



N 96TH BOMB GROUP NEWSLETTER

October 2023

ISSUE NO. 80



80th Anniversary Tour

80th Anniversary Tour at Duxford Air Museum **Front:** Matt Hand, Jerry Bee, Piet Sybesma, Jon Hand, Stan Hand Jr., Ben Hinchman, Susan Hinchman, Dawn Ford, Jill Tebble, Betsy Cambell, Pam Lenahan, Rebecca Lutz, Linda McClain, Anita Crist Sybesma. **Back:** Mark McClain, Bill Ford, Jim Lenahan, Joshua Hand, Pat Lenahan, Randy deMars, Jr., Jeannette Batton, Janet Strizic, Nadine Huylebroeck, Dan Ricard, Wim Jacobs, Jerry Lutz.

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President's Corner



Hello friends! I hope everyone is enjoying their fall. I have a few items I'd like to discuss this time.

First up, I would like to mention the upcoming 2023 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion. This year's Reunion will be held in Ontario, California - the dates are October 18th to the 22nd, 2023. The reunion hotel is the Double Tree by Hilton Hotel Ontario Airport. Ontario is located approximately 60 miles east of Los Angeles.

The reunion plans include tours to air museums in Chino and Palm Springs, as well as a non-museum trip to the LA Farmer's Market and Hollywood. I encourage all of our members to consider attending this reunion - you will meet other people with a similar family history/interest. You will probably learn a few things, and you may be able to help another family learn more about their veteran or his service.

By the time you read this, the published reunion registration deadline will have passed. However, you can certainly still attend the reunion - the ability to add the reunion tours or special meals may be limited after the deadline. If you would like to consider attending, please give Debra Kujawa with the 8th Air Force Historical Society a call to discuss. Her number is (912) 748-8884. All reunion registration and other information can be found on the 8th AFHS website, at 8thafhs.org.

As I write this message, several members of the 96th BGA have just returned from a trip to England for their "80th Anniversary Return to Snetterton Tour". Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find a report on this trip and the activities the travelers enjoyed.

The Return to Snetterton trip was scheduled to align with the 2023 Open Day for the 96th BG Museum at Snetterton Heath. There is a report on another very successful Open Day in this newsletter as well.

And now I'd like to address an important issue regarding this newsletter. This newsletter is for our members. Even more importantly, this newsletter is **by** our members. All articles in each newsletter are from members just like you. I am writing these words because we are not receiving articles for inclusion in the newsletter like we used to. Without articles to include, we only have the businesslike pages at the back of the newsletter, a report from 'Back at the Old Base', and a page of random thoughts from this president - we need your help to keep this newsletter as a strong connection to the original 96th BG.

What might your article look like? Have you been on a journey of discovery of a veteran's history with the 96th BG? This journey could include physical travel or more of a research project. Do you have a journal or diary from a veteran of the 96th BG that could be transcribed or otherwise presented? If you are an author of a book about a 96th BG veteran, would you like to present an excerpt from your book?

Over the past several years, Vicki Ekmark has presented an excellent series of articles about all of the various men from a single 96th BG crew. While I don't assume anyone has that sort of information on another entire crew, maybe someone does? Another interesting article from a few issues back was

by Aoibheann Thinnes who is the granddaughter of Lt. Carl Thinnes, a 96th BG airman. This article detailed her memories of her grandfather as well as a visit with her father in Germany to see the site where Lt. Thinnes' B-17 was shot down and crash landed.

There is a broad range of topics that might make a great article for this newsletter - if you think it is an interesting topic related to the 96th BG, I bet there are others who would think so too. You can review previous copies of this newsletter in PDF format (from April 2014 to now) at the 96th BGA website: www.96bg.org

Our fabulous editor, Mr Dale Budde, works very hard to put together each newsletter. He is truly our editor/publisher. While Dale will help with any final tweaking to fit the newsletter format, articles do need to be print ready (or very nearly so) when submitted. If you are an author submitting an excerpt from a published book, that excerpt must be print ready, in a useable format (Word), and must be free of watermarks, etc.

Another topic regarding the newsletter is our goal to transition the newsletter subscription to an email version as the basic normal level, with an additional fee assessed for mailing of a hard copy newsletter.

Many of you already receive the newsletter in PDF version via email. One significant benefit of this version of our newsletter is the inclusion of color photos. The hard copy newsletter is black and white only, as it has always been.

The idea to change more directly to an email newsletter has come about because of the continuing increase in costs for publishing each newsletter - both paper and postage costs continue to rise. We note that the 8th AFHS is going to a very similar format with their magazine - the regular membership fee will cover an electronic version of the 8th AF News, with a hard copy version for an additional annual cost. I would note that the 96th BGA intends to continue to provide WWII veterans and surviving spouses of veterans with a hard copy of the newsletter at no additional cost.

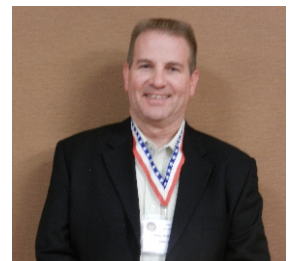
Finally, we intend to hold the 2023 Annual General Meeting of the 96th Bomb Group Association this Fall (possibly in early December as has been done the last two years). The meeting will be held via Zoom. A link to the meeting will be sent to all members via email once a meeting date and time are scheduled. Please consider attending this Zoom call - we welcome all thoughts and inputs, and the more, the merrier.

That is all for now!

As I mention each time - if you'd really like to connect, visit or call a veteran.

Thank You for your time!

Mike McIlraith
President - 96th BGA



PS - The article by Ms. Thinnes can be found in the August 2015 newsletter. The articles on the 'Rum Boogie' crew by Vicki Ekmark can be found in the 96th BGA newsletters between August 2017 and March 2022. All of these newsletters are available at the 96th BGA website: www.96bg.org

Meanwhile Back at the Old Base



2023 has been a year of change at the 96th BG Museum. Over the winter months and after cataloging the artifacts, we realized items that had been donated by individual veterans were spread across the museum. We worked to put these items together, to tell that individual's story and the large display case was refurbished to house these displays. Labels were made to inform visitors and both photos and insignia were added to items to make displays personal and authentic.

The 95th Bomb Group Museum team has been very supportive, kindly donating 5 display cases which has enabled us to update the museum and display more items. Sombra Patrick kindly donated a new flat screen TV in memory of my dad Bert Patrick. Bert lived next to the base during the war, carried the cross at Quidenham Church at the dedication of the memorial window in 1944 and along with Geoff, Sean and Malcolm set up the museum.

After over 30 years the museum wooden doors had seen better days and could no longer be repaired so in July we replaced them with solid wooden doors with a double lock.

In February Alfie and I attended a meeting hosted by the 100th BG Museum. The meeting's purpose was to bring together all local museums to share ideas, information and to generally network. The meeting was a great success, and we made some useful contacts.

On Memorial Day I had the privilege of laying the wreath on behalf of the 96th BG Association at Madingley Cemetery, Cambridge. I will admit I shed a tear this year as standing next to me was a 95th BG veteran.



In June we held a fundraising 1940's Dance at The Red Feather Club at Horham, once again we must thank our friends at the 95th for allowing us to do this. A great evening was had by all and £480 was raised for the 96th museum. We hope to make this an annual event.

We have had a steady stream of visitors to the museum this summer including veteran's family members and The Minnesota Military Round Table History Group.

In August we hosted the **Return to Snetterton Tour** and our main open day, both of which were a great success. After a very wet summer we were extremely lucky to have one of the only dry Sundays for our open day and what a day! We estimated that we had over 500 visitors, which was amazing.



Friends and Family Remembered Open Day Display

The event included living history displays by Airborne Assault, Liberation 44, American Women in East Anglia during WW2, Friends and Family Remembered, New Farm Aviation, Stories of the 448th, Homefront display, vintage vehicles some from Norfolk military vehicle group, stalls from Blitz n Pieces, East Anglia books, 100th BG and 95th BG and music from the era by DJ Andy AV8 which set the atmosphere for the day.

A big thank you to Lewis Brawn for his work on our social media pages to spread the word about our event and for making sure I took up the offer of a radio interview too !! I also need to thank Louise Brawn for all her work organizing our fund-raising stall. Tim Harvey for his support and Auroral School Eccles for allowing us to hold our event. But I must not forget my crew chief Alfie Tebble, for his tireless support this year, not only with open day but with all the museum refurbishment.

As I write this we are working on new displays, one of which will include pieces from two 96th B17s and other displays of items kindly donated by veteran's family members which we very much appreciate. More to follow in the next newsletter.

Best wishes to you all,
Jill Tebble
96th BG Museum Curator
jill.1967@btinternet.com

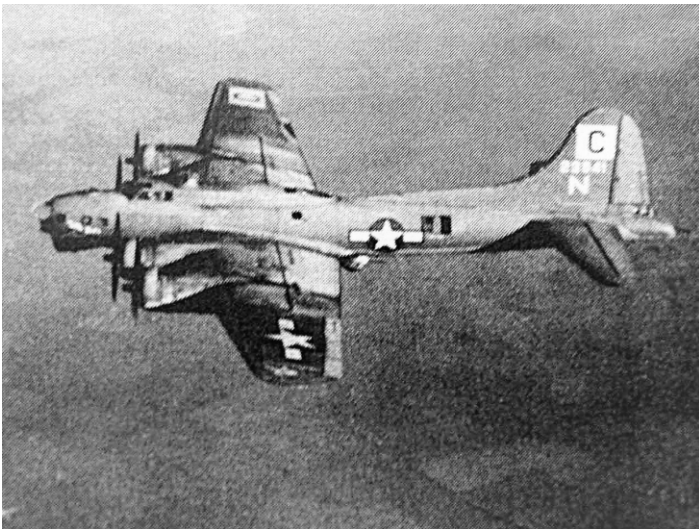
A Lunch Date 78 Years In The Making

Written by: Jo-Ann (Johnston) Messina

The long journey to November of 2022 began in late 1943 when a WWII Mighty 8th air crew was brought together for the first time stateside in August of 1943 and then transferred to England in November of 1943. Everyone agreed the men comprised one of the best crews and their camaraderie was just about the best on their base located at Snetterton-Heath, Norfolk, Great Britain.

At 3:00 AM on 5 January 1944, a cold, rainy and misty morning, the crew was mustered for their seventh mission. At the morning briefing, they learned that day's mission was to the German fighter plane and submarine pens in Bordeaux, France. The crew knew attacking this type of installation was like kicking a hornets nest.

While returning from their successful mission, their B-17F named "*Little Girls*" (42-3541) met with heavy resistance and gun and cannon fire from a swarm of German ME-109s. On board the targeted B-17 were 10 airmen, including the Navigator, John (Johnny) Johnston and Radioman, Ken (Wehrhan) Trent. The pilot said these two were good at their job and invaluable members of his crew.



"LITTLE GIRLS" in flight (John Harris)
"Snetterton Falcons 96th Bomb Group – Enhanced Edition"

The fighter attack knocked two of the four engines out. The engines and cockpit were engulfed in a raging

fire. The fire also knocked out communications between the cockpit and the rear of the plane. Assessing damage and maneuverability, the pilot tried to steer the plane toward land in hopes of a ground landing. However, that mighty *Flying Fortress* could not hold altitude and the only option was to ditch in the Bay of Biscay. Unbeknownst to the pilot, the aft crew had already bailed out. (Unfortunately, the five aft crew members were never located and are considered "Killed in Action." The Co-Pilot was killed instantly when he was hit in the chest by an exploding cannon shell.) The remaining crew stayed on board to hopefully bring the plane in as best they could by scuttling anything that was not tied down. Their efforts were not successful. The order to brace for emergency landing and impact was issued. The Bombardier said the plane hit the water like it was hitting a wall. The men hurriedly exited the plane before it sank. They floated and paddled the emergency rafts in frigid January weather. After a few hours, they were captured by Germans and taken as POWs.

All of the captured crew were interrogated and separated. Johnny was locked in, standing room only, with several other POWs and transported via box car (a common form of transport for POWs) to Stalag Luft 1, in Barth, Germany, northern Germany, while Ken traveled similarly to Stalag 17B, in Krems, Austria. As best as can be determined, after returning home, Johnny and Ken never re-established their connection.

Fast forward to the early 2000s and enter Ed Davidson, the pilot of "*Little Girls*." Ed is key to this story. Through the years, Ed stayed in touch with his crew, and as they aged or passed on, he established contact with their grown children. Ed brought them into the fold and was a source of information for all of them, ensuring they were copied on correspondence, articles of interest, and other pertinent resources. As often as he could, Ed met with them and was always eager to answer their questions. It was always a special "event" when Ed was coming to town. Like so many of the "Greatest Generation," sadly, Ed and all of the crew are gone now.

Along the way, three of the younger generation started exchanging information about their Dads, details about life at the airbase and the Mighty 8th in general, as well as family and their children's milestones. Ken's children AnnSue (Trent) Folstad, living in California, and Rick Trent in Texas, and Jo-Ann (Johnston) Messina, who is in North Carolina struck up a correspondence friendship.

Jonathan, AnnSue's grandson and Rick's great nephew, graduated from the Coast Guard Academy and is currently stationed in southeast North Carolina. AnnSue and Jo-Ann had discussed trying to find a way to meet. Opportunity finally knocked on the door. Word came that their "Coastie" was in line for a promotion. A trip to NC was immediately in the planning.

At last, on November 14, 2022, the long-awaited meeting happened. For convenience sake, they planned lunch at a restaurant near Raleigh-Durham International Airport. The two ladies, accompanied by AnnSue's daughter Julie and Jo-Ann's husband Dan, met for the first time. Emotions ran high and after a long tearful hug, they finally stepped back and took each other in for the first time. For two hours, the ladies talked about their families, themselves, and exchanged information about their Dads. It's interesting to note that when Johnny and Ken were crew mates, neither Jo-Ann nor AnnSue were born. Jo-Ann was born while her Dad was a POW; AnnSue was born 9 months after Ken came home. Each of them was so amazed how the many pieces of information they shared filled in missing blanks about their Dads' WWII history. Like so many Veterans, their Dads never spoke about their service experiences and memories.

As you can see from the accompanying photo, at the suggestion of AnnSue's daughter Julie, the ladies

brought a picture of their Dad to share. What a great idea. After 78 years, if only in spirit, Johnny and Ken, through their daughters, were together again.



Daughters: Jo-Ann (L); SueAnn ®

After all was said and done, Jo-Ann wished they had recorded their meeting. Saying so long was harder than they thought, but they are boosted by the words of the WWII song made popular by Dame Vera Lynn:

"We'll meet again ... don't know where ... don't know when ... but I know we'll meet again some sunny day."

Snetterton Falcons Pages 92 and 93
68 JAN. 5 1944: BORDEAUX-MERIGNAC
FRANCE



96th drops stick of bombs on Bordeaux-Merignac 5 Jan. '44. (Air Force)

Snetterton Falcons Page 97
AIRCRAFT STATISTICS JANUARY 1944

Jan. 5th

A/C 42-3541.

B17F-75-DL. 39th Sqdn. 1J-N. LITTLE GIRLS,
Downed by enemy fighter. Ditched in Bay of Biscay.

P.2/Lt. Edwin D, Davidson.

CP. 2/Lt. Clarence A. Trubey. KIA

N. 2/Lt. John S. Johnson.

B. 2/Lt. Maurice H. Lynch.

R. T/Sgt. Kennrth W. Wahrman.

TT. T/Sgt. Jack C. Barrett.

BT. S/Sgt. Robert H. Drumhiller. KIA

WG. S/Sgt. Kenneth R. Droggel.

WG. S/Sgt. Thomas M. Michan.

TG. S/Sgt. James D. Radcliffe KIA

MARC 2011

#60 DEC. 13, '43: KIEL, GERMANY

This third mission of the month claimed casualties. The 96th put up 54 A/C in three groups. Two planes were lost from the A Group. 2/Lt. Emory Chesmore's 338th crew was hit by flak over the Friesian Islands. They were flying *Dry Run IV* and were going down under control when last observed, although they were still being chased by two JU-88s. From the 413th the crew of 2/Lt. George Parker were flying *Short Stride IV*. Hit by flak, the bomber blew up. Although Lt. Parker, his co-pilot, 2/Lt. Rosario Bilodeau and bombardier 2/Lt. Gordon Ladd were killed, several members of the crew survived.

Although fighter attacks were relatively light over the target, the Luftwaffe continued to harrass the bombers all the way back over the North Sea. This highlighted a real gripe on the part of the gunners. Recently, for some unknown reason, someone, only God knows who because no one would admit to it, had dictated that there be a reduction of tracer bullets in the ammunition belts. Normally, a gunner could rely on every fifth shell leaving an illuminated trajectory. This not only gave him a sense of bearing, but getting a windshield full of tractors caused Luftwaffe pilots to break off prematurely many times.

Returning in distress today was the 337th crew of Lt. George Fabien in A/C 42-30160. *Dottie J II*. Bombardier Bob Hughes takes up the story.

"We had bombed Kiel and had taken quite a beating over the target. We struck out alone for the base on only two engines. We were losing speed and altitude. In fact, we were getting ready to ditch when one of the silent engines roared to life again. And although this helped get us to base, we were only at 300 feet. The tower made us fly a right hand pattern instead of the customary left hand one because the two shot-out engines were on the left wing. And you can't bank into dead engines."

It was while she was making this approach that *Dottie J* was forced out of the pattern by another plane. She stalled and then literally cartwheeled into the ground just over the main road to the western side of the field. It was amazing that all were not killed. As it was, only six of the crew survived. Bob Hughes was thrown through a hole in the top of the aircraft. Along with five others he was taken to the base hospital. All six recovered and went on to fly other missions.

One of the dead was navigator 2/L John Boyd. Both pilot George Fabian and co-pilot Tom Scanlan wrote to the next of kin.

"I am at a loss as to what to say, ..." wrote Fabian to Boyd's parents. "..... knowing that he cannot be brought back, I still hope to ease your sorrow by telling you that John and our

deceased radio operator, Sergeant Truman P. Starr, were the two to whom the survivors are indebted for our extended lease on life."

Lt. Fabian goes on to explain how Boyd and Starr cooperated in bringing the crippled Fortress back to base. Co-pilot Scanlan's letter also praised Boyd's navigational skills on that last journey and concludes:

"It may help a little to know that he died immediately and did not suffer I feel that John's spirit will still be up there on future missions guiding us. He gave his life for something he believed in and it will not have been in vain. I cannot bring John back, but I assure you that every time our crew flies many of the enemy will make a partial payment for John's life ..."

Today was another early milestone in the history of the P-51. Soon it would develop into the most famous prop-job of WWII. Today the 354FG used external gas tanks which gave them 6 hours airtime or 650 miles! It wouldn't be long now! Berlin was 600 miles from England. The P-51 were an unmistakable threat to Germany.



Dec. 13, '43' Two shots of *Dottie J II* after Lt. Fabian crashed trying to return from Kiel. Five men were killed. (Evens and Zorn)



STATISTICAL SUMMARY MISSIONS TO KIEL, GERMANY

DATE	DISP	EFFCT	MIS A/C	KIA	WIA	MIA CREW	E/A CLAIMS	DAM	
# 8 JUNE 13, '43		24	14	3	2	9	30	15	7
#19 JULY 25, '43		21	16	0	0	0	0	3	0
#60 DEC. 13, '43	54	53	2	4	6	20	0	1	
#129 MAY 22, '44	24	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	
#179 JULY 18, '44	38	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	
#306 APRIL, .4538	35	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
#307 APRIL 4, '45	38	36	0	0	0	0	0	0	

Mission Report #60 Dec. 13. '43: **KIEL, GERMANY** was taken from *Snetterton Falcons* pages 83 and 84.

STATISTICAL SUMMARY MISSIONS TO KIEL, GERMANY was compiled from the individual monthly reports throughout the *Snetterton Falcons*.

Poet's Corner

Sgt. Robert E. Doherty was assigned to the 339th Squadron of the 96th Bomb Group in December 1943 as the Radio Operator/Gunner on 1st/Lt Paul Herring's crew. Some of his first memories of Snetterton would have included the crash of returning aircraft from the December 13 mission to Kiel on the previous page.

Four months later on Mission #90 March 4, 1944 to Berlin, Germany flying in AC 42-30412 "*Mischief Maker II*" (Snetterton Falcons, page 111) he would be shot down and become a prisoner of War.

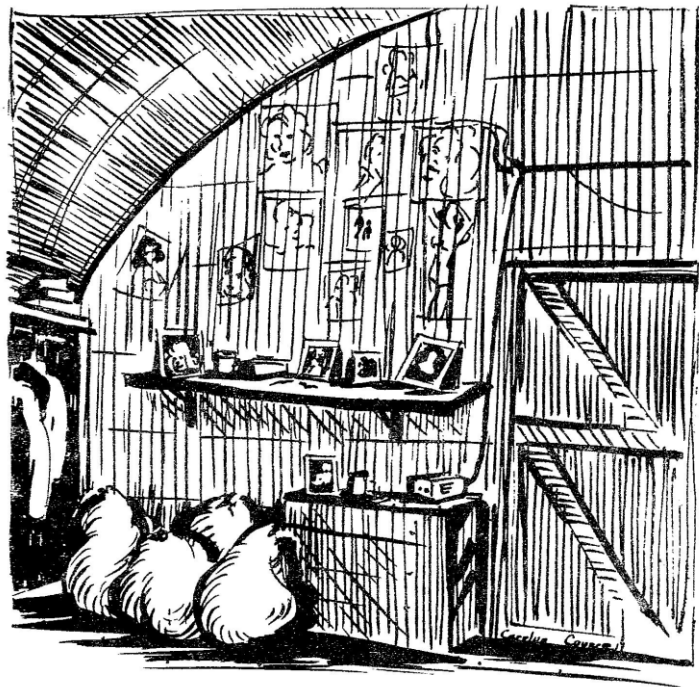
The two poems here were written by 'Bob' during his captivity and published in:

When Grandpa Flew In World War Two

Poems of Training, Combat, Captivity and Liberation

By Robert E. Doherty, Illustrated by Carolyn Council

Jan '44



Over Kiel

*Crinkle, crinkle, flaming Fort!
Jesus, please don't flop to port!
It seems that screams fill up the sky
When ten men spiral down to die!*

*Ten who shared our tents and huts:
Ten who shared their booze and butts,
Ten who now in burst of smoke
Spill from where their coffin broke.*

*Twinkle, Twinkle, they were hit
By flak and not a Messerschmitt.
When flak explodes in a full bomb bay
You come apart – then blow away.*

AFTER KIEL

*But for those families on the shelves,
We have this Nissen to ourselves,
We want to write the parents, but
Their ghosts must first release this hut.
At any rate, what would we say?
'We saw your sons get blown away'?"
Besides, the censors won't allow
Us writing how we feel right now.
Their duffle bags, their private things
Their pin-up girls, their crewman wings
Are sad mementos which reveal
The price for flying over Kiel.
Our squadron top-kick brings the Scotch
A lead-crew sneaks-in beer.
Before we know it, Kiel is past
And life is only Here.
But for their families' photographs
There's poker, booze and belly-laughs.*

Mar '44

80th ANNIVERSARY TOUR RETURN TO SNETTERTON 2023

Reported by Susan Hinchman

Our Return to Snetterton tour marking the 80th anniversary of the arrival of the 96th Bomb Group to Snetterton was an amazing experience for our group of 25 who had the chance to take part. Arriving from all over the U.S., we are the children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews and friends of those airmen who courageously served with the 96th BG during WWII. So well planned, thanks to our 96th BG Museum Curator Jill Tebble, it was 5 days chock full of a variety of activities combining fun, new friends, family, inspiration, and emotions that left us with precious memories to cherish. Adding to the experience, the weather was superb!

On Thursday, our Sandringham visit was a delightful peek into the Royal Family's life when they are out of the spotlight. This was the late Queen Elizabeth's private residence each year from December until February. And on the picturesque grounds of the vast estate sits the lovely Church of St. Mary Magdalene where Christmas has been celebrated by the Royal Family for decades.



Friday's activities included a long-awaited view of the Silver Dream Memorial embraced by the fence line displaying plaques honoring our loved ones who gave so much during that time. What a powerful sight to behold! On our way to the 96th BG Museum, Jill made sure we drove throughout the area to point out the location of the four bomb squadrons, air strips, and facilities.



On arrival at the museum, just outside we were met with a beautiful board containing our loved ones' photos and information displayed. And the new bench with the commemoration plaque for the 80th anniversary of the 96th BG's arrival in Snetterton was special to see.



We spent several hours at the museum taking in all the meaningful exhibits that have been so carefully arranged. It was clear to us that much love and care are given to ensuring our loved ones' stories of sacrifice are remembered.

A delicious catered box lunch was enjoyed before bussing on to lovely St. Andrews Church in Quidenham. Standing for over 1,000 years, it was emotional to be in the same church where the airmen worshipped before heading on their missions and going into harm's way. In November 1944 the Memorial Chapel within, and its beautiful stained glass window, were dedicated by their colleagues to the airmen who were stationed in Snetterton with the 96th and perished during WWII. How moving to witness.





We completed the day with a tour of the 100th BG's Museum and grounds. Their control tower still remains.

Saturday was our Free Day to tour Norwich and its environs. We visited the beautiful Norwich Cathedral followed by the museum located in the Norwich Castle while throughout the day tasting the culinary delights of downtown Norwich. Others on our tour made their way to the North Sea to take a brave plunge into its icy waters. Brrr! Wish I had done that!!



The week's highlight on Sunday was the chance to attend Open Day at the 96th BG Museum! Jill and her team have created a masterpiece of events for the community to enjoy. And did they ever participate! Guests were attired in 1940's period dress and blissfully danced the Lindy for hours. I was delighted to host the museum for a bit of time during the day and what a great opportunity to meet community members and feel their enthusiasm for stories my dad had shared with me about his WWII experiences over the years. After all these decades, the folks I spoke with are still so appreciative of how the Americans came and helped defeat the Third Reich during WWII.



On Monday morning, we visited the Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial. Upon arrival, Stan Hand was honored to lay our wreath on the Cemetery's Memorial remembering those from the 96th who are buried there. It was an emotional experience touring the grounds of the Cemetery, Chapel, and Walls of the Missing and viewing the grave sites of several airmen from the 96th—those who flew their final mission and never had the chance to return home.



We wrapped up the day and our tour by visiting the American Air Museum in Duxford and seeing the B-17 on display—commissioned to be painted by one of our own 96th BGA veterans—that proudly bears the square “C” of the 96th BG. At the end of the day, it was an emotional farewell to all of our newly made friends with whom we share so much history and commonality. On a personal level, it was particularly powerful to experience the Return to Snetterton tour with two of the sons and daughter-in-law of Jim Lenahan, the bombardier on my dad's crew. I am sure our dads would have been thrilled to know we shared this experience together.

Our sincere thanks go out to Jill, husband Alfie, Lewis, Louise and Mark Brawn, and Tim Harvey—and our coach driver Kevin as well as many others--for all their dedication to maintaining and growing the 96th BG Museum and for making our amazing tour a complete success far beyond our expectations. More importantly, we are grateful for the assurances that our loved ones' sacrifices will be remembered.

Now keep watching for information about a possible revisit to Snetterton in 2025 to celebrate V-E Day and the 96th BG's departure from Snetterton.

Diary of 2nd Lt William P Jones

By Bill Ford

In 2020, our group was contacted by a gentleman who wished to donate a diary that had come into his possession. It was the diary of 2nd Lt. William P Jones, who served as the bombardier on the Lt. Keith Berve crew, 338th Squadron, 96th Bomb Group.

The person wishing to donate the diary was himself an Air Force Veteran, Colonel David W. Buermeyer, USAF Retired. As I lived closest in proximity to Colonel Buermeyer, Sue Hinchman asked if I would be willing to connect with him. I agreed and made arrangements with Colonel Buermeyer to meet.

Colonel Buermeyer was a fascinating individual in his own right. He flew F-4 Phantoms on reconnaissance missions during the Vietnam War and was stationed around the globe after that conflict, including at least one stint on an air base in England. After introducing myself and spending time talking about his experiences as an F-4 pilot, which I enjoyed immensely, I asked how he had come into ownership of the diary. He said he had discovered it when going through some memorabilia that had belonged to his first cousin, Brigadier General James H. Howard. I guess being a high-ranking Air Force officer ran in the family. General Howard was a WWII Medal of Honor recipient as a P-51 pilot. After spending several hours enjoying his company, I thanked him for thinking of our group to be the guardians of this veteran's diary and headed home.

As soon as I arrived home, I opened the diary to see what we had and I could not believe my eyes. It was incredible. The detail this young Lieutenant had put into describing each mission their crew flew and the thoughts and feelings he experienced were stunning. I realized this was a unique piece of history we had obtained and immediately started thinking about how we should handle this artifact. My first step was to contact our group president, Mike McIlraith, to let him know what we had received and to discuss what the next steps would be. In the meantime, I read thru the diary in its entirety and then put it back in the envelope it came in and stored it in a safe place.

The next several years were consumed with COVID and lock downs and life went on. The diary was out of sight, out of mind until the announcement of our group reunion last year. I brought the diary to show our members who attended and to discuss what should be done with it. The consensus was that I would make a digital copy of the diary for our group to keep and to donate the original copy to the 96th Bomb Group Museum on the upcoming "Return to Snetterton" tour. I also decided that I would submit a couple of entries from the diary in every issue of the upcoming group newsletters until we reach the diary's conclusion.

This is the beginning of that commitment and the first entry in the diary. It will be transcribed directly from the diary without paraphrasing. The entirety of this diary was written in the year 1944. I hope you find it as fascinating as I did.

"Departed from Dyensburg by train May 13. Arrived at Kearney, Nebraska May 15. Left Kearney by plane the morning of the 24th. Arrived at Grenier Field, Manchester NH the afternoon of the same day. Left there the 26th for Gander, Newfoundland. Left Gander the 27th about 1AM and arrived at Nuts Corner Ireland shortly after noon the same day. Left Nuts Corner the 29th for Stove, England. Left Stove on the 4th of June for Bovington near Boxmoor, England. On June 5th we visited London for the first time.

On June 17 we were sent to the 338 Bomb Squadron of the 96 Bomb Gp. located at Snetterton Heath near Thetford. On the way we had a four-hour layover in historic old Cambridge.

On Friday June 23 we flew our first practice mission. We saw two B-17s in a formation near ours bang together. The tail was broken off one and the wing off the other. Both went down like rocks and exploded on impact. I saw two parachutes.

On the 24th we flew two practice missions. We are now operational and any day we'll be on our way to Germany. I heard today that Roy Dix has already made six trips. Lou Johnson, his bombardier, has already got a purple heart. Lovely war no? NO!"

This concludes his first full entry in the diary. Stay tuned for more entries in the next newsletter.

The outside cover and a page from the Dairy

A Chat From Your Chaplain

Bucket list #80...Norwich, England

My return to Snetterton with my three grown sons, and the 96th Bomb Group tour group, was the trip of a life time. It had been planned for months with much preparation, anticipation and many work schedule adjustments. The date had finally arrived. We four Hand men were on a nostalgic adventure to relive days of our father and grandfather, who was a 27 year old Pilot of the US Army Air Corps. It was the first time we men had traveled together without wives and children. That in itself was a different and unique experience.



The Hands Joshua, Jonathan, Stan and Matthew viewing the plaque of father and grandfather Lt. Col. Stanley Hand 413th Squadron.

We explored a nostalgic place where Lieutenant Colonel Stanley Hand, had served for 18 months, during World War II. Together we experienced first hand where his 27 missions in the B17 bomb raids were planned and executed. The sights, and tactical memorabilia of that strategic part of England and the part it played in the war, brought a sense of pause and reflection. Thankfully, we traveled with no fear of our lives and terror of war time, like so many endured in the time of war.

As we traveled the English countryside we saw with peaceful discovery, the rich heritage of England. Our minds were filled with many poignant moments of love of country and human sacrifice that took place there 80 years ago.

Joshua 1:9: *Be strong and courageous, not frightened, or dismayed for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.*

God has chosen a man, no matter how dark the hour. God has a method for us to not lean on our own understanding, but to put our faith and trust in Him.

God has a mission to deliver us out of bondage (sin) into the freedom of His kingdom to come. God wants to deploy us and send us out to the light and to be the light.

That's what our Veteran fathers, brothers, uncles, cousins, and loved ones did, so that we might live and experience freedom. True freedom comes by knowing Jesus.

The reason for the trip for the 96th was to experience the place of Snetterton Field, to see the left-behind treasures in the museum at Snetterton, and the 100th Bomb Group museums.

Those World War II veterans did not consider the ominous task that they were asked to do as duty, but rather as a privilege to serve.

These were the men and women of the 96th Bomb Group who embraced the mission, and they did their utmost to fulfill it. As your Chaplain, I want to challenge us all to face the future and be willing to do the same as our forefathers did for us. May we follow in their footsteps in the love of God and country

Stan Hand, Jr., M. D.



Stan with his sons at Cambridge American Cemetery where Stan laid a memorial wreath from the 96th Bomb Group Association.

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

Address your correspondence for our Chaplain to:

Dr. Stanley I. Hand, Jr. MD
1016 Ridgecrest Road
Orlando, FL 32806

Mobile: (321)-662-3305

E-mail: stanhand306@gmail.com



96th Bombardment Group Unit Colors Return to Snetterton

In early August of this year, Jill Tebble our Museum Curator in England learned of an item for sale that might be of interest to the 96th BG Museum - a flag of the 96th Bombardment Group colors. This flag was for sale on consignment by a militaria collector's website.

The flag is in very good condition and has a tag from the Philadelphia Quartermaster. This tag is one of the ways collectors can verify the era/authenticity of an item. The Philadelphia Quartermaster created flags and other items for units of the military. The Quartermaster only created items for units while they were active - for the 96th BG, this would mean this flag was created sometime between July 1942 and December 1945.

After several discussions between 96th BGA Board members and the Museum, it was decided to pursue the purchase of this flag. While the museum has acquired its current collection through donations over the years, we felt that this purchase was warranted as this was such a unique piece that would make a great addition to our museum. The purchase has been made, and as of this writing, the flag is in safekeeping with our Secretary Treasurer until such time as it can be delivered to the Museum in England.

The cost of the flag was \$2,995.00. This is a significant expense. The museum has already received a commitment for a donation of \$600 towards this purchase. We had hoped to be able to have a fund-raising campaign prior to making this purchase but due to the consignment nature of this item, we had to make a decision on whether to purchase the flag before there was time to raise funds ahead of the purchase.



"It's a Treasure!" Reports. Sue on receiving it.

We would like to ask for your help with a donation to support this purchase - any amount would be most welcome. If you are able to help, you can make checks payable to the 96th Bomb Group Association. Please make sure to note in the memo line this donation is for the 96th BG Flag. All donations should be sent to:

Mrs. Susan Hinchman
96th BGA Treasurer
706 Miami View Court
Loveland, OH 45140

Thank You very much in advance for your consideration of a donation.

Mike McIlraith

96th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION - SILVER DREAM NOTE CARDS ORDER FORM AND 2023 DUES PAYMENT

The 96th Bomb Group Association is excited to announce the opportunity to purchase Note Cards displaying an image of the Silver Dream, the iconic memorial erected at Snetterton Heath to honor those who served so courageously with the 96th during WWII. These Note Cards are 5"x7" in size and will be sold in packs of 10 cards and 10 envelopes at a price of \$15, postage included. Net proceeds (after printing and postage charges) will be used to support the Snetterton Heath 96th Bomb Group Museum at New Eccles Hall School and the St. Andrews Church, in Quidenham, England, where the Memorial Window is located. To order these Note Cards, please complete the form below and mail with your check or money order payment. **Please make checks payable to 96th Bomb Group Association.**

Please mail form and payment to:

Susan Hinchman, Sec'y/Treas.
96th Bomb Group Association
706 Miami View Court
Loveland, OH 45140

Indicate number of packs of note Cards requested to purchase (\$15/pack)
For annual members, indicate whether you would like to pay your 2023 96th BGA dues at this time (\$25/year)
(Note: Dues may also be paid in advance for future years.)

Please print clearly and legibly

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____

State & Zip Code: _____

Email: _____ Phone: _____

NOTE: Please be sure to include your email address as this is the most effective way to reach you if there is a question on your order. The 96th BGA does not sell or share email addresses beyond our membership.

Quantity	Per Unit Cost	Total
	\$15.00	
	\$25.00	
Grand Total		





The Silver Dream

Our Fortress flies again at Snetterton Heath, Station 138,
The Falcons' Nest.


At the very top is a B-17 climbing away on a mission. Supporting the B-17 are four columns, representing contrails coming back from the engines. These four columns increase in size as they reach the ground and are representative of the support needed to put the B-17 up there. Each column represents one of the four squadrons comprising the 96th Bomb Group.

The Memorial at Snetterton Heath as designed by Martin Rance is constructed of stainless steel by Sinclair Steel Fabrications and is located along the old North South runway serving as the entrance road to the Octagon Motorsports racing circuit track.

The plinth is inscribed with these words:

DEDICATED TO ALL PERSONNEL
OF THE
96TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)
8TH U.S.A.F.
WHO SERVED ON
THIS AIRFIELD



Memorial Plaques at the Silver Dream



We have been delighted with the response regarding the plaques and are very pleased that the plaques included several Ground Crew and Support Staff. The plaques are 4 x 6 inches and engraved with name, position, squadron, and if the Veteran was a Prisoner of War or Killed in Action. Over 200 plaques have been installed on the fence surrounding the Silver Dream Memorial, which is a very impressive sight. Our Treasurer, Sue Hinchmen, has emailed the 38 96th Bomb Group member Veterans who do not have plaques, It would be great to have a plaque for each of our Veterans.

Please complete one order form below for each plaque which will cost \$25.00 including shipping cost and include your personal information so you may be contacted with any questions about your order.

If you have any questions, please contact Rebecca Lutz at rlutz4000@gmail.com or call 512-238-858

CPT. THOMAS H. BARTON
PILOT
339TH SQUADRON

2ND LT. GLENN A HARRISON
CO-PILOT
339TH SQUADRON
POW - JUNE 20, 1944

S/SGT. CHARLES P. WILDER
WAIST GUNNER
337TH SQUADRON
KIA - DECEMBER 16, 1943

Veteran's Information for the Silver Dream Plaques

Please print clearly and legibly

Rank and Name of Veteran: _____

(Rank while at Snetterton)

Position: _____

Squadron: _____

POW----Date: _____

or

KIA ----Date: _____

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Relationship to Veteran: _____

Mail this form with a check for \$25.00 payable to the **96th Bomb Group Association** at the address below:
Rebecca Lutz, 2104 Saint Andrews Drive, Round Rock, Texas 78664

BULLETIN BOARD



Snetterton Falcons and *Snetterton Falcons II – In the Nest And On The Wing*

It gives us great pleasure to make both of these out of print books available to our members, family and friends who are interested in the lives of our veterans and the history of the 96th Bomb Group at a reasonable price. This was not done to be a fund raiser but to make the books that many wanted available to all without hardship.

(This order form and the one for European orders as well is available for download on our web site at: <https://www.96bg.org/>)

2023 ORDER FORM SNETTERTON FALCONS CD/FLASH DRIVE

The 96th Bomb Group is very excited to announce the "long-awaited" digital version of the Snetterton Falcons book, as well as Snetterton Falcons II – In the Nest And On The Wing, in either CD or flash drive format. Upon receipt of this form and payment, we will send your choice of either the CD or flash drive. Reproduction of this prized book collection has been with the permissions of the authors and the publisher. Net proceeds (after reproduction and postage costs) will be used to support the Snetterton Heath 96th Bomb Group Museum at New Eccles Hall School and the St. Andrews Church, located in Quidenham, England, where the Memorial Window is located.

To order this two-book digitized collection, please complete the form below and mail with your check payment.

Please make checks payable to 96th Bomb Group Association.

Please mail form and payment to:

Susan Hinchman, Sec'y/Treas.
96th Bomb Group Association
706 Miami View Court
Loveland, OH 45140

Snetterton Falcons – Digital*

Please print clearly and legibly

- \$25.00 CD for current paid 2022 members
- \$25.00 Flash Drive for current paid 2022 members
- \$50.00 2023 Membership Renewal & CD *
- \$50.00 2023 Membership Renewal & Flash Drive *
- \$50.00 CD (non-member)
- \$50.00 Flash Drive (non-member)
- \$25.00 (2023 dues)

Total: \$ _____

Your Name: _____

Address: _____

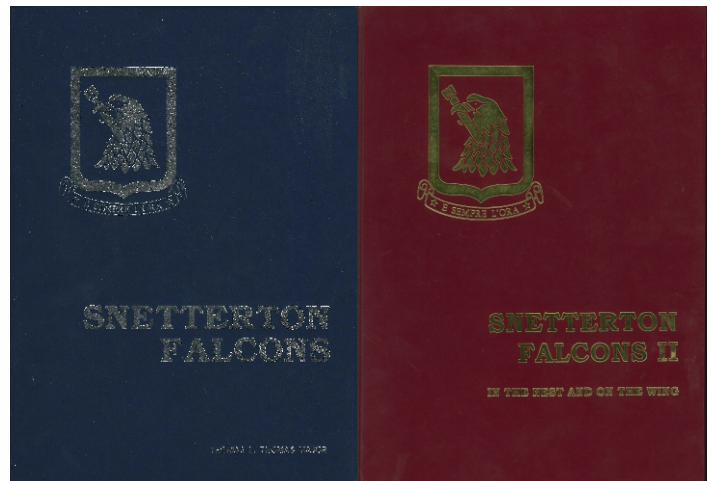
City: _____

State & Zip Code: _____

Phone: _____

E-mail: _____

*We realize there are those who would like to make a copy for a family member; however, we would ask that you be respectful of the 96th Bomb Group, and other purchasers, by only making one additional copy from each purchase. If you wish to make more than one additional copy, please purchase an additional CD or flash drive for each additional copy.



I would like to become a member of the 96th Bomb Group Association (dues are \$25 per year). I have included below information regarding my connection to the 96th Bomb Group:

Service Member's Name _____
Squadron _____ Number of Missions _____ Position _____ Ground Crew _____
Other crew members or information you feel might be useful to the 96th: _____

* For new members, first year's dues are included in the price of the CD or Flash Drive.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Since February, 2023



James A. Lenahan 1344 Windtree Court, New Albany, OH 43054
Patrick M. Lenahan 1120 Kay Street, Boalsburg, PA 16827-1630
Nathan Strickler 4577 Lindenwood Drive, Frisco, TX 75034

Sons of James H. Lenahan 338th B

Related James E. Graham 413th/339th CP

All of our members are encouraged to invite their family members, relatives and friends to join us. They will receive two issues of our Newsletter each year. We hope they will find them informative as well as give them an understanding of what the 96th Bomb Group and its members contributed to World War II.

96th Bomb Group Association Membership Application / Dues Remittance

Dues are \$25.00 per year payable to: 96th Bomb Group Association, 706 Miami View Court, Loveland, Ohio 45140

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: _____

Check here if you would like to receive the 96th BGA Newsletter via email rather than hard copy via US Postal Service.

*- Please provide your email address so that you can receive important updates about the 96th BG Association during the year. Email addresses are private information and the 96th BGA does not share them with any non-members.

MUSEUM OPEN DAYS CONFIRMED FOR 2024

Sunday April 21st, Sunday May 19th, Sunday June 16th, Sunday July 21st,
Sunday August 18th - (which will be our main open day,)

Sunday September 15th

We will be open 10 am until 4pm.

The museum can be opened other weekends for private visits if a veteran's family member is over in the UK.

Contact - Jill Tabble, 96th Bomb Group Museum Curator for reservations at jill.1967@btinternet.com



YOUR 2023 DUES SHOULD BE PAID NOW

This may be your last *Newsletter!* unless you are a Life Member
Send your **\$25 annual dues**

To: Susan Hinchman
96th Bomb Group Association
706 Miami View Court
Loveland, Ohio 45140

(Make checks payable to 96th BGA)

(Annual Dues were raised to \$25 at General Meeting October 18, 2019)
Due January 1st each year.



UPCOMING MEETINGS



8th Air Force Historical Society 49th Annual Reunion

Ontario, California - October 18-22, 2023

Double Tree by Hilton Ontario Airport

Planned Tour are

Palm Springs Air Museum, Planes of Fame Air Museum, Yanks Air Museum and Beverly Hills

Complete Reunion information, available on line at:

www.8thafhs.org

96th Bomb Group Annual Meeting 2023

To be Virtual again this year

More specific plans for the 96th to be posted on our Web site
96thbg.org and Facebook and watch for e-mail notices.

SNOWBIRDS, VACATIONERS BEWARE
BE SURE TO LET Susan Hinchman KNOW
YOUR WHEREABOUTS
To Insure YOU RECEIVE YOUR NEWSLETTER.



WHERE TO CALL OR WRITE



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<https://www.96bg.org/>

* Denotes Deceased Past Presidents

Texts and/or photos are sincerely solicited. If requested, photos will be returned. The Editor reserves the right to edit text. December 31, 2023 is the deadline for the February 2024 issue.

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Final Mission

*Those Who Served Their Country
With Honor and Distinction*

Cherry, Edna *Spouse of Mel D. Cherry 337th*
Doherty, Dr. Mark J. *Son of Robert E. Doherty 339th Radio*
Hoidra, George R. *Former Director 8th AFHS
Son of George Hoidra 447th BG Navigator*
Jerger, Evelyn *Spouse of Richard M. Jerger 413th Pilot*
Kelley, JoAnne R. *Daughter of William D. "Bill" Ready Group Air Executive Officer*
Martin, Patricia J. *Spouse of Reese S. Martin 338th Pilot*
Price, Charles A. Jr. *Brother of William M. Price 337th Pilot*
Wolfe, Dorothy M. *Spouse of Retired Major George W. Wolfe*
Scarborough, Regina B. *Spouse of John J. Scarborough 339th Pilot*

*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: Susan Hinchman Secretary/Treasurer, address on this page.*

96th BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION
706 Miami View Court • Loveland, OH 45140



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"It is Always the Hour"