

GROUP



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

WING



# SECOND BOMBARDMENT ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

*"Second to None"*

[www.2ndbombgroup.org](http://www.2ndbombgroup.org)



Volume 26, No. 2, July 2010

## President's Corner

Greetings again from the Midwest. After a long and fairly tough winter, it is finally springtime. As I write this, we will soon be celebrating another Memorial Day. My Purple Heart Chapter will have the honor of being the lead contingent in Ohio's largest Memorial Day parade. Hopefully, many of our Second Bomb Group members will have the opportunity to either participate or attend a parade, or be involved in some other ceremony honoring veterans. We should particularly remember our fellow Second Bomb Group men who did not return, and those who, fortunately, returned but have since left us.

And speaking of honoring our veterans, in another part of the newsletter there is a story by Earl Martin regarding Honor Flight, an organization that transports W.W. II veterans to our nation's capitol, free of charge, to visit the W.W. II Memorial and other veterans' memorials. Again, I implore everyone to consider a contribution to this non-profit group specifically organized to assist W.W. II veterans. Another non-profit organization that I previously mentioned, and worthy of your consideration, is Fisher House Foundation, which has been serving military families for many years. There is at least one facility at every major military center. There are forty-five Fisher Houses located on eighteen military installations and fifteen V.A. Medical Centers. And don't forget the U.S.O.

Back in April it was my good fortune to be a close spectator to view seventeen B-25 aircraft, possibly the final time so many of these vintage W.W. II planes would be together at one location. The event was the 68th anniversary of Doolittle's raid over Tokyo on April 18, 1942. The B-25s assembled at Grimes Field in Urbana, Ohio, from which they flew on Saturday, April 17th to the Air Force Museum in Fairborn, preparatory to the anniversary fly-over on Sunday.

Ann and I drove up to Urbana the first day of the four-day celebration, where we checked out the early arrivals. On Friday evening we went back and were able to walk around and inspect all seventeen of the planes. (W.W. II veterans were allowed on the parking ramp area free of charge.) I was surprised there were so many variations in the equipment and design of the aircraft. Those four days beginning April 14th were so special. I spent a little time each day viewing these wonderful planes. On Saturday, I drove back to Grimes Field at 6:00 a.m. to watch all seventeen of the B-25s take off for the Air Force Museum. These weren't B-17s, but nevertheless, it was a nostalgic moment.

Twice during the month of May I was honored to be a guest speaker at two schools in the area, talking about W.W. II. One of the sessions was videotaped. The class had two of the students act as moderators. They took turns asking questions which the class had prepared in advance. The program was quite professional, and the 8th grade students were very attentive and respectful. It was a pleasant experience and also educational for me.

Well, it's on to Tucson for our 2010 Second Bomb Group Reunion October 13-16th this fall. Hopefully, we will have a nice turnout at a really fine resort hotel. Our thanks to Loy Dickinson and Penny LeGrand for working so diligently to arrange the events and banquets. Make your airline and hotel reservations soon.

Best regards,

Lew Waters

## THE VIEW FROM THE FARM

As difficult as the economy seems to be these days, it is heartening to see, even in upper reaches of our little state, the ability and desire of the sponsors and helpers to get the Honor Flight off to the Nation's Capital. In the closing days of April 2010, eighty one World War Two veterans were flown from our area to Washington D.C. to see the World War Two memorial and the many other sites. Most of them were accompanied by a relative or someone to help them. Many of the vets were wheel chair bound. They were flown to D.C. in a special chartered airplane (Honor Flight also uses commercial aircraft). They were met by an escort and were fed and taken care of for the entire day. On the capital tour they were transported by buses. Honor Flight, Inc. has been applauded by our Association president, Lew Waters. The project has its origin in Lew's part of the country some few years ago. Now, it has grown to a very popular plan to give many WWII vets a chance to see the WWII memorial made especially for them and to see many other memorials in Washington, D.C.

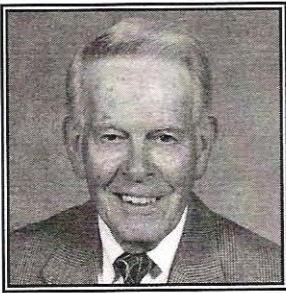
In May, 2005 Physicians Assistant and retired Air Force Captain, Earl Morse of Springfield, Ohio, organized a group of volunteer pilots to fly 12 veterans from Springfield to Manassas, VA and treat them to a tour of the capital city. More flights followed and by year's end, 137 veterans had seen the World War II memorial and Morse had begun the non-profit Honor Flight Network. Southwest Airlines has donated seats on its airplanes to Honor Flight. Now there are 94 hubs in 34 states. A total of 40,318 veterans have been transported to D.C. since its inception. This year (as of May) over 4,000 have attended. (Go to [www.honorflight.org](http://www.honorflight.org))

Do you remember when we held our reunion there and we were met and sponsored by former Senator Bob Dole? Bob Dole personally greets most of the veteran groups. Honor Flight is a worthy undertaking and has provided thousands of veterans, who otherwise might never have been able to make this trip with an opportunity to be honored for their service in our nation's capital. One observer said the most impressive memory of the trip was inside the cabin where one could see row upon row of baseball caps with "World War Two Veteran" on them. On the flight home each veteran received a packet of "mail call", letters from school children thanking them for their service.

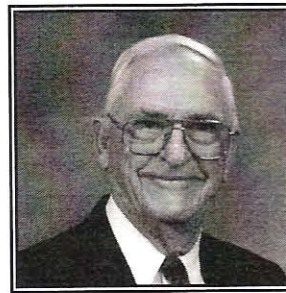
We are looking forward to our coming reunion, October 13 thru 16, 2010, in the old Southwest City of Tucson, Arizona. We are promised beautiful accommodations and the countryside in the vicinity is desert and mountains, a good place to be in the Fall of the year and very scenic any time of the year. I must warn everyone, though, to practice their pronunciation before heading for the desert countryside. The giant cactus is Saguaro (pronounced Sa WAH row); Tucson (pron. TU-sahn); Gila (pron. Hee-lah); Navajo (pron. NAH-vah-ho) and Prickly Pear (pron. "OUCH"). One can walk easily through the desert and admire the great amount of plant and animal life that abounds there.

Once again, we are honored to have our Assistant Editor, Linda Gartz, author the second part of her trip to Amendola, Italy. Thank you Linda for a most interesting article about our war time haunts.

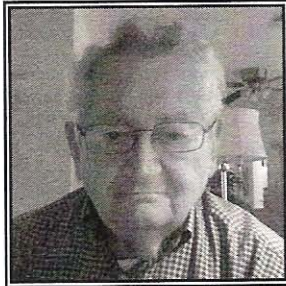
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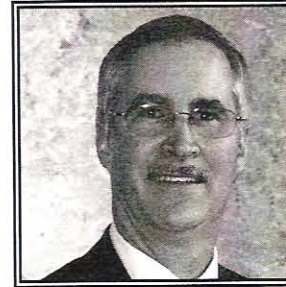
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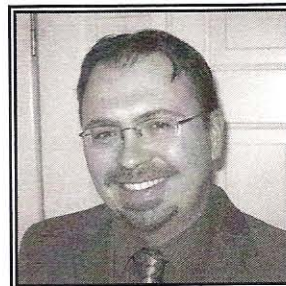
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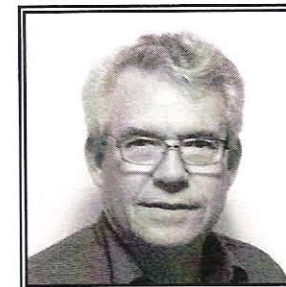
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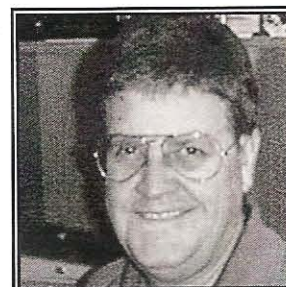
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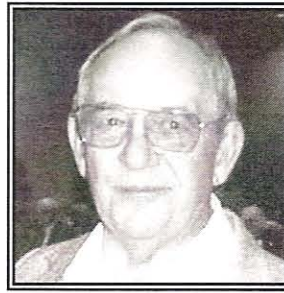


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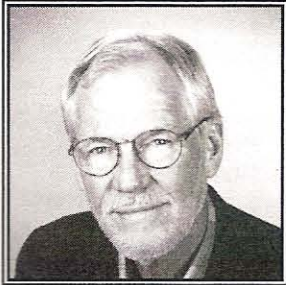
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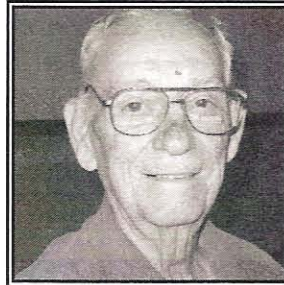
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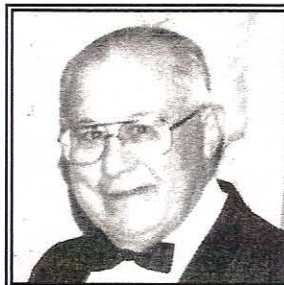
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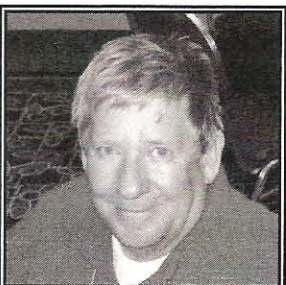
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# PILGRIMAGE TO AMENDOLA

Part II by Linda Gartz

The first part of the story about my pilgrimage to Amendola was published in the January 2010 newsletter. In Part I, I described my desire to visit Amendola because my Uncle, Lt. Frank Ebner Gartz, had flown twenty-five missions (as navigator) from January 1945 through May, 1945. I described my uncle's training and quoted from several letters he had written home. After completing his missions, he landed a job out of Caserta, Italy, flying VIPs (generals and congressmen who had come to rebuild post-war Europe) to destinations throughout the region.

He was about to come home when my grandparents received a letter from the Hospital Command at Naples stating that their son, Frank E. Gartz, was seriously ill. He died from infantile paralysis (polio infecting the brain) on October 12, 1945, seven days before they even knew he was sick.

Trying to make sense of his death, I recalled Frank's philosophical stance toward death as expressed in a letter to my father:

"...and if the good Lord has some other way [for me] to die, I'm not going to get it on the battlefield."

Having come to know my uncle through his letters, I was determined to go to Amendola. Part II below, describes my visit.

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Several months prior to leaving for Italy, Todd Weiler, The Second Bomb Group's historian, had provided me with an Italian Air Force contact. I wrote to Master Sergeant Antonio DiSipio, who responded to my email inquiry: "We are always pleased to meet relatives of the men who contributed to a page of Italian history, and in particular, to the Amendola Airbase."

Sergeant DiSipio asked me to send a scan of our passports, and gave me his cell phone number to call when we exited the autostrada, near Manfredonia. From there he said it would be about a ten minute drive to

Amendola.

After picking up our rental car at the Rome airport, we drove on the E-8, directly east through the mountains of Abruzzi and toward Pessara, on Italy's Adriatic coast, then south on E55 to Foggia. I snapped a few photos of the surrounding fields, wondering if anything would look familiar, after all this time, to the men who had been stationed at Amendola. One thing I know they would not have seen were the dozens of high tech wind turbines bristling up across the countryside, their enormous blades rotating slowly in the autumn air.

Exiting at Manfredonia about 2:30, we called ahead to alert Sgt. Disipio of our imminent arrival and followed the signs to Amendola. On the road to the airbase, we passed a grove of olive trees and within minutes were driving alongside a chain link fence topped with coils of razor wire, the air traffic control tower rising in the distance.

As we pulled up to the entrance, the massive, green-barred gate opened to let us in. Sgt. DiSipio and two other Italian Air Force members flagged us to a parking spot. We exited our car to

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*Lt. Frank E. Gartz in uniform*

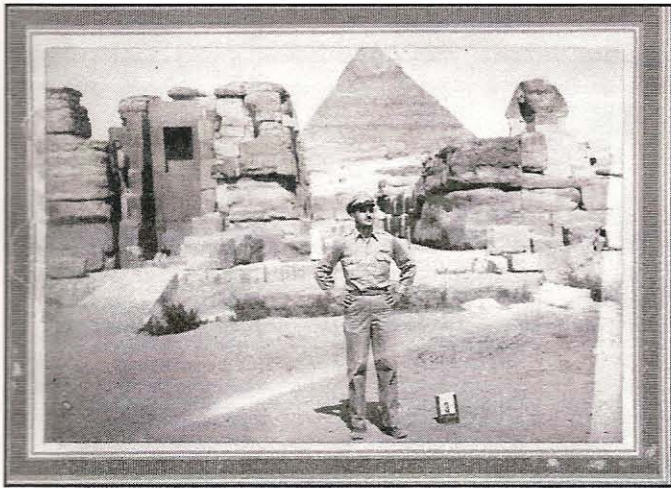


*Lt. Frank E. Gartz, second from left, standing, with crew & B-17 on hardstand at Amendola*

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say hello to Sgt DiSipio, dressed in full uniform. He extended his hand. “Buon Giorno. Welcome to Amendola.” He introduced us to his assistant and the base’s historian, Sgt. Michele Rosito, the latter two dressed more casually in navy blue v-neck sweaters.

“Buon Giorno. Mi piacere.” (“Hello. I’m please to meet you,”) I said. My husband didn’t speak Italian, so we deferred to English, which Sgt DiSipio spoke quite well.



*Lt. Frank E. Gartz in Egypt, summer, 1945*

“Would you like some coffee?” He asked.

“Sounds wonderful.” It was the perfect suggestion after more than four hours of stressful driving. We followed the Airmen in their car down tree-lined roads cutting through the airbase, passing green dormitories where Italian Air Force trainees lived. In a few minutes we arrived at the officers’ club, which had a full “bar,” as it’s known in Italian—for coffee. “This is our drug,” he quipped. “We come here at least four times a day.” We each placed an order with the barristo, the man serving the coffee. “Un café lungo,” I requested – espresso with twice as much water as what the Italians routinely drink, to tone down the powerful brew. Two sips, and it was gone.

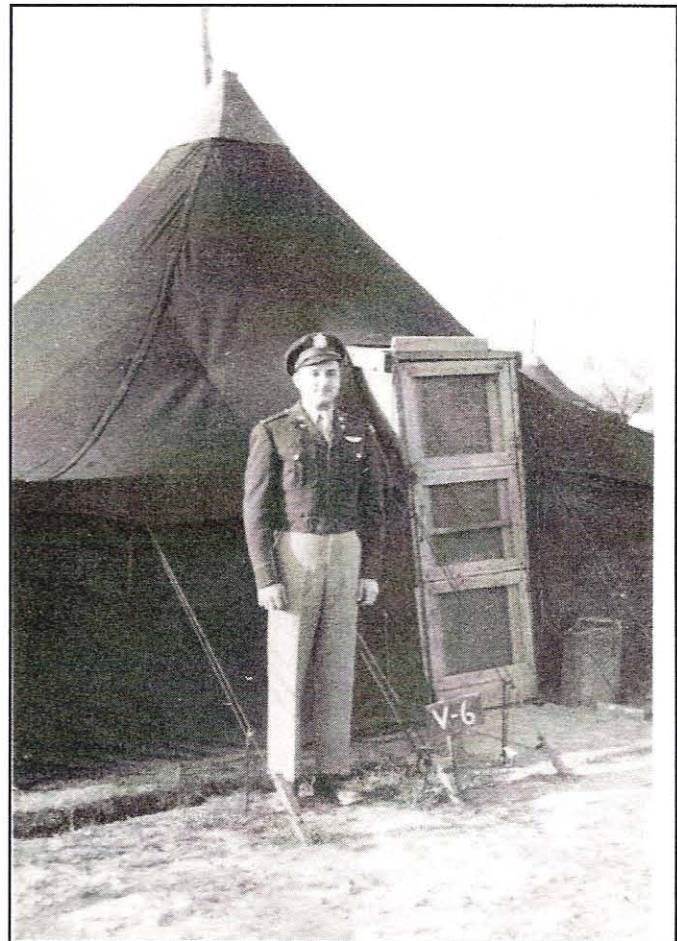
I looked around. One wall of the officers’ club was covered with plaques. On the other side of the wall was an enormous, gleaming mess hall, certainly not in existence in 1944-45.

After drinking our coffee, the officers led us outside to a large square, named in honor of a pilot killed during training exercises: Piazzale Magg. Pilota Giuseppe Carrone. (see photo). Several aircraft were on display: the Vampire, a British fighter; G91 Yankee (Italian), and a T33 American Trainer.

Sgt. DiSipio said that the airmen at Amendola deploy to Afghanistan. The Predator (a UAV) is routinely flown out of Amendola. We saw the predator’s hangar, but weren’t allowed to photograph it. Stenciled on the hangar was an outline of the Predator with the following warning (in English): “You can hide, but we’ll find you.”

Historian Michele Rosito then brought us to a small theater and set up an English version of a documentary he had produced. Using historical footage and photos, the documentary recalled the bombing of Foggia for of its strategic importance, the use of Amendola by the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force as a base for bombing Axis positions, the laying of the pierced steel planking runway for the B-17 Flying Fortresses, stills and footage of the B-17s flying and dropping bombs, and various stills that captured life at the base. It concluded with the evolution of Amendola’s function as an airbase post-World War II to the present. Sgt. Rosito gave me several copies of his documentary, which will be made available for the Second Bomb Group website, barring any technical difficulties.

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*Lt. Frank E. Gartz at tent, Amendola*

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It was getting late, so I requested to see more of the outside of the base before sunset. The area where the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group's tents had been set up during WWII was off limits, but we were able to go to the place where the B-17s had taken off on their missions.



*Linda Gartz pointing to field where B-17s took off*

As we drove around the base, Sgt. Rosito pointed out to us a couple of chunks of crumpled metal. They were all that was left of the metal grids, that had been laid out on Amendola's muddy fields more than six decades ago to form foundations on which the heavy B-17s were stored in between missions and to create the runway for take-offs and landings. (According to Loy Dickenson, these metal grids were called "The Hard Stand" by the men, but were officially known as "pierced steel planking.") Only these few scraps of twisted, rusty metal remained.

We then drove to a vast field, where Sgt. Rosito showed us where the original runway had been laid. I tried to envision, on this placid field, the sight of dozens of B-17s, loaded with fuel and bombs, engines revving, taking off one after another, flying into formation. I asked the Sgt. Rosito to take a photo of me pointing to where the runway had been.

There wasn't much to see. But that wasn't the point. I was there. I saw the same mountain to the west of the airbase. I stood on the same ground. When I drove along the coast, I saw the same Adriatic Sea, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group squadrons had flown over, mission after mission. It was the sense of place I wanted to absorb.

Our last stop was the museum Sgt. Rosito had created in honor of the Italian Air Force and the American 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group. He had arranged several rooms of memorabilia to remind visitors of the role this airbase had played in winning World War II. On either side of the path leading to the entrance, the nose and tail of a now rusty bomb were pressed into the ground, like two sentinels standing guard. Inside, the first room was devoted to the commanders of Amendola over the years, their photographs spread across an entire wall. Nearby Sgt. Rosito had mounted a photo of Italian Airman, Fiorello LaGuardia, the man who would become the future mayor of New York. He had trained at Amendola.

Sgt. Rosito had arranged displays of respiratory equipment (gas masks), uniforms, boards of instrument panels that had been used to train pilots, models of aircraft, including the B-17, aerial photos of bomb sites, a fragment of an aircraft window (called tettuccio), the motor from a Bristol Orpheus 803-K13, and an aerial photo of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group in formation "flying over the new Amendola Airfield in the spring of 1944". I ended my visit to the museum by signing its guest book as a family member of a Second Bomb Group Navigator, and thanking them for their hospitality and devotion to Amendola's history.

As the sun set, we bade goodbye to our hosts. Their gracious reception and eagerness to share Amendola's past were evidence of their respect and gratitude for the American Airmen who had served here and whose courage brought eventual peace to Italy and the world.



*Linda Gartz with Italian Air Force Hosts.*

# JAMES A WEILER CREW

James A Weiler was the uncle of Association Historian, Todd Weiler. He was the pilot (commander) of airplane number 048, shot down on the famed mission number 263 when the entire 20th squadron was lost. Descriptions of the mission may be found in *Defenders of Liberty* and in *The Second Was First*. From Todd, "I first found this crew photo in my uncle's belongings just before Christmas in 2007, but no further information. Last fall, I teased a friend, Bob Kowalski, who sits at a computer all day, to stop sending me aviation stuff and help me find some of my uncle's crew. Sure enough, in a few weeks he located an obit of Loren E Byam's mother in the Wisconsin Dells area. I called the number Bob had found of a relative in the obit and left messages, but no return calls. Then this spring the phone rang. Indeed, I had located a nephew who kept some of his uncle's letters and photos. They were snow birds and had missed the earlier calls. I was excited to know I was getting a photo of a missing crew member, Loren Byam. I opened the package last night and started reading a binder of material.

To my amazement, I found the same group photo, but this one had what I thought I would never see — names — date — and place. The Holy Grail is now complete. I have the names of all of Jim's first crew as it was formed before going overseas. A month later on July 5, 1944, they would all be seeing their first combat over Montpelier, France. Of these crew members, Weiler, Bumgardner, Dalcanale, Wagner and Byam all died on Jim's "Queen", 232048 on mission

#263. Laratta died on #263 but on William Bullock's plane #359. I am so thankful for the support of my friends who continue to help me learn and share this story with all of you. I urge you all to never give up, and, "Keep 'Em Flying."

## Lt. Weiler's Picture to be Placed On His Grave in Czechoslovakia

A photograph of Lt. James Weiler, Burlington airman who was killed in world war II, will soon be sent to Czechoslovakia to be imbedded in his tombstone there, according to his parents, Dr. and Mrs. J. G. Weiler. Lt. Weiler's body has been moved to France, but the residents of the community in Czechoslovakia in which he was killed still keep up the mass grave they provided for Lt. Weiler and those who died with him.

Dr. and Mrs. Weiler have been receiving letters from Mrs. Julie Sykorova, of Slavcine, Czechoslovakia, who witnessed the fatal crash of Lt. Weiler's plane, August 29, 1944. She provided the Weilers with information regarding the crash and has sent them several photographs.

Lt. Weiler was the pilot of the bombing plane, a B-17 (Flying Fortress,) that was shot down by the Germans at Slavcine, in the province of Moravia. Of the ten in the crew, only one, the co-pilot, was not killed. They were in the fifteenth air force and had taken off from Foggia, Italy, for the raid on German-held Czechoslovakia.

Mrs. Sykorova requested Lt. Weiler's picture in her latest letter. She also gave the details of the plane crash. She states that although she and other Czechs wanted to aid the fliers who were not killed instantly,

the German soldiers present would not allow it.

The letter was received a few weeks ago, but is in Bohemian and the Weilers had to send it away for translation. Mrs. Arthur B. Lederer's mother, Mrs. Fisher, of Chicago, did the translation.

The grave the Czechs provided for the members of Lt. Weiler's crew is in Krhox, near Slavcine. Twenty-nine fliers from several American planes shot down in the area were buried there.

Some of the photographs the Weilers received show a memorial mass in honor of the fliers held at the grave in 1945, after Czechoslovakia had been freed from the Germans. Evidently the entire population of the community attended, from the size of the crowd shown.

Some other pictures show the ceremonies held when the bodies were removed to France in 1946. A picture of the spot at which Lt. Weiler's plane crashed shows the marker with names of the nine victims of the crash that has been placed there.

Mrs. Sykorova is shown at the grave in another picture. Still another one shows the German soldiers who guarded the plane when it crashed. It was acquired by the Czechs without the German's knowledge.

Standard Democrat, March 25, 1949



TOP ROW: Bumgardner UTG, Dalcanale TG, Laratta RWG, Husband ROG, Wagner LTG, Byam LWG  
BOTTOM ROW: Ellis Navigator, Weiler Pilot, Sulkey Bombardier, Mirabito Co-Pilot



# IN MEMORIUM

Kenneth L Norcross 3/10/10 96<sup>th</sup> Sqdn  
Arthur A Worth 3/13/10 20<sup>th</sup> Sqdn  
George L Kling 4/25/10 49<sup>th</sup> Sqdn  
William S Tune 10/29/08 20<sup>th</sup> Sqdn

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## THOSE VIENNA MISSIONS

As the war progressed into the summer of 1944, the bomb group began flying missions to the vicinity of the Vienna, Austria. Before the war ended, the group flew 24 missions to that hot spot. Many moans and groans were heard at the briefings when the map cover was removed and the men saw the long red cord that stretched from Amendola to what became the hot spot of the war as far as the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force was concerned. Surely, some of our vets that flew those missions remember the dread when they saw "That Vienna" was the target again.

Perhaps a bit of explanation is in order as to why the Austrian capital became the center of so much effort and the target for so many of our tons of bombs. As the war turned against them, many of the German forces were pushed back toward central Europe by the Russians from the East and the Allies from the West. As much as possible, the Germans moved their anti-aircraft artillery and their diminishing fighter airplane units as they retreated. Except for certain times when the German Air Force was able to mount vicious attacks against our bombers (the well known 'Mission 263' when we lost the entire 20<sup>th</sup> squadron to fighters, comes to mind), German fighters were not always effective. The artillery, however was another matter. The Germans brought their big guns from target areas, such as Ploesti, into the heavily industrialized vicinity of Vienna. Thus, Vienna became the most heavily defended area in Europe as far as large Anti-Aircraft artillery was concerned. No doubt, Vienna missions generated the expression "Flak was so thick you could walk on it!" brought back by the B-17 crews. Vienna was considered to be the second most heavily defended bombing target on the continent.

All of the Vienna missions are listed below. Perhaps some of our members will remember details from some of them. Note: the concentration of targets to the German oil supply.

Mission Number	215
June 16, 1944	Florisdorf Oil Refinery
June 26, 1944	Schwechat Oil Refinery
July 8, 1944	Vosendorf Oil Refinery
July 16, 1944	Winterhofen Oil Storage
Aug. 23, 1944	Neudorf Aircraft & Engine Factory
Sept. 10, 1944	Lobau Oil Refinery
Oct. 7, 1944	Lobau Oil Refin
Oct. 13, 1944	Florisdorf Oil Refinery
Nov. 1, 1944	South Ordnance Depot
Nov. 3, 1944	South Ordnance Depot
Nov. 7, 1944	Florisdorf Oil Refinery
Nov. 18, 1944	Florisdorf Oil Refinery
Nov. 19, 1944	Winterhaofen Oil Refinery
Dec. 3, 1944	Southeast Goods Section
Jan. 15, 1945	Northeast Marshalling Yards
Jan. 21, 1945	Schwechat Oil Refinery
Feb. 7, 1945	Lobau Oil Refinery
Feb. 8, 1945	Southeast Goods Section
Feb. 13, 1945	South Ordnance Depot
Feb. 14, 1945	Schwechat Oil Refinery
Feb. 15, 1945	South Station Freight
Feb. 20, 1945	Lobau Oil Refinery
Feb. 21, 1945	Central Yards and Shops
Mar. 12, 1945	Florisdorf Oil Refinery

On mission 375 - 225 B-17's and 522 B-24's bombed the target at Florisdorf with 1,667 tons of bombs.

## TO THE SWISS FRONTIER

Mission 350, February 5, 1945, was to bomb oil storage at Regensburg, Germany. Thirty-seven group airplanes bombed the primary target while two others bombed targets of opportunity.

Airplane number 44-6678, 429th Squadron, Pilot, 1st Lt. Maurice D. Porter, was listed as missing. A message was received by the Radio Operator of another airplane: "Losing altitude and trying to make Switzerland." The plane had lost two engines to flak, and with fuel leaks, was running low on fuel. The crew flew into a snow storm over the Alps, and Porter ordered the crew to bail out. After the bail-out, the airplane, still on auto-pilot, flew until it crashed into the Piz Plazer Mountains, some thirty miles away.

Meanwhile, the crew descended into the blinding snow storm. They became separated after landing. Lt. Porter, Lt. Fishback, S/Sgt Smith, and S/Sgt Fredrickson were captured by the Germans and became POWs. The body of FO Skoda was found by the Swiss in May. His skull was crushed, and it was

thought he might have fallen into rocks or in a snow slide.

The rest of the crew were picked up by the Swiss, returned to Italy and then home. The stories of some of their ventures are in *Defenders of Liberty* and in *The Second Was First*.



**STANDING:** Kenneth L. Hoffman ROG, Bud Wartman TG, Fredrickson LTG, Glenn Macovec LWG, Andrew Lannigan RWG, Charles Smith UTG  
**KNEELING:** John Skoba, Navigator, Donald Fishback, Co. Pilot, Maurice D. Porter, Pilot, James McWhirte, Bombardier

### DID YOU KNOW?

- That during the cold war, the U.S. built a 41,400 pound bomb which could only be carried by a B-36.
- That Purple Heart Day is August 7. The original medal was designed and awarded by President George Washington in 1782.
- That only 9 of the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders are still living. Only 5 were able to travel to their reunion last April. (Sounds rather like an Association we know and love.)
- That Charlton Heston served as a B-25 radio operator during WWII.
- That the German code name for Ireland was "Mackerel"
- That GUAM was the first U.S. territory captured by the enemy in WWII
- That President Roosevelt's airplane, a B-24, was named "SACRED COW".

# Letters

## AIRPLANE NAMES:

Some interest was stirred up in the past newsletters about some of the names attached to the B-17s we flew during the war. I mentioned the name of one of the airplanes my crew and I flew: "Marishka." I soon received the following, most welcome, letter from Association member, Gene Smith:

"Your last newsletter mentioned "Marishka." I had painted it on B-17 17066 for the captain whose wife's name was Marishka. I don't recall his name. Enclosed is a photo. Also enclosed is the 2nd Bomb Group logo I painted on the fireplace of an Italian farm house at Amendola."

## My Answer:

Dear Eugene:

What a fine thing for you to send me the pictures, especially of the name, Marishka, which you painted on the airplane I flew.

"When my crew and I arrived at the 2nd Bomb Group, we were the new crew in the 20th Squadron and, of course, were given one of the old airplanes to fly on our first few missions. We knew nothing about how the airplane was named. We just took it and flew it.

I think the picture you sent was taken when we

returned from our second mission on which our navigator was killed, and the co-pilot was wounded. If you have any other pictures of the airplane, I would deeply appreciate them too.

I do not have words enough to tell you how much I appreciate you taking the trouble and thought to send me the pictures. I will write more about "Marishka" for future newsletters and will show the picture to family and friends and talk about the "old" days we spent at Amendola.

Sincerely,  
Earl Martin



## ANOTHER LOOK AT "SWEET PEA"

This is another eye witness account, by a member of our neighbor group, the 97th, of the landing of the famous "living junk pile," named "Sweet Pea."

"I was a member of the 97th Bomb Group, and we had also bombed the Debreczen target that day. I was standing on top of the plane swabbing out the top turret barrels when somebody pointed to the south. There



was this plane making wide swings about five miles away, obviously trying to line up with our runways. We could not see the damage from that distance, but were curious because of the odd maneuvering and the distress flares being fired.

"The plane passed us about 100 yards away as it landed, and we all yelled with surprise at the big hole in the waist. Four of us jumped into a jeep and drove over to where it stopped. The tail wheel had collapsed about half way down the dirt runway (between a steel mat and an asphalt strip) causing the plane to ride to a stop on the ball turret.

We arrived at the plane with several other jeeps just as the crew was getting out. Somebody yelled that the ball turret gunner was still in the ball. Other guys and I opened the turret and pulled out the gunner, who was in bad shape emotionally. He had not been able to move the ball nor communicate with the rest of the crew. One photo shows the turret hatch laying on the ground where it fell when we opened it.

The account I read, provided by Seesul, reported

*continued on next page*

# Letters

*continued from previous page*

that the gunner had been freed from the ball on the way back from the target. It's a small matter, but I thought it worth correcting since it still stands out in my mind after sixty-five years. My wife and I visited Amendola in 1990. It is an Italian Air Base laid out much as it was then.

That was the finest flying feat I ever witnessed, since there were no controls in that plane. We in the

97th always had a good relation with the 2nd, and I wish all the surviving members well.

Best Wishes to you,  
Jack Botts  
Ex radio operator  
414th Sqdn, 97th Bomb Group  
Amendola, Italy

---

## THUNDER OVER MICHIGAN

### August 7 & 8 2010 - Willow Run Airport at Ypsilanti, Michigan

Yankee Air Museum presents the Biggest Air Show On Earth

Dozens of military aircraft, mostly WWII vintage will be on display and available for inspection. The usual suspects: B-17 Flying Fortress, B-24 Liberator, B-25D Mitchell, P-51 Mustang, ME 262, AD-5 Sky Rider

Vultee SNV-1, Boeing PT-17 Stearman, Sikorsky MH-53E and the list goes on.

F/A-18 Super Hornet and F-16C by the East Coast Demonstration Team -Plus

Four of these beauties will be available for flight experiences - B-17 Yankee Lady, B-24 Liberator, Messerschmidt 262 and the TP-51C Mustang. Go to [www.yankeemuseum.org](http://www.yankeemuseum.org) for particulars.

Thousands will be able to see and inspect military aircraft of every description and hundreds more can pay from \$350 to \$425 to take a ride on these exquisitely-cared-for machines. There were 12,731 B-17's and 19,258 B-24's and 3,960 B-29 SuperFortresses made in America for the war effort. Of the B-17's thirteen are believed still to be air worthy. 11 in the U.S., one in the U.K. and one in France. Of these we have been able to identify the following which are presently touring the U.S. for the 2010 summer season. You can Google the named to learn their current schedules.

"Aluminum Overcast" Owned by Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA) in Oshkosh, Wisconsin.

"Chuckie" Owned by Vintage Flying Museum, Fort Worth TX- This B-17 flew Ike Eisenhower, during the war.

"Fuddy Duddy" now privately owned.

"Liberty Belle" Owned by Liberty Foundation, Tulsa OK

"Nine-O-Nine" Owned by Collings Foundation, Stow Massachusetts

"Sentimental Journey" Owner, Commemorative Air Force, Mesa Arizona

"Yankee Lady" Owner, Yankee Air Museum, Ypsilanti MI

You ask, "What happened to Memphis Belle?" The Memphis Belle was the most storied and celebrated bomber of the war. In 1946 it was purchased by the City of Memphis for \$325 and was put on display outdoors and suffered from vandalism and weather exposure until the 1980s. It was moved a few times with unpleasant results. The National Museum of the United States Air Force finally moved it to its museum in Dayton, Ohio, in October, 2005. It is undergoing extensive restoration there. (there were 5 other airplanes that were named Memphis Belle)

Captain Robert Morgan's crew flew 29 missions with the 91<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group, 324<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, all but four in the Memphis Belle. After its 25 missions Memphis Belle was flown back to the U.S. by a composite crew. Captain Morgan and the crew flew on a 31 city bond tour.

Morgan and his co-pilot, Jim Verinis, saw the movie, 'Lady for a Night' in which the leading character owns riverboat named Memphis Belle which they adopted. Morgan then contacted George Petty at Esquire Magazine (ask your grandpa about it) and requested a pinup drawing - for which Petty supplied from the April 1941 issue.

## CZECH VISITOR, PAUL MERRELL

It is Memorial Day weekend, and I just returned home from my only trip to Europe. I had come in contact over the internet with a young Czech, Roman Susil, who knew all of the details of Mission 263 of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group in WWII. My uncle was tail gunner on "Big Time," a B-17 in the 20<sup>th</sup> squadron. On August 29, 1944, they were ambushed over Czechoslovakia by German fighters. All seven planes of the squadron were shot down along with two others from different squadrons. My uncle, Dudley Standridge, along with 39 other men, was killed in action. 46 men were taken prisoner and only four evaded.

What is incredible to me is that the citizens of this area have so much love and respect for the Americans who died to make them free. 28 of the flyers were buried in a mass grave at Slavcin. Last August marked 65 years since the incident. The Catholic Church at Slavcin has held a special mass in remembrance of our fliers the last Sunday of August every year since 1944.

There is a monument erected at each crash site, whether in the forests, meadows or on mountains commemorating the lives of our fliers. Some are accessible only by foot. Each monument lists the names of those who died. Wherever I went I was treated as royalty, not for who I am, but as a token of repayment for the life my uncle gave. I couldn't buy a meal or beverage. Whenever I would protest, someone would always tell me, "Your uncle already paid." One young man I had never met told me not to pay my hotel bill, it was already paid.

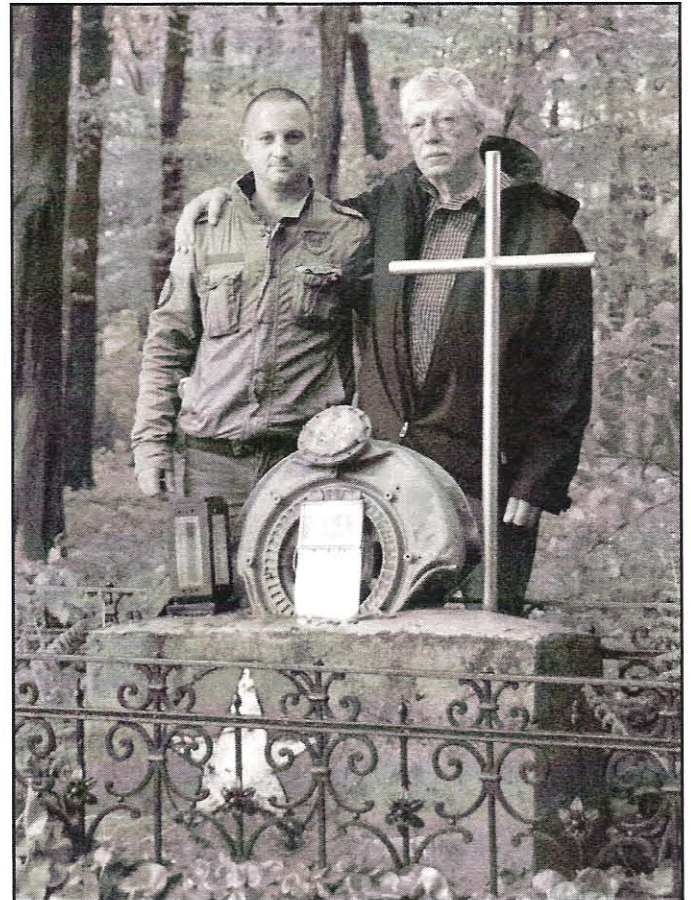
The people here say you cannot truly appreciate your freedom until you've lost it, and then regained it.

Dudley Paul Merrell

Nephew of

Dudley Earl Standridge

2, July, 1919 – 29, August, 1944



*Roman Susil (l) and Paul Merrell at monument in Sanov, Czech Republic - August 29, 2009*

### **La Citta' Distritta - Foggia dal 1943-45**

*Courtesy of The 32 Stormo (Bomb Wing) of the Italian Air Force and Linda Gartz  
Linda brought this back from Italy last October and donated it to the Association*

This is Foggia and Amendola and more in 21 minutes of film which our masterful Web Master, Sid Underwood, has put up on your web site.

Type in [www.2ndbombgroup.org](http://www.2ndbombgroup.org) and then go to "Videos" on the left column of the home page and space down to 'Citta' Distritta'.

## CALI NEUBERGER EARNS "A+"

Ms Cali Neuberger, a recent graduate of Central High School in Omaha, Nebraska, wrote a paper and created a power point presentation, describing the accident that took the life of 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Gerald K Beem, age 23, a graduate of her school, along with the lives of eleven other men. Cali's teacher graded her excellent history project a grade of A+. It also is awarded A+ from this quarter!!

On December 30, 1942 a B-17, one of three aircraft practicing close formation and high altitude flying, crashed near Musselshell, Montana (near Billings) with the loss of life of everyone on board. These planes were from the 20<sup>th</sup> squadron. "The Second Was First" on page 9 describes the initial loss of a 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Group B-17 that resulted in fatalities. The cause of the crash was never determined, but a review of the accident report and eye witness accounts, it was likely a combination of bad weather, with icing on the aircraft's wings, and possibly lack of oxygen due to equipment malfunction. Our history book "Defenders of Liberty" provides greater detail on pages 109-113.

Cali Neuberger did an excellent job of research, obtaining a copy of the original Army Air Corps accident report, including many supporting docu-

ments and articles from various Montana newspapers and statements of witnesses to the crash. She also included background information of Lt. Beem, describing family history and his high school and college records. In addition she developed information from a younger brother and statements from Gerald's classmates and teachers.

Among the fatalities was Major Orville A Ralston, Group Intelligence Officer and veteran of World War One, Nebraska's only WWI flying ace. Also lost in the crash were; 1<sup>st</sup> Lt Edward T Layfield, 25 - Baltimore, MD; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Regis J Newland, 21 - Millville, PA; 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Chester A Knight, 21 Prescott, AZ; S/Sgt Frederick T Brown - Almont, MI; S/Sgt Hulon B Dutton, Adairsville, GA; S/Sgt Charles T Valys - Creston, CA; T/Sgt Wallace H Hanson - St Paul, MN; Corporal Hobart L Hall - Sioux Falls, SD; Private Jacob V Reiss - Cleveland, OH.

With the exception of Major Ralston, none of these men had been in combat nevertheless, they should be remembered for their service and sacrifice. We are grateful for Cali's research and appreciate her efforts to provide information previously unknown to our association.

---

## BUCK RIGG

Buck Rigg, founding curator of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Museum at Barksdale AF Base, retired October 2009 after 30 years service. Rigg's connection to the museum began in the mid 1970's while his father was working at 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Headquarters. He was a fine arts student at Louisiana State University and also running a business on the side selling aircraft art and prints. Rigg said, "I've always had a deep love of history instilled in me by my parents." The then-commander expressed a desire to acquire B-17 and B-24 bombers for display and sought authority to make it happen. Once the aircraft were brought to Barksdale, the need for an organization to maintain the history of the base was recognized. Approval for a formal museum with a focus on strategic bombard-

ment came from the Secretary of the Air Force. In its humble beginnings it was housed in two rooms in the old 2nd wing headquarters. The museum grew under Mr Rigg's guidance to the current facilities just inside the North gate.

"My favorite acquisition was a solid silver punch bowl that was used as a trophy for the annual 5<sup>th</sup> Corps Army golf tournament," said Mr Rigg. "Upon reading the inscription, I saw that the first recipient was Lt Eugene Hoy Barksdale, the base's namesake. It wasn't until the early 1980's that I was able to get the bowl for the museum."

Rigg was a great friend to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Association and will be missed.

All our very best to you Buck!

# Seventeenth Second Bomb Association Reunion

Greetings and Welcome to the Seventeenth Reunion of the Second Bomb Association. This will be our second visit to the charming southwestern desert city of Tucson. Recent trends have been for greater attendance by family groups. This is a wonderful opportunity to renew old friendships and to make new ones.

**Be sure to call the hotel for your reservation** and identify that you are with the *Second Bombardment Association* to get the rate of \$117.65 (including sales & bed taxes and housekeeper gratuity.) This is their special rate exclusively for the military.

For a complete description of resort amenities, go to [www.WestwardLook.com](http://www.WestwardLook.com)

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We look forward to greeting you and your party!  
Lew Waters,  
President



**Transportation:** Tucson is served by nine airlines – Alaska, American, Continental, Delta, Frontier, Southwest, Sun Country, United and US Airways. Your Association will arrange special transportation from Tucson Airport to the Resort. Included with your Reunion Confirmation will be a request for your flight information if you are flying, in order to schedule shuttle services.

**Refund Policy:** Refunds can be accommodated if cancellations are made at least two weeks prior to the event. **Be aware** that if your plans change you must also cancel Hotel reservations. We cannot do that for you.

## REUNION HIGHLIGHTS

Thursday, October 14, 2010    **10:00AM - 5:00PM:** Registration  
**12:00 Noon - 10:00PM:** Hospitality Room  
Dinner - Hotel or many local restaurants

Friday, October 15, 2010    **9:30AM - 3:30PM:** Pima Air & Space Museum

This is one of the largest air and space museums in the world. It includes 80 acres, 300 planes and 100 years of aviation history. The SR-71 Blackbird "Spy Plane" & B-36 - the largest bomber ever built are included in the docent guided tram tour of the entire field. Lunch is in the 390<sup>th</sup> Museum with a program on the B-17. Plus "I'll Be Along" it's perfectly restored B-17! • COST: \$42.00

**6:00PM:** Social Hour

**6:40PM - 9:00PM:** Dinner in the Hotel

**SPEAKER** - Major General Floyd L Carpenter, Commander, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force

## DINNER MENU OPTIONS

<u>Grilled filet of Salmon</u>	Mixed Greens with choice of dressings Roasted Garlic Mashed Potatoes, Chocolate Mousse Cake	\$36.00
<u>Vegetable Lasagna</u>	Garden Green Salad with Italian Herb Vinaigrette, Chef's choice of Vegetables and Garlic Bread, NY Style Cheesecake	\$34.00
<u>Grilled breast of Chicken</u>	Mixed Greens with choice of dressing, Garlic Mashed Potatoes, Fresh baked Rolls, Chocolate Mousse Cake	\$34.00
<u>Child's Plate (12 &amp; under)</u>		\$15.00

Saturday, October 16, 2010 **9:15AM – 3:15PM:** Tubac Art Community

Tubac is a true wonder. It is located about half way between Tucson and Nogales AZ. Tubac was established in 1752 as a Spanish presidio (fort) and is the site of Arizona's oldest state park in the Village's Old Town. Here you will be able to wander through art galleries, working artist studios, gift shops, restaurants and more. Not quite, but a near par with Carmel, Santa Fe or Door County in Wisconsin. The Plaza is accessible to wheel chairs. As Fortune has it, that day will see the 'Juan Bautista de Anza Day' celebration. You will be on your own to select one of 8 or 9 spots for lunch. • COST: \$17.00

**6:00PM:** Social Hour - Relax and Revel with family & friends at the Hospitality Suite  
**6:30PM - 9:00PM:** Dinner in the Hotel - Entrée Choices are the same as Friday Evening.  
**SPEAKER -** Dr. Joseph K. Bush, Phoenix Veterans Administration

## SPEAKER HIGHLIGHTS

### Major General Floyd L Carpenter

General Carpenter is Commander, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, Barksdale AF Base, Louisiana, and Joint Functional Component Commander for Global Strike, U.S. Strategic Command, Offut AFB, Nebraska. "The Mighty Eighth" - General Carpenter also commands Task Force 204, activated in November 2007, to oversee Air Force nuclear bomber and reconnaissance activities. General Carpenter received his commission through the ROTC program at Texas A & M University in 1977. He has commanded at the squadron, group and wing levels.

From November 2002 through May 2003, he deployed as Commander, 40<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Wing, where he directed combat forces in support of operations Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. Rated as a Command pilot the General has over 4,000 flight hours, including 300 combat hours. His extensive biography is posted on our web site which is [www.2ndbombgroup.org](http://www.2ndbombgroup.org)

You can be sure that the General is a big Texas A & M Aggie fan. He and his wife Melissa have two children and two grandchildren. Earl Martin recalls well that then Lt Col Carpenter spoke to us at the Las Vegas Reunion in 1997. He gave a vivid description of a B-52 mission he led. Three airplanes left Barksdale AFB, went to Guam and then flew a round trip mission to Iraq, delivered some bombs. On route, one of the planes lost an engine but it was not deterred from fulfilling the mission. At another point they detected enemy aircraft taking off to intercept them however, Navy fighters seriously discouraged them. We look forward to hearing General Carpenter's message at the Friday night banquet.



### Joseph K. Bush, MD

Doctor Bush's work with the Veterans Administration is evaluating service related disabilities. He is a graduate of the University of Tennessee Medical School and completed his Internal Medicine residency at Duke University, with a two year time out for Army duty. After retiring from private practice, Dr Bush accepted a position with the Phoenix VA in 1997. He lives in Phoenix and has three grown sons and five grandchildren. He will speak to us on Saturday evening about his experience in evaluating recently injured military and the problems these veterans bring with them.





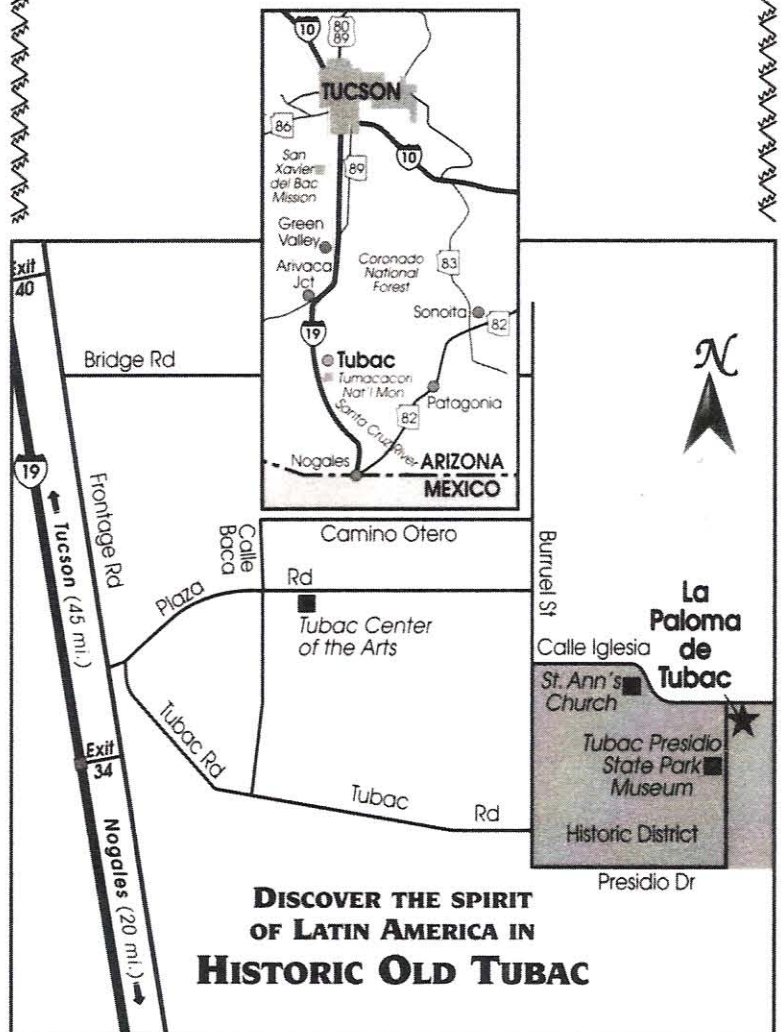
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*Bill and Cheryl Green*



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## NEW HISTORY BOOKS

(valuable new releases)

Daring Young Men by Richard Reeves gives us a welcome perspective on the Berlin Air Lift. Harry Truman famously declared, "We stay in Berlin. Period." Thousands of airmen were recalled to duty from all over the world to lift food, coal, steel and machinery by the thousands of tons into Tempelhof and two other airports in Berlin. Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin ordered the blockade of Berlin, gambling that he could drive out the detachments of American, British and French troops. It ended almost eleven months when Stalin backed down. The Berlin Airlift changed the world.

Whirlwind By Barrett Tillman He writes in the first book to tell the complete, awe-inspiring story of the Allied war against Japan. From the audacious Doolittle raid in April, 1942 to the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August, 1945, Tillman takes the reader into the cockpits and gun turrets of the mighty B-29 Superfortress. He examines the mind-set in Tokyo's war cabinet, which ignored the atomic destruction, requiring the emperor's personal intervention to avert a ghastly Allied invasion. Those of us who served a world away in Europe will gain invaluable insights from this book.

# REGISTRATION

Second Bombardment Association 2010

**DUE**  
**September 15,**  
**2010**

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

(This name will be used on your name badge)

Spouse or Guests(s)

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First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

First Name \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name \_\_\_\_\_

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Email \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron \_\_\_\_\_

		No. of Person	Cost per.	=	Cost
<b>Friday</b>	<b>Pima Air &amp; Space Museum</b>	_____	<b>@ \$42.00</b>		_____
<b>Friday</b>	Grilled Filet of Salmon	_____	@ \$36.00		_____
<b>Dinner</b>	Vegetable Lasagna	_____	@ \$34.00		_____
	Breast of Chicken	_____	@ \$34.00		_____
	Childs Plate	_____	@ \$12.00		_____
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>Tubac Art Community</b>	_____	<b>@ \$17.00</b>		_____
<b>Saturday</b>	Grilled Filet of Salmon	_____	@ \$36.00		_____
<b>Dinner</b>	Vegetable Lasagna	_____	@ \$34.00		_____
	Breast of Chicken	_____	@ \$34.00		_____
	Childs Plate	_____	@ \$15.00		_____
<b>Registration/Hospitality (per person)</b>		_____	<b>@ \$15.00</b>		_____
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$ _____</b>

Please tell us about any special needs you may have. \_\_\_\_\_

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Penny LeGrand is managing our event this year.

If you have questions call Lew Waters, Loy Dickinson or Penny LeGrand

**520-907-1404** or email to: [pennylg@msn.com](mailto:pennylg@msn.com)

# FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

## THE WORLD WAR II YEARS, 1943-1945

As a new command the Fifteenth Air Force was constituted on October 30, 1943 and activated November 1 at Tunis, Tunisia. It undertook operations immediately and for the ensuing 18 months contributed heavily to the Allied war effort. The 15<sup>th</sup> was initially composed of veteran units such as the 97<sup>th</sup> and 301<sup>st</sup> Bomb Groups. It started its existence with experienced heavy and medium bomber units of the 1942-43, period with both the Twelfth and Ninth contributing groups. It was assigned four B-17 (Flying Fortress) groups and two B-24 (Liberator) groups. For a brief time at the beginning, it also had two B-25 (Mitchell) and three B-26 (Marauder) groups. To protect this armada, three escort fighter groups with P-38 (Lightning) and one P-47 (Thunderbolt) group were assigned. Then, beginning December 1, 1943, the Fifteenth moved from North Africa to the Foggia area of Southern Italy, a logistical feat of extraordinary proportions. By June 1944 the command had reached strength of 21 Bomb Groups (6 B-17 and 15 B-24) and 7 Fighter Groups (3 P-38, 3 P-51, 1 P-47).

The 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force in the 18 months of existence destroyed all gasoline production, knocked out all the major aircraft factories in its sphere and destroyed 6,282 enemy aircraft in the air and on the ground. It dropped 303,842 tons of bombs on twelve countries of Europe, including military installations in eight capital cities. Its combat personnel made

148,955 heavy bomber sorties and 87,732 fighter sorties against the enemy. It lost 3,364 aircraft and 21,671 killed, wounded, missing and taken prisoner – 20,430 bomber crewmen and 1,187 fighter pilots.

Most notable and vital of the 15<sup>th</sup>'s oil targets was Ploesti, Romania complex of refineries, which contributed about 30% of the entire Axis oil supply and an equal amount of gasoline. Ploesti was protected by 150 first class fighters and 250 heavy flak guns when the 15<sup>th</sup>, with the cooperation of the RAF 205<sup>th</sup> Group of night bombers, began a series of attacks against it on April 5. The campaign continued until August 19. The cost was 237 heavies (15 of them RAF), 10 P-38 dive bombers and 39 escort fighters. This was the time that Russian troops overran Romania.

A unique sidelight of the 15<sup>th</sup>'s operations was the rescue and repatriation of air crews shot down in enemy territory. No other air force undertook escape operations in so many countries. The 15<sup>th</sup> returned 5,650 personnel by air, surface vessel and on foot through enemy lines. In over 300 "reunion" operations, men were brought back from Tunisia, Italy, France, Switzerland, Greece, Albania, Romania, Hungary, Austria and Germany.

Sources – extracts from:

"The Fifteenth Air Force Story" – Fifteenth Air Force Association -1986 and web – [376hbgva.com/history/15thairforce.html](http://376hbgva.com/history/15thairforce.html)

20th Squadron



49th Squadron



96th Squadron



429th Squadron



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A Veterans Organization of the  
2nd Bomb Group & Bomb Wing

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