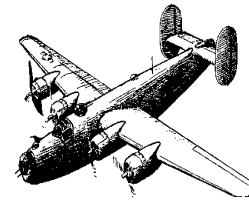


Plane Talk

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society
Virginia Chapter Newsletter



VOLUME 15, ISSUE 1

JANUARY 2008



Greetings From Your President:

Now that the Christmas holiday and New Years festivities are behind us it is high time that we think of what our Chapter should do in 2008. To me, as the member you have chosen to offer leadership, the answer is not really simple. The Chapter needs to function with a smaller and smaller membership due to the fact that we Veterans are not as numerous as we once were. We are not as independent. We are not as ambitious or as industrious. We fit the definition of “the spirit is strong but the body is weak.” As your President, I recognize that. Even so, I think we still have things we can accomplish.

I think we can all agree with the following goals. We should see each other as often as possible. We should discuss old times and our part in the struggle that beat back last century’s worst threat to our nation’s freedoms. We should have fun together. Above all those things we should endeavor to do, we should plan and work for continuation of the Virginia Chapter even after we can no longer carry the torch. That obviously means we need to include our sons, grandsons, daughters, granddaughters, and yes, even our great-grandchildren in the workings of the Chapter. We are benefiting even now from the contributions and increasing leadership being offered by those I like to call 2nd Gens. We need to enlist even more 2nd Gens and train them to take over from us.

Along the line of seeing each other and having fun together, Chris Bowers is planning a bus trip. Even though we had to “scrub” the last two missions, we are working to have a trip to the Museum at Dulles and the WWII Monument in D.C. It is planned for Saturday, May 17th. (What better day to participate in this get together than Armed Forces Day!) You will hear the details at a later date, but this info will let you set the day aside. Please join with us to make this a howling success. A great time to bring those future 2nd Gens. Or better yet, have them bring you.

LET’S KEEP ‘EM FLYING!

Lew Burke

WE NEED YOUR STORIES AND PICTURES! WE WANT TO KEEP PLANE TALK INTERESTING AND NEED YOUR HELP. PLEASE SEND YOUR STORIES AND PICTURES TO THE EDITORS.

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CHAPTER MEETING – 8 DECEMBER 2007

President Lew Burke called the Christmas meeting of the Virginia Chapter to order at 1145. The meeting was arranged by Bob Noziglia and held at Stonehenge Country Club in Chesterfield Virginia. There were 30 members and guests in attendance. John Pearson led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. Lew Burke offered a prayer. After introductory remarks by President Burke the group had lunch.

The meeting reconvened after lunch with reports from President Burke. There was a brief report by the Program Committee on its progress towards scheduling a Chapter bus trip to the Udvar-Hazy Center of the National Air and Space Museum and the World War II Memorial in Washington, D.C. The trip is tentatively planned for 17 May 2008 – Armed Forces Day. It was also noted that the Chapter will award several “scholarships” to cover the cost of the trip.

President Burke introduced our guest speaker Ken Rowe. Ken described his experiences as a bomber pilot and prisoner of war in World War II. He also talked about his years as the Director of the Division of Aeronautics (later the Department of Aviation) for the Commonwealth of Virginia. Ken brought along the escape map that he carried with him during World War II.

The meeting adjourned at 1400.



Ken Rowe's Escape Map

LEST WE FORGET ...

Bob Noziglia

In the spring of 1944 ... we were masters in the air. The bitterness of the struggle had thrown a greater strain on the Luftwaffe than it was able to bear... For our air superiority, which by the end of 1944 was to become Air Supremacy, full tribute must be paid to the United States Eighth Air Force.

Winston Churchill, *Closing the Ring*

The Eighth Air Force was one of the great fighting forces in the history of warfare. It had the best equipment and the best men, all but a handful of whom were civilian Americans, educated and willing to fight for their country and a cause they understood was in danger – freedom. It's what made World War II special.

Andy Rooney, *My War*.

As the American participation in World War II occurred, the leaders of the U.S. Army Air Corps had a firm belief that air power alone could bring the enemy to his knees. Destroying the enemy's industrial capacity to wage war and destroying his will to win could be accomplished by daylight precision bombing alone. We had the instruments – the B 17, B 24 and the Norden Bombsight.

Not So Fast ...

I had a front row seat and have read a lot about the Eighth Air Force experience and I'll present an overview of how I saw it play out. My crew and I arrived in our Group in mid-April 1944. We flew deep penetration strikes ... sometimes with a fighter escort and sometimes not. Enemy fighters were a consideration and flak was an important hazard. As our tour progressed we witnessed an increase of friendly fighter protection for longer periods and we saw a reduction of the enemy fighter threat.

Over time, the flak increased in quantity and accuracy. I finished my tour 11 July 1944. I was in my unit less than 90 days.

Prior to the D Day invasion we flew many short diversionary strikes as well as strikes against missile sites along and near the coasts of Nazi-occupied Europe. I flew two sorties the same day on two occasions. I also went on three deep penetrations against Berlin, as well as other important and heavily defended targets at Merseburg, Hamburg, Bremen, Toulouse, and Munich. We struck many targets in the heavily defended flak alley of the Ruhr Valley.

I divide the Eighth AF experience into three phases. The first featured short penetrations against heavily defended Nazi assets with no significant fighter escort. This phase saw devastating losses of our aircraft and good young people. I see the second phase as we made deeper penetrations against important and heavily defended targets with increasingly effective allied fighter

help. Our losses decreased dramatically. The third phase I missed but I think of it as the period when we owned real estate on the continent which assisted in the launch of the force and recovery of damaged aircraft. The casualties decreased. We struck more tactical targets and participated in close support of ground forces.

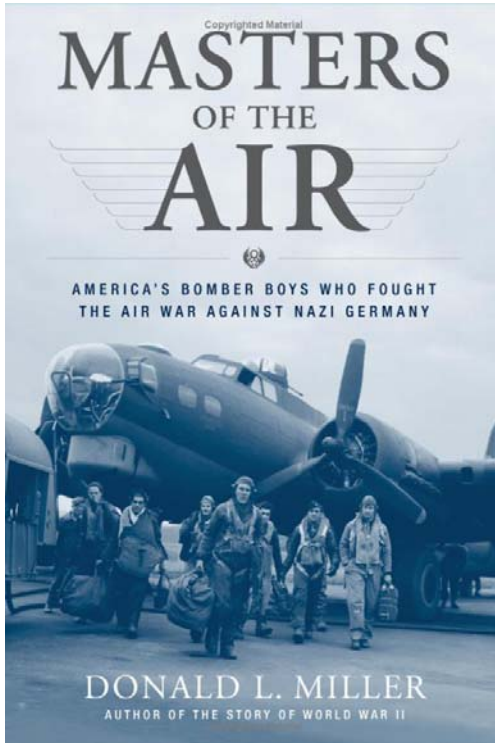
The Eighth suffered more casualties than the US Marine Corps did in the entire

war. The Eighth Air Force adventure is one of the best documented of any unit in any war. Those who were there are fast disappearing. I take my hat off to the guys who flew missions in the early stages and suffered accordingly. I never forget the competent and devoted ground personnel who performed so admirably. When their plane failed to return they suffered and you could see and feel their grief.



Mission to Merseburg
(457th BG Association Photograph)

***MASTERS OF THE AIR* – A NEW BOOK ABOUT THE MIGHTY 8TH AIR FORCE**



Masters of the Air, published by Simon & Schuster in 2006 and now available in paperback, is a narrative history of the Eighth Air Force in World War Two.

The American bomber war began in the summer of 1942 with a strike by a dozen B-17s) against Rouen, then occupied by the Germans. It ended in the spring of 1945 with a succession of thousand-bomber attacks against Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden and other cities in Germany.

Of all the military services in World War Two, only the German U-boat crews suffered a higher casualty rate than the bomber crews. The Eighth Air Force suffered over 26,000 fatal casualties,

more than the entire Marine Corps. An additional 23,000 flyers were made prisoners of war. In 1943 an airman's chance of surviving 25 missions – the number required to go home – was about one in four.

Masters of the Air focuses on the crews who flew the planes. It is based on over a thousand oral histories and an even greater number of unpublished letters and diaries. The 100th Bomb Group is at the center of the story and the book follows the group from basic training to the end of the war.. It tells the story of Robert "Rosie" Rosenthal – now 88 – in some detail. He flew 52 combat missions and was shot down three times, the last time behind Russian lines. In one bombing raid, over Munster, Germany, his was the only plane to return.

The book takes readers into battle with the crews, freezing in the air in unheated, unpressurized aircraft. It takes readers to East Anglia, where nearly a quarter of a million Eighth Air Force personnel were stationed, many living among their English hosts. Air men had comforts unknown to the infantry: beds with clean sheets, nights at the local pubs. But they faced far worse odds than any other branch of the armed services.

Masters of the Air mixes the strategic with the personal and gives us a riveting account of the bomber war while at the same time telling us unforgettable stories about the young men who flew these planes.

CHAPTER MEETING – 8 DECEMBER 2007



Ken Rowe Speaks to us after lunch.



Our Flags were flying at Stonehenge!



President Lew Burke opens the meeting.

The Miracle of Memory

*When I was young and strong
Things were different then.
I thought I'd live forever
That the good times would never end.*

*But now I see things differently,
I look back, not just ahead
Recalling as if it were yesterday
Things I've done and said.*

*I find things neatly stored away
In the recesses of my mind,
And each time I search I'm overwhelmed
By the treasure that I find!*

*There are all my yesterdays
Laid neatly in a row,
Filled to the brim with all those things
I put there long ago.*

*This treasure house of memories
Is held exclusively for me.
No one else can use them
I have the only key.*

*Matching half-remembered stories
With half-remembered faces,
I begin to place them once again
In those half-forgotten places.*

*I relive those precious moments
Laid aside so long before
But now brought back, through the miracle of memory,
To enrich my life once more!*

William L. Wright
Group Lead Bombardier, 34th BG
8th Air Force, England, 1944-45

A "Certificate of Recognition" May Be Owed You as a Veteran

If you were a member of the armed forces or a civilian employee of the federal government during the Cold War era, September 2, 1945 to December 26, 1991, you are entitled to a certificate that recognizes your service.

To obtain this certificate, you must forward your request to the CWRS team at:

U.S. Army Human Resources Command
Cold War Recognition Program, Hoffman II
Room 3N45
Attn: AHRC-CWRS
200 Stovall Street
Alexandria, VA 22332-0473

Your request should include supporting documentation to prove your service. Such documentation should contain your name, Social security number or Military Service number along with date or dates of service. Questions can be answered at (703) 325-5864 or <https://www.hrc.army.mil/site/active/tagd/coldwar/default.htm>. Your certificate may take up to two months to arrive.



**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS
FORM AND RETURN IT TO
PAUL ADAMS IF YOU
HAVEN'T PAID YOUR
CHAPTER DUES FOR 2008.**



VIRGINIA CHAPTER DUES RENEWAL FORM

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CHAPTER DUES \$10.00

**My organization was the _____ Group or _____ Squadron
or Other _____**

Please return to Paul Adams; 11813 Coolwind Lane; Richmond, VA. 23233-1413
