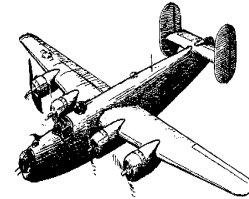


Plane Talk



The Eighth Air Force Historical Society
Virginia Chapter Newsletter

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

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November 2014



Greetings From Your President:

Please take a look at the address label on this *Plane Talk*. There is a number following your name on the top line. If it is 2013 or earlier, you may not have paid your dues for 2014. Please take care of it now so you can remain on the roster and receive our newsletter. You may mail your dues to me. I will bring my database up to date and forward your check to our Treasurer, Paul Adams. If you have paid and the number is incorrect, please contact me so it can be corrected.

We had a very nice meeting and luncheon at the Stonehenge Country Club on May 3rd. We had 20 of our folks in attendance: Ron Manchand, Forest Marshall, Geraldine Marshall, George Bergdoll, Gordon Caulkins, Frank Carlomagne, Don Demmert, Hildegard Demmert, Cort Demmert, Jim Boehling, John Maurice Miller, Bill Smithdeal, John Payne, Ron Kimler, Doris Armstrong, Luella "Rocky" Banton, James (Jimmy) Harvell, Lew Burke, Lillie Burke, and Ann Royster.

Gordon Caulkins & George Bergdoll were elected Chapter Directors to fill the two vacancies.

As usual, several attendees had some remarks or participated in part of the program. John Marshall, assisted by Anne Royster, presented an interesting film on how to fly a B-17. I don't know why they didn't just ask me! Frank Carlomagne reported on one of the "Honor Flights" that brought WW-II vets to the WW-II Memorial in D. C. These flights are free to the vets that fly on them.

On an inside page I will have a report on our August 23rd Meeting & Luncheon.

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 EDITOR.

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MORE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since I reviewed some items from our May meeting, let me touch on our August 23rd get together. We had 16 present but they had tidbits from their service days that they shared with us. Those present were:

Donald "Spec" Campen, Desiree Choe, Ray Gulick, Rachel Carlile, Liz Carlile, Wm. F. "Bill" Smithdeal, John Maurice Miller, Gray Smithdeal, Gorden Caulkins, Doris Armstrong, Ron Marchand, Luella "Rocky" Banton, John Payne, Lew Burke, and Bernie Breeden (Lew's Designated Driver And Adopted Son)

Our Founding President, Chris Bowers showed some pictures of his Family and more prominently of his Father during the time of his service. The part I saw was very interesting. (I was late. Made a wrong turn and ended up in downtown Richmond. I was a great Co-Pilot but always had a Navigator to get me back to some airfield. Even if it was not the one we took off from)

Our luncheon consisted of soup and a sandwich served by the Club. Oh did I mention the desert? We had their great chocolate pie again. If you do not attend your Chapter meetings, perhaps you better start. That is the greatest chocolate pie I have ever eaten.

Again most of those present recounted some of the happening back during the big war



MY BOOKSHELF

By Robert Gates

Like many of you, I have a house full of books on a wide variety of topics. One subject that has been of particular interest to me is World War II and, especially, the Eighth Air Force. I recently looked through my books and made a list of the ones about the Eighth Air Force. I've got autobiographies and biographies of the top leaders as well as the recollections of pilots, bombardiers, and navigators. I've got books about the aircraft and specific missions and I've got books of historical analysis.

Here's a list:

AUTOBIOGRAPHIES & BIOGRAPHIES

"Global Mission"	H.H. Arnold	"Iron Eagle: The Turbulent Life of Gen. Curtis LeMay"	Thomas M. Coffey
"Hap Arnold and the Evolution of American Airpower"	Dik Alan Daso	"Mission with LeMay"	Gen. Curtis E. LeMay
"Master of Airpower: Gen. Carl A. Spaatz"	David R. Metz	"Bomber Harris"	Dudley Saward

PERSONAL RECOLLECTIONS

"A Mighty Fortress"	Charles Alling	"Bomber Pilot"	Philip Ardent
"No Foxholes in the Sky"	Harry H. Crosby	"A Wing and a Prayer"	Harry H. Crosby
"Fire and Fury"	Randall Hanson	"B-17s Over Berlin: Personal Stories from the 95 th Bomb Group (H)"	Ian L. Hawkins (Ed.)
"The Man Who Flew the Memphis Belle"	Robert Morgan	"To Kingdom Come"	Robert J. Mrazek
"Shot at and Missed: Recollections of a World War II Bombardier"	Jack R. Myers	"The Wild Blue Yonder and Beyond: The 95 th Bomb Group in War and Peace"	Rob Norris w/Ian Hawkins
"Half A Wing, Three Engines and A Prayer"	Brian D. O'Neill	"Return to Base"	Jesse Richard Pitts
"The Wrong Stuff"	Truman Smith	"The Innocent Cadet: Becoming a World War II Bombardier"	Charles N. Stevens
"An Innocent at Polebrook"	Charles N. Stevens	"Back from Combat: A World War II Bombardier Faces His Military Future"	Charles N. Stevens
"The Savage Sky"	George Webster		

GENERAL

"The Wild Blue"	Stephen E. Ambrose	"The Mighty Eighth"	Gerald Astor
"On the Highways of the Skies: The 8 th Air Force in World War II"	Martin W. Bowman	"Fortress of the Skies"	Martin Bowman and William N. Hess
"Boeing B-17 Owners' Workshop Manual"	Graeme Douglas	"B-17 Fortress at War"	Roger A. Freeman

“Dambusters”	James Holland	“Airwar”	Edward Jablonski
“Flying Fortress”	Edward Jablonski	“Twelve O’clock High”	Beirne Lay and Sy Bartlett
“Masters of the Air”	Donald L. Miller	“The First Heroes”	Craig Nelson
“The Rocket and the Reich”	Michael J. Neufeld	“The Bombers and the Bombed”	Richard Overy
“The Legendary Norden Bombsight”	Albert L. Pardini	“The Planes of the 449 th Bomb Group in World War II”	D. William Shepherd (Ed.)
“Bombs Away: The Story of a Bomber Team”	John Steinback		

I’ve got a lot of other books about the senior military and civilian leaders, personal histories from members of the other services, and some general World War II histories. Maybe I’ll make another list sometime!

If you have books to suggest, let me know and I’ll add them to the list.



Photo by Sean Gates

MEMOIRS

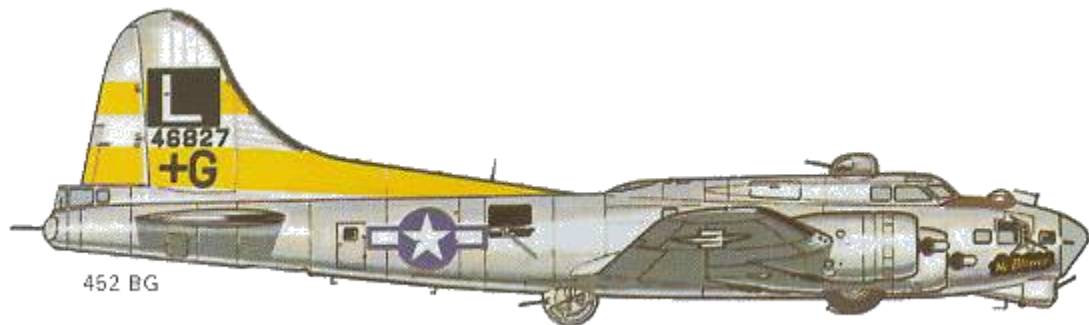
THE LAST WAR-TIME LOSS OF THE 452ND BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

By Jimmy Boehling

Editor's Note: While going through my Father's papers after his death, I found a copy of "Memoirs" by Jimmy Boehling. The two essays, written in 1993-94, addressed the last war-time loss of the 452nd Bomb Group (H) and flying home with the 452nd Bomb Group (H). Edited excerpts from the first essay are presented here.

We checked the crew list at squadron headquarters for the next day's mission and there we were ... scheduled to fly our first combat mission the next day, April 21st, 1945. So it was early to bed to try for some sleep after flying a practice mission that day and because of an early briefing in the morning. And although crews returning from recent missions were reporting them as "milk runs," thoughts of the April 7th mission when the 452nd was hit hard and lost four B-17s to the new German jet fighters and suffered damage to thirty-five planes put up by the Group. I did manage to get a couple hours of sleep before the Charge of Quarters woke us at 2:30 AM for briefing at 3:45 AM.

At the general briefing I was announced that the target would be in Munich and the alternate target in Ingolstadt, which was about 50 miles north of Munich, both being deep in southeastern Germany. The weather was predicted to be poor most of the way and a cold front located just west of the Rhine River had to be crossed.



It was still dark when we arrived at the airplane we would be using. We who flew up front tossed our equipment into the forward hatch and swung ourselves up into *Slienthe Je Vahr*, which is Gaelic for "A Long and Happy Life." The thought struck me that I had never been on a B-17 so heavily loaded – fuel tanks full, twenty-two 250 pound bombs in the bomb bay, boxes of .50 caliber ammunition at all the guns and turrets, and heavy steel-ribbed flak jackets at each station. The nose compartment was so filled that was hardly room to move about.

Dawn was just breaking when the green flare went up and the sound of the first engines starting could be heard in the distance. It was sometime before our turn came, but then one by

one the four Wright-Cyclone engines puffed blue smoke and roared to life. After most of the 29 planes put up by the Group that day had taken off and the B-17 in front of us had started down runway 225, we moved out and lined ourselves up. We used up practically all of the runway, but cleared the fence by a fair margin. I entered the time of take-off in my log as 7:05 which was double summer time.

We climbed eight or nine thousand feet and leveled off. The clouds cleared for a while and I could see the Thames Estuary far off to the right. The clouds closed in again before we reached the continent near the French and Belgium border. After we were nearly two hours and 260 miles out of Deopham Green, we saw B-17s circling the radio buncher at Rheims.

We found a spot in the formation, although it was not the assigned one in the low squadron. I was told 46 years later that we were in the high element of the high squadron. The Group was fully formed up and left the buncher on a heading nearly due east at 9 o'clock. The formation began its planned climb of another twelve or so thousand feet and all was well.

We passed over the city of Metz, which was visible briefly through a break in the undercast. We continued climbing and reached nearly 29,000 feet and, because of the thin air and heavy load, the controls became mushy. As we approached the front, the co-pilot, Lt. George V. Pringle, told me that it was likely that we would not clear the cloud tops and the gap in the clouds was not wide enough for all of the planes in the Group to pass through.

After a minute or so, *Slienthe Je Vahr* went into a cloud. I looked out the window across my navigator's table and could not see the element lead which was no more than 50 feet away and I'm sure that the pilot had also lost sight of it. Almost immediately, I perceived a turn to the right which I took to be the proper procedure to put some distance between us and the element lead.

After our turn to the right and in solid overcast, I felt the plane pull into a rather steep climb. Before I had time to think about it, the plane pulled up sharply again and this time I suspected something was wrong. In another few seconds, although the engines were running normally, the climb could not be sustained as the airspeed dropped. The nose dropped and the left wing fell. Without any visual reference to know the plane's attitude because we were in thick clouds, I had a strong sensation of falling and believed we had stalled and had begun a steep spiral down.

I was anxious to know what was happening in the cockpit. I crawled through the bulkhead opening and tapped the flight engineer, Seth Wagner, on the leg but he gave me no response. I returned to the navigator's table and noticed that the altimeter was winding down rapidly. The toggelier, George Grubbs was watching me and I pointed to the altimeter in case he had not perceived that we were falling. At that time, I believe we were in a near vertical dive and spinning slowly. I remembered that I had heard that fully loaded B-17s did not recover from spins and I thought that time was running out. Again I caught the attention of the toggelier and pointed to my parachute and pointed down to suggest that maybe we should bail out. He only looked at me expressionless.

I consciously considered that the airplane would be righted but I thought that the odds were against it and decided to leave although the bailout alarm had not sounded. I motioned to George Grubbs that I was leaving and crawled to the hatch below the flight deck, turned the handle on the door, shouldered it open, and rolled out head first. After about 15 seconds, my parachute popped open. I felt relieved although I was hanging from only the left riser, having forgotten to fasten the right one to my harness. At length I broke out of the overcast at what I estimated to be a thousand or fifteen hundred feet above the ground. Right away I saw a pall of black smoke and pieces of metal fluttering down at my altitude at a distance of what appeared to be a hundred yards or so though it must have been farther

I landed unharmed in a field being plowed by an elderly farmer behind a pair of oxen. I was fairly sure that I was in Allied occupied Germany so did not worry about being mistreated. As I pondered what to do, about 10 German youths approached me. The boys put a canvas over me to shield me from the rain and offered me a bicycle ride into the nearest town, Landau. Along the way, I was found by two French soldiers who turned me over to a couple of American soldiers in a jeep who took me to their quarters in a railroad car.

Within fifteen or twenty minutes, an American officer took me to the City Hall in Landau. After some questioning, I was turned over to the 64th Fighter Control Wing at Edenkoben. It was there that I learned that *Slienthe Je Vahr* had dived into the ground and exploded and that none of the others had survived the crash.

I spent the night with the 64th and the next day, Sunday, caught a ride on a truck convoy going to Nancy, France and the same evening took the night train to Paris. I was told to report to the Francis Hotel, 100 Rue Lafayette which the Air Force had taken over for billeting transient airmen. The following day I flew to London where I reported to the 8th Air Force Headquarters. Late that afternoon I caught the train for Attleborough and the base shuttle to Deopham Green where I surprised the few people I knew when I walked in at about 9:00 that evening.

I was given a week's leave for rehabilitation at Moulsoford Manor near Reading, England and returned to base on May 4th and the war ended on the 7th. I flew two prisoner haul missions and quite a few practice flights mostly for celestial navigation practice in preparation for the flight back to the U.S.A. In June we flew back to the U.S. and were scheduled for deployment to the Pacific Theater in B-29s. However, the war against Japan ended after the atomic bomb was dropped in August and I was discharged four months later.



ANNOUNCEMENT

We are having our next meeting and luncheon on November 22nd at Stonehenge Golf and Country Club in Chesterfield. The meeting will start at 11:30 with lunch at 12:30.

This is the last meeting scheduled for 2014. This is a great opportunity to see and talk with fellow vets and 2nd Gens. As always, Stonehenge Golf and Country Club will serve a great 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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