

Ball of Fire QUARTERLY EXPRESS



NEWSLETTER OF THE 93rd BOMB GROUP

Vol. 14, No. 3

SUMMER 2006

Letter from Fernley Smith to 93rd BG and 2nd Air Division Assn. Members

My name is Fernley Smith, a member of the 93rd Bomb Group, 409th Squadron, whereas a pilot/officer, I flew 18 missions in 1945. I have been nominated as Executive Vice President of the 2nd Air Division Association by the nominating committee.

My decision to retire as President of the 93rd Bomb Group Association to seek this challenging opportunity with the 2nd Air Division Association was not an easy one. However, with the enthusiastic support of the 93rd, along with a number of other Bomb Groups, I accepted the challenge. The overriding reason for this decision stems from my desire to become involved in helping the 2nd Air Division Association find the best course acceptable to the membership for the long term future of the 2nd ADA. I wish also to assist and support the newly elected President as he seeks to use the many talents and resources of the 2nd ADA to achieve the stated goals of the membership.

I'm especially interested in working closely with The Heritage League to best utilize the talents of that group to carry forward the image and goals of the 2nd ADA in the years ahead, both at home and abroad. I would ask you to check me out with my fellow 93rd members, as well as other Bomb Groups to evaluate my service these past three years as President of the 93rd BG.

I am particularly proud of the successful involvement of our 2nd generation associates, who have brought energy and enthusiasm for insuring the long term future of the 93rd. You may wish to check out the 93rd's website: www.93rdbombardmentgroup.com.

I will be arriving October 11th for the Falls Church meeting in October to permit time for you and I personally to meet before the business meeting on Saturday, the 14th.

In the meantime, I would welcome your e-mails, phone calls (602-490-0330) or written correspondence to my mailing address which is: 827 Union Pacific, PMB 71-1033 Laredo, TX 78045.

You may expect my prompt and open replies. Working together at this important time for the 2nd ADA, we can make a difference, and I would therefore ask that you to seriously consider my candidacy.

Sincerely,
Fernley Smith

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Big News – Big Heat – Big Fun



Fernley Smith (front left) is hoping to use his talent and ideas in the position of Executive Vice President of the 2nd Air Division Assn.



Fred Weir (L) and Alberta Delguidice listen to Lou Delguidice at the Pirate's House Restaurant

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear Sir,

My name is Ray Marcello, WWII Vet, Ex POW. My roommate in Stalag 4, in Germany, was a member of the 93rd Bomb group, He was S/sgt. Harris P John #18171257 and his home was Crowley, LA. He was married with one son and was killed by a deranged Ex-GI in 1958. His wife was pregnant at the time and delivered another son. The boys never knew their father and came to me for info about his WWII service. Surprisingly, while in Stalag 4 we didn't talk about what bomb group we were in, number of missions or how we got there. All we talked about was going home. We survived the 509 mile death march of Feb-April then we were liberated.

The boys and I have had little luck obtaining info until I found out that he flew with the 93rd BG. Could you help us find out what squadron he was in, how many missions, and other info. I do know he was shot down on July 26 or July 27. Would appreciate any info you have so the John's boys will have some knowledge of what their father did in WWII.

Thanking you for any help. I remain Ray Marcello.

119 Levenson St
Houma, La 70360

marcellor@bellsouth.net

Dear Paul,

I noticed on my recent Ball of Fire that by my address was marked 1/1/05 and I wondered if I had forgotten to pay my dues. I have included a check. I would also like to comment on the article "As I Saw It" by Doug Garner in which he describes a mission that was never completed. As it happens our crew (Lt Atons) was also in that line but memory tells me that we might not of left to get in the line when we heard that tremendous blast. The mission was immediately scrubbed and we looked at the crater hole and the remnants of the plane. There was no single piece of wreckage larger than a 3 foot part of the propeller. We did not hear what plane it was or crew it was. It was for me a great surprise at the time, because as Doug Garner reported, it was very near the end of the runway and we all thought even if it had not exploded the plane never had enough altitude to make it. A great tragedy indeed but those poor guys never knew what hit them.

Warren Lee (*nose gunner-Aton's crew*)

Dear Sir,

I am writing you to inform you of the passing of Eugene R Garner on October 25, 2005. Mr. Garner was a gunner on the Kickapoo that crashed and burned shortly after take off on the Polesti Mission on August 1, 1943. Mr. Garner and Mr. Russell Polivka were the only survivors of the crash. My dad, Vaun Wenrick was the flight engineer. Perhaps, you had the news of Mr. Garner's passing on your website. Some of us don't have web access and we miss any items posted there. Patty Hornback 818E 3rd Cherryvale, KS 67335

Hi Paul,

Sorry my dues are late this year. I am sad to inform you that my mother, Ann Wier, passed away on Dec 17th, 2005. She was an associate member for many years. Could her name be included in the listing of Folded Wings or is that column just for veterans?

See you in Savannah,
Fred Wier

Hello Fred,

Sorry to hear about your mom's passing. I would be more than happy to add her name to Folded Wings. Thanks for asking. ~ Paul

Dear Paul,

I was a member of the 93rd, squadron 328, Oct 1943-June 1944. Flew 25 missions. Flew with various crew members. Many of my original crew were killed or returned home due to illness. I survived a crash landing on 9 March 1944 and flew 3 more to complete my 25. I retired in 1969 as a Lt. Colonel and was c-124 standardization officer at Mac headquarters Scott AFB, Ill.

Dwight Deming
3233 Woodlake Dr.
Abeline, TX 79606

Hi Paul,

I have changed my address as noted on the enclosed cover. As an additional note, I was the tail gunner on Paul Bergman's plane and along with Paul Kartman are the three remaining crew members.

Bob Bembenek

Hi, Paul,

Sorry I'm late with my dues. I just woke up to the fact that they hadn't been paid. I've recently transferred some old 8mm movies to the DVD format. I found some interesting pictures of the early days in England including the visit of King George to our base at Alconbury. Brings back a lot of memories. I was the Armament Officer for the 328th. I joined the 93rd at Barksdale. Sorry I can't make it to Savannah.

Best Regards,
Don Whited
6800 S Granite Ave. Apt 630
Tulsa, Ok 74136

The following letter was forwarded by Will Paine to the Editor. Bob Calkins was Will Paine's father's top Sargent

Dear Mr. Paine

On behalf of Bob Calkins, I am in receipt of your wonderful book. Bob died January 4th.2006. A peaceful death- I was with him. I miss him so. I had the privilege to be Bob's secretary for many years. We remained close over the years and I continued to visit him every Sunday to help with the bill paying, read the Sunday paper, go to church and visit. He was a great attorney and State's attorney for Peoria County, Illinois. AN HONEST MAN!

I have forwarded your journal to Bob's daughter, Julia Peterson. I talked to her last night and told her about your journal. I took the liberty to read some of it-it was wonderful. She will contact you with Bob's Obituary. Thank you for serving our country and humanity.

May your blessings be many.

Marcia Gunner

Marcia@wwtlawoffice.com

Well Hello to you all,

This is just a quick note to thank you all for a great time in Savannah; it was truly great to see you again. The city of Savannah is so beautiful and it was great to see it with friends, old and new. I am looking forward to seeing you if you come over to Norwich this year coming. If not, look out, I think I have the 93rd BG reunion bug!

With the greatest thanks

Your friend in England, Colin

Dear Mr. Steichen,

I am writing to ask if you have any information about a Pilot, Leon Del Grande from the 93rd. He was transferred here after the plane he co-piloted in the 44th BG, "Pappy's Chillun", iced up and crashed in April 1944. My daddy's brother was KIA in the crash. The pilot and copilot were the only ones who survived. We have spoken to Mr. Del Grande who seems to be a fine person. I was just interested in seeing other pictures of him with later crews and airplanes, if any exist.

Thank you for any help you could provide!

Sincerely,

Donald Higgins

donboy37@earthlink.net

Dear Paul,

My grandfather was Ralph Ernest Draper from Fulton, NY. There were two Misschief's and the one he was on actually transferred from another squadron prior to his flying on it. I have been in contact with a pilot from another Misschief and even have a picture of that plane as well.

I know my grandfather flew 27 missions with the first being 21 SEP 1944 and the last 11 APR 1945. The crew photo that he is in on the website is taken in front a plane but I don't know if it's Misschief or another one. We do have one picture of him in front of the Misschief though. Also all 27 missions were not flown with just his crew, he flew missions with a few other crews as a replacement sometimes in order to get missions under his belt.

I have a copy of the same photo from your site and on the back it has names and identifies each person, their position and where they were from. They are, starting back row, left to right:

- (1) Bombardier (*can't read signature*) from Los Angeles, CA
- (2) David Carpenter, co-pilot, New York City
- (3) Thomas Maroney, Navigator, Buffalo, NY
- (4) James Cook, Pilot, Houston, TX
- (5) R.E. Croom, Top-Tur-Grn, Mule Creek, NM
- (6) Ralph E. Draper, Eng-Grn, Fulton, NY
- (7) Louis R. Oliver, Grn, Jacksonville, FL
- (8) Jack Maijeh, Radio Opr, Lula OK
- (9) Lyrus Gibbs (*hard to read first name*), Ball Grn, Fulton, Miss
- (10) C.D. Chinberg, Tail Grn, McPherson, KS

After the war m grandfather was discharged and then in about 1950 joined back up. He then served in the USAF until 1972 as a Flight Engineer and passed away 6 FEB 2001. I appreciate your reply and any help you can provide would be great, thank you.

Sincerely,

Ralph E. Draper III

redraper3@hotmail.com

Paul,

This grandson is looking for anyone who may remember his grandfather or any info on crew member who may still be alive.

Cal

Dear Sirs,

I have been researching my grandfather's military history when I found a letter with his name and this group. I'm hoping maybe you would have some info or maybe even a picture of a Howard Armstrong Milligan. He was a staff sergeant at the time. Any help would be greatly appreciated.

Thanks

Steve Milligan

Steve_1@sbcglobal.net

Dear Sir,

Many years ago I was given an A2 leather flight jacket with the 328th Squadron patch of the 93rd Bombardment Group and the leather name tag "Francis E. Adams, Jr." It has leather 2nd Lt. Rank insignia on it.

The jacket was given to a friend of mine in West Tennessee near Memphis by the son of Mr. Adams and the friend gave it to me more than 15 years ago. It has been on display in my dental office since that time, except in 1944 when I wore it to Normandy and England for the 50th Anniversary ceremonies which I attended with my father and other members of the 79th Infantry Division.

I had tried many times to identify the patch and learn more about Mr. Adams, to no avail. I do know he was living in the 1980's in Arlington, TN and that he died when he fell off his roof. This was told to the friend by Mr. Adams' son. The son also said he was in B-17s which is contrary to what I find in your website. I recently spotted and thus identified the patch in a display at the 8th Air Force Museum near Savannah and that has prompted this renewed search, the first since the internet came on the scene.

I would appreciate any information that you or members of your group can give me on Francis E. Adams, Jr.

I enjoy your fine website and appreciate what you are doing.

With warmest regards,

Anthony Hodges, D.D.S.

Honorary member, 313th Infantry Regiment,

79th Infantry Division, ETO, WWII

Chattanooga, TN

chattarebel@earthlink.net

Dear Paul Steichen,

This is to inform you that my uncle, Daniel V. Beightol, passed away after a very brief illness on August 9, 2006.

I'm a Navy veteran but I've always found the Ball of Fire very interesting. If I am allowed to join your group, I have enclosed a check to cover the cost of a one year subscription and annual dues. Uncle Dan was a Flight Engineer on a B-24 and flew over 35 missions over Europe with the 93rd Bomb Group.

Yours truly,

Richard Biancosino

Paul,

Hope this is in time for your next issue.

My congratulations to all for another great reunion. I wish to thank all who worked to make it so successful. As I go forward in my attempt to become an active and effective officer of the 2nd Air Division Association, I am thoughtful and most appreciative of the support you have given me in this undertaking. I am very pleased to report that Alan Senior, President of the 2nd ADA, has extended to me a personal invitation to attend the Executive Committee meetings, lunch and dinner on Thursday, which should give me an opportunity to meet all of the key players early in the reunion, before the election on Saturday. Hope to see all of you attending at our own 93rd dinner on Friday in Falls Church, VA. Finally, I want to give my very best wishes and full support to our acting President, Paul Steichen, and our great second generation team, and my dear friend and crew member, John Lee, who has been very helpful to me in reaching my decision regarding the 2nd ADA Executive Vice President Office nomination. Until we gather together again stay well.....

Best always,

Fernley



Ben and Shig Kuroki and their daughter, Julie Cooney, are in this photo with President and Mrs. Bush and Japanese Prime Minister Koizumi

~ The Kuroki's attended a south lawn reception for Prime Minister Koizumi and a formal dinner at the White House on June 29, 2006 ~

Photo by White House Photographer Kimberlee Hewitt

SAVANNAH REUNION ATTENDEES

JAMES ADAMS,

ALFRED ASCH, NAOMI ASCH, DAVID ASCH,
WENDY ANNISON, JACKIE SEAWARDS,

LEW BROWN, BECKY ESTES,

WILLIAM BROWN, LEOTA BROWN,

JOHN CLONINGER, ROBERT CLONINGER,

CAL DAVIDSON, ARDITH JOHNSON

KEITH DAVIDSON, KATHY DAVIDSON,

SCOTT DAVIDSON, AMANDA BROADMAX,

HALEY BROADMAX

LOUIE DELGUIDICE, ALBERTA DELGUIDICE

JOE DURAN, PHYLLIS DURAN

FRANK FAGNITO

JOHNNY FRIDELL, BETTY ALDERMAN

DOUG GARNER, PAT GARNER

CARL GRIGG, WILMA GRIGG

BILL GROS, JACCQUENNE MYERS

JIM GUDDAL, CORINNE GUDDAL

LEON HARMON

KENT JAQUITH

GEORGE JOHNSON

MILES LEAGUE

GIBBY LEAGUE

JOHN LEE

BETTY LEE

BURT LENHART

KRISTIN LENT

PAUL LEVINE, JORDON LEVINE,

SAM HARRIS

CHARLES LOTSCH, RICHARD LOTSCH

COLIN MANN

JOHN MARX, RAYANN MARX, EMMA MARX

GENE MATHEWS, JULIE MATHEWS

GENE MC CANN

DON MORRISON

BILL NEUMANN, MARY ANN NEUMANN

HENRY NYKAMP, BEATRICE NYKAMP

PATRICK O'CONNOR, DIANE O'CONNOR

ROBERT OSBAHR, MARK OSBAHR

MARSHALL PAINE, JANET PAINE

WILL PAINE, MARY LOU PAINE

SCOTT RAMSEY

JOHN ROCHE, PAT ROCHE, JOHN ROCHE,

JOHN ROCHE III, TIM HULLIHAN, CARRIE

HULLIHAN, RYAN HULLIHAN,

ETHAN HULLIHAN, MATHEW HULLIHAN

DAN ROURE, EILEEN HUNT

CHARLES ROWLEY, BERT ROWLEY

JOSEPH SCHWARZGRUBER

CHARLES SILL

FERNLEY SMITH, JOANNIE, JOE KULICK,

JOAN KULICK

LLOYD SMITH, SARAH SMITH

HEATHER SOTO, ANNETTE LAZZARO

DON SPENCER, MARYLOU SPENCER

PAUL STEICHEN, MARRISSA STEICHEN

SUSAN STEICHEN

FRED STROMBOM, INEZ STROMBOM

JOHN SULLIVAN, BEE SULLIVAN,

JAMES SELLERS, MICHAEL SELLERS

RICHARD TROUSDALE

HEAROL VETETO, MAXINE VETETO,

GERALD VETETO, LISA VETETO

FRED WIER

MARY YAMAMOTO

HERITAGE LEAGUE GUEST:

BRIAN MAHONEY

ED AND ROSE ZOBAC

IRENE HORNER

CLAIR BIEL

MIGHTY 8TH GUEST:

DR. WILLIAM BROWN

HAP CHANDLER

CONNIE METTS

CRAIG HARRIS

As I Saw It



Major Wilmer H. Paine
Gambut, Libya 1943

*(The following is the first five days from a recently discovered journal of the 93rd's flight surgeon, Maj. Wilmer H. Paine. His son, Wilmer H. Paine, Jr. has created **Flight Surgeon** from this journal and other information from his father's experiences with the 93rd.)*

December 5, 1942 Alconbury (Saturday)

This morning things about as usual except a convoy left for Hardwick. 'Yack' Brown went over as advance medical officer. As Ken [Cool] & I were planning to have Barry O'Gorman and Pat 'Scotty' Patterson up at my thatch cottage rendezvous for supper I spent best part of morning managing for groceries. About noon I began hearing that something was in the air at Group Operations. Briefing at 3:00P. and we were told to be ready to take off for N. Africa in the morning. I called Wyn at 5:30 and told her I was going 'to join Chick.' We had a swell farewell party in my thatch cottage until 11:30.

DECEMBER 6, 1942 (Sunday)

Took off in "Big Dealer" from Alconbury at 9:00 a.m. for Port Reath on south England coast, but before we got there we ran into some weather and soon some 'Spits' came up and directed the 330th to land at Exeter. At Exeter we soon took off for Hurn because there were no accommodations for us at Exeter. We had a security lecture in the afternoon and briefing at 8:00 PM.

DECEMBER 7, 1942 (Monday)

Took off at dawn from Hearn England airport in "Big Dealer" with Cool, Kunze, Emmons, Gillespie, Kagarek [Kozarek] & enlisted crew, Woody etc. for Tafaraoui airdrome 20 miles from Oran. Weather ideal. Flew out to Bishops rock for rendezvous with other ships of 330th plus Capt. Hoover. Asch on our wing. I spent most of day reading "For Whom the Bell Tolls." Saw Lisbon off to left in passing. Flew past Gibraltar about dusk. We were fired on from naval base near Tangiers. Landed at Tafaraoui [Tafaroui] about an hour after dark. 409th and 328th took off from Point Reath flew across Spain & landed at 4:30. All 330th ships in at Tafaraoui except Ox Johnson's and Hoovers. We remained at ship for half hour and then went in trucks to our barracks-old French barracks & torture iron slats instead of springs. In my room were Cool, Lofgren, Roche, Kunze, Emmons, Sentman and Verne le exhibition!

DECEMBER 8, 1942 (Tuesday)

Hoover's ship flew in about ten a.m. He had gone to Gibraltar when he saw he would land in Africa after dark. Word came that a ship had crashed in the mountains du Tessala about fifteen air line miles from Tafaraoui last night at 7:45. We soon knew the worst- Ox Johnsons ship "Blasting Bastard" and entire crew of 14 rubbed out. We think they read their map in feet instead of meters as they circled in sight of the lights on Tafaraoui & La Senia [Es Senia] airfields. I went up to scene of crash with Verna & Sentman in a 2-1/2 ton truck. It was a 60 mile trip one way around salt marsh. Hired 8 Arabs to help me get bodies carried to truck. 4 burned to crisp-one I had to dig out of molten aluminum that had melted & run down the gully plane fell into after hitting hill top. Three I cut from plane. Back to Tafaraoui at ten-wet dirty & tired. Slept in dispensary as my bed wasn't fixed.

DECEMBER 9, 1942 (Wednesday)

Tafaraoui N. Africa Rain, mud & cold. I brought back 14 bodies on truck and a half truck load of flying clothes, chutes, & personal property -- ammunition, guns, etc. from the mountain of crash. At 11:00 PM. I left Tafaraoui with truck load of bodies & negro driver from N.O. & Chaplain Warden & drove to Oran to contact QM. Lunch at Continental Hotel, Oran. We buried our 14 dead at American Nat'l Cemetery Oran with Catholic chaplain as well as Warden officiating. I couldn't identify Ox Johnson or McNeely but I made Ox grave #256 in row 10 anyway in order to keep he and Mc both from being unknown soldiers.

~ Wilmer H. Paine

Ted's Travelling Circus Returning to England May 3rd – 8th 2007

93rd BG Returning to England

"We'll meet again, do know where, do know when." With apologies to Vera Lynn, this announces another VE Day trip for the 93rd BG to Norwich, England. The trip is scheduled for May 3-8th 2007. We will be staying at the Swallow Nelson in Norwich. In 2005, we had 48 travelers with us and anticipate that many or more for this trip. As of now we have 30 rooms available to us at the Swallow Nelson.

The room rate is 49 pounds per person per night. The rate is for each person not per room. The reason for this pricing is that the 49 pounds includes a full breakfast and a 3 course evening meal. I see on their website the "Nelson" advertises rooms from 54 pounds. So, we are saving at least 5 pound per night with our group rate.

We will have an activities fee of @\$150 per person. That will mainly cover our transportation (bus), some lunch and some admissions. I am currently working on our schedule and contacting the bus company. We should go to Duxford Air Museum, Lay a wreath at Cambridge American Cemetery then go into Cambridge, visit the library in Norwich and spend a day at the Hardwick base and museum. We will spend time honoring the memory of those men who didn't make it back. We will also do some site seeing not related to the 93rd's World War II experiences. We will also be going to Sandringham (The Queen's residence) and possibly we will rent 'self drive' boats and explore the Norfolk Broads. The final schedule will probably not be finalized until spring.

But now, I need to know who wants to join us so I can continue planning the trip. I am now asking those who are interested, to contact me within the next month so I can get a head count. I can be reached at paulsteichen@comcast.net or via snail mail at

Paul Steichen
1615 Birdhaven Way
Pittsburg, Ca 94565

Soon after I get our numbers together, I will contact each one with the information to make hotel reservations. I will give a password to get the group rate. In case of problems, the reservations can be cancelled up to one month beforehand with no charge. Each one will need to make their own airline plans. There are two basic ways to get to Norwich. Fly into London and take the train to Norwich or fly via Amsterdam or Manchester, England and then transfer and fly to Norwich on a regional carrier. I've heard positive things about flying into Norwich and avoiding London. More later on this.

Should be a fabulous trip and it will be great to see our English friends again. Contact me if you have questions or would like to join us.

~ Paul

REMEMBERING *Ramsay Potts*

By AL ASCH



Turning the tables. General Timberlake, Colonels Ramsay Potts and James Stewart serve enlisted men at Old Buckenham

Major General Ramsay Potts passed away on Sunday, May 28, 2006, at the Bethesda Memorial Hospital in Boynton Beach, Florida. He was born on October 24, 1916 and raised in Memphis, Tennessee. An elite athlete, he graduated from the University of North Carolina in 1941 where he played No.1 on the varsity tennis team and was a starter on the varsity basketball team. He was commissioned as a second lieutenant five days after Pearl Harbor and the completion of pilot flight training. He was soon sent to Barksdale, LA where he joined the 93rd Bombardment Group flying B-24's in preparation for combat. He became a squadron commander of the 330th Bomb Squadron soon after he joined the 93rd.

As squadron commander, he trained his flight crews to fly high altitude combat and his ground crews to maintain and service the B-24's for combat flying. He took his squadron to England in the fall of 1942 with the 93rd, where they joined the 8th Air Force to bomb targets in Germany, occupied France, Austria and North Africa. He led his squadron three times on temporary duty to North Africa to support the war effort there to defeat the German North Africa Field Corps. On one of these trips, Ramsay led a flight to bomb oil refineries at tree top level in Ploesti, Romania. While on the bomb run Ramsay's B-24, called *The Duchess*, was hit by ground fire which severely damaged the vertical stabilizer and shot away his elevator control cables. Ramsay used the auto pilot to control the airplane until the engineer could repair the damaged cables with .50-shell links and service wire. When *The Duchess* returned to base it had more than 50 fist size holes in the wings and fuselage.

General Potts won many promotions, e.g., he was a full colonel at age 27. General Timberlake, the first commander of the 93rd and becoming Wing Commander under the 2nd Air Division, promoted Ramsay to Commanding Officer of the 453rd Bomb Group. Actor James Stewart was his operations officer. "We hit it off very well even though he was 8 years older than I was", Ramsay said of Stewart, with whom he remained friends after the war.

General Potts became director of bombing operations of the 8th Air Force and after the war he was a military adviser to the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey Team which analyzed the effectiveness of bombing missions against the Axis powers. For that work, he interviewed top Nazi leaders, including Hermann Goering, Albert Kesserling and Alfred Jodl.

After the war, General Potts graduated from the Harvard Law School and was a special assistant to then Air Force Secretary W. Stewart Symington and he served as President of the Military Air Transport Association.

In 1958, General Potts and three other lawyers formed a Washington law firm that after some changes among top partners was long known as Shaw, Pittman, Potts, and Trowbridge. He retired in 1986 as managing partner and became senior counsel of the firm which grew to more than 300 lawyers with offices in the Washington, DC area, New York, Los Angeles, and London.

His military decorations include the Army Distinguished Service Cross, two awards of the Silver Star, the Legion of Merit, three awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Bronze Star, and five awards of the Air Medal.

Survivors include four children, a brother, three sisters and six grandchildren. His wife, Veronica Raynor Potts, whom he married in 1945, died in 1993.

General Potts has been a great supporter of the American Air Museum in Briton, The Mighty 8th Air Force Museum at Savannah, Georgia and many activities of the 93rd Bomb Group.

A memorial service was held for Ramsay at the Metropolitan Methodist Church on Friday, June 23 at 1 pm. His ashes will be interred along with his wife, Veronica's ashes, on Thursday, September 14 at 1 pm at the Arlington National Cemetery. Visitors should gather around 12:30 p.m. at the Administration Building on the cemetery grounds.

Expressions of sorrow may be made to the following charities and organizations:

The Washington Tennis and Education Foundation
William H.G. Fitzgerald Tennis Center
16th and Kennedy streets, NW
Washington, DC 20011

The Mighty 8th Air Force Museum
P.O. Box 1992
Savannah, GA 31402

The History Department Fund
The Arts and Sciences Foundation
Attn: Kim Goodstein
The University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill
CB 6115
Chapel Hill, NC 27514-9862

Dick Wilkinson of the 93rd at Cooperstown As His Father Enters Hall of Fame



Dick and his father, "J.L. Wilkie" Wilkinson's Hall of Fame plaque

They should have gone in together. Since J.L. Wilkinson isn't here to give his Baseball Hall of Fame induction speech, his son, Dick, wanted Buck O'Neil to speak for him.

"It's too bad," Dick said Monday from his home in Prescott, Ariz. "It really is."

Because while Dick Wilkinson and his family celebrated the election of J.L., longtime owner of the Kansas City Monarchs, by a 12-person special committee that chose 16 others affiliated with the Negro Leagues, they lamented the committee's omission of O'Neil, for so many years Wilkinson's friend and partner.

When they met almost 68 years ago, Wilkinson was already among the most famous and respected owners in the Negro Leagues. His skin color - Wilkinson was the Negro National League's only white owner - made him stand out. His innovations - he fielded the All-Nations Club with blacks, Asians, Latinos and American Indians, pioneered night baseball by hauling portable light kits across the country and signed Jackie Robinson to his first pro contract - cemented his legacy.

And it's one that O'Neil felt privileged to join that spring day in 1938. J.L. and a 19-year-old Dick were standing on the Paseo, watching the Monarchs show up for the first day of camp, when an unfamiliar face emerged.

"This long, skinny guy came up carrying a bag," Dick said. "My dad didn't know. I didn't know. Sure enough, it was Buck."

Over the next 18 years, O'Neil witnessed the essence of Wilkinson as a player and the team's manager. On the road, when hotels did not have enough rooms, Wilkinson shared his bed with O'Neil.

"During that era, that was unheard of," said O'Neil, who called Wilkinson "only the second man I had ever known who was not prejudiced," the first being his father.

That's the typical assessment of James Leslie Wilkinson, born in Algona, Iowa, on May 14, 1878, commonly known as "Wilkie," always thought of as a gentleman.

"Never smoke, never drank, never swore," his son said. "He was such a gentle person. He never was excitable. He was just a nice guy. I don't think I ever saw him mad. He just had that type of personality.

"I never met anybody who didn't like my dad."

In 1909, Wilkinson started an all-women barnstorming team. A few men in drag only added to the entertainment value. Three years later came the All-Nations team, which eventually developed into the Monarchs.

"Dad always wanted to have a good baseball team," Wilkinson said. "He didn't want to get into minor-league stuff because that wasn't going to satisfy him."

So they moved to Kansas City, settling in Waldo, where Wilkinson's wife, Bessie, opened an antique store. Dick went to Southwest High, and his father traveled the Midwest and beyond with a team that won two Negro League World Series and 11 pennants.

The Monarchs bred stars, four more of whom were among the 16 others elected Monday: manager Jose Mendez, outfielders Willard "Home Run" Brown and Cristobal Torriente and pitcher Andy Cooper.

Perhaps his greatest feat was developing the traveling light system for night baseball. Wilkinson bought four trucks to lug poles that shone lights from 50 feet above.

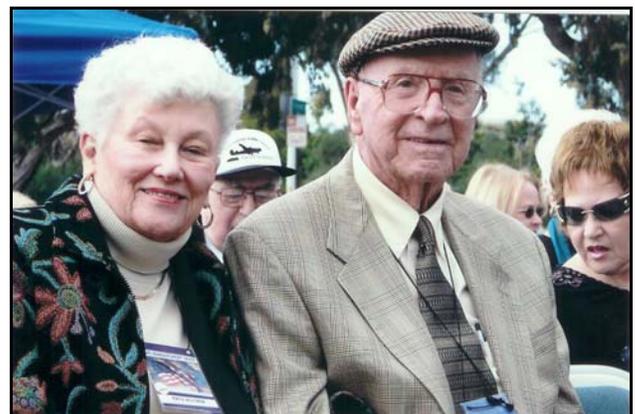
"He mortgaged everything in the house to get it going," Wilkinson said. "It was right in the middle of the Depression. They'd pull outside the park, and so many people would be outside, because they couldn't afford to go into the game. But he wanted to bring them back."

His partner in the Monarchs, Tom Baird, bought out Wilkinson's share in the late 1940s. Though Wilkinson's eyesight was fading, his fervor for baseball never waned.

"He listened to ballgames on the radio," his son said.

Wilkinson spent most of his time with Bessie at the antique shop before dying in 1964. He never got to see Satchel Paige, his greatest player, become the first Negro League player inducted into the Hall. And he certainly couldn't have guessed he'd find himself in someday, too.

Yet on July 30, he'll be one of 17 whose families will accept on their behalf. Dick will travel from Prescott with his wife of 64 years, Portia, and he'll be on the stage reading his father's plaque, proud as ever, only wishing that O'Neil, who plans to sit in the stands, could be up there with him.



Portia and Dick Wilkinson at San Diego reunion

Author: JEFF PASSAN ❖ Section: Sports ❖ Page: C1

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FOLDED WINGS

Edwin Wagner

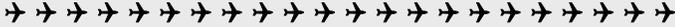
Ramsay Potts

John L. Mosier

Daniel V. Beightol

Bob Calkins

Ann Weir, wife of Ray Weir, mother of Fred



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