



HERITAGE HERALD

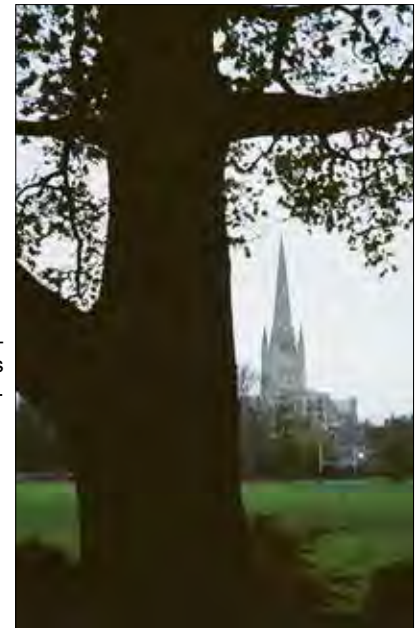
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Periodical of the Heritage League of the Second Air Division (USAAF)

RETURN TO BASE!

**Come on a high-value trip to “Where It All Happened” for the Second Air Division in WWII...
NORWICH, England, for Memorial Day 2014!**



Soaring atrium of The Forum (2001), at left, draws visitors to the Memorial Library; sits well with Norwich City Hall (1936) to right.



Inside the Medieval city wall, an ancient riverbank oak frames cathedral tower as evensong is rung.

Join us on a journey back, one that delivers! For five-plus days in England, we will be immersed in the ancient and modern history of Norwich, visiting wartime bases and museums, taking in cultural sites across 2,000 years of vivid history, enjoying the friendship and warm embrace of grateful East Anglians, who keep the memories alive! On Memorial Day help us reverently lay a wreath at The Wall of the Missing at Cambridge American Cemetery, the dignified final resting place of 1,442 from the Second Air Division who made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedom. Be with us, as we tour a fully restored airfield tower, enjoy food and drink at an authentic pub, and renew or begin old friendships. (Full description and registration form begins on page 3.)



In heart of Tomblands neighborhood: our gracious historic hotel with old “Sampson and Hercules” dance hall entry on left edge, and Bishop’s Gate just out of view to right.



School boys pass through Bishop’s Gate at West Front of Norman cathedral, dating to 1166 AD.
Photos by Brian Mahoney

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year! Hopefully you are warming up after the Polar Vortex in the east, and getting some rain after the Ridiculously Resilient Ridge of high pressure in the west.



Over a year has passed since the 2nd Air Division Association dissolved, and we cherish the Veterans who are now Honorary Life Members of the Heritage League. As we carry the history and legacy of these heroes forward in our 27th year, we have several exciting updates.

The Heritage League continues publication of our interesting and informative newsletter "The Herald" as our main communication with you, our members. We encourage you to send your stories, photos, ideas and updates to share with fellow members! To do so, you can email information to our Newsletter Editor, Lisa Niehoff at lisa@huxcomm.net or mail it to the address in this newsletter.

Your volunteer board members, located all around the US, meet monthly via Skype conference calls, to keep the Heritage League infrastructure running smoothly to serve you. Skype is a free service where we can talk to each other using our computers instead of phone lines, so it keeps costs low and keeps us connected.

As you read in our last issue, the Heritage League had a successful convention in July 2013 in Savannah, co-located with the 8th Air Force Historical Society. This spring, ***our 2014 convention location will be held in Norwich, England from May 25 - 30, 2014!***

Whether you are a WWII veteran or a 'newbie' looking for a well-guided, economical trip to connect with the places your veteran knew in 1943-45, this trip is for you and **now is the time!** There is still time to sign up, so look for details in this newsletter or click here: <http://www.heritageleague.org/reunions.htm> for the Information Package and Registration form on the Heritage League website. Then, it's as easy as 1, 2, 3...

1. complete the form and send in your deposit to the Heritage League for the activities
2. book your flight to England directly with the airlines of your choice
3. call the Maids Head Hotel to book your room.

I look forward to meeting you there!

Beverly Baynes Tomb, President, Heritage League of the 2nd Air Division

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HERITAGE LEAGUE REUNION

Mark your calendars and plan to join us in a visit to Norwich, England from Sunday, May 25th through Friday, May 30th, 2014.

We have been very busy planning an exciting program with enough options and flexible times that your individual pace can be accommodated. The schedule allows first time attendees and returning travelers to visit with our British friends, to explore the charms of Norwich and, most special of all, to walk on the actual bases and airfields where our veterans served. If time allows, the individual traveler may want to extend his or her trip either before or after our Reunion, to discover the many nooks and crannies of Norfolk and the surrounding countryside. (Some may plan to be in Normandy the following week, for D-Day 70th Anniversary celebrations.)

DAY BY DAY

Sunday, May 25, 2014

Arrive in Norwich and check into the Maids Head Hotel.

3:00 p.m. Meet us for Evensong at Norwich Cathedral

5:00 p.m. A Heritage League reception of light food and drink to thank many of those who have helped the Heritage League over the years with its mission.

Monday, May 26th After breakfast.

We board the bus for Memorial Day wreath-laying ceremonies at Madingley American Cemetery near Cambridge where 537 Second Air Division warriors are commemorated on the Wall of the Missing and another 905 Killed in Action rest in marked graves among a total of 8,939 US combatants memorialized or buried in this hallowed, moving place.

We proceed to the nearby American Air Museum at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford (<http://www.iwm.org.uk/>) to visit the excellent collection of British and American war birds, many in flying condition.

All transportation and admission is included in the basic package. Light lunch will be on your own at concessions at the museum.

After returning to the hotel, you are on your own for dinner and evening exploration.

Tuesday, May 27th After Breakfast.

Visit to the Memorial Library at The Forum.

Annual Heritage League business meeting. Our third "in England" meeting and the second to be held at The Forum.

Followed by a welcome from the City of Norwich, which includes a light lunch.

As an optional extra, join us for a leisurely afternoon boat excursion on "The Broads," the beautiful recreational waterways and lowland habitat of Norfolk, favored by GIs for sailing getaways during the war. Afterward, we go to a historic pub for hearty authentic pub fare, and reboard our coach for the trip back to our hotel. <http://www.broadstours.co.uk/norfolk-broads-river-trips.php>.

<http://thefurandfeatherinn.co.uk/> (\$85.00) before returning to the Maids Head Hotel.

For those not joining the tour, dinner will be on your own.

Wednesday, May 28th After Breakfast.

Real excitement for all who crave a walk on 'their' airfield. Thanks to Colin Mann and his many helpful friends, we will try to offer guided trips to most, or all, of the bases requested.

You are responsible for your own lunch in 'your' old neighborhood.

Dinner and evening on your own after returning to the Maids Head Hotel.

Thursday, May 29th After Breakfast.

Option to attend a specially scheduled meeting of the Trust Governors and tour the Norfolk Record Office Archives (state of the art facility that has 2AD artifacts).

Or, go on another base visit (allow \$60.00 for your meal, transportation, gratuities).

Or, go on a tour to Blickling Hall (\$36.00 includes transportation. Lunch is on your own. Café is available)). The Blickling Hall option takes us north to a large Jacobean estate conserved by the National Trust, with extensive walks, gardens, and costumed re-enactors. This was ancestral home to Ann Boleyn, and site during WWII of secret RAF planning and training, amid the distractions of wildlife and historic buildings. Take your lunch outside for a picnic! <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/blickling-estate/visitor-information/>

Or, take a free day to explore Norwich. Lunch is on your own.

Evening Our farewell banquet (cost included in the basic package)

PLEASE NOTE Limited amount of space is available for our British guests who would like to join us for the banquet. Cost would be £40 per person. Please contact Marybeth if you are interested in joining us. Her contact information is listed below.

Friday, May 30th After Breakfast and checkout.

Optional coach trip to London, with box lunch (\$45.00)

Time will be planned for check-in at a hotel nearby and luggage to be dropped off (hotel at your own expense) - See group-rate information below.

4:30 p.m. A special service is planned in the American Chapel of St. Paul's Cathedral.

5:00 p.m. Evensong at St. Paul's Cathedral.

Bus returns to Norwich after service. Those who want to return to Norwich can do so with no added cost.

Group dinner (at your own expense).

Travel agent Diane Thomas from Marilyn Can Travel has negotiated a special price with a London hotel near St. Paul's Cathedral for any of the Heritage League group who wants to stay in London on Friday night, May 30th. For those who want to sightsee afterwards, the price will be extended

through the weekend. The rate is for a limited time and a limited number of rooms. Please get in touch with Diane either by telephone toll free at (866) 865-0265, her office at (530) 836-0265 or her cell at (530) 414-4444 to make arrangements for the London hotel room. She can also help with plane tickets or any other travel arrangements that people may need. Diane can also be reached by email at diane.marilyncantravel@gmail.com.

I'm sold!! What do I do NOW?

Reserve your place ASAP with a \$75.00 deposit as described below. Give us an email address. More information will be sent giving suggestions for flight planning, follow-on travel, for other Norwich and East Anglia excursions, etc. Make your travel arrangements early to realize the best pricing.

Prior to stating your preferences as to the base(s) that you would like to visit, please read the article on the present day condition of the various bases at our website at: www.heritageleague.org. Information is under Reunions.

REUNION PACKAGE and options (all pricing is per person)

The Basic Registration package: \$255.00 per person.

Reserve your space at our reunion by sending the registration form and a deposit of \$75.00 per person in the form of a check or money order made out to the Heritage League to:

Marybeth Dyer, 1020 Glacier Avenue, Pacifica, CA 94044, smbdyer@sbcglobal.net

You can also make your deposit and/or pay the full registration amount on our website online via PayPal. (Please note: PayPal prices reflect a service surcharge that the Heritage League must pay). Your deposit will be applied to your Basic Registration.

So, if there is a reasonable chance that you will go to Norwich, indicate so by sending in a deposit and completed Pre-Registration Form. This will allow us to estimate attendance and to make transportation, dining and other arrangements with some accuracy. Please give us an email address or phone number to be able to reach you. Upon receiving your deposit, we will send full registration forms by email, U.S. mail, or registration forms will be available on our website. Please note: If your entire registration amount is not in hand by the final date of April 1, 2014, your deposit will be refunded.

THE HOTEL

THE MAIDS HEAD HOTEL is known to be the oldest hotel in the UK dating back over 800 years. Situated in the historical center of Norwich, this independent hotel boasts charm and individual character and is the Jewel in Norwich's crown. We have chosen to stay at the Maids Head and have reserved a block of rooms for this reunion. ***Hotel reservations are to be made by each attendee directly with the Maids Head Hotel. To receive the special price, reservations must be made no later than April 15, 2014. Mention the Heritage League.*** Email them at reservations@maidsheadhotel.co.uk to call from

the US- Use this telephone number: 01144 1603 209955, Fax: 01144 1603 613688.

The mailing address is Maids Head Hotel, Tombland, Norwich, Norfolk, NR3 1LB, England.

Room rates are stated in pounds. The exchange rate of the day will be charged. Payment may be made by credit card directly to the Maidshead Hotel upon the end of the stay. Currently the exchange rate is about \$1.70 per £ (pound).

Single Occupancy includes breakfast £ 70.00 /day

Double Occupancy includes breakfast £ 50.00/day per person-per day

Dinner may be added to the room charge at the time of reservation £ 15.00/day

THE CITY

NORWICH, central to the air bases of the Second Air Division of the Eighth Air force during World War II, is home to the Second Air Division Memorial Library. Our library was created as a memorial to those who served in the Second Air Division and died in the war. After a fire destroyed the original building, it was moved into The Forum, a community building in the city center that was especially commissioned to celebrate the new millennium. Veterans, family members and friends of the 2ADA traveled to Norwich for the re-dedication of this war memorial, which is also our library, in November 2001. Norwich is the most complete medieval city in Britain, the first English city to be awarded the permanent accolade of UNESCO City of Literature. The Norwich Cathedral is over 900 years old and boasts the largest monastic cloister, the highest Norman tower, and the second highest spire in Britain. It has been named one of the best cities for shopping in Britain. There are centuries old buildings and museums of varied interests. The Broads (Britain's magical waterland) is a large area of rivers and countryside about ten miles north of Norwich on the way to the North Sea. Tours can be taken and boats rented from Norwich to explore the very popular area.

TRAVEL ARRANGEMENTS

You will need to make your travel arrangements to and from England. There are several ways to get to Norwich. Northwest/KLM can include the short connector hop to Norwich from Amsterdam, on tickets there from major US international airports. The common alternative is to fly into London and then taking the train or bus to Norwich. For the adventurous, one could rent a car and drive the distance. In order to help get used to the time change, you may want to arrive a day or two early. The hotel will honor the room price both before and after our Reunion.

Please indicate on the registration if you require a wheelchair. We will do our best to make arrangements.

Cheers from your 2014 Reunion Committee! See you in Norwich!! Irene Hurner, Marybeth Dyer, Colin Mann, Chris Clark, Brian Mahoney, & Beverly Tomb

2014 Norwich Reunion Registration Form

Please indicate on this registration if you require a wheelchair. We will do our best to make arrangements

Name 1- As shown on your name tag _____ BG _____

Name 2- As shown on your nametag _____ BG _____

Name 3- As shown on your nametag _____ BG _____

Name 4- As shown on your nametag _____ BG _____

If more than 4 people are in your party, please email additional names and BG to Marybeth Dyer- smbdyer@sbcglobal.net or add names to the back of the form.

	Price per Person	Number Of People	Total
REGISTRATION FEE- Includes all below except as noted	\$255.00		\$
Sunday, 5/25---- Low Tea Reception			
Monday, 5/26---- Madingley American Cemetery Ceremonies and entrance to Duxford Air Museum (<i>lunch is not included</i>)			
Tuesday, 5/27----- HL Annual meeting at ZAD Library (lunch reception included- courtesy of the City of Norwich)			
Wednesday- 5/28- Base Visit- (<i>lunch is not included</i>)- PLEASE SELECT BASES YOU ARE INTERESTED IN VISITING. Please see the detailed base information at www.heritageleague.org -Under Reunions <i>We will try to accommodate your 1</i>	1 st choice	2 nd choice	3 rd choice
Thursday, 5/29----- Banquet- (you will have menu options)			

Registration Form continues on the reverse

Continued from the reverse

PACKAGES- Optional meals and tours				
Tuesday, 5/27----	Boating on the Broads, and then dinner at an authentic pub- Fur and Feather Inn	\$85.00		
Thursday, 5/29- Please Select only one event				
Memorial Trust Governors Meeting-				
Blickling Hall includes entry and transportation Lunch is on your own- Café is available		\$36.00		
Additional Base Visit-We will help arrange your visit, using your priorities for Wed, but you will need to cover costs (transportation, lunch and gratuities.)				
Friday, 5/30-----	London coach to St Paul's Cathedral- Includes lunch- Coach returns to Norwich after Service	\$45.00		
Friday, 5/30-----	London- Possible Group Dinner- TBD	TBD		
<i>See below for making your London arrangements</i>				
Deposit ONLY at this time-Full amount due April 1, 2014		\$75.00		
	SUBTOTAL	\$		
PayPal ONLY; If paying online, please add 3% here:		\$		
	Total Amount Payable to Heritage League- TOTAL	\$		\$

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A Journey Back in Time: Solving the Mystery of a Lone B-24 Shot Down over Poland in 1945

by Marcin Zoltowski (Photos via author)

From the earliest childhood, family tales have always grabbed my attention and excited boyish imagination. Tumultuous Polish history ridden with numerous calamities made often forays into my ancestors' lives later becoming the subject of agitated discussions held at occasional family reunions.

Of all those stories one seemed particularly fascinating, for its beginning and the end were immersed in aura of mystery. Furthermore, the very protagonists of that tale gave it a distinctive Western taste, which for a kid living behind the Iron Curtain had only good connotations.

It was from my grandma that I first learned about the tragic events of March 15, 1945. At that time, she used to live in a small town of Konstantynów Łódzki located in central Poland. The history of my family has been tightly connected with Konstantynów, for it was founded as a mill village in 1821 by our forbear, Mikołaj Krzywiec-Okolowicz.

The story, as I originally heard it, had more gaps and surmises than facts. Later on, as a grown-up man, I took an effort to piece together several first-hand accounts. The result was still far from perfect but at least it provided me with several points of reference for further research.

The fateful event took place on Thursday, a bright and sunny day. The early spring that year brought heavy thaw causing the nearby river to flood all surrounding fields. Around mid-morning, a low-pitched roar of heavy aircraft engines disturbed the silence over Konstantynów. The town dwellers were not so much taken aback as petrified, instinctively running for their lives; a habit that had helped them survive the atrocities of the previous years. The war was not over yet. No sooner than two months earlier the Germans were pushed westward by the advancing Red Army. Soviets quickly installed their outposts taking control over the Polish territory, all according to Stalin's plan. The Konstantynów buildings that, during

the German occupation, served as Nazi secret police headquarters fell into the hands of NKVD. Soviets secured their positions at all strategic points, including the neighboring airport.

The metallic plating of the bomber glistened in the sun as the aircraft circled above the heads of onlookers who dared to leave the shelter of their houses. It was dropping red flares. Baffled people took to the main street trying to identify the bomber. Finally, someone pointing to military insignia painted on the airplane's fuselage, which featured the distinctive white five-pointed star on a circular blue field with white bars flanking both sides, screamed "Americans!"

Suddenly the sound of cannonade burst the air. It was the Soviet anti-aircraft battery installed at the nearby airport. Several minutes later four Russian fighter planes appeared out of nowhere opening fire at the ill-starred bomber. Its pilot tried to evade the unsuspected onslaught; however, his efforts were of no avail. The bomber, still shooting the flares, started slowly losing altitude. Then, one by one, ten human silhouettes detached from the nose-diving machine. As one of the eyewitnesses described it, their parachutes looked like "ten ping-pong balls falling languidly from the sky."

The abandoned bomber vanished behind an adjacent forest while the wind scattered the bailed out aviators across the soppy fields. Unfor-



An unknown Polish family standing behind the graves of two American airmen KIA on March 15, 1945.

unately, not all of them made it safe. Two airmen were killed supposedly when they hit the ground. The town dwellers buried their bodies during a solemn funeral ceremony in the Konstantynów's main square



Lt. Wesley J. Bartelt's crew.

bearing the name of joint Polish and American hero Tadeusz Kościuszko. As my grandma told me, there were always bunches of fresh flowers on the airmen's graves as well as American flags, despite the fact that it was the time of burgeoning Cold War when such an open display of pro-American sentiments was quite risky. In 1947, the bodies of aviators were exhumed and taken away by their families.

Nobody knew what happened with the rest of the crew. Rumor had it that they were scooped up by the Soviets and detained at the local airfield. A few weeks later, they disappeared.

Having heard such a riveting story, I decided to launch my little private investigation to find the missing puzzles. Sadly, due to the scarcity of information, I was unable to make headway. An old photograph that I found in the town archive was my last hope. It featured an unknown family posing behind two graves with wooden crosses and memorial plaques attached to them. The inscriptions were too small and too blurry to allow for a satisfactory reading. Fortunately, someone rewrote the airmen's names and their identification numbers underneath the picture. I decided to resort to Internet—an ultimate source of information.

Amid one of my online rambles, I stumbled upon a photograph of Lt. Wesley J. Bartelt's crew stationed in Old Buckenham, United Kingdom. Standing in the background was B-24 'Wandering Wanda' transferred from 735th BS to 732nd BS, 453rd BG. The photo caption written by Mr. Tom Brittan explained that the crew actually never flew combat mission in "Wandering Wanda", their brand new unnamed B-24M (44-50477 E3 I) was lost on March 15, 1945 over the Eastern Europe. When I read that, my heart almost stopped. While browsing the crew list I spotted the name of a tail gunner, S/Sgt. Kenneth U Olsen, one of the airmen buried in Konstantynów.

If it was not for the Mr. Brittan's generosity and willingness to help me, I could have hardly found Mr. Wesley Bartelt's article 'Our Last Mission' whose author provided a detailed description of the dramatic circumstances that led to death of 2nd Lt. Hans Niichel and S. Sgt. Ken Olsen. More importantly, without Mr. Brittan's support I wouldn't have been able to get in touch with one of the crewmembers, Mr. William Carlson, who served as a radio operator. Mr. Carlson agreed to record a special video featuring his first-hand account of the last mission. It was the last message I received from Mr. Carlson who sadly passed away in 2010. Such a touching gesture encouraged me to pay tribute to the fallen airmen in form of a commemorative website (<http://allies.id1945.com>). Complimentary to the website was my initiative to unveil a memorial plaque bringing back memory of that fateful event to popular awareness of Konstantynów residents, which hopefully will be brought into fruition this year.

To use Mr. Bartelt's metaphor researching the story of "the only B-24 crew in the 2nd Air Division to be shot down by American-built fighter planes flown by Allied pilots" was like solving a puzzle. Although many pieces are still missing and some will probably be never found, the satisfaction and a great lesson of history it taught will stay with me forever.



Graves of two B-24 crew members buried in the Kosciuszko Square in Konstantynów, Poland.

"Buddy"

Robert E. Bertelsen 446th, 389th BGs, 355th FG

by Stephen Breitenstein

This article was originally published in both the 446th BG and 389th BG Newsletters. Since its original publication, I've had the good fortune of identifying the members of my Cousin's crew and making contact with their relatives. They've been helpful in expanding upon his story. Also, they've been kind enough to open up their family albums and greatly increase the photo documentation that I've been able to add to the article appearing here. Still, I'm hoping that readers of the Heritage Herald can inform me further about my Cousin's history with the Second Air Division. Please contact me with any information that might aid in my research. Contact details are at the end of the story.



Robert E Bertelsen,
Family Studio Shoot

The date of September 11 has come to represent a terrible tragedy for the American people, but the date holds a doubly tragic meaning to my family. On that date in 1944, my cousin, 1st Lt. ROBERT E. BERTELSEN, perished in a plane crash near his base at Steeple Morden, England. Incredibly, September 11 took on a new, altogether different, meaning for me in 2007. It was the day that I began a journey to discover the true story of the short, but remarkable life of my cousin, Robert E. Bertelsen.

My initial knowledge of "Buddy" (as he was known by family members) came through a vague account of his exploits in WWII. As the family story went, Buddy had piloted B-17 Flying Fortress bombers and, after completing his tour of missions, had opted to stay in England to fly fighter planes. He had been killed while attempting to crash land his P-51 Mustang in England after being badly shot up in a duel with the Luftwaffe.

This story was shared again by my mother, Dorothy Nonie Breitenstein, during a late 1960s Memorial Day visit to Buddy's final resting place at the Golden Gate National Cemetery near San Francisco. On that day, she implored my brother Jeff and me to always re-

member our cousin and his service to our country. Sadly, my mother succumbed to cancer not many years later but, as per her request, I have never forgotten Buddy or his sacrifice. The years and, now, decades have flown past since that day with Mom at the cemetery. With Buddy's story in the back of my mind, I recently attended a lecture by a former WWII P-51 pilot at a local library. I was impressed by the photos of this 19-year-old kid and his exploits in the skies over Germany. It also struck home, though, that the man presenting these images was now an octogenarian.

I came to the realization that, if I were ever to have a chance of knowing Buddy's complete story, the search would need to be undertaken immediately. So many of his comrades had already "folded their wings." And so, with a sense of urgency, I set out to discover the full and correct story of Buddy's war service.

Armed with the verbal history passed down by my family, the research began. A photograph of "Bert" (as he was known to his comrades in arms) and his crew posing by their aircraft hung on the wall of our home. This item would figure significantly in my search, but there was also the memory of the visit to his grave those many years before.

I returned to find Buddy's graveside on the



The original Robert E. Bertelsen crew, 446th Bomb Group, 704th Bomb Squadron (The Vultures). Standing L to R: Samuel F. Uretta - waist gunner; Irvin R. Bosley - radio operator; Charles M. Yant - waist gunner; Peter P. Barszczewski - flight engineer; John S. Roberts - tail gunner; and Joseph L. Baile - top turret gunner. Front row L to R: Ray L. Mitchell—bombardier; Robert E. Sleet- navigator; James G. Lloyd - copilot and Robert E. Bertelsen - pilot.

fateful day of 11 September 2007. Amongst the information on his headstone was his service with the 564th Bomb Squadron. Little did I know, this inscription would be the key to unlocking the story of his life and service during the war.

Returning home, I searched the Internet to learn more about the 564th BS. I found that the 564th was an element of the 389th Bomb Group, a group that flew B-24s, not B-17s, as had been reported in the family story. I studied the photo of my cousin with his crew. The aircraft in the picture sat nose low, definitely not the nose-high stance that would indicate a B-17. The fuselage also appeared somewhat slab-sided, different again from the more rounded fuselage of a B-17. It became obvious that this part of the family story had been inaccurate; Bert had actually piloted Liberators, not Fortresses.

Information on the 389th Bomb Group's website indicated that he had flown Pathfinder B-24s with the group, but not much beyond that. The site did, however, mention his previous service with the 446th Bomb Group, 704th Bomb Squadron. With this development, the story really began to unfold. The members of the 446th BG Association gave kind assistance, allowing me to piece together the history of Bert's early service time.

Second Lt. Robert E. Bertelsen was inducted into the Army Air Corp in Oakland, California, on 13 November 1941. The clouds of war were looming as he entered the military just a few short weeks before the 7 December attack on Pearl Harbor. Bert completed his Aviation Cadet Training (Class 43-F) at Lubbock Army Airfield, Lubbock Texas, on 25 June 1943. Months later, on 24 October 1943, he found himself in Lincoln, Nebraska, as a member of the original cadre of 446th airmen and crews bound for England. The group embarked for the ETO at Morrison Field in West Palm Beach, Florida, and followed the Southern Atlantic Route to its ultimate destination, Bungay/Flixton in England.

The first record I found of Bert's combat missions was of one flown during "Big Week" with the 446th BG to Gotha, Germany, on 24 February 1944, (the targets were factories engaged in manufacture of Me 110 aircraft). He was flying an aircraft known as "The Beast" (serial number 42-7679), but difficulties with numbers 3 and 4 superchargers caused the Liberator to fall well behind the main bomber stream. Instead of aborting the mission entirely, Bert opted to attack an alternate target; this target of opportunity was a railroad inter-

section two miles northeast of Neuenhauss, Germany. The mission log for the date indicates that 438 five-hundred-pound General Purpose (GP) bombs were dropped on Gotha, while the Bertelsen crew dropped 12 five-hundred-pound GP bombs on the target near Neuenhauss.

Bert's transfer to the 389th BG Pathfinder Squadron occurred somewhere within the March to April 1944 time-frame. During this period, he and his crew trained in the use of the new PFF Radar targeting technology. With PFF, missions could be flown, and targets acquired, without visual reference to the ground. Quite an advantage, given the poor weather over the European continent at the time.

These missions were generally flown in support of other Bomb Groups.

He flew a variety of missions with the 389th BG throughout April and May, building experience in utilizing the new PFF technology. He often flew missions in support of his old mates in the 446th BG. An aircraft



"The Vultures" B-24; 389th BG / 564th BS; 41-28807. This aircraft was flown by Bertelsen and crew on their June 6, 1944 Pathfinder mission over Omaha Beach. Bertelsen and crew departed the 446th for training as a PFF crew and with the 389th Bomb Group, 564th Bomb Squadron. They paid homage to their former Bomb Squadron (the 704th Bomb Squadron, "Vultures") by naming their aircraft to reflect their 446th heritage.

he frequently used was named THE VULTURES (serial number 41-28807), which honored his previous bomb squadron, the 704th, in both name and logo.

Bert and crew must have done an exemplary job in their new role flying PFF-equipped aircraft. So well, in fact, that on the early morning hours of 6 June 1944, Bertelsen was assigned to lead preliminary D-Day raids with the 446th. He was flying as Deputy Lead off the right wing of Lieutenant Charlie Ryan and Colonel Jacob Brogger in the B-24 named "Red Ass" and was definitely one of the D-Day leaders. Quite a notable accomplishment!

His tour of bombing missions with both the



Robert E. Bertelsen Crew after their final Bombing Mission; 31 July 1944. L to R: Robert E. Sleet - Navigator; Peter P. Barszczewski - Flight Engineer; George F. Weller - Bombardier; Charles M. Yant - Waist Gunner (reclining); Robert E. Bertelsen - Pilot

446th and 389th groups ended on 31 July 1944, when he reached the total of 30 missions. I'm sure there was anticipation to rotating back to the States, when an offer was extended by Lt. Colonel John A Brooks III [the 389th first Operations Officer]. Brooks was creating a new experimental fighter group known as the Scouting Force. The idea was to recruit pilots with bomber experience to fly scouting fighter aircraft in advance of bomber streams. It was surmised that these ex-bomber pilots could provide better intelligence to the attacking bombers than could fighter pilots without bomber experience.

Sometime around mid-August 1944, Bert joined the 355th Fighter Group, 2nd Scouting Group as a fighter pilot in training. Ex-bomber pilots were initially assigned to fly AT-6D trainer aircraft prior to their transition to the high-performance P-51 Mustangs. Unfortunately, the new program was not without its teething problems. Several of the newly recruited bomber pilots were involved in mishaps during their transition training, with some of these mishaps proving fatal. Of the initial assemblage of pilots recruited to the experimental group, five pilots were killed before completing their training. Sadly, my cousin was one of them.

On the evening of 11 September 1944, Bertelsen was returning from P-51 training at Goxhill Airfield in Northern England flying an AT-6D near his base at Steeple Morden, England. In formation with Bert was another ex-B-24 pilot, Lieutenant Roger Counselman. Counselman reported seeing my cousin making "medium steep turns," and the next contact he made was when he noticed, "smoke on the ground and the wreckage of Lt. Bertelsen's plane." The cause of the accident was officially ruled "undetermined."

The Scouting Group experiment continued, meeting with good success, though the recruitment

policies for ex-bomber pilots were modified. (It was found that the quality of being a superb bomber pilot didn't necessarily translate into the skill sets that made for a good fighter pilot.)

And so ended the brief but exceptional life of my cousin, 1st Lt. Robert E. Bertelsen. But how was I to reconcile my family's legend with the facts of his actual service history? I can only guess at why the story had strayed so far from the realities. At the time, the B-17 was getting far better press than its ugly duckling cousin, the B-24. Right or wrong, the B-17 is the aircraft most associated with the bombing campaign in the ETO. For these reasons, it's easy to understand how Buddy was assumed to have been piloting a Flying Fortress on his missions. As for his fatal wounding in combat with the Luftwaffe, one can only guess that this was a fabrication at some link in the information chain to make his tragic and untimely death slightly less painful to the family.

It might be easier to imagine Buddy battling it out in a P-51 over Europe and dying by enemy fire, than the actuality of a stall-spin accident over the peaceful English countryside. One must also consider that this accidental death would have been avoided had he not extended his service tour.

When I look back on my cousin's life, I'm pleased that I've been able to tell the story of his actual experiences, getting beyond the distortions that have occurred in the years since his passing. I now believe that the reality of his time in service was even more heroic than the stories passed along by my family members. This article is a tribute to his service as an out-



Stopover in Marrakesh, Morocco; November 1943. Lt. Robert E Sleet (L); Lt. Robert E Bertelsen (C); Lt. Ray L. Mitchell (R) Members of the original cadre of 446th airmen and crews bound for England. The group embarked for the ETO at Morrison Field in West Palm Beach, Florida, and followed the Southern Atlantic Route to its ultimate destination, Bungay/Flixton in England.

standing bomber pilot in the skies over Normandy and the European continent. It also honors his decision to extend his tour. While this decision would ultimately cost him his life, it was undertaken with noble and selfless intent, to continue on in the service of both his country and his fellow bomber pilots.

Acknowledgements: I'd like to acknowledge the inspiration and information provided by the following individuals: Mr. Kerry Weller; son of Bertelsen crew Bombardier, George F. Weller. Mr. Jack Fancher, nephew of 446th BG pilot, 2nd Lt Cecil "Forry" Miller. Mr. Bill Getz; 491st BG, 355th FG, Second Air Division Scouting Force; and my late Uncle Mr. William Robert "Bob" Beck. Miller.

For additional interesting history and photos of Steve's cousin, visit this website:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/9529957@N06/sets/72157604641473328/detail/>.

If you knew Robert E. Bertelsen, or have any information about him, Steve would appreciate hearing from you:

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Phone: 650-697-1353
Email: srbreit@yahoo.com

Far Flung Flowers—A Follow Up

by Chris Clark



Wreath as placed against the wall of the missing. Note that even in this random placement we have at least one hero of the 2nd Air Division showing: at upper left is indication of a 458th BG man Missing In Action. (Flight Officer Fred B. Herman was a pilot in the 755th BS, and hailed from California. He died on July 11th, 1944, and his body has never been recovered.)

er Fund' with a donation that I could afford, something small, but with numbers in our group, we can do a very nice showing every year into the future. You can help in two ways, by donating now, or when renewing your membership. Please check the box for an extra donation to the "Flower Fund." If you have any questions, please contact Chris Clark or Brian Mahoney. (Contact information can be found on the back page.)

Send your check to Marybeth Dyer, 1020 Glacier Ave., Pacifica, CA 94044. Please make your checks payable to 'The Heritage League, with 'Flower Fund' in the memo section.

Thank you,

Chris Clark, nephew of S/Sgt. Charles Franklin Clark, 489th, 44th

After reading about the nice work that some of the Heritage League past presidents have done out of their own pockets, for the flowers placed at Second Air Division graves in Europe, I wanted to help. As a board member of the Heritage League, I proposed, as part of our mission to remember the men and the sacrifice of life that 2,104 dead, and 1,469 missing men gave in service of their country to help end the madness of Adolf Hitler. The work that has been done by Brian Mahoney (467th, 492nd BG), Marybeth Dyer (458th BG), Irene Hurner (453rd) and Past President Billy Sheely Johnson (492nd). They have gone far and beyond their call of duty on this one.

After I brought this to the attention of the rest of my board members, I proposed and, it was passed in quick order, that, as a group, the Heritage League will place flowers at the graves in the 13 American Battle Monument Commission cemeteries of Second Air Division airmen. I started off the 'Flower



Tony Kerrison and Gretchen Mason hold a wreath from 1991 for The Friends of the Memorial Library for the benefit of the Heritage League. Photographs via Irene Hurner.

We appreciate the generous gifts from members inspired by an individual to whom we are all connected. We wish to thank members who have given the Heritage League recent contributions as follows:

IN HONOR AND MEMORY OF

Joseph Long, In Honor of Robert L. Long
 Pamela Meharg, In Honor of William B. Meharg
 Louana Burch, In Memory of
 Uncle Maurice Earl Chapman
 Susan Alley, In Memory of Jack Robert Alley
 Steven Risley, In Memory of J.A. Risley
 Viola Ramp, In Memory of Richard I. Ramp
 Charles Booth, In Memory of Col. James H. Isbell
 Anne O'Neill, In Memory of Thomas O. O'Neill
 Joseph Drummond, In Memory of
 Robert J. Drummond
 Pam Stevens, In Memory of Jack Stevens
 John Moulder, In Memory of Elizabeth Moulder
 April Reed, In Memory of George W. Smith
 Laurel Simmons, In Memory of Carl Ernest Marino
 Janet Leavitt, In Memory of Russell C. Philpott
 Vicki Warning, In Memory of William Brooks
 Bruce Helmer, In Memory of Ruth W. Helmer
 Robert Hammond, In Memory of Carl D. Peterson
 Barb Figueroa, In Honor of
 Frank and Bob Birmingham
 Katherine Hart, In Memory of Dean H. Hart

Claire Biel, In Honor of Albert Biel
 David Mercado, In Memory of David Mercado
 Mervyn Levin, In Memory of Doris H. Levin
 Diane de Julio, In Memory of
 Lt. Col. Dario A. de Julio, USAF
 Kathy Jackson, In Memory of Charles Yant
 Karen Parker, In Memory of Fred A. Strombom
 Doug Cox, In Memory of John Henderson Cox
 Jeane Stites, In Memory of Wilbur Stites
 Caryl Belward, In Memory of
 Lt. Col. Ralph and Mrs. Virginia Belward
 James Holben, In Honor of James Holben
 Barbara Mello, In Honor of Albert and Claire Biel
 Jennifer DiMola, In Memory of Francis DiMola
 Dorothy Harvey, In Memory of Robert R. Harvey
 Stephen Pease, In Memory of Clarence "Skip" Pease
 Lois Bertapelle, In Memory of Antonio Bertapelle
 William Gleaves, In Memory of George W. Gleaves
 Brenda Piskin, In Memory of Arnold A. Piskin
 Paul Howell, In Honor of Leonard R. Howell
 Charles Suitch, In Memory of John J. Suitch

FOLDED WINGS

Bowling, Ollie	44th BG
Boyer, James A., Jr.	44th BG
Colella, Frank	44th BG
Goldman, Siegman (5/09/2013)	44th BG
Lopez, Vincent	44th BG
Porter, Jack	44th BG
Serbin, Edward	44th BG

Yarevac, Anthony	44th BG
Wiley, Christi, 30 May 2012	448 th BG
Ghaster, Richard, 3 October 2013	453 rd BG
Hudock, Stephen, 22 May 2012	445 th BG
Kotapish, James G., 22 March 2013	453 rd BG
Maruschak, Theodore, 5 March 2013	489 th BG
Shafer, Thomas A., 17 January 2014	445 th BG

Somewhere in England

by Evan Thomas

I have a great memory. I can recall little things from years ago, trivial things people said or situations. I'm good with names and faces and it's a very useful skill to have. My grandfather is losing his memory, now. In his eighties, he doesn't always remember where he is or why things are the way they are. As he sits in an armchair with a cup of tea, I wonder if he remembers the significant moments of his life.

A few years back I recorded several transatlantic telephone conversations with Larry Taylor who was a Navigator on the B-24 'Wazzle Dazzle' on missions over Germany. He described to me the horror of seeing the air war up close and personal saying:

"It's odd what sticks in your mind as the most terrible (moment); I guess... I don't know how you rate something like that. And I don't want to talk more about that; I don't want to think more about that. But it's there and it doesn't go away."

He was able to recall a great deal from the war and from his childhood. I wish I'd spent more time talking to him. I remember Pat Everson telling me about conversations she'd had with a veteran who had 'total recall.' Ernie Stark who worked in the 448th Public Relations Office was at the other end of the spectrum and, in an email to me, said he was:

"Frankly dismayed by the absence of clear recall of so much that I was involved with during the many months I spent at the Seething Air Base."



My grandfather and I before the word 'selfie' ever existed.

When the 448th Bomb Group was hit by Me262's on the 4th April, 1945, Lt. Harold Dorfman took a picture that blows my mind. In his diary he wrote: *"took a picture today that I would rather forget."* When I spoke to him by telephone about the possibility of a short interview he said he was honored to hear from me but that at age 86 there was no memory left. He was upbeat adding: *"my mind doesn't work, my feet don't work, my legs don't work. The only thing I'm good for is a little humor."* Thankfully, like many veterans, he had the foresight to keep a diary of his experiences and I'll always be thankful for the copy he sent to me.

Ed Chu was that rare person, an Asian American GI. He had served as a Tail Gunner in the 448th BG. I'd seen him in photos at the Seething Control Tower Museum and had the pleasure of meeting him at the 2007 reunion in Orlando, Florida. After the trip he wrote me a letter and pointed me in the direction of his war diaries:

"... I always related my war stories to the late Mrs. Chu (Dee). After I retired, she encouraged me to record these stories. Her comment at that time was, 'you know, what you're telling me is part of history, and when you're gone, it'll all be lost.'"

We are so far down the road now that even those veterans with great memories will be gone before too long. As I read the books and flick through photographs of the last great reunions in the UK of the late eighties and early nineties, I sometimes fear that I'm too late and I have missed it all. Jimmy Stewart was here, in my city, walking around and I missed it! What can I possibly add that hasn't been said by the veterans themselves or their children or by the authors and enthusiasts that have come before me?

It is my memory of the Dorfman photo that always brings me back whenever I feel like I have forgotten about the 8th Air Force as I go about my days.

This year I want to spend more of my time writing about the 8th Air Force, reading more and spreading the word. I want to commit to doing the work and to stop using excuses about 'life getting in the way' (such a shameful phrase when you think about it, especially in this context). Maybe you will hold me accountable?

If you feel like sharing or want to say 'hi', you can email me at evan@happywarriors.co.uk.

Best Wishes,
Evan

The Story of “Tail End Charlie”

by Jaap Halma

The way I came upon this story is somewhat curious.

My name is Jaap Halma. I live in Joure, a small town in the Province of Friesland, in the northern part of the Netherlands. I am member of a local society of amateur historians connected with the local museum. We publish a periodical three times a year with historical facts of our Municipality. When we reached the 25th edition, we decided to compose a book about the events during World War II in our region. I was one of the editors. During the process, I became particularly interested in the crash of the American B-24 “Las Vegas Avenger” of the 306th Bomb Group near Joure and the consequences of what we call the “Hunger winter of 1944.” *The Dutch famine of 1944, known as the Hongerwinter (“Hunger winter”) in Dutch, was a famine that took place in the German-occupied part of the Netherlands, especially in the densely populated western provinces during the winter of 1944-1945, towards the end of World War II. A German blockade cut off food and fuel shipments from farm areas to punish the Dutch for their reluctance to aid the Nazi war effort. Some 4.5 million were affected and survived because of soup kitchens. About 22,000 died because of the famine. Most vulnerable according to the death reports were elderly men.*

At that time, the Allies already liberated the southern part of the Netherlands, although the central and northern parts were still occupied by the Germans. During this very severe winter, tens of thousands of children from the big cities in the center, like Amsterdam, were accommodated with families in the northern part because hardly any food was available in the

big cities, and thousands of people starved to death. Last year I tried to re-unite the former evacuees with those families. During one of the interviews, a man told me about the crash he had witnessed as a boy of an American bomber in the cemetery of Mirns. The story made me very curious. I had done some interesting research on the fate of the surviving crewmembers of the “Las Vegas Avenger” of the 306th Bomb Group, and even found relatives of the crew who I could tell what had happened to their loved ones. It appeared they knew little about this event and were very grateful to learn more about it. I therefore decided to do the same for “Tail End Charlie.”

This is what I found:

On November 4th 1943, the 445th Bombardment Group (Heavy) left from Sioux City Army Airbase, Iowa, crossed the Atlantic Ocean and stationed on the airfield of Tibenham in the English county of Norfolk, situated on the eastern coast of England. The Group consisted of the 700th, 701st, 702nd and 703rd squadrons. Curious to know: On arrival at Tibenham the famous film actor James Stewart acted as commander of the 703rd squadron; he flew 10 missions with the squadron before he transferred to the 453rd Bomb Group.

They entered combat on December 13th by attacking U-boat installations at Kiel. On December 22nd, the Group started their 4th mission and 28 Liberators left to bomb a communications centre in Osnaabrück in the Northern part of Germany. 24 airplanes reached their target and dropped their bombs. It was



The field of the forced landing. At left the white bell tower of the cemetery. The plane went from the standpoint of the photographer in the direction of the bell tower. At right the Tjalma farm.



The same field but from the opposite direction. At right the Albada farm; the German barracks of the observation post were situated near the trees at left in the background. The shore of the lake is about 150 yards behind the farm.



Pictured right. A photo of John R. Elder (John was the ball turret gunner who died because of the crash and his brother George W. Elder (left), probably taken in August 1943.

bad weather that day, rain and low clouds limiting visibility considerably. The bombing on Osnabrück took place between 2:00 pm. and by around 3:00 pm. most planes were on their way back home. Sadly, two airplanes would not return and both crashed in the southwestern part of the Province of Friesland, in the North of the Netherlands. Of the 20-crew members, only three would survive.

German Me-

110 fighters shot down

the first Liberator, no identification number known, from the 701st squadron; the ship was badly damaged with bombs still on board. The pilot tried to make a forced landing with the burning plane and hit the ground just outside the outskirts of the town of Bolsward. The whole crew perished in the flames and later the remaining bombs started to explode. The crew were buried in the Protestant section of the church cemetery with big crowds of Bolsward inhabitants attending, defying the German occupation and honouring the heroes. The town of Bolsward donated a funeral plot, caskets and flowers.

The second Liberator in the area, called "Tail End Charlie" number 42-7445 of the 700th squadron, was also fighting to stay in the protecting bomber formation. Its crew consisted of:

Allen, John Harold, pilot, 1st Lieutenant, from Dallas.

Bevins, Erwin J., co-pilot, 2nd Lieutenant

Destro, Anthony Louis, bombardier, 2nd Lieutenant, from Miami.

Elder, John R., ball turret gunner, T. Sgt.

Gill, Joseph F., navigator, 2nd Lieutenant, from New York.

Henry, Harry L., waist gunner, Sergeant, from Philadelphia.

Pavelko, Joseph John, belly gunner, T. Sgt., from Philadelphia.

Odom, Everett M., tail gunner, S. Sgt.

Owens, James C., waist gunner, T. Sgt.

Robbins, Oscar, radio operator, T. Sgt.

The bombs had been delivered. However, on the way home a German rocket hit an engine and damaged the body construction to such an extent that doors could not be opened and communications within the plane was no longer possible. With one engine gone, the ship could not keep up with the formation and became a straggler. The German fighters found their easy prey in the area between the towns of Bolsward and Workum and went for it.

What exactly happened, we do not know. While flying above the town of Bakhuizen, Erwin Bevins, co-pilot and Harry Henry, waist gunner, aborted the plane, which continued in the direction of the IJsselmeer Lake and descended beneath the clouds. The plane made a 180 degree turn and again approached the coast, probably to avoid landing on the water and getting the head on to the easterly wind. At about this moment, Sergeant John Elder also leaves the plane. His parachute opens, but with the strong easterly winds, he drifts back to the lake and drowns in the icy water.

Apparently, it is pilot John Allen's intention to land the plane on the flat fields between the shore of the lake and the hamlet of Mirns. He must have had very poor sight due to the bad weather because the flat area is quite small to make a forced landing with an air-



The new restored bell tower. The plane went through the trees just left of the small shed at right and completely demolished the tower. This kind of bell tower on a cemetery is typical for this region and found nowhere else in Holland.

craft of this size. Perhaps the situation of the plane also compelled him to make this impossible choice, or the fact that there were seriously wounded people on board which needed medical attention and wouldn't survive a parachute jump. We will never know.

Although the plane is too low to jump, Lieutenant Joseph Gill also takes his chance to abort. Perhaps because of the insufficient height he does not wait three seconds to open his chute, it is caught by the tail



This is the hotel Jans where Harry Henry stayed for a few hours before being made prisoner. Erwin Bevins hid in the woods behind the hotel.

of the aircraft and Gill is pulled along by the plane until it touches the ground. The aircraft, now flying very low, passes between the German barracks and the Al-bada farm.

The cemetery is on a low hill, sloping down to the lake. The wildly burning plane barely avoids landing in the water and hits the slope with its nose, turning over completely and crashing through the trees of the cemetery. Next, it hits the bell tower and various grave-stones, shoots through the trees on the other side of the cemetery, crosses a road, and finally comes to rest in a small wood on the other side of the road. All six remaining crewmembers perish due to the crash. The aircraft was destroyed with no more than small shreds remaining. Landing wheels were found in a field about 400 yards from the site of the crash.

The crash caused confusion in the small hamlet of Mirns. German soldiers from the observation barracks near the shore were there within a short time, along with Luftwaffe personnel from a nearby camp. They closed down the cemetery, kept people away, and left the bodies of the crew where they came down. This was a standing order from Heinrich Himmler, the head of the German police, with the intention of showing off what damage the German army could inflict on the Allies.

However, a miracle happened. Lieutenant Gill broke his jaw, and was unconscious but still alive! The Germans left him there without medical treatment. The inhabitants of Mirns were not allowed to enter the cemetery, except Father Schellaerts of the Roman Catholic parish of Bakhuizen and John Keulen. The latter was well acquainted with the Germans, but that was just a sham. He was active in the Dutch Underground as well as Father Schellaerts. Joseph Gill would

Before or after Liberation? Erwin J. Bevins on a Dutch lady's bicycle, somewhere in the Netherlands in 1944 or 1945. Is this the smile of a defiant evadee, disguised to fool the German occupiers, and chancing death to himself and those aiding



him? Or is it the smile of a liberated American who decided to 'go native' for a period following the war? Photographer unknown; from the collection of Jan Braakman, author of "The War in the Corner."

(Author's notes on this picture: Jan Lefeber sent a nice picture of 2nd Lt. Erwin J. Bevins who was co-pilot on a B-24 that was hit above the Netherlands on December 22nd 1943. The airplane crashed near Bakhuizen in the province of Friesland, in the northern part of the Netherlands. Bikes are still the main means of transport in the low country, though during the war for many people it was the only way to get to another place. Many Dutch used the bike to transport food from the east of the country to the west during the last winter of the war, when starvation was high because of the scarcity of food.)

Bevins stranded in 1943. A Friesian underground worker, named Rense Talsma, picked him up. One of the many addresses Bevins frequented as an onderduiker, was the farm of Albert and Hanna Koeslag in the village of Laren. He traveled to Laren by train, according to his own account. He got food and shelter in the months of July and August. At the Koeslag farm Bevins was with 7 other evaders. Bevins told the US Military and Intelligence Service (MIS) after the war. He also remembered that Koeslag (which he erroneously spelled as Kooslag) had eleven or twelve children.

From Laren he moved to the village of Nijverdal, where he stayed until the Canadian liberators came in April 1945. According to the notes he made for the MIS, he was treated for appendicitis by local practitioners.

Then he moved with Lt. Ted Weaver and 30 Dutch civilians to a castle, where the 2nd Canadian Division took him and his companions. On April 9th he finally was 'released' to return to his own regiment. At that time he may have been a record time onderduiker. For almost one and a half year, he had been hiding with the Dutch underground.)

survive but, unfortunately, they couldn't do anything for the others.

On December 24th, the bodies of John Allen, Anthony Destro, Joseph Pavelko, Everett Odom, James Owens, and Oscar Robbins were buried at the Roman Catholic cemetery in Bakhuizen. The body of John Elder was found on the shore the day after the crash and he was buried there as well.

But, what happened to the crewmembers who aborted the plane?

Harry Henry landed in a wooded area near a hotel in the village of Rijs and was brought to the hotel. His leg was wounded, luckily not badly, but he did not know where Erwin Bevins had come down. His leg was inspected by a doctor and found in order. When civilian clothes were brought, he changed into them, and was told to stay in the hotel and later hide in the woods until it was dark. But, there luck left him. The Germans came to know where he was and he was arrested. Henry had the good luck to be allowed to put on his uniform



The two Sons of the Bruinsma Family, Berend and Hendrik then aged 8-10. (Bell has been marked in Dutch to indicate 'belltower Mirns, Friesland.')

again, thereby regarded as a regular prisoner of war and not as an active member of the Underground. He was first transported to a German transit camp for prisoners of war where he was interrogated. Henry was later transferred to other camps near Frankfurt and Wetzlar, but survived and

safely returned to the United States after the war.

In the meantime, another Dutchman had found Bevins and hid him in the woods. During the night, he was brought to a safe place because the Germans knew that two men had parachuted from the plane. Although they had arrested one, they were still looking for the other. The following day Bevins was transported in a fake ambulance operated by members of the underground from the town of Leeuwarden and went into hiding in that town. He stayed there for some time, but he's also been traced in Laren, a small village in Eastern Holland. A picture exists of him with the Dutch family with whom he stayed. It is unknown as to why he went there, perhaps to be closer to the Allied armies. Bevins stayed in hiding for the remainder of the war, and was never caught by the Germans. Probably he was liberated there by the Canadian Army in April 1945.

Joseph Gill also became a prisoner, but was not allowed to get medical treatment at first. A fellow prisoner, a Greek dentist, later treated his jaw in the prisoner camp and he safely returned home after the war.

I have also interviewed two sons of the Bruinsma family, at that time living about 100 yards from the cemetery in Mirns. The sons Hendrik and Berend, then aged about 8-10, were at the shore of the IJsselmeer lake that afternoon to gather driftwood for the

stove in the house. They were returning home via the cemetery when their mother heard the Liberator coming in very low. Because of the low clouds, they couldn't see the aircraft. Their mother called them to come into the house immediately. Then they saw the plane coming down in flames on the cemetery at 3:02 pm., barely 100 yards from their house. At that same moment three men, Gerrit Tjalma, Frans van der Werf and his son, Fimme, were gathering wood on the eastern side of the road between the cemetery and the Tjalma farm with two horses and a cart. They were all injured by burning kerosene. One of the horses was injured so badly by the wreckage that it had to be killed. Many windows were broken in the Bruinsma home and all windows in the Tjalma farm. Another house nearby was also damaged.

In the same wood where most of the wreckage came to rest, Hendrik Bruinsma later found the iden-



In the woods at left Hendrik Bruinsma found the identification disk of John Allen. The three men gathering wood were there when the plane came down. At right the Tjalma farm. In the field behind the tree, some 400 yards away, landing wheels were found. Two men, trying to salvage the wheels, were shot at by the Germans from here. They escaped.



In December 1964, 21 years after the crash, a propeller (not from a B-24) was dug up when preparing a new grave. In the middle, Father Bruinsma. At left, the Tjalma farm.



Extreme courage documented. Family of Albert Jan and Hanna Koeslag (2nd row, 2nd and 3rd from the right), photographed in 1944. Farmers near the town of Laren in eastern Holland, they offered Bevins (at right, back row) a hiding place after having stayed in Leeuwarden. Albert Jan was arrested by the Germans in November 1944 but survived the war. —photo via Gerald Martin, from the collection of Jan Braakman; photographer unknown.

tification disk of John Allen of which his mother wrote down the data on a piece of paper still in possession of the family: "John H. Allen 0465407 T-430. Jetta Allen 5434 Goodwin Ave. Dallas, Texas G." She later handed over the tag, to who is unknown.

The oldest son, Ids, who was 14 years old, was visiting his father at that moment. His father worked as a farmhand on the Draaier farm along the coast about one mile S.W. from their home. They distinctly heard the air battle and saw a big ball of flames coming down through the clouds. They were afraid that their house had been hit and went home on a bicycle as fast as they could. They were very happy there were no casualties in their family and their house hadn't suffered heavy damage.

The Germans, from the observation post, were there very fast. An Austrian sergeant named Hans was in control until other Germans from the nearby camp in Sondel arrived and took over. Father Bruinsma tried to enter the cemetery but was repelled by the Germans.

According to Ids, the day after the crash a girl called Siemke Keuning, observed from her bedroom window in the Albada farm something strange at the shore of the lake. She warned her father who went to have a look and found the body of John Elder.

After the war, the bodies of John Allen, Anthony Destro, John Elder, Joseph Pavelko, Everett Odom, James Owens and Oscar Robbins were trans-

ferred to the American Military Cemetery of Margraten in the south of the Netherlands. Still later most of them were reburied in the United States. John Allen rests in the American Military Cemetery of Neuville-en-Con-

droz in Belgium; Joseph Pavelko still rests at Margraten.

On August 30, 1950, Anthony Destro's remains were exhumed and his body was re-interred in a group burial plot at the Memphis National Cemetery. He was a 1st generation American. Both of his parents came from Sicily. He was the first of his family to be born in this country. Italian-Americans were one of the largest ethnic groups to serve in the USA military during WWII. Many of Anthony's cousins were also 1st generation who served in the military during the war.

It was a great pleasure for me to write this article in honour of the people who gave their lives for our freedom. I hope it will fill some gaps in the remembrance of relatives of these heroes. If you are interested in this story, please feel free to contract me. jacobt.halma@gmail.com.

Jaap Halma

<http://www.backtonormandy.org/the-history/air-force-operations/airplanes-allies-and-axis-lost/b-24-liberator/B-2411238.html>.

A site where you can see the cemetery and a plaque: <http://en.tracesofwar.com/artikel/52583/Klokkenstoel-Mirns.htm>

The memorial page of bombardier Anthony L. Destro: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=3153625>

The second grave: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=66114626>

The third grave: <http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=95905603>

The author thanks and credits researcher Jan Braakman, author of "The War in the Corner." blog: http://www.thewarinthecorner.org/TheWarintheCorner.org/Blog/Artikelen/2012/9/8_Record_time_onderduiker.html biography: <https://www.smashwords.com/profile/view/JanBraakman>. personal site: www.janbraakman.nl.

(Jaap Halma's exceptional attention to detail in his research of the Tail End Charlie story is most notable because of his enthusiasm, resourcefulness, and his deep commitment to provide valuable information to the relatives of those men who died. And a special thank you goes out to Johan Kuiper for his invaluable contribution in providing the links below for the Tail End Charlie story. —Ed.)



NYS Southern Wing Chapter News

by David C. Levitt

The New York State Southern Wing Chapter of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society will hold a luncheon/meeting at the FDR Library and Museum in Hyde Park, New York on Sunday, May 4, 2014.

Please check our website <http://blogs.ny8thswcaphs.org> for the latest information and costs, or email: fxe84@optonline.net.

The theme of our event will be how the Eighth Air Force teamed up with the other branches of the military to win the War in Europe during WWII.

For a V-E tribute, Veterans from the air, land and sea, will speak to their experiences when the Eighth Air Force provided direct support to the Army and the Navy. At Normandy, St. Lo, and other locations the Eighth Air Force attacked tactical targets to clear the way from the ground troops advance, thanks to supplies air dropped by the Eighth and having B-24's of the Eighth converted to fuel tankers flying in gasoline to airfields near the front lines which helped General Patton's Third Army keep up a blistering pace against the Germans.

The Eighth Air Force flew missions that provided support for the United States Navy as well. German-held Submarine pens and shipyards along the English Channel and the North Sea were targeted repeatedly.

During D-Day, German coastal artillery emplacements which had guns aimed at our ships in the Channel were bombed by the Mighty Eighth.

We will also discuss President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's role as a strong, forward-looking Commander-in-Chief. In the years prior to when hostilities broke out in Europe, President Roosevelt foresaw the need for a well organized military equipped with sufficient quantities of modern aircraft and other weaponry and supplies. In addition, he was one of the leaders of the effort to coordinate the activities of the different branches of the US military and to work in harmony with our Allies namely Great Britain and the Soviet Union.

FDR's strong-minded political will also created controversy, however. His opponents accused him of ramrodding his policies through and being vindictive of those who opposed his views.

Both FDR's supporters and detractors agree that President Roosevelt had a dramatic influence on national and international events. If someone else had been President from 1933 to 1945, the world would be significantly different; the outcome of World War II could have been drastically different.

Please come to our luncheon/meeting on Sunday, May 4, 2014, to hear more about these and other interesting topics. The historic and scenic lower Hudson Valley of New York would also be a great place to visit for the entire weekend. In addition to the FDR Library and Museum in Hyde Park, there are many other sites of military and aviation interest, including the US Military Academy at West Point and The Camp Shanks Museum and Piedmont pier in Orangeburg, NY. (The last stop before deployment for many WWII US service members).

We look forward to having you join us at the luncheon/meeting. For more information and /or to RSVP, Please email fxe84@optonline.net or mail to NY Southern Wing Chapter, Eighth Air Force Historical Society. 10 Arlington Lane, Bayville, NY 11709.

ANSWERS TO YOUR TECHNICAL QUESTIONS



-by Pete O'Tube, Expert (Chris Clark and Brian Mahoney)

Dear Mr. O'Tube,

I have seen a few photos around the noses of WW II bombers where the nose area is draped, sometimes W inside the nose glass, even on warm days, so I know this is not the standard coverings against frost and snow. What could be happening in the front of a Lib or a Fort that is so secret, when everyone on the base was on the same side?

Pickford L. Bar-el

Dear Pick L. Bar-el,

The Norden bombsight was kept classified until 1984, though we have since learned that the Germans actually had a captured one in good condition in 1943. The removable portion was kept in a secured vault in the secured headquarters block at each bomber base, and brought to the bomber under guard. Navigators were instructed to put a .45 bullet through it if their plane was going down.

The US philosophy of expending our considerable strategic bombing efforts on military targets with concentrated effect in full daylight, made our campaign over Europe a test of several deadly variables at once. British area bombing by night was a rough 'control,' in experiment-speak, for most of these variables. For all of the American intent to avoid collateral damage, and concentrate impact on targets identified as critical to the enemy's continuing war effort, the Germans (civilian and military experts alike) had trouble seeing much difference on the ground between British and American bombing accuracy and concentration.

Conceptually, the gyro-stabilized, pricey and precise 50-pound analog computer, which used bombardier- and plane-instrument inputs to correct for more than

a dozen variables in real time, was very capable. Half a formation's combined bomb load from 20,000 feet was put within 75 yards of the aiming point in ideal test conditions. The boast of "hitting a pickle barrel with a 500 pounder from 10,000 feet" was often repeated, but more ruefully as the war progressed. In practice, with variable visibility, rough air, fighter and flak attacks, battle damage, and operator fatigue in unpressurized and unheated planes, meant the actual 8th AF average performance by war's end was 40% bombs within 1000 yards of the aiming point, from a range of altitudes.

The most accurate conventional heavy strategic bomb drop of WWII was by the 467th BG and sister groups, at lower altitude, on 14 April 1945, at Pointe de Grave, France, where the estuary out of Bordeaux empties into the Atlantic. It was a big deal that 100% of the bombs were within 500 yards.... Imagine a circle on the ground that is 3,000 feet wide, with planes flying at 4 times that height. It hardly seems precise! Today's smarter (programmed cruise missiles, or actively laser- or GPS guided) ordinance can really hit a small aiming point, so, appropriately, expectations are that collateral damage should be limited.

There was a need, late in the Vietnam war, for a return to 'precise' dumb-bomb dropping, and some old Nordens, and instructors, were pressed into service as late as 1967. 90,000 had been built, in many variants.

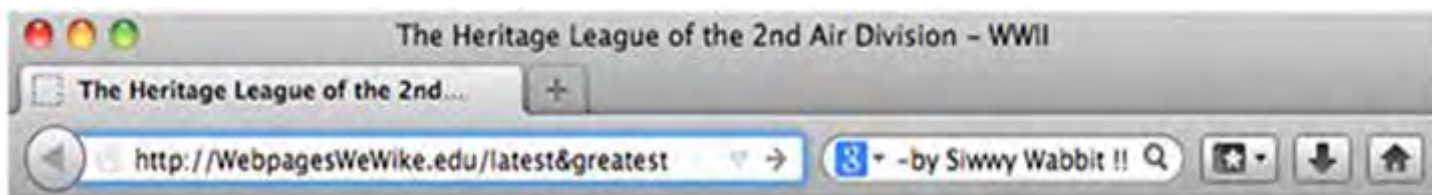
Yours, on target,

Pete

Recommended further reading:

<http://www.plane-crazy.net/links/nord.htm>.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Norden_bombsight.



We are back, after a long absence! We will re-describe some of the old powerful favorites, and start with a new one, relevant to our upcoming trip back to England. The usual cautions against relying on things read on the web, unless the source there does a nice job of leading viewers all the way back to authoritative origins. As stewards of an exciting legacy, we know that the truth needs no embellishment. We all have a responsible part to play in keeping the stories and history of the 2nd Air Division alive—and accurate. If you publish to the web, let viewers know precisely where you got your material, and if you need to, ‘qualify’ its reliability. In doing so clearly, you will have done a service to the truth, as well as to the service and sacrifices we would honor.



American Memorials in Norfolk and Suffolk <http://eastangliamemorials.blogspot.co.uk/> Blog author Laurie Atkins is an American living in East Anglia, intent on documenting as many of the commemorating markers to WWII USAAF groups as she can find. Be sure to scroll down on the left side past the archives section to find ‘Units and Museums’ of interest, as the search feature is tricky and limited.



UK Airfields <http://www.ukairfields.org.uk/> This ambitious labor of Richard Flagg’s love and respect for WWII fliers, American and Brit, is reformatted and has a new URL since we first loved it many years back. Seems a great deal of the old content is missing (we wonder, was there was a cyber-mishap?), so watch as it repopulates the category “memorials in Norfolk,” for example. His photography is clear, use of text and space, and guidance to locations is absent, but his introduction, and transparent organizing scheme, make it accessible and laudable nonetheless.



Veterans’ History Project <http://www.loc.gov/vets/> Before it is too late, consider getting a clear record from your favorite WW II veteran’s mouth. The American Folklife team guides you on technical and interviewing matters but you need to seize the moment, for the ages. A great resource for authentic, vivid accounts of US combat veterans from WWI to the present. Powerful search engine will allow you to pursue a specific interviewed individual, or find a group who share traits (e.g. POWs in USAAF in WWII, with web-viewable digital files). Our HLM Alan Sabol, a 492nd Prisoner of War, has a compelling, rich, accessible account there, with letters, photos and German missing flier reports, which should inspire you to get to it now, while you can!



2AD Memorial Library <http://www.2ndair.org.uk/> The site of our main ally organization, forever memorializing the 2nd Air Division with a ‘living memorial.’ The Library continually presents the story of the ‘Yankee Invaders’—the USAAF personnel on 14 bomber and 5 fighter bases surrounding the seat of Norfolk from 1943-45—in a compelling and vivid way to young and old. This site is a good extension of the beautiful ‘bricks and mortar’ building and wonderfully staffed operation, in the modern Forum, in the heart of Norwich. The latest addition to the site is PDF imagery of the beautiful pages of the illuminated Roll of Honor, a must-see there, or now via the Internet.



Army Air Forces of WWII <http://forum.armyairforces.com/> Presents discussion threads on technical and military aspects of 5th through 9th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 20th Air Forces, and various training Army Air Forces of WWII. A huge repository of findable info on all manner of related subjects; a go-to place where you can find whether your topic has been covered, or how best to pose your question. Activity has fallen off markedly in the last three years, as many knowledgeable veterans have left us, and one needs to carefully weigh the preponderance of evidence, not taking things as ‘gospel,’ without checking diverse sources with credentials. The last redesign sadly eliminated the presentation of hierarchy of all squadrons and groups and wings within each USAAF, so you need this overarching knowledge from elsewhere...see the next entry. That said, it is certainly THE internet resource for those wishing to dig deep—or help others doing so—in our overall subject ar-

ea. Registration is free, and participation will make you a better researcher. Our own tech expert, Pete O'Tube, hangs out there under the nom d' plume "Brian Mahoney." (Talk about siwwy!)



Mighty 8th Cross-Reference <http://mighty8thaf.preller.us/> Ambitiously attempts to present the organizational structure of the numbered air forces (such as the 8th) but lacks 'needed nuance' in many particulars, such as changing numbers of bombardment wings in the 2nd Air Division, and the groups assigned to each at different times. It offers beginning researchers useful resources and encouragement. Augments the Army Air Forces site, which eliminated its hierarchical presentation of the various units (squadrons in a group, groups in a wing, wings in a division, divisions in a numbered air force, and the other USAAF numbered air forces in WWII). Overall, a very good and accessible first-take on many important questions offering a concept of the bigger picture.



Air Force biographies <http://www.af.mil/AboutUs/Biographies.aspx> Want to know the full, official military bio of Jimmy Doolittle, or others who made general rank in WWII, or since? This is the place. Navigate from here to explore the other offerings of the Air Force Historical Research Agency, which holds many crucial series of records on operational history of units large and small, and important personal collections of giants in early and mid-century aviation giants.



The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) <http://www.archives.gov/> The overwhelming repository of conserved official US executive branch records. Some of the records are digitized, and some of the finding aids are viewable over the internet, but even for the highly experienced, it is challenging to find specific needles in the haystack! If you go there on a research trip, spend at least as many hours on the internet, planning beforehand, as you will in your first visit to the alluring, modern facility in College Park, MD.

From the Desk of Mike Simpson

Executive Vice President of the Heritage League

Greetings Heritage Leaguers! I trust everyone survived the New Year's celebrations more or less intact. Things are really starting to pop for this New Year. We're about 8 weeks away from the deadline to sign up for the Norwich Trip in May! If you've been dragging your feet, it's time to start getting things in gear. There's an update to the trip information with a contact number for the hotel (Maidhead in Norwich) to make room reservations in advance. It can be found on the Heritage League website under the 'Reunions' link.

Things out here in Arizona have been pretty calm. We missed out on most of the severe weather, although we did have some nighttime lows below freezing. My better half is off to Ohio to visit family. Looks like she'll arrive in time to enjoy their latest snowstorm. I won't say I told you so, but I just did!

I'm continuing my research into our database project for displaying information about the missions flown by our 2nd Air Division members. Even though I've worked with computers for the past 36 years, database design is not an easy tool to grasp. We're using the 445th Bomb Group's records as a prototype as we already have a fairly extensive set of files that can be pulled in.

What we are envisioning is a possible online link for someone to look up the missions flown by the various bomb groups that made up the 2nd Air Division. If you are looking for a specific person, by entering their name you could find out on what missions they flew, with whom they flew, what the target was, and plane information (name, serial number, photographs (if available) and more.

Once this structure is refined and the search engine configured, then we'll be able to turn this over to the various historians and researchers of 2nd Air Division bomb groups for them to incorporate their information.

What a wonderful way of preserving the memory of those young men who, so long ago, risked life and limb for our country! This is certainly along the lines of the intent of this organization.

If there are any out there reading this that might have a skill set that would help us in this endeavor, please don't hesitate to contact our VP for Volunteers – Chris Clark at ClarkHistory@aol.com or me at Mike@445BG.org.

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