



# HERITAGE HERALD

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Periodical of the Heritage League of the Second Air Division (USAAF)

## “St. Louis Countdown!”

### President's Message

—*Brian Mahoney*

Under Membership VP Marybeth Dyer, our recent membership renewal solicited donations to support The League, the Memorial Library, the Museum in Savannah, and The Friends of the Second Air Division Memorial (in England). Thank you very much for your generosity, especially in these tough times. More than enabling many worthy activities, it heartens us as volunteers.

Many have elected to receive their *Herald* electronically, which will allow us to realize savings now, and streamline production and delivery under the innovative lead of Communications VP Laurie Bedus.

We understand that The Friends are going through a challenging period, and may be reorganizing, clarifying and adjusting their own mission. We remain thankful to all of them for the magnificent USAAF airfield tour guidance they have offered hundreds of visiting parties,

*It's not too late to join your Heritage League friends in St. Louis for the Annual Convention.*

and year-in, year-out support of the Memorial Library and its programs. They, too, are 'all volunteer,' in it for all the right reasons. It is implicit in our mission, and kindred hearts, to support them in combination and as individuals, as they find new, appropriate ways to "never forget." We wish our fellow Heritage Memorial Friends godspeed; we will always remember your contributions.

I HOPE THAT MANY OF YOU WILL BE SEEING US IN ST. LOUIS, WHERE WE MEET 'ALONGSIDE' THE 8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, OCTOBER 11-16.

My colleagues on the Executive Committee are excited and refining plans for how we will 'bring something to the party.' It may be possible to still get included as you read this, but do not delay another day; please go to [http://www.](http://www.heritageleague.org/reunions.htm)

Brian Mahoney, 467th BG



[heritageleague.org/reunions.htm](http://heritageleague.org/reunions.htm) right away and lock down room and reunion registration.

It is biannual election time for the League, and Nominations Committee Co-chairs Irene Hurner and Jonathan Bickel are preparing a slate to suggest to 'members present and voting' at our Annual Business Meeting during the convention. We hope to enroll other 2AD descendants while there, and learn more about 'mission overlap,' as well as defining differences, of our two 'perpetual organizations, while socializing with

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# 23rd Annual Business Meeting Minutes

## September 11, 2010

Omni Royal Orleans Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana

Draft minutes 23rd Heritage League Business meeting

The General Business Meeting of the Heritage League (HL) of the Second Air Division Association was called to order by President Brian Mahoney (467th/492nd son) at 11.25 am on September 11, 2010 at the Omni Royal Orleans Hotel, New Orleans, Louisiana.

Invocation: A prayer was given by Ed Zobac (445th son) and Michael Simpson (445th son) led in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Greetings: President Mahoney welcomed all members and guests and thanked all for supporting the Heritage League over the years. He paid tribute to all contributors and notables among us, including four British Governors Matthew Martin, Andrew Hawker, Anthony Harmer and David Gurney, Trust Librarian, Libby Morgan from Norwich, UK, John Marx (93rd son) and President of the 93rd BG. He gave thanks to all veterans, Bob Books (392nd son and HL webmaster). A minute of silence was held for all victims of 9/11/2001.

The League continues to lay Memorial Day wreaths at five overseas cemeteries, Henri-Chapelle, Margrathen, Ardennes, Cambridge and Normandy. Brian hopes to be present at Ardennes next Memorial Day on a cycling tour with his brother and cousin.

Brian remarked the HL will not be hosting the 64th Annual 2nd Air Division Association Convention but standby ready to help as deputies.

Brian acknowledged the fine way that The governors had extended the intent of the defunct Fulbright Librarian Program, and that the replacement "American Presence" in the Library is doing well.

Minutes: The Minutes from the Heritage League's 22nd Annual General Meeting in Chicago were offered for review. As they had been reviewed with a preliminary ExCom approval and found to be a correct record, Irene Hurner (453rd daughter) moved they be accepted, Mike Simpson seconded and the motion was carried.

Report of the Delegate Committee: President Mahoney declared all voting HL members present as official delegates. The Heritage League of the Second Air Division Association is a non-profit, non-political organization composed of U.S. veterans and registered with the Internal Revenue Service under Tax Code Section 501 (c) (19). It's TIN (Tax Identification Number) is 36-3590698. As such, certain income tax considerations apply to us in the performance of official organizational duties. The reasonable cost to such attendees is construed to be a charitable contribution and may be deductible by those who itemize deductions on their annual income tax returns. The Heritage League cannot provide advice on these matters. Members are advised to seek their own professional

advice as needed.

Irene Hurner moved this report be accepted as correct, motion was seconded. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Sue Risley could not attend and Brian reported in her absence. Our expenses have decreased by finding a more permanent newsletter layoutist who works well and has kept the costs down in producing the Heritage Herald.

Membership Report: Marybeth Dyer (458th daughter) reported we have 247 paying members. We have 139 Honorary Lifetime Members (HLM) who do not pay and receive a complimentary membership with full benefits. Our membership has increased by 10 and she encouraged all to

Minutes 23rd Annual HL AGM cont. page 2

take some membership applications home to share with others. We have started the eHerald to keep members

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

veterans, descendants and researchers of all three divisions of the Mighty Eighth. Our meeting (schedule to be posted soon to our web page) will feature recognitions, reports on 'the state of The League,' and a broad intro and welcome to guests and new members. Your presence will make it even more special, when we make recognition presentations to some special veterans and some of their hard-working descendants, too.

With our friends in the 392nd BGA (who are noted both for their research acumen and their gracious socializing),

we will offer hospitality to friends old and new in a 'day room' and 'hospitality room' operation, at least from Thursday onward, and hope you will join. Our 'webguy,' Bob Books, and VP for Volunteers Ben Jones set up excellent historical displays and a 'donations' bar, not be missed!

It bears repeating: the annual meeting of the Heritage League, beyond the brief business, is a great, continuing social gathering, where we always actively welcome all who are interested in our mission of honoring and remembering

the services and sacrifices made in WW II by the men and women of the Second Air Division. Spread the word in your family and among those for whom the story of 'your veteran' has had emotional traction.

As we go forward, collaborating with like minded organizations, and offering opportunities for all to help in meaningful ways, we ask your help in making the League visible and effective. Our 'annual party' is a big way we recharge, and we hope you can join this year and for many to come.

## Webpages We Wike

-by Siwwy Wabbit

<http://www.2ndair.org.uk/> The newly designed website for the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library (in Norwich, England) rolled out several months back. Librarian Libby Morgan and her capable staff are to be congratulated for this wonderful effort, on top of the important work they are already doing, keeping a vibrant 'face of America' presented in East Anglia. Take a few moments following the attractive front-page links, to see the width and depth of their programs, and 'feel the quality.' You will see why so many of our members consistently check off a contribution to 'The Library' in our annual membership renewal campaigns.

<http://www.8thafhs.org/> In October of this year, for the first time, the League will hold its annual membership meeting alongside "the other big perpetual organization," the 8th Air Force Historical Society. If you are not already a member, you can get an orientation on their similar mission, chapter list, history and activities. On their front page, you will see that they have also launched a YouTube channel, with a few historic newsreel clips on WW II airpower by Walter Cronkite, and a welcoming message from their board. Join us in looking out for latest convention details there, too, by clicking on the 'About Us' tab and then selecting 'Reunions.'

<http://www.crew713.com/> Follow progress in developing an engaging, full length documentary, by our member, Alex Mena. He is documenting the crew with which his father served from North Pickenham, the first of only six to finish a tour with the very-hard-luck 492nd BG, in its short time on combat in 1944.

<http://www.carlisle.army.mil/AHEC/> Individuals and organizations looking for serious conservation and research support in selecting a repository for their significant USAAF historical holdings, should visit this site. The 44th BGA has entrusted the large and significant corpus of their research and records to this fully endowed, very professional institution, just outside the famous Carlisle Barracks (Army installation in south-central Pennsylvania). Their scope ranges from Continental Congress days, through the Civil War, to the present day Army, deployed in Iraq and Afghanistan. The independent US Air Force was established in 1947; our WW II era veterans were in the Army Air Corps (USAAC) in the early days of the war, later the US Army Air Forces (USAAF).

<http://www.aviastar.org/index2.html> The Virtual Aircraft Museum is a handy reference for quickly checking out that 'unfamiliar-to-me' plane you hear the vet mention in passing, or to let you drill down deeper for more type-variant info on a particular familiar plane or specific tail-number aircraft. Warning: you can lose yourself here!

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# Daily Life at

## For Home Front Heroes: Sept. 1944

by Steven P. Puhl



Rosie helps to manufacture B-24s at a blistering pace at Willow Run.

September 1944... The Allies have a strong foothold in Western Europe and have moved north through France having liberated Paris and are approaching Belgium. The Army Air Force and Bomber Command continue its around-the-clock saturation bombing of key German cities. In the Pacific, American forces are fiercely engaged with the Japanese at Peleliu while continuing their island hopping campaign approaching ever closer to the Japanese homeland. Meanwhile, back in the United States, the "Arsenal of Democracy" continues on "maximum effort" pouring out wartime materials 24/7. At one such facility outside of Detroit, The Ford Willow Run B-24 Bomber Plant maximizes its daily routine of two assembly lines with 9-hour assembly shifts per day on a five-day schedule. This was a far cry from September 1942 when the first Liberator "struggled" out of hangar door #1. Henry Ford's dream, however, of "a bomber an hour" was realized in March 1944 when Willow Run produced 453 aircraft in 468 hours for the month. Production would remain strong throughout the summer and into October of 1944.

What must it have been like working in this colossus of American Industry that Charles A. Lindbergh called "the Grand Canyon of the mechanized world?" How was an infrastructure built around this behemoth so quickly? What did the future hold for the more than 42,000 employees? In the global picture, WWII had begun for some in 1939, but for those in the USA, Pearl Harbor was the focal onset for all Americans. For those on the factory floor at Willow Run, however, the focus was on the present moment, not the future. Let's take a snapshot in time back to September 1944 as seen thru the eyes of a typical worker, a "Rosie" who was a riveter in Dept 936: Center Wing, Vertical and who "really got around in the plant," which for her was "her home-away-

from-home."

*Today, I am running a bit behind, and I didn't want to be late as I haven't missed a day or been late since I hired in "way back" in March of 1943, but the traffic was really jammed up today even with that new tri-level overpass in front of the plant. Then, there is always that line at the time card racks! But the truth is, I got a speeding ticket on my Harley and will now have to pay a fine out of my hard earned cash at the State Police Post in Ypsilanti. Yep, that's right, "cash!" We get cash in our pay envelopes, even \$2.00 bills, but I hear that they will soon be going to "payroll checks." We are still running at full tilt, and there is so much happening in the Plant. I've finally gotten used to seeing all silver planes that I think they call "natural metal finish" (NMF) instead of the olive drab (OD). This change occurred in February, but there were still some of the ODs hanging around the Plant. I'm gonna miss those OD-colored planes because you could always tell that they were from our Willow Run Plant by the even, scalloped under-fuselage paint scheme, but I'm sure that will eliminate a lot of weight.*

*Last week one of my friends had to stay over to finish some electrical work in a cockpit and was telling me about this old guy who came snooping around. He laughed as he told me the story because he was sweating and all "cramped" under the left side instrument panel repairing a wire that got pinched when the guy arrived. He realized there was someone in a suit bent over him, and it wasn't his boss! My friend asked him to leave, as he wasn't supposed to have any "outsiders" in the plane. I guess this was because there had been some suspicion of "alleged sabotage" in the past, and we were always on tight security. The old guy left without uttering a word and smiling. Come to find out later*



# Willow Run

*that it was "ole Henry" himself just wandering through the Plant! Can you imagine that?*

*At lunch, the other day, I was talking with one of my co-workers who asked what might happen when this war is over. I knew I would be okay and prayed everyday that my fiancé would get home safely from the war, but I still wondered if there would be some kind of work here for me or if I would be let go. However, I was more concerned about the right now! Since I had forgotten my lunch, I bought a bite to eat from the "lunch wagon" that services the factory floor. We get 30 minutes for lunch and a fifteen-minute "break" in the morning and afternoon. Some of the guys refer to it as the "the roach coach," but the food isn't too bad. It really is a good idea since the Plant is almost a mile long. I actually like taking my lunch with me while I walk thru the assembly area and see all the planes queued up. Right now, the assembly line has what they call the "L" variant (B24L-10-FO) being completed. I noticed something different when I stopped to stare at the ones just past what we call the "tax turn" where the planes rotate 90 degrees to finish the assembly process. There are NO rear turrets or machine guns. I asked a friend what had happened. He mentioned that these were going to the Pacific and they would be fitted with the appropriate armament at a Modification Center (MOD). Well, I learned something new about the planes that I rivet every day, but in my little world of Department 936, I don't see a whole lot of the rest of the Plant.*

*Like I mentioned earlier, the new overpass in front of the Plant is really something. Although completed in September 1942, it is always jammed up! It is supposed to be the 1st one like it in the USA. On top of that, they are continuing this huge highway near here called an "Interstate." Someone told me it would eventually go coast-to-coast. Just in the short time I've been here, the airport is completed; they've built an entire village called West Willow and keep adding to it; added to the Plant; built an army base; and trained thousands of people from all over. The down side is that a lot also quit or were fired, so I hear that they "hire and fire" a couple thousand each week. This is hard to believe! One thing that always annoyed me was the "quality issues" especially with this type of "people turnover." I'm a perfectionist, and when I heard in a training session that on the early variants, there were hundreds of "squawks" (that's what the quality defects were called), on each plane I wondered how "our boys" would even get in these planes! The good news is that we are now approaching as a Plant less than 20 on each plane, and they are minor, on-site repairs. For my part, I sort of like to etch my initials on the bottom side of the section I rivet. This is my personal way to let "the*



The "Roach Coach" serves lunch at the Plant.

*boys" know that I take pride in what I do!*

*I just remembered something I think is pretty neat! I saw three "famous" people in this Plant during the last year. I keep hearing rumors that many have been here including FDR himself, but I actually saw Clark Gable in my department and "Lindy" was in our department, but he is on the factory floor all the time it seems. Also Gloria Swanson was here for a War Bond Drive, but only saw her from a distance. Clark was also on a War Bond Drive promotion (thought I was gonna faint when he looked right at me!) Anyway Charles A. Lindbergh's old friend, Henry Ford, hired him in March 1942. I gotta say this, according to all my friends, he is on the floor a lot, makes recommendations for improvements, talks to the people and is getting things done! I think he is a big part of the reason that our quality "squawks" have also dramatically decreased. I've also heard that he really speaks his mind with those Ford bosses about making production and making it right!*

*Well, I think I've rambled on enough, and it's getting near quitting time. I think today I'm going to stop by the Orange Lantern Saloon as it's actually within walking distance from the Plant. A nice glass of cold draft beer would taste good, and 10 cents won't break me. It's also a good place to catch up on the gossip and real news. I gotta find out who this "special visitor" is who will be visiting us in a month or so. I enjoy my friends, my work and my paychecks! It's a good life for me, and I have a little room in town and my Harley. I'll catch up on what else is happening in the Plant. Oh, yeah, the "speeding fine..." Maybe tomorrow would be better as it's payday!*

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# USAAF Archaeology:

By Brian Mahoney

Have you noted that many who are interested in WW II history, often have a hobby or two that support the interest? For my part, I love maps, and the way they yield up layer upon layer of information, rewarding careful study and ‘reading.’ Similarly, as a lifelong photographer, I tend to ‘see the way a camera sees,’ and glean evidence from historic photos often unnoticed by others.

My hobbies intersect powerfully with my historical interest.

late father’s two WW II bases, USAAF Stations # 143 (North Pickenham, with the 492nd BG) and #145, Rackheath (with the 467th BG). My good fortune went further: Dad’s library included, among several gems, the three-part ‘bible’ of “Mighty Eighth” titles by British author Roger Freeman. I had corresponded with him and with my first Rackheath hosts, David and Jean Hastings. We have friends—met by my father during the war, and now into our 3rd generation



***Recent aerial of North Pickenham. Southern extension of main runway has been removed since 2001 and several modern windmill generators installed since this image taken. Much airfield, and some other sites’ concrete slabs remain, but very few structures.***

I want to share some powerful methods of ‘virtually’ exploring East Anglian remnants of the Second Air Division. Of course, the virtual trip you take will really pay off as a planning exercise for an actual trip. If you have never made one, or it’s time to go back and explore a little further afield.

During the 1990s, I had the good luck to have the health, funds, and time, to do some touristic ‘archaeology’ around my

of family friendship—actually living in the stable close to the Rackheath Estate. And along the way, I befriended Perry Watts (467th historian and friend) and North Pickenham experts Allan Sirrell and author Russell Ives.

The airfields themselves—or the very great variety of what is left of them—is what is most easily found from the map, or especially, ‘satellite’ (photographic imagery) views. If one also has a WW II period map with full information on the living, technical, administrative, mess and other sites, some of these details, where they survive intact or decrepit, can still be made out. In the case of sites you are finding for the first time, you will soon acquire the skill to squint at the map at a low resolution scale and guess where to zoom in and/or switch to im-

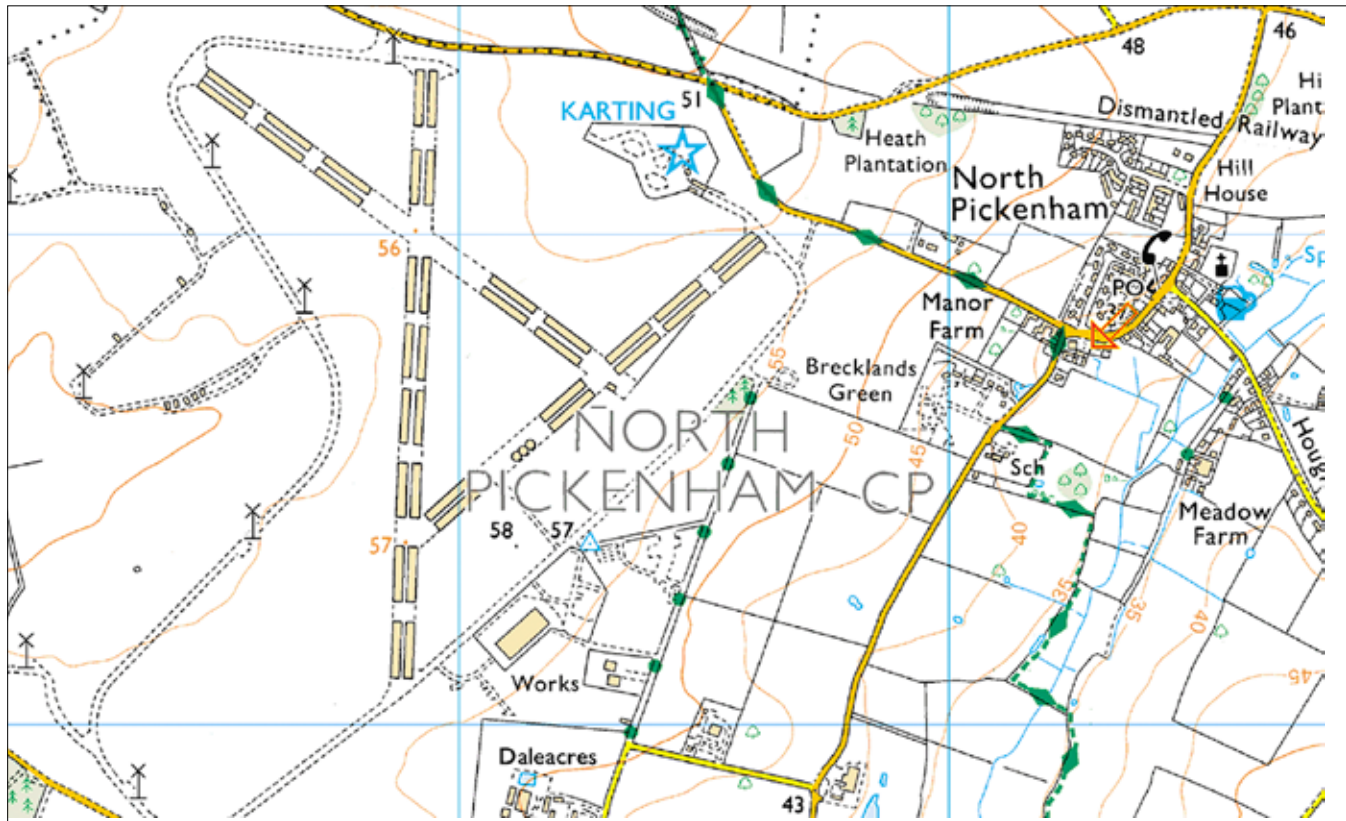


# Internet mapping shows airfield remnants from on high

agery. Many runways did not get fully removed for highway fill after the war, and serve as over-engineered foundations for such uses as Bernerd Matthews LLC turkey sheds, karting tracks, wind farms, telecom towers, or sport sailplane and parachute companies, or even combinations of these. Some of the runways or surrounding 'peri-tracks' (peripheral, or encircling roads) that have been lost, still shaped the planning of commercial or residential developments, or the planting of forests or fields, and leave a visible trace.

Check out the three 'new tools' (web resources) listed later; install all if you can. Each is fairly intuitive, so 'playing' is the same as studying.

If you have a WW II period map of the airfield, you will be able to do a 'pattern recognition exercise,' by navigating to the town in England, switching to the 'satellite' (imagery) view if needed, and hunting for remnant shapes. In the case of some bases, like Rackheath, there has been substantial loss of



This article will illustrate some of the power of combining internet maps and satellite/aerial photo imagery, with period maps of the bases, and possibly our own experiences 'on that ground.'

## How to tour, virtually

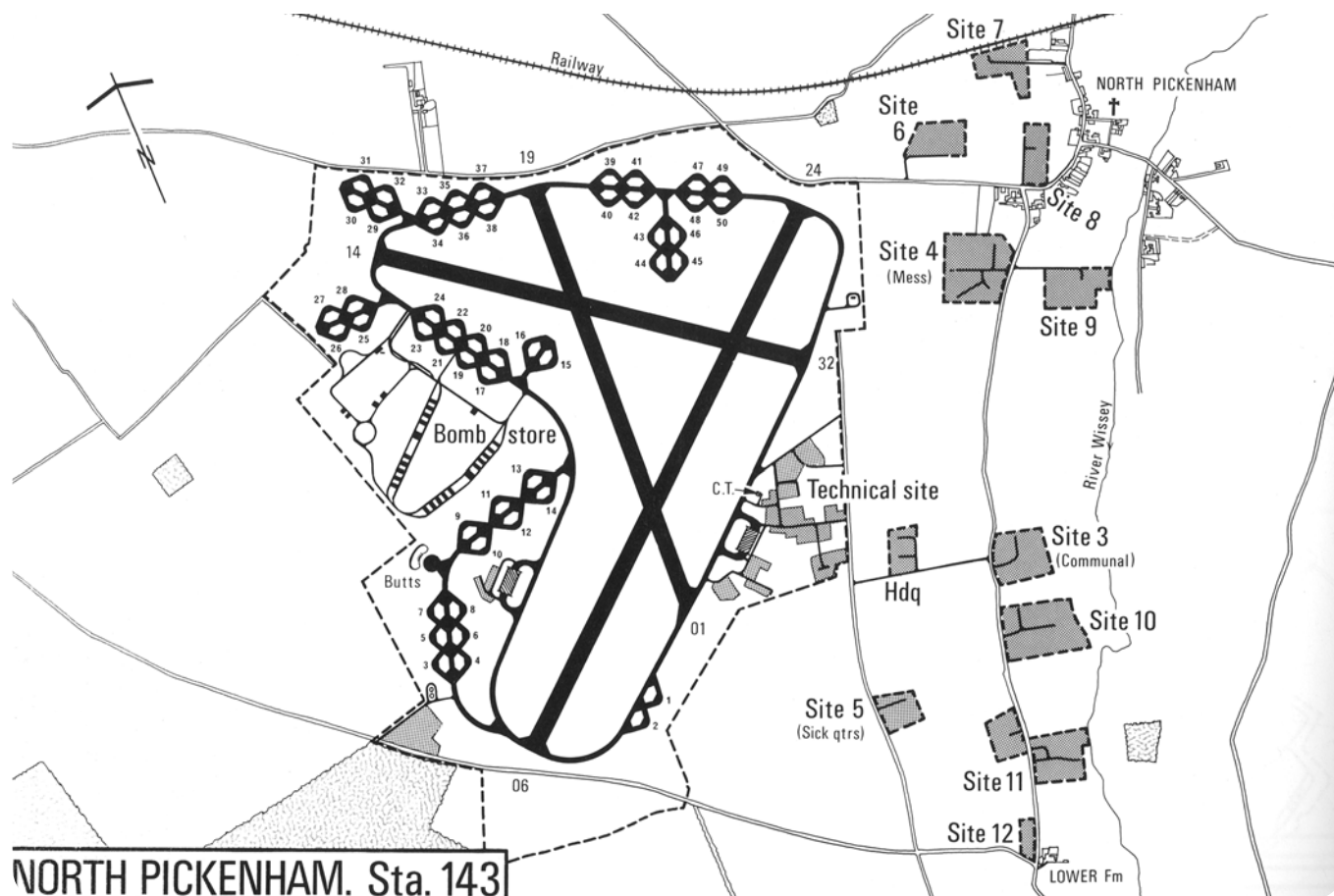
You do not need to know where exactly Attlebridge was, but you will need a place name for your veteran's base, not just the group number, to find it in the mapping aids. If you need to link to a Second Air Division bomb or fighter group by its number to a location, you could use the front page of the Heritage League website (<http://www.heritageleague.org/>) as a 'key.'

*Author was able to scale this excellent period-recreation map using known length of main runway, relied on True North indication, compass and declination angle data in 1999 to find overgrown slab foundation of control tower ("C. T." at center of map) in relation to still-standing main hangar.*

the characteristic peripheral track and the main runways, but enough distinguishing bits remain, in the correct relation to one another, that it will eventually 'jump out' at you on the map. Of course, the interesting thing about this, like much of aerial photography, is that some durable patterns emerge at substantial viewing distances, which we completely miss when we are 'down in the weeds.' Some bases have much or all of

## USAAF Archaeology: Internet mapping shows airfield remnants from on high continued

Johan Kuiper



***Dotted lines show still-remaining old concrete; new windmills, kart track on repurposed hardstands 47, 48, 50.***

the heavy concrete from the airfield site intact and photogenic; North Pickenham is in this category. I suspect that the knowledgeable would have little difficulty spotting it from the Space Station, if they had a clear day over England. Sixty-six years following the war, the bases have changed in a range of ways. Some leave only the faintest trace now, while others have at least parts very recognizable. The 100th BG (of the Third Air Division, based at Thorpe Abbots, Suffolk) features a perfectly restored tower and adjoining bits of peri-track, runway, and hardstandings. It feels very authentic, standing on that ground! Restored and reclaimed buildings at Seething and Hethel, in 'our' Second Air Division, represent awesome volunteer efforts over the years, though you can only truly appreciate these by actual touring.

If you do NOT have a period map of an airfield, you will not have the benefit of recognizing its particular shapes, but once you have looked at enough of these, you will come to 'see' places where the road network seems to have left a blank area (in 'map' views) or recognize hardstands, runway intersections, random straight lines of 'road' where most are curvy,

and other tell-tale signs of these fields, typically in imagery views. Indeed, I am now regularly finding RAF fields by noting 'obvious' signs, then doing a browser search on the nearest named town with the work 'airfield' added. It has not failed me yet!

Keep an eye on the scale indicator, or the 'zoom in bar' in whichever mapping application you use; my own experience is that too far out makes it hard to find the 'pattern' indications of an airfield, but too low down is just as bad; you can miss entire areas trying to methodically cover the region displayed based (only) on the name of a nearby parish or town. In Google Earth, I favor the slider being zoomed in one notch from the middle position.

Another suggestion: if your period map did not make clear where True North was, be prepared to 'rotate' the pattern for which your eye will actively search over the terrain. I have seen several presented with South at or near the top, and various other compass rotations.

I keep finding new powers in these online tools. Google Earth will offer you elevations at your cursor, typically rounded to the nearest foot or meter (the Preference choices are rich). Its ruler tool will let you click two points and tell you their distance and the heading of the line, in degrees.





Great way to confirm a runway whose length and heading are known from other sources. I was curious in one case to know if all of what I saw at one point was full width (150 feet wide) main runway, and by zooming in close and using the tool carefully, confirmed that the original contractor conformed precisely to the Type A Airfield Standard Specification of the day!

### The New Tools:

<http://www.streetmap.co.uk/> Interactive product of the Ordnance Survey, the UK analog to US Geologic Survey. Beautiful site with visually pleasing presentations, rich with detail, for which you will want to be minding the 'map key' link at left along the bottom of the viewing pane. You will want to keep its separate window running. Scrolling is by use of symbols in the page or click-and drag only. There are ads around the frame, which somewhat diminishes the useable area of the viewing pane. The database of place names is astoundingly rich; even if you only have the name of the tiniest parish church or an old estate, you will find your location from a sometimes impressive list. Google will get you in a few magnifications further, but the excellent labeling and keying of these maps fully compensates. The style of mapping shifts for the two closest resolutions, and some of the over-

*Rail line and Salhouse station shown in 1944, both are still in use. From restored tower one can still contemplate the extent and expanse of the three intersecting runways. A controversial proposal to develop dense 'EcoTown' on remaining open airfield space would profoundly change the character of this relatively rural, historic setting.*

laid typographic info is dropped. A side panel gives you links to businesses and accommodations in the area, in the event this article inspires you to 'go beyond the virtual,' and visit your **Old Man's old airfield**.

<http://maps.google.com/> For this type of work, it is good to use the map mode to get to where you think you belong, but then a great revelation to switch to satellite view to see photo reconnaissance imagery, which more often than not is detailed enough to zoom in fully. Once you know your way around the area, you may want to toggle off the 'labels' (under the 'traffic' panel) to see detail beneath or on roadways. The little 'viewer on the ground' icon can be dragged from the zoom scale into the image, hunting for places where there may be photos, or even continuous video tracks available. The names database may not be as rich, understandably, as in the UK resource below. Your arrow keys can be used

## USSAF Archeology Continued from Page 9

singly or even in combinations for moving about, and those with scrolling mice or touch mice or trackpads will quickly get addicted to the ease of zooming in and out, though in imagery modes this will take some processing time and may test the bandwidth of your connection. Hard to ascertain when the image you are looking at was taken; I know that some of the US imagery only gets refreshed every few years. Map display scale does not change when you resize the browser window, on this or the other sites.

Google Earth Not to be mistaken with the resource above, this is a web-based application running huge graphic and geo-spatial and -textual content for you through a client application, which you download on your computer at <http://www.google.com/earth/download/ge/agree.html>. Your 'local' client—on your own computer—interfaces with the 'real,' very powerful tool 'out there' on the web.

I will not try to tell you all of its capabilities, but encourage you to check it out. Of especial interest for this exercise is that its imagery is often far more recent and far better detailed than that seen through Google Maps and other 'satellite' view interfaces on the web. You can bookmark locations, put editable notes and marks on maps, and even construct virtual 'tours' that 'fly' viewers from one location to the next, with the zooming you indicate, and so forth. You can send the file that creates the tour, so others may have the experience you assembled for them, if they also have the client installed.

### Traditional Resources

I hope that by dint of my personal relationship with the late, great Roger Freeman, granddaddy to all of the amateur historians of the 'Mighty Eighth,' I will be forgiven for reproducing in this article some of the extremely accurate USSAF Station maps (by the late Norman Ottaway), which I have scanned from my cherished copy of *The Mighty Eighth*

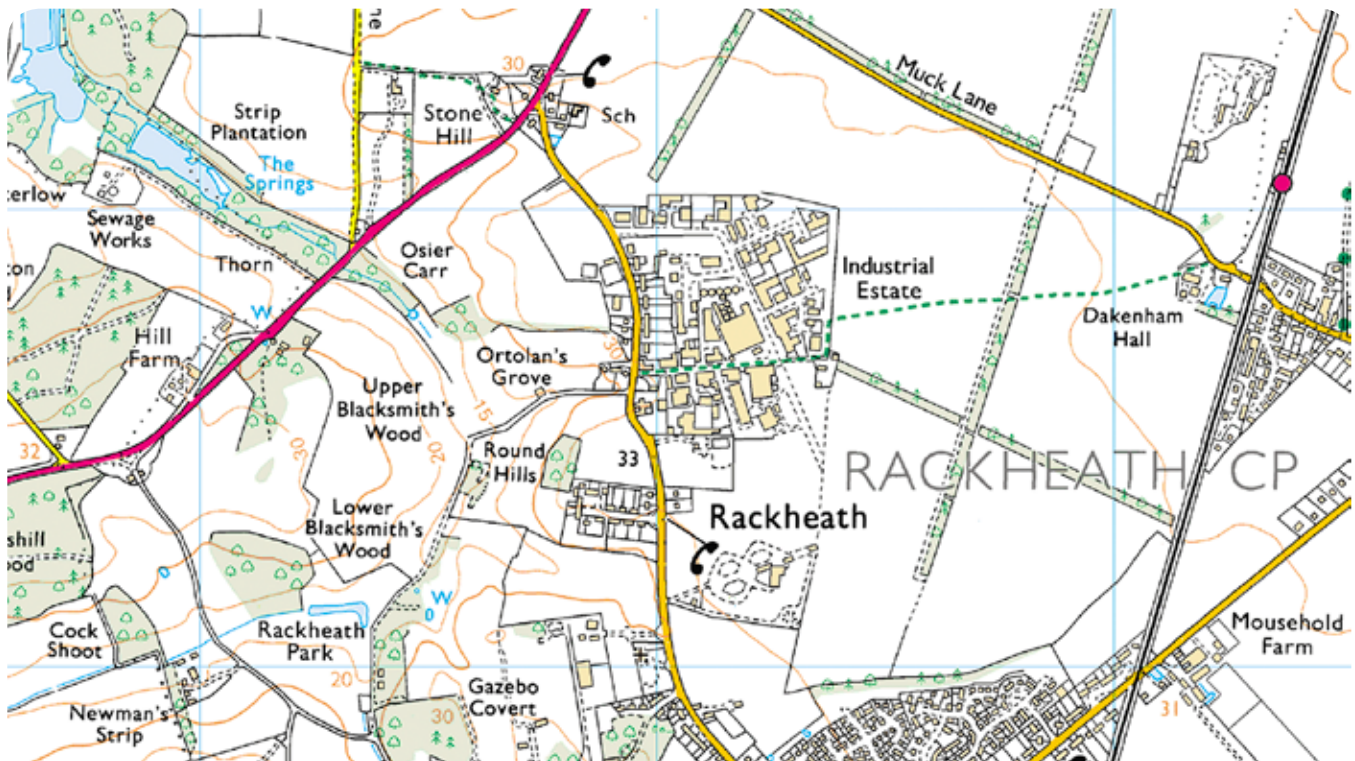
***Rackheath offers contrasting case: time has taken away most of the concrete, but left scores of the 'temporary' structures. Note remaining hardstands 44-47, segment of full-150-foot width of main runway, dense recent residential development at 'New Rackheath.'***

War Manual, published by Jane's New York, London, Sidney, ©1984.

Naturally, books or websites about a particular group or field will give indications (sometimes coordinates) that can get you there. Online searching in Amazon may find you post-war memento books printed by veterans of many of the 2AD fighter and bomb groups.

### Final Thoughts

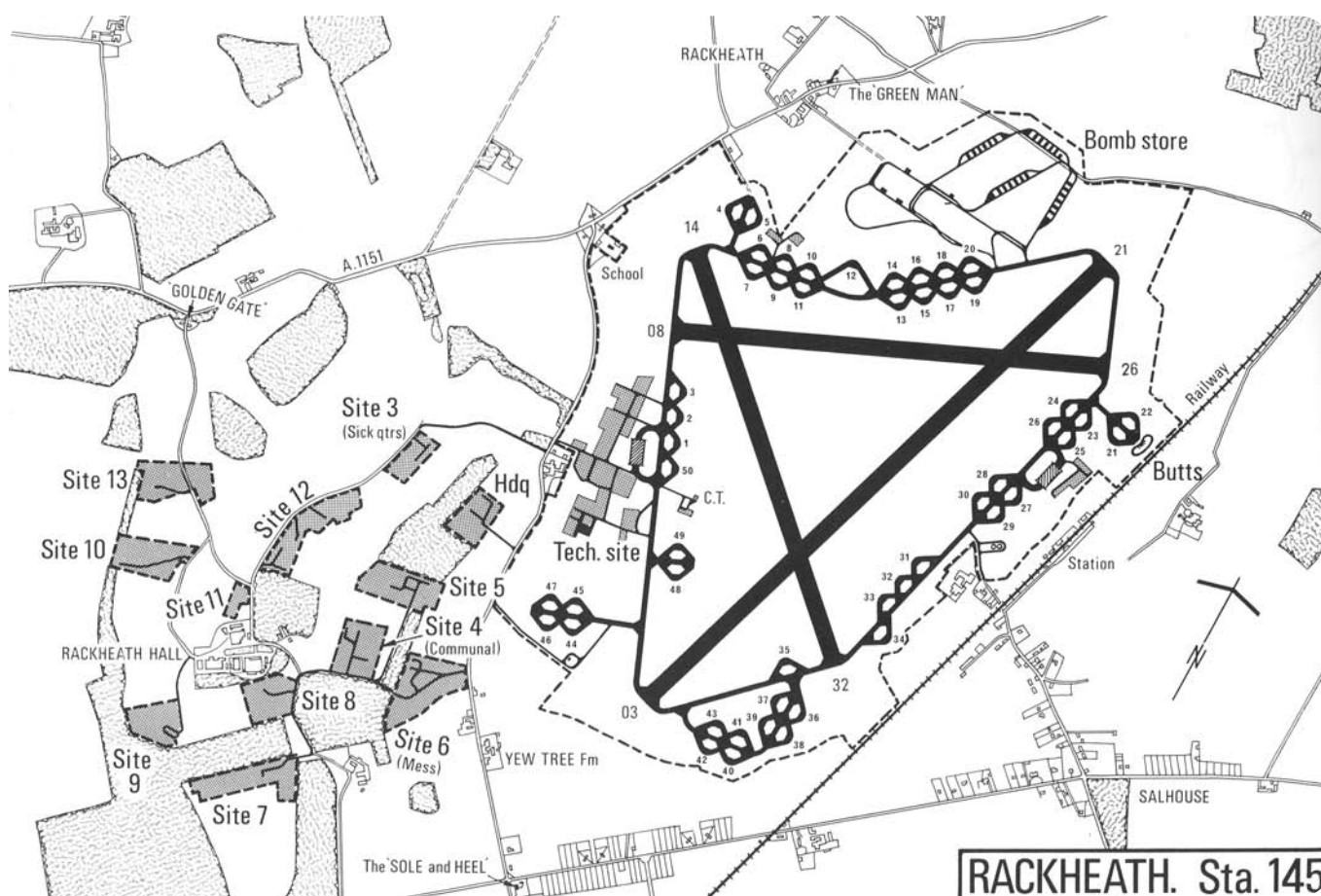
Need one or more of the Ottaway maps? I will be glad to shoot you one; email me your request (all League contacts





are listed on the back cover of *The Herald*). If you want other support with 'geo-graphics,' maybe I can give you a short tutorial over Skype; let me know. If you still have 'your vet' available, you might want to record his comments as you virtually roam about his old stomping grounds... I hope it might elucidate a story or two that we otherwise would lose. Good luck, and let us know any new tricks you can share with the rest of us!

*Dashed line (left to right, near center) jogs near wonderfully restored control tower, represents preserved right-of-way footpath dating to Roman times. Industrial site is vibrant; many new structures surround a score of WW II ones in different states of preservation. Largest is original T-2 hangar.*





By Philip Mosley

# Bill Cross (1917-

At ninety-one Bill Cross was sharp as a tack, attributing it partly to good fortune and partly to regular sessions of bridge from which he often emerged a winner. His mental and physical agility had led him to be a six-time national seniors table tennis champion and had clearly served him well in the 8th Army Air Corps during World War Two as a navigator and bombardier on thirty missions in B-24 Liberators, an outstanding service that twice won him the Distinguished Flying Cross. Bill was also a keen bowler and golfer, while Eleanor, his wife of sixty years, was quite a singer—a member of the Sweet Adelines.

I became acquainted with Bill in the year before his death on March 23, 2009. He had been an active member of the 8th social group in the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre area of northeastern Pennsylvania where I have lived and worked since immigrating to the USA in 1988. My own connection to this circle of veterans is that I am from Norfolk, England, and grew up in the post-war years surrounded by the active presence of the USAF at bases like Sculthorpe and by the 'ghost fields' of the former 8th USAAF. A high school friend and I liked to bicycle around those hauntingly derelict places and to imagine what they must have been like in wartime, rather like in that memorable scene near the beginning of *Twelve O'Clock High*. And I learned to drive on some of those abandoned runways albeit in a tiny English sedan rather than in one of those huge American cars in which we would often see GIs negotiating the narrow country roads. But then, this is not about me. It's about



Second Lieutenant Bill Cross poses in his uniform.

Bill Cross. I sat down with him at his home in Wesley Village near Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, on the afternoon of Wednesday, 30 July 2008. This is his story.

BC: When the war broke out, rather than be a ground soldier, I applied for and was accepted as an aviation cadet to be trained as a pilot, a bombardier, or a navigator. I was at the [age] limit to be accepted as a cadet: 24. I went to bombardier school, which was thirteen weeks, and when I finished training I became a 2nd lieutenant. You were an officer when you graduated any one of those

three courses. I thought I was off to an assignment to a crew, but such was not the case. I was disturbed that I didn't go. I was young, gung-ho, and didn't know any better. On reflection, being held back put me in combat at a much safer time. Unexpectedly they sent me to navigation school, which normally took the same thirteen weeks. So now I was a qualified bombardier and navigator. I was sure I was about to be assigned to a combat crew and sent overseas. Wrong again! They sent me to Boca Raton, Florida, because I was to be in the first class of radar students. The problem was the Air Force thought it had the greatest thing in the world—the Norden bomb sight—and it was a very accurate instrument, but over in Europe the AF found that at least 7 times out of 10 the target had 100% cloud cover and the

# 2009): A Tribute

bomb sight required visual sighting to aim. So the Norden was worthless on 70% of the missions. And so they came up with the idea of learning to bomb by radar.

After I got through with the training I was sent overseas—by myself, as yet unassigned to a crew. When I landed, they took me to Alconbury and I got some training in flight in the use of the radar equipment. A limited number of planes had this new equipment. I was assigned to an experienced crew—they were not going to start this new radar bombing with rookies. My crew had already flown 15 missions. I became its lead navigator. If the target was visible, the regular bombardier would take over with the Norden, but much of the time they called on me, the ‘Mickey Operator’ (they thought it could be kept secret, but the Germans knew everything!) I managed, very luckily, to get through 30 missions [mostly out of Seething with the 448th BG and some out of Halesworth with the 489th BG, 2nd Division]. At that point 30 missions in the lead were considered a tour of duty and you could go home to be an instructor. After 15 missions I lost my crew, which had completed a tour, and I had to get another crew. I came home, took a leave, then they sent me to Victorville, California where I instructed both bombing and navigation in the classroom and in the air. Some of us who came back were sent immediately to Asia with the new B-29 [Boeing Superfortress], but I was retained as an instructor. I did that until the war was over.

PM: So you had only one year in the European theater?

BC: Yes, but it was a matter of missions, not of time. When we bombed, we would fly to the initial point (IP) of the bomb run, which was about 30-35 miles long. The lead bombardier was the only one aiming. Everyone else just opened their bomb bay doors when we opened ours. When my bombs left, they toggled—it was a patterned bombing. But there were all kinds of problems. For instance, it’s funny in a way, my first mission was 10/10ths coverage and we had to use the radar equipment. The command pilot had the authority to abort the mission at any time, change the target, or go through with it. Funny but typical of those days, when we came back from that first mission I thought I did what I was supposed to do and did all right. But at the debriefing we got interrogated as to what happened and I gave my story. Then this young command pilot, a colonel, said “Bulls---! We weren’t anywhere near the target”. He couldn’t tell with 10/10ths coverage! There were great problems in trying to hit the target with radar. We flew about 5 miles up always above 20,000 feet. When you bomb, you’ve got to solve for the wind, know how far you’re upwind and in what

direction you’re tilted. It was my job, with the help of the other navigator, to figure this out. But between 25,000 feet and the ground the wind could change. So you’re solving for the wind only at the altitude you’re flying at. I couldn’t be sure. But what they tried to do the following day was to send a stripped down P38 [Lockheed Lightning]—the fastest plane we had—with a camera and go see if the target was hit. Sometimes they could do it, sometimes they couldn’t.

I got two DFCs for the work I did. One particular mission was to the submarine pens at Kiel [probably January 1944] right on the edge of the water, and with water, radar is a blank, so it makes it a very good target. We got on the bomb run but we couldn’t see the target, so ‘Mickey’ (me!) had to take over: “Bombs away!” Within 5 seconds of bombs away the clouds parted with 100% visibility, and we hit the target. I think that’s one of the DFCs I got. Nobody was sure how accurate this radar bombing was. General [Jimmy] Doolittle was the number one man in charge of the 8th and he came out with an edict one day saying, “We’re missing too many targets”. On the bomb run to the release point we used evasive action to try to get the slow German 88mm howitzer guns to miss us. Doolittle said, “From now on there’ll be no more evasive action from the IP to the bomb release. We’ll go straight and level”. And there was one big chorus of “Oh, s---!” from all the fellows flying because we were sitting ducks for 35 miles. We lost an awful lot of planes and I was just plain lucky. [The Germans] knew the lead plane was doing the aiming, so it was scary. I can’t understand how lucky I was.

We were on a mission to Magdeberg [probably February 1944], and one of our dead reckoning navigators was looking out of the turret. All of a sudden he said, “Oh, s---! What was that?” The Germans had put up a jet fighter [Messerschmitt 262s]. We never saw anything come at us so fast, much faster than any propeller plane could fly. But that turned out to be not so bad—they could only stay up in the air for 10 to 15 minutes. [On] some of our missions we had fighter escorts, and those fighter pilots picked off those little jets.

I went to Berlin twice [probably March 1944]. Berlin was the one that people were afraid to go on. The capital had the best defense. Two things worked in my favor: number one, the first time I went, halfway there my equipment went out. The colonel said, “Work on it, get it fixed.” But I couldn’t get it fixed, so I was aborted. Someone else had to take over—we did have a deputy. I went home and inasmuch as I had gone halfway I got credit for a mission.

*(Continued on page 14)*

### Bill Cross (1917-2009): A Tribute Continued from Page 13

Second [time] I was saved by another thing. Some bright guy invented 'chaff' [or 'window': pieces of aluminum foil]. If thrown out in a certain way, this chaff would throw their radar-emplaced anti-aircraft guns off.

They woke you up about three in the morning; you had breakfast, and then went into the briefing room. On the wall was a map of Europe and the bombing course for that day was laid out in ribbons. And it was all covered over with a sheet. So when you went into that room you didn't know where you were going, and everybody was looking for a comparatively easy target. When they pulled the sheet up and you found you were going to Berlin—[there was] a chorus of "Oh, s---!"

The furthest we went was to southeast Germany—[that was] as far as the 8th went—and we got shot up pretty good that day. There we were, over the target, bombs away, and "boom!"—there went the fourth engine. And number three engine started coughing 1150 miles from home. [We said], "Let's get out of here", and I thought we'd never make it, but we made it on two and a half engines.

[To conclude, here is Bill's typically witty account of a particularly hairy incident]. We were on a practice run just flying around England practicing navigation. It started to get very

foggy, so we headed back to our base and had one helluva time trying to get there. My pilot kept down to about 300 feet, so we flew under the line of the fog. It was a real sonof-a-gun trying to get back to base. In fact, at one point it was very scary. I wasn't even looking and I heard a noise and felt a shudder. I knew g----- well our plane had hit something, and we were flying at 300 feet. I reached for my parachute and backpack, looked out, and saw a B-17 (we were in a B-24). It looked like maybe our propeller had gone through its tail, and it settled down right in the trees. Somehow my pilot got our plane back. We didn't get back to our own base but to a base. He got it landed and called our base to tell them where we were and what happened. The hotshot colonel in charge of our base said, 'I'll be right over'. Well, I was still shaking from what happened and was lying down in this place. It was 10/10ths coverage down to the ground. Then you heard this plane—probably our colonel. These young hotshots weren't afraid of anything. He took three shots at the field before he finally landed. He got in and came over to us, the crew, and said, 'C'mon, get in the plane, we're going home'. I said, 'I'm not getting in anything'. He said, 'That's an order, get in the plane'. I was scared. It was only a short distance maybe five or ten minutes [in the air] given good visibility. He took three shots and finally landed in 10/10ths coverage. It was as scary as any of our missions!"

## the write stuff

### book notices & reviews

From the author of *Snowbound*, *The Last Mission* centers on fictional hero Jack Raab, who uses his older brother's papers to enlist as a B-17 waist gunner in the Army Air Corps in 1944. Feeling a call of duty to defend his country and his Jewish race from Nazi oppression, Raab goes behind his parents' back and enlists even though he is only 15 years old. Raab then enters basic training, gunnery school, and meets his crew for the first time in the novel. Raab and his crew fly several successful missions until they encounter flak over Germany and are shot down close to the end of the war. After helping his friend Chuckie Obrien escape from the burning B-17 plane, he then bails out and struggles to survive in Nazi Germany.

Author Mazer gives credit to Eighth Air Force Flyers: Bob Peel, Bob Welter, Harry

Grey, and Bill O'Malley. He then dedicates the book, "To the men I flew with in the 398th Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force during World War II, and to my crew, Godfather's Inc."



-Review by Jonathan Bickel

It is evident that the author painstakingly researched the lives of B-17 crew members before writing his historical fiction novel. This novel is a quick read and does a nice job detailing the lives of heavy bomber flyers during this period. This novel may be a good choice for teenagers interested in learning more about the Eighth Air Force. However, in Mazer's quest to be historically accurate, he uses several invectives in the novel that were common for this era. I would recommend reading the novel before recommending it to a young teenager.

The *Last Mission* is full of action and suspense and showcases the positive and negative effects of flying a heavy bomber during WWII.



### *- Minutes continued from Page 2*

apprised of current HL activities.

Communications Report: Reed Hammans could not attend. Brian reported in his absence, noting Marybeth Dyer had summed up Reed's HL contributions to the Heritage Herald adding that Reed usually puts in about 20 hours a week on the Herald. The Heritage League website [www.heritageleague.org] is doing well with Bob Books as webmaster.

VP of Volunteers Report: Ben Jones (92nd son, Norfolk native, now US citizen), our new VP of Volunteers, could not attend. Brian reported in his absence that Ben will be presenting remotely a slide show at the HL presentation later today. As an active USAF reservist and very computer capable member, Ben contributes research to the B-24.net website.

State of the HL 2010: A computerized PowerPoint Presentation was read by Brian about the history of the 2ADA and the contributions they gave during WWII, connecting what the HL does as an organization today and into the future.

- The HL's 2006 By-Laws were amended so that certain non-familial members could participate as fully voting members. We welcome all interested parties to participate although the League retains a 'Legacy Member' category to preserve a direct descendant connection.
- Since 1987 the HL has answered hundreds of individuals' research questions promoting an accurate historical perspective via our newsletter and the website, the mission here being to connect descendants with their legacy.

We collaborate with many different organizations, notably 'The Heritage Memorial Friends', aka The Friends, our reciprocal group in East Anglia.

With the 8th AF Museum in Savannah, they've prepared a secondary school curriculum guide on the history of the 8th AF during WWII and the HL helped with content suggestions and distribution of that content. There is much referring back and forth between individuals. We encourage individuals to contribute to the 8th AF's cause both in research and donations.

The League continues to interact with the 2nd AD Memorial Trust and Library in visits and the book endowment program and have a presence annually at their AGM each November. Vicki Warning, recently retired HL Representative to the Memorial Trust board was recognized for her long standing contributions.

Old Business: No matters arose. The delegate report is listed above.

New Business: We will award three certificates of appreciation to second generation individuals for their volunteer efforts in writing articles, helping with research and helping out with regional reunions.

In anticipation of helping the 2nd Air Division Association and dovetailing actions we stand ready to assist in any way. As far as Jim Guddal's proposal presented at the 2ADA ExCom meeting we will continue to search for energetic proposals and ideas in moving forward.

Convention 2011: As previously discussed.

Jim Guddal asked if the Heritage League would consider laying a wreath at the American Cemetery in Épinal, France. Brian remarked that last year's wreaths were covered financially by an 'in-kind' donation from one of our members. There are also two other possibilities, Sicily, Italy and Tripoli, Libya, North Africa.

King Schultz remarked there is another area in Southern California near San Diego for a wreath to be laid

With no other business arising the meeting was adjourned at 12:05 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Holliday, Secretary.

# Memorial for the Sachtleben Crew 607 of 492 BG (H)

-Tony Cadney

My name is Tony Cadney I am a Parish Councillor in the village of Garveston, Norfolk UK.

On the 4th June 1944 a B24 (42-95160) from 492 BG (H) crashed on the edge of our village with the loss of all the crew. Further to this, tragically two US firemen from Shipdham (44th BG) were killed by exploding munitions whilst they fought the inferno at the crash site.

The Parish Council is proposing to set up a memorial commemorating the loss of these brave young men before too many more years pass and there is a break in the living memory. Among the 300 residents, there are still a few who remember the tragic incident. I have been tasked to liaise with surviving relatives of the crew and organisations such as the Heritage League who may be interested in learning of this intended memorial.

In order to manage this task we have formulated a committee of four. Three of which are Parish Councillors, the fourth is a US citizen now domiciled in the UK. The 'chairman' of the committee (Michael Garrod) can remember the impact and explosion.

Permission has now been granted for the memorial to be sited on the Village Green space; a pleasantly maintained area of grassland in the gift of our village community. This area is readily accessible from the road with parking adjacent to our village hall. It is intended to place the memorial in a quiet corner away from the road with a backdrop of native trees and hedging to create a space of contemplation and remembrance. A bench seat will be provided for those who wish spend time with their thoughts. The memorial will consist of a brick plinth supporting a polished black marble stone on which will be engraved the date of the incident and the names of those who lost their lives. The memorial will be in the centre of our village approximately one mile south of the crash site. The aircraft would have flown directly over this location seconds before impact.

The next phase will be consolidation of the design in line with realistic costs. It is hoped that the 8th Air Force emblem and a silhouette of a B24 would be engraved along with the names of those who died. Before we can ratify the design we will have to establish what level of funding can be secured.



*The crash site is now a quiet and peaceful flower meadow.*

Unfortunately, Garveston Parish Council has strict limitations on its budget that can only be used on civic projects that directly benefit the 300 villagers. Therefore, to progress this project it has been necessary for us to establish a Garveston Liberator Memorial fund. We will be seeking donations and funding from local residents, sponsors and recognised charitable organisations. There is no reason to believe that we should not achieve the dedication ceremony on the anniversary of the D-Day Invasion on 6th

June 2012.

It is our intention to invite representatives from USAF Lakenheath to join with members of our community in the service of dedication. Furthermore, should any surviving members of the families wish to attend the ceremony, they will be made very welcome by our community and arrangements will be made for them to visit the site of crash should they wish.

The name, rank, ASN and position of late Crew 607 and the two men from 2033 Fire Fighting Platoon are shown below.

1st Lt Raymond Sachtleben (O-811444) Pilot  
2nd Lt Vernon Mueller (O-814917) Co-Pilot  
2nd Lt Gerald Hirschman (O-699931) Navigator  
F/O Wallace Krueger (T-123129) Bombardier  
S/Sgt Clarence Grimm (36802488) Engineer  
Tech/Sgt William Lasio (34600810) Radio Op  
S/Sgt Howard Schwegel (35120394) Gunner  
S/Sgt Harry Wensel (12031247) Gunner  
S/Sgt Oliver Brown (13100808) Gunner  
S/Sgt Edward DeBrular (15547122) Gunner  
Sgt Monroe Atchley (35579833) Fire Fighter

Pvt Ted Bunalski (32756508) Fire Fighter

If you or your members would be able to give advice or assist in locating surviving relatives we would be very grateful. I trust the above is of interest to you and I will gladly keep you informed as to the progress of this project in the next Herald edition, unless you express otherwise. My email address is: [tony.cadney@btopenworld.com](mailto:tony.cadney@btopenworld.com).

Our village of Garveston is a typical Norfolk village of approx 300 souls, some of whom can trace their ancestry back to the middle ages and beyond and there are those who lay claim to Viking or Nordic lineage. The village is mentioned in the Domesday book. So the biggest shock to our agricultural based society was the arrival of the 8th AF in late 1942, the nearest base being at Shipdham (44BG) about 2 miles south of the parish boundary.

At the time there was no electricity, mains water, or mains drainage in the surrounding villages. Our village did not get mains electricity until the mid 1950's and we only had mains water connected in the early 1980's. We still have a number of villagers who rely on water pumped from their own boreholes.

Michael Garrod the chairman of our 'memorial committee' was 6 years old when 'the big silver aircraft' fell out of the sky demolishing two cottages. He heard the impact and the resultant explosions from the burning aircraft. Michael lived at Manor Farm, the first house to be lit by electricity in the area. This was done as a reward for his grandfather allowing the supply cables for the Shipdham Air Base to cross his land. I say lit. There was only one bulb; it was rarely used in case it wore out.

The Parish Council is the first step on the democratic ladder of government. As councilors, we elected representatives of our community, we stand for election every four years. It was the council's idea to commemorate the passing of these twelve brave men who died in our village on our soil fighting for freedoms that are now taken for granted. We all felt it is important to do this before the event slips from living memory as those who witnessed the incident leave us.

The area has had historic connections with the USA before the 'friendly invasion' of 1942. Three miles south east of Garveston is the larger village of Hingham, the home of the Lincoln family who emigrated to America following floods and harvest failures in the 17th century.

Allow me to introduce the B24 Memorial committee (which includes three Parish Councilors and one US citizen now domiciled in the UK),

Michael Garrod, Parish Cllr, Committee Chairman

Kay Enk, Parish Cllr.

Tony Cadney, Parish Cllr.

Ken Hamer, US Citizen.

At present we are all engaged on fund raising from local residents, businesses and registered charitable organisations.

On waking this morning it dawned on me that I had overlooked a fairly significant point concerning the reasoning for holding the commemoration ceremony next year. 2012 marks the 70th anniversary of the "Friendly Invasion" of East Anglia by the 8th Air Force. To mark this 'anniversary,' a Norfolk / American Heritage trail is being organised by the Norfolk museums service. This will feature places and points of common historical interest. This will be supported by publishing maps and leaflets featuring various memorials, artifacts, and reconstructions, including those associated with WW2. It is our intention to have our memorial included in this heritage trail, with strong reference to "Hands across the ocean" remembering not only the 12 good men shown on the memorial, but the three thousand members of the 8th Air Force stationed at the nearby Shipdham airbase of which half were never to return home.

It is hoped that with the increased numbers of US citizens and others coming to the UK next year for the Olympic Games some may wish to take advantage of this opportunity to follow the trail to gain an insight to the common heritage shared between our nations and the personal sacrifices made for freedom to endure.

On a totally different topic, both Suzanne my wife and I are licensed radio amateurs (radio hams) and Suzanne's call sign is G0LUZ and my call is G0HUZ. I am sure within the Heritage League you will have a number of amateur radio operators. Should any members of the Heritage League who are licensed wish to chat about what we are trying to achieve over here, we are happy to arrange a radio contact by e-mailing me first.



*("Daily Life at Willow Run" continued from page 5)*

September 1944 rolled along with sustained production of the "L" variant, but the final variant, the "M," was in queue to begin production at a decreased volume. The "visitor" which the "Rosie" talked about was a Boeing B-29 Superfortress that paid a visit in December 1944. Unbeknownst to the employees at the time, this was the aircraft that would replace the B-24 and ultimately deliver the atom bomb ending the war. The last B-24M-30-FO, 44-51928, would roll out the hangar door on June 28, 1945. Many of these final-run planes never saw combat nor were used for training. They were ferried directly to "bone yards" to be stripped and melted down for peacetime use. Life at Willow Run changed drastically. Many stayed in the area and found work, but the majority moved back to their points of origin. Our Rosie married the love-of-her-life when he returned from the ETO, and they settled down in Illinois. Oh, yes, she did pay her fine, and ended up getting one more ticket. However, she never missed work and was never late...

#### RECOMMENDED RELATED READING

Blue, Allan G: *The B-24 Liberator*, Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, NY, 1976.

Brinkley, Douglas: *The World War II Memorial*, New Voyage Communications, Inc., 2004.

Kidder, Warren Benjamin: *Willow Run: Colossus of American Industry*, KFT: Lansing, MI 1995.

Lindbergh, Charles A: *The Wartime Journals of Charles A. Lindbergh*, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc., 1970.

"Willow Run" *Air & Space Magazine*, August/September 1992: 82.

"The Willow Run Story" DVD, 43 minutes, the Ford

Henry Ford II tugs the last B-24 out of the plant on 6.28.45 thus ending production.



# My Name is SPAM...I Am...I Am...

By Lisa Niehoff

Hormel's canned pork shoulder luncheon meat, commonly known as SPAM, has been the butt of many jokes ever since its debut 1937 as Hormel Spiced Ham, soon to be a wartime staple. Since its introduction, more than 5 billion cans have been produced. However, there's no mystery as to where the meat comes from. It's all pork shoulder and ham, with ham coming from the pig's hind legs and rear end. A relatively large amount of salt is added for flavoring and in preserving the meat, along with sugar for flavoring.

Spam first came to the UK with the passing of the 'Lend-lease' act by the US Government in 1941 to aid the allied forces in Britain and Russia during WWII. For the British public who struggled to come to terms with life on rations, Spam tasted good and they embraced this new addition to supplement their diet. Its long shelf life and the ability to liven up a variety of dishes, Spam graced many a mealtime table.

When America entered the war in 1941, military officials bought large quantities of this cheap, easily transportable canned meat. Some sources say the name 'Spam' is

a merging of "Spiced" and "Ham", while others stand by the derivation from "Shoulder of Pork and Ham." It was food all-people-military loved to bellyache about, not because it wasn't tasty, but because it was always on-hand. This so-called 'Miracle Meat', was also known as 'Poop on a Shingle', a term for chipped beef on toast.



By war's end, Spam had become one of the great unifying forces. Our service men and women shared the dangers of combat and the ever-present threat of more Spam. Spam became a common enemy but it wasn't the only canned meat to go to war.

There were 10 different varieties of canned meat available to feed the hungry troops. These products found their way into K and B rations where Spam ended up cheek-to-jowl with its competitors' canned pig ears, noses, and tongues. But, to fed-up service men, it was all Spam.

Today, Spam is still the most popular canned luncheon meat on grocery store shelves. Its popularity is goes beyond explanation. Spam products, conveniently packaged in the famous blue and yellow pull-top cans, offer a distinct savory and salty-sweet taste, which is enjoyed by millions,

*Footnote: Food rationing came into force in January 1940. To start with, rations (per person per week) included 4 oz. of butter or lard, four ounces 12 oz. of sugar; 4 oz. of raw bacon or ham and 2 eggs per person per week. Meat rationing started in March, two months later. Children 5 years and older had their own ration books. Other food items such tea, jam, biscuits, breakfast cereals, and canned fruit were also rationed. Bread, despite becoming increasingly expensive, was not rationed until July 1946 (almost two years after the war) when, "largely due to the necessity of feeding the population of European areas coming under British control, whose economies and been devastated by the fighting. It is ironic, but understandable, that Britons who were young during those years of food rationing were the healthiest generation on record: you only have to look at photographs of the children—lean but robust. There was little meat, butter or lard to clog their arteries and very little sugar or sweets of any kind to create cavities or rot their teeth. Consequently, our diet was low in carbohydrates and saturated fat.*

## Webpages We Wike Continued from Page 3

<http://www.armyairforces.com/> This recently redesigned site remains a strong as well as entertaining resource for the researcher. It is a good first 'go-to,' when you have a question on planes, equipment and stations for USAAF bomber and fighter operations in WW II. Our own Reed Hammans remains one of the regular contributors, helping others (as he does on our web page) with research questions. The League has supported its passionate and effective webmaster with a stipend in 2009, as his volunteer effort is fully in the spirit of our mission of honoring and remembering, with accuracy!

<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/fsowhome.html> Library

of Congress online photography from the Depression and WWII, nicely sorted by a logical hierarchy of subject matter (or geography or photographer, if you prefer). This is worth revisiting periodically, as the digitization and cataloging of these holdings is a continuing project. The 1600 color images are a great place to start!

<http://www.ibiblio.org/pha/index.html> "Dedicated to combating history by sound-bites," this site is rich with links to research resources on the web for those interested in WW II generally. It is a nice entry point for a range of research questions; bookmark it!

# THE SEARCH FOR IRON ASS

*By Clint Gruber*

Hello. My name is Clint Gruber. I served in the 93rd Bomb Group from June through November of 1943, and was shot down on December 1 on a mission to Solingen in the Ruhr Valley. While a POW at Stalag Luft One over the next year and a half, I wondered from time to time about the final fate of Iron Ass. It seemed likely that the airplane had burned up when it crashed. But what really happened to it, and where was the crash site? I never had a clue until August 14th of 1998 when, while checking on the Internet B24 site, I found this message:

“Hello to all. Does anyone have some information about the B24D, nickname “Iron Ass”. Serial 42-40-769 lost the 1st of December 1943. Thank you. Phil”

Well, Yes. I had information!!

“Hello Phil. I was the co-pilot on Iron Ass, shot down 1 December 1943. Target Solingen. What is your interest? Do you know the crash location?”

Clint Gruber Beaverton, Oregon USA”

And so began.....

## THE SEARCH FOR *IRON ASS*

Within a few hours after sending my message, I received an answer from Philippe Dufrasne, living in Brussels, Belgium, who described himself as an “amateur historian on the WW2 air war”. “I take interest in this subject because many years ago I witnessed the recovery of a wreck in the Brussels area, and the remains of the pilot are still in the wreck 18 feet underground.

Since then, I have tried to make a most complete list of the lost aircraft over Belgium in WW2. Some information gives the site of the crash of your airplane in Belgium, but some recent news gives the site of the crash in Germany (Cologne). I have a friend, Eric Mombeek, who is a specialist on the Luftwaffe, and I will ask him if he has a contact in Cologne.”



Clint Gruber's Iron Ass B-24 D before crashing in Germany.

Mombeek is an internationally known authority on the German Luftwaffe in WW2, and the published author of many books about its units and personnel. He readily agreed to assist in the search through his many contacts in Germany.

Phil explained that his primary research is accomplished

through study of documents and microfilms rather than visiting a crash site. He sometimes does so at the request of people who want to know “what was that fell in their garden”. He was turning out to be a great correspondent, with a wonderful sense of humor. Once, I complimented him on his English, and apologized for my own lack of language skills. To which he responded, “Thank you for my English. Your English is also perfect. Better than mine. Don't worry.”

The best information with which Phil and Eric had to begin their research was that recorded in the Missing Air Crew Report (MACR), filed for every missing USAAF aircraft during the war. In the Iron Ass MACR, another pilot in the bomber force that morning reported that he saw us abort the formation and turn back with one engine smoking heavily. It was after that last sighting that the fighters shot us down, so the reported position, 5043N 0638E, was not much help. The probable crash site of Iron Ass would be somewhere in the large area south of Cologne. A real research challenge for



Phil and Eric!

On August 17, 1998 Phil wrote, "For the crash site of Iron Ass we must wait a little bit because it's outside of Belgium. However, I have sent all the information I have to my friend Eric. Now we must wait and hope."



Luftwaffe pilot Rolf Hermichen

Then, in the last week of August, another update: "I have some news. Soon I'll get the name of the German pilot who shot you down! My friend Eric researched that and informs me that it's in good way."

On September 1, incredible news from Phil! "Hi Clint. We have found the pilot who shot down your aircraft! His name is Rolf Hermichen. We are sure at 99% because this day he is the only who claim victories on B24 in the area where you were at that moment. Eric Mombeek interviews him. Hermichen does remember that your airplane left the formation and that's why he remembers it. He is an ace with 64 victories. I join the picture."

September 1, 1998, from Clint to Phil:

"I am absolutely astounded at the research that you and your friend have done in identifying the Luftwaffe pilot, "Your killer" as you put it, who shot down my airplane so long ago. At the moment, I am really at a loss for words, except to say "thank you" to you both. I need some time to think about this, to try to sort out my feelings".

I also wrote to Eric Mombeek to express my thanks, and in his reply Eric said: "I am very pleased that I could make you this little pleasure. The Germans say "Herrauschuss" for an aircraft so damaged that it could not stay anymore within the "box" and so have its protection. Hermichen claimed on that day such a Herrauschuss, and he is your probably adversary. He is still living (1998) and I had a few contact with him several years ago."

Several weeks went by while Mombeek was looking for a contact in Germany who could help in locating the crash site of Iron Ass. Then, on December 7, 1998, fifty-five years later, almost to the day of the last flight of Iron Ass, came this electrifying message from Phil: "Good news! We

see the end of the tunnel! We have nearly all about your "Iron Ass". Eric has just received a letter from Germany. The crash site is near the center of the village of Eicherscheid. The correspondent said that they can provide a picture of the front of the wreck, and they know a man who has recovered the wing and one of the motors! Things are on the way! The contact of Eric, Wolfgang Meyer, informs us that he will write soon with all the information we need. We had hoped to get this by 1 December for the anniversary of the crash, but we are a little late." The very next day, December 8, Phil wrote again: "As I promised, I send you what we have. I join translation of the letter from Mr. Meyer.

"Dear Mr. Mombeek. Many thanks for your letter. I was very glad to hear that the co-pilot, Lt. Clinton Gruber, is still alive and looks for information on his aircraft. The fact is that last year I have researched to find former crew of this plane in USA. Unfortunately, I had no success.

Now, concerning the crash of the B24, 42-40769, on 1-12-43 in Eicherscheid.

The aircraft was shot down by German fighters and exploded still in the air over the town. The only crewmember still on board was S/Sgt Harry E. Byerman. He could not leave the plane, being hitten during the German attack, and was probably dead when the aircraft exploded. This explosion completely destroyed the bomber and parts rained on the town of Eicherscheid. Most of the parts fell in the town itself, and are not anymore to find now. Nevertheless, a larger part of the aircraft including parts of a wing as well as an engine, fall in a wood and I could find some pieces last year.

I made for you a copy of the only existing photo of the crashed plane. This photo was taken a few hours after the crash.

Signed, Wolfgang Meyer, Bad Munstereifel, Germany"

Along with an engine and portion of a wing mentioned by Wolfgang, this was the largest part of the airplane remaining after the explosion. The picture shows much of the nose section tilted on its left side, with the right side pitot tube and the remains of the navigator's dome visible forward of the destroyed cockpit. In the original photo, it is just possible to make out a portion of the name and the white mule "Iron Ass". The German soldier in the picture was apparently on guard until the wreckage could be salvaged.

On February 1, 1999, I received the following:

"Dear Mr. Gruber. I am very happy (because this is my first time) to have contact to an American pilot who was shot

down in my home country. I am very interested in aviation since my childhood. Since ten years I try to collect informations about crashed aircrafts that were shot down during World War 2 in my home country, which is a wooded and hilly area called "Eifel", approximately 40 km south of Cologne, Germany. In 1995 I heard the first time of the crash of an American four-engine aircraft (Iron Ass) over Eicherscheid. The people in the village told me that a part of a wing with engines went down in the woods northeast of Eicherscheid. I was lucky to find the place in the summer of 1997."

In the same letter, one sentence stood out: "I am sending a small piece of tin from Iron Ass!" Needless to say I watched for a package in each mail delivery every day and, about the middle of February, it arrived! What an experience! Here was a small piece of Iron Ass, torn apart in the violent explosion at the end. There was no way of knowing where this piece of aluminum came from on the aircraft but it was still bright on one side, and had the early wartime dark green paint on the other. But there was no doubt that it was from Iron Ass.

Proof of its identity was assured when the engine, with identification plate still attached, was discovered in the woods. A portion of the very detailed information on the MACR for missing aircraft during the war was a listing of the serial numbers for each of the plane's engines. Wolfgang enclosed a picture of the plate with the serial number plainly visible. The number matches the record for one of the engines on Iron Ass.

A few days after receiving Wolfgang's package, Phil wrote to say: "I am happy that Mr. Meyer contacted you. Now you are really in touch with your past when you feel in your hands this part of metal".

So, as the successful story of "The Search for Iron Ass" comes to a close, readers of this narrative may marvel, as I have, at the willingness of strangers in foreign lands, two Belgians and a German, to help. Wolfgang Meyer, the German, has spent much time as a hobby in researching the crash sites and histories of Allied Aircraft which were lost in WW2. He took special interest in the story of Iron Ass because the

crash site was near his home, and he recognized the importance of his effort in helping me close the circle.

Eric Mombeek, a Belgian, is an internationally known historian of the Luftwaffe in WW2 and has many published books on the subject. Most are written in German, but two new books, both in English, have just been published. One,

"Storming the Bombers", is of special interest to veterans of the Mighty Eighth as well as the Fifteenth AF. A big book, it is filled with many photos and the stories of pilots of the Luftwaffe's Fourth Fighter Wing, covering their war over Italy and the Continent. Mombeek says "I do not make these researches for political reasons. I will remain all my life much thankful for all the young men coming across the seas to save our liberty and our lives.



*Iron Ass crash site wreckage*

If I can help you or your comrades, I do it with great pleasure, feeling also that it is my turn to do something for your generous generation."

Philippe Dufrasne, also a Belgian, was the leader of the Search, and expressed his reasons in responding to my offer to reimburse him for his out of pocket expenses. "Hey, Clint. We are friends now, don't ask again that you want to pay for something. I do it for the pleasure to help some guy whose risk is a more valuable thing...his life. Maybe you think that your job is inconsiderable, but you must know that without people like you we are still in the darkness. What we do is a very little thing compared to the risk you and your friends have take that bloody day for people you really don't know and who are most of time ungrateful to your country and for the sacrifice of a lot of young people. You do it for my granddaughter Laetitia and all the children who can play in the snow without fear. I never thank you enough for that. I am proud to be your friend."

Phil Dufrasne has visited my home in Oregon three times, and is a special friend. I remain in frequent email touch with him, as well as with Wolfgang and Eric. I salute them for the work they do in helping to keep alive the memory of America's wartime sacrifices, and with eternal thanks for completing the circle of my wartime memories.



By Pete O'Tube, Expert

Dear Pete,

One of the old flyboys was talking about his crew needing to 'belly-in' and how this rendered their Liberator "Cat-E." He had already started to lose me, then insisted that it was still "...a good landing."

Please illuminate, for someone who wasn't there, but wants to know more!

Salvatore Vadge

Dear Sal Vadge,

To belly in is to land with the gear retracted, and only indicated for a B-24 in when 'ditching' on water, which, itself, is not at all recommended but often that was the only 'option' left when power, altitude, and probably other essentials were lost to battle damage. The low-wing B-17 was better at both of these 'failure modes,' and often repairable if it did not sink or burn as a result, but the Liberator was always destroyed by either a wet or dry 'bellying-in.' The water landing usually collapsed the bomb bay doors inward with the fast massive crushing water. The plane sometimes even broke when the wall of water hit the bulkhead at the rear of the bomb bay, and loss of life was common. It seldom remained afloat for more than 30 seconds.

There was a system for categorizing the extent of damage to a USAAF plane in the European theater of operations (ETO). "Cat-A" was salvageable, sometimes even at the base level. 'AC' meant the same, but with the estimate of time needed being in

excess of 36 hours. 'Cat-B' indicated significant damage, but worth repair, requiring specialized engineering and fabrication skills found at the sub-depot or depot level, not at the base itself. (The 2nd Air Division was served by the 3rd Sub-Depot at Watton. Things requiring more than sheet-metal work or part replacement and maintenance, typically had to happen off-base at the sub-depot, which in turn was supplied by depots in rear areas, usually the continental US, or 'CONUS.')

'Cat-E' indicated damage exceeding economical repair, as resulting from combat or serious accidents in the air or on the ground. 'Salvage.' sometimes combined with the 'Cat-E' rating, meant that usable assemblies or valuable parts could be removed for re-use... airframes so designated and parked at the technical site of a base were referred to somewhat affectionately as 'Hangar Queens.'

A good landing is any one you walk away from. Some of the best 'war stories' entail men walking away from badly shot-up and/or wrecked planes. A dear friend who served as a Navy fighter jock (they are all certifiably nuts, by the way, flying onto those bouncing postage stamps at 100 knots, full throttle, hoping to hook a wire), tells me that the USN version of this sentiment, goes a bit further. If you can also re-use the airplane, it was a damn good landing.

Keep listening and taking good notes!

Pete



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