



Heritage Herald



Issue 22

April 1998

THE 2ADA BY THE NUMBERS

Reprinted from the 2ADA Journal, Winter 1997 issue, submitted by Evelyn Cohen

Membership Totals

February 1983	4537	February 1991	8094
February 1984	4803	February 1992	8321
February 1985	5418	February 1993	8237
February 1986	6069	February 1994	8012
February 1987	6458	February 1995	7796
February 1988	6525	February 1996	7451
February 1989	7158	February 1997	7037
February 1990	7641		

Group Totals as of 8/25/97

44th BG	432	14 CW	3
93rd BG	602	96th BW	2
389th BG	611	4th FG	6
392nd BG	373	56th FG	3
445th BG	481	65th FG	3
446th BG	330	355th FG	5
448th BG	545	479th FG	1
453rd BG	475	2BAD	2
458th BG	623	3SD	4
466th BG	381	ARC	6
467th BG	397	HM	13
489th BG	312	AM	399
491st BG	351	SM	157
492nd BG	144	BG	14
Headquarters	106		
2CW	1		
		TOTAL	6782

AS I SEE IT.....
by Earl Wassom (466th BG)
2ADA Liaison Officer to the Heritage League

When I picked up the receiver, I recognized the familiar and jesting voice of one of my best war-time 2ADA buddies. "Well," he said, "I see the Grim Reaper hasn't been to your house, yet." I responded with the customary one-liner: "I checked the obituary column and my name was missing. Furthermore, I was not mentioned on the morning TV news among missing prominent citizens who were no longer with us." "Weird humor," you might exclaim. Well, yes and no. Difficult perhaps to the one who has just lost a dad or grand dad, but to the remaining veterans of World War II who now average 78 years of age, it is a pleasure and privilege to still be around, get together and share memories again.

When a senior member of a family passes away, the source of information upon which we always relied is gone forever. Events, dates, names of people in pictures, memorable events must be verified by memories. Where are the important family papers? Sometimes, recollections are vague, uncertain, or information just isn't there. We turn to other sources and the result is almost always negative.

I don't know how many calls I have received from children or grandchildren asking about a veteran of WWII, Eighth Air Force. Just recently, a son was wanting information about his dad. He knew the squadron number but that was all. His dad was a co-pilot flying B-24's but he didn't know anything about his training, his crew, or when he flew his missions. His dad recently passed away. He was prominent in his community and to recognize him, a building in the area was going to be named in his honor. Now, the facts about his dad became important. He needed information for those in charge of the ceremonies. Pictures, documents, letters were never shared by the dad. The family never asked. He never volunteered to share his

experiences! the "grim reaper" came and nothing was left, this copilot took all with him never to be recalled again.

Recently, I met a man in my home-town who was a B-24 tail gunner and flew on the Ploesti raid with the 44th Bomb Group. He had no association with any veteran's organizations. He declared that he didn't remember anything about the war, this mission, nor did he recall any names of his buddies. He didn't even want to talk about it. Nevertheless, I persuaded him to see me again and I now have a thirty-minute tape of him "recalling things" he had forgotten, things about that mission I had never heard before. His attentive wife sat there listening, learning, and amazed at what her husband of fifty years had done in his youth. I doubt that his children knew of the things that he went through during this 1942-1945 period.

We veterans and the children and grandchildren must get busy! The grim reaper is after all of us but in all likelihood, he will get the older folks first. We must get the facts and make them available to researchers for the 21st Century. Even with us alive and around, the young PhD Historic Revisionists and so-called "military experts", are making-up what they don't understand or know.

Fortunately, others are helping us preserve this history. We have dedicated and hallowed shrines to receive, process, and make available any information we have or will gather from our veterans and the outfits in which they served. The Memorial Library in Norwich, England which was destroyed by fire and is now being restored, will always be there for the British people. We must continue to support it. In the United States, we now have the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia which is serving as a beacon to the American people.

continued on next page

The materials gathered by this library and this museum are mutually shared. Now, our legacy and place in history is being preserved for posterity on both sides of the Atlantic.

The Museum in Savannah is more readily available to us and now, only two years old, its collection of materials is expanding and is growing in prestige among military museums. The Archivist reports that there are currently 20,200 names in the Veteran's Data Base. This list can be searched giving the researcher the ability to look for names of individuals or groups and using key-words, locate and compile appropriate available data regarding any outfit in the 8th Air Force. Your dad's name needs to be in this file. If he is deceased, you are responsible. You do it! If he is still alive, his name needs to be registered. Help him to respond to this plea! Locate his papers,

letters, military orders, notes, flight logs, pictures, and any military memorabilia and send them to the Museum in Savannah or the Memorial Library in Norwich. Visit these shrines, look at the collections and displays and learn how you can strengthen and support them.

Both organizations need your financial support. The Heritage League has given faithfully to the Library. We thank you. Membership is available for you in the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum. I would like to see hundreds of our number become members, life-time members if possible. I thank you in advance. The Library in Norwich has realized that its strength and success has been the result of many who have stood by it. Likewise, there is strength in the numbers of us who will become members of the Museum.



If anyone can help us find the following 2 members, please contact Kathy Jackson (address on page 8):

Frank Gadbois of Suffolk, England

and

Mike Carroll of Merseyside, UK

The Mighty 8th Heritage Museum is also on the web.

Visit it at:

<http://www.mighty8thmuseum.com>

Correction.....

The Heritage League's web address is:

<http://www.primenet.com/~hl-2ada>

we can also be reached via email at:

hl-2ada@primenet.com

The Heritage League Meeting will be held Monday May 25th following breakfast, between 8:30 - 9:30. See you there!

My Thoughts Now

Lida B. Thompson Norris

When a friend suggested to me in 1942 that we join the WAACs, my instant reaction was NO WAY, but the seed had been planted. January weather in Indiana was not pleasant and the thought of spending time in Daytona Beach, in any capacity, was very attractive, so I signed up. Of course, I was sent to Ft. Oglethorpe, Ga. for my basic training and nearly froze to death. In basic training, one becomes a member of a communal community, sacrificing dignity and privacy. The cadre was made up of women and harassment was only a word in the dictionary.

Administration School in Conway, Ark. was the next assignment where I thoroughly enjoyed the coming of spring, my favorite season. Having signed up for the First Separate Battalion, in April I was sent to Ft. Devens, Mass, where I enjoyed another coming of spring.

Our last weeks in the U.S. were spent at Camp Shanks, New York. We were able to take in the sights and sounds of the City where we were the only ones wearing winter uniforms in July, a sure sign we were headed overseas. In all my time in the service, I was never issued a summer uniform and never got back to my home in Indiana til the day I was again a civilian.

One Saturday evening a group of us were on our way downstairs to catch the bus to go into the city when Lt. Berry met us on the stairs and very dramatically said, "This is it!"

The First Separate Battalion boarded the SS Aquatania and sailed to England without benefit of a convoy. We took up quarters at Old Catton, a former RAF Barracks, and rode a bus to Horsham St. Faith where we worked. The first Sunday I worked was Aug. 3, 1943, the day of the Ploesti Raid. On occasion, we had gas mask drill and had to wear the masks while working at our desks.

About this time, Congress passed legislation to form the Womens Army Corps and the WAAC was disbanded. Women were given the option of leaving the service and some did.

During the winter, 2 AD Headquarters moved out to Ketteringham Hall. We were issued bicycles to ride to work. I worked in Statistical Control which was at the end of a dead-end road, far away from the Hall which was the center of activity. We missed out on many notable events at the Hall.

In the summer of '44 when more WACs were assigned to 2 AD Headquarters, several of us volunteered to live in tents until more barracks were built. We had lived in Stagger Alley (the bunk beds were in staggered alignment) and moved into a new Redemption Terrace.

On days off and evenings we could take the Liberty Run (an army truck) in to the Market Square in Norwich. I loved going to the theater concerts which continued to be held all during the war. Getting back to the Square to catch the Run was a bit of a chore in the blackout but we learned to find our way around in the dark in short order.

After my discharge in the fall of '45, I married a B-24 gunner from Kansas whom I had met at one of the mission parties at Hethel, the 389th. We started farming on a rented, hilly, barren farm in Kansas with a house that had no electricity or running water, but we were so happy with it. We had a place where we had privacy, sweet, sweet privacy, and a place to call our own, space bigger than an army cot.

Many of us veterans were deeply disturbed by the Enola Gay incident at the Smithsonian last year. Recently, I was totally taken aback when a grandchild, fulfilling an assignment to interview a veteran grandparent, asked if I thought the bomb should have been dropped. I answered "ABSOLUTELY".



WHAT DID YOU DO IN THE WAR, MA?

By Al Blue

(Reprinted from the 2ADA Journal, Winter 1996)

When Rep. Edith Rogers of Massachusetts informed Gen. George C. Marshall in the spring of 1941 that she expected to introduce a bill establishing a women's corps in the Army, the War Department had to face up to an issue it had long avoided. Planners in the General Staff hurriedly outlined the framework for a women's organization which would "meet with War Department approval, so that when it is forced upon us, as it undoubtedly will be, we shall be able to run it our way." Mrs. Rogers incorporated the plan in a bill which she introduced in the House 28 May 1941, calling for establishment of a Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, or "WAAC." After considerable debate and delay, the events of 7 December 1941 changed the attitude of the majority and the Rogers bill became law on 15 May 1942. The measure permitted the enlistment of 150,000 women between the ages of twenty-one and forty-five, but set an initial strength limit of 25,000.

Legal authorization, of course, did not guarantee public acceptance of the idea. Congressional critics had been unable to defeat the measure, but their opinions and predictions of dire consequences reflected the feelings of a large segment of the public. To some congressmen the measure was "the most ridiculous bill" and "the silliest piece of legislation" within their memory. The Army itself was unwilling at first to accept this newest addition to its forces. However, the wartime performance of the WACs altered the attitude of many commanders, including General Eisenhower, who originally was opposed to women in the Army. "The simple headquarters of a Grant or a Lee," said Eisenhower after the war, "were gone forever. An army of filing clerks, stenographers, office managers, telephone operators, and chauffeurs had become essential . . . From the day they first reached us their reputation as an efficient, effective corps continued to grow." As early as November 1942 the WAAC strength limit was raised by executive order from 25,000 to the 150,000 authorized. (In fact, however, this limit was never reached. Because of recruitment and other problems, peak strength was less than 100,000.)

Air WACs

It was typical of the AAF to desire a separate women's corps completely independent of other branches of the

Army. The AAF, furthermore, early recognized the need for full Army status, rather than auxiliary status, for the WAAC. These two ideas were temporarily squelched in November 1942 when General Marshall wrote a note to the Chief of Air Staff: "I believe Colonel Moore this morning took up with Mrs. Hobby the question of her attitude toward a separate women's organization for the Air Corps (sic). I don't like the tone of this at all . . . I don't wish anyone in the Air Corps office to take up, without my personal knowledge, any question of organizing a separate unit, or any discussion of it except with me first."

Although the AAF could not acquire WAACs on its own terms, it was glad to take them on any basis. During the early months of the existence of the WAAC, the Aircraft Warning Service received top priority in the assignment of women in the AAF. The Air Forces felt that effective operation of AWS stations required full-time personnel subject to military discipline, and WAACs began to arrive at these posts in September 1942 immediately after completing their basic training at Fort Des Moines. In March 1943 the AAF began to receive its first WAACs for use in posts other than AWS stations. Small companies reported for duty at Chanute and Scott Fields and at Jefferson Barrack, Missouri. In the following month twenty-three WAAC units arrived at air bases in the United States, and by the end of September 171 air bases had WACs as part of their personnel.

WAAC to WAC

In the summer of 1943 the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps became the Women's Army Corps. This step, placing the corps *in* the Army instead of *with* the Army, corrected a fundamental error which had been growing increasingly obvious. With the conversion to Army status, approximately 80 percent of the women serving with the AAF reenlisted. At peak AAF WAC enrollment of 39,323 in January 1945, more than 200 different job categories were filled by enlisted women, while WAC officers held more than 60 different types of jobs in addition to that of company officer. Some 20 WACs were listed as "Air Crew Members" and there was at least one WAC Crew Chief. Women sometimes also made non-combat flights as radio operators. As an experiment, an

entire flight line was staffed with WAC mechanics, and there were eventually some 617 women in Airplane Maintenance, 656 Aviation Specialists, and lesser numbers in related jobs. The AAF WAC program was headed by LTC Betty Bandel.

The WACs Overseas

In the Spring of 1944, the AAF adopted a plan for assignment of EAC clerical workers to the headquarters of combat air forces around the world. However, well before this system went into effect WACs had been shipped to the Eighth Air Force in England, the first WAC Separate Battalion arriving in July 1943. The satisfactory performance of this unit led to so many requests that by September the Air Force WACs made up one-half of the total WAC strength in the ETO. Requests from other theaters soon poured into AAF Headquarters, eventually resulting in the following distribution of AAF EAC personnel in January 1945:

European Theater - 2,835
Mediterranean Theater - 457
Pacific Ocean Area - 2
Far East Air Forces - 694
China-Burma-India Theater - 287
Air Transport Command - 2,755
Other - 285
Total - 7,315

If there was any doubt in the public mind by the end of the war as to the official Air Force attitude toward the WACs, it was removed by General Arnold's final report to the Secretary of War. General Arnold recommended that "a nucleus organization of female soldiers should be maintained in peacetime in order to provide for rapid and efficient expansion in time of national emergency." He pointed out that wartime experience "has clearly proven that these women, in the jobs they were qualified to perform, were more efficient than men."



MAILBAG.....

Seeking any information about S/Sgt George J. Le Comte (36-622-318). He was with the 453rd Bomb Group from 23 Dec 1943 to 27 Oct 1944 when he was transferred to 15th AF in Italy. With the 453rd he was first with the 1792nd Ord. and M Co (Aun) then the 733rd Bomb Squad. (H). On 27 Oct 1944 he was transferred to the 161st Repl. Co, 131st Repl BN AAF and then sent to Italy. S/Sgt. Le Comte flew on several missions as a gunner. Can anyone help me or tell me where to look for information?

Kathy Le Comte Lupton
869 Columbia Ave.
Springfield, IL 62704-2342
217-787-6512
email: johnkath@springnet1.com



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Please note the dues expiration date on the mailing label. If your dues have expired or are about to expire, please take the time now to renew.

If you have received a renewal form, please return the original dues notice back with your payment so that it can be returned to you along with your membership card(s), which is your record of payment. Remember that donations can be used as an IRS record. Thank you!

Heritage League Membership Application

I wish to become a member of the Heritage League of the Second Air Division (USAAF) and to support its purposes. I certify that I am eligible for membership under one of the categories indicated.

Name _____ Spouse _____

Street Address _____ Home Tel. _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Work Tel. _____

2ADA Member (Sponsor) _____ Bomb Group or Unit No. _____ Relationship _____

Membership Category (please check) ☐ Regular ☐ Associate ☐ New ☐ RenewalAnnual Dues: **Regular \$6.00**, Associate \$4.00

Signature _____

Send Remittance To: Heritage League of the 2ADA, Kathy Jackson, 1027 Keeler St., Maumee, Ohio 43537

Regular Members: Spouses, brothers, sisters, children, grandchildren of former personnel, military and civilian, American and British, who, at any time served with the Headquarters organization of the 2nd Bomb Wing, 2nd Bomb Division or 2nd Air Division during WWII and any person who served with any bomb group or any other unit of the 2nd Air Division, USAAF, either assigned or attached. These shall be voting members.

Associate Members: Friends or associates of regular members who by their demonstrated interest in the League and who make literary, artistic, historical or other valuable contributions to the 2nd Air Division Association, The Heritage League of the 2nd Air Division (USAAF) and/or The Memorial Trust of the 2nd Air Division. These shall be non-voting members.

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*Keep
'Em
Flying*

Thanks to everyone who contributed articles for the *Heritage Herald*. Please continue to send items of interest about members of the League or of a historic nature. We really need everyone's support. The deadline to submit articles for the next issue is July 15, 1998. *Kathy Jackson*

Kathy Jackson
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