



306th Echoes

Educating and Communicating



B-17 Flying Fortress

2017 Reunion Hailed as a Flying Success!



Reunion: *An instance of two or more people coming together again after a period of separation; a social gathering attended by members of a certain group of people who have not seen each other for some time.*

Indianapolis, Indiana, the site of the 2017 306th BGHA reunion, reflected these definitions as 93 individuals, including 8 veterans, gathered. The past met the present, and service was honored. Incredible stories were shared, and history came to life as once again these veterans, along with Indiana’s governor, Eric Holcomb, climbed aboard the *Yankee Lady*, a painstakingly restored B-17 Flying Fortress, for a 30 minute flight across the Indiana skies.

For those on the ground, the revving of the engines, the taxiing, and the take-off evoked an emotion that connected those who flew strategic missions with those who could never perceive what the air war over Europe truly felt like.

Dr. Susanne Meinl, a Munich-based historian who specializes in researching events following the downing of Allied airmen, has spent years helping American families learn the fate of their relatives killed in Germany during the war. As special guest speaker, Dr. Meinl addressed *(continued on page 4)*

Ralph Bordner: 306th BGHA Founder Dies



Ralph E. Bordner, one of the original founding members of the 306th Bombardment Group Historical Association, and the Association’s first president, passed away July 22, 2017,

in Metamora, Illinois, at age 99.

Ralph was a navigator/bombardier with the 368th “Eager Beavers,” reporting to the 306th in July 1944 as a member of the Robert Chrisjohn crew. His skills and capabilities resulted in his eventual assignment as lead 368th Squadron bombardier. He completed 30 missions. After the war, his military service included a tour as Deputy Commander of the Peoria Air National Guard, retiring as a Colonel in 1978. *(continued on page 3)*

EDITION HIGHLIGHTS

2017 Reunion Recap.....	1
Ralph Bordner	1
President’s Column	2
Past President’s Column.....	3
Editor’s Column	4
Chapman University Center for American War Letters	5
2018 Board of Directors	6
2017 Reunion Photo Album	7
Secretary’s Column	19
SSMA 75 th Anniversary Ceremonies	19
Webmaster’s Column	20
Bamforth Newspaper Interview.....	21
Cole Crew Memorial	22
Oral History Review.....	26
Remembered “Over There” Part 2.....	28
From the Bookshelf	31
In Remembrance of –	32
Membership Registration Form.....	35

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The 306th Bomb Group Historical Association was determined by the IRS to be a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) as a public charity, effective 24 July 2015.



**A Message from 306th
BGHA 2017-2019
President Bill Feeser**

It is my privilege to begin a two year term as your president. I am deeply grateful to my predecessors, Steve Snyder and Charles Neal, from whom I have learned so much. It is humbling to enjoy the trust of so many wonderful people. I deeply appreciate the work in which I have participated with board members as Vice-President these past two years. The work we do to honor the service and memory of those brave men of the 306th in WWII is a sacred trust. My father, S/Sgt. William H. Feeser, became a part of the 306th at its formation after his training at Sheppard Field; Boeing; and at Wendover, Utah. Enlisting 9 September 1941, he served beyond VE day and was discharged 9 September 1945. The most significant and memorable day of his duty was serving as Crew Chief on Colonel Frank Armstrong’s plane, 27 January 1943. Armstrong’s plane was the lead on the first raid over Germany by the USAAC. I’m blessed to have an official photo of the plane, crew, and ground crew taken on that day.

As you may have noted in a recent Facebook post, my first official act as the new president, was to join with Michele Reioux, Michele’s friend Mary, Jackie Feeser, Bruce Chase, and Will Higgins (Human Interest and History reporter for the *Indianapolis Star*), for a memorial observance for Lt. Milton Olszewitz at the Beth-El Zedeck Cemetery in Indianapolis. Lt. Olszewitz was a member of Michele’s father’s crew on *Choo-Z-Suzy* of the 423rd squadron. Milton was an only child and never married; thus we, representing the 306th family, were there to honor and remember his sacrifice.

I am happy to report we have several new indexing volunteers who have offered their time to create a searchable data base which records all the missions of the 306th, the crew members and their positions, and the planes. My personal thanks to all who have joined in this work.

In recent days I’ve noted that almost daily we are receiving more and more requests from people to join our group of Facebook friends. Thank you Sue for your work in helping new people to connect with the 306th. If you are a Facebook user, and would like to connect through this social media platform, just search for it and submit a request to join. You can stay up to date with 306th and SSMA activities and issues.

Our partnership with the SSMA at these reunions has truly enriched our gatherings. Together we have a great heritage that we share. The friendships we have formed are so rich and meaningful. *(continued on page 3)*

Feeser Message *(continued from page 2)*

Finally, my deep thanks to everyone who made our recent reunion a wonderful experience for all: Doug Rapp for arranging tours, events, and the *Yankee Lady* flights; our various board members who worked hard in preparation for the event; our Round Table Vets for sharing stories that brought tears and appreciation; Cliff and Brandy Deets for caring for our hospitality room; the hotel staff; and so many more. I do look forward to working with our past president, Steve Snyder, on next year's gathering and with our board and all of you, as our members, fulfilling our common mission to educate, remember, and never forget.

Thank you. ***Bill***

Bordner Obituary *(continued from page 1)*

In the 1970s, as an active participant in 8th AAF reunions, Ralph and a handful of other 306th Bomb Group alumni decided that an association organized just for 306th veterans should be formed. The 306th BGHA was first informally constituted in early 1975, and eventually formally incorporated on March 23, 1979, in the state of North Carolina. At that time there were only three 306th BGHA board members: Ralph Bordner, Russell Strong, and William Collins; there were no elected officers until 1979 when Ralph was elected as the first official president of the Association. In 1983, the 306th BGHA began holding its own reunions separate from the 8th AAF Historical Society, which has continued through our latest reunion in Indianapolis.

Ralph Bordner held a degree in education from Northern Illinois University and a master's degree from Bradley University. He served for twenty-nine years at Robein Grade School as a teacher, principal, and superintendent, from the opening of that school until his retirement. The school gymnasium is named in his honor.

Surviving Ralph are his son, also named Ralph; two daughters, Lillian and Jo Ann; nine grandchildren; and fifteen great grandchildren.

His contribution to the 306th BGHA is immeasurable: he was a true American hero and a member of our country's Greatest Generation. He will be missed. ■



Steve Snyder, 2015 – 2017 Presidential Reign Draws to Close

Well, my two year term as president of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association has ended. Boy, did it go fast! It has been an honor to serve in this position, and I look forward to my upcoming two year term on the Board of Directors as immediate past president.

It is my passion and my privilege to help REMEMBER the 306th Bomb Group's achievements during the air war over Europe, to HONOR the men of the 306th who fought it, and to EDUCATE the public about it, especially younger generations. It is something I do continually throughout the year by making PowerPoint presentations to all sorts of different groups and attending air shows around the country signing copies of my book, *Shot Down*.

The #1 blessing of being a member of the 306th BGHA is getting to know our veterans and hearing their stories be it through our website, on our Facebook page, and particularly at our annual reunions. However, another real blessing is getting to know the relatives and friends of the veterans through Facebook and at the reunions. Reuniting with members and meeting new members each year at the reunions is so much fun. Over time, strong and everlasting friendships are made.

This coming year I am also Reunion Chairman and will be planning our visit to Orange County in Southern California. I have some exciting outings in mind and hope there will be a big turnout. The weather should be great, and with all the other attractions in Southern California, it would be a good opportunity for people to either come early or stay over to enjoy some vacation time.

In closing, I want to welcome our new president, Bill Feeser, who is a wonderful man and a dear friend.

Steve

(continued from page 1)

the reunion group, telling the story of two 306th Bomb Group members, Charles Evans and Harvey Purkey, who were murdered at the hands of the German citizens near Gross-Gerau following the crashing of their B-17G **Hard to Get** in the vicinity of Budberg. Through her efforts, a memorial to these two airmen is planned. Dr. Meinl emphasized that her research assists in bringing an airman's story full-circle, to closure for the family, and that the end results are a healing experience for all.

On a bus excursion to the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center, the 306th reunion group visited this 1,000 acre facility that provides a tailored training environment for military units, first responders, government agencies, and contractors from around the world. It is the preferred destination for organizations looking for full-immersion in a contemporary urban training environment.

The traditional Veterans Roundtable event was moderated by Eric Eastes, who posed engaging questions of JJ Gaydosh, Allen Lawson, Clayton Nattier, Gailard "Red" Ketcham, and Robert Vickers, asking them to recall their training, first combat mission, and, for Clayton Nattier, the POW experience.

Clayton's reunion attendance had particularly memorable significance. After years of not seeing each other, Clayton and his Stalag Luft 1 roommate in Barth, Robert Vickers, had the opportunity to reconnect.

One day later, at the **Yankee Lady** airfield, Clayton met Karen Robling, daughter of Max Kimmel, waist gunner aboard the B-17G **Duration Plus** piloted by Clayton. Max was a POW and returned home after the war. He passed away in 1960, a few months before Karen was born. Although she never knew her father, Karen's husband, Brian Robling, an historian and World War II researcher, made contact with Clayton and, at Clayton's invitation, drove to Indianapolis to join the group. Having the chance to share time with Clayton and to learn more about her father was a once-in-a-lifetime event.

Colonel Susan O'Konski, US Air Force (Retired), spoke at this year's "Folded Wings Tribute to the Fallen," reminding us to "listen between the lines," paying attention not only to the stories our veterans share with us, but also what they do not voice aloud. There are sobering

messages in the silence and the understated account of their military experiences. A total of 104 veterans' names and 4 wives' names from the roll of the deceased were read by Bill and Jackie Feeser.

Friday night dinner speaker, Colonel Jerry Hadley (Retired) spoke of the similarity between the military of World War II and the military of today. His admiration of our veterans, the contributions they made, and the functions they played in ensuring our freedom were echoed through his words of gratitude to veterans who came from a generation that would not acknowledge defeat and gave their lives to keep America free. He praised those who came home to make this nation the greatest on earth. ■

From the Editor



306th BGHA Challenge Coin Makes Reunion Appearance

*(Editor's contact
information on page 2)*

A challenge coin is a small coin or medallion (usually military) bearing an organization's insignia or emblem and is carried by the organization's members. Traditionally, they are given to prove membership when challenged and to enhance morale. In addition, they are a favorite collectable by service members, and circumscribed by tradition, custom, and light-hearted machinations.

There are myriad stories citing the origin of the challenge coin, some dating back to the Roman Empire, but the most common story credits a wealthy lieutenant, probably from an Ivy League University, who quit mid-term to join the fighting forces of World War I. He ordered medallions struck in solid bronze and presented them to his unit. A young man from the unit, when captured by German patrol after his plane was shot down, escaped only to be arrested by the French who thought he was a saboteur. Having no identification, other than his medallion, he showed it to his world-be executioners. One of his captors recognized the insignia, thus staying the American's certain death. Instead of shooting him, they gave him a bottle of wine.

During World War II the coins or medallions were issued to the Office of Strategic Services

personnel who were deployed in Nazi-held France. The coins were simply used to verify and give bona fide credibility to a person's identity.

The challenge coin tradition has been adopted by all branches of service, non-military organizations, and the United States Congress, which produces challenge coins for members of Congress to give constituents. In today's Air Force, military training instructors award an airman's coin to enlisted personnel upon completion of their US Air Force Basic Military Training and to officers upon completion of the Air Force Officer Training School.

Protocol dictates that when presenting a challenge coin to someone, the coin is concealed in the right hand, then passed to the recipient while shaking hands.

This year's reunion attendees were introduced to the newly struck 306th BGHA challenge coin. Anyone wishing to obtain a challenge coin should contact Historian Cliff Deets at cldeets@att.net or via his contact information listed on page 2 of this issue of *Echoes*. Cost of the coin is \$17, which includes shipping cost. Coin will be shipped after receipt of payment. ■



Chapman University Opens the Center for America War Letters



The Center for American War Letters (CAWL) is a unique and extensive manuscript collection of previously unpublished war letters from every American conflict, beginning with handwritten

missives composed during the Revolutionary War and continuing up to emails sent from Iraq and Afghanistan. These personal war-related correspondences are a vital record of the collective memory of the American people, as witnessed and articulated by service members, veterans, and their loved ones, who experienced these wars firsthand.

The Center's mission is to continue to collect, preserve, and promote extraordinary war-related correspondences so that this generation and those to come will better understand the sacrifices and experiences of US troops, veterans, and their loved ones.

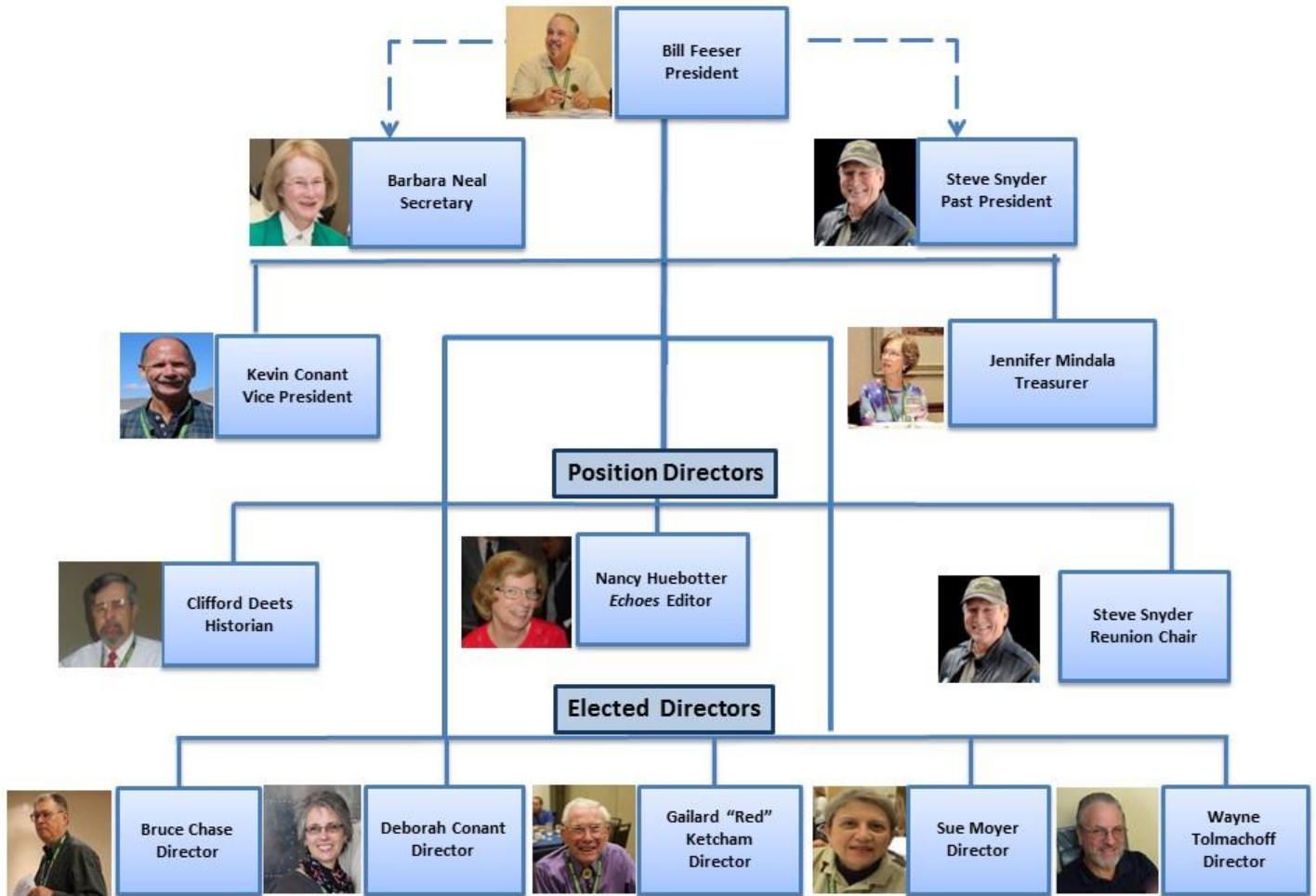
The Center for American War Letters is committed to the ongoing collection, preservation, and promotion of these incomparable records of the American experience through various projects and media, including the following:

- production of plays and live readings throughout the US
- video recordings and documentaries of troops, veterans, and their families telling their stories in their own voices and/or reading their letters
- traveling exhibits
- articles and books that incorporate the letters
- educational guides to assist teachers and community leaders with the interpretation of these primary sources in the classroom
- additional materials that will encourage Americans to recognize the extraordinary historical, cultural, and literary value of these irreplaceable documents.

Ultimately, the Center will work to expand its collection and strive to become the nation's largest and most preeminent archive of personal wartime correspondences. The Center for American War Letters is directed by Andrew Carroll.

Andrew Carroll is the editor of several *New York Times* bestsellers, including *War Letters*, *Letters of a Nation*, and *Behind the Lines*. *War Letters* inspired the critically acclaimed PBS documentary of the same name, and the audio version of the book was nominated for a Grammy in the "Spoken Word" category. ■

Meet the 2018 Board of Directors



2017 Reunion Photo Album



Pictured (clockwise from upper left corner): Bill Carlile [Group Flying Control Officer], JJ Gaydosh [Pilot], Carl Groesbeck [Navigator], Gailard "Red" Ketcham [Ball Turret and Casey Jones Project], Allan Lawson [Co-Pilot], Clayton Nattier [Pilot], Vincent Stokosa [enlisted in 1945; stationed at Schweinfurt], and Robert Vickers [Bombardier].



2017 Board of Director's Meeting (clockwise): Steve Snyder, Red Ketcham, Bruce Chase, Jennifer Mindala, Les Stellish, Charles Neal, Cliff Deets, Deborah Conant, Sue Moyer, Nancy Huebotter, Barbara Neal, Bill Feeser (hidden). Not pictured: Kevin Conant (photographer).



2017 Board of Director's Meeting (clockwise): Deborah Conant, Sue Moyer, Nancy Huebotter, Barbara Neal, Bill Feeser, Steve Snyder, Red Ketcham, Bruce Chase, Jennifer Mindala, Les Stellish, Charles Neal, Cliff Deets (hidden) Not pictured: Kevin Conant (photographer).



Reunion attendees were introduced to the training capabilities of the Muscatatuck Training Center.



Muscatatuck Training Center buildings and train wreckage used in various training scenarios.



Pictured (left to right): Dean Sergeant, Steve Snyder, Bruce Chase, Bill Feeser.



Board of Directors: Steve Snyder (president), Bill Feeser (vice president), Barbara Neal (secretary), Jennifer Mindala (treasurer).



306th BHGA General Meeting.



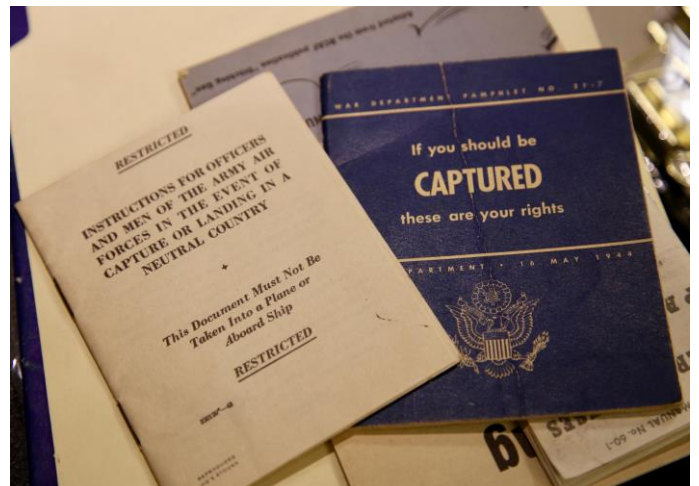
Military clothing display in Hospitality Room.



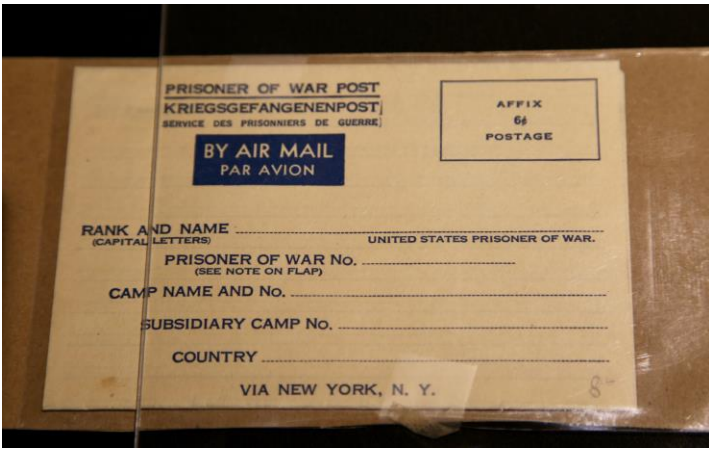
Carl Groesbeck checking out the Red Cross package Display in the Hospitality Room.



Setting up World War II memorabilia display.



Memorabilia on display in the Hospitality Room.



Prisoner of War stationery.



Red Cross package contents.



Red Cross package contents.



World War II memorabilia.



Allan Lawson (co-pilot) and JJ Gaydosh (pilot): Friends for 70+ years.



Red Ketcham, Walt Lubojacky, Judith Hermley, Joanne Fleet.



Honor Guard at Folded Wings Tribute to the Fallen.



Colonel Susan O'Konski (retired) addressing attendees during Folded Wings Tribute to the Fallen.



Bill and Jackie Feeser reading names of the recently deceased during Folded Wings Tribute to the Fallen.



Chris Thaiss, Ann Jeffries, Clayton Nattier.



Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association Business Meeting.



Margaret and Carol Petrucka.



Marty Lenaghan and Carolyn Couey.



James and Hilary Gill with Bruce Chase.



James and Nena Leary.



Veterans Round Table (left to right): JJ Gaydosh, Allan Lawson, Clayton Nattier, Gailard "Red" Ketcham, Robert Vickers.



Dr. Susanne Meinel (Special Guest Speaker) and Doug Rapp (Reunion Chairman).



Dr. Susanne Meinel.



Steve Snyder and Bill Feeser.



Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb with Bill Feeser and Steve Snyder.



Vincent Stokosa registering for flight aboard the Yankee Lady.



Susan O'Konski, Em Christianson, and Deborah Conant.



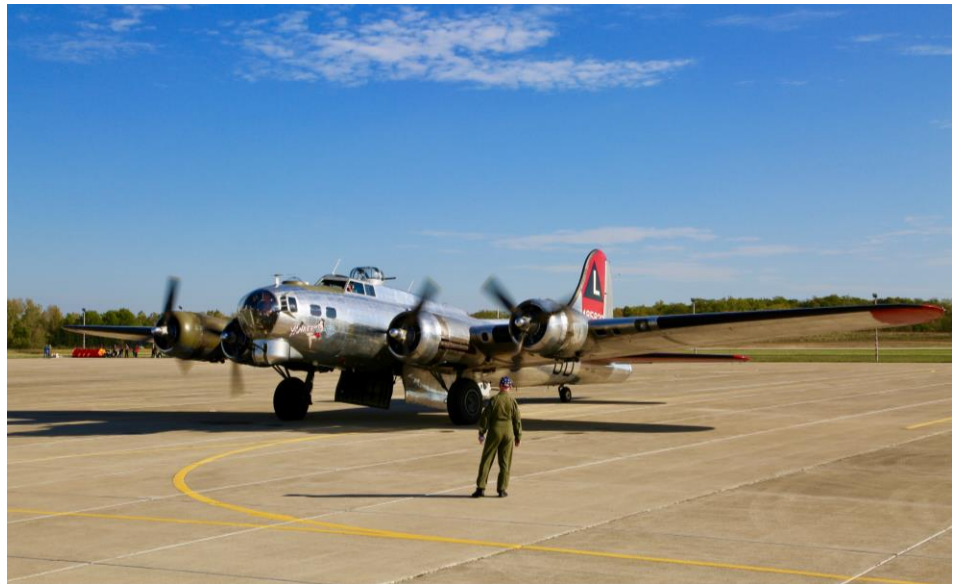
Clayton Nattier with Yankee Lady Pilot.



Inside the Yankee Lady.



Indiana Governor Eric Holcomb.



Yankee Lady revving her engines.



Governor Eric Holcomb congratulating 306th Veterans Allan Lawson and JJ Gaydosh.



Bill and Mike Prentice.



Caryl and Dustin Smith.



Doug, Steve, and Clayton Snyder.



Karen and Brian Robling.



Ann Jeffries flanked by sons Flannery and Chris Theiss.



*The Vickers Family (left to right)
Dennis and Debbie Williams, Robert Vickers,
Robert L. and Rita Vickers.*



Mary Conway.



Michele Reieux.



World War II Veterans (left to right) Carl Groesbeck, Bill Carlile, Robert Vickers, JJ Gaydosh, Allan Lawson, Clayton Nattier, Gailard "Red" Ketcham. Not pictured: Vincent Stokosa.



World War II Veterans and Wives/Widows (left to right) Carl Groesbeck, Bill Carlile, Robert Vickers, JJ Gaydosh, Allan Lawson, Clayton Nattier, Gailard "Red" Ketcham. Back row: Em Christianson, Elizabeth Huebotter, Doris Jenks, Patricia Moulis.



2017 Indianapolis, Indiana, 306th Bomb Group Historical Association Reunion Attendees.



Marty Lenaghan, Steve Snyder, and Chris Thaiss.



Carol and Margaret Petrucka, Roland and Donna DeLair, Tresia Hendricks.



Bill Feeser presenting veterans gifts to Allen Lawson and JJ Gaydosh.



Bill Feeser.



Secretary's Column

By Barbara Neal
(Secretary's contact information on page 2)

I hope each of you reading this column will promptly submit your 2018 Membership Registration.

Membership is FREE. Registering as a member is needed each year, from ALL of our followers -- vets, widows, AND all of us other "younger" followers. The association is a non-profit 501(c)(3) -- thus we have an obligation to keep track of who are our members. Thanks to that 501(c)(3) status, any donation you may wish to make is deductible on your US tax return.

Register your 2018 Membership either by mailing in your Member Registration form (on page 35 of this *Echoes*) to the address on the form OR by registering as a Member at our website, www.306bg.us. List your preferred contact information, and submit it. Be assured, no personal contact information is kept on the website. It is immediately sent in an email to our volunteer Membership Director, Bruce Chase (whose father was a radio operator at Thurleigh), and to me. If you choose to mail your Member Registration, Bruce's mailing address is on the form.

As your volunteer secretary, it is really helpful to me to know which WWII veteran is YOUR veteran of interest. We often have inquiries from younger members, wanting to learn more about what his or her family's veteran experienced while stationed with the 306th Bomb Group at Thurleigh, near Bedford, England. Some veterans were also POWs; sometimes I can find another who was POW at a similar time and in the same location(s), so that is helpful to know.

I often review our current membership listing, trying to figure which veterans or their family members can help new young members better understand what their own family's veteran's experiences overseas were like.

As many of us know, our own family's veteran may never have been willing or able to discuss his overseas WWII time. Others, in their senior years, thanks to meetings with their peers at various reunions and meetings, gained much peace of mind

in being able to talk with others who went through many of the same experiences.

Learning more can help any interested family member better understand how WWII impacted a family's veteran, as well as the entire family. It fits well with our Mission of educating others about the 306th Bomb Group's service in WWII.

If you need help getting registered as a 306th member, leave a message on my cell phone. My number is on page 2 of each *Echoes* and at the Leadership tab of 306bg.us. ■

SSMA Plans Trip to Germany for 75th Anniversary Ceremonies



The Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association (SSMA) is planning to have one or more representatives in Schweinfurt for the 75th anniversary ceremonies scheduled for 14 October 2018, the date known as "Black Thursday" in US Air Force history.

In 1998, veterans from both Germany and the United States commemorated their reconciliation by dedicating a monument that included the inscription, "DEDICATED BY SOME WHO WITNESSED THE TRAGEDY OF WAR, NOW UNITED IN FRIENDSHIP AND THE HOPE FOR LASTING PEACE AMONG ALL PEOPLE."

While SSMA members may provide travel tips, all travel will be independently arranged by the traveler. SSMA will not be coordinating any travel plans; however, they would be delighted if you would like to join them as they once again commemorate this occasion.

For additional information, contact any SSMA board members, including Robert McCalb (step_ads@bellsouth.net) or Sue Moyer (ssma43@gmail.com).

Scheduled activities include ceremonies and events surrounding the 75th anniversary of the mission, meeting local citizens, and potentially visiting crash sites. ■

306bg.us – Reaching Out to the World

by Charles Neal

Our site honors WWII air campaign vets by educating succeeding generations about their service.

Note SIGNIFICANT enhancements to our website:

- Visitors, including you our reader, can now DONATE to our Association via our website
- Implementation of no cost MEMBERSHIP
- Initiation of an INDEXING project, which allows SEARCHING our indexed files
- Addition of pages describing how ANYONE can help index our historic documents
- Addition of scanned pages of an index of 306th *Echoes* 1975-2000
- Addition of a page giving advice for “Finding a vet at 306bg.us”
- Addition of a number of video clips of our veterans speaking of their experiences
- Addition of more individual histories, current memorials and historic material
- Addition of a website map
- Reunion photos from our 2016 Dayton reunion

IMPORTANCE of our site: Our veterans are passing on, and our site is the way for their voices to still be heard, passing the stories of our veterans to succeeding generations of family and to others around the world. Many recipients of our printed *Echoes* may not be aware of the significance of our website. The younger generations are unlikely to find information regarding the WWII vet in their family in material stored. Today they look for information on the internet. Many veterans and their families have loaned (for scanning and return) or given material found in the attic and basement storage boxes to our Association (you can still do so). Such material, historic documents and photographs, individual histories, etc., have been scanned and uploaded to our website where they can be viewed by interested family members,

students, historians, researchers, and history buffs around the world. The Association’s primary mission is now educational, and our website is the primary way we reach out to the world.

Website statistics:

- 306bg.us Website usage:
 - Oct 2015 to Sept 2016 visits = 47,300
 - Average > 135 visits/ day
 - Average > 600 pages viewed/day
- Some web file stats (approximate):

• War era photos	8,000
• Special Orders	800
• Mission Reports	350
• Correspondence files	1,700
• Card files	8,000
• Daily bulletins	700
• Past reunion photos	4,000
• Other files, more than	25,000
• Total files in excess of	50,000



Start making your plans!
306th BGHA/SSMA 2018 Reunion
Watch for additional information
in your eMail and
the Spring edition
of *Echoes*.

Great Nephew's Research Yields Newspaper Account of Men and Their Missions

While on leave in his hometown of Brunswick, Maine, young Leon L. Bamforth granted the *Brunswick Record* an interview, which ran in the 12 August 1943 edition.

T/Sgt. Bamforth completed a 25 mission tour with the 306th in July 1943, then in July 1944, while flying with the 305th as a top turret gunner on a mission over Munich, Germany, Bamforth died after being struck by shrapnel.

The following article, uncovered in the newspaper archives at the Curtis Memorial Library as Shawn Favreau conducted research on his great-uncle, yields some insight into the men, their missions, and the English people.

[Editor's Note: The following article is reprinted here as it appeared in the Brunswick Record. No modifications to the text have occurred.]

Sgt. Bamforth, Home on Furlough, Tells of European Bombing Raids

**Hero has won Air Medal and Distinguished Flying
Cross: Has high Admiration for the British**

Technical Sergeant Leon L. Bamforth, United



States Army, Brunswick's first war hero to come back from the European theater of war, told a Brunswick Record reporter this week that he has the highest admiration for the British people, whose morale is still high in spite of the highly destructive air raids which they

have gone through. Americans, he said have only given up about one half of what our English allies are doing without in the way of food, clothing and luxuries.

Sgt. Bamforth, who has been decorated with the Air Medal, three Oak Clusters and the Distinguished Flying Cross is a veteran of 25 bombing missions over Germany, France, Holland, and Denmark. He has shot down two enemy fighter planes, one over Paris and one over Wilhelmshaven from his position as top turret gunner. Although he has never been wounded, six of his flight

companions have been wounded in action. On one occasion, the man standing shoulder-to-shoulder with him was shot through the elbow, suffering a compound fracture.

All members of the plane crew of ten are highly trained to cope with any emergency situation and when his comrade was shot Sgt. Bamforth applied a tourniquet and administered first aid. Things are done instinctively when a bomber is on a mission, Bamforth stated, because all flyers are required to go to ground school every day. Ground school training never stops.

Sgt. Bamforth is back in the United States now because flight crews are given a rest after successful completion of 25 missions. Although he is to report to Salt Lake City after his month furlough with his parents Mr. and Mrs. Coral Bamforth of Maine Street is completed he is eager to get into action in the Pacific theater of war where he would like to mix with the japs. He will be transferred from the Salt Lake replacement center to some post where he will serve as an instructor.

Bamforth figures that the European theater of war is the toughest, and states that flying at high altitudes over enemy territory is trying on the nerves even though not subject to the attack of enemy fighters. All crew members wear specially heated clothing, helmets and shoes to counteract the cold weather which is encountered at 20,000 feet, from which height most bombing is done. On one mission last winter the temperature at that high altitude was 62 degrees below zero centigrade.

The boring part of any mission he intimated, was not the trip itself but the hours of practice which were held before each raid. On the practice missions however, he stated that the crew often put on headphones and listen to good music as they shot through the high altitudes. There are plenty of American cigarettes available to the United States flyers stationed in England and the first thing the flyers do as they take off is light up a cigarette from one of the seven packs they receive weekly.

On Jan 5, 1942 Sgt. Bamforth enlisted in the service after having undergone training at the Aero Industries Technical Institute in California. He has always wanted to fly, he said, but confessed that he had never gone in for making model airplanes when he was younger. A bad eye, he went on, kept him from qualifying as a pilot.

He came back to this country in a C-54 transport plane which was as comfortable as one could imagine. The trip by train from Presque Isle, however, took almost as long as the plane trip via Iceland did.

Bamforth took part in the first all-American raid over Germany and in the first all-American raid over Norway. The trip to Berlin would be tough however, he intimated, because of the distance and the tension under which the flyers would be. "They'll get it. They can do it all right." he affirmed to the reporter.

He marveled at the morale of the British people and was surprised at the rapidity with which they cleaned up after the Germany Raids. They even put the street lights back up. He expressed also, his belief that the English people would probably get some modern plumbing as a result of the Germany raids. The English at the moment, hardly know what a room with bath is.

Most of his bomber crew came from other states than those in New England Bamforth said, and his original bombardier is now a prisoner of war in Germany. Most of his crew are furloughed now as a result of their numerous missions. Some of them came to this country with him while one or two are remaining in England as instructors.

Sgt. Bamforth, who has been stationed in England since November, came away with the highest regard for our allies. "I admire those people over there." he concluded.

Residents of the community of Brunswick can well be proud, alas of their fighting men who [unreadable] such gallant deeds in the air over Europe. ■



*Crew of **Leading Lady**: Pilot: Gene Henry, Co-pilot: Carmine Savastao, Navigator: Paul Young, Bombardier: Martin Lally, Radio Operator: Bill Mauntel, Ball Turret Gunner: Gerald Palmer, Waist Gunner: Joe Peed, Tail Gunner: Dale Hanks; Flight Engineer/Top Turret Gunner: Leon Bamforth.*

“Thunder in Heaven”

Memorial to the Crew of 42-29971

Black Thursday, 14 October 1943, and the 423rd aircraft 42-29971, piloted by Lt. Vernon K. Cole, had been mortally damaged by a rocket fired from a JU-88. The crew was ordered to bail out (two men already dead and another not able to make it out) while Lt. Cole remained at the controls until he was finally blown from the airplane as it continued on, crashing near the village of Beek, in the Netherlands.

Seventy-three years later, the 306th BGHA was contacted in April 2016 by Mr. Roy Gottgens, whose hometown is Beek, requesting more information regarding the crew and aircraft that had landed and exploded that day near his village.

Lt. Cole was found hanging from his parachute in a tree, killed in action. The bodies of the three men who crashed with the airplane were found in the wreckage: T/Sgt. Robah C. Shields Jr., S/Sgt. Donald Richardson, and S/Sgt. Frederick W. Zumpf, all killed in action. Those that were able to bail out were taken as prisoners of war: Lt. Robert E. Partridge, Lt. Charles R. Kuehn, Lt. Joseph M. Columbus, T/Sgt. Robert D. Folk, S/Sgt. Adrien H. Wright, and S/Sgt. Irving J. Mills.

The citizens of Beek had erected a war memorial in 1969, honoring those lost in the war with stepping stones engraved with the names of local military men and Jews who had perished. Among those stepping stones, which surround the base of the monument, is one engraved with the names of the three men who were found in the wreckage of 42-29971 (Shields, Richardson and Zumpf). That was all that honored the men of this 423rd Squadron aircraft until April 2016 when Mr. Gottgens began researching the crew and airplane and decided that these American heroes deserved a more fitting tribute.

Over the past year and a half, 100 plus emails have been exchanged between Mr. Gottgens, SSMA member and 306th Facebook guru Sue Moyer, 306th BGHA secretary Barbara Neal, and historian Cliff Deets, and with the many relatives of the Vernon Cole crew. The result of Mr. Gottgens' effort is a memorial to the crew of 42-29971 that was dedicated on October 14, 2017 in Beek. Thirty-one relatives of the crew attended the ceremonies.

Soon after beginning his research, Mr. Gottgens solicited local authorities, hoping to find a location in Beek, then raise funds for, and have a memorial erected and dedicated to, all of the men in Cole's crew. His target was to have the dedication ceremony on October 14, 2016, the anniversary of the crash of 42-29971. Roy soon had the local town authorities onboard with his idea and the project soon grew in scope, with organizations on the national level becoming involved, including the Dutch National Trust, an organization that was experienced in erecting such markers and also owned the land where the memorial was to be placed. In July 2016, it was decided to reschedule the dedication to 14 October 2017 to allow for further in-depth planning.

The sight selected for the memorial is located at the place where the aircraft crashed, just 100 yards from an old medieval farmhouse that Beek was restoring as the town's visitor's center. It was also decided to involve local school children in a history lesson for them. On March 15, 2017, school children learned about what had happened in the air war of WWII, and what had happened to the crew of 42-29971, including a "live" presentation of the story of Robert Folk. The children then planted ten fruit trees at the sight of the memorial, one for each crew member. Four schools and six officials each adopted a tree. A contest was organized whereby each child was asked to write an eleven word phrase or poem about what they had learned. The winning eleven words to be inscribed on the monument are *"Airplane, soldiers went to the ground, therefore we walk freely around."*

While progress was being made toward construction of the monument, Roy Gottgens researched and wrote a twenty-eight page paper about the plane and crew and that document is now posted at the 306th web site under the "crew histories" section of Education/Research and then Histories of 306th Squadrons, Planes & Individuals. He named his paper "Gedonder in de Hemel" ("Thunder in Heaven").

Roy also corresponded with many of the relatives of the Cole crew for their stories and, of course, invited them to the planned dedication ceremony.

Construction of the monument was scheduled to begin at the end of August. The design is a walking area in a field nearby the Visitor's Center shaped in

the life size outline of a B-17. The left wing and fuselage are defined by a low vertical steel plate wall, rust colored, with the Dutch inscription "vrijheid is niet vanzelfsprekend" (we cannot take freedom for granted). The letters are formed by holes in the steel representing bullet holes. At the leading edge of the right wing is a polished metal plaque mounted on a lectern, inscribed with "Gedonder in de Hemel" and the names of the ten members of the crew. A bench nearby at the trailing edge of the right wing is for visitors to sit and reflect.

The design can be viewed on a short YouTube video at web link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4RUU4xmMk1w&feature=youtu.be>.

The monument is surrounded by the ten fruit trees planted by the school children, and the whole area is then surrounded by more fruit trees representing other 306th aircraft. Inside the Beek Visitor's Center, a small exposition room holds some artifacts recovered from the plane's wreckage and a bench donated by the Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association. An art rendering of the aircraft with the "Triangle H" and 423rd "Grim Reapers" logos as well as the names of the ten crewmen, which was donated by the 306th BGHA, is included in the display. The dedication ceremony took place on 14 October 2017 under sunny skies, with a host of dignitaries and approximately 150 guests, along with the thirty-one relatives of the crew of 42-29971, many of whom had travelled from the United States. Dignitaries included US Army General Alex and US service officers from NATO Headquarters, high ranking military officials of the Netherlands, the mayor of Beek, and the US Charge d' Affaires to the Netherlands.

Thanks to the determination and hard work of Mr. Roy Gottgens, another 306th aircraft and crew are memorialized, honored, and "Remembered Over There."■



Beek Visitor's Center.



The small stepping stone (above) engraved with names of the three men found in the wreckage of the plane piloted by Lt. Vernon K. Cole is at the base of the original Beek War Memorial.



Inside Visitor's Center a tribute bench donated by the SSMA.



The low steel wall lining the left fuselage. "Bullet" holes spell out "vrijheid is niet vanzelfsprekend" [we cannot take freedom for granted].



The memorial to 42-29971 and crew encompasses a reflection area in the shape of a B-17 with a steel plate wall outlining the left wing and fuselage. In the right wing is the memorial plaque and bench. Two cherry trees planted by local children complete the site.



Mrs. Lois Partridge, 93 year old wife of co-pilot Robert Partridge, lays flowers at the memorial site.



Mr. Roy Gottgens addressing dignitaries and guests at dedication ceremonies.



Unveiling the memorial plaque.



Memorial plaque at leading edge of right wing. Gedonder in de Hemel (Thunder in Heaven) with names of crew engraved.



Thirty-one relatives of the 41-29971 crew attended dedication ceremonies.

Memories from the Edge of the Abyss: Evaluating the Oral Accounts of World War II Veterans

by Rodney Earl Walton

A Review by Sherry Tuffin

[Editor's Note: Sherry Tuffin not only conducts oral history interviews for the Yankee Air Museum in Michigan, but teaches others the techniques for conducting successful oral history interviews. At the request of the Michigan Oral History Association, Ms. Tuffin reviewed an article published in the Oral History Review journal. Her article, which is included in this issue of *Echoes* with her permission, is reprinted below.

As part of the 2016 306th Bomb Group Historical Association Reunion in Dayton, Ohio, Ms. Tuffin was instrumental in providing attendees with the video-recorded interview of Bill Houlihan, who spoke about his "Life at Thurleigh" while stationed there as a 367th Medical Technician during World War II.

Encouraging further discussion of, and conducting of World War II veterans' oral history interviews is a good and time-critical topic.]

Rodney Earl Walton, asserts that WWII veterans are often reticent to talk about their war experiences although their memories – even decades later - are often quite reliable. In "Memories from the Edge of the Abyss: Evaluating the Oral Accounts of World War II Veterans" (The Oral History Review: vol.37 (1), p.18-3) he further posits that WWII veterans recall initial combat experiences more vividly and in greater detail than later ones. When I compare his observations to my personal experiences in conducting WWII veteran oral histories, this is what I found.

Dr. Walton notes WWII veterans are, "frequently reticent about recounting their memories...and often waited until late in life to do so." He reasons this is because: having lived during the Great Depression instilled a sense that complaining was unacceptable; they view their individual roles as small in the scheme of things; after the war they directed their focus to rebuilding their lives. When they might have been ready to tell their stories the Baby Boomers were anti-war and uninterested. Three events that finally prompted vets to share their war experiences, were the end of the Cold War, the collapse of the USSR, and a national surge of

patriotism that made telling war stories more acceptable.

The Great Depression taught people to be stoic about depravations. As one vet told me, matter-of-factly, when he was a child he would fill his belly with water from the garden hose to ward off hunger. I similarly found WWII veterans, as a group, to be modest about their personal role during the war years. For instance, while taping an oral history of a veteran who fought in the Battle of Okinawa, he omitted that he had been awarded the Bronze Star with Valor. I had to extract this information, question by question, from this modest Marine.

"You were awarded a medal weren't you?"

"Yes."

"What medal were you awarded?"

"A Bronze Star."

I persevered, "With valor correct?"

"Yes."

I can also confirm the dearth of veteran's stories in the post-WWII period was because they were anxious to move on with education (on the GI Bill), marriage, children, and careers. When I asked about their lives following the war, they expressed a strong desire to leave the war in the past and resume civilian life. I don't know whether it was due to apathy or the anti-war sentiment of the 1960s and 1970s, but one gentleman informed me his "children weren't interested in hearing my stories." I have no firsthand knowledge that the surge of patriotism in the 1980s and 1990s, as reflected by a plethora of war movies such as *Platoon* (1986) or *Saving Private Ryan* (1998), acted as an incentive to re-visit their war experiences, but it seems a logical conclusion. Another cause might be the healing effect of time. One veteran confided to me before relating a painful memory of an event over seventy years in the past, "I've never told this story before."

The second observation Walton drew from his oral history experiences was that WWII veteran's recollections many years after an event remain, "honest and accurate." While older memories may lack the freshness of immediate memories and become abbreviated through repeated telling, he concluded that vivid memory recall is often due to battle memories being "burned into the veteran's mind," and that the passage of years "will never erase the times when one's body and soul were on

the edge of the abyss.” Listening to stories of events that occurred almost three quarters of a century ago, I, too, was amazed at the rich details veterans were able to summon – names, places, heat, clothing, scenery, thoughts, sounds.

These descriptive details make me agree with Walton that comprehensive questioning is crucial in winnowing fact from fiction. While, “*veterans have little incentive to falsify date or place,*” prior research helps clarify discrepancies and, in some cases, may refresh a veteran’s recollection. Before conducting a pre-interview with a staff sergeant medic, attached to the 306th Bomb Group, 367th Bomb Squadron, I discovered through my research where he was stationed in England, the training and duties of a wartime medic, the history of the 306th Bomb Group and the 367th Squadron and more. This data serves multiple purposes: it permits me to ask pertinent questions, assess the accuracy of the medic’s memories, and can even stimulate the veteran to recall additional detail. For example, I had seen pictures of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth visiting the 306th Bomb Group during the war and asked the medic about the royal family visits. He not only recalled their visits, but was reminded that the woman who ran the Red Cross station was a cousin of the Queen’s and that, in turn, reminded him of additional memories.

Walton notes that, “*over time memories may be colored or influenced by movies, TV, books, other vet’s stories,*” and suggests fact checking a veteran’s recollections. Additionally, I attempt to create a word picture by asking questions such as, “What did it smell like?” “How hot was it?” “What did it sound like?” “Where were you standing?” Questions that can be answered if you were there. Memories created, altered or influenced by hearsay, movies, or TV are bereft of the taste, touch, or feel of first hand experiences. The recall of sensory impressions can also stir up additional memories and can add detail, making for a richer, fuller story.

Are the memories of the first battle more vivid and detailed than subsequent encounters as one veteran suggests because the “*mind starts cutting all this stuff out....couldn’t handle it any more...[and you] just click it out*”? Walton suspects diminished memory is because, while “*first impressions are critical [and] generate lasting impressions*” the monotonous grind of war causes “... *hours, days,*

months [to spill] sluggishly from the future into the past...” as noted by a survivor of Auschwitz. I have no empirical or anecdotal data to substantiate this opinion, but my sense is this is correct. We all vividly remember ‘firsts’ – our first date, our first car, our first job. Those are the ‘peaks,’ but in between the peaks our memories tend to be blur. I see no reason why the recollections of soldiers – unless traumatized - would differ. This is pure supposition and as Walton notes, “*memory is a curious instrument.*” However, I can substantiate Walton’s premise that the “*oral accounts of World War II [vets] are generally reliable and of high quality.*”

Similarly, I concur that “*meeting and talking to veterans provides a human touch and a richness one cannot get from a paper document*” and is “*personally rewarding work.*” When he says that, “*stories told orally are sometimes full of humor and quiet drama,*” I find myself recalling such moments while working with WWII veterans to memorialize their experiences. Of course oral history “*acts as a complement to and not a replacement for, other sources of history,*” but that does not diminish the unique nature of oral history to complete, humanize, and possibly even “*rewrite military history.*”

It is Dr. Walton’s wish that his observations of World War II veteran’s oral histories will generate a dialog among other oral historians to assess the “*strengths and weaknesses of World War II veteran interviews.*” I am adding my voice and hope others will join the discussion. ■



Remembered “Over There” Part 2

On page 22 of the Winter/Spring 2016 issue, *Echoes* ran an article on the men and aircraft of the 306th that had been memorialized or remembered by the citizens of the various European countries that had been directly affected by the 8th Air Force bombing campaign. Since that time, our staff has received more information from overseas regarding a number of other projects that have memorialized our 306th veterans. Here is the latest update:

Isle of Man – On 14 April 1945, with the end of combat operations for the 306th just a few days away (19 Apr 45), a 367th squadron aircraft, 42-37840 “Combined Operations” piloted by Lt. Robert A. Vieille was on a routine R&R flight to the Isle of Man when it crashed near Port St. Mary. All eleven persons onboard perished including Emily Rea who was a senior officer of the Red Cross. On September 17, 2012, almost 67 years after the crash, the commissioners of Rushen Parish and the Manx Aviation and Military Museum dedicated a memorial to the fallen crew and passengers at the sight of the crash. All were buried at Cambridge Cemetery: Vieille, Rea, Captains George E. Cubberly and Wilbur B. Butterfield; Lts. Collin E. Liersch and Austin J. Parrish; F/O Chester Smalczewski; M/Sgt. Derrell Jones, and Sgts. Ernest E. Gallion and William C. Starbuck. David Jansen, grandson of Dr. Arthur Weihle (367th squadron surgeon), who was supposed to be on that flight but just missed catching it, recently visited the memorial resulting in a featured article in the June 15 – 21, 2017 edition of the local newspaper, the *Manx Independent*.

Cambridge American Cemetery – This well-known American Battle Monuments Commission cemetery in Cambridge, England, recently requested photographs of our 306th veterans who are buried there. The purpose of the request is to display the pictures of our Vets at their gravesites every Memorial Day. Memorial Day 2017 was the first where the photos were posted (see accompanying photo of the grave of Michael Roskovich, the “Mad Russian,” who was the first man in the 8th AAF to complete 25 combat missions).

Margraten American Cemetery, Netherlands – We have received a number of inquiries from families and citizens of the Netherlands for information on 306th veterans who are buried at Margraten (another American Battle Commission cemetery) and whose gravesites these Dutch families have adopted. This entails caring for and maintaining the gravesites in good condition as well as placing flowers on the grave and posting photos of the 8,300 plus American soldiers and airmen buried there. It is our understanding that these are one year sponsorships and then another family adopts the grave. We also understand that there is a two year waiting list for adoption of a grave.

Piriac-sur-Mer, France – A memorial was dedicated on 23 November 2003 to the crew of Lt. Clay Isbell and aircraft 41-24478 that was shot down 23 November 1942 with only two of the crew surviving to become POWs. Piriac-sur-Mer is near/adjacent to the town of Guerande (where the crew of Lt. Ferguson’s aircraft and crew had a memorial erected that was featured in the 2016 article). Both towns are on the route flown to bomb the infamous submarine pens at St. Nazaire.

In Memoriam Sergeant Albert Swartz – Many memorials to 306th veterans and aircraft are large plaques mounted on marble and rock. Some are even more elaborate while some are quite simple. Witness the small plaque mounted on a fence post on a road near Bourtange, Netherlands, that leads to nearby Dorpen, Germany. It is dedicated to Sergeant Albert Swartz, 423rd radio operator, who was killed in action 25 June 1943 on a mission to bomb Bremen (see the accompanying photo). He was killed when his parachute failed to open. The photo is from an organization named Ikarus and was sent to us by Mr. Harrie Koning of Holland.

Garsten, England (Choo-Z-Suzy update) – In the Winter/Spring 2016 article in *Echoes*, we reported on the crash of Choo-Z-Suzy near Garsten. The company, Building Research Establishment (BRE), had chosen the sight for their new building. When they started construction, they discovered parts of the plane were still there. A display of those parts was incorporated into the new building. Chris Scivyer recently reported that in September 2017, BRE held an open house. Chris recently wrote to Michele Reioux, daughter of the pilot of Choo-Z-Suzy, Paul Reioux. “*I thought you might*

be interested to hear that last Saturday BRE had an Open Day for our neighbours. As part of the event I gave six presentations on the Choo-Z-Suzy story and had an exhibition stand. I guess we had some 600 people who looked at the stand or listened to my talks...I met several people who as school children at the time witnessed the unfolding story.”

Chris also wrote an excellent report about the crash of Choo-Z-Suzy that is posted on the 306th BGHA web site under the Education/Research tab and then can be found at Histories of 306th Squadrons, Planes & Individuals.

24 April 1944, book project by Mr. John Meurs – In past issues of *Echoes*, we have solicited support for Mr. John Meurs of Switzerland from relatives of the 101 men on the 10 aircraft of the 306th who were lost on the 24 April 1944 mission to bomb Oberpfaffenhafen. Mr. Meurs has been writing a book that will highlight the individual veterans who were on that mission. He reports that he is nearing completion of his draft manuscript and hopes to have it published within the year. ■

Isle of Man



Memorial plaque erected on the Isle of Man honoring the crew and passengers of “Combined Operations” 42-37840 that crashed on 14 April 1945 while on an R&R flight.



Article from the Isle of Man newspaper, the *Manx Independent*, reporting on the visit of David Jansen, grandson of Dr. Arthur Wehler, who had just missed the ill-fated R&R flight of “Combined Operations.”

Cambridge American Cemetery



Memorial Day 2017 at Cambridge American Cemetery Michael Roskovich, the “Mad Russian.”

Piriac-sur-Mer, France



Memorial to the crew of Lt. Clay Isbell, and aircraft 41-24478, at Piriac-sur-Mer, France, shot down 23 November 1942.

Sgt. Albert Swartz



Memorial to Sgt. Albert Swartz on a fence post in Holland.

Choo-Z-Suzy

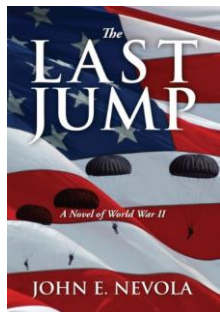


Mr. Chris Scivyer of Building Research Establishment and Michele Reioux, daughter of Choo-Z-Suzy pilot Paul Reioux, meet in June 2015 at the sight where the airplane crashed.

From the Bookshelf

The Last Jump: A Novel of World War Two

by John E. Nevola



Four years in writing, and one year in editing, this historical novel is based on US airborne operations in Europe during World War II. Mixing fiction with non-fiction, the author successfully places the fictional characters in historically accurate situations and venues, the result being a

very engaging story. A synopsis from the book cover captures the essence of the book:

J.P. Kilroy, a middle-aged journalist, regrets ignoring his mother's only request. Even her last letter, which exposed the existence of a dark family secret, could not motivate him to reconcile with the father who abandoned them years before. When he receives an invitation from the White House to attend a long overdue Medal of Honor awards ceremony, he also discovers his estranged father, an honoree, had recently passed away.

Kilroy reaches out to four aging veterans who served with his father in an effort to uncover the truth, but soon discovers the four men not only know the secret, they all took a solemn oath never to reveal it. Undaunted and with the aid of an Army press liaison, he accepts the challenge to engage the veterans into revealing the truth by any means necessary. Their conversations become a verbal odyssey and flashback to the racially charged attitudes in America during the War. Kilroy learns about the altruism and contributions of Americans on the Homefront, the plight of women volunteer ferry pilots and factory workers, and the extraordinary dedication and self-sacrifice of the average citizen. He is taken back in time to a country in grave danger but a country as united as never before or since.

Over time the aging men begin to pass on. As the last one dies, Kilroy's hopes are dashed. But one reaches from beyond the grave to identify the only other living person who has the answer and Kilroy races death to reach her. His desperate desire is that the revelation will finally relieve his guilt and bring peace to the soul of his beloved mother. ■

Liberty Lady: A True Story of Love and Espionage in WWII Sweden

by Pat DiGeorge



Liberty Lady is the true story of a B-17 crew piloted by 1st Lt. Charles W. Smith of the 306th Bombardment Group. On 6 March 1944, the day of the Eighth Air Force's first large-scale daylight raid on Berlin, the battle-damaged bomber forced-landed on a tiny island just off the coast of neutral Sweden.

The bombardier of the aircraft, 1st Lt. Herman F. Allen, along with the rest of the crew, was housed in an internment camp, unable to leave the country. Allen soon began working with the United States' espionage agency, the OSS, with instructions to befriend a Swedish businessman suspected of selling secrets to the Germans. Later, Swedish newspapers erupted with headlines about one of the biggest spy scandals of the war, and newspapers in the US tantalized readers with "Swedes Jail Spy."

Pat DiGeorge's research into this exciting story has taken her to Sweden twice; to the Roger A. Freeman Eighth Air Force Research Center in Pooler, Georgia; to the National Archives in College Park, Maryland; and to the Air Force Historical Research Agency in Montgomery, Alabama. In 2012, she visited the 306th Bombardment Group Museum in Thurleigh, England, the site of the airfield where her father's crew was stationed.

Extremely helpful was the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association and its treasure trove of research material, World War II veterans, and fellow historians. Members of the Facebook group, "306th Bomb Group – First Over Germany" have kindly answered many questions.

Until now, few books have been published in the English language about two significant topics of World War II history – the American internees in Sweden and the operations of the OSS in Stockholm.

Since 2009, Pat has been blogging her research at www.LibertyLadyBook.com. Books are available on Amazon.com. ■

In Remembrance of –

Obituaries – Veteran death information should be submitted to the Secretary. Contact info is on p.2.

Bachmann, George W Jr. waist gunner (367th, Paul Martin crew) of Ohio, passed away May 15, 2017, at 91. After the war he returned to work in the family business in Akron and then as a postal worker. His love of singing brought him to performing with the barbershop quartet, the Derbytown Chorus. He is survived by his wife, Patricia, seven children and one stepchild, sixteen grandchildren and a step-grandchild, and a great grandchild and step great grandchild.

Barber, George L. gunner (368th, Walter Sumner crew), of Clovis, Ca, died May 17, 2017.

Bennett, John E. (306th Group Gunnery Officer), passed away December 1, 2009 in Peoria, IL. He taught at Miami of Ohio, the University of Illinois, and Bradley University, and later worked for Caterpillar in their engine division. At the time of his death he was survived by his wife, two children, three grandchildren, and a great granddaughter.

Bidwell, Walter G. tail gunner (369th, Alfred Lomar crew), age 90, of Janesville, WI, died October 6, 2015. He worked for General Motors for over 35 years in their front office. At the time of his passing he was survived by his daughter, Susan, two granddaughters, and one step granddaughter.

Blood, Leon J. copilot (367th, Joseph Pedersen crew) evadee, passed away August 21, 2017 at the age of 96, in Morrisville, VT. His aircraft was shot down on a mission to Noyen, France on 17 June 1944. He was briefly captured by German forces but later escaped from the train he was being transported on and evaded further capture by reaching Switzerland. He worked for and retired from the Foxboro Company. He is survived by his wife, Virginia Marie, four children, eight grandchildren, and five great grandchildren.

Bonem, Joseph F. gunner (423rd, Wendell Larson crew), passed away at 90 years old on March 18, 2015, in Essexville, MI. He was a pharmacist and was co-owner of Werner's Pharmacy. He was a member of the Elks and Lions Clubs, and a past president of the Civitan Club. He was survived by his wife, two children, and four grandchildren.

Bordner, Ralph. bombardier (368th, Robert Chrisjohn crew) – see page 1 article

Burnett, Albert F. bombardier (368th, Gwynn Boswell crew), of San Antonio, TX, passed away 17 February 2017. He continued his service with the Air Force after WWII, retiring as a Lt. Colonel and Veteran of both the Korean and Viet Nam conflicts. In addition to the B-17, he crewed in the B-36 and B-52. He is survived by a son, three grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

Castagnasso, Donald H. gunner (369th, William Canell crew), 91, of Ft. McCoy, FL, passed away December 24, 2015. He farmed and raised Clydesdale horses, was an international judge for all draft horse breeds, and drove the famous Budweiser Clydesdale team for many years. He was survived by his wife, five children and one stepson at the time of his passing.

Cervello, Ralph A. teletype operator (368th Communications), died February 25, 2015, in Canton, OH, at age 93. He worked for the U. S. Postal Service after the war. At the time of his death, he was survived by a son, two grandchildren, and three great grandchildren.

Dickerson, George C. navigator (367th, Lester Kearney crew), of Baltimore, MD, died April 15, 2017. Survived by wife Elizabeth, three children, one grandchild and one great grandchild.

Dobbs, Hurstle. aircraft mechanic (369th), died July 10, 2016 in Shelbyville, Kentucky, at age 93. He was on the ground crew of the infamous "Satan's Lady."

Ferguson, Edgar P. navigator (367th, William Bisson crew) POW, of Bermuda Dunes, CA, passed away August 11, 2017. His airplane was shot down on 29 July 1943 on a mission to bomb Kiel, becoming a POW for the duration. After the war he worked in construction building homes and was superintendent for a large developer. He is survived by his wife of 71 years, Joann, and by six children, 9 grandchildren, fourteen great grandchildren, and one great, great grandchild.

Furay, James A. crew chief (369th), of Lewiston, NY, passed away September 22, 2016 at age 98. He was crew chief for "Bouncing Baby" which completed over 100 combat missions. He worked for Union Carbide after the war.

Gibson, Charles H. pilot (423rd), died March 15, 2011 in Bremerton, WA. He was age 90. Charles was the superintendent of the pattern shop at Puget Sound Naval Shipyard until retirement in 1982. He was survived at the time of his passing by his wife, Doreen, two sons and two daughters, twelve grandchildren and fourteen great grandchildren.

Gise, William J. navigator (367th, John Olsen crew), died 23 March 2015, in Seguin, TX. He continued to serve with the Air Force, retiring in the rank of Colonel, and was a veteran of the Korean War in addition to WWII. Survivors at the time of his death include his son, eight grandchildren, and five great grandchildren.

Hansen, Robert E. gunner/togglier (369th), passed away July 21, 2016 at his home in Summit Township, PA. Robert was an original member of the 306th and became a POW at Stalag 17 after he was shot down with pilot Lt. Frank Watson on 17 April 43. He held degrees from Clarion State College and Penn State, taught high school math and science, and in 1969 was selected by the Governor of Pennsylvania to be the first director of the State Bureau of Science.

Heitman, Eric C. navigator (423rd, Francis Leigh crew), 92, died June 8, 2017 in Traverse City, MI. He was a graduate of Western Michigan University and worked as office manager for Thayer Dairy. He also volunteered with the Boy Scouts. Surviving Eric are three sons, six grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

Hubbard, Jack C. radio operator (369th Kenneth Dowell crew) corrected date of death is 25 October 2016.

Hughel, Edward B. copilot (369th, Craig Powell crew), died June 16, 2017, at age 96, in Noblesville, IN. His plane was shot down on 14 October 1943, Black Thursday, and he became a POW for 19 months before repatriation. He was an attendee at the recent 306th BGHA reunion in Dayton, OH.

Surviving family includes sons Craig and Thomas, six grandchildren, and four great grandchildren.

Johnson, James W, pilot (367th) passed away April 27, 2017, in Dallas, TX at age 95. His airplane was shot down and he was wounded on a mission to bomb Huls, Germany, on 22 June 1943 and became a POW in Stalag Luft III. He was awarded the Purple Heart. Johnson maintained a commission in the US Air Force reserves after the war and served in the Korean War. He served as an award winning sales representative for Rolex. He is survived by his son, grandchildren, and a grandson.

Johnson, William F, crash crew (4th Station Complement Squadron) passed away in November 2010, in California according to his son. He worked as a plant Manager for PAC Foundries in Point Hueneme, retiring in April 1992.

Kellogg, George W, parachute rigger (367th) died November 7, 2012 at age 92, in St. Johnsbury, VT. He continued his service with the Air Force after the war, retiring in 1964, and then went to work for the state of Vermont Agency of Transportation. He was a member of the VFW, American Legion, and served 65 years with the Masons.

Kelly, William A, radar navigator/bombardier (367th James Patten crew) passed away in August 2016 at age 91, in Haworth, NJ. After the war he attended Princeton and then worked for Lever Brothers for 35 years, rising to become Vice President of Research and Development. At the time of his passing he was survived by his wife Ruth, three children and seven grandchildren.

Klick, Harold V, tail gunner (368th) died September 24, 2017, of Conover, NC, at age 93. He is survived by two sons, a daughter, and three grandsons.

Lissner, Roland A. ("Ron"), pilot (367th), internee, passed away July 18, 2017 in San Jose, CA at 94 years of age. On a mission to bomb Berlin on 3 February 1945, he flew his badly flak damaged plane to Sweden and was interned with his crew for the remainder of the war. Ron worked in the aerospace and defense industries after the war for companies that included Aerojet General, Firestone, and Rheem. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus and was an active 306th BGHA member, attending numerous reunions. Ron is survived by his wife of 71 years, Bari, two sons, and a granddaughter.

Malay, Richard E, navigator (367th John Conlin crew), passed away at age 85, July 1, 2008 in West Chicago, IL. He was a member of the Knights of Columbus and very active in the Saint Vincent DePaul Society. He was father of fifteen children and proud grandfather to thirty-two grandchildren.

McCutchan, Robert I, navigator/bombardier (368th, Duane Clocksin crew) died in January 2005. He continued to serve in the U. S. Air Force reserves after the war, retiring as a Lt. Colonel. He attended Kansas State University and Rochester Institute of Technology, and worked for Rochester Gas and Electric.

McMahan, Albert N, tail gunner (369th, Robert Riordan crew) passed away November 12, 2017 in Georgia, at age 97. Albert was president of the 306th BGHA in 2005 and then served two years as secretary from 2007 to 2009. As an "original" with the 306th, he volunteered for combat flight duties and completed 25 combat missions. He continued his

service with the Air Force, retiring in 1963 as a Warrant Officer. He then worked for RCA and other companies as a computer programmer followed by employment with the US Civil Service in that same capacity. Albert was also an instructor at Wexford-Missaukee Vocational Center in Michigan before final retirement. He will be interred in Arlington National Cemetery.

Murphy, William R, armorer (369th), passed away July 9, 2017, near Lansing MI. He was an aerial gunner with the 390th Bomb Group before frostbite prevented further flying duties and he was transferred to the 306th and assigned as an armorer, and then later as a truck driver, with the 369th.

Oldenburg, Leo A. G, bombardier (369th, William Haase crew) died 27 December 2010, in Galena, IL. After the war he began a grocery store business and owned and operated his own supermarket until retiring in 1980. He served on the Board of Directors for Galena State Bank and Trust and was active in numerous organizations, foundations and societies in Galena, including serving as president for the Galena Chamber of Commerce. At the time of his passing he was survived by his wife, three children, and nine grandchildren.

Pesterfield, Lawrence F, tail gunner (368th, Henry Dryar crew), of Eagle Point, OR, died August 16, 2012 at age 88. He was a recipient of the Purple Heart, having been wounded in action by flak on a mission to Kothen on 20 July 1944.

Pipano, Max (449th Sub Depot) has passed away at some time since 2014 when he was a resident at an assisted living facility in Baltimore, MD.

Polansky, Charles A, engineering (306th Gp Hdqtrs), died 13 July 2014 in Tampa, FL. An original member of the 306th at Wendover, he was transferred before the group was deployed and went on to help establish the B-29 Bomb Wing and served with the 499th Bomb Group, retiring from the Air Force in the rank of Colonel after a 23 year career.

Rafferty, Robert L, gunner (423rd, Lemon Smith crew) passed away June 30, 2017 in Cleveland, OH, at age 91. He continued service to his country after the war, serving as a Cleveland police officer for twenty-five years. He is survived by his wife, Edna Fay, four children, thirteen grandchildren, and twenty-nine great grandchildren.

Rainieri, Michael J, aircraft mechanic (367th), 95, passed away in Dedham, MA, on March 25, 2016. He was a member of the American Legion, VFW, and DAV. At the time of his passing, he was survived by son Michael and daughter Alexine, and a grandson.

Raymond, Richard L, navigator (423rd, John O'Brien crew), died 27 January 2017 in Wilmington, DE. He was a graduate of the University of Illinois and worked for Sun Oil Co. as a research biologist. He developed a technique for cleanup of petroleum contaminated groundwater that was patented and was known as the "Raymond Process" and he authored or co-authored an additional 22 patents, receiving numerous awards from various environmental and industrial associations. He is survived by his four children and a stepson, five grandchildren, and a step-grandchild.

Spencer, Gordon A, radar navigator/bombardier (367th), died January 1, 2016, in San Antonio, TX, at age 97. He continued to serve with the U. S. Air Force, receiving a degree from Harvard in chemistry and serving in the Korean War before retiring in the rank of Colonel. At the time of his

passing, he was survived by his wife, four children, six grandchildren, four step grandchildren, five great grandchildren, and fourteen step great grandchildren.

Thelen, Charles J, pilot (367th), POW, passed away on April 2, 2017, in Santa Rosa, CA, at age 97. On 5 April 1943 on a mission to Antwerp, his aircraft was shot down with Thelen and two others being the only survivors. He became a POW at Stalag Luft III. He continued his service with the Air Force after repatriation, retiring in the rank of Lt. Colonel. He is survived by wife, Patricia, four children, two stepchildren, nine grandchildren, and one great grandchild.

Thomas, George L, bombardier (423rd, Wilmer Schultz crew), of South Bend, IN, died December 1, 2012 at age 87. After the war he became a golf professional and became the head golf coach at Notre Dame, serving 13 years before his retirement in 2001. At the time of his passing, he was survived by his wife and five children, and twenty-seven grandchildren.

Varnado, Alban F, navigator (368th, Carmen Nickols crew), 94, died 11 December 2015, in San Antonio, TX. He served a total of seventeen years with the Air Force. He received a doctorate from LSU and was a professor at that university for another twenty years. He then served as a Red Cross volunteer for another seventeen years.

Wallace, Richard, crew chief (367th), died December 15, 2014 at age 93 in Muncie, IN. He worked for Universal Electric Company for 42 years. He was president of the local Boys & Girls Clubs having served over three decades on their board of directors and also was active in other local charitable organizations. At the time of his passing he was survived by two daughters, two grandsons, and four great grandchildren.

White, Robert W, weather officer (306th Gp Hdqtrs), of Oshkosh, WI, passed away July 19, 2017 at age 97. He received a master's degree in physics and doctorate from the University of Wisconsin where he served as a physics professor for twenty-five years, and briefly served as both the Assistant Dean and Dean of the graduate school. He is survived by three sons and five grandchildren.

Wilson, John C, radar navigator (368th, Albert Rehn crew) died 27 December 2016 in Cleveland, OH, at age 95.

After the war he finished a degree in engineering and provided engineering services to numerous companies including managing a small factory for a period. He is survived by two sons, five grandchildren, and six great grandchildren.

Zrust, Gordon F, bombardier (367th, Lewis White crew), POW, passed away December 28, 2011, in Phoenix, AZ. His aircraft was shot down on a mission to bomb Ruhland on 12 September 1944.

Zych, Leo E, tail gunner (367th, Emmette Sutherland crew), POW, age 94, died 8 May 2017 in Holland, MI. The aircraft he was flying on piloted by Lt. Martin was shot down on a mission to bomb Ruhland on 12 September 1944 and Zych became a POW. He is survived by his wife of 69 years, Shirley, three children, six grandchildren, and eight great grandchildren.

306th Family

Baker, Esther, wife of 423rd bombardier **Hollis H. Baker**, passed away October 28, 2016 in Lompoc, CA.

Jeffries, Andella, wife of 423rd pilot **Virgil H. Jeffries**, passed away April 20, 2017, in Falls Church, VA.

Lockard, Mabel, wife of 423rd pilot **John Lockard**, passed away 30 April 2017 in Lebanon, PA. During WWII she was a "Rosie the Riveter" assembling aircraft for Armstrong. She is survived by her husband, 306th Veteran John Lockard.

Mocharnuk, Mary D. O. wife of 369th radar navigator **William Mocharnuk**, died May 20, 2017 in Ontario, CA. She was a career teacher.

Rose, Clara, wife of 369th ball turret gunner and evadee **Woodie Rose**, passed away in Whitehouse, TX, 18 March 2015.

Stewart, Ann, wife of 423rd pilot **Forrest J. Stewart**, passed away on September 7, 2017 while visiting her daughter in New Jersey.

The Bombers

by Sarah Churchill

Whenever I see them ride on high,
Gleaming and proud in the morning sky,
Or lying awake in bed at night,
I hear them pass on their outward flight;
I feel the mass of metal and guns,
Delicate instruments, deadweight tons,
Awkward, slow, bomb racks full,
Straining away from downward pull,

Straining away from home and base,
And try to see the pilot's face,
I imagine a boy who's just left school,
On whose quick-learned skill and courage cool
Depend the lives of the men in his crew
And success of the job they have to do;
And something happens to me inside
That is deeper than grief, greater than pride,
And though there is nothing I can say,
I always look up as they go their way
And care and pray for every one,
And steel my heart to say,
'Thy will be done.'



306th Bomb Group Historical Association Membership Registration Form

Print all information.

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

306th Unit: _____ Duty/Job Title: _____

Additional Information: _____

If you have an interest in a particular WWII 306th veteran, please complete the following:

Your relationship to a 306th Veteran: _____

Veteran's Name: _____ 306th Unit: _____

Duty/Job Title or Additional Information: _____

Are you?

- World War II History Buff Author/Writer Researcher Other

Additional Information: _____

Tax-Deductible Donations Are Appreciated!

- Check: Please make check payable to 306th Bomb Group Historical Association
 PayPal Donations can be made on-line at www.306bg.us

PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH

Mail this application and any donation to:

306th Bomb Group Historical Association
c/o Mr. Bruce Chase, Director of Membership
2324 Hatch Hill Road
New Albany, PA 18833-8887

You will be placed on our membership list for the current calendar year only; annually we will ask you to confirm your willingness to remain on our membership list.

A free electronic version of the **306th Echoes**, or official publication, is available via www.306bg.us.



Meet me in Southern California
Site of the
October 2018
306th BGHA/SSMA Reunion

Watch for more details in the
Secretary's monthly eMails
and the Spring issue of *ECHOES*.