



Heritage Herald



Issue 27

December 1999

Memories of The 2nd Air Division USAAF

By David J. Hastings

Words can never really describe how we felt in Norfolk when as youngsters we witnessed the arrival of the 2nd Air Division USAAF in early 1944. We had lived through the Fall of France, Dunkirk, the Battle of Britain and then the Blitz but in those dark days when you saw the first American aircraft in the sky, you felt a great sense of relief in that if young men and women were prepared to travel over 4000 miles to join us in the fight for freedom, then surely we would win the struggle.

My first meeting came in January 1944, when as an aviation mad young schoolboy, word swept through our school in Norwich that Americans were coming to Horsham St. Faiths and two of us played truant to watch the sight of the Liberators coming in to land over the Cromer Road. We waited at the main gate for hours that day to get our first sight of a real American and were rewarded when eventually a whole group of Airmen poured out. We admired their smart uniforms, their laughter and friendship and one gave me a silver quarter which I still have today. The next day we received a caning from the Headmaster at school for being absent, but it was worth it. We spent many happy hours at Horsham until someone told us that the Liberators had arrived at Rackheath and you could get close to their dispersals so three of us cycled out and began our association with the 467th. Sadly for us, although the ground crew were friendly, the MP's were not and having been caught for the third time in a B-24, our meeting with the famous Colonel Shower scared us all so badly that we decided that we had better cycle elsewhere. Fifty years later, Colonel Shower still remembers that brief encounter. We turned our eyes south and there was Hethel, only about 30 minutes hard cycling from where we lived in Norwich. June 1944 saw the beginning of the school holidays and we cycled out and to our luck we found a hardstand close to the back road. The Liberator was away on a mission, but the Crew Chief "Pop" Ganness, made us welcome and suggested that we stay to meet his crew. We waited, enjoying our first taste of Coke and overjoyed at the ground crews' friendship to us, when

in the late afternoon, the sky was filled with the sound of the returning Liberators as the group swept over the field and peeled off to land. Then a silver B-24 called "Pugnacious Princess Pat" swung into our dispersal, turned around and shut down and to our amazement and delight "Pop" was right, as the pilot walked over to meet us and so began our friendship with Lt. Al Dexter, the crew of the "Pat" and the 389th Bomb Group. Lt. Dexter lifted me over the fence and introduced me to his crew and then as usual the MP's arrived and Al made his now famous remark. He offered them three choices:

1. "They could shoot him, which he doubted,"
2. "They could confine him to barracks, which would be great as he would not have to fly any more missions" or
3. "They could get the hell out of there" - They left !!!

All our school holidays were spent at Hethel, we saw them go out and counted them back. Al Dexter would always walk me around the aircraft on his return, with his hand on my shoulder, pointing out the battle damage (something we realised 50 years later was a crew "Good Luck" superstition) and then after the crew had left, came the great bonus of collecting all the waxed cartons of candies. On the days when the crew were not flying, "Pop" used to smuggle us on board and with the put-put running and the intercom on, we flew the "Pat" all over Europe in our imagination. To also be allowed to be on board for an engine run-up was tremendous, as were the days when the crew took us to the mess hall for chicken and ice cream, something we had not seen for years. We also shared the sadness when crews we had met did not return but luckily for us, Al and his crew completed their 35 missions. Al Dexter and the crew also visited our home in Norwich, where we had "Open House" for the 2nd Air Division, as my mother was Deputy Commandant of the Red Cross in Norwich which ran the American Services Club.

Then in November, Al Dexter and his crew completed their tour, we presented them with a wooden model of the "Pat" and they were gone. We stayed to meet the new

(Continued on page 9)

NOTES FROM THE 2ND AIR DIVISION ASSOCIATION

by Jim and Mary Lorenz (466TH BG)
2nd ADA Liaisons to the Heritage League

Our 2nd ADA EXECUTIVE Committee met in Tampa Bay, FL on October 21-24, 1999 at the Hyatt Westshore, where our May 2000 convention will be held. As only voting members of our EXCOM were invited (to save costs and time), I presented President Craig's report to the group. Ed Zobac had kindly sent me a current league membership list (as of August 99) and I was pleased to note that in the 753 members, all of the 2nd ADA groups were represented (with a range from 14 to 85) plus 14 Brits! I copied your membership application and gave one to each of our VP's. I requested that they publish this in their next stand-alone group newsletter.

We have just received (from the previous 2nd ADA Liaison) the notebook detailing the history, along with the "many-sided discussions" of getting the League up and running. Your charter, granted by the state of Illinois on March 3, 1987, listed the full name as, "The Heritage League of the Second Air Division (USAAF), an auxiliary of The Second Air Division Association." This is the tie that allowed the organization as a 501(c) (19) veteran's group. This name, in turn, allowed the Internal

Revenue Service to grant a 501 (c) (3) Not-for profit I D of 36-3590698. The League operates under its' own By-Laws. The 2nd ADA had adopted a Legacy Plan, detailing the procedure for dissolution of the Association. When that time comes, the League will be the official contact with the Memorial Room English Board of Governors. Our actuarial study shows this could happen by year 2012!

The 2nd ADA meeting at the Hyatt, Westshore, Tampa Bay, FL (where the May 26-29, 2000 convention will be held), approved the tentative plans for the 2001 meeting to be held in Norwich, to dedicate our hopefully completed new memorial room Nov. 1-9. Details will be in the next Journal, but a \$50 non-refundable deposit to Evelyn will hold a place for the trip. The hotel rates are high (about \$138), but this Norwich official meeting may be our last (some say this after every visit). Evelyn promised a special 'Young Ones' event for all Heritage age attendees. It may be cold and blustery — but the airline rates usually drop on Nov. 1.



B-24 GROUPS MEMORIAL SAN DIEGO

THE B-24 INTERNATIONAL 60TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION

December 9—12, 1999

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Irvine, CA 92604-3683
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E-MAILBAG.....

Since I am a "Short Snorter", I enjoyed reading your article on short snorters in the August issue.

If memory serves me correctly, there were two requirements for being a short snorter. You had to fly across the equator and number two, you had to be signed up by someone who was a short snorter.

Enjoy your publication, keep it up.

Elvern R. Seitzinger
492nd Bomb Group
856th Bomb Squadron

Dear Ms. Jackson,

I was just reading the August, 1999 Heritage Herald and thought I should forward this letter on to you. I wrote this letter to Mr. Goar as editor of the 392nd Newsletter. He printed a bit of it in his publication. The Heritage League seems to be inclusive of all the divisions, so I am forwarding this.

My family and I are proud members of the Heritage League and will continue to be so for many years. My sons know the many sacrifices of the men and women who served and can talk with pride about their grandparent's efforts.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter.

Sincerely,

Sharon Lane Marcander

(Read Sharon's letter on page 5)

Report for EXCOM 23 Oct 1999—Heritage League By Craig Beasley

There were forty attendees at the Heritage League meeting in Austin, Texas on 31 May 1999. Incoming President, Hap Chandler introduced the new Liaison to the Heritage League. They are Jim and Mary Lorenz of the 466th Bomb Group. Hap brought greetings from Earl Wassom who is ill and unable to attend the convention.

Earl Wassom has been a strong supporter of the Heritage League and appointed a Heritage League member for each Committee as an observer. In appreciation of his efforts and support of the Heritage League, a sculpture "And There I Was", was sent to him.

Ruth Anderson, Membership Vice President reports there are 721 members in the League presently. The league is financially sound with assets of

approximately \$12,000.

The Heritage League web site has had over 50 "hits" requesting information. They have established links to other web sites.

I would like to see more interest generated in the Scholarship program the League has established and have asked Carol Kendrick to work on this project.

Jim and Mary Lorenz are working on a plan for a pen pal exchange with the students at Wymondham College.

Chairman of the Board of Governors for the Memorial Trust, Paul King, spoke regarding the progress of the library. He emphasized that the Memorial will live on and encouraged the younger people to become involved.

Heritage League New Members

ZOE HATCHETT — 466
WILLIAM BEIGEL
CYNTHIA NASSAUER — 453
MARY ANNE JOHNSON — 453

JOHN ROWE — 448
MAJ. R. F. GELVIN — 445
VIRGINIA THOMPSON — 445
EDIE FLOYD — 492

SAVING PRIVATE RYAN

Steven Spielberg, who had previously won Oscars for Best Picture and Best Directing for Schindler's List, again received the Best Directing award for "Saving Private Ryan." At the ceremony, after thanking his wife and children, Spielberg added the following. "This has just been an amazing experience and what I'd like to do is just thank very, very sincerely the families who lost sons in World War II. I want to thank the Niland Family and the Sullivan families and I want to thank all the families who incurred these tremendous losses. In this film we tried to show a story of one such family, and it turned out there were many such families, unfortunately. And Dad, you're the greatest. Thank you for showing me that there is honor in looking back and respecting the past. I love you very much. This is for you. Thank You".

*From the DFC Society Newsletter, issue no 12, July 1999
Reprinted from The 453rd Bomb Group Assoc. newsletter, Sept. 1999*



Did you know that in Washington, DC, near the Capitol there is an "8th AF Memorial Tree?" It is a tree similar to the American Elm but is resistant to Dutch elm disease. When it was planted on September 17, 1981, it was 12 feet high. It is now more than 25 feet tall! On September 17, 1991 a plaque was added, honoring those who served in the 8th Air Force during World War II.

Reprinted from the Beachbell Echo, Sept. 1999

Reunions of the 2nd ADA and Related Associations

2nd Air Division Association Annual Convention
May 26—29, 2000
Tampa Bay, Florida

Eighth Air Force Historical Society Convention
October 15-22, 2000
Salt Lake City, Utah

2nd Air Division Association
November 1—9, 2001
Norwich, England

The Heritage League meets in conjunction with the 2ADA.

2AD MASTER DATABASE

The Second Air Division Association has endorsed the master database program. The mission is to place computerized information in appropriate archival repositories. The National Foundation for Military Heritage Data is a non-profit foundation which is set up to support creation of a database program.

They encourage all of our Second Air Division groups to participate in this master database program in order to create and maintain an electronic database of all our individuals who served in Second Air Division groups. We know that this is a gigantic task. They are asking for the support of each group in bringing together as much information as possible for the database. This is an on-going living record that will be available for historians, authors, and family members seeking information about our Second Air Division personnel. It is planned that the complete database for all participating groups will be placed in our Memorial Room Library in Norwich, England; The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia; The Air Force Academy; The Air Force Historical Center at Maxwell AFB, Alabama; and selected universities and colleges throughout the United States.

There is a demonstration model of the program that can be viewed on the Internet. Search of data on this model is not available but example pages can be viewed. Internet address:

<http://www.8thairforce.com>

Reprinted from the Beachbell Echo, Sept. 1999



The Heritage League :

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

The Mighty 8th Heritage Museum:

<http://www.mighty8thmuseum.com>

2ADA Memorial:

<http://www.ecn.co.uk/memorial/index.htm>

Dear Mr. Goar,

This is a letter I should have written months ago. It has taken me this long to put my thoughts and rememberings in print.

My sister, Bette Garfield and I made a trip to Italy to visit my son Tom, who was in school there. Part of our itinerary was to try and get to Norwich and Wendling. We had heard so many stories from Mom and Dad about their time spent in these places. This is where they became engaged and later married. It had always been a dream to visit the places they had seen and to walk in the church where they were married. Our timing was perfect; we arrived in Norwich April 7 and were met by Marjorie and Raymond Mackertich. These people are absolutely wonderful. Your organization is so fortunate to have local contacts like these. They took us into the town to the Memorial Library. What an experience We were thrilled to visit with the librarian and be shown all the memorabilia of the 392nd. We were fortunate to find pictures of our parents in several publications. You have a dedicated staff working to preserve the history of your unit.

April 8th, our mother's birthday. What a special day to visit the places she so fondly told us about all these years. We met Denis Duffield in Wendling at the Memorial. What a delightful host he was. He told us of the airfield and runways where our parents must have spent many hours. The Memorial and gardens were beautiful and we felt so proud to be standing there. We imagined the planes flying over and all the activity that must have been going on. It made us feel extremely proud of all the young American aviators who served and especially those who lost their lives in the service of their country.

We moved on to Besston. Marjorie and Denis took us to the church of St. Mary the Virgin. As we drove down the country road we could see the spire and knew it was the one we had looked at in pictures of our parent's wedding. Bette and I were in tears before we even got out of the car. As we walked up the path to the church door we could just imagine Marilyn and Bob walking the same steps as they left the church as Mr. and Mrs. Robert Lane. Denis had gotten the key to open the church and was on his knees trying to make it work. Once inside the church we were speechless and amazed at the beauty. The sun was shining through the small stained glass windows and we could just envision the wedding party and our mother walking down the aisle. It was an overwhelming emotional sensation and one I will never forget. I had brought along our mother's diary from those years and read her entry for her wedding day. "My Wedding Day!! A beautiful day in England too. Everything went beautifully. They are certainly a swell bunch." We laughed and cried and tried to imagine every detail about the ceremony. What a glorious way to celebrate their wedding day and her birthday.

We will always be indebted to Marjorie, Raymond and Denis for their dedication to the preservation of the historical significance of the Second Air Division and the 392nd.

Thank you so much for your friendship with my parents. I have wanted to tell you how much it has meant to me to still have the memory of you on the steps of the church in Louisville as the hearse carrying my mother was pulling away. I looked out of the car window and there on the steps I watched as you stood at attention and saluted her. It was a fitting tribute to a wonderful woman and a proud soldier.

Sincerely,

Sharon Lane Marcrandner

JOES

By Bob Stone

Two of the four propellers are feathered and another engine is smoking. The brakes are gone, two gunners are wounded, and flak holes make the B24 look like a piece of Swiss cheese.

The bomber comes in, sets down, and races the length of the runway. When it overruns to the rough ground beyond, its momentum is fortunately almost exhausted. It hits a bump, the left wing drops for a second to snag the ground, and it comes to an easy stop. Lucky!

Crash crews suppress the fire on the smoking engine while medics attend to the wounded crew members.

Five days later, the Lib is back in formation, gassed up, and with bombs in its belly. The shattered plexiglass in the top turret replaced, the belly turret is new, and so are three engines, the brake lines, and the left wing tip. The mended flak holes show up more than usual because the crew insisted that a patchwork quilt design in loud colors be painted over each new skin graft.

The whole process of rescuing the Liberator, from the moment the control tower man spotted its dead engines and red flare signals, to its departure on the next raid, was taken over by some ground-bound airmen whose work seldom appeared in the papers or in the awareness of war conscious Americans.

The first JOE was the tower man. He cleared the field so that the B-24 would have no traffic worries added to the already serious problem of setting down safely. The next JOES were the bunch in the crash and meat wagons, ready to squelch the fires and give the wounded immediate aid. There were also the JOES who drove the towing tractor and the JOES who hitched the plane to it. A whole slew of

JOES went to work on it in the hangar. More from the armament shop repaired the top turret and replaced the ball turret. Warehouse JOES wrestled the engines and the wing tip out of their crates, so the JOES in the hangar could install them. JOES from the sheet metal shop worked on the skin, and from the hydraulic shop replaced the brake lines. And meanwhile, almost forgotten JOES were filling the fuel and oil tanks.

These are the JOES that put us in the air and strove to keep us there. Perhaps it is not commonly known, but the ratio of American airplanes overseas to Army Air Force men was about one to fifty. Thus for every airplane, with a crew of from one to ten, there were from forty to forty nine other fellows serving the fliers in every capacity, from humble to divine, from physical to spiritual, from cook to chaplain. There were the military police, bookkeepers, civil engineers, photographic interpreters, stevedores, intelligence officers, headquarters clerks and map makers, telephone and radio operators, paymasters, barbers and physicians, practitioners of a thousand different specialized occupations, all necessary to an air war with a thousand different facets.

These were the JOES that did the extraordinary, and perhaps, while not bearing the glamour of the 'fly boys' image, nonetheless accomplished a tremendous mission themselves, with both feet on the ground.

The 'fly boys' owe a debt of gratitude and thanks to all the JOES. This writer can't help but wonder if they ever received the thanks and respect due them. Without them, air crews would not fly. A big round of thanks to all those wonderful JOES.

Reprinted from the 389th Bomb Group Newsletter, Fall 1999

UNRELATED?

During the course of World War II, many people gained fame in one way or another. One man was Butch O'Hare. He was a fighter pilot assigned to an aircraft carrier in the Pacific. One time his entire squadron was assigned to fly a particular mission. After he was airborne, he looked at his fuel gauge and realized that someone had forgotten to top off his fuel tank. Because of this, we would not have enough fuel to complete his mission and get back to his ship. His flight leader told him to leave formation and return.

As he was returning to the mothership, he could see a squadron of Japanese Zeroes heading toward the fleet to attack. And with all the fighter planes gone, the fleet was almost defenseless. His was the only opportunity to distract and divert them.

Single-handedly, he dove into the formation of Japanese planes and attacked them. The American fighter planes were rigged with cameras, so that as they flew and fought, pictures were taken so pilots could learn more about the terrain, enemy maneuvers, etc.

Butch dove at them and shot until all his ammunition was gone, then he would dive and try to clip off a wing or tail or anything that would make the enemy planes unfit to fly. He did anything he could to keep them from reaching the American ships.

Finally, the Japanese squadron took off in another direction, and Butch O'Hare and his fighter, both badly shot up, limped back to the carrier. He told his story, but not until the film from the camera on his plane was

(Continued on page 10)

The Sky Was Never Still

By Roger A. Freeman

The old man sat in the English pub
As he had for many a year
And listened to the stranger's talk
As he sipped a temperate beer.

A stranger asked how long he'd lived
In the village here about.
"Why all my days," the old man said
An age, without a doubt."

"I envy you" the stranger sighed
Your tranquil village life,
The gentle fields, the muted sky,
Devoid of urban strife."

The old man smiled a wistful smile,
"That's just a townie's dream.
For I have seen the sky aflame
And heard the meadows scream."

"I've known a thunder at each dawn
That shook the very ground
As warplanes sought to gain the clouds
From airfields all around."

"They called some Forts and others Libs
And there were fighters too
I've counted hundreds at a time
Yes, what I tell is true."

"They'd climb and soar like flocks of rooks
And round and round they'd mill
From north and south, from east and west
The sky was never still."

"Sometimes there'd be a wondrous sight
A sight beyond compare
The bombers going out to war
Forging the frigid air."

"Four miles above, just silver specks
Like sunshine on the dew

And trailing lines of cloud-like white
Across the cosmic blue."

"They set the heavens all a-throb
That did not fade away
For others rose to meet the night
Invisible to stay."

"And when was this?" the stranger asked
"And who were those you saw?"
The old man drank and then replied
"It happened in the war."

"They were but boys and me a child
But I remember well
And if you have the time to spare
There's more that I can tell."

The stranger said that he must go
"Perhaps another day"
Indifferent to the old man's tale
He quickly slipped away.

The old man turned to inward thought
His memories to tend
He knew that those who were not there
Could never comprehend.

Those who'd not known the crowded sky
The sounds that drenched the land
Or stood in awe and wonderment
Would never understand.

The old man left the English pub
And stood awhile outside
The evening vault was milky blue
Cloud-free and stretching wide.

He raised his head and scanned the sky
That held so still and clear
And in his mind a memory
And in his eye a tear.

GREETINGS TO THE HERITAGE LEAGUE

At the October meeting of the Memorial Trust Governors, with Chuck Walker present from the 2nd ADA Executive we received from Event Limited, their final designs for the interior of the new 2nd Air Division Memorial Library and they were breathtaking. In the entrance they have captured the atmosphere of an American Library and then we have the moving Roll of Honour area backed by a very striking wall mural which not only has the "Bombs away picture" but in addition it tells the complete story of your days with us. We then have the study area, complete with the computers as well as an office for the Trust Librarians and a meeting room for groups, Trust Governors and Friends of the Memorial. A door on the west wall will open out on to the Memorial garden and fountain. The wonderful scale model of a B-24 will hang from the ceiling.

In addition we saw details of the exciting Visitors attraction Centre which is also a part of our new Millennium Library and again designed by Event Ltd. This will tell the history of Norwich and Norfolk from the Vikings to the present day and will cover three floors. The 2nd Air Division USAAF will feature in this history.

Later this month, The Friends of the Memorial will be holding the Annual Thanksgiving Dinner at the Swan Hotel in Harleston and once again this is a complete sell-out. After the huge success of their Hangar Dance at Norwich Airport in September they have reached their pledge of £5000 for the rebuilding appeal and a cheque will be presented to Paul King, the Trust Chairman, at the dinner. To raise this large sum has been a great achievement.

We were also very touched when Chuck Walker presented a further cheque for \$27,000 from the 2nd ADA at the Governors meeting. This means that the Rebuilding Appeal has now reached the staggering figure of £180,000.

We are working hard with Evelyn Cohen on the planning of the 2nd ADA visit in November 2001 to open the New 2nd Air Division Memorial Library and are delighted to see so many families attending. Also glad to see that thanks to Carol Kendrick the links with Wymondham College are really taking off.

Finally, can we send our sincere best wishes to the Heritage League for Christmas and the New Year. Stay well and God Bless.

Jean and David Hastings.

DEDICATION

Reprinted from the 361st Fighter Group Newsletter August 1999

Strange as it may seem, there are those who never served in the military who still do not understand why military personnel do what they do for a living. When John Glenn was running for the U.S. Senate, he was asked, "How can you run for a seat in the Senate when you have never held a 'real' job?"

Glenn replied, "I served 23 years in the U.S. Marine Corps through two wars. I flew 149 missions; my plane was hit by anti-aircraft fire on 12 different occasions. I was also in the space program, you may recall. I didn't have a 9 to 5 job where I took time off to take the daily cash receipts to the bank. In my line of work, it wasn't my checkbook that was on the line – it was my life. I'd like you to go with me, as I went the other day, to a VA hospital, and look at those men with their mangled bodies. Look them in the eye and tell them they didn't hold a 'real' job. Come with me to visit the widows and

orphans of Ed White and Gus Grissom and Roger Chafee, and look those kids in the eye and tell them their dads didn't hold a 'real' job. Join me on Memorial Day or Veteran's Day and stand with me at Arlington National Cemetery, where I have more friends than I care to remember – you stand there and you watch those waving flags, you think about this nation, and you reflect, as I have, about all those heroes buried there, then tell me to my face they didn't have a 'real' job. Then I'll tell you, my friend, that you should be on your knees every day of your life thanking GOD that there were some men – SOME MEN – who held a 'real' job. And they required a dedication to purpose and a love of country and a dedication to duty that was more important than life itself, and their self-sacrifice is what made this country possible. So you see, my friend, I HAVE HELD A JOB. What about you?"

MEMORIES.....*(Continued from page 1)*

crew, but "Pop" Ganness volunteered for Air Crew and the "the Pat" and her crew were lost over Germany and it was never quite the same despite the exciting times but who can ever forget the sight and sound as hundreds of B24's slowly assembled over Norwich each day before heading out for Germany, or when they returned 7 hours later badly shot up with wounded on board. Also the night when the Division came home in the dark with a German Nightfighter mixed in with them and the carnage that followed. One B24 crashed in flames on Daniels Nursery and for many months afterwards Colman Road still carried the tragic pieces of molten metal. My father and I ended up driving a visiting American out to Attlebridge and the memory of meeting the crew that night will stay with me for the rest of my life. I doubt if any other generation will ever witness the sights that we saw or make the friends that we did.

Then in 1945 it was all over, we heard they were leaving but school exams kept us away from the airfield for a week or so and when we next cycled out it was unbelievable. All the Liberators had gone, and there was no guard on the main gate. We decided to chance going in and wandered through the empty huts including Al Dexter's, with copies of Yank still on the tables, we visited the deserted mess hall where we had enjoyed so many great meals, then the tower and the locked hangars collecting an American steel helmet on the way, it all seemed to be impossible and for the day we had the base to ourselves and even cycled at speed down the main runway. However, the sadness that our American friends had gone was very deep indeed.

So it seemed that my links with the USAAF had ended, but in a few years it was my turn to be called up to serve in the Royal Air Force and I met them again while serving in Germany and it seemed odd to be flying food and coal for people who only a few years back had tried to kill me and my parents in the Blitz. Now my dreams of aviation had been realized, I had my wings and had also married a super girl called Jean. We tried hard to contact Al Dexter without success and we seemed to have lost contact with that historic part of our lives. In the seventies we at last achieved our ambition to see the USA, when we brought our two young children out for a tour of the west coast of the USA and then in 1979 the story came to full circle when I was asked if I would serve on the Board of Governors of the 2nd Air Division USAAF Memorial Trust in Norwich. What a wonderful chance it was to repay just a little of the great debt that we owe to the 2nd Air Division and to work for their unique and living Memorial, the only one of its kind in the world. Now we had a reason to visit

the USA and attend the 2nd Air Division Conventions and it felt like coming back home for the Division is such a wonderful family. Sadly, there was no sign of Al Dexter but we met up with many other wonderful people from Rackheath, Hethel, Tibenham, Attlebridge and Ketteringham Hall to name but a few. Again I was so lucky to meet up with a B24 co-pilot Dave Patterson and his wonderful wife Joan and have now flown over 28,000 miles with them all over their great country. If you had said in 1944 that I would be a pilot and fly in the USA with a B24 co-pilot, it would have sounded impossible but it has happened.

To complete the story, the unbelievable occurred in 1990 when at last we found Al and Pat Dexter and they came to England to meet our son and daughter. A member of the 2nd Air Division Association had seen my pleas in their journal asking for help to find Al, had passed them on and one evening the phone rang and an American voice said "David, this is a voice from your past" – it was Lt. Al Dexter and he was in Norwich, we could not believe it. We drove out to Hethel and for a morning the past came flying back as we stood on the site of the dispersal where we met for the first time in 1944 and then together stood in the remains of the Base Chapel to give thanks for this reunion and friendship. The following year we flew to St. Paul to meet Al and Pat and their family and to take him a replacement model of "Pugnacious Princess Pat", which completed the links.

Finally, in 1992 I achieved my dream of flying a Liberator, when I joined the Confederate Air Force Crew to bring "Diamond Lil" over to Norfolk from Fort Worth to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of the arrival of the 8th Air Force in Great Britain in 1942. the flight itself was unique and as a tribute to the 2nd Air Division we flew on one of the wartime ferry routes over the Arctic and the Atlantic, 4500 miles of flying in a 51 year old Liberator, something I never dreamed of way back in 1944. So in June of that year the story was complete as Lt. Al Dexter and I sat in the cockpit of "Diamond Lil" at Horsham St. Faiths in Norwich, the wartime pilot and the young English schoolboy reunited again in a free world and flying in a Liberator once more, but this time as two pilots, with so many great memories thanks to the kindness and friendship of the 2nd Air Division USAAF, whose unique Memorial we will serve until we too fold our wings. They came as friends, they stayed as friends, they have remained friends and we and future generations of East Anglians will always remember them with pride and affection.



How The Americans Took 170,000 War Dead Home

By Iain Walker (From the 8th AF News)

One of the closely-guarded secrets of the 1940's was the fact that the Americans took 170,000 war dead home for burial. As part of this massive repatriation almost 6,000 bodies were returned from Britain. And while the Americans had decided that no cost was too great to rebury the fallen at home, the British Government kept the operation secret for one reason: They could not afford to do the same. The total cost of shipping almost 170,000 bodies back to America was \$164 million. The journey from Britain began at the American Military Cemetery at Madingley, four miles from Cambridge. The bodies were dug up, identified and placed in bronze caskets. They were loaded in a siding at Cambridge Station on to a special train which was so long and heavily laden that it had to meander on a 200-mile journey to Wales to avoid tight bends and steep gradients. At a special enclosure at Cardiff Docks throughout 1948 and the next spring, America's dead were taken aboard U. S. transport ships for the journey to New York. In 1946, Congress had passed a special War Dead Act giving every American next-of-kin the right for the return of their dead. It was not reported in British newspapers at the time. Confidential Foreign Office and Home Office files, now open to public scrutiny, reveal how Prime Minister Clement Attlee and Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin were tearful that news of the huge project might leak out. In a 1948 letter, a Foreign Office official, Mr. J.G.P. Spicer, says: "We must be anxious to avoid giving publicity to the American repatriation operations, as the Imperial War Graves Commission have decided not to adopt the same policy, and if the American scheme became known it might have serious repercussions." His colleague, Mr. C.G. Kemball hears indignant complaints to newspapers and

members of Parliament from irate next-of-kin of British War dead who will ask why American corpses are treated differently from ours." But the American Embassy, through Third Secretary Wayne Snyder, quickly cooled Whitehall anxieties. In a letter to Bevin he says: "I wish to state again that my Government has no intention of creating embarrassment."

Gangs of local and Polish laborers were hired to dig up the thousands of graves in Britain. But of the hundreds involved in the operation, only a dozen or so key officers and railway personnel knew the full story. And only a few survive. One is the retired station-master at Cambridge, Mr. Morris Lawn, now in his seventies and living in Thorpe, Norwich. He said: "The train was one of the most handsome things anyone could imagine. Inside there were white enameled walls and black tile floors. The coffins were so heavy, it could only take ten to a carriage. No one who saw it passing on the lines suspected what the real cargo was. We were all sworn to secrecy." The American Military Cemetery at Madingley is one of the most impressive monuments to the fallen. The Superintendent, Mr. Joseph Cetola and his assistant, Mr. James Shaffer, have been there since the war. Mr. Shaffer said: "It was a big task, digging up all those boys. But it was done with the utmost decency and respect". Mr. Shaffer went to Cardiff Docks to see the first coffins loaded. Behind the high security fence, a British Army Guard of Honour snapped smartly to attention. Ice covered the dockside paving stones. Not a sound broke the silence. The Yanks were going home.

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UNRELATED?....(Continued from page 6)

developed, did they realize the extent he really went to, to protect his fleet. He was recognized as a hero and given one of the nation's highest military honors. And as you know, the O'Hare Airport was also named after him.

Prior to this time in Chicago, there was a man named Easy Eddie, he was working for a man you've all heard about, Al Capone. Al Capone wasn't famous for anything heroic, but he was notorious for the murders he'd committed and the illegal things he'd done. Easy Eddie was Al Capone's lawyer and he was very good. In fact, because of his skill, he was able to keep Al Capone out of jail. To show his appreciation, Al Capone paid him very well. He not only earned big money, he would get extra things, like a residence that filled an entire Chicago City block. The house was fenced, and he had live-in help and all of the conveniences of the day. Easy Eddie had a son. He loved his son and gave him all the best things while he

was growing up; clothes, cars, and a good education. And because he loved his son he tried to teach him right from wrong. But one thing he couldn't give his son was a good name, and a good example.

Easy Eddie decided that this was much more important than all the riches he had given him. So, he went to the authorities in order to rectify the wrong he had done. In order to tell the truth, it meant he must testify against Al Capone, and he knew that Al Capone would do his best to have him killed. But he wanted most of all to try to be an example and to do the best he could to give back to his son, a good name. So he testified. Within the year, he was shot and killed on a lonely street in Chicago.

This sounds like two unrelated stories....

But Butch O'Hare was Easy Eddie's son.

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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 April 15, 2000. *Kathy Jackson*

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