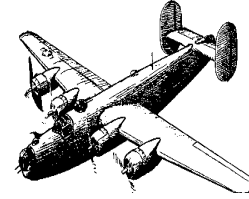


Plane Talk

The Eighth Air Force Historical Society
Virginia Chapter Newsletter



<http://www.8thaf-virginia.org>

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Greetings From Your President:

First, let me say again that last fall's General Membership meeting and visit to the Richmond Holocaust Museum was a real education. Abe Firestone did the Chapter a great service for his part in arranging the visit.

Abe has stepped forward again to arrange the program for our scheduled luncheon meeting on April 25th. The 11:00 am meeting will be at the Stonehenge Country Club in Chesterfield. Lunch will begin at 12:30. Call James Harvel at (804) 744-1764 if you need directions.

We Vets can do as a further service to our country by passing on our understanding of the workings of our democratic form of government. We know we have the advantage of living in a "free" country. Members of the Eighth Air Force were more aware than most of the horrors of tyrannical forms of control foisted on people in highly centralized governments. Our Founding Fathers had experienced the excesses of a monarchy wherein the word of a king or queen was supreme law. Those founders passed down many advantages to posterity but first among these was a written set of rules that define our democratically elected leader's duties and the inalienable rights of the citizens. The Constitution we inherited from them was short and to the point. It has been amended a number of times according to the process spelled out in the document itself, which requires nearly universal acceptance by the citizens in order for amendments to become law.

These days we experience blind acceptance, particularly by the younger among us, of provisions not contained in our Constitution. They do not have the advantage of the historic and patriotic knowledge that most of us acquired in the public school systems of our day.

Because we are fast becoming a vanishing and special generation, we are sometimes asked about our wartime experiences. Some of us can still remember events and can, and should, comply with such requests. All of us can urge those who seek information to realize that it is their time to pick up the torch and see that the great advantages that we enjoy are preserved.

Please make every effort to attend the April 25th meeting.

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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VIRGINIA CHAPTER BOARD MEETING 21 FEBRUARY 2009

The Board of the Virginia Chapter met at Stonehenge Country Club in Chesterfield Virginia on 21 February 2009. Lew Burke, John Pearson, Paul Adams, James Harvel, Abe Firestone, and Chris Adams were present. Anne Royster, Chapter Web Master, also attended.

It was noted that John Pearson was awarded the title of Director Emeritus by the Eighth Air Force Historical Society.

Abe Firestone was commended for organizing the Chapter visit to the Holocaust Museum in Richmond. Many of those who attended provided photographs or their personal observations which appeared in the last *Plane Talk*.

Lew commented that the last issue of *Plane Talk* was an excellent one and urged members to continue to provide the editor with stories or other items of interest. Lew also reported that the National Capitol Area Chapter met last fall and held a Christmas luncheon in December. The National Capitol Area and Virginia Chapters may co-sponsor some events in the future. This should appeal to Virginia Chapter members who live in Northern Virginia.

Due to resignations we now have only three directors. We must have at least four directors. It was proposed that recommendations for one or two replacements be communicated to the President. He would like to make an interim appointment pending election by the general membership.

It was agreed that the next general membership meeting will be held in April. One of the features of the meeting will be a slide show and presentation by Abe Firestone.

Lew introduced Anne Royster to the Board. She has volunteered to serve as Web Master for the Chapter. She distributed copies of the site configuration that she has set up. Her efforts are impressive. A motion was made and passed to reimburse her in the amount of approximately \$100 for set up fee and annual maintenance. Members were urged to log on to the site and to provide pictures, stories, and other material to be added to the website. The site can link individuals to websites of other chapters and groups. Anne is the daughter of one of our deceased members. Her Father was Morris Royster, a B-24 tail gunner.

The Bicycle That Went To War

by William R. (Bill) Greenwell, Jr.

During World War II, the bomber crews that went to England were issued English bicycles so they would have transportation to the flight line. American bicycles had fat tires and pedal brakes. The English bicycles had thin tires, a three speed gear shift, and handle bar brakes. One handle bar had a front wheel brake and the other had a rear wheel brake.

In order to stop and avoid a crash, the frustrated Americans would pedal backwards to no avail, or press the front brake a little too hard and be thrown over the handle bars. A favorite pastime of the “older” crews was to invite the new guys for a ride to town on the bikes at night.

The countryside was blacked out because of the danger of bombing. The town was on a small river at the foot of a hill. The road from the base to the town went down a hill and turned sharply right at the river. The idea was to get the new guys started down the hill and then challenge them with “Last one to the pub buys the drinks.” When they came to the bottom of the hill, the sharp turn, and the river, somebody usually got wet.

One of the bombardiers made the “trip” to town. He went for the challenge and at the bottom of the hill applied his front brakes much too hard. He was thrown over the handle bars and into the river. The result was a smashed bicycle and a broken arm! During the healing process he kept the broken bicycle near his quarters. He said he was going to use it later. A few months later, on a mission to Germany, we turned on the bomb run and were shocked to see his bicycle falling from the bomb bay onto the Germans.

After the mission we asked for an explanation. He said “That damn bicycle will kill more Germans than all the bombs we drop on them.”

Bill Greenwell grew up in Norfolk, Virginia and served as a B-17 pilot in the Eighth Air Force during World War II and completed thirty missions. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. After the war, he worked for Headquarters, Tactical Air Command as a computer systems accountant. Bill is retired and lives in Poquoson, Virginia.

**Would you like to see more stories like this? If so, send or e-mail yours to
Rob Gates, Editor of *Plane Talk*.**

ANNOUNCEMENT

We are having a general membership meeting and luncheon on April 25th at Stonehenge Country Club in Chesterfield. The meeting will start at 11:00 with lunch at 12:30.

There will be a presentation by Abe Firestone. It will be an interesting slide show depicting Abe's attendance at his Bomb Group reunion in England last summer. Abe's show will remind many of us of our England revisits. To Vets it will bring back memories of old East Anglia bases and airfields, pubs, and narrow winding country roads. It will give non-Vets a picture of the English countryside that is still pretty much the way it was a several generations ago. I won't give away the entire plot! Bring a young person or two. Better yet, have them bring you. (The Chapter definition of "young" is anyone not yet 65!)

Following Abe's presentation, we will enjoy a "soup and sandwich" lunch with beverage and desert. Admission will be \$10, payable at the door.

James Harvel needs to give the club an approximate head count a couple of days in advance so that they can plan. Please give James a call at (804) 744-1764 if you plan to attend. He can also give you directions if you're not sure how to get to Stonehenge Country Club.



**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS
FORM AND RETURN IT TO
PAUL ADAMS IF YOU
NEED TO PAY YOUR
CHAPTER DUES FOR 2009.**



VIRGINIA CHAPTER DUES RENEWAL FORM

NAME: _____

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CHAPTER DUES \$10.00

My organization was the _____ Group or _____ Squadron
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