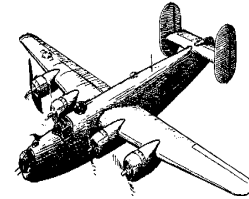


Plane Talk



The Eighth Air Force Historical Society
Virginia Chapter Newsletter

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

VOLUME 18 ISSUE 3

November 2011



Greetings From Your President:

The address label on this issue of *Plane Talk* has special significance. We plan to print an up-to-date Chapter roster for everyone's use and your label shows the information that we have about you. Please look at it and let us know if corrections are needed.

The first line is, of course, your name. If your name is spelled incorrectly please provide us with the correct spelling. The year next to your name shows the year through which your dues are paid.

Line two contains information that we would like to include in the membership roster. For Vets, we would like to show your WWII outfit, for example, "398th Bomb Gr., 603rd Sqdn." (We are limited in the space set aside for this, so try to keep it short.) Family members might want to write "Son or Daughter of XXXXXXXX" or "Widow of XXXXXXXX." Others can feel free to use their imagination, but again keep it short.

The remaining lines are for your address. One item we did not print on the label, but we would like to print in the roster is your telephone #number. Some we have, but they may not all be correct.

There is a form on the back of this newsletter which you may use to send your dues to the Treasurer, Paul Adams. It's also a convenient way to provide the roster information. This will save your Chapter the cost of mailing a separate notice

There were a number of Chapter members and family and friends at the Collings Foundation fly-in on October 15th. There's an article and photographs in this newsletter. There are many more photographs on our website.

Be sure to reserve December 10 for our "Christmas Luncheon/Meeting" at the Stonehenge Country Club.

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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ABOUT PEOPLE WHO FLEW IN THE 8TH AIR FORCE

Let me say some things about the kind of guys who could and would fly in WWII.

As kids, we played from sun up 'till sun down, baseball, football, tag, wrestling, swimming, flying kites, and shooting marbles. We umpired our own games. We often made our own toys.

We grew up as young animals do, playing at being men.

None of us ever wanted to be called sissies.

We all avoided being "quitters"

Facing danger was not pleasant but quitting was not in our nature.

We learned determination and courage on the playgrounds.

We fought in WWII the same way we grew up. Damn few of the 8th AF flyers quit. We could ask to be relieved of flight duty but I never knew anyone who did.

A Vet



Frances Nunnally Remarks
Virginia Chapter 8th Air Force Historical Society Meeting
20 August 2011

I am probably the most unlikely person to stand here and address a group of American Veterans. I was born in Austria and my father fought in World War I. On the other side!



Then, as history took its course, the Germans invaded Austria in 1938. We were a Jewish family and the persecutions began almost immediately. Soon my parents were no longer allowed to work and earn a living. We children were no longer allowed to go to school. The GESTAPO (Hitler's secret police) began to spread terror all around. Being summoned for "questioning" meant beatings, torture, and often death. Parents scrambled to get their children out of the country. England generously accepted thousands. I was one of them.

In November 1941 I was drafted into the British Army. Just two weeks later Pearl Harbor was attacked and soon the Yanks began arriving in England. I was then stationed in East Anglia which was right in the midst of all the American bases that sprung up almost overnight.

I remember the drone of the Flying Fortresses taking off on missions over the Continent. And I fondly remember the Dances with Big Band music held on the various bases.

But mostly I remember when victory came to Europe in 1945 bringing Hitler's terror regime to an end.

The ending of the War for me meant the beginning of a long search for my parents and family. They were among the six million lost in the Holocaust. Half a million of those lost were children.



We all owe so much to the American Airmen who helped bring the War to a victorious end. I think of them every day and I want to thank you personally today.

Thank you!

The following letter is from Heidi Nunnally

Dear Editor:

It's always nice to come home, open my mailbox to find the 8AF newsletter. After corresponding with Lew Burke and making arrangements to attend the August luncheon with my mother, I felt it was a trip worth making. Everyone warmly greeted Mom and me and the emotional recollections of the past will stay in my memory, not to mention the outstanding display of WWII memorabilia.

I moved to New York City in 2000 in search of a different life and settled into a day job at a law firm. I even became an editor for a Holocaust-based newsletter. Then 9/11 forced a new world on us all and, having experienced it first-hand, I soon came into a gift that allowed me to connect with my mother.



I was running from a thick cloud of ash as the World Trade Center's North Tower collapsed to the ground. I walked about six miles before reaching my apartment where I tried fruitlessly to call my parents in Richmond to let them know I was alright. When I was finally able to get a call through to my mother, she listened quietly to my saga before saying to me, "Now you know." At that moment, I understood what my mother had endured in WWII.

Ever since then, I have asked her many questions and she has shared with me the stories of her youth in Vienna and subsequent time spent in England after escaping the Nazi's. I even visited the hostel on the outskirts of London in Belsize Park where she lived for two years before joining the English Army.

To be surrounded in August by my mother's fellow comrades was an occasion to learn even more. Forgive me if I get any names wrong, but I enjoyed hearing every story, particularly Morris Miller's recollection of the weekly dances that took place where (he's almost certain) he danced with my mother! He talked about the planes he flew. "We got shot at..." he trailed off. "A lot." And Ron Marshand's Korean War missions and his former New Jersey neighbors who had survived Auschwitz.

I know that a number of people traveled a long distance in heavy traffic just to be at the luncheon. For that, I am grateful. I enjoyed meeting everyone and feeling the warmth that filled the room as we all chatted. As everyone around the table told their story, I worried my mother would be nervous. But she rose to the occasion and in her delicate voice told a tale that, to this day, I find riveting. And at the age of 90, she is understanding and modern-minded, an inspiration and great influence in my life!



I cannot imagine living in a time or place where I could not attend school or go to movies or have to leave my family, never to see them again. These are the liberties our country fought for. My mother endured hardship at a young age and was still be able to adapt to a different culture in England where she supported the allied troops while she was in Bury St. Edmonds, many of which 8AF members were stationed nearby.

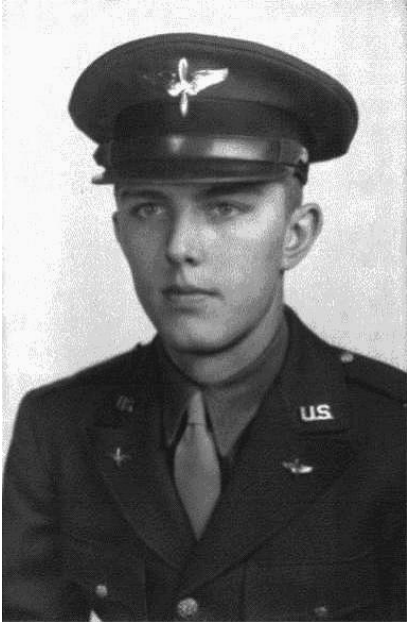
I can't thank everyone enough for their open arms at the luncheon and sharing their incredible stories.

Sincerely,

Heidi M. Nunnally

Reflections on My Grandfather

By Sean Gates



The last time I saw my grandfather, he was gaunt and pale, his blue eyes seeing whatever lies beyond the veil of the world, blind now to the wife, children, and grandchildren at his bedside. He was barely recognizable as the stoic, broad-shouldered man I knew in my youth, a grim reminder that time takes no prisoners, and that even the Greatest Generation must one by one cross that last battlefield from which there is no return.

But that's not the way I remember Ordway Benjamin Gates, Jr. He was a tall, strong man with a boyish smile and a penchant for speaking his mind. My uncle Ernie once said that growing up, he and his brothers (including my father) saw in my grandfather "the face of God—sometimes in anger, but always in love." I can think of no greater epitaph. He taught us all about honor, decency, and love.

Like most men of his generation, he didn't talk often about his experiences in World War II, but when asked he would share a few anecdotes, or tell the story of his experience when the B-17 on which he served as bombardier was shot down over Luxembourg on return from a mission to Regensburg on July 21st, 1944. He was the last man out of the plane – he opened the bomb bay doors and stepped out into space, parachuting into the woods, where he was found by the resistance and hidden for two months until he could be safely returned home. It was his seventeenth mission.



On October fifteenth, 2011, my father and I had the opportunity to take a ride on a B-17 Flying Fortress, an aircraft called Nine O Nine which belongs to the Collings Foundation and is part of its Wings of Freedom Tour. It was a truly amazing experience, and gave me a deeper understanding and appreciation for a man who was already a hero in my eyes.

When someone calls an aircraft a "flying fortress," you expect it to be enormous. The Boeing B-17 is just over 74 feet long and has a wingspan of nearly 104 feet. To put that in perspective, a Learjet 85 is 68 feet long and has a wingspan of nearly 57 feet, and Boeing's own DC-10 commercial aircraft is 180 feet long—nearly two and a half times the length of the Flying Fortress—and has a wingspan of 165 feet. Enormous would be a drastic overstatement.

Inside the aircraft, there are very few places where a man can stand upright. To get into the tail gunner's station a man would have to crawl on his belly. To get from the waist of the aircraft up to the radio room requires edging around the ammo boxes on top of the ball turret, on a narrow platform less than a foot wide, and then crossing the catwalk through the bomb bay. The catwalk is also less than a foot wide, and is framed by narrow v-shaped supports that require a man to



turn sideways to slide through. The chairs in the radio room, and in the bombardier's station which is in the nose of the aircraft, look like they were made for children. This narrow, claustrophobic tin can would carry ten crewmembers on missions that usually ranged from six hours, to upwards of ten hours.

That's about the time I realized that these things really were operated by kids. My grandfather was just 22 years old when he flew his seventeen missions in Europe. I guess when you're that age you can do anything. To access that bombardier's station, you have to clamber through the flight engineer's gun turret, then slither down under the cockpit. The navigator's table is bolted to the port bulkhead, and the bombardier's chair and the Norden Bombsight that he would use to line up his targets are sitting out in a glass bubble that comprises the nose of the plane.

My grandfather would have ridden right out front like that, with a full hemispherical view, the rumble of the engines vibrating the deck beneath his boots, as antiaircraft fire exploded around them in puffs of black smoke and burning shrapnel while single-prop fighters zipped around like insects, and machine gun fire carved jagged, dotted lines through the sky. I can see the images in my mind's eye, but I can't begin to understand how it must have felt. But I think now I understand what made him the kind of man who once jumped out of the car and chased burglars off his property. The kind of man who didn't mince words, and who understood in full measure the value of life, love, and family. Men like that may be a dying breed, but we would do well to remember them and pass on the lessons we have learned from them. We owe it not only to them, but to ourselves, and most of all to future generations.

The aircraft photographs in this article were taken by Sean Gates at the Collings Foundation "Wings of Freedom Tour" fly-in at Warrenton/Fauquier Airport on 15 October 2011.

Fly-In at Warrenton/Fauquier Airport

The Collings Foundation “Wings of Freedom Tour” came to Warrenton/Fauquier Airport on 14-17 October. A B-17, B-24 and P-51 were available for tours and flights those days. As always, the Collings Foundation did a great job!

SAIC sponsored the visit, rented the hangar that was used for the program and lunch, provided box lunches to veterans and families, and paid for 60 veterans and family members to fly in the bombers. Thirty four of those who signed up to fly were WW-II veterans. Mrs. Monica Frechette of SAIC was in charge of the Saturday function and did a fantastic job. All in all SAIC paid approximately \$35,000 to make Vets and family members comfortable.



These pictures were taken by Sean Gates on 15 October 2011. You can see many more of Sean’s photos and some taken by Anne Royster at Chesterfield Airport the following week on the Chapter website.

ANNOUNCEMENT

We are having our traditional Christmas meeting and luncheon on December 10th at Stonehenge Golf and Country Club in Chesterfield. The meeting will start at 11:30 with lunch at 12:30.

This is the last of three meetings scheduled for 2011. We get to see and talk to fellow vets and their wives, children, friends and neighbors and wish each other a very MERRY CHRISTMAS. We addition, we have plans in the works for a surprise program! As always, Stonehenge Golf and Country Club will serve a great lunch.

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.



**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS
FORM AND RETURN IT TO
PAUL ADAMS IF YOU
NEED TO PAY YOUR
CHAPTER DUES FOR 2011.**



VIRGINIA CHAPTER DUES RENEWAL FORM

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____

CHAPTER DUES \$10.00

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

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