



Vol. 13, No. 4

Winter 2005-2006

President's Message

2005 has been another great year for the 93rd and to all of our members I would like to say "thank you" for your support and help in keeping our 93rd as dynamic and congenial as it has always been.

I would be remiss if I failed to thank all of our 2nd generation participants for their important contribution in keeping the 93rd a vibrant organization dedicated to perpetuating the story and the honor so richly deserved by all of our comrades in arms.

This year we are continuing the transfer of leadership to our associates and I have asked Paul Steichen to take the lead role in 2006 with my full support and assistance.

I would also like to congratulate John Marx who so ably assisted Don Morrison in the superb handling of our San Diego reunion and who has agreed to continue in this role. Paul Levine has agreed to fill the role of secretary of our association, a role I feel he is ideally suited for. Finally, Bob Stahl, who has been acting as our reunion Chaplain, has been appointed Chaplain of the 93rd. Congratulations to all!

As a group, after great discussions at the San Diego reunion, we have requested the executive committee pursue the task of reviewing with all other bomb groups the future of the 2nd Air Division. Our goal is to determine if we can agree on the changes that are needed in order for this organization to meet the future boldly, or just fade away.

John Lee, myself and other members of our executive committee will be reporting to you on our progress toward reaching a formal recommendation to be voted upon at our 2006 Savannah reunion. If indorsed, this will be submitted along with all the other bomb group presidents at the next meeting of the 2nd Air Division.

Hope you had a happy and prosperous 2005 and I am looking forward to seeing you in Savannah this summer.

FERNLEY SMITH

San Diego Reunion Ends Banner Year



Cal Davidson Retires as Editor of Ball Of Fire

The easy life has returned for Cal Davidson. After many years as editor of BOFQE, in fact more editions went out under Cal than did by the founder, Paul Steichen, Sr., Cal has retired. The 93rd BG would not be as successful as it has been without Cal's work. The 93rd BG thanks and congratulates Cal for his years as editor. We don't want Cal to be too relaxed so he is staying on as treasurer. But judging by the picture below we might be too late!



Cal and Ardeh Johnson outside the Hospitality Suite at Handlery Hotel

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Mr. Paul Steichen,

Regarding the article in the Ball of Fire newsletter Fall 2005 referring to the Ken MacFarland stories by Dale Melin, page seven, first column: I am able to help with the RAF base in England with 'Down' in the name of the station. It was Boscombe Down in Wiltshire, an experimental bombing station.

I am enclosing a copy of the envelope from my then future husband when he was stationed in Africa, approximately Feb 1943. I served with the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF RAF). I met John when the crew was billeted in the next Quonset hut where I was on duty. He was the crew chief of Liberty Lad. They flew to Boscombe Down to participate in the bombing and target practice. However, the weather was unfavorable to complete their mission at that time.

You will notice on the copy of my envelope that it was censored by 1st Lt. W.E. Keefer. John cherished memories of Liberty Lad, also of Paper Doll and all the guys he served with. He spoke fondly of the crew especially Com. Dessert and Ken MacFarland and many that were mentioned in the Ball of Fire newsletters.

John and I were married in May 1943 and spent 63 years together; sadly he passed away June 2004.

Trusting this note will be interesting to you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Norah D. Swindler
6341 Jason Drive
Milton, FL 32570

Hi Cal!

I'd like to inform you of the death of David Phil Jones on 9/2/05. He was with 409th BS BG Hardwick and he also taught dancing at the Red Cross on base. Any other information needed I would gladly help you out.

Lester Steves

Dear Mr. Lee,

I am pleased to inform you of the books which have been purchased in your name for the period 04/05.

Sixty years after the end of hostilities in Europe it is encouraging to note the continuing output of published material on World War II, including two new Second Air Division unit histories.

We have held several events within the Memorial library this year including a special Sunday opening to celebrate VE Day, receptions for former "Land Girl" and

continue to collect World War II reminiscences for the BBC "People's War" website.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Hills
Trust Librarian

(Editor: This letter is from the Librarian at the Memorial Library in Norwich. One of the donated books was **The Ploesti Raid** by Roger Freeman.)

Paul,

Sadly, I must report that Phil Rake informed me that his father George Rake passed away 1-20-06 at 4:20 p.m. He will be missed.

Bill Neumann

(Editor: George was an engineer on Howard Hinchman's crew, 328th Squadron)

Hello Paul,

I am trying to get any information concerning the "Liberty Belle", a B-24 that flew out of Hardwick, England during WWII. The top turret gunner was Orville (Jeff) Myers. I am trying to find a picture of the aircraft he flew on, and what happened to the aircraft after he fulfilled his mission requirement. Any help you could provide would be appreciated.

Thank you.

Bill Elliott@noaa.gov

Savannah is Site for 2006 Reunion

Visited by Caribbean pirates, Sherman's army and now, the 93rd BG

The 93rd BG's annual reunion for 2006 will be held July 13-16th in Savannah, Georgia. July 13th is arrival day; July 14, 15, and 16 have scheduled events and July 17th is getaway day. The Heritage League is in town at the same time and we will have some shared events with them.

Mark your calendars – full information in April issue.

BOFQE now available online



As you can see, the BOFQE has changed. It can now be sent both electronically and by snail mail. By sending the BOFQE as an e-mail attachment, the 93rd BG can save money. If you can receive the next issue by e-mail, please send me your e-mail address at: **paulsteichen@comcast.net**.

As I Saw It

(The following excerpt is from the story of his service in WWII by Wayne B. Baker of the 93rd BG)

The War Years

I went to basic training in Fresno, California and from there they sent me to Santa Monica where we lived in Edgewater Beach Hotel out on Santa Monica Beach and went to school at Northrop Aviation in Eaglewood. The school was run by California flyers, an aviation school. I received my aviation training for both engine and air frame from this aviation school. I took my small arms gun training AT Kearns, Utah. From Kearns, we went to Las Vegas for aerial gunnery training. We flew this training in B-17's using 50-caliber Browning machine guns and shooting at targets towed by other airplanes in the Indian Springs area.

We went from Las Vegas to Murock Dry Lake, which is now Edwards Air Force Base, for phase training in B-24 aircraft. This is where our crew came together and operated as a single unit. We were part of the 330 Squadron, 2nd Division. My crew was: Pilot, Clarence O. Bergeson, Co-Pilot, Chesley B. Agee and John R. Bratschie as navigator, Bombardier William J. Anderson. I was the first engineer with the rank of buck sergeant and the ranking non-commissioned officer generally responsible for the enlisted men of the crew. The radio operator was Charles E. Beinbrech, armory gunner was M.I. Boyce, second engineer, Howard C. Coz, third engineer was William M. Heil and gunner was F.C. Spiegel. At this time we picked up a mascot cocker spaniel which was named Eager because he was so eager to get into the plane at any time that any one of us headed toward the plane. He'd jump up into the bomb bay and be ready to go. The Flying Wing was being developed at Murock during the time that we were there. After we finished phase training we went to Sacramento, McClellan Field, and that's where we picked up a B-24. We got a new B-24H series and then flew from there over to Midland Texas and from here to Miami to one of the islands off of the South American continent.

From there we flew to Fortaleza, Brazil which is on the north of the mouth of the Amazon. That was the first time I tasted the real good pineapple. The pineapple you eat has no relationship to real pineapple. It is true with bananas. You've never tasted a banana that's ripened on the tree. Anyway, we had a bad engine oil leak when we got into Fortaleza. I was the engineer and I had an assistant and we changed the gaskets on the engine. We were there about 3-4 days doing the work we had to do on it. We picked up a spider monkey at this time as a second mascot. From Fortaleza we flew across the Atlantic Ocean to Dakar, Africa. This was about a 12-hour trip and we had to put in bomb bay tanks to have enough fuel to make it across.

At Dakar, we saw some interesting things. There were trees that must have been 6-8 feet in diameter (the trunk) but only about four feet high and they had a few little branches, little twigs with a few leaves on each one

of them. That's all the green there was on them. They were more like a mold on the ground. There was so little moisture that they have to stay close to the ground. That was also the reason why there was little vegetation. We stayed overnight and were glad to get out of there. It was extremely hot and I hated it.

We flew from Dakar, Africa to Marrakech, Morocco and in flying we flew quite low over the mountains. Most of the area between Dakar and Marrakech is a barren desert and there were hills quite high that appeared to be solid rock and yet there would be these nomads living out there and you'd see they had goats or sheep. You couldn't really tell what they were but they have a few animals and yet you couldn't see that there was anything for them to eat at all. It looked just like bare rock.

While in Marrakech we went out to the olive tree orchards where they were watering the olive trees. They'd dug out a big hole in the ground like a bomb crater and they keep scooping it out and the water would fill in the bottom and that's where they'd haul the water out in buckets and water the olive trees. The hole down to the water was 12-14 feet deep and might be as big as 25 feet across.

My tail gunner and I got a chance to go to town. As we went into Marrakech we were warned to stay out of the walled city. You weren't allowed to go into the walled portion (old section) of the city and of course the city had expanded out beyond the walls. Anyway, we tried ice cream there and got a little scoop of ice cream about an inch in diameter and it was horrible. It was warm. Evidently, whipped goat's milk and horrible tasting stuff.

In wandering around the town they had lots of knives for sale that were done up in bronze handles. There was a lot of bronze work there, all crudely done. They considered it very decorative but very crudely done—nothing of quality that I saw. A little kid, probably 10-12 years old, wanted to show us the city, show us around what was interesting in the city, and I was with my tail gunner at the time, William Heil. Anyway Heil and I went to town together and we hired this kid to take us around and show us the city and we'd go through a building and he'd show us interesting places and after awhile we noticed that we never saw any Americans. There were no soldiers around anywhere and it suddenly dawned on us that maybe we were in the walled city. Because we'd gone through buildings and stuff we'd never seen where we'd gone through a wall, but going into a building and out the other side you could end up in the walled city. So, just about the time we decided we'd better have him take us back to where he got us from a jeep with some MPs showed up. It came down the street to where we were and the kid took off running. So, obviously we knew he had us in a place that we weren't supposed to be. Anyway the MPs picked us up and took us back and while we were waiting to see the Provost Marshall we were sitting in an office there and a soldier came in and told an officer that they had picked up a bunch more of the natives with elephantiasis and various incurable diseases and they now had a truck load and the officer

said” Well, load them up and haul them out into the desert that you know they not going to get back.” So he left and I guess that is what he did. There was a lot of disease there. To get into a lot of the buildings you had to stoop way over as the animal and human manure would build up to the point that the doorway was maybe only four feet high. It was a horrible, dirty place.

The Provost Marshall (The American Military Police) was going to court marshal us. WE tried to convince them that we hadn't done anything. We were in there by mistake. We did not know that we were going into the walled city. He wasn't very well convinced since Heil had his fly open. So he was going to have us court marshaled and the next morning we took off for England. We didn't hear anymore about this.

From Dakar we flew west of Portugal and Spain and into Valley, Wales, England. Valley is the name of a town in Wales. We left our B-24 at Valley. They'd had so many planes shot down that as soon as we landed they took the plane from us to replace planes they'd lost. They also took both of our mascots for quarantine and we never saw them again. From there we crossed by boat to Northern Ireland near Greenwich Castle to get more training as to what to do if you get shot down. What information to destroy and what you could give to the enemy. I still have the maps and papers reflecting some of that information. They also gave us maps for escape and money we could spend in those countries. In other words, you had a little survival pack and they had an interrogation officer that said, “Do not surrender any equipment to the Russians. Treat the Russians the same as you would the Germans, because they are our enemy and we know that when we finish with the Germans we'll have to whip the Russians. So treat the Russians like enemies.” In Ireland it was mainly preparation for what you should do if you get shot down, where you could go and how to contact the underground and things like this.

After North Ireland we went to Norwich, Norfolk , which is on the eastern side of England and probably two or three hundred miles north of Dover and within fifty miles of the North Sea, The Hardwick Aerodrome Air Corps Base was located fifteen miles out of town. This was now spring of 1944. I flew my first mission over Orleans Bricy on May 23, 1944. We hit the Lorient sub pens (submarine pens) in France.

Wayne Baker

Cal Stewart Ailing

93rd BG historian Cal Stewart, who recently savored the success of the Ben Kuroki Medal Award, has not been feeling well and was forced to miss our reunion. A card from his fellow 93rd BG members would surely cheer him up. His address:

*Cal Stewart
7202 Van Dorn #37
Lincoln, NE 68506*

BOFQE Available in CD

Many thanks to Will Paine for producing a CD with all of the previous 50 editions of the Ball of Fire. It is available from him for \$10 which includes shipping and handling. Send order to:

*Wilmer Paine, Jr.
2221 W. Sunset Dr.
Stillwater, OK 74074*

Folded Wings

George Rake
David Phil Jones
Roger Freeman (Author, Historian, English Friend)

Reunion Recap

The 2005 93rd BG reunion held in San Diego over the Veteran's Day weekend and our 93rd BG vets were Grand Marshals of the San Diego Veterans Day parade. Leading the parade from the top of a red double Decker bus was one great moment from our reunion. Another great moment was our Ben Kuroki Banquet, which featured a speech by Ben and a preview showing of the Bill Kubota film of Ben's life. Ben gave his speech early on so he could relax and enjoy the rest of the banquet.

The Kubota film was very well done and stirred up hope that it soon would be shown to a wider audience via public broadcasting TV. Ben received the Distinguished Service Medal earlier in the year at a ceremony in Lincoln, Nebraska.

At another banquet, we had a guest speaker, Gen. Bob Cardenas, a B-24 pilot, shot down on his 20th mission. Gen. Cardenas went on to play a key role in American aviation. He was a test pilot after the war and was part of the team along with Chuck Yeager that created aviation history with the first supersonic flight. With a sly wit and a slide show, Bob presented the history of that 1st historic supersonic flight.

As a group, we went on a San Diego harbor cruise with a buffet and attended the dedication of a Bronze B-24 at the Veteran's Memorial garden. At this event, we learned the one clap-clap and the importance of always thanking your wife when you get a chance. The one clap-clap doesn't seem likely to leave San Diego and storm the nation.

As always enjoying the company of other 93rd BG members seemed to be the most enjoyable. We had a poolside hospitality room that worked well as the meeting spot between events. Other than the drunk woman who woke up many at 2 a.m., the hotel and its facilities seemed topnotch. The food seemed a little better than usual. It was a high spirited reunion with lots of laughs and friendship. We are blessed to have so many great people in the 93rd BG.

San Diego Reunion Attendees

Wendy Annison
 Jackie Swards
 Wayne and Mariam Baker
 Corey and Bonnie Pantuso
 Mike and Susan Hepworth
 Don and Claudia Baker
 Connie McCourt
 Christine Wilshaw
 Lew Brown
 Lew Brown, Jr.
 Becky Estes
 William and Leota Brown
 Bill Bergan
 John Cadle
 Cal Davidson
 Ardeth Johnson
 Joe and Phyllis Duran
 Johnny Fridell
 Doug and Patsy Garner
 Jim and Corinne Guddal
 Brian Guddal
 Leon Harmon
 Martha Hood
 Julie Hood
 Kent Jaquith
 Bill Kubota
 Jim Kubota
 Ben and Shige Kuroki
 Julie Conney
 Alexis Conney

John and Betty Lee
 Burt Lenheart
 Paul and Janet Levine
 Jordan Levine
 Elissa Levine
 Sam Harris
 Charles Lotsch
 Richard Lotsch
 John and Rayann Marx
 James McMahon
 Kahn Bernard
 Dave and Claire Moore
 Don Morrison
 Bill and Maryann Neumann
 Wilmer Paine
 Cecilio Preciado
 John Sargent
 Bill and Joanne Sargent
 Steven and Kathy Schanes
 Joseph Schwarzgruber
 Charles Sill
 Jack and Mary Skeels
 Fernley and Joannie Smith
 Lloyd and Sara Smith
 Fred and Dorothy Sparrevohn
 Jim and Michelle Day
 Heather Soto
 Annette Lazzaro
 Roger Alexander

Robert and Dottie Stall
 Paul and Marissa Steichen
 Scott Stewart
 Fredrick and Inez Strombom
 Robert and Lisa Sullivan
 Vernon Swaim
 Carl and Joanne Todd
 Richard Trousdale
 Dale and Mary Troxell
 Bob and Jeanie McDermed
 Fred Wier
 Dick and Portia Wilkinson
 Hearol and Maxine Vetetto

Just Missed

Sandy Comstock
 Michael and Mary Debrino
 Daniel and Jeanne Ciampino
 Louis and Alberta Delguidice
 Bill and Anita Ferraro
 Francine Palermo
 Betty Alderman
 Murray and Nancy Friedman
 Walter and Violet Hughes
 Richard and June Mitchell

The Ball of Fire Quarterly Express
 93rd Bombardment Group

Paul Steichen, Editor
 1615 Birdhaven Way
 Pittsburg, CA 94565
 Phone 925 709 7285
 paulsteichen@comcast.net

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