



*** *We were the 1st, and still serving* ***



SECOND BOMBARDMENT ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

"Second to None"

www.2ndbombgroup.org



Volume 24, No. 2

July 2008



President's Corner

Dear members, families and friends,

On this Memorial Day, I am remembering all those men who were with the 2nd Bomb Group that never returned, those that returned that are no longer with us and send massive gratitude to all of you who fought and are still here for us to love and appreciate. You deserve the gratitude of our nation for your service. Just yesterday, I received a flag that Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R, TX) had flown over the Capitol in memory of my dad, 1st Lt. Pete Blackford who served with many of you guys and died July 16, 1943 in Algiers and is buried in Tunisia. A fitting memorial to a man I never met.

I cannot tell you how excited I am about our upcoming reunion in late August in Washington, DC. Karen Nelson has done a fabulous job in managing some 200 attendees' registrations and she has some exciting plans for us while we are in the nation's capital. I have visited the WWII Memorial and can hardly wait to attend with our own heroes, many of whom have not yet seen the edifice dedicated to their service. There are some fascinating tours scheduled for us including the White House and Pentagon. I know that all of you who are coming have already sent your security information for clearance to Karen by now. The hotel rooms are filling up and we are now planning some of our support for Karen. If any of you want to help with registration please email me at bstith@ix.netcom.com and we will put you to work. Your board has been working all year to help folks learn about family members' service, and to improve the website, to get an accurate database, doing the newsletter, keeping the books and doing the taxes and developing an authentic historical view of the 2nd Bomb Group. They are one wonderful group of men and woman who care a great deal about all of you and are eagerly looking forward to spending time with you and

your families in DC.

If you have not done so, please pay your dues so Matt Bryner has some money to count! We are still the best bargain in town when it comes to dues. Our new members include family members and friends. All are invited to come as we celebrate the remaining members of the Greatest Generation...our very own heroes. See you in August.

Fondly, Bonnie Hellums

The View from the Farm

Time draws near for the Reunion - August 27 through August 31. Our Washington DC authority, Karen Nelson has done an outstanding job setting up the events, making the contacts and obtaining security clearances. This may be the best attended reunion in many years by the old vets and total numbers. Good Show!!

Those who have not registered, better get it done.

We are greatly pleased by the willingness of the younger generations to take over some of the responsibilities of running the organization. Bonnie has done outstanding work as President. Matt and many others have jumped right in with vigor and enthusiasm to do the things that need doing. Believe me when I say we "old geezers" are mighty thankful.

Sadly, we have lost a number of Association Veterans during the past year. At our ages, though, that is to be expected. Hard as it is to lose lifelong friends and former companions with whom we fought the battles of a new distant war, we realize the stream of life continues.

All WWII vets continue to receive Plaudits and wherever we go, many want to shake our hands and thank us for what we did "in their behalf". I, for one, do appreciate those kind words and I try to respond with a "thank you" of my own. Many of

those who come to us with their thanks are in their middle years and I always try to ask them if they served in the military forces. Usually I find they did serve in the Vietnam war or other military action since that time, including the present conflict in which our nation is involved.

I am always delighted to see the respect and cheering of the populace when those who return are present. Those who are fighting the battles now are demonstrating the abilities and the fighting courage that has been present in Americans since the Minutemen stood their ground against their enemies.

Keep on cheering those who are in the front lines of the battles for Freedom.

Thank all of you who send information to correct and update our roster and files. And especially those who send interesting articles and general information. Many stories are still out there to be told. Keep those cards and letters coming.

Earl Martin, Editor

Editorial

I do not normally editorialize but feel there is one situation which requires a bit of discussion since it has a great deal to do with the present and future of this great nation.

I am concerned about the apparent lack of concern regarding the budget for our military forces. The members of Congress and the Administrations (whether they are of either party) seem to be unaware of the need for adequate funding to keep all our forces equipped and ready for action whenever and wherever they are needed.

I will mainly refer to the US Air Force, but the other services have similar situations.

No more important government need exists than that of self defense. The armed forces of our nation are set up for that purpose and though we have been slow to react in preparation for military emergencies in the past, our military forces have always risen to the task and have kept most of our citizens from harm.

Our present situation causes me to wonder if our legislators and the people of our nation realize the difficult time the armed forces have in staying adequate for our defense with the very small part of the national budget allocated to them.

Some examples: Our airplanes are old and worn out. Our fighters, bombers and transport airplanes are nearly all far past the point at which the builders meant for them to still be in use. Most of our F-15 first line fighters had to be grounded for an extended period. (Some of them were falling apart.) The tankers, a very important part of our war fight-

ing capabilities, are older than the crews that fly them and they are worn out; while the politicians argue about who should build some new ones. The Air Force has been at war for the last 18 years with a great deal of wear and tear on the equipment. Since September 1991, our fighters have flown more than 200,000 hours in keeping a protective cover over our nation.

We old vets, who flew new airplanes in WWII are hard pressed to believe the Air Force can get along while their budgets are always being cut. (The Flying Fortress I left in a heap in a field in Yugoslavia, was on its third mission).

I am sure the other services have the same problems, but I believe the Air Forces of the United States should immediately have its budget doubled, so the very expensive equipment they need can be placed on order.

Let us not wake up one day in the future and find we do not have the ability to fight off those who would cause us harm.

Your Editor

Did You Know?

1. That one Air Force Mobility Command aircraft takes off every 90 seconds.
2. That since 9-11-01, Noble Eagle (Fighter Sorties over North America) has flown more than 181,000 hours to provide protection in our sky.
3. That at the time the United States entered World War One, the total strength of the Air Division was 52 officers and 1100 men, plus 200 civilian mechanics. Of the 55 planes on hand, Hap Arnold considered 51 obsolete and 4 obsolescent.
4. That Hermann Goering was a fighter pilot in WWI credited with shooting down 22 aircraft. He took over command of the Red Baron's squadron.
5. That Betty Grable's "million dollar" legs were only insured for \$250,000.
6. That Guam was the first US Territory to be captured by the enemy in WWII, Dec. 10, 1941.



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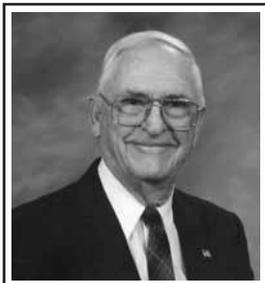
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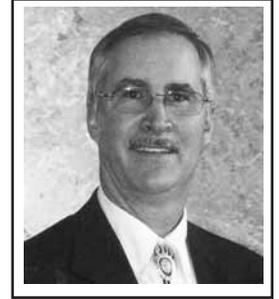
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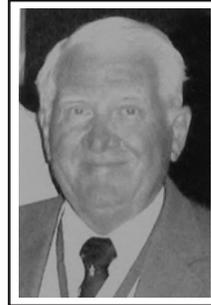
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In Memorium

Past President Kemp F Martin, 20th Sq.
July 13, 2008

Past Treasurer William A Parsons, 96th Sq.
July 12, 2008

John Bascu, 49th Sq.
William T. Garland, 20th Sq.
May 25, 2008

Thomas M. Moriarty, 96th Sq.
Nov. 26, 2007

James Reiman, 429th Sq.
March 30, 2008

Emmett A. Shearer, 49th Sq.
July 30, 2007

Albert F. Sparkman, 20th Sq.
May 1, 2007

George B. Spencer, 429th Sq.
Sept. 30, 2007

William J. Weckel, 96th Sq.
Aug. 5, 2007

Arnold A. Witoff, 429th Sq.
May 27, 2008

Special note: Barbara Specker, widow of John R. Specker, who managed the 429th Sq. reunions, passed away April 27, 2008.



Lalka on left with Irene Lopatniuk holding one of Lalka's doll collection.

300 Mission Party

Ed. Note: When an infrequent chance for a party occurred, the men of the 2nd Bomb searched about for members of the gentler sex to grace the gathering. They were not easy to find in the war zone.

In the January, 2008 newsletter Bombardier Raymond Tuwalski told of his experience in finding the ladies of the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration and described the fine work they were doing. He continues the story with another which is related. Perhaps others may remember the 300 mission party.

He says, I returned to the Bomb Group. The next evening while dining in the Officer's Mess, the Special Services Officer of the 2nd Bomb Group made the announcement that the group was approaching their 300th mission. Unable to predict precisely the day it would actually take place, the date agreed upon to hold the 300th mission party was October 7, 1944. Female guests would be welcomed, but he strongly advised against escorting the local camp followers or "ladies of the night." American nurses and officers, and Allied female officers would be most welcome.

As he passed by my table I questioned him if that included the ladies I had met in the UNRRA compound. And then the possibility of including the Polish nurses I had met while visiting the Polish organization. He inquired, "How many ladies?" Not being certain, I estimated perhaps a dozen. But I told him, because of the great distance they would need to travel, transportation and overnight accommodation would have to be provided..."

"The following day, I was called to Group Headquarters and told I was removed from combat status. All transportation would be provided by our group and I was handed two sealed envelopes which contained official invitations to the party. Not to leave me in the dark, so to speak, about the contents



300th mission celebration. Brig. Gen. Lawrence, 5th Wing Commander addresses the gathering at the officer's club, while Gen. Twining enjoys an after dinner cigar.

of the invitations, the Special Services Officer said all transportation would be provided by the Bomb Group. I envisioned a huge bus being needed and I asked if he could be more specific about the travel arrangements. I noticed Col. Paul T. Cullen, Group Commander, was listening to the conversation. I was soon notified that an airplane would be made available to fly the guests from the Bari airport to our base."

"I was issued a command car from the motor pool and ordered to proceed on my mission to obtain as many of the female guests as possible."

"When I arrived at the UNRRA compound I presented the invitation to our party to the supervisor. As she read the invitation, she rose from her chair to show it to the others. They began to chatter among themselves and what then took place was amazing to me. Some disappeared, returning to show me their formal garments, inquiring if they would be appropriate. They had beautiful gowns they had packed amongst their wardrobes. I was flabbergasted. This was a war zone and these ladies included formal evening wear to take to their overseas assignments."

"The next day I drove on to Casamassima. On the way I purchased several bunches of flowers to give to the nurses for the various wards."

"At the Polish hospital, I was introduced to the Matron of Nurses, Julia Nenko and handed her the invitation. After giving it some thought she asked how many nurses we could accommodate. I answered, as many as she could spare from their duties. She said it would take several days for her to draw up plans to shuffle her remaining nurses and could I return the following week to firm up the arrangements. I agreed and was elated at the success, envisioning a swarm of Allied Nurses attending our party."

Upon return to the base, I reported my successes to the Special Services Officer and inquired if there would be enough overnight accommodations for what I felt could amount to almost thirty guests. I was told the beds would be cleared of patients in all the squadron hospitals. There would be a sufficient number of beds."

"I became a most popular person on the base. Word had gotten about that I was the sole purveyor responsible in bringing a group of female guests to our celebration. A number of men asked the Special Services Officer how the distribution of these guests would be handled. He, in turn came to tell me, that since it was through my efforts the guests would be there I would be responsible in pairing the couples. I took a sheet of paper and as each officer approached, I added him to the list on the left side of the ledger. Then each was told I had no fix on how many would be attending but those on top of the list would be escorting the UNRRA ladies

and the others the Polish nurses."

"On my return to Bari my first stop was at the UNRRA base to firm up and explain the arrangements for our party. I continued on to Casamassima. When I met my contact, Irene Lopatniuk at the officer's club, she appeared very saddened. She told me their attending our party had been cancelled. They were in mourning because of the defeat by the Germans at the Warsaw uprising. The uprising begun by the Polish underground on August 2, 1944 had been put down by the Germans while the Russian troops stood idly by on the eastern bank of the Vistula River. Since my last visit an order from the Polish High Command was issued to all Polish troops that they were to be in mourning.

I was devastated. All my efforts to get the Polish nurses to our party had been wiped out. I asked to see the Matron of Nurses. She was very sympathetic but the Administrator had to follow the order handed down by the High Command. I countered by requesting her to approach the Administrator to plead our case. She agreed to try and in the meantime she relieved Irene for the remainder of the day to keep me company.

We went to the officer's club to watch Irene's co-workers at their game of bridge. It was an experience, watching and hearing their bidding in the Polish language and the postmortems that followed each rubber.

I awoke early the next day and was at the hospital gate about 8 am. I was escorted to Julia Nenko's office where she invited me to share coffee and cookies. She said the administrator would see me in his office at 9 am. The administrator was not present in his office as we were escorted in by the orderly. I observed by the certificates hanging on the wall that he was also the Chief Surgeon. When he entered, I saluted a full Colonel of the Polish Army. I was a nervous shavetail lieutenant about to plead our cause.

I offered my condolences about what the Germans and Russians had done to the Polish underground in Warsaw and explained the reasons behind our 300th Mission Party, saying we would welcome all Allied Military commanders.

When I had finished, the Colonel inquired where I had learned to speak their language so well. I told him I had what amounted to eight years of teaching by Polish American Nuns. He then revealed that word had gotten around the compound that a person was there who might be impersonating an officer in military garb and who spoke the language fluently. He had me investigated as a possible spy.

The meeting came to an abrupt end. The Colonel indicated he was not offering me hope but he would consult his superiors. Later that afternoon
(continued on next page)

Irene found me and took me to Julia's office where I was told a token group would be made available to our party. I was greatly relieved.

I departed early the following morning and drove nonstop to our base. I reported my results to the Special Services Officer. I was told I had done well and was directed to be available to transport our guests to the Bari airport and that a committee would be at our base to escort the ladies to their accommodations.

A huge ambulance was provided for transport of the guests to the Bari airport. All medical paraphernalia had been removed and padded seating was along the walls with open space in the middle for baggage. A corporal was assigned to be the driver. I noticed a large plaque on the drivers side door stating that the ambulance was provided by donations from the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Cleveland, Ohio, my hometown.

We left for Bari the day before the party, checking first with the UNRRA group confirming their attendance. The driver was not too elated about making the entire journey so I relieved him and continued on my own.

I received some ecstatic news. Twenty-one nurses were made available to attend the party. Could I accommodate that many? I said yes, realizing it would take two trips to the airport. I went to Fifteenth Air Force Headquarters and placed a call to 2nd Bomb Headquarters to inform Special Services about the number of Polish nurses. Sleeping accommodations would have to be provided for them and a later flight would be required to fly the last group of them to Amendola. I requested a confirming reply in the event we could not accommodate that many. The reply came back "bring them all."

The following day became a circus. When the two B-17s arrived, I told one of the pilots that after taking a load of nurses to our base, one of them would need to return for another load. I left the corporal at the airport to assist the guests and I drove to the hospital for the remaining guests.

When I arrived at the hospital, I learned that Julia Nenko was coming along, serving as chaperon to her charges. She sat in the passenger seat as we drove to the Bari airport.

When we arrived at the airport, the corporal was standing on the tarmac, with no B-17 in sight. I went to the tower to inquire by phone as to the whereabouts of the air transportation. I was told there had been some delay and the aircraft was on the way. I learned later, the delay was due to some of the aircraft sustaining damage on the mission to the Lohau Oil Refinery that day. It was almost dusk when the aircraft arrived and the pilots, crew chief and one waist gunner did not appear too happy making this trip. Their feelings dissolved when they saw



Front row left to right: Lt. Arnold Kwiatkowski, Nurse Lalka. Nurses: Irene Lopatniuk, Helen, Elizabeth. Transportation officer Capt. Whiting, and office name unknown.

Back row left to right: Officer unknown, Lt. Raymond Tuwalski (behind Irene), Group Mission Briefing Officer; Lt. Stanley Smorag (behind Nurse Helen), Special Services Officer (behind Nurse Elizabeth).

all the lovely females board the aircraft.

I had Irene with me in the nose of the aircraft and Lalka managed to crawl her way up to be with us. It was a delight to see them so fascinated by the scenery below and how the airplane was equipped, armament and all.

Upon landing, the nurses were escorted to the hospital area to freshen up. I was told to get into class A's and report to the Officer's Club. I had taken the list of names of the officers desiring to be escorts to our guests and placed opposite to the names of the ladies. The ladies were then escorted by the committee to the entrance to the club. I began with the UNRRA ladies. They were escorted to their assigned area in the club. Finally I ended with the Polish ladies and I with them serving as an interpreter. I had Irene and Matron of Nurses seated at my immediate left.

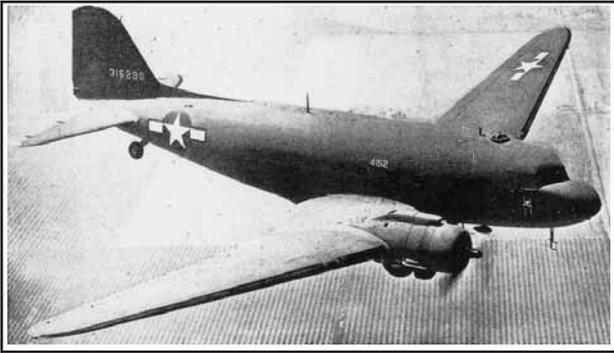
I was kept busy interpreting the conversations between the escorts and their guests. I managed to have two dances; the first with Julia Nenko and later with Irene. I motioned to other officers standing by to take Irene to dance. I discovered at the table that Julia Nenko, as I suspected long before, understood and spoke English. I chided her for that, which she took good naturedly.

At the end of the dance, the guests were escorted by the base security to their sleeping accommodations. What cries of disappointment came from the young officers hoping to have solo time with their guests. It turned out that there was insufficient room to house all the guests. Julia, Nenko, Irene and Lalka did not have a place to retire for the evening. Sadly, I had been put on combat status and was listed to fly the next day as was Lt. Kwiatkowski and Stan Smorag. Stan and

Kwiatkowski offered Nenko and the two ladies their sleeping quarters; their stone block hut. We escorted them inside, showing them how the stove worked and the dangers that went with it. Arnold and Stan gathered their flying gear and carried them to the tent I occupied with our crew where we changed clothing and trudged to the Officer's Club. We each selected a table away from the eyes of the Italian help hard at work cleaning up the aftermath of the party. We slept on the tables for the remainder of the night waking up for breakfast and proceeded for briefing of the mission.

The mission was a practice mission and when we returned to base all of the guests had been safely returned to their places of duty.

In closing, it is my hope the readers will appreciate the lighter events that took place during our combat days at Amendola and some of the happier moments.



The Douglas C-47B Skytrain Military Transport (two Pratt & Whitney R-1830-90C engines).

The Berlin Airlift

Author: Lloyd Haefs

Some of our members were involved in the Berlin Airlift. Perhaps some memories will be stirred up by this little article.

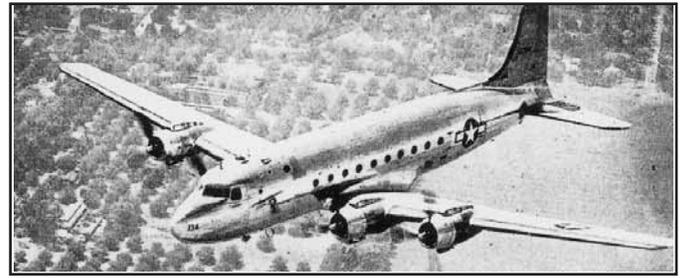
Musings of John Kochanski

Some time back I was ruminating on the Berlin Airlift and thought, why not do a short piece on it for the 2nd Bomb Newsletter and/or webpage. This is my first attempt at such a thing. I hope everyone enjoys it.

The Berlin Airlift was started in June 1948 when the Russians blockaded road and rail traffic into the city. The city was divided into zones, British, French, American and Russian in East Berlin as was the country of Germany itself divided into zones, the Allied forces in the west and the Russians in the east. After the dust of politics had settled, Berlin, the long time capital of Germany, found it was deep in Russian East Germany.

The Russians wanted the Allies out of Berlin, hence the blockade.

However, the Allies had from the Russians a



The Douglas C-54B Skymaster Long-range Military Transport (four Pratt & Whitney R-2000-7 engines).

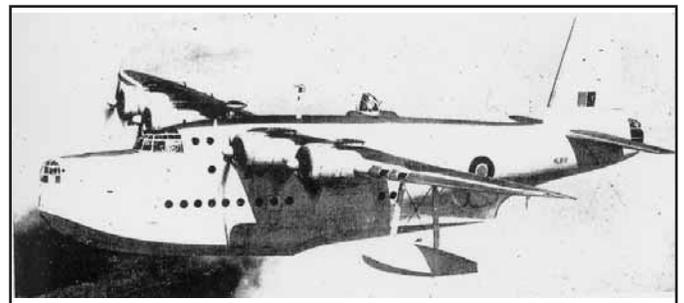
written guarantee of access to the city by air. The Russians were thinking about Stalingrad where the Germans tried to do such a thing. If the German Luftwaffe could not supply an army from the air, how could the Allies supply a city?

The Russians, from their own war time experience, should have known that the right people, with a good cause, can achieve dang near anything. For the Allies, the cause was to keep the city of West Berlin alive and out of Russian hands.

The airlift was started with C-47s, otherwise known as the DC-3, whose exploits are legendary, but it could only carry 5,000 pounds. So the call went out for bigger planes. From the US came the C-54 or DC-4, a venerable workhorse that could carry 20,000 pounds of cargo. From the UK came converted Lancaster and Halafax bombers and the Short Sunderland flying boats.

They came from all parts of the world, civilian and military, to achieve a goal and through their teamwork, they did. The history of the Berlin Airlift and the people who made it possible makes for great reading. Here are a few facts to wet your appetite.

At the height of the Airlift, landings and takeoffs were at three minute intervals, 24/7. On the 1,000 hour check, some of the C-54s that had been hauling coal, were found to have over 4,000 pounds of coal dust that had sifted down below the floor boards.



The Short Sunderland III General Reconnaissance Flying-boat (four Bristol Pegasus XVIII engines).

Because they were protected from the corrosive effects of salt water, British Sunderland flying boats were used to haul salt, landing on the Havelsee Lake in Berlin.

(continued on next page)

The Airlift lasted 324 days and 278,228 flights were made. More than 2 million tons of goods were delivered. Check out the web or the library for more information on a fascinating time in our history. Great stuff for school reports.

I would like to end this with a short piece I composed to honor those people of the Berlin Airlift.

In the halls of human history, there is an endeavor that will live forever.

That is the Berlin Airlift.

To all who participated and to those that gave their all,

You showed us how to act if we get the call.



Thank you Berlin Airlifters.

Top row - L/R - D. Mayfield, W. Bigham, J. Krannichfeld, V. Dunkelberger, C. Gabbert and L. Meek

Bottom row - L/R - J. Clemons, S. Ayo, R. Johnson, and W. Payne - Massicult, North Africa

War Story

This story began with an e-mail from Shirley Payne Engel. She said, "My father was a gunner in the 96th Squadron. He was taken prisoner from the 24 Feb. 1944 mission to Steyer, Austria. I have a newspaper clipping from his hometown paper, Chickasha, Oklahoma of the march he and others endured. There is another clipping which gave his only experience as a ball turret gunner (his position was waist gunner). He died Feb. 10, 1987 in Oklahoma. I never knew him, nor do I remember ever seeing him, but I sure wish I had. Anyway, my reason for contacting you, was to see if you would like a copy of his story."

Another e-mail followed with copies of the two clippings which will be found below. "My mother and I moved to California from Chickasha,

Oklahoma in 1940. I am very sorry we never knew each other. I was told we were very alike. I would like to think so, because he was a brave man with great fortitude or he wouldn't have survived the war. I have no pictures of him. If there should happen to be any with his crew, I would be so grateful to see it."

"Someone was kind enough to send these clippings to my mother. She kept them in a scrapbook with pictures of me and family as I grew up."

Ed. Note: Thank you, Shirley for an excellent story: The clippings are very fragile so she sent copies.

Chickasha Gunner Really Sees Air Battle from Ball Turret

Pilot He Shot Down Didn't Know It

The "whole show" is described by T/Sgt. W C Payne, Chickasha, following an air raid over France in which he rode in the ball turret, and which he describes as "I was thrilled to the bone."

In a letter to W P Chaffin, he writes.

Things have been going pretty good for me lately. I was made Technical Sergeant the first. And I have been on raids over France, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria and different parts of Northern Italy. I missed the raids over Greece but day before yesterday, I went on a honey. My regular position is top turret. Best job but a poor position to see the show because I never could see the bombs strike. On this last raid, I rode in the ball turret. From there I could see the whole show. Our target was in France. You probably have read about the raid. I could see the whole target area as we approached, although we were nearly four miles high. I saw the big flak guns below open up on us. They looked like a lot of flashlights blinking on and off. They filled the air around us with black puffs. One came close enough I could hear it go "whoof" above the roar of the engines. I didn't even look up or even jump. I was too busy observing the target area and trying to count the number of guns they had. Then I heard over the intercom "bomb bay doors open.

I swung up facing the bomb bay, just as the big eggs started falling. I swung down with them and watched them fall with a long curving drop. They went directly into the target. Then came the explosions. The whole target area was a mass of explosions. I was thrilled to the bone.

Then came the fighters. Focke Wolf 190's and Messerschmit 109's. I saw the boys behind us hit one that was diving on them from above. He caught fire and just kept diving until he hit the ground.

The four headed for the tail of our ship. We

started firing before they got in range - they turned away. Three 109s came in on our nose. The top turret man got one of them. He went past me, a flying ball of fire. I saw him hit the water. A 109 came at our left side, low. I fired a few short bursts at him and he peeled off before he was really in range. As he flew behind us I followed him around and saw another one hit the water behind us.

Then I swung all the way around looking for more. I spotted two all the way off to our left. They turned into us - dropping low as they came. One was 500 to 600 yards ahead of the other one. I centered him in my sight and tracked him as he came in. No doubt now, he was straight at me. Their backs were painted exactly the color of the water. He must have thought I didn't see him because he came in straight as an arrow. I had dead aim on him as he came into range but held my fire because he was below me and flying level making it necessary to raise his nose to fire at me. On he came. I held my sight on him like a leech. Now he was in point blank range. Any time I pressed my thumb he was mine. Then he lifted his nose and I pressed. Those twin fifties sang a beautiful tune. It was him or me - but all the time he was coming in, I knew who it was going to be. He burst into flame instantly, rolled over to the right and crossed under our tail (the other fighter left). Rolling and burning, I gave him another burst. He nosed straight down and went into the water. No more came. We were well out to sea on our way home. From the time we turned away from our target 'till the last fighter left was 14 minutes. I saw four fighters go down, all in flames. None of the pilots got out. I didn't hurt mine. He never knew what hit him.

So Much to Live For, Reason GI's Survive Prisons

**T.Sgt. Payne among 40 overseas patients
who arrive at BGH**

"The only reason I can give that we had the strength to live was that we had so much to live for," said T/Sgt. William C. Payne, Chickasha, who arrived at Borden General Hospital Wednesday night after being a prisoner of the Germans for 14 months and eight days.

The shipment of patients from the European Theater included six from Oklahoma. Others were mainly from Mississippi and Alabama.

Top turret gunner on a B-17 with the 15th Air Force, T/Sgt Payne will be remembered by Chickasha citizens for his colorful descriptions of a bombing raid over France which appeared in the Feb. 24, 1944 issue of the Express.

He was reported missing in action Feb. 24, 1944 over Austria and was later reported a prisoner of war.

Our ship was hit by 250 fighters on this mission," he said. "Of this Nazi group 165 were shot down by our wing, group.

We were going to Steyer, Austria to bomb the largest Focke Wulf factory in Germany's possession at the time. The group did wipe out the target. We crossed the Alps and were immediately met by the Luftwaffe in force an hour and forty minutes from the target. We went down 20 minutes from the target.

The Luftwaffe all attacked the same plane at one time. I couldn't say whether or not I shot down any. Enemy planes were exploding all around, but whenever one exploded, there were two in its place. I was left waist gunner on that mission.

They were coming in at us in formations of four as close as they could get without crashing our ship. Our ship started flying to pieces all around us. I was the only one in the rear of the plane not seriously wounded. The left wing was on fire, the vertical stabilizer was shot off, the pilot's controls were destroyed and he couldn't move the stick or the rudder. All the gunners except me were on the floor seriously wounded. The radio man was the only one that died. There was nothing to do but get out of there quick.

The trainers escorted us to the ground and radioed our position to the Austrian ground forces. Everybody got out. We landed in the snow and were picked up and taken to an air field. The German pilots there were sports. They played the game. Among the pilots who visited us at the air field was an Austrian flier who had been shot down that day by the B-17s. He was very pleasant and looked upon the air war as a game of ball.

From there, things took on a different hue. We were taken to Dulag at Frankfort-on-the-Main. There, we were put in cells without any ventilation. The rooms were barely large enough for one man to lie down in. They put 12 of us in one such room. There was an effective electric heater on the wall which they turned up to full force. We thought that our time had come...that we were to be smothered to death. We took off all our clothes and had to lie on the floor to breath. We stayed there for three days and nights and we each had one slice of bread and a cup of artificial coffee.

Then we were taken to headquarters, processed and shipped in box cars to **Hydekrug**. Early in July 1944, the Russians advanced to within 50 miles of us. The Germans took us from our camp and loaded us on a boat at Memel.

We were put in a hole 60 feet below the surface. The only entrance was a hatch 10 inches wide in the top which was reached by an iron ladder straight up and down. We were packed in the steaming hole so tightly that there was not over one square
(continued on next page)

foot of space per man. We couldn't lie down, we couldn't sit down and we couldn't stand up.

"We stayed on the boat three days and two nights and arrived at Schweinemunda, a port at the mouth of the Oder river where we were taken off and handcuffed by twos. Then we were hauled by box cars to Grossschow, Pomerania. We were then lined up in the road in columns of four with packs on our shoulders and were cursed by the officer in charge who told the guards that we were beasts, murderers and "Luftgangsters." He ordered the guards to run us down the road until we dropped, to club us with their rifle butts, to stick us with their bayonets and to sic the dogs on us. They did all this without any provocation from any of our men. The ditches between the station and the camp were lined on both sides of the road with bodies of wounded.

"After that, those who had made the run safely were taken into camp, stripped and searched. There again, many were beaten. All of our possessions were taken from us and we were given back one pair of pants, a shirt and shoes. Some of the boys received a towel, but I didn't.

A British chaplain with us in the room at the time protested to the Germans for beating our men. He was immediately beaten.

We remained at Stalag Luft IV until Feb. 6, 1945 when the Russians were within a few miles of us.

It was a different story this time. There were 16,000 of us in this camp, among them two other Chickasha men, T/Sgt. Clarence Bolt and S/Sgt. Noble Shires. We had heard through the grapevine and also heard the German guards remark that we were no longer prisoners of war, but were hostages.

On Feb. 6 we were marched from camp by a very irregular route, generally going North and West. The first three days of the march we were given no food. Fortunately, we had some Red Cross boxes. When they did finally feed us on the road one afternoon, we were given only a piece of bread and a cup of soup.

We had walked since daylight that morning and it was raining. We continued to walk until one o'clock the following morning...and it was still raining. We had not been allowed to get a drink of water all that time. After walking 25 to 40 miles, still on a road in the woods, we could go no further. We had eaten all the Red Cross food. When they stopped they said "here's where you sleep." We slept in a clearing in the forest with a circle of machine guns guarding us. Each man had two blankets, soaking wet.

We started marching at daylight the next morning and continued until dusk. This continued until May 2, 1945, during which time the Germans didn't give us more than two loaves of bread per man and less than three potatoes per day.

We were marched a great deal in circles, clear across Germany to Hanover where we spent one week sleeping in mud under a tent pitched in muddy ground. There we received one seventh of a loaf of bread per man and one bowl of soup which did not contain more than half of a good sized potato with water and not even any salt.

My feet were never dry day or night from the time we started marching until about two weeks after we moved out of Hanover and it stopped raining.

The treatment was obviously planned by some 'higher ups' and was uncalled for and unnecessary. They had figured just how little men could live on and gave us that much.

The Germans had plenty of food on the farms we were marched by. There were from 200 to 500 hogs bedded down in huge stone barns on nearly every farm. The hogs were kept cleaner than we were able to keep ourselves. There were also big white geese, fat ducks and plenty of chickens, herds of cows and fine bulls. They had work horses of every type, beautiful, well kept and perfectly cared for. Huge piles of potatoes, turnips, yellow turnips, sugar beets and other vegetables were seen in all the fields.

Daily, as we cried for food, they said 'kinder' (we don't have any) and yet we saw the food everywhere.

We were filthy with no chance to bathe or clean up. Sometimes we slept in barns. We were all so lousy we couldn't rest when we had the chance. The fleas had a bite that could put a Louisiana mosquito to shame. A typhus serum was obviously very effective but some groups were not so fortunate. One whole English camp became infected with typhoid fever and mostly all died.

We were treated much better than many others. If the Hitler movement had not suffered from internal collapse, I firmly believe we would have been held as hostages by the high command in a last attempt by them to save their own lives at the cost of ours. We would not have expected the world to compromise with men of their type even at the price of our lives.

We were near Luneberg, Germany between two villages on May 2, 1945 when British soldiers entered both villages at 3:30 pm. One jeep plus one Limey, plus one Tommy gun composed the force that caused the German guards to lay down their arms.

Immediately, the men started eating chickens and gathering eggs. We built bonfires and cooked a big feast. The next day we rode on German wagons pulled by German teams to a road where an SS motor column had been surprised and had fled leaving hundreds of motor vehicles behind. We selected a good auto and took a ride back down the

road over which we had marched to Luneberg. After being well fed in hospitals for a while, we were flown across the Atlantic in C-54s and landed in Maine, June 5. From there we were sent to Mitchel Field, New York and from there to Borden General.

Now that I am back in god's country, it's just like being born over again. It's just like a dream to be treated decent. To have good food and enjoy the wonderful things at home. Any time you hear of a super-anything in Europe just pass it off with a sly grin. We have the same things in the United States, only much better.

S/Sgt. Payne wears the Air Medal with two oak leaf clusters, the Presidential Citation and the Purple Heart.



A Sixty-Three Year Quest

by William J. (Bill) Fili

Ed. Note: This article was taken from the Association of Former Prisoners of War in Romania newsletter. Winter 2008.

Bill Fili and Hank Heim beneath the cockpit of the B-17 Yankee Lady. A symbolic gesture of returning the Romanian coins.

I was one of more than eleven hundred POWs that were rescued by B-17s landing in a grassy field, each picking up 20 ex POWs and braving the hazardous take-offs on this short "airfield" in an overloaded bomber. I stood between the pilot and co-pilot for that flight wanting to see the Adriatic Sea and know I was free. That was in August 1944.

During that return to freedom, the two pilots and I had a long discussion about the circumstances of the rescue mission. I took some Romanian coins out of my pocket and gave each of them a few. Landing in Italy was uneventful and I shook the hands of the two pilots, thanking them for the ride of a lifetime. As time went on, I often thought of those men and asked air crews I met, without success, if anyone knew any of the rescuing pilots.

I will fast track to June 2, 2007 at the Mid Atlantic World War II Commemorative Weekend in Reading, PA when that changed. This was an air show that I have been presenter and opening speaker for the last seventeen years. But his year, the operations manager wanted to invite a few of the WWII Veterans (aka - Old Geezers) to a cocktail party. I was invited and showed up at the requested time and was directed to sit at a certain table with five other "old geezers."

Introductions began and the gentleman to my right began by saying he flew the P-51 Mustang over Germany and was credited with being the only Mustang pilot to shoot down an ME-262 jet fighter. To his left was a past German fighter pilot whose credits included being a ME-262 jet jockey. The significance of this is that he was the German pilot shot down by the man sitting to his right. The next man at the table said he flew B-17s in the 15th Air Force in Italy and that he helped rescue POWs from Romania. My ears perked up and I stopped the introductions to question him. Did he actually land in Bucharest, Romania to pick up the freed POWs? He said he did - he picked up twenty men and took off right away. I asked him if anyone of the POWs gave him anything. He said "yes" and I asked what did he give you?" He responded "Romanian coins." I was dumb founded with surprise as I said, "I was the POW who gave you those Romanian coins." He too was quite surprised and pleased that we had reconnected after all these years. His name is Hank Heim and he has been living in Harrisburg, PA all these years.

Finally, my sixty-three year quest has been fulfilled and I had a chance to thank one of the pilots that flew me to freedom. The moral of this is to never give up your ideals or quests!

But isn't that why the American GI succeeded in ending the two ocean World Wars and handed all people on planet earth the path to universal peace and freedom. Perhaps the lesson here is for world leaders to start listening to "We the People." Ole geezers of WWII would not give up.

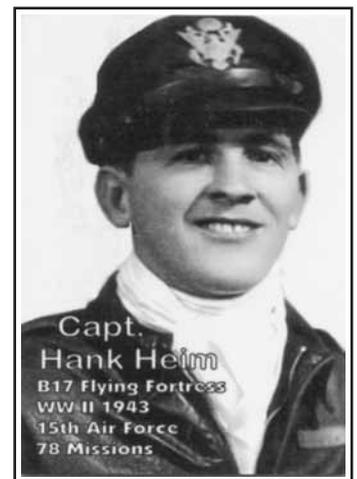
Ed. Note: This story does not end here. Read on.

I contacted association member Henry Heim to obtain this story of the POW rescue mission. He replied that indeed he was one of the pilots that flew Bill Fili to freedom and he described the mission.

The day before they were putting plywood in the bomb bays. We were informed we were to pick up POWs. We did not have any clue as to where.

The next morning we found out and I couldn't wait for take-off (we wanted so very much to get them home).

We flew formation to the field in Bucharest until our final approach to the runway. There were groups of POWs (approx 20 to a group). As each plane landed he would taxi to the end (his posi-



(continued on next page)

tion in the formation) the POWs would then get in the plane and it would taxi out to take-off.

The plane in front of me blew a tire so the POWs rushed to my plane and all tried to get on (double load). The cockpit and rest of the plane was jammed and overloaded. I really hated to do it, but I insisted some of the extra POWs had to get off and try another plane. My cockpit was jammed with a POW between the pilot and co-pilot. I told him he should stand back and give us room to make the tricky take-off. He did so.

I had approx. 30 POWs on my plane. The take-off from Bucharest was hair raising at best due to the short field. As we approached the coast of Italy a cheer arose among the POWs.

The man standing between the pilot and co-pilot as we approached Italy at the time gave each of us a Romanian coin.

As I was on final approach tears welled up in my eyes for you see I had a hand in the freedom of these fine young American heroes. Approximately two weeks later I volunteered to go back to Romania and rescued eight wounded American GI's. But that is another story.



Amendola is a modern Italian Air Force base now.

Looks different, eh?

VA News

More than a million veterans are in line to share \$349 million in insurance dividends during 2008.

The VA operates one of the nation's largest insurance programs providing more than \$1 trillion in coverage for 7.1 million service members, veterans and family members. The dividend payments will be sent to an estimated 1.1 million holders of

VA insurance policies on the anniversary dates of their policies. (AFA News)

Big Boomers

This year, the Air Force plans to test the Massive Ordnance Penetrator. It is the 30,000 pound next generation bunker buster. It will be test dropped from a B-52. (Air Force Magazine)

Jeanne Valentine

Ten years ago (that is 20 issues of the newsletter) when I took over as editor upon the untimely death of Rudy Kohler, I was told to send the material for the next issue to Jeanne Valentine at a seemingly unlikely address in Shingle Springs, California. I did as I was directed.

Since that time and for some time before that time, Jeanne has been typesetting and assembling our newsletter from my poor job of editing and gathering all of it.

Jeanne has been very valuable in this work as well as helping us, through the years, assembling the mailing list and roster and mailing our dues notices to the members.

Now, time moves on. Jeanne has many other duties and responsibilities and will not be able to do our work any more after this issue. We will need to have this work done in another way. We will do so.

Thank you, Jeanne, you will be missed and we will always remember how you have helped our association through the years.

Note from Past President, Dick Radtke

Below is the note I sent to Ed Wade in response to his inquiry concerning the procedure necessary to get the attention of the Veteran's Administration.

While going over some of the letters in my in-box, I came across your request for information concerning air crew hearing loss. I checked my items sent box as well, but found no item that would indicate I had responded to your inquiry. Having said this, here is my belated response.

The process can be a bit slow should you contact the VA yourself, but I have found a way to speed it up a bit. Each county in every state has a Veterans Service Officer with an office. Usually located in the Court House or Annex. He/she can speed things up if you work through them.

A Busy Air Force

from the AFA Daily Report: April 21, 2008

Based on the average current rate of daily sorties, the Air Force anticipates surpassing today (April 21) the one-millionth flight milestone in the global war on terror since Sept. 11, 2001. This includes air lift, air refueling, aeromedical evacuation, bomber, fighter, reconnaissance, and tanker flights around the clock to support military operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere and aerial surveillance, fighter and tanker sorties that protect the homeland. Synchronized and integrated into larger coalition air efforts, these missions represent the most deliberate, disciplined and precise air campaign in history. The Air Force says it is averaging more than 450 sorties a day worldwide. It flies these missions from the United States as well as from more than 100 sites worldwide. As of April 1, the Air Force tally was 991,172 total sorties. This includes 352,586 for Operation Iraqi Freedom, 193,908 for Operation Enduring Freedom, 40,984 for operation Noble Eagle and 393,424 for additional supporting airlift missions. We understand that the one total includes sorties over the contiguous 48 states as well as Alaska and Hawaii.

Word from Sid Underwood

The soft copy of the book "The Second Was First" (TSWF) has now been added to the 2BG website. I think that is going to be a very valuable research tool for the children and grandchildren of those that served in the 2nd BFG. I'm very grateful that Jean Richards has made Chuck's important book available to all of us.

Once on the 2BG website <http://2ndbombgroup.org/>, click on the "Books" tab on the left side, then scroll down the "books" page, and then click on "The Second Was First" bookcover. TSWF will open as a pdf file in Adobe Acrobat and you can then navigate throughout the book page by page or by doing a word search to find something particular that you're looking for.

News from the Wing

2nd Wing Maintenance Still Good

The Second Bomb Wing is still doing a good job keeping the massive bombers they now fly in airworthy shape. The following is from the Air Force Magazine On-line.

A "Perfect" BUFF: Dedicated crew chief Ssgt. Benjamin Norton and assistant crew chief A1C Jason Edwards earlier this week, delivered a B-52

bomber with "no known discrepancies," a very rare occurrence for an aircraft of its vintage, about 48 years old. Col. Steven Shinkle, 2nd Maintenance Group commander, called the feat by two Barksdale AFB, LA, airmen "an amazing testament to their work." "Having absolutely no writeups on an aircraft of this age is no easy task," he said. Norton and Edwards took charge of this particular bomber about nine months ago, when it had more than 1600 maintenance discrepancies that needed fixing. Veteran maintainer SMSgt. Jeff Williams said, "I know of only seven other cases in my 12 years of B-52 experience where a crew launched a perfect jet."

Letters:

Becky Goodrich Black wants us to know that her dad, Jim Goodrich, celebrated his 90th birthday on April 4, 2008. "We, his kids, are having an open house March 30th and plan to make it a very special occasion."

Jim was a waist gunner in the 20th squadron. He has 5 children, 12 grandchildren and 18 great grandchildren and is an inspiration to all of them.



Original Crews The First to Combat

During WWII, after several months of training in the United States, 38 combat crews of the four squadrons of the Second Bomb departed with their brand new B-17 Fs for their assignment to combat. They were led by Col. Ford J. Lauer.

They flew to Brazil then across the great Atlantic Ocean to Dakar in Africa and finally to their temporary home in North Africa where they began their combat experience.

April 28, 1943, the group began combat operations. This was their first combat for the Second since their participation in World War One. The last mission during WWI was November 5, 1918.

Col. Lauer was posted back to the US so Lt. Col. Joseph H. Thomas took command of the group until Col. Herbert E. Rice became commander on Sept. 3, 1943.

New to combat, the crews began their duty to fly 50 missions before being relieved to return to the US. Their losses at first were not severe, but as missions became longer and deeper into enemy terri-

tory, some crews were not able to return to base because of enemy action and replacements were needed.

The group stayed at three bases in North Africa before moving to Amendola Landing Ground, near Foggia, Italy. First they were at Chataudun-du Rhumel, Algeria; then at Ain M'Lila, Algeria and at Massicault, Tunisia.

By the time the group moved to Amendola, 106 combat missions had been flown and very few of the flying men who came to combat in April of 1943, remained. Many had given their lives for their nation, some were languishing in prison camps while others recovered in hospitals. Most had completed their 50 missions and had been reassigned. Others had learned from them and were carrying on the battle against the Axis toward the total of 412 missions flown by the group in WWII.

Most of the combat crews that were assigned to the Second Bomb Group during the war knew only one base of operations, a very settled establishment at Amendola. The original crews, however, plus most of the ground personnel, had experienced travel and temporary bases on their way to combat.

The Mission Plan

PLAN #89 TARGET - ANSTETTER STATION M/Y, AUSTRIA DATE - 23 Feb. 45.

GROUP LEADER COL. RYAN

CALL SIGNS:

DEP GP LEADER CAPT. CHILDS

BOOMER - RUBBISH 1

TAXI 0755

FIGHTER - BOULDER

WEATHER A/C - PIXIE (OUT)

TAKE OFF 0806

SOMEGIRL (BACK)

ASSEMBLY NONE

TRUVALI - TRUMPET

DEPARTURE W. Tip L. LESINA

5th WING FORMATION & BOMBING ALTITUDES:

POINT ALTITUDE 5,000'

2nd

TIME 0967

(19,000)

CONTROL JUDENBURG

301st

99th

POINT ALTITUDE 19,000'

(20,000)

(21,000)

TIME 1130

463rd

(19,000)

TARGET AXIS ATTACK 20'

97th

483rd

IAS 150 RALLY RIGHT

(20,000)

(21,000)

TIME OVER TGT 1157

INDIVIDUAL CREWS AT 1 MIN. INTERVALS

FROM DEPARTURE PT. DIST. TO

COLORS OF THE DAY:

G R

TO ZARA
4407/1515 134 369

0700-1300

Y-YR

P

O

1300-1900

YY

V

R

TO CONTROL PT. - JUDENBURG
4710/1439 185 362

RUSSIAN RECOGNITION SIGNALS:

BASIC. Dio right wing 2 or 3 times.

2008 Roster

Copies of the 2008 Bomb Group roster will be available at the reunion. If you would like a copy mailed to you contact

Secretary Lew Waters or Loy Dickinson

Find contact info on Page 3

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from B-17 Flying Fortress Assoc.

We all know the name of Lindberg,
And we've read of this flight into fame.
But think, if you can, of his maintenance man,
Can you remember his name?

And think of our wartime heroes, Gabreski, Jabara and Scott.
Can you tell me the names of the crew chiefs?
A thousand to one you cannot.

Now pilots are highly trained people,
And wings are not easily won.
But without the work of the maintenance man
Our pilots would march without a gun.

So when you see the mighty jet aircraft
As they mark their path through the air,
The greased stained man with the wrench in his hand
Is the man who put him there.

The Forgotten Man

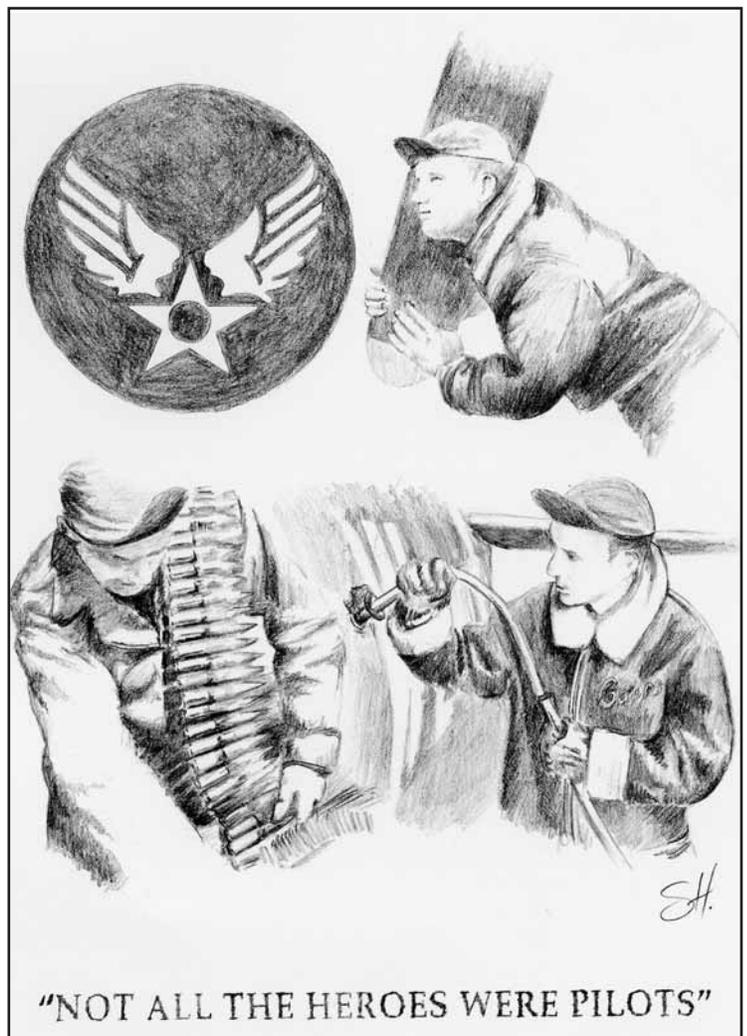
Through the history of world aviation
Many names have come to the fore
Great deeds of the past in our memory will last
As they're joined by more and more.

When man first started his labor
In his quest to conquer the sky
He was designer, mechanic, and pilot,
And he built a machine that would fly.

The pilot was everyone's hero,
He was brave, he was bold, he was grand,
As he stood by his battered old bi-plane
With his goggles and helmet in hand.

To be sure, these pilots all earned it,
To fly then you had to have guts,
And they blazed their names in the hall of fame,
On wings with bailing wire struts.

But for each of our flying heroes
There were thousands of little renown,
And these were the men who worked on the planes
But keep their feet on the ground.



"NOT ALL THE HEROES WERE PILOTS"

Second Bombardment Association

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 W. Harold PLUNKETT - Tel (239) 565-1797
 Richard L TRUE - Tel (812) 256-4198
 Sidney P. UPSHER - Tel (405) 843-7117

Part 2 - Change of Address

Unit	Name	Street Address	City, State, Zip Code	Phone
	Lawrence T. ASHLEY	270 SW South River Dr. Apt 101	Stuart, FL 34997-3253	
	Stanley C. BECK	870 Summer Breeze Ct.	Grand Junction, CO 81506-6701	
	Charles L. CHILDS	4201 Elm Ave. Apt 312	Rapid City, SD 57701-8694	
	Orville DOUGHTY	40 S Broadway Pl. Apt 1216	Tucson, AZ 85710-3790	
	J.B. MARTIN	3825 Clement Dr.	Ft. Worth, TX 76133	
	Richard L. TRUE	2110 Spring Ridge Ct.	Charleston, IN 47111-7807	
	Sidney P. UPSHER	2406 NW Grand Ave.	Oklahoma City, OK 73116	
	Clair H. SCHMITT	814 San Gabriel Pl.	Colorado Springs, CO 80906-4913	
	Albert E. SMITH	7418 Spring Valley Dr. Apt 424	Springfield, VA 22150	
	Ruby L. STEELE	8608 Ford Ave.	Raytown, MO 64138-3141	
	Leland R. SWANSON	1520 S 5th St.	Dayton, WA 99328-1716	
	Mark D. WATERS	409 Scott St.	Folsom, CA 95630	

Part 3 - New Members

Unit	Name	Street Address	City, State, Zip Code	Phone
20	Doug BRYNER	4713 Ontario St. #3	Ames, IA 50014-3042	
20	Josh BRYNER	516 8th St. SE	Washington, DC 20003-2834	
	Donna HURT	348 Rolling Park Dr.	Lexington, NC 27295-6850	(336) 956-6302
	Daniel NELSON	907 Evans St.	Ottawa, IL 61350-1361	
96	William POPOFF	20 Chapel Pl. Apt 3R	Great Neck, NY 11021	(516) 466-6244
	Lt Col Cathy Reardon	1301 S Joyce St #4334	Arlington, VA 22202	(703) 868-4993
429	Marilyn WITOFF	1803 Eleuthera Pt. Apt C2	Coconut Creek, FL 33066	(954) 975-0877



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