



344TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

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MILK RUN

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER/344TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

Volume XXII, No. 2

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**SEASONS GREETINGS, MERRY CHRISTMAS, HAPPY HANUKKAH,
AND A HAPPY AND HEALTHFUL NEW YEAR 2012**

MINNEAPOLIS REUNION 2011 REPORT

Once again, with thanks to George Cornett, and the 454th Bomb Squadron Association, the Minneapolis Reunion for the 344th Bomb Group Association was a big success.

The 344th had in attendance 9 original members, and 25 relatives and friends. 16 members were either at their first reunion, or returning after a long absence. In attendance were (V=veteran, N=new):
494th SQUADRON: Thomas Phillips (N), Ben Phillips (N), Mark Phillips (N) (all honoring Claude Phillips, mechanic, crew chief); Don Korkowski (V) (Pilot); George Eldridge (V) (Nav/Bomb), Marc and Mary Lew McCarty (honoring George Eldridge); Otto Kirkpatrick (V) (Nav/Pathfinder), Rick Kirkpatrick.
495th SQUADRON: James Lawrence (V) (Pilot); Sam Endrizzi (V, N) (Crew Chief), Marlon (Endrizzi) Whelpley (N); Casey Hasey (V) (Nav/Bomb + Pathfinder).
496th SQUADRON: August Turner (V, N) (Gunner); Wanda Turner (N).
497th SQUADRON: Shirley Fowler, Carol Fowler, Mary Ellen Gregorich (all honoring William Fowler, gunner); Edward Horn (V) (Pilot/POW), Chris Horn; Joseph Balach (V, N) (Pilot), Shirley Balach; and honoring Leonard Norris Pew (KIA, gunner, mechanic): Emily Fisher (N), Doug Fisher (N), Grace Fisher (N), Ethan Fisher (N), Mary Lou Crawford, Linda Schilt, Jack Schilt (N), Holly Combs (N), Brian Combs (N), Alan Crawford (N), Sandy Crawford (N).

Reunion Details: First day, took a motorcoach tour of St. Paul and Minneapolis, including the Governor's Mansion, Garrison Keeler's home, the Capitol and the Minnesota War Memorial, St. Paul Cathedral, Guthrie Theatre, Mary Tyler Moore statue, St. Anthony Locks, and Minnehaha Falls. Very enjoyable except for the 99 mph winds blowing down the streets of downtown Minneapolis (Ed Horn almost blew away).

Second day, visited the Minnetonka Lake area by motorcoach. In the evening, we had a wonderful dinner, with an amazing guest speaker, Betty Strohfus, a bubbly 91 year old former WASP. This was followed by President Edward Horn and his slide presentation on his POW career from May 1944 until April 1945.

The final day of the reunion included the individual unit business meetings. 20 members attended the 344th business meeting. The main topic was next year's reunion: The Pima Air and Space Museum in Tucson, Arizona. The reunion dates are OCTOBER 25, 26, 27, 2012. Please take a look at the museum website. The day concluded with a splendid double entrée dinner.

V-MAIL

- *Rosemary Murr – the passing of her husband, JULIUS MURR.
 - *Peter Palermo – the passing of his father, FRANK PALERMO.
 - *Anita Schwartz – the passing of her uncle, ABE INKELES.
 - *Lynda Le Grone Bass – the passing of her father, HERBERT J. LE GRONE, and crew photo.
 - *RAY SCHULTZ – 494th tailgunner, listed crew and missions, completed 65 missions.
 - *JOHN FINKLE – 1st pilot, 32 missions, 494th.
 - *Marion Whelpley – wrote for her 90 y/o father, SANTO ENDRIZZI, 495th.
- Sad to hear of passing of FRANK CARROZZA. Also suggests the WW2 book, UNBROKEN, by Laura Hildebrand.
- *LEROY SCHELL – of the Marauder Men of the Metroplex, down to 10 members.
 - *Dorothy Maffry – wrote for photo's of her husband's plane, "Maffry's Mottled Marauder".
 - *JAMES LAWRENCE – sent photos of his plane.
 - *Bill Hadden – wrote that his father was a mechanic with the 496th (please send more info on his father, name, rank, etc).

FINANCIAL REPORT – current checking account balance: \$5130.91

Dues and Donations: \$ 100 Lynda LeGrone Bass in memory of Herbert J. LeGrone, 496th tailgunner; Paul Mershon; \$50 Alan Crawford; Frances S. Terrill in memory of Jack Terrill 495th; \$35 Clarence Fowler; \$25 Maurice A. Halladay, Raymond M. Schultz, Santo (Sam) Endrizzi, Richard J. Foulk, Anthony Bozich; \$20 Johnny Lee Zak; \$15 Elizabeth J. Hillis; \$10 Pinkney H. Faver. Many of these donations were combined with a 344th Cap Purchase.

THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT – we send out over 400 mailing twice a year, but hear back from only a few. We would like to hear from you, and if possible, a small donation, so that we may continue to remember the 344th for future generations.

OFFICIAL 344TH BASEBALL CAPS FOR SALE

Due to a complete sellout of the first order, we now have a new order of 71 caps available for purchase. The main color is Tan, with Black High-lites. Front design: B-26 Marauder W.W. II, 344th Bomb Group, Silver B-26 w/ White Triangle and 7I-F. Right side: 494th BS 495th BS 496th BS 497th BS. Left side: 1ST Group to Bomb on D-Day. Photo available on the 344th Website.

Price, including shipping & handling (48 States): \$ 15.00

Send orders and checks to: 344 BGA, 46 Balfour Rd East, Palm Beach Gardens, FL 33418

LAST FLIGHTS

JULIUS WILLIAM MURR	5/15/11	Junction, TX	496	Master Sgt., Flight Chief and Head of Maint.
ABRAHAM (ABE) INKELES	1/17/11	Queens, NY	495	Navigator, Pathfinders
FRANK A. PALERMO	6/21/11	Katy, TX	494	PFC
HERBERT J. LE GRONE	1/3/08	Gulfport, MS	496	Tailgunner/Eng, 65 Missions
JOHN CHRISTOPHER DINOU	2/26/06	Chi, IL	496	Pilot Class 43K, author of <u>Faded Wings, Faded Glory</u>
OWEN LANSDOWNE	6/8/11	Cedar Park, TX	495	Pilot, 65 Missions, served in Korea
JOHN L. WILLIAMS	9/10/10	Sandy Springs, GA	494	
GORDON C. CORDSEN	1/3/08	Ft. Collins, CO	496	
HERBERT LOGIN	6/27/11	Monroe Twp, NJ	496	
VON JACK LE VAN	7/3/2011			
RUSSELL LANGDON	4/29/09	Glendale, AZ	494	

INFORMATION PLEASE?

If anyone has any information on the following 344th personnel, please e-mail or write to Chris Horn @ the 344th Bomb Group Association (see letterhead for addresses):

RODNEY T. BRUBAKER 495TH BS, Last Flight 1/19/2004
ALBERT LEE PAXTON 495TH BS, Private
MICHAEL W. SOPRONYI 494TH, San Antonio, TX

LASTING LEGACY

The 344th is a repository for the history of the unit. Any photos and histories are welcomed. Recently, we received the following:

Journal of a World War II Army Air Force Pathfinder Navigator, by Otto Kirkpatrick

I Remember, by George W. Eldridge

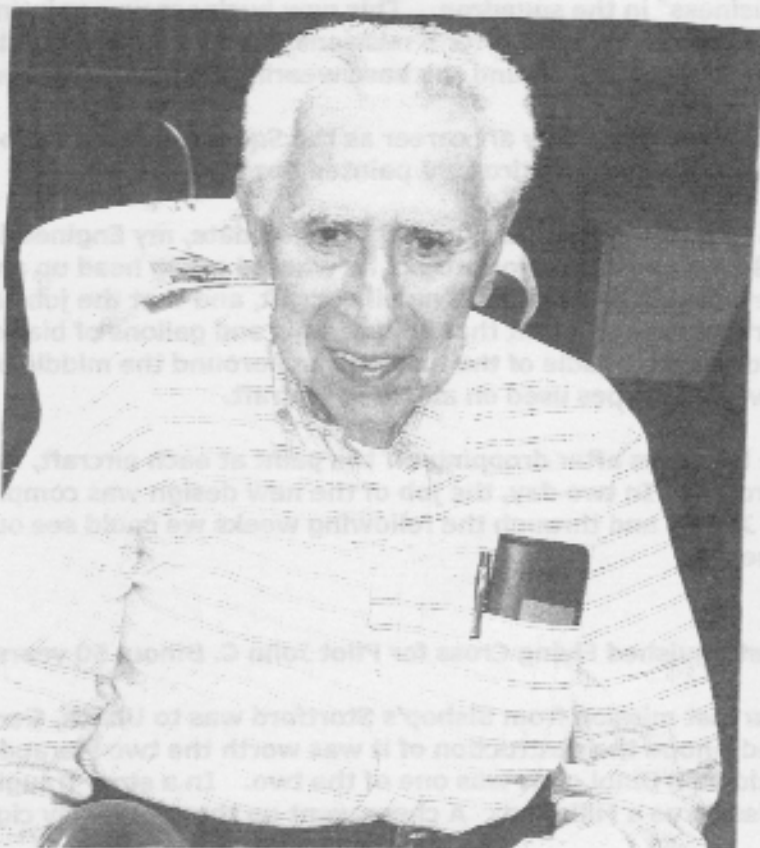
My Life in the Service, the Diary of Sterling Robertson

The Carl Christ Photo Archives, sent in by Edna Christ

ABRAHAM "ABE" INKELES

Lt. Inkeles entered the service in March, 1941, but did not attend the Air Force Navigation Scholl until 1943. Assigned to the 344th Bomb Group on July 14, 1943. He was transferred to Pathfinder Unit in May of 1944. Discharged October 29, 1945 at Ft. Bragg, North Carolina.

Our dear friend and member Abe Inkeles passed away in January. He was born on January 17, 1917, in the Bronx. Abe was a regular attendee at the yearly reunions. His last reunion was the 2010 Norfolk Reunion. As a Navigator with the Pathfinders, he was trained to use radar to lead bomber formations in order to do pin point bombing in bad weather conditions, at night, or when the targets were close to Allied troops. When a friend once took Abe's dogtag, and pointed to the "H" for Hebrew, and said, "Aren't you worried about being shot down and captured by the Nazis?", Abe replied, "I'm not getting shot down, you are." So long, Abe. Thanks for leading the way for us.



Flight Log of Capt. Karl N. Retzer, USA to England via the South Atlantic Route:

Lt. Kirkpatrick (Navigator), Lt. Vano (Co-pilot), S/Sgt Murphy, M/Sgt Sisson and I left Morrison Field, Florida at 8 o'clock the morning of January 20, 1944. Our destination, as we found out one hour later, was England and our first stop Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico. We flew over the Bahama Islands which constituted our first check point. At various times we would sight coral reefs and small islands through the clouds.

At one time to avoid a particularly nasty looking thunderhead, I put the ship into high blower with the intent to climb over – which we did. Murphy, our radio operator, felt the ship dip and heard the engines change sound and thought we were in trouble. He promptly turned on our emergency IFF for distress only. His face was certainly red when he found out the mistake he had made. He turned off our distress signal and notified the ground station that no emergency existed.

About an hour from Borinquen, Lt. Kirkpatrick tried his hand at flying. I'll always believe he knew we were slightly off course, because when he gave up playing pilot after a series of violent climbs and turns we were dead on course.

Duties of a Radio-Gunner during a mission, as retold by Sgt. John Scott of the 497th:

We were coming home from a mission that was virtually a Milk Run. I had stowed my waist guns and was making my way forward when I noticed 'loose' fluid 'diddling' about the left forward area of the aft bomb bay. I couldn't trace it to any leakage. I removed my three pairs of gloves from my left hand and dabbed them in the liquid trying to seek a 'viscosity'. Then it dawned on me. I looked around embarrassingly to see if anyone was watching. When I made it forward, my suspicions were confirmed. The Copilot had been using the relief tube!

Squadron artist, by an Engineer of the 495th, Dick Reese:

After a year in the states, our Squadron and Group moved to England and from there to France, Belgium, and finally Germany. In the interim, because I was the artist of the squadron, I began a little "art business" in the squadron. This new business was painting realistic B26s in color on the leather jackets of the flight crews and after 5 missions, I would paint 5 bombs falling from the B-26. There were dozens of flight personnel around the base wearing leather jackets with my painting of a B-26 with bombs falling.

The next step in my art career as the Squadron Artist: I began to paint "nose art on a number of the aircraft of our squadron. I painted dozens.

In late May prior to the June 6 invasion date, my Engineering Officer, Captain Jack Terrill called me in and told me about a major project he wanted me to head up and supervise. He showed me the blue prints of a new design to be painted on all aircraft, and that the job had to be completed within a week. He then directed me to a tent that held gallons and gallons of black and white paint. The design was to be painted around the middle of the fuselage and around the middle of the left and right wing. This was the famous invasion stripes used on all Allied Aircraft.

In two days after dropping off the paint at each aircraft, the painting began by the ground crews of each aircraft. In two days, the job of the new design was completed throughout the squadron. On the morning of June 6 and through the following weeks we could see our new design flying towards France and the enemy.

Distinguished Flying Cross for Pilot John C. Dinou, 50 years late.

Our last mission from Bishop's Stortford was to Ubach, Germany. The target was a communication center and I hope the destruction of it was worth the two Marauders we lost out of Coffin Corner Flight. The Caldwell/Dinoui crew was one of the two. In a story fraught with irony, the briefing officer described the mission as a Milk Run. A cheer went up through heavy cigarette smoke. Weeks later, in a Flak House in

right off the page. It said, "Milk Run to Ubach" by McKinlay Kantor.

Our flight leader made a tight turn after Bombs Away, right over the only heavy flak concentration shown on the overlay map. I felt the hit. KABOOM! In the right engine (my co-pilot's side). The guys in the back screamed, "We're drowning. We're drowning." I looked out my window and sure enough, aviation fuel was pouring out of a ruptured fuel cell. It must have been siphoning back through the waist windows.

I hopped down off the flight deck, ran back to the bomb bay where the fuel cut off switch was located and cranked it shut. Meanwhile, the pilot, Keith Caldwell, had feathered the right engine and was rigging the left for single-engine. When I returned to my seat, I thought "sure as shooting, we're gonna make it." The right prop feathered beautifully and the left engine was mightily pulling us along.

Then it quit. As though it was tired of doing all the work. Caldwell did not hesitate. He signaled me to bail out the crew while he executed the most skilled act of marauder-flying I had ever seen. He stayed in his seat to feather the left engine. Now, with both engines dead and feathered, he set about trimming the airplane so that it would fly, hands-off, long enough for him to follow me down off the flight deck, through the radio compartment, step through the bomb bay bulkhead and thence, out of the yawning bomb bay doors. Thus, we qualified as Double Caterpillars, already being members of a select body of persons saved by parachuting out of an emergency situation, the Caterpillar Club.

There was no autopilot on board; not on those ships. We got the guys out as well as ourselves. We had kept the ship in the air long enough to have cleared the bomb line. Luckily, the GI's had cleared the Germans out of the area a scant week before. Thus, we avoided capture as well as saving our lives. Once more, we were cited for the DFC but alas, nothing happened again. At the 344th Reunion at Colorado Springs, almost 50 years later, I happened to find a quiet moment with my Squadron CO, Jewel Maxwell. He promised to look into it. A few months later, I received a beautiful DFC in one of those lovely blue boxes, minus the citation.

From the diary of Sterling Robertson, upon learning that his plane, Smilin' Joy, had been shot down:

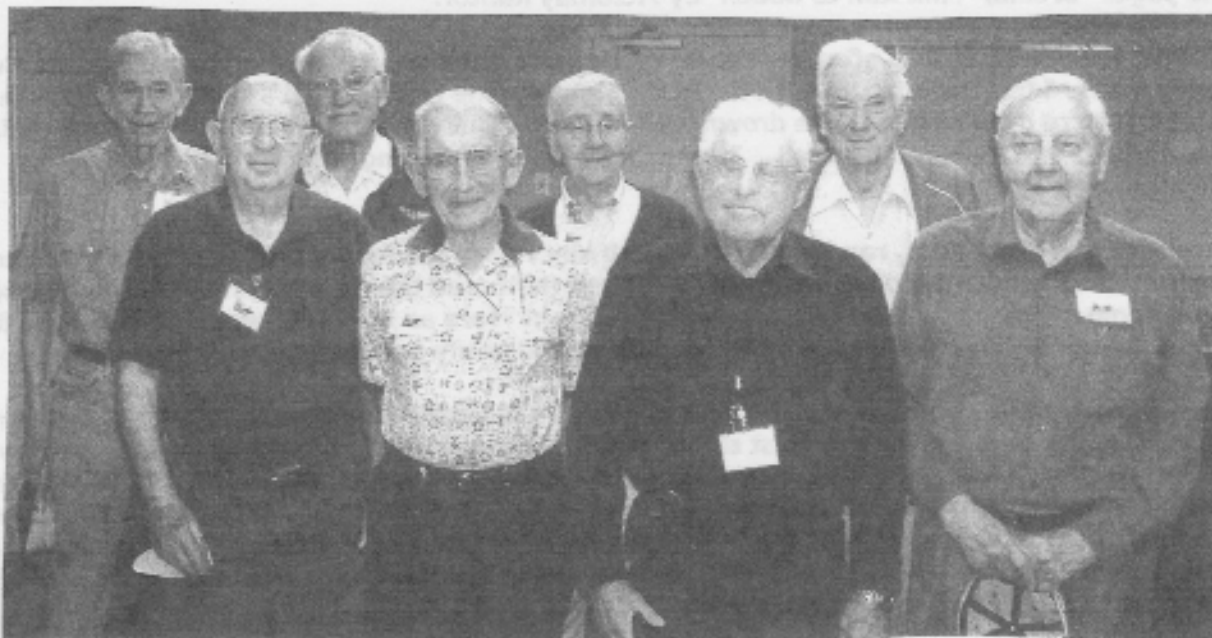
May 28, 1944 – Sunday, up at 0830 to breakfast and then got ready to take off for Shaftsbury rest home (the Coombe House). Flew in the AT-23 with majors Brawner, Bentley, and Mayer – landed at Zeals, a mosquito field. Home base sent transportation for me and arrived in time for dinner and spent the P.M. lounging on the lawn, and came in at 8 P.M.

Group flew two missions with A.M. a railroad bridge over the Seine River near Paris. Five ships were shot down over the target: Peterson, Woodrum, Seales, Laux, and Sewell. The rest came home with much battle damage. P.M. mission another railroad bridge in that area. Reynolds was flying "Smilin Joy" and was hit by flak at Amien. He feathered the right engine and turned back. There was no report of him until the next day, when returning fighters saw a ship with a white triangle down near Abbeville and reported four chutes. Ed Horn seemed to be hit badly; S/Sgt Coon radio-gunner and S/Sgt Gold armorer-gunner were along. Her (Smilin Joy) 41st mission and last..... a sweet ship.

Frank Palermo, and duties of the ordnance men in the 494th:

Our job overseas was to obtain the particular bomb sizes and fuses at the ammo dump for a certain mission. After obtaining the bombs and fuses, we loaded the bombs into the B-26's, then fused and armed them. This was our job in England, France, and Belgium, until the war was over.

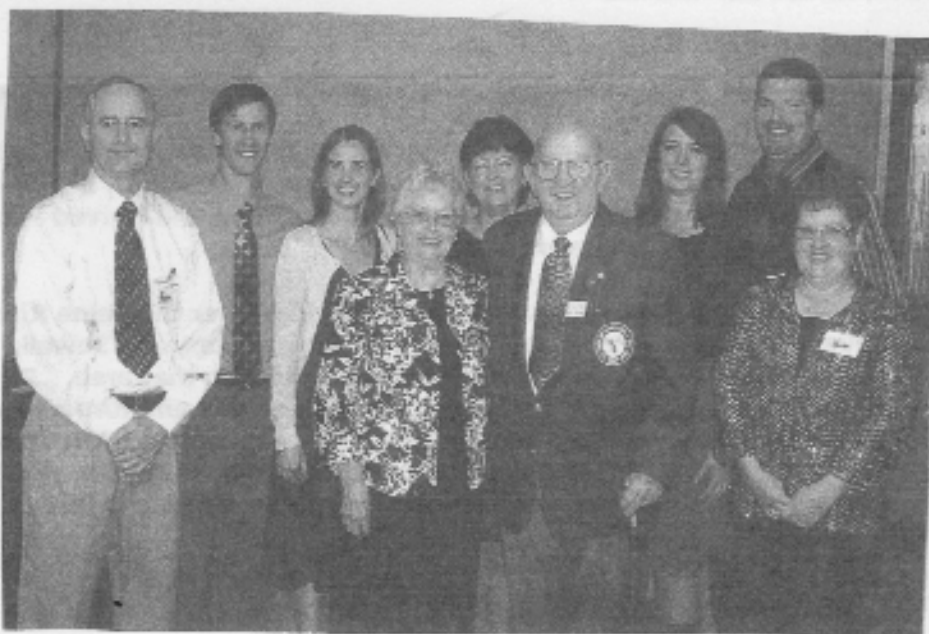
While in England on D-Day, we were kept busy 24 hours loading and fusing bombs for different missions. At one point during D-Day we were so busy that we were fusing the bombs as the planes were taxiing to the runway. We managed to finish the job and hop off the plane just before it took off.



The Reunion Veterans (L - R): James Lawrence, Edward Horn, Joe Balach, Don Korkowski, Santo Endrizzi, George Eldridge, Casey Hasey, Otto Kirkpatrick



**Another Reunion Veteran
August Turner with Wanda Turner**



The Leonard Norris Pew family members at the Reunion, with Ed Horn