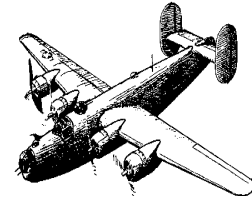


Plane Talk



**The Eighth Air Force Historical Society
Virginia Chapter Newsletter**

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

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NOVEMBER 2009



Greetings From Your President:

Your Chapter has not been idle. On August 23rd, we visited the Richmond Holocaust Museum. On November 8th some of us attended a book signing at the Udvar-Hazy Museum at Dulles. The book was a series of beautiful, detailed drawings of primarily WW-II planes. The artist, Nicolas Trudgian, presented each Vet with a copy of the book. These meetings along with a joint NCAC and Virginia Chapter Christmas Luncheon at the Fairfax Elks took place in late 2008.

On April 25th, 2009, we had a luncheon/meeting at the Stonehenge Country Club and Abe Firestone entertained us with slides of his recent return to his old base in England with his Bomb Group. Your Board met February 21, April 25 and September 26.

Another very successful outing was the Fly-In at the Warrenton/Fauquier Airport on October 22-25. Your Chapter was asked to furnish Veterans to answer questions about the B-17, B-24 and P-51 that the Collings Foundation flew into the airport. We had members there every day. We explained about the planes and their use in the "Big War" to some very inquisitive visitors of all ages. The 30 plus WW-II guys were up to the task! We are hopeful some of the other Vets there will be joining the Chapter. We incorporated a Chapter Meeting into the activities on Saturday. The Chapter web site contains several pictures of the affair.

SAIC, a world-renowned corporation, chipped in with financial and personnel support for the affair. We in the Chapter and the public at large benefited greatly from their gracious efforts. Lunches for the Vets, family members and guests were free. SAIC also paid for 20 rides, 10 in the B-17 and 10 in the B-24 for the Vets in attendance Sunday. Yours truly took advantage of this gift and rode in a B-17. It was my first since May of 1945.

The Chapter will meet on December 3rd, at the Stonehenge Country Club. Along with a short meeting and great lunch, Bob Noziglia will show a film titled "All The Fine Young Men." David Fields from the Warrenton/Fauquier Airport will make a report on the activities at the recent Fly-In of the B-17, B-24 and P-51. You will be proud of your Chapter's participation.

Again, I close by saying, "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.

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

OFFICERS

Lewis E Burke, President
5287 Ellicott Drive
Centreville, Va. 20120
703-631-0510

smokesignallev@aol.com

John S. Pearson, Vice President
1900 Lauderdale Dr. #C315
Richmond, Va. 23238
804-740-2635

Paul L Adams, Treasurer
11813 Coolwind Lane
Richmond, Va. 23233
804-360-9620

padams@accubanc.com

Robert V, Gates, Secretary
P.O. Box 352
Dahlgren, Va. 22448
540-663-3068

robgates@va.metrocast.net

DIRECTORS

A.J.Z. Firestone
5 Templewood Drive
Hampton, Va. 23666
757-826-1161

zekes18@verizon.net

Ordway B. Gates, Jr.
5109 Scarborough Mews
Williamsburg, Va. 23188
757-259-0865

ordwayg@aol.com

James E. Harvell, Jr.
11200 Misty Hollow Road
Midlothian, Va. 22901
804-744-1764

Anne B. Royster
7913 Southford Pl.
Chesterfield, Va. 23832
757-870-1673

lithses@aol.com

VIRGINIA CHAPTER BOARD MEETING 26 SEPTEMBER 2009

President Lew Burke called the meeting to order at 1140. The following members of the Board were present: Chris Bowers, Abe Firestone, Rob Gates, James Harvell, Bob Noziglia, and John Pearson.

President Burke reported that there are currently 88 people on the rolls of the Virginia Chapter and that 74 have paid their dues through 2009 or beyond.

There was some general discussion of *Plane Talk*. The Board was reminded that the newsletter is more interesting when member's reminiscences are featured. It was suggested that such articles from past issues of *Plane Talk* could be included in a "Best of *Plane Talk*" section of the newsletter. Two specific articles were recommended – one by Frances Nunally and another by Jim Kelly.

President Burke noted that we our By Laws require that we have four Directors and that we currently have fewer than that. John Pearson observed that officers are directors as well and, hence, we are in compliance with the By Laws.

A motion was made and seconded that Anne Royster be appointed to the Board until an election can be held at a general membership meeting. The motion passed unanimously.

President Burke reported that he had received a call from David Fields of the Collier Foundation about a fly-in of a B-17, B-24, and P-51 at the Warrenton-Fauquier Airport on 22 – 25 October 2009. The Foundation is having 8th Air Force veterans attend. The suggestion was made that the Virginia Chapter attend and have a general membership meeting on Saturday 24 October. President Burke will contact Mr. Fields and, if a meeting can be held, will send a letter to the membership.

It was also decided to have a general membership meeting at Stonehenge Country Club on either 5 December or 12 December. James Harvell will check on the availability of Stonehenge.

The meeting adjourned at 1250.

***Speech at Bensley Community Veterans Day Ceremony
15 November 2009***

by John V. Cogbill, Jr.

I would like to recount the exploits of O.B. Gates, Jr., an old friend and Chesterfield native who served in the U.S. Army Air Force. In 1944, he was a bombardier on a B-17 bomber in the 336th Squadron of the 95th Bomb Group stationed in East Anglia, England.

On the 21st of July (his 16th mission), the target was Regensburg, Germany. While exiting from the target, the aircraft was badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire and German fighter aircraft. With most of the crew wounded, including Lt. Gates, they struggled to keep the bomber in the air. After losing three of four engines and down to 1000 feet, they all bailed out. Lt. Gates and the co-pilot held the aircraft in the air while the other crew members jumped from the falling plane. Lt. Gates' delay in leaving the aircraft caused him to land some distance from the other crew members, who were all captured by the German military. He was found by Luxembourg underground members and hidden in a cave until nightfall, at which time he was moved to a safe house. During his time in hiding, he was moved a number of times. This was accomplished by disguising him in an overcoat with a German emblem, which covered his uniform. Movement was usually done shortly before the 5 pm curfew, riding a bicycle with a small group of Luxembourg civilians. Unknown to Lt. Gates, the U.S. fighter escorts arriving close to the crash site of his aircraft, reported that all ten parachutes had come out of the aircraft and no one was killed in the plane crash. I was able to get this information from his unit in England, and I provided the same to his family.

Of note, fighter escorts at this time were unable, because of fuel problems, to escort the bombers all the way to the target. Later this was changed and the bombers were accompanied all the way in and out from their targets, providing much greater protection for the bombers.

Lt. Gates was rescued by elements of the U.S. 28th Infantry Division on September 24th and moved to the rear area and back to his unit in England. He was then returned to his family in Chesterfield.

His many awards include the Purple Heart and a special award of a small silver boot (worn on the uniform) which is given to flyers that fly in and walk out.

I will end my salute to the honoree with a story about the ingenuity of the American Serviceman. Due to a lack of any way to freeze food, the 95th Bomb Group had a special daily mission flown by a B-17 designated the "Mess Hall" run. A B-17 Bomber was loaded with containers of ice cream mix and flown high enough to freeze the contents for the Mess Hall – a special treat enjoyed by all.

Fly-In at Warrenton-Fauquier Airport

The Collings Foundation flew three classic war birds – a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress, a Consolidated B-24 Liberator, and a North American P-51 Mustang – into the Warrenton-Fauquier Airport near Catlett, Virginia. The aircraft were available for tours and rides from October 22nd through October 25th. The event was sponsored by SAIC and Wells Fargo and lunch was provided by Smokey Joe’s Café.

David Fields, the Wells Fargo representative, asked interested veterans to come to the event and answer questions from the public. At least 30 veterans attended and fielded questions from the public. The Virginia Chapter was well represented and several of our members were present every day.

A complementary lunch was provided to all Vets and their families and guests in a hangar reserved for that purpose. David showed excerpts from a History Channel documentary on World War II and then asked the Vets to introduce themselves and briefly describe their service during World War II.

The Virginia Chapter Board decided to hold a general membership meeting on Saturday October 24th. There were 11 members and guests present.

For the Vets, this was step back in time. For many of the Second Gens, it was a dream come true.

The following pictures were taken on a rainy Saturday. There are many others posted on the Virginia Chapter website (<http://www.8thaf-virginia.org>).



The Hot Stove

by William R. (Bill) Greenwell, Jr.

Many of the World War II bomber crews in England lived in wood frame buildings covered with tar paper. The English had furnished charcoal stoves for heating these buildings. These stoves were of a simple construction. They had no grates to hold the fire off the bottom of the stove to allow air to circulate, as in American stoves, or dampers to control the heat. They were simply a cylinder about 12 to 18 inches round with a six inch pipe out the top. There was a flap door on top and one at the bottom.

Starting a fire in these stoves was like starting one in a modern barbecue. Charcoal isn't easy to light, but with a limited supply of kindling and paper, it was often impossible. To start a fire we put in a little paper, some scarce kindling wood, and the charcoal. Then we lit the fire and tried to get the charcoal going. The paper would burn, the wood would burn, and the whole mess would drop down into the bottom of the stove, often with no heat in the cold quarters.

As wood became scarce, we searched for some solution for starting our charcoal and keeping warm. One was pulling the rafters out of the frame of our building. We methodically stripped the building of all of the excess supports it could possibly spare. With that sources depleted, we began to search for other ways to light the stoves.

Finally, we decided to try something new. We took one of the distress flares from an airplane and added it to the paper, wood, and charcoal. The flare was like a big shotgun shell. Each contained four red flares. When the shell was fired the flares would go up in the air like fireworks on the Fourth of July.

As an after thought, we put a brick on top of the stove before we lit the fire. Well, the paper started burning and after a while, our scraps of wood started burning, and then the charcoal fell down into the bottom of the stove as it usually did.

Just as we started to open the stove to try again, "WUFF" - the flare went off. "WUFF" - it went off again, and twice more! The building shook but remained standing. The stove survived but out of our smokestack went the "RED, RED" signal for wounded aboard. God knows we were lucky we didn't have any wounded aboard. But we had a fire in the stove. We never tried it again because the supply office somehow produced an adequate supply of kindling wood after our experiment.

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. 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 December 3rd at Stonehenge Country Club in Chesterfield. The meeting will start at 11:30 with lunch at 12:30.

Bon Noziglia will be showing the very interesting film "All the Fine Young Men." This will be a review of history for many members but new information for the younger members! The film will start at 12:15 with lunch to at 1:00 PM. Other business, including an address by David Fields, will follow dessert. We'll certainly adjourn in time for everyone to get home before dark.

The Chapter will pay for lunch.

James Harvell 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.



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