



# HERITAGE HERALD

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

## D-Day—Normandy, 1944

**Two 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Airmen Recount Their Unforgettable Experiences**

### Asleep at the Switch—The Extra Long D-Day

*By Robert A. Jacobs (389<sup>th</sup> BG), 2ADA Journal, 2005 Summer*

At 0230 hrs on 5 June 1944, the crew of Liberty Run was awakened to fly its 24<sup>th</sup> mission. Our crew, originally from the 93<sup>rd</sup> BG, was selected for PFF (pathfinder) training with the 564<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron of the 389<sup>th</sup> BG, Hethel, in March 1944. We flew our last 18 missions out of Hethel as a PFF crew leading or flying deputy lead for various bomb groups but most often with the 93<sup>rd</sup>. Howard Hinchman gave us our final preoperational flight check ride upon completion of the PFF training. The crew was composed of the personnel named under the photo shown page 3. The mission of 5 June was to the Pas de Calais area, short and uneventful with no fighters and little flak observed.

#### Important Mission Preparation

Upon returning to Hethel, we received word that hot water was available at the “Ablutions.” This was an infrequent occurrence, so we made a dash for it. While in the shower, our crew was paced (continued on page 3)

### The Fred Becchetti Story...D-Day Was His Worse Mission

*By Nick Pappas—The Albuquerque Journal, November 10, 2020*



Fred Becchetti, Bombardier/Navigator. Freddie as he was called, was 20 years old when he joined the crew. He flew 35 full missions, four of them after the crew's bail-out over Norwich. USAAF photo via Becchetti family.

Fred Becchetti doesn't hesitate when asked what he was doing when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. He was washing dishes for 10 cents an hour at the old Alvarado Hotel in Albuquerque. At the time, the Albuquerque High School junior had more important things on his mind, such as earning his letter in track and field. He remembers dancing that night with friends until 2am at an old Central Avenue church before retiring for some red-hot chile and juke box tunes at the Red Ball Café. “Pearl Harbor, the Japanese, and the war had nothing much to do with me at 17” the 96 year old related from his home in Virginia Beach, Virginia. That would change soon enough.

Shortly after his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, he would find himself crammed inside the nose turret of a B-24 Liberator, coming under anti-aircraft fire, unloading six 1,000-pound bombs in the north of France. And nursing a bout of facial frostbite after being exposed to 50-degrees-below-zero temperatures on his return to base. “At one point, the door of the turret got caught in the wind...and the door flew off and then got jammed. So I couldn't move the turret,” he says: “I had to have one of the crew members (continued on page 4)

## Heritage League Annual Meeting

Join us for our Annual Meeting at the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society Reunion  
October 27-31, 2021 in Savannah, GA

# PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

—Marybeth Dyer



Heroes come in all different shapes and sizes. Webster defines a hero as “a person who is admired or idealized for courage, outstanding achievements, or noble qualities.”

After this past year, we can acknowledge more heroes: teachers, health care workers, first responders, caregivers, and those who continued staffing critical businesses. We are grateful for what they have done to keep us all going.

My dad was an unspoken and quiet hero. Dad was an ordinary guy who graduated from high school in 1943 and went directly into the Army Air Corp. He had hoped to be a navigator but all the spots were filled, so he was trained as an expert tail gunner on the B-24 and flew 31 missions. Like most of the soldiers who came home, Dad never really talked about what he experienced until later. When he finally opened up, he was adamant that the true war heroes were the airmen who never came home. He definitely experienced survivor guilt and did not want a big deal made of his service. Does this sound familiar?

This month, our family honored my dad Francis P. Birmingham, as a war hero and my mom, Lucille, as a hero who waited patiently for him to come home from the war. She was a wife and mother of four.

Mom and Dad were laid to rest in their home state of Wisconsin on June 18, 2021. We arranged an honor guard who played taps, folded the American flag and presented it to Uncle Bob, my Dad's brother who served in the same 458<sup>th</sup> BG. As the flag was presented, they said:

*On behalf of the President of the United States, the United States Air Force, and a grateful nation, please accept this flag as a symbol of our appreciation for your loved one's honorable and faithful service.*

All veterans who served deserve this honor. The Heritage League mission is to honor and remember the heroes in our lives from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division of the Mighty Eighth Air Force, and all they accomplished to secure the freedoms we have today.

This year is our election year. We are looking for individuals interested in participating with the Heritage League as protégés and officers. If you are interested, please contact Chris Clark at: [clarkhistory@aol.com](mailto:clarkhistory@aol.com).

Good news: The Heritage League will hold our annual meeting in conjunction with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society Reunion from October 27-October 31 in Savannah, GA. Schedule and sign-up information is in this newsletter. We look forward to seeing you there!

Finally, our lives are filled with busy moments and events. Take some time to remember a Veteran and thank them for their service. It will mean the world to them.

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*(Asleep at the Switch, continued from page 1)*

on the Tannoy and told to report to the briefing room immediately ready to fly—which we did—to Bungay, home of the 446<sup>th</sup> BG. When we landed, we were met by armed MPs, taken to a secured building, and informed that D-Day was 6 June, the following day. We spent the remaining time at target study and flight planning. I think we were given some coffee and sandwiches but cannot recall the details of that particular meal. To say that we were excited would be a gross understatement.



Crew of Liberty Run. Standing (L-R): Lt. George F. Doell, co-pilot; Lt. Leon S. Campbell, bombardier; Lt. Lester J. Litwiller, pilot; Lt. John Heisl, radar navigator; Lt. John Brown, pilotage navigator; Lt. Robert A. Jacobs, D.R. navigator. Kneeling (L-R): T.Sgt. Warren Harding, flight engineer; S.Sgt. Lewis Critchelow, waist gunner; S.Sgt. Oscar Otto, ball turret; S.Sgt. James Maynes, waist gunner; T.Sgt. Fred Barnes, radio operator; S.Sgt. Earl Brooks, tail gunner. USAAF photo via Jacobs family.

This was what we had been waiting for. Our mission was to lead the 446<sup>th</sup> BG to bomb the invasion beaches of Normandy immediately prior to the ground assault. We had been selected to be the first heavy bomb group to cross the French coast on that day.

We took off at 0220 hrs., climbed to 10,000 feet and circled in our prescribed forming area firing specific flares as the 446<sup>th</sup> aircraft assembled in formation behind us. The mission went precisely as planned except for an under cast which necessitated bombing by radar. As we approached the French coast, the radar navigator called me over to look at his PPI scope. It clearly showed the vast armada of the invasion fleet standing

just off the coast of Normandy—a thrilling sight even on radar. Bombs were away at precisely 0600 hrs.! We led our aircraft back to Bungay via Portland Bill lighthouse and returned to Hethel. Much to our surprise, no flak or German fighters were observed. Our fighter cover was everywhere.

**Do it again**

As we started to undress to get some rest, we were again paged and told to get over to Bungay for another mission.

During the course of the briefing, the flight surgeon gave each aircrew member a pill with instruction to take it only “when you feel you can no longer keep awake.” We had been up since 0230 hrs. of 5 June, and it was now the afternoon of 6 June, some 36 hours later—we were running on reserve energy.

Shortly after take-off, my eyelids began to get very heavy. Since we were again leading the 446<sup>th</sup> BG and I needed to have all faculties clear, I took my pill. Shortly thereafter, all signs of weariness disappeared and I was again able to perform my navigation efficiently.

We flew to our briefed target, Coutances, dropped our bombs, and returned to the English coast above a solid under cast. At landfall, I gave the pilot a heading for Bungay and relaxed. It was all over but the landing, or so I thought.

The next thing that I recall was being shaken violently by my engineer, T.Sgt. Bud Harding. He finally managed to get across that the pilot was calling me over the intercom. The pill had worn off and I had fallen soundly asleep! Les Litwiller, my pilot, informed me that he had been instructed by the British to circle and let down below the overcast so that our formation could be identified visually. There was some fear of German

intruder aircraft. The formation was now at 1,000 feet and Les wanted a new heading for Bungay. There I sat, the lead navigator, feeling half drugged, without the foggiest notion of our position. I told Les to contact the deputy lead and obtain a heading from his navigator while I attempted to fix our position. We were apparently too low to use GEE (radio navigation aid-*Eds*), because I could not pick up any station clearly.

The heading obtained from the deputy lead put us on a track due east. In the meantime, I found our position when the formation letdown had started and was able to compute an approximate D.R. (dead reckoning-*Eds*) position around which I drew a circle. The radius of this circle was determined by the maximum distance we could have travelled from my D.R. plot. I figured we were somewhere in the circle, about 50-80 miles due west of London. Noting our easterly heading, I asked the pilot to monitor channel 6440 for balloon barrage squeakers because, according to my rough position, we were heading straight for Rainbow Corner. By now it was dark. Pilotage navigation was out because of the blackout.

I continued to work with the GEE set and was finally able to pick up one station. About that time, the pilot called to tell me that he had picked up the balloon barrage squeakers. I immediately gave him a new heading for Bungay, away from London. Then, for the first and only time, I used the GEE homing procedure that I had learned at Cheddington when our crew first arrived in the U.K. It worked beautifully, and we came across the blue perimeter lights of Bungay at 500 feet just as the GEE blips lined up—just as we had learned in the classroom at Cheddington.

## A Two Day Mission

A quick peel-off and we were on the ground at Hethel at 2345 hrs. It had been a long two days! As you can imagine, I was on the receiving end of many “asleep” type one-liners by my crew and other friends as word got around in the days that followed. 🐛

### *(Becchetti Story, continued from page 1)*

come and crank the turret so that I could get out. And while all of this was going on...wind was hitting me on the face and that's how I got frostbite”. That was his first mission. There would be 34 more—including “the most frightening experience of my combat tour” on D-Day and an emergency bailout over England—that would culminate in the Distinguished Flying Cross.

## Flunked kindergarten

Becchetti was born on March 31, 1924, in Dawson, New Mexico, nearly a dozen years after 263 men were killed in the second-deadliest mine disaster in U.S. history. Both his grandfather, Domenico, and his father, Frank, worked in the Dawson coal mines, but neither were in mine No. 2 when it exploded in 1913. After he flunked kindergarten—“Well, it was disciplinary,” he says—the family moved 35 miles north to Raton, where he attended public schools up through fifth grade. Then it was off to a Catholic junior high school in Trinidad, Colorado, before enrolling at Albuquerque High School as a sophomore.

The highest medal awarded to Becchetti and crew in recognition of completing 35 combat missions. “... just a measurement of my survival of the violence,” he said. The Distinguished Flying Cross in his display case. Photo: Becchetti family.

Shortly before graduating in May 1942, Becchetti registered for the draft, but he didn't wait to be called. In November, he and his buddy Burton Smith visited the Albuquerque Federal Building to consider their options. After speaking with recruiters, both enlisted in the Army Air Corps, the forerunner to the U.S. Air Force, with dreams of flying sleek fighter planes, he said, “like those landing occasionally at Kirtland Field.” Two months later, Becchetti boarded a train in Albuquerque for the 500-mile trip to frigid Wichita Falls, Texas, for basic training. Or, in his words, the “hell hole” known as Sheppard Field.



## ‘Like dogs after a bone’

For Becchetti, basic training in North Texas became the standard against which all future training



would be judged. And not in a good way. “For almost a month, we were treated almost like animals at Sheppard Field,” he wrote in his collection of war memories. “Our hair was cut down to about an inch, we were injected in both arms, we were subjected to painful calisthenics by seemingly sadistic instructors, we were forced to par-

to do anything... Anyway, he gave me a bad grade, and I don’t blame him because I didn’t know what I was doing up there.”

That wasn’t true at his next stop, the San Antonio Classification Center, which would decide whether cadets entered the war as bombardiers, nav-

igators, or pilots. After undergoing a battery of tests, Becchetti was chosen to train as a bombardier, the person responsible for dropping bombs over enemy targets from altitudes of 20,000-25,000 feet while flying 200 miles per hour. That also made him the de facto nose gunner. So when he underwent additional training as a navigator, he became, in Becchetti-speak, a “bombinavitrigalator.”

From here, Becchetti’s course was set for bombardier training at Houston’s Ellington Field; advanced work on the use of bombsights in Big Spring, Texas; combat training with his nine

crewmates aboard a B-24 bomber in Casper, Wyoming.

On May 5, 1944, following a grueling 10-day trek, Becchetti and his crew arrived by train at Tibenham, the Norfolk home to their assigned 445<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group—and American movie star Jimmy Stewart. Stewart put his award-winning acting career on hold to join the war effort, flying more than a dozen combat missions with the 445<sup>th</sup> before being promoted up the chain of command. He held the rank of colonel in 1946 when he starred in his first film back as George Bailey in the classic *It’s a Wonderful Life*. The 445<sup>th</sup> and its 50 bombers were attached to the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, which would lose more than 26,000 men by the end of the war. Statistically, according to Becchetti, the most dangerous place to be in World War II was seated in a bomber flying over Germany.



Bombardier/navigator Fred Becchetti of Albuquerque, seated third from left, was a member of Crew 2366, part of the 445<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group stationed in Tibenham, England, in summer 1944. Standing from left, Robert Sherrick, tail gunner; Leroy DeRouen, flight engineer/gunner; Gregory McGovern, armorer/waist gunner; Lawrence Sladovnik, waist gunner; Garl McHenry, radio operator/gunner; John Smith, ball turret gunner. Seated from left are Cliff Bolton, co-pilot; Keith Palmer, pilot; Becchetti; Vincent Hamilton, navigator. All completed 35 missions, but Hamilton was killed in an accident after the 35 missions of his tour. USAAF photo via Becchetti family.

ticipate in games on a dirt field called ‘the Cow Pasture’ in which we fought for giant balls like dogs after a bone ...Nothing was ever as bad as Sheppard Field.” Case in point: Wichita University in Kansas, where cadet-bound trainees were sent for two months of mostly academics. Life was good here, Becchetti says, and not just because of the “beautiful girls” on campus.

With the help of his colleagues, he survived his biggest academic challenges, even earning a coach’s half-serious invitation to return after the war to play football. The 5-foot-10, 175-pound Becchetti, it turns out, could toss a football 65 yards in the air “like a bullet.” Still, his stay in Kansas ended with a case of kindergarten redux. He flunked his flight test. “I wasn’t very good,” he says. “I couldn’t drive a car; I had never driven a car at that time. And here I was in an airplane trying to fly an airplane. The instructor just couldn’t get me



On May 28, 1944, enemy anti-aircraft fire knocked out the braking system of Fred Becchetti's B-24. In what may have been one of the earliest parachute-assisted landings in history, crew members attached parachutes to machine-gun mountings on each side of the plane. Upon landing, one of the parachutes deployed correctly, slowing and then stopping the plane before it reached the end of the runway. This photograph, showing Becchetti scooting under the plane, appeared in the March 1945 issue of Air Force Magazine. USAAF photo.

## ...the D-Day Horror

Becchetti's most terrifying mission of all was D-Day—but not for the reasons one might think. On June 6, 1944, he and his crew were awakened at 0130 hrs. to provide air support for the dawn invasion by 150,000 Allied troops along the beaches of northern France. But, unlike Becchetti's previous nine missions, this one took flight at 0252 hrs. in total darkness, making it next to impossible to enter proper formation with his 36-bomber squadron for the 235-mile flight across the English Channel. "On D-Day, we were in the darkness all the time, and, of course, that really threw us off because we weren't used to forming our formations at night in the dark," he says. "We had orders not to shoot flares in order to protect ourselves. But when we got up to 10,000 feet and we were trying to do the formations, everybody was shooting flares to keep from being collided. It was horrible. It was a terrible, terrible experience."

Unable to join his bombing group, Becchetti and his crew hooked up with a stray B-17 Flying Fortress and B-26 Marauder—"We just looked for anyone going our way," he says—for the flight to Omaha Beach. Becchetti was supposed to drop fragmentation bombs on enemy gun positions prior to the Allied landing, but he could tell through some breaks in the heavy cloud cover they were too late. "By that time, we didn't dare drop our bombs because the troops were already starting to land and they were already wading into D-Day against the defenses. So we just flew over the beach and dropped our bombs 50 miles beyond the beach, and let them fly wherever they went. It was a real mess," he says. "We were happy about the invasion and felt confident that it would succeed, but we were miserable about not having done more to help."

## Bailout over England

Another scary flight occurred eight weeks later on mission No. 32, an assignment to bomb a chemical plant in Ludwigshafen, Germany. At 17,000 feet over England, however, the plane encountered engine trouble and began to lose altitude, forcing most of the crew to bail. Becchetti parachuted out at 750 feet, drifting silently through the clouds before landing smack-dab in a newly dug garden, face-planting in the soft dirt. "Suddenly," Becchetti says, "this Britisher comes through the hedge and he says, 'Y'having a bit of trouble, Yank?' Military police escorted Becchetti back to base, but not before he accepted the Englishman's gracious invitation into his home for a scotch and soda. At 9 o'clock in the morning.

## Final mission

Becchetti's 35<sup>th</sup> and final mission took place two weeks later, an assignment to bomb a railroad bridge south of Laon, France. The crew met no resistance. When the men returned to Tibenham, Becchetti exited the plane, knelt and kissed the ground. His bombing days were over. So, too, his combat service. On Sept. 3, Becchetti boarded a C-54 transport plane bound for home. After some welcome R&R in California—he danced at the Hollywood Palladium—Becchetti trained for three months as a bombardier instructor in Midland, Texas, before being assigned to New Mexico to train Chinese nationalists at the Carlsbad Army Air Base. That's where he was stationed on July 16, 1945, when Manhattan Project scientists tested the world's first atomic bomb 200 miles away near Alamogordo, foreshadowing the Japanese surrender and the end of the war a month later.

Becchetti was discharged on Sept. 23— at 7:10pm to be exact—at the Fort Bliss Separation Center in El Paso, Texas. By the next weekend, he was back in Albuquerque for his favorite cousin's birthday. One year later, he married Vivienne—they will celebrate their 74<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary next month—then took advantage of the G.I. Bill to further his education. He taught and dabbled in small-town politics for a time, then embarked on a 27-year career as a diplomat for the U.S. Foreign Service in Central America. When he retired in 1989, he took up watercoloring as a hobby, painting 500 landscapes while traveling the next 10 years throughout the U.S. and Canada.



Freddie in 2020. Originally from Albuquerque New Mexico, he currently resides near Virginia Beach, Virginia. Photo: Becchetti family.

## No hero

The Distinguished Flying Cross ranks among the highest of all military medals, awarded for "heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in an aerial flight." Charles Lindbergh received the first for his trans-Atlantic solo flight. Navy Commander Richard E. Byrd, Amelia Earhart and the Wright Brothers were other early recipients. That's pretty esteemed company, but Becchetti won't have any of it. For him, the Distinguished Flying Cross is a measure of having flown and survived 30 or more missions—no more, no less. Ditto for his Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters and a handful of others. "They are nice to have, but not really necessary," he says. "They have nothing to do with heroism. They are just a measurement of my survival of the violence sent my way during the summer of year 1944."

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# The Distinguished Flying Cross

## Heritage Herald Military Award Series

by Lisa Niehoff



The Distinguished Flying Cross. A Bronze cross pattée on which is superimposed a four-bladed propeller awarded for single acts of heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight. U.S. Air Force graphic by Staff Sgt. Alexx Pons.

Editor's note: This is the *Heritage Herald's* second of a five part series on military decorations for flyers. We covered the Air Medal in the last *Herald* and future issues will highlight higher awards of Silver Star, Distinguished Service Cross, and Medal of Honor.

The Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) is our country's most elevated honor for unprecedented flying accomplishments and is granted to recipients for courage while taking part in an aerial flight. During World War II, the award's criteria evolved during the conflict. Initial awards were given for finishing a set number of combat sorties. Later, the emphasis shifted to criteria of

acts of heroism or extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight. Both heroism and extraordinary achievement are distinctive, involving operations that are not routine.

The Distinguished Flying Cross was first instituted on July 2, 1926. The very first one was awarded to Captain Charles A. Lindbergh for his flight in the Spirit of St. Louis, the first transatlantic solo flight in 1927. The first U.S. Navy pilot to be awarded the DFC was Commander Richard E. Byrd for his flight to the North Pole and back in 1926. Amelia Earhart was the first female pilot to receive the DFC in 1932. By special Act of Congress, the Wright Brothers retroactively received a Distinguished Flying Cross.

## World War II

The medal's award criteria varied depending on the theater of operations, aerial combat that was engaged, and the distinctive success of missions that were accomplished. In Europe, many crews received the DFC for their overall accomplishments after completing their tour of duty. In the Pacific, commissioned officers were often awarded the DFC, while enlisted men were given the Air Medal. The criteria used were however, not consistent between commands or over time. Extraordinary leadership and individual achievement could also result in the award. For example, George McGovern received one for successfully completing a bombing mission after his aircraft lost an engine then landing it safely, saving aircraft and crew. Similar to the DFC, Army ground forces were awarded the Distinguished Service Medal.

Roger Freeman mentions in his book *The Mighty 8<sup>th</sup>* that 41,497 Distinguished Flying Crosses were awarded to 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force personnel with an additional 4,480 oak leaf clusters added.

Devices: Additional awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross are shown with bronze or silver Oak Leaf Clusters for the Army Air Force.

Devices: Additional awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross are shown with bronze or silver Oak Leaf Clusters for the Army Air Force.

## Notable Recipients

WWII (Note: ranks and branches given are individual's at completion of their service).

**General of the Air Force Henry H. Arnold, USAAF:** commander of the U.S. Army Air Forces during World War II

**General Ira C. Eaker, USAAF:** commander of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force during World War II

**General Jimmy Doolittle, USAAF:** leader of the Doolittle Raid and 8<sup>th</sup> AF Commander

**General Curtis Lemay, USAAF:** Air Force Chief of Staff and vice presidential candidate

**Major Clark Gable, USAAF:** star of *Gone with the Wind* who flew on five bombing missions during WWII

## 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division

**Brigadier General Leon W. Johnson, USAAF:** leader in the Ploesti Raid and later commander of the Continental Air Command

**Colonel Gabby Gabreski, USAF:** highest scoring American ace in the European Theater with 34 kills. Recipient of 13 DFCs

**Brigadier General James Stewart, USAFR:** World War II B-24 pilot and Group Operations Officer. Academy Award-winning actor



S. Sgt. Frank Clark, 44<sup>th</sup> BG nose gunner/bomb toggler, received the DFC from Brig. Gen. Leon Johnson, Commander of 14<sup>th</sup> Bomb Wing, and Ploesti Medal of Honor awardee in January 1944. Gen. Johnson himself had two DFCs. Photo: Clark family.



## Other Military

Lieutenant George H. W. Bush, USNR: 41<sup>st</sup> President of the United States

Brigadier General Charles A. Lindbergh, USAFR: first person to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean

Colonel Jacqueline Cochran, USAFR: aviatrix, multiple record setting commander of the Women Airforce Service Pilots (WASPs), first woman to break the sound barrier and during World War II

Captain Don Herbert, USAAF: World War II B-24 pilot. Creator and host of *Mr. Wizard's World* television program

Captain Jim Wright, USAAF: Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives

Captain Joseph McCarthy, USMC: U.S. Senator

Captain Dan Rowan, USAAF: P-40 Warhawk pilot and star of *Laugh-In*

Captain Gene Roddenberry, USAAF: Creator of the *Star Trek* television series and franchise

First Lieutenant George McGovern, USAAF: U.S. Senator, presidential candidate

First Lieutenant Ted Stevens, USAAF: U.S. Senator

## Civilians

Orville Wright: aviation pioneer. Awarded by Act of Congress on December 18, 1928

Wilbur Wright: aviation pioneer. Posthumously awarded by Act of Congress on December 18, 1928

Glenn Curtiss: aircraft designer. Post-humously awarded in 1933

Amelia Earhart: legendary aviatrix. First woman to receive the DFC by an act of Congress in 1932

Wiley Post: completed record-breaking around-the-world flight and was the first person to fly solo around the world. Awarded in 1932

## DFC National Memorial

The Distinguished Flying Cross Memorial at March Field Air Museum adjacent to March Air Reserve Base in Riverside, California was designated as a national memorial to recognize members of United States Armed Forces who have distinguished themselves by heroism in aerial flight. The act was signed into law by President Obama on July 25, 2014.

## Credits:

Wikipedia: Distinguished Flying Cross

The Distinguished Flying Cross Society—DFC Society

Distinguished Flying Cross (United States) | Military Wiki | Fandom

Tracesofwar.com › awards › Distinguished-FI

# How I Got the DFC... with condolences to those who deserved but never received one

*by Theodore R. "Ted" Smith (93<sup>rd</sup> BG); 2<sup>nd</sup> ADA Journal, Winter 1994, Vol. 33, No. 4, page 20*

During World War II, I was a B-24 pilot in the Eighth Air Force, assigned to the 409<sup>th</sup> Squadron of the 93<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group. I flew 35 missions, and was on my way home before my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday. I suspect that anybody who's been in any kind of combat that involved shooting, and being shot at, knows of people who committed extraordinary acts of courage and/or skill, who

were never recognized for those acts. On the other hand I suspect we may know of some who received medals for doing things that were not particularly outstanding. It seemed, in those cases, to be a matter of who did it, who reported it, and who started the medal award wheels turning. One of the more egregious examples of this was Lyndon Johnson's Silver Star.

When we got into World War II, LBJ was a member of Congress. He went into the Navy, where he served a total active duty hitch of a little over six months. For about two of those months he was in the South Pacific, where his total exposure to combat consisted of one mission as an observer in a B-26. On that mission the ship was bounced by three Japanese fighters, one of which was shot down by the tail gunner. For simply riding along on this mission, LBJ was given the Silver Star by General MacArthur himself. What medals did the B-26 tail gunner and pilot get? They got zip. I personally knew only one man who got the Silver Star, and he died in the process.

My DFC falls into a category all its own, because the citation awarding me the medal was a piece of almost pure fiction. The events that led to my getting the award occurred on our last mission. Our target that day was the marshalling yard at Landshut, which is down in Bavaria, about 40 miles northeast of Munich. The trip into the target was uneventful to the extent that I don't remember much about it. I do remember we were flying a brand new M model B-24 that was equipped with "formation stick." This was billed as the answer to a pilot's prayer, because it was supposed to take all the physical labor out of flying the ship in close formation. It was connected to the flight controls through the auto pilot, which was the designer's first mistake, because auto pilots on B-24s were not very effective in maintaining control around the pitch axis of the ship. So we hand flew the new airplane, the same as we had all the others.

We were flying on the squadron leader's left wing, so our copilot, Don Porter, did most of the flying that day. I'd never seen our own bombs fall from our ship and explode on the ground. (Note that I make no reference, at all, to hitting the aiming point. That was a rare occurrence for Theodore R. "Ted" Smith (93<sup>rd</sup> Group Navigator). There appeared to be very little flak over the target, and there were no German fighters reported in the area, so I decided to go back to the bomb bay and watch our bombs drop. In retrospect, probably not a smart move on my part.

So, after watching our bombs fall all the way to the ground, where they blew up a couple acres of some poor farmer's freshly planted field, I returned to the cockpit and climbed into my seat. As soon as I got hooked up to the interphone, our navigator, Don Weisert, called to say that the wing lead wasn't following the briefed route out of the target area. We were supposed to leave the target by doing a 180° right turn immediately after

bombs away. This would keep us from getting too close to the flak batteries at Munich. Instead, the wing lead flew straight and level for five minutes or so; then made a right turn to a southwest heading, which he flew over for ten minutes, and then made another right turn and led us right in over downtown Munich.

At that stage of the war, the Germans were short of black powder for their flak guns, and were using a lot of smokeless powder. As we approached Munich, we saw very few black flak bursts, and were beginning to think that maybe we'd be lucky and get out of there with a whole hide. Then we saw a couple ships, in the group ahead, get hit. As we got closer to Munich we could see that we were flying into what appeared to be a solid box of smokeless flak.

I suspect the fact that we were on our last mission made the flak appear more threatening than it actually was. But I was not about to get shot down on our last mission because of bad navigation by the wing lead, so I committed the unforgivable sin of leaving the formation. I slid out to the left about a mile, and climbed to get out of the altitude where most of the flak was bursting. Our squadron made it through the flak, and when they were clear I slid back over to rejoin the formation, fully expecting a reaming for having left in the first place. Our squadron leader that day was a good friend named Simpson. He apparently realized I was having a terminal case of the "35<sup>th</sup> mission puckers," because when I asked him on the radio if I could come back in on his wing, he said, "Roger, pal. Welcome back." So I gratefully slid back in on his left wing, and hoped that my transgression would be overlooked by the brass.

The trip home was a bit like going to heaven. Porter was doing his usual first class job of flying the airplane. We had plenty of fuel. (Our engineer, Gabe Zsigo, was a master at figuring out what the sight gauges were really telling us. I accused him of using black magic.) The ship was behaving itself. The weather on the return leg was clear. There were P-51s all over the sky, and we managed to avoid the more nasty flak areas. We even had a forecast for good weather over the base upon our return. In other words, things were really looking good. So I just relaxed and, when we went off oxygen, smoked a cigarette that had never tasted better, and enjoyed being alive.

When we got close to the base, I suspect most everyone in the crew was feeling as happy as I, because one of our gunners, Ralph Kurka, suggested that it might be fun to buzz the tower. I vetoed that, and re-

mindful of the legend on our base of the pilot who buzzed the tower on his last mission and, as a punishment, was made to fly an extra mission, a thing I had no wish to do. Instead I suggested that, since we were flying a left hand 360° overhead landing pattern and would be the first ship in the squadron to peel off for landing, maybe we could do something a little out of the ordinary at that time.

When we came in over the field and it was time for us to peel off, I ran the engines up to full power and pulled the airplane up into what could best be described as a “show off's wingover.” Apparently the maneuver was unusual enough (for a B-24, anyway) that the tower thought we were out of control, because I was later told that they alerted the crash truck to head for the upwind end of the field, where they thought we were going to crash.

The wing-over resulted in my having to fly a very tight diving turn in order to make the runway. I wasn't at all sure I'd be able to get lined up, and was concentrating so hard on my flying that I completely forgot to call for the landing gear to be lowered. When we rolled out on final we were about 30 feet off the ground, with full flaps, and flaring out to land, but with the gear still up. One of our waist gunners, Al Spaulding, came on the interphone, advising me in no uncertain terms that the gear wasn't down. The tower was calling us on the radio and shooting me in the face with the red Aldis lamp. (We called it the “biscuit gun.”) The caravan at the end of the runway was firing red flares, and Porter, ever the diplomat, was shouting that the landing would probably be smoother if the gear were down.

When I finally got the message I felt like an absolute jackass, and for a moment considered climbing out and circling, until the rest of the group landed, before trying again. But, since there still appeared to be sufficient runway ahead, I decided to try for a landing. So I added a bit of power, slammed the gear handle down, and floated down the runway, in ground effect, until the gear handle popped back up to neutral and the green gear lights came on. When that happened, I chopped the throttles and landed, earnestly praying that the gear was, in fact, down and locked. It was, and the brakes worked well, so we turned off the end of the runway with no trouble, and once again all was right with the world.

As we taxied to our hardstand, hoping to forestall a nasty comment from the tower, I called and said, “Milfoil, this is Thrufare, sorry for causing all the excite-

ment, but we were just celebrating our last mission.” The tower replied, “Roger, good show.” So I heaved a sigh of relief, taxied the ship to our hardstand, shut it down, bade it farewell, and climbed out, never to set foot in a B-24 again.

At interrogation (now called debriefing), while I was having a nip of the flight surgeon's traditional post mission bourbon, our squadron commander, Murray Fant, came up to me and, with a grin, said, “Smith, I saw that peel off and landing you just made. Anybody who does that to a B-24 deserves either a court martial or a DFC. Which do you think I should give you?” Assuming he was kidding about the DFC, and hoping he was kidding about the court martial, I said, “Well, Colonel, if I have a choice, I'll take the DFC, but I probably deserve the court martial.” Then I told him about leaving the formation after bombs away, and forgetting to put the gear down. I don't think he was expecting to hear the answer I gave him because he gave me a quizzical look and said, “Well, we'll see what happens,” and walked away. I didn't give the episode any more thought, and instead concentrated on getting orders sending me back to the States.

A few days before I was scheduled to leave, the group got word that one of the intelligence officers wanted to see me, and that I should bring my mission records. When I met with him he told me that he had been instructed to see if I had done anything on my missions that warranted a DFC, and if so, he was to write up the citation.

We went over my mission notes, and I must admit, in the aggregate they didn't tell a very impressive story of my time in combat. In other words, they weren't the stuff of which heroic legends are made. The only events that seemed to make the intelligence officer sit up and take notice were two missions on which we made crash landings in France. He grilled me rather thoroughly on those, taking notes the whole time. He then commented that perhaps he could “make something worthwhile” out of the information he had, and sent me on my way. I left for the States a day or so later and completely forgot the whole affair.

I returned to the States, took some leave, and then asked to be sent to combat in fighters. I was at Mirana Air Base in Arizona, finishing up in AT-6s, and about to be sent to P-51 transition, when V-J Day came. I figured I had enough “points” to get out of the army, so I requested inactive reserve status, and separation. I was given those orders, and got busy clearing the base.

When I was in the base adjutant's office picking up my travel orders, the adjutant himself called me into his office. He said he had just received, through channels, a citation awarding me the DFC. Apparently it had been following me ever since I left England. The adjutant told me he wanted to have an award ceremony for me, and would order the medal, which would arrive in a week or so. I told him that I was on my way home, planning to enroll in the fall semester at college, and couldn't afford to lose any more time, waiting around, just to have a medal pinned on me. I probably wasn't as diplomatic as I should have been, because the adjutant (a major) got highly indignant. He said that he was a graduate of West Point (we called them "ring knockers") and intended to spend the next twenty or thirty years serving his country in the military. He then went on to say that I was a less than patriotic American, to be in such a hurry to get out of the service.

I replied that I had plans for my future that didn't include putting any more time in the peace time military than was absolutely necessary. I further stated that I had flown a tour in combat, been shot at more times than I cared to be, and felt that I didn't owe Uncle Sam any more of my life unless and until we got into another war. I then made the personal observation that if he, the major, was an example of what the officer corps in the peace time military was going to be, I was even more determined to become a civilian as soon as possible.

With that, he threw the citation at me, and roared that I was "nothing but a dime a dozen throttle jockey, and a sad sack of an officer, who would be useless in peace time," and that the army would be better off without me. Then he ordered me "off the base by sundown." (Apparently he'd read one too many wild west novels.) I realized that I was on the verge of real trouble with this guy, and had better not say one more word. So

I picked the citation up off the floor, grabbed my orders, beat a hasty retreat from his office, left the base, and was driving through Phoenix, on my way home, when the sun went down.

It wasn't until later that I read the citation the major had thrown at me, and as I stated earlier, it read like a piece of fiction. It was apparent the author of the citation had done a bit of creative writing, and had taken the events of two, if not three, of our more exciting missions and had written the citation as though all those things had, in fact, occurred on just one mission. On first reading, I couldn't believe the citation was for me. But my name was correct, and so was my serial number. My first impulse, after pausing to enjoy the irony of the whole affair, was to toss the citation in the trash, but instead I just stuffed it in my army file and put the whole ridiculous business out of my mind.

I never made any attempt to get the medal. I did pick up a ribbon and wore it for a studio portrait, the typical "hail the conquering hero" picture that I could show to my children and grandchildren. But when I looked at the proofs, I felt like a fraud. So I cancelled the portrait, and tossed the proofs into a box with the rest of the flotsam of my military career, stashed it all in the attic, and forgot about it. Then, in 1992, Don Weisert, my navigator, and I had a reunion. While we were winning the war all over again, the subject of medals came up. That triggered the recollection process, and this "confession" is the result.

So, to all you unsung heroes who weren't given the glory you deserve, I offer the following thought, which will prove that there really is no justice, and thus, I hope, be of some consolation: You now know of a guy named Johnson who probably didn't deserve the medal he got, and a guy named Smith who definitely didn't deserve his.

## **...but three veterans add their views concerning the DFC**

**George Risko** of the 491<sup>th</sup> BG wrote: "regarding the story How I Got the DFC: In the 491<sup>st</sup>, you received an Air Medal after six missions. If you completed your tour you received four Air Medals and a DFC. However, I became a combat casualty on my 28<sup>th</sup> mission, so my DFC was awarded belatedly for the last mission I flew. My opinion is that anyone who survived 30-35 missions flying combat in the 8<sup>th</sup> AF should have received a DFC — two if you flew combat in a B-24 and three if you were a navigator."

—491<sup>th</sup> BG, excerpted from *2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Journal*, 1995 Spring

**J. Fred Thomas** of the 392<sup>nd</sup> BG wrote: "Remember our paragraph about trying to get our crew's ball turret gunner his DFC medal. We had no success, so we turned the file over to our C.O. of the 392<sup>nd</sup> BG, Col.



Lawrence Gilbert. Since that report, we have had a nice letter from Col. Gilbert in which he outlined his efforts in contacting numerous units of the “Blue Suits” post-war blue Air Force-Eds. So far, he has had no success, either. On the surface, it would appear that the new boys put the DFC in the category of the Bronze Star, Silver Star, or what have you, which were awarded for acts of heroism. All the while we thought the DFC had to do with flying.

All my crew members who finished the tour with me received the DFC. The only heroic thing they did was survive 30 missions while flying with me and my abilities as a novice pilot with about 400 hours and combat training which was minimal. It seems Congress passed an act that would enable those who fell through the cracks to get the deserved medals, but the paper-shufflers continue to do their thing. Damn it!!”

—392<sup>nd</sup> BG excerpted from 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Journal, Summer 2000

**Louis Loevsky**, veteran of the 466<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, was honored and recognized on April 17, 1999 for heroism during World War II. Fifty-five years after jumping from a falling B-24 bomber and into the hands of Nazi Germans, ex-prisoner of war Loevsky was given a belated Distinguished Flying Cross medal for heroism during the flight.

After the airplane was hit by enemy fire, Loevsky pulled an injured crew member, Leonard Smith, from a gun turret and helped that airman jump from the airplane. As Loevsky drifted toward land by parachute, he was in fear of his life for two reasons — he was American and he was Jewish. Loevsky spent 13 months in a POW camp.

He was awarded the medal during a ceremony in Savannah, Georgia that was part of the 466<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group reunion which was also attended by Smith. Presenting the medal to Loevsky was Col. Beverly Steadman, who served as commanding officer of the 466<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group in 1944.

Said Loevsky, “My wife, Molly, and family were thrilled to be present when I received the DFC. When five-year-old David said, ‘Grandpa...I’m proud of you,’ it was priceless.”

Editors note: you can read about Louis’ referenced mission by going to this same Journal, same page: *My First Trip to Germany and It Had to Be Berlin*. Click on our Heritage League Website: <https://heritageleague.org/orig/files/1999-12-small.pdf>.



After 35 years, Louis Loevsky, (left) 466<sup>th</sup> BG navigator and POW survivor, was awarded his DFC by his former group commander Steadman at a 1999 bomb group reunion. Photo: Loevsky family.

—466<sup>th</sup> BG, excerpted from 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Journal, Winter 1999, page 15

## and currently...

### Gunship Crew Nets Five Distinguished Flying Crosses for High-Risk Afghanistan Mission

by Brian W. Everstine, *Air Force Magazine*, June 24, 2021

The Air Force awarded five Distinguished Flying Crosses and four Air Medals to the crew of an AC-130J gunship for a daring mission to help helicopter crews safely evacuate wounded American and Afghan forces during a September 2019 firefight in Afghanistan.

Flying under the call sign Shadow 71, the Ghost rider provided continuous close air support over the course of a two-hour operation, firing on multiple enemy positions as helicopter assault forces flew in to evacuate wounded ground troops, according to a June 22 release. “I always say gunships are a team sport,” said Shadow 71 aircraft commander Lt. Col. Christopher McCall during an award ceremony at Hurlburt Field, Fla. “You really can’t do something like this without a great team. Shadow 71 has talent from front to back.”

During the ceremony, Distinguished Flying Crosses were awarded to McCall, weapon systems officer Capt. Jasen K. Hrisca, combat systems officer Capt. Tyler D. Larson, lead special missions aviator Tech. Sgt. Jake M. Heathcott, and sensor operator Staff Sgt. Kyle W. Burden.

Four more crew members were awarded the single event Air Medal: co-pilot Maj. Brian D. Courchesne, special missions aviator Staff Sgt. Alex Almarlaes, special missions aviator Senior Airman Brianna S. Striplin, and special missions aviator Senior Airman Thomas I. Fay.

Air Force Special Operations Command boss Lt. Gen. James C. Slife praised the crew in the release. "Thank you for who you are," he said. "Thank you for being our examples; thank you for your service to the nation; thank you for your dedication to our mission." 🇺🇸



DFCs and Air Medals await presentation to the gunship crew of Shadow 71 last month. Photo: Air Force Magazine.

## Headed to London?

### Don't miss the American Chapel at St Paul's Cathedral



Main altar of American Chapel backs up to main high altar of the cathedral, off left, and fronts the Roll of Honor, just off right. Photo: Brian Mahoney.

A memorable and moving place for 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division members and families to visit in London is the special chapel commemorating those Americans who staged from Britain and were lost during WWII. The American Memorial Chapel found beyond the High Altar at the very east end of St Paul's Cathedral is well worth a visit.

A short documentary film *History of the American Chapel* tells the multi-decade story of the American Memorial Chapel within St Paul's Cathedral, a special place of worship and remembrance honoring the 28,000 Americans who lost their lives in World War II while based in Britain.

Highlighting the bond between two great nations, it starts with the original idea for the Chapel by Lord Hugh Trenchard and Lord Clive Baillieu in the immediate aftermath of the war, and continues through President Eisenhower's work



commissioning of the centerpiece *Roll of Honor*, the

Roll of honor containing 28,000 Americans who lost their lives staging from England, is in the center of the American Chapel at London's St Paul's Cathedral. Photo: American Memorial Chapel.

dedication of the Chapel by Queen Elizabeth II and then Vice President Richard Nixon and ends with the Chapel's continuing use today for services and remembrances.

You will also see visits from Supreme Court Justice Owen Roberts, a special July 4<sup>th</sup> service reuniting Eisenhower and Sir Winston Churchill, a fundraising concert at Carnegie Hall and the founding of the Trust itself by Lord Mayor of London Sir Paul Newall. The film features appearances by Dr. the Hon. Robert Baillieu, great-grandson of Lord Baillieu, as well as former U.S. Ambassador to the Court of St James's the Hon. Robert Tuttle and current Dean of St Paul's Cathedral, The Very Reverend Dr. David Ison.

The St Paul's Cathedral Trust in America is a U.S.-based 501(c)(3) public charity that funds vital education for the St Paul's Choristers and works to conserve England's greatest symbol of hope.

See their video at: <https://www.stpaulstrust.org/the-memorial> 🎥



Glory abounding. High Altar, with the American Chapel beyond, just to left of this view, to SE. Ornately carved wooden choir stalls ('Quire') visible to right. Photo: Brian Mahoney.

## Project Update: News from The Greatest Generation

by Christopher Clark (489<sup>th</sup> & 44<sup>th</sup> BGs) and Brian Mahoney (492<sup>nd</sup> & 467<sup>th</sup> BGs)

Earlier this year, Marybeth Dyer set a goal for us: to find all of the newsletters published by veteran groups of the Second Air Division and make them searchable by all. We have two initiatives running at once:

1. **survey** existing newsletters and digitize them, if they are not already digitally available; and
2. **publish** these collections electronically, so they are easily accessible and searchable; only requiring that you have a browser and an internet connection.

Most of our survey is complete. We were lucky to find several collections have already been digitized and made available to us (tip of the hat to the 392<sup>nd</sup>'s Bob Books, and Ric Parsonson, our friend in North Pickenham, home the 492<sup>nd</sup> BG and then the 491<sup>st</sup> BG). Full runs of these three bomb groups' postwar associations were already prepared and freely shared! In other cases, we have found all or most of a series in hardcopy only, but made available to us for scanning and text recognition. A few remaining cases are still being researched, such as how many of 'our' five fighter groups had veteran associations which issued periodicals, and whether we can access and include them.

In the Fall, we will have the first big batch scanned. As the year ends, if we have holes that are still unfilled, we will come to you, our readers, with requests for specific items, to be scanned in a small, later operation.

The **publish** part entails a host of technical issues, and we are delighted to have the continued volunteer involvement of our Heritage League webmaster Nancy to implement a suitable architecture for storing, searching, and displaying. We will soon model methods, with an eye toward minimizing hosting expenses and complexity, while still delivering a muscular platform.

We are as excited as you are and look forward to reporting further progress in the next *Herald*! 🎉



# Heritage League Annual Meeting

Please join us for our Annual Meeting at the Savannah Reunion. Listed below, it is Thursday, October 28 at 5:30 pm. Also note that the Marriott's reunion rooms are sold out. The Society has made overflow hotel arrangements. Check its website for the latest info at: <https://www.8thafhs.org>.



## 47th ANNUAL 8th AFHS REUNION Marriott Savannah Riverfront, Savannah, GA October 27-31, 2021

### Wednesday, October 27

1:00pm — 6:00pm	<b>Reunion Registration open</b>
6:00pm — 7:00pm	Complimentary Welcome Reception, followed by dinner on your own
7:00pm — 9:00pm	8th AFHS Board Meeting
7:00pm — until	Hospitality Suites remain open throughout reunion

### Thursday, October 28

7:30am — 8:30am	American Breakfast Buffet
8:00am — 12:00pm	<b>Reunion Registration open</b>
9:30am — 12:00pm	<i>"The Other Savannah"*</i>
1:00pm — 6:00pm	<b>Reunion Registration open</b>
2:00pm — 3:30pm	<i>"Learn from the Past...Journey to the Future"</i> — UK Speakers: Emily Charles, Hattie Hearn, Suzie Harrison, Jeff Hawley, & Paul Bellamy—with Q & A
3:45pm — 5:00pm	<i>"Honoring Their Service"</i> Gary Webb—Webb Military Museum
5:30pm — 6:30pm	Heritage League Meeting
6:00pm — 9:00pm	Cash Bar Open
7:00pm — 9:00pm	Buffet dinner and program: <i>"The 8th—Beyond the Legacy"</i> LTC Steve Bolton, Garrison Commander, Hunter Army Air Field <i>(subject to the needs of the US military)</i>

### Friday, October 29

7:30am — 8:30am	American Breakfast Buffet
8:00am — 12:00pm	<b>Reunion Registration open</b>
8:00am — 9:15am	Group Meetings
9:30am — 2:30pm	<i>National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force*</i>
1:00pm — 6:00pm	<b>Reunion Registration open</b>
3:15pm — 4:30pm	<i>WWII Vets with Q &amp; A</i>
6:00pm — 9:00pm	Cash Bar Open
7:00pm — 9:00pm	Rendezvous Dinners

### Saturday, October 30

7:30am — 8:30am	American Breakfast Buffet
8:00am — 12:00pm	<b>Reunion Registration open</b>
8:45am — 10:15am	General Membership Meeting
11:00am — 2:30pm	<i>"Historic Savannah" (City Tour ~ lunch on your own)*</i>
12:00pm — 4:00pm	8th AFHS Board Meeting
1:00pm — 6:00pm	<b>Reunion Registration open</b>
6:00pm — 9:00pm	Cash Bar Open
7:00pm — 10:00pm	Gala Dinner and Program

### Sunday, October 31

7:30am — 8:30am	American Breakfast Buffet
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**\*It is important that you be in the bus boarding area at least ten [10] minutes prior to the scheduled departure times. All tours require a minimum of 35 participants, unless otherwise stated. Driver and Staff gratuities ARE NOT included in the tour prices.**





**REGISTRATION FORM**  
**47th Annual 8th AFHS REUNION**  
**Marriott Savannah Riverfront, Savannah, GA**  
**October 27-31, 2021**

REGISTRATION CUT-OFF DATE IS October 10, 2021	Price p/p	# of People	TOTAL
The principal attendee <b>MUST</b> be a member of the <b>8th AFHS</b> to register for this reunion. If you are <b>NOT</b> a <b>CURRENT</b> member, please pay your yearly DUES here:	\$ 40	#	\$
<b>REGISTRATION FEE—ALL attendees MUST pay registration fee.</b>	\$ 45	#	\$
Registration fee for children ages 8-16 attending more than 1 function & staying at hotel:	\$ 30	#	\$
Buffet Breakfast @ \$33 per day: Thursday _____ Friday _____ Saturday _____ Sunday _____	\$ 33	#	\$
<b>BOX LUNCHES @ \$10 per lunch FRIDAY, Oct. 29th, ONLY!!!!</b> Box lunches will be available from the <b>Mighty 8th Museum ONLY:</b> You <b>MUST PREORDER THEM HERE!</b> Please select: Ham # _____ or Turkey # _____ Vegetarian Wrap # _____	Price is per lunch per person: \$ 10	#	\$
<b>DINNERS</b>			
Thursday, Oct 28 — EVENING DINNER BUFFET Savannah Style favorites	\$ 55	#	\$
Friday, Oct 29—RENDEZVOUS DINNER Roasted Breast of Chicken and seasonal sides	\$ 45	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 30—GALA BANQUET (Please select ONE entrée)			
Filet Cut Sirloin	\$ 55	#	\$
Pecan Grouper ( <i>a Savannah favorite</i> )	\$ 55	#	\$
Vegetarian plate(s) Please indicate [number]: Thurs # ____ Fri # ____ Sat # ____	\$ 45	#	\$
<b>TOUR OPTIONS:</b>			
Thursday, Oct 28: The Other Savannah Tour—Lunch on your own	\$ 25	#	\$
Friday, Oct 29: Tour of National Museum of the Mighty 8th Air Force —round trip	\$ 15	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 30: Historic Savannah City Tour—Lunch on your own	\$ 25	#	\$
<b>Total amount payable to: 8th AFHS</b>			\$

Please PRINT. If registering a WWII veteran here, please list their name first.

MEMBER NAME (for name tag): \_\_\_\_\_

WWII Veteran \_\_\_\_\_ BG/FG Affiliation (for Rendezvous Dinner seating): **HERITAGE LEAGUE** ☐

SPOUSE or PERSON attending: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDITIONAL GUESTS: \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS: \_\_\_\_\_ CITY: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

DAYTIME PH #: \_\_\_\_\_ EMAIL: \_\_\_\_\_

EMERGENCY CONTACT: \_\_\_\_\_ PH #: \_\_\_\_\_

PLEASE INDICATE ANY PHYSICAL OR DIETARY RESTRICTIONS: \_\_\_\_\_

IF PAYING BY CREDIT CARD —M/C; VISA; or AmEx (**a 3% convenience fee will be added**):

CARD #: \_\_\_\_\_ EXP. DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

SIGNATURE: \_\_\_\_\_ *Your contact information will only be shared with attendees.*

MAIL completed form with check or credit card info to: 8th AFHS ~ 68 Kimberlys Way ~ Jasper, GA 30143-4769

IF paying by credit card, you may **SCAN and email** form to: ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org

# Happy Birthday VETS!

The Heritage League is pleased to acknowledge our Veterans' birthdays who have recently, or are about to celebrate their 'special day.' We missed a couple from earlier this year and have included them in this issue.

**HELP!** We have been able to get photos of some, but not all of our Veterans who served in the 2nd Air Division. We strive to highlight more Veteran birthdays as a regular feature but we need your help as we do not have photos of all. If you have a fairly recent photo of your Vet, please Email it with "2AD VET Birthday" in the subject line to: ddovey@hotmail.com.

Our country is filled with much promise for tomorrow's generation, all because it was shaped by legends like you who risked your lives every day defending our nation. **HAPPY BIRTHDAY.** We honor you and thank you for our freedoms today. 🇺🇸

*Whatever you guys are doing  
—keep it up!*



93<sup>rd</sup> BG pilot Bill Brown reaches 101 years this July. He completed 35 combat missions and last year received the French Legion of Honor. Photo: Jim Root, 93<sup>th</sup> BG.



Ray Gulick marked 100 years last April. A 466<sup>th</sup> BG bombardier and veteran of 30 combat missions, with a DFC. He is still aiming forward. Photo: family.



Mo Morris, waist gunner with the 453<sup>rd</sup> BG. Ever vigilant, he celebrates his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday this month. Photo: D.Dovey.



George Insley, 44<sup>th</sup> BG pilot, reached 99 years last April. He made two combat tours during the war. Photo: Insley family.



453<sup>rd</sup> BG bombardier Francis Cartier marks 98 years this month. Photo: Irene Hurner.



Earl Wassom, a pilot with the 366<sup>th</sup> BG, completed 35 missions. Always beaming and inspiring; he is our veteran chaplain. Earl will be 98 this September. Photo: Doug Dovey.



446<sup>th</sup> BG nose gunner/bomb togglier Kieth Babcock, makes a youthful 97 years this August. Photo: Babcock family.

# News from the American Library, Norwich



*By Orla Kennelly, Memorial Trust Librarian*

The newly refurbished **American Library—Memorial to the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, United States Army Air Forces**—is open to the public, on the same restricted basis as established last April which limits its number of attendees permitted at one time. Although it was hoped that restrictions could be relaxed by now, England is not reopening as readily as the U.S. Target date for easing current restrictions is July 19, 2021—all dependent upon progress in controlling outbreaks of the new COVID variant.

We have been working to answer remote inquiries and we expect to see a number of our archive images in upcoming Library presentations. Orla Kennelly, Trust Librarian is available to speak on digital platforms to any groups or associations and the following talks are currently available:

- Virtual Tour of the American Library
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division in East Anglia—An overview
- Getting the most from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Archive
- The U.S. Women's Army Corp in WWII Norfolk
- Wartime Brides and GI Sweethearts

To inquire, email: [americanlibrary@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:americanlibrary@norfolk.gov.uk). More talks will be available this Fall 2021.

## Monthly Internet Get-together

The Library continues a regular web-based activity 'Coffee Afternoon' the second Saturday of every month on Zoom at 11am U.S. Eastern daylight time (4pm British time). Hosted by library assistants Jane Appleton and Linda Sheppard, it is an opportunity for 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division families and friends on both sides of the Atlantic to get together. Please email: [americanlibrary@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:americanlibrary@norfolk.gov.uk) for an invite.

## Reoccurring activities invite participants:

- Interpretive films for the *Life in the Air* and *Life on the Ground* display units have been produced,

and are now installed in those areas of the library, telling a good story.

- Reading America Videos have been produced by the American Scholars and staff. These short segments focus on one book for each of the 50 United States. See the collection on Facebook here: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/323083774517/702996397247971>.

## Special Upcoming Events

- Virtual Tour of the American Library. Monday September 13<sup>th</sup> 18:00 BST (1pm EDT).
- Food and the Forces: The U.S. 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in WWII. Speaker Panel, hosted by the American Library. Thursday September 16<sup>th</sup> 18:30-20:00 (1:30pm EDT). Panel discussion on food at 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in England and the Stalag Lufts 1943-1945. Panel members are:

1. Dr. Derwin Gregory, Programme Leader, Archaeology and Heritage at Bishop Grosseteste University, Lincoln, England.
2. Hattie Hearn, PhD Researcher at the University of East Anglia, England.
3. Heather Thies, Director of Education and Volunteers, National Museum of the Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, Savannah, Georgia, U.S.A.

**Getting the most from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Digital Archive**—a talk with the Trust Librarian. Saturday October 9<sup>th</sup> 17:30 BST (12:30pm EDT). Discover all the features of the archive and how it can aid in your research. This event is hosted during Libraries Week 2021.

**Researching WWII U.S. Army Air Forces personnel archived in the American Library.** Thursday October 21<sup>st</sup> 18:00 BST (1pm EDT). The Trust Librarian will guide you through the resources available to aid you in your research.

**We Will Remember.** Saturday November 13<sup>th</sup> 18:00 BST (12pm EST). Memory and commemoration in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division archive in conjunction with Remembrance Day (Veterans Day). A talk by the Trust Librarian.

All special events will be advertised and ticketed via: <http://Americanlibrary.eventbrite.com>. 📱



# Memorial Day—2021



## Heritage League Flowers Program

Memorial Day is our day for honoring and mourning all military personnel who have died serving our country. The Heritage League particularly honors those brave airmen of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division serving in WWII. The Division lost approximately 7,000 souls in the fight for freedom in Europe.

Due to COVID restrictions at the 13 overseas ABMC cemeteries with 2AD airmen, we were not able to formally present our usual Heritage League commemorative wreaths as in past years. Our program remains funded and we hope to reinstate presentations as ceremonies resume in the future.

Our British friends shared with us the small individual observances they conducted at their respective locations.

**Cambridge American Cemetery.** Colin Mann, always a special friend to the League, made a special trip to Cambridge American Cemetery at Madingley, which was only partially open to visitations, to place wreaths. He refers us to the following poem:

*They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the year's condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.  
"Lest we forget"*



Heritage League friend Colin Mann presents three wreaths on Memorial Day at Cambridge American Cemetery. There were only a dozen or so wreaths that day, a marked contrast to the hundreds during normal times. Photo: Colin Mann.



The Heritage League's wreath presentation for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division. Photo: Colin Mann.



## National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force—Special Event



Some of the 26,000 flags placed in the Memorial Garden of the National Museum of the Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force for their ceremonies. Photo: Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> Museum.

Worthy of note, the National Museum of the Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in Pooler, Georgia, conducted a special presentation for Memorial Day. “*Flags for the Fallen*” consisted of 26,000 American flags placed in the museum memorial garden on behalf of men and women who lost their lives in defense of their nation in the war-torn skies over Europe from 1942-1945. Volunteers placed the flags, each with 48 stars, because that was the flag they died under during the war.

We provide a link to the Museum’s video recordings of the events of that day...which included our WWII veterans. We appreciate and thank the hundreds of volunteers who came out to help place and then remove the flags.

<https://spark.adobe.com/page/UQMyH4HFE1ijj/>



A wreath on the 489<sup>th</sup> BG Memorial to remember its first combat mission on 30 May 1944 and the two airmen who died on that first mission: S.Sgt. Aldo Pellini and Lt. Joseph Garber. Photo: Marjorie Shiers.

## Halesworth Airbase

To our veterans, families and friends. The warmth and sunshine has returned, and today we have wonderful weather for Memorial Day (and for our own Bank Holiday) here in UK.

Our own WWII airmen who flew from Halesworth were remembered. The flags were raised over the Memorial site to half-mast at 8am and full at 12 noon. Red and yellow roses were placed on each of the memorials to the 489<sup>th</sup> BG, the 56<sup>th</sup> FG and the 5<sup>th</sup> ERS stationed here.

Due to current COVID-19 restrictions, the **American Cemetery at Cambridge (Madingley)** did not have the usual large Memorial Day Ceremony this year, but they held a private wreath laying ceremony at 11am for Base Commanders and the U.S. Embassy. This was not open to the public, but the cemetery would be open for anyone wishing to lay a wreath from 1pm. Our contact at the cemetery told me that ‘A-Plot’ will be decorated with flags and photos and there would be a flyby at 2pm.

—**Marjorie Shiers,**

Friends of the 489<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group

# What Memorial Day Means to Me

*by Christopher Clark, 489<sup>th</sup> & 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Groups, 8<sup>th</sup> AF*

When I hear Memorial Day, as a member of the baby boomer generation, I get a very solemn feeling—I have many men to thank for my freedom. As a proud baby boomer, all of my uncles were in combat or served our country.

My father had four brothers. Frank flew 47 missions in a B-24 and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. Bob was in the 28<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division, and marched in the Paris Liberation Parade in Aug 1944; he was captured by the Germans near Aachen and was a POW in Germany from Nov. 1944 to May 1945. David was classified 4F because of bad eye sight. Tommy served time after WWII in the Navy. My wife's uncle, William Defibaugh, died at Battle of Bulge January 1, 1945. My father served two years in peace time, 1955 to 1957 as radio operator in the Signal Corps of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army.

My mother Avon had five brothers and two husbands. Avon's first husband was a United States Marine, as an EOD (explosive ordinance disposal technician) in Korea. He was killed three months after the end of fighting in September 1953. There were three men that day, two blonde with blue eyes, one dark complexion and black hair. After the explosion, there were only enough remains to fill a shoe box; according to the story my mother told us when we were young. There was no DNA tracing back then. They buried the blonde hair and blue eyes in one coffin with two names on the tombstone at Arlington National Cemetery. Before we kids knew that our mother had been married before to our father, I do recall my Mom and Aunt Lucille broke away from us at Arlington. When they returned, my Mother had been crying.

Mom's oldest sister, Francis, married my Uncle Melvin, also a United States Marine, who saw combat at the invasion of Wolmido Island near Incheon, Korea. He was wounded there; only two men of his platoon survived. After healing and returning back, Uncle Melvin was wounded a second time; he was the only one who survived. The shrapnel that almost took his head off made him almost bald for the rest of his life.

There were more uncles. Uncle Marvin served as a MP in the U.S. Army in the 1950s. Uncle Calvin, mom's brother, served in the U.S. Navy in the 1950s as a diver. Uncle Alvin was a career lifer in the U.S. Air Force as an Air Force Doctor (psychologist). He served at the nuclear missile bases in the middle of the U.S. and would not talk about it at all. Uncle James was also a lifer, starting in the U.S. Navy in the Gulf of Tonkin, then transferred to the Air Force also in Vietnam. In addition, Uncle David was in Vietnam. I remember my Mom and I taking him to Andrews Air Force Base where he departed for Vietnam. I was the only one of her four sons to be there. This was unusual because we always traveled together. Why I don't know where the other three were, but I remember that hug Mom gave him, and her tears as just the two of us watched his plane take off until disappearing in the distance.

When I recently came across and developed some photo negatives that Uncle David sent to my Mother; they showed some pigs feeding. I sent my uncle the photos by mail and waited a few days to ask him about the pictures. He got real quiet. Apparently, the pigs were consuming human flesh that had been burned. This is one of the things that our fighting men have faced since the beginning of the United States of America. They fought for this country and had to deal with the scenes of war for the rest of their lives.

The impact of their service expanded over time. I have talked to both of Dad's brothers, Frank, and Bob. Both related they had bad dreams that interrupted their sleep; Uncle David too. My father said that both Frank and Bob left the U.S. young and fresh, neither one smoked or drank. After the war ended, both were chain smokers and, sad to say, became alcoholics. Both were very heavy drinkers, and it was the WAR that did it. Lastly, my cousin Donald Becker was killed at Cherry Point, North Carolina, as a United States Marine Corp pilot in a Harrier accident in 1980.

I have many men to thank for my FREEDOM as do we all! Thank a Veteran for his or her service to our country by saying 'Thank You,' it will help both of you. 🇺🇸

**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 MEMORY OF...***Donors*

Albert (453 <sup>rd</sup> ) and Claire Biel	Barbara Mello
William L. Brooks (466 <sup>th</sup> )	Kurt and Vicki Warning
C.N. (Bud) Chamberlain (489 <sup>th</sup> )	Dana Chamberlain
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**—Folded Wings—**

<b>Gerald H. Scott</b>	03/06/05	445 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Harold O. Simms</b>	02/20/07	44 <sup>th</sup> & 466 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Edward L. Varga</b>	09/21/08	453 <sup>rd</sup> BG
<b>C. Bickham Dickson, Jr.</b>	10/13/11	489 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>James M. Davis</b>	02/20/12	489 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>George Lewis Weidig, Sr.</b>	09/10/14	44 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>John D. Leppert, Jr.</b>	09/14/15	491 <sup>st</sup> BG
<b>Eli (Link) Veazey, Jr.</b>	01/18/16	446 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Norman R. Dunphe</b>	11/18/16	448 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>David T. Rhodes</b>	11/27/16	453 <sup>rd</sup> BG
<b>Maurice G. Hebert</b>	01/18/18	389 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Frank M. Pickering</b>	06/11/18	489 <sup>th</sup> BG

<b>Alfred V. Sloan, Jr.</b>	07/27/18	445 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Edward J. Dittlinger</b>	12/26/18	445 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Kenneth J. Ferland</b>	07/12/19	453 <sup>rd</sup> BG
<b>Melvin A. Goldberg</b>	08/30/19	489 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Richard J. Brandt</b>	11/19/19	445 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Donald Dumoulin</b>	12/03/19	453 <sup>rd</sup> BG
<b>George A. Heropoulos</b>	05/30/20	448 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Norman C. Cook</b>	08/26/20	445 <sup>th</sup> & 492 <sup>nd</sup> BG
<b>Herbert J. Wilson, MD</b>	10/10/20	44 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Harold Burks</b>	10/26/20	93 <sup>rd</sup> BG
<b>Aubrey Burke</b>	12/11/20	392 <sup>nd</sup> BG
<b>Aldo Ricci</b>	01/07/21	453 <sup>rd</sup> BG
<b>Dwight Irvin Auman</b>	01/25/21	466 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Ward C. Urbom</b>	02/04/21	446 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Jack H. Wendling</b>	02/04/21	466 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Roland R. Cappiello</b>	02/21/21	466 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>Charles E. Dye</b>	02/24/21	392 <sup>nd</sup> BG
<b>Burton Dale Madison</b>	02/28/21	453 <sup>rd</sup> BG
<b>Orlin H. Benedict, Jr.</b>	03/05/21	389 <sup>th</sup> BG
<b>John A. Paller</b>	04/15/21	491 <sup>st</sup> BG

**Folded Wings Report**

Please report the death of a member or spouse and provide a copy of the newspaper obituary if possible.

Name of deceased \_\_\_\_\_ Unit/Sqdn. \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Date of death \_\_\_\_\_ Survivors \_\_\_\_\_

Reported by \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to: Marybeth Dyer, 6410 Valley Oak Plaza, Martinez, CA 94553

or Email to: [smbdyer@sbcglobal.net](mailto:smbdyer@sbcglobal.net)



Wreath noting the "memory of 6,881 men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division who gave their lives." Photo: Colin Mann.





## HERITAGE LEAGUE VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

### —MISSION BRIEFING—

by Chris Clark, Program Protégé &  
Brian Mahoney, VP for Volunteers

Recently, a handful of our members have stepped forward and are already making very high value contributions to the Heritage League's work to honor and remember the services and sacrifices of the Second Air Division in WWII. There are some just entering retirement and see volunteer opportunities with us as a meaningful use of their talents and energies. (We tip our hat to three recent additions who each bring very honed talents to the table, and are available for research and photo work for the *Herald*; freeing this volunteer to focus more on... running the Volunteer Program!) For those who are at busier career points with less available time, we also have items from our 'wish list' that take a smaller time commitment.

Currently the 'wish list' consists of mission relevant, practical tasks or roles that the Executive Committee and officers and protégés have come up with, but we should remind you that we are open to hearing your ideas of additional ways volunteers can take our rather conceptual mission and turn it into specific, meaningful achievements. To engage everyone's creative juices—and tempt you to volunteer!—here is a sampling from the current wish list. (Note that the items range from one-time tasks requiring modest time, to ones that involve adopting a role in recurring processes and longer term initiatives.)

**Contributing Photographer.** If you are able to 'cover' an event or destination related to the historic 2nd Air Division or current social and ceremonial events with a 2AD component, we are interested in briefing you on our broad pictorial guidance and technical preferences. The *Herald*, our website, Facebook and even YouTube 'spaces' will benefit, and you will be credited.

**Records Improvement.** The Executive Committee is carefully setting up digital repositories for our organization's historical records, reference collection, and wide array of files in current regular use. Do you have experience with organizing cloudspace for team users, or designing and implementing backup routines and security audits?

**Sunshine Program.** From time to time, we like to have a more personal outreach to one or our friends or members...would you be suited to writing a note to console or congratulate, on our behalf?

**Flower Program Team.** Due to pandemic, we have temporarily curtailed our wreath placements at the overseas cemeteries holding 2 AD airmen killed in action, or commemorating those missing in action. We expect to 'bloom' again. One or more of our recent past presidents has always taken this on, but it has grown steadily in its reach. Could you be a reliable helper as we develop and maintain important personal, and business, and institutional relationships year-round?

**Content Generator.** We use more and more social media to reach our future members and to bring accurate history and dignified commemorations to the public view. Are you a born researcher who can commit to finding a steady stream of suitable pictures and stories?

**Content Placer.** Could you commit to refreshing the League's public face throughout the year?

Please use the online Volunteer Form on our website at: <https://heritageleague.org/volunteer/> to contact us so we can match your interests, talents, and time limits to a suitable task or role. Speaking for all of the current and past volunteers of the Heritage League, we look forward to having you join us! 🙏



## HISTORY SNAPSHOTS THIS TIME-FRAME IN 2<sup>ND</sup> AIR DIVISION'S PAST

—compiled by Doug Dovey  
art credit: Ron Cole \*\*



- **8<sup>th</sup> Fighter Command Mission FO-71 Bomber Escort. July 14, 1943**

A combined force of 128 P-47s from 4FG; 56FG; and 78FG provide escort for the Amiens/Glisy element of 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Mission #73. Three aircraft are lost: 4FG (1) - one KIA; 78FG (2) - one KIA, one wounded in action returned to duty (WIA, RTD). Also, on this date a Spitfire IX of 485 Squadron RNZAF 9 (Royal New Zealand AF) flown by American airman Captain John R. Walker was shot down by enemy aircraft while providing top cover for the bomber stream over Evreux, France. One KIA, Missing aircrew report (MACR) 36.

(Side note: Flying P-47 Thunderbolts throughout their time stationed in England, the 56<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group, known as “the Wolfpack” had more ace pilots than any other Eighth Air Force Fighter Group. The group also destroyed more enemy aircraft in air combat than any other.) \*

- **8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Mission 132. November 18, 1943**

The German airfield of Oslo/Kjeller, Norway is the target for a force of 102 B-24s from 2<sup>nd</sup> Bomb Division that included: 44BG (34); 93BG (20); 389BG (26); and 392BG (22). 82 aircraft are effective on the target. 9 aircraft failed to return (FTR), 61 KIA, 30 interned. One aircraft crash landed upon return at Shipdham, UK. \*

- **8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Mission 541. August 11, 1944**

Excerpt from Ted's *Travelling Circus*: 93<sup>rd</sup> Bombardment Group (H) - USAAF - 1942-45 by Carroll (Cal) Stewart, page 368: “There were two Circus missions to Coulommiers Aerodrome; the effort was designed to ‘pot-hole’ the field and further impede GAF mischief-makers.

Number 1 - six 329<sup>th</sup> Squadron pathfinders led squadrons of the Circus and 446<sup>th</sup> Group (Bungay). Lieutenants Edward W. Appell, Stoner and Hayes ushered the 93<sup>rd</sup>; Lieutenants Fischer, Elliott and Hagler showed the way for the Bungay crowd.

Number 2 - Thirty Circus ships were dispatched under Captain Wayne Beumeler, four aborted, 26 reached the targets, several didn't unload. The lead's navigational gear went haywire. Flak was intense and accurate. The 330<sup>th</sup> roamed France on a Cook's Tour, skirting Paris. However, the 328<sup>th</sup> and 409<sup>th</sup> squadrons scored well. The Circus dodged known ack-ack concentration during withdrawal, but drew fire over Pas de Calais. Five Libs took damage.

On the return, Lieutenant Hank Gruener had a tire blow-out half-way down the Hardwick runway, and the nose-wheel collapsed. His plane needed a wholesale face-lift. Lieutenant Glen R. Dunlap landed in southern England.

At day's end: nobody hurt. Groundlings had enjoyed a hot summer day under azure skies. Late that night, British searchlight batteries were combing aircraft in an eerie sky. Not to worry. Libs were practicing night flights.” \*

- **8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Mission 650. September 27, 1944**

This mission was conducted by three elements against industrial targets, an oil refinery and an aircraft

factory in Germany. A total of 1,192 heavy bombers were dispatched from 1st, 2nd and 3rd Bomb Divisions: 2nd Bomb Division consisted of B-24s from 44BG, 92BG, 93BG, 385BG, 389BG, 445BG, 446BG, 453BG, 489BG, 491BG, and 492BG.

1st Element - A Combined force of 462 B-17s dispatched by 1st Bomb Division. They attacked the secondary target of the industrial areas of Cologne, Germany. 421 of 462 are effective on this target. Fighter and flak opposition on this force are light and only 1 B-17 (351BG) is damaged beyond repair. 10 B-17s from this element bomb the industrial area of Blatzheim, Germany as a target of opportunity. The bomber gunners make no claims on enemy aircraft.

2nd Element - A combined force of 415 B-17s dispatched to bomb two primary targets: the oil refinery Opau at Ludwigshafen, Germany and the railroad marshalling yards of Mainz, Germany. 214 of 415 are effective on Ludwigshafen and 171 of 415 are effective on Mainz. Only 1 B-17 (34BG) is lost to enemy action over Ludwigshafen, but 2 of the force dispatched to Mainz sustain a mid-air collision during assembly. The crews bail out successfully near Ipswich, Suffolk.

3rd Element - A combined force of 315 B-24s were dispatched to bomb the Henschel aircraft factory at Kassel, Germany. 248 of 315 are effective on this target and 35 of 315 bomb the industrial area of Gottingen as a target of opportunity. The fighter opposition is intense by special Luftwaffe bomber assault units, 'Sturmgruppen' using 'Company Front' tactics of wedge formations of 8 to 16 heavily armed FW-190s. The 445th BG was wandering away from the main formation and sustained the highest loss on any BG during the war with 25 MIA, 4 DBR, also B-24 MIA from 491st BG. The bomber gunners claim 5-3-0 of the enemy aircraft.

35 of the 315 B-24s left the main bomber stream due to a navigation and leadership error. They were scheduled to bomb Kassel but ended up bombing Gottingen some 25 miles northeast of Kassel. 25 of the 35 445th aircraft were shot down just south of Kassel in less than 5 minutes; attacked by 6 waves of German Fw 190's and Bf 109G's. Of the remaining 10 planes, three crashed on the Continent (2 in France, 1 in Belgium). Two planes made emergency landings at Manston near Dover; one plane crashed between Tibenham and Old Buckenham airfields; and only four planes landed back at Tibenham. \*

#### 2AD Target GOTTINGEN specifics:

Tonnage dropped - 92.5 Tons  
 Number of aircraft Sent - 35  
 Number of aircraft Effective - 35  
 Number of aircraft Missing In Action - 25  
 Number of aircraft Damaged Beyond Repair - 5  
 Number of aircraft Damaged - 5

#### 2 AD Target KASSEL/HENSCHEL AIRCRAFT FACTORY (Primary) specifics:

The 445th Bomb Group suffers the highest group loss (25 MIA, 4 DAMAGED BEYOND REPAIR (DBR)) on a single mission on this raid.

Tonnage dropped - 707.5 Tons  
 Number of aircraft Sent -415  
 Number of aircraft Effective - 214  
 Number of aircraft Missing In Action - 26  
 Number of aircraft Damaged Beyond Repair - 6  
 Number of aircraft Damaged - 41  
 Number of people Killed In Action -135

Number of people Wounded in Action - 2

Number of people Prisoners of War - 130

Number of people Returned To Duty - 38

\* Source: American Air Museum in Britain 'missions' database: [www.americanairmuseum.com](http://www.americanairmuseum.com)

\*\* Source: <https://roncole.net/collections>



Whew! A port-side propeller came off and sliced into the fuselage near the navigator's station of ScrewBall. The plane, on loan to 491<sup>th</sup> BG from the 467<sup>th</sup> BG, was able to land at Woodbridge on September 1944. No injuries reported. Beyond economical repair, it was salvaged. USAAF photo.



## Shopping Alert

The Heritage League participates in the AmazonSmile program. The idea is simple: you shop AmazonSmile, and it donates a portion of the proceeds to the Heritage League of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division—USAAF. Here is how it works: visit <https://smile.amazon.com/>. Log in with your Amazon account username and password. If you don't have an account, create one. Select Heritage League of the Second Air Division as your designated charity.

In the future, whenever you shop amazonsmile, the Heritage League name will be on the top.

Best part—every eligible purchase is a donation. It's easy and we all win. Thanks for the support and KEEP SHOPPING!



# Videos We Like

by Lisa Niehoff

**Crawl through a B-24 In Flight.** Having never had the opportunity to actually stretch my legs in a B-24 bomber which, apparently, is more fantasy than true-to-life. I found this video thrilling, and it makes the best of those claustrophobic moments more bearable when seen through the eyes of a video camera. The challenging part is actually standing up. This is an amazing video and one you shouldn't miss. Color, 22 minutes.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fcZmiFMR3g>.

**The Story of the Lady Be Good.** This video dives into the disappearance of the 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force B-24 *Lady Be Good* serving from North Africa where her missing crew would be all but forgotten through the passage of time. During that fateful trip, *Lady Be Good* carried nine members of the 514<sup>th</sup> Squadron, 376<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force. Her story was not unique, as she was only one of numerous airplanes and team to disappear during the war. Unlike other disappearances, the narrative of *Lady Be Good* and her men would at last be explained. *Lady*, which had been one of the last planes to depart for the mission, never caught up with the formation. She eventually turned around just prior to reaching the target in Naples. It was on the solo trip back to Soluch that things went awry.

The silence desert holds and preserves many a secret. Presenter Dick Campbell will have you under his spell from beginning to end with his explanation of this tragic mystery. Color and B&W, 39 minutes.

[https://youtu.be/qpYlqP4\\_OVc](https://youtu.be/qpYlqP4_OVc).

**Memorial Day 2021 'Flags of Fallen' Video.** 26,000 48-star American flags were placed in the Mighty Eighth Museum's Memorial Garden. In excess of 200 volunteers set the banners in the ground, with many returning the next week to remove them. Below you will find the link to the Museum's video recording of this event which included several of our WWII veterans. Thank you to the hundreds of volunteers who came out to help place and then remove the flags. Four separate videos, color.

<https://spark.adobe.com/page/UQMyH4HFE1ijj/>

**The American Chapel at St Paul's Cathedral, London.** In this short documentary film, the *History of the American Chapel* you'll find the multi-decade story of the American Memorial Chapel within St Paul's Cathedral, a very special place of worship, respect and remembrance which honors the 28,000 Americans who lost their lives in World War II while based in Britain. Color, 9.5 minutes.

<https://www.stpaulstrust.org/the-memorial>.

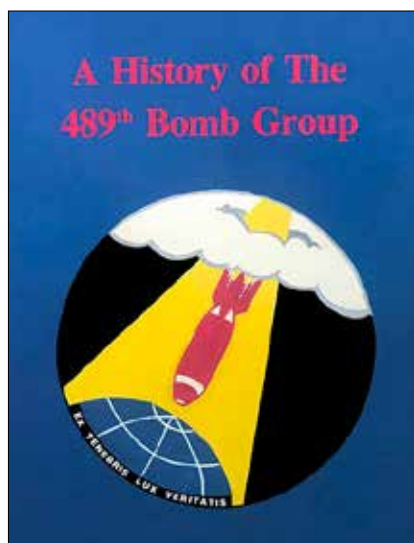
**Heroes of the Sky: The Mighty Eighth Air Force.** National Geographic presents the memories of the brave men from the U.S. Eighth Air Force who, with each mission, entered the cockpit knowing that their call to duty would be a likely death sentence. These 'saints of the sky', integrated with the airmen's own words from personal diary entries, letters to friends and family, and from previous interviews seamlessly draws from more than 1,000 hours of rare and never-before-seen intimate footage, recounting the incredible story of the courageous figures in the Eighth Air Force. Two hour made for TV movie. Watch *Heroes of the Sky: The Mighty Eighth Air Force* online at Nat Geo TV:

<https://www.nationalgeographic.com/tv/movies-and-specials/heroes-of-the-sky-the-mighty-eighth-air-force>

In the search window, type *Heros of the Sky*.

# the write stuff

book notices  
& reviews



## *A History of the 489<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group*

By Charles H. Freudenthal  
Copyright by the Author, 1989  
Published by American Spirit  
Graphics Corp., Minneapolis, MN  
313 pages hard bound or soft bound  
No ISBN Number

—*Reviewed by Christopher Clark*

The book is no longer in print but should be available through your local library inter-loan system.

The History of the 489<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group by Charles H. Freudenthal is an indispensable source for researchers of this Second Air Division bomb group. As the proud nephew of a 489<sup>th</sup> bomb group veteran, I maintain this book is the one body of work about the 489<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group that researchers can use for a definitive story of their six months of action at Halesworth, England in 1944.

In 313 pages, Mr. Freudenthal retells the stories of how the group was formed out of the 29<sup>th</sup> BG (as well as others) and describes the long southern route they took to Halesworth where the 489<sup>th</sup> flew 106 missions from 30 May 1944 to 10 Nov 1944. Mr. Freudenthal, who was the Group Bombardier, narrates each mission with in-depth detail. The June 5, 1944 mission to Boulogne, Wimereux, and the Ambleteuse area around Caen was to be the opening of the D-Day invasion in France. On this mission, Lt. Col. Leon Vance would receive the Medal of Honor. (Side note. This is the only M.O.H. to be awarded to a B-24 airman for actions flown from England. The Aug. 1, 1943, mission to Ploesti was a 9<sup>th</sup> Air Force mission flown from North Africa where the three 2<sup>nd</sup> AD groups were on loan to 9<sup>th</sup> AF.)

The 489<sup>th</sup> was one of the last groups to arrive in England and it was the first to leave. They departed England November 1944, returning to the United States for training on the B-29 and deployment to Japan. As world events would dictate, the atomic bomb would end the costliest war in human history.

This book also depicts the grim sacrifices of war: a record of downed crews and a list of crew members that were shot down; a very sad record of the men killed in action or in the line of duty; and lists of prisoners of war, evaders and escapees. He also has a very nice glossary of Air Force terms and a complete list of B-24 aircraft that the group flew. There are 140 combat crew pictures that list the crew members by name. There are 33 crews listed by names of the men but have no picture of them. There is even a crew list for the B-29 crews that were going to Japan, but thanks to the atom bomb, stayed in the U.S.

Christopher D. Clark, Proud nephew of S.Sgt. Charles Franklin Clark, 489<sup>th</sup> and 44<sup>th</sup> Bomb Groups.



# Summer/Fall 2021 Heritage Calendar & Historic Events

## Upcoming Events of 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Interest

### June

**D-Day invasion.** 77<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was June 6, 2021

1941—U.S. Army Air Corps becomes the US Army Air Forces, June 20

1942—General Eisenhower takes command of U.S. forces in Europe, June 25

### July 2021

**Duxford Summer Air Show**, July 24-25, American Air Museum. Imperial War Museums ([iwm.org.uk](http://iwm.org.uk))

### August

1943—Operation Tidal Wave, first raid on Ploesti oil refineries is conducted by B-24s, August 1

### September 2021

**U.S. Air Force's 74<sup>th</sup> birthday**, September 18-19, Air Force Association Convention, Gaylord Resort and Convention Center, National Harbor, MD. (Washington, DC). Info at: [www.afa.org](http://www.afa.org)

**Duxford Battle of Britain Air Show**, September 18, American Air Museum. Imperial War Museums ([iwm.org.uk](http://iwm.org.uk))

**National Museum of U.S. Air Force.** *Plane Talks*: 74<sup>rd</sup> Anniversary of the Air Force, and National POW/MIA Recognition Day. Friday, September 17

1944—Operation Market Garden begins with Allied airborne forces landing in the Netherlands, September 17

### October 2021

**467<sup>th</sup> BG Association.** Virtual reunion via Zoom. Oct 3, 2021, 1pm ET. Registration and more information at: [www.467BG.com](http://www.467BG.com)

**93<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Group Reunion**, October 14-17, Salt Lake City, UT: <https://www.93bg.com/reunion-schedule-1>

**8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society 47<sup>th</sup> Reunion.** October 27-31, Marriott Savannah Riverfront. Schedule and registration forms are on page 16 and 17 of this issue, and also online at: [www.8thafhs.org](http://www.8thafhs.org). Note: reunion block rooms at Marriott are now sold out. For reservation information at the

overflow hotel, check the website: [8thafhs.org](http://8thafhs.org). In addition to Heritage League members, 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Bomb Groups anticipated to formally attend are: the 392<sup>nd</sup> and the 466<sup>th</sup>.

### November 2021

**Remembrance Day at Norwich, England**, Sunday November 7, 2021 (the Sunday before Veterans Day, November 11). Due to COVID restrictions, formal events are still under consideration. Heritage League plans to place commemorative wreath at Cambridge Cemetery. The American Library will have a presentation: "We Will Remember" in the Library on Saturday, November 13<sup>th</sup>.

**Special 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events at Tomb of Unknowns.** Arlington Cemetery, Washington, D.C. Most likely sequenced around Veterans Day, November 11. The tomb was established after end of WWI on Veterans Day 1921

**Trust Governors of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Memorial Trust.** Annual Meeting, November 15.

### American Library Events (More info at:

[www.americanlibrary.uk](http://www.americanlibrary.uk))

**Monthly Internet Get-together.** The Library continues a regular web-based activity 'Coffee Afternoon' the second Saturday of every month on Zoom at 11am U.S. Eastern time (16:00 British time). Hosted by library assistants Jane Appleton and Linda Sheppard, it is an opportunity for 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division families and friends on both sides of the Atlantic to get together. Please email: [americanlibrary@norfolk.gov.uk](mailto:americanlibrary@norfolk.gov.uk) for an invite

**Virtual Tour of the American Library.** Monday, September 13, 18:00 BST (1pm EDT)

**Food and the Forces:** The U.S. 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in WWII, Thursday, September 16, 18:30 (1:30pm EDT). Speaker Panel, hosted by the American Library. Discussion on food at 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force in England and the Stalag Lufts 1943-1945. More info at: [www.americanlibrary.uk](http://www.americanlibrary.uk)

**Getting the most from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Air Division Digital Archive.** Saturday, October 9, 17:30 BST

(12:30pm EDT). A talk with the Trust Librarian. Discover all the features of the archive and how it can aid in your research. This event is hosted during Libraries Week 2021.

### **Seething Airfield Control Tower Museum.**

Home of the 448<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, the Seething Airfield Control Tower Museum announced select open dates. There are only three Sunday dates remaining for the season. They are: August 8, September 5, and October 3. The museum is also updating its website and invites you to check it for updates: [www.448bombgroup.co.uk](http://www.448bombgroup.co.uk).



### ***Heritage Herald Staff***

Published three times a year, the Heritage Herald is the official publication of the Heritage League of the Second Air Division (USAAF). The mission is to educate future generations about the sacrifices of our forebears of the bomb and fighter groups of the 2<sup>nd</sup> AD in WWII. Membership is open to all those who follow this ideal.

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