



2024 Reunion in New Orleans

The 50th annual reunion of the 8th Air Force Historical Society (8AFHS) was held in style in New Orleans, Louisiana, from 25-29 Sep 2024. It was the best-attended reunion in years, with over 400 participants.

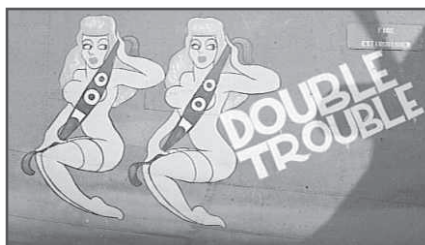
Among the 28 Crusaders were two first-time attendees. Jim Pearson is the nephew of Sgt Bryan T. Pearson, a gunner on 2/Lt Donald D. Prell's crew in the 576th Sqdn. The crew was shot down by enemy fighters on 19 May 1944; eight of them were killed in action (including the possibility that Sgt Pearson was killed after he successfully landed, was captured, and then turned over to the Gestapo). Another two became POWs.

Marilyn Miller-Ortiz is the widow of 576th tail gunner Sgt Joseph C. Ortiz. He became a POW on 13 Nov 1943 while flying to Bremen, Germany, as part of 1/Lt John D. Harris Jr's crew.

Location, Location, Location!

The site was a major draw, especially the option of having unlimited access to The National World War II Museum.

A lunch cruise on the Mississippi River was another highlight. Along the way, we passed the Domino® Sugar Chalmette Refinery—the largest cane sugar refinery in the Western Hemisphere (second largest in the world)—which refines 700 million pounds of sugar every day.



At dinner that night, The National WWII Museum's Senior Historian, John Curatola, gave a presentation on nose art. Photos of several 392nd BG planes were shown, including #42-100100, *Double Trouble*.

The third trip option was a bus tour of New Orleans—always exciting to drive through the *Big Easy*!

392nd BGMA Annual Business Meeting

There were 18 in-person attendees with 4 present via Zoom. After calling the meeting to order, Pres. Ralph Winter read the 392nd BG Prayer; Mark Stasney led all attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance, followed by the *Second Air Division Fanfare/Star-Spangled Banner*.

Reports

Reports by Secretary Debbie Beigh and Treasurer Joel Fleck, distributed in advance to all members by email, were approved as submitted. Joel reminded attendees that the 392nd BGMA is a registered 501(c)3 non-profit organization and expenses related to attending the annual

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Crusaders at the Gala Banquet. Front row, L-R: Betty Payne, Linda Haynes, Annette Tison, Sharon Marcrander, Joel Fleck, Connie Fleck, Marilyn Miller-Ortiz, Sue Williams, Janet Stasney and Bob Books. Back row, L-R: Laurie Huntley, Bill Marcrander, Ralph Winter, Don Tison, Mark Naber, Doug Dovey, Taylor Gilbert, Mark Stasney, Dave Nowack, and Debbie Beigh.



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FROM THE EDITOR

Dues price increase. As stated in the business meeting report on page 7, the cost for dues-paying members who receive a print copy of the *News* will rise from \$25 to \$35 annually, effective 1 Jan 2025. This change—the first dues increase since September 2009—is the result of soaring costs for printing and postage. Everyone affected has been notified—but please act quickly to support your organization at current prices. You can save money by switching from a print version to an emailed pdf copy (just \$20 annually)! See page 4 for details on how to renew.

Alamogordo Article. At the reunion, Sharon Marcander shared a 21 May 1943 copy of *The Bombsight*, the Alamogordo Air Base newspaper. Her father, Maj Robert E. Lane, was 578th Sqdn Adjutant. In a *Squadron News* article, Cpl Ellwood W. Adams Jr. advised, “All has been quiet around the 392nd Headquarters this past weekend, the station hospital reporting that its staff has had its first respite since the 392nd first appeared on the Base. This deplorable state has, no doubt, been caused by the reformation of all personnel. Whether this new spirit has been engendered by the Chaplain or the fire in the Adjutant’s eye is unknown; however, each member of the command has resolved that, henceforth (and even after that, it would seem), that ditches will be scrupulously avoided at all times and that window-jumping will be confined to one story buildings only. Hence, it would appear that while the Group will be considerably less colorful, it will be much more efficient.”

577th Sqdn reporter Cpl N.W. Greene noted, “Biggest news of the week concerns the addition of one Tillie the Toiler to Squadron personnel. Tillie has taken up residence in the shower dressing room and is quite happy, thank you. Sergeant, Corporal, Private—the boys line up from dawn till midnight to pay her their weekly visit. Tillie, fellows, is a darn good washing machine in spite of a slight leak.”

Hart’s War Follow-up. The last issue included some memorable events from pilot Wildrick Hart’s memoir. He mentioned armor plates installed on each side of the plane. Here is a photo of what one looked like—and the protection it obviously gave 577th pilot 1/Lt George T. Haffermehl. It shows B-24 #100346, *Late Date*, after its return from Gotha, Germany, on 24 Feb 1944. As is evident, the plane received extensive battle damage and was judged not economical to repair. It was therefore salvaged for parts at the 392nd.



Bill Sacher recently became a member. His father, S/Sgt Philip Sacher, was the engineer on the 577th’s 2/Lt Harold L. Creel crew. They flew their first and only mission together on 3 Feb 1945. Soon after, 2/Lt Creel was moved to the 579th Sqdn as a copilot. The rest of the crew stayed in the 577th and flew with pilot 2/Lt Emil S. Osojnicki. He had previously been a copilot, flying his first mission on 26 Sep 1944.

On 14 Feb 1945, Sacher flew his second mission, with Osojnicki. Aboard B-24 #42-50697, *We’ll Get By*, they had to land on the Continent due to fuel shortage.

In my files was an anecdote that crew member George W. Ashen often told his daughter: “He had trained as a bombardier but flew most of his missions as a navigator. During that mission, he made an error in calculation and they had to make an emergency landing near Mons, Belgium, because they would not have enough fuel to get them to Magdeburg. They did not know if Mons was occupied or liberated—everyone was nervous. He met a priest and went to mass with him (and was the only other male in the church).

“In his conversation with the Abbe, he found out that the Abbe did not have coffee or food supplies so he returned the next day with the Escape Kit from the plane and gave it to the Abbe. The engineer helped him by getting him a jeep to deliver the kit. He was able to stay a couple of days as he had the authority to detain a flight (related to weather).”

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President's Corner



Dear Crusaders,
Season's Greetings to you and yours. I hope your holidays have been enjoyable so far as we head into the New Year.

Our annual membership meeting and reunion in New Orleans was a great success as detailed in Annette's feature article. Our members turned out in numbers not seen in

recent years and included some new faces. With the hotel being across the street from The National WWII Museum, the venue could not have been more perfect. And in spite of a major hurricane raging 500 miles to the east, the weather was beautiful, with clear skies and mild temperatures. The membership meeting went well and I'm looking forward to working with the board members elected for 2025.

Plans are shaping up for our return to the U.K. next year. The dates have been confirmed with hotels for an arrival on Saturday, September 6 and departure on Tuesday, September 16. Itinerary and pricing details will follow soon in a special email, so be on the lookout. If you're considering joining us, mark your calendars and book early, as space is limited. It promises to be a very interesting trip including many sites not seen on our previous visits. Our good friends in the U.K., David Parnell (board member), Philip Brazier, and Jim Clarey are helping with suggestions and details.

We will have our quarterly **Meet & Greet** on Saturday, January 18th at 1:30pm Eastern Time (6:30pm local time in London). Mark your calendars and join us for this informal get-together with your fellow 392nd BGMA members. An email with the Zoom link will be forthcoming a few days before we meet.

As we start to observe the seasons of Christmas and Hanukkah with its accompanying cold weather, my thoughts went to what our airmen must have endured during the winter months in East Anglia in addition to the tragedies of waging war far from home and loved ones. I found the photos below on www.b24.net which help us imagine what it was like and serve as another reminder of the many sacrifices made by the men of the 392nd BG.



This photo shows the entrance to the hospital site located to the east of the main technical site. This is the "Ambulance Only" entrance as can be determined from the signs. The entrance was located on Dereham Road and was close to

where the Wendling Memorial is now located.



This photo shows the Control tower in the winter.

Wishing you all a wonderful Holiday Season with family, friends and loved ones,

Ralph

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I shared the story with Bill and asked if his father ever talked about that mission. He confirmed Ashen's account and said his dad also told him "the pilot was so worried about having to land in Belgium at an airbase that was possibly still German-controlled that he kept questioning my dad's judgment that they didn't have enough fuel to make it back to base. To finally convince him, my dad had to stick a wooden pole in the gas tank to show the actual fuel left in the tank. My dad said the tip of the pole was barely wet. My dad also spoke of a Belgium family that took the crew in for a few days because the town was not yet Allied controlled."

Bill added, "What your organization is doing to recognize and document the achievements of that generation is so important. The freedoms we enjoy (and take a little too much for granted) are the result of their sacrifices."

October 2024 Meet and Greet

A lively conversation was enjoyed by the nine attendees!

Ralph Winter noted that the 392nd BGMA had a good meeting in New Orleans. After the gala banquet, he and Doug Dovey chatted with guest speaker Major General Jason R. Armagost, Commander of Eighth Air Force at Barksdale AFB, about whether the B-24 they have on display would/could be donated to the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force. He was very receptive to the idea but noted that there were "some hurdles" that would have to be overcome first.

Doug Dovey attended the October 2024 reunion of the Heritage League at Colorado Springs, home of the Air Force Academy. That organization focuses on the units (including the 392nd BG) that flew for the Second Air Division in England. Members placed a wreath at the plaque for the 2AD in the Academy's Cemetery. As it so happens, the next reunion of the 8th Air Force Historical Society and the 392nd BG will also be in Colorado Springs, from 1-5 Oct 2025, so our members will be able to visit the Academy as well.

The next M&G will be at 1:30pm Eastern Time on 18 Jan 2025. Ralph will be happy to answer any questions about the September 2025 trip to England and what being our President entails! An email from him with the Zoom link will be sent out a few days in advance.

See you there!



News from Across the Pond

Services of Remembrance

Beeston

Head Trustee Jill Scott reports, "Sunday, 19th November was a dull morning, low cloud cover, but no wind nor rain, and the temperature reasonable for the time of the year.

"After the annual Remembrance Service at the church, just outside the village on a slight hill (a landmark with its distinctive spire for some returning pilots and crews during the war), the Reverend Miriam Fife and the congregation left for the American War Memorial at the other end of the village.



"When they arrived there was already a large group of people waiting to take part in this Service, which followed



its regular pattern. The flags of the Brownies and Rainbows were ceremoniously laid at the foot of the Memorial.

"The flags on the two flagpoles were lowered as the Last Post rang out (a recording). The Two Minute Silence, followed by Reveille as the flags were raised.

"Your usual red, white and blue wreath was laid, this year by

Trustee Henry Dennett. Wreaths were also laid by the Rainbows and Brownies, the Parish Council and The Ploughshare Pub. The Collect [prayer] for the 392nd BG was, as always, included in the last Prayers.

"After The Blessing the Brownie and Rainbow flag bearers came forward to receive their flags from the Reverend Miriam and walked together, proudly flying their flags, down the path to the gate.

"Then, after some standing and talking and looking at the wreaths, as always nearly everyone retired to the Village Hall to enjoy the refreshments arranged by the Parish Council, and to take the opportunity to talk to so many people—and to get warm again!"

Cheshunt, Hertfordshire

A large assembly gathered to remember and honor 2/Lt John D. Ellis's crew, who crashed near Cheshunt on 12 Aug 1944 while heading for a bombing mission at Juvincourt,

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392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

If you get the *News* in print format, your membership status is shown on the mailing label directly after your name; "24" means your dues expire THIS MONTH. If you get the *News* via email, you will receive an email in September and December advising if your dues are expiring. If you wish to join or renew, send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Joel Fleck, 5606 Doolittle St., Burke, VA 22015 or join / renew on-line at <https://www.b24.net/membership.htm>. **LM** means Life Member and **FRIEND** means that you receive the *News* with compliments of the 392nd BGMA. *Effective 1 Jan 2025, dues to receive a paper copy will increase from \$25 to \$35.*

The Board of Directors has ruled that no Crusader will be denied membership because of financial concerns, so if you're in straitened circumstances, check the Hardship Waiver box below. If you can help the 392nd BGMA treasury with a donation, please indicate the amount in the space below.

Name _____ Ground [] Air [] Sqdn/Unit _____

Mailing address _____

Email address _____ Telephone number _____

Please provide the name and unit of your Crusader relative/friend: _____

Dues: [] \$25/year if you want to receive the *News* by postal mail (\$35 after 31 Dec 2024) OR [] \$20/year for receipt by email. Please feel free to renew for multiple years! Just let us know what your wishes are: I am renewing for _____ years.

Hardship Waiver [] DONATION \$ _____ TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____



Above, wreath-layers are ready to honor 2/Lt John D. Ellis and his 577th Sqdn crew. At left, 392nd BGMA Director and Liberator Memorial chairman David Parnell paused for reflection after he placed his wreath.

France. All ten men were killed.

The entire service was accompanied by an excellent stream of appropriate music. Fittingly, the last piece played was John Philip Sousa's stirring march, *The Stars and Stripes Forever*. The service was followed by light refreshment at the Masonic Lodge Halsey Hall.

Lodge Members place over thirty wreaths annually at memorials both local and overseas. In 2013, they added the Liberator Memorial to their busy schedule, with the service conducted on a Saturday as near to Remembrance Sunday as possible.

Upper Sheringham

From Doug and Celia Willies: "We were getting to think that we would not be able to get along to the Remembrance Sunday activities this year but I am delighted to report that we did, in fact, 'make it'! (The 30th anniversary of the Memorial for the Colby Waugh, crew by the way). We got to give the Memorial a good wash and clean a week or so before last weekend, Celia made the usual poppy posy and we added the traditional crosses and US Flags. We should have taken a photo but unfortunately omitted to do so! Sorry. Anyway, glad to say, all looked OK after a grass trim, etc. We got along on Sunday, the sun shone—the first time for over a week—and all went well. So glad!

"We wanted you to know and assure you that they are still not forgotten!"

North Tuddenham

Pat Baldwin reports that, as usual, poppies were placed on the memorial to 2/Lt Louis F. Bass and crew. While forming up in terrible weather conditions for a mission to Zwickau, Germany, on 21 Apr 1944, their left wing broke off at the outer panel during assembly (perhaps due to icing). The plane crashed near the village, killing eight of the ten men aboard.

When Pat arrived for the Remembrance Day ceremony, she noticed that someone had planted a red rose beside

the memorial—perhaps a personal remembrance from someone who knew the men.

Visits East and West

Several Yanks (and a Brit) crossed the pond this year.

Christine Gorder wrote, "I recently returned from a visit to Ward Sackal's grave at Rhone American Cemetery in southeastern France. Since learning in 2009 where he was buried, I have made yearly trips to visit and honor him.

"We had met in Tucson in January of 1943 when the group was undergoing training here. I knew all of his crewmates on the McKee crew—heroes all of them and great guys! [Nine of the ten members of 1/Lt Thomas R. McKee's crew, 578th, including Ward, were killed in action on 29 Dec 1943; one became a POW.]

"I will turn 100 next year, but I hope to make one more trip. Ward was a wonderful person in all respects. I still love him very much."

Brennan Family

In March 2024, Carol Perrin became a member of the 392nd BGMA. Her father, S/Sgt Robert Brennan, flew combat missions from December 1944 to April 1945 as a gunner on 1/Lt Robert W. Harcus's crew, 578th. She emailed that several family members wanted to visit the 392nd BG Memorial in September and asked for help. We provided Jim Clarey's name as Philip Brazier had previous obligations during the visit.

On 22 Sep 2024, the Brennan family met up with Jim Clarey and Philip Brazier (unexpectedly home for the weekend). Carol says, "Jim and Philip helped my brother Tom, his fiancée Lee Russell, my sister Bonnie, and me make sense of what looked like a turkey farm and open fields. We were able to view the 392nd Bomb Group Memorial (where we left shiny US pennies to commemorate Dad's service), the runway from which Dad's B-24 took off (part of the runway is still there!), the bomb storage area, the bomb fuse area, and even the bicycle rack where Dad most likely stored his bike. Having a beer at the local pub, The Beeston Ploughshare, which Dad probably visited, ended our day."

Philip adds that after he took them to see the in-ground bike racks where one of the enlisted dining halls had been (on the industrial estate opposite the old Combat Officer's Mess), Carol got really excited, as "Dad had a bike and would have probably parked it there when eating at the Enlisted Mess.

"She knew that the racks had featured in the September 2024 issue of the 392nd BGMA News. 'Yes,' I replied, 'that's my bike in the picture.' I signed her copy of the article for posterity."

The Andertons

Russ and Heather Anderton visited in early October 2024. Heather's father was Cpl Joseph G. Crockett, radio operator on 2/Lt Jim C. Vaden's crew in the 578th. He flew

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meeting might be tax deductible—but to contact their tax preparer for further guidance.

Sue Giesing Williams named the three veterans (Harvey Naber, William L. Pilcher, and Charles H. Pedrotta) whose deaths had been reported in the *News* since the last reunion.

Debbie Beigh advised that our Association has 167 members and 46 Friends; countries represented outside the US are England, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, and Germany. Joining us this year were 16 new members. WWII veteran members are 576th Sqdn tail gunner John Rumancik and 578th Sqdn engineer Rupert Sutphin.

Our Website

Webmaster Bob Books spoke about the past, present and future of www.b24.net. Bob did the coding that launched the website in March 1999; it showcased the research work done by Jim Marsteller, Greg Hatton and Ben Jones and became the official website of the 392nd BGMA that October. Information from 578th Sqdn pilot Col Robert E. Vickers' two books (*Liberators from Wendling* and *Wendling's Crusaders: Remembrance of the Missing*) was soon folded into www.b24.net.

Our website is massive: it has over 800 internal links; the names of 3,852 combat airmen and 3,997 support personnel (including many of their photos); 227 issues of the *2nd Air Division Journal*; 152 issues of the 392nd BGMA *News*; 88 written accounts of wartime experiences; 32 POW accounts; 56 oral histories on video; 12 videos from 392nd BG archives; a 1993 veterans' seminar video; Greg Hatton's 2009 POW seminar video; and training videos from 1943.

Over 500 other websites have a link to our website because it is such a valuable resource.

Data from August 2024 shows that the website got 3,300 visits with 1,300 from cell phones. Half of the visits were from the US and another one-third from England and Germany. The POW section attracts the largest number of visitors, as it has the most information on the internet about the POW camps for Allied airmen. Those visits often lead to an exploration of the sections about the 392nd BG.

What makes our website truly impressive is that the information can be searched by an airman's name (which will reveal all the missions he flew, the planes he was aboard, and links to details about each mission); by the Aircraft Serial Number; by mission date; or targets.

Bob pointed out that those details are due to a lengthy collaboration between him and Annette Tison. Throughout 2008, Annette made regular trips to the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, Maryland. There, she made paper copies of the *original* crew loading lists (CLLs) for every combat and diversion mission flown by the 392nd BG. Over the course of many months, she re-typed every CLL into a Word document which Bob then re-wrote in the code necessary to upload them to our website in a searchable format.

[Editor's note: To provide additional context, in 2017 Annette also made paper copies of microfilm at the National Archives that had the histories prepared by several of our support units. She re-typed those histories into Word

documents, matched the events described in the histories with photos from 392nd BG archives, and forwarded them to Bob. He did the coding to upload them as searchable documents.

As a result, www.b24.net presents the stories not only of our combat airmen but also of the ground personnel in the 10th Station Complement Squadron, the 403rd Air Service Group, the 465th Sub Depot, the 1217th Quartermaster Service Group, the 586th Air Postal Unit, the 2974th/208th Finance Detachment, the 2101st Engineer Fire Fighting Platoon, the 1287th Military Police Detachment, and the American Red Cross who supported their efforts. Take a look at <https://www.b24.net/groundEchelon.htm> to learn what they did on the ground to enable the combat crews to be so effective from the air!]

Five years ago, Bob and another "techie" did a complete rewrite of the coding to make www.b24.net compatible with cell phones. Now, about 39 percent of our traffic comes from cell phones.

In the future, Bob predicts that the website will have to adapt to Artificial Intelligence (AI) as well. Undoubtedly, our information is already being "scooped up" by AI.

At this point, Jim Pearson endorsed the usefulness of our website and its extensive information, thanking the Association and especially Bob Books, for having it readily available when he began looking for information about his uncle. There was a hearty round of applause for Bob, with Ralph thanking Bob and Annette for what they've done to help perpetuate the 392nd BG's legacy.

Library of Congress

Bob spoke about Chris Clark, president of the Heritage League. While 8AFHS highlights the efforts of the entire 8th Air Force, the Heritage League concentrates on the Second Air Division and its B-24s.

Chris has made contacts at the Library of Congress who are interested in preserving the story of the Second Air Division in WWII. Annette has already sent them a complete set of our newsletters (152+ issues).

Facebook

Ralph completed the conversation about our internet presence by reading a report from Greg Hatton, who is in charge of both the POW section of www.b24.net and our Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1563692720350729>):

"The 392nd Facebook page informs us that we have 365 members... Membership has certainly grown over the last year. That's a good thing. However, with that growth has come an increased frequency of AI involvement. Both applications for admission and chat content have been challenging to monitor. At this time, it's only annoying; but I can see it becoming overwhelming. Our attitude towards security has been somewhat relaxed, because we don't elicit any personal information.

"A troubling item is the inability to see who is viewing each post. Initially, you could select "# reaching" and a list of names would be revealed. No longer. That limits my ability to reach out and engage with individuals.

"The increase in 'viewership' has resulted in an increase in participation. More folks are posting items. Our posts

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often come from the trove of items available on b24.net. Other items come from my forays onto the web. I do include items not directly related to the 392nd BG, but they usually come with a caveat up front, asking for the Group's indulgence.

"Occasionally, members follow my lead by sharing items of a more general nature. This is a good thing, because it encourages participation. However, reposting carries with it a responsibility to verify before submission. So, as Socrates said: 'All things in moderation.'

"Looking forward, we'd like to encourage folks to help us get some legacy support. Our active communications efforts include the *News*, the website, and the Facebook page.

"Getting help from an interested 392nd-type would be outstanding; however, a social media/tech savvy person would also be welcome. This issue is time sensitive. I was noticing that my 'sell-by' date was not filled in yet."

Old Business

Char Heim, who has been writing the "Ideas and Inspiration" column since December 2015, notified us of her intention to step down from that position. She was thanked for her nine years of thoughtful (and thought-provoking!) editorials. [Debbie Beigh has volunteered to author that column; her first is on page 12.]

Ralph reported that the quarterly Meet and Greets continue and participation is growing. They are held the month after the *News* is published, with the date announced in the issue and an email with the Zoom link sent a few days in advance.

Ralph also gave an update on John Gilbert. He is doing well for his age and health and some 392nd BGMA members were thrilled to visit him recently!

New Business

Treasurer Joel Fleck reported that the costs of printing and mailing the paper copy of the *News* have gone up significantly in the last few years. A motion was then made—and approved—to raise the annual dues of members who receive the print version of the *News* from \$25 to \$35, effective 1 January 2025. This will be the first price increase for receiving a printed version since September 2009. Dues for those who receive an emailed pdf version of the *News* remain \$20.

Ralph reported that the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force in Pooler, Georgia, is going forward with building an addition to house a B-24 airframe (when one is located and obtained) and accompanying artifacts. A brief discussion about the Museum followed.

Ralph gave further details on the planned September 2025 trip to England: 3 nights in London before going to Norwich for an additional seven nights. While an outing to the base will be a highlight, this trip will focus on visiting other memorials to 392nd BG crews. Details will be in the March 2025 issue.

Debbie Beigh, chair of the Nominating Committee, presented the names of Ralph Winter, Annette Tison and Don Carey for re-election as Directors and nominated Mac Cassell as a new Director. With no nominations from the floor, this slate was elected unanimously by both the in-

person and Zoom attendees.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

2025 Officers

All Directors present met after the general membership meeting and, by acclamation, re-elected Ralph Winter as President; Greg Hatton as 1st Vice President, Sue Williams as 2nd Vice President, Debbie Beigh as Secretary, and Joel Fleck as Treasurer.

Ralph announced his intention to step down at the 2025 business meeting, so please contact him if you want to learn more about what the position entails.

Next Reunion

The next 392nd BGMA reunion/business meeting will be 1-5 Oct 2025 in Colorado Springs, Colorado—hopefully when the fall foliage is at its peak! It will commemorate the 50th anniversary of the founding of 8AFHS.

Eighth Air Force Historical Society Gala Banquet

The Gala Banquet began with opening remarks by 8AFHS president Paul W. Tibbets IV. Reciting *The Pledge of Allegiance* by all attendees and playing of *The Star-Spangled Banner* then followed.

Candle Lighting Ceremony

Crusader Dave Nowack hosted the traditional Candle Lighting Ceremony, which "signifies the reason we are gathered here. We are here to remember the memorable history of the Eighth Air Force. Let us now remember the fallen, and those who survived; all of whom left an indelible mark on the illustrious history of the Eighth Air Force during World War II."

Dave then called on "our candle lighters to illuminate this hall with candles of remembrance to all who contributed to victory in Europe, and those that protect our freedom today."

The first candle "remembers those who served in support of the gallant fliers."

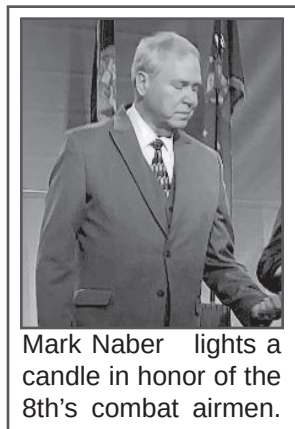
The second candle, lit by Crusader Mark Naber, "remembers the flying personnel." It was a poignant moment for Mark, as his father, 576th waist gunner Harvey Naber, folded his wings on 16 Feb 2024.

The third candle "remembers those heroes who now silently fly on a more peaceful sortie"—the 26,000 aircrew members of the 8th AF who "sacrificed their lives for a noble endeavor."

The fourth candle, lit by Dave's friend (and honorary Crusader) Lorraine Horn, "shines brightly for the 28,000 brave airmen who were once prisoners of war in a dark era of their lives."

The fifth candle was lit by Dr. Hattie Hearn, Curator of the American Air Museum at Imperial War Museum Duxford, "in remembrance of our British friends."

The final candle was lit by USAF Maj Cassandra Alexander "as we recognize the men and women of today's 8th Air Force."



Mark Naber lights a candle in honor of the 8th's combat airmen.

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missions from 6 Feb-20 Apr 1945.

After a few days in London, the Andertons drove to Norwich with stops at Imperial War Museum Duxford (where they were delighted to see the B-24 painted as the 392nd BG's #44-50493, *Dugan*) and Cambridge American Cemetery.

They then met Philip Brazier and Jim Clarey for a tour of Old Buckenham airfield, home of the 453rd BG and site of one of Jim's private museums. That afternoon, they went to Seething, where the 448th BG was based.

The next day was devoted solely to Wendling/Beeston, with Philip directing them to locations where Heather's father would have walked, lived, or flown from.

Heather commented, "We were both amazed by the number of air fields built in eastern England. It was such a huge undertaking with all the equipment and personnel required. We also learned so much from Jim Clarey about the job of a radio operator and the training required. He told us that my father would have been able to take apart and assemble the radio with his eyes closed! He also showed us an example of a light Dad would have used to communicate with other planes via Morse code. The radio operator was an important part of the crew as he was responsible for helping to get the plane to the target and back to the base safely.

"Visiting all the sites, I was most struck by the ages of the men serving in WWII. So many, like my father, were 18, 19, 20 years old. They left everything they knew and flew across the Atlantic to bases all over the countryside of England. I can't imagine how my dad felt every time he went up with his crew. When I saw the slots in the concrete where the men parked their bikes, it really hit me that he had been right there riding to the mess hall and back to his quarters. I felt strangely close to him in that particular location. I think it was an image I could vividly recreate in my mind as I stood on that same ground where he stood and rode his bike."

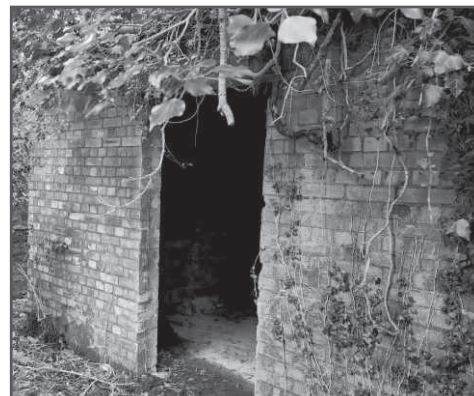


This photo of bikes in front of the Red Cross Aero Club shows just how omnipresent they were at Station 118!

Russ added, "I just can't believe how good the 392nd website is...!"

Many thanks to Philip and Jim for sharing their time and knowledge with American visitors and to our many English friends who permit Crusaders to walk across the same land and see the same buildings that their relatives had!

Some photos from their trip: The small brick building in the foreground of the top photo was an MP guard post where



identification cards for English workers and visitors would be checked. (In spite of this security, however, English children always seemed able to find ways to visit "their" airmen!)

The small building in the middle photo was in the bomb dump at Honeypot Wood, where fuses for the bombs were stored. There



are still two or three of these small buildings in the woods.

In the bottom photo, Russ and Heather Anderton had a delightful visit with John and Doris Gilbert.

A Brit was coming, a Brit was coming...

Josh Sutton, Philip Brazier's stepson, spent several months in America studying our election process. He attended rallies for both major parties and spent time in Washington, DC, as well as the swing states of North Carolina, Arizona, and Pennsylvania.

Before he flew back to England, he had brunch with Annette and Don Tison. Much of their discussion, of course, centered on the differences between the American and British electoral processes. He did reveal how amazed he was at the amount of ice we consume in our beverages, and said he would miss having flavored creamer in his coffee.

CRASHES, CAPTURE AND CHRISTMAS 1944

From the editor: I asked Greg Hatton, our extraordinary POW expert, to share accounts by 392nd BG POWs.

He sent two exceptional documents. The first included information from 577th navigator Clarence B. Rich and the widow of waist gunner Maurice A. Lampe about the men's 23 Jun 1944 mission, when they were shot down.

See POWs on page 9

POWs from page 8

Five were captured, 4 were killed in action; another died of his injuries in a German hospital; and one successfully evaded.

Greg's second contribution was S/Sgt Robert H. Richards' personal account. Also in the 577th Sqdn, Richards was a waist gunner on 2/Lt John E. Buecheler's crew, shot down on 12 Sep 1944 with eight men captured and one killed.

The article below is about their final missions. The March 2025 News will discuss their months as POWs, their weeks enduring the Death March, and the Heydekrug Run which other POWs suffered through.

Their information has been lightly edited to fit the space.

The Whittemore Crew's Final Mission

Rich and Lampe were members of 2/Lt Warren T. Whittemore's crew. On 23 Jun 1944, they were flying as a lead crew, with command pilot Capt Melvin H. Graper, to attack Laon-Athies airfield in France.

Rich recalled that just before their plane was hit by flak, he had ordered radio operator S/Sgt Robert H. Ammon to check that the bombs had completely dropped. He said, "We often had trouble with bombs catching in the racks and not dropping. Of course, a situation like that was very dangerous for us, because the bombs were armed and ready to go off. That day, we were carrying 52 clusters (if I remember correctly) of anti-personnel bombs, with five bombs in a cluster, which made them even more dangerous.

"Ammon hesitated and answered that he had to send a bomb report first. I told him it would be 30 to 40 seconds before the bomb would strike, so to check bombs away, and that was an order. Almost immediately after, we received a direct hit in the hydraulic accumulator, which was directly behind me and caught on fire immediately after the hit.

"It sprayed my back and the left side of my face with the burning fluid. My parachute was on the table beside me, and it, too, caught on fire. I crawled back to the flight deck to get the extra parachute stored there. Bombardier Milton Issenberg stayed with me and put out the fire on my back before he jumped. In doing so, he burned his hands and wrists badly and burned both his upper and lower eyelids to the point that he had to have multiple operations in US

hospitals getting them restored.

"Ammon must have opened the door to the bomb bays just as the fire flashed through the plane, and he just automatically jumped. The plane flying just behind us said he went by them clawing at his jacket, as he had apparently jumped without attaching his chest pack parachute. As a result, I have always felt a responsibility that I am sure will stay with me to the end. I still don't know what else I could have done, but it is still a very real burden to bear.

"Engineer T/Sgt Carl L. Peterson jumped over me with his hair on fire while I was putting on my parachute. He was killed. Tail gunner S/Sgt Robert S. Tremlett and extra navigator 2/Lt Stanford I. Birnbaum died in the plane. Capt Graper had been badly wounded in the plane by shell fragments and died in a German Army Hospital on July 8.

"I stayed hidden for 4 nights and 3 days during which time my eyes burned and swelled shut. I finally got one open the 4th morning and began my way back. I hid for 10 days or so with a French nurse while she and a doctor friend healed my burns, in Laon, so that I could see to travel.

"I spent 70 days working my way back across France to the Normandy Beachhead, walked most of the way, had very little to eat, lost 60 pounds, but finally made it on the anniversary of my wife's and my marriage."

In a 1994 letter to Rich, Lampe's widow said, "You wrote that you have felt responsibility for Ammon's death. Maurice died still feeling responsible for Tremlett's. Waist gunner Charles Altemus, Tremlett, and Maurice were together preparing to leave the plane. Altemus jumped first, then Tremlett said, 'I've got to get my new shoes (they were at his station in the tail). Maurice said, 'I'm leaving' and Tremlett replied, 'Go ahead, I'll be right behind you.' Maurice always felt he should have insisted that Tremlett go first."

Lampe's Wartime Log

The YMCA sent journals to American POWs so they could record their experiences while in captivity. Many were used for drawings, anecdotes, menus they intended to indulge in after release, and the names/addresses of fellow POWs (Lampe's had 75). He also saved a wrapper from his 1944 Christmas dinner.

See POWs on page 10

FOLDED WINGS REPORT

Please report the death of a member, spouse or Friend 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 _____

Our website, www.b24.net, contains the history of the 392nd Bomb Group. You could make no greater tribute to your loved one than a donation for this living and ongoing memorial. Please send this report to: Debbie Beigh, 6284 Antler Ct., Zionsville, IN 46077-9089

POWs from page 9



Part of a Red Cross food parcel sent to American POWs, this "Boned Turkey" was made

by Christian & Co., Inc., of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; on its label, Chef Aime Paulin declares "This is the finest Turkey I know how to prepare."

Lampe's logbook also included several poems which must have had special meaning to him. Their authors' names were not recorded.

Christmas

Someone somewhere is wishing us today
A Merry Christmas from across the sea
And I can almost hear a mother say
"God Bless my son wherever he may be"
No way of life environment or creed
Should interfere with our attitude
This day was meant for kindness not for greed
The things we do should be for some one's good
And let us be considerate of all
Use not the name of our Lord in vain
But pay respect to both the great and the small
Our motives should be love and not undue gain
No jealousy or malice should prevail
Let hatred and envy disappear
To all this day should be of some avail
A day of loyalty, good will and cheer

Your Weekly Letter

A thought of love a word of cheer
Your weekly message to someone dear
A line of words from your heart comes stealing
To let her know just how you are feeling
You write about weather and say that you're well
But there are so many things that you cannot tell
You talk about old times and how much you miss her
And hope to come back once more to kiss her
She doesn't know what you're going through
It would be mighty hard if she only knew
The long days just sitting here
Alone with your thoughts and your heart full of fear
That you may never return to your home again
All hope is gone—you live in vain
Yet as each week comes you rewrite once more
The same old lines as the week before
And pray when she reads them she'll never know better
What you couldn't write in your weekly letter

My Buddy

They say he died in glory
Whatever that may be
If dying in a burst of flame is glory
Then that is not for me
In the briefing room that morning

He sat with clear eyes and strong heart
Just one of the determined gunners
Determined to do his part
My buddy had the guts alright
He sought not glory or fame
He knew he had a job to do
And his crew knew the same
But death had the final word
And in its log he wrote his name
And my buddy died that morning
In glory and a burst of flame

A Crash and Capture: S/Sgt Robert H. Richards

Editor's note: Ironically, Richards was from Hanover, Pennsylvania, and his final target was an oil storage depot near Hanover, Germany, which he spelled as Hannover throughout his article.

Richards' comments are in regular type, added information is in italics.

This is a personal history that concerns the plight of 7,000 bomber crewmen, mainly from the 8th Air Force and all other air forces that flew over the European Theater of War.

I am indebted to Gerald Ralston who recorded the daily occurrences of our internment. *[Ralston, a waist gunner in 2/Lt Harold E. Jones' crew in the 578th, was shot down the day before Richards. Five of his crewmen were killed, five were captured.]*

Please note that there is a continual reference to the amount of food received daily, especially the Red Cross parcels which gave us much needed sustenance. We were supposed to receive one parcel per week per man, this rarely happened.

Gerald Ralston was my "ration buddy," most of us paired up and shared rations and slept together for common warmth. Because of the constant hunger, one man could not control his hunger and in a weak moment he would consume his food all at one time. The food had to be rationed out by self-discipline until the next rations arrived. So with two men sharing their food—one man could restrain the other to stretch out their rations—and vice versa. The average weight loss per man was from 25 to 30 pounds.

As the expression goes, "There were no atheists in the foxholes." By the same token, "There were no atheists in the prison camps." You had to rely on the spiritual powers in a day-to-day existence. We were apprehensive, not frightened, and we certainly did not want to give the Germans any notion that we were weaklings!

This history is all fact; there was no need to exaggerate the conditions.

Concerning Combat Missions

Out of the 20 combat missions that we flew, there were only five that we came back without any holes in the B-24 Liberator. I don't remember which of the missions we were hit the hardest on except the last one to Hannover, Germany. There were two missions that one engine was hit by flak. #3 on one flight and #2 engine on another flight. And on another mission, we got hit on #1 and #3 and were still able to return to base.

The most dangerous time on any airplane is takeoff

See POWs on page 11

POWS from page 10

and landing. If there is power loss on any of the engines halfway down the runway the plane cannot take off or land again!

On one of our missions, we started down the runway, however one of our engines lost power. Since we were not quite halfway, the pilot shut off all the throttles, settled back on the runway, and slammed on the brakes! We were just barely able to stop at the very end of the runway! We burnt out the brakes and the tires!

When you have 36,500 lbs of B-24, 8,800 lbs of bombs plus 1,500 lbs of crew you got problems! The command hurriedly took us to a spare B-24 so we continued the mission.

Getting Shot Down

On 12 Sep 1944, at 11am, we were over the target of Misberg-Hannover, Germany. It was a very clear day which enabled the German flak batteries to zero in our formations by visual rather than radar. In formation we were flying Tail End Charlie; in other words, the last and lowest position in our eight plane squadron. So, if shells fired at the lead plane fell short, they ended up in our area.

We were flying at 22,000 ft so the Germans had to use 105mm guns instead of the famous 88mm anti-aircraft guns which could only reach 20,000 ft.

The flak was intense and accurate. About one minute after bombs away, we felt a sudden lurch upward in the right side of the plane and an uncontrolled sharp left bank which pinned us to the side of the ship due to centrifugal force. I was flying as right waist gunner and looking out the window, I saw about a one foot hole behind engine #3. The engine's supercharger was gone. The right aileron controls were damaged. At that location, #3 and #4 gas tanks were punctured and the fuel lines were cut off.

I immediately notified Lt. Buecheler, the pilot, to feather #3 engine. Great quantities of gasoline were draining from the tanks and although #3 engine was operative, its exhaust could very easily have ignited the leaking gasoline. The gas also back-drafted into the rear of the ship so we were saturated in gasoline and there was about six inches of gasoline in the ball turret hole. The danger now existed that if there were just one spark from damaged wiring or an electric motor, the plane would have exploded.

We fell out of control from 22,000 ft to 11,000 ft and the pilot put the ship on automatic pilot, which fortunately leveled us out. The bomb bay doors were then opened to ventilate the incoming gasoline. We were ordered to try and lighten the plane. I opened the rear hatch and the left waist gunner and I threw out any loose objects.

We were flying a southwest course away from Hannover to try and get across the allied lines in France. However, about 20 miles southwest, the pilot called back and told us that we were running out of fuel on the remaining #4 engine on the right side and that we couldn't transfer from #1 or #2 engine tanks because the lines were severed. So the order to "Bail Out" was given before #4 ran out of gas.

Becoming a POW

First the tail gunner jumped; then the left waist gunner; then myself. Jumping out of a plane at 210 miles an hour feels like jumping into the rapids.

I delayed opening my parachute for about three minutes in free fall to get closer to the ground in case of ground fire.

Approaching the ground I saw that I was directly over high-tension lines, so I steered the chute to the right. Then about 100 ft off the ground I noticed a team of horses with a wagon directly under me. I pulled the chute hard to the right and landed with most of the weight on my left leg, then falling backwards, landed with a hard jolt to my back. I received a back injury which never fully corrected itself.

I was laying on the ground when an old farmer and two young boys stood over me with pitchforks ready to strike! They allowed me to stand up; then as I reached down to remove my harness, they became excited, thinking that I was reaching for a weapon. Then one of the boys took my harness off as I stood there.

Then I was started toward their village. We were met by the local Burgermeister; a combination mayor and one-man police force.

I was then taken to his private home where his office was. While all of these events were taking place, the local people were looking on in curiosity. In a small community about the size of Abbotstown [*just 6.5 miles from Richards' hometown, it had a population of 441 per the 1940 census*], this was the first direct contact the people had with an American Airman. You could tell that all they believed in was the propaganda in their newspapers and radio.

At first, they were sure I was a Jew. Then they asked me if I was from Chicago, because all Chicago gangsters were supposed to make up the entire American Air Force!

They were surprised to find out that I was of English-German descent and that my home was Hanover, Pennsylvania, also that the last name of the girl I was engaged to was named Fritz! [*He married her after the war.*]

So to justify themselves as to why a "nice" young German was fighting them for, they concluded that I was a victim of the "Rosenfeld" (Roosevelt) Administration!

I was talking to the Burgermeister's wife who showed me pictures of her two sons who were in the German Navy and that they were both killed in action. I told her that it was a sorry situation and that war was bad for all sides. You might say, that here was a mother of two slain boys, looking upon me, not as an enemy, but as another young boy at war; with my mother being concerned about me, the waste of lives, time and hardship.

About one-half hour later, two burly Gestapo came from the town of Wunstorf to this town, Neustadt, to pick me up. They already had the tail gunner in the back seat. We came to Wunstorf and were taken to Gestapo Headquarters where we met the other members of our crew. We stood at attention for an hour, then the Luftwaffe MPs came for us.

When we went out on the main street we were surprised to find that a parade was assembling, what's more (!) we were the "center of attraction!" There was a uniformed marching band up front; we came afterward with the men who aided in our capture. The local home guard unit followed, then two cars with the local "wheels" taking a little credit. The schools were let out and the stores were closed and it seems that everybody in town came to see the "Victory Parade" (not ours)!

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Debbie Beigh

daughter of Jim Goar, Group Transportation Officer &
News Editor from November 1989 to December 2007

DECORATING WITH GRATITUDE

Holiday decorations seem to appear on store shelves, and therefore in yards, earlier each year. As I write this on November 21, our neighbors' decorations have been on bright display for over a week. However, I can't be too critical; in Indiana we play chicken with the weather. It was a lovely, warm fall for hanging decorations and other outdoor activities, for which I am grateful.

I love to decorate for the holidays. I plan where each string of lights, each candle, each snowman, and where the forest of miniature evergreen trees will be placed. This year, I am in grateful anticipation, because last year my right arm was in a sling, recovering from shoulder surgery, and yes, I am right-handed. Holiday decorating was somewhat sparse last year. I will be especially grateful to bring my porcelain village from the basement and arrange it on the fireplace mantle, according to the diagram I drew some thirty years ago, and from which I have not deviated.

May you all also decorate with gratitude. Light those you love and who love you with extra grace, patience, and smiles. Shine kindness on strangers who cross your path. If you have extra this year, put some in the stockings of those less fortunate.

May gratitude bring joy to your holidays ... and to the rest of your days.



Left to right: The 392nd BG Memorial in September 2024 during a visit by S/Sgt Robert W. Brennan's family; in October 2024 during a visit by S/Sgt Joseph G. Crockett's family; and in November 2024 after the annual Remembrance Day Service.



392nd Bomb Group Memorial Assoc.
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Fairfax Station, VA 22039
USA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail

Almighty God, Who has blessed us with the will and courage to do our duty, we praise You for our comrades whose death kept freedom living. We praise You also for giving us the years we have lived since their departure. We pray that You will strengthen and sustain our devotion to truth and justice, so that we may be faithful beneficiaries of their sacrifice. Continue Your mercy to our comrades; keep them in Your care; and bring us all at last into Your presence there to rejoice Eternally. Amen. — Composed by 576th pilot the late Very Reverend Robert C. Martin, former Dean of the Cathedral at Erie, Pennsylvania.

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

There have been no Folded Wings reported since the last newsletter.

