



N 96TH BOMB GROUP NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2015

ISSUE NO. 64

Who Was Merl Leroy Schroeder?



Merl Schroeder's Crew: (left to right) William E. "Tex" Shields *R*, Elbert Wilkie Schanke *CP*, Merl Leroy Schroeder *P*, Robert Paul Girvin *B*, Henry Albert Tracy *N*, Richard Rucker *WG*, Arthur Lemieux *TT*, Anthony Carpentieri *WG*, John Burns Hull *TG* not pictured Clarence E. Kelly *BT*. This photo was taken in September on arrival at Snetterton and includes radio operator "Tex" Shields who was replaced on December 16, 1943 mission by Irvin J. Wade. PROVIDED BY JUDITH HULL, daughter of John Burns Hull.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

President's Corner	2	Our Chaplain Tries Out His Wings Again	19
Meanwhile Back at the Old Base	3	We Have A Librarian	20
Who was Merl Leroy Schroeder?	4	Holdings of the 96th Bomb Group Association Library	21
#61 December 16, 1943 Bremen Germany	7	Mail Call	22
Deborah Thank You	8	E-Mail	22
It's Better Late Than Never	9	Minutes Annual Meeting 11 October 2014	24
Home town Heroes	12	Treasurer's Report 2014	25
Faces and Places Nashville Reunion	14	96th Membership Committee	26
American Air Museum Why I Am A Member.....	16	New Members	27
Poet's Corner	17	Officers & Contacts	28
A Chat From Your Chaplain	18	Final Mission	28

President's Corner



Hello fellow 96'ers

My wife and I wish the 96 BG members a happy and healthy New Year.

I am extremely proud of our 96th membership for continuing to be so strong in their support by their attendance at the annual 8th Air Force Reunions. The 96th was #1 again in Nashville this past October. We had 46 registered participants 6 of whom were veterans. Overall attendance continues to fall understandably but there were 60 veterans among the 350 total attendees.

We are sorry to report that due to last minute family matters Dan Bradley and George Bonitz were not able to be with us and hope that all is well with them in the New Year.

Our 96th Bomb Group held its own regular business meeting while in Nashville minutes of which are published elsewhere in this issue.

Maintaining membership and even hopefully growth are of primary concern to our continued existence. To that end Rebecca Lutz and Lydia Anderson were appointed as our membership committee and we hope to hear more from them on ideas for continuing our search for not only veterans of the 96th but for recruiting members of the Next Generation. If anyone has a lead for a possible new member please contact Rebecca or Lydia at their address listed on the back cover of this Newsletter.

As another decade passes since the end of the war we are all grateful for our English friend's assistance in remembering our fallen as they are for our service. The attendance and participation of all on Britain's National Remembrance Sunday at Saint Andrews Church in Quindenham in November is most appreciated. It is indeed a great comfort to know that the 96th's Memorial Window there is a vital part of remembering all the fallen on this annual day of remembrance.

A very special thank you to Bert Patrick, Jill Tebble and Geoff Ward for their efforts in planning not only these activities of remembrance but for all your help to the 96th in keeping the memory of our lost comrades and our time of service alive.

To Sean Simington, your staff and students at New Eccles School thank you for not only hosting our humble museum but for the fine care you take of it. The new sign is spectacular.

Another trip to England is in the planning for May to coordinate with the Memorial Wreath Laying at the Cambridge American Cemetary. Rebecca Lutz and Geoff Ward are in the process of working out the details. Contact Rebecca for more information.

The 96th BG now has a library with great books, 48 titles and growing. It is hoped that it will make books like the Snetterton Falcons more available to all for research on the 96th and family members service as well as provide a wealth of information about the 8th Air Force and the War

The next reunion will be held in Omaha Nebraska October 13-18. Please watch for more details. They will be available soon. The March issue of the 8th Air Force News and our next Newsletter in August will both have details. If you can not wait that long check the 8th Air Force Historical Society web page at www.8thafhs.org.

Mark your calendars and make plans now to join us in Nebraska. I look forward to another great turn out by the 96th,

Joseph Garber
paljoe2@aol.com



Even the rain could not keep Joe down, just look at that smile

Meanwhile Back at the Old Base



As reported in the last issue of the newsletter, November 2014 marked the seventieth anniversary of the dedication of the 96th Bomb Group Memorial in Quidenham church.

The actual date coincided with the national remembrance Sunday in Britain and it was thought that this would have an adverse effect on attendance owing to the fact that all towns and villages would be holding their own services.

The Quidenham church council decided to go ahead with the service and also invite members of two other parishes within the Quidenham group to commemorate their fallen servicemen alongside us in the church.

To our delight on the day, well over fifty people were present at the service, which was conducted by the Archdeacon of Norfolk, the Ven. Steven Betts.

Jill Tebble, one of our association members contacted the USAF at Lakenheath to ask if they would be able to send a representative to the service. To our delight Major Mark Gray and eight airmen from his engineering unit attended plus two local 8th Air Force re-enactors who were dressed in World War Two uniforms.



Wreaths were laid in memory of the fallen from Quidenham, Wilby, and Eccles parishes, our own 96th Bomb Group Association, and one from USAF Lakenheath.

The names of those local men from the three villages lost in the two world wars were read out by their village representatives and a special recognition was made of the nine hundred plus men from the 96th Bomb Group who also lost their lives.

After the service an invitation to lunch at the New Eccles Hall School was attended by several people and the museum was opened for those who wished to visit. The American servicemen were very impressed by the hospitality offered and also our museum, which they informed us they would be visiting again in the near future.

Our special thanks must again go to Sean Simington at the New Eccles Hall School for his generosity and continuing support for the museum and the 96th Bomb Group Association. Over the years Sean has given outstanding support to the 96th Association and we will always be indebted to him for that.

After severe gales during the early part of last year, the museum sign at the entrance to the school suffered damage and has now been replaced by Sean with an even more outstanding one.



Rebecca Lutz is again in the process of organising another tour to Britain sometime in May of this year and we are looking forward to seeing many of you again and perhaps some of you who have never visited before. This tour will include a tour of some of Britain's most outstanding scenery in Cornwall and the Costswolds.

Recently I was asked by Richard Gipson from the 100th BG museum if they could show our film of Snetterton, at one of their film evenings. They normally have two film shows per year at their museum at Thorpe Abbots which are always very well attended. So after some discussion with Richard, I have agreed to co present an evening show, which also will include a presentation on the Poltava "shuttle" mission to Russia when the 96th suffered one of their highest losses when 16 aircraft were destroyed on the ground and others damaged by a German air raid.

From all of us over here in Britain we send you our warmest greetings for a Happy and Healthy New Year and we are looking forward to hosting those of you who will be making the trip over to England.

"To the 96th"

Geoff Ward

Who was Merl Leroy Schroeder? Adopting a name, constructing a memory of Caldwell, Idaho pilot

BY KRISTIN RODINE - May 26, 2014

These articles published in the Idaho Statesman, Caldwell, Idaho on Memorial Day May 26, 2014 and the followup article of June 28, 2014 as a result of its publication are presented here in grateful acknowledgment to Deborah Schröder and the many other Dutch citizens who have adopted the graves of our fallen warriors.

A Dutch woman who grew up near an American cemetery for the fallen of World War II has made it her mission to learn about the man.

It's been more than 70 years since 1st Lt. Merl Schroeder's B-17 went down in Holland after a bombing run. His remains, and those of half his crew, were never found. On Sunday, May 25, 2014 Memorial Day in Holland, Deborah Schröder placed a bouquet of flowers against a wall that bears his name - and 1,721 others - in the American Cemetery in the village of Margraten. It's called the Wall of the Missing.



Deborah Schröder at work with some of her references-*The Cold Blue Sky* by Jack Novey, a 96th'er, on top.

Schröder "adopted" Lt. Schroeder in June of 2013 as part of a program the village established after World War II to honor the American aviators and soldiers who liberated their region from the Nazis. Since she received her adoption certificate - and was shocked to find the pilot's name was so similar to hers - she has worked avidly to learn more about Merl Leroy Schroeder. She has unearthed many details: The dates he was born and (presumably) killed, where his father worked in Caldwell and even the serial number on the B-17F he piloted on the day he went missing. But she hungers for a sense of the man behind the name on the wall and, hopefully, the chance to connect with family members or others who knew him

OUTLINES OF A LIFE

Schröder scoured online resources, including ArmyAirForces.com, connecting with veterans and others who offered information, research tips and links to other resources. She started reading books about the air war over Europe, getting glimpses of what bomber crews

experienced: the extreme cold, un-pressurized cabins requiring oxygen masks, the near-constant threat of German anti-aircraft guns.

She made contact with the families of two of Schroeder's crew members, learning more about the unit and getting a photo of the 10-man crew that put a face to the man she was researching. She submitted a request for Schroeder's personnel records, and although some had been destroyed in a 1973 fire, the National Archives and Records Administration furnished two documents including the Missing Air Crew Report.

From myriad sources, she cobbled together the outlines of Schroeder's life. Merl Schroeder was born Dec. 5, 1920, in Fullerton, Nebraska, to George and Bethel Schroeder. The family, including Merl's little brother, George T., moved to Broken Bow before leaving Nebraska to settle in Idaho sometime between 1935 and 1940. George Sr. managed the Veltex gas station that then stood at 924 Cleveland Blvd., Caldwell, Schröder said. The family apparently lived around the corner from the station at 410 S. 10th - a block now taken up by a Bank of the Cascades and a Kelly-Moore Paints.

Schroeder was commissioned as a second lieutenant on March 10, 1943, and received his pilot's wings the same day. Then he learned how to fly the bomber dubbed the Flying Fortress

WHAT HAPPENED

In September, 22-year-old Schroeder and his crew were assigned to the 96th Bomb Group (Heavy), 337th Bomb Squadron at Snetterton Heath, Norfolk, in the east of England. Today the site is a race car track. Together the 10-man crew flew more than 15 bombing missions over enemy territory, most likely using various B-17s. On Dec. 16, 1943, Schroeder piloted a B-17F with the serial number 42-30860. Returning from a mission to Bremen, Germany, they were nearing the Dutch coast when a U.S. bomber flying nearby was hit by flak and exploded. The wreckage tore into Schroeder's aircraft, crippling it. None of the crewmen survived. Remains of five were recovered and identified. The others, including Schroeder, were never found.



"Holy Mackerel" A/C 42-3265, above is believed to be the plane that exploded and crippled the nearby B-17 piloted by Merl Schroeder in December 1943. The plane Schroeder flew that day had no recorded name or nose art and is in the crash report by its serial number 42-30860.

PROVIDED BY U.S. AIR FORCE National Archives and Records Administration

A CULTURE OF GRATITUDE

Schröder grew up in Heerlen, 7 miles from Margraten in the Netherlands' southeast. She was fascinated by her grandfather's stories about the great war and the day in September 1944 when Americans liberated the area.

"All of this has made a very deep impression on the village," Schröder said. "Their farmlands were turned into a cemetery for their liberators, to whom they felt so indebted. It was horrible to see how many young men would never be going home again."

At one time, more than 18,000 soldiers and aviators were buried there, until many U.S. families chose to repatriate their loved ones' bodies after the war, Schröder said. Now 8,301 are buried at the permanent American Cemetery, plus the 1,722 names on the Wall of the Missing.

An adoption program for the fallen was started shortly after the war, with adopters pledging to care for and regularly visit the graves. Later the program was extended to the many MIAs, and that's what Schröder signed up for. All of the graves have been adopted - there's a waiting list - as have most of the missing. A special foundation administers the program.

Schröder now lives in Hagen, Germany, with her husband and two young sons. So far she has made the 200-mile round-trip to Margraten six times to lay flowers by the Wall of the Missing and honor Schroeder's memory.

Her sons, ages 2 and 5, are a big part of her motivation. "Someday I will have to tell them about the war," she said. "Just showing them the cemetery wouldn't be enough, since the amount of crosses and other markers is too overwhelming.

"By adopting one soldier, and hopefully learning as much about him as possible, I will be able to tell them the story of a man who came from a faraway country and gave everything so that they can be free. And the more I know about him, the more I will be able to honor him.

"I hope that when I'm old, (my sons) will visit him every now and then and think about him."

CAN YOU HELP?

Deborah Schröder would love to hear from any relatives or friends of Merl Schroeder, or anyone else who can help flesh out her understanding of the MIA pilot. Contact her at deborah_schr@hotmail.com.

It is truly amazing how an article like this can lead to a wealth of information when someone happens to see it and share. Deborah Schröder's accumulation of information by her determined research and outreach brought about this article and its publication set in motion the events that produced the following follow up story. The contact information for Deborah above is good and if you have more information about Merl Schroeder and his crew or just want information about how she conducted her research I am sure she would like to hear from you.

Family, friend of WWII pilot from Caldwell sketch in his life

A Caldwell schoolmate, a nephew and newly recovered tailguns help a Dutch researcher

BY KRISTIN RODINE - June 28, 2014

When Josephine Miller picked up her Idaho Statesman on Memorial Day morning, the front page headline about a World War II aviator from her hometown captured her attention.



Josephine Miller talks about high school friend Merl Schroeder, who signed her 1938 Caldwell High yearbook. Miller, who had been a Caldwell resident since birth, moved to Boise about nine years ago. She described Schroeder as a very quiet, nice teenager.

Then she looked at the photo and started reading the story.

"Oh, my gosh, that's Merl," she recalled exclaiming.

Miller dug out the yearbook from her sophomore year at Caldwell High School - Cougar 1938 - and turned to the seniors section. There she found the smiling face of a boy she knew well, accompanied by his signature in blue ink: Merl Schroeder.

Five years after he signed that yearbook, 1st Lt. Schroeder's B-17 Flying Fortress crashed over Holland as the Allies fought Germany. His remains, and those of half of the 10-man crew, were never found.

Now Miller's memories are helping a Dutch woman piece together the story behind a name on the "Wall of the Missing" at the American Cemetery in Margraten, near her hometown.

Deborah Schröder "adopted" the Idaho pilot as part of her community's effort to honor and remember the U.S. servicemen who liberated their region from the Nazis. She researched official records, searched WWII websites and reached out to the Statesman in hopes of learning more about the man. The resulting article yielded several contacts.

She heard from a grand-niece of Merl Schroeder's and, most productively, a nephew who shared family snapshots and a sense of how the pilot's presumed death devastated the family.

Meanwhile, in the Netherlands, two shrimp fishermen discovered the tail guns of Schroeder's B-17 in tidal flats of the Wadden Sea in the Dutch province of Friesland.

"It's really unbelievable: Parts from the plane were found, as well as a family member and an old friend," Schröder remarked June 10, before a second family member came forward. "And all of that in such a short period!"

A TRUE HEART

Merl Schroeder was a tall, lanky redhead who moved to Caldwell from Broken Bow, Neb., midway through his high school career, Miller said. He and Murlin Brock, another displaced Midwesterner, became best friends.

Miller, then Josephine Ney, dated Murlin Brock that year, and they frequently went out with Merl and his girlfriend, class treasurer Josephine Sedlmayer.

"We went to the movies, and driving around in the car," Miller said. "The car was Merl's. His father had a service station, and I think he worked at that station."



This undated family snapshot shows Merl Schroeder, right, with his father, George, and brother, George Richard. The family moved to Caldwell when Merl was in high school.

PROVIDED BY GEORGE SCHROEDER

Merl's senior yearbook picture is accompanied by the quote he chose: "A silent tongue and a true heart - the most admirable things on earth."

"I think that kind of says it about him," Miller said, noting that Merl was mostly a quiet person and "just as nice as can be."

"He and Murlin would kind of crack each other up," she said.

Merl was on the yearbook staff, in charge of snapshots. The yearbook features the staff's imaginings of what class of '38 members would be doing. Merl and his girlfriend are listed as future butler and maid for a classmate described as "a rather inactive playboy."

Miller, 92, said she's not aware of anyone else from their circle of friends who is still alive. "Oh, my goodness, there isn't anybody left," she said as she studied the yearbook photos at her Boise home.

A FISHERMAN'S FIND

A few days after the Statesman published its story about the search for information, Schröder learned that twin tailguns discovered by fishermen earlier in May had been identified as coming from the B-17 Merl was flying on Dec. 16, 1943, when it was crippled by pieces of a U.S. bomber that was shot down.

"Due to the relatively good condition of the guns, the serial number was still readable," Schröder said. "This is only very rarely the case, especially for plane parts coming out of the North Sea," of which the Wadden Sea is a part.

According to the local Friesland newspaper, the Leeuwarder Courant, the recovered tailguns - complete with live ammunition - were officially confiscated as illegal weaponry, but the curator of a regional museum that houses displays in bunkers used to fight the Nazis told the newspaper that he hopes to display the machine guns.

The guns were found about 6 miles north of Kornwerderzand, not far from where the remains of the plane's bombardier floated ashore after the B-17 went down

RESEARCH CONTINUES

Schröder said she feels obligated to keep looking into the story of Merl Schroeder and his crew. And she is impressed by the contacts she has been able to make.

"I didn't dare hope for a lot," she said Thursday. "It's been such a long time ago that the chance of finding people who knew Merl or his family would have to be slim. And since Merl only had one younger brother and no kids himself, there was a chance that the Schroeder family line would have ended.

"During my research, other researchers warned me not to be disappointed since experience showed that it can be very hard to find family members or friends. That it turned out this fantastic, I could have never imagined."

*Though it may seem that we have the cart before the horse in this presentation of the Merl Schroeder story the excerpt presented next on Mission #61 from the **Snetterton Falcons** was shared with Deborah after the publication of these articles when she was referred to your editor by Geoff Ward in September. This mission recap, the original crew assignments and A/C Statistics for December 43 (Listing all A/C and crews lost for the month) were all sent via e-mail to her. She was also put in contact with Bill Thorns (b17fertilemyrtle@att.net) who was copied in the e-mail and finally with Bill Shields, the son of Tex Shields.*

See also her September 5 response to our information and e-mail.

#61 DECEMBER. 16, 1943: BREMEN,
GERMANY

This was a bad day for the 96th. Thirty-six aircraft took off in the morning. Thirty-three went all the way to bomb Bremen, but of these, seven went MIA. In addition to that, one crashed and three others were forced into emergency landings at strange bases.

Of B Group's low squadron, all but one bomber was destroyed. Of the 631 planes dispatched by the 8th, 10 never came back. That's not a bad percentage. But it's horrible when one realizes that 7 of the 10 came from Snetterton!

The A Group fared the better because the fighter escort kept the Germans at bay. But even so, there was chaos in the skies.

2/Lt. Ewing LeBlanc was at the controls of 42-3265, Holy Mackerel and taking evasive action from the flak installations of the Friesian Islands. From the same squadron, the 337th, 2/Lt. Merl Schroeder was doing the same thing in 42-30860.

Both planes collided. The time was 14:08 and witnesses fixed the positions at 5303N-0440E which was over the North Sea. All of Schroeder's crew were killed. Fortunately some of Lt. LeBlanc's crew had that precious split second to bail out. And although German salvage parties found many of LeBlanc's men dead at their stations in the wreckage, two men survived. Both the navigator, Lt. Ken Wales and the bombardier, Lt. Lowell Rogers lasted out the war as POWS.

Because he did not fly with them today, T/Sgt. Tex Shields, Lieutenant Schroeder's regular radio man, became the only survivor of that crew. His story not only illustrates the vicissitudes of war which cruelly dictate who shall die and who shall live, but it epitomizes that set of circumstances which were accepted throughout the air-war as a crewman's nightmare.

T/Sgt. Shield's nightmare began three days ago on the 13th when four men died as Lt. George Fabian's crew crashed on the base.

Ever since training days back in Dyersburg, the crews of Lieutenants Fabian and Schroeder were close. Here at Snetterton they shared huts. Especially close were two Texans; Fabian's BTO, Sergeant Mabry, and Schroeder's radio-man, T/Sgt. William E. "Tex" Shields.

After Mabry died in the crash, Shields requested and received permission to escort his friend's body to the cemetery on the 16th.

Returning to base from having just buried his friend, Sergeant Shields was told that his own crew had been lost in mid-air.

Thus Sergeant Tex Shields confronted a crewman's nightmare. He had begged to be excused from the war only for a few hours to bury a friend and in that brief time his grief was multiplied mercilessly. Running the emotional gamut, from the traumatic realization that a nine-man vacuum exists to the determination to get on with your own life. defies description.

Tex Shields remembers: "That was the most heart- sick I have ever been in my life. I actually cried for three solid days and nights. I couldn't eat. I didn't go to the Club or do

anything except pack up the personal things of the crew for shipment home...I felt the whole world had caved in on me and I've never quite forgiven myself for not being on the mission. That was the first time Schroeder had been off the ground without me, and I've always felt that maybe I was a good luck charm. At any rate, I was so shook up that the C.O. grounded me for several days."

Most orphaned crewmen faced the task of continuing their tours as "spares". They were assigned out of a replacement pool. There would be one mission with this crew, another with that crew; and so on.

Fortunately for T/Sgt. Shields, his crewman's night- mare did not send him into the pool of spare gunners. Lt. Fabian was more than happy to take him as radio- gunner.

Fighter attacks on the B Group were much more intense. Five B-17s went down in short order. Fifteen FW -190s came roaring out of the sun and scattered B Group momentarily like a gaggle of hysterical geese.

Suddenly, there was another collision. This one was witnessed by Lt. Jim Attaway who was flying lead in the high squadron. Below him, enemy fighters literally shot an engine off Captain Harold Motts 339th 42- 31113. Having been severed from the wing, Motts engine plunged down onto the wing of 1/Lt. Lewis Kerrick's 42-30872, Blonde Bomber of the 337th. Blond Bomber ascended sharply. On the other hand, Motts plane descended. Both planes tangled wings and plunged into the sea. The toll was extracted in full. Twenty men!

Enemy action soon wore down three more 96ers. First to go was 1/Lt. Carl Greer in the 413th's 42-3429 fighters ganged up on him over the *Zuider Zee*.

Then there were the double-death throes of two 337th planes. Both were done in by enemy aircraft near the Dutch coast. One carried the crew of 1/Lt. Edwin R. Smith in 42-31086 and the other, 42-37739, carried the crew of 1/Lt. Maynard Freemole. In one of those strange quirks of war, both planes were made inoperable simultaneously. They plunged down upon the Friesian Islands out of control. According to German and Dutch witnesses, one plane exploded at low altitude while the other kept burning until it crashed.

Our information concerning these losses comes from the Dutch architect Pieter C. Meijer who has already provided eyewitness testimony to an October 20th casualty.

"During the day," Mr. Meijer writes, "there had been much activity in the air over the Friesians. And it was foggy. About 1400 hours the American bombers returned. One could only follow their flight by ear because the fog was very thick. Villagers of Rarewerd heard some aircraft which simply had to be flying too low. Then about 1430, there came the unmistakable noise of crashing aircraft.

"The wreckage of one plane," Mr. Meijer continues, "was centered at the Kleaster (an abbey or cloister) between Rarewerd and Poppingswier. The wreck was burning fiercely and exploding ammunition kept sympathetic Dutch civilians at a distance.

"About one mile south, the second aircraft was strewn in five parts. Evidently it had exploded before crashing."

Deborah's Thank You E-Mail

Subject: RE: 1st/Lt. Merl Schroeder
Date: 9/5/2014 2:25:49 P.M. Central Daylight Time
From: deborah schr@hotmail.com
To: dlbudde@aol.com
CC b17fertilemyrtle@att.net

Hello Dale,

Many thanks for your kind replies as well as all the data you sent along. It was very helpful indeed.

I'm happy that this story is of interest to you and that you are willing to use parts of it in the 96th BG newsletter. I've read your latest newsletter with great curiosity. It's wonderful that the 96th BG association is still so active!

The email address of George Schroeder is:

gaschroede@charter.net.

He lives in Athens, Georgia.

Actually I've been in contact with Bill Shields, the son of Tex Shields. We have corresponded and he is planning on writing down some memories of his father's. He didn't know much about LT Schroeder's crew unfortunately. I've also been in contact with Judith Hull. She is the daughter of John Burns Hull, the tail gunner of Schroeder's crew. She was born after her father went MIA. She wrote that her mother followed John Hull through various stations of his gunner training and got to know all of the crew members. They were all pals. Judith Hull didn't know anything else about Merl Schroeder. I haven't been able to trace down more family members yet.

Interestingly enough I have also corresponded with David Boyd. He is the nephew of John A Boyd, the navigator of LT George Fabian's crew. John Boyd died on 13 December 1943 during a landing crash at Snetterton Heath (also mentioned in the excerpt from Snetterton Falcons which you sent). David and I met through the forum at www.armyairforces.com. When we compared the crew pictures of resp. LT Fabian's crew and LT Schroeder's crew, we discovered that they were taken in front of the exact same B17. I've attached them both for you.

Thanks again for your help, I truly appreciate it. I really hope that there are still people alive who knew these men.

Please let me know in case you have any questions and I will do my best to answer them.

Warm regards,
Deborah

Editors Note:

The photo of Merl Schroeder's crew and ID's are on the front cover and that of the George Fabian's crew appear at the left. Note the B17 in the picture is indeed the same.

If you can help to match the names with the photo in the Fabian crew please let us know as well as any other information you may have with regards to these men and their lives while at Snetterton.

Thank You Deborah for not only sharing this remarkable story with us but more importantly for helping us understand the great dedication of yourself and all the others who have adopted the graves and names of our fallen comrades. It is indeed heart warming to know that some seven decades later they are remembered and honored for their sacrifice not only by the tending of their memorials but by the education of those generations that have followed as to the importance of their contribution to the world as we know it today.

Bodies from both crews were rounded-up for the next two days by Dutch civilians and Luftwaffe burial- details from the nearby airfield at Leeuwarden. The bodies were buried in the Protestant cemetery of Poppingswier in Row 30, Grave 1. They were buried with military honors. Services were conducted by Pieters Bornstra and Jonker in the presence of the local Burgomeister and Luftwaffe delegates from area head- quarters at Amsterdam.

Although not shot down in the technical sense, one of the most popular and dignified ladies of the 96th, Fertile Myrtle III, was destroyed today. Struggling home from Bremen under the control of her pilot, Captain Tom Kenny, old Myrtle gave it all she had. It wasn't enough. Bill Thorns wrote in his diary of the grande dame:

"She was badly shot up with all control surfaces damaged and several cables severed. The fin was slashed nearly in two and there were huge holes in the wings and fuselage. The crew got her back to England, but she was just too unstable to land. They balled out after setting the auto-pilot on a heading out to sea.'

But Myrtle never made it to the sea. She went out of control and crashed at Silver Fox Farm, Taverham near Norwich. She caused no damages or injuries.

Thus ended the career of a classic lead ship. She had led the Regensburg shuttle with LeMay and later, with Archie Old, she led the 3AD in the second Schweinfurt raid.

It was significant now that many of the older planes were falling by the wayside. Many had seen their original crew finish their tours. They began carrying their second or third replacement crews. They were wonderful planes, those charter members. They were sentimental objects now. They were loved. But they were war-weary. When the rate of survival was calculated, (a Fortress, just like a crewman, had a 7 -mission life- expectancy in 1943), it was amazing how long some of them lasted.

NOTE: *Fertile Myrtle III was not flown on this mission by Captain Kenny and his crew. They observed her return to base and their comments are presented here but they were none of them on board that day. Snetterton Falcons is in error as noted in a latter edition. The actual crew is not reported.*



The Fabian crew (L/R) Rear Truman P. Starr, No ID, No ID, No ID, James W. Mabry, No ID. Front John A. Boyd, Thomas J. Scanlon, George Fabian, Robert P. Hughes. Not ID are: Joseph M. Tonko, Frank Alioto, Robert P. Larobardier and Jay E. Epright.

It's Better Late Than Never

For S/Sgt. Jesse "PeeWee" Reese, the tail gunner on 1st Lt. G.H. Blitzer's Crew "Ole Skatterflak" in the 337th Bomb Squadron, 96th Bomb Group!"

by Jesse Reese

On December 31, 1944 the Crew of "Ole Skatterflak" was getting ready to fly their 35th mission and complete their combat tour of duty. The target for the day was the Blom and Voss Shipyards at Hamburg Germany; this was a maximum effort mission.

Things started to go wrong shortly after reaching our aircraft as we prepared it for the mission. The top turret was not functional, it would not move, this was not enough to ground the aircraft for a mission of this type.

The next thing to go wrong was that our group was 32 minutes late heading into the target. This resulted in the fact that we missed joining with our fighter escort.

Next, we had just released our bombs over the target when our aircraft had a violent jolt shaking the entire plane. An explosion of an 88 MM Cannon Shell blew a huge hole in the right horizontal stabilizer. (this hole was large enough for 5 airmen to stand in it shoulder to shoulder). This damaged the controls in this area and made the aircraft hard to stay in the formation.



Not hospitalized survivors view the damage to horizontal stabilizer with thumbs up. L/R): S/sgt. Jesse Reese, S/sgt. John Worby, Pilot 1stLt. Gus H. Bitzer, Copilot Al Sherman, T/sgt. John Humpting

As we were leaving the formation a group of enemy fighters flying ME 109's Messerschmitts came down out of the sun firing their machine guns and 20MM Cannons. They made one pass thru the formation of the 96th Bomb Group. Our aircraft took 3 hits by 20MM Cannons and many holes from machine gun fire all over our aircraft.



Fighter damage, created a fire in the nose and wounded the navigator in the back and through one leg and the bombardier with a wound to the temple.

The first 20MM exploded in the nose compartment wounding 1st Lt. Jim McCarthy in the head, back and shoulder. 1st Lt. Gene Huffman had similar wounds, the chin turret was knocked out and all the electronic equipment was damaged and the oxygen system was out. A small fire did a little more damage but it extinguished itself.

The oxygen supply on the flight deck was damaged leaving the Pilot and Co Pilot without oxygen. Engineer T /Sgt. John Humpting gave the Pilot, Co Pilot, Navigator and Bombardier portable oxygen bottles because we were at 25,000 ft.

The second 20MM shell exploded in the radio room wounding Radio Operator T/Sgt. C.R. "Rusty" Hilchey in both knees and legs. This explosion damaged the radio equipment.

The third 20MM exploded in the waist compartment wounding S/Sgt. Bob Trusdale in the knees, back and shoulder. The right waist gun was destroyed.

With all of this happening Ball Turret Gunner S/Sgt. John Worby and myself called out enemy fighters at 5'oclock low. Both of us began opening fire at about 1500 to 2000 yards. This group of enemy fighters was ME 109's and captured P51 American Mustangs. The sight of our tracers seemed to keep these fighters away from our aircraft. Worby and I did not claim the downing of any enemy aircraft, we only said several of the attacking enemy aircraft showed heavy black smoke and then disappeared. We weren't able to follow the flight of the smoking aircraft because more enemy planes were coming toward us, and these attacks lasted for about 30 minutes and at which time we were at the coastline of the North Sea at an altitude of only 500 feet!

Navigator McCarthy using only hand instruments gave Pilot Bitzer a heading toward England. S/Sgt. Worby came out of the Ball Turret and helped S/Sgt. Truesdale throw out anything of weight to lighten the aircraft. T /Sgt Hilchey was crying out for help so Truesdale and Humpting went to his aid and gave him morphine shots.

The flight over the cold grey North Seas was very nerve racking. We would go up a few hundred feet, and then down a few hundred feet. Pilot Bitzer and Co Pilot Sherman used their knees to keep the control wheel column steady. As we reached the coast of England Navigator McCarthy gave Bitzer another heading, this brought us directly toward the runway of the English Woodbridge Air Base. This base was also an emergency landing base, the runway was 3 miles long. Upon approaching the runway Engineer Humpting had to hand crank down the landing gear due to the damage



CREW NN 39. 337th Squadron on arrival at Snetterton July 1944.
 Back Row: 2/Lt. Gustave H. Bitzer (P), 2/Lt. Alvin Sherman (CP)
 2/Lt. Peter J. McCarthy (N), 2/Lt. Harold G. Huffman (B)
 S/Sgt. John A. Humting (ENG).
 Front: S/Sgt. Clarence R Hilchey (R), Sgt. Robert Tuesdale (WG)
 Cpl. Jesse Reese (TG), S/Sgt. Jack O'Dell, Sgt. John Worby (BTG).
 Jack O'Dell left the crew with the reduction to nine man crews.

to the hydraulic system. Our aircraft hit the runway very hard and bounced several times then sped toward the end of the runway. We stopped only a few feet from the end. Four ambulances came along side and quickly removed the four wounded crewmen and took them to the 56th US Military Hospital.

We remained overnight on this base and were treated very nice. The next day New Years Day, we waited until late afternoon before a truck came and returned us back to the 96th Bomb Group where we had a very short interrogation. We then returned to our hut our beds were rolled up, we were MIA's! The next day Humpting, Worby and myself were shipped out in different directions. We returned to the States and were together at the convalescent hospital on Santa Ana Air Base in California. Several officers from the 96th came to see us and they thought we were awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, however, it was not in our records and due to a bureaucratic snafu, we never received the medal.



Tail Gunner Jesse Resse kneels in contemplation of his good fortune at not only having survived this last mission but all 35.

On May 9, 2014 I received a letter from the Air Force at Andrew's Air Base stating that upon a review of my records, I was to be awarded The Distinguished Flying Cross for action on December 31st 1944

...*Better late than never!*

It's Better Late Than Never the saga continues.....

The 96th Bomb Group Newsletter has been following Jesse's story since September of 2006. Thanks to the famous *Blue Jackets* of the 96th and sharp eyed Roy Brockman who recognized Jesse at the Wright Patterson Air Force Museum during a reunion that he was not registered to attend. The result of that chance meeting was the first publishing of Jesse's story in the Newsletter as we recapped mission #255 December 31, 1944: Hamburg, Germany - *What A New Years Eve! And No Celebration...*



In 2014, Reese decided to contact the Air Force about getting his medal. He included a letter from Alvin Sherman of Aventura, Florida, the senior officer of "Ole Skatterflak," to support his request.

"Mr. Reese stayed at his position and courageously kept defending our aircraft," Sherman wrote. "He was calm throughout the attack and reported constantly to the flight deck all activity and our damage as he assessed it. I was of the impression that he had been awarded the DFC and was surprised to hear this was not the case."

So when Jesse received the letter from the Air Force in May stating that upon a review of his records, he was to be awarded The Distinguished Flying Cross for action on December 31st 1944 all that was left was to set a date for the presentation.

First though he had to find time for one other important celebration on 27th of November this year, and it was not Thanksgiving. Jesse and his wife Connie celebrated their 67th wedding anniversary

Then finally on Friday, January 16, 2015 he got his Distinguished Flying Cross. Before a large crowd in the Family Life Center at St. Joseph Catholic Church in Dover, Ohio Col. Jim Jones of the Air Force's 121st Air Refueling Wing in Columbus pinned the DFC on Reese.

"It is a real privilege to be a part of today, honoring Sgt. Reese and what he did 70 years ago," Jones said. "His professionalism and airmanship are awesome."

"You are a hero," Jones said. "This is your day."

Other honors were heaped on Reese, 89, a retired Dover High School teacher.

Dover Mayor Richard Homrighausen read a proclamation naming Friday as Jesse A. Reese Day in

the city. State Rep. Al Landis, R-Dover — who had Reese as a home-room teacher in 1973 — presented him with a certificate of recognition from the Ohio House of Representatives, signed by Landis and Speaker of the House Clifford Rosenberger. A proclamation by the Tuscarawas County commissioners also was read.



U.S. Air Force Col. Jim Jones, 121st Air Refueling Wing commander, presents retired Staff Sgt. Jesse Reese with the Distinguished Flying Cross medal Jan. 16, 2015, in Dover, Ohio.

U.S. Air National Guard photo by Master Sgt. Ralph Branson



Reese smiled a lot and said "It's been a great day." He expressed pride in being a member of the Air Force. "It was Army Air Corps then, but in my heart, I'm Air Force."



HONORING THE MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE SERVICE AND SACRIFICE HAVE SECURED OUR FREEDOM

Hometown Heroes is a weekly radio show honoring the men and women whose service and sacrifice have secured our freedom. Featuring interviews with veterans, primarily from the World War II generation, Hometown Heroes presents history through the perspectives of those who lived it. Host Paul Loeffler travels the country as a sportscaster, connecting with veterans in places as diverse as Missoula, MT, Las Vegas, and Washington, D.C. His experience has left him convinced of something you'll hear him say frequently on the program:

“No matter where you're from in this great country of ours, no matter how big, or how small your hometown might be, there are heroes around you.”

<http://www.hometownheroesradio.com/>

One morning this past August I received a most surprising phone call from Paul Loeffler. He wanted to know if I knew Nyle Smith and if he was a member of the 96th Bomb Group Association. I could find no record or mention of a Sergeant Nyle Smith but as more details were revealed I did find a report of the events in the *Snetterton Falcons II* on page 109 entitled: **NIGHT OF THE INTRUDERS 11-12 April '44.**

The facts that follows taken from the Hometown Heroes web page tells how another “Lost Soul” was found and we gained another new member. If you can download the audio from the web page you will be treated to a great audio history.

26 July 2014

Paul Lefler

<http://www.hometownheroesradio.com/aircraft-mechanic-saved-lives/>

Aircraft Mechanic Saved Lives

91-year-old Nyle Smith of Fresno, CA appears on episode #325 of Hometown Heroes, debuting July 26, 2014. Smith grew up on a farm near La Place, IL, and enlisted in the Army Air Corps shortly after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Smith repaired and inspected B-17 Flying Fortresses as an assistant crew chief with the 96th Bomb Group, 413th squadron, based in Snetterton, England.



You'll hear Smith recall the base being bombed the first night he arrived, as well as the terrifying and tragic events of April 12, 1944.

On April 11, Nyle volunteered to replace another member of the ground crew on a short flight from Snetterton to the 390th Bomb Group base, Parham Airfield, about ten miles west of the North Sea shoreline. They were ferrying a special “pathfinder” B-17 equipped with radar to enable it to lead bombing missions even through cloud-saturated skies. Many of the twelve men aboard were sleeping when the bomber was attacked on its final approach to Parham.

You'll hear Smith recall initially thinking it was British anti-aircraft fire headed through the darkness toward the B-17, but when he saw the tracer bullets whiz by the waist window, he knew a German night fighter had them in his sights. A Messerschmidt 410 piloted by Lt. Wolfgang Wenning shot the plane down just shy of the base, and it collided with trees, the ground, and even a brick wall on the estate of the Earl of Cranbrook.



In the foreground Left is a mangled propeller in the aftermath of the crash and ensuing fiery explosion.

Listen to Nyle Smith's account to hear how he experienced the crash, including the last minute decision he made before impact that he believes may have saved his life. Smith's actions after the burning wreckage came to stop resulted in his being credited with saving the lives of others, including the plane's pilot, Donald MacGregor. The fact that it had happened at the midnight hour, and in such close proximity to the base, may have been what led authorities at the time to deem the crash a non-combat incident. As a result, Smith was given the highest honor a serviceman can receive for action not involving the enemy, the Soldiers Medal.



The other nine men were wounded, including Smith, who found out during an x-ray in recent years that he still carries shrapnel in his right hip. Nyle's understanding is that he was the only crash survivor who was not sent home to the U.S. at the point, but he's actually thankful for that because of what happened later.

Remaining at Snetterton, Nyle continued to work on B-17s, but after a weekend leave to London saw him almost killed by a German V-2 rocket, he decided to take a long train ride to Scotland for his future passes. At a dance hall in Edinburgh, he met a young Scottish lady named Phyllis, and on December 30, 1944 she became his wife. Nyle and Phyllis will celebrate their 70th anniversary this winter, and you'll also hear him share how the newlyweds were together when they found out the news that the war in Europe had ended.

Among the other things you'll hear Smith discuss are some close calls he experienced while serving in Vietnam, as well as the notable B-17 "Five Grand." and what he saw of the plane in England.

Smith retired from the Air Force after 22 years, two months, and six days of service. If you see this humble hero, please thank him for serving our country.

Paul Loeffler



Nyle Smith (right) after being awarded the Soldiers Medal for his heroics in the aftermath of the B-17 crash.

You'll hear Smith explain what happened after the plane came down, including the intense explosion involving more than 1700 gallons of aviation fuel, as well as bombs and ammunition. Three men on board were killed: navigator George Pietrucha, bombardier John Petrowski, and radio operator Howell Thompson.



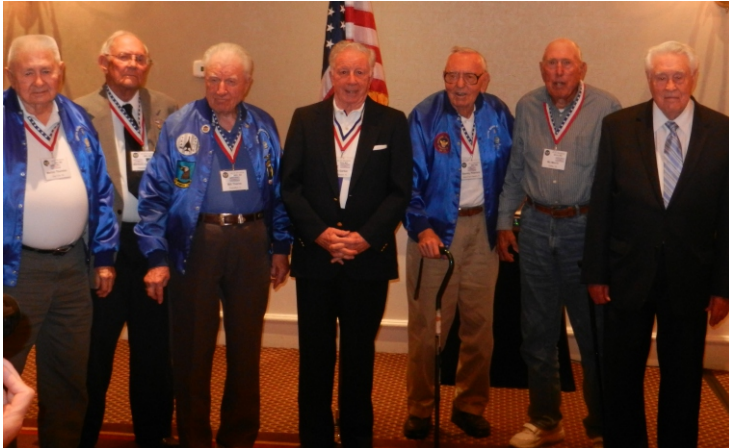
Wreckage is strewn across the field between the crash site and the estate's farm-cottages. This was a close call for those families. Note the unexploded marker-bomb in the center and the propeller-boss in the foreground



Phyllis and Nyle Smith after 70 years of marriage. The happy couple now reside at 904 E. Frederick Ave., Fresno, CA 93720. Once again listed as a member of the 96th he probably would enjoy hearing from some of you.



Faces and Places Nashville Reunion October 9 - 13



Six of our own and a straggler from the 453rd BG. L/R Merton Thurston, Marbury Council, Bill Thorns, Joe Garber, Stan Peterson, Mo Morris (453rd) and Glen Harrison. We missed you George Bonitz



Fifteen First Timers L/R Patricia and James Thurston, Bruce and Nancy Crawford, Andy Dunn, Manuela Zonensen, Charles Dunn, Beverly Miller, Regina Jornod Sjoberg, Usha Dunn, Janet Strizic, Janet Laura Carpenter, Adam Thorns, Tracy Thorns and Mo Morris.



Veteran Mo Morris from the 453rd BG. We are still picking up stragglers.



Laura Edge, daughter S/Sgt. Lawrence L. Witt 338th, speaks of her father's experiences as a POW.



Glen Harrison and daughter Allison in front of Son Glen Harrison Jr. and wife Nancy



Our Host and Hostess for the 96th Bomb Group in Nashville Jerry and Rebecca Lutz



L/R Gladys Garber, Carolyn & Marbury Council, Doris & Jim Davis, Janet Strizic, and ?????? look like they might be enjoying Janet tell how excited she is to be our Librarian.



First Timers the Charles Dunn Family L/R Usha Dunn, Manuela Zonensein, Andy Dunn, and Charles Dunn. We hope to see excerpts from Charles's Memoir of his parents war time experiences in a future edition of the Newsletter.

Next Stop Omaha



Craig Ternovits, Mike McIlrath, William Thorns, Dan Thorns, Dale Budde, Ken Stam, Rebecca and Jerry Lutz, Mark Wagner, Regina Jornod Sjoberg, Patricia Thurston, Janet Strizic, Charles Dunn 14?, Andy Dunn, Manuela Zonensen, Adam Thorns, Janet Laura Carpenter, Glen Harrison ,Jr.and Nancy, Sonny Thorns, Allison Harrison, Laura Edge, Bruce and Nancy Crawford, Center Row: Charlie and Sarah Conroy, Cathy Stam, Carol Wagner, Lydia Anderson, Joan Garber, Gladys Garber, James Thurston, Nancy Severson, Cathy Duncan, Usha Dunn, Carolyn Cuncell, Beverly Miller, Candy Brown, Bobi Rehberger, Dorris Davis, Seated: Willodean Hill, Dorothy Thorns, Joe Garber, Bill Thorns, Merton Thurston, Stan Peterson, Mo Morris, Glen Harrison, Marbury Cuncell Front: Michele Thorns, Richard Hill Tracy Thorns. Not pictured our photographer. Fifty-four in all not a bad turn out.



A Real Family Affair *Back* L/R Tracy & William, Michele & Dan Thorns, Ken Stam, Adam Thorns *Center* Charlie & Sarah Conroy, Kathy Stam and Sonny Thorns Seated in front Bill and Dorothy Thorns.

Carol & Mark Wagner stranding behind Stan Peterson and his daughters Nancy Severson left and Cathy Duncan right.

Stan Makes another sale and gives away his famous autograph to Richard Hill.



Adam and Sonny Thorns, Merton Thurston, James and Patricia Thurston, Nancy and Bruce Crawford, Laura Edge and Candy Brown



Lydia Anderson, Bobi Rehberfer, Glen Harrison Jr. and Nancy, Mike McIlrath, Allison Harrison and Glen Harrison.



AMERICAN AIR MUSEUM NEWS

THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE AMERICAN AIR MUSEUM IN BRITAIN

Early Summer 2014

www.americanairmuseum.com

Issue 71

Why I'm A Member: Marbury Councill, Jr.

B-17 Ball Turret Gunner Almost Didn't Make It

American Air Museum Marbury Councill vividly recalls sitting in the ball turret of his B-17, looking down on Germany through the gunsight of his twin.50 caliber machine guns, watching the dark smudges of flak work their way up to his altitude.

It was January 1945 and he and his fellow crewmates were on their way to bomb Munich. They were part of the 337th Bomb Squadron, 96th Bomb Group. It was his 13th mission, and the number would prove its unluckiness.

"I was too young to be afraid. I didn't appreciate the danger as much as I should have, he said. He was only 17 years old when he had enlisted during the summer of 1944. His father had flown biplane fighters over France during World War I, and rejoined the Army Air Force at the outbreak of World War II.

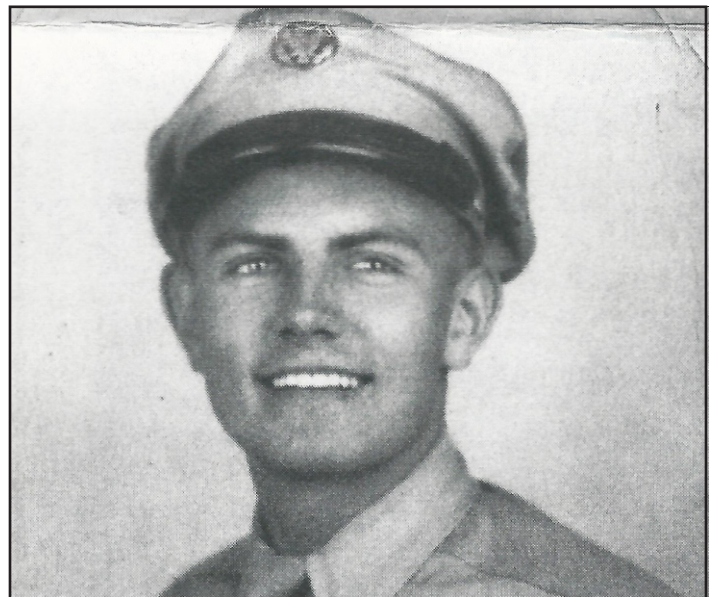
His son, Marbury Jr., was eager to follow in his dad's footsteps and joined as soon as he was old enough. "I wanted to be a pilot as well, but that was not to be. They made me a gunner."

And months later, he was sitting in his ball turret watching the flak get closer and closer, until a German shell penetrated the airplane's hull just above his position, exploding in the radio room. Shrapnel radiated throughout the plane, instantly killing the radio operator, damaging the aircraft's infrastructure and systems, wounding crew members ... and peppering Councill's ball turret.

"I lost an eye to a piece of that shrapnel, Passed out. When I came to there was blood everywhere. I knew I had to get out, so I tried to stay conscious, and rotated my guns straight down, so that the turret's hatch would be facing straight up so I could open it," the now 88 year old remembered, reaching back for a 70 year old memory. "I got it open. ... stood up into the fuselage ... and knew I

was going to pass out again. But my buddies, the waist gunners ... they were wounded too ... pulled me out and zipped me into a heated bag we had for the wounded."

Meanwhile, the pilot and co-pilot were struggling to maintain control of a badly damaged aircraft. Losing altitude and dropping out of the bomber formation, they knew reaching allied lines was out of the question and took the best option available ... steering south toward neutral Switzerland. Praying that no Luftwaffe fighters would take notice, the two men struggled to keep the B-17 in the air. Finally the Rhine River, which divided Germany from Switzerland, came into the view. The aircraft barely made it across the river before the pilot belly-landed into a field. "Thank god we had a great pilot. When they pulled me out of the aircraft, I could see German troops on the other side of the river looking back at us. We almost didn't make it."



Councill's graduation photo from gunnery school in Kingman, Arizona.

But Switzerland was a neutral country. Swiss troops soon arrived and took control of the crash site and the survivors. All of the crew members were shipped off to a containment camp to sit out the rest of the war ... except for Councill, who was the worst wounded. He was trundled off to a local hospital

Four months later, the war was over, and Councill and his crewmates were repatriated back to the states. He gained a degree from the University of Maryland, got a job in the office supply business, and married his wife Carolyn. Today they have three children , twelve grandchildren, and even a couple of great-grandchildren.

He has been a supporter of the American Air Museum since its beginning, and has visited many times, including in May 2013. "It's a neat place. The aircraft are OK, but I really enjoy the smaller items on display ... the photos, the papers ... I like the details. It's a history lesson in itself. Everyone who visits will learn something important."

Through the decades, Councill maintained close ties with his crewmates. But as the youngest member of the crew, he is now the sole survivor. "It makes me angry. I miss them," he said. "That's why I think the Museum is so important. I want visitors to be reminded of my buddies and the others who served. They were family. When you are cramped up in an air- plane with all of these guys, risking your lives, you get to know one another very well. These men did a great job, and I want everyone to know it.



The scene after Councill's plane crashed in Switzerland and the Swiss came to their aid.

Opened in 1997, the 70,000 square foot American Air Museum at Duxford has hosted over 5.5 million visitors and serves as a memorial to the almost 30,000 U.S. Airmen who gave their lives flying from British shores in World War II. The AAM is enhancing its facility to create a sustainable and educational "living history" of the legacy it celebrates. They are integrating technology onsite and online to be a center for educational and professional development.

If you have never visited the American Air Museum it is highly recommend. If you can not make the trip to England go to their web page at www.americanairmuseum.com register and enjoy a truly remarkable and informative experience. You will see why Marbuury Councill is a member.

Poet's Corner

To My Boomerang

by Capt. Roland McRae

*From placid fields of green you rise,
Thrust armored nose into the skies.
Your legs tucked into each nacelle
Thus transformed, a queen from hell.
With throttles set and turbos turning,
Synchronized propellers churning.
Higher still I've watched you soar,
Marvelled at your muffled roar.
Around you now come kindred tribe,
As mounting arcs your wings inscribe.
Element, squadron tucking tight,
Your groups formed in early light.
Wing control points, division too
Are mere routine to me or you,
Departure point and zero hour
Demanding more of your great power.
Channel crossed, we're on our way.
"Fortresses hit Hun today,"
"Bandits high, nine o'clock:"
Fifties roar and turrets rock.
Through flak and fighters lumbering on,
Staccato burst and steady drone,
Nothing stops the steady stream
Of Boeing's Baby and airman's dream.
Oh, I have seen you loop and roll,
Silken 'chutes from you unfold.
I've watched you dive and spin in flames,
Seen the mounting list of names,
Ah, but others have returned,
Feathered props and engines burned,
Full of flak holes, rudder shorn,
Not the sleek war bird of morn,
Red flares pop and Chaplains pray,
Bring them safely home today.
Miracles of flying skill,
Call it anything you will,
I offer thanks to my Creator
That I don't fly a Liberator ...*

To My Boomerang

was taken from

The Sky Was Never Still

Favorite Poems of "The Mighty Eighth"

An Anthology Edited By
Robert E. Doherty and James W. Hill

Copyright 1996
8th Air Force Memorial Museum Foundation

A Chat From Your Chaplain

With your permission, I'd like to consider our theme for this issue as one of hope!!!

To start with, do you know what the word BIBLE stands for? Basic Information Before Leaving Earth!!!

I have scanned most of my references and have come up with a number of quotations involving "hope" I'm sure you all feel we need hope to the nth degree.

"Day dawns after night, showers displace drought, and spring and summer follow winter? Then, have hope! Hope forever, for god will not fail you!"

"Waiting with hope is very difficult, but true patience is expressed when we must even wait for hope. I will have reached the point of greatest strength once I have learned to wait for hope."

"Of course you'll encounter trouble. But behold a god of power who can take any evil and turn it into a door of hope."

"Hope is some extraordinary spiritual grace that god give us to control our fears, and to oust them."

"Hope is a golden cord connecting you to heaven. This cord helps you hold your head up high, even when multiple trials are buffeting you. Hope lifts your perspective from your weary feet to the glorious view you can see from the high road. You are reminded that the road we're traveling together is ultimately a highway to heaven."

"Christianity is realistic because it says that if there is no truth, there is also no hope."

"No other religion, no other, promises new bodies, hearts, and minds. Only in the gospel of Christ do hurting people find such incredible hope."

"Hope is faith holding out its hand in the dark."

"Even when our situation appears to be impossible, our work is to "Hope in God. Our hope will not be in vain, and in the Lord's own timing, help will come."

"Hope is the power of being cheerful in circumstances we know to be desperate."

"Our Christian hope is that we're going to live with Christ in a new earth, where there is not only no more death, but where life is what it was always meant to be."

"It is impossible for that man to despair who remembers that his helper is omnipotent."

"God's word says there's no hopeless situation, illness, marriage Our hope is the anchor of our soul. .. The confident hope of Jesus Christ's return!"

"The word hope I take for faith; and indeed, hope is nothing else but the constancy of faith."

"I am your risen, living savior! Through my resurrection you have been born again to an ever-living hope. It is vital for you to remain hopeful, no matter what is going on in your life, you can find only one adequate source of help--me!"

"We must accept finite disappointment, but we must never lose infinite hope."

Our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread as, "I imagine so", or "It is unlikely" our salvation is fastened with God's own hand, and with Christ's own strength, to the strong stake of God's unchangeable nature."

A FEW "MORE IMPORTANT THAN ITEMS"

What you learn from an experience is more important than what you earn from it.

The size of your heart is more important than the size of your home.

How completely you have forgiven is more important than how deeply you were hurt.

Respect is more important than reward or recognition.

The significant things gained during difficult times are more important than the insignificant things that are lost.

You are all very SPECIAL friends, and the good lord willing, hope to see Y'all in Omaha!!!!



Bill Thorns



Address your correspondence for our Chaplain to:

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E-mail b17fertilemyrtle@att.net



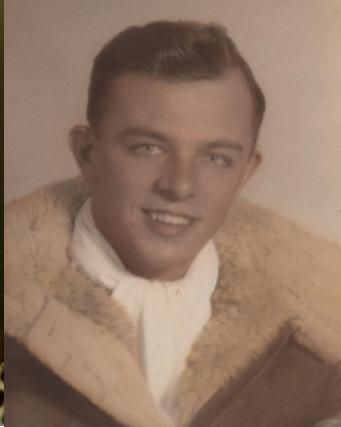
Our Chaplain Tries Out His Wings Again

Squadron 4 of the EEA hosted Bill Thorns, below far left, and five other local veterans to an Honor Flight for Media Day during the Aluminum Overcast visit to the Aurora Municipal Airport on August 29, 2014.



We Have A Librarian Janet Strizic

Janet Strizic is the daughter of First Lieutenant George W. Ernst who served as a pilot with the 96th Bomb Group, 337th Squadron, stationed at Snetterton-Heath beginning in March 1945. He flew 17 missions from the time he began in March until the final combat mission #320 April 21, 1945 to Inglostadt, Germany. He also participated in the Operation Chowhound food drops in early May to the starving civilian population of Holland.



emotional moment to know that she was actually at the base he served at. "I really had hoped to get a copy of the book, but learned it was out of circulation and there was no way of getting one. So, when I attended my first reunion this past October and when I heard they were looking for a librarian to maintain the library of books that the 96th had been accumulating, I couldn't

wait to put my hand up and volunteer. It allowed me to have the book in my home and share it with my boys who knew about the book through me and had been trying to locate a copy for us. I'm very happy to serve as librarian and will be traveling to Omaha with this wonderful library for the next reunion."

Thank you Janet for raising your hand and becoming not only our first librarian but also our first patron. Your own family's experience in having access to these materials shows that we are on the right track.

We look forward to hearing from you in future issues about your work in cataloguing, labeling and developing procedures for checking out and returning materials. Hopefully, too, other stories about the library's use and new additions to the collection..

Looking forward to seeing you and the Library in Omaha in October.

First her father, George, passed away in May 2012 at the age of 88. Then she injured her back that summer and needed surgery in December. If that was not enough her granddaughter was born in January 2013 with a bad heart. She received a new heart at 2 months and came home at 3 months. The good news starts with she turned 2 this January.

The other good news began when Janet saw in one of her father's newsletters that the 96th Bomb Group was planning a trip to England and Ireland to commemorate the 70th Anniversary of the first flight going out of Snetterton,

Janet says "I just knew I was due for a break."

She called Rebecca Lutz (the organizer of the trip) and asked to hear more. When she told 2 people at work they said "you'd be crazy not to do it!" So, she called Rebecca back and asked how to get in. She went over thinking that she wouldn't be going to the base her father had served at because the name didn't sound like what she recalled from discussions with her father. In a conversation at the beginning she asked Laura Edge (who was also along on the trip) before our day at Snetterton, and she said that if my father was in the 96th and 337th Squadron, then she really thought that it had to have been Snetterton. She said that when we got to the museum that we would look in the book *Snetterton Falcons*, written by Geoff Ward and Robert Doherty, to see if my father's crew was listed in there. And, sure enough, there it was. He arrived with his crew in March 1945. Janet related that it was a very

wait to put my hand up and volunteer. It allowed me to have the book in my home and share it with my boys who knew about the book through me and had been trying to locate a copy for us. I'm very happy to serve as librarian and will be traveling to Omaha with this wonderful library for the next reunion."

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The Crew of BJ-30 337th Sqdn. listed in the *Snetterton Falcons* on arrival in March 1945 Back L/R: Cpl Kenneth E. Kettle (TG), Cpl Leonard A. Robinson (E), Cpl Norman L. Levick (BT), Cpl Russell F. Gearhart (WG), Cpl Victor O. Smock (RO), Front: 2/Lt Donald L. Roth (N), 2/Lt Harold W. Oehmke (B), Cpl Leroy M. VanDuyne (TT), Wilbur L. Griffiths (CP), 2/Lt George W. Ernst (P).

Holdings of the 96th Bomb Group Association Library

Listed below are the titles and authors of what has become your 96th Bomb Group Association Library. Many of them came to us with the passing of Thomas (Tom) Thomas, our Association Secretary Treasurer for its first Thirty (30) years. A number of them are autographed copies from the authors. Many are no longer in print and some are unique publications like our own **Snetterton Falcons** and **Snetterton Falcons II** that have been self published in small numbers for and by other World War II Groups and Associations. Some of these are autobiographies by our members or biographies by friends and family that give a special look at what life was like during the war.

They are all unique and valuable to someone trying to share with family and friends the war time experiences and life of a parent, loved one or friend. The 96th Bomb Group

Board of Directors is most grateful to Janet Strizic for volunteering to be our Librarian and has committed to paying the postage one way for loans as we get this project of the ground. This seems most fitting as the stated purpose of the 96th Bomb Group Association is *"To perpetuate the history of the 96th Bomb Group and the memory of lost comrades."* We welcome the opportunity to share this resource with all our membership.

Plans are to bring them all to Omaha and the 8th Air Force Historical Society reunion in October. Meanwhile loans can be made from our Librarian:

Janet Strizic
10303 N. Ellendale Road
Edgerton, WI 53534-8405
(608) 290-3611
rainorshine101@yahoo.co

Title	Author
Snetterton Falcons The 96th Bomb Group In World War II	Robert E. Doherty and Geoffrey D. Ward
Snetterton Falcons The 96th Bomb Group In World War II	Robert E. Doherty and Geoffrey D. Ward
Snetterton Falcons The 96th Bomb Group In World War II Enhanced Edition	Robert E. Doherty and Geoffrey D. Ward
Snetterton Falcons II In The Nest And On The Wing	Robert E. Doherty and Geoffrey D. Ward
The Mighty Eighth A History of the U.S. 8th Army Air Force	Roger A. Freeman
Mighty Eight War Diary	Roger A. Freeman
B-17 Flying Fortress	Roger A. Freeman
The Mighty Eighth War Manual	Roger A. Freeman
The Mighty Eighth In Color	Roger A. Freeman
Eyes Of The Eighth	Patricia Fussell Keen
A Story of The 7th Photographic Reconnaissance Group 1942-1945	
Warrior General The Legend and Legacy of Archie J. Old, Jr.	Jack Allday
Never Give Up A biography of Thomas L. Thomas	Cheryl Price
On The Wings Of An Angel Biography of S/Sgt Joe Pino	Peter G. Flores
Happy Landing	Joseph D. Pace
"The Saint" Stories by the Navigator of a B-17	Stanley A. Peterson
On the Wings of Dawn American Airmen as Germany's Prisoners	Laura A. Edge
The Cold blue Sky A B-17 Gunner In World War Two	Jack Novey
The Best of War Stories The 8th AFHS, National Capital Area Chapter's	John W. McCollum, Editor
The Greatest Generation	Tom Brokaw
"When Grandpa Flew IN World War Two"	Robert E, Doherty Illustrated by Carolyn Councill
Poems of Training, Combat, Captivity and Liberation	
The Sky Was Never Still Favorite Poems of "The Mighty Eighth"	Robert E, Doherty Illustrated by Carolyn Councill
Big Bombers Of WWII	William N. Hess Frederk A. Johmsen Chester Marshaall
One Last Look A Sentimental Journey to the Eighth Air Force Heavy Bomber Bases Of World War II In England	Philip Kaplan and Rex Alan Smith
Camouflage & Markings	
Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress U.S.A.A.C. & A.A.F., 1937-1945	<i>Roger Freeman</i>
Boeing B-17B-H Flying Fortress	
The B-17 Flying Fortress	Text Ernest R. McDowell Illustrated Richard Ward
Chick's Crew A Tale of the Eighth Air Force	Steve Birdsall, Drawings by Richard Groh
War Pilot Of Orange	Ben Smith . Jr.
To Kingdom Come An Epic Saga of the Air War over Germany	Bob Vanderstol
Final Flights	Robert J. Mrazek
Dramatic wartime incidents revealed by aviation archaeology	Ian McLachlan
POW Odyssey	
Stalag Luft III The Secret Story	Major General Delmar T. Spivey USAF
The Longest Tunnel The true Story of World War II's Great Escape	Arthur A. Durand
The Longest Mission Images from the Stalag War	Alan Burgess
A Gallant Company The Men of The Great Escape	
Behind The Wire Stalag Luft III West Compound	Jonathan F. Vance
A Domain Of Heroes	Arnold A. Wright
Clipped Wings	Carrol F Dollon
American Ex-Prisoners Of War	R.W. Kimball
The City & The Camp Moosburg Stalag 7A	Gardner Hatch, Chief Editor
There I Was (Cartoons)	Herbert Franz, Bürgermeister Town of Moosburg
More There I Was (Cartoons)	Bob Stevens
	Bob Stevens



August 29, 2014

Daniel Bradley
31 Brinkerhoff Ave
New Canaan, CT 06840

Dear Daniel,

Enclosed is the renewal form and check for dues for 2014 and 2015 for me. My father, Charles F. May, Jr., was a co-pilot in the 339th Bomb Squadron and thoroughly enjoyed your publication. He flew his last mission on 6/30/2013. His address had been changed to me as I was taking care of him. I realized that I had not paid dues and needed to do so. After Dad's passing I started to look through his military collection and found his diary of his missions. Enclosed is a typed copy of his diary if it is any interest to you. I am also blessed that at one of the 8th Air Force reunions, he received a picture of his plane, the Winnie C, dropping bombs over Bremen on one of his three missions to Bremen taken by a war correspondent. I presented that framed 24" X 36" picture to the Troy Vets Club after his passing. A copy of that picture and photocopy of his diary was presented to the local air museum in Elmira, NY. He seldom talked about his service until the last few years. I am a Viet Nam army vet and was amazed at what the bomber crews went through. They were the Greatest Generation!

In your August 2014 newsletter, there is a story about Joseph Gagliardi, Jr taking a ride in a restored B-17 with his son Ron. I also was blessed to accompany Dad on a flight in a B-17 out of Elmira, NY a few years ago.

Thank you, and the other officers, for keeping the 96th Bomb Group going.

Sincerely,

Jerry F. May
1033 Redington Ave
Troy, PA 16947

Jerry,

Thank you for your letter. It was forwarded to me as a lead for the Newsletter. I am sure that our readers would like to hear more of your Dad's story, as it is OURS too.

If from his diary and mementos you could write a story for us we can combine it with another Mission report from the **Snetterton Falcons** to Bremen. Mission #61 of December 16, 1943 is on page 7 of this issue.

Dale Budde
Editor 96th Bomb Group Newsletter
2415 Fairchild Lane
West Chicago, IL 60185
DLbudde@aol.com



Subject: Hello from Snetterton
Date: June 2014
From: Mrs Jean Wills jfwonepress@btinternet.com
To: Candy Brown cbrown6126@aol.com

Hello Candy,

I thought that I would just like to say hi my name is Jean Wills and actually live on what was during WW11 the Snetterton Air base, home to the 96th Bomb group, my cottage which is several hundred years old was standing there then on what was out of bounds to the local villagers, as it was right next to the main runway, amazing that it is still standing really.

I am a member of the 96th Bomb Group for another reason, as my own family was caught up in what happened here in the war time. My mother was originally from London but had joined up to serve the country by coming a Land Army girl she was posted to Quidenham just down the road from here. She had a sister who worked in London but came to visit and while she was here she met and later married a US serviceman. She went to US on the Queen Mary and although my American uncle died [sadly I never got to meet him] my aunt still lives in Michigan she is 91 years old. I have visited her many times including March this year and she has been back here many times. I have many connections here with the 96th Bomb group and the Museum which is within walking distance of my home. On the Beech Trees outside my cottage are name carvings on the trunk and I have often wondered who carved their names into the trees. From my bathroom window I can see the memorial to all the service men who were stationed here. One thing that I have never been able to find thought is any record or any recollections of my own uncle. His name was Anthony [Tony] Brefke he was a member of the ground crew. I was born in 1948 so never had any first hand experience of the war time. I have lived here since 1986.

So thought I would just like to say hello to you and your family.
Jean Wills

Subject: Re: Anthoney (Tony) Brefke
Date: 7/4/2014 10:33:47 A.M.
From: Candy Brown cbrown6126@aol.com writes:

Hello my 96th BG Friends!!

I have an inquiry about a 96th Bomb Group member who was on the Ground Crew at Snetterton. His name is Anthony (Tony) Brefke. His niece wrote a nice message via my web site about Snetterton. She lives very near the runway, now racetrack. I'd love to be able to provide her any information that is available concerning the Ground Crew, particularly Tony Brefke. Thank you for whatever information you may have.

I'm taking a trip to Podington, home of the 92nd BG, next week. I can't believe I'm going. I always felt badly that I couldn't travel with you last year but I guess there's a reason for everything. I'm sure had I gone then, I wouldn't be going now!! It will be quite a feeling I'm sure!

I hope this mail finds you all well and that I will be seeing all of you again in Nashville!! Because of you, I feel that I can go because I know I will see my friends. You probably remember that I was the only one from the 92nd BG who went the first year that I attended and luckily you noticed me trolling the halls and invited me in. The rest is history! It ended up being a perfect piece of my book puzzle and I appreciate you for that and lots more!! :)

Thanks for any info you may provide.

Happy 4th to all,
Candy

Subject: Anthony Brefke
Date: Saturday, September 20, 2014
From: dlbudde@aol.com
To: jfwonepress@btinternet.com

Jean Wills

My name is Dale Budde and I am the editor of the 96th Bomb Group Newsletter. Candy Brown has referred your request for information about your uncle to me and I have done a quick search of Ancestry.com to see if I could find anything for you as I could find nothing amongst my 96th Bomb Group records.

I did find an Anthony Brefke with the following information:

Born: 11 Jan 1919
Death: 6 Oct 1977 Grand Rapids, MI
Residence Plainfield MI
Enlisted: 22 May 1942
Height 75"
Weight 201
Released 13 Nov 1945
Married: Jan- March 1945 Hendon, Middlesex, UK
to Jean C. Cloud

I do not know if this is your aunt or the right Anthony Brefke at this point. There were 20 pages of references but this seemed the most likely. There is also a Virginia Brefke that pops up as his spouse but she is dead and might be his sister.

I do not know if you have tried to search for him through Ancestry.com but you might try it. Let me know if this is of any help or matches up.

Dale Budde

Subject: Anthony Brefke
Date: Saturday, September 20, 2014
From: jfwonepress@btinternet.com
To: dlbudde@aol.com

Hello Dale,

Thanks you for getting back to me.

We may have actually met before as I am a 96th Bomb Group member and have attended many of the reunions over here including the memorial service a few years ago.

As you can imagine I know Geoff Ward and Bert Patrick very well indeed. It seems though, that you have indeed tracked down my Uncle Anthony Brefke [Tony] who was a member of the 96th Bomb Group and was stationed here in the war. Although I have looked at the records in the museum at Eccles School and asked Geoff and Bert to help me locate his name they have never been able to. I have also taken my aunt to the museum on several occasions to look through the archives to no avail.

As I said to, Candy if it wasn't for the fact that my mother was stationed just up the road from here and my aunt Jean married Tony I would think that it didn't happen but I have a picture of their wedding and him in uniform. My mother used to tell me all sorts of things about living in this area during the war, including that she used to take her post to the Quidenham Post office, which was on the other side of the road to where she was lodging and there she used to see Bert Patrick as a young boy, as his parents use to have the post office.

Well as you may have read from the message I sent to Candy I have a real story to tell about the 96 Bomb Group and have long thought that I should write to you hoping that you would publish my unique story in the Newsletter.

The story is as follows:-

My mother Vera Cloud who was from London had joined the Womens Royal Land Army to help the war effort. She had only done office work prior to joining so it was a complete change of life to her. She was posted to the farm next to the church at Quidenham. She had one older sister Jean Cloud (I am named after her) who remained in London during the war and she worked in a munitions factory making bombs

One summer she came to Norfolk to see her sister and as my mother was at work that day Jean went to Eccles railway station and there also getting the train to Norwich was this 6 ft 4 inch tall, very handsome, American serviceman.

Well I am not saying that it was love at first sight but it must have been almost that, as the next thing was that they got married and shortly afterwards Jean travelled to New York on the Queen Mary and then on by train to Grand Rapids to meet her in laws for the first time.

From what she told me it was a bit of a shock to her and to them, as they didn't even know that Tony had married and she had to stay with them until Tony eventually was demobbed from the services.

All in all they had a very hard time as Tony hadn't a proper job before joining up but made a bit of a living hunting and fishing. After a while they did have a son Eugene. Their marriage only lasted a few years. I suspect that the Virginia was Tony's second wife. I believe they went on to have a daughter.

Jean and Tony did remain friends as they still lived close to each other and of course they did have Eugene to consider as well.

Well these days my Aunt Jean is 91 years and still lives in Wayland, Michigan next door to her son Eugene and his family she is a bit frail and forgetful these days. My husband, sons and I have been to USA many times, in fact went came over in March of this year and had a family get together with them.

One thing I always wondered though was, why Tony's name never was featured in any records of the 96th. I know that he was a ground crew member but that was all really. I don't know if he had been stationed elsewhere before he came here or went anywhere after here. I would just like to know.

I do know that Jean and Tony lived in Kenninghall the next village to Quidenham for a while after they were married.

My husband and I have lived here in Eccles since 1986 and it was a coincidence that we ended up living here. As we had been looking elsewhere, and it wasn't until we did move here that my mother reminded me of the family connection that I have to the area.

These days it is still a noisy place to live with the car race track that doesn't bother us too much as both of our sons work in Motor sport but I sometimes reflect on what it must have been like to live here in the war with the bombers taking off and landing.

My father was in the RAF and as a child I lived on many air bases so you can imagine that coming from that background I knew my planes. Sadly neither of my parents are still alive so my Aunt Jean is my only senior living relative.

Living here still has its reminders of the war as a few years ago my son went out on the other side of the road and came back with a whole handful of bullet shells, all 'spent', I may add but it got my attention at the time and more recently you may have heard that someone with a metal detector found a hand grenade on side of the little lane next to our cottage that goes down to the railway bridge and they had to have the Army bomb disposal team blow it up.

So the the 96th Bomb group is not forgotten. Seriously though as I said to Candy the legacy of the American Serviceman in the war is still highly thought of over here and none of you will ever be forgotten for what you did for us at that time.

Anyway I feel as though I have gone on too much, so hope you find this of interest so goodbye from the clear skies at Snetterton Heath.

All the best Jean [Wills]

Jean

I have printed our e-mail exchanges in hopes that one of our readers might recognize Tony from the story they tell. We might try printing the wedding picture in a future issue to see if it would help anyone to remember them. Just maybe Nyle Smith from our story on page 12 may have known him as he too was a member of the Snetterton ground echelon of which not much appears in the records that are available.

Dale Budde



96th Bomb Group Association

General Meeting

Minutes

11 October, 2014 0830 Hrs

Sheraton Music City

Nashville, TN

President Joe Garber called the membership of 96th Bomb Group meeting to order at 0830, 11 October 2014.

Pledge of Allegiance was made and Bill Thorns gave the opening prayer.

Recording Secretary called roll of board members:

Present: Joe Garber, Mike McIlraith, Jim Davis, Bill Thorns, Rebecca Lutz, Lydia Anderson,
Dale Budde

Absent: Dan Bradley, George Bonitz and Geoff Ward

Minutes of the last General meeting July 24, 2013 were approved as printed in the October 2014 Newsletter.

Mike McIlraith read the treasury report as Treasurer was absent.

Our expenses exceeded our income but our total assets are in good shape. We mail out our Newsletter to 340 recipients. We have a total of 187 members with 112 being life members. The mailing list was discussed with regards to who all gets mailing. It is beneficial to send out the newsletter via the Internet to our overseas members. It saves greatly on postage and allows color reproduction that is otherwise cost prohibitive. It is also sent via the Internet as well as their mailed to those members for whom we have valid e-mail addresses.

Membership Committee has been established consisting of:

Mike McIlraith, Rebecca Lutz and Lydia Anderson

President Garber reported:

96th BG once again was 1st in attendance with 46 and 6 of those being veterans.

Thanks to all who made it.

Omaha will be the location for the 2015 reunion.

Discussion was held for ensuing reunion locations and suggestions solicited.

Bill Thorns discussed 96 BG Flight Roster compiled by John McGlynn. It will be on display. Any more corrections will be appreciated.

French Legion of Honor was discussed and the method of it's awarding. All who flew missions over France are encouraged to make application.

The 96th librarian position was discussed with Janet Strizic accepting and taking possession of the books

Stan Petersen discussed his book and offered it at a special price of \$10.00

Meeting Adjourned by President Garber.

Respectfully submitted

Jim Davis Recording Secretary



96th Bomb Group Association TREASURER'S REPORT 2014

(January 1 - December 31, 2014)



Beginning Balance January 1, 2014
Connecticut Wells Fargo Checking Account (non interest bearing account):

\$ 31,016.47

NCOME 2014:

Membership Dues/Donations: \$ 1,300.00
Foreign Check exchange refund 4.98

Total Income \$ 1,304.98

Expenses:

April Newsletter # 62 Budde's Print Shop: \$1,479.01
August Newsletter # 63 Budde's Print Shop: 1,864.21
State of Illinois NFP Filing 13.00
Foreign Check exchange rate charge 4.98
Canadian Check charge 5.00
Hospitality Suite 348.08
8th AF (Hospitality Suite Balance) 271.92
Hospitality Supplies 604.56

Total Expenses \$4,590.76

Total Income for 2011:

(income - expenses)

\$ (3,285.78)

Total Assets: (December 31, 2014)

\$ 27,730.69

Respectfully Submitted Daniel Bradley, Treasurer 96th Bomb Group Association

Notes:

All funds are currently deposited in a not for profit checking account which is non interest bearing.

State of Illinois non profit status to "Active"

Agent Name: Dale Budde (agent needs to reside in Illinois)

IRS Filing Submitted August 12, 2012 Form 1024 to get Tax Exempt Status reinstated with Fed. Govt.
IRS Status: Reinstated Retroactive.

96th Membership Committee



by Rebecca Lutz and Lydia Anderson

We have lost track of time, but we have been members of the 96th Bomb Group for at least 12 years. Our participation in the 96th has been one of the most rewarding experiences of our lives. We have so much fun at the annual reunions with our very large extended "family" of uncles, aunts and cousins. Each reunion feels like a wonderful family reunion, and we look forward to attending every year. We even have members of our extended 96th family who are British and maintain the old base and the legacy of the 96th, and Belgians who have adopted the graves of our Heroes who perished in the war.

We have also made several trips overseas together, which are made so much more meaningful because we have been joined by Veterans, some of whom had never returned to the old base, either after they finished their missions or because they were shot down and finished the war as POWs.

We are proud that for several years, the 96th Bomb Group has been the largest group at the 8th Air Force Historical Society reunions due to the enthusiasm and participation of the "next generation". However, we need to add more next generations and "third generations" in order to keep the 96th BG strong. It is vitally important that we keep the legacy of our Veterans and the sacrifices they made for us and our country. Each Veteran is a Hero and we want to honor their service. It is now our responsibility to ensure that the generations to come never forget.

One thing we would encourage our existing 96th members to do is encourage the next generations in their family to join the 96th, or perhaps give them the gift of a membership. The dues are \$20 a year, and we believe they would really enjoy the Newsletter, as well as joining us at the reunions.

The stories we have heard and continue to hear of our Dad's and Uncle's adventures, both good and tragic are fascinating and moving and often times quite funny. Many of our Dads did not talk about their experiences during the war, and being a member of the Bomb Group and attending the reunions is a wonderful way to hear these stories first hand. Many of our Veterans have begun documenting their experiences, and we have an extensive library made available to us by one of our past presidents who played such a big part in our Bomb Group.

The 96th Bomb Group Association has a Facebook page, which is an excellent way to connect with others who might be a family member or a member of your Dad's or Uncle's crew. We find many next generations are doing research now because their loved ones did not talk about their experiences.

We are also planning another trip to England in May, which will include a day at Snetterton and participation at the Memorial Day Ceremony at the Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial on Memorial Day in remembrance of our fallen Heroes. We will also tour The Cotswolds and Cornwall. We will leave the US on May 20, arriving in London on May 21, and the tour will depart London after breakfast on May 22. We will return to London on June 1, to fly back to the US on June 2. The cost per person is £1,285.00 with a single supplement of £350.00. You would be responsible for your own airline reservations and expense.

If you would like to join us on our trip to England, contact Rebecca at twolutz@att.net. For details and if you have any questions about joining or adding a family member to the 96th, please contact Rebecca or Lydia at: lha1015@hotmail.com.

The 96th on FACEBOOK

By Mike McIlraith (mmc@flash.net)

The 96th BGA has a Facebook page – appropriately enough, it is listed under “96th Bomb Group Association”. If you are a Facebook user, just search for 96th Bomb Group Association – give us a 'Like'! If you aren't a Facebook user, you can still view the page by entering this into your computer internet browser:

<https://www.facebook.com/96thBombGroupAssociation>

From this, you can see the page and the photo albums, follow links to other pages, etc., but you won't be able to add any comments. You can join Facebook for free – all you need is an active e-mail address.

What might you find there? Currently, there is an article that our intrepid newsletter editor shared (Thanks Dale!) about Mr. Jesse Reese getting his Distinguished Flying Cross (you can see the article in this newsletter as well). There are brief mentions of the 2015 Collings Foundation aircraft tour for their B-24 and B-17, and below that a reminder that the next 8th AFHS reunion will be in Omaha in October of 2015. Both of those items have links you can follow for more info.

We try to highlight any WWII related events we are aware of. Other folks will post questions about relatives, or memories of missions or other related info. To date, we have 315 Likes, and we have seen a pretty steady gain of new friends over the last couple of weeks.

I am working to begin regular messages post to the page from the book *Snetterton Falcons*. I will probably highlight items of relevance for the particular week.

Our hope is that this page will become one more way folks can find out info about the 96th, a particular relative, or about the Greatest Generation in general. This is your page let us know if there is something you'd like to see!

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Since August, 2014



Hapke, Norman F. Lloyd, Lynn	3309 Paseo Halcon, San Clemente, CA 92672-3524 2115 New Bedford Drive, Sun City Center, FL, 33573 <i>Daughter of Frank Wiswall 413th Bombardier</i>	339th CP
Sjoberg, Regina Jornad	17542-B Parkwood Drive, Spring Lake, MI 49456 <i>Daughter of Howard Jornod 338th Bombardier</i>	
Schröder, Deborah Smith, Nyle	Am Lilienbaum 11b, 58135 Hagen, Germany 904 E. Frederick Avenue, Fresno, CA 93720-2544	413th CC

96th Bomb Group Association Membership Application /Dues Remittance

Name _____ Spouse's Name _____
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____ Zip _____ + _____
 Phone # A/C _____ - _____ - _____ E-mail address: _____
 Squadron _____ Number of Missions _____ Position _____ Ground Crew _____
 Other crew members or information that you feel might be useful to the 96th: _____

Dues are \$20.00 per year payable to: 96th Bomb Group Association, 31 Brinckerhoff Avenue, New Canaan, CT 06840

YOUR 2015 DUES SHOULD BE PAID NOW



This may be your last *Newsletter!*
if not unless you are a Life Member
Send your **\$20 annual dues**

To: Daniel Bradley
96th Bomb Group Association
31 Brinckerhoff Avenue
New Canaan, CT 06840

(Annual Dues were raised to \$20 at General Meeting September 2002)
Due January 1st each year.

**SNOWBIRDS, VACATIONERS BEWARE
BE SURE TO LET DAN BRADLEY KNOW
YOUR WHEREABOUTS.
To Insure YOU RECEIVE YOUR
NEWSLETTER**



UPCOMING MEETINGS



**96th Bomb Group Reunion 2015
with the
8th Air Force Historical Society
41st Annual Reunion**

**October 13 - 18, 2015
Doubletree Hotel
1616 Dodge Street
Omaha, Nebraska**

Look for program and reunion information in the
8th Air Force News March 2015.

**WHERE
TO CALL
OR WRITE**



PRESIDENT⁽²⁰¹⁵⁾

Joe Garber (Joan)
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PalJoe2@aol.com

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mmc@flash.net

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nessej@outlook.com

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jdavis5190@tampabay.rr.com

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#011-441-379-643762
Gdmh.w33@tiscali.co.uk

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Tucson, AZ 85748
(520) 886-0917
Web address: <http://www.96bg.org/>

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10303 N. Ellendale Road
Edgerton, WI 53534-8405
(608)-290-3611
rainorshine101@yahoo.com

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ARTIST

Carolyn Councell (Marbury)
Caramarb@aol.com



Final Mission

*Those Who Served Their Country
With Honor and Distinction*

Dixon, James E.	338th	TG
Douglas, Paul	413th	SUBD
Holmes, Ralph L.	413th	TG
Krel, Max W.	337th	P
Pace, Joseph D.	337th	R
Williams, Gordon E.	413th	B

We will print the names of all deceased 96th airmen sent to us whether or not they are current members of the 96th BGA.

We will also print the names of members of other Bomb Groups if they are current members of the 96th BGA. Written notification is required. Send to: Daniel Bradley, Secretary/Treasurer, address on this page.

Texts and/or photos are sincerely solicited. If requested, photos will be returned. The Editor reserves the right to edit text. June 30, 2015 is the deadline for the August 2015 issue.

96th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION
31 Brinckerhoff Avenue • New Canaan, CT 06840



FIRST CLASS
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PERMIT No.6078
Carol Stream, IL
60188

We're all fighter pilots now

