

# 2nd Bombardment Association "Second to None"

[www.2ndbombgroup.org](http://www.2ndbombgroup.org)



**Volume 31, No. 1 Winter-Spring 2015**



## Message from President Karen Nelson

Dear Veterans and Friends of the 2nd Bomb Group,

Happy Summer to everyone. I hope you are all well and looking forward to our final reunion in Shreveport. It will be good to start thinking of something other than cold and snow. In this issue of the newsletter, you will hopefully find many interesting articles and updates, starting with our next, and probably final, reunion at Barksdale Air Force Base in Shreveport, Louisiana, the home of the 2nd Bomb Group. The reunion will be held from Wednesday, October 14th, through Sunday, the 18th.

At our last reunion in Albuquerque, we were privileged to meet Brigadier General Peyton Cole and his wife. General Cole has a long association with Barksdale, including time as a Wing Commander. He gave us a lot of information on the area and options for our reunion. A few months ago, Bonnie Hellums and her husband, Carel Stith, visited Barksdale and finalized plans. Penny LeGrand, who has helped us organize past reunions, is doing the same for us at Shreveport. I think you will be pleased.

We hope that, at this final reunion, we will have as many veterans as possible attend, along with our second generation members. The airmen at Barksdale are ready, willing and able to give our veterans a wonderful reunion. As at the Air Force Academy, it is a great honor for these men and women to meet our veterans and their families. Our second generation members, too, can add so much with their stories about veteran family members.

In this newsletter, Todd Weiler, our Historian, will explain the urgency we face in finding a home for all of our

documents and memorabilia. As we have often discussed, many of our members do not want to give personal items from their veteran loved-ones, but might be happy to send copies of documents. It would be best if we could discuss this in person, at the next reunion, so please do try to attend. If you could bring a list of your documents and memorabilia, that would be ideal. If for health reasons, you are not able to attend, please contact Todd to discuss your items.

In Albuquerque, it was decided that we will use our treasury funds to continue our website, rather than continue the newsletter. After this newsletter, you will receive one very short newsletter/registration form for the Barksdale reunion and one recap newsletter following the reunion. As always, if you have any questions, please contact me at [karenwnelson@msn.com](mailto:karenwnelson@msn.com), or at 703.892.5176.

Please stay well and I look forward to seeing you in Louisiana

Kindest regards,

Karen Nelson  
President 2nd Bomb Group

### Inside this edition...

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- Registration form for 2015 Reunion at Barksdale, AFB Shreveport, La.

## Comments from the Newsletter Editor

by Todd Weiler, Editor (308m14@gmail.com)

I have to apologize for the lateness of this edition but a number of unforeseen events unfolded that honestly zapped my ability to crank this information out. First of which was an overwhelming summer I'll never forget. It began with the 70th anniversary of mission #263 in the Czech Republic, the groups worst lost of life mission of WWII.

Besides trying my hardest to make this an unforgettable experience, I was cast into a participatory role representing the 2nd Bomb Group. I was honored by the attendance of not one but two vets, one of which a survivor of the mission, Loy Dickinson, and pilot Chuck Childs with whom I had a great time in New Orleans with. I'll expand on the CZ trip later in the newsletter.

One thing that was inevitable was that this would be the last of many things. As I was preparing for the CZ trip the future of the organization was in question. I could not process the events to come in the Czech Republic and stateside discussions regarding closing down the association at the same time. It put me at cross-purposes of planning for the future and the end at the same time. It gave me great difficulty in moving forward, but like anything in life an inviablensness that must be dealt with.

In 2006 I came into 2nd Bomb Group as a curious relative wanting to learn more about my Uncle Jim Weiler's service. I was immediated embraced and deluged with information and pictures my family never knew before from group members and others. I agreed to help their cause and here I am now, plotting the next heading.

I want to make sure that others like me have the same experience. Losing the living members is the hardest. They add so much support and style, that I cannot find adequate words to quantify what a first-class bunch of guys these were. They motivated me to step forward and lend a hand.

I was so involved in many of the events in the CZ reunion and Albuquerque reunions I vaguely have any memories of them. I was no longer an observer on the sidelines, but a spokesman trying to find the right words and not screw anything up. Thank goodness a lot of you took and sent me pictures so I can re-live the memories and begin to process all that happened.

Then when I thought I had enough on my plate a serious illness was diagnosed at Christmas. Long story made short is I had surgery and the pathology is looking 95% cured. One thing I'll tell you, is listening to the stories of the vets getting shot down, taken P.O.W. and more, helped me feel I could endure anything compared to what they went through. Thanks guys! It has set me back as I don't seem to have as much multi-tasking skills as I used

to. It's hard to spend an 8-hour day at work in front of a computer and then go home and spend 4 yours in front of the computer again. Hence my dilemma right now.

So we have a number of decisions to make for the future of the organization.

1) The first one is to control expenses, we would like to E-Mail you the newsletter instead of printing it. Each edition costs \$500-\$700 to print and mail out. Please e-mail Treasurer Matt Bryner at [mrbrwyner@gmail.com](mailto:mrbrwyner@gmail.com) and request e-mail edition only,

2) I still need access to someone who has access to people finder software or services. Many of the "good" services like Accurint, Pipl, Spock or genealogy services like Ancestry.com all start free but then require a fee to continue. I have had only one volunteer. If you can help, shoot me an e-mail and we'll get started.

3) The group is planning what may likely be the last reunion of the 2nd Bomb Group. One suggestion is that we reach out to the existing Bomb Group and legacy Squadrons that currently exist at Barksdale and elsewhere. If the organization is going to continue, the younger members from Korea and foward need to be contacted and solicited for their support. We need people who can reach out to those originations and determine the level of interest if we want the 2nd BG to continue. If you can help in this regard, contact 2nd BG President Karen Nelson at [karenwnelson@msn.com](mailto:karenwnelson@msn.com).

4) We have to select a process to determine what to do with all the documents and artifacts that the Association has. Many of the board members, veterans, families of veterans have boxes of items in their homes. As we past on, we would like a defined process of what to keep and what to discard. Prized items like photos with names and dates need to be scanned and digitized to prevent deterioration. We need people with scanners and time to digitize our materials. Contact me if you can help.

5) Since we are going to Barksdale and the 2nd Bomb wing, 20th and 96th Bomb Squadrons, 49th Test and Evaluation squadrons are located there, a.k.a. the majority of the legacy 2nd Bomb Group legacy units are based there, it makes sense to leave our archives there. The question becomes one of who then has access and control. Perhaps these are delicate questions that need to be discussed face to face. But what each current member has to decide is what are their preferences? Let your board members know. If you say nothing, we can't act on your behalf. Many alternative suggestions are to let vets donate them to their local colleges or libraries. Needless to say, the more we put in one spot, the easier it will be for future researchers.

Enough to think about for now. Keep 'em flying! 🌟

# 70th Anniversary of Mission 263 commemorated in Czech Republic

by Todd Weiler, Editor

In 2007 when I attended my first commemoration of Mission #263 in the Czech Republic I was filled with uncertainty and fear, but my curiosity squelched any doubt I was having about coming. In the end I learned a valuable lesson about history, courage, sacrifice, honor, loyalty, justice and the price of freedom.

2014 would be a year to stand above the others. 70 years must have felt like an unconscionable number to see come and go, especially to those who witnessed the original events. Time heals many wounds, but the sense of honor deepens as the loss of the day sinks in.

This cathartic moment in the 2nd Bomb Group history is also a pivotal moment in the Czech history as well. It was the moment that the CZ's rebelled against the Nazi occupiers and it became their "Pearl Harbor" moment as well. This August 29th, 2014 friends, families, historians and representatives from around the world gathered to pay their respects and remind the world that we have not forgotten the loss of 41 airmen.

This reunion was not to be without its dramatic moments too. Right off the bat weather play havoc with arrivals and arranged transportation plans flew out the window. The most serious was Chuck Childs, a 2nd BG veteran pilot all of 94 years young, missed his ride connection from Vienna and was not heard from for a day. He missed the first day of ceremonies, but wisely took a hotel in Vienna before taking a train and cab to finally arrive at the hotel with the Americans. Whew! Add Navigator to his pilot credentials.

A record number of stops were planned this year with two countries, 10 grave site/memorials all in three dawn to dusk days.

The first stop was where William Bullock's plane went down near Kasava, CZ. Then it was a half day ride to get to Bosaca, Slovakia where Robert McCloskey and then Antonstal where the lone B-24 piloted by Billy Ray crashed. The hillside graveyard in Bosaca overlooks the village below in a heavily



The massive crowds in Rudice once again didn't disappoint as hundreds filled the cemetery where two 2nd BG vets, Russell Meyrick and Joe Merinello are buried with a new headstone. Included are two CZ WWII commandos who died in the area.



Loy Dickenson seated in w/chair with Chuck Childs behind him pose with all the Americans who came to represent their families at the mass grave in Slavciv where 28 airmen from Mission #263 were initially buried.

wooded area. Many of cemeteries contain century old graves. They all typical have some aviation plane part or artifact as a part of the memorial. The weather cooperated and the ceremonies began. Since the Czech Republic divided after the war, both the Czech national anthem, the Slovak national anthem and the U.S. national anthems were played. It was a very moving moment to hear those melodies. I tried to stay focused to deliver my comments, but inside I wanted to be an observer and let my emotions out. It was one of the hardest things I ever did.

After the Ray ceremony we dined at a former Soviet military base now a museum. Outside were many Soviet made MIGS, tanks and other heavy weapons. The juxtaposition of the current world events with the nearby fighting in the Ukraine cast an eerie irony of history replaying itself out again. More than one Czech expressed their concerns about the current state of Eastern European affairs.

Everyone was very relieved to learn that Chuck Childs managed to find his way to the hotel WITHOUT his CZ escort. He replied, "Where were you guys?" with a wide grin as we joined him in the bar that evening. There wasn't much partying that night as everyone was adjusting to the jet lag and the long day. A beautiful crescent moon in clear skies slid over the majestic Carpathian mountains as everyone turned in.

When I attended these ceremonies in 2007 and 2009, it was 90+ degrees hot. I prayed for cooler temperatures and got it. I forgot to ask to leave out the rain. All three days the clouds build and rain fell around us, but not on us. It rained for two weeks straight just before we arrived.

The wet road complicated our next ceremony in Sanov. The farm access roads were too muddy for cars. U.S. Army to the rescue. 20 or so reenactors drove there vintage WWII vehicles to be part of the commemorations. They were a life saver as we needed them to get from the City up into the wooded hills where Thayne Thomas's plane "Big Time" crashed. Into the jeeps and trucks the Americans were loaded up and driven through town as the villagers all looked in

See Letters Mission #263 Remembered continued on Page 4



U.S. military reenactors drove their open air jeeps and vehicles from all over Europe to be a part of the commemorations in Sanov. They saved the day as the heavy rains muddied the roads for conventional cars to reach the Thane Thomas crash site. They carried the Americans through the town and up the hills as residents waved eagerly on.

amazement and waved back as if Gen. George Patton himself was liberating the town again. I almost became an astronaut as our jeep hit a hidden ditch and up I went with no seat belt. Luckily I landed in a safe part of the jeep. I have new respect for the infantry.

In the woods near Thomas's plane they circled the vehicles and we did another set of reading honors to the dead and played the national anthems. The locals were harvesting a record crop of mushrooms thanks to the wet weather. Down the hill we went back to town waving to the towns people once again. At the municipal museum of Sanov there were book signings and toasts of Slivovitz to be had before heading over to Bojkovice for lunch and a tour of their museum.

At the Bojkovice museum two books were baptized with slivovitz, as is the tradition with new books, that commemorated mission #263 and the people impacted. With funds from the European Union, the 10 local cities where the ceremonies were held, each go 40 copies for their libraries. They also created a traveling popup display that honors each plane that got shot down and the details of their crews along with their pictures. The displays will travel from city to city to educate the youth of the sacrifices of the veterans from mission #263.

Our next stop was a visit to the small village of Prečkovice where #263 veteran Edward Sallings hid in a house for the rest of the war, undetected by the Germans after being shot down. Th Czech have now placed a historical marker on the home.

From Prečkovice is was a short 20 minute ride to the town of Rudice. Two vets, Russell Meyrick and Joe Marinello were buried here with full German military honors, unlike other crash sites. Two Czech commandos who parachuted in to coordinate the resistance against the Germans, but were immediated surrounded are buried here. They took their own lives in lieu of certain torture and death at the hands of the

SS. While conditions of their death may be taboo to some, they forfeited their lives for the sake of freedom and deserve recognition none the less.

The Rudice cemetery was overflowing once again as it located in the heart of town and everyone comes out for the occasion. Hundreds filled the walkways and grounds for the wreath laying cemetery. Then everyone walked a mile out of town to an open field and woods were there is a memorial to Russell Meyrick who chuted failed to open after bailing out. Several small planes flew by in salute during the open air mass led by the local archbishop. A very moving tribute. The locals still call that area "America". Think about that. That's how much they revere of veterans.

From there it was back into town with a fine dinner of the local Czech cuisine at a restaurant. The entire townspeople stopped by and there was no lack of slivovitz as some found out the hard way.

The next morning came early after such a wonderful party the night before. A ceremony was held in Slavicin where 28 airmen were buried from mission #263. The area was once used to bury animals and criminals, which is why the Germans chose that spot. Now 70 years later it is in the heart of the cemetery and a place of high honor. After a great lunch in Slavicin we headed to Krohov where my uncle's plane crashed.

As we exited the bus, a few stray drops hit us. The only rain during the 3 days of ceremonies. I felt that they were more tears from above than rain. We didn't get soaked and the ceremony went off with out a hitch. Next was Vyskovec.

Of all the sites we visited, this one is closest to heaven. High on the hill and right on the border, the local Slavs came dressed in their native homeland costumes. Some in costume peasant singers entertained with songs before the ceremonies.

Then it was time to head back to the hotel and begin the tearful routine of saying goodbyes and well wishes. There wasn't a dry eye in the place and the magnificent once in a lifetime event drew to a close. Godspeed to all! 🇺🇸



Loy Dickenson (left) with Chuck Childs pose in front of the Merrill A. Prentice crew monument near Vyskovec on the Czech-Slovak border on the last day of ceremonies.



## Linda Gartz continues uncle's letters home from 1st Lt. Frank Ebner Gartz

from Linda Gartz, Board Member

Linda Gartz is posting letters written to and from her Uncle Frank Ebner Gartz, on or near the date they were written seventy years ago at her blog, entitled "Letters of a World War II Airman." Frank would eventually become a navigator with the 49th Sqdn, 2nd Bomb Group and successfully complete twenty-five missions through the end of the war in 1945.

The full blog can be accessed at:

<http://www.chicagonow.com/letters-world-war-2-airman>

It's been a while since you have caught up with my uncle, Frank Ebner Gartz, called "Ebner by some, and Frank by others in the family. I believe you read his letters last when he had started Navigation School in January, 1944. By April 11, 1944, he was in Advanced Navigation School which would last eighteen weeks. "The courses are tough," he wrote. By April 24th he wrote in jest, "I know what a brain cell is and how to misuse it...I've learned more [in the last two weeks] than all the time in Santa Ana and Pre-flight together."

He confessed to my mother in May that he would "raise a little hell," on his birthday (5/14/44 he would turn twenty), and my mom, in turn, compliments Frank on "being in the highest branch of the service, the Air Corps." At the end of May, he wrote my parents that he had "300 tick and chigger bites, and can never stop scratching," but his real pain comes from the fact that he was failing tests. He wrote his parents on June 11, 1944:

"I'm worried about my course here. I failed another examination and I can't figure it out. I try so hard. I work too slow and never finish my examinations. I don't know what to do. I'm standing here helpless and just watching the bad marks go down....This is practically all I have been thinking about these past days. I can't write letters or eat right because of it. It's a constant threat to my existence. If I work fast, I get mixed up and can't do anything right."

The whole family rallies behind Frank's anxiety, every member sending encouraging words. His parents send a telegram:

**"DON'T GET DISCOURAGED, SON. YOU LICKED ALGEBRA WHEN YOU THOUGHT YOU COULDN'T. WE KNOW YOU CAN MAKE THE GRADE NOW TOO. WE HAVE FULL TRUST IN GOD TO LEAD YOU THE RIGHT WAY. LOVE MOM AND POP."**

My father writes, "I hear you have been having some difficulties in your studies. Could it be that you 'try too hard?' I'm not being sarcastic....A person can try so hard that, like

cramming it fails to make a [lasting] impression." He goes on to give his younger brother tips on studying.

Oldest brother, Will, sends along some "tricks and shortcuts," and offers to try to help anyway he can (he's an engineer and pilot with the Civil Air Patrol).

On September 17, 1944, Frank sends a telegram to his folks. He faced down his studies and won: **GRADUATION TODAY. MADE 2ND LT.... MUST REPORT TO NEW BASE 27 SEP.**

Frank was sent to Rapid City, South Dakota, to complete his training in the B-17 heavy bomber: He wrote to my father on October 12th:

We are going to fly tomorrow. It's my first time in a 17. I have a good crew. The first pilot has his 1400 hours of flying and really knows his stuff. The co-pilot is a swell guy and so is the bombardier. The three of them are married so I have two rooms to myself in the B.O.Q. We have been going to class every day and celestial navitrainer (?) since I've been here, but it's not too dull. I've learned quite a few things in those classes."

His mother wrote to Frank two days later. "Some times I wish I could fly to you and see what has happened to my Frank. I had a nightmare from worry, but thanks God it is all over." She goes on after writing about his dad's infected knee and her 20 hours (yes 20!) per day to keep up with all his janitor work and the "women's work" of the house. She ends with: "So God is very good to us and so to you as it comes closer to your test to lead your [B]-17 safely where your duty is given to you." (She wrote English with the accent of her native tongue, German).

By November 30th, Frank's departure for Europe is getting closer. He writes his mother:

"We have a good team in our crew. In fact we have won 3rd place out of 57 crews, and we will get an honorable mention and promotion for it. We did work hard for it." He informs his family that he will soon be flying overseas. My father wrote a heartfelt letter on Dec. 7, 1944, beginning like this:

"My Dear Brother, There is so much pent up within me that I want to say to you and I don't know how to get it out. You leaving us—not to see you for probably a long time. We have been together (all of us) for quite a while and despite little differences, our love for each other is truly without bounds. To me you are somewhat more than just a brother. You remember you and I were in the park day in and day out and even, when need be, I changed your diapers?"

He continued on with family reminiscences, and then: "I don't know how to close this, except through Mom. Don't forget what she taught us, irking as it may have been, it was and always is, based in love and sacrifice. She and Dad have given up

**See Letters from an Airman continued on Page 10**



## Barksdale A.F.B Reunion – Wednesday, October 14th through Saturday, October 17th, 2015 Plan to attend last reunion.

**Hotel – Sam’s Town Hotel & Casino** - \$99 per night plus tax. Rate does not include breakfast, however, there is a very inexpensive restaurant in hotel that has a breakfast menu ranging in price from \$2 to \$12. There is complimentary shuttle service to/from the airport

Modified daily menus are listed below. They are included for your information and to help with your plans.

**Wednesday** – arrival day –Check into hotel and then the hospitality area. Hospitality room open from 3 P.M. until dinner and then, after dinner

Buffet dinner at hotel - 6 P.M. \$22.00 per person. Buffet to include Cobb Salad, Turkey sandwich, tuna or chicken salad wrap, with condiments, dessert with beverage.

**Thursday** – First Day of tours. Hospitality Room open. Shreveport and Boissier City sightseeing. Approximately \$30 per person with a minimum of 25 people. Lunch on your own with plenty of options in area of tour bus.



Buffet Dinner at hotel - 6 P.M., \$22 per person, Taste of Italy. Lasagna, salad, dessert, with beverage

**Friday** – Hospitality Room open. Day at Barksdale AFB. Transportation, tour of Barksdale, and lunch \$36 with minimum 25 people.



Following a tour and orientation by the Wing Commander, Col Kristen Goodwin, we’ll tour the Global Power Museum and Aircraft Display.

Many of the aircraft used by the 2nd Bomb Wing and 2nd Bomb Group are on display. Golf carts will be available to expedite transportation around the grounds. There is also a gift shop in the museum with many interesting momentos from the past and the present. We will proceed over across the street to the Officer’s Club for lunch.



Buffet dinner at hotel - 6.00pm, \$22.00 per person. Deli Delight, including an assortment of meat, cheese, breads, salads, and dessert, with beverage.

**Saturday** – Hospitality Room open. Trip to RW Norton Art Gallery and Gardens. An Art Museum with 400 paintings set in a botanical park. Surrounding the R.W. Norton Art Gallery are 40 acres of beautifully landscaped grounds and botanical gardens, where tens of thousands of plants. has the most extensive collection of Charlie Russell Western sculptures and paintings in the world. The gardens are set among gentle swells of land, shaded by tall columns of venerable pines and oaks. Southern Living named "one of the South's favorite spots". \$20 per person, 24 people minimum Lunch on your own Some active duty crewmembers will come to the casino to have a hanger flying session with some of the original 2nd Bomb Group members and their kin. The aircrews are very interested in learning all they can about their heritage and the story of the 2nd Bomb Group.

General meeting at 4 pm in the hospitality room

Banquet dinner at 6:00 pm, \$35.00 per person

### Saturday Banquet Menu

Salad, choice of entree: Stuffed Chicken Breast, Flat Iron Steak, or Salmon Filet, with accompaniment, dessert, beverage.

*\*\*\*All meals are inclusive of tax and gratuities. The menu’s are subject to change, and beverages are water, tea, and coffee*



# 2nd Bomb Group Reunion 2015 Registration Sheet

**Wednesday Oct 14th** \$22.00 per person Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$22 Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Buffet dinner at hotel - 6 P.M.

**Thursday October 15th** \$30.00 per person Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$30 Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bus tour of Shreveport/Bossier City  
 Buffet dinner at hotel 6:00 PM \$22.00 per person Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$22 Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Friday October 16th**  
 Barksdale A.F.B Tour/ Lunch \$36.00 per person Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$36 Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Buffet dinner at hotel 6 P.M. \$22.00 per person Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$20 Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Saturday October 17**  
 Tour R. W. Norton Art Gallery Shreveport, LA \$20.00 per person Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$30 Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Evening Banquet Options \$30 each:  
 Formal Evening dinner banquet at hotel - 6 P.M. Salmon Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$35 Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chicken Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$35 Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Beef Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$35 Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee all attendees - \$15.00 per person Number \_\_\_\_\_ x \$15 Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Total Amount Sent \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

If you or others in your party will require a wheelchair, please check here, including the number of wheelchairs;  
 Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Number \_\_\_\_\_. There is no charge for this.

For events and meals, please make checks payable to: **LeGrand Travel.**  
**Send to Legrand Travel , 11231 N. Platte Dr., Oro Valley, AZ 85737**  
DEADLINE IS October 1st, 2015

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Veteran: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Others attending: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_



# News from the internet you might have missed

by Sid Underwood, 2nd Bomb Group Webmaster

*One of the great powers of the internet is its weakness. As the younger generation grows more connected, the older generation can't keep up. Knowing many of you do not have a computer or access to the internet, we are trying to bring you news that normally is available on the internet, but you might have missed. People are posting requests for information that you might have. So here is a compilation of the latest requests that we hope you can respond to by call or letter.*

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Posted 3/20/15

Prisoners of War - Stalag Luft 1

There is a writeup on <http://www.merkki.com/brynerjohn.htm> by my grandson, Matthew Bryner, about The Peace Memorial Monument, dedicated 22 March 2005 in Grossraschen, Germany. Thirteen German citizens and my 9 crewmates were killed in the crash of my B-17 #44-6440. We designed a beautiful black marble monument for the old graveyard in Grossraschen. Special Note: The city plans a nice ceremony 22 March 2-15, 70 years after the crash, and all members of the 215th USAAF, friends and relatives are invited to attend. Wolfgang Lehmann, a 16 year old Hitler youth was badly burned in the plane crash: POW in Serbia 1945-1955, returned home with others. I was invited to attend, but at 90, recovering from a heart attack, I regretfully will not be there. For more information, ask Matt Bryner, 2nd BG Assoc Treasurer for me.

Sincerely,

John Bryner via Matt Bryner at [mrbryner@gmail.com](mailto:mrbryner@gmail.com)

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Posted 3/21/14

Subject: Requesting Information - Identify Unknown 2nd BG Officers

Rob Hofmann, the nephew of Capt Jerry Hofmann who was a pilot in the 429th Bomb Squadron, is requesting assistance in identifying the officers in the photos below. Capt Jerry Hofmann is in the middle of unknown # 5. You can click on each photo to enlarge it.

Please contact Robert Hofmann at [robertdhofmann@yahoo.com](mailto:robertdhofmann@yahoo.com)

(See Pictures next panel.)

Unknown # 1



Unknown # 2



Unknown # 3



Unknown # 4



Unknown # 5



Unknown # 6



## Folded Wings In Memoriam....2nd Bomb Group Veterans that have passed recently

**Lloyd R. True**, November 10, 2013, 20th Squadron

**Raymond C. Roe**, 2013, 20th Squadron

**Peter B. Beers**, February 2, 2014, 429th Squadron

**Jack W. Gamble**, February 24, 2014, 20th Squadron

**Carl J. Nastoupil**, June 20, 2014, 429th Squadron

**Robert "Bob" Joseph Fredericks, Jr.**, January 30, 2015, 429th Squadron

**Meyer Spieler**, March 15, 2015, 20th Squadron

**James W. Carter**, May 8, 2015, 49th Squadron

Please keep these men and all veterans in your prayers. Family, please forward all member obits to 2nd Bomb Association to be honored on our website. ✪

# Albuquerque Reunion Highlights

By Todd Weiler

It's called the land of Enchantment. It truly lived up to the billing this year as the site of the 2014 2nd Bomb Group reunion. Parked in the shadow of Sandia Mountain with Kirkland Airforce base in the foothills, one arriving by air has their nose pressed up against the window taking in the vast mesas, winding Rio Grande river and green forested mountains. The trip down from Denver is spectacular as I've flown it many times.

The group assembled at the Marriott Double Tree in downtown Albuquerque. It was centrally located for all to get to. The first day of activities involved a trip to the longest tram ride in north America...the Sandi Peak tram.

The breathtaking view over the City of Albuquerque is wonderful. A clear cobalt blue sky greeted us as we looked out over the base station. Inside was a collection of old ski boots that I swear came from my closet.

Down the hill we rolled all the way to Old Town for a wonderful lunch at the old Church St. Cafe restaurant. The food was Mexican for those that wanted it and milder for those gringos with a more sensitive constitution. Next stop was the Nuclear Museum.

The museum is loaded with the history of all things nuclear. It starts with the first discoveries of radiation and takes it all the way to bombmaking, medicine and power generation. I was amazed to know just how many "broken arrows" accidentally dropped nuclear weapons there were. Some how missed that part in my history class. It was also

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Meyer Spieler, was a member of the 2nd Bomb Group, 20th squadron. He passed away on Sunday, March 14th at age 95. One of his proudest possessions, which I too have always cherished, is a piece of lava from Mt. Vesuvius. He was stationed in Rome when Mt. Vesuvius erupted in 1944. He threw a coin in some lava to see if it was hot, and the coin partially melted. He waited until it cooled, picked it up, and it now sits in my hutch.

Ira Spieler <irawww@gmail.com>

My father, Meyer Spieler who was an airplane mechanic for the Second Bomb Group told me of how they would wait for the planes to return and anxiously count how many got safely home. He showed me a picture of one of the B-17's that returned from somewhere near Russia that was so badly damaged that the fuselage was held together by a tree trunk but the Flying Fortress brought her crew home safely. Amazing airplanes and amazing men. My father was very proud to have served with them.

Ann Spieler <awhitex1@netzero.net>



Navajo Code Talkers and 2nd Bomb group members share stories and autograph each other books at a house diner hosted by Ann and Russ Rhodes.

fascinating to see how small some of the nuclear charges were including a back pack sized demolition charge. Not very comforting given today's terrorist driven agendas.

Some how the cards got shuffled we realized our dinner bus was not going to take us to my cousin's house for a planned diner house party with Navajo Code Talkers as the special guests. Some how with the help of others, including my cousins, we all got there on time. Unfortunately, the Code Talkers had car trouble too. My cousin sent a limo for them and finally the greatest generations of the European Air theater meet the Marine Pacific veterans. Bill Toledo and Jack Jones Navajo code talkers shared their compelling story of how they called in commands from the front lines to their radio translator in the Navajo language. The Japanese army never learned about this secret Navajo weapon. Only recently has their contribution to America's winning of World War II come to its rightful honorable place.

The most amazing moment of the night was when Bill Toledo in his 90's sang the Marine Corps hymn "The Halls of Montezuma"...in Navajo. It was stunning. A moment I will always cherish. The sunset faded into a brilliant red sunset with the lights of the city glittering underneath. The food was delicious and it was time to go back to the hotel. Good thing we drove, as we started an hour late and the bus would have left before we got to hear the Marine Corps hymn.

Friday was a day to explore Old Santa Fe. Again the bus cards fell out of place and I was called upon as tour guide calling out the sights along the way. Thank goodness I've been there enough times and have good cell phone reception to add tour guide to my duties. Saturday was a day left to explore the sights of Albuquerque on your own.

A special thanks to my magnificent cousin Ann Rhodes and her husband Russ for hosting us all at their house for an unforgeable and historic evening. See you in Barksdale AFB in October 12-18, 2015. 🌟

## Letters from an Airman continued from Page 5

everything for us—everything, and whatever you or Will or I might ever be, we owe it to them.

May the good Lord keep you and bring you safely back to us, and until then, Auf wiedersehen. Auf wiedersehen. Dein Bruder und Kamaradt.” (Dad reverted back to the first language he learned from his Romania-born, but ethnic German parents).

On December 16, 1944, Frank wrote his mother:

Dear Mom, I can't tell you where I am or where I'm going but the first leg of our trip is over and we are waiting for things to come out right so we can leave here.

Then on Christmas day, he wrote from Africa: “We haven't reached our final destination, but I hope we soon will as this constant flying is getting all of us on edge. We have had good luck so far and I hope it will keep up... We had a nice Christmas dinner tonight with turkey, wine, and all—but the poor enlisted men had a bad deal. They had “C” type rations and they had a right to be as mad as they were.

Frank's next letters arrived in January, 1945, and I love it. He writes three letters each with a very different tones, one to my parents, one to his parents, and one to a friend his own age.

Jan. 2, 1945

Hello Mom and Pop, I'm still waiting for something to happen. We celebrated New Years here...with a quiet game of black jack with the boys of our crew. Between the eight of us, we had a half pint of brandy, a half pint of sweet wine and a gallon of tomato juice. All in all we had a nice time among us.

Dear Fred, “Christmas we were at some undisclosed islands in the Atlantic and bright and early Christmas day we were in the air on the way to Africa. WE arrived in the afternoon and had a swell dinner at Marrakech on the West Coast. This was the start of a two-week vacation in which all we did was eat, sleep, haul wood and coal for our fire and play cards, raise hell, get drunk, and have a hell of a good time.”

To his best friend, also in the air corps but stationed in the Aleutians, he wrote with language reserved for “the guys.”

Marrakech was off limits, soooo, we saw all of it. The weather was never right. The [weather] guy must had his b..lls twisted in a knot because he isn't worth sh... You should take this joker's place. I've got 33 more missions to go and some time to do it. Germans know what 105s and 88s were made for and know how to use them.”

By this time, Frank had flown several missions, his first on January 20, 1945, to bomb the oil storage at Regensburg, Germany. Of the twenty-eight aircraft that took off, one didn't come back.

He wrote his parents about the mission:

“It was quite the thing. I saw my first flak and even though other disagree with me, I think it was pretty. But the again, many pretty things are dangerous.”

On Feb., 12th, he wrote:

“We have been trying to fly a mission for the past 5 days and it just won't go. Perhaps it will one of these days.”

It did...the next day: Mission # 354. Forty-two aircraft dropped 410 five-hundred-pound RDX bombs on the south ordnance depot of Vienna. “Flak was heavy/moderate, to intense and accurate” according to the official report, “resulting in the death of Paul W. Hampstein, 429th Squadron, and wounding of Cpl. W. Kopke, 20th Squadron.”

Frank wrote my parents about mission 354, saying “Well, I've got 33 more to go and I hope that none of them will be like the last.”

Two days later, he had a chance to find out. On February 18, he wrote my dad a letter, sending along a newspaper article of the raid he participated in on February 16th, bombing marshaling yards at Innsbruck, Austria, and other targets:

Dear Fred,

I was on the raid that is mentioned in the article and it was super HELL. We had 42 flak holes in the ship, but no one was hurt. We did a wonderful job of bombing on the Brenner Pass. Remind me to tell you about my 3rd mission. I'll never forget it and hope never to see another like it.

I'm well and as happy as can be expected. I'm going to a party tonight and most likely will have a pleasant glow when I get back. Write soon—till then take it easy.

Love to both of you,  
Frank

That brings us up to an overview of Frank's last days of training, his trip overseas, and his first missions in 1945, seventy years ago. In the next installment, we'll see how what happens on his next missions. I hope you've enjoyed this brief trip to the past through the words of one of your comrades in the 2nd Bomb Group.

Happy spring!

Linda Gartz

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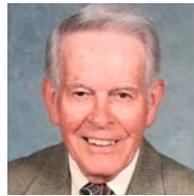
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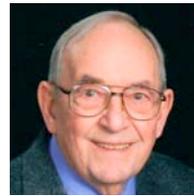
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