



NEWS LETTER

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SECOND AIR DIVISION ASSOCIATION

March 1975

AMERICAN TIES WITH EAST ANGLIA

by Christopher R. Elliott

An East Anglian who has links with the New World recalls some milestones in the American Air Forces association with East Anglia which will soon have extended over a period of nearly 35 years.



In January, 1942 the first American Service men landed in this country. Their coming — two million were to follow between 1942 and 1945 — had a profound effect on East Anglian village and town life. In February, 1946, at Honington, near Bury St. Edmunds, the 8th U.S.A.A.F. officially departed, but later that year at Marham, in conjunction with R.A.F. Bomber Command, the U.S.A.A.F. carried out rocket bomb experiments, and, finally in 1948, when the Berlin blockade started, returned to England where they have been stationed ever since.

When the first American Service men since World War I arrived in England in 1942, many East Anglians found, to their surprise, that a good many of these Americans had our names and that some had better connections with the Puritan "family" of John Winthrop, of Groton, Suffolk, who voyaged with other local men and women to the New World in 1629, than many native claimants.

For my part I had an American cousin on my father's side in the 8th Air Force,

a native of Ohio and, later in the war, a cousin on my mother's side, a native of Ipswich, married a Wattisham-based American from Pennsylvania. By now, with the 35-year link coming up, thousands of other East Anglian families can make similar claims.

Allan A. Michie, the well-known American journalist and commentator of the war years, who had friends in West Suffolk, told me after the war that some 50,000 Americans, mostly 8th and 9th Air Force men, married local girls. Indeed, the marriage rate in some areas was extremely high.

Are the Americans of today very different from those we first got to know 35 years ago? The best spontaneous judgment I heard passed on this point was as a guest of my American cousin in the famous American Red Cross Rainbow Corner, now demolished, at the corner of Shaftesbury Avenue and Windmill Street, Piccadilly, where there was a notice over the main entrance which said *Through These Portals Pass America's Finest.*



An American, seeing me reading this, said: "Son, that may be true. It all depends on who's the judge, but I reckon that it would be true to say that we are no better and no worse than our fathers and your fathers who served in World War I. We certainly ain't angels."

The East Anglian community through the years has honored the American Air Force. Major General William E. Kepner, one of the Eighth's commanding generals, was given the first non-British honorary freedom of Norwich, and from the Mayor of Cambridge he received a casket containing the scroll of freedom for his entire force — some 300,000 men and women.

Elsewhere there are several tangible monuments to their three war years in the Eastern Counties. In Norwich, for example, where on market days the Americans used to ride cattle Wild West-style, the city is proud of the American Room at the Central Library — a memorial to the 2nd Air Division which flew Liberators in Norfolk.

At least two good books by East Anglian-based American authors emerged from the war-time occupation: *Suffolk Summer*, by John T. Appleby, in 1948, the proceeds of which were given towards the upkeep of a memorial garden in the Abbey grounds at Bury St. Edmunds; and *Here we are Together*, by Robert S. Arbib, junior, a little earlier — in 1946. What, I wonder, is the present generation of Americans writing about East Anglia?

(ed. note: The above article appeared in the Eastern Counties Newspaper, Norwich, England. It pretty much says it all.)

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448th RAMBLINGS



by
Joseph T.
Michalczyk
(448th BG)

Less than two years ago membership of the 448th in the 2nd Air Division Association was very close to not even existing. I was also one of those among the absent.

Upon being awakened from my sound sleep I attended my first reunion held at Colorado Springs in July of 1973. A turnout of 624 members from assorted Groups impressed me.

After returning from the reunion I spent the remainder of the year, along with our Vice President Ken Englebrecht, searching for 448th people who had become lost. Our search bore fruit and our membership is now climbing.

At the reunion this past year I was appointed historian of the 448th and I hope to do a good job in this capacity. Our number one concern has been, and will continue to be, growth of our Group in the Association.

We are interested in obtaining as many personal stories, photos and records as we can. If any of you can help we will appreciate it. All material will be copied and returned immediately. Let us all get to work.

PLANNING A TRIP TO ENGLAND?



By Tom Swint
(467th BG)

It has been 30 years since we used to shiver around the potbelly stove in Sack Hall, Rackheath. I still have some fond memories of riding a bicycle around the English countryside with the former Monica Jean Atkins, then a WAAF stationed at nearby Horning Ferry.

I talked about this with a friend of mine who was planning a trip to England last summer. He agreed to budget one day for me and go back to my old base and see what the hell had happened. I was a bit apprehensive because Dick Moody had been a Navy officer in The Big War and he might not appreciate the sentiments that an old flyboy would have for concrete aprons, hardstands and English pubs.

Dick followed my directions explicitly: First find the Blue Boar Pub in Norwich. Order two black-and-tans. This will arouse the curiosity and/or suspicion of the barkeep. Ask him how to find the Golden Gate to Lord Stracey's estate and the village of Rackheath. If he gives you any lip, depart in a huff and seek out the Green Man Pub.

Dick is an excellent reporter. He found the Blue Boar got directions and soon was driving around the old site of the 467th Bombardment Group. The Flying Control Tower was part of an auto-parts junkyard with a mean watchdog. The old subdepot area is now light industrial and there are several rows of tract homes.

He ran across the old chap who used to be the King's Clark (clerk, I suppose) and this old fellow remembered the Americans well. Many old timers at Rackheath remembered the Americans with the same gusto as they recalled the V-1 buzzbomb and the V-2 rocket. Some gave us top billing.

Some of the old buildings were standing, like the concrete Ops Block and a few scattered Nissen huts were seen about. Dick took color slides and they made my heart go flippedy-flop when I remembered bicycling down those narrow roads, always chilly, to eat powdered eggs, bully beef and orange marmelade.

At least there was one consolation. They ain't raising pigs on OUR base yet. A little wheat and maybe a stray calf or two. Lots of the concrete apron has crumbled but some light planes still use the runways.

If you're planning a trip to England, Dick had a good idea. He set aside so much to spend each day. When his plane landed at London, he went to a Dunn & Co. store and bought a good warm British sports jacket to keep warm. Then he sought out a Budget-Rent-a-Car outlet (one in Winbledon) and rented a car for four weeks.

Staying off the well-traveled tourist traps, he wound his way up one side of the island and down the other. Each afternoon about 3 p.m. he would tie down for the night in a "tourist home" in some village that offered bed and breakfast super cheap. After his afternoon "tay" he would explore afoot and gravitate to the local pub.

I forgot to ask him to check on the Abulutions Building at our old site. I'm sure the coating of ice hasn't thawed in 30 years. It should be intact.

Dick did say that the "clark fellow", Jack E. Bunkell, Rackheath Parish Council Clerk, said that Lord Edward Stracey had gone to his reward. Lord Edward never forgave me for feeding his horse some extra sugar from our K rations.

TRY THIS IN YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

"The Second Air Division Association is making every effort to locate anyone, and everyone, who served with the 2nd Air Division of the United States Air Force in England.

All personnel ever identified with the following Bomb Groups and Fighter Groups are eligible to join the Association. Bomb Groups: 44, 93, 389, 392, 445, 446, 448, 453, 458, 466, 467, 489, 491 and 492. Fighter Groups: 4th, 56th, 355th. Scouting Force: 361st and 479th. Also all attached units.

Anyone who served, at any time, with one of the above listed units please contact Ms. Evelyn Cohen, 404 Atrium Apts., 2555 Welsh Road, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19114. Each member receives the Association Newsletter, published quarterly, and a copy of the latest Roster of Members which now numbers over 2000 names and current addresses."

(ed. note: The letter appearing above was sent to over 80 Newspapers this past year by Roy Jonasson (389th BG) and the results were amazing. We urge everyone to make a copy of this and send it to your local paper or papers.)

NOTICE

Just a reminder to all of you going to England with us this coming May. Please bring one book along with you pertaining to your locality so we can present these to the Library. A bookplate will be inserted in each one designating the giver. Many, many thanks.

SWEDEN WAS NOT A TARGET—BUT IT CERTAINLY WAS A HAVEN

The Newsletter has been very fortunate in making contact with Torbjorn Olausson of Sweden who, with this issue, will begin a series covering all 2nd Air Division aircraft that landed in Sweden during the war years.

The articles will include photos of each and every plane taken immediately after landing. Some were wrecked beyond recognition but all are identified by their serial number. In addition, where possible, he will detail the final disposition of these planes.

Torbjorn is a Swedish Television Producer and recently completed a Documentary covering this period and the events that took place while the various crew members were interned.

We are commencing this series with a listing of all the aircraft from all the 2nd Air Division Groups which landed in Sweden. If any of our members were on the crew of any of these planes Torbjorn will appreciate your getting in touch with him. While he has most of the facts he still has a few gaps to fill. Write Torbjorn Olausson, Swedish Broadcasting Corp., 105 10 Stockholm, Sweden.

The next issue will contain photos and stories on all the 44th BG aircraft.

Serial No.	Type	Nickname	Down	Unit	Photo
42-63962	B-24D-15-CF	Princess	Bulltofta 29/5-44	44 BG	5
42-63971	B-24D-15-CF		Trollhättan 18/11-43	44 BG	2
42-72858	B-24D-160-CO	Pistol Packin Mama	Bulltofta 9/4-44	44 BG	2
42-94892	B-24H-20-DT		Bulltofta 20/6-44	44 BG	
42-73500	B-24J-50-CO		Säve 29/5-44	44 BG	1
41-24111	B-24D-20-CO	Piccadilly Filley	Högsby 9/10-43	93BG	4
42-40128	B-24D-30-CO	War Baby	Örebro 18/11-43	93 BG	1
42-40610	B-24D-75-CO	Death Dealer	Rinkaby 9/10-43	93 BG	1
42-95030	B-24H-25-FO		Bulltofta 20/6-44	93 BG	5
42-51523	B-24J-5-FO		Bulltofta 17/1-45	93 BG	3
42-109816	B-24J-105-CO		Bulltofta 21/6-44	93 BG	
41-28787	B-24H-15-DT		Bulltofta 20/6-44	389 BG	
42-94973	B-24H-20-FO		Bulltofta 29/5-44	389 BG	4
42-50649	B-24J-1-FO		Sövde 24/8-44	389 BG	1
42-100146	B-24J-75-CO	Mistah Chick	Halmstad 21/6-44	389 BG	5
42-100190	B-24J-80-CO	Princess Konocti	Halmstad 24/6-44	389 BG	3
42-7502	B-24H-1-FO		Örebro 18/11-43	392 BG	2
42-7637	B-24H-1-FO	The Queen of Peece	Smedstorp 3/1-44	392 BG	3
42-51125	B-24H-25-DT		Röstänga 20/6-44	392 BG	1
42-95135	B-24H-25-FO		Bulltofta 20/6-44	392 BG	2
42-7627	B-24H-1-FO	DTO	Rinkaby 9/4-44	445 BG	1
42-110065	B-24J-130-CO		Rinkaby 29/5-44	445 BG	
42-51213	B-24H-30-DT		Bulltofta 20/6-44	446 BG	1
42-52733	B-24H-15-FO	Jiggs	Bulltofta 20/6-44	446 BG	1
42-94765	B-24H-15-FO		Bulltofta 20/6-44	446 BG	
42-100306	B-24J-90-CO	War Goddess	Visby 22/3-44	446 BG	2
41-29191	B-24H-5-CF	Hello Natural	Bulltofta 6/3-44	448 BG	4
42-51079	B-24H-20-DT		Bulltofta 20/6-44	448 BG	
42-52118	B-24H-10-FO		Bulltofta 9/4-44	448 BG	1
42-95013	B-24H-20-FO		Bulltofta 20/6-44	448 BG	
42-95089	B-24H-25-FO	Dual Sa?	Bulltofta 21/6-44	448 BG	2
42-95200	B-24H-25-FO		Bulltofta 20/6-44	448 BG	
42-50648	B-24J-1-FO		Sövde 4/8-44	448 BG	1
42-110040	B-24J-130-CO		Bulltofta 9/4-44	448 BG	1
44-10517	B-24J-		SW Falsterbo 25/3-45	448 BG	
42-52174	B-24H-10-FO		Bulltofta 25/8-44	453 BG	
42-52240	B-24H-10-FO		Rinkaby 9/4-44	453 BG	
42-52244	B-24H-10-FO		Rinkaby 9/4-44	453 BG	
42-94850	B-24H-20-FO		Bulltofta 20/6-44	453 BG	
41-28667	B-24H-5-DT		Bulltofta 9/4-44	458 BG	1
41-28718	B-24H-10-DT		Rinkaby 30/4-44	458 BG	
41-28963	B-24H-20-DT		Hellerup 17/1-45	458 BG	
44-10521	B-24J-60-CF	Laden Maid(en)	Säve 2/4-45	466 BG	4
44-40093	B-24J-145-CO	Lovely Lady's Avenger	Bulltofta 21/6-44	466 BG	3
42-94948	B-24H-20-FO		Sövde 25/8-44	489 BG	
42-95011	B-24H-20-FO		Rinkaby 29/5-44	492 BG	
44-40103	B-24J-145-CO	Say When	Bulltofta 20/6-44	492 BG	3
44-40106	B-24J-145-CO		Bulltofta 20/6-44	492 BG	
44-40112	B-24J-145-CO		Klagstorp 20/6-44	492 BG	
44-40136	B-24J-145-CO	Silver Witch	Bulltofta 20/6-44	492 BG	1
44-40142	B-24J-145-CO	Sknappy	Bulltofta 20/6-44	492 BG	3
44-40159	B-24J-150-CO	Bootling Boop	Säve 18/6-44	492 BG	3
44-40195	B-24J-150-CO	Boulder Buff	Bulltofta 6/7-44	492 BG	8
Unidentified					
41-28945	B-24H-20-DT	No Nothing	Sövde 6/8-44		1
41-29005	B-24H-20-DT		Bulltofta 21/11-44		
42-50343	B-24H-20-CF		Bulltofta 20/6-44		
42-50586	B-24J-1-FO		Hjortshög 21/6-44		
42-50770	B-24J-5-FO		Sövde 4/8-44		
Fighters					
43-28616	P-38J-15-LO P-51		Barkaby 27/11-44		
43-6365	P-51B-5-NA	Z Hub	Skummeslöv 15/4-44		
43-6461	P-51B-5-NA	Hot Pants	Rinkaby 13/5-44	4 FG	4
43-7158	P-51B-		Ljungbyhed 4/8-44		
42-106854	P-51B-15-NA		Kalmar 22/5-44		
43-12463	P-51B-1-NA		Lomma 25/8-88	357 FG	1
44-13345	P-51B-		Ljungbyhed 4/8-44		
44-13917	P-51D-5-NA		Lomma 25/8-44	357 FG	1
44-13939	P-51D-5-NA		Bulltofta 6/8-44	339 FG	1
			Kungstorp 4/8-44		

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Alfred Jenner



Alfred Jenner, aged 57, is Group Editor-in-Chief, and Deputy Group General Manager of Eastern Counties Newspapers Limited, publishers of four daily newspapers, including the "Eastern Daily Press", and 19 weekly newspapers. Born at Lowestoft, he has lived most of his life in Norwich and has worked for his company for 40 years.

His interest in the American Memorial Trust stems from several sources, but in the main it comes from his experiences as a prisoner of war in Germany after being shot down over Berlin in April, 1941. After America came into the war what had been exclusively RAF POW camps began to receive American air crew prisoners and for the next two years Mr. Jenner had ample opportunity to watch his transatlantic allies in adversity.

"Quite frankly, they behaved better than most of our other allies in the camps," Mr. Jenner says. "They were generous and, to men who had been behind barbed wire for two or three years before they arrived, refreshingly arrogant in their attitude towards the German guards. Unlike the British they had never suffered the anxieties of being alone in Europe and, therefore, had an unshakable confidence in the idea of victory. This was a great help to our morale."

Mr. Jenner also saw the US 2nd Air Division in action from close quarters because his camp during the last year of the war was in the direct run up to Berlin for the Flying Fortresses and Liberators. Day after day he watched these formations flying through heavy anti-aircraft barrages without ever breaking formation. Every so often a stricken bomber would pull out, smoking or in flames, but the formation would just tighten up and go on without hesitation.

There are two other links between Mr. Jenner and the Americans. First, his sister is married to an American colonel, now retired and living in California. Secondly, he was official press officer when the American Memorial Trust library was opened in Norwich in 1963. "I think the authorities were looking for an Aunt Sally," he says, "Because it was thought that the late President John Kennedy might attend the opening of the library. Had he been able to do so the city would have been invaded by press men from all over the world and something would have had to go wrong. As it was, I had a most enjoyable time with the American press corps and was given a free hand in the City Hall by the Town Clerk to make quite certain that they had everything they wanted."

Mr. Jenner, who has visited east, middle and west America twice in recent years is married with a grown-up son and daughter.

THE LIBERTY RUN



by John W. Archer
(Associate)

The Air Force called it the Liberty Run. Airmen had another name for it — run like hell for liberty!

The liberty run was actually a convoy of 15 or so trucks carrying 360 airmen and one disgruntled officer to the nearest town. Norwich was a favorite rendezvous being within easy reach of all the 2nd Air Division Groups.

Liberty runs were always rush and hurry propositions. After the days work was over fatigues were cast aside, a fast shower taken (often cold water), a faster shave and a snitch of that good smelling stuff which couldn't be had on the civilian market. This was the last chance to quit the Air Force, partially at least, and get four hours of freedom.

There was always a rush for seats and many were still grabbing at the tailgate while the trucks were moving off. Of course, if you were lucky enough to be on station No. 104 (Hardwick) a more comfortable ride could be had by riding an old, beat-up, British bus. In either case the first 12 miles were the toughest. After that you became insensible to the pain and discomfort.

Everyone was all shined up. The guy next to you was probably the mechanic who was so damned crummy looking on the flight line earlier in the day, but right then he was the epitome in sartorial splendor.



TIMBERRRR!

The trucks disgorged their load under the shadows of the stately Norwich Castle. There were the Liberty Run's usual greeters. Children from six to twelve who liked gum and candy and even knew what day the rations were issued! The girls were there also, the steadies, waiting for their particular date. Those airmen who were not meeting anybody disappeared into the blackout.

Some headed for the Bell Hotel or the Maids Head for a quiet meal in a relaxing atmosphere. Others headed for private homes with rations they had begged, borrowed or obtained by bribery, stealth or other means for a dinner and evening in a warm family gathering.

The bookworm made for his favorite bookstore where he read, discussed and haggled over books with the owner. The Samson and Hercules ballroom was preferred by many. Here was the place where the action was really lively. "The next dance will be a quick step!" When they said 'quick' the Tiger Rag was a waltz compared to some you got under that general title. Then there would be the 'excuse me' jobs. The girls did the cutting.

The Pubs were another favorite watering stop. Although they received only limited supplies of beer and very little of the 'good' stuff there always seemed to be enough to go around. Near the exit two MP's on their rounds checked that everything was under control. On occasion their presence brought relief to the anxious landlord.



Now where is that damn truck?

At 11 pm the trek started back to the Cattle Market where the trucks were warming up and ready to go. One had to make it fast if a seat was expected. Standing after having a few dozen beers and a supper of fish and chips could well cause the stomach a few problems.

The ride back to the base was always something to remember. The driver, in most cases, was usually as merry as some of his passengers. The pin-point blackout headlights searched the dark winding lanes toward the base. Considering the darkness of the night and the strangeness of the roads it was a wonder that the Liberty Runs ever made it back to the base. But after a thirty minute or so journey the friendly looking nissen huts hove into view.



Hic! Burp! Belch! — Take your choice!

If you were unfortunate enough to miss the ride home, and let us face it the base was 'home', the long hike was hardly good for the soul. Arriving in time for a late breakfast you could at least be thankful for a cold, foggy dawn which meant — 'no mission scheduled due to unfavorable weather conditions'. Of course if you had to fly there was always the oxygen mask at zero altitude!

WINGS GOD GAVE MY SOUL

by Joseph W. Noah



This is the story of one of America's greatest fighter pilots — George E. Preddy, Jr. This book can best be described by taking from the introduction as

written by General John C. Meyer who had the privilege of flying with George Preddy.

"I have yet to meet a man of such single-minded and dedicated purpose, of such intense desire to excel, not for himself but for his squadron, for his country. Above all, always, for his country. His appearance and conduct on the ground belied his skill, tenacity, and fighting heart in the air. But his achievements confirmed them. George Preddy was the complete fighter pilot.

The author writes of Preddy's exploits with accuracy and flair. But especially, he captures the total flavor of the man — the core of steel in a largely sentimental soul, the coolness under fire, the professional with his passion for essential details."

I've read the book but I couldn't say it better than General Meyer. It is a revealing history of a dedicated man taken, for the most part, from his own diary.

Copies can be purchased from the author Joseph W. Noah, 4660 Kenmore Ave., Suite 1106, Alexandria, Virginia 22304. Price is \$4.00 per copy plus postage. Buy it. You'll love it.

Attlebridge Notes

10

(466th BOMB GROUP)

Editor:

Lt. Col. John H. Woolnough

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REGIONAL RALLIES SCHEDULED

40% of the known 466ers live within 500 miles of Orlando, Dallas, or Los Angeles yet have not had a reunion in their area. With this in mind and in view of the relatively small number going to Norwich, we are trying a low-key Regional Rally concept. The program will simply include a meal, a time for talk, and a tour opportunity.

To keep the paperwork down, make reservations with the motel and identify yourself as a 466er. If you do not stay at the motel, advise the coordinator a week in advance. If you need a question answered, supply the coordinator with a stamped, self-addressed envelope - keep it simple and easy for the coordinator and he or she might want to do it again.

The meeting place and coordinator are listed below:

SE 15-16 Aug, Cocoa Beach, FL, Mary Leeds, (305) 784-0253

SC 1-2 Aug., Six Flags Inn, (817) 261-4211 Arlington, TX - J. M. Daniels.

SW 1-2 Aug., Newporter Inn, (714) 644-1700, Newport Beach, CA - C. V. Meconis.

Of course, all 2nd AD people are welcome.

CHARMED LIVES

A 12 Aug 44 PR report reads as follows: "A B-24 Liberator Pilot, 2nd Lt. Paul S. Evans... recently brought his plane with all four motors inoperative to what is believed to be the first instrument crash landing on record in the ETO."

"Coming back from an attack on Strassbourg, the B-24, named "Reliable Babe", came down on a strange field without injury to any crew member despite crashing through the control tower, a truck, an automobile, and approximately 32 trees."

"Two motors... were knocked out by flak over the target and the terrific strain was too much for the remaining two as they circled the nearest English field for a landing. The sudden descent caused frosted windows and the pilot, unable to see, landed on instruments, but the loss of all the motors was the really great problem. Evans and his co-pilot, 2nd Lt. David E. Cahill... were pleased and astonished to find that no one was hurt after shuddering to a stop..."

The Evans crew were on their first mission in 527-R on the 12th of August. They returned to combat on 15 August, the a/c was back in harness on 8 Sep 44. With 094-B they had a forced landing in Belgium, 18 Oct. The a/c and men returned to combat in short order. On their 33rd mission they suffered a mid-air over Belgium, 16 Apr 45. 585-H was demolished and they parachuted (all OK). This was the end of combat operations for them and the a/c (see Jun 73 News Letter). Though charmed, they resist location efforts.

HISTORY PROJECT

The writing of the history goes well. By the end of 1974 the first draft of the chronology, thru Aug 44 was complete. There are still a few troublesome gaps. We are looking for details on the following: ARC facilities in Norwich. The fate of Hammond, Allen, & Lanham crews (missing 12 Aug 44, 5 Sept 44, and 2 Apr 45). Pinpoint location of the water tower in 1944/45 (it has been moved). Gas Hauling missions.

MAPS FOR NORWICH REUNION

Those of you going to the Norwich reunion will be looking for a good map to help in orientation. In 1971, after I had bought every map I could find and after having found the base the hard way, I stumbled on to the map I should have bought in the first place. It is the one inch series (one inch equals one mile) published by the Ordnance Survey. The details are complete, including dotted lines for runways. These can be found at book shops and in Railway stations. Sheet 125 covers Attlebridge as well as Wendling, Shipdam, and North Pickenham (392nd, 44th, and 491st/492nd Bomb Groups). Sheet 126 covers Horsham St. Faith and Rackheath (458th & 467th BG - as well as the City of Norwich.

Ed Note: We would appreciate the donation of sheets 136 and 137 to complete our coverage of the area. JHW



This engaging shot of these young ladies and this PFF a/c was taken to commemorate our 100th mission. Russ Clements, Photo NCOIC, supplied the photo. Anyone know the girls in this 18 Aug 44 picture? I flew this a/c (42-95592, "Black Cat", revetment 58) on its first combat mission, 15 Aug 44 and again on 1 Nov, my last mission. This was the last 466 plane shot down in the war. On 21 Apr 45 we lost the Farrington crew and Capt. Weiser in that shootdown.

Editor's Notes:

Norwich visitors might look up Wm. H. Wilkins, 9 Larkham Lane, Clarkson Road. Vic Hadley tells me that Mr. Wilkins used to produce "B-24 Ashtrays" out of the scrap aluminum base men provided. One of those ashtrays would make a great addition to our historical collection.

I try to answer every question I get. I always return keepsakes immediately. There are times when I get letters that do not require an answer. I am grateful for these, but am sorry that I can not find time to acknowledge them. Thank you all.

Those of you that go to reunions know that your gifts keep our projects going. Those of you that can not get to reunions should know that we can use your support too, especially this year when not many of you will get to the reunion. Send your donations to Treasurer Stuart Peace or to me - JHW.

Some of our members are looking up missing 466ers in their home state by telephone or letters. If you want to try your state or local area, drop me a line and I will send you some WWII addresses to check.

LOW LEVEL BOMBING RAID

Ray Barr, gunner on the Griesback crew (785th, Mar/Jun 44) has reminded us to include an account of the low level mission in the History Project. He sent a clipping from a Springfield, Missouri newspaper. It reads as follows:

"The combat wing of B-24 Liberator bombers made their run at 6,500 feet, dropping their bombs and the railway bridge near Blois, France collapses into a heap of rubble. On this first low altitude heavy bomber mission to be flown in support of Allied ground troops invading France the bridge was destroyed and the B-24's came home, flying formation behind fast, maneuverable two-motored B-26's which made a business of low altitude bombing."

On 11 June 1944, according to 466 mission records, 19 a/c from the group bombed at an altitude ranging from 4,900 feet to 6,350 feet. Tikey was the pilot of the lead a/c, with Sisco in command. The second section was led by McGregor, with Frank Elliott in command. There were no casualties, no planes missing, no enemy a/c sighted, and little flak. Crews commented that they liked bombing in three ship elements at low altitudes.

The mission folder included a citation for this mission. 8th AF General Order No. 466 (yes, that is the correct number), signed by Lt. General Doolittle, and dates 12 July 1944, cites the 96th Combat Wing for "extraordinary heroism and outstanding performance of duty in action... all three bombardment groups... made the run on the target and the bridge was successfully destroyed..."

Questions remain for the History Project. Which group led the Wing? Was this the lowest B-24 raid in the ETO? Are related pictures available? Are there any first-person stories on this mission to be had? What were we doing in a formation of B-26's?

MORE ON TRACER ACTION

In a routine search for pilot Roy F. Hurst I wrote to County Clerks in Indiana and Oklahoma. The name was listed twice (two different addresses) in the roster I have. The one in Indiana came back with "no record." The Blaine County Clerk in Wagonia, OK very kindly told of a Mrs. Roy L. Hurst now living in Oklahoma City. Her thrilling response to my letter told of her being the mother of LeRoy Franklin Hurst who was killed in an accident in England (see story in April 1973 News-Letter). LeRoy was the bombardier on the Williams crew. She told of how little contact she had had with anyone since the loss of her son, and how good it was to be in touch at this late date. Her delight increased a hundredfold by the recent visit of Stu and Sara Peace (he parachuted from the Williams a/c). Stu wrote, "We must have stayed for two hours. She is a real personable lady, and was very interesting and entertaining. She very definitely appreciated our visit... Thank you for letting us know..." LeRoy's mother sent this note, penned by a friend of his. "He belongs to another Air Corps now with the greatest of all Commanders and we know LeRoy will still carry out commissions assigned to him and do it in a big way."

Mrs. Roy L. Hurst has joined the Second Air Division Association. The rewards of tracer action are huge and immediate. Why don't you try?

CHEMICAL WARFARE



by
Bro. R. J. 'Roxie'
Marotta, SDB
(44th BG)

The 806th Chemical Company (Air Operations) was formed at Hunter Field Savannah Georgia in December of 1942. As was usual during that rather hectic period men were hastily assigned to units which were destined for immediate overseas duty, often with very little regard to competence and/or training. It is a tribute to the men who served in this unit – and undoubtedly others – that they responded with alacrity and enthusiasm to whatever task was assigned to them.

Upon arrival at our first base (Hardwick) we were immediately given the task of handling incendiaries. This in spite of the fact that none of us had ever seen an incendiary during our training back in the States. But bomb damage evaluation pointed out that the incendiary bomb was doing more damage than the 500 pounders. It was decided to increase the use of incendiary bombs and it was our job to learn (on the job training) how to store and fuse them. For this work we were transferred to Shipdham and the 44th Bomb Group.



Handling these clusters was ticklish business.

It was at this base that we began to work in earnest and once having mastered the handling of incendiaries our attention was turned to the development of the sky marker, the brainchild of Col. Clarence Breedlove. The sky marker was born because the bombardiers had trouble dropping on the lead ship. These markers were simple but deadly when something went wrong.

They consisted of a 100 pound casing filled with a smoke producing acid and

two small glass plates on each end with a gasket and detonator that would explode and allow air to pass through. When they worked properly they looked like a big chalk mark drawn through the sky.

It was far from glamorous work because all too often a convoy would arrive in the late afternoon and we would immediately proceed to unload the bombs. Then we would have a 50 or 60 plane mission to arm and fuse. We would eat on-the-run and work right through the night usually dropping exhausted in the early morning light. THEN we would learn that the mission had been scrubbed!

One of the biggest rewards we got was at the end of the War when they ran those Trolley Missions showing us the bomb damage to cities and railroad yards. It was then that we knew we had indeed 'contributed' along with everyone else.

This is not a tale of heroic deeds in the strict sense of the word. It is simply a recounting of the story of men who, in spite of the fact that they had no hope of being awarded medals, performed their assigned tasks with simple devotion to duty and the knowledge that the part they were playing would save lives and hasten the end of hostilities. They considered this reward enough.

VALOR OF "VALKYRIE"

by George A. Reynolds (458th B.G.)
(Associate)

"A U.S. Bomber Base Somewhere in England, May 8, 1944. Another of the war's miracles witnessed and experienced. . . A painfully wounded ball turret gunner, alone in a crippled, pilotless Liberator, rode out a crash landing today and then saw the bomber catch fire and explode after he had limped agonizingly to safety a short distance away. . ." is how the yellowed newspaper clippings begin. Now, 30 years later that gunner, Ray D. Bates of Haleyville, Alabama, recalls his nightmarish flight as though it happened yesterday.

– Paraphrasing – At Old Buckenham the 453rd Bomb Group put 12 B-24s up that morning for the mission on Brunswick, Germany's aircraft factories. Snafuing began, kept cropping up, and some might have thought these an omen – rightfully! Ten of the 12 birds went down in the same area where Major James Stewart, of the 389th Group, earned a DFC just four days ago. Nearing the target, some 50 German fighters jumped the formation. Almost immediately aboard the Lib "Valkyrie," Bates and two other crewmen were wounded, four fires started, two engines went out, a wing was damaged and its controls were partially shot away. The pilot, Lt. Robert P. Catlin, knew he'd lost his battle to keep up with the formation. So, he salvaged the

bombs and everything moveable, then turned for home. Fortunately, a P-38 Group arrived to take care of the Luftwaffe, and one of the Lightnings peeled off to escort Valkyrie back to England.

Over the Channel when ditching seemed imminent, a changing of the guard – the P-38 gave way to a P-51 that came out to ride shotgun for them on to base – improved their luck too. Catlin was able to coax his battered kite farther. Nearing home base, however, a third engine went out, and he ordered the crew to bailout. But first he went aft and assisted one wounded gunner to jump, then going back forward, took the controls until his copilot, Lt. George Ware, leaped. Catlin hit the bailout bell, set the autopilot and left.

Shortly Sgt. Morris Irby, the top turret gunner, came forward and was amazed to find the cockpit empty. He had heard none of the bailout poop. Assuming he was alone, Irby nosed the bomber over and dived out at 700 feet. Valkyrie veered slightly and crashed into a clump of trees.

Sgt. Bates, with his wounds throbbing, flung off a pile of equipment which avalanched upon him and climbed out of the wreckage. British civilians came to his aid, but he sent them toward the plane shouting, "Help the pilot and copilot." Before they could reach it, however, the burning Liberator exploded.

"That gunner had guts," said Capt. Mitchell Sweig of Chicago, Illinois, an Army surgeon. "There was a piece of shell two inches long and an inch wide in his left knee, a lot of little holes in his right knee, a hole in his abdomen and a patch on his face. There was also a two-inch gash in his right arm down to the bone."

"What's in a name? According to Teutonic mythology, a beautiful maiden who brings the soul of a brave, slain warrior to Valhalla and there waits upon him divinely is known as Valkyrie. There was nothing fictitious about a B-24 bearing this name, however. But rather a miraculous feat in its fateful protection and deliverance of her crew on home grounds. And it did so with a rudder shot away, its wing crumpled, three dead engines and only partial control available for 400 miles.



The Wreckage!