



2nd Bombardment Association "Second to None"

www.2ndbombgroup.org



Volume 30, No. 2 Summer 2014



Message from President Karen Nelson

Dear Veterans and Friends of the 2nd Bomb Group,

With October fast approaching, we're all looking forward to our reunion in Albuquerque from Wednesday, the 22nd through Sunday, the 26th. We have a wonderful reunion planned, including a trip to the Nuclear Museum and dinner, on Thursday, for every one of us, at a private home. This kind and unexpected offer was made by Todd Weiler's cousin, Ann Rhoades, who lives in Albuquerque.

In addition to dinner, Ann has arranged for two Navaho code talkers to meet us and give a signed copy of their book to each of our veterans. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to meet those who, along with you, our veterans, contributed greatly to ending the war. Please invite your friends and family to this reunion as this dinner and event is a very good reason to have as many attendees as possible. We will use our tour bus company for transportation.

By the way, we are committed to occupying thirty-five rooms for the reunion. That was the number we needed in order to get our reduced room rate, full, cooked breakfast and a free hospitality room. Further to that, if any of you, or your families, feel that attending from Wednesday through Sunday is too strenuous, please feel free to attend for as many days as you feel comfortable. In other words, if you think that you could manage Friday through Sunday, that's fine. Please submit your registration for those days. If you can attend from Wednesday through

Friday, or Saturday, that's fine, too. Any combination of days is acceptable. Just fill out your registration with the dates, meals and events which are best for you.

Joe Flowers, one of our new board members, has arranged for free wheelchairs with a local organization. They will be available at the hotel. We can take these chairs on our various bus trips. In addition, every venue we visit will have wheelchairs.

Back to our schedule: On Thursday morning and afternoon, we'll take a city tour of Albuquerque, including a guided tour of the Nuclear Museum. This is the only museum of its kind in the United States. Our bus will leave the hotel at 9 am and return at 3 pm. We will have lunch, on our own, in Old Town Albuquerque. There are many restaurants near the bus stop. We'll visit the Nuclear Museum in the afternoon. Thursday evening is our dinner at Ann Rhoades' home.

Friday is our bus trip to Santa Fe. We will leave the hotel at 9 am, taking the beautiful, scenic Turquoise Trail. The drive is just over one hour. We will have four hours in Santa Fe, including lunch on our own. If you'd like, you will be able to see the famous Palace of the Governors, now

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Inside this edition...

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- Why Mission #263 is a part of 2nd Bomb legacy
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- A war man's stories continued...Frank Gartz
- Success stories...finding lost veterans
- Catching up on past due honors "Chuck" Childs
- Helping Dutch family to locate "adopted" son

the State History Museum, which is located on the Plaza. In addition to the museum and other historic buildings, the Plaza is full of Native American jewelry vendors; for those of you who would like presents for yourselves or for a head start on holiday shopping.

Saturday will be a free day. Please use the hospitality room, or, if you prefer, use the free hotel shuttle to visit Albuquerque. If you stay at the hotel, or return in time for lunch, the hotel's La Oja restaurant will have a special lunch menu for our group. Please ask the hostess for the 2nd Bomb Group menu. Lunch will be available from 11 am until 2 pm. Our general meeting will be on Saturday at 4 pm.

You will find a registration form in this newsletter. As always, please book your hotel room directly with the hotel as a 2nd Bomb Group member. Please send me a check for your meal and bus payments, so that I can pay for those, directly with the vendors. The museum is included in the Thursday bus payment.

Our Saturday banquet will be very special. Todd Weiler will talk about the 70th anniversary commemoration of Mission 263 in the Czech Republic. We hope to have Czech and NATO visitors at our banquet. These people have given so much to remember our servicemen. We are all honored and delighted to invite them to our reunion.

In this newsletter, you'll also find more of Linda Garth's entertaining and thoughtful letters from her Uncle Frank. Wasn't it wonderful to read them in the last newsletter?

This newsletter also includes additional email and mail requests for information, received by Sid Underwood and Todd Weiler. Since our last newsletter, Lew Waters has been corresponding with a gentleman in The Netherlands, who, with many of his fellow citizens, tends the graves of our fallen servicemen. One elderly lady, Mrs. Dassen, asked if there was a way to find information on the boy whose grave she has tended for over 70 years. Lew and Linda Gartz are tracking down information for her. We have received emails expressing many thanks for our efforts, while, actually, the initial effort was made by the lovely people in The Netherlands.

The emails, from our new friends in the The Netherlands, have told us about the ongoing lessons which the older generation shares with their children and grandchildren, about Liberation and the soldiers who gave their lives. Entire villages tend the graves of our fallen servicemen. We truly owe these lovely, caring people our gratitude.

I hope you agree that this reunion will be among our best. We all look forward to seeing those of you who, for various reasons, haven't attended the past few reunions. We miss you and sincerely hope you will join us in Albuquerque. Please stay safe and healthy until we see each other in October.

Kindest regards,

Karen Nelson
President 2nd Bomb Group

Welcome from the new Newsletter Editor

by Todd Weiler, Editor

One down and how many more to go? Having finished the first newsletter was an interesting task. I'd like to thank the many contributors who make creating the content of the newsletter an easier task. Without them this endeavour would not be possible. A few comments of feedback that we got.

First, bigger type. Sorry I didn't see that one coming. As I am wearing glasses now I should have known better that my audience is a bit "higher" than me, meaning I need to boost the type used so you all can read it easier. This is a double edge sword as we boost the size we lose content. It's a tough act to get right. I've taken it up from 11 point to 12 point to see if that helps. Let me know.

As you are reading this remember to keep us informed of any address changes. We had about 20 changes out of 350 letters and even three of those required a third mailing to clear up. We know not everyone has access to a computer but the newsletter is always available on line. There is some discussion from the board about whether that should be reserved for "members only". So far the consensus is that the more we put out on the web, the more we will be found by those seeking us out.

Speaking of finding people, I'd like to make a newsletter editor wish list:

1) I 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. Perhaps there is a law firm, or business out there in our membership that does these kinds of searches all the time. I would hope that they could help us out. I expect it could be 2-3 a month that we could use your help to find people we've lost track of. I'm not trying to help author's or other inquiries from other professional interests but limit it to our 2nd Bomb Group needs. If you can help, shoot me an e-mail and we'll get started.

2) We have four large 2'x4'x1' boxes that store the photo boards of our bomb group. We put them out every year at our reunions. We need a place to store them between reunions. If you have a safe, dry, area that you could store them, we need your help. You would ship them to the hotel just before the reunion and then receive them afterwards. We of course would reimburse you for the shipping costs. Think you can help? Shoot me an e-mail.

Learned an interesting fact. It cost 49 cents to mail the last 12 page newsletter, same as a First Class letter. The post office now charges 57 cents to tell us that you have moved. Half the time they return just a postcard saying that. Other

See 2013 Editor Comments on Page 3

70th Anniversary of Mission 263 to be attended by 20 Americans and a B-52 Bomber...a legacy to remember

by Todd Weiler, Editor

Mission #263 is such a cathartic moment in the 2nd Bomb Group history that two books have been written solely about that one mission. The mission was a milestone in many ways. Best known as the greatest loss of life by the 2nd bomb group, it contains some bitter memories. The timing of the mission is also pivotal to the Czech history as well. This August 29th, 2014 friends families and representatives from around the world will be gathering to pay their respects and remind the world that we have not forgotten.

August 29th, 1944 was supposed to be a "milkrun" a.k. a "easy" mission complete with fighter escort. The target was a synthetic oil refinery near the Czech-Polish border next to a Czech city called Ostrava. A railroad marshalling yards with 1500 German rail cars was also on the target list.

Four heavy bomb groups took off at 6:00 AM heading north from Foggia Italy. 112 B-17's, 16 squadrons of 7 planes each, all laden with twenty 200 lb. bombs set to be dropped from 19,000 feet.

For whatever reason "tail end Charlie" 20th Squadron fell behind picking up other bombers struggling to the target. Five minutes from reaching the I.P. (Initial Point) and turning to



2007 commemorations featured an outdoor mass at the site near Rudice, CZ where Russel Meyrick was found. The site is now named "America" by the locals. Seated in front is #263 survivor Joe Owsianik (seated front row 4th from left) who visited the ceremonies there many times.

towards the target the group of 10 bombers saw what they thought was their promised fighter escort. Instead it was 110 German fighters, a mix of FW-190's and ME-109's. Within 15 minutes the battle was over. Nine B-17s, one B-24, the entire 20th Squadron plus 3 heavies all were shot down. 100 airmen downed, 41 killed, 57 POW's, 2 evadees, the worst loss of life by the 2nd bomb group. More planes had been shot down before, but never with such a deadly outcome.

The Czech witnesses still remember the battle. It was the turning point shortly there after that they turned on the German "protectorate" and the wave of resistance resonated across the region. The Germans were soon in retreat.

For many years under Russian rule the American role in WWII was suppressed. After the "Velvet Revolution" in November 1989, Czech's for the first time could openly honor the American airmen that gave their lives to set them free. The Czech's did not forget. They built monuments where the valiant warriors fell from the sky. Every year they hosted events and commemorations in many of the small villages where the heavy bombers fell nearby. Historians from the U.S. and Europe gathered many times, often with the guest appearances of the survivors of mission #263.

2014 will be the 70th Anniversary of this battle. Preparations are being made at the crash sites once again. Officials will gather. People will recall the tragic day. Names will be read. Wreaths of honor will be placed where they died and where they were buried. Museums will open their doors to remind those of the day with tangible artifacts.

Headlining the Americans will be 263 survivor Loy Dickinson and family. Loy's health is back and we hope for the best. Also lead pilot Chuch Childs is coming.

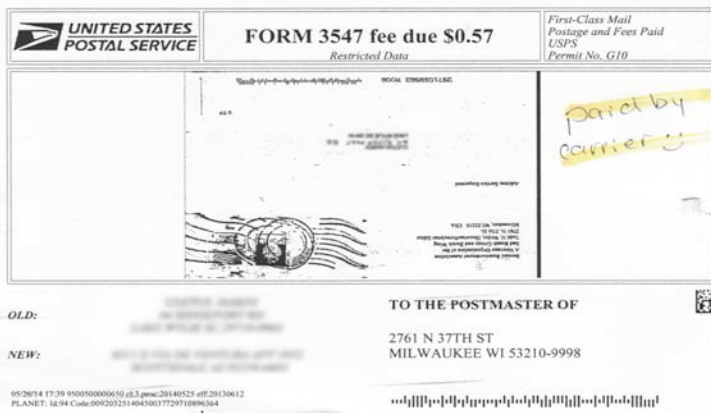
Barksdale AFB is planning on flying a B-52 at some of the ceremonies. Last November they renamed a B-52 after the first plane shot down on mission 263. If it all comes together as planned, it will be the event of a lifetime to remember. It will be a great honor to be there to witness it. It will be a bitter-sweet moment as the light of history begins to fade on these events. Hopefully our memories will not. ★

Editor's Comments continued from Page 2

times we get our tattered newsletter back.

But not all postal employees are so cold. We have some fans out there in postal land. Like the change of address card noted below, the local carrier fronted the 57 cents to provide us with the change of address card that was returned. (Maybe he was a former Air Mail pilot and he's helping us out.) I guess their are a few angels out there with their wings that are making this all happen.

Remember to help those "angels" and remember to tell us about any address changes. We'll forgive you when it's that permanent address change to the pearly gates. But only once! :) ★



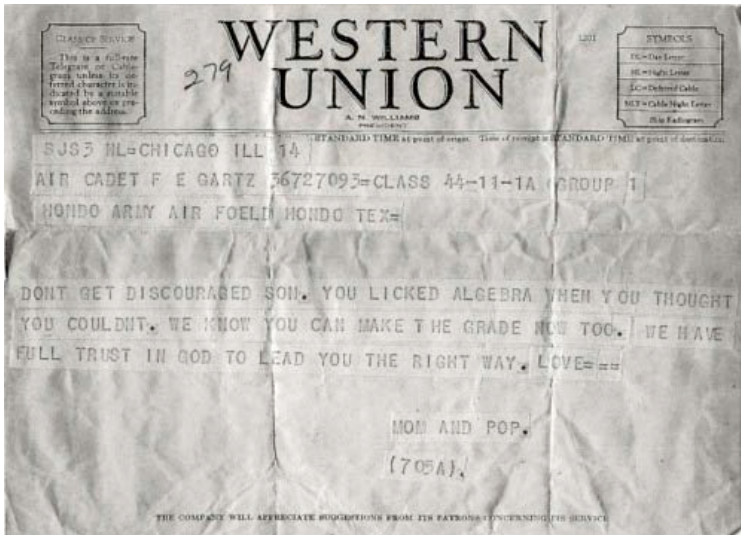


Linda Gartz continues uncle's letters home from 1st Lt. Frank Ebner Gartz

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>



In Frank's last letter home, dated June 11th, he expressed fear about his course work. No matter how hard he studied, he was failing tests. He wrote: "I can't write letters or eat right now because...it's a constant threat to my existence." In World War II, the fear of "washing out" from the Air Corps, a common occurrence, and being sent to the infantry, plagued every young cadet.

His family immediately rallied behind him to bolster his confidence with love and encouragement. The telegram that is featured on this post, sent from his mom and dad on June 13th, immediately after receiving Frank's letter, is below. I'll write in all caps, as the telegram was written:

"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.

The letters below arrived from both brothers too, to bolster Frank's confidence. You'll notice a markedly different approach

between Will's letter and that of my Dad, Fred, but both had the best intentions -- to help their little brother keep going.

These letters are just the latest evidence of a family that pulled together in tough times. When my grandfather's knee became infected, and he couldn't climb stairs, my Dad, a chemist, and his brother, an engineer, dove right in, hauling coal and taking down the trash to help my grandmother, who was getting by on four hours sleep a night as she tried to do her "woman's work" and her husband's care for up to 65 apartments. (See: Winter toil takes toll and Homefront update (4th paragraph) for a vivid view of a time when no social "safety" nets existed.

First, from my Dad. I'm only including the part that pertains to Frank's course work as it's a very long letter.

Friday nite 6-16-44

Dear Ebner, --

I have a few minutes tonight for myself here at work so kinda thought I'd drop you a line. I hear you have been having some difficulties in your studies. Could it be that you "try too hard?" I'm not being sarcastic but actually mean it. A person can try so hard that, like cramming, it fails to make an impression that is a lasting one. Could it be that you over-emphasize the wrong points or perhaps just don't give enough time to the weak spots? When I had my course in teaching at Lewis and when I had that practice teaching of chemistry at Crane there was a principle of over learning very strongly emphasized.

A person may sit down and learn something or memorize something perfect in about 1 hr. He may retain this shall we say from 8-10 days (this is just an estimation). However if you broke that hour into two ½ hour periods and in the 2nd ½ hour try to "over learn" what he remembered from his 1st ½ hour period, then he may retain it not 8-10 days but rather 12-14 and so on.

Now this may or may not be your problem at all. If it is and you can use it give it a whirl. We are all for you in our thoughts and hopes and prayers no matter what happens, only remember this. Even though you are in the Army and away from civilian life, you still are having an opportunity that you may never get again in civilian life. The education that you are getting at the government's expense is and will be very valuable to you in the future.

I suppose it is trite for me to say that you should try to do the work faster for if you didn't try, you wouldn't have known, but remember, speed and accuracy are essential prerequisites of a navigator for a crew has greatest faith in a navigator who can give a quick and accurate answer as to this position.

LETTER TO BE CONTINUED IN FUTURE POSTING

See Letters from an Airman continued on Page 5

From oldest brother, Will:
June 15, 1944

Dear Frank:

We received your latest letter and I'm surprised at your discouragement. Don't let it get you down – just think – that fellow and that fellow has done it. So can I.

There are a lot of tricks and shortcuts that can be learned so let's have the dope on what passed as you have your troubles in solving your problems. Is it the graphical solution or is it computer work? In any case if you are free to discuss same with me maybe by a few quick letters we can swing you right. This is supposing that I can help you for it may be your work is far above my plane of knowledge. In any case we may be able to do something with all the sources of information I can dig up.

Double drift problems to determine the wind direction and velocity should be easy. Alternate airport or base problems shouldn't offer too much opposition. Interception problems and celestial navigation may present a little difficulty but from what I hear they too should and could be made easy.

What's the dope?
Bill

Letter Home to Frank's Sister Lillian

This letter, written July 2, 1944, is to his sister-in-law, Linda's mother, Lil, whom he now calls "Sis." At the time of this writing, Frank was posted in Hondo, Texas, at the navigation school there, where the fear of "washing out" plagued every student. At her blog, you can read the letters Frank wrote of the daunting coursework and how fear of failing "threatened his existence.

Linda chose this letter for our newsletter because it covers a lot youth's high jinks and bravado that many of you may remember from your own days in training. Frank also updates Lil on his coursework and asks after his father, who has been suffering from an infected knee. Many more letters that give one cadet's personal view on his training and the family that supports him at Letters of a World War II Airman.

Note: Photo of "Lillian Gartz" is from 1941, a year before she married my father, Fred Gartz, Frank's older brother.



Ebner LTRs 1944-07-02 to Lil

Dear Sis,

It's taken me a long time to answer your letter but here goes. I had a nice weekend with my new room mate. He is really a joker and a wolf with the lousiest line I ever heard. I can't see how he can get along with the women.

We rented a car in mind to throw a big party. In Texas here you rent a car at a flat rate and get all the gas you need. Well we weren't satisfied with the low priced cars we had to get a "41" Oldsmobile which cost us \$40.00. Twenty a piece.

Well I drove the car to San Antonio and took 3 passengers who paid us \$2.00 each then I went back to Hondo and got 6 more at the same price. Well the day was hot and so were the roads and I wanted to make time. I traveled from S.A. to Hondo at 65 all the way and sometimes at 70, got my load and headed back. When I got on the road that certain urge came over me and I opened her up. Boy! Could that car travel. I kept this up only 5 minutes at which time I threw a re-cap right off the tire.

Then I switched tires and traveled a little slower. It's about 45 miles and I made it in 50 minutes with the tire change included. Well when we headed back after having a swell evening I told the owner about my misfortune and he didn't get sore but told me that he expected it to go any time and no sooner has he got the words out of his mouth he blew out the rear right tire.

Now to get back to my school. I'm sort of glad that they washed me back a class. It gives me a clean start and I have a chance to show them I do know my work. I took one of the exams I had previously failed and got a 99 on it. I hope my luck holds out. Perhaps you were right about my mind wandering. It was almost impossible to keep it on the tests.

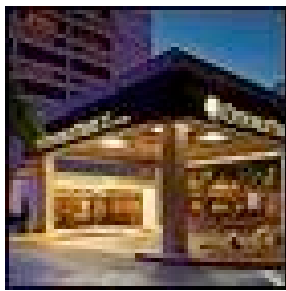
I've been a little worried about Dad's knee. I hear he is lame. Let's have the dope. What's wrong with him?

Pup tents were passed out to all who went on bivouac and some were issued 2 by accident. I was one of the lucky fellows. Cookie's little brother Bob has joined the scouts and has been going on hikes lately and perhaps he could us it while you're not. It's just a passing thought!

Tell that x@"! Brother of mine not to play with fate. In his last letter he addressed it as Pfc. and when I get a hold of him it will be his neck. I think that I'll answer his letter in the same envelope. You know conservation of paper ahem!

Well till I write again, Take it easy and God bless you.
Your brother,
Frank

See Letters from an Airman continued on Page 6



Albuquerque Reunion – Wednesday, October 22nd through Sunday, October 26th, 2014

Hotel – Marriott Doubletree Convention Center – \$90.00 per night, not including taxes. Reserve early as there are a limited number of rooms. Please call hotel directly for reservations and **tell the agent that you are with the 2nd Bomb Group; Phone – 1-800-584-5058** , The hotel has a free airport shuttle.

Daily menus are listed below. They are included for your information and to help with your plans. Saturday lunch will be available at the hotel restaurant. Please ask for the 2nd Bomb Group menu. If you have any food allergies, please speak with the hotel upon arrival.

Wednesday – arrival day – hospitality room open from 10 am until dinner and then, after dinner Buffet dinner at hotel - 6 pm \$20.00 per person. Wednesday - Soup, Salad and Sandwich Buffet. Since all meals, except the Saturday banquet, are buffets, it is not critical that you arrive precisely at 6:00 pm. Meal service will end at approximately 7:00 pm. We may stay in the dining area, or move to the hospitality room.

Tomato Bisque soup, House Salad with Tomato, Carrots and Cucumber. Ranch and Vinaigrette dressing. Assorted Sandwiches with Lettuce and Tomato; including: Turkey and Swiss on Wheat Bread , Ham and Cheddar on Ciabatta Bread, Beef and Provolone on White Bread, Mustard and Mayonnaise. Assorted Cookies; Chocolate Chip, Oatmeal and Peanut Butter

Thursday – Albuquerque city tour including a guided tour of the Nuclear Museum

Bus will leave hotel at 9 AM and return at 3 PM \$30 per person includes evening bus and dinner

Lunch on your own in Albuquerque. There are many options at the location where the tour ends.

Dinner at private home under Sandia Peak– no charge!

Dress code for private dinner is casual. Bus leaves hotel at 5 pm and returns at 8:00 pm. Cocktails will be at 5:30 and dinner at 6:30. There will be a special treat for our veterans so please indicate the number of veterans!

Friday – Bus trip to Santa Fe – \$22 each. Leave hotel at 9 A.M. and leave Santa Fe at 3:00 P.M. (slightly over a one hour drive), return to the hotel at 4 P.M. The bus will travel the Turquoise Trail to Santa Fe which is a beautiful, scenic route. Buffet dinner at hotel \$20.00 per person. Buffet Dinner -Build your own Salad Bar with: Romaine Lettuce, Marinated and Grilled Chicken Breast, Marinated Flank Steak Toppings; Cheese, Olives, Sunflower Seeds, Tomato, Cucumber, Carrots, Croutons and Cottage Cheese. Salad Dressings; Ranch, Blue Cheese, Vinaigrette and Thousand Island Cheesecake topped with Berry Compote

Saturday – free day to explore Albuquerque or stay at the hotel – hospitality room opens at 10 am

The hotel offers a free shuttle within a 5 mile radius of the hotel. The radius includes Old Town and various museums.

General meeting at 4 pm in the hospitality room

Banquet dinner at 6:00 pm, \$30.00 per person

Saturday lunch will be available at the hotel restaurant. Please ask for the 2nd Bomb Group menu.

Saturday Banquet Menu

House Salad with Tomato, Carrots and Cucumber. Ranch and Vinaigrette dressing.

Choice of the following options: (which you will indicate on your registration on the previous page).

Seared **Chicken** with a Citrus Beurre Blanc Sauce

Crispy Rosemary **Salmon**

Flat Iron Grilled **Steak** with Demi-glace'

Garlic Broccolini

Roasted Red Pepper Bliss Potato

DoubleTree Chocolate Chip Cookie

On each day, the meal prices include taxes and gratuity, regular and decaf coffee, tea and dessert

2nd Bomb Group Reunion 2014 Registration Sheet

Wednesday Oct 22nd \$20.00 per person Number _____ x \$20 Amount \$ _____
 Buffet dinner at hotel - 6 P.M.

Thursday October 23rd \$30.00 per person Number _____ x \$30 Amount \$ _____
 Bus tour of Albuquerque and Nuclear museum tour

Thursday BBQ dinner at private home bus and dinner **No Charge!** Number Veterans _____ Others _____

Friday October 24th
 Scenic Bus ride to Santa Fe (lunch on your own) \$22.00 per person Number _____ x \$22 Amount \$ _____
 Buffet dinner at hotel 6 P.M. \$20.00 per person Number _____ x \$20 Amount \$ _____

Saturday October 25th
 Evening Banquet Options \$30 each:
 Formal dinner at hotel - 6 P.M. Salmon Number _____ x \$30 Amount \$ _____
 Chicken Number _____ x \$30 Amount \$ _____
 Beef Number _____ x \$30 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: **2nd Bomb Group** and send them with this form to:
Karen Nelson, #107, 1300 Army Navy Drive, Arlington, VA 22202 (Phone 703-892-5176; email at karenwnelson@msn.com)
DEADLINE IS October 1st, 2014

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.

Posted 7/7/14

Subject: Searching for a Copy of the Book, "A Bombardier's Story", by Paul Dolan (20th Bomb Squadron)

My father, Frank C. Hammond, flew with the 5th Wing, 2nd Bomb Group, 20th Bomb Squadron, 15th Air Force in WWII. He was a tail gunner on both the B-17F and B-17G out of Amendola, Italy. I have recently found a book written by a Paul Dolan, titled "A Bombardier's Story" which I have borrowed from the St. Petersburg, FL library through an inter-library loan. However, I am interested in purchasing this book but it is out of print, as well as the Publisher, Florida Hand Prints (Tampa, FL). I can't seem to track this book down and I was wondering if you might have heard of it and would know if there were any copies that can be purchased? I thank you for any information you might have that will help me with my search. If you need any additional information, please email me?

Sincerely,

Jim Hammond

gabehammond@comcast.net

Posted 3/22/14

Subject: Searching For Photo Taken After Mission # 200

On page 227 of the book "Defenders of Liberty" under the description for "Mission 200", at the end of the first paragraph for this "Landmark Mission", it says the following: "After interrogation, pictures were taken of all who participated in the mission." Does anyone have any information on these photos or have any ideas where something like this could possibly be found? I would think these would be beneficial to many people here on the boards (myself in particular!). I would appreciate any ideas or suggestions anyone might have regarding this. Thank You for your time and efforts. I come to this site often.

Best Regards,

Terry Short

shortt214@gmail.com

Posted 7/7/14

Subject: Searching for 96th Bomb Squad Members Who Remember Wilbert Wolken, Ordnance Officer and Adjunct

My father, Wilbert Wolken, was not a flying officer; he was the Ordnance Officer and Adjutant for the Red Devil (96th) squadron, according to letters that he wrote to my mother. So I was wondering if your database is confined to flying officers and men? Could there perhaps be another source for non-flying personnel? I was also wondering if it would be possible to post my father's pictures on your Website in the off-chance that a former squadron member might remember him? My father is the officer at the top left row in each picture.

John Johnston

jdjohn03@msn.com



Success Stories

...helping to find missing airmen

By Todd Weiler, Historian

Last month we published a long list of messages from the electronic bulletin board of our website. We did so in hope “fresh” people would read the inquires and reply. I’m happy to report more success.

Paul M. Andrews posted an inquiry about the sudden crash of B-17 “Jocko: #42-31682 after takeoff and the incident is not documented in any accident report or MACR missing airman crew reports. Well, I got a call on this and as Paul Harvey would say, here’s the rest of the story.

Gus Pipkin of Citrus Heights, CA called to say he remembers the crash.

In November 1944, Gus left Savanna Georgia with a brand new B-17 and was told to fly to Goose Bay Labrador. From there they gassed up and told to fly towards the north pole and open their orders after crossing the mid-point meridian. The orders directed them to Iceland. From Iceland they headed to Valley Wales, England for another fuel stop. Next was the longest leg to Marrakesh, North Africa. The final leg was to Geoia, Italy where there plane underwent modification for combat. The air crew then traveled by truck to Foggia, Italy home of the 2nd Bomb Group.

If ever there was a baptism by fire this had to be it. Gus arrived December 4th and was bivouacked about a mile from the field across the road in an Olive grove surrounded with a low white stone fence. He recalled it was forbidden to cut down an Olive tree, but mysteriously quite a few caught fire to ease the cramped quarters.

On December 5th he was heading to the flight line and was picking up his flight equipment including his electric suit. Overhead he heard a big collision. Apparently a mosquito bomber and a P-38 collided over head. Soon parts of debris were raining down all over the field.

On the next morning, December 6th, the morning that Paul Andrews was inquiring about, proved again to be a deadly sunrise. Gus and his co-pilot were rising out of their tents the heard a very loud boom.

As they got dressed and headed to the field the news came back that a B-17, fully fueled, fully armed, and fully crewed, crash right after take off. Gus says the just cleared the end of the runway and the crash site was all a big hole in the ground.

When asked if the cause of the crash every got back to the troops he said there was no word as to the cause. Gus did say that the take-off experience was the highest risk. The intervals that the planes were spaced, the timing and traffic was a thing of precision. He said everything had to be right for it all to work. Mistakes are easy and costly. If you turned before you had enough air speed, if an engine lost power, if anything where to go wrong the consequences would be life threatening.

While we don’t have all the answers it’s amazing that we still have people that remember these poignant events. As Gus said at the end of that crash, “I said to myself, this is what war looks like.” Gus survived the baptism to fly 22 missions to the end of the war. ★

Past honors due...

Retired Lt. Col. Charles (Chuck) Childs inducted to Aviation Hall of Fame

By Todd Weiler, Editor

This is one of those stories that fell between the proverbial cracks. It was always meant to go into the newsletter but never made it.

So from a date line of 2010 April 15th there was a luncheon held at the Ellsworth, AFB. Lt. Col. retired Charles (Chuck Childs) was inducted to the South Dakota Aviation Combat Crew Hall of Fame.

Colonel Childs joined the service in 1940 as a light machine gunner in the 164th Infantry of North Dakota. In November 1941 he was accepted as an Aviation Cadet at Maxwell Air Base, Montgomery, Alabama. He graduated in class 42F July 3, 1942. He said that he lost his independence, the next day, July 4, 1942, when he married his college sweetheart Gracie Saueressig. He was assigned to a Training Command as a flying instructor for British cadets, then he remained in the Training Command flying P-40’s, P-51’s, B25’s, B-26’s and instructed on B-17’s and B-24’s. He finally received orders for an overseas assignment to the 15th Air Force as lead pilot in B-17’s.

He flew 37 credited Combat Bombing Missions against targets in Italy, Yugoslavia, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Austria and Germany. He was a Squadron Group lead pilot and flew 315 combat hours. He received 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 7 air medals. Three years after WWII he was flying C-54’s on the Berlin Airlift and flew 196 missions into Berlin in all kinds of weather necessitating many instrument landings. During he good flying weather he would drop candy on his final approach to the German children. He stated that he was proud to have helped save 2.5 million Wet Berliners from freezing and starving to death and to give them their freedom from Communism. He received the Medal for Humane Action for his duty.

Three years after the Berlin Airlift he was flying C-119’s in the Korean War dropping Paratroopers and supplies in the combat zone. He was credited with 280 combat hour and received the Bronze Star. During his flying career of 8000 flying hours, he checked out in 21 different military aircraft and 7 civilian. Colonel Childs and his wife Grace have lives in Rapid City for 51 Years.

He’s not done flying. This summer he headed up a group of the Berlin Airlift veterans for a reunion there. Chuck also has plans to “cross the pond” again this August to attend the ceremonies in the Czech Republic commemorating the mission of #263.

Chuck is also on the board of directors for the 2nd Bomb Group and is always assisting me in answer inquiries from all the e-mail that comes from families of veterans. I had the honor to spend an entire day with him as his “wingman” as we “flew” around New Orleans in search of his secret passion. Chuck is an avid drummer and his preference is dixieland jazz. He is a delight to be with and I look forward to sharing his company in CZ this August. ★



Lt. Col. “Chuck” Childs

Lew Waters helps Dutch folks find their “adopted” son

By Todd Weiler from dispatches sent by Lew Waters

War is known to tear families apart. It also builds new ones. Such is this one which began this spring with an e-mail from Noorbeek, Netherlands on April 15th, 2014.

Jean-Paul Wyers had a friend, Mrs. Dassen who lives in Gronsveld. Years ago she adopted the grave of T Sgt. Robert C. Stewart (reg nr 13087773, 429 Bomb Sqd-2 GP-H) at Margraten Memorial Cemetery. It's the only American Cemetery in the Netherlands. Mrs. Dassen asked him if he could help her with the search on information on Stewart. Mrs. Dassen is an elderly lady and not handy with computers and/or the Internet. For many years she visited the grave of Robert C. Stewart and brought flowers, something she sees as a small token of gratitude for the great offer the American soldiers gave for the liberation of Europe.

This is also the 70th anniversary of the liberation of their country and the rest of Europe. In all the years that Mrs. Dassen visits the grave, she always asked her self "who was this young man? Did he have family/ children? How did he look? So began the quest.

Lew Waters a 20th Sqdn. veteran from Springfield, OH and past President of our association, took the lead and began to help. Lew found the co-pilot of the flight in question, Peter B. Beers which was a member of the 2nd BG association and left a call with no results. Next Lew was able to Google the cemetery and learned Robert Stewart was named after his father. His mother was Ella W. and he was born in Allegheny County near Carnegie, PA.

More facts began to emerge. Given his Army Serial number, he was a radio operator despite our reference books of “The Second Was First” and “Defenders of Liberty” listing him as a tail gunner. Those books detail the mission profile. It was Sgt. Stewart's 22nd mission and the group's 227th. It was a raid on Blechhammer, Germany on July 7, 1944. Stewart's plane A/C #42-31470 piloted by Driscoll Horton was hit and losing altitude and was turning back. It crashed and all but two of the crew that escaped where captured near St. Michael, Austria. Sgt. Stewart was not injured but suffered dysentery, was given some medicine from a local town doctor, but it didn't seem to help. Stewart was imprisoned in a Luftwaffe camp in Graz and was a mess helper. Stewart died November 7th, 1944 from Scarlet Fever and a throat infection while in Dulag-Luft prison camp.

Lew next sought the obituary from the Pittsburg Post-Gazette to see if there were any siblings, and perhaps a photo of Sgt. Stewart. The story takes on a stranger twist. The Carnegie, PA Historical Society had a difficult time because there were two Robert C. Stewart individuals living within two blocks of each other in the same town, and evidently the

families were not related to each other. And it seems they both ended up serving in the U.S. Army Air Corps. These facts are stranger than fiction. At the same time Lew fielded an inquiry from Mr. Podurgiel, a Free-lance reporter in town curious about the growing inquiry.

Carnegie Historical Society finally had some success and sent Lew copies of what they found. There was a picture of T/Sgt. Stewart copied from his high school yearbook. It is not too clear, but it is the best they had. The picture was hard to get as the local library cut-off date was 1938 and they need 1937's yearbook. Luckily the Scott TWP. High School of Carnegie came through. Some of the other pictures, also from



Sgt. Robert Stewart

the yearbook, don't show up well at all – but we thought it would help understand his background and school history. Lew thought the article by Mr. Podurgiel, which appeared in the June 5 issue of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, covered the story rather well. And it gave the Dutch folks some publicity in the western Pennsylvania area. We will see if the article generates any information about the family.

We know that Sgt. Stewart's father died in the 1918 flu epidemic a few months before Robert, Jr. was born, and that his mother died when he was 4 years old. We don't know who helped raise him, but they did learn he was an excellent student, was on the Honor Roll, active in student activities, and from one of the pictures we know was on the H.S. basketball team. As we had previously mentioned that there were two Stewart families in the neighborhood, and to confuse the researchers even more was the fact Sgt. Stewart's mother was “Ella”, and the other family the mother was “Etta”. Talk about double jeopardy?

On June 25th, six days after mailing the research package to the Netherlands Jean-Paul received the information on Sgt. Stewart from Lew Waters. He plans to meet with Mrs. Dassen soon and promises to send photos of their excited meeting.

This is another one of those improbable stories that if Hollywood wrote it nobody would believe it. Look at the odds starting with a veteran's remains buried hundreds of miles away from where he died, where the cause of death was nearly like his father, to the extended love of a liberated individual that embraced one tombstone, which for generations now will likely have perpetual care, the two families living blocks apart same names and serving in the same branch of the service, mothers with nearly identical names, to the dogged determination of volunteers in the Netherlands, Springfield, and Carnegie...what a wonderful outcome from such a tragic beginning. Thanks to the publicity efforts, this turned what would have been thought a hopeless and obscure quest into another serendipitous story to add to the 2nd Bomb Group legacy. 🌟

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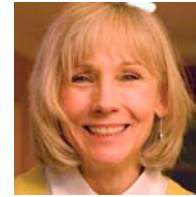
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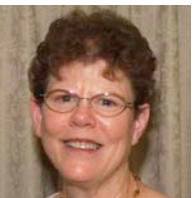
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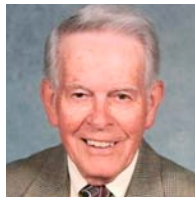
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