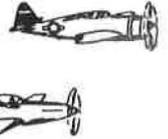




NEWSLETTER



Volume 9, Number 5

SECOND AIR DIVISION ASSOCIATION

September, 1971

2ND AD HOSTS 44th REUNION AT WILLIAMSBURG

30 years ago (January 1941) the 44th BG was activated at MacDill Field in Tampa, Florida by the simple expedient of some hopeful soul in Washington putting pen to paper and making it official.

The ensuing months witnessed an infusion of young blood (bright eyed, eager and bushy tailed) from all sections of the country. A select group of Officers, not very advanced in age themselves, were given the task of turning out a fighting unit capable of holding their own with the best that Germany had to offer. A formidable, and many times thankless, task. That they succeeded, and how well, is history.

On July 16 many of these same people re-joined the 44th to celebrate this 30th anniversary of the founding of the Group. In spite of the fact that a lot of water has gone under the bridge since 1941 it was not difficult to recognize old buddies and casual acquaintances.

Everywhere throughout the hall these mini-reunions were solidified with many a mixture of gasoline and sulphur (the English jokingly refer to this mixture as Scotch) and it was very evident that nobody has lost any of the important skills gained while serving with the 44th.

Mike Fusano, the General's driver during the war, came all the way from California to introduce the General at the dinner party. But the distance prize has to go to Goodman G. Griffin who made it from Hawaii — broken leg and all!

One of the more pleasant surprises was the appearance of so many of the originals who had the unfortunate ex-

perience of spending time as 'Guests' of the German government. Jim O'Brien, Moe Cannon, Hank Lasco, Virgil Guebard and countless others.

The highlight of the evening was the talk given by General Johnson who showed evidence that he has lost none of his fire and determination to see to it that the United States remains strong and alert. There was no doubt in anyones mind that he was still the man who led the 44th over innumerable European targets as the Group piled up

2nd AD BANQUET LARGEST EVER

Never before in its 24 year life span has the 2nd Air Division ever seated so many at its annual dinner. 243 members, wives and guests strained the accommodations of the Motel dining room to the point where it was bulging at the seams.

Highlight of the evening was the speech by General Thomas P. Coleman who 'told it like it is' regarding the present status of the Air Force. It was not a reassuring picture, and his experience with SAC and other World Wide Commands meant that he knew what he was talking about.

General Coleman is now deputy director of the Secretary of the Air Force's Office of Information. He is a former enlisted man, pilot and flying instructor who accumulated many delightful hours at the controls of our venerable B-24's. None of which he cares to remember!

An element of the 564th Air Force Band, Langley Air Force Base, under the direction of Major Edward V. D'Alfonso kicked off festivities at the

records and material for future historians to read and write about.

A symbolic re-presentation of the Medal of Honor followed the General's talk with the presentation being made by John D. Hammer the M.C. A little difficulty was experienced when the snaps proved to be a bit elusive, but, as in the days of old, the participants survived.

The evening ended with everyone table hopping — and wondering if Bruce Pauly has received his letter yet!



A small portion of the large crowd at the 44th banquet.

banquet with a program of music designed for the occasion.

The candle lighting ceremony (one for each campaign participated in by the 2nd AD) was performed this year by Goodman C. Griffin in recognition of his having come the longest distance — Hawaii. In spite of a broken leg (acquired in the act of cutting off tree limbs!!!) this ceremony, however, was accomplished without a hitch.

Following the banquet there was dancing until the wee hours of the morning interspersed with many Group conferences concerning future reunions and past experiences. And there is absolutely no truth to the rumor that liquor is now in very short supply in Williamsburg.

Second Air Division Association Eighth Air Force

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THE WENDLING WONDER

By Roger Freeman

The bizarre paintwork on the 2nd Air Division groups' Assembly Ships made these B-24s the most eye-catching aircraft to be seen over England in '44 and '45. To English onlookers who did not know the purpose of these gaudy planes they were further evidence of the flamboyant nature of their Allies. I have heard a number of dreamed-up explanations for this bright decor, most far from the truth. The two most amusing being that "It was the C.O.'s plane" and "it was to draw the enemy fighters away from other B-24's and was crewed by men who had got into trouble on the base as a punishment." Assembly Ships were, as most 2nd AD veterans will recall, simply a visual aid to assembling in formation for a mission.

The individual color schemes of most Assembly Ships are recorded pictorially in a number of publications. One of the exceptions is the aircraft operated for a short period by the 392nd BG, and, because of its extraordinary markings, known to some local inhabitants as the "Wendling Wonder".

The first I heard of this was from a cook who fed the multitude at Wendling. "We had one B-24 with a painting of another all along its side." This I politely dismissed as a case of double vision brought on by that 'weak' Norfolk beer they brewed back in '44. But in later years I heard much the same tale from a Wendling farmer — and he was a teetotler. Then John Bode, a gunner with the 392nd, came up with more detailed memories of the plane, including the fact that it was an old

D' model and painted pale gray overall. He also provided a sketch.

It was obvious that the Wendling Wonder was not fiction. Finally I discovered the record of a memo from the 8th AF to the RAF notifying them of this peculiar paint job — without explanation.

Since then I must have talked to or corresponded with a dozen or so 392nd veterans but not one of them can recall the Wonder, let alone produce a photo of it. So I'm still left wondering as to the purpose of the B-24 painting on a B-24. The aircraft hardly seems gaudy enough to have filled the true Assembly Ship role. And how long did it endure and what was its fate? Somebody somewhere must know the story.

(ed. note — If somebody can come up with a photo or the story on this plane we will appreciate your advising the newsletter.)

NEWSLETTER "CAPTURES" BIRDSAIL, FREEMAN AND BLUE

In our continuing efforts to make your newsletter interesting reading we have 'bombed' into submission three of the leading writers of WW II air action.

Steve Birdsall, noted Australian author and Vietnam war correspondent, has written five books and numerous magazine articles on WW II Groups, Aircraft and events. He confesses to being 26 years old, drinks, smokes and gambles (not necessarily in that order) and advises that it gets worse from there. Sounds as if he really belongs!

Steve will do a continuing column titled "Time to Remember" in which he will cover Group Histories and the sagas of individual aircraft, crews and events. His first on the 93rd BG appears in this issue.

Stevens' latest book "Log of Liberators" will be out this Fall and special arrangements are being made with the publisher to have a supply available for 2nd AD members. A complete review of this book will appear in the newsletter as soon as it is available.

Roger Freeman, well known English author, is probably best known for his comprehensive history of the 8th AF "The Mighty Eighth". This book is still available at your bookstore and is a 'must' for 2nd AD members. The book traces the early history of the 8th and contains detailed accounts of its operations from the U.K. between July 1942 until V-E day, with emphasis on the combat units, their men and aircraft and a mountain of statistics.



Steve in one of his more serious moments.

Roger will 'roam the fields' and submit articles he feels will have special interest to one or more of the 2nd AD Groups. His first submission, "The Wendling Wonder", also appears in this issue.

Roger spent his early years as a youth watching the B-24's take off from their bases to bomb Germany and then patiently waited for their return. He kept copious notes of markings, serial numbers, condition going and coming etc., and from this material have come many articles and his "The Mighty Eighth".

Al Blue is known to most of the 2nd AD members as he never fails to attend our reunions year in, year out. Over the years Al has accumulated a store of information that rivals the Pentagon. He has also written many articles on every phase of the WW II air action and, in addition, authored the unit history of the 492nd BG "The Fortunes of War".

This unit history, incidentally, is still available if there are any new 492nd members who do not have a copy. They can be obtained by writing directly to Al at 6515 Marywood Rd., Bethesda, Maryland 20034.

With such an array of talent how can we miss!

**THE ANNUAL (1971)
STATEMENT FROM
MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY
EVELYN COHEN**

HELP!!

TIME TO REMEMBER: TED'S TRAVELLING CIRCUS

by Steve Birdsall

Fame is fleeting, fragile, and changes hands often, but the 93rd Bomb Group, "Ted's Travelling Circus", repeatedly staked its claim between October 1942 and April 1945.



Col. Edward J. Timberlake, the Commanding Officer of the 93rd Bomb Group at Hardwick, England, briefs the combat crews just before their take off on another mission over enemy territory. April 1943.

Not only were their Liberators the first to fly with the Eighth Air Force, (against Lille on October 9, 1942), but *Bomeroang*, one of the most battered aircraft returning that day, went on to become the first B-24 in the Eighth to complete fifty missions. In all, the Circus flew 396 missions, more than any other Eighth Air Force group, and dropped over 19,000 tons of bombs, losing one hundred B-24s in action along the way.



Bursts of deadly flak explode dangerously close to Consolidated B-24's of the 93rd Bomb Group during a mission over Augsburg, Germany. 1 March 1945.

The group's nickname was well earned...in December 1942 93rd Liberators were ordered to North Africa for "ten days" to add their weight to the disruption of Rommel's supply lines. Twelve weeks later they were back in England with more than a score more missions to their credit



With almost the care of a mother for its child, the crew of the "Shoot Luke" looks her over after returning from a mission over enemy territory. This Consolidated B-24 has been on 27 missions. Hardwick, England. 93rd Bomb Group. April 1943.

On March 18, 1943 the Circus flew the Vegesack mission, a turning point in the strategic air war, and at the end of the following month they were selected to switch over to night operations. That idea was dropped in time for the 93rd to return to daylight bombing and the classic Bordeaux mission of May 17, when thirty-nine Liberators of the 93rd and 44th Groups set out on a seven-hundred mile curved course which kept them undetected until it was too late for the Germans to mount an effective defense. There was only one enemy fighter encountered, minimal flak, and excellent bombing.

Then came Ploesti, the low-level strike against the Rumanian oil refineries, and the group headed for the desert again. Ploesti was the most savage air battle of the war, and the Circus paid their part of the price. Lt. Colonel Addison Baker, who had taken command when Ted Timberlake moved up to Wing Headquarters, died after leading his formation to their target in the flaming *Hell's Wench*. He and his co-pilot, Major John Jerstad, were awarded the Medal of Honor, and the group received a Distinguished Unit Citation.

The Circus only had time to fly two missions back in England before they were sent off again to the Mediterranean to support the Salerno operations. When they got back to Hardwick in October 1943 the travelling was finally over, except for the long and regular grind out across the English Channel.



The Circus' gaudy barber pole, once old "Ball of Fire" from the 328th Squadron.

Old soldiers never die, but tired Circus aircraft made a unique contribution to the Eighth's air war as they faded away. In all, seven old 93rd B-24s went on to become the multicolored, garishly decorated formation assembly ships. The 93rd kept *Ball of Fire*, striped in yellow, black and white, the nearby- 446th painted *Eager Beaver* golden orange and renamed her *Fearless Freddie*, the 448th got *Hellsadroppin' II* and splashed black and yellow checks all over her, and *Wham Bam, Luck Gordon, Ready & Willing* and *Thar She Blows* went to other groups. They were the pioneers' legacy.

Throughout 1944 the Circus hit the full range of Eighth Air Force targets, from bombs on Berlin to ferrying food, gasoline and water to Patton's army, from tactical missions around Normandy to supply drops to beleaguered paratroops in Holland...whether the work was strategic or tactical the Circus was there. Then finally it was April 25, 1945, and it was over.

BOB KRUEGER & RAY LACROIX — DECORATIONS

If anyone thought that the wall decorations behind the head table at the 44th reunion were the result of long and careful planning, he is only half right.

Although the 'eightball' insignia was planned and beautifully hand done by Ray LaCroix, the remaining decorations of the B-24's and the squadron numerals in silver were the result of Bob Krueger hearing about the reunion for the first time in late June and coming on like gangbusters to lend us a helping hand.

Bob is an accomplished and well known artist of WW II Aircraft scenes and his work has been on display at many art shows in the Eastern area of the Country. He had a few examples at the reunion but not nearly enough to satisfy the cravings of the B-24 hungry members of the 2nd Air Division. If all possible a future edition of the newsletter will carry an article on Bob and his work complete with photographs.

In addition to the 'eightball' poster Ray Lacroix, a refugee from our WW II Navy, and his wife Bea provided untold assistance throughout this past year to help make this reunion possible. Ray is now an honorary member of the Association having been adopted by the 44th.

Thus the reputation of the 44th for never letting any kind of talent escape continues to grow.

Many of the prints on display were from negatives never before developed and are considered rare in the WW II photo field. Copies can be obtained from Ussel by writing to him at 413 Pratt St., Fulton, New York, 13069.

MAYDAY! MAYDAY!

Evelyn Cohen, our alert membership secretary, is urging one and all to dig into their files for names and addresses of potential members. Send them directly to her or to one of the members who are working on their particular Group:

44th Bomb Group — John D. Hammer, 4621 Bay to Bay Blvd., Tampa, Florida 33609; Charles R. Loftus, Jr., Logan-Milton Hershey School, Hershey, Pennsylvania 17033; William G. Robertie, P.O. Drawer B, Ipswich, Mass. 01938

93rd Bomb Group — Glenn Tessmer, 66 Colonial Rd., Sudbury, Mass. 01776.

389th Bomb Group — Bud Koorn-dyke, 867 Reynard St., S.E., Grand Rapids, Michigan, 49507; Dick Littlefield, 905 Meadowviel Lane, Toledo, Ohio 43616

392nd Bomb Group — George T. Thodes, Jr., 715 Clark Rd., Martinsville, Virginia 24112.

458th Bomb Group — Art Vanderbeek, 15 Pearl St., Rouses Point, N.Y. 12979.

466th Bomb Group — John H. Woolnough, 6611 Northam Rd., S.E., Camp Springs, Maryland 20031.

467th Bomb Group — Adam Soccio, 357 Midland Ave., Garfield, New Jersey 07026

492nd Bomb Group — Gloyd Kingsley, 25 Dawes Dr., Newark, Delaware 19711.

Also, think about volunteering if your Group is not listed above.

* * * * *

Carl J. Valentine, 2421 Lincoln St., Parma, Ohio 44134, is looking for members of his crew, No. 23, 458th BG, 753 Squad. The names are De Neffe, Shapiro, Decima, McClintok, Wadsworth, Carroll, Hutchings, Veletta, Lockhart and Zottolli. Anyone who can help Carl should write to him at the above address — and send a copy of the addresses to Art Vanderbeek.

* * * * *



Jerre Vliet, a gunner in the 466th BG and now President of the International Plastic Modellers' Society, wants to know the story of this B-24J, Parsons Chariot.

He was told she was the oldest B-24 on operations and a bond tour was in line before the flak gunners at Wilhelmshaven sent her home on fire. Can anybody help him as to serial number, and squadron code letters for this bird? Send replies to the editor.

* * * * *

This column is open to any of our members seeking information of any kind. So send us your problems — within reason!

NOTICE

In this issue of the newsletter we have taken a few tentative steps which we hope will make your newsletter interesting reading and something you will look forward to receiving throughout the year. But we still need help.

We will appreciate members sending contributions — stories, photos, what have you — quickly and often. Remember, this is your newsletter and I know that other members will enjoy sharing your experiences with you.

So send those letters. In short, COMMUNICATE. But above all, MAIL THEM!



(Photo Courtesy U. P. Harvell)

44th Bomb Group crew leave their calling cards. German gunner returns the compliment!

Look Who's Here!!

The Association proudly welcomes the following 34 crew members back into formation, and we also proudly welcome our two new associate members. The 44th Bomb Group continues to lead in the race to track down former Group members.

44th Bomb Group

ALLEN, James W., 2601 S. Wayne Ave., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46807
CANNON, Morris A., 14923 Fairacres Dr., La Mirada, Calif. 90638
DAVIDO, Frank, Rt. 1, Box 28, Zillah, Washington 98953
DEAN, Robert L., 3718 16th St., San Francisco, Calif. 94114
DOUGHTEN, William N., 1197 Fenn Dr., Ankeny, Iowa 50021
ERICKSON, Hubert E., 1230 Earl St., St. Paul, Minn. 55106
FRANKLIN, Albert D., Linville Falls, North Carolina
GEHRT, Clarence, Box 264, Pomeroy, Iowa 50575
GOLDBERG, Sydney I., 518 Broad St., Dewickley, Pa. 15143
HICKMAN, Robert J., Ft. 3, Box 183, Millsboro, Delaware 19966
HILL, Clair W., 3918 Doral Dr., Tampa, Florida 33614
HILL, Harold L., 6320 Eagle Lake Dr., Minneapolis, Minn. 55442
KAZMIRZAK, Edmond, 699 Church Rd., Cherry Hill, N.J. 08034
KINNING, Robert B., Eagle Butte, South Dakota 57625
LANGCASKEY, Stanley, 213 George Dye Rd., Hamilton Square, N.J. 08690
LEHNHAUSEN, Robert J., 709 W. Meadows Pl., Peoria, Illinois 61604
McATEE, James C., RR1, Viola, Illinois 61486
McCLOUD, Albert E., Jr., 360 N. 4th St., Lewiston, N.Y. 14092
MURRELL, Loughridge C., 6520 Calahan Ct., Fort Worth, Texas 76112
O'BRIEN, James E., 2327 Patterson St., Pittsburgh, Pa. 15203
PAULY, Bruce H., 143 Kenton Rd., Chagrin Falls, Ohio 44022
PETERSON, Donald L., R 1, Box 114, Currie, Minn. 56123
REYNOLDS, H. Maxey 1700 Westover Hills Blvd., Richmond, Va. 23225
SCHUYLER, Keith C., Cedar Lane RD 2, Berwick, Pa. 18603
STRONG, William H., 925 Sandstone Dr., Bartlesville, Okla. 74003
TILLET, Arthur H., RD 1, Timberlake, N.C. 27503

WOOD, Francis M., P.O. Box 123, Natchez, Miss. 39102
YOUNG, James F., P.O. Box 773, Sanford, Florida 32771

93rd Bomb Group

JACOBS, Robert A. Col., 203 Cannister Ct., Hampton, Va. 23369

361st Bomb Group

SHULTS, Richard B., 41 Lafayette St., Palatine Bridge, N.Y. 13428

392nd Bomb Group

KEILMAN, Myron H., Col. Ret., 6616 Buckhorn Drive, Sacramento, Calif. 95842

466th Bomb Group

SJOHOLM, Edwin M., Jr., 6144 Beachway Dr., Falls Church, Va. 22041
SOBIN, Peter, Strongtown Rd., Southbury, Conn. 06488

467th Bomb Group

GRACE, Charles W. Lt. Col., P.O. Box 27014 Indianapolis, Indiana 46227

Associate Members

HARVELL, Frank, 1704 73rd St., Kenosha, Wisconsin 53140
LaCROIX, Ray, 11 Meriam St., Wakefield, Mass. 01880

PLANS FOR 1972 REUNION IN NORWICH UNDERWAY

Due to the heady response (over 200) to our recent query as to how many of our members would be interested in holding next years reunion in Norwich, England plans are now well underway to set up the machinery to accomplish this for the least amount of money.

Evelyn Cohen is working with a travel agent on the final details and full particulars should be available for the next issue of the newsletter.

Mr. Alfred A. Jenner, Director and Group Editor-in-Chief, Eastern Counties Newspapers Ltd., Norwich, England has already advised the Newsletter that Norwich will be looking forward to a renewed association with the American Veterans they knew so well.

If you have been wondering what your old base looks like this will be the opportunity to find out. Those from Shipdham will be happy to learn that the base is now back in operation as a commercial enterprise. 44th Bomb Group members have been invited by the present management to tour the base and visit their memorial room which they hope will be completed by

that time. More on this in a later Newsletter.

HARVELL DISPLAY HIT OF 44th REUNION

Ursel P. Harvell, who served as photographic Officer with the 44th BG, provided the most talked about display at the entire reunion with 150 enlarged photographs of shots he took while serving with the Group.

His artistic talent with a camera was graphically portrayed in the number of 'unofficial' photos he snapped while flying to and from missions. Cloud formations dwarfing entire flights, B-24's under attack, close up of crew stations, the ever-present flak. They were all there skillfully displayed.

In addition Ursel showed 16mm movies (some in color) of the 44th in action and scenes from the North Africa journey made by the Group in 1943. Some of these films were sent to Ursel by his war-time assistant Paul Kubitschek of Lincoln, Nebraska. The remainder came out of Ursel's files.

Ursel began his professional career in 1916 and was immediately fascinated with the possibilities in aerial photography. It wasn't the lack of desire that made these early years rough going, it was simply the lack of airplanes capable of staying in the air longer than five minutes. But he persevered and developed a skill that is recognized today as being one of the best in aerial photography.

The 44th BG was indeed fortunate in obtaining the services of Ursel as photographic Officer. He admits to volunteering in a weak moment (join the club Ursel) after many soul searching hours of telling himself that he was too old, and they couldn't possibly use him. In his many missions over Europe he proceeded to prove to one and all that age is only relative, and that those of us who were younger than he in those days have now caught up with him.



Ursel reminds all of us that we have now caught up with him in age. L to R - Betty Hammer, Ursel, Evelyn Cohen, Goodman C. Griffin and Hathy Veynar. (Continued on Page 6)



Gen. Johnson and Mike Fusano relive old times.



John Hammer pins Medal of Honor on Gen. Johnson in re-creation of scene which took place when Gen. Johnson was awarded the medal for leading the 44th on the now famous Ploesti Raid.



A few from the 506th Squadron get into formation once again.



General Coleman tells us "how it is" with our present Air Force.



Gen. Johnson addresses his old command.



Goodman C. Griffin. A little thing like a broken leg couldn't keep Goodman away.



After the dinner came the jokes. [Standing L to R] John Hammer & Bill Robertie. [Seated L to R] Bill Strong, Gen. Johnson, Bob Lehnhausen and Jim McAtee.



[L to R] Ed Goldsmith, Ed Hamel, Bill Strong and John Hammer. Bill Strong was pilot of "Baldy and his Brood" (wonder where they got that name) and Ed Hamel his engineer.