, with the 548th BS. Cono was a member of the 385th BG.

**Elsenbaumer, Rowland**, Navigator, 486th BG/832nd Sqn. He completed 35 missions

**Fick, Lawrence Robert**, (17 March 1923 - 29 Dec 2011) Portland, Ore., with his wife, Marjorie, by his side. He was trained as a B-24 navigator and served in England. He wrote three books about forest history and one about his experiences in the Army Air Forces.



**SSG Billie M. Ford**

My father passed away recently. He was in the 401st Bomb Group.

**Ford, S/Sgt. Billie McConnell**, age 86, passed away on November 22, 2011 in Ft. Walton Beach, Florida. He was born in Grayson, Georgia

on December 13, 1925. He enlisted in the Army Air Corps at age 17 then served in the 8th Air Force, 401st Bomb Group. His plane was the famous B-17G Fancy Nancy IV which flew 134 combat missions by war's end. This was only 6 missions short of the record for all bombers! SSG Ford flew 28 of those combat missions as a ball turret gunner. In one mission over Berlin he encountered ME-262 jet fighters and a flak burst that went through the ball turret and missed him by only inches. In another mission to bomb a V-2 launch site, he watched one of the rockets fly up through the squadron before the B-17s destroyed the facility. SSG Ford returned to active duty in the new Air Force during the Korean War, serving as a boom operator on a KB-29 air-refueling tanker. His sons followed in his footsteps; one enlisting in the Navy and the other recently retiring from the Army with 24 year's service. His grandson will soon graduate Auburn to be commissioned a Second Lieutenant in the Army. SSG Ford was buried on 9 December with his wife's cremains at Barrancas National Cemetery in Pensacola.

**FRANZ, Lt., NORMAN H.**, passed away 02/28/10 and was laid to rest in Lexington, NC. Norman was with the 457th BG and has completed his final patrol and has joined his fellow airmen that he flew with during WWII. He flew in B-17s from England as a bombardier in the 457th. Norm had donated much of his memorabilia to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum a few years ago; thereby allowing all who visit to realize part of what he and his fellow airmen had to do and the equipment they worked with to help keep the world from being

dominated by Hitler. Submitted by Gary E. Fisher - Son-in-law. **Hallecy, John H. (Jack)**, 90 passed away January 25, 2012, in Arlington, TX. He was born August 18, 1921, Bronx, NY. Jack was assigned to the 381st BG, Ridgewell, Essex, UK where he completed 28 missions as a B-17 Pilot. After a 24 year career in the US Air Force, Jack retired as a Lt Col in 1967. He then retired from American Airlines in 1988 with 21 years as a Flight/Simulator Instructor in the Boeing 727.

**Gano Sr., Frederick (Fred)**, 90, passed away December 13, 2011 in Boise, Idaho. He was born October 03, 1921 in Burley, Idaho. He was preceded in death by his wife of 55 years, Katharine Delores Gano.



**Fred Gano**

In 1944 Fred was sent to Hobbs, New Mexico and transitioned to a B-17 Pilot, then sent to the European Theater, 8th AF, 303rd Bomb Group H, 427th Bomb Squadron. Fred flew 35 missions out of Molesworth, England with his last tour ending in January of 1945, and attained the rank of first lieutenant. Fred married Katharine Delores Grohosky, together they started a family in Jerome, Idaho and raised five children.

**Garner, Douglas Charles**, 89, died January 23, 2012 at Huntsville Hospital. Among Doug's proudest accomplishments was his service to his country as Tail gunner on a B-24 during WWII. He flew with the 93 Bomb Group, also known as Ted's Flying Circus, because of the many battles in which they flew missions.

He helped organize the North Alabama Wing of the 8th Air Force Historical Society and was Vice-Commander of the Chapter for many years. He was an original member of the Chapter's Speakers' Panel and



**Douglas Garner**

spoke to thousands of students and citizens throughout North Alabama. His wife Patsy supported him in all his presentations with her quiet presence and gracious manner. They were fully involved in the use of the replica, 8th Air Force Briefing Room at the Huntsville/Madison County Veterans Museum. They provided the 48 star flag that hangs over the door inside of the room.

A day to always remember was the day Doug flew on the inaugural Honor Flight that he described as "one of the best days of my life."

An interesting fact about Doug is that he named himself! He grew up being called by initials D.C. When he joined the Army Air Corp he was told he had to have a name. So he named himself Douglas Charles as he stood in front of the registration desk.

The WWII biography of Douglas Charles Garner, AN AIRMAN'S STORY, is cataloged with the Library of Congress.

**Gillen, George R. "Bud",** 93, Milford, MI, passed away December 8, 2011. He was married to Naomi R. Knight on 11, 2, 1946, Toledo, Ohio. George served in the U.S. Army Air Corps, 303rd BG.

**Goslin Jr., John T.,** of Berwyn, PA, (December 24, 1920 - November 2, 2011) at age 91.

Born in Media Pennsylvania. Survived by his wife Jane Reed Goslin. Served in the Navy, Army and 303rd Bombardier Division of Hells Angels.

**Gustafson, Orall Ray "Gus",** 87, passed away Oct. 26, 2011. He was born in Winthrop, Minn. on Nov. 12, 1923. He flew 35 missions over Germany as top turret gunner and navigator on a B-17. He also proudly served his country in the Korean and Vietnam conflicts. He married Joyce Aklestad on Dec. 3, 1948. He was a soldier in three wars defending our



**John Halley**



**Milton Hamill**



**George Harris**

**Harris, George R.,** 88, Retired USAF Tech Sgt and Boeing Tooling Lead Man, died November 12, 2011. George was born July 7, 1923 in Zanesville, Ohio. He married Luella Harris on Feb. 9, 1947 in Wichita. George served in the 303rd BG, 360th BS in Molesworth, England as an aircraft mechanic. He later worked on B-29s. He is preceded in death by his wife, Luella.

**Hayes, Theron Martin,** was born 21 December 1923 in Caledonia, NY. He died in San Diego, CA on 23 December

great nation, but more importantly he was a soldier for Christ. He ran the good race and is now at home with his Lord.

**Halley, John H. (Jack),** 90, passed away on January 25, 2012 in Arlington, TX after a 24 year career in the US Air Force retiring as a Lt Col in 1967. Born August 18, 1921, Bronx, NY, Jack entered the Army Air Corps in April 1943 later assigned to the 381st Bomb Group, Ridgewell, Essex, UK where he completed 28 missions in B-17 aircraft over Europe as a Pilot. He then retired from American Airlines in 1988 with 21 years as a Flight/Simulator Instructor in the Boeing 727.

**Hamill, Milton J.,** 88, died peacefully, Nov. 30, 2011.

Born in Saugus, Mass. During the war, Milton flew 25 combat missions as a member of the 303rd BG. He was in the first BG to bomb Germany. His B-17 bomber was named "Jersey Bounce," a well-known aircraft. Milton married Ruth Barnett of 64 years. **Hardin, Mae Belle,** passed away December 19, 2011. Tom Hardin and Mae Belle were married in 1947. With the rank of S/Sgt, Mae Belle served four and a half years in the Women's Army Corps as an Air Traffic Controller in Texas. Submitted by 303rd BG friends

2011. Hayes aspired to be both an aviator and an artist from early childhood, drawing World War I dogfights in the margins of his school text books, which

became animations when he flipped through the pages. From early childhood until the end of his life, he was an expert in World War I aircraft design and warcraft. He worked at the local airport gassing and washing airplanes in order to earn flying lessons as a teenager. At the time of the bombing of Pearl Harbor, Hayes was studying mechanical engineering in order to become an aircraft designer. He was a technical sergeant serving as a co-pilot in the 303rd BG, also known as The Hells Angels, in the Eight Air Force, at Molesworth. His crew flew 32 missions over Europe, once ditching in the English Channel, crash landing in France, and crash landing at Molesworth from flak-damaged tires. Hayes was the author of "Above the Fruited Plains," and "Make It Look Easy," fictionalized accounts of his crop dusting experiences.

He is survived by his wife, Antoinette Azevedo. **Hein, Walter Edward,** 87, died from Cherry Hill, NJ. On December 1st, Ball Turret Gunner and Flight Engineer S/Sgt Walter is the last surviving member of the B-17 "Thunderbird" crew, piloted by Vern Moncur, and was granted leave. He departed peacefully. Walt is survived by his



**Theron Hayes**



**Walter Hein**



loving wife of 59 years Florence. He received credit for 750 Flying hours and 28 missions, credit for two of the three toughest 8th Air Force Missions of the war. His crew's plane "The Thunderbird" immortalized in the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum with a hand painted mural, 75 foot wide, 1976

At 11:37 CST (12:37 EST) December 3, 2011, the B-17 Thunderbird (renamed), carrying the American Flag in the Ball Turret, dipped her wing over the Lone Star Flight Museum, in Galveston Texas, in honor of S/Sgt Walter E. Hein, last surviving member of the Original Thunderbird Crew.

**Heller, William C.**, passed away November 2011 at 91 years old, in Las Vegas Nevada. He was a B-17 Combat Bomb Squadron Commander out of Molesworth, England, serving with the famous 303rd BG, "Hells Angels". Flown as pilot since early 1936. Amassed 33,000 command pilot hours. Airline Captain for 35 years.

**Hower, James M. Sr.**, 90, of St. Joseph, Missouri died November 1, 2011. He was born September 21, 1921 in Lincoln, Kansas.

He married Velma Marie Portschy in 1944. He was deployed to England in World War II. He was a U.S. combat Air Corps pilot serving as a B-17 Flying Fortress pilot. He flew 30 missions and attained the rank of First Lieutenant. He received the Army Air Medal and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for flying the lead ship during an 8th Air Force combat mission over Nazi Germany.

**Knight, Ernest Eugene "Gene"**, 89, of Great Falls, passed away Dec. 26, 2011. Gene was born Dec. 20, 1922 in Nashua. He was raised in the Greenfield and Fairfield areas. He was a gunner in World War II. He married Patricia I.

Paddock on Sept. 29, 1992, in Coeur d'Alene.

**Marshall, David B.**, Portland, Oregon (3 March 1926- 22 Nov 2011).

He attended Washington High School where he met Georgia Leupold in 1943. They would marry 56 years later. He was

a ball turret gunner with the 381st Bomb Group, 535th Bomb Squadron. He married Betty Jones in 1948. In 2003, he co-authored a 700 page reference book "BIRDS OF OREGON", which has been called the "definitive source for Oregon ornithology".

**Mauger, Warren**, 88, of Brandon, Fla., passed away Feb. 19, 2011. He was raised in Kenosha, Wis., and moved to Brandon in the 1970's. Warren is survived by his loving wife of 62 years Lovina. He was a B-17 pilot and a retired Lt. Colonel.

**Mays III, Thomas Gardner "Tommy"**, 87, was born January 24, 1924 in Maysville, Oklahoma. He passed on December 2, 2011. On June 17, 1944 he married Jo Frances Miller of Lindsay, Oklahoma.

Tommy was a Veteran of WW II serving as a machine gunner with a B-17 bombing crew called the "Hell's Angels" Combat team of the 303rd BG.

**Meikus, Otto**, passed away 15th October 2011. Otto was in the 324th BS, 91st BG(H) and one of the original contingent of 91sters to arrive at Station 121, RAF Bassingbourn, England. He was crew chief on B-17F "Jack the Ripper" the aircraft of Captain William Crum's and his crew, the first 8th Air Force crew to return to America. One of the early problems with B-17F's was the super charger ducts cracking rendering the air-

craft Wright Cyclones engines useless at high altitude. Otto solved this problem by replacing the duct with a corrugated one and it was noticeable that "Jack the Ripper" never had to return earlier from a mission with cracked super charge ducts. When Otto's modification was explained to the Station's Engineering Officer the modification was adopted by the rest of the Group's aircraft. Eventually Boeing were told and the modification became standard on all current and future B-17's. Otto was very disappointed that Boeing never paid him for his idea. While at RAF Bassingbourn Otto met his future wife Gladys and after the war they settled in her home city, Cambridge.

**Miller, Lt. Colonel Edgar Cornelius**, Ret., born March 8, 1920, in New Underwood, South Dakota, died December 16, 2011.

He was assigned to the 303rd BG and flew 30 missions. For his bravery in the air over Germany, he was ultimately awarded several medals. He returned to the USA from the War right after D-Day in June of 1944 as a First Lieutenant and married Jill Wilson in January 1945.

Ed decided to stay in the newly formed U.S. Air Force and was assigned to the Philippines in 1945 and was promoted to Captain in Japan in 1946. Later, in 1948 and 1949, he flew C46's and C47's both day and night into Berlin as part of the famous Berlin Airlift to keep that city from falling into Soviet control. Ed was promoted to Major and was stationed in Germany in the mid-1950s and continued flying for the Air Force. His next Air Force assignment was in 1960 as a Lt. Colonel in the office of the Comptroller of the Air Force in the Pentagon. Ed continued flying while working in the Pentagon, and in 1961, Ed went through jet pilot training at Randolph Field, Texas. In January 1963, Ed retired from the Air



**Warren Mauger**



**Thomas Mays III**



**James Hower**



**"Gene" Knight**



**Ed Miller**

Force after 23 years of service. He moved the family to the west coast and took a position in the Long Range Planning Group of North American Aviation in Anaheim, California. Ed rose within that organization to become the Vice President for Planning for North American Rockwell in 1966.

**Naylor, Richard G.**, age 87, passed away December 17, 2011. He was born in Philadelphia and grew up in Andalusia, PA.

He served in the 303rd BG "Hells Angels", as a tail gunner aboard B-17. Sgt Naylor flew 36 missions over Europe including 4 missions over Normandy in support of the D-Day invasion.

Dick was preceded in death by his wife of 57 years, Lillie (Johnson) Naylor.

**Schulstad, Mel**, 93, passed away 6 January 2012, in Everett Washington. Mel was a B-17 pilot, he served with the famous 303rd "Hells Angels" BG. He was born March 9, 1918 in Duluth, MN. He received his pilot's wings in March 1942, and flew B-17 missions from November 1942 to May 1945. He is credited with 44 missions, including all three missions to Schweinfurt. He began his ETO-tour as a squadron pilot and rose to become the Group Operation Officer, frequently flying as Group lead. In the post-war period, he had a distinguished career in the US Air Force, retiring as a Colonel at the end of 1965. He was preceded in death by his wife of 40 years, Geraldine Broz Schulstad, a 303rd Station Hospital nurse he met and married while in England.

**Standafer, Stanley**, age 89, of Bronston, Kentucky, departed this life on Friday, December 9, 2011. He was born in Perry County, Kentucky on August 20, 1922. Stanley was a member of the 401st Bombardment, 615th Bomb Squadron in Germany. He served 65 missions in Germany as a tail gunner. Mr. Standafer served 12 years in the service when he left the Air Force in Alaska, where he lived thirty years. He is survived by his wife, Arlene McComas Standafer, whom he married on March 25, 1961 in Soldot-



**Mel Schulstad**

na, Alaska;  
**Stiftinger, George A.**, age 87, of Willow Grove, PA, born May 21, 1924 in Farrell, PA, passed away November 8, 2011. A member of the "Pearl Harbor Avengers," Farrell High boys who enlisted, George served as bombardier/navigator on the B-17 "Oh Miss Agnes", 486th BG, Sudbury, England. George's many volunteer efforts included ceremonial chaplain to the Eighth Air Force Historic Association Pennsylvania Chapter, docent for the Wings of Freedom Air Museum, Horsham, PA and frequent speaker with his wife Mary at the Abington, PA Library WWII lecture series. "When you're right, you fight."

**Thwaites, Spencer C.**, 87, passed away October 2011 from Whiting, New Jersey. He is survived by his wife Marie. Spencer served as a Flight Engineer with Base Air Depot #2 (BAD.2), Warton, England, during 1944-45. Spence flew on practically every aircraft type which operated in the ETO. After the war he was a Line Supervisor for Eastern Airlines until his retirement. He lived in Whiting, New Jersey and passed away on October 14th 2011 age 87. He is survived by his wife Marie.

**Thevaos, Theodore**, 95, died Dec 3, 2011 in Charlotte, NC. He was an engineer/gunner on a B-24 in the 445th BG. He completed 30 missions and had one bail out over friendly territory.

**Thompson, Sr., John A.**, joined his loving wife of sixty-six years, Kathryn R. in eternal bliss on December 17, 2011. He was born April 11, 1923. His youth was spent in Owensboro Kentucky and he was a graduate of Daviess County High School Class of 1940.

He was assigned to serve with the 303rd BG (Hell's Angels). He flew thirty five

mission credits as a B-17 bomber pilot over Nazi Germany. He left active service in June of 1945 and reserve service in 1956.

**Turner, Duane O.**, passed away on December 6, 2011 in Pleasant Grove, Utah.

He married Norma Ernten October 26, 1941 and on that same day, he was taken to Fort Douglas and entered military service. Only a little over a month later the US was attacked at Pearl Harbor. Duane became part of the US Army Air Corps and proceeded to become part of the 8th Air Force, 303rd BG.

**Wilson, Donald M.**, the last surviving member of the Executive Committee of the National Security Council (ExCOMM), a specially created policy group that advised President John F. Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962, died on Tuesday, Nov. 29, 2011, at his home in Princeton, NJ. He was commissioned a second lieutenant as a B-17 navigator. With the 303rd BG, he flew six missions over Europe before the war ended. Mr. Wilson's autobiography, "The First 78 Years," was published in 2004 by Xlibris. He was a member of the Century Association and the Council on Foreign Relations of New York City.



**Duane Turner**



**Donald Wilson**



**John Thompson**

Please send all obituaries to be printed in this Taps section of the 8th Air Force News Magazine to:

**Donna Neely**  
2090 Cairo Bend Road  
Lebanon, TN 37087  
OR  
donnajneely@gmail.com

# BULLETIN BOARD

## Current Information Regarding DD-214's

**Please pass on to other vets.**

It's official: DD-214 discharge papers are  
**NOW ONLINE.**

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) has provided the following website for veterans to gain access to their DD-214s online:

[http://www.archives.gov/veterans/  
military-service-records/](http://www.archives.gov/veterans/military-service-records/)

This may be particularly helpful when a veteran needs a copy of his/her DD-214 for employment purposes. NPRC is working to make it easier for veterans with computers and Internet access to obtain copies of documents from their military files.

Military veterans and the next of kin of deceased former military members may now use a new online military personnel records system to request documents.

Other individuals with a need for documents must still complete the Standard Form 180, which can be downloaded from the online web site. Because the requester will be asked to supply all information essential for NPRC to process the request, delays that normally occur when NPRC has to ask veterans for additional information will be minimized. The new web-based application was designed to provide better service on these requests by eliminating the records centers mail-room and processing time.

**Please pass this information on to former military personnel you may know and their dependents.**

## MILITARY WIVES CHOIR

This video is taken from a British series where a guy called Gareth Malone takes a group of people and turns them into a choir. This time he's taken a group of military wives whose husbands are all away in Afghanistan and turned them into a choir. Gareth looks about 16yrs old but is actually in his mid-30s and a Choir master for the London Symphony Orchestra, among other things. They wrote a song based on excerpts from letters written by the couples whilst apart and this is the beautiful result.

**The single is out in the UK on Monday and thousands have been pre-ordered and all the money raised is going to military charities.**

<http://www.youtube.com/user/militarywiveschoir?feature=watch>

**Please share your story or photos with us!**

**Send all material for this 8th Air Force News Magazine to:**

Donna Neely  
2090 Cairo Bend Road  
Lebanon, TN 37087

OR  
donnajneely@gmail.com

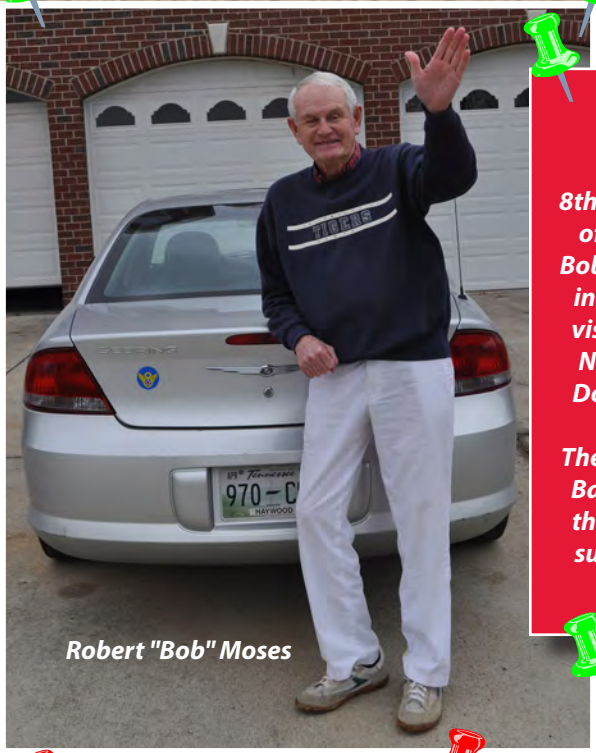


**38TH ANNUAL 8TH AFHS  
REUNION IS SET  
SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS  
October 3-7, 2012**



Look for registration, activities, and complete reunion information in the **2012 June 8th Air Force News** magazine.

# BULLETIN BOARD



Robert "Bob" Moses

## "World Traveler"

**8th AFHS Board of Directors, Bob Moses paying a friendly visit to 8th AF News Editor, Donna Neely.**

**The map on the Back Cover of this issue was submitted by Bob.**

8th AF News  
The Eighth Air Force Historical Society  
P.O. Box 956, Proser, GA 31322



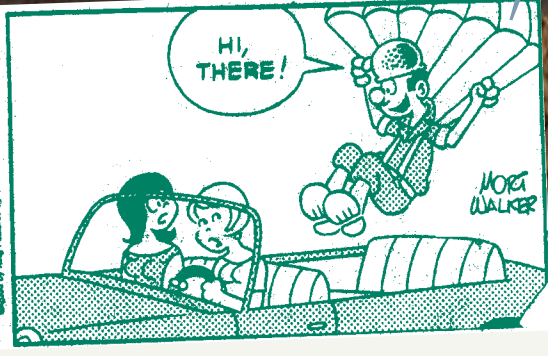
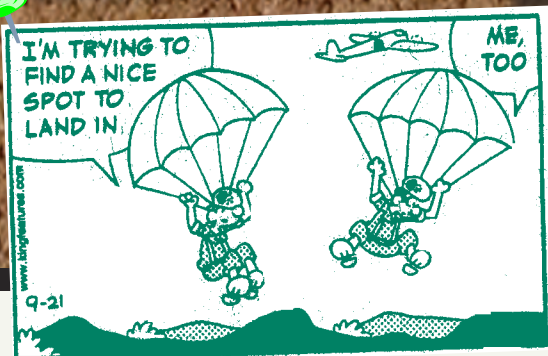
21st Century Archives



Illustration by Roger Stuch



21st Century Archives



# 8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY PX AT THE MIGHTY EIGHTH AIR FORCE MUSEUM STORE



QTY	8TH AFHS PX ORDER FORM DESCRIPTION	PRICE	OPTIONS	TOTAL
	8th Logo Polo Shirt	\$29.99	S, M, L, XL White, Navy	
	Crewman Baseball Cap	\$14.99	Stone	
	8 <sup>th</sup> AFHS 4" jacket Patch	\$3.95	NA	
	8 <sup>th</sup> AFHS bumper sticker	\$.90	NA	
	8 <sup>th</sup> AFHS 4" round sticker	\$.75	NA	
	8 <sup>th</sup> AFHS plastic license plate	\$3.95	NA	
	8 <sup>th</sup> AF logo silk tie	\$27.99	Red	
	8 <sup>th</sup> AF 3" patch	\$3.98	NA	
	8 <sup>th</sup> AF 3/4" pin w/clutch back	\$3.50	NA	
	8 <sup>th</sup> Logo License Plate	\$13.99	NA	
	Mighty 8 <sup>th</sup> Cuff Links	\$8.99	NA	
	Crewman Patch	\$3.98	NA	
	8 <sup>th</sup> AF logo grey T-shirt	\$13.99	S, M, L, XL	
	8 <sup>th</sup> AF logo white T-shirt	\$17.99	2X	
	A-2 Jacket	\$10.99	S, M, L, XL	
	Flyboys (Paper Back)	\$14.99	2X	
	The Mighty 8 <sup>th</sup> (Paper Back)	\$349.99	40, 42, 44, 46, 48	
	Military Vintage Logo B/B Caps	\$7.99	N/A	
	8 <sup>th</sup> Logo Tervis Tumbler Mug	\$7.99	N/A	
	Air Force Challenge Coin	\$11.99	Army Air Corp, 8 <sup>th</sup> A.F. Vintage, U.S. Army Air Force	
	Spotter Card Mugs	\$19.99	N/A	
	Military Singing Bears "11	\$14.99	N/A	
	U.S. Military Uniformed Scrapbooks (12x12 post bound album comes with 15 top loading sheet protectors and 15 white paper inserts)	\$9.99	B-17, P-40, F-4U, P-51, P-38, B-29, B-24, B-52	
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# How About It?

## WHAT ON EARTH ARE YOU DOING?

My wife and I were at a social gathering recently and we connected with friends we had not seen for a number of years. We were their seniors by about twenty years. Following the usual pleasantries and greetings they said, "You and Earl certainly look great!" Cindy replied, "Well, considering the fact that I am eighty-five and Earl is eighty-eight, we aren't doing too bad." They exclaimed "No.... You can't be that old...that is hard to believe. What is your secret?" Cindy, in her usual philosophical reasoning replied: "I have thought about this a lot and have decided that some people are ready for heaven and so the Lord takes them on but He has a lot of work to do on me before I am ready".

Recently, I was privileged to be on a cruise ship headed to Bermuda. There was a special group of men on board who were WW II vets, all B-24 men, who flew out of England with the Second Air Division. I have a picture of these men taken on one of the spacious decks on that magnificent ocean liner. About 30 of us posed for the cameras. A few weeks later, I was with another group of Veterans, members of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society, all WW II guys, who came together for a reunion in St. Louis. About seventy-five lined up and a group photo was also taken. What a sight! Probably the youngest was 83, the oldest 94 or so! We had only two things in common, we were old and we were all veterans of the Eighth Air Force. There was nothing else about us that was the same. I, a first lieutenant, stood near a general, bird-colonels and others of higher and lower rank. But it was an impressive group, they looked hale-and-hearty, were able to stand up to have our photo taken. There weren't many walking canes or wheel chairs visible. The list of vocations we had chosen in life was impressive. Some chose the military, others were researchers and scientists, some educators and professors, lawyers, railroaders, builders and business men.... you name it! Their success in life lay in knowing which league to play in. I have had conversation with many of these men, there were no NFL players, no NBA stars, tennis or baseball or soccer or poker champs among our men. But they picked a league in which

they were competent, considering their skills and talents. In the first century B C, Epictetus a philosopher summed it up for us when he said: "If you can fish, fish, if you can sing, sing. If you can fight, fight. Determine what you can do. And do that."

What in the world are you doing? I am very proud of our men, they have been successful because they have learned where they can perform best. But the world is full of people who die confused and unfilled because they spend a life trying to be something they are not. They spend their lifetime trying to perform either above or below their abilities. That kind of individual feels like a failure. He often looks for gratifications in all of the wrong places. Epictetus went on to say, "Why worry about being a nobody when what matters is being a somebody in those areas of your life over which you have control, and in which you can make a difference?" One may ask, "Who am I? What difference can I make?" Of course, evil exists and is nasty, it gets all of the headlines and is usually glamorized; those who are corrupt are often not punished; the lazy masses want their entitlements at any cost; these are all frustrating but life goes on! Don't miss the good stuff because of what is going on around you. You are a part of a generation that is admired. You have already made a difference and who knows, there are future generations whose lives will be shaped by the moves you make and the actions you are taking this very moment! Every single thing you do matters. You are a one-of-a-kind person that God has created, there is no one else in the world like you. You are destined to do something that will last and be passed on. No one else can do your assignment. Don't take it lightly. Your spirit, thoughts, feelings and your influence exist in no one else, you have the power in you to change your world.

I read a lot of different kinds of things...philosophy, military history, the 'funnies' and one of these comedy strips got my attention, I will pass its message on to you. General Halftrack has command over Camp Swampy and its array of would-be soldiers and their antics. The main character, Beetle Bailey is

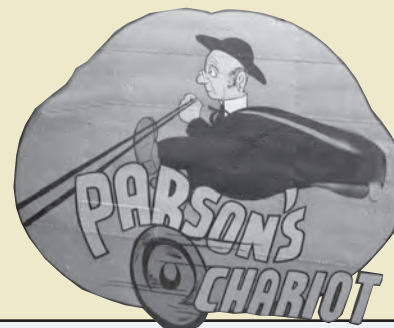


**Earl Wassom**

the Camp 'gold-brick' who is always trying to escape the wrath of Sarge. On this occasion, Beetle Bailey is leaning against a tree, his legs are crossed, arms folded behind his head, his eyes closed and a big grin on his face as he enjoys total tranquility. He is approached by Zero, the buck private (who is as they say, is 'one brick shy of a full load' ). Zero takes a look and asks: "What are you doing Beetle?" Unruffled, Beetle answers: "Watching the clouds, listening to the birds, smelling the fresh air, seeing little animals and flowers....." Zero joins Beetle, reclines against the same tree and responds: "WOW!!!, I didn't know so much was going on!"

What is going on around you that you have not cued in on? Take notice. Dream a little. Your life and what you do with it has far reaching influence. Enjoy each moment. You never know who is watching. There are those who will receive inspiration from you!

**Earl Wassom, 466th BG  
Chaplain, 8th AFHS**





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