

# 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION



## 8 BALL TAILS

Vol. 1 - Issue #4

Non Profit Veterans Organization

Journal of the  
44th Bomb Group  
Veterans Association

Winter 1995  
EIN #68-0351397

## "WELCOME SIGHT"

A Limited Edition signed by two distinguished WWII Bomber Pilots  
General Leon Johnson & Major General Ramsay Potts



"WELCOME SIGHT"

1000 signed & numbered, 27 1/2" x 20 1/2"

By Robert Taylor

B-24 Liberators of the 44th Bomb Group pass over Ely Cathedral, Cambridgeshire, after a mission to occupied Europe. Ely Cathedral, towering above the East Anglian fens, was a welcome landmark for the returning US 8th Air Force crews.

This classic work by Robert Taylor pays tribute to the men of the 8th Air Force and in particular the gallant crews of the B-24 Liberator, and the contribution they made to the Allies' success in World War II. Returning from a mission, flying over the beautiful Cambridgeshire landscape with Ely Cathedral in the background, the B-24s make an imposing subject. This magnificent 900 year-old Cathedral in fact played more than an

aesthetic role in the story of the US Air Force's war effort in England. The men of the 8th Air Force still fondly recall those stirring moments returning from a mission, when they spotted that beautiful old monument rising from the flatlands of the Fen country, providing an easily recognizable landmark, and thus a bearing on their home base. The Cathedral has ever since been regarded by the gallant crews of the B-17s and B-24s as their Cathedral.

The aircraft centered in the Robert Taylor painting is the 68th Bomb Squadron's B-24 HE-101 (Corky), which is the featured Liberator of this issue.

# Corky



*The Corky Ground Crew Left to Right: Joe Crisman, Chuck Wagner, Crew Chief Barton Cramer, 66th Spts. Operations Officer Frank Davids (whose infant boy "Corky" the plane was namesake), and Robert Krueger.*

Over the past 2-1/2 years, many members of the 68th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group who served in England during 1944, to early '45 have received calls from a Canadian physician with a Scottish accent searching for information regarding a B-24 of the 44th Bomb Group by the name of Corky. I have told the story of my involvement with this plane and picture so many times, that perhaps it's best that I start from the beginning, so that the 8 ballers, if they are called again, have an understanding of the information I seek.

My family comes from the small town of Larnark, 30 miles south of Glasgow, Scotland. My mother was in the Women's Royal Air Force and in 1944-45 was a flight controller dealing with B-24 Liberators with the Royal Air Force Coastal Command.

My father was in the British Army, Scots Guards, Armored Division and later the connection with this plane will become more apparent.

I was brought up in the late 50's and early 60's when the personal involvement of many people in the events between 1939 and 1945 were common, with the exploits of the famous pilots were in magazines, having been brought up on the exploits of pilots such as Douglas Bader, Johnny Johnson and their German counterparts of Adolf Galland and Werner Molders. We all knew about the famous raid to Ploesti and the daylight raids from magazines and from the movies, including 12 O'Clock High, The War Lover, etc. The exploits of Glasgow's own Squadron, 602 City of Glasgow, Auxiliary Air Force (equivalent of the National Guard). They were the early heroes of the war having downed the first

German aircraft in mid-October, 1939.

One of my mother's school friends won the Victoria Cross, the youngest member of the Royal Air Force to do so in 1940, when the remainder of his crew bailed out, he helped his pilot bring their crippled bomber home from Antwerp. Such were the stories that were told in the evening to a little boy, who, as most are at that age, was interested in war planes.

In later years, having moved to Canada in 1978, I learned to fly and in 1980 when I returned home for a year, spent many weekends flying out of Prestwick, up and down the west coast of Scotland and over to Ireland. One of the sights that I will never forget is the crash site of a B-24 on the Island of Arran, west of Prestwick. The wreckage is still visible even today when one travels to Glasgow on transatlantic flights.

In 1987 the picture, Welcome Sight, by the English artist Robert Taylor was published as a limited edition print, which had been signed by General Leon Johnson and Ramsay Potts. I must admit, at the time I really didn't like the print. At that time, I really wasn't a fan of B-24's, being more interested in the Lancaster and B-17. Two years later, however, the original picture was at the National Aerospace Museum in Washington at an exhibit of Robert Taylor's works. Having been to Washington on a visit, I viewed the collection. The original Welcome Sight was much more impressive. In early November, 1989 I decided to buy it.

Knowing Robert, I knew this would represent a real aircraft, but, at that point, the pleasure was of having the picture. I didn't have any further interest in finding out



about it until three years later. At an air show I was speaking to a local collector and he indicated that one of the crew had come from Rochester and had been killed when the plane was shot down over Dortmund, Germany January 28, 1945. This was the first information I had.

A year later one of my patient's husbands saw the picture in a book about Robert Taylor's paintings and had realized that I was the owner of the original. He told me some more details about the squadron and subsequently, Harry Goldbrecht from the 8th Air Force Association in San Clemente, California, was kind enough to give me the address of Pete Henry in New Jersey. Shortly afterwards, in October of 1993, I was put in touch with Will Lundy, who you all know as the Bomb Group historian.

Through Will, I was able to contact George Washburn and Sam Armour, who were the co-pilot and navigator from Elmer Kohler's crew who flew Corky 23 times out of 65 missions. Elmer Kohler, the pilot, had not been seen since 1947, but eventually, with the help of Art Hand and his trusty PC and CD telephone directory we tracked Elmer down to just outside Los Angeles. Lester (Jim) Dietz the radio operator, lived in northern California, quite close to Roy Owen and Oliver Cardinal. Their engineer was just across the border in Michigan. Over the past two years, the following story has been put together of their remembrances, from the National Archives in Washington, from Will Lundy's records, also those from Bill Beitling in Kansas City, and from many families who's relatives had passed away in the meantime.

One of the difficulties is that 50 years later, many of the people involved are no longer alive, especially those involved in the last flight of the plane. However, Marilyn O'Brien, who's brother Burt Steinmiller was one of the gunners from Corky, has been valuable in providing guidance of my search, as she remembered many individuals and their home addresses.

The families of Vern Kirkey and Glen Mace, who also did not return from that fatal mission, have been helpful in providing information including letters and photographs. Burt Steinmiller and Vern Kirkey's mothers are alive at the ages of 95 and 96 respectively.

The relatives of Patrick Colosimo, the radio operator, and Maurice Corwine, the pilot, (both of them survived the crash) have both provided valuable information in documenting the story.

The German Embassy in Ottawa, through Lt. Colonel Ibrom, were helpful in forwarding my correspondence to Germany, though the official records didn't provide any information. The local newspaper in Dortmund where the plane crashed, provided a wealth of information from a local aviation expert who just recently, in late October, provided the statements from two young boys who actually saw the plane crash.

The story is incomplete as many of the individuals from many of the crews are not available for interview having passed away. Also many individuals have promised information which hasn't yet come available. Many remember in explicit detail; others have only sketchy memories. The official records, I've realized, are never accurate and one frequently gets conflicting information. If anyone is left out, it isn't that I wished to do so, but that in many cases the information just wasn't available. If anyone has any information that they wish to give, it will be gratefully received.

This then is the story of Welcome Sight, Corky, E-101.

B-24 H-21 BT42-51101 was one of the last planes produced in a block of 149 H model B-24 Liberator Bombers contracted at the end of August, 1943 and produced by Douglas Aircraft Corporation at it's Tulsa, Oklahoma plant from a kit of parts produced by Ford Motor Company at Willowrun, Michigan. The plane came off the assembly line around the end of April, 1944, the exact date is not clear from the records, but it was accepted by the USAAF on the 15th of May, 1944. The plane did not have ball turret and was one of the first to have K-6 waist gun mounts. These were the features of the plane that can be determined from what is available. She was rather unusual in also having heavier armor plate around the engine nacelles, though I haven't been able to confirm this. Comments have been made that the plane was heavier than other H's and this may in fact be the reason.

How she got from Tulsa, Oklahoma to Britain, whether by the Northern route or Southern route is not available from the available records at this time.

She shows as having been assigned 68th bomb squadron, 44th bomb group shortly after the beginning of June, 1944.

She was assigned to crew chief, Barton Cramer and his ground crew of Robert Krueger, Joe Crisman, and Chuck Wagner. The first mission was flown to Angers, France on the 8th of June with subsequent missions listed as the 10th of June, 17th of June, all three missions with Reuben Rickett's crew. Webb Todd's 68th Squadron history doesn't show a mission on the 10th of June, so this may be a typographical error, for the 12th of June to Illiers L'Éveque, France.

No damage was sustained, but on the 20th of June with Arnold Larson's crew, she had 12 flak hits over Politz. On the 21st of June, with Bonnet's crew, no damage was sustained, and on the 22nd (Larson's crew) she sustained one flak hit. On the 25th, with Ford's crew, there was no flak damage. However, Arnold Larson and crew, on their last mission, 29th of June, sustained numerous hits over Magdeburg. Apparently, the flak on this mission was one of the worst that the 68th had encountered. So severe, that the 506 squadron lost two

aircraft, with the 68th having 12 damaged.

Robert Knaplein crew flew to Beaumont LeRoger, France. On the 6th of July she with Donald's crew, but the mission is not listed as to target. 7th of July, Reuben Ricketts again flew her to Darenburg. This was one of the worst missions that the 68th had to fly; 3 aircraft and crews were lost and 5 aircrafts received category A/C damage, with 3 category A. Out of 12 aircraft, only 2 had no damage. On the 11th of July, she flew to Munich with Ford's crew and on the 12th, Knaplein's crew returned again to Munich. Reuben Ricketts crew flew her to Saarbrücken on the 13th of July. No damage was sustained as the flak was minimal and inaccurate.

On the 18th of July she was flown to Thorne, France by Lt. Elmer Kohler. This was the third mission for Elmer Kohler, but the first for his crew, he having flown in the usual fashion as co-pilot in his first two missions. Kohler flew Corky 23 missions subsequent to this date in his tour and his crew is recognized as being the one to which this aircraft is associated.

Earlier to this date, E-101 was christened Corky after the infant son of Frank Davido, the 68th squadron operations officer. The distinctive nose art with the little boy sitting on a bomb with a map of Berlin was painted on the nose by Bob Krueger, the 68th squadron resident artist.

The information on Corky's missions from this point between 18 July and the end of November, 1944 come from Kohler's crew. The July 18th mission was particularly rough, Corky sustaining 6 flak holes, one through the Plexiglas in the Bombardier's window which knocked Sam Armour's helmet off. The only other casualty was Richard Calgore's (tail gunner) chocolate bar, which was hit by a piece of flak. On the 19th, the 68th was off to Coblenz, again with EK (Elmer Kohler). Once again the flak was heavy, with 4 holes in the plane and the pilot's side window being hit again! To paraphrase EK, "Had the left window (less than a foot from my head) blown out, very noisy, very cold, very scary." On the 20th of July, she went to Erfurt with Benjamin Ford's crew and on the 21st, Harrock's crew flew her to over Oberpappenhofen. This was a long mission and 44th bomb group aircraft, including 2 from the 68th, were lost. Apparently, on this mission Corky had to return because of mechanical problems. Kohler's crew on this mission flying W-224 had their usual attraction to flak, with the pilot's window being blown again with the wires to EK's throat microphone being cut. On the 24th of July, flew to St. Lo with Robert Knaplein and Frank Davido as command pilot.

On the 25th the 68th went to St. Lo again with Elmer Kohler and again the magnetic attraction for flak occurred. Five flak holes, number 3 engine out, and the pilot's window blown out while bombing at 13,000 feet.

On the 29th of July, EK and crew went to Bremen. They had lost their magnetic attraction and E 101 returned with no flak damage (a record for them). On the 31st of July, Tommy Kay's crew flew her to Ludwigshafen without significant damage.

In August, she was flown on the 1st, 3rd and 4th by EK and crew with the targets being Corbie with medium flak and no damage. On the 3rd, to Mery-Sur-Oise, the weather was bad and the target could not be hit and an alternate was hit with excellent results. Again, there was no flak damage.

However, on the 4th of August it was a different matter. On this date, the 44th went to Kiel. On this occasion the group formation was being led by Bill Cameron as the group lead.

Bill was kind to give me a commentary of this mission. He was command pilot and flew in I for ITEM take off at 0955 hours. Apparently there was difficulty forming up the full group of 36 aircraft. There was significant congestion in the formation area, however by 12 noon the wing formation was formed, the 68th being in the low position. The Frisian Islands were crossed at 1302 with the 68th closing up with the green group, with the blue group being far behind. Shortly after this, a B-24 crashed into the sea. The cause was not known. The formation was joined up with P-38's at approximately 1325 at 23500 feet, the formation having flown around Heligoland without any evidence of flak. By 1444, the 44th had left the target area, the weather was good but there was an effective smoke screen. Cameron, apparently, was in the bomb bay when the doors were opened, and being without oxygen almost blacked out. The flak was also bursting underneath, but not close. The formation then let down to 18000 feet for the trip home. Several aircraft were in distress and the blue squadron caught the brunt of the flak. P-38 fighters were in close escort and flying past north of Wilhelmshaven, the 44th saw a squadron of B-17's obliterate an airfield. The trip home for the group was uneventful.

However, it was very eventful for EK and crew. As usual, the magnetic personality of Kohler's crew became evident, Corky sustaining 23 holes from flak and the hydraulics being shot out (again). Coming home she was steadily losing altitude, partly with EK flying her on the step to try and conserve fuel, but also because of one engine being feathered. Also a P-38 with a propeller feathered came along side and the question is who was giving who moral support? At one point while crossing the Frisian Island there was some concern as to whether or not they would make it home and Lester "Jim" Dietz, the radio operator, transmitted with the trailing wire aerial to give a position report. However, it became evident that the altitude loss was less severe than they'd thought and the English Coast came up and an uneventful

landing was made at Shipdham, apart from a second engine cutting out on approach. On the 8th of August, having been repaired, 101 was off to La Perth in France with Ray Mondloh's crew. On the 9th of August, EK and crew flew her to Sindelfingen again; 21 holes/flak damage with bad weather obscuring the primary target on Saarbrücken the secondary target. Apparently the formation hadn't turned sufficiently to avoid a heavy flak concentration.

On the 12th of August, Kay's crew flew to Juvincourt with meager flak and no damage. On the 14th Mondloh's crew flew her to Lyon again with no flak damage. On the 15th and 16th of August, with EK's flew her to Ardorf and Kotten with no damage.

On the 18th of August, the 44th flew to Nancy. On this mission Elmer Kohler's crew landed at St. Lo due to rudder cables having part and landing at a forward fighter's base near St. Lo. This was the first landing of a heavy bomber at an Allied fighter base following the invasion.

The mystery here is that the formation map as briefed shows Kohler's crew flying Orange 381, however, opinion is split as to whether or not they were actually flying E-101 that was listed as a reserve aircraft that day. I haven't been able to resolve this as memories are equally split on this point. Elmer Kohler indicated that he felt it was Corky. When the control cables parted, there were severe vibrations in the plane and on landing at St. Lo, they rolled up the steel runway because of the weight and didn't endear themselves to the combat engineers. A piece of flak had cut a rudder cable. The fighter group ground crew took a day or two to repair the damage and later EK buzzed the field, which in retrospect perhaps wasn't such a good idea, the damage having just been repaired.

On the 24th of August, EK again attracted significant damage from very stiff flak, category A/C. On the 25th, having been patched up yet again, they flew to Schwerin airfield, an 8 hour mission. On this mission, George Washburn the co-pilot, was in the bomb bay when the bomb bay doors were open and had a rather interesting few minutes (being in a rather awkward position). On the 26th they flew to Salzbergen with minimal flak and no damage. Sam Armour, the navigator, had the flu and his ears were plugged and had difficulty hearing. Following this mission they were sent on leave to Scotland to the small village of Aberfoyle north of Glasgow. They stayed at the Baillie Nichol Jarvie Inn, which is a rather famous and well-known 18/19th coaching inn in a small village just south of the Trossachs which is a very scenic area in the hills north of Glasgow.

During the week there, they met a fighter pilot who was seldom without a drink from a grateful crew. During this time, they partook of the local entertainment, which

at that time could be very meager or plentiful, depending on your situation. Lester Dietz, the radio operator, headed south to Glasgow for more lively entertainment. (In the summer of 1994, while on holiday at home, I spent an afternoon up at Aberfoyle. The Baillie Nichol Jarvie is now derelict, being turned into apartments, but at the local tourist office, the lady there who was 12 years old at the time in 1944, remembered her sister going to dances in the local hall with some American flight crew.) Who knows, maybe it was the same crew, we'll never know.

This area of Scotland was an area I frequented when in medical school on weekends, kayaking. Young men in their early 20's or late teens have the same interest whether in 1944 or in 1974. I won't elaborate any more!

This was the first connection that I found to myself and Corky.

On the 27th of August, while EK and crew were enjoying a well earned rest, Barnhart's crew flew her to Basdorf uneventfully. On September the 5th she was flown to Karlsruhe by Julian Dayball's crew, suffering minimal flak damage. On the 8th she returned to the same target with Pellow's crew and on the 10th of September, flew to Ulm with Bill Kelly's crew and then to Hanover with Ritter's crew on the 11th. On the 13th of September, EK and crew again sustained category A damage from flak! Shortly after this, George Washburn, the co-pilot, was checked out by Frank Davido and pronounced to be suitable as first pilot (he took over Thurston VanDyke's crew, who'd been injured) and flew his first mission as pilot in command on the 18th of September to Best, Holland. This mission was flown at under 500 feet and the well-known photographs of Corky that are on display at the U.S. Air Force Museum and in Martin Bowmans book "Four Miles High", were taken from Julian Dayball's plane.



*Sept. 18, 1944, Corky over Nijmegen, Holland, the low-level supply drop to the 82nd Airborne Division. The light flak on this mission was particularly heavy and there were 15 holes in the aircraft with damage to the gas tanks and hydraulics.*



When the formation returned to Shipdham, Elmer Kohler was at the hard stand to watch Washburn and crew return. George, who looked much younger than his 21 years, was heard to exclaim, "Elmer, someone was trying to kill me," while they were inspecting the damage to the plane.

This mission was rather interesting as they were dropping supplies to the 82nd airborne at Neimegen. Jim Colosimo, the brother of Pat Colosimo, was in fact with the 82nd airborne in this area and saw the formation going over.

My father's tank unit was also not very far from this area, while fighting their way up to the Rhine bridges.

My former consultant, while I was a medical student, was the regimental surgeon with the British Parachute Brigade that had dropped at Arnhem. On the 25th of September, the 68th went to Koblenz, with Leibrich's crew. On the 30th, Kohler's crew flew her to Hamm, with no damage, and on the 30th to Hamm again, the second time sustaining category A damage. Bill Kelly's crew took her to Lippstadt on the 5th of October and on the 6th, Kohler's crew went to Hamburg. On this trip, their usual attraction to flak occurred yet again, with them limping across the north sea on their own with a P-47 as escort. On the 12th of October, Julian Dayball's crew flew her to Achmer without damage. On the 14th, 15th, 19th and 25th of October, EK and crew flew her again, the 14th, 15th and 19th being milk runs with no damage.

On the 15th of October, for some reason, Corky's call letter was changed from E to H and I haven't been able to get any evidence as to why this was done.

On the 25th of October, EK and crew went to Gelsenkirchen, with their reliable, but magnetic aircraft.

This was their worst raid up to this point. The flak was intense and accurate and just before the bombing point, they were hit in the number 3 engine by an 88mm shell. This started a fire. The co-pilot was flying his first mission and on being told that number 3 was on fire, EK bent down to select the fire extinguisher,

while the co-pilot was trying to maintain altitude.

They came down from 23,000 feet to approximately 12,000 feet prior to getting the fire out and then turned for home having dropped their bombs. Once again they were on their own with only one engine pulling full power and two others on reduced power, heading for home.

In the meantime, George Washburn flying just behind, had prior to this been hit severely, spun out of formation with control only being regained by use of the auto pilot. Washburn and crew returned to Shipdham with one wheel damaged before Corky and thus promptly closed the main runway landing. Kohler aborted his approach to Shipdham and went down to Woodbridge, an RAF emergency station with a long runway. Oliver Cardinal, the engineer, manually wound down the flap and they landed without brakes. They were holding off

the nose prior to landing to slow up their approach speed, however, the co-pilot pulled back heavily and the nose rose during flare just before the stall and the old war-horse landed with considerable noise, but with little forward velocity!!

Sam Armour's map table was badly holed and he still has a piece of shrapnel from this raid. They say that one is safe until a bullet with your name on it reaches you. EK had a piece of flak land on his leg. The fragment, when examined later, had the initials EK engraved on it. The damage was so bad that it took 3 weeks to

repair Corky, including a complete overhaul of hydraulic and braking system, replacement of Number 3 engine and repairs to two others. On the 5th of November, Kohler's crew, in the absence of their now regular aircraft, flew to Karlsruhe with moderate flak. Minimal damage was done to the aircraft. The aircraft was 711.

Missions assigned on the 18th and 20th of November were canceled, either before take off or during assembly and it was not until the 26th of November that Dolan's crew flew to Bielefeld with no damage sustained. On the 27th the raid to Offenburg, John Vaughn's crew flew her without damage.

Elmer Kohler's crew flew their final mission in Corky on the 29th of November to Altenreken. There was



*The Maurice Corsvine crew at Pueblo, CO, 2 Oct. 1944, during training. L to R, back row: Lt. Corsvine, Lt. Wayne Scott - Navigator, Lt. Robert Lough - CP, unidentified; L to R, middle row: Patrick Colosimo - Radio, Joseph Walker - Flt. Engr., Wilbert Steinmiller - LW Gunner; L to R front row: Edward Weinman - Tail Gunner, Vernon Kirby - Nose Gunner, Glenn Mace, Jr. - RW Gunner.*

complete cloud cover and radar bombing results were unobserved. There was no flak. On the following day on the 30th of November, 1944, Kohler's crew flying 711 completed their final mission of their tour. Sam Armour volunteered to stay on and didn't leave the 68th until early April, 1945 working in operations. Elmer Kohler, Lester Dietz and Oliver Cardinal flew with a transport squadron for a short period during Ardennes offensive. Richard Calgato, Steven Gihenen and Frank Tilton, the nose gunner, were transferred, with William Vafiades apparently going to a weather observation unit, the others returning to the U.S.

On the 4th, 10th and 12th of December, the aircraft was crewed by William Solomon's crew. On the 4th they flew with the 491st bomb group and I'm not sure of the reason for this. On the 10th they flew to Bingen. Apparently on this raid there was a problem and a repeat pass over the target was required before the bombs were away.

On the 12th, the mission was to Aschaffenburg. There was no flak. On the 18th of December, to Kyllburg with Russell Ericson's crew. The raid was canceled just 8 minutes from target because of bad weather, sortie credit was allowed. There were no flights over Christmas by Corky and on the 28th of December, Peter's crew flew her to Kaiserslautern with no damage. However, it was a bad day for the 68th with 582 D missing in action. Another aircraft had to land on the continent with damage, but with the crew being safe; and Corky's stand partner, Lili Marlene 260P, had to abort due to engine problem in Number 2, missed the approach and apparently lost another engine while turning back to the runway spun out and crashed. There were no survivors from the Second Lt. Jessie Bledsoe's crew. She's listed as having flown on the 29th of December with Garbades crew, but there's no notification as to the mission. On the 30th of December, William Solomon's crew again took her to Ahrweiler. This was a radar attack due to complete overcast. The year ended with Ned Anderson's crew going to Neuwied.

The New Year started on the 1st of January with a raid to Koblenz, a railroad bridge over the Moselle. On this raid the aircraft was piloted by Maurice Corwine and his crew.

Glen Mace, one of Corwine's gunners, provides a commentary from his diary. The bomb load was 3-2,000 pound general purpose bombs, the mission time was 7 hours and the bombs were dropped visually and on target. The bridge was destroyed and there was moderate flak, but not too accurate. Bud Steinmiller, the top gunner, had one small piece of flak through the Martin turret. The following day, the 68th squadron returned to Koblenz. Again there was no damage when William Solomon's crew flew the mission. On the 7th of January,

VanDyke's crew flew her, also on the 14th; However, the 14th's mission was aborted due to technical problems. On the 7th the mission was to Landau. On the 21st of January, Ned Anderson's crew flew her again to Heilbronn.

No missions were flown between the 22nd and 28th of January because of bad weather. On the 28th, the mission was to attack a coking plant outside of Dortmund.

The official version of the raid indicated that Corky was hit by flak with a direct hit in the bomb bay shortly before 12:00 just prior to bombs away, she pulled out of formation, losing altitude and exploded several thousand feet below. Maurice Corwine, the pilot, and Patrick Colosimo, the radio operator, were the only two survivors. Three parachutes had been reported from the plane.

These were the official facts in Webb Todd's book and much of the official paper work that I've seen.

The crews families were notified in the middle of February that the aircraft was missing, but little else was heard till Patrick Colosimo returned to the U.S., with Maurice Corwine following shortly after in May and June in 1945. The details of what happened have been pieced together from Maurice Corwine's wife Delores, from Burt Steinmiller's sister and mother, who's still alive at 96, Vernon Kirkey's mother and sister (his mother's 95) and the family of Glen Mace, the family of Bob Lough the co-pilot, who supplied some details; but the remainder of the crews relatives have not been traced to this date.

Trying to track down relatives 50 years after an event is difficult, however, I had with some luck in knowing that one of the crew had come from Rochester. Once the MACR was reviewed and I realized that Burt Steinmiller came from Rochester, I found a relative who put me in touch with Burt's sister in Florida. Marilyn provided many of the essential details of the crew, particularly Maurice Corwine, Patrick Colosimo and Robert Lough's family and also of the Kirkey's and the Mace's.

Unfortunately, Patrick died in 1979; but his story was published in several newspapers. Glen Mace's nephew, Michael Broshart, provided some newspaper clippings containing Patrick's story, also the same story was provided from the local newspaper from Plymouth, Massachusetts, Vern Kirkey's hometown.

While on the bomb run, Patrick Colosimo had gone down off the flight deck to open the bomb doors, as there apparently had been some technical problems with one of the doors which was partly stuck open. Glen Mace had also come forward from his mid ships position and was assisting him in opening the door. The gears were apparently stripped and the door on one side was only open about a foot. Corwine had told them to leave it and they were going to salvo the bombs later. Glen Mace was returning to his waist position and Colosimo turned to go back up to the flight deck. At that point, the

ship shuddered and there was severe heat on his back and flames all around him. His clothes caught on fire, as he was disconnected from the intercom. He didn't know what was said following this and piecing together from several sources, apparently he was pushed out by someone else through the bomb bay. He was not aware of what happened for a period till he came around, his parachute deployed, with no signs of any other parachutes, but a large fire on the ground. Patrick indicated that he had been picked up by Germans and thrown into a village prison where the news of his crew was variable and was told that 6 were dead and then later that they were all alive. He was moved to several different prison camps following this, and on the 5th of May his prison camp was liberated coincidentally by the 82nd airborne to which his brother was attached. Being injured, he was shipped out by ambulance to a hospital. His brother Jim, only missing him by 20 minutes. He returned to the U.S. in late May where he contacted the relatives of his crew. Maurice Corwine returned home shortly after and his story was basically similar, having been blown clear of the plane in the explosion and having been taken prisoner.

In early 1995, I was able to get some copies of captured German documents, which were the official Luftwaffe communications regarding the crash from a Captain Maas who was the engineer in charge of the salvage crew, indicating that there had been 4 identified bodies; Scott, Steinmüller, Lough and Mace, with 4 unidentifiable bodies at the crash scene. At this point, there seemed little else in the National Archives from the German point of view and on playing a hunch, I contacted the Germany Embassy in Ottawa and spoke to Lt. Colonel Christen Ihrom, the military attaché, who was extremely helpful in forwarding my request to the German Archives, which did not bring up any definite specific evidence for me. He did suggest that I contact the local newspaper in Dortmund and they might be able to give additional help. This was done in early October and only 2 weeks later I received a letter containing the information about the crash.

Unfortunately, because of the closeness to the promised date of completion some of the details are not available, but to summarize the findings, it will show the difference in perspective, though the story is remarkably similar to those of Pat Colosimo.

I have to thank Stephen Klemp of the local newspaper for providing this information and Horst Munter the local aviation enthusiast in Dortmund, who collected the information. His information came from two sources; Herman Luer and Willy Pietrzak, who were young boys at the time who witnessed the crash.

The story is that just before noon on a clear and cold wintry day the American bombers flew over Dortmund.

The anti-aircraft batteries hit a silver plane; the right wing which went on fire, broke off, and the plane spun down. The witnesses only saw one parachute, though later information indicated that there were two survivors. The east wind blew the parachute towards Dortmund, suburb of Mengde, and the remains of the plane came down in Dortmund-Derne. Colosimo landed on a street called Am Ammerbaum. At this point, there was a flak unit 88mm. crewed by members of the Arbeitsdienst (young men too young for military service) and 105 mm battery of the Luftwaffe. There was some argument as to who should take him prisoner and in the meantime two police officers arrived and lifted him up and carried him approximately 1 1/2 km. to the local police station. He was wounded and bleeding from the head and his right leg was broken. On the way, they passed a number of civilians who were standing on the street, screaming "murderer" and who spat and kicked him. One of them kicked his broken leg and Patrick screamed. At this point, the police officers did not take any action and the witness said that the journey was like (running the gauntlet). One of the little boys grabbed a heated glove that he was carrying. When they reached the police station, he was left on the steps and the police officers went inside. The two young boys came up to Patrick and saw that he was covered in sweat and that there were tears running down his face. At that point the local Ortsgruppen Leiter (local Nazi party official) Franz Land arrived on his bicycle, ran up the stairs towards the prisoner. Patrick must have gotten a shock when he saw this real Nazi in his brown uniform coming towards him after what had happened on his journey from the street. However, Land entered the police station and there was a loud argument, the basis of which was that the policemen had not carried out their duty to protect the prisoner who had been abused. The police officers defended themselves saying that Dr. Goerbels had said (no mercy for the terror flyers). Patrick was then carried inside and put in a detention cell in the basement and the two boys saw him through a window. He was moaning, "Help me, help me." One of the police officers left the police station and fetched Dr. Hallermann, the local doctor, who came and gave him medical treatment.

The police had informed the local Luftwaffe at Brackel air base, but it was several days before he was picked up. Two soldiers had gone for the prisoner and helped him to the front door; however, Patrick dropped the crutches, pushed the soldiers aside and limped down the steps. When the back of the truck was opened, he found there were several other American air crew in the truck. His spirits rose and he pulled himself onto the truck.

I spoke to Horst Munter by phone and he, though his English is limited, and my German is non-existent, we



managed to piece together similar details of the story. Corky exploded in mid air and the wreckage was spread over a considerable area. The German records indicated that it was 95% percent demolished. The wreckage was cleared by the members of the Luftwaffe, commanded by Captain Maas and also by an officer called Zehrowski.

Four of the dead were identified at the scene by their dog tags; Glen Mace, Wayne Scott, Burt Steinmiller and Robert Lough. The other crew members, Earl Houser, Joseph Walker, Vern Kirkey, and Edward Weiman were not identified till much later. They were buried in the main cemetery in Dortmund on the 9th of January. However, it was not until much later in the year, around December, that the graves were actually investigated and in March of 1946 they were transferred to the Ardennes National Cemetery, close to Liege in Belgium.

Hoest Munter also indicated that, and I may have gotten the translation slightly wrong, but apparently a number of years ago a portion of a propeller and an engine were found from the crash area, Hoest indicated that he will keep in contact with me to get some more details of what happened.

The official U.S. Air Force records indicate that there were 3 parachutes, but many of the witnesses from the 68th bomb group are no longer alive. However, Tom West the engineer from Solomon's crew saw Corky hit and his friend, Ray Zgoda who has also died, left a diary with the details in it.

Now 50 years later, memories fade and the number of individuals associated are few, but Robert Taylor's painting, Welcome Sight, and the prints that were taken off the original will hopefully provide a lasting memory of a fine craft that brought its crew safely home 64 times, with fate intervening on the 65th and last mission.

Recognition should also be given to the ground crew of Barton Cramer, Joe Crisman, Chuck Wagner and Bob Krueger for keeping their plane, and it really was their plane, flying despite the cold, the wet and mud of an English airfield, getting up in the early morning to prepare her for her missions and then waiting the long wait till she returned. Then having to repair the damage sustained, in addition to the routine servicing, but managing to get her ready for the next mission which often meant working through the night in extremely severe conditions.

The picture, Welcome Sight, provides a lasting memory to these men, those who returned and those who didn't and their aircraft.



DATE: 28 January  
TARGET: Dortmund, Germany

*The Coking Plant at Dortmund was attacked but results of the bombing were poor, due to several circumstances. One 66th Squadron aircraft crash landed on the continent, but with no injuries. One 68th Squadron aircraft did not return.*

**68th Squadron A/C #42-51101 H or E CORKY**  
**Missing Air Crew Report #12007**

**68th Squadron Crew:**

<b>CORWINE, MAURICE D.</b> ASN 0-771320 Sedalia, Missouri	Pilot Escaped/Returned	1st Lt.
<b>LOUGH, ROBERT L.</b> ASN T-126827 West Virginia	Co-Pilot KIA	Flt Of.
<b>SCOTT, WAYNE S.</b> ASN 0-206605 West Palm Beach, Florida	Navigator KIA	2nd Lt.
<b>HOWSER, EARL P.</b> ASN 0-864127 Kansas City, Missouri	Radar - Nav. KIA	1st Lt.
<b>WALKER, JOSEPH H.</b> ASN 14135751 Socamore, Alabama	Engineer KIA	T/Sgt.
<b>COLOSIMO, PATRICK N.</b> ASN 13061725 Branchton, Pennsylvania	Radio Oper. Escaped/Returned	T/Sgt.
<b>KIRKEY, VERNON O.</b> ASN 31166867 Plymouth, Massachusetts	Nose Turret KIA	S/Sgt.
<b>MACE, GLENN E. Jr.</b> ASN 17151925 Washington, Iowa	RW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.
<b>STEINMILLER, WILBERT R.</b> ASN 12239759 Rochester, New York	LW Gunner KIA	S/Sgt.
<b>WEINMAN, EDWARD I.</b> ASN 32828525 Long Island, New York	Tail Turret KIA	S/Sgt.



## 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION

4334 Meadowridge Drive • Santa Rosa, CA 95409 • 707-538-4726 • Fax 707-538-1212

October 14, 1995

Mr. John Page  
6 Meadow Way  
Poole, England, Norwich  
NR14 7LZ  
United Kingdom

Dear John:

Please accept this copy of The Second Air Division History as a token of the great respect and gratitude held for you by the members of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association.

Your long, loyal and dedicated friendship with the 44th over the years has been displayed in many ways. Most significantly, with your annual Memorial Day travel to the American Cemetery at Moddingley to provide and place a beautiful wreath in the name of the 44th Bomb Group to the memory of our fallen comrades buried there.

Additionally, the personal contact and guidance you so untrillingly provide to any of our group and their families when visiting the Norwich-Shipdham area has deeply endeared you to the hearts of our 44th family, of which you are a part.

While we can never expect to fully express our gratitude for all your help and loyalty, we hope this history will give you pleasure and be a reminder of how much we treasure your friendship.

Sincerely,

*Roy W. Owen*  
Roy W. Owen,  
President

*John Page at the  
American Cemetery,  
Moddingley,  
May 30, 1994.*





# FLYING CONTROL

## December, 1944

Here is some more great text about another of our support units. The only problem here is that I don't know who submitted this report. Can anyone fill us in on who was the Senior Flying Control Officer?

At the outset it should be made clear that the name Flying Control is a misnomer. This Section has as its basic function the safety of the aircraft and crew from time of take-off until it is safely on the ground again, whether at this aerodrome or some other.

Probably a brief resume of the history of Flying Control and how it came into existence in our Air Force is in order. After the first year of war, Great Britain found that her losses in aircraft were far greater on non-operational flights and on the ground than they were because of actual combat. A study of the causes of this situation resulted in the establishment of the Flying Control Organization within the R.A.F. under the Director of Aircraft Safety, Air Ministry.

Shortly after the entry of the United States into the war, liaison between our two Air Forces indicated the need for such a system within our forces. This was especially true because of the expectation that large numbers of our aircraft would be flying from bases in the U.K. where they would have to comply with R.A.F. rules and regulations.

To that end, early in July, 1942, ten officers were sent from the U.S. to England and placed on detached service with the R.A.F. for training in Flying Control. The Senior Flying Control Officer of this station was one of that original group. Since that time, hundreds of USAAF officers have received this training in the R.A.F.

Flying Control is analogous to Base Operations back in the States, but the similarity divides sharply once we leave its fundamental purpose. In the U.S. flying is conducted almost wholly according to peace time and civilian airline requirements. Here, we have only military flying as dictated by the needs of training in new techniques and the demands of the strategic and tactical situation. Thousands of aircraft flying day and night into, out of, and within a country no larger than one of our medium sized states back home. Our job is to provide every humanly possible facility to these aircraft.

Broken down into its major headings, Flying Control is responsible for: supervision of Aerodrome maintenance, taxiing, take-off and landing instructions for aircraft, local air traffic control, the provision of certain navigational aids and facilities, instituting air sea rescue, locating and homing facilities for aircraft that are lost or in distress, various night landing light navigational aid facilities, instituting air sea rescue action through proper channels, routing of non-operational flights, recognition and identification procedure, air raid broadcasts.

Early in the Group's operational history, our Flying Control Section realized that inadequate research and thought had been given to the problems of bad weather daytime landings. The R.A.F. system of Aerodrome night lights were excellent for just what they were intended for, but were useless for aircraft flying in daytime and returning to land under the worst possible conditions of visibility and ceiling. The non-existence of what we considered proper (0865)

equipment, together with the shortage of supply of any equipment and our inability to procure suitable substitutes presented rather tough obstacles. However, even under these circumstances, we did manage to devise a system of runway lights and lights out in the country to act as pylons for the planes to make their turns on, which are still second to none in this country. This is evidenced by the fact that invariably during really bad visibility, all of our planes will land here, plus one or more aircraft from other Groups, who saw our lights. To date, our system of bad weather Aerodrome landing lights has been in operational for more than one and a half years and the number of aircraft saved by it is large. The British Air Ministry has twice sent an aircraft down to make dummy runs on it for the purpose of checking up on its adoption. The Senior Flying Control Officer of First Bomb Division has inspected it with the idea of adopting it so far as practicable in First Division. Various stations in Second Air Division are using features of it and one station is building it in its entirety. On one occasion, under similar weather conditions, 22 of our own aircraft, plus five from other Second Division stations and thirty-two B-17's from First Division were landed during very poor visibility and a heavy snow storm in less time than other stations took to get their own aircraft on the ground.

Any suggestions from flying personnel as to how we can improve our service to them is welcomed and if practical, put into effect. An Alert Crew is always on duty to meet, park and service visiting aircraft. Since this section has a considerable number of activities associated with R.A.F. night flying, it is necessary that there always be a complete staff on duty. Alert crew, crash crew, flap-path crew, Sandra lights crew, Panda crew, Airfield Controller, Airman of the Watch, Radio-telephone operator, clerks and a duty Flying Control Officer, all maintain a system of watches throughout the 24 hours of the day.

Realizing that the Aerodrome is the front door to the Base for most flying personnel and large numbers of passengers, particular stress has always been placed on neatness, cleanliness and attractiveness of the Control Tower and its grounds. At considerable personal expense, a beautiful flower garden was created around the Control Tower this past year and it is expected that this year an even prettier and larger one will be developed.

The December Monthly Flying Control Report of this station which goes on to higher Commands, indicates 19 heavy bombers, from other aerodromes, in difficulty or distress, were given sufficient assistance by this Section to enable them to make safe landings here. Of this number and because of the efficiency of the Section and the aids and facilities provided, six of these aircraft were possibly saved from crashing. This is a fairly typical month and it is worth noting that the figure of 19 is exclusive of our own aircraft! (0866)

In conclusion, regardless of whose responsibility a duty may be, this Section has never hesitated to either do or see that the job is done. Other Units and Sections on this base have been extremely helpful and co-operative with us in the performance of our duties and our thanks are due them for such excellent teamwork. (Fins) (0867)

## DOING OUR JOB

Editor: Better have the Kleenex nearby for this great story! After reading three issues of this journal, you must have discerned that communication amongst the 44th family is our primary purpose. Assisting one member to find another, finding a family member or crew member since deceased, or helping a crew get together after all these years is the high point of doing this job. You, by now, probably have guessed that occasionally your Editor is sitting at this computer trying to type through the tears, emotional guy that I am. This is one of those days. This story will, no doubt, be the benchmark in rewards for doing our job, and one you won't soon forget.

We'll start with an article authored by staff writer Dawn Drago for the Reading (PA) Eagle/Times on Sunday, May 7, 1995. The article concerns Mrs. Lois (Shaeffer) Cianci of Sinking Springs, PA. She responded to an Eagle/Times Commemoration of the 50th anniversary of VE Day plea for copies of letters of love to and from those separated in the war years. Her Letters of Love were from her father Technical Sergeant Clair P. Shaeffer, 68th Bomb Squadron, 44th Bomb Group (H) Shipham, England.

Sergeant Shaeffer, Flight Engineer on the B-24 Liberator "Nice 'n Naughty" was killed in action 21 January 1944 on a mission targeted against a German V-1 Missile complex in the Pas Des Calais Area, France. The 68th Bomb Squadron put up seven aircraft against this target, only three returned.



ABOVE: Lois Cianci sorts through her father's wartime letters, including the three above right. RIGHT: Clair P. Shaeffer holds his daughter, Lois, in a photo from 1943.

"I kept thinking maybe he lost a leg and he didn't want to come home that way, that maybe he stayed (in France). I always thought that one day the doorbell would ring and I would open the door and he would be there."

Lois Cianci  
on the loss of her father  
in World War II

## Letters of Love from a war 50 years ago



*Lois Cianci holds dear the love notes she received as a tot from a dashing airman, her father.*

**By Dawn Drago**

*Eagle/Times*

Lois Cianci, 56, of Lower Heidelberg Township was a little girl during World War II, but she got love letters, photos and trinkets from a dashing airman.

After he was shot down over France in 1944, those precious few things were all she had left of her daddy.

And her Daddy was all she had.

In Reading in 1942, Clair P. Shaeffer was a route salesman for Maier's Bakery, a divorced man raising his 3-year-old daughter alone in an era long before day care centers.

When he had nowhere to leave his little girl during his work hours, he took her with him on the truck. Sometimes, she spent the days at her uncle's gas station in Shillington.

Somehow, father and daughter managed.

But, then, Shaeffer was called into the Army Air Force, where he would later be trained as a flight engineer and turret gunner on a B-24 Liberator bomber and earn the rank of technical sergeant.

He had no alternative other than to leave his young daughter with a succession of friends as he went off to war.

The friends were good to little Lois, but still her father fretted from afar, worrying when she got whooping cough, sending home his pay to cover her room and board, saving up to buy her a set of wardy bedroom furniture, which she still has.

His letters to her are tender, filled with affection and a stream of pet names - "Dear Snooks," "Dear Princess," even "Dear Crybaby."

He sent her photos of himself and his bunkmates, and he wrote her often.

Once, he sent a large portrait of himself in uniform.

The friends framed it, and Lois kept it on her dresser.

They saved his letters, too, so she would have them when she got older.

She was five on Jan. 21, 1944, when her father's plane was shot

down over France and he was reported missing in action.

Several months later, the wreckage was found and he was officially declared dead.

Lois went to live with her father's half-sister, who was married with two children of her own.

Except for the photos, letters, his uniform cap, his Bible, his flight wings and his posthumously-awarded Purple Heart, Lois has only dim memories to remind her of her father. And, as with most childhood memories, it's difficult to sort out what she really remembered and what she was told later.

She does, however, remember the years of her childhood after her father was killed.

I was often angry at him for leaving me," she acknowledged. "I kept that picture of him on my dresser and one time I got so mad, I knocked it on the floor and broke the glass."

"And yet I knew that he would have come back to me if he had survived."

For years, she clung with a child's faith to the hope that her father wasn't really dead.

"I kept thinking maybe he lost a leg and he didn't want to come home that way, that maybe he stayed (in France)," she said. "I always thought that one day the doorbell would ring and I would open the door and he would be there."

She read stories about heroic nurses who cared for injured fliers and decided that she would become a flight nurse so she could help injured G.I.'s like her father.

"Ever since I was little, I wanted to be a nurse - a flight nurse," she said.

She did go on to become a registered nurse and to work for many years at Reading Hospital. Along the way, she married Anthony Cianci, and they had two children.

A few years ago, she decided to give up nursing to help care for infants in the Childhood Education Center at the hospital.

Both of her own children are grown now, and she has begun to try to track down the exact location of her father's grave in Belgium.

"I'm told the cemeteries there are beautiful," she said.

Her husband, who works at Carpenter Technology, has an acquaintance who lives in Belgium, and Cianci said he has promised to try to locate the grave.

"I'd like to go there someday, or at least see a picture of it," she said, sitting in her living room looking over her father's belongings.

"But I have lots of things to remember him by, which I'm sure lots of kids don't have."

✻

Sept. 9, 1942

*Darling Lois,*

Daddy is sending a few pictures of himself and his bunkmates and a girl by the name of Mary. I am very glad to hear your whooping cough is getting so much better, keep that chin up, be a good girl and we'll lick that rashy.

This is one of the uniforms Daddy has and the longer he stays in the Army, the prouder he is to wear it.

Down here, the rainy season has just commenced and very

nearly every day we have a short sprinkle. I fully expect to be shipped within the following three days so do not write until you receive my new address. I hope it will be Denver, Colorado. Keep your fingers crossed for me sweetheart.

I am getting along very well down here and really like it tremendously because now I have been introduced to quite a few very interesting people.

Mary, many times in the course of the day, the memory of my sweetheart back home comes into my mind, and I never tire of showing the boys your picture and telling them about you. They all say you must be a grand girl.

I wish I could see you and hear you talk. Daddy is terribly proud of you. I am looking forward to your birthday. Imagine, you'll be 4 years old. A real big young lady.

The lights are going off in about 10 minutes so until Daddy comes home, his love will make the stars shine for his little darling Lois.

Daddy

**From Army Air Force Tech. Sgt. Clair Shaeffer to his 3-year-old daughter Lois in Reading.**

**Lois Cianci of Wernersville shared this photograph of her father's air crew. He is standing at the far right.**



*We pick the story up with a letter written by Bob Maiden to our own Pete Henry after being approached by Lois at the Reading, PA Air show commemorating the 50th Anniversary of WWII.*



June 19, 1995

Mr. H.C. Henry  
1648 Portland Lane  
Jenewburg, NJ 08831

Dear Mr. Henry:

I'm writing this letter on behalf of Lois (Shaeffer) Cianci whom I met at the 50th anniversary WWII air show in Reading, PA. She approached me because I was wearing an 8AFHS cap. After hearing her story, I offered to contact someone through the Second Air Div. Assn. to see if anyone can reach out to her.

Her father, T/Sgt. Clair P. Shaeffer, was shot down over France 1/21/44; she was 5 at the time. Her only remembrances are photos (copy enclosed), and letters he wrote to her as his only child.

The particulars are: T/Sgt. Clair P. Shaeffer, 8AF, 44th BG, 68th BS, stationed at Shipdham, England. His plane was "Nice 'n Naughty." On the photo he is standing at the extreme right. Unfortunately, the others are not identified.

In letters some of his crew were referred to as Tommy, Goss, Stinky, Shock and Sammie. Presumably they perished with him. But there might be some out there who knew this crew and can provide bits and pieces of info. Mrs. Cianci would be grateful.

Her address is:

Mrs. Lois Cianci  
871 North Church Road  
Sinking Spring, PA 19008

Thanks for any help you can offer.

Cordially,  
Bob Maiden  
7408 Henry Avenue  
Phila., PA 19128-1402  
(389th BG, 367th BS, Heibel)

*Pete Henry, our Group Vice President to 2nd Air Division, then wrote to Will Lundy, our Historian. Will responded directly to Lois Cianci by sending her excerpts from The Webb Todd 68th Bomb Sqdn. History concerning the Lt. Frank W. Sobotka crew on which T/Sgt. Shaeffer served. He also identified all of the Sobotka crew members in the photo and provided her with the current addresses of the surviving crew, along with the Missing Air Crew Report from the 44th Roll of Honor which he compiled and published.*



**68th Squadron Crew:**

<b>SOBOTKA, FRANK W. Jr.</b> ASN 0-799486	Pilot KIA	1st Lt.	Flushing, New York
<b>ROSENBLATT, MILTON L.</b> ASN 0-676018	Co-Pilot POW	1st Lt.	Miami Beach, Florida
<b>TEITEL, ABRAHAM</b> ASN 0-678456	Bombardier Evadee/Returned	1st Lt.	Pasadena, Texas
<b>SHAEFFER, CLAIR P.</b> ASN 33187932	Engineer KIA	T/Sgt.	Wernersville, Pennsylvania
<b>CAPIZZI, THOMAS F.</b> ASN 32533914	Radio Oper. KIA	T/Sgt.	Bronx, New York
<b>SEANIETTO, AUGUST F.</b> ASN 19062047	Ball Turret POW	S/Sgt.	Santa Barbara, California
<b>ROSS, ANDREW J.</b> ASN 33663111	RW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Gold Springs, Kentucky
<b>SHOCKLEY, CHARLES W.</b> ASN 15332979	LW Gunner POW	S/Sgt.	Milan, Indiana
<b>REEVES, CLARENCE D.</b> ASN 13046428	Tail Turret KIA	S/Sgt.	Millvale, New Jersey

The MACR had very little information, "At 1524 hours aircraft #42-7501 was hit by enemy aircraft and the bombs were dropped immediately. It was observed to circle off to the left and to begin burning, apparently under control. Enemy aircraft attacks became so intense at this time there was no further chance to observe.

Lt. Milton L. Rosenblatt, co-pilot, added these comments:

"We were attacked by Me 109's while circling to find our target. Both engines on the left side were shot out, putting us in a steep left turn and rolling our plane over on its back. With both Frank (Sobotka) and me on the controls, we managed to right the plane, but couldn't pull it out of the flat spin it went into. The rudder controls were gone and the instrument panel was shot out. Frank immediately hit the alarm bell switch alerting the crew to bail out.

After a few seconds, I spotted only four chutes descending. The mess in our cabin, due to the rolling over, was unbelievable. Our chest chutes, usually stowed behind our seats, had ended up in the radio compartment. I retrieved the chutes, putting Frank's in his lap and buckling mine on. Sgt. Clair Shaeffer was strapped in the top turret, obviously dead, and our radio operator, Sgt. Tom Capizzi was putting his chute on as well. Frank was yelling at us to jump.

Capizzi and I stood at the end of the bomb bay, so I jumped and apparently Capizzi froze up. He and Frank rode the plane down. I have no idea what had happened in the waist or nose sections of the plane, but I know I was the last one out. We were so low at the time I jumped that my chute only oscillated once before I hit the ground.

I came into contact with the Underground about three days after landing. The only information they could give me about my crew was that Abe Teitel was alive and Frank Sobotka's dog tags were found in the wreckage of the plane. I have never heard from any of my crew since then, although on my return to the States, I talked to most of their families and gave them as much information as I could."

*On July 25, 1995 Lois responded to both Pete Henry and Will Lundy gratefully acknowledging the help they provided in filling the void left in the life of this little five year old girl when the gallant Daddy she knew from the love he poured into those letters was lost to her in the terrible finality of a war incomprehensible to a child of five.*

July 25, 1995

Mr. Will Lundy  
P.O. Box 315  
Bridgeport, Ca. 93517

Dear Mr. Lundy,

This will acknowledge your letter of July 19, 1995 along with the additional information from the crew log and the briefing check form. All of this has been very helpful in tying together the events of that fateful mission. I have now talked to three of the living survivors on the phone, and I am eternally grateful for your help in locating them.

I am enclosing a copy of a newspaper article from our local newspaper from May of this year which was celebrating the 50th anniversary of WWII. The reporters were looking for love letters from the war and I felt mine were certainly letters of love.

I hope you enjoy reading the article as I am happy to share it with you. This will help you understand why I was so interested in collecting facts about my father even after all these years.

Thanks again for your interest and help.

Sincerely,  
Lois M. Cianci

P.S. Would it be possible to send me a copy of your book, "44th Bomb Group - Roll of Honor and Casualties?"

Thank you for your consideration.



July 25, 1995

Dear Pete,

Received your card requesting information on my father:

Clair P. Shaffer Ser. #433187932  
68th Bomb Squad (H) Shipdham, England  
Aerial Engineer Turret Gunner on Liberator B-24  
Reported missing 1/24/44 confirmed 10/44  
Remains never recovered.

Enclosed you will find a copy of a news article printed in May celebrating the 50th anniversary of WWII in our local paper.

The reporters were looking for people who had love letters from WWII. I felt I truly had letters of love. This will explain my need to find some missing answers to questions I have had for many years.

Since I last contacted you, I have spoken to another crew member, Charles Shockley from Knoxville, TN, by phone and also learned that Andrew Ross from Ky. passed away Feb. 1995. We spoke to his wife. We are trying to locate Abraham Teitel, who returned, last address Brooklyn, NY. Then all the crew will be accounted for. This certainly has been very exciting and quite emotional. I do hope some day I will be able to travel to Nurpre, Belgium to the Ardennes American cemetery and visit the WWII Tablets of the Missing.

Thanks again for your help.

Sincerely,  
Lois M. Cianci

*A closing word for Lois. We of the 44th Bomb Group, comrades of your Father, will always memorialize him as a member of our family. As you have witnessed, we welcome the opportunity to search the extensive archives maintained to perpetuate the honor and heritage of our Bomb Group and our comrades alive and deceased. Keep in mind that you, also, are a member of our family, please keep in touch. If you need further research assistance, you have only to ask. Lois, you are a beautiful person and you have our sincere thanks for sharing this beautiful story with us.*

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I see Will Lundy has done a fine job describing our San Antonio reunion, in the "Will See" column, so with that, along with the photos of the reunion we are printing, there are just a few comments on our first 44th BGVA reunion that I wish to add. Incidentally, after asking you folks to send along your reunion photographs, I have so many, obviously space won't permit publishing them all in this issue, so in the Spring Issue we will pick up where we left off and publish more of the reunion pix to share the fun with those who missed the fun first-hand. Thanks for your response, it's so darn hard to get around and snap pictures when there is so much good stuff going on!

While we're in the THANK YOU department, on behalf of all the attendees, we wish, again, to thank our Vice President and Reunion Chairman, Jim Clements, along with his beautiful support system, his wife Nettie and daughter Judy Garrett for the overall organization and management of that great affair. You more than deserve the big Texas tip 'n the ten gallon hat we're giving you with our thanks.

In every event like this, in addition to the obvious heroes of the affair, there is a "behind the scenes" person that without whom the operation could easily spring some serious leaks. This is the local guy or gal who knows who to see, where to go and how to take care of or get the myriad of little things you've overlooked or that pop up in the middle of all the activity. Usually most of the attendees don't see or are not aware of this "masked rider that just rode through," in our case, our unsung hero, Nick Garza, did surface to give us the beautiful "blessing and welcome to Santonio" invocation at the Sunday Banquet. He was otherwise occupied as the reunion committee "gofer," running errands, re-supplying the Hospitality Room, etc., etc. You too, Nick, have our thanks and are included in the big tip 'n the hat!

Now to the business. At the meeting of the Executive Board the following important pieces of business were passed, then presented to the general membership for vote (does that have a different ring to it?).

1. The proposal to the Tower Restoration Project contributors to abandon the project, pay the outstanding obligations and offer the balance of funds of the 44th BGVA treasury was approved.
2. The proposal for the BGVA to accept the offer for the transfer of the balance of the Restoration funds to the 44th BGVA was passed.
3. The proposal for the 44th BGVA to offer to enter into a cost sharing agreement with the Arrow Air Service, Inc. to construct a pilots lounge and memorabilia room connected to the Arrow Air operations center. This addition would incorporate the wall art transferred from the old 14th CBW Headquarters. This proposal was passed by the membership.

4. A proposal by the President to Amend the Constitution to make the Historian a full voting member of the Executive Board is pending subject to appropriate notice to the membership required by the Constitution.

5. The third quarter financial statement presented by the Treasurer and the 1996 budget presented by the President were accepted by the Board for presentation to the membership. Subsequently accepted.

6. The nomination of a return to England for the 1997 Reunion was unanimously accepted by the Board. Reunion committee to be appointed.

The Election Ballots were counted by Vice President Clements, verified by President Owen with the results:

Incumbent MEL TRAGER, elected to represent the Support Units.

Candidate Robert L. "Bob" Brown to represent the 67th Bomb Squadron.

Candidate Sherman "Bud" Douett to represent the 506th Bomb Squadron.

I will close for this issue with a few of the comments, both verbal and in the post reunion letters we have received: "the friendliest," "the warmest and most congenial," "don't remember ever seeing so many first-timers for a 44th reunion, it was great seeing buddies from 50 years back!" "everything was great!" and on and on. We had a few tight spots, but they were quickly resolved.

I think the message here is: When you get the registration details on St. Louis in the Spring Issue of the 8 Ball Tails, jump on it and get your registration and hotel reservations early...I predict we are going to have a blow-out reunion in St. Louis when the word gets out on San Antonio. There will be a cut off date for registration for the upcoming convention. The date has not been determined at this time, but we'll let you know as soon as it has been set.



Roy Owen, President



# 44th BGVA BUDGET FOR CALENDAR YEAR 1996

## Projected Income:

145 Life Members (allocated @ 12.5%)	\$1,545
720 Regular Members @ \$15	10,800
Reunion Income (net)	2,000
Contributions (estimated, raffle, etc.)	1,000
Investment Income (estimated)*	<u>2,400</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$17,715</b>

\*We have invested \$1,050 in rosters & \$773 in Caps

## Projected Expenditures:

3 Issues of 8-Ball Tails @ \$2,250 each	\$6,750
Historian	1,600
(8th AF Data Base project plus research)	
Unit Historians 4 @ \$50	200
Archive Research (Mastradone)	200
Membership Search (Hand)	600
Roster (Shepherd)	200
Treasurer*	500
Directors 9 @ \$600 (Travel)	5,400
President (Administrative & Travel)	1,000
Secretary	200
Arrow Air Project Manger	300
Equipment purchases (2 fax machines)	550
Insurance	<u>115</u>
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$17,615</b>

\$17,715

17,615

\$100

\*Treasurer invested \$125 member dues billing envelopes for printing.

We need 35 new members (\$525) to do the MacDill Plaque.



*Ho! Ho! Ho!*



*Merry Christmas!*

## 44th BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BALANCE SHEET as of September 30, 1995

### ASSETS

<b>Current Assets</b>	
Tower Fund	\$35.80
First Security Checking	973.19
Convention Cash Advance	1,500.00
Investors Service Money Mkt	<u>13,756.63</u>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>\$16,265.62</b>
<b>Other Assets</b>	
Roster Books Inventory	\$1,050.00
Second Air Div. History Books	168.50
44th Bomb Group Cap Deposit	200.00
Bulk Mail Deposit	<u>335.01</u>
<b>Total Other Assets</b>	<b>1,753.51</b>
<b>Total Asset</b>	<b>\$18,019.13</b>

### LIABILITIES & NET WORTH

<b>Liabilities</b>	
Life Memberships	\$14,250.00
Memberships Amortized	<u>1,743.75</u>
	\$12,506.25
Bill Strong Memorial Fund	<u>75.00</u>
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$12,581.25</b>
<b>Net Worth</b>	
Surplus 1/1/95	7,570.50
Adjustment as of 9/30/95	<u>(1,932.62)</u>
<b>Surplus as of 9/30</b>	<b>\$5,637.88</b>
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Worth</b>	<b>18,019.13</b>

*Convention Funds are Separate Account*

# SAN ANTONIO '95 - THE FIRST FOR THE 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION!



*Nattie Clements and daughter Judy Garrett,  
helper first class on the reception crew.*



*Mr. 306th at the head of the Mexican Buffet chow line!*



*The Caville Lighting Ceremony*



*The first ever 44th General Membership meeting to get  
a real Treasurer's report and financial statement.*



*Charlie Hughes daughter Sandy Symannovich brought her beautiful  
American Airlines smile to delight our reunion.*



*The Prez with the Bill Strong kids, Becky and Bill, Jr.*



*Dick and Ardith Butler, Nick and Nancy Gorn, Arlene and Loy Neepfer*



*"Mike" Mikolucki, his son Vincent and grandson Evan being polio-walky with Bill Cameron.*



*Our Treasurer Jerry Folsom and his guest Bob Winger doing some great boogie moves.*



*Nettie Clements, Irene Lundy and Ardith Butler doing a great job at the Registration table.*



*Our Reunion Chairman about to imbibe in the HR.*



*Bob Gjestrum and Tom Shepherd doing a great bartending job in the hospitality room.*





*Richard and Caroline Bottomley swinging at the Saturday night dance.*



*George and Beryl Aggar, a copy of Glenn Miller swinging.*



*Norm Kiefer and Joe Milliner sorting out the details of the Pionti Raid in the "Benghazi Debriefing."*



*The Mexican dancer's floor show following the Sunday Banquet.*



*The newly elected 67th Spln. member of the Executive Board, Robert L. Brown and our Historian, Will Lundy.*



*Mr. 506th himself, Dick Pederson.*



# BEATING THE BUSHES

by Art Hand & Will Lundy

## Background

Several years ago, I initiated a column in the old Logbook with the name of "Beating The Bushes." At that time, I was doing much of the searching for our people, often on my own, but usually aided by Art Hand, Pete Henry and Webb Todd. We had only minimum success for all of the effort expended. This all has changed since Art Hand went ultra modern, purchased new, high tech phone disks and is doing most of his searching through the use of this system. He is having a high degree of success, locating many new members and unfortunately, learning that many are now deceased.

Currently, Art is searching and locating our former members, then sending their addresses to me so that I can send them information about their records in the 44th. I try to furnish them with this data, then requesting them to furnish us with as much data about themselves as possible. The 44th BCVA is growing every month, if not in the organization itself, at least in data about those who served along side of us.

Art is systematically searching one squadron at a time - has now completed most of the 66th Squadron and much of the 67th. It is his intention to continue on through the other two squadrons, as well as to work with any member who wants to search for a friend or buddy from the war years. Contact Art Hand at the address shown elsewhere in this issue.

**ALBERT J. FLYEN:** 1321 East 6th Street, Superior, Wisconsin 54880 (715) 398-5694. Albert was the radio operator on 1st Lt. George Haag's crew. They transferred in from the 492nd BG in August, 1944. 67th Sq.

**THOMAS A. GRAVEN:** Rt. #3, Box 3054, Galena, Missouri 64656 (417) 538-2332. 1st Lt. Graven was co-pilot for Lt. Haag's crew. 67th Sq.

**ALBERT GREYHOSKY:** 334 South Vaughn Way, Aurora, Colorado 80012-2441 (303) 366-7170. Albert was co-pilot for C. Henderson's crew. 67th Sq. This crew as lost on 01 October 1943 mission to Weiner Neustadt, with only three surviving to become POW's - He, William Newbold and John Newberry.

**LEWIS S. ENNIS:** 101 Willow Drive, Elkhon, Maryland 21921. 67th Sq. Lewis was a gunner, also on George Haag's crew. Haag's crew flew about six more missions with the 44th to complete their tour.

**ROBERT L. VANNISTE:** 3630 South Uptad Road, Proctor, Minnesota 55810-2435. Robert was a gunner on Howard L. Hirman's crew. 67th Sq. On 16 January 1945 he broke his foot after bailing out over France.

**BERNARD LIPKIN:** 500 Iron Forge Court, Royal Palm Beach, Florida 33411. He was the Navigator/Bombardier, normally assigned to Lt. Hirman's crew, but was not on the 16 January 45 mission.

**JAMES REGAN:** #2 Concord Street, Natrona Heights, Pennsylvania 15065. He was Radio Operator on Lt. Hildebrand's crew. First mission February 1945. 67th Sq.

**JACK G. STANE:** 1010 10th Court, Jupiter, Florida 33477. He was co-pilot for Roger S. Markle. This crew was assigned to the 67th Sq. on 7 February 1945, flew Mi Akin Aas home at war's end.

**ANTHONY C. KASEVAC:** 45 Marshall Road, Branford, Connecticut 06405. He, too, was a member of Lt. Markle's crew, Radio Operator.

**LEONARD H. LOUKE:** Box 1243, Spokane, Washington 99210-1243. Leonard was a first pilot in the 67th Sq.; was assigned on 20 December 1944. They completed 28 missions, flew home on 21 May 1945.

**ROLAND A. NELSON:** 8 Cedar Street, Presque Isle, Maine 04769. He was a gunner for Lt. W. T. Zerman's crew; transferred to 323 BG on 27 September 1944. Was a 67th Sq. crew.

**ALBERT F. NEVEN:** 21825 NE 137th Street, Woodinville, Washington 98072-5801. Albert was in the 1287 MP platoon.

**CHARLES ALBA:** P.O. Box 1323, Dania, Florida 33004. Charles was a 66th Squadron crew chief.

**PHILLIP J. QUIRK:** 4211 West First Street #1, Santa Ana, California 92703. He was co-pilot for Max Mendenhall in the 506th Sq.

**BENDELL C. SWARTZ:** 6365 SE Mariner Sands Drive, Stuart, Florida 34997. He was a gunner on Thomas McKenna crew in the 506th Sq.

**RAYMOND A. KLEMMER:** 4429 Lajane Drive, Columbus, Georgia 31907. He was co-pilot on Thames crew in the 67th Sq.

**WILLIAM E. MILICH:** 17159 Fulton Road, Marshallville, Ohio 44645-9712. William served as Bombardier on Lt. Steele's crew in the 67th Sq.

**R.C. FYNBO:** 800 South 4th Avenue, Albert Lea, Minnesota 56007. He was Radio Operator, also on Jack Steele's crew. 67th Sq.

**GORMAN HERMINGHAUS:** 445 26th Avenue, San Mateo, California 94003. Gorman also served on Jack Steele's crew, a gunner. 67th Sq.

**CALVENA HENER:** P.O. Box 67, Superior, Nebraska 68978. Calvin, too, was a gunner on Jack Steele's crew. 67th Sq.

**HERBERT W. TERKHOORN:** 728 Ash Street, Seymour, Indiana 47274-2541. He was the Radio Operator for O'Brien's crew in the 67th Sq.

**DALTON P. BERRIER:** 10610 Sagewillow Lane, Houston, Texas 77089-30216. Dalton was Engineer for Robert Schmidt's crew in the 67th Sq.

**KYLE E. JONES:** P.O. Box 1143, Pinehurst, North Carolina 28574.

**CHARLES A. OVERSTREET:** Box 621, Route 2, Keota, Oklahoma 74941. Charles was a lead pilot, often flew lead for the 491st BG. Was assigned to the 67th Sq. & 66th Sq.

**JOHN A. TORODE:** 213 South Cherry Street, Starke, Florida 32091. John served as co-pilot for Charles Overstreet in the 67th Sq. & 66th Sq.

*In addition to the men listed above as living and located, Art also found several others that were deceased:*

**FRED SCHEDEGGER:** RR #1, Box 228, Blanchardsville, Wisconsin 53516. Fred folded his wings on 7/26/95. 68th Sq. Crew Chief.

**GEORGE B. HAAG:** Ambler, Pennsylvania. Date of Death unknown. 67th Sq. and also served with the 492nd BG.

**BENJAMIN D. FORD:** 15 Shore Point Road, North Little Rock, Arkansas 72116. Widow: Mildred. Ben was 68th Sq. 1st Pilot.

May 8, 1995

Dear Will:

Thank you for your letter of 20 April last. The documents enclosed were very interesting and very valuable. Indeed, I'll be able to use the information. I certainly wish I had this type of info on all crew members buried here. I want you to know that I appreciate your initiative, very much. I find that actually I never know enough. It's great to have the answer.

You can be sure that the material you gave me will be kept in the 44th BG files, to be available to all who are interested. I feel fortunate to get your cooperation and I think all my colleagues should feel the same way.

If I can ever be of assistance to you, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Roland B. Prieur

This letter arrived in response to a mailing to next of kin telling them that the French people in Illfurth, France were planning a memorial service during D-Day celebrations and a memorial plaque at the crash site. Roland B. Prieur, Epinal Cemetery letter attached, being near the crash site and where some of the crew were buried. I sent him the pages from my ROH book covering all the 44thers buried there. If had time I'd do the same thing for all 11 cemeteries where our men are buried except Madingley, as I donated my complete book to them. Bill Rendall and I have been working with Prieur for data about this crew. ROH pages 154 and 155.



EPINAL AMERICAN CEMETERY

10000 Route de France, 54100 Epinal, France  
Autres coordonnées: POC US, APC 44th BG, France 033-3842141111, 033-3842141111

Epinal, France  
March 1995

1 December 1995

Mr. A. HENRY  
4001 West Street, Association  
10000 Route de France  
54100 Epinal, France

Dear Sir,

I have just learned that a monument will be erected and inaugurated, on 29 January 1996, in Illfurth, France, to honor the 44thers of George H. Wagner's crew, whose B-24 (42-24187) crashed on 29 January 1944.

It will go to the plaque that had been inaugurated on 8 June 1974. This plaque is located in the Hall of the County House in Illfurth, where the monument will be erected next to the crash site.

The monument is being funded by the town of Illfurth, as has been the plaque. Wouldn't it be great if members of the West Coast Group could assist the ceremony? The people of Illfurth would certainly be happy and honored. If you can come, I'll be in attendance, and I'll do my best to represent you & what we know.

Looking forward to hearing from you.  
I remain,

Yours sincerely,

  
Roland B. Prieur  
Superintendent

If any of the members would like to volunteer to attend, please contact your President, Roy Owen.



## VOYAGE ON THE S.S. CHANTILLY TO ENGLAND

By Ray I. Marnet, Jr.

The following is a piece Ray I. Marnet, Jr. wrote. He states, most of the stories we have about our group are those of the air war over Europe, as they should be. This story is of the ground echelon of the 506th Bomb Squadron and their problems of just trying to get there.

The ground echelon of the 506th Bomb Sq., 44th Bomb Group, consisting of 14 officers and 270 enlisted men, and under the command of Capt. Gecon Benton, Jr., boarded the S.S. Chantilly in New York on February 27, 1943.

The S.S. Chantilly was an old French ship that was taken over by the British in 1940. She was not in very good repair, and a lot of work was done on her in New York prior to our boarding, but she needed much more. The ship's crew was composed of some British and the rest were Hinds from Calcutta, India. There were approximately 1,000 troops on board including American sailors, marines and infantry men. The Chantilly, carrying the only troops in the convoy, joined the approximately 74 ships of the convoy in New York harbor and sailed on February 28, 1943 for the United Kingdom.

In Ursell P. Harvell's book "Jaws over Europe" it was stated that the S.S. Chantilly was placed in the middle of the convoy to give the personnel carrier some protection in case of a U-boat attack. This statement was not correct as the Chantilly was centered at the rear of the convoy, with only three ships behind us. There is also a statement in major Harvell's book as follows: "The shipment of skilled Air Force personnel, sorely needed in the 8th Air Force aboard the S.S. Chantilly, a condemned old English ship, the orders taking seventeen days to cross the Atlantic, was given by someone definitely irresponsible and came close to the disaster for the 8th Air Force." Any aboard the S.S. Chantilly would probably agree with this statement. It was truly a miracle that the ground troops of the 506th Bomb Squadron ever got to the Shipham Aerodrome.

The first 11 days of our voyage were fairly uneventful, aside from very poor sleeping arrangements, seasickness, and probably the worst food any of us had ever eaten. However, on Ash Wednesday, March 10, 1943, this changed dramatically. Around 6:30 pm we heard an explosion and the master bell rang. We headed up the gangway to the deck in time to see an oil tanker sink and two other ships were damaged. Any ship that sustained damage indicated this by lighting a red light that would be visible to any support craft. We later learned that our Captain saw the first torpedo coming toward us and he laid the Chantilly on her side and the torpedo went along our starboard hull and hit the ship ahead of us on our port side.

The Captain then began to change course every few minutes by rocking the ship from one side to the other and continued this for the rest of the night. He was rocking the ship as much as 43 degrees, which made it very difficult to stay on deck.

Around midnight we were attacked again and the red lights



seem to come on all around the convoy. It was too dark to really see how much damage was being done, but we knew it was bad.

Around 3 am we heard another explosion and either a munitions ship or a tanker with high octane gas was hit and the flames grew larger and larger, lighting the entire area. The light endangered the whole convoy, so a British Corvette shelled the ship and a terrific explosion followed with the flames shooting hundreds of feet in the air. The ship then quickly sunk.

In our position at the rear of the convoy, there were three ships behind us and three ships to our front. At dawn on March 11, 1943, we found that we were alone well behind the rest of the ships. All six ships were either sunk or some may have changed position. We felt that we were like sitting ducks in this vulnerable position. We spent the next day trying to catch up with the rest of the convoy. Obviously, we were probably the slowest ship on the seas. Luckily no more attacks were forthcoming.

In a letter to Major Ursell P. Harvell, in reply to his request, the Dept. of Navy gave the following information: During the attack by U-boats on March 10, 11, 1943, the following ships were torpedoed and sunk:

1. British Cargo TUCURINCA; 2. British Cargo JAMAICA PRODUCER; 3. Norwegian BRUMM COUNTY (or BRANT COUNTY); 4. U.S. Cargo LAWTON B. EVANS; 5. U.S. Cargo ANDREA F. LUCKENBACH. There were other ships in the convoy that were damaged by torpedoes, but did not sink. HMS HARVESTER was damaged when she rammed a U-boat. She took

on board prisoners from the U-boat, and afterward she sank. It was reported by German prisoners that there were 12 U-boats in the vicinity of the convoy. HMS ACONITE sank U-boats No. 432 and No. 442. There were many stragglers in this convoy, scattered because of the high seas and fog, and many left the convoy and proceeded to their destination.

The S.S. Chantilly remained at the rear of the main convoy and sailed up the Firth of Clyde, near Glasgow on March 15, 1943, going ashore on March 16, 1943.

After a long train ride from Scotland, we finally arrived at Shipham Aerodrome on March 17, 1943.

A few days after our arrival at the Air Base, I was walking from our living site to the flight line, when a staff car stopped and offered me a ride. Being a kid of only 20 years and not very military I piled in the back seat to find then Colonel Leon B. Johnson. I guess the General wasn't very military either. He couldn't have been nicer to me. He wanted to know all about our trip over the Atlantic and all the details of the submarine attack. I will always remember how reassured I felt with this man as my commanding officer.

*Top Photo: Lifeboat drill on the S.S. Chantilly.*

*Bottom Photo: S.S. Chantilly - This "Luxury Liner" looks like something out of an old Humphrey Bogart-Peter Lorre movie! The word among the 506th troops is that the S.S. stood for Sad Slow.*



## WILL SEZ

What a great reunion! Weeks later these memories firmly remain: Our guests from England, Janice and Steve Adams, and Paul Wilson and how wonderful to see them here in the U.S. for their first trip ever. This was a golden opportunity for so many of us 44thers who he has corresponded with over the years to meet him, and for Steve to get more information for his upcoming book covering the 66th Sq. history. Paul brought 25 of his beautiful hand painted Flying 8 Ball leather patches, suitably adorned with the individual squadron colors - even donated five of them to us to help with our dwindling finances. Paul and Steve, along with David Morgan, were responsible for setting up the mini museum at Arrow Air on a corner of the old Shipdham base.

First time attendees, many I have never met before but have shared information and letters. One of them was MG William H. Brandon, an original combat man, honored us for the first time. He flew "Avenger" over to England as part of the 66th Sq. air echelon. Too, though not for the first time, BG John H. Gibson joined with us as well. Most welcome, General!! 66th Squadron C.O. and pilot on Ploesti, Dexter Hodge was exciting to meet, as were so many others. Capt. Armstrong and Harold Morrison and I had a mini meeting to discuss our latest facts located concerning D-Day. These two men DID lead the 44th and 14th CBW, were the FIRST to bomb the coast that day.

Happily, I was able to sit in on two meetings organized by Ed Dobson in his effort to learn more specifics about the famous Ploesti mission as well as the second Wiener Neustadt. Because the official records for the 44th BG covering these attacks are meager at best, or entirely missing, Ed asked for those men who participated in these missions to meet, re-establish as many facts as possible. Norm Kiefer acted as MC, while Pete Frizzell captured the discussions on video. Pete, for those who don't know him, has worked long and hard on the entire Ploesti mission - all five groups - to record the facts. He has videoed as many personal interviews of these airmen as he can get. In fact, while Irene and I were in the lobby Monday afternoon waiting for a ride to the airport, Pete and Ed Dobson came dashing through, carrying equipment to interview General Brandon! As you probably know, General Brandon was the 44th BG's lead pilot on Ploesti, General Johnson acting as his co-pilot and Commander aboard Suzy-Q. Trust that they were most successful.

The "show & tell" memorabilia room was very interesting to those of us that found it - it was a bit hidden. David Webster and his buddy who are American military

aviation collectors, displayed a fine collection of uniforms, equipment, books, photos, etc. and were on hand morning to evening to answer questions, talk with us all, and provide security for the many other items which our members provided. Thank you gentlemen! Jim Anman, 44th & 466th BG, brought color to the hotel and this display room with his many large decorative hand painted wall posters. At the end, he generously gave them to anyone who wanted one. Jim also provided me with his own account of a 492nd BG crash near the base where two of our fire fighters were killed by exploding frag bombs. Now, to military proof of death and these two men will be added to our official Roll of Honor.

Obviously, this old 44th historian would remember other features of the reunion not generally observed by many others. But for me, I was thrilled because Charles Hughes not only attended, but brought along much of his supply of 66th Sq. ORIGINAL records. He not only brought them, he gave them to me for my archival files, but some I still have not reviewed as there were other historians who wanted to borrow them immediately. Steve Adams will get many copies for his book. Between Charles Hughes' papers and photos, Dexter Hodge's priceless Ploesti photos, our ambitious younger lads (Steve Adams, Pete Frizzell and Ed Dobson) got little sleep. At midnight they took a taxi to get photos copied (yes they located a shop) and worked until 3 a.m. Then, when Joe Gonslow arrived, bringing more photos along with his detailed knowledge of the group's processing of mission photos, Steve and Pete failed to get to bed at all. Those Ploesti photos were examined most thoroughly, turning up many clues about which planes were in the photos, which plane took them, targets, where the film was processed and when, etc. Oh, for the energy of youth, and their priceless interest in our history!

Yes, there were several problems which arose, most of them due to the fact that the reunion itself was so successful - a sold-out hotel, with limited space - so eating was a problem at times, etc. But the hotel management did their utmost to solve problems when they arose, with genuine concern and positive actions. They were kind enough to make several copies of papers for me immediately. Busiest man there, night and day it seemed, was our Reunion Chairman, Jim Clements. To you Jim, and your lovely wife Nettie, we all thank you most sincerely...Thanks to all of you that attended, who made this such a memorable event...On to St. Louis, and then ENGLAND!

Will Lundy





## FOLDED WINGS

Willis D. Abrams	'93	Unk
Ned Anderson	Unk	68th
Irving A. Barber	5/84	68th
Wade F. Bond	Unk	67th
Ray Ciesielski	'80	Unk
William Dolan	Unk	68th
Ivan L. Geldersleeve	'79	Unk
Rev. Leroy Holmberg	'95	506th
Peter P. Karipin	7/95	66th
K.L. Keesee	'72	Unk
John F. King	12/94	68th
Carl K. Miller	9/95	506th
John D. Money	'94	506th
Joel Peck	10/95	67th
Robert E. Rose	Unk	68th
Andrew J. Ross	2/95	68th
Edward Rumsey	Unk	67th
Fred Scheidegger	7/95	68th
John Skutt	Unk	Unk
Jack Tinney	'94	67th
Maurice Welsh	10/95	68th
John Wolbarst	'87	Unk

This is a partial list of our deceased 44th comrades. We will continue to catch up on the list with each issue, as well as list new Folded Wings.

## MISCELLANEA

*Heaven is where*

*the police are British,  
the cooks are Italian,  
the mechanics are German,  
the lovers are French,  
and it is all organized  
by the Swiss.*



*Hell is where*

*the chefs are British,  
the mechanics are French,  
the lovers are Swiss,  
the police are German,  
and it is all organized  
by the Italians.*



## SECOND AIR DIVISION REUNIONS

There will be a Second Air Division Regional Reunion to be held in Orlando, Florida at the Clarion Plaza Hotel on February 5, 1996. The hotel will offer special rates for three nights preceding and three nights following the reunion for those who may want to make a Disney World vacation of it. Contact:

Lawrence Gilbert, Chairman  
1482 Granville Drive  
Winter Park, Florida 32789  
Phone: (407) 647-2625

The Second Air Division Assn. 49th Annual Convention will be held on June 13 - 16, 1996 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. Convention Reservation form and schedule will be included in the Winter Issue of the Journal.

The Second Air Division of Southern California will hold their fifteenth annual regional reunion dinner at the Marine Corps Air Station, El Toro Officers' Club, Saturday, Feb. 24, 1996. For further information, contact either: Dick Baynes (714) 552-3889 or Jay Jeffries (714) 846-1653.







## FLYING EIGHT BALL PATCHES

Paul Wilson of Norwich, England, who many of you met at the reunion, has donated five of his beautiful hand-painted, 5 inch diameter leather 8-Ball patches (any of the squadron colors). The cost to you is \$12 post paid with all profit going to the 44th BGVA general treasury. A terrific bargain to put on a new A-2 jacket! Order from:

Will Lundy  
3295 North H Street  
San Bernardino, CA 92405-2809  
Phone: (909) 882-2441



## CALLING ALL PILOTS!

The Aviation Cadet Alumni Association is compiling a listing of former cadets by class. More than 31,000 names are on file, and printouts by Class are available to participants who include \$2 to cover costs. Please send your Flight Class, Primary, Basic and Advance Schools to:

Robert C. White  
54 Seton Trail

Ormond Beach, Florida 32176

Due to the amount of contact and detail involved, Mr. White prefers written requests rather than phone calls.



## PLOESTI BOOK AND VIDEO

The Floesti book entitled *Black Sunday* is available for \$35, \$10 under list price, by calling 1-800-898-2124.

The Floesti video, short title *Utah Man*, is available for \$29 by calling: 1-800-869-6379.



## 44TH BOMB GROUP HISTORY

In case you have not submitted your biography and order for the forthcoming 44th Bomb Group History, the deadline has been extended to January 4, 1996. If you did not receive the form, call Eric Parrent of Turner Publishing Co. (502) 443-0121. This will be a beautiful history, be sure you are included.



## ANOTHER AUTHOR AMONG US

Just prior to departure for the reunion, I received a copy of a book entitled *Black Hole of Wauwilermoos* authored by 66th Bomb Sqdn. member Dan Culler. He was unable to attend the reunion to display his book, but asked me to do so in his behalf. Many of you saw it and some orders were placed at the reunion. I have just completed reading this remarkable account of the USAAF career of Tech/Sgt. Culler from enlistment through training and into combat with the 44th Bomb Group and shoot-down on the Friedrichsafen mission March 18, 1944. The last chapters recount his internment in Switzerland and his change in status from internee to civil prisoner after a failed escape attempt. The accounts of his captivity in Wauwilermoos are brutal I must warn you. It was a facet of the war that escaped the notoriety it deserved. To order the book, make a copy of the order blank herein and by having 44th written in the lower left corner, Culler will send a dollar of each sale to our Treasury.

Reorder form, "Black Hole of Wauwilermoos," book.	
For your personal autograph book, please send check with your name and address to: Dan Culler, 750 S. LaBrisa, Green Valley, AZ 85614-2202	
Please print your	
Name _____	
Address or _____	
P.O. Box _____	
City _____	
State _____	ZIP _____
Name of person book(s) is to be personalized to _____	
Price per book \$15.50 Plus \$3.50 for shipping and handling	
Number of books ordered _____ @ \$16.50 per book—Total _____	
Postage @ \$3.50 per book _____ Total _____	
total for books plus postage _____ Total _____	
Thank you Dan Culler	
44th	

# GOOD NEIGHBORS

By Roy Owen

There's been a lot said and read lately about Anglo-American relations. I'm a real Anglophile so I've been loving it. This story is one of the reasons I love England and its people; I'm sure it will bring some smiles and warm remembrances to some 506th guys.

We'll start out at the 44th Reunion of 1992 in Norwich and, of course Shipdham. On the Shipdham Airfield visitation day, a bunch of the local folks got together with the Arrow Air Service staff and, from the 44th memorabilia they possess, they found an original copy of the Thanksgiving Dinner menu for 1944. Lo and behold those precious people prepared and served that meal in the remaining big hangar to the whole reunion! It was beautiful.

During the meal, I fell into a conversation with a 506th guy across the table from me (can't remember now who it was) and I asked him if he remembered the farm family that lived immediately over the fence from our Squadron site (see the accompanying Site 2 photo) and how the wife did our laundry, baked bread, sold us eggs, had us to tea and the small family of three, in general, looked out for us. He replied that not only did he remember, but the wife, Linda Davies (now Weston) was at the reunion, and, was in fact at the luncheon. Thereupon he stood up, looked around

and pointed her out. There she was, 81 years young, slender and grey, but head tossing with laughter. I couldn't believe it! After a minute or two to allow me to fight back the emotional tears, Lolly told me to approach her and introduce myself. When I did and we went through the recognition and getting re-

acquainted period, the emotion really rose and we had a jolly reunion. Linda was accompanied by her daughter Beryl and her husband Ron, with their children Rebecca 12 and Christopher 9. Linda's husband Bill had passed away sometime after the war.

That Fall and Winter of '44-'45 when the Bill Smith crew took up residence at Site 2 turned out to be the coldest in 30 years. We took up residence in the quonset huts, suffered the indignities of double bunks, segmented

mattresses called "bisquits," separate no-heat bathroom buildings called "ablutions," little round coke burning cast iron stoves aptly named Slow But Sure and assigned one to a hut along with about two small wheel barrow loads of coke per week, cold always cold, never enough blankets, and plenty of "C" Ration Stew

in the Mess. Oh yes, and the variations of the supply system. Sometimes our little PX would be out of cigarettes for three days, but we had lighter fluid, lots of lighter fluid and only 10 or 15 cents a bottle. This



Linda's husband Bill and daughter Beryl circa 1944.



Roy Owen and Linda Weston during 1992 Reunion.

turned out to be a blessing because one crumpled-up Stars & Stripes, a shovel full of coke, a bottle of lighter fluid and an accurate tossed lighted match through the open Slow But Sure stove lid and you had a rather explosive but pretty sure start of a fire in the stove.

Like all of the rookie crews, we lived and learned, then discovered that little "home away from home"

just across the fence. Also about that time, we began to also learn the advantages of a convoluted supply system when it came to food supplies. For

instance, fresh meat was scarce. Spam (the mystery meat) was plentiful, powdered eggs must have come in 500 lb. sacks, but here is the surprise; butter, yes, real butter in 2 lb. bricks, we had PLENTY, along with peanut butter and jam in those big cans.

Linda (age 34), her husband Bill (probably about age 40) and daughter Beryl (age 13) in spite of civilian shortages were doing all they could to "take care of her boys" until the ration coupons were used up. It was then that between the "care" packages from home and the "long on supply" items that could be "negotiated for" at the mess, we could see the wonderful world of barter at work. Linda baked

bread and supplied us with the Kings fresh eggs and we would occasionally form a small group with the Davies and make a foray into a Local Shipdham pub for a beer and darts party. For a bunch of young Yanks a long way from America, homesick, sold and hungry, this relationship with the Davies family was, in large part, what got us through that bitter winter and helped keep a smile on our faces while we were

engaged in the most deadly and final game any of us had ever before experienced.

This was not an isolated thing. It went on all over

the country. They had so little to share, but share it willingly they did. Was I impressed? Your damn right I was impressed, and I'll always love those English ancestors for making me feel like one of the family when I was a long way from home.

Linda is now 84. After Bill died, she remarried and a few years ago she was widowed again. She now lives in a suburb of Portsmouth. Beryl and her family reside nearby. She spends each Sunday with them. We have corresponded regularly since the '92 reunion and she tells me she is staying healthy so she can attend another Shipdham reunion. She signs her letters "Mum," and being one of her "boys." I love it!



*Shipdham Airbase Site 2, home of the 30th Bomb Sqdn.  
The Davies farmhouse on the rear side of the fence line.*

## **44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION REUNION**

*Saint Louis '96*  
*October 3 - 7*



**MORE DETAILS & REGISTRATION FORMS IN THE  
SPRING '96 8-BALL TAILS!**

**PLAN EARLY!**

## MAIL CALL



*This comes from:*

*Ron Chantry*

*9 Westwood Avenue, Eastbourne, East Sussex BN22 0HA*

*Tele: 01323 500421*

*5/13/95*

Dear Mr. Watson:

Congratulations and thanks for a well researched history of Rudy-Less and moving account of her last flight. How sad that the ten young men perished in such a violent way.

Your article is a timely reminder of the debt we owe to them and the thousands like them who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Yours sincerely,



*This letter comes from new member Al Greybosky, 67th (see "Beating the Boobies" elsewhere in this issue)*

*Al Greybosky*

*334 South Vaughn Way, Aurora, CO 80012*

*(303) 366-7170*

*5/28/95*

Dear Will & Irene:

I was surprised and pleased to hear from you. Let me try clarifying some items in your letter.

1) You probably got my story from Navigator Wm. Newbold. We were fellow POW's in Stalag Luft III. Nothing much happened in POW camp except when we were marched away on a very cold January night because the Russians were coming. A paperback book and various accounts of that march have been written by others. These accounts are accurate because I checked them against my diary of the move to Mooseburg, Stalag VIIA (near Munich). Gen. Patton's army freed us on 29 April 1945.

2) I was never contacted by the 44th Bomb Group alumni, nor did I know it existed until Art Hand contacted me in April of this year.

3) I came to England as a co-pilot on a replacement on Hagers crew. When we got to Shipham - the 44th was already in Africa. We flew to Africa and joined the 44th just before the Ploesti raid. Aaa rookie crew with a new B-24 - they "grounded" us by taking our plane. We didn't go on the Ploesti raid.

Our crew was scheduled for the Foggia mission. As we were awaiting take-off, Pimentel(?) ran over to our plane and informed us that the commander didn't want an "all green" crew flying this mission. That's how I joined Henderson's crew. Pimentel was killed in what was my seat. (I met my pilot

later in POW camp and he told me about it. The exact details have escaped my mind over the years.)

We lost an engine in route to Foggia and had to abort. On the way back, we dropped our bombs in Bari Harbor. Soon afterwards, we returned to England and I remained as Henderson's co-pilot.

4) I flew a total of five missions with Henderson. We got along fine. He was the epitome of what a dedicated pilot should be. If he hadn't been, I wouldn't be alive today.

5) The 44th returned to Africa in September, ostensibly to aid the Salerno landing in Italy. The Salerno crisis was over by the time we arrived. The mission to bomb the Folke-Wulf aircraft factories in Wiener Neustadt was the only one scheduled before our return to England.

6) Here's a couple of anecdotes for your information:

a) The following happened after the Foggia mission. Henderson, myself and flight engineer Cooper were ordered to transfer a B-24 from another squadron to the 44th. (Jack Benny was going to perform that night at our base.) It was twilight before we took off to return to our base. We were about 100 feet high when I smelled smoke in the cockpit. Not wanting to needlessly alarm anyone, I turned and asked Cooper if he smelled any smoke. Just then, smoke filled the cockpit.

The landing gear was already up. I didn't know whether Henderson was going for altitude or to crash land. I put on my chute preparing to take the wheel if we were going to climb, in hopes of jumping out.

Henderson decided to crash land. We dove downward and just before we hit, he pulled back on the wheel and pancaked in. I remember the nose wheel coming up through the cockpit after we hit. Cooper was knocked unconscious; I crawled out the window and onto the fuselage. Henderson got to Cooper and handed him to me through the top hatch.

Cooper returned to duty the next day after spending the night in the hospital. Neither Henderson or I were injured. Remember how high a B-24's fuselage is? I stood next to the plane and I could see over it. It was compressed over half its original size. We had crashed in a muddy salt flat that was our salvation. It also put out the fire. We missed Benny's act.

b) Our plane's name was "Count Bruga," although it wasn't painted on at the time of our last mission. My leather jacket had the name Count Bruga imprinted above the pocket.

At my first preliminary interrogation by the Germans, they looked at my jacket, and coupled with my name, asked, "When did you leave Poland?"

At POW camp my fellow inmates asked me (after several days) if I was a Polish "count." I should have lied; it would have made a better story. This odd name came from a novel of the





same name by Ben Hecht (novelist and Hollywood screenwriter).

Again, I wish to thank you for sending the crew list. Memories... "When you are sorrowful, look again in your heart, and you shall see that in truth you are weeping for that which has been your delight."

Sincerely,

P.S. After I returned to the States, I visited Henderson's parents and his younger brother in Dallas, Texas. His wife was teaching school in New Mexico and she wasn't present. I told them of the last mission and that I was alive because of his actions. He was somebody.



*This comes from:  
James Regas*

*No. 2 Concord Street, Natrona Heights, PA 15065  
7/29/95*

Dear Will:

Thanks a million for your recent letter. It was a welcomed surprise. Sorry it took so long for me to reply, but I was in the hospital for the common old folks ailments. I never thought I'd grow old, but seems like I went to bed one night and woke up old the very next morning.

Thanks for the addresses of my crew members. I wonder if my pilot Fred P. Hildebrand is still around? I will never forget a mission we flew over Wilhelmshaven on March 30. As soon as we dropped bombs, Fred stated, "watch out grandma." During the flight (after bombs were dropped), I found out his grandmother still lived at Wilhelmshaven. I never forgot that and it really stuck with me after all these years. War is not only hell, but just plain stupid.

Enclosed you'll find a list of missions that we flew. I really don't know how accurate it is, but I searched my old briefcase and came up with this list. Thanks again for your letter.

Sincerely,

*EDITOR: Great letter, James. The "watch out grandma" really got to me. One of the cruel twists that came with the hell of war.*



*This comes from:  
James & Elaine Swale*

*6164 Capshore, Toledo, OH 43611-1211  
(419) 729-0914  
8/2/95*

Dear Mr. Lundy:

I am the niece-in-law of Clarence Swale. I am the family historian and we were most honored to hear about Uncle

"Bob" Clarence. His military career in Europe was not known other than he was a tail gunner, shot down and was a prisoner.

It was very interesting to read your information to Aunt Millie Hohn. I am sorry it has taken so long to reply.

Uncle Clarence didn't speak of his war years. He died 4 Nov 1989 in Pitcairn, PA. He is survived by his sister Millie Hohn, 5 nieces and nephews, 14 great nieces and nephews and 14 great great nieces and nephews.

My husband James and I were going to contact Army personnel in St. Louis as we had just found his service number.

The information that your friends and Organization can supply would be a most valuable asset to our family history. It just amazes us that this information would come from such close friends of his in the service.

We would be very interested in all the information you could give us about Uncle Clarence and his service years.

Eagerly looking forward to your reply.

Sincerely yours,



*This comes from:*

*Bill A. Rosser*

*8121 Countrywood Rd N.E., Albuquerque, NM 87109  
(505) 821-5483  
8/21/95*

Dear Will:

Fortunately, I just rediscovered the first issue of 8 Ball Tails. I haven't any juicy "gray" to contribute because most of my memories are of simple, funny little incidents. My memory banks seem more adapted to those rather than some of the sheer terror type things. Guess I'm lucky that way.

As latecomers, we arrived at 44th Bomb Group on the day of the 200 mission party, so we had a rather distorted vision of how a war was fought--beer kegs on every corner with tin cups attached by strings, no one wearing rank insignia, just one big party!! Then we woke up in the real world - - somewhat confused, but we made it.

Of my crew, I now have contact only with Al Weaver, tail gunner. One of those funny memories occurred late on a return from a deep mission. We were somewhere above the Rhine, beginning to wind down a bit, when Al shook us up when he cut loose with his 50's. He had spotted some barges on the Rhine, so he was "strafing" them from 15,000 feet!!

Leo Austin (wings folded), our bombardier, was riding in the nose turret one mission when someone above cleared their guns and the casings broke the plexiglass on the turret. In getting out, Leo nicked his shoulder on a sharp edge. We were kidding him about his "wound" and the Major debriefing us offered Leo a Purple Heart! I doubt that he really put it where Leo told him, because it would have been painful to his majorship!!

On one of our later missions, an ME 262 (?) jet, the first we had seen, was moshing along beside our group after our fighters

had left. Armorer/gunner "Kirk" Kirksey (folded wings) decided to "wake him up" by lobbing a few tracers at him. Boy, could that thing move! We'd never seen anything like that.

One rather scary incident happened when we were flying squadron lead to Magdeburg (02/03/45). We had damage to #1 engine on the bomb run, and soon after release I called my Deputy to take over as I slid out (Alley) and to the left. The call was confirmed by the co-pilot, but the pilot was flying. However, he was on intercom and did not hear the message, so when I pulled out, he stayed on my wing and much of the squadron tried to follow. We were a very lucky squadron that day, because it took some excellent flying by several people to avoid an incident that could have brought down several planes.

On the low level resupply mission to Best, Holland (09/18/44), we transferred our marker beacon antenna from below the catwalk to a Dutch haystack. We were low. I will never forget the flooded fields and the starving animals trapped on the dikes, and the young girl tending cattle in one of the few unflooded fields who saw us coming and waved her white apron at us. I've always hoped that she was cheering us on rather than asking us not to hurt her. That must have been an awesome sight for her.

We always had a reputation of which we were very proud. We were considered a "lucky" crew, meaning that we seldom had problems. Since we always had one non-crew member aboard, we were proud that the guys making up a mission wanted to fly with our "lucky" crew.

My wife, Lee and I plan to go to the San Antonio Reunion and hope to see you and so many others there.

Sincerely yours,



*This comes from:*

**Ken Adrian**  
2297 Chantalla Avenue, Pueblo, CO 81006  
9/12/95

Dear Will:

I got your most welcome letter recently -- thanks for the "Down De Hatch" photo. I had one, but it was small. We flew roughly 20 to 25 missions in that plane.

Bob Iverson of Ledger, Montana, the crew chief, kept the old beaters going and had over 100 missions without an abort, at one time. He was a remarkable crew chief and is one of the reasons we completed our tour.

I'm glad to get the true figures on our group's KIA (860) -- we still have roughly 100 more than the "Bloody 100th". Now I wonder how many POW's we had (528 and 179 Internees).

Don't feel obligated to answer right away -- I know you are busy. I just enjoy writing letters to good people.

Sincerely,

*This comes from:*

**Bill A. Rosser**  
8121 Country Wood Road N.E.  
Albuquerque, NM 87109-5262  
(505) 821-5485  
10/2/95

Dear Will:

Thanks so very much for your letter and list of our missions. During one of Lee's and my many moves, a box containing most of our memorabilia was lost, including the official log of my missions. For some unknown reason, my flight school log book in which I had noted our missions was not in that box. Your list and mine are quite similar, and only the Oct. 3 mission to Offenberg is really different. I had made a very few comments, which are included.

My first mission was as co-pilot (John J.) on Ryan's crew on August 24, 1944. I was shipped out immediately after my 35th, and was not allowed to go with my guys on their 35th. I think they may have arrived back in the U.S. before I did, though, because at Stone (?), I was assigned to a very large group for a large ship. However, that ship was needed for a hospital shipment, so we had to wait until another large ship was available. As I recall through 50 years of haze, it was about one month before such a ship was free. We were not allowed to challenge the "logic" that our group could not be broken up into smaller shipments!

I cannot recall why or just when we were moved from the 506th to the 66th. I think we were lucky that it happened, though, because we were billeted with Joe Testa's crew, and they were a wonderful bunch of men who were more experienced, and we learned much from them.

I mentioned in my recent letter that we were a "lucky" crew. There were two occasions in which we might not have been able to make it all the way home. One was Oct. 18, when the fuel transfer pump was sprinkled by the engineer who was relieving himself on Hitler when we hit some prop wash and he missed the bombs. We usually did not transfer fuel from the outboard tanks until needed because an empty tank full of fumes was much more likely to explode from hot shrapnel than a full tank. When we landed at a newly liberated field at Brussels where the only fuel was in Jerry cans, we were not particularly welcome, especially when they learned that we had 450 gallons of gas in our outer tanks. We were able to transfer after the pump thawed, so that relieved the problem to some degree.

We landed at Orly, as you indicated, on Jan. 16. Had fields on the continent not been available, it is doubtful that the mission could have been completed as flown because a great many planes were low on fuel. I don't remember how many landed at Orly, but there were a lot of them. Someone ran off the taxi strip into deep mud and stranded several planes. Since there was no equipment available to free him, we were "stuck" in Paris for three days. I told you we were lucky!

We look forward to seeing you in San Antonio. Best regards.

*This comes from:*

**Ralph Golubeck**  
Pilot, 506th Sq.  
13133 Royal Pines Drive  
St. Louis, MO 63146-2280  
10/3/93

Dear Will:

I would like to congratulate you and all of the others who have done such a great job of re-organizing the 44th BGVA. It was very difficult for me, sitting out here on the prairie to understand fully what was going on. I gather that there has been a rather bitter split in the organization and that you and your colleagues have formed this new group to keep the spirit of the 44th alive. For that, and your great newsletter, I congratulate you all for a job well done.



I have enclosed some pictures of a model of a B-24 "Princess" Tail Number 42-63963, call Letter "W," and would like to tell you the story of the Princess as far as I know it.

I flew the Princess on many missions as a pilot in the 506th B.S. I always enjoyed flying her because, without a nose or belly turret, she was a good deal faster than the "J" or "M" models that the rest of the group were flying. With that lower weight and speed advantage, I always returned from a mission with plenty of fuel. As the length of our missions kept increasing, fuel became a critical factor. On fuel situations, I returned with almost 800 gallons of fuel in the tanks. This wasn't necessarily the result of my fuel management skills but because the Princess just used less fuel.

During one of our missions critiques, Colonel Gibson congratulated me for excellent fuel management. I thanked him, but did not tell him that I was flying a "D" model.

On what was to have been my 30th and last mission, I was forced to seek refuge in Sweden after bombing the oil plant at Politz on 29 May 1944. We made an emergency landing in Sweden after sustaining serious battle damage from a twin engine German fighter (Me-410). The number one engine was knocked out and could not be feathered, and fuel tanks in the port wing were holed, resulting in loss of a large amount of fuel. My engineer, T/Sgt. Walter Dunslop attempted to transfer fuel, but was unable to do so. With #1 windmilling, and creating a lot of drag and loss of much fuel, it was determined that we would be unable to return to England. We had no other choice but to head for Sweden.

We made a successful landing on a grass field and were interned for about six months. My tail gunner, Sgt. Stephen (Zeke) Jones had bailed out shortly after we had been hit, and was taken prisoner by the Germans. He was later returned safely to the United States.

Normally, that would have been the end of my story, but there is more...much more. After returning to the States in November, 1944, I was assigned to Leam Air Base in Belleville, IL, flying C-47's. I had the duty of airdrom officer, and one day one of my duties was to inspect the control tower. While in the tower, I heard a pilot call in for landing instructions, but was using a very familiar tail number. My ears perked up! Was this the Princess? I requested that he repeat the call sign and type of aircraft. You guessed it! It was the Princess!!

I immediately left the tower, jumped into a jeep, and drove over to where the B-24 had just parked. I could not believe my eyes - it really was the Princess! It had been repaired, flown back to England and then to the U.S. and now was on her way to Arizona to be melted down. How sad!

I remembered that I had left my Zippo lighter in the plane when we landed in Sweden and wondered if it was still there. After a complete search of the flight deck, I am sorry to report that it was not there.

The next morning I went down to the flight line very early. I was hoping to be able to fly the Princess just one more time. All I wanted to do was to shoot one more landing. But even as early as I was, the B-24 pilot was earlier. He had just left for Arizona.

This should have been the end of my story, but again, it wasn't. Hold on - more to come: Fifty years later I was a volunteer at a flight museum in Dallas Texas at Love Field. One day, in late May of 1994, I was walking through a window display of about 20 warbird models when I spotted a B-24. Somehow I instantly knew that it was the Princess, even though I had not seen the nose art or the tail numbers. I literally ran into the shop and asked to see that model.

I was speechless at first, but finally managed to convey to Irene that I had been the pilot of the original airplane. About this time, the owner of the shop appeared and wanted to know what was going on. When I told him, I could tell that he really did not believe my story. How could I convince him that my story was true?

It was then that I remembered an old picture of the Princess that I carried in my wallet. Will, I believe that you sent it to me years ago. When I displayed the picture, they immediately believed my story and insisted that I sign an autograph book which contained autographs of many pilots. I was honored to sign, and of course, I bought the model and proudly display it in my den.

I have always been curious about this airplane and interested in clearing all of its history. *Why was it the only "D" model in the 506th Squadron?* (All others had been lost, last of the



"D's.") ("D's" were vulnerable to nose and belly attacks, so all replacement models were J or H models.) *Was it on the Florenti Raid?* (No, did not arrive until the end of September, 1943.) *Who flew it to the 44th BG?* (Unknown, but R.A. Johnson was the first to fly her in combat - 2 October, 1943.)

However, I do have a few facts which might help trace the Princess. There were several names on the airplane at the various crew positions. The only one I remember was Carlton Horne. He had transferred from the RAF. I flew a couple of missions with him and remember him very well. When I returned from Sweden, I saw him in the officers club playing bridge with Major McAtee and two others. Perhaps if he reads this letter (or others), he could help me.

I think the Princess might have been one of the Florenti Raiders. In Steve Birdhall's book, "Log of the Liberator," on page 28, he writes, "Behind him, Princess and all the rest pinpointed their bombs." (Reference could have been to Princess Charlotte, though this plane did not fly Florenti either).

I always thought that only the original 44th BG planes had the logo. Maybe some of this will jog some old memories and I can at last know the history of my "Princess." (No, the Flying Eightball was painted on the pilot's side for a considerable time after the original "D's" were gone (other than Lemon Drop).

My wife and I are thrilled that the 44th will assemble in my home town of St. Louis in '96. I have never before attended a reunion, but am certainly looking forward to attending this one.

On a sadder note, my old friend, John Money, folded his wings last year. We were good friends. He was a 506th Squadron pilot.

Keep 'em flying...

*EDITOR: Thanks for this amazing story of what seems to be your destiny with "The Princess" even in the form of a beautiful model! We don't have anything in the roster on Carlton Horne. You might try Jim McAtee, RRI, Box 134E, Viola, IL 61486. Also, you might wish to get your own copy of the 44th BGVA Roster to help in your research. See the note on Roster purchase elsewhere in this issue.*



*This comes from:*

*James & Edna Asman  
352 Church Street  
Saint Marys, Pennsylvania 15857-1012  
10/30/95*

Dear Roy:

We want to thank you and all the others who put together the wonderful San Antonio Convention, the hotel arrangements, the toasts, the Mexican band and dancers and most of all, those good old 44th Bomb Group people. We came home with dozens of new friends and a million sweet memories.

You have our total support and warmest regards in all our 44th veterans ventures.

*This comes from:*

*Pete Worby  
26 Woodgreen Road  
LUTON LU28BT  
England*

Dear Pete:

You don't know me yet. I am a 37 year-old English "Friends of the 8th" member. I have been a member for 20 years.

It is remembrance day here as I write this letter to you and I am sad today as I remember those that fell and thankful that I have never had to experience the horror of war.

I do appreciate what you guys did to help us free and no one will ever be able to find the words to thank you all enough. I hope some of us keep all your memories alive, I intend to.

Please tell me about yourself, Pete and tell me how much to send you for a copy of a war time photo of you, as I am most interested.

The greatest thing that I wish I could have is to shake the hand of every USAAF veteran because we consider all of you as honorary English.

I saw your page in 2nd AD news about "Petra" (p 11 Summer 95). Petra is an old temple set into a cliffside. It appears in the closing shots of the film "Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade" as the exterior of the temple.

Please can you also tell me how much to send for an old copy of 44th Newsletter and if any 44th want to write to me, I would love to hear from them.

If there is ever anything I can do for you or any 44thers, please let me know, as I am most honored to know you all.

Yours,

*EDITOR: He'll have a copy of this issue soon!*





## 44TH BOMB GROUP VETERANS ASSOCIATION BOARD

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Phone: (916) 268-1019

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## THE NEW 44TH ROSTER

Have you ever wished that you had a 44th BGVA Roster of your own to keep track of your crew and other buddies? Well, it's here! The Board authorized publishing the Membership Roster and we introduced it at the San Antonio Reunion. It was a RUSH! This first issue Active listing is complete as of June 1, and the deceased list as of June 5. Your order will be accompanied by an addendum sheet of changes since those dates.

The Roster will be completely updated and reprinted biennially on June 30, with an update addendum June 30 of the between year. The cost is \$5 plus \$2 1st class postage. Place your order with:

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Make checks payable to:  
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(In the lower left corner of your check, note Roster.)

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If you hear of a 44th'er that does not belong to our Association, or has passed away, please notify:

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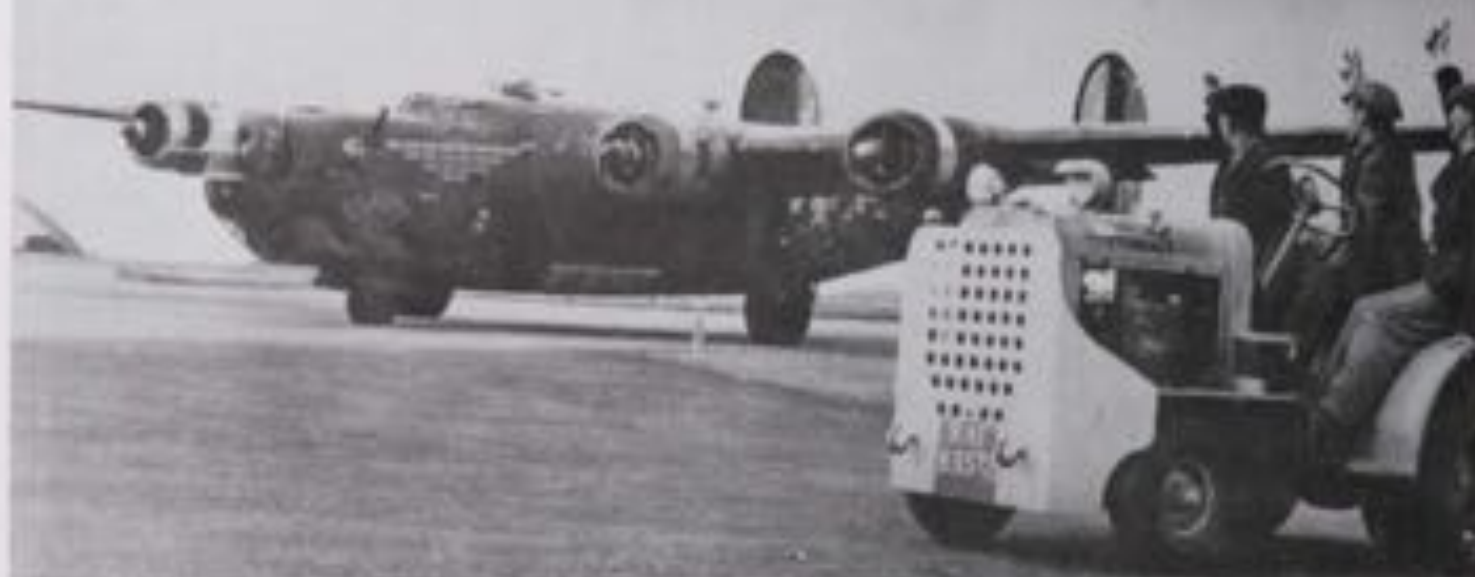
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If you move or change any aspect of your address or phone number, wife's name, want to stop receiving the 8 Ball Tails or whatever, please notify:

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516 C

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