



N 96TH BOMB GROUP NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2015

ISSUE NO. 65



Read the story of A/C 42-102482, B17G-50-BO. 339th Sqdn. QJ-A. lost to flak on Mission #122 May 8, 1944 starting on page 9 Rear *Left to Right* S/Sgt. Jack E. McIlrath (RWG), S/Sgt. Leroy E. Chamberlain (TG), T/Sgt. Charles N. Chase (TT), S/Sgt. William N. Latta (BT), S/Sgt W.C. Parnell (LWG), S/Sgt. William Pierson.(R) , Front 2/Lt. Harold F. Eye (P), 2/Lt. Carl F. Thinnas (B), 2/Lt. Joseph McElroy.(N), 2/Lt. Leland O. Baker (CP)

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President's Corner



I hope you all are having a good summer.

It saddens me to report the passing of Colonel Stan Hand on March 6, 2015. Col. Hand was an extremely fascinating individual and he had a wealth of experiences. I am so glad that I had the opportunity to meet and share some of them with him last July at his home here in Florida.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you in Omaha in October. We will hold our annual meeting on Friday October 16th at 8:30 am. Please advise of any items that you would like to have placed on our agenda.

If you have not made your reservations yet do so soon as the deadline is September 11, 2015. It would be nice to see the 96th continue its first place showing in attendance. See the details in this issue of the Newsletter.

Thanks to Rebecca Lutz for arranging the trip to England in May. Details of their tour are covered later in this issue. While at Snetterton they visited our museum at the New Eccles School. When they returned home I received an e-mail from Rebecca and Lydia expressing concern about the condition of the exterior mural on the facade of the 96th B.G. museum. The initial response of your board of directors was to proceed with the necessary steps for its refurbishment. However, when Geoff Ward our English contact investigated further for us and consulted with Sean Simington, the Director at the New Eccles School (*See e-mails on page 20*) the decision was reconsidered and it was decided to leave the mural as is. Perhaps in a year or two, we can address this matter again.

I am reminded by this excerpt from Sean Simington's e-mail of the opportunities I have had this past year and the importance of each of us doing our part to preserve our experiences and memories for the future.

"I feel that the money or time spent in making it new could be better spent on continuing to build up the valuable primary source of history the museum and learning centre contains, namely personal diaries and photographs that as I write are being lost and discarded as people do not realize their value for the future."

I have been contacted by colleges, Rotary clubs, TV stations, and newspapers requesting a biography of my World War II experience and inviting me to speak at various groups. They explained their reason for contacting me was that, because of the ages of World War II men and women, they wanted to obtain their experiences to preserve for the future. I would encourage you all if contacted by your local networks, news media, and civic organizations to willingly offer your story for

historic preservation.

The Experimental Aircraft Association of Oshkosh, Wisconsin recently visited New Smyrna Beach, Florida again with their B-17 "*Aluminum Overcast*" and asked me for a second time to serve as a tour guide. Three hours of guided tours of the aircraft concluded with several paid flights for the public at \$475 each after which I was treated to a complimentary flight – "I felt just like I was flying over Germany on a mission again."



Here at my old position in the waist while conducting a tour.

In May I was honored to be invited by an Army Major to attend a three day event called "*Operation Give Back*" that is committed to helping the men and women of the U.S Military who have been wounded in action, recognizing they have served our country with pride, distinction, honor, and in some cases paid the ultimate price. This event was held at the Memory Mall on the University of Central Florida's campus in Orlando, Florida.

Currently I am involved in putting together a veterans' educational museum to be located on the second floor of the Daytona Beach International Airport terminal. It will serve as a memorial to all those who have served in all branches of the US Armed Forces. The museum will be a space to collect and exhibit items related to American veterans, in a leased space of approximately two thousand square feet. The cost to build out the museum space is estimated at \$60,000 and local businesses are being solicited to donate toward this very important work.

Contributions and donations of memorabilia and other artifacts related to US veterans are also being sought that would be added to the collection and placed on display for the public. If you have any items that you feel might be of interest from any era or branch of service you would like to donate please contact me.

See you in Omaha,

Joe Garber

Meanwhile Back at the Old Base



The main event recently has been the England Tour by members of the Association. As usual it was a most enjoyable and friendly visit with a more detailed account by Rebecca Lutz included in this edition of the Newsletter. It was such a friendly and thoughtful group that someone? started off with a nasty cold which was eventually shared by most of those on the coach, including our driver. The tour of the Cotswolds and Cornwall became an international event as six of our UK members joined the tour and two of our Belgium members joined the group over the weekend in Norfolk.

We were honored to have the presence of one veteran who was able to make the long trip over; our former President, Marbury Councill.



● Indicates 96th member on the wall

Marbury was given the honor of presenting 96th Bomb Group's wreath at the American Memorial Day Ceremony at the American Cemetery at Cambridge.

In April I was invited by the 100th BG Museum to give a presentation on the 96th. I decided to focus on the disastrous Potava Shuttle mission as we have a wealth of photographic coverage of this mission. I also included some of the historical events of the Group in a power point presentation, ably assisted by Richard Gipson of the 100th BG Museum, who set up the presentation and guided me through some of the technical issues. The audience consisted of about 100 people and there were some very favorable comments after the show. Some people remarked they did not realise the extent of the 96th history.

More publicity for the group came from our local radio station, Radio Norfolk, when they enquired if they could use our Memorial at Snetterton as a mystery location in one of their programs. On Sunday mornings they run a treasure quest program in which the audience are given clues to solve which will direct the presenter to various locations where the clues for the next location are found.

In the most recent newsletter, Jean Wills requested if anyone had any knowledge of her Aunt's husband, Anthony Brefke who was a member of the 96th. While searching through the group records for information on another enquiry I found the name Sgt. Anthony Brefke who was attached to the Station Utilities Section as a Repairman. I therefore contacted Jean and she was pleased to at last find out exactly what his connection was with the Group. The Utilities Section performed a major part in the maintenance and upkeep of the various buildings and services at Snetterton. It is probably one of the sections that did not get much mention in the Group history, but like many other ground based organizations, played a vital part in the back up of services which kept the 96th operating successfully.

Jean has now become involved with our UK group and she has a career in publicity and advertising. She has accepted to become our publicity member and will be able to get the group's activities recognized in the various publications she is involved in.

My thanks to all those who have been involved with the organization of events over here in England and helped to continue to promote the history of the 96th Bomb Group.

“To the 96th”

Geoff Ward



Our English Tour May 2015

Reported by Rebecca Lutz

The 96th Bomb Group trip to England was again very memorable. We began our tour in London, on Friday, May 22, where we were picked up by our coach driver, Viv Ritchie and of course, Geoff and Margaret Ward.



Carolyn and Marbury Councill, Rebecca and Jerry Lutz, Geoff and Margaret Ward, Laura Edge, Janet Strizic and Jeanette Batton all with smiles even after the long jet trip and the bus ride to Norwich.

We left London and went to Norwich by way of Bury St. Edmonds, walked through the Abbey ruins and gardens and had a delightful lunch in a café garden, before proceeding to Norwich. We were joined in Norwich by our Belgian members Wim and Nadine Jacobs and English members Bert and Sombra Patrick and Malcolm and Ann Holmes.



At the Silver Dream Marbury and Carolyn Councill, Geoff and Margaret Ward, Wim and Nadine Jacobs, Jeanette Batton, Rebecca Lutz, Janet Strizic, Jerry Lutz, Lydia Anderson, Camille Latour and Laura Edge.

On Saturday, we went to Snetterton, with stops at the Silver Dream, the Museum, and St. Andrews Church. We were provided a lovely luncheon by Sean

Simington, Headmaster of the New Eccles Hall School. We were also able to have a nice visit with Sean, Jill and Alfie Tebble, Tim Edwards and Richard Burlingham, who have always been great supporters of the Museum and the 96th. From Snetterton we visited the 100th Bomb Group Museum at Thorpe Abbots which was very interesting as they were able to restore their Control Tower.



Sombra Patrick watering fresh flowers she keeps at the 96th Memorial Chapel in St. Andrew's Church at Quidenham

On Sunday, we took a boat trip on The Broads and Viv took us on a tour of the North Norfolk Coast and Cromer before returning to Norwich.

Memorial Day was very special as we went to the Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial to participate in the Memorial Day ceremony. Marbury Councill, our Veteran on the tour, laid the wreath along the Wall of the Missing in memory of men in the 96th, 106 wreaths were laid in all. From there, we proceeded to Gloucester to spend several days in the Cotswolds.

On Tuesday, we visited multiple villages including Broadway, Chipping Campden, Stow-in-the-Wold and Burton-on-the-Water. It was a tour of picture postcard England with thatched roofed cottages and beautiful gardens.

The next day we went to Sudeley Castle, which was somewhat difficult to get to as the roads had been closed overnight and there were no clear directions to the Castle. However, a local man in Winchcombe boarded the coach and directed us to the Castle. Imagine the

look on his son's face when he bicycled by and saw his Dad sitting in the front seat of a Simonds coach. Sudeley castle was the home of Catherine Parr, the last, and fortunately for her widowed, wife of Henry VIII. Actors portraying Henry VIII, Anne Boleyn, her Mother, Sister, Sister-in-law and Ladies-in-Waiting walked around the castle and grounds posing for pictures, which was fun. We toured the Castle and Gardens and Pheasantry and were entertained by the Peacock roaming the gardens calling his Peahens.



At Sudeley Castle in the Cotswolds we were greeted by Henry VIII

On the way back to Gloucester, we visited the very pretty village of Bibury, a favorite of many local and foreign artists.

As Viv was required to have a day off from driving, on Thursday several of us took a short train ride to Bath where we toured Bath Abbey and lunched at Sally Lunn's before returning to the hotel. Unfortunately, time constraints did not allow further exploration of the city.

The next morning we checked out of the hotel and Viv drove us to Plymouth for a couple of days' tour of Cornwall. In the afternoon, some of us toured the Barbican and the steps where the Pilgrims departed in 1620.

On Saturday, Viv drove us to Port Isaac, which for those of you who watch Doc Martin on PBS, is known

as Port Wenn. It is a lovely village with narrow streets that could not accommodate the coach, but fortunately, Viv was able to contact the shuttle service that ferried people to the harbor. From there, we went to Tintagel, the legendary site King Arthur's castle with dramatic seaside cliffs and views.

On Sunday, we went to Princeton to the visitor's center and proceeded on to Buckfast Abbey. On the way, we drove through Dartmoor, which was beautiful in its austerity and even more mysterious, due to the misty day we were experiencing. Dartmoor is the setting of Sherlock Holmes' Hound of the Baskervilles and quite understandably the site of an infamous prison. We also saw the famous Dartmoor wild ponies. Buckfast Abbey is new, relative to many other Abbeys in England, and is very beautiful. There are lovely gardens there with several "garden rooms" based on various themes and plant types.

On Monday, we traveled back to London, but Viv suggested that we stop in Windsor to allow time for those who had not been, and a lunch break. We arrived in London, bid farewell to our English traveling companions, and prepared to fly to the U.S. the next day.



No flag is flying so the Queen was not there to greet us at Windsor Castel as Henry VIII had at Sudeley.

It was a lovely trip allowing us the opportunity to tour East Anglia, Norfolk, the Cotswolds and Cornwall and as always reminded us of the service and sacrifices of the original members of the 96th Bomb Group so many years ago.

A Chat From Your Chaplain

At birth we boarded the train and met our parents, and we believe they will always travel at our side. However, at some station our parents will step down from the train, leaving us on the journey alone.

As time goes by, other people will board the train, and they will be significant, ie, our siblings, friends, children, and even the love of your life.

Many will step down and leave a permanent vacuum. Others will go so unnoticed that we don't realize they vacated their seats. The train ride will be full of joy, sorrow, fantasy, expectations, hellos, goodbyes, and farewells.

Success consists of having a good relationship with all passengers requiring that we give the best of ourselves.

The mystery is: we do not know at which station we ourselves will step down. So we must live in the best way, love, forgive, and offer the best of who we are. It is important to do this because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life.

I wish each of you a joyful journey on the train of life. Reap Success and give lots of love. More importantly, thank God for the journey.

Lastly, I thank you for being one of the passengers.
On my train!!!!!!!!!!

A Little Humor.

It's late fall and the Indians on a remote reservation in South Dakota asked their chief if the coming winter was going to be cold or mild. Since he was chief in a modern society, he had never been taught the old secrets. When he looked at the sky, he couldn't tell what the winter was going to be like. Never the less, to be on the safe side, he told his tribe that the winter was indeed going to be cold and that the members of the village should collect firewood to be prepared. But, being a practical leader, after several days, he got an idea. He went to the phone booth, called the national weather service and asked, "is the coming winter going to be cold?" the reply was "it looks like this winter is going to be quite cold," the meteorologist at the weather center responded. So the chief went back to his people and told them to collect even more firewood in order to be prepared. A week

later, he called the weather service again. "does it still look like it is going to be a very cold winter?" "yes," the man at the weather service again replied, it's going to be a very cold winter."

The chief again went back to his people and ordered them to collect every scrap of firewood they could find. Two weeks later the chief called the weather service again "are you absolutely sure that the winter is going to be very cold?" "absolutely, the man replied. "it's looking more and more like it is going to be one of the coldest winters we've ever seen.?" "how can you be sure?" the chief asked. The weather man replied, "the Indians are collecting a fantastic load of firewood"

A Few More "More Important Than" Items:

Hearing what you need to hear is more important than saying what you want to say.

How well you do something is more important than how many people see you do it.

Relationships are more important than riches.

Attitude is more important than aptitude.

How giving you are is more important than how gifted you are.

A question: When you pray, do you give God instructions, or do you report for duty?

I'm thankful, hope you are too!!!!



Bill Thorns

*Bill as our Chaplain tries to write a personal letter on the behalf of the 96th Bomb Group to the family of all our members that have flown their **Final Mission**. You can help him and the 96th Bomb Group by letting him know in a timely manner of a members passing and the address to which he might send the letter.*

Address your correspondence for our Chaplain to:

William (Bill) Thorns
20301 South Pine Hill Road #3
Frankfort IL 60423-9368
Phone (815)-469-4494



Operation Power Flite

A 96th Bomb Group Connection to SAC



Operation Power Flite was a United States Air Force mission in which three Boeing B-52 Stratofortresses became the first jet aircraft to circle the world nonstop, when they made the journey in January 1957 using in-flight refueling to stay aloft. The mission was intended to demonstrate that the United States had the ability to drop a hydrogen bomb anywhere in the world.

Led by Major General Archie J. Old, Jr, as flight commander, five B-52B aircraft of the 93rd Bombardment Wing of the 15th Air Force took off from Castle Air Force Base in California on January 16, 1957, at 1:00 PM, with two of the planes flying as spares. Old was aboard *Lucky Lady III* (serial number 53-0394) which was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel James H. Morris, who had flown as the co-pilot aboard the *Lucky Lady II* when it made the world's first non-stop circumnavigation in 1949. Heading east, one of the planes was unable to refuel successfully from a Boeing KC-97 Stratofreighter and was forced to land at Goose Bay Air Base in Labrador. The second spare refueled with the rest of the planes over Casablanca, Morocco and then split off as planned to land at RAF Brize Norton in England.



Major General Archie J. Old Jr.



of the Malay Peninsula before heading towards the next air refueling rendezvous over Manila and Guam. The three planes continued across the Pacific Ocean and landed at March Air Force Base near Riverside, California on January 18 after flying for a total of 45 hours and 19 minutes, with the lead plane landing at 10:19 AM and the other two planes following each other separated by 80 seconds. The 24,325 miles (39,147 km) flight was completed at an average speed of 525 miles per hour (845 km/h) and was completed in less than half the time required by *Lucky Lady II* when it made the first non-stop circumnavigation in 1949. General Curtis LeMay was among the 1,000 on hand to greet the three planes, and he awarded all 27 crew members the Distinguished Flying Cross. Though Old called the flight "a routine training mission," the Air Force emphasized that the mission demonstrated its "capability to drop a hydrogen bomb anywhere in the world."

The National Aeronautic Association recognized the 93rd Bombardment Wing as recipient of the Mackay Trophy for 1957.



A Boeing B-52 Stratofortress refuels in flight from a Boeing KC-97 Stratotanker. The KC-97 had to enter a shallow dive to increase its speed, while the B-52 flew in landing configuration to fly slow enough to stay with the tanker. (U.S. Air Force)

After a mid-air refueling rendezvous over Saudi Arabia, the planes followed the coast of India to Sri Lanka and then made a simulated bombing drop south



The three Boeing B-52B Stratofortresses at March AFB, 18 January 1957. (U.S. Air Force)

Berlin! Two days in a row!

The following excerpt from the Snetterton Falcons and the brief summary of the actual 54 page Missing Air Crew Report 4575, for A/C #42-102482, B-17 G are presented here as background material for the story shared with us on page 15 by the granddaughter of 2/Lt. Carl Francis Thinner, Jr.

#122 MAY 8, 1944: BRUNSWICK, GERMANY

Murphy's Law, "If anything can go wrong, it will go wrong," seemed to control events. It was to be a sad, long day in the history of the 96th and therefore deserves a report commensurate with the twists of fate.

We start our report by extracting from "The Last Ten Minutes," an exciting article by Tom Thomas, navigator on Harold Niswonger's crew. Tom begins at the 0500 briefing.

"When the Group Commander (Colonel Travis) entered and took his seat," Thomas writes, "we all quieted down. Then the briefing officer drew the curtain back slowly to reveal the target. Everyone groaned - the target was Berlin! Two days in a row! Our crew had barely made it back from there yesterday."

If this second sequential stab at Berlin sent spines chilling, there was a "first" in the order of things which would intensify the chill. That "first" was a newly conceived formation. Lew Warden, Lt. George Palm's navigator, explains:

"We were experimenting with a 14-ship formation, a noble invention of our Group Commander. The standard formation was 18 planes; 6 each in 3 squadrons staggered lead, high and low. But Colonel Travis had it figured out that a formation of 6 in the lead with a 3-ship element flying high and low and one more plane flying right in the diamond would have the same bomb-pattern power due to overlapping. It would have equal fire-power for the same reason and more invulnerability because it was a smaller unit. In short," Warden writes, "It was a superior formation. Unfortunately," he concludes wryly, "the silly Germans didn't know this. All they saw was a smaller formation."

At any rate, the 96th dispatched an A and B group. The A Group consisted of 14 Fortresses plus 2 Pathfinders and flew lead in the 45CBW's A Section. Our B Group had 16 Forts and one PFF. Take off and assembly were executed well and the 96th set out for BIG B. The 3AD was led by the 4CBW. Our 45th was in the middle and the rear was brought up by the 13CBW. Things began going awry when our lead PFF A/C 654, piloted by Lt. Knupp with Lt. Col. Marcus Lemley aboard as Wing Leader, had to abort due to oxygen failure. When this happened, 1/Lt. John White assumed the A Group lead in his PFF, A/C 631.

At this juncture a snafu in timing occurred which about decimated the 96th. According to Major Morris Ulman, Group Intelligence Officer, the 96th groups had made up time. So much so that "although the 45CBW was to follow the 4CBW's two wings (A and B groups), it, in fact, flew over enemy territory on course but some 12 minutes ahead of the

other 3AD forces." Consequently, the formation was disrupted by a combat wing of B-24s from the 2AD. This aerial traffic snafu happened over the Dummer Lake region and, Major Ulman declared "the 45th was thrown slightly north of course."

Tom Thomas' article recalls the incident: "Our pilot could hear the 45th Wing leader cursing the 24s for flying too fast and being ahead of schedule. The B-24 Leader responded 'You are too slow and behind schedule!'"

Major Ulman reports that the B-24s pulled back some distance to the right of our formation and parallel to it. But they did not let us return to our assigned air space in the bomber stream. Obviously, the 96th A and B groups had been severely disrupted. In fact, they were separated from most of the Wing. And as they were reforming over Dummer Lake, the Luftwaffe struck. A pack of 30-40 E/A came boring in head-on. In the first attack the leaders of both A and B groups fell. Luftwaffe opposition against the smaller 14-ship formations became very aggressive. German pilots held their fire until they were suicidally close. Some of them introduced parachute bombs into the fray and a B-17 was brought down when one of these foot-long cylinders exploded on the wing.

Sergeant Donald H. Jones, a tail gunner with the 452BG, witnessed early 96th losses: "As I was scanning the skies behind for fighters. I saw the group behind us get hit. There were three B-17s going down in spins."

An even more frightening insight to the chaos comes from one of our gunners, Sergeant Erwin Hebbeln.

"I was the right waist gunner on Lawrence Lonn's crew (A/C 44-6989) *Ragged But Right*. It seemed that everything was happening just outside my window. I saw *The Reluctant Dragon* plummet by. Still in shock from that, I saw an unpainted B-17 practically stall and drop down - the nose section was completely missing! Finally the plane made a gentle turn and disappeared. But then came the most terrifying sight! Drifting over us was a mortally wounded B-17. It was not more than 20 feet above and had two engines on fire. I could look directly into the nose compartment. The bombardier was turning to leave. The navigator pointed in our direction while shouting and at that the bombardier rehooked into the intercom and evidently warned his pilot because the flaming ship eased out of my field of vision. Believe me, I could feel the heat of the fire on my face!"

As horrifying as it was, Sgt. Hebbeln's perspective was miniscule compared to the big picture, in fact all hell was breaking loose at heaven's gate.

After the initial Luftwaffe assault, the 96th's groups tried to reform tighter. By now Lt. George Sterler had assumed the lead of the A Group and eight aircraft dropped 74x500GP bombs on smoke flares of a B-24 PFF. "This was," wrote Major Ulman, "in the vicinity of Brunswick. The B Group also managed to get fairly well reformed (thanks to Captain Lee Seeman, as we shall see later. and five aircraft dropped incendiaries in the same area."

But as the 96th began to withdraw from the Brunswick area, the Luftwaffe made another coordinated attack. The official report declares that these were really attacks that

were continuous over an area of 12 miles and that most E/A were FW-190s colored silver or white with black fuselages and cowlings. Once more they knocked down the leaders of both groups and the groups themselves were further split. Thankfully, at this point friendly fighters appeared and drove the Luftwaffe off.

It was time to take stock. Ten 96ers had been shot down and others were badly damaged. One of these, *The Reluctant Dragon*, (which Sgt. Hebbeln had given up for lost) was so caught up in the chaos of battle that part of her crew had bailed out leaving her pilot, Lt. Jerry Musser, engineer T/S Leon Sweatt (who was credited with an FW -190 during the melee) and bombardier 2/Lt. John Flanyak to bring old 42-38133 home.

The one bright uplifting report of this mission came from Sgt. Hebbeln's diary which records that when his *Ragged But Right* pulled into its hardstand, Hebbeln was astonished to see the *Dragon* in her usual place. Shot up to hell, for sure, but back safely.

Among the missing was Lt. Harold Niswonger's 337th crew in 42-97782. Tom Thomas continues their account:

"At 1000 I took a visual check of our position because there was a large break developing in the undercast. We were between Bremen and Hanover. I was entering this information into my log when I heard 'Fighters! Ten o'clock high!'"

"As I turned to look there was an explosion after which I found myself on top of the escape hatch at the front of the plane. Since I kept my chest chute there, I decided it would be wise to put it on - which I did. I then tried to crawl to the navigator's guns. However, I found that my right arm was numb and quite useless and bleeding. I was also bleeding from the right chest. The cannon shell had gone right through my right arm and had exploded just below the bulkhead at the co-pilot's position. The co-pilot was wounded in the legs. There were two more explosions and I heard Niswonger say that the #3 engine had been hit and that we were on fire. That second cannon shell had hit in the radio room wounding Sgt. Bob Morrison in the stomach. I was still intent on getting to my guns when we were whacked again. The right wing took another hit and the ball turret was blown away. By the grace of God, Our BTG, Ed Marsh, had just left the turret to fetch more ammo.

"At this point," Thomas reports, "the pilot rang the bail-out bell. Before we jumped, however, bombardier Tom Fitzgerald salvoed our bombs. Niswonger and our engineer, John Caum, went aft in order to help Sgt. Morrison. They never made it!"

While descending in his chute, Lt. Thomas continued watching for others to bail out. "But," Thomas recalls, "before they were all out I saw the plane disintegrate in a great ball of fire."

Actually the doomed Fortress was rammed by an out-of-control FW-190. According to Roger Freeman the German pilot was Lt. Leopold Munster, Staffelführer of V/JG-3. Munster had 93 victories before being killed in this collision.

Thomas continues "- I realized I was near a river and could end up in the drink. (It was the Aller River which flows

through Verden.) Maneuvering my shroud lines, I landed near some hedgerows. Our waist gunner, Al Crick, landed nearby and came to help me. - With- in minutes German soldiers arrived. I looked at my watch, "Thomas concludes;" Ten minutes past ten. All this had happened since I had taken a fix at 1000. Just ten minutes!"

Apparently engineer John Caum, unlike Niswonger and Morrison had bailed out safely. But his body was not recovered until after he had been killed by irate civilians.

Fragmented stories surrounded the other casualties. Navigator George Hopkins tells something of 42-97631.

"When Lt. Knupp and Major Lemley aborted, my pilot 2/Lt. John White, took over the lead for A Group. Our crew today was unusual; we had six officers aboard. Major Raleigh Shoemaker flew the co-pilot's seat in order to best observe and command the formation.

"Just as our group began to get free of the B-24 parade, we were hit by enemy fighters which pounced from out of the sun. We never saw them until they were on us. We were hit on the first pass," Hopkins continues, "and an engine caught fire. After many unsuccessful attempts to put out the fire, Lt. White dove the plane hoping to extinguish the flames - but to no avail. So we dropped our wheels and were definitely out of formation.

"Just before Lt. White gave the bail-out order, "Hopkins recalls," the Germans made a second pass. Until then none of us had been wounded. Forty three years is a long time, but I recall that our plane was still in a dive when we bailed out."

Engineer Bob von Sternberg writes "As soon as Major Shoemaker saw flak, he requested a flak jacket - After we were attacked the second time, Lt. White gave the order to abandon ship. The last glimpse I had of the cockpit showed Lt. White waiting for Major Shoemaker to get out of the co-pilot's seat. This was very difficult with a flak vest on. I was in the bomb bay when the ship exploded and was fortunate to be blown clear."

Hopkins was captured when he landed and met some of his crew later in the afternoon. His co-pilot, 2/Lt. H.J. Grau, had flown in the tail so that Major Shoemaker could command from the co-pilot's seat. Grau had bailed out just before the plane exploded. "He was badly burned about his head," Lt. Hopkins remembers.

"Especially in those areas not protected by his helmet or his oxygen mask."

Nevertheless, Lt. Grau survived. The officer who took his seat, Major Shoemaker did not. Neither did pilot White nor bombardier Charlie Jones.

Aircraft 42-102525, Lt. Charles Birdsey, 338th, was seen to drop back after the first attack. Eight men on this crew were killed.

Amid the chaos Lt. George Sterler assumed the lead for the bomb run in his 42-102451 of the 338th. Witnesses last saw him diving out of control after the second German attack with his right wing burning.

A/C 42-39998, piloted by the 337th's Captain Milton Shoesmith started out leading the B Group. Engaged in the battle, it had to peel off and crash at Resthausen near Clappenburg. All survived as POWs.

Piloted by the 338th's Lt. Frank King, 42-38062 had its tail and stabilizer shot away. Five chutes were counted emerging from the waist door as the plane kept slowly descending under some miraculous control. Knowing he had wounded men who could not bail out, Lt. King refused to abandon ship. He crash-landed with his survivors at Ostenholz but he paid the price of a leg for his devotion to duty. Everyone survived as POWs.

*Editor's Note: The following two paragraphs vary from that of the actual Missing Aircraft Report that follows this summary of the days activities as reported in the **Snetterton Falcons**. It is not hard to understand if you think about it that such a variance would occur in the recounting of the days activities by the combatants.*

The second victim of the first German assault was the 339th's 42-102482. Lt. Harold Eye went into a steep vertical dive with the #2 engine and the left wing on fire. Eye had received wounds during the attack but stayed at the controls.

Two men managed to bail out before Lt. Eye attempted a crash landing 2 km west of Wolfenbützel. Eye and his co-pilot, Leland Baker, were killed in the crash. Ball turret gunner William Latta soon died in a German hospital but the rest of the crew survived.

Aircraft 42-38190 yielded a sole survivor. Piloted by the 339th's Lt. James Kirkpatrick, this Fortress exploded during the first attack. Miraculously T/S Bob Swift was blown clear, landed by chute and was hospitalized with leg wounds

Smilin Thru, 42-102444, carrying F/O Leo Green's 339th crew went down on this their sixth mission. Green and his tail gunner were wounded but everyone bailed out safely. Harry Shirey, the tail gunner, had been shot in the feet but stayed at his guns until he was blown out when *Smitln' Thru* exploded. This bravery lost Shirey some toes in a German hospital but it earned him a post-war DSC. Even at that, Sgt. Shirey was lucky because he landed miraculously in a tree and became a momentary phenomenon to observing French farmers and German soldiers.

Although *The Reluctant Dragon* had been nursed home by Lt. Jerry Musser, his bombardier Lt. Flanyak and T/Sgt. Sweatt, their left waist gunner, Robert L. Blevins, was dead; six other crewmen were MIA and the plane was bound for intensive care. Even so, Musser, Flanyak and Sergeant Sweatt exemplified today's course in raw survivorship. (But war's irony will not be denied. As we shall see. Each of these three men will soon be shot down while flying with different crews. Only one will survive the war as a POW.)

Thus ended one of the 96th's most hellish missions. Out of the 500 or so planes dispatched by the 1 and 3ADs to Berlin, 25 failed to return. Ten of the twenty-five (40%) were 96ers!

Summary

Missing Air Crew Report 4575, #42-102482, B-17 G.

The mission this day for the 96th Bomb Group, 339th Bomb Squadron was Berlin. The 96th BG left in the early morning from its base, AAF #138, Snetterton Heath. This

was the run-up to D-Day and the Allies wanted to keep the German's guessing on their intentions of a cross channel landing and its location. This crew previously flew five missions together to Brunswick, Calais and (3) to Berlin, pursuant to ICQ's in the file.

On this day May 8, 1944, the formation was attacked by between 30 and 50 enemy aircraft. The initial wave hit at 0955 and five ships were lost, and then at 1005 a second wave struck and an additional 5 ships were lost. Some chutes were seen and some aircraft went down under control while others descended out of control. The German information in this file indicates they believed the subject plane was damaged due to flak, "shot down at 1030 hours."

At some point, the pilot Harold Floyd Eye was wounded and apparently could not continue to fly the aircraft and Co-Pilot Leland Otis Baker took the controls and decided to crash land the craft. He may have made this decision to provide timely medical attention for the wounded crew members. A bail out order was never issued, however, W.C. Parnell, Assistant Armorer and Left Waist Gunner did bail out and Carl Francis Thinnies, Jr. the Bombardier, who was seriously wounded was "thrown out" by the Engineer William Atley Pierson. Parnell may have bailed out to provide assistance to Pierson once he landed. In any case, there was obviously little time and the plane was flying at a very low altitude. Other crew members noted that the plane was "too low" to bail out.

At the time of the crash landing, the nose of the plane was devastated and the Pilot and Co-Pilot probably died from their wounds. S/Sgt William Norwood Latta Jr. was in the waist according to one ICQ and was badly injured in the very hard landing. He was admitted to an Air Force Hospital in Brunswick but died from his wounds. One ICQ noted that the crew was in the same room that he was in when he died. Note that most agree that the German Air Force treated USAF members with the best treatment during the war. Goring believed in a strange type of chivalry among airmen.

Pierson was ultimately "captured" and had gunshot wounds to his right thigh, a head wound and a knee fracture to his left leg. Charles Norman Chase also had face wounds. Obviously, we are missing a lot of information about what happened after this ship was hit by enemy fire. It is obvious that the crash landing was extremely hard and the ship was 85% to 95% damaged, according to German correspondence. The Germans noted that the fuselage had both a star and the letters Q7 or QJ markings on it. It actually would have had a QJ on both sides indicating the 339th Bombardment Squadron. A briefcase that belonged to the Navigator was also salvaged, indicating that little time was available prior to the crash landing.

Turn to page 15 to read the story of 2/Lt. Carl Thinnies history as he told it to his family and as his granddaughter Aoibheann Thinnies who retells it for us.

It must be a great comfort for family members to retrace the history of these stories and follow in the foot steps of their beloved family members. One can only guess at the sense of pride it must give one to visit in person the places where such hardships were endured and survived.



8th AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY 41st ANNUAL REUNION DOUBLETREE DOWNTOWN OMAHA OCTOBER 14 – 18, 2015



REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

See choices below and complete the Registration Form noting your event choices and personal information. By "WWII GROUP," we're asking for the group or unit in which you served (specific Bomb Group, Fighter Group, PRG, HQ, etc.). We use this information for tallying totals for each group, name tags, and seating arrangements. If you prefer to sit with a different group, please give us that information too. We do not need your squadron. Remit by mail with check or money order payable to Armed Forces Reunions by September 11, 2015. You may also register and pay with credit card online at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2015. A 3% convenience fee will be added to online credit card reservations. Forms received after September 11 will be accepted on a space available basis only. Hotel reservations should also be made by September 11, 2015.

ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. CANCELLATION POLICY

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less a \$5 per person processing fee. Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less a \$5 processing fee. Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9:00am until 4:00pm Eastern Time, excluding holidays. Please call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation doesn't cancel your reunion activities.

MEALS / EVENTS CHOICES

MEAL PACKAGE 1 \$212

Package includes 7 hotel food functions beginning with breakfast on Thursday (4 breakfasts, 3 dinners).

MEAL PACKAGE 2 \$148

Package includes 5 hotel food functions beginning with breakfast on Friday (3 breakfasts, 2 dinners).

The continental breakfast buffets include juice, fruit, cereals/milk, yogurt, breakfast breads, and coffee. The full breakfast buffets include juice, fruit, eggs, meat, potatoes, breakfast bread, and coffee.

CHOICE #3 INDIVIDUAL EVENTS

Thursday's Buffet at \$44 is included in Package 1 but can be purchased separately. Friday's Rendezvous Dinner at \$45 (individual Bomb Group Dinners for groups of 30 or more) and Saturday's Banquet at \$45 can be purchased separately as well, but are included in both packages above.

TOUR OPTIONS

Tours and trips are described on the Reunion Highlights Pages. Prices are listed on the registration form. Driver and Staff gratuities are not included in the tour prices. All trips require a minimum of 35 people. Please be at the bus boarding area five minutes prior to the departure time.

HOTEL

DOUBLETREE HOTEL OMAHA DOWNTOWN – OMAHA, NE

(800) 222-8733 or (402) 346-7600

www.doubletree3.hilton.com/en/hotels/nebraska/doubletree-by-hilton-hotel-omaha-downtown-OMAH-DT/index.html

Location

1616 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68102

Located in the heart of downtown Omaha and just ten minutes from the Eppley Airport.

Reservation Information

Call the number above and reference the 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion or please visit www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2015 and click on the hotel reservation link at the top of the page to make reservations and receive the discounted group rate.

Group Name: 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion

Reunion Dates: October 14-18, 2015

Rate: \$105 + tax (currently 18.16%). Rates are offered 3 days before and 3 days after reunion dates, based on group block availability.

Cut off Date: 09/11/15. Late reservations will be processed based on space availability at a higher rate.

Cancellation Policy: All reservations have a 48 hour cancellation policy, or the attendee will be charged one night's room rate plus tax. All early departures are subject to an early departure penalty \$25 and late check-outs are subject to a penalty of \$75.

Parking & Shuttle Information

The Doubletree Hotel is offering complimentary self parking to all overnight guests. The hotel also offers complimentary shuttle service to and from the Omaha Eppley Airfield. Upon arrival at the airport you will need to call the hotel and then proceed outside to the shared ride/taxi pickup/drop off stand outside baggage claim.

Wheelchair Rental

ScootAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call (888) 441-7575 or visit www.scootaround.com for details and to make reservations.



41st 8th AFHS ANNUAL REUNION

DOUBLETREE DOWNTOWN OMAHA

OCTOBER 14-18, 2015



Wednesday, October 14

1:00pm - 6:00pm	Reunion Registration open
1:00pm	Memorabilia and Gathering Room open throughout the reunion.
1:00pm - 4:00pm	8AFHS Board Meeting
6:00pm - 7:00pm	Welcome Reception, followed by dinner on your own

Thursday, October 15

7:30am - 8:30am	Continental Breakfast for Package #1 participants
8:00am - 11:00am	Reunion Registration open
9:00am - 1:30pm	CITY TOUR / OLD MARKET
9:30am - 12:30pm	BRIEFING AT THE BUNKER (STRATCOM HQ)
1:00pm - 6:00pm	Reunion Registration open
2:00pm - 3:30pm	Q&A WWII Vets
3:45pm - 5:00pm	Q&A Cold War Vets
6:00pm - 9:00pm	Cash Bar Reception
7:00pm - 9:00pm	Dinner Buffet – Bill Beigel WWII Researcher and Author

Friday, October 16

7:30am - 8:30am	Full Breakfast Buffet for Meal Package participants
8:00am - 10:00am	Reunion Registration open
8:30am - 10:00am	Individual Group Meetings
10:00am - 11:20am	Chapter & Unit Development Meeting
11:30am - 4:00pm	BUZZING AT THE BLUFFS MINI AIR SHOW
2:00pm - 6:00pm	Reunion Registration open
6:00pm - 9:00pm	8AFHS Cash Bar Reception
7:00pm - 9:00pm	Rendezvous Dinners

Saturday, October 17

7:30am - 8:30am	Continental Breakfast for Meal Package participants
8:45am - 10:15am	General Membership Meeting
11:00am - 4:30pm	DURHAM MUSEUM / CITY TOUR
12:00pm - 4:00pm	8AFHS Board Meeting
12:30pm - 4:00pm	STRATEGIC AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM
5:30pm - 6:00pm	Reunion Registration open
6:00pm - 9:00pm	8AFHS Cash Bar Reception
7:00pm - 10:00pm	Banquet Dinner & Entertainment

Sunday, October 18

7:00am - 8:30am	Full Breakfast Buffet for Meal Package participants
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*Please plan to be at the bus boarding area at least five minutes prior to the scheduled time.
All trips require a minimum of thirty-five people, unless otherwise stated.
Driver and Staff gratuities are not included in the tour prices.*

REUNION HIGHLIGHTS
CITY TOUR / OLD MARKET

Thursday, October 15

Enjoy a guided driving tour of Omaha's past, present and future, with an overview of Omaha's points of interest. See Lewis & Clark Landing, the Historic Gold Coast District and Creighton University. Included sites include Billionaire's Warren Buffet's residence, 1903 Joslyn Scottish Castle, St. Cecilia's Spanish Cathedral, the Blackstone Hotel (birthplace of the Reuben Sandwich), TD Ameritrade Park (Home of the annual College World Series), Omaha Community Playhouse (where Henry Fonda started acting), and much more. Stop at Pioneer Courage Park to see life-size sculptures of an authentic pioneer wagon train traveling west across the Nebraska prairie. You'll have time for a leisurely lunch and shopping on your own at the Old Market, Omaha's most historic and entertaining neighborhood. The cobblestone streets are home to a diverse mix of shopping, galleries, and restaurants. Shuttles back to the hotel will be offered at 12:15pm and 1:15pm.

9:00am board bus, 1:30pm back at hotel
\$37/Person includes bus, guide, and guide gratuity. Lunch on your own.
****OR****

BRIEFING AT THE BUNKER

Thursday, October 15

STRATCOM Headquarters on Offutt AFB is home to the historic "Bunker" currently known as the Global Operations Center, the underground facility where officials from each branch of the military and civilians carry out the command's worldwide mission. In the comfort of the briefing theater inside the Headquarters building, learn the history and current missions from the men and women who play a vital role in our nation's defense, from the early crises of the Cold War to the expanded missions including cyber security, enjoy this once-in-a-lifetime experience.

9:30am board bus, 12:30pm back at hotel
\$28/Person includes bus and escort.

BUZZING AT THE BLUFFS MINI AIR SHOW

Friday, October 16

It's time for some real hangar flying during a private air-show at the Council Bluffs Airport. Check out Gunfighter, a beautifully restored P-51 and other fully restored war birds as well as vintage memorabilia.

Lunch will be provided! More details coming!

11:30am board bus, 4:00pm back at hotel
\$29/Person includes bus and escort.

DURHAM MUSEUM / CITY TOUR

Saturday, October 17

If you missed the city tour on Thursday, you'll have an opportunity to take one today, but first we'll stop for a quick bite at the Old Market. There are lots of restaurant choices, along with shops and galleries, but use your time wisely. Next stop: Union Station, now home to the Durham Western Heritage Museum. Affiliated with the Smithsonian, the museum is the nation's first restored Art Deco railway station, housing exhibits and memorabilia from Omaha's history. Walk through full-sized train cars, learn the history of Omaha from the Native Americans to present, and enjoy an ice cream, malt or phosphate at the old-fashioned soda fountain. Finally, embark on a two hour city tour, as described above to learn about Omaha's past and present.

11:00am board bus, 4:30pm back at hotel
\$47/Person includes bus, guide, and admission. Lunch on your own.
****OR****

STRATEGIC AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

Saturday, October 17

More than thirty of the world's most famous military aircraft and missiles are on display at the Strategic Air and Space Museum. This 300,000 square foot facility includes the SR-71 "Blackbird" and the B-36 "Peacemaker," as well as a B-17 and many more interesting aircraft. A special 'Planes, Trains, and Autos' exhibit will be on display during our visit. Save time to see a film in the theater and visit the gift shop. A limited snack bar is available, but we recommend you eat lunch before departing the hotel.

12:30pm board bus, 4:00pm back at hotel.
\$41/Person includes bus, escort, and admission.

8th AFHS Activity Registration Form October 14 - 18, 2015

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. You may also register online and pay by credit card at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2015 (3% will be added to total). If a valid email address is provided, an electronic receipt will be sent. Otherwise, your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. All registration forms and payments must be received on or before September 11, 2015. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. Your contact information will be shared only with other reunion attendees.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
322 Madison Mews
Norfolk, VA 23510
ATTN: 8th AFHS

OFFICE USE ONLY

Check # _____ Date Received _____
 Inputted _____ Nametag Completed _____

CUT-OFF DATE IS 9/11/2015

	Price Per	# of People	Total
REGISTRATION FEE			
Includes meeting expenses and other reunion expenses.	\$40		\$
Reg. Fee for children ages 8-16 attending more than 1 function & staying at hotel	\$25		\$
MEAL PACKAGES			
<i>Package #1 includes 7 hotel meals beginning with breakfast on Thursday</i>	\$212		\$
<i>Package #2 includes 5 hotel meals beginning with breakfast on Friday</i>	\$148		\$
Please select your entrée choice(s) for the Banquet:			
10oz. Grilled NY Strip		#	
Roasted Salmon with a lemon-herb sauce		#	
SEPARATELY PRICED MEALS (if not purchasing a package)			
Thursday, 10/15: Dinner Buffet	\$44		\$
Friday, 10/16: Rendezvous Dinner (Pan Roasted Chicken)	\$45		\$
Saturday, 10/17: Banquet (please select your entrée)			
10oz. Grilled NY Strip	\$45		\$
Roasted Salmon with a lemon-herb sauce	\$45		\$
TOURS			
Please choose one of the following two tours:			
Thursday, 10/15: City Tour / Old Market	\$37		\$
Thursday, 10/15: Briefing at the Bunker	\$28		\$
Friday, 10/16: Buzzing at the Bluffs Mini Air Show	\$29		\$
Please choose one of the following two tours:			
Saturday, 10/17: Durham Museum / City Tour	\$47		\$
Saturday, 10/17: Strategic Air and Space Museum	\$41		\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

Please Print

MEMBER NAME (for name tag) _____

I VETERAN I NEXT GEN I OTHER WWII GROUP AFFILIATION (Please list BG, not BS) _____

IF A VETERAN, PLEASE CIRCLE ERA: WWII Cold War Era Korea Vietnam Gulf War Desert Storm Iraq Other _____

SPOUSE NAME (If attending) _____

GUEST NAMES _____ I NEXT GEN

PHONE # (____)____-____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____@_____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DISABILITY/ DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUSTRIPS? I YES I NO (**PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY**).

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PH. NUMBER (____)____-_____

Retracing History

The War Stories of My Grandfather Revisited

By Aoibheann Thinnés

“There I was at 30,000 feet, flak flying all around...” This is what my grandfather, Carl Thinnés, would say when his once-captive audience would slide into side conversations during one of his famously long-winded stories. Not that distractions were surprising in a house with his wife, Marge, their six children, and the many friends and guests they frequently entertained. There was always something going on at the Thinnés household, whether it was the regularly planned card nights with Carl and Marge's friends or an impromptu party for my father's entire high school after an invite to a couple of friends after a basketball game spread like wildfire.



2/Lt. Carl f. Thinnés, Bombardier

My grandfather worked at Indiana Bell Telephone Company for 35 years, while my grandmother tended to the six children and worked at a local inner-city grade school, yet the family still found quality time to spend with one another. On summer vacations, with all six kids crammed in the station wagon, three pairs of feet sticking out the back window of their Dodge, Carl

always showed off his special talent for creating poems and stories off the top of his head. Although not all of the poems might be publishable here, they were undoubtedly memorable; my aunts and uncles can recite his most popular ones to this day. Another summer ritual was going to the Officer Club at Fort Benjamin Harrison. Marge would pack up all of the kids and a large pitcher of lemonade and head to the pool for the entire day. In the evenings, Carl would take the bus straight from work to meet up with everyone and catch the last hour or two of fun. On the way home, darkness falling and Marge behind the wheel because his war injuries prevented him from driving at night, Carl would spin elaborate scary stories in the car. This is something my father found pleasure in doing when my siblings and I were younger too.

Not all of the stories in the Thinnés household came from Carl, however. As young boys tend to do, when my father was about eight years old, he was engaged in an intense bragging battle with another boy about whose father was coolest. They traded boasts until my father finally proclaimed “my dad can take his eyeball out”. This was clearly the winning claim, but was met with skepticism, so after school they marched over to my father's house. When Carl came home, my father's friend walked up to him and stated simply that Jeff had said Carl could take his eye out. Without further ado, my grandfather left no doubt as to who won the argument by proceeding to pop out his right eye; his glass eye. A fun trick at the time, but one that hearkened to a tougher past as a bombardier in the U.S. Army Air Corps during World War II.

On October 2, 1941, at the age of 22, Carl Thinnés received a notice in the mail that he had been drafted to serve his country during WWII. He packed a bag and headed to Fort Sill, Oklahoma for his 16-week basic training course. While there, he decided to apply for the Air Corps. After passing the necessary tests and providing the needed letters of recommendation, Carl was accepted into the Air Corps, was placed with his B-17 crew, and continued training as a bombardier. After several months preparing with the Flying Fortress, the crew was sent off to Snetterton Heath air base in England.

On May 8, 1944, Carl and his crew were flying their fifth mission; a mission to bomb Berlin. Floating above the clouds in the clear blue skies, the peaceful scene was suddenly disturbed by the ominous presence of black dots on the horizon. As the objects quickly grew larger, it was apparent that my grandfather's crew had been spotted by the German forces and, within minutes, they were engaged in a firefight thousands of feet in the air. Amidst the onslaught of flak, roar of multiple engines,

and flashes of gunfire, the B-17 took a fatal hit and it was clear the plane was going down. A flight crew worked like a well-oiled machine, and in the event that a plane was going down, each member had a specific set of duties. As the crew took stock and scrambled to prepare for an inevitable crash, it became apparent that Carl had been blinded and was severely wounded. Out of line with typical protocol, the engineer, Charles Chase, who was situated behind Carl in the nose of the plane, radioed the co-pilot (the pilot had been killed in the firefight) and requested permission for Carl to bail from the aircraft. The request was granted, so as the remaining crew readied the plane and themselves for a crash landing, the Sergeant Chase maneuvered Carl to a gaping hole in the aircraft, attached his chute, connected it to the static line, and then pushed him out. Badly wounded and hanging blindly under his parachute, there was nothing Carl could do as he left the noise of the fight behind and floated toward the ground in silence.

Carl landed in a field and lay there for hours. Eventually, he heard what sounded like a tractor in the distance, gradually making its way closer, and then finally the voices of an elderly man and woman standing over him speaking German. My grandfather was eventually taken by German soldiers to be interrogated, and then to a Prisoner of War site that was set up in a cloister specifically for severely injured soldiers. Presumably because they were a low flight risk, the POW site was run by a group of nuns. He received occasional treatment for his injuries, but they were unable to restore his eyesight, so he spent the next eight months blindly making his way around the cloister and relying on the kindness of the nuns. Meanwhile, initial newspaper reports back in his hometown of Indianapolis listed Carl as Killed in Action. However, on May 24, a telegram from the Secretary of War to Carl's mother reported his status as Missing in Action and on June 15, a second telegram was sent confirming that Lt. Carl Thinnies was alive and being held as a prisoner of war.

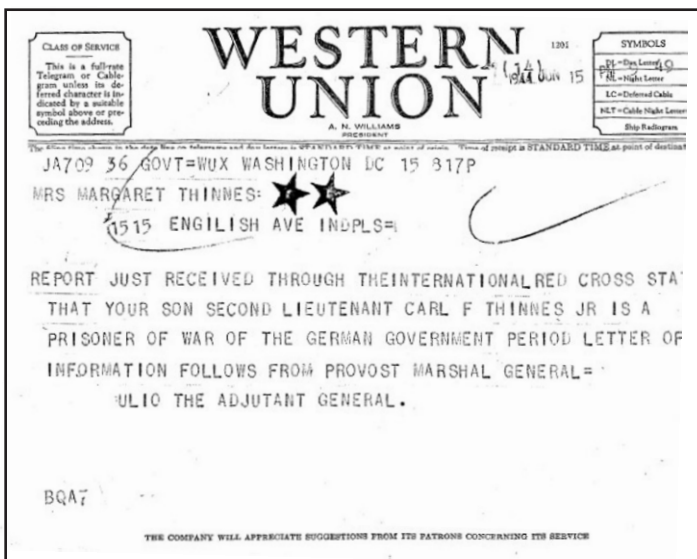
In January of 1945, Carl was transported to Switzerland, where an official exchange of U.S. and German soldiers took place. Upon returning to the States in February, Carl was immediately sent to Valley Forge hospital and, after multiple operations, doctors managed to restore sight in his left eye. For the first time since his plane was shot down almost a year prior, my grandfather could see again.

Throughout his time in the Army Air Corps, Carl maintained constant letter correspondence with his family, especially his mother. The letters he exchanged with his mother were a beautiful and honest display of love, understanding of duty, and faith. Always an eloquent writer, Carl also kept a journal while he served and frequently wrote poems, songs, and prayers expressing his thoughts and feelings about his war experiences. A poem my grandfather wrote while he was a POW titled *A Flyer's Lament* is one of my favorites, because it captures the joy he felt in flying and the pain of his last mission.

(Editor's note: Read Carl Thinnies' poem in the Poet's Corner on page 19 of this Newsletter.)

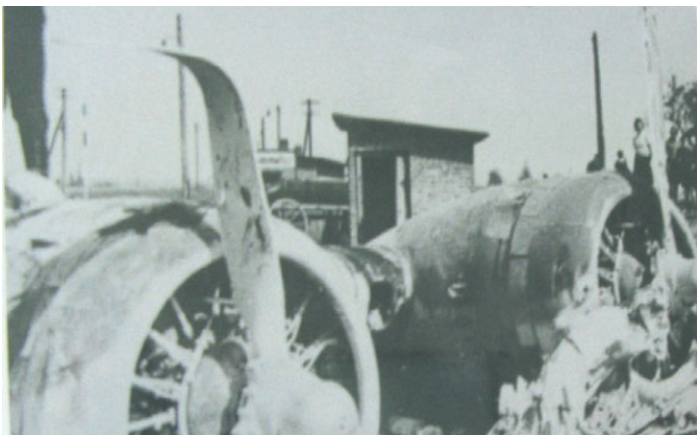
My dad has always shown a particular interest in his father's war stories. He would ask his father about his service in the Air Corps, and has since spent considerable time collecting and managing records of my grandfather's many letters and journals, as well the KIA newspaper reports, MIA telegrams, POW aerogrammes, and more. He has worked to organize and preserve these special documents and, more recently, has taken the next step to track down other documents to fill the gaps and round out the full story of my grandfather's time in Germany. In 2012, thanks to the dedicated research of the nephew of Sergeant William Latta, one of the three crew members killed on May 8, 1944, my father learned the details of what happened to the plane after Carl was pushed out. This ultimately led my father and me on an adventure retracing history.

48 years after my grandfather was shot down on his way to bomb Germany, I was born in Berlin. Another 20 years later, I was back again to study at a university there. This is, in fact, less a coincidence than one might think, as the reason I studied in Germany can be traced back to my grandfather. Although he spent years training to face the Germans across enemy lines, and then engaged in combat that downed his plane, killed his comrades, and left him as an injured POW, my grandfather never held a grudge. He demonstrated an inspiring forgiveness for those on the other side, an understanding of the cruel demands of war, and even some guilt for the actions he was required to take. One



of the passages from his letters home that I find most touching, expressed just this. In a letter penned to his mother only days before he was shot down, he wrote, "And don't only pray for me and my well-being, but say one now and then for the guys and people I must drop my bombs on, and shoot, to defend my own life and end this awful war. I detest that way and wish there were some other way – and as there isn't – all I can do is say a prayer as 'Bombs Away' and hope God will forgive me." Out of this respect, my grandfather helped to cultivate an interest for Germany in his children, especially in my father, who went on to spend many years studying, living, and working there. Several times, Carl and Marge visited my father in Germany and traveled around. In 1984, they even returned to the cloister in Bad Soden Salmunster where my grandfather was held captive. Some of the same nuns who had cared for my grandfather were still there and through conversations with them, my grandfather learned about many of his former fellow POWs.

For four years, my parents, three brothers, and I lived in Munich, during which time I too learned the language and developed a love for the country. It was only fitting that in my junior year of college at the University of Notre Dame (which my grandfather attended upon his return from the war, courtesy of the G.I. Bill and a commanding visit by his mother with the University president to plead his case), I would spend a semester studying in Berlin. While I was there, my dad established contact with a local reporter in the small town of Wolfenbuettel, not too far from Berlin, where my grandfather's plane crashed. This reporter had written a couple of articles about the crash after Bill Latta, nephew of tail gunner Sergeant William Latta who died hours after the plane crashed, had conducted extensive research about the incident. Bill's research took a particularly significant turn when Dr. Silke Haase, responsible for the archives of Wolfenbeuttel, found an old photograph of the wreckage that identified the tail number of the plane. This enabled Bill to determine the exact house that the plane had crashed into, and even establish contact with local residents who had witnessed the crash.



May 8th, 1944 A/C 42-102482 - B17G-50-BO. 339th Sqdn. QJ-A, Downed by enemy fighters. Crashed 2½km west of Wolfenbuettel, Germany

When my dad came over to Germany for a business trip in June, 2012, we decided to take the opportunity to retrace as much of my grandfather's last mission as possible. This began with a visit to Wolfenbuettel to meet Helga Bartels, who was nine years old when the B-17 took off the top floor of her house. Over breakfast, we exchanged stories about my grandfather's side of the story, and heard from Frau Bartels what it was like to hide in the cellar as the plane crashed into the upstairs. That afternoon, we drove to the very edge of Wolfenbuettel and found a traditional whitewashed German house sitting unsuspectingly in a row of similar looking homes on a quiet street. Behind the house was nothing but a large open field. Frau Bartels met us there and the current owner of the home invited us inside. We walked into the basement and stood in the very spot where Frau Bartels had crouched as a young girl. Upon leaving, we walked down to the end of the street where my grandfather's plane had eventually come to a halt.

My father and I left the neighborhood as a light rain began to fall and picked up a card and a small wreath on our way to the local cemetery, where Lt. Harold Eye, Lt. Leland Baker, and Sergeant William Latta Jr., were first laid to rest. As I crouched down to lay the wreath, I felt a little closer to the people and the events that had been so significant in my grandfather's life. It was an honor to pay our respects to three of my grandfather's heroic crew members who lost their lives in the crash.

After visiting the crash site and original graves of some of the crew members, we hit the road to complete the other half of our journey and visit the cloister where my grandfather was held as a POW. The sun shining above, we crested a foothill and wound our way through the hilly streets of a small German town, Bad Soden, looking for the town hall where, in 1985, my father, Carl, and Marge were received by the Buergermeister. Finding a small building that seemed to fit the bill, we walked up just as a woman was leaving. A stroke of luck for us, because Frau Monika Ruppel was one of the town historians. We caught her just in time, because she was locking up for the day since Bad Soden was shutting down early to finalize preparations for the annual salt festival the next day. Upon hearing about



Jeffrey A. Thinnies, son of Lt. Carl F. Thinnies Jr., Frau Helga Bartels, on whos house Carls plane crashed in Wolfenbuettel and Aoiheann Thinnies the author of this story.

our little quest, she invited us back inside and showed us some of the records she had from that time. She also shared some stories, including one about a fake burial with a casket full of rocks to cover up the escape of a French prisoner. Frau Ruppert insisted we stay for the festival the next day, where we would have a chance to discuss WWII Bad Soden with more locals. Although we had originally planned to make the visit a day trip, we figured this was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and we would stay, by which time Frau Ruppert had already organized a room for us at a nearby hotel.

While the village finished preparing for the festival the next day, we drove up the hill at the edge of town to the cloister, St. Vinzenzhaus, where my grandfather stayed as a POW. Although the building was abandoned by then, I was overwhelmed by the opportunity to touch the walls my grandfather had used to guide himself around the compound, to look down the hill at the smaller building through the trees where the nuns brought the prisoners to bathe, and to imagine the sounds of the nuns singing during Mass with the prisoners secretly listening out of sight. At Christmas in 1944, my grandfather had asked one of the nuns if he could attend the Christmas Mass, but because German soldiers would also be in attendance, he was not allowed. Instead, she told him about a stairwell where he could hide and still be able to hear. One of only two times my dad remembers seeing his father cry was when, almost 40 years later, Carl was listening to Christmas carols and *Stille Nacht, Heilige Nacht* (Silent Night, Holy Night) began playing. All of the memories and emotions of standing crouched in the stairwell, blind and alone at Christmas time, came rushing back to him. To stand in front of the building where my grandfather experienced all of this as a captive, and to also know I was standing in the same spot he did when he revisited the cloister in 1985, was an emotional experience that really cannot be explained.

The next morning, my dad and I made our way to the large, grassy park in the center of Bad Soden. We felt like we had gone one step further in retracing history, and had actually stepped back in time. Every single person was dressed in garb from the 1800s and those with young children were even pushing them in old buggies from the same era. We met up with Frau Ruppert from the day before and she introduced us to another town historian and reporter, Georg-Wilhelm Hanna. Thanks to the enthusiasm around our story, we were immediately treated as town celebrities. Herr Hanna shepherded us around the festival, introducing us to the mayor and to citizens who had lived in the town during WWII.

The mayor, also dressed to the nines with top hat and

all, asked that we be given little commemorative bags of salt, since salt is what Bad Soden is named and known for. While my dad spoke with the reporter, I had the opportunity to sit down and talk with a woman who was a young girl in Bad Soden during the war.

The magnitude of this chance to use my German language skills to speak with someone who lived in the same town where my grandfather was a POW, and to hear her talk about the prisoners, the U.S. aircraft flying overhead but not bombing because they knew injured Allied soldiers were in the area, and the sight of the Americans coming over the hills at the end of the war, was not lost on me.

Herr Hanna later wrote an article about our visit in the local newspaper, the *Kinzigtal Nachrichten*, and we have stayed in touch with him since. My family continues to piece together additional information about my grandfather's experiences and his crew during WWII, but the places my dad and I visited and the people we met in 2012 are a special piece in the puzzle. Stories and words, both those pulled from the imagination and those grounded in reality, were a constant and important aspect of my grandfather's life and therefore my father's, and my own, life as well. Maybe these stories have a special importance to me, because I only have a few personal memories of my time with my grandfather, and I owe a lot of what I know about his life to the stories and tales passed down. This is part of the reason I am especially grateful for the opportunity I had to visit Wolfenbuettel and Bad Soden; it was a chance to retrace my grandfather's steps and feel that much closer to the reality of his experiences and the origins of my own. "And there I was at 30,000 feet, flak flying all around..." Just making sure you are still listening; I am told that I inherited my grandfather's knack for long-winded storytelling. It seems only fitting given the importance of stories to our family, and I am proud to carry on at least a little piece of his legacy.



Frau Monika Ruppel, town historian, and her granddaughter, Georg-Wilhelm Hanna, a reporter, Aoiheann Thinnes and Jeff Thinnes at the Salt Festival in Bad Soden.

THE FLYER'S LAMENT

By Lt. Carl F. Thinnis, Jr. (ret.)
Composed While a Blinded Prisoner of War
Bad Soden, Germany 1944

As I lay here in my little sack
With a busted leg and my eyes turned black,
I'll tell a tale about a guy
Whose sole ambition was to fly.

So put a pillow 'neath my head,
Pull up your chairs about my bed,
And listen to my tale of woe
And how I've come to meet the foe.

I met him in high skies of blue,
Far above the earthen hue,
High above the land and sea
Where even God seemed next to me.

Rather there than down below,
In the mud and rain and snow,
Or in the desert so very hot,
Oh no, dear God, I'd rather not.

So join the squadron meet the group,
Find the wing then start to troop,
Cross the channel Zuider Zee,
And point her nose to Germany.

To Germany to Germany.
Cross the channel cross the sea.
Through the air black puffed with shell,
On we go to give em hell

Ten men in a man-made bird,
Three tons of bombs to give the word,
To tell the foe way down below,
Just where in hell he too can go.

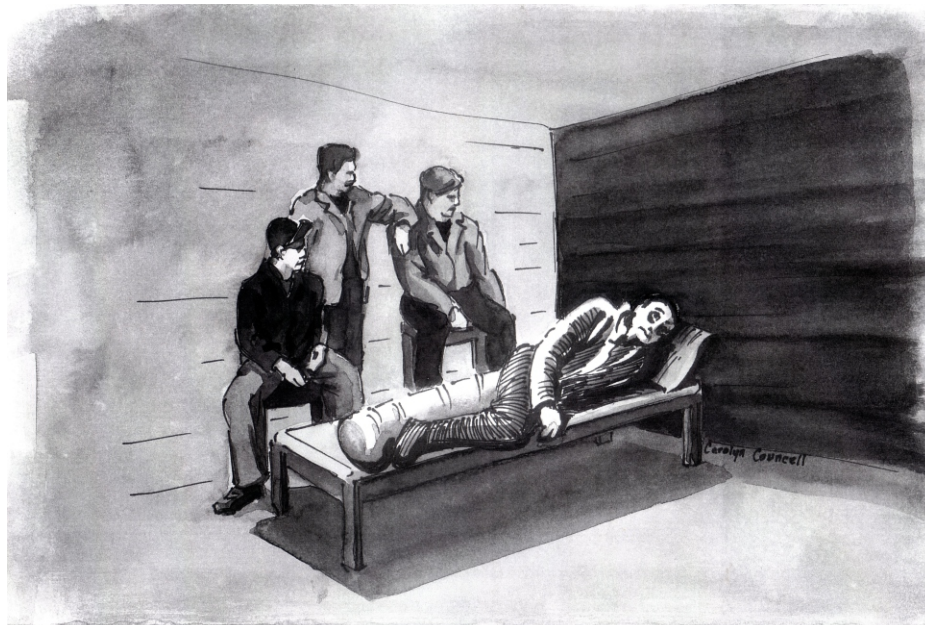
And just in case he's hard to hear,
Or doesn't care to lend an ear,
There are other planes and other men,
Ten times ten times ten again.

The clouds below the sun above,
This is what I really love.
I feel happy free and full of life,
And think of home, away from strife.

But scan the sky and watch the sun,
For from its glare doth come the hun.
And many a man in his reverie,
Has come to the end of his destiny.

No sooner said no sooner done,
When suddenly from out the sun.
"Gerry" comes from 12 o'clock,
And in death's struggle we did lock.

So here I am in my little sack,
With a busted leg and my eyes turned black,
And ne're again shall I ever fly,
Farewell to you my loving sky.





An up close look at our Museum facade during the recent 2015 Tour visit. (Left to Right) Geoff Ward, Malcolm Holmes, Sombra Patrick, Anne Holmes, Nadine Jacobs, Wim Jacobs, Jill Tebble (Bert and Sombra Patrick's daughter), Bert Patrick, Alfie Tebble (Jill's hubby), Carolyn Councill, Tim Edwards, Marbury Councill, Richard Burlingham, Laura Edge, Jerry Lutz, Rebecca Lutz, Jeanette Batton, Lydia Anderson, Janet Strizic, Camille Latour, Margaret Ward.

E- Mail



Here are excerpts from an exchange of e-mails to show how consideration was given to ideas and concerns in making the final decision with regards to the refurbishing of the museum facade. The first from Board Member Rebecca Lutz after her return from the England tour this May.

Subj: Museum Facade
 Date: Fri, Jun 5, 2015 12:45 pm
 From: Rebecca Lutz twolutz@att.net
 To: paljoe2@aol.com, nessej@aol.com,
jdavis5190@tampabay.rr.com, b17fertilemyrtle@att.net,
george339@gmail.com, lha1015@hotmail.com,
dlbudde@aol.com

Fellow Board Members,

I have been corresponding with Geoff regarding the Facade of the Museum at Snetterton. As those of us who have been to the Museum in the last few years have seen, the paintings on the front of the Museum are badly fading and will disappear altogether if they are not

restored soon. At present, you can barely see one of the propellers and the other three have completely faded. There are some cracks as well that need to be repaired.

Several of us have expressed concern, and we have spoken to Geoff about it, but apparently Sean, upon whose school the Museum sits, feels it looks more like a WWII building with the fading facade. However, Geoff feels that since it is our Museum, Sean would not object to, and perhaps help facilitate, the restoration of the facade, if that is what we want. Geoff did feel we need to get a consensus that we want these repairs to be made and that the money will come from 96th funds.

Please let me know what y'all think and if you think we need to proceed, the request should come either from Joe or Dan, not me. I have asked Geoff for Sean's contact information.

Have a good weekend,

Rebecca

The second e-mail on the following page was sent to our President Joe Garber from Sean Simington, the Headmaster of the New Eccles Hall School where the museum is located and was most helpful in putting the final decision in perspective when shared with the Board.

From: NEHS <admin@neweccleshall.com>
To: [paljoe2 <paljoe2@aol.com>](mailto:paljoe2@aol.com)
Cc: Geoff Ward <gdmh.w33@tiscali.co.uk>; NEHS
<admin@neweccleshall.com>
Sent: Sat, Jul 11, 2015 9:35 am
Subject: Museum Mural

Dear Mr. Garber,

Further to your discussions with Geoff with regard to the mural on the front of the 96th Bombardment Group Museum. Geoff and I have had a few discussions with regard to the mural and whether it should be renewed.

Geoff, I know, has conveyed my thoughts to you about the mural but I thought I would also put them in writing to ensure that they are fully understood and given consideration in the grand scheme of things.

The Mural I believe should not be touched but left to fade back as all murals have that were painted in or on buildings from the war era. It gives the whole building an authentic look and adds to the mystery of the history of the 96th that the building houses. All that glistens is not gold. The mural as it stands invites visitors to find out more by going inside.

Furthermore the mural is a piece of contemporary artwork which was painted by the school, the art master Mr. Martin Rance and his students at the time, 1990, and that is a piece of history in its own right and has a value to the school and the campus for that very reason.

The mural as it stands is clear and can be seen and whilst it is clearly not new it brings to us the importance and significance of the history the building contains because it is not brand new.

I feel that the money or time spent in making it new could be better spent on continuing to build up the valuable primary source of history the museum and learning centre contains, namely personal diaries and photographs that as I write are being lost and discarded as people do not realize their value for the future.

I leave the above as food for thought. I look forward to hearing further.

Yours sincerely,

Sean Simington
Director
New Eccles Hall School
Quidenham
Nr.
Norwich
Norfolk
NR16 2NZ
01953 887217



From: Co de swart codeswart@gmail.com
To: Dale Budde dlbudde@aol.com
Date: 12 July 2015 14:00:12 CEST
Subject: **Onderwerp: Honoring weekend May 9/10-2015 for Belgian WWII Comet Escapelinehelper Henriette Nanotte**

Honoring weekend for WWII Escapeline helper Henriette Nannotte (95).

2Lt. Don Mills Sr. was a Bombardier. on B-17 MZ-V / 413 BS, that crashed on Oct. 20-1943 in De Bilt, Holland.

He was the only member of the crew who could evade by help of Belgian and French Resistance/Escapeline and return to England.

His son Don Jr. payed his respect to this Escapeline helper by attending the weekend she was honored by the Communities of Rumes (Belgium) and Bachy, (France) from where she operated for the Comet Escapeline in WWII.

She accompanied his Dad in 1943 from Bachy to Paris where others took over and lead him over the Pyrenees Mountains to Spain and freedom.



Don Mills Jr. from Sacramento, CA. came to Bachy, France to meet and honor the woman who in the fall of 1943 lead his Dad on his way to freedom, Henriette Nanotte (95).

BULLETIN BOARD



This Issues Featured WEB Site

Once a Year at 11:11 am the Sun Shines Perfectly on this Memorial



The Anthem Veterans Memorial, located in Anthem, Arizona, is a monument dedicated to honoring the service and sacrifice of the United States armed forces. Photograph by Mike Spinelli

At precisely 11:11 a.m. each Veterans Day (Nov. 11), the sun's rays pass through the ellipses of the five Armed Services pillars to form a perfect solar spotlight over a mosaic of The Great Seal of the United States. The pillar provides a place of honor and reflection for veterans, their family and friends, and those who want to show their respects to those service men and women who have and continue to courageously serve the United States.

To learn more about this beautiful memorial go to:

<http://twistedifter.com/2014/11/anthem-arizona-veterans-memorial/>

96th Bomb Group Library

Our Library is coming to Omaha. Janet Strizic, our librarian, is transporting it to the reunion. Be sure to checkout the many titles and valuable resources that are available. You might just like to check one out and take it home. If you have books that you borrowed in Nashville please bring them with you and exchange them for another.

If you will not be attending the reunion a complete list of our holdings was printed in the last issue of the Newsletter and you could borrow your choice by mail.

Contact

Janet Strizic

10303 N. Ellendale Road

Edgerton, WI 53534

(608) 290-3611

WANTED OLD ISSUES 96th BOMB GROUP NEWSLETTERS

Issue # 20 February 1992

Issue# 21 August 1992

Issue # 22 February 1993

Issue # 23 August 1993

Issue # 24 February 1994

Issue # 27 August 1996

Issue # 28 February 1997

Issue # 29 August 1997

Issue # 36 February 2000

These are needed to provide a complete set for the Newsletter Files. If you could donate or loan them to be copied it would be greatly appreciated. The process of putting all of the back issue into a printable PDF format that can be posted to our web page or made available on a CD to the membership has begun and needs only these issue to be complete.

Please send them to or contact our Editor to arrange for their loan.

Dale L. Budde

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Dlbudde@aol.com

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Since April, 2009



Bosna, Rene
Butts, James L.
DeGeyter, Kristof
Geske, Corey (Mrs.)

Laak33 8431 SC Oosterwolde, Friesland, Netherlands
29905 Bankside Drive, Menifee, CA 92585
Kruisabeel 27 9280, Wieze, Belgium
73 Atterbury Drive, Smithtown, NY 11787
Daughter of William C. Phelon 338th Radio
2723 Kenross, Houston, TX 77043
3601 Meares Drive Apt. 411, Fort Worth, TX 76136

Hoffman, Catherine
Skeels, Ted

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
Omaha, Nebraska
October 14 - 18, 2015
Doubletree Downtown Omaha
1616 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68102
for room reservations
Phone (800) 222-8733 or (402) 346-7600

*Note rooms at the 8th AFHS rate are limited.
Make your reservations soon.*

*See complete program and reunion information in this issue
or in the 8th Air Force News March 2015 and June 2015.*

**WHERE
TO CALL
OR WRITE**



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Texts and/or photos are sincerely solicited. If requested, photos will be returned. The Editor reserves the right to edit text. December 31, 2015 is the deadline for the February 2016 issue.

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



Final Mission

*Those Who Served Their Country
With Honor and Distinction*

Angilo, Thomas F.	337th	PCHR
Hand, Stanley I.	413th	CO
Huff, Robert	339th	ENG
Justin, Howard.J	339th	N
Litke, Melvin H.	413th	WG
Phelon, William C	338th	R
Roytek, Frank Jr.	337th	BTG

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.

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We're all fighter pilots now

