

The Second Annual Aubrey Award Contest

The Aubrey Awards

ELIGIBILITY, GENERAL INFORMATION & RULES

WHO IS ELIGIBLE TO COMPETE?

Any student ages 15-18 who resides in *The USA, Canada, England, the Netherlands, France, Germany, or Belgium.*

GENERAL INFORMATION

Each contestant is required to prepare a presentation in one of the following formats:

- A written essay
- A PowerPoint presentation, or
- A YouTube presentation.

Additionally, all entries must include a short presentation in your chosen format that tells what impressed you most about the life of Aubrey Burke, for whom the award is named and whose memory it honors. A short biography of Aubrey's life is provided within this document for this information.

An Aubrey Award will be given for first, second and third place. These will be cash awards of \$1,000 for First Place, \$600 for Second Place, and \$400 for Third Place for US winners or the cash equivalent in local currency for the UK/European winners. Additionally, non-cash Honorable Mention Awards may be given.

Your presentation may be submitted any time before, but no later than, midnight (EST) April 15, 2023.

Specific rules are given on pages 3-5.

Please read all rules carefully. If you have any questions, email Ralph Winter at rewcts@gmail.com.

Suggested resources:

b24.net

digitalarchive.2ndair.org.uk

THE THEME FOR YOUR MAIN PRESENTATION

Consider how American bomber bases in England contributed to the successful outcome of WWII. Narrow your focus to one aspect of how the pilots, crews, and support personnel of the 392nd base at Wendling dealt with the challenges they had to face. Use b24.net as a principal source for your analysis. Give details about those challenges and explain how they were addressed productively. In what ways did local residents assist and encourage the war effort by the Americans? Do succeeding generations understand the significance of that contribution? End your presentation with a brief summary of what you have learned and how it mattered to England and the world.

RULES

Form: Each entry must be in a format that can be transmitted by email. The presentation regardless of format must be in English. Use only **one** format for your presentation.

Length: **For an Essay**, it will need to be 750-1000 words. The title page, bibliography and your portion about Aubrey Burke are not included in the word count.

For a PowerPoint, 10 -12 slides including your title slide, bibliography and piece about Aubrey Burke. Font size should be no less than 30 point.

For a YouTube video, it should be at least 8 minutes long but no more than 12 minutes including your title frame, bibliography and piece about Aubrey Burke.

Title Page: The title page, frame or slide must include the following information:

- 1) The title of your presentation (subtitles permitted)
- 2) Your full name and address
- 3) Your phone number with area code or international calling code
- 4) Your e-mail address
- 5) The name of your school, your grade level and age.

Here are two title page examples:

The impact of US Air Bases in East Anglia during World War II

By

Dillon Writeswell

123 Cherry Blossom Lane

Bloomsbury, Georgia 33300, USA

Phone: 912-453-6798

Email: dillonw@gmail.com

Shamrock High School, Grade 10, Age 16

OR

Letters from the Past

Dillon Writeswell

123 Back Lane

Beeston, King's Lynn PE32 2NN

011-44-7712-543345

Email: dillonw@gmail.com

Litcham High School, Year 10, Age 15

The Entries: Each entry will have **two** parts:

- 1) Your main entry based on your exploration and research.
- 2) A presentation in your chosen format that tells what you found interesting and inspirational about Aubrey's life and his service in the 465th Sub Depot of the 392nd Bomb Group.

The Bibliography:

Each entry must have a bibliography, but not internal source citations. The bibliography should list all the materials you used to gather information for your essay including, but not limited to, conversations or emails with relatives or veterans, books, newsletters, magazines, websites, and documentaries. It should credit the authors or creators of the material and in the case of website material, the full URL. For example, the proper reference for information found in Capt. Bill Cetin's diary in the 392nd BG Crusader Stories section would be:

<https://www.b24.net/storiesCetin.htm>.

Submission Deadline: Midnight Eastern Standard Time, April 15, 2023.

Submitting Your Entry:

Send an email to essays@b24.net with CONTEST in the subject field.

For an Essay or PowerPoint, send your entry as an attachment.

For a YouTube presentation send the link to your YouTube production.

IMPORTANT!! If you have not received an email acknowledging receipt of your entry within 5 days after submission, please notify Ralph Winter at rewcts@gmail.com for instructions on how to re-submit.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

HOW WILL THE ESSAY BE JUDGED?

The two presentations will be judged on overall response to the prompt (especially in validity and strength of support); historical accuracy; organization of material; originality; and creativity. The Aubrey Burke presentation will also be judged on how well you convey your “thoughts, opinions, and reflections” on Aubrey’s life.

WHEN WILL THE WINNERS BE ANNOUNCED?

All winners will be notified and the awards given no later than June 1, 2023. Please note: The winners, by accepting this award, agree to have their entries featured in a future edition of the *News*, the quarterly newsletter of the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association; their entries may, at the discretion of the 392nd BGMA, be released to local news outlets for publication. Additionally, the entries will be kept in the archives of the 392nd BGMA. PowerPoint and YouTube entries may be added to the b24.net website so any visitors to our website can view them.

Members of the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association, and especially Beverly Burke, want to thank all participants for entering this contest. We hope you learn a lot and enjoy doing it. Good Luck!!

USE THE INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING PAGES FOR
YOUR THOUGHTS AND COMMENTS ABOUT AUBREY BURKE

AUBREY BURKE BIOGRAPHY

Who Was Aubrey Burke?

Use this information as you reflect on the life of Aubrey Burke, one of *the Greatest Generation*.

This biographical information comes from 392nd BGMA archives and private communications/emails between 2011 and 2020; Aubrey's Facebook page; an interview with Aubrey on July 26, 2015 by Michael Brewer of the High Desert Branch of the California Writers Club; and an on-line article at <https://www.vvdailypress.com/story/news/2021/02/06/as-only-a-burke-could-do-it-the-life-of-world-war-ii-veteran-aubrey-burke/4398238001/>.

Aubrey was born in El Dorado, Arkansas, in 1923, the fourth of five children (two of whom died in infancy). That same year, oil was discovered nearby. By 1933—a few years into the Great Depression—his world changed.

His father had become a major oil rig building contractor but lost it all in the Depression. Aubrey remembered pulling boards off the back fence to burn for cooking and heating. Things got so bad, that they were scheduled to be evicted from their home on Monday, March 16, 1933. However, Pres. Franklin Roosevelt closed the banks effective at 1 a.m. that morning, and their eviction was permanently postponed. (“Very opportune for us,” Aubrey said.)

His father abandoned the family when Aubrey was 12, so he “had to learn to change my way of life.” He rode his bicycle all over town, selling things he found. He loitered around junk yards and machine shops, “just watching and learning” and a neighbor taught him how to use a wood-turning lathe.

At age 18, essentially destitute, he took advantage of an opportunity to learn a trade. A few years earlier, Pres. Roosevelt had created the National Youth Administration, stating, “I have determined that we shall do something for the Nation’s unemployed youth because we can ill afford to lose the skill and energy of these young men and women. They must have their chance in school, their turn as apprentices, and their opportunity for jobs—a chance to work and earn for themselves.”

Aubrey said, “From as early as I could remember (at age four, disassembling and then re-assembling a new tricycle), I’ve been one to tinker with tools. So it was a natural for me to go through the NYA’s three-month hands-on machinists training program.”

Upon completing the course, the NYA got him a job running the vertical turret lathe on the graveyard shift at the Cushman Chuck Co. in Hartford, Connecticut. There, he made parts for industrial-sized lathe chucks, using a 36-inch diameter Bullard Vertical Turret Lathe, 1896 model.

This was considered “essential work” and Aubrey would not have been drafted. In the fall of 1942, however, he quit his job, returned to Arkansas and on October 3rd, enlisted in the Army Air Force. His early training was at bases in Texas, Illinois, Washington and Nebraska.

465th Sub Depot

In December 1943, he was sent overseas and assigned to the 465th Sub Depot the next month. It supported the 392nd Bomb Group, which flew B-24 Liberator bombers on 285 combat missions between August 1943 and April 1945. The Group was based in Wendling, Norfolk, England.

The 465th Sub Depot was the largest non-combat unit at Wendling, with six officers and about 250 enlisted men. It was responsible for repairing aircraft and vehicles which could not be fixed at the squadron level, reclaiming and salvaging parts from B-24s that could no longer be flown in combat, repairing and calibrating instruments installed in the aircraft, and many other repair and maintenance duties.

Its commanding officer, Col James W. Wall, was well aware of the importance of their work and frequently told his men that “they could get more flying personnel but they couldn’t easily replace” the highly trained mechanics, machinists, welders and engineers who worked in the Sub Depot.

Aubrey was assigned to the Machine Shop, which helped repair battle damage so that the B-24s could fly again. If a tool or part needed for a job was not available, the machinists used milling, shaper and Do-All machines as well as lathes, power hacksaws, drill presses, grinders and other necessary equipment to re-create the part or invent something that could do what was needed.



This Machine Shop photo, taken on September 4, 1944, shows some of the many machines he mastered.

Inventive ingenuity was key and Aubrey excelled at the work. Once presented with a broken tool or part, he had a knack for being able to instantly visualize how he could fix the item or create a new one with the available machines.

In fact, soon after its work began, the Machine Shop received a letter of commendation from the Chemical Officer for constructing 5,000 retaining rings and retaining wrenches, which at the time were not available through Supply channels, but vital for the use of incendiary bombs.

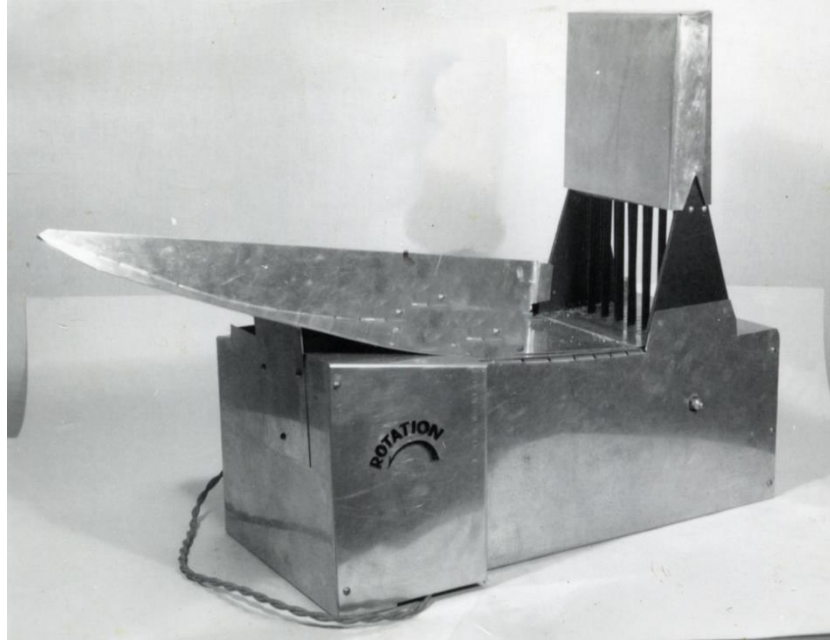
In August 1944, the Sheet Metal, Machine, Welding and Carpenter Shops coordinated their skills on a special job for the Signal Corps unit working on secret installation of a radio-controlled bomb-dropping mechanism.

Once, while working on a damaged B-24, he saw expended shell casings from its machine guns. He picked up a few and took them back to the shop, where he turned them into Communion cups. He created a tray for them and then machined a handle for it from battle-damaged propeller scraps. He called it “Swords to Plowshares.”



Aubrey's "Swords to Plowshares" which he made from spent machine gun shells and a battle-damaged propeller

He also created devices that benefited every person on the base. He recalled, “The British bread loaf had a tough crust, was shorter and a bit wider than our standard loaf, and hard to cut with our regular butcher knives. Early on I was given almost free reign of the machine shop to carry out any of my special projects. One of my first projects was a bread slicing machine for Mess Hall #2. It finally stopped working the day before we left Wendling!”



Aubrey's bread slicer on March 29, 1945. It had eight reground hacksaw blades and was spring-loaded at the top with a crankshaft drive. Using a 250-volt British motor, it made 17 slices at a time.

He also put an electric motor drive on the dental clinic's drill, which had previously been powered by pushing a foot pedal up and down. This device undoubtedly made things easier for both the dentist and his patients!

He did have occasional time off, some long enough that he could travel to Edinburgh and Glasgow, Scotland, by train.



This caricature was made during a visit to Edinburgh, Scotland.

He didn't really celebrate Victory in Europe on May 8, 1945. Instead, he and other 465th Sub Depot personnel were "too busy getting ready to pack things up for the Pacific War." After returning to the US, he had 30 days leave and was on his way to Charleston, South Carolina, for deployment to the Pacific Theater when Victory in Japan was declared.

He was transferred to Long Beach, California, and discharged from the Army Air Force in December 1945.

Aubrey was overseas for 18 months. His most vivid memory? "Watching planes take off in formation and coming back not in formation—two, three or four at a time. And always the question: did a missing plane go down because of something I did? There was a bit of insecurity because sometimes I'd do a last-minute repair job on an engine the night before a mission."

Thanks to the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944 (the "G.I. Bill") he was able to attend and graduate from the University of Southern California. Always "in need of a few dollars," he

joined an Army Air Force reserve unit in the fall of 1949. Having switched his major to psychology and counseling, he was assigned to a medical group.



Aubrey at the University of Southern California

He was recalled to active duty in 1950 but thanks to his degree (and the birth of his second child), he was stationed at Victorville Army Airfield in California instead of being deploying to Korea. He was discharged from the military in 1953.

For the next 23 years Aubrey worked for Southwestern Portland Cement Co. As the production foreman, he oversaw total plant operation when on shift (evenings, nights, and weekends). After retiring, he worked as a self-employed contractor for 30 years, designing and installing home electronic and ventilation/air conditioning systems.

After going into business for himself, Aubrey opened Burke's Interiors in Apple Valley, California. He also took business and accounting classes at Golden Gate University in pursuit of a Master's in Business Administration.

He began attending reunions of the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association in 2011, accompanied at first by one (or more) of his children and then by his wife Beverly.



Beverly and Aubrey Burke at the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association reunion in 2019

He said that being in the military “enlarged my scope and understanding of the world.” He would “never have received the education or traveled to the places I did” without his military service.

He was also quick to point out that “I was just one of the guys working in the shop. I didn’t fly any aircraft but I helped manufacture the parts to repair them. We were the boys that kept the planes in the air.”

Aubrey passed away on December 11, 2020. Beverly said he had recently completed what was to be his final project: a fence surrounding the couple's front yard.

“Each piece designed, made and put in place by the man who could—and did—do everything,” she said. “Someone else might order a fence—Aubrey ordered wood—and literally made each slat that went into that fence.”