

A Son's Father

by Tom Nicholson

Annette Tison, our newsletter editor, invited me to write my memories of growing up with my father, William "Bill" Nicholson, and the impact he had upon my life.

A Brief History of Crew 9-1

On 13 Feb 1943, having completed basic training in their crew positions, the ten men who were to become crew 9-1 assembled at Davis-Monthan Army Air Field outside Tucson, Arizona, for their B-24 training.

The enlisted men stayed together until they were shot down on 5 Nov 1943. The four officers, pilot Bill Maxwell, copilot Bill Nicholson, navigator John Slowik and bombardier Madison Veazey went through their entire stateside training on the B-24 together and formed a very close bond.

Shortly before departing the states, however, Bill Maxwell was

reassigned and replaced by 1/Lt Charles "Dutch" Holloman. As future events showed, if a change of pilots had to take place, the crew was fortunate to have Dutch Holloman as the replacement.

My father and his crew deployed from Topeka, Kansas, with the original cadre of the 392nd BG, 579th Sqdn, on 11 Aug 1943 and arrived at Station 118 in Wendling, England, on the 16th.

I was just over 1½ years old at the time.

Missions, Crew Changes and a New Plane

On 6 Sep 1943, the Holloman crew flew a diversionary

mission along the French coast.

Three days later, the 392nd BG flew its first combat mission. The Holloman crew, with Group Commander LtCol Irvine Rendle on board, led the formation to an airfield at Abbeville, France, home of Hermann Goering's feared Yellow Nosed Squadron.

"As a result of this mission," ball turret gunner Richard Hoffman later wrote, "our bombardier, navigator and pilot

were promoted to staff positions. Our crew had led the squadron to the target area.... and the drop could not have been more precise. Our copilot, Lt. Nicholson, was promoted to be our first pilot.... We liked Nick and had a lot of confidence in his flying ability. He was cool and collected."

Dad's diary for 12 Sep 1943 reports, "This afternoon I was made first pilot of



The crew after the 392nd BG's first combat mission on 9 Sep 1943. Standing L-R: pilot 1/Lt Charles C. "Dutch" Holloman; bombardier 1/Lt Madison A. Veazey; navigator 1/Lt John E. Slowik; copilot 2/Lt William P. Nicholson, top turret gunner S/Sgt Raymond A. Perry; engineer T/Sgt Erling A. Olson. Kneeling L-R: radio operator T/Sgt Jean N. Chamblin; tail gunner S/Sgt Robert G. Fowler; waist gunner S/Sgt Charles D. Martin; ball turret gunner S/Sgt Richard H. Hoffman.

crew 9-1, our old one from Texas and New Mexico. To say the least I am more than proud of this honor. I will do the best I am capable of!"

Pilot Dutch Holloman was reassigned and became the Squadron Director of Operations. He flew 29 combat missions and 2 diversions, completing his combat tour on 14 Oct 1944.

Bombardier Madison Veazey was moved to a Squadron staff position as a lead Bombardier. He flew 12 missions with the 392nd, including 4 diversions. In late January

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FROM THE EDITOR

Dayton Reunion 2018. Pay particular attention to pages 8-11 of this issue, which give the details and registration form for the 8th Air Force Historical Society reunion in Dayton, Ohio, from 10-14 Oct 2018.

It is now necessary that at least one person on each registration form be a dues-paying member of the Society. That person may already be a member, but if not, they can pay dues on the activity registration form. Every person doesn't have to be a dues-paying member, but the Principal Attendee must be. Examples: A WWII Veteran would be considered the principal attendee and should be a member of the 8AFHS (and pay dues via the registration form if he isn't). His wife and grandson listed on the same form do not have to pay dues to the Society. Someone coming to the reunion alone needs to pay dues. A widow of a WWII Veteran and her 4 children want to come. She (or at least one of the kids) needs to pay dues. I hope you get the idea—at least one person on each form needs to be a dues-paying member.

A hot breakfast buffet is included in the room rate this year! Therefore, there is no need for a meal package. All dinners (and a box lunch for Saturday) can be purchased à la carte. This will save most people money this year.

8AFHS reunion planners also say, "We understand the desire to help, but we'd sincerely appreciate it if you would not make multiple hotel reservations in an effort to help others who may have put it off. Instead, give them a call and encourage them to make their own reservations in their own name. Unfortunately last year, we ran out of rooms at the Hilton before it was necessary because some people were holding multiple rooms that weren't actually used in the end. We made an attempt to reuse them, but it requires a lot of extra work when dates or bed types don't match up."

The 392nd BG will be in Dayton, so plan on joining us for a good time. The reunion form already lists "392nd BG" which will help the 8AFHS ensure there are enough seats at our rendezvous dinner for everyone.

Wendling Reunion 2018. The registration date has passed and our group is now established. Further information will be sent solely to the participants.

Photos and information about both reunions will be included in the December 2018 *News*.



Update from

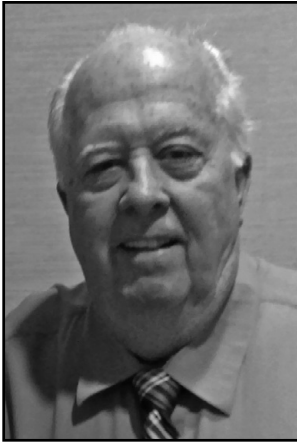
France. Bernard Ballenger reminds us that 31 Dec 2017 was the 74th anniversary of a mission to St. Jean d'Angely, France. "As every year in Montlieu-la-Garde, a tribute was paid to the crew of 1/Lt Thomas McKee."

While flying with the 445th BG, his plane was hit during a massive German

fighter attack. Only two men were able to bail out; one was then strafed and killed by a fighter while descending in his parachute. The B-24 exploded in the air, with several pieces landing near the little village of St. Vivien. A burning wing fell on the home of Mrs. Yvonne Bourdejeau, who was badly burned. She died on 20 Jan 1944. A memorial to the McKee crew was dedicated in 1947. Annual ceremonies thus remember both US and French casualties.

Enlisted Navigator. In his column on page 3, President Bob Books recounts several of the 392nd BG's "firsts." Among them may be the only enlisted man in the 8AF to serve as a navigator. Here is "the rest of the story" summarized from articles in the May 1993 *News* by co-editors Jim Goar and Birdie Larrick and in the September 1993 issue of *Crosshairs*, the official newsletter of Bombardiers, Inc. **See EDITOR on page 3**

President's Thoughts



Spring has sprung in Pensacola, Florida, after one of the coldest winters I have experienced in 23+ years living here. My Wisconsin family have a difficult time understanding my issues of considering temperatures around freezing as "cold."

Ben Jones and I were talking on the phone the other day and he was telling me the 392nd BG was the first and maybe only bomb group to have an enlisted man as a navigator.

As we talked about 392nd BGMA "firsts" and the impact on preserving our history, we remembered that the 392nd BG was the first to place a memorial in England on September 2, 1945, dedicated to remembering those who didn't return home. Another first was to have our complete mission records published in June 1977 by Robert Vickers. Most likely the first in March 1995 to recognize the 2nd Generation to be replacement crews for the 392nd BGMA veterans when they fly their last missions. Then the first to digitize our mission records and place them on the internet on March 22, 1999. Recently, in December 2017, the first of any bomb/fighter group from the 8th AF to have a website re-coded to be automatically responsive to mobile phones, tablets, and desktop computers.

If you know of any other unit firsts, contact me!

Ben has recently developed a Facebook page for our Group, named "392nd Bomb Group (H) Wendling ~ England 1943~1945 WWII." Join us in this new way to share information!

Ralph Winter, John Gilbert and Annette Tison are in the process of putting the final touches on the Wendling reunion in September. Our tours and sightseeing will focus on where 392nd BG personnel lived, worked, and enjoyed themselves—and where they are still remembered. We will also have our annual membership meeting, director elections and will decide important matters regarding continuing to educate and preserve the history and legacy of the 392nd BG. We will also have a special membership meeting at the 8th AFHS Dayton reunion in October to discuss the decisions made at Wendling.

If you have been to www.b24.net lately, you will see that we added "Newsletters" as a link. This is a "members-only" link which requires a password; it will be emailed to our 2018 email members in the next few weeks. This link contains all our newsletters since the beginning of the Association in February 1986.

While posting and reading the newsletters, I found that my first 392nd BGMA reunion was in June 1996 with the 2nd Air Division Association and then again in October 1996 with the 8th AFHS. As I get older, time flies faster! This feature alone is worth the membership fee.

Updating the website continues (what's new?). I need a volunteer or two to help. You don't need any special website coding skills, only basic computer knowledge. Just

a few hours a month would help a lot. Please contact me if you are interested.

Bob

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It all began with one of our B-24s. 392nd tail gunner Jack Stewart wrote the *News* that *The Encyclopedia of the World's Combat Aircraft* printed a sketch of B-24 #42-109835; then, gunner Jack Bode said the Revel Company, aircraft model makers, used the same number markings on a B-24 model they produced.

Jim and Birdie asked Bob Vickers, author of *The Liberators From Wendling*, about this plane. He reported it had gone down on 11 Apr 1944 while on a mission to Bernberg, Germany.

They located some survivors from that plane and learned that while flying with the 44th BG, the ship was heavily damaged by enemy aircraft attacks in the target area; two engines caught fire and the landing gear dropped.

Copilot 2/Lt George P. Callaghan was killed by 20mm fire, but the other nine men bailed out and became POWs.

The navigator manifested for the mission was Sgt Elmer N. Horey. He was on his 7th combat mission when his B-24 was shot down. His first four were flown as right waist gunner—so how did he become a navigator?

Horey said, "When our regular navigator, 2/Lt Louis G. Kramer, went to PFF school, the crew was short a navigator. I was within two weeks of finishing navigator school when I was washed out and I was fairly well qualified. The squadron gave me a chance to check out, and they must have been satisfied with my work because I was the navigator of the crew on three missions that we flew before being shot down. So I was a rare bird, an enlisted navigator.

"I bailed out over the nose wheel with my arms wrapped around a popped chute and luckily it opened. The a/c blew up right after I exited. I broke my ankle when I hit the ground."

Sgt Horey became a POW; never heard anything more about being advanced in rank to Flight Officer or Second Lieutenant as he had been promised; and was never awarded a Purple Heart for breaking his ankle.

Nonetheless, he can claim the unique distinction of having served in the 8th Air Force as an enlisted navigator—perhaps the only one!

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1944, he was transferred to 8th AF Headquarters.

Navigator John Slowik was assigned to a Squadron staff position as a lead Navigator. He flew 21 missions which included 5 diversionary flights. He was Killed in Action on 18 Mar 1944 while flying with the Books crew to Friedrichshafen, Germany. On this mission, the 392nd Bomb Group suffered its worst losses of the war, losing 14 of 28 airplanes.

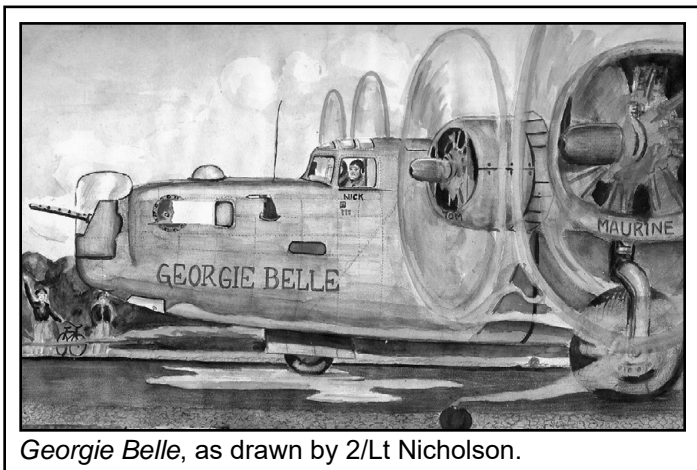
The breaking up of the officers from the original crew must have been difficult for those involved. Nicholson, Slowik and Veazey had gone through training in the states prior to

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deploying to England and had spent over a year together. I know that John Slowik and Madison Veazey were Dad's best friends. They were inseparable when on the ground and especially when they went to town. However, both Slowik and Veazey were *excellent* navigators and bombardiers and with the aircraft and crew losses being sustained, it made sense to spread their talent around.

There was a major restructuring of the officer complement on the crew. The new officers were copilot 2/Lt Leonard D. Culbertson, navigator 2/Lt William W. Kary, and bombardier 2/Lt James W. Hammond.



Georgie Belle, as drawn by 2/Lt Nicholson.

Just as a point of interest, on 18 Sep 1943 a new aircraft arrived at Wendling, #42-7543. It was assigned to the 579th Sqdn and then to the Nicholson crew. After a discussion among the men, the aircraft was named *Georgie Belle* for my mother, Georgie. Dad, a decent self-taught artist, did

the art work, design, and actual painting of the nose art.

She flew seven missions, five with the Nicholson crew.

A month later, Sgt Hoffman wrote, "Our squadrons were increased from nine ships to 18 today and the new crews started arriving. Our crew has been designated as a lead crew. The older crews became instructors for the new ones."

Last Mission

Georgie Belle and the Nicholson crew were shot down on a raid to Munster on 5 Nov 1943, only five weeks after they and the 392nd BG flew their first combat mission. The original crewmen had flown 11 missions—4 combat sorties over occupied Europe and 7 no-credit diversionary outings. It was just the third mission in which the 392nd BG had suffered casualties.

On that fateful day, the 392nd lost three aircraft along with 30 crewmen—16 were KIA and 14 became POWs. Ten of the 14 POWs were from *Georgie Belle's* crew. The enlisted men were sent to Stalag Luft 17B (a POW camp later made famous by a Broadway play and movie named *Stalag 17*).

Dad and the other officers were held at Stalag Luft 1 just outside the city of Barth, north of Berlin on the Baltic Sea. They were held for 18 months until liberated by the Russians, but they all survived the war. They were lucky! In 1943 and early 1944, life as an aircrew member in the 392nd Bomb Group was usually both short and brutal.

Recollections

Both the combat missions and his time as a POW left a profound impression on my father.

Dad was blessed with a near-photographic memory and was a wonderful storyteller. As I grew up, I listened spellbound as he willingly shared his combat and POW

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392nd BGMA MEMBERSHIP FORM

Please look at the mailing label where your membership status is shown directly after your name. **"18" or higher means your membership is current.** LM means Life Member and FRIEND means that you receive the *News* with compliments of the 392nd BGMA. Send this form and your check (payable to 392nd BGMA) to Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039. You may also join or renew on-line at <http://www.b24.net/392nd/join.htm>.

The Board of Directors has ruled that no Crusader will be denied membership because of financial difficulty, so if you're in straitened circumstances, check the Hardship Waiver box. If you feel that you can help the 392nd BGMA treasury with a donation, there is a provision for it below.

Name _____ Ground [] Air [] Sqdn/Unit _____

Mailing address _____

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If a spouse, friend, or relative served in the 392nd, please give us his name and unit: _____

Dues: [] \$25/year if you want to receive the *News* by postal mail OR [] \$20/year for receipt by email
Please feel free to renew for multiple years! Just let us know what your wishes are.

Hardship Waiver [] DONATION \$ _____ TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

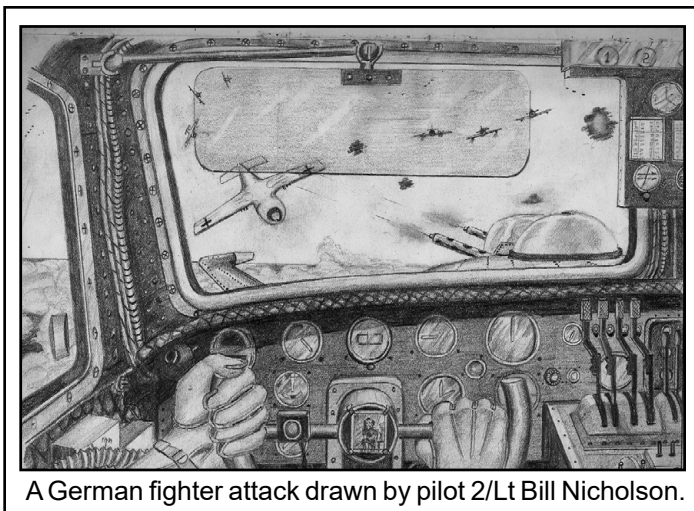
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experiences with me. But, like many other combat veterans, he was reluctant to discuss his WWII experiences with others unless they had similar experiences during the war.

German Fighters

I still remember with great clarity my dad telling me about the German fighters (Me-109s and FW-190s) flying about a mile to the left and right, parallel to and 1,000 to 1,500 feet above the bomber formation. Because of their significant speed advantage over the B-24s, they easily pulled about a mile and a half ahead of the bombers. They then rolled into a 180 degree descending turn and commenced their head-on attack. When they rolled out of their turn they were descending directly in front of the bomber formation with a rate of closure of about 600 miles per hour (combined airspeed of the bombers and the fighters). It only took about 6 seconds to close the mile distance, during which they commenced their firing pass.

Both the Me-109 and FW-190 were armed with 20mm



A German fighter attack drawn by pilot 2/Lt Bill Nicholson.

cannons, which were significantly larger caliber than the .50 caliber machine guns carried by the bombers and had a longer effective firing range. Watching the muzzle flash as the 20mm guns fired left an indelible impression on Dad and the other crew members with a forward facing view. It was commonly referred to as “the longest 6 seconds” of their lives.

Hunger

Dad’s experiences as a POW were varied. The stories about their hunger were heart-wrenching. When shot down, he weighed about 180 pounds; when Stalag Luft 1 was liberated at the end of the war, he weighed about 125 pounds. On a semi-weekly basis, the prisoners were issued 11-pound Red Cross parcels containing some canned food which supplemented their caloric intake.

The reality was that throughout the war, food for the prisoners was in short supply. On a daily basis, the Germans provided a limited amount of potatoes, black bread, and sauerkraut, plus meat when available. Toward the end of the war, both the German food supply and the transportation needed to deliver it to the camp were limited.

Dad often said that he felt there was no intent to deprive the POWs of food, rather it was a reflection of the reality. The German civilians were not much better off and toward

the end of the war the guards were as thin as the POWs.

Recently I came across a wonderful book written by 445th BG navigator Maj Joseph H. Reus titled *Kriegsgefangener: War Prisoner*. He was shot down on his first mission and survived ditching in the English Channel (5% rescue rate). He was shot down on his next mission and held in Stalag Luft 1 for the rest of the war.

Reus observed, “In general I’m sure we were much better supplied [with food] than most of the German population during almost any period from mid-1943 through the end of the war. In German cities many people actually died from starvation as they had done in the aftermath of WWI...”

The POWs spent a disproportionate amount of time thinking about food and the lack thereof. Dad documented some of his thoughts in a journal entitled *And How We’ll Eat!* It includes recipes, detailed instructions and sketches about how to build a Bar-B-Q pit, and lists of the restaurants his fellow POWs recommended for after-war dining. It’s heart-wrenching to look at the elaborate menus they wrote up and think about how much time and thought they spent in so doing.

Of course, one thing the POWs had in great supply was time on their hands. One of the quotes from the journal concludes: “A man who has really known hunger will vow never to go hungry again.” After Dad returned home—and throughout my remaining years living with my parents—my mother Georgie (who I might add was an excellent cook) was careful to always prepare enough food for the meals but was also careful to put an appropriate serving on each plate. You could ask for seconds, but once served, no plate was ever cleared from the table with food remaining.

Kitchen Fire

Some of the many stories about life as a POW were humorous, at least in retrospect. Stalag Luft 1 was large and toward the war’s end contained some 9,000 men. It was divided into two main sections—the north compound and the southwest compound, each of which contained a mess-hall and accompanying kitchen facility. All the food except the Red Cross parcels was prepared in the kitchens. Food was always in short supply and over time all the POWs were losing weight.

Well, almost all the men. It was noted that the POWs comprising the kitchen staff were doing quite well—and if you’re hungry enough, you have a tendency to notice things like that. They didn’t seem to be losing much, if any, weight. What occurred next was at least a curious series of events.

One evening after “dinner” when the kitchen staff had finished up and returned to their barracks, a fire broke out in the kitchen. Within a short time the blaze had burned it to the ground. The Germans had limited firefighting capability but a bucket brigade comprised of POWs was formed that went completely around the kitchen fire—but hardly a drop of water was actually put on the fire. Dad said that in ten minutes any hope of salvaging any part of the building was lost and the POWs just stood around and watched the embers burn.

The Germans never did rebuild or replace the kitchen facility. From that point on, most of the cooking was done in

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the barracks using the tile stoves provided by the Germans that were highly modified by the POWs.

How the kitchen fire started has been a subject of some debate. The Red Cross, I believe, had provided instruments for a band which was coordinated with both the theatrical plays the prisoners put on and occasional concerts. The instruments were stored in a small unused room attached to the kitchen since the rehearsals, plays and concerts were put on in the mess-hall. Interestingly, the next day it was discovered that none of the orchestra/band instruments had been lost in the fire. It seems that each of the band members had removed his instrument to his barracks for safekeeping. I don't know that arson could or should be suspected... I'm just saying...

In Maj Reus's wonderfully detailed overview of life as a POW, he corroborated my father's story about the mess-hall kitchen fire.

Curfew

Another humorous incident took place during late summer 1944. Early on, the Germans had established a curfew confining the POWs to their barracks about an hour before sunset. The doors and window shutters of all the barracks were closed. To insure the POWs remained inside until roll call the next morning, the guards released German shepherd guard dogs that ran loose throughout the compound. Dad described the dogs as impressively big, well trained, and to be avoided at all costs.

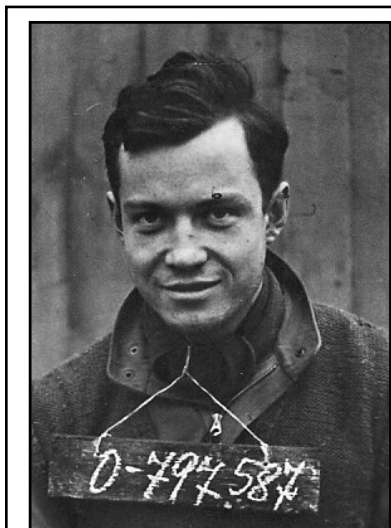
Occasionally, boredom resulting from too much time on your hands leads to poor decision-making. The shutters over the barracks windows were heavy and very substantial. Two of the twelve men assigned to the barracks decided to play a game which had provided humor a few nights previously.

A rope was tied to an eyebolt on the inside of one of the shutters and it was opened $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way. The two men had ahold of the end of the rope. The intent was to call out to one of the dogs in the compound. When the dog saw that the window was open, it would run and attempt to jump through the window located some 4 feet above the ground.

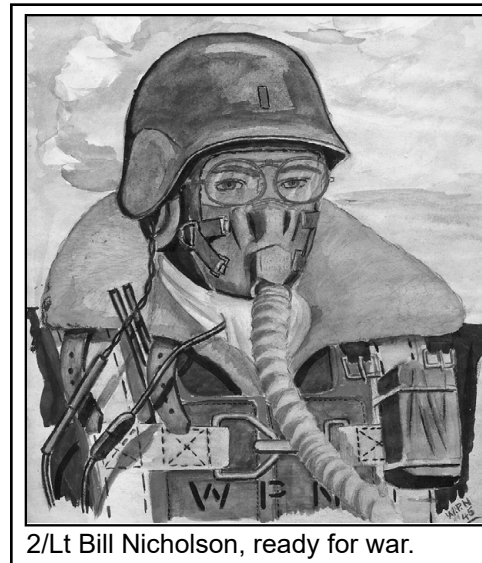
At the last minute the two men planned to pull hard on the rope causing the shutter to slam shut—resulting in the

airborne dog slamming head first into the closed shutter.

However, as the saying goes, "even the best laid plans of mice and men..." After being called, the dog ran toward the open window. At the last minute, the men pulled on the cord, the knot securing the cord to the window pulled loose (leaving the window only partially closed) and the dog leaped unimpeded through



2/Lt Nicholson's POW photo.



2/Lt Bill Nicholson, ready for war.

the opening.

Dad said two things then occurred simultaneously: he noticed that the 80 pound dog had a REAL attitude (what a surprise) and all twelve men sought refuge on the six top bunks in the room. They were fortunate that the bunks were stacked

two high or the dog would have done some very serious damage to the men.

The event was fortunately witnessed by the soldiers in the guard towers who called to the guards by the main gate who then entered the compound and got the dog. Dad also noted that the guards took "their sweet time" in retrieving the dog. He said he was never so glad to see a guard in his life! A lesson was learned and that evening's entertainment was never tried again.

My Turn at War

Since I was interested and fascinated, I repeatedly asked my father to retell his experiences during WWII. For years I could talk at length about all the other nine members of his crew. They were like a family; the bond that had developed during training and in England was impressive. To this day I can close my eyes and picture the head-on attacks of the Me-109s and FW-190 fighters.

So bear with me and we will jump ahead 22 years from my dad's return to the United States in 1945 to May 1967. That's when I found myself in the cockpit of an F-4D Phantom jet fighter departing Eglin AFB in the panhandle of Florida with my squadron to Ubon, Thailand, our new home for our tour in Southeast Asia. Our mission was flying over North Viet Nam to interdict the supply lines moving the war materials into South Viet Nam. When the weather made flying into North Viet Nam impossible, we flew missions into Laos to achieve the same goal. A complete tour was 100 missions into North Viet Nam (Laos didn't count) or one year in country, whichever came first. The losses we suffered during my tour were sadly somewhat comparable to those incurred by the 392nd BG early in WWII.

Lessons Learned

Over the years, I've had occasion to reflect on the lessons learned from both my father's experiences and my own. Some interesting truths evolve which I think the vast majority of combat crews will agree upon.

There are two factors that determine who will survive and who will not. Training, experience, preparation, and the ability to focus all contribute directly to the aviators' survival chances. Analysis of combat losses show an inverse correlation between actual combat experience and

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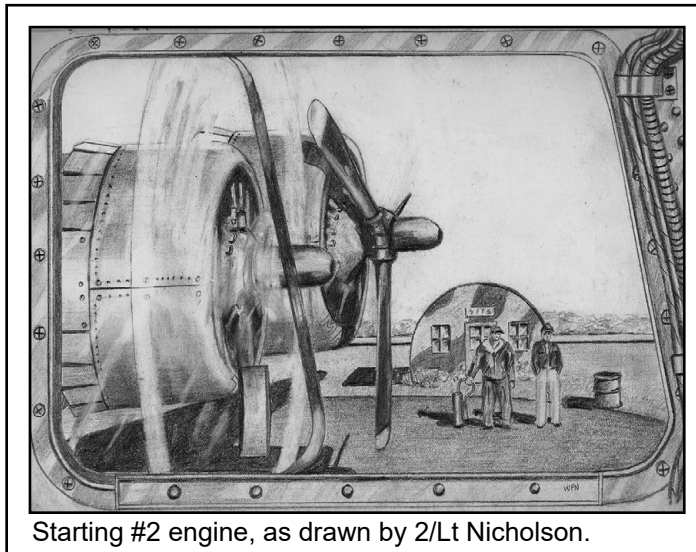
losses sustained. Generally speaking, if you can survive the first 10 combat missions, your odds of completing your tour of duty rise dramatically. Early in your combat tour the learning curve is very steep.

On the other side of the coin is luck; being at the right place at the right time and—even more importantly—avoiding being at the wrong place at the wrong time. Luck also includes all the factors over which you have no control.

Let's start with two examples regarding the crew of the *Georgie Belle*. The aircraft and crew were shot down 5 Nov 1943 by 88mm antiaircraft fire. The shell went through the bottom of the aircraft and exploded about 8 feet in front of the cockpit, narrowly missing both the navigator and bombardier. In the process, it took out the engine and rudder controls.

The pilots had enough control left to keep the aircraft more or less steady until all of the other crew members had bailed out. Incredibly, all ten men bailed out successfully and in fact all survived the war.

Now if you do the math, assuming the aircraft was doing about 240 mph, if the antiaircraft gun had been fired 2/100 of a second later, the shell would have exploded in the cockpit, instantly killing both pilots and probably eliminating (or at least reducing) the odds of any of the other crew members from successfully bailing out. 2/100 of a second! That's faster than the blink of an eye. I think you'll agree we are talking pure luck.



Starting #2 engine, as drawn by 2/Lt Nicholson.

Lt John E. Slowik, the navigator on *Georgie Belle* throughout training and my Dad's best friend, had been reassigned on 9 Sep 1943 to a Squadron staff position as a lead navigator. He was therefore not on board on 5 Nov 1943 when the crew was shot down. It would seem he was lucky. But, sadly, on 18 Mar 1944 he was killed in action on a mission to Friedrichshafen. Bad luck, being at the wrong place at the wrong time, can be devastating.

There's an old saying among flight crew members: "There are two factors involved in survival—luck and skill—and if I can only have one of the two, I'd rather have luck."

Another example is described by ball turret gunner Sgt Hoffman in his article, *Flying the Northern Route*. Upon arriving at Wendling from the States everyone in crew 9-1

was scheduled for in-theatre ground school training. During their absence, their B-24 (which they had picked up new at the factory in Tulsa, Oklahoma, shortly before deploying overseas) was flown to a nearby base for modifications.

Three days later, the modifications having been completed, #42-7468 was returning to Wendling on 30 Aug 1943 when it "unaccountably exploded in mid-air while flying back from the modification center, killing the crew chief and the ferry flight crew." If they hadn't been in school, the normal flight crew would have been on board and perished along with the plane. The flight crew of the *Georgie Belle* was again lucky.

Combat

Basically nothing about combat has changed over the course of history. The technology has constantly evolved but the basic premise of combat has remained unchanged. It is a harsh, brutal endeavor which is unforgiving.

If you watch Hollywood movies, you'd have the impression that combat is glamorous, glorious, and a grand adventure. When you have occasion to discuss the reality of combat with veterans you get a very different picture.

There is nothing fun or glorious about any of it. There are experiences that are seldom duplicated outside of combat. There is an adrenaline "rush" that I have never felt before or since. When you become aware that, unlike previous experiences, this isn't either a game or a training exercise and that the people on the ground or in the air are doing their best to actually kill you, your survival instincts trigger the adrenaline rush. Time seems to slow down and you are more alive than you have ever been.

The fear that is triggered by the survival instinct can be debilitating and each person has to figure out how he or she can deal with it successfully. There is no escaping the fight-or-flight syndrome we've all read about; you're forced to face it head on. Only a fool isn't scared; it's how you deal with your fear that will determine how you respond.

There are very few individuals who are trying to be heroes. What you'll find is combat crews fighting to survive and trying their best to successfully complete their assigned mission.

It's amazing how focused one becomes and that focus is limited to your survival and the survival of those flying with you on the mission. I've never talked to anyone who in the heat of combat was thinking about freedom, the country or even their family. Having the ability to focus only on today and not about the future simplifies life greatly. On days when we flew, my entire long-range planning was limited to who I would have dinner with that evening, if things went well. If you want to be a combat pilot there is no heroism involved. It just goes with the territory.

Of the men I had the privilege of flying with, I don't think there was a hero amongst us. We were just pilots doing a very difficult job under trying circumstances and trying to protect ourselves and our wingmen. The tight bond that formed between us was based upon our mutual survival.

Families

Unlike my father, I was extremely fortunate in completing my 100 mission tour and coming home to my wife and family rather than becoming a POW. The best part was

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that I returned home Christmas eve. My wife Linda met me at the airport and we walked through my parents' front door at 4pm with our entire family including our 3 year old son and 1 month old daughter there to greet me. Life doesn't get any better than that! I wish I could tell you the reason I made it home while many of my squadron mates didn't was due to my skill and superior airmanship, but I would be lying. I had more than my share of good luck assisting me along the way.

When my father was five years old his mother took him to the Philadelphia airport and he (and she) enjoyed a 15-minute sightseeing ride in a Ford tri-motor. He was hooked, and from that day onward the only thing he wanted to do was fly airplanes. He was lucky; after the war he was hired as an airline pilot and flew most of the rest of his life.



Georgie, Bill and Tom Nicholson, Christmas 1944.

I was even luckier. From an even younger age I knew that I wanted to fly, primarily because I so greatly admired my dad. After separating from the US Air Force I was fortunate enough to be hired by a major airline and flew until the then- mandatory

retirement age of 60. It was a wonderful career!

I have few "heroes" other than my mother and father, who lived through the experience of WWII, and my wife Linda. During WWII, when airplanes and their crews were shot down they were usually reported as MIA (missing in action). It commonly took between 4 and 6 months for the Germans to verify the status of the men (either killed in action or prisoner of war) and then send the notification through the Swiss and American Red Cross to the US War Department who then notified the families. This seems like an extremely long period of time but the reality was that this notification to the Allies was far down the list of issues the Germans were dealing with in the middle of the war.

This was understandably a very difficult time for the crew members' families. My mother was a pillar of strength. She never gave up hope and was instrumental in holding the extended families together. Some of her letters to her family during this trying time are inspirational. What I've come to appreciate is that there was really nothing special about my parents during this time frame. Their entire generation was as tough as nails.

I would submit that if there are unrecognized heroes, serious consideration should be given to the wives of the combatants. Often with young children and a very uncertain future if their husbands were killed or seriously wounded they proved time again to be the glue that bound the family together.

You can't appreciate what these young men endured and

accomplished until you look at the pictures taken during their time in training and while in England. They were so young! My father was back home in the States after the war at a younger age than I was when we deployed for combat in South East Asia 22 years later.

The memory of my father and the airmen he served with during WWII has been instrumental in my becoming who I am. I was fortunate to have had such great role models.

It's because of the sacrifices of men like those who served in the 392nd BG (both airborne and ground personnel) that my generation have enjoyed the freedoms we have today. We owe them our gratitude for a job well done!

The generation of men who actually served with the 392nd BG are almost all gone now. My generation are rapidly becoming "old men." There is a book (which has no connection to our story), the title of which says it all: "WE WERE SOLDIERS ONCE...AND YOUNG." With the passage of time, history moves on and our memories fade...

8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion October 10 - 14, 2018 Dayton, Ohio

Wednesday, October 10

- 1:00pm– 6:00pm Reunion Registration
- 6:00pm–7:00pm Welcome Reception with Cash Bar and Snacks, followed by dinner on your own
- 7:00pm– 9:00pm 8AFHS Board Meeting
- 7:00pm– 392nd BGMA Hospitality Suite opens

Thursday, October 11

- 7:00am– 8:30am Complimentary Breakfast Buffet for 8AFHS overnight Crowne Plaza Hotel guests
- 8:00am–11:30am Reunion Registration Open
- 9:00am– 2:00pm DAYTON CITY TOUR
- 1:00pm– 6:00pm Reunion Registration Open
- 2:10pm– 2:50pm Curator's Corner
- 3:00pm– 5:00pm Seminar on Crash Site Excavations— Uwe Benkel & Maj Arie Kappert*
- 6:00pm– 9:00pm Cash Bar Reception
- 7:00pm– 9:00pm Buffet Dinner and World Premiere, "The Cold Blue" by Erik Nelson & Peter Hankoff*

Friday, October 12

- 7:00am– 8:30am Complimentary Breakfast Buffet for 8AFHS overnight Crown Plaza Hotel guests
- 8:00am–11:30am Reunion Registration Open
- 8:00am– 9:15am **392nd BGMA Membership Meeting**
- 9:30am– 2:30pm NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE

See DAYTON REUNION on page 9

DAYTON REUNION from page 8

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

- 1:00pm– 6:00pm Reunion Registration Open
- 3:00pm– 4:30pm Q & A WWII Vets
- 6:00pm– 9:00pm Cash Bar Reception
- 7:00pm– 9:00pm **392nd BGMA Rendezvous Dinner**

Saturday, October 13

- 7:00am– 8:30am Complimentary Breakfast Buffet for 8AFHS overnight Crowne Plaza Hotel guests
- 8:30am–11:30am Reunion Registration Open
- 8:45am–10:15am 8AFHS General Membership Meeting
- 10:30am–11:30pm Heritage League Meeting
- 11:30am–12:00pm Box lunches available for pick up (pre-purchase only)
- 12:00pm– 3:30pm 8AFHS Board Meeting
- 12:30pm- 4:45pm CARILLON HISTORICAL PARK / PACKARD MUSEUM
- 5:00pm– 5:30pm Reunion Registration open
- 5:30pm– 7:00pm Cash Bar Reception
- 6:30pm– 6:45pm WWII Veteran Group Photo**
- 7:00pm–10:00pm Gala Dinner and Program

Sunday, October 14

- 7:00am– 8:30am Complimentary Breakfast Buffet for 8AFHS overnight Crowne Plaza Hotel guests

*Speakers are tentative at this time and will be confirmed prior to the reunion.

**Tentative timing. Please check final schedule.

Registration Instructions. Please see the information about the hotel on page 10 and make your reservations immediately. Once your hotel reservation is confirmed, proceed with the activity registration. See choices below and complete the Registration Form on page 11, noting your event choices and personal information.

Remit by mail with check or money order payable to Armed Forces Reunions by September 7, 2018. You can also register and pay with credit card at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2018. A 3.5% convenience fee will be added to online credit card reservations.

Forms received after September 7 will be accepted on a

space available basis only. Hotel reservations should also be made by September 7, but we encourage you to do so much sooner.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. Cancellation Policy.

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less a \$10 per person processing fee. Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less a \$10 processing fee. Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9:00am until 4:00pm Eastern Time, excluding holidays. Please call (757) 625-6401 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4-6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation doesn't cancel your reunion activities.

Dues. Most reunion activity registration forms include a principal attendee and possible guests, for example, a WWII veteran and his wife; a Next Gen Attendee and her son; an 8AF enthusiast (no relation to a WWII veteran); etc. The principal attendee must be a dues-paying member of the Society to attend the reunion, so at least one person on the registration form must be in good standing as a member of the Society for that person and his/her guests to attend. If the principal attendee is not a member, Dues, \$40 per year, may be paid on the registration form.

Registration Fee. Everyone is expected to pay the registration fee, \$45/person, which is totally different and separate from Dues. To be included in Group counts (which are used to determine the size of the hospitality suites), each person must have paid the registration fee and be a dues-paying member of the Society (or the guest of one).

Meals. New for 2018: There are no meal packages! Because the hotel room rate includes a hot breakfast each morning, there is no need for a meal package. All other hotel meals can be purchased separately and are listed on the registration form.

TOUR OPTIONS. Tours are listed on the registration form and can be purchased separately. Driver and Staff gratuities are not included in the tour prices. All trips require a minimum of 35 people. Please be at the bus boarding

See DAYTON REUNION on page 10

FOLDED WINGS REPORT

Please report the death of a member or spouse and provide a copy of the newspaper obituary if possible.

Name of deceased _____ Unit/Sqdn _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Date of death _____ Survivors _____

Reported by _____

Address _____ City _____ State _____ Zip _____

The 392nd BGMA is engaged in a fund-raising effort to financially support our website, www.b24.net. It contains the history of the 392nd Bomb Group. You could make no greater tribute to your loved one than a donation for this living and ongoing memorial to the 392nd. Please send this report, hopefully with your check payable to the 392nd BGMA-Website, but send it with or without it, to: Annette Tison, 9107 Wood Pointe Way, Fairfax Station, VA 22039

DAYTON REUNION from page 9

area at least five minutes prior to the departure time.

DAYTON CITY TOUR, THURSDAY, OCTOBER 11. The birthplace of aviation, Dayton was once home to powered flight inventors Orville and Wilbur Wright. Your guide will narrate the significance of the many interesting sites along this tour, including Oregon District, the city's oldest suburb; the Civil War Monument; the Flyover, an award-winning sculpture of flight; the Korean War State Memorial; and Memorial Hall, where veterans are remembered. Learn the history of the Miami Valley from the first settlers in 1796 to the influence of such entrepreneurs as Patterson, Deeds, Kettering, and Frazee. These notables and others made immense contributions to aviation, the arts, sports, government, and industry. There will be a short stop at the Esther Price Candy Store, now a successful candy distributor, which opened 50 years ago in Mrs. Price's basement. Enjoy lunch on your own at Dayton's upscale shopping and restaurant district, The Greene—featuring Cheesecake Factory, Chipotle, Panera, Subway, and many other dining choices.

9:00am board bus, 2:00pm back at hotel

\$38/Person includes bus and guide.

Lunch on your own.

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF THE US AIR FORCE, FRIDAY, OCTOBER 12. The United States Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base is the oldest and largest military aviation museum in the world. The Museum tells the exciting story of aviation development from the days of the Wright brothers at Kitty Hawk to the Space Age. More than ten galleries showcase various exhibits including over 300 aircraft and missiles, plus historically interesting aeronautical displays. Exhibits are known to change and move, but lots of planes are on display. The newly refurbished B-17 Memphis Belle, one of the most recognizable symbols of WWII, will be on permanent display at the museum. In addition, the Presidential Gallery is located here featuring a collection of presidential aircraft, some of which you can walk through. *In the Memorial Park, see the tree and plaque dedicated in September 1985 to honor the 392nd BG.* The museum also features an IMAX theater and flight simulators (admission on your own). Have lunch at your leisure in one of the cafes on the mezzanine or second floor. The buses will shuttle back to the hotel at 12noon, 1pm, and 2:15pm.

9:30am board bus, 2:30pm back at hotel

\$38/Person includes bus & escort.

Lunch and IMAX on your own.

CARILLON PARK / PACKARD MUSEUM, SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13. Carillon Historical Park celebrates the history of invention, transportation, and pioneer life in Dayton and the Miami Valley. It is home to a variety of collections which document the area's history. While touring the Park, you may visit Newcom Tavern, Dayton's oldest standing building; view the Wright Flyer III; and board a 1903 Barney & Smith Parlor car. Antique automobiles, a working 1930s Print Shop, and vintage bicycles are some of the other exhibits you will see along the way. Continue the tour and step back in time at America's Packard Museum, where the Packard Motor Car Company comes to life again. Located

in the original Packard Dealership Building, which was built in 1917, the museum has officially taken the name of the original dealership—The Citizens Motorcar Company—but has become known as “America's Packard Museum.” View the world's largest collection of “Packard only” automobiles in the actual showroom. This unique museum showcases “the world's finest motor car” from its beginnings in 1899 to its demise in 1956. Note: This tour may be limited to the first 100 people, or different schedules may be followed. A lunch break is not included on this tour, so consider pre-purchasing the box lunch to eat before departure.

12:30pm board bus, 4:45pm back at hotel

\$54/Person includes bus, escort & admissions.

CROWNE PLAZA DAYTON

33 E. 5th St., Dayton, OH 45402

(937) 224-0800 or www.cpd Dayton.com/

The hotel is ideally located near the Dayton International Airport and situated in the heart of the city, near the Oregon Arts District. Guests can enjoy shopping, dining and entertainment just minutes away.

RESERVATION INFORMATION

Please call the number above and reference the 8th Air Force Historical Society or go to www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2018 and click on the hotel reservation link at the top of the page. The hotel will allow no more than two reservations per call. Reservations should only be made for yourself and/or a family member. Separate names will be required for each room reservation. Please encourage your friends and family to make their own reservations instead of holding multiple reservations as a “just in case.” This practice caused a premature need for overflow hotels last year.

GROUP NAME: 8th Air Force Historical Society

DATES: October 10-14, 2018

RATE: \$124 + tax (currently 13.25%) for 1-2 people (\$10 add-on per night, per person for 3rd or 4th person). Rate includes hot breakfast each day. Rates will be offered three days before and after official reunion dates, with advanced reservation notice and subject to group block availability.

CUT OFF DATE: September 7, 2018. Late reservations will be processed based on space availability at a higher rate.

CANCELLATION POLICY: All reservations must be accompanied by a credit card guarantee. Reservations can be cancelled up to 6pm on the day of arrival. No-shows and late cancellations will be charged.

PARKING & SHUTTLE INFORMATION: Complimentary airport shuttle service is offered to and from the Dayton International Airport. Call the hotel once your airline ticket is booked to make your shuttle reservation and to obtain more information. The hotel also offers a complimentary shuttle service to the local area. As is the case with all complimentary shuttles, space is limited and considerable wait times may be necessary during busy arrival/departure times. You may want to pay for a taxi instead. The hotel also offers complimentary parking for guests staying at the hotel.

WHEELCHAIR RENTAL. ScootAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call (888) 441-7575 or visit www.scootaround.com for more information or to make reservations.

8th AFHS ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM – OCTOBER 10 – 14, 2018

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will participate in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. Your cancelled check will serve as confirmation. You may also register online and pay by credit card at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs2018 (3.5% will be added to total). All registration forms and payments must be received on or before September 7, 2018. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. Your contact information will be shared only with reunion attendees.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
322 Madison Mews
Norfolk, VA 23510
ATTN: 8th AFHS

OFFICE USE ONLY

Check # _____ Date Received _____
 Inputted _____ Nametag Completed _____

CUT-OFF DATE IS 9/7/18	Price Per	# of People	Total
<u>DUES</u>			
The principal attendee must be a member of the 8AFHS to register for this reunion. If you are not a member, please pay your yearly dues here.	\$40		\$
<u>REGISTRATION FEE</u>			
Includes meeting expenses and other reunion expenses.	\$45		\$
Reg. Fee for children ages 8-16 attending more than 1 function & staying at hotel	\$30		\$
<u>MEALS</u>			
Thursday, 10/11: Dinner Buffet (Chicken w/ Honey Brie Dijon Sauce & London Broil w/ Chimichurri sauce)	\$42		\$
Friday, 10/12: Rendezvous Dinner (Rosemary Lemon Chicken)	\$38		\$
Saturday, 10/13: Box Lunch (sandwich, chips, cookie, water)	\$16		\$
Saturday, 10/13: Banquet (Please select your entrée below)			
Herb-Roasted Prime Rib	\$45		\$
Grilled Salmon w/ Creamy Leek Sauce	\$45		\$
Chef's Choice of Vegetarian Entrée	\$45		\$
<u>TOURS</u>			
Thursday, 10/11: Dayton City Tour	\$38		\$
Friday, 10/12: National Museum of the US Air Force	\$38		\$
Saturday, 10/13: Carillon Historical Park / Packard Museum	\$54		\$
Total Amount Payable to <u>Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.</u>			\$

Please Print. **If a WWII Veteran is registering on this form, please list his name first.**

MEMBER NAME (for nametag) _____

8AF VETERAN OTHER VETERAN NEXT GEN HERITAGE LEAGUE OTHER

IF A VETERAN, PLEASE CIRCLE: WWII Cold War Era Korea Vietnam Gulf War Desert Storm Iraq Other _____

WWII GROUP AFFILIATION FOR UNIT TOTALS & SEATING ARRANGEMENTS  ***** 392nd Bomb Group ***** 

SPOUSE NAME (if attending) _____

GUEST NAMES _____ NEXT GEN

PHONE # (____) _____ - _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____ @ _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? YES NO (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).

HOTEL RESERVATIONS SHOULD BE CONFIRMED BEFORE SUBMITTING THIS FORM. PLEASE CHECK YOUR CONFIRMED HOTEL:
 CROWNE PLAZA DAYTON OTHER _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

IDEAS AND INSPIRATION

by Char Heim

daughter of Charles E. Dye, 1825th Ordnance Co.

We are blessed to see another spring. It's a time of renewal, rebirth and repair. It might be a difficult time in our country and God Speed to those who have lost their young lives, the elderly who battle to continue their journey here and those who had no idea that they might have just taken their last breath.

We are a country of survivors and our veterans have given us an unprecedented example of the courage and determination we need to continue to make our country the strongest and most unwavering in the world.

Remember: "The country which forgets its defenders will forever be forgotten." Let us never forget the sacrifices of our veterans that allow us to live free. Let us never forget that we have a responsibility to follow their lead and continue to be determined and strong in the face of adversity, violence and bias.

God bless America and all the Americans who fight (military or civilian) to keep us safe and free.

392nd Bomb Group Memorial Association
9107 Wood Pointe Way
Fairfax Station, VA 22039
USA

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

First Class Mail



**But we...shall be remember'd;
We few, we happy few,
we band of brothers.
For he to-day that sheds
his blood with me
Shall be my brother...**

William Shakespeare
Henry V

Almighty God, Who has blessed us with the will and courage to do our duty, we praise You for our comrades whose death kept freedom living. We praise You also for giving us the years we have lived since their departure. We pray that You will strengthen and sustain our devotion to truth and justice, so that we may be faithful beneficiaries of their sacrifice. Continue Your mercy to our comrades; keep them in Your care; and bring us all at last into Your presence there to rejoice Eternally. Amen. — Composed by 576th pilot the late Very Reverend Robert C. Martin, former Dean of the Cathedral at Erie, Pennsylvania.

∞FOLDED WINGS∞

Marcella I. Bandelier, widow of Harold L., HQ,
December 21, 2017
Jack R. Rotzien, 579, January 19, 2018
George W. Michel, 576, February 26, 2018
Allen V. Jones, 577, December 30, 2017
Carl Donald Scharf, 579, February 18, 2018
Jack O. Stewart, 578, August 6, 2011
Wildrick Hart, 576, March 1, 2018
John C. Puchir, 579, February 24, 2018