



# 344TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

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## MILK RUN

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER/344<sup>TH</sup> BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION

Volume XXIV, No. 1

July 2013

### A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Welcome to all members and friends of the 344<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. It is time to get ready for our 25<sup>th</sup> reunion. George Cornett and the 454th Bomb Squadron Association have arranged for another outstanding reunion in Charleston, S.C. on September 26<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup>, 2013. The details are included in this MILK RUN.

This past April, my son Chris and I attended my annual Stalag Luft III POW reunion, which was held in Washington, D.C. this year. I was happy to see a fellow Kriege from the 496<sup>th</sup>: William E. Whitney, Jr. He was the co-pilot in Lt. Savko's crew, which was shot down on 27 April, 1944, while bombing coastal defenses at Fort Mardick. Four of the crew were KIA, while two became POWs. The 344<sup>th</sup> had 50 members who were POWs while stationed at Stansted. Bill hopefully will be attending the Reunion at Charleston.

While we were in Washington, we were invited to attend the "Old and Bold Pilots" weekly lunch meeting held at the Army-Navy Country Club. Our friend, Ken Chilstrom, invited us. Ken is a legendary WW2 fighter pilot and early test pilot. While at the luncheon, he introduced us to retired USAF Col. Wolfgang W.E. Samuel. Wolfgang was a 10 year old boy living in Sagan, Poland, in 1944 with his father who was a Luftwaffe Officer. Sagan is where Stalag Luft III was located. So, Wolfgang was there at the same time I was a POW in the camp. He is the author of the book, "German Boy", a story of his life growing up under the Nazis in Germany and the Communist in East Germany.

This is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the building and dedication of the runway at Stansted, England. This was the first airfield used by the 344<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group during WW2. The runway was officially dedicated by Col. Volmar of the 850<sup>th</sup> Engineering Battalion, on 15 February, 1944. To commemorate the runway, the Stansted Airport Authority will hold a ceremony on 26 July, which includes a plaque, a tree planting, and the remembrance of 95 members of the 344<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group that lost their lives or are MIA while stationed at Stansted. Chris and I will be flying over to London to attend the ceremony as representatives of the 344<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. We will be staying with our 344<sup>th</sup> Stansted members John and Daphne Smith.

Hope to see many of you at Charleston.

Major Ed Horn, President, 344<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association

REUNION - CHARLESTON, SC    SEPT 26 - SEPT 28

## V-MAIL

- **LEE GOLDSTEIN** – Hopes to attend the Reunion and contribute his War Stories.
- **JOANNE BEAIRD** – Daughter of Lt. Col. Leland “Ed” Embret, who was in the 494<sup>th</sup>, flying **SOLLY MILL K9-R**. His crew were: Hathway, Carney, Evert, Tippens, and Murphy. Ed passed away in 2007. Her daughter is Rachel Beaird.
- **PATRICK SACCO** – Wrote of the passing of his father, Cpl. Joseph Sacco of the 496<sup>th</sup>.
- **JAN STOUT** – Wrote of the passing of her mother, Mrs. Alfred L. Freiburger.
- **JOSEPH R. BALACH** – Wrote about being in Tyler, TX, with Casey Hasey, and remembering when he was visited by his brother during the Battle of the Bulge.
- **ROBERT E. AHERN** – Was a flight engineer and top-turret gunner in the 497<sup>th</sup> with Lt. Haden’s crew. Flew in six missions, and remembers flying their plane over to England via the Southern route.
- **ZAYNA WALDHOFF** – Daughter of Bob Waldhoff, who was a gunner with the 496<sup>th</sup>. Wanted info on her father’s crew. If anyone knows of info, please contact the MILK RUN.
- **SUSAN BRUSSARD** – Her father was Victor K. Syphers of the 496<sup>th</sup>. Purchased CAPS for her son and two grandsons.
- **SEPTOR WORKING** – Sent a crew photo from Barksdale AFB: Pilot Covey, Co-Pilot Shaeck, Bmbdr Bozich, Eng-Gun Barnhill, Radio-Gun Werner, Tail-Gun Burnham. Covey was killed in Korea; Burnham was killed in top turret.
- **CAROL LARSON CONDIT** – Daughter of Pilot Donald E. Larson of the 494<sup>th</sup>, bought a CAP for her son.
- **DARLA DOBSON** – Wrote that her husband. William Dobson, 495<sup>th</sup>, will be 92 on June 5<sup>th</sup>.
- **LTC. JOHN H. ECKERT** – Purchased a CAP in honor of his father, Pilot John K. Eckert, KIA on 8 March, 1944, 494<sup>th</sup>. His crew was involved in the mid-air collision of another B-26.
- **P.H FAVER** – Sent a photo of the famous picture of Capt. Chapman’s plane on fire due to flak. He said that he and Lambert were eye witnesses on 23 Feb. 1945.
- **MARION WHELPLEY** – Sent us a framed photo of Ed and Chris from the 2012 reunion. Thanks very much!
- **MARK G. KELLER** – His father was a 496<sup>th</sup> bomb-nav, and flew in both the “Queen of Hearts” and “Maxwell House II”. Looking for more info on his father’s war time experiences. Sent a photo of his father’s training crew, of the “Queen of Hearts”, and many other photos.

**Dues and Donations:** Robert E. Ahern \$200, Joanne L. Beaird \$100, Joseph Balach \$100, William Whitney \$100, Lee Goldstein \$50, Clarence E. Fowler, Jr. \$50, John C. Eckert \$40, Charles R. Hoeft, Jr. \$30, Carol Condit \$25, P.H. Faver \$24.

**THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT –** we send out over 400 copies twice a year, but hear 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 344<sup>th</sup> for future generations.

### **LAST FLIGHTS**

<b>MRS. ALFRED FRIEBURGER</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>Westminster, CA</b>	<b>9/13/2012</b>
<b>JOSEPH SACCO</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>Syracuse, NY</b>	<b>5/12/2012</b>
<b>JOHN P. Mc BRIDE</b>	<b>MSC</b>	<b>Moorestown, NJ</b>	<b>1/4/2009</b>
<b>GERHARD EVERWYN</b>	<b>MSC</b>	<b>Muchen, Germany</b>	<b>1/8/2013</b>
<b>DORIS TUBBS</b>	<b>495</b>	<b>Youngsville, NC</b>	<b>4/2012</b>
<b>GERALD S. LEIB</b>	<b>496</b>	<b>Harrisburg, PA</b>	<b>3/27/2013</b>
<b>WILLIAM (JOYCE) SKINNER, JR.</b>	<b>494</b>	<b>Davis, CA</b>	<b>unknown</b>

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Thanks to Phyllis Hay, of the B-26 Marauder Historical Society. In February, she sent 3 plaques that had been donated by the Carl Cutright family upon his passing. Carl was a co-pilot in the 496<sup>th</sup>. His son David lives in California. There are three plaques all mounted on Plexiglas. The top plaque reads: **“DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY OF THE 344<sup>TH</sup> BOMBARDMENT GROUP (MEDIUM) AAF “SILVER STREAKS” AND ITS MEMBERS WHO DIED WITH HONOR. CORMEILLES-EN-VEXIN, 30 SEPTEMBER 1944 – 5 APRIL 1945, PRESENTED ON 5 APRIL 1997, BY MEMBERS OF THE 344<sup>TH</sup> BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION”**. The middle plaque reads the same, except for: **“FLORENNES – JEAN OFFENBERG BASE, 5 APRIL 1945 – 1 SEPTEMBER 1945, PRESENTED ON 5 MAY 1988, BY MEMBERS OF THE 344<sup>TH</sup> BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION”**. The bottom plaque is the insignia of the **“FORCE AERIENNE, 2me WING TACTIQUE”**, with a key ring attached at the bottom. I am assuming that Carl was present and representing the 344<sup>th</sup> on both occasions.

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### **THE MOST IMPORTANT SQUADRON IN THE NINTH BOMBER COMMAND IN THE SPRING 1944**

By Joseph A. Hauser, Colonel, USAF (ret), 495<sup>th</sup> Sqd.

I wonder how many of our members remember how many missions were flown between the end of 1944 and onto the end of the war in May 1945 that were flown behind one or two of the B26's of the 1 Pathfinder Squadron? The recording of my tour in Europe with the 344<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group 495<sup>th</sup> and subsequently the First Pathfinder Squadron is limited to my memory and the diary I kept.

I remember that we did a lot of flying after we got qualified to lead a Pathfinder Mission. I did not realize how busy we must have been. We finished our Pathfinder qualification on the 20<sup>th</sup> of December 1944. We were scheduled to fly on December 31, 1944, but that mission was cancelled. The first mission that we flew was on 1 January, 1945. The last mission we flew was on the 18<sup>th</sup> of April, 1945. So, in 108 days, we led 47 missions. If one considers the number of days that the weather was too bad to fly, then one must come to the conclusion that we Pathfinders must have led about two-thirds of all the missions flown in this time period. This feat was certainly worthy of a special commendation which we



never received.

A good example was promotion. I flew 8 missions with the 344<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, and 47 missions with the Pathfinders. If I had stayed in the 344<sup>th</sup>, I would probably have been promoted to Captain after 15 missions. Yet, I led 47 Pathfinder missions as a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. I was only promoted after I informed the Group that I was scheduled to go home. Sometime, in the middle of my assignment to Pathfinders, I queried the Group about getting a promotion. Guess what: they said they needed the promotions themselves and maybe they would take care of me when I completed my missions. I was promoted on my way home.

Just a little background: I graduated from flight school in class 43B on 16 February, 1943. I was assigned to the 336<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 85<sup>th</sup> Squadron for replacement training, since the group was in the process of expanding. After completing transition, I was selected to be an instructor. Although I only had 50 hours in the B-26, I started checking out other Pilots, including some of my classmates. I can only say that in the next 100 hours, I learned more than my students. This was before we started getting transitioned pilots Del Rio and Dodge City.

I spent the next 16 months instructing in the 336<sup>th</sup>, and went overseas in June, 1944. Incidentally, my prize student was none other than 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt. John Moench, later General Moench, whom you all know and to whom we all owe a great debt of gratitude for his sterling work that got the B-26 Historical Society to where it is today. Thanks John, you have done a great job. (editors note: Major General John O. Moench (ret), passed away on 3 April, 2013, in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida).

As part of a Pathfinder crew, just remember, that on every day that our crew flew, there were Pathfinder airplanes sent to each of the other groups. Since there were eight B-26 Groups, and three A-20/A-26 Groups, one can assume that Pathfinder Squadron crews led over 500 missions from 1 January 1945 on to the end of the war.

I have not record of the history of the Pathfinder Squadron, but this is what I remember. The Squadron was formed in either late 1943 or early 1944, to fulfill the requirement to continue pressure on the Germans during the fall, winter, and spring when cloud cover over Germany generally made visual bombing in-effective. Fortunately, the British had an effective radar system dubbed "Oboe" that they had used for their night bombing target markers. Since they used it at night, it was made available to the 9<sup>th</sup> Bomber Command for daytime use.

The original cadre of crews that were borrowed from the operating Groups was made up of crews who had substantial mission flying experience in the Groups. They devised the operational concepts and wrote the Operational Instructions. By the time our crew arrived in November of 1944, the Pathfinders were in full swing. We were what I would call the second phase of the Pathfinder operations. Most of the replacement crews that arrived in late 1945 were low mission types, but the crews were made up of experienced people. Most of us had been instructor pilots at either Lake Charles (336<sup>th</sup>) or Barksdale (335<sup>th</sup>).

A word about the Pathfinder Mission day: Since we had to be briefed on our part of the mission before flying to the Group, we had to be up and in our briefing room at least 3 hours before the Group was scheduled to take off. This was dependent on the flying time to the group's base. We then had to attend the Group's briefing, and then present our flight and bombing plan. This made for a long day, especially when the take off was delayed or we had to lead two missions in one day. Getting up at 2 AM was not unusual.

Editor's note: Two members of the 344<sup>th</sup> were Pathfinders and wrote of their experiences – Otto Kirkpatrick's "Journal of a World War II Army Air Force Pathfinder Navigator" R. Casey Hasey's "My Bombsight View of WWII"

## **2013 Reunion - Schedule of Events**

You should plan to arrive on Sept. 25th, and depart on Sept. 29<sup>th</sup>.

### **CHARLESTON 2013 Reunion - Tours, Events**

(Register for tours in advance by Aug. 24<sup>th</sup> – Tour Reservation Form)

#### **Charleston City Tour - Thurs, Sept. 26th 1 pm – 5 pm \$38**

Guided Motor Coach tour of: 4 Corner's of Law, St. Michael's Church, Battery Park and Gardens, The Citadel, and Rainbow Road of Historic Houses. After the tour, explore the Historic French Quarter at 3:30 pm for 1-1/2 hours prior to bus back to hotel. Plan to eat lunch prior to tour; limited walking required.

#### **Harbor Tour & Fort Sumter Cruise- Fri, Sept. 27th 11 am – 3 pm \$43**

Motor coach drive to Cruise (2-1/2 hours). Includes narrated boat tour of Charleston Harbor as well as a stop at the Isle of Fort Sumter, with a presentation and time on your own. Snack bar on boat, limited walking required.

#### **Special Dinner/Entertainment Evening - Fri, Sept. 27th 6 pm – 8:30 pm \$39**

Tonight we will be attending a special 3 course dinner with a special entertainer. All at the hotel, casual dress.

<b><u>Saturday Sept. 28<sup>th</sup></u></b>	<b>10:00am</b>	<b>Business Meeting</b>
	<b>5:00pm</b>	<b>Cocktail Hour / Cash Bar</b>
	<b>6:00pm</b>	<b>Farewell Dinner/Entertainment</b>

#### **Farewell Dinner Evening - Saturday, Oct 27 5:00 – 9:00pm \$38**

3 course, duet entrée dinner, with musical background. Time to dress up!

**9:00pm – 12:00a.m. Hospitality Room Open**

*\*The tours require minimum of 30 participants, fully refundable if minimum number not achieved; within 30 days only refundable if medical emergency; operators not responsible for delay, injury and/or cancel due to mechanical problems and/or "Acts of God" incidents and conditions.*

### **HOTEL RESERVATION AND AIRPORT SHUTTLE INFORMATION**

\* Hotel Reservation Cut-Off Date (to secure \$110 Rate, tax included) is Sept. 4, 2013

Book by phone, call hotel reservations at (800) 967-9033. Hotel Guest Services number is: 843-744-2501 (For discounted rate, be sure to mention "454<sup>th</sup> Air Force Reunion". The Reunion Dates are: Sept. 25 (Wed) check-in / Sept. 29 (Sun) check out = 4 nights.

Radisson Hotel Charleston Airport, 5991 Rivers Avenue, Charleston, S.C. 29406  
Airport Shuttle Service is free (at airport, call hotel at 843-744-2501).

# Reunion Registration 2013 – Charleston, S.C.

Mail to: 454<sup>th</sup> BSA Attn: George Cornett 8250 E. Obispo Avenue  
Mesa, AZ 85212

Any inquires call, George Cornett at (480) 984-3676

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Group 344th Squadron \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Additional Guests \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival Date \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date \_\_\_\_\_

\$38 City Highlights Tour\* Thu. Sept. 26<sup>th</sup> Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$38 = \_\_\_\_\_

\$43 Harbor & Ft. Sumter Tour\* Fri. Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$43 = \_\_\_\_\_

\$39 Special Group Dinner Fri. Sept. 27<sup>th</sup> Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$39 = \_\_\_\_\_

\$38 Farwell Dinner Event Sat. Sept 28<sup>th</sup> Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$38 = \_\_\_\_\_

\$10 Unit Registration (Complimentary Hospitality Room) Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$10 = \_\_\_\_\_

Total Payment \_\_\_\_\_

OR

All tours/dinners and Registration \$168 each Total Enclosed # \_\_\_\_\_ x \$168 = \_\_\_\_\_

Please make Checks to: 454<sup>th</sup> BSA

Person Contact, Emergency

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

(Full Refunds, if canceled prior reunion)

\* See Tour Description for Details

**Please complete and return Registration by AUGUST 24, 2013**

If anyone needs assistance in making reservations, please call Chris Horn at 561-626-2497. Also, kindly e-mail or call Chris to advise us if you are attending.