



HERITAGE HERALD

Issue Number 84, February 2026 • www.heritageleague.org
Periodical of the Heritage League of the Second Air Division
8th Air Force, United States Army Air Forces (USAAF)

Membership renewal
drive is ongoing

HL Convention 2026
Oct. 15-18, 2026
San Antonio, TX



Heritage League and 93rd Bomb Group Association,
Dayton, Ohio, October 2-5, 2025. Photo: NMUSAF.

Heritage League's 38th Convention, Dayton, Ohio The Birthplace of Aviation

A splendid and memorable convention. Two dynamic organizations seamlessly overcame rescheduling challenges due to the government shutdown

By Irene Hurner (453 BG, Old Buckenham)

It had been seven years since the Heritage League visited the National Museum of the United States Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, and I looked forward to being able to spend time there. For me, like other members of the League, it is a thrill to visit the largest display of military planes in the United States and to see the many exhibits housed there. So, as the date for the convention neared, I grew more excited. The convention committee had worked for the last year with the convention committee of the 93rd Bomb Group Association to plan our gathering with the theme First Flight, four days (October 2-6) packed with social, business, and educational activities. And so, I begin.

The *Heritage Herald* included all the information that was necessary to let me know the dates, the contact informa-

tion for the Hilton Garden Inn, Austin Landing, registration, and agenda. It was up to me to pack a suitcase and be off.

I arrived a day prior to give myself a bit of time to adjust to my three-hour time difference. Registration didn't start until 1:00 p.m. so that let me sleep in on Thursday morning. Those who had story boards and other items for display set them up in the Memorabilia Room finishing prior to the Welcome Dinner. The displays would be available for the duration of the convention, and the Heritage League Hospitality Room would be open for visits, puzzles, and camaraderie in its many forms. Jim Root, 93rd Bomb Group Association (BGA) President, welcomed everyone to the 93rd's 25th reunion, which was also the 38th reunion of the Heritage League. He noted that there were no WWII

(continued on page 4)

INCOMING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Norwich Lord Mayor Vaughn Thomas with Jim Birmingham in 2019. Photo: Bevery Tomb.

—*Jim Birmingham (458th Horsham St Faith)*

Dear members,

I am truly honored to have been elected to the office of president of the Heritage League.

I have been a member of the Heritage League board for the past three years as vice president under president, Chris Clark. I would like to thank him for all that he has done and continues to do for us as president and now as past president on our Executive Committee. We had a productive convention last October at Dayton where members approved a revision to our Bylaws and elected new members to the ExCom: Bob Gedid Vice President, Jean Coghlan Membership VP and John Jurzcak VP Volunteers.

I am the son of Sergeant Robert Birmingham of the 458th Bomb Group. Bob was a nose gunner on a B-24 out of Norwich England at Horsham St Faith. On his fifth Mission Bob's plane was shot down over Hamburg, Germany. Just after they dropped their bombs a missile came through the bomb bay doors and hit the gas tank above. Fortunately, it did not explode. It didn't have a detonator as discovered later. They were able to crash land in Sweden. All crew members survived and were interned in Sweden until the end of the war. Bob passed away at 97 years old in January 2023.

I live in Greendale, Wisconsin and was elected to the Greendale Village board as Village Trustee from 1997-2015. I was also elected village president from 2015 to 2021. I have owned the Broadstreet Coffee Shop in the village of Greendale for 20 years.

I hope by now you all have received your membership renewal package in the December mail. If you have not done so, please fill out the renewal form and return it with your membership dues. A form is also included in this *Herald*. Also this year, we are making a special request for donations to our flower fund which buys wreaths to be distributed to the cemeteries in Europe where our crew members have been buried on Memorial Day and for recently identified vets who are repatriated in the U.S. as part of our "Welcome Home" program. A Flower donation section is also listed in the membership renewal form or go to our Website at: www.heritageleague.org/donate.

This year we will be joining the 8th Air Force Historical Society at its convention in San Antonio, Texas October 15 through the 18, 2026. Hope to see you there.

2nd Air Division 2026 Annual Convention with the 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion

8th AFHS will conduct its 52nd Annual Reunion in
San Antonio, TX October 14-18, 2026
Details and registration instructions will be
located at: www.8thAFHS.org

OUTGOING PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Photo: Wendy Dwyer.

—*Christopher D. Clark* (489th Halesworth & 44th Shipdam)

Goodbye But Not Farewell !

For the past 24 months, I have had the privilege to be President of the Heritage League has been the honor of my lifetime. It seems like yesterday that Irene Hurner asked me if I wanted to be President. I have worked hard to continue the fantastic work of the Heritage League Presidents that served before me. At our Annual Business Meeting in Dayton, Ohio, Vice President Jim Birmingham was elected as our new Heritage League President, and I am sure he will do an amazing job. I will continue to serve on the Executive Committee as Past President.

The Library of Congress is now back at work. Mr. Dwight Powell has asked me to call him to make arrangements for the Heritage League to hand deliver the 2nd phase of our "News from The Greatest Generation" project, that has been digitized by Crowley and Co. in Fredrick, Maryland. At last count, with the second phase added, it will total 12,288 pages. Newsletters from Bomb Groups, HQ, and all other sources were collected from all over the United States and England. I am keen to ask when we will be able to use the donation for research. I will let everyone know when that is possible. It has been a slow process, but the wheels keep turning forward. A special mention to the family of Earl Wassom (466 BG) for its donation that comprised most of the 2nd phase.

Our work with the "Flower Fund" continues to grow. We now have the "Welcome Home" program and attend the funerals of newly identified 2nd Air Division Airman. New VP for Volunteers, John Jurczak has done a fantastic job on this worthwhile project. John arranges Heritage League support or a member to attend the funeral, and we supported 13 at last count. If you can attend one of these, ask John to put you on a list. We owe the returning Airman that. Please remember to donate to the "Flower Fund." Many times, the wreaths we send are the only flowers there. Just look at the pictures that we have recently posted and published in the *Heritage Herald*, which is a fantastic publication because of the hard work of Doug Dovey and his crew of helpers. Are you good with layout and photo work and editing? If so, please let John Jurczak know about volunteering or go to the "volunteer tab" on our website.

Table of Contents

HL's 38th Convention	1	Videos We Like.....	23
Incoming President's Message.....	2	Welcome Home SSGT Danneker.....	24
Outgoing President's Message.....	3	Halesworth Remembrance Day.....	25
Next HL Convention 2026	3	Nose Art.....	26
Annual Meeting Minutes	8	In Memory of.....	27
Memorial Trust of 2AD Report	13	Folded Wings.....	27
American Library Report.....	14	Membership Renewal Form	28
Silver Wings.....	16	Bomber/Fighter Group Contacts.....	29
Build Up for Big Week, Mission to Gotha	17	Winter/Spring Heritage Calendar.....	30

Heritage League's Convention, Dayton, OH

(continued from page 1)

veterans in attendance, but three 93rd vets ranging in age from 102 years old to 106 are still in contact. The 79 attendees were from twenty states, the most from Ohio with 14. Jim mentioned that the convention would be live streamed. Heritage League member, ninety-nine-year-old veteran Allan Hallett, 389 BG, was among the veterans who recorded a welcome message. A blessing written by Earl Wassom, past 466 BG chaplain, was read by Sue Risley. After dinner, attendees were introduced.

Day 2, Friday, October 3, traveling by buses to the National Museum of the United States Air Force, we arrived and saw that the parking lot was empty. This was surely unusual. Then we were told that the government shutdown was in effect, but since our group made prior arrangements with the Museum Foundation which operates the museum; we were able to make a restricted entry just for our group. We had only two hours to look at the entire museum all by ourselves! With four buildings divided into eleven galleries that are full of exhibits and planes, I just couldn't get through it all. This museum could keep a person busy for days. The good thing is that I can go back in the future. Before leaving the museum grounds, a wreath was



389th Bomb Group, Hethel. Photo: D. Dovey.

laid at the 93rd memorial plaque and we went on to view some of the additional 2nd Air Division units' plaques.

Carillon Historical Park was just a short ride away as a substitute for the originally scheduled museum time. We had time for lunch and to view some of the exhibits, but this is a place to return to with a day to play. The park was founded by Colonel Edward Deeds and his wife Edith Walton Deeds. It contains Ohio's largest carillon instrument and exhibits about Dayton's unique contributions to the world including the airplane, the cash register and the automobile electric starter. There are many historical buildings, a train, barn, school, tavern, and more. Too much to visit in the several hours that we had before returning to the hotel to get ready for dinner at the Kohler Presidential Center where group pictures were taken. And a delicious Italian buffet dinner enjoyed after a blessing given by George Jung. A trumpeter dressed in a WWII army uniform provided entertainment. Jim Lux gave a presentation



Well preserved after 56 combat missions from North Africa, the B-24D Strawberry Bitch, colored in its iconic pink desert camouflage, was flown from the boneyard to the museum on Armed Forces Day 1959 by Maj. Max J. Hadley and Col. A Shower (prior 467BG commander). Photo: D. Dovey.

about *Hot Stuff*, a 93rd B-24 that crashed in Iceland on the way home after being the first heavy bomber to reach 25 missions in Europe (there is a display in the museum about this). He spoke about the installation of a monument near the crash site that he organized. In tribute, a B-52 performed a fly-over during the dedication ceremony attended by the USAF Europe commanding general.

Day 3, Saturday, October 4, was a lovely, sunny day, and saw the group board a bus for Cincinnati, founded in 1788. We all enjoyed lunch aboard the riverboat, Belle of Cincinnati, and a trip up the Ohio River which took us past many landmarks including the John Roebling Suspension Bridge near the Cincinnati Reds stadium (a prototype for the Brooklyn Bridge which was begun prior to The Civil



458th Bomb Group plaque, Horsham St Faith, with 458 BG next Gens: (L-R) Robert Van Kuran, Larry Van Kuran, Marybeth Dyer, Jim Birmingham, and Mary Betz Lord (467 BG). Photo: D. Dovey.

War), the Great American Building (the tallest building in Cincinnati (665'), homes which were safe houses for the Underground Railroad, and many other sights.

We returned to the hotel in time for the Heritage League annual business meeting, which was live-streamed and included officers' reports, a vote on the proposed amendments of the bylaws, and the election of officers.

I had been reading an article and came across a quote from President George Washington. "In a republic, what



Past Heritage League presidents enjoy the riverboat ride passing Cincinnati on the Ohio river. (L-R) Vicki Warning with husband Kurt, Marybeth Dyer and Irene Hurner. Photo: D. Dovey.

species of knowledge can be equally important? And what duty is more pressing than communicating it to those who are to be the future guardians of the liberties of the country?" The quote seemed very fitting because after dinner the first of two educational sessions was held. The first, planned by the 93 BGA, included four speakers:

Phil Barlow told of his father (93 BG pilot) 1 LT Richard (Baginski) Barlow's training and his trip across the north Atlantic via Labrador, Greenland, and Northern Ireland. Phil's father was first trained in aircraft maintenance, and took flying lessons on his own, before finally being given a chance to test to be an Air Force pilot. Eventually, pilot Barlow arrived at Hardwick in 1944 after D-Day. He completed 35 missions, most of which were deep into Germany.

Mary McGuire told of her father, Major Edward L. McGuire (93BG Captain and then pilot), who was sent to Tallahassee, Florida, for assignment in 1940. He became known as "Mr. Fix It," after being asked by General Hap Arnold to get trees removed at the end of the runway which were on private property, and found the cause and removal of a fly infestation that came from sludge at a nearby sewer farm. There were other stories about McGuire, who eventually became a pilot, and through contact with Hap Arnold was sent to England. This Yankee Irishman came home, settling in Georgia.

Jan Cress Dondi, the niece of CPT John B. White, Jr. (93rd navigator) and daughter of Robert (Bob) Cress, a 15th Air Force navigator, spoke of her book entitled *The Navigator's Letter*. It is the story of these men, partly of the assignment to deliver a briefcase with plans to cripple Hitler that became known as Ploesti. John B. was shot down and originally bur-



Sister ship and smaller look-a-like to our Belle of Cincinnati, awaits our arrival at the Kentucky side of the Ohio river. Photo: D. Dovey.

ied in Germany. Jan describes the mission, what happened, the errors, and the crews' experiences. Bob became a prisoner of war and was rescued in Operation Reunion, the largest evacuation by air in history. 1,162 prisoners were rescued from Bucharest after the Soviet forces liberated Romania. Over a period of three days, beginning on August 31, 1944, B-17s were used to repatriate the servicemen to Italy twenty at a time. Of those rescued, 1127 were Americans and 31 were British. Jan told of her extensive research before writing the story, even finding the name of the German pilot who shot Bob down, and visiting with him. She used many sources including Bob's diary for this factual account.

Don Morrison, grandson of SSGT Melvin Morrison, (93 BG Gunner) was the final speaker. He related his efforts and successes in collecting bits and pieces of the plane *Sleepy Time Gal*, including an M2-50 caliber gun and other parts of the aircraft. Forty-seven different pilots flew the plane that was used for one hundred missions, the first of which was in September 1944. *Sleepy Time Gal* crashed in the Scottish Highlands in June 1945, killing all fifteen aboard who were part of the 44th Bomb Group. The site was found in the 1970s. A plaque was placed there in June 2024.



Heritage League presidents in front of recovered B-24 fuselage section of *Sleepy Time Gal*, 44 BG, which crashed in Scotland on the return flight to the U.S. with no survivors. (L-R) Jim Birmingham, elected president and past presidents MaryBeth Dyer, Irene Hurner and Vicki Warning. Photo: D. Dovey.

Day 4, Sunday, October 5, began with a non-denominational religious service conducted by George Jung that included hymns, readings, and prayer, ending with a benediction. The 93rd Bomb Group Association held its annual business meeting before lunch.

The second Educational Session of the convention was hosted by the Heritage League. There were two speakers:

Nolan Testagrossa, great-grandson of recently deceased 389 BG SGT/Top Turret Gunner Allan Hallett, read a



Nolan Testagrossa, grandson of SSGT Allan Hallett, 389 BG top turret gunner; presented his veteran's correspondences at the educational session. Photo: D. Dovey.

series of letters that Allan had sent home during his military training and while stationed at Hethel. Everyone enjoyed listening to them.

Doug Dovey, son of Mickey Navigator 1 LT Arnold Dovey (44 & 392 BGs) told his father's story. Dovey was first assigned to a B-17 before transferring to Wendover, Utah for B-24 training as a navigator using mickey radar. Doug explained that the radar turret replaced the ball turret on the B-24. During training in England, Dovey's plane was shot down on his first mission (a training mission); he spent two months in the hospital with his left side partially paralyzed. Arnold was in the 44th crew for four missions, before transferring to the 392 BG and participating in 19 more missions. The story of Doug's father's mission to Bremen in July 1944, for which he received his first Distinguished Flying Cross, appears in a *Target Victory* newsletter. Dovey later received another DFC for a mission to Hamburg while stationed at Wendling.

The final event of the convention was the Memorial Dinner. Its opening ceremonies included the traditional candle lighting ceremony,

pledge of allegiance, singing of the national anthem, and a prayer. The first candle was lit by incoming Presidents Jim Birmingham of the Heritage League and Jean Koznarek of the 93 BG Association representing the two organizations at this Convention/Reunion—the Heritage League of the 2nd Air Division and the 93 BG Association. 2nd candle was lit by Mitch Magee from the HL and Barry Sykes of the 93 BG to honor the example and accomplishments of the Greatest Generation. Dan Reilly, 93 BG VP and convention chair, which honored the freedom and loving spirit through many generations. 3rd candle lit by 93rd Anne Pancella and Mary McGuire with Rayann Marx from the 93rd whose uncle is still missing in Korea since 1950, represented the DPAA (Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency) which is the Pentagon agency tasked with the recovery and identification of our MIAs. 4th Candle represented the Fourth Generation descended from our WW II veterans, was lit by Nolan Testagrossa, Great Grandson of Alan Hallett (389 BG) with Piper Morrison, Great Granddaughter of 93 BG SGT Morrison. Last candle was lit by COL. John Marx U.S. Army (Ret) for the 93 BG and Col. Doug Dovey, USAF (Ret), for the Heritage League, representing Active Duty and Reserve military members in all branches but especially in the U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force.

Overall, it was a splendid and memorable convention which will be fondly remembered. Two dynamic organizations seamlessly overcame the early schedule challenges due to the government shutdown. Everyone appreciated the efforts and results of the two convention committees. Participants collaborated well in an enjoyable and beneficial way. Conventioneers mingled well in the memorial display room and hospitality suite providing purposeful research and stories. The well-organized in-house events and quality lectures were video recorded and can be accessed via the 93rd website at: MC Webcast Dayton 2025 | 93rd BG Association.

We look forward to next year's convention with the 8th Air Force Historical Society at San Antonio, Texas. 



At the memorial dinner, eleven distinguished individuals honored five notable actions by lighting five candles of honor at the convention's final evening. The table next to them (right) is the vacant 10 place-setting in reverence to a missing 10-man B-24 crew. Photo: Kurt Warning.



Entire reunion group. Scotty David photography.



Heritage League present and past Executive Committee members: (L-R) Doug Dovey, VP Communications; Marybeth Dryer, past president; Jim Birmingham, elected president; Sue Risley, treasurer; Vicki Warning, past president; Irene Hurner, past president. Scotty David Photography.



392nd Bomb Group, Wendling, Photo: D. Dovey.



Missing Man Monument, Air Force Museum Memorial Park. Photo: D. Dovey.



Piper Morrison, Great-granddaughter of SSGT Melvin Morrison, 93 BG, pausing under the watchful eye of her grandfather, Don Morrison, after trying to take in all the events of the memorial presentations. Photo: Doug Dovey.



2nd Air Division's 4th Fighter Group monument at the museum's memorial park. Photo: D. Dovey.



Very active convention participants Piper and Lena Morrison with 93 BGA treasurer Kenna Payne. Photo: Doug Dovey.

Minutes of the 2025 Heritage League Annual Meeting—October 4, 2025 (Unapproved)

Call to Order: Vice President Jim Birmingham called the 38th annual business meeting of the Heritage League of the Second Air Division (USAAF) to order at 4:05 pm EDT at Hilton Garden Inn Austin Landing, Dayton, Ohio on October 4, 2025. The meeting was streamed via Zoom.

Invocation: The invocation was written and given by Sue Risley.

Pledge of Allegiance: The pledge was led by 4th generation member Nolan Testagrossa, great grandson of Allan Hallet, SGT/Top Gunner, 389th BG.

Statement of Quorum Present: Vice President Birmingham stated that a quorum was present.

President's Report: Via Zoom, President Christopher Clark welcomed everyone to the annual meeting and gave an overview of the previous year's activities including:

This is the 13th stand-alone gathering and the 38th annual meeting. The Heritage League continues in strong fashion to fulfill its mission of honoring the accomplishments and sacrifices of all 2nd Air Division personnel.

Coffee hours once a month hosted by the American Library via Zoom have brought two volunteers, Bob Gedid and John Jurczak, who are now part of the Executive Committee.

The second phase of the "News from the Greatest Generation" is in the final stage. Just under 5,000 pages of newsletters have been delivered for digitization to Crowley and Company. When completed, the originals and the digitized copies will be delivered to Mr. Dwight Powell at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C. The project total pages donated will be just under 10,000 pages.

President Clark concluded stating that it has been the honor of a lifetime to have served as president.

Vice President's Report: Vice President Jim Birmingham gave an update on the 1/16 scale model bronze B-24 Liberator Memorial in San Diego. In 2003, the 2AD veterans began this project, and now it is in need of maintenance. Research is being conducted into its funding history. Jim is also investigating D&O liability insurance options for the Heritage League Executive Committee.

Secretary's Report: Secretary Colleen Mersman was absent. Irene Hurner presented the minutes of the annual business meeting of October 18, 2024, which were published in *Heritage Herald* issue #81. Doug Dovey made a motion to approve the minutes. Mary Betz Lord seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: Treasurer Sue Risley reported that, in summary, the Heritage League had a cash balance of \$61,155 as of June 30, 2025. Included in that total is \$12,363 of restricted funds leaving a net cash position of \$48,792. Primarily due to a decrease in donations and costs associated with three issues of the *Herald* compared to two the previous year, the report showed a loss of \$3,863.00. Sue stated that the largest expense is the production of our *Herald*. The balance in the Flower Fund is very low and needs to be replenished as nearly \$4,200 was spent during the year to send wreaths on Memorial Day and floral arrangements for 9 burial ceremonies of those recently identified WWII, 2nd AD MIA servicemen. Treasurer Risley has completed the switch from PayPal to Stripe for online payments. Sue reminded members that the Heritage League is a charitable organization and can be named as a beneficiary when doing estate planning. Sue had ledgers with her for review and financial reports are available by request.

Volunteers VP Report: Volunteers VP Bob Gedid reported via Zoom that there are six new volunteers (some from England) who bring with them various skills. John Jurczak, Volunteers Protégé, continues to administer the Welcome Home Honors Program which aims to have League representation at the funerals of airmen recently identified by the DPAA and returned to the United States for burial. Ceremonies were held at various places for nine servicemen, while one has not yet been scheduled. John had the names of three who had no ceremony date scheduled as of the meeting. Bob would like to see all the bomb groups of the 2nd AD meet together under one roof again to help ensure continuation of our organization.

VP of Membership's Report: Vice President Marybeth stated that as of June 30th, there were 265 current members, 20 Honorary Life Members (HLM), 225 Legacy members, and 20 Regular members (friends). The total is 16% lower than the 2024 total on the same date and is mostly due to attrition after veterans pass. She emphasized efforts being considered to engage members of younger generations. Bob Gedid will work on Instagram, Facebook, and other media.

VP of Communications' Report: Vice President Doug Dovey reviewed five core programs and three outreach projects that come under the heading of communications.

The Heritage League Website at www.Heritageleague.org is maintained by volunteer Nancy Hildebrandt who works with ExCom member Marybeth Dyer to keep our site user friendly and informative, with information on programs, conventions, volunteering, the history of the 2AD, and other subjects. Coming up will be a section on the Memorial Day flower program and the Welcome Home Honors Program which will include dates and locations of final ceremonies for recently identified 2AD servicemen as they are announced.

The website has 204 past Journals of the 2nd ADA from 1950 until the association disbanded in 2012, in addition to 50 past *Heritage Herald*s (we have currently published 80) available for viewing. There is a ten-year gap of the Journals from 1962 which Nancy and Marybeth will work to fill in during the coming year. For those interested in the meantime, a super search of the entire grouping can be completed by Doug or Brian Mahoney upon request through the "contact us" tab on the website. The website averages about 630 views per month with a bounce rate averaging 60%. We would like to see that number below 50%.

The *Heritage Herald* newsletter is published three times a year with each issue costing about \$3,000. In addition to volunteer feature writer and editor Lisa Niehoff, photo editor Dallas King, and former editor, contributor, and distribution master Brian Mahoney, other volunteers have researched and written original articles. A calendar of upcoming bomb group events, museum events, and WWII dates of interest is a regular feature. Because of a discount offered by the printer, more color has been added. The printed version is mailed out to about a third of the members with the remaining distributed via email from the new sender domain HeritageLeagueExcom via mailchimpapp.net. Other features include upcoming veterans' birthdays, Kids Corner, B-24 nose art, "Pitch it to Pete" which answers technical questions, flower placement and more.

The official Facebook page is titled *Heritage League of the Second Air Division—USAAF* and is administered by the Heritage League Executive Committee. There is an unofficial page with a similar title which ends with the word 'group.' Watch for the address that ends in USAAF. It is a read only site, but our administrators can be requested to post members specific information by going to our website 'contact us' tab to request this. Please Visit, Like and Follow our page.

Veterans Vitality Outreach—Sunshine Program: A Heritage League member reaches out to our WWII vets to convey best wishes on birthdays and other times with cards and phone calls. A volunteer is needed. Lately, past president Marybeth Dyer has been tending to this activity.

Memorial Day Flower Program: On Memorial Day, the flower fund provides for wreath placement at each of the 13 overseas cemeteries administered by the American Battle Monuments Commission where 2nd AD servicemen are buried or listed as MIA. A thank you is given to Beverly Baynes Tomb, Past president and governor on the board of the Memorial Trust, administers this program and has recruited several overseas volunteers to lay wreaths on behalf of the Heritage League at these ceremonies. Another thank you is given to President Chris Clark for his idea to create the Flower Fund.

Welcome Home Honors Program for MIA airmen: There has been an increase of MIA identifications of 2nd AD airmen by the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) this past year. The League is proud to honor these men and provide historical wartime information to the relatives. During the year, flowers were sent and League members attended eight to date. Four are pending. A thank you is extended to Beverly Baynes Tomb for initiating this program, to Bob Gedid, and to John Jurczak who serves as the administrator.

Newsletters From the Greatest Generation Archive: The second round of newsletters and documents collected from several active and dormant bomb and fighter group associations is being digitized in searchable version to transfer to the Library of Congress for future reference. Thanks to President Chris Clark for making the original contact with the Library of Congress, to David and Lorinda Drake Crow for newsletters from the 355th Fighter Group, and to the Earl Wassom family for newsletters from the 466 BG.

Bomb Group Associations Web Site Preservation: The Heritage League aims to preserve the websites of dormant BGA's so that they are available for reference but are not updated. Currently the 492 BG website is being kept open by us. There is an effort among entities including several museums to preserve 2nd Air Division dormant group websites.

Convention: A special thank you to the convention committee who worked with the 93 BG Association to organize this memorable week: Sue Risley, Marybeth Dyer, and Jim Birmingham. Also, to Brian Mahoney for sending all email notices, organizing the database, and issues of the *Heritage Herald*.

Delegate Committee Report: Irene Biel Hurner read the Delegate Committee Report which states: Those members of record who attend the annual meeting will be declared official delegates with a list to be published in the *Herald*.

"The Heritage League of the Second Air Division (USAAF) is a non-profit, non-political organization and is registered with the Internal Revenue Service under Tax Code Section 501(c)(3). Its TIN (Tax Identification Number) is 36-3590698. As such, certain income tax considerations apply to us in the performance of official Heritage League duties.

The participation of regular, voting members of the League in today's annual business meeting of the Heritage League as an official delegate is such a duty. The reasonable cost of attendance is construed to be a charitable contribution and may be deductible as such for those who itemize deductions on their annual income tax returns. All voting members present are official delegates.

The Heritage League cannot provide advice on these matters. Members are advised to seek their own professional advice as may be needed. The convention Chairperson will make a finalized list of all regular members of the League who attended the meeting and publish that list with the minutes in the *Heritage Herald*."

Irene Hurner made a motion to accept the Delegate Committee report, to declare all regular members attending the annual business meeting be official delegates, and that it be so documented in the minutes of the meeting. The motion was seconded by Marybeth Dyer. Motion carried.

Convention Committee: Chairperson Sue Risley stated that the 2026 Convention will be held alongside the 8th Air Force Historical Society in San Antonio, Texas from October 14th through 18th.

Bylaws Committee: Irene Hurner reported that during the past year the Bylaws Committee reviewed the current bylaws which were last amended in May 2007. A copy of the suggested amended bylaws which included an updated name of the organization was sent to each current member who was eligible to vote. Packets contained a postcard to be returned with an advisory vote as to acceptance, against, or abstain. The results were 91-yes, 1-abstain. Marybeth Dyer made a motion to accept the amended bylaws. Mitch Magee seconded the motion. Motion carried with the vote of 24-yes (3 via Zoom), 1-abstain.

Memorial Trust Reports:

The **Report of Memorial Trust Chairman Richard Middleton** was presented by via Zoom by Trust Governor Beverly Baynes Tomb: 2025 marks the 80th anniversary of the end of hostilities of WWII in Europe. Though the year was quiet for the Trust, The American Library participated in many activities or hosted events marking this date including Silver Wings, a major exhibition in the Forum in Norwich. The second Congress to Campus event was presented just two weeks after the presidential election, and another session is scheduled for this November. Despite total assets dipping slightly by £.2m last year because of various factors, costs were covered in part because the income distribution was increased by 3% and by generous donations from many others including \$7,000 from the Heritage League. Governor Simon Jamieson agreed to chair the Finance Sub Committee. Governor Jonathan Powell had served in that position for nine years. American Scholar Eric Nicholls will continue at the library for a third year. Because no one at UEA chose to study in the United States for the student's year abroad, a Walker Scholarship was not awarded, nor was a Trust scholarship given due to a lack of applicants. The Trust is working with the University to look at possible solutions. The Trust remains financially sound. The library staff is planning events in 2026 to mark the 250th anniversary of American Independence.

The **Report of the American Library Trust Librarian Orla Kennelly** was given via Zoom. She highlighted the recruitment of new relief staff, the expansion of the base contact list, and other projects including Reading America Book Group which meets monthly, the collecting of oral histories, new donations to the archive, and lectures. A new project is developing a more complete story of the 231st station hospital. Orla also listed the library's recent activities and report-

ed on the very successful Silver Wings project. Planning began in 2023 and was a collaboration with the Forum to explore the legacy of the 2nd Air Division in Norfolk. Over a ten-day period in September during Norfolk Heritage Open Days, the endeavor included workshops, oral history interviews, lectures, school outreach, creative projects aimed at young people, videos provided by Trust Governor Joe Dzenowagis, and culminated in an exhibition in the Forum of objects from many bomb groups. The American Library was grateful for support received from the Heritage League, communities on both sides of the Atlantic, significant funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund and many other sources. Orla was elated to report an attendance of 39,000.

Nominating Committee:

Bob Gedid presented the report of the Nominating Committee: The Executive Committee consists of the elective League officers, including any filling a vacancy by appointment, the League representative to the Trust Board of Governors, and up to two past presidents, none of whom is currently a League elected officer. The slate of elective officers is:

- President – Jim Birmingham (458 BG)
- Executive Vice-President – Bob Gedid (458/466 BGs)
- Secretary – Colleen Mersman (491/44 BGs)
- Treasurer – Sue Risley (446 BG)
- Vice President of Membership – Jean Coughlan (458 BG)
- Vice President of Communications – Doug Dovey (392/44 BGs)
- Volunteers Vice President – John Jurczak (446 BG)

There being no further nominations from the floor, Irene Hurner made a motion to accept the slate. Doug Dovey seconded the motion. The motion carried. Yeas-22, Nays-3, Abstained-1.

Newly elected President Jim Birmingham thanked Brian Mahoney and Irene Hurner for their long-term contributions, as they have rotated off the Executive Committee with this vote.

The meeting adjourned at 5:13 p.m. EDT

Irene Hurner, Acting Secretary

Heritage League of the ZADA Statement of Financial Position June 30, 2025	
	Total
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Cash Accounts	
Checking - 53rd Bank	11,092.35
PayPal Account	4,071.61
Savings - 53rd Bank	37,991.41
Total Cash Accounts	\$ 53,155.37
Other Current Assets	
Due from Memorial Trust	8,000.00
Total Other Current Assets	\$ 8,000.00
Total Current Assets	\$ 61,155.37
TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 61,155.37
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	
Liabilities	
Current Liabilities	
Restricted funds	
8th AF Historical Society	50.00
492nd Bomb Group Website Mgmt	2,000.00
Flower Fund	2,042.80
American (Memorial) Library	3,340.00
Greatest Generation Project	4,930.00
Total Restricted funds	\$ 12,362.80
Total Current Liabilities	\$ 12,362.80
Total Liabilities	\$ 12,362.80
Equity	
Net Assets	52,625.21
Net Income (Loss)	(3,832.64)
Total Equity	\$ 48,792.57
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	\$ 61,155.37

Heritage League of the ZADA Income and Expenses For the twelve months ended June 30, 2025	
	Total
Income	
Donations Received	
Heritage League	3,405.00
Total Donations Received	3,405.00
Dues	6,660.00
Interest Income	
Interest Income - Other	4.95
Total Interest Income	4.95
Total Income	\$ 10,069.95
Expenses	
Bank charges and paypal fees	250.87
Convention - 2024 (Colorado Springs)	1,189.20
Convention - 2025 (Dayton)	234.00
Donation to Memorial Trust of the 2nd ADA	1,255.00
Heritage Herald	
Printing	2,294.37
Production	6,206.66
Total Heritage Herald	8,501.03
Honorarium	500.00
Membership Mailing Supplies	122.14
Postage	682.35
Promotional Material	250.00
Registration fee - State of IL	18.00
Software	820.00
Website	80.00
Total Expenses	\$ 13,902.59
Net Operating Income (Loss)	(3,832.64)
Net Loss	\$ (3,832.64)

**Heritage League of the Second Air Division (USAAF)
Attendance Annual Business Meeting – Dayton, Ohio
Saturday, October 4, 2025 – 4:00 PM Eastern**

Attendees

Members

Jean Koznarek	93 BG
Martha Testagrossa	389 BG
Nolan Testagrossa	389 BG
Becky Bergeron	389 BG
Craig Birmingham	458 BG
James D. Root	93 BG
Norman Canfield	491 BG
Priscilla Canfield	491 BG
George Jung	93 BG
Kim Whitney	93 BG
John Marx	93 BG
Mary Betz Lord	467 BG
Joe Kingston	93 BG
Michael Sellers	93 BG
Vicki Warning	466 BG
Kurt Warning	466 BG
Mitch Magee	389 BG
Mary Yamamoto	93 BG

Bomb Group

Lawrence Van Kuren	458 BG
Robert Van Kuren	458 BG

Heritage League ExCom

Chris Clark	489/44 BGs via Zoom
Jim Birmingham	458 BG
Marybeth Dyer	458 BG
Susan Risley	446 BG
Doug Dovey	392/44 BGs
Irene Hurner	453 BG
Brian Mahoney	492/467 BGs via Zoom
Beverly Tomb	466 BG via Zoom
Bob Gedid	458/466 BGs via Zoom

Guests

Orla Kennelly	American Library via Zoom
Alysa Birmingham	458 BG
Al Bergeron	389 BG
Mary McDaniel	448 BG via Zoom
Ed Zobac	445 BG via Zoom



Annual meeting of the Heritage League in the memorial room in the Hilton Garden Inn. New bylaws were approved and new officers were elected. Photo: D. Dovey.

Report from Second Air Division Memorial Trust to Heritage League Annual Meeting

— *By Richard Middleton, Chairman of Memorial Trust of the Second Air Division*

I am sorry I'm not able to join you again this year but hopefully the Trust Librarian, Orla Kennelly, will join you virtually and provide you with a full report on what has been happening at the American Library during the year.

In general, it has been a quiet year for the Trust but a busy year for the American Library. The main challenge for the Trust during the year was to make the necessary funds available to enable staff to carry out their ambitious programme of events, while also meeting some significant rises in running costs, all within the context of a challenging investment environment.

Throughout 2025 there have been national and local events to mark the 80th Anniversary of the end of hostilities in WWII in 1945, first in Europe in May and then in the Far East in August. The American Library has played a full part in these commemorations; on 25th April we held a reception to mark the last combat mission flown by the 2nd Air Division; in May the Library invited the public to a WWII themed tea party and sing along; and throughout the year we have held a number of themed activities for children in the American Library. We attended ceremonies at the War Memorial in Norwich, the Cambridge US Military Cemetery and St Paul's Cathedral in London. The American Library's commemorations culminated in the extremely successful Silver Wings, the USAAF in WWII Norfolk project; the centre point of which was a major exhibition in the Forum in Norwich from the 12th to 21st September. From the Trust viewpoint, it was an outstanding success thanks to the hard work of Orla and the staff. Orla will provide more details on the project in her report.

The second Congress to Campus event took place in November, just two weeks after the Presidential elections. It was another evening of mature debate without any petty point scoring or outlandish party-political claims. The Representatives were Cheri Bustos, Democrat and Bob Dold, Republican, both from Illinois. These events really show the best side of U.S. politics and are a good advert for Congress. Despite cuts to Federal funding, I am pleased to say that we have been informed there will be another session this November.

The book value of the Trust's assets fell from £5.8m to £5.6m during the last year, which is disappointing, given the uncertainty about trade tariffs and other factors causing turbulence in the markets. However, the investment managers, CCLA, were able to raise the income distribution by 3% which helped to cover the increased staff costs. The Trust's financial position was further helped by some generous donations, including \$7,000 from the Heritage League. Thank you.

Simon Jamieson agreed to take over the chairmanship of the Finance Sub Committee from Jonathan Powell and chaired his first meeting in March. He and the Finance Committee will be monitoring the performance of the investment managers over the next few months. I am extremely grateful for Jonathan's efforts as Chairman over the last 9 years and I am delighted that he will remain as a Governor.

Last year I reported that we were having difficulty finding candidates for the American Scholarships but that we were helped out because the existing scholars, Lauren Cortese and Eric Nicolls both stayed on for another year. Unfortunately, we have again been unable to find replacements for 2026, although Eric has agreed to remain for a third year. We are working with the University to look for possible solutions.

We have not been able to award the Walker Scholarship either this year because there were no students choosing to go to American universities for their year abroad. We believe it is because of visa issues, the introduction of social media checks and the negative feelings among students about the American university scene at the moment. Again, we are working to find a solution which would meet the wishes of the Walker family.

I am grateful to all the staff for their efforts and for the support of my fellow Governors. The Trust remains financially sound, and the staff will be looking to see how they can capitalise on the success of Silver Wings as they plan their events for the year ahead, remembering that 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of American independence.

Report from the American Library to Heritage League Annual Meeting

— By Orla Kennelly, Trust Librarian

Introduction

2025 has been a busy year as the library has been marking 80 years since the end of World War II. The Silver Wings heritage project has been a cornerstone of the American Library's programming in 2025 and will be so well into 2026. A series of events were also held specifically to mark VE Day 80. To support this activity, we recruited some new members to the team as relief staff.

Our base contacts list is still expanding, and we are delighted to have more contacts with 2nd Air Division Family and Friends than we did this time last year. At the same time, some long-term friends of the library and the 2nd Air Division have passed away. This has further reinforced the need to keep reaching out and growing the 2nd Air network to ensure this living memorial does live on and these histories are always remembered. This work continues to be spearheaded by Jane Appleton. Keeping the direction to the veteran family community was further enhanced by the attendance of the Trust Librarian at the 2024 Heritage League convention. This event, shared with the 93rd, 392nd, and 467th Bomb Group Associations, provided an excellent opportunity for sharing knowledge and ideas.

Regular Events and Community Engagement

Throughout the year, the American Library has continued to host a range of regular events designed to encourage community participation and engagement with American literature and history. A key example is the Reading America Book Group, which meets monthly to explore literature from each of the 50 U.S. states. These sessions not only celebrate the diversity of American writing but also foster local community around reading and discussion. The Library also provides lectures, drop-in sessions, and public information events, often themed around anniversaries, notable American figures, or historical topics relevant to the Library's memorial mission. These consistent offerings help build long-term connections with local residents, students, and visiting researchers.

American Life and Culture Programming:

Beyond historical and memorial programming, the American Library places strong emphasis on showcasing contemporary and traditional aspects of

American culture. Over the past year, this has included theatre-focused workshops like Explore American Theatre: Wicked, which combined performance activities with cultural education. Another standout was the Congress to Campus visit in November 2024, which brought former members of the U.S. Congress to Norwich for a public dialogue on democracy and political leadership. Such programs reflect the Library's broader mission to promote transatlantic understanding and provide a cultural bridge between the UK and the United States. Through arts, politics, and literature, these events engage a wide audience and deepen appreciation of American society past and present.

2nd Air Division Archive

The archive is special because the collections are digitized and made available to everyone for free forever. Please get in touch if you are interested in donating any archive items. New donations made to the archive are: Ray Pytel (Last editor of the 2ADA Journal collection), Margie Fahey collection, 2ADA newsletters, new letters from a 448th Seething veteran. As part of the Silver Wings project, we have also collected 10 new oral histories.

Silver Wings Exhibition—the US Army Air Forces in WWII Norfolk

Launched in partnership with the Forum to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II last September, Silver Wings explored the legacy of the 2nd Air Division and 8th Air Forces in Norfolk. It includes intergenerational workshops, oral history interviews, school outreach, and creative projects aimed particularly at young people.

Participants were encouraged to research and share stories of American airmen and their relationships with local communities. The project culminated in a major public exhibition during Norfolk Heritage Open Days in September 2025, featuring talks, guided walks and a 1940s-style community event. Through this project, the Library is actively expanding its role as both a living memorial and a platform for historical engagement and cultural dialogue.

Silver Wings was only possible because of the generosity and input of so many of the community on both sides of the Atlantic. One of our Trust Governors, Joe Dzenowagis, provided video footage for the exhi-

bition. Joe is a 467th son. He had footage from across the 2nd Air Division and we highlighted a video of Peggy O'Meara Stewart who served at Hardwick with the 93rd.

Our keynote speaker was Dr. Curatola who travelled from the WWII Museum in New Orleans. Other speakers ranged from 392nd at Wendling, 445th at Tibenham to Red Cross volunteers.

We had objects on display from many Air Division Groups; 44th Shipdam, 389th Hethel, 446th Bungay, 448th Seething, 466th Attlebridge and 467th Rackheath. Lots of local museums and collectors supported this. On our museum pop up day, we were joined by some of those groups and by the American Women in WW2 England project.

For some displays, we worked with new partners like the Costume and Textile Association who helped us to display the uniforms and lent us other items like '40s parachute silk ladies' clothes. The Wymondham Heritage Museum also assisted us.

We published an archive inspired creative writing anthology with contributions from 14 aspiring authors, almost all brand new to the 2nd Air community. We worked with 470 schoolchildren between 7 and 11 years old. We ran regular sessions for three youth groups with people aged 12 to 23 and published a zine from their contributions.

As part of the legacy, some of the displays will travel to other places in Norfolk. Larger parts of the exhibition have now been donated to local air base museums including the New Farm Aviation Heritage Museum, and the new 466BG Heritage Center at Attlebridge.

Several of the visitors at this event supported the exhibition, with 93 BG Michael Sellers supporting screening of the *Return to Hardwick* documentary, and another 93rd member Anne, traveled to us in Norwich for the event. Doug Dovey, 44 & 392 BGs, also joined us in Norwich, and Brian Mahoney, 467 & 492 BGs, helped us with some of our research.

It has been an enormous and collaborative effort, and I am so grateful to the Heritage League and all your support. It is invaluable. Our full evaluation report will come at year end, but feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. And I am so pleased to say that over the 10 days of Silver Wings, 39,000 people visited the exhibition.

Special Events coming soon

- Silver Wings stories will be online for the US based audience.
- 231st Station Hospital event – do you have any records of your veteran being in this hospital?
- Congress to Campus—Bringing former US representatives to a public forum at the library in partnership with the University of East Anglia American Studies department and the Eccles Centre for American Studies at the British Library.

Up Next for 2026

- America250—Commemorating US Independence
- 2026 National Year of Reading
- New Norwich Iowa connections celebrating our shared stories as UNESCO cities of literature

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 forebearers of the bomb and fighter groups of the 2nd AD in WWII. Membership is open to all those who follow this ideal.

Doug Dovey, Virginia, Managing Editor
ddovey@hotmail.com

Thomas Chang, New York, Layout
tctomchang@aol.com

Lisa Niehoff, Iowa, Assistant Editor
lisa@huxcomm.net

Dallas King, Indiana, Photo Editor
dwk1927@gmail.com

Brian Mahoney, Maryland, Researcher
researcher@brianhmahoney.com



"Silver Wings"—an extraordinary tribute to our Veterans

The highlight of the year was undoubtedly Silver Wings Exhibition last September. The American Library partnered with the Norwich Forum to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the end of World War II. Silver Wings portrayed the legacy of the 2nd Air Division in Norfolk in a prominent manner.

The Forum Hall was transformed with impressive and pleasurable displays effectively depicting the Army Air Force footprints during WWII. It included exhibits from many 2nd Air Division bomb groups: 44th Shipdam, 389th Hethel, 446th Bungay, 448th Seething, 466th Attlebridge and 467th Rackheath. Local museums and collectors also supplied

displays. Programs at the event included intergenerational workshops, oral history interviews, school outreach, and creative projects aimed particularly at young people. They will also conduct programs of reading groups and lectures during the year. The keynote speaker was Dr. Curatola, New Orleans WWII Museum chief historian.

The 39,000 attendance was impressive, but it was the reaction of the visitors and the connections made during the Exhibition which really show the Forum and American Library are honoring the wishes of our veterans for a living memorial of their sacrifices.



Gala opening of Silver Wing exposition, a by invitation event, with several distinguished speakers including Mr. Richard Middleton, chairman of the 2nd Air Division Memorial Trust. The invitees and displays fill the expanse of the Norwich Library Forum. Photo: D. Dovey.



Floor displays from several bomb groups and WWII units fill the expanse. Additional displays in adjoining rooms and speaker presentations in the auditorium were ongoing. Photo: D. Dovey.



Photo: The Norwich Forum.

Buildup for Big Week, Feb. 20-25, 1944

2nd Air Division's Mission to Gotha—Part I

By Tom Eisele (93 BG, Hardwick)

Few things in life are certain and in warfare, even fewer certainties exist. Still, in war, Rule #1 is that young men die; and Rule #2 is that statesmen and politicians and diplomatists and doctors and nurses (and, yes, even commanding generals) cannot change Rule #1.

During World War II, in 1943, all over the world people were fighting and dying. The American Army Air Force (among others) wanted to put an end to this litany of suffering and death, and the question was: How to manage it?

Initially, the settled doctrine in air war was that, "The bombers will always get through."¹ This belief was the basis for the American doctrine that daylight bombing could and would be successful—when it was done with the extremely accurate M-4 Norden stabilized bombsight, and undertaken by heavily armed 4-engine bombers (namely, the B-17 Flying Fortress and the B-24 Liberator) with crews of 10. In late 1942, and during the bulk of 1943, the USAAF [Army Air Force] proceeded along these lines to fight the Nazi war machine in western Europe.

The American effort failed. Or, at least, the American daylight heavy bombing missions were brought to a standstill by the remarkably robust and tenacious German air defenses, which themselves depended upon the best anti-aircraft gun in the war (the multi-purpose 88mm) and extremely reliable defense fighters, the Bf-109 Messerschmitt and the Fw-190 Focke-Wulf (among others).

What made the best efforts of the American flyers so vulnerable to defeat, or at least, what led to a draw in late 1943?

I. Lack of Success in 1943

To begin with, America started late. The German industrial machine began producing airplanes with a warlike purpose in 1937, and by May 1940, the German Luftwaffe had more than 3,500 serviceable aircraft at its disposal.²

The United States, on the other hand, was mainly a nation of isolationism and pacifism – until 1940-41. And, as much as President Franklin D. Roosevelt painstakingly attempted to nudge much of American industry toward preparing for war (for example, in late 1938, FDR authorized an expansion of military spending, including the Air Corps); it still remained true that inertia could be a difficult force to overcome. Even though FDR began turning the ship of state toward a wartime footing, the battleship of American industry and the American armed forces proved to be very slow and cumbersome in actually making any U-turn. It was only after the provocative attack on Pearl Harbor (December 7, 1941) that American industry and the American civilian populace became fully committed and fully mobilized.

To illustrate the long distance covered by the United States industrial complex and the U.S. Armed Services, consider the following basic statistics:

Buildup of the American Air Force ³	Combat Aircraft Available	Officers & Enlisted Men
Munich crisis (Sept. 1938)	1,200	22,700
Pearl Harbor (Dec. 1941)	3,000	340,000
Big Week and Beyond (1944)	80,000	2,400,000

To be sure, this table is an impressive indication of American industrial might and military strength; still, the statistics in this table can be misleading. The condition of the U.S. American Air Force in England during 1943 was, at best, precarious.

1. The source of this claim seems to have been the Italian general, Giulio Douhet, who propounded this point in his writings during the 1920s (Douhet died in 1930). Others – such as Stanley Baldwin, then Prime Minister of Great Britain – accepted this claim and used it as a basis to support their pacifism and appeasement in the face of the growing threat from Hitler and Nazi Germany. See, e.g., Richard Overy, *The Bombing War* (Allen Lane Books: 2013), pp. 3, 34; and William Manchester, *The Last Lion: Winston Spencer Churchill. Alone 1932-1940*. (Little, Brown and Company: 1988), pp. 96-97.

2. See Derek Wood & Derek Dempster, *The Narrow Margin: The Battle of Britain and the Rise of Air Power 1930-40* (McGraw-Hill Book Company: 1961), Appendix 16, pp. 478-79.

3. Data taken from Donald L. Miller, *Masters of the Air: America's Bomber Boys Who Fought the Air War Against Nazi Germany* (Simon & Schuster: 2006), p. 45.

The Eighth Air Force had moved to England only in mid-1942, and its initial raids (starting with a raid of 12 B-17s heading to Rouen, France on August 17, 1942, with another six B-17s serving as a diversionary force) were hardly juggernauts. The initial use of B-24s in bombing Europe



Major Gen Eaker, Commander of 8th Bomber Command (later 8th Air Force) speaks gleefully with media after 1942 first mission successes. He was the chief proponent for daylight precision bombing as agreed to by Roosevelt and Churchill at the January 1943 Casablanca conference. AAF. Photo colorized by D. King.

came two months later, on October 9, 1942, when 24 B-24s from the 93rd Bomb Group joined a force of B-17s, totaling 108 heavy bombers, on the 8th Air Force's 14th Mission, heading toward Lille, France.⁴

These initial raids were tentative forays, meant to give the new 8th Air Force air crews some deadly wartime experience, while also giving them a chance to feel out the enemy's defensive measures. In other words, we Americans were attempting to gauge the odds of our successfully inflicting some serious damage on Germany and German-occupied territory in western Europe.

In all, only 27 bombing missions were flown by the 8th Air Force in 1942. As 1943 rolled around, however, the pace of its bombing activities accelerated, but not by much. In the first five months of 1943, for example, 8th Air Force flew 34 missions, which exceeded its entire output for 1942. And by the end of 1943, the 8th Air Force had flown 144 missions during that year alone. Yet, we still may ask, how successful were those 1943 missions? Not very.

The fly in the ointment (or, perhaps, the flaw in the ointment) was the American assumption that heavily armed 4-engine bombers could, on their own, adequately defend themselves against enemy fighters. This simply was not true.

Yet important American generals, high in the Army Air Force hierarchy, continued to believe it, contrary to the teaching of their recent experience in the 8th Air Force. For example: "General Ira Eaker had always believed in the self-

defending capability of the large daylight bomber formation. The Eighth Fighter Command under Brig. General Frank Hunter shared Eaker's view that unescorted bomber operations were possible."⁵ Until these generals (and others like them in the USAAF) were disabused of this faulty belief or assumption, the 8th Air Force seemed doomed to repeat the errors of the past.

Their eyes were opened to the truth by the disastrous twin bombing raids against the ball-bearing factories in Schweinfurt. These were not the sole missions to fail in 1943, of course; still, these two raids were emblematic, in the sense that they certainly were the most dramatic and compelling failures suffered in 1943, a year that brought American long-range heavy bombing missions to a standstill in Europe.

The first Schweinfurt raid took place on August 17, 1943, the second raid on October 14, 1943. The results of both raids, deep into Germany against a high-value target vigorously defended, proved decisively that long-range bombers on their own, without heavy and sustained fighter escort, would be decimated by the defending German fighters and flak gunners.

The former mission in August was Mission 84 to the cities of Regensburg and Schweinfurt. It cost 60 heavy bombers lost, and an additional 75-90 bombers damaged, out of a total of 376 heavy bombers. The later mission in October, Mission 115 (aptly called "Black Thursday"), cost the AAF another 60 bombers lost outright. An additional 17 bombers were so badly damaged that they had to be scrapped, and another 121 bombers were damaged but repairable.

These casualties in October 1943 were from a total force of 291 B-17s. (An additional 60 B-24s from the 2nd Air Division either aborted or diverted due to weather conditions in October; thus, they were not figured into the loss/rate calculation.)

Loss rates on individual missions hovering between 20-25% of the attacking air force were prohibitive. Accordingly, long-range bombing missions penetrating deep inside Germany were suspended for the next four-five months. The sad conclusion reached in the fall of 1943 was that "the Eighth Air Force did not have air superiority over Germany."⁶

How might the Eighth Air Force regain air superiority over Germany?



Major Gen Hunter, commander of Fighter Command. AAF photo, Colorized by D. King.

5. Overy, *The Bombing War*, p. 359.

6. W. F. Craven & J. L. Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 2 (University of Chicago: 1951), pp. 704-05.

4. See Roger Freeman, *Mighty Eighth War Diary* (Jane's Publishing Company: 1981), p. 19.

II. 1944: a New Year and a New Plan: Big Week and Beyond

In October 1943, from the 8th to the 14th of the month, the USAAF conducted missions to Bremen, Munster, and Schweinfurt (among other sites) that ended in losses of 148 heavy bombers and almost 1,500 airmen. This span of action came to be known as "Black Week," and it shook the entire brass section of the USAAF. The officers in charge collectively realized that this rate of loss of heavy bombers and men was unsustainable. Accordingly, bombing missions flying deep into Germany were suspended.

During the suspension of deep-penetration bombings, from October 1943 to February 1944, the focus of the 8th Air Force was on more circumscribed goals, often targeting easily reachable facilities in western Europe. Still, plans for bigger projects were in the works. A draft plan was initiated in November 1943, by which the AAF would seek to destroy German aircraft and ball-bearing industrial capacity. The plan was termed "Operation Argument." It proposed a complicated series of raids by the heavy bombers of the 8th Air Force, escorted by plentiful fighters, against the Third Reich' industries connected to the production of German aircraft.

Bad weather conditions at the end of 1943, and into the beginning of 1944, delayed (temporarily) the implementation of this new AAF bombing plan. During this weather-imposed respite, the Allies solved (or at least improved) various logistical problems with their bomber supplies and maintenance. As well, the U.S. and British air men combined their experiential wisdom to develop the P-51 Mustang. It was a long-range escort fighter capable of providing cover for the otherwise vulnerable heavy bombers on long missions. All this pre-operational activity coincided with a buildup of U.S. heavy bomber capacity. From fewer than 400 operational heavy bombers being available in the summer and fall of 1943, the 8th Air Force grew by January 1944 into a force with over 800 heavy bombers in operation.⁷

Mid-February of 1944 brought a change in the weather for the UK and for the continent of Europe. From February 20th to the 25th, "Operation Argument" (also known as "Big Week") was carried out. This entire operation included missions flown not only by the 8th Air Force, but also by the 9th Air Force, as well as missions flown from Italy by the 15th Air Force. All of these actions are fully described in Bill Yenne's *Big Week: Six Days that Changed the Course of World War II* (Berkeley Publishing Group: 2013).

In this article, however, I am initially limiting my description to some of the basic details simply of the 8th Air Force efforts during Big Week. Then, after my brief description, I shall dig more deeply into the actual events of one specific mission flown during Big Week by the 2nd Air Division, namely, the 2 AD's (Air Division) February 24th

mission to bomb Gotha, Germany.

The framework of events during Big Week was the following:

- **Mission 226** took place on Sunday, February 20, 1944. Three separate attack flights, comprising 1,003 bombers and roughly 830 escorting fighters, hit 14 different sites in Germany: airfields, aircraft manufacturing and assembly sites, and various targets of opportunity. This was the first 8th Air Force mission ever to muster a thousand bombers.
- **Mission 228**, on Monday the 21st, saw 861 bombers and about 680 fighters being dispatched to hit six airfield and aviation industry targets in Germany.
- **Mission 230**, Tuesday the 22nd, saw 789 bombers and around 650 fighters dispatched to hit more German airfields and aviation industry targets. Unfortunately, bad weather affected targeting over many bomb sites, and results were quite mixed, including some accidental bombing of civilians in Holland.
- **Mission 233** was flown on Thursday, February 24th, against several widely dispersed primary sites in Germany. This split-action was designed to reduce the ability of the Luftwaffe to concentrate its responding fighters. **Second Air Division was assigned Gotha for this mission.** A total of 809 bombers participated.
- **Mission 235**, flown Friday the 25th, had 754 bombers and almost as many escorting fighters hitting four German targets connected to the aviation industry.

In general, how did "Operation Argument" fare? The results of Big Week were ambiguous at best, albeit mildly encouraging to the AAF. Losses over this six-day period numbered nearly 250 American bombers and another 30 fighters. But these losses, as costly as they were, could be made up by the Allies.



Brig General Hodge, first commander of 2nd Bomber Division. He was relieved after D-Day. AAF photo colorized by D. King.

Germany, on the other hand, had lost as many as 355 of its front-line fighters. Especially savaged were their squadrons of twin-engine fighters, which had been specifically designed to interdict and break-up American bomber formations (by using their long-range armaments, such as under-wing missiles or rockets and aerial mortars). As

important as were these German losses in planes, however, even more important was the loss of their men. Almost 100 German pilots perished during this six-day onslaught. These Axis pilots proved to be irreplaceable.

Operation Argument was not fully effective in stopping

7. Overy, *The Bombing War*, Table 6.2, p. 317.

or reducing German aircraft production. While it is true that, at the end of the Allied onslaught, Germany's monthly production figure dropped to a low of 1700 replacement aircraft, the Germans bounced back from this dip. The Reich was able to increase its eventual production numbers to a peak figure of 3700 replacement aircraft (turned out in September 1944). One reason for this surprising rebound in German aircraft production was the direction of Albert Speer, who during this time took over leadership of German armament programs. Speer rationalized and stream-lined the German production systems; he also dispersed German fabrication and assembly plants, making it much more difficult for the Eighth Air Force to locate and target these decentralized aircraft production facilities.

Despite this instance of German resilience and resolve, it ultimately was to no avail. Training programs for replacement pilots were not well maintained by the Germans. If the Americans could continue the drumbeat of bombing operations, as inaugurated by Operation Argument, challenging the German pilots to defend the Reich, the bleeding in trained personnel would inevitably continue. "The bombing raids forced the Germans to fight and imposed a continuing battle of attrition on their fighters. This high attrition of pilots resulted not only from combat operations but also from the continued dilution of the [German fighter] force by inexperienced, ill-trained pilots, who in winter's bad weather conditions were as dangerous to themselves as enemy fighters."⁸

The increased attrition rates among German pilots could spell doom for the Luftwaffe. Men and machines, meanwhile, were pouring into the UK from the United States at an ever-increasing rate, replenishing and indeed growing the ranks of the Eighth Air Force.⁹

III. Mission 233, Thursday, February 24, 1944

Mission 233 for the 8th Air Force took place on the fifth day of the planned "Big Week" of bombing missions. The day before, Wednesday February 23, the entire 8th AF had stood

down due to poor flying weather. On Thursday the 24th, however, there would be no reprieve; instead, it proved to be a maximum effort. The Mighty Eighth put all three Air Divisions into action, mounting a bomber force that in the aggregate numbered 809 bombers (plus over 750 supporting fighters).

The plan called for a three-pronged attack on various targets within German borders:



Mission 233 targets, February 24, 1944. Arc depicts rough range of fighters. Graphic by Elizabeth O'Shaughnessy.

- The 3rd Air Division, with nine Bomb Groups of B-17s, numbering 304 bombers in all, would head northeast from East Anglia, toward Tutow in the extreme northeastern portion of Germany. It happened that Tutow was the city where the Luftwaffe had formed its first Fighter Squadron (established in 1934), and where currently there were several Focke-Wulf manufacturing and assembly plants. In addition, an important air command center also was located in this vicinity.

In its northeastern column of attacking bombers, the 3rd Air Division fared well, even though it ended up not bombing its intended targets of several Focke-Wulf production plants in the vicinity of Tutow, Posen, and Kreising. Because of bad weather over the primary targets, planes in the 3rd AD column were forced to select targets of opportunity, and the aviation industry sites in and around Rostock became an attractive alternative target. As a consequence, the Rostock aircraft manufacturing plants were heavily damaged.

Out of the large force of 304 heavy bombers sent on this mission by the 3rd AD, only five B-17s were lost. One for-

8. Williamson Murray, *Strategy for Defeat: The Luftwaffe, 1933-1945* (George Allen and Unwin: 1985), pp. 180, 183.

9. See, e.g., Jay Stout, *The Men Who Killed the Luftwaffe* (Stackpole Books: 2010), pp. 190-92.

fortunate factor working in favor of this relatively low loss-rate was the fact that the German fighter resistance was relatively light in this sector on this particular day.

The 1st Air Division heading toward Schweinfurt and the 2nd Air Division heading to Gotha would not be so fortunate.

- The 1st Air Division, with twelve Bomb Groups of B-17s, would put up 266 bombers to head, once again,



Formation of 342 BG B-17s over Schweinfurt. Better than expected results this time. AAF photo via National Archives. Colorized by D. King.

to the damnable city of Schweinfurt, located in south-central Germany. The men of the 1st Air Division had "been there, done that," twice before, on August 17, 1943 (Mission 84), and again on October 14, 1943 (Mission 115, known as "Black Thursday"). On each previous mission, the 8th Air Force had lost 60 bombers, with many more planes severely damaged and barely able to fly, and with a very large number of men killed, wounded, missing, or captured. Both earlier missions had been traumatic for the flyers who had the duty to fly them.

Schweinfurt—"a Death Sentence for us."

The preceding missions to Schweinfurt, on August 17 and October 14 in 1943, had led to unspeakable losses. For any air force and any country, no matter how rich and plentiful they may be, these losses would be unsustainable over any considerable period of time. In addition, and perhaps even more importantly, these two missions became infamous—they deeply affected morale. The men of the 8th Air Force could not imagine living to finish their tour of duty (i.e., completing 25 bombing missions, which later was increased to 30 missions flown). No flyer could remain confident when individual mission loss rates hovered in the area of 25-30% of the planes and men flying per mission.

Let me just quote a short passage from someone who

witnessed the reaction of the B-17 aircrews in the briefing hut when they learned their target was Schweinfurt:

"I see faces go pale..." A nearby flight engineer bows his head and begins to pray. The red line [on the briefing chart] goes deep into central Germany to the city of Schweinfurt, a name that strikes fear in the flyers of the Eighth Air Force. ... Combat veterans fear a Schweinfurt mission. It's a death sentence for some of us. Everyone looks grim. Some are obviously frightened. A fellow next to me covers his face and mumbles that he wishes he'd written to his wife last night."¹⁰

I doubt that George Webster over-stated the situation in the briefing room; as far as I can tell, there was a sense of desperation in many of the airmen assembled there.

Still, the airmen went. First Air Division launched 266 B-17s on their mission to Schweinfurt, and 238 of those planes ended up over the target, releasing their bombs. Some planes turned back short of the target, as a matter of course.

The opening German defensive activity began with a wall of flak thrown up at the bombers over Holland, and then the resistance stiffened even more as the columns of bombers headed into Germany proper. Countless German fighters were ready and waiting for the bombing forces. Bill Yenne, in his book on Big Week, says: "As the 1st Division bombers passed over the Netherlands, there were a higher than usual number of aircraft dropping out of the formation for mechanical reasons. Maybe it was nerves, or maybe they were hearing sounds inside those Wright Cyclone [engines] that made them worry."¹¹

In response, I would ask, "Frankly, how could we imagine humans to act any differently, given the challenges they faced, and the odds stacked against them?" I, for one, doubt that I could summon enough courage to face such fearful odds.

In fact, for a long period of time during their approach flights to their respective targets, the 1st AD column of planes and the 2 AD's column of planes were roughly parallel to one another—only toward the end of the approach did the 1 AD's column of B-17s separate by heading southeast, toward Schweinfurt, as the 2 AD's column of B-24s continued grinding their way due east, toward Gotha. This twin group of bombers initially numbered 505, and it would seem to have been a formidable bombing force, hopefully dissuading on-looking German fighter pilots from challenging either branch or column of planes.

Unfortunately, that did not prove to be the case. Rather than gaining some advantage from roughly parallel ap-

10. George Webster of the 92nd Bomb Group, quoted in Bill Yenne, *Big Week: Six Days that Changed the Course of World War II* (Berkeley Publishing Group: 2013), p. 205.

11. Yenne, *Big Week*, p. 206.

proaches – the idea being something akin to there being "safety in numbers"—these dual columns of bombers met steady, resolute, and even strident resistance from German defenders.



B-24 formation from 489 BG Halesworth, heads toward Gotha. AAF photo via National Archives. Colorized by D. King.

Let's look at the 1st Air Division's approach to its Schweinfurt target, which comprised various plants manufacturing ball-bearings, an absolutely fundamental component of most vehicles and machines.

Through the flak barrages, through the repeated attacks from German fighters, the intrepid flyers in the 1st Air Division pushed their B-17s to the target, and then home again. The bombing itself was highly successful. Major George Shackley was leading the 381st Bomb Group over Schweinfurt that day (and, in fact, Major Shackley had also flown both previous 1943 missions to Schweinfurt on August 17th and on October 14th). As to their bombing results, Major Shackley is quoted as saying:

"Bombs were slamming down on factories and other targets in the city for at least half an hour. Our own bombing was one of the best. This was one hell of a lot different from my first two Schweinfurt missions."¹²

The lead bombardier for the 381 BG, Captain Lawrence Potenza, wholeheartedly agreed with Major Shackley's assessment of the bombing results: "The bomb run was beautiful. I could see hits from our bombs right in the factory area. Heavy smoke was over the town from bombs dropped by the group ahead of us and fires were everywhere."¹³

When the 1st Air Division planes returned to their bases, the men were surprised (perhaps "astonished" would be a more accurate word) to learn that this day over Schweinfurt, their force of 266 B-17s had lost only 11 planes (4%). In the cold, hard world of wartime, a loss rate less than 5% is "acceptable." It is a rate of loss that can be sustained against an enemy with fewer resources than the United States, and an enemy which now was beginning to suffer massive losses of its own.

As the men of the 1st Air Division gathered around their welcoming friends and colleagues, they also recalled that the "weather was so crystal clear over central Germany that day that the 1st Division Flying Fortresses over Schweinfurt could see the 2nd Division Liberators over Gotha in the distance."¹⁴

Given that the 1 AD fared so well, we are entitled to wonder how their compatriots in the 2 AD did that day.

IV. Going for Gotha—2nd Air Division's Target

The 2nd Air Division drew Gotha for its target, and the Division unfortunately suffered the highest losses of Mission 233 (almost 14%). Eight Bomb Groups flew in column to destroy the Messerschmitt production facilities in Gotha, Germany (which is approximately 420 miles east, across the English Channel). A total of 239 B-24s from the 2 AD constituted the column of bombers heading toward Gotha. A ninth Bomb Group, the newly operational 458 BG, was used as a decoy, flying a diversionary course over the North Sea, but the 458 BG otherwise did not participate in the mission.



B-24 formation from 446 BG Bungay, heads toward Gotha. AAF photo via National Archives. Colorized by D. King.

To Be Continued in Part II of the next Herald. Tom will detail the 2nd Air Division's three attack waves to Gotha and the tragic losses on that February 24, 1944 day. [—Ed.]

12. Yenne, *Big Week*, p. 214.

13. Yenne, *Big Week*, p. 215.

14. Yenne, *Big Week*, p. 215.





Videos We Like

By Lisa Niehoff

Where were you on Victory in Europe Day? 2nd Air Division Veterans at 50th anniversary parade

Thirty years ago, Joe Dzenowagis interviewed Colonel Watten, 93 BG pilot, who became emotional at the marshaling yard of the 50th Anniversary VE Day parade at Norwich. See many of our Vets return to Norwich in 1995 for the reunion and parade.

B&W & Color/4:32 Mins. <https://youtu.be/TwOcVzshhUw?si=aqJB7csvNG17Ztvi>

Editor's note: Joe Dzenowagis has cataloged and provided to YouTube 18 videos in connection with the 80th anniversary of V-E Day. This is the second of the 18 videos. The Heritage League appreciates and thanks Joe for his efforts. We will showcase one of his videos in each future *Herald*.

Five Things You Never Knew About the B-24 Liberator

See the answer to the question: what was the location of the first destroyed B-24 in WWII? This informative short documentary asks four more 'did you know' questions in presenting lesser-known facts about the B-24, the most produced American military aircraft in history. Although the B-24 was often overshadowed by the B-17, this video successfully details the B-24's significant, though often unpublicized, contributions across all theaters. For all the terror bombers could bring to an enemy, their crews were often sitting ducks. It was a matter of survivability and that of the crews' efforts. This video is well worth the time spent viewing it.

Color 15:39 Mins. <https://youtu.be/BX5oRx8wxUI?si=GnB3ObCIXtqW5yPe>

WWII's Most Incredible Landings: Bringing the B-24 Liberator Home (Restored Documentary)

This USAAF training video for aircrews on how to save not only a valuable aircraft but, more importantly, a ten-man crew that had just endured hours of combat deep in enemy territory. See the recommendations on how to deal with landing damaged B-24s. The remainder of this video shows how bombing missions are planned and approved by the commanding general. Then, how a 'maximum effort' mission is conducted from takeoff, formation rendezvous, navigation to the target, bomb release and return to base.

Color 1:53:03 Mins. <https://youtu.be/0Z9SnRop1vw?si=eCKbGQEJYYJem6zy>

An Analysis of the Unbelievable Courage of WWII Bomber Crews

How much courage does it truly take to measure the bravery of those who face the extremes of the human condition? What qualities do successful individuals possess in such situations? This video examines the concept of courage, analyzes the experiences of these individuals, and evaluates the significant psychological and physical toll that these experiences have inflicted on them.

B&W & Color/41:34 Mins. <https://youtu.be/iZZoVH1OIwY?si=xrWUsCWh-vNq-qLL>

Welcome Home Honors Program

Heritage League Honors Final Burials of Recently Identified Airmen of the Second Air Division

Staff Sergeant John H. Danneker, 389th Bomb Group, Hethel
Arlington National Cemetery, Washington D.C., August 26, 2025



AAF photo, colorized by D. King.

On a pleasant sunny warm but not hot summer day at Arlington National Cemetery, four members of the Heritage League attended the final resting of SSGT Danneker, a 19-year-old waist gunner from the 389th Bomb Group at Hethel. The full Army's delegation, honor guard, band, and firing squad presided. Also present were nine of Danneker's extended family, the director of the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) and several members representing

Project Recover, which assisted DPAA for this recovery. The Heritage League supplied a large wreath and four ExCom members attended and as part of our "Welcome Home" program.

On June 20, 1944, Danneker originally from Williamsport, Pennsylvania and several other members of his crew went missing in action when their B-24J Liberator bomber collided with another B-24 in the same formation and crashed into the Baltic Sea off the coast of Denmark. The pilot and co-pilot of Danneker's aircraft survived after successfully bailing out, but the rest of the crew were killed in the crash.

In early 1948, the American Graves Registration Command (AGRC), the organization that searches for

American personnel lost in the European Theater, investigated the crash but was unable to find any of the missing crewmen. Over the next couple of years, the AGRC also as-



Eight Army Honor Guards convey SSGT Danneker to the final service. Photo: D. Dovey.

searched unidentified remains that washed ashore in the area where Danneker's aircraft crashed but was unable to identify any of the crew. Danneker was declared non-recoverable on May 12, 1950.

In 2019, Danish divers found a WWII-era aircraft wreck in the area of the aircraft's last known location and recovered a 50 caliber machine gun from the site with a damaged serial number that partially matched one from the missing aircraft.

According to the DPAA, Project Recover survey team from the University of Delaware worked with the Royal Danish Navy to map the wreck site in August 2021 and volunteers from Project Recover returned in 2022 to assist DPAA primary partner Trident Archäologie, along with Wessex Archaeology, as well as representatives from the Royal Danish Navy and the Langelands Museum, in excavating the wreck site.

Extensive evidence was recovered, including human remains and ID tags of two of the crew members that were turned over to Danish authorities and then accessioned into the DPAA laboratory. Additional recovery operations were conducted in 2023 and 2024 by Trident Archäologie, that found further material evidence and more possible remains.

"My work with archaeological finds has always been fulfilling, but this recovery mission in Denmark introduced me to a different aspect of my field: the recovery of



The Director of DPAA, Mr. Kelly McKeague on behalf of the Defense Department, presents condolences nephew Dale Danneker. Photo: DPAA.



Fourteen members of Danneker's extended family traveled to Arlington National Cemetery to attend his final resting. It was a first reunion for several of the group. Photo: D. Dovey.



Attending members of the Heritage League next to the wreath presented by the Heritage League. (L-R) President Chris Clark, Communications VP Doug Dovey, VP Volunteers John Jurczak and Beverly Baynes Tomb, 2nd Air Division Memorial Trust Governor and former president. Photo via D. Dovey.

servicemen whose relatives remain unaware of their fate," said University of Denmark forensic anthropologist and Project Recover Team Member Svenja Weise, who participated in the mission to locate Danneker's aircraft. "I am glad that John Danneker will return to his family after 80 years of uncertainty, and hope that my continuing work at Project Recover will help to bring more airmen home."

Danneker's name is recorded on the Wall of the Missing at Cambridge American Cemetery, Cambridge, England, along with others still missing from WWII. A rosette will be placed next to his name to indicate he has been accounted for.

Sources: DPAA, Fox56 Williamsport PA & Project Recover Releases.

Halesworth Remembrance Day

Story and photos by Marjorie Shiers (489 BG, 4 FG)

Greetings on Remembrance Sunday 2025. To our 489th veterans, families and friends

The sky was blue and the sun was shining here in Halesworth on Remembrance Sunday. Just before 11 o'clock we gathered around the Holton Village Memorial to remember those who lost their lives during the two world wars. Poppy wreaths were placed in tribute to the fallen from both our nations and a two-minute silence was kept. We also remembered our American airmen who served here in Halesworth (Holton Airfield) during World War Two. Following the wreath laying we went into St Peter's Church for our annual Remembrance Day Service. We were so happy to see a group of our friends from the 48th Fighter Wing, RAF Lakenheath with us again today. These young men came here to pay tribute to those who sacrificed their lives for us all and we are so very grateful.

After the church service, where we sang hymns and both of our national anthems, the congregation walked to the airfield memorial site. During this walk, the young serving airmen read aloud the names of each and every man who lost his life whilst serving at Halesworth during WWII.

A short service was held at the memorial site, where poppy wreaths were placed on the three memorials—to the 56th Fighter Group, the 489th Bomb Group and the 5th Emergency Rescue Squadron. The poppy wreaths on the picket fence were made by the local primary school pupils for each of the three group memorials. The children also made the little poppies on sticks which were placed in front of the memorials, beside the poppy crosses. With the sun still shining everyone was welcomed into the museum for refreshments.

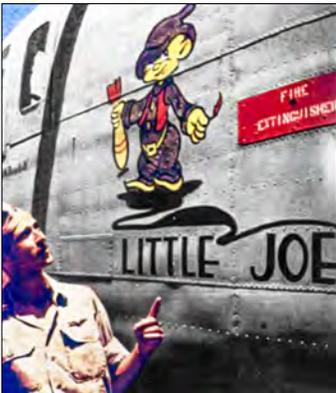
Your families were remembered today, and we continue to thank them all for their Service. With love and best wishes, the Friends of the 489th, Halesworth and from all the volunteers at Halesworth Airfield Memorial Museum.



Nose Art *Edited by Lisa Niehoff*

Nose art boosted crew morale, fostering camaraderie and a sense of identity within the unit.

Little Joe/98th BG, 419 Bomb Squadron (41-24195)



Little Joe was assigned to 9th Air Force and 98th Bomb Group. This aircraft with nose art depicting a cartoon character holding a bomb and a lit match, returned safely to the base from Operation Tidal Wave, the mission to Ploesti. Even though this character may appear like 'Dopey' from Disney's 'Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs,' my search results indicate the character portrayed on this plane was original, created for the plane, not an officially licensed Disney one. The Disney Company created hundreds of unit insignia and other war-related art for military use during the war. The decision to use this particular cartoon character was most likely made by the air crew themselves and depicted Berlin as their final objective.

Credit and photo: American Air Museum.

Editor's note: you may recall we covered another *Little Joe* from the 2nd Air Division, 453 BG in the last *Herald*. Not to be confused, it was shot down with all lost on a mission to Brunswick, Germany on April 8, 1944. To date, all those crew have been identified by DPAA

with eight laid to final rest. Heritage League representatives have attended six funerals to date. The remaining two crewmen's final disposition awaits DPAA efforts to locate next of kin.

Lil Joe/98th BG, 345 Bomb Squadron (41-11886)

Lil Joe was also assigned to the 9th Air Force. It featured nose art of two dice showing a score of four, which is referred to as a 'Little Joe' in craps. She was flown by Pilot LT. Lindley Hussey on Operation Tidal Wave to destroy the oil refineries at Ploesti, Romania on August 1, 1943, but did not return. On approach to its target, *Lil Joe* was hit by flak in one of its 400-gallon extra bomb bay gasoline tanks and caught fire from a large fuel leak. Its pilot, LT. Hussey, pressed on and bombed his target with his burning airplane trailing flames from its leaking gasoline tank. After dropping his bombs, Hussey pulled *Lil Joe* up into a climb to enable a bailout for his crew. Six crewmen bailed out. *Lil Joe* crashed into a field and exploded into flames. LT. Hussey and his radioman were pulled from the wrecked aircraft severely burned but survived their burns and became POW's. Credit and photo: American Air Museum.



Rugged Buggy/44th BG (41-23819)



Rugged Buggy, also known as the 'Flying Tractor', was painted by its crew. This nose art was created by SSGT. Sarkis Bartigian, a member of the ground crew of whom we have featured in several issues. He was known as the 'greatest painter of nose art of all time' and was responsible for the artwork on other B-24s although this one appears to have been done in a hurry.

The name *Rugged Buggy* likely had a personal meaning to the crew. The accompanying 'Flying Tractor' may have been an inside joke referring to the aircraft itself. The B-24 was notoriously difficult to fly, earning nicknames like 'Flying Brick,' 'Spam Can,' and 'The Old Agony Wagon'. A 'Flying Tractor' could have been a humorous, self-deprecating name for the 'ungainly' plane. Also, we can consider that many service members came from farming backgrounds, so a tractor would have a familiar, nostalgic image of home. The 'Flying Tractor' could be a simple, lighthearted combination of the crew's old life and their new reality.

Rugged Buggy was part of the 44th Bombardment Group. The 44 BG was nicknamed 'The Flying Eightballs'. She was shot down during a bombing run against submarine yards and naval targets on May 14, 1943. The plane's left wing was destroyed by enemy fire at an altitude of approximately 18,000 feet. The crew was forced to parachute out behind enemy lines.

Credit: Goggle AI, Photo: American Air Museum

We appreciate gifts from members inspired by an individual to whom we are all connected. We wish to thank members who have contributed to the Heritage League

IN MEMORY OF...

Donors

Sidney B. Allen, Jr. (448th)
 Leo Bauman
 Albert (453rd) and Claire Biel
 Robert & Frank Birmingham (458th)
 Frank Birmingham (458th)
 Dwight W. Bishop (453rd)
 William L. Brooks (466th)
 Thomas J. Campana (445th)
 Norman J. Canfield (491st)
 CPT. C.D. Cavit
 C.N. Chamberlain (489th)
 Maurice Earl Chapman (453rd)
 SSGT. Charles Franklin Clark (489, 44th)
 Royce Virgil Colby (491st)
 William L. Croft (453rd)
 Charles E. Cupp, Jr (448th)
 William Croft (453rd)
 LTC. Dario A. de Julio (458th)
 Robert J. Drummond (445th)
 Karl A. Eisele (93rd)
 Duane G. Fair (458th)
 LT. John J. Goodwin (392nd)
 LTC. (Retired) Royal D. Grumbach (448th)
 Allan Hallett (389th)
 Paul Hardwood (93rd)
 Richard B. Kimball, Jr.
 Peggy Learman
 Dr. Herbert S. Leopold (466th)
 James H. Lorenz (466th)
 TSGT. Johnnie H. Martin (491st)

Warren Brandt Allen
 Tim Eissle
 Irene Hurner
 Jean Coghlan
 Amy Meier
 Douglas Bishop
 Kurt & Vicki Warning
 James F. Campana
 The Canfield Family
 Dennis Cavit
 Dana Chamberlain
 Luanna Burch
 Chris Clark
 Peter Manning
 Katherine Dow
 Sally Duran
 Carolyn Wagner
 Diane de Julio
 Joseph Drummond
 Tim Eisele
 Robert D. Fair
 John N. Goodwin
 Paul Grumbach
 Martha Testagrossa
 Richard Hardwood
 Katherine Dow
 Richard Learman
 Cathy Leopold
 Mary Lorenz
 Johnny M. Sandlin

Oak Mackey (392nd)
 COL. Ernest Marino (445th)
 Jack McDaniel (448th)
 Kenneth M. Nelson (44th)
 Henry Nykamp (93rd)
 1 LT. Arnold A. Piskin
 Daniel J. Reading (446th)
 J. Audley Risley (446th)
 Leo W. Ryan (453rd)
 Paul Steichen (93rd)
 Jack (John) Stevens (467th)
 David E. Tuckwiller (389th)
 Albert Edward Weaver (44th)
 British Friends
 Crew #589 (466 BG, 785 SQ)
 453rd Bomb Group

Randall Mackey
 Diane Marino
 Mary G. McDaniel
 Steven Nelson
 Jean Koznarek
 Brenda Piskin
 Roger Danel Reading
 Sue Risley
 Geraldine Suskin
 Susan Steichen
 Pam Stevens
 Alice Carol Tuckwiller
 Darlene Rea
 Irene Hurner
 Stephen Dluginski
 Irene Hurner

—Folded Wings—

Max Minear	5/1/25	446 BG
William Jann	7/9/25	448 BG
Joseph Haenn	10/21/25	467 BG
Albert V. Malone	11/3/25	389 BG
Allan Hallett	1/31/26	389 BG

—In Remembrance—



Heritage League sadly announces the passing of a very special member. We have lost a dedicated Heritage League Veteran Allan Hallett, Staff Sergeant, top turret gunner assigned to the 389th Bomb Group at Hethel. Allan was an inspirational presence at our conventions, always with a smile and a story to relate. We miss you. We will carry forth to sustain the memories of your service and those of your colleagues.

Our country is filled with many promises for tomorrow's generation, all because it was shaped by legends like you who risked your lives defending our nation. We honor them and give thanks for our freedoms today.

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: membership@heritageleague.org.

Please renew your membership for 2026

Note: we have a student rate



Membership Application/Renewal for Heritage League of 2nd Air Division, 8th Air Force (USAAF)

NAME _____ SPOUSE _____

ADDRESS _____ TELEPHONE _____

CITY, STATE _____ ZIP _____

E-MAIL _____ @ _____

(If you receive the newsletter by email, please make sure you provide your current email address)

NAME of related 2nd Air Division Veteran _____

VET's Bomb Group or Unit No. _____ Their relationship to you _____

RENEW _____ NEW MEMBER _____

Dues for students, friends and relatives of 2nd Air Division Veterans (check one):

___ PDF Newsletter via Email—provide email address above—\$25 \$ _____

___ Students (up to age 25), PDF Newsletter via email only—\$20 \$ _____

___ Printed Newsletter sent by US mail—\$35 \$ _____

2nd Air Division Veterans are eligible to be an Honorary Lifetime Member (check one).

___ PDF Newsletter, via email—provide email address above—\$0 (free)

___ Printed Newsletter sent by US mail—\$30 \$ _____

(If the cost of the printed newsletter causes a hardship, please let us know)

ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS (We are a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) organization)

Contribution to the Heritage League operations \$ _____

Contribution to American Library 2nd Air Division (Norwich, UK) \$ _____

Contribution to Flower Fund for Overseas Cemeteries and Welcome Home Tributes \$ _____

If you like, we would be pleased to note your contribution as...

In Memory of _____

OR

In Honor of _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

Return this page with your check, payable to The Heritage League,-mail to- Heritage League Membership, 6410 Valley Oak Plaza, Martinez, CA 94553 or renew online with a credit card at

<https://heritageleague.org/membership/> If you have membership questions, please email:

membership@heritageleague.org

VOLUNTEER YOUR TIME AND TALENT. We are very appreciative of the strong financial support you have shown for The League and related entities. Would you also be able to share your time and talent with us? You can fill out a form at: <https://heritageleague.org/volunteer/> or contact us at

<https://heritageleague.org/contact-us/>

Second Air Division Bomber/Fighter Units Contact Listings

Here is a list of our 2nd Air Division contacts for those who desire information about the units listed below. You will notice several 'unavailables' as we are still compiling this listing. Many of the units use their website as the contact address. We will print this in the *Herald* from time to time.

2nd Air Division Headquarters	Unavailable
44th Bomb Group	https://44thbombgroup.omeka.net/contact . or Email: Maratruslow@gmail.com
93rd Bomb Group	https://www.93bg.com/
389th Bomb Group	https://389thbg.com/connect.html
392nd Bomb Group	Contact Us at the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association (b24.net)
445th Bomb Group	Mike Simpson. Email: 445th.bombgroup@gmail.com
446th Bomb Group	Harold Jansen. https://446thbombgroup.com Email: haroldjansen@gmail.com
448th Bomb Group	Via Seething Museum. Email: info@448bombgroup.co.uk
453rd Bomb Group	Jim Clarey (UK). Email: Curator@453museum.com
458th Bomb Group	CONTACT 458th Bombardment Group (H) (458bg.com)
466th Bomb Group	www.466thBGA.com (www466thbga.com)
467th Bomb Group	467th Bombardment Group - Contributors (467bg.com)
489th Bomb Group	Marjorie Shiers (UK). Email: marjorieshiers@yahoo.co.uk
491st Bomb Group	Ric Parsonson (UK). Email: Researcher.492@gmail.com
492nd Bomb Group	Ric Parsonson (UK). Email: Researcher.492@gmail.com
65th Fighter Wing Headquarters	Unavailable
4th Fighter Group	http://www.4thfightergroupassociation.org/contact-us.html
56th Fighter Group	nigeljulian@hotmail.com (Webmaster) or jgmccamish@darientel.net or http://www.56thfightergroup.co.uk/
355th Fighter Group	Email: DavidCrow355thUK@gmail.com
361th Fighter Group	Unavailable
479th Fighter Group	Unavailable

OTHER RESEARCH SOURCES

Heritage League Website for links to Bomb Group Websites and past copies of *Heritage Herald* and 2nd Air Division Association newsletters. [History and Research – Heritage League of the Second Air Division](#)

American Library Norwich U.K., Memorial to 2nd Air Division, 8th Air Force, United States Army Air Forces, WWII. 2nd Air Division Digital Archive. More than 30,000 images of original photographs, letters, memoirs, and others.

<https://www.americanlibrary.uk/article/1936/Archive-collections>

Norfolk U.K. Record Office. 2nd Air Division Archive at the Norfolk Record Office. [NRO's catalogue NROCAT](#). They have indexed and digitized online 30,000 2ndAD bomb & fighter group records. The Evelyn Cohen and Jordan Uttal Memorial Catalogue, the published catalogue (main reference MC 371) is available via:

<https://americanlibraryuk.wordpress.com/2011/11/18/launch-of-the-2nd-air-division-archive-catalogue/>.

American Air Museum. [Home | American Air Museum](#)

General info on visiting Airbases in UK. Mr. Colin Mann - **Email:** colinmann64@gmail.com

Winter/Spring 2026 Heritage Calendar

and Historic Events of note

January-March

1939—B-24 first flight. December 29.

1941—President Roosevelt signed the Lend-Lease Bill, providing war supplies to countries fighting the Axis. March 11.

1942—President Roosevelt calls for production of 60,000 planes in State of Union address. Jan 6.

1942—Casablanca Conference. Roosevelt and Churchill planned for a combined bomber offensive against Germany. General Ira C. Eaker promoted daylight-bombing offensive for U.S. forces. Jan 14.

1943—Government announced rationing of leather shoes limiting purchases to three pairs per year. It was lifted on Oct. 1945.

1944—Big Week. Maximum effort missions, also known as 'Operation Argument,' to suppress German air superiority in preparation for the future land invasion. February 20-25.

1945—2nd Bomb Division becomes 2nd Air Division. Jan 1.

April-May

1942-Dolittle raid on Tokyo. April 18.

1945-Final 2nd Air Division combat missions in Europe and last combat losses, April 25.

1945-German surrender, Victory in Europe Day, V-E Day, May 8, 80th anniversary.

1987-Heritage League is established at 2nd Air Division convention. May.

2nd Air Division Trust Governors mid-year meeting. May 18, 2026, Norwich, England.

Memorial Day Ceremonies at overseas American Battle Monuments Commission Cemeteries. Dates vary from May 23-25. Check their website at: <https://www.abmc.gov/> for latest information. Heritage League will provide wreaths to the 13 overseas cemeteries containing 2nd Air Division airmen.

Flags For the Fallen, Mighty 8th Museum Special Event. 26,000 flags placed to remember fallen 8 AF airmen. Pooler, Georgia. May 23-25. Info at: www.mightyeighth.org.

June

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

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

1944-D-Day invasion. 81st anniversary. Normandy. June 6.

1948-Berlin airlift begins. June 26 until May 1949.

35th WWII Weekend Show. Reading, Pennsylvania. Carl A. Spaatz Field, Mid-Atlantic Air Museum and Jimmy Stewart WWII control tower. June 5-7, 2026. Info at: <https://www.spaatzmuseum.org/>.

July

1943-President Roosevelt announced the end of coffee rationing which limited people to one pound every five weeks since it began in Nov. 1942. July 28th.

Duxford UK Summer Airshow. July 4-5, American Air Museum: <https://www.iwm.org.uk/airshows/duxford-summer-air-show>.

Airshow at Old Buckenham UK (453 BG). July 25-26. Tickets on sale. Contact: www.oldbuckenhamairshow.com or email: airfield@oldbuck.com.

Bomb Group Reunions

Heritage League Convention with 8th Air Force Historical Society. Oct 15-18, 2026. San Antonio, Texas. www.Heritageleague.org.

8th AF Historical Society Reunion. Oct 15-18, San Antonio TX. www.8thAFHS.org.

93 BGA Reunion. San Diego CA, Nov 5-9. www.93bg.com.

392 BGMA Reunion. With 8th AF Historical Society at San Antonio, TX, Oct 15-18. www.B24.net.

466 BGA Reunion. With 8th AF Historical Society San Antonio TX, Oct 15-18. www.466thBGA.com.

467 BG Reunion. Reunion in Norwich U.K. Sept 20-25. 467th Bombardment Group. Info at: www.467bg.com/index.php.

Museum and General 2026 Activities

American Library. Monthly web coffee. The Norwich, U.K. Library hosts a regular web-based activity 'Coffee Afternoon' the second Saturday of every month on Zoom at 11 AM U.S. Eastern time [16:00 British time]. Hosted by library assistants Jane Appleton and Linda Sheppard; it is an opportunity for 2nd Air Division families and friends on both sides of the Atlantic to get together. Email for an invite at: <https://www.americanlibrary.uk>.

93 BG Hardwick Museum opens for the season on the 3rd Sunday of each month from May through October. Info at: <https://aviationmuseum.eu/Blogvorn/usaaf-93rd-bomb-group-museum/>.

Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum. Featuring artifacts from Bungay Airfield plus a lot more. Open Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays. Info at: <https://www.aviationmuseum.net/>.

448 BG Seething Control Tower Museum. Home of the Seething Airfield Control Tower Museum opens the first Sunday of each month from May to October. Info at: <https://448bombgroup.co.uk/>.

453rd Bombardment Group Museum & 8th AF Heritage Gallery, Old Buckenham. Open all year Friday, Saturday and Sunday and by request other days. Contact:

James Clarey, Museum Curator, Email: curator@453museum.com. Tel from US: 011 44 1366386119. Info at: <http://www.453museum.com/welcome.html>.

Mighty 8th Air Force Museum, Pooler, GA, weekly webcasts. 'Target for Today' lecture series digging into the history of the Eighth Air Force. It broadcasts each Thursday at noon ET via 'Mighty 8th Video' or 'Mighty 8th Facebook.' More info at: <https://www.mightyeighth.org>.

National Museum of U.S. Air Force, Dayton, OH. Plane Talks at museum—78th Anniversary of the Air Force, Sept. 18. Plane Talks programs occur throughout the year in conjunction with significant Air Force or military event. Info at: <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Upcoming/Events/>.

Military Aviation Museum, Virginia Beach, VA, USA. Home to one of the world's largest collections of flying vintage military aircraft. Includes over 50 aircraft from World War I and II. The museum is also home to a rebuilt control tower from RAF Goxhill. Info at: <https://www.militaryaviationmuseum.org>.

Freedom Museum, Manassas, Virginia. The museum has an exhibit on the WWII air war which contains the recently donated B-24 navigator compass. Open Thursdays (March 15-Jan 1) plus Friday, Saturday and Sundays. Info at: <https://www.freedommuseum.org/visit>.

Jimmy Stewart Museum. Indiana, Pennsylvania. The movie star and command pilot held many command positions in the 2nd Air Division reaching the rank of Colonel as chief of staff of the 2nd Combat Wing. In later years, he attained the rank of Brigadier General in the Air Force reserve. Jimmy's legacy is alive and well in Indiana and worth a visit to his quaint hometown. More info at: <https://jimmy.org/museum-events/>.

General Carl Spaatz National USAAF Museum, Boyertown, Pennsylvania. Fly its B-17 simulator plus visit five other interactive displays of WWII base operations. In January 1944 after command of 15th Air Force in Italy, General Spaatz assumed command the U.S. Strategic Air Forces in Europe, which he headed throughout the pre-invasion period and the ensuing campaign which culminated with the defeat of Germany. He was later named the first Chief of Staff of the new U.S. Air Force in 1947. Museum Hours are Thursday through Sunday 10 AM to 4 PM. Info at: <https://www.spaatzmuseum.org/>.

2026 Notable Occasions

- 84th anniversary of American forces arrival for European campaign
- 81st anniversary of V-E Day
- 79th anniversary of United States Air Force
- 29th anniversary of American Air Museum, Duxford UK

Also, check the following websites for more information:

- <https://www.americanlibrary.uk>
- <https://www.nationalmuseum.af.mil/Upcoming/Calendar/>
- www.8thafhs.org
- <https://www.abmc.gov/>



Heritage League members at convention. Photo: Scotty David photography.

Heritage League of
the Second Air Division (USAAF)
Marybeth Dyer (458th BG)
6410 Valley Oak Plaza
Martinez, CA 94553

www.heritageleague.org/

NON-PROFIT
ORGANIZATION
US POSTAGE
PAID

2025-2028
Heritage League
Executive Committee

President
Jim Birmingham (458 BG)
7325 Edgehill Road
Greendale, WI 53129
(414) 331-7359
president@heritageleague.org

Executive Vice President
Bob Gedid (458, 466 BGs)
Pittsburgh, PA
bob@heritageleague.org

Secretary
Colleen Mersman (491/44 BGs)
2240 Summerlin Dr.
Aurora, IL 60503
secretary@heritageleague.org

Treasurer
Sue Risley (446 BG)
578 Madison Lane
Elgin, IL 60123
(847) 571-4405
treasurer@heritageleague.org

Membership VP
Marybeth Dyer and
Jean Coghlan (458 BG)
6410 Valley Oak Plaza
Martinez, CA 94553
(650) 892-1082
membership@heritageleague.org
jmcoghlan27@gmail.com

Communications VP
Doug Dovey (392/44 BGs)
PO Box 821
Yorktown, VA 23692
(757) 206-3724
ddovey@hotmail.com

VP Volunteers
John Jurczak (446 BG)
153 Carmella Drive
Irwin, PA 15642
(724) 787-1947
jajis60@winstream.net

2AD Memorial Trust Governor
Beverly Baynes Tomb (466 BG)
2122 Grayson Place
Falls Church, VA 22043
(703) 241-4152
trustgov@heritageleague.org

2ND BOMBARDMENT DIVISION, 8TH AIR FORCE

20th Combat Wing 2nd Combat Wing 14th Combat Wing 96th Combat Wing



65th Fighter Wing



Past President
Chris Clark (489/44 BGs)
8427 Willow Glen Court
Manassas, VA 20110
(703) 392-9437
clarkhistory@aol.com

Past President
Marybeth Dyer (458 BG)
6410 Valley Oak Plaza
Martinez, CA 94553
(650) 892-1082
membership@heritageleague.org