



95th Bomb Group Memorials Foundation

The 95th Bomb Group Memorials Foundation, Inc. is a 501(c)3 organization whose purpose is to educate the public regarding the history of the 95th Bomb Group (H) and its role in the air campaign over central Europe during WWII.

Volume 5 Issue 1

February 2016

"Justice with Victory"

Tucson Memorial Room to Reopen at 95th Reunion October 6 – 9

Dear 95th Bomb Group family and friends,

Thanks to you, Mission Tucson is on target! With over \$445,000 in pledges and gifts to date, we are well on our way to reaching our goal of \$500,000.

The reopening of the 95th BG Memorial Room will be the highlight of the 95th reunion October 6-9 in Tucson AZ. The dedication ceremony will be on Saturday, October 8, and we hope you will be there! Watch for more news about the reunion later this spring.

Thank you again for honoring the veterans of the 95th with your gifts, and for recognizing the importance of keeping their legacy alive. What better way to say thank you to those who gave so much to ensure our freedom?

The Mission Tucson Team

*Janie McKnight, Chair
Margaret Blagg
Mike Darter
Toby Mumford
Michele Slade
Nancy McK Smith*

***"I want to thank YOU
for joining the
Formation"***



**It's not too late to support
this important mission!**

***Every gift is appreciated and
will be recognized at the
Memorial Room in Tucson***

Please use the
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found on page 16.

Donations may also
be made online.

www.95thbg.org

Thank You Mission Tucson Donors!

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Dick Westerburg
Dottie Mattina
Pam Westerburg
Trey Westerburg
Afton Westerburg Moore
Cory Moore
Andy Moore
Kyle Mattina
Kevin Mattina
Cody Mattina
Mindy Jones
Rick Holiman

Max E. Wilson
In honor of the Wilson crew

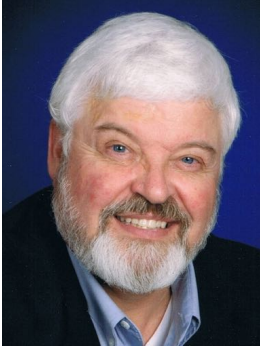
Rollie C. Wilson

Becky Wright

Donna Wright

Edward H. Yursky

Notes from the President



Gerald Grove
Son of Ronald W. Grove
335th Tail Gunner

The 95th BG Memorials Foundation begins 2016 with plans for our annual reunion to be held October 6th to October 9th in Tucson, AZ. Plans for Saturday, October 8th include the grand re-opening of the 95th BG's Memorial Room within the 390th BG's Memorial Museum at the Pima County Air and Space Museum. Our 95th BG website and Facebook page will provide updates on

reunion registration and events throughout the coming months. One of the themes throughout each of our reunions is remembrance, which will likely be an important part of this year's event.

We anticipate a number of our extended family from the 95th BG Heritage Association in England will attend the October reunion. This year we're also fortunate that members of our sister group, the 390th BG Memorial Museum Foundation, may join us for selected activities during the reunion weekend. The 13th Combat Wing, which also includes the 100th BG, shares a noteworthy history in the European Theatre of Operations from 1943 until 1945. One common denominator among our three Foundations is our commitment to educating the public about our Groups' veterans and their sacrifices in the 8th Air Force during World War II.

Our annual 95th BG Memorials Foundation membership mailing has gone out with a specific goal in mind. The challenge presented is for each of us to invite one new person to become a dues-paying Foundation member. When this challenge

is extended to our non-member website users and Facebook page fans, the opportunity for each of us to prove our individual commitment to honoring the service of these veteran airmen will be clear. Our nominal annual dues to become a Foundation member provide the funds required to support many of our programs. Dues for the 95th BG Memorials Foundation, a 501(c)3 Organization, are tax deductible.

The Mission Tucson project committee begins 2016 with the encouraging news that the committee's objective to secure the funds to refurbish our Memorial Room has been met. We continue our fund raising this year as our project focus shifts to funding the endowment for the maintenance, in perpetuity, of all six of the Foundation's official 95th BG memorials: USAF Academy in Colorado Springs, CO; National Museum of the USAF near Dayton, OH; The Ring of Eight at St Mary's Church in Horham, Suffolk County, UK; Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, VA; Memorial Room at the 390th BG Museum in Tucson, AZ; and National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force near Savannah, GA. All contributions of any size are important in this worthwhile effort!

I look forward to seeing many of you this coming October in Tucson, AZ! Please contact me via email or phone with your ideas and input for ways to improve our organization in our quest to honor our veterans ... the sole purpose of the Foundation and our efforts.

Justice – Honor – Victory
Gerald



Bomber Captured Spirit of City

The following article is published with permission from the *Martinez News-Gazette* in Martinez, CA

By HARRIETT BURT

Martinez News Gazette Editor's Note: Seven decades ago, from December 1944 to mid-April 1945, Martinez native U.S. Army Air Force Lt. Frank Calicura and his crew of eight flew the B-17 Flying Fortress "The Spirit of Martinez" back and forth 30 times from an airbase in England to military targets in Germany and neighboring countries. The story behind the anniversary not only honors one of many local servicemen in that conflict but the spirit and energy of the town which raised enough money for the war effort to merit naming an airplane after the city. The story is reprinted from the Martinez News-Gazette, October 13, 1990. The headline was "Bomber Captured the Spirit of the City."

Martinez, we believe, owes a very definite debt of gratitude to the crew of the Flying Fortress "Spirit of Martinez" which has been pounding Germany for the past two months as part of the Army Air Force.—Editorial in the Contra Costa Gazette, February, 1945.

In the late winter and early spring of 1945, hundreds of B-17 Flying Fortresses took off daily from air bases in England to bomb industrial, military, and transportation targets in Germany.

During about 50 of those missions one of the planes carried the name "Spirit of Martinez" boldly painted on its fuselage. Piloted by native son Frank J. Calicura, "Spirit of Martinez" and its crew of nine took local patriotism to the front lines daily in the closing months of World War II.

Naming an airplane was no easy thing in those days, says Calicura's widow, Joyce Williams.

"You have to go through a lot of trouble to do this," she says. "You have to get all sorts of permission."

Civic leaders of the time figured the town was "owed" because of the citizens' outpouring of financial support to the war effort during the sixth War Bond campaign during 1944.

During the drive, Martinez bought twice the town's quota of \$800,000 in war bond sales. As a result, War Finance Committee chairman Ray S. Taylor and other members were told that the city's additional bond sales would be used to purchase a B-29 Super Fortress to be named for it.

However, Williams notes, the "name" consisted not of the already famous "nose job" big enough for enemies to read without their glasses. It was instead merely a small plaque placed under the aircraft's instrument panel. Committee members were disappointed, but contacting the Treasury Department, the local War

Finance Committee was told that with an additional \$350,000 subscription by local citizens, the cost of a B-17, a plane could be named for their city.

Meanwhile, they heard that local resident Frank Calicura, a newly minted Army Air Force pilot, was stationed in New Jersey while he formed a crew to fly a new B-17 over to England to join the Eighth Air Force.

"We learn from one of your brothers," the Committee wrote Frank, "that you and your crew have completed all training and are awaiting assignment of a B-17.



"Somebody else suggested that it would be wonderful if this little city had one of its own boys piloting 'The City of Martinez' so it could watch the ship's exploits with pride and hope and feel true community kinship with the pilot, ship, and crew."

Calicura agreed and when his new ship was delivered he and the crew chose "The Spirit of Martinez" as the name. In December 1944 they flew it to Europe to join the 95th Bombardment Group stationed at Horham, Suffolk, England.

Twenty-three years old and the father of two, Calicura was one of 17 children born to Mr. and Mrs. Sam Calicura who lived on Mellus Street. After graduating from Alhambra High School in 1938, he became a butcher, working for his brother, Sam.

When the war came, Calicura took flying lessons at the little Martinez airstrip that paralleled the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks on the waterfront, and became a member of the Civil Air Patrol entering Army Air Force flight training in February 1943. His brother Dominic entered flight training at the same time, ending up as a training pilot for fighter aircraft.

Calicura would have preferred lighter aircraft but was instead assigned to "heavies," the huge four-engine planes being used in the European Theater.

"Frank was serious, steady," his widow says. "They take the serious, steady men for the bombers."

You Too: From our Members & Facebook Friends

From Linda Endris

Marie Gardner, wife of veteran Wilmer Lee Gardner, is attempting to find any living members of Mr. Gardner's crew. His pilot was Clair Wyrick, 334th SQ. If anyone has information for her, Marie's email address is imaqui33@yahoo.com. Her address is 1311 Beverly Avenue, Odenton, MD 21113.



From Donna Mason January 21, 2016

Every time I see the 412th mentioned, I admit to hoping that I will see my late Uncle Leroy Myers identified somewhere. Uncle was in one of the combat crews dispatched from Horham on 3-4-1944 for the first daylight bombing raid of Berlin. He was in the formation being led by the late Lt. Al Brown that day. Uncle was a substitute waist gunner with the Lt. Marion "Tex" Worthy crew that fateful day. In the famous book *B-17s Over Berlin*, Malcolm Durr, navigator with Al Brown's crew, noted seeing Worthy's plane leave formation and mentioned knowing Worthy's crew, because they shared a Nissen hut at Horham.

Our family has no crew photo including my uncle, so we don't know the original crew to which he belonged. If anyone stumbles across my uncle's crew photo, please contact me via Facebook or via his tribute website guestbook at <http://leroymyers.freehostia.com/>. Uncle would have been 98 next month, but he died in 1956 at the young age of 38 of a probable massive heart attack, believed related to harsh POW conditions at Stalags VI and IV, then the German Death March until finally liberated.

When Freedom Bled

by Richard John Scarr

When came the moment, came the men.
But they were made from special seed.
And so they flocked to heed the call.
For they were men of yesterday's breed.

Allied, they came from far and wide,
to fight in Freedom's name.
And valour was their watchword.
But their likes will never come again.

They were your Uncles and your Granddads,
of every colour, culture, creed.
And they came because they could not bear,
to watch the cause for Freedom bleed.

They fought upon the battlefields.
On the sea and in the air.
There was barely a parent in their lands,
who could not say: "My boy is there!"

Time and time they risked their lives.
Even knowing time was running out.
Yet still they ventured into hell.
That's what raw courage is all about.

They fought the scourge of tyranny
to keep us safe and free.
And many thousands gave their lives,
to protect the cause of liberty.

So spare a moment now and then,
in the midst of this and that.
To send a prayer of thanks to them.
And if you have one, doff your hat.



www.facebook.com/groups/95thBG/

Where the 95th story continues to be told

You Too: From our Members & Facebook Friends

From Rob Morris

To my 95th Bomb Group Family:

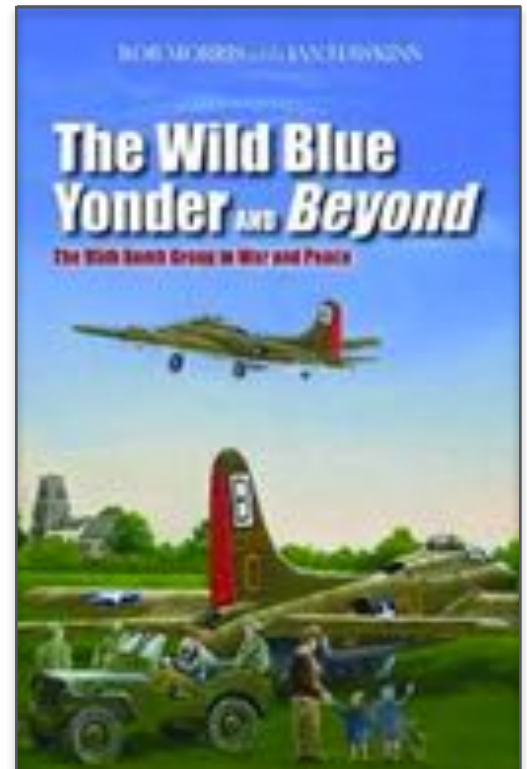
Thank you for the many cards, phone calls, and prayers over the past year during my battle with cancer. I am thrilled to tell you that your prayers were successful and my last blood test indicated I am in remission. It was a tough fight and I am only beginning to build my strength back. So many days I came home to a card or got a call from one of you that lifted my spirits and gave me the boost and courage to keep going. I have missed the reunions so much and am saving to attend this year. God bless each and every one of you for being my second family and for all you do for each other. The 95th is a special group to which my allegiance will be life long. Thank you so much.

Rob

Editor's Note: Rob Morris is author of the 95th Bomb Group's unit history, *Into the Wild Blue Yonder and Beyond*.

From Candace Riccio Salem (November 5, 2015)

71 years ago today, Richard Wright's crew flew a B-17 on a mission over Ludwigshafen. The "No No Nanette" was hit and most of the crew bailed out over Germany. The pilot and one crew member landed the damaged plane in France. My dad, Vincent Riccio, was the flight engineer on that crew. If anyone is interested in reading more about that raid, and about the experiences of a flight engineer and POW in WWII, this short memoir, *Ever the Patriot: Recollections of Vincent J. Riccio, World War II Veteran and POW*, is available on amazon.com.



Haven't Read the 95th Bomb Group Unit History Yet?

Rob Morris has written a comprehensive and reader-friendly account of the 95th Bomb Group in war and in peace.

A must-read for all lovers of the 95th!

Available at smile.amazon.com



From Volker Urbansky (November 20, 2015)

Today after two years of very long, difficult research, I found the crash site and some remnants of the B-17 42-6039 of Lt. Leslie B. Palmer in Bosel, Germany. 29 Nov 1943 Mission Bremen, 334th Bomb Squadron. I would be so grateful if somebody would share photos of him or of the crew of his B-17 42-6039 "Blondie III."

Volker Urbansky
vurbansky@t-online.de

A Stunning Tribute to the B-17 Bomber Crews Who Served from Eye

Editor's Note: The following article, written by Kate Royall and used with permission, was originally published in the Eastern Daily Press in Suffolk, UK. Photo by Carlo Roberts, taken from a plane owned by Maurice Hammond.



An aerial shot of the B-17 Bomber drawn into a field in Eye.

As land art goes, this was pretty ambitious—taking days to complete and spanning 350 meters. The stunning sight of a B-17 bomber was etched into an Eye field in commemoration of the crews who served from the town's airfield during the Second World War. Called the Flying Fortress, the artwork was completed by Eye residents Carlo Roberts and Stefan Fulcher in the year that marks the 70th anniversary of the end of the Second World War. The B-17 bomber planes were flown from Eye airfield by the U.S. air crews of the 490th Bombardment Group from August 1944 until February 1945. The field is located a mere 600 meters from the airfield and directly under the flight path the planes would have taken.

Mr. Roberts, a geography teacher at Diss High School, said "It's a slightly forgotten piece of history although the airfield still remains in some part. I have a passion for art, particularly community art. I got the idea to do some land art in 2012." The pair's first foray into the art form saw a set of Olympic rings drawn into the earth in 2012, followed by a remembrance poppy in 2014. This most recent etching was given the green light by landowner Tom Baldwin.

Mr. Roberts, 48, used satellite maps to plot the outline of the design before heading out into the field. After marking out the trailing edge of the wing, he scaled up his original drawing using a surveyor's instrument to measure the angles, setting out 37 reference points. The outline was then ready for Mr. Fulcher to plow in using a set of discs ordinarily used to break up and cultivate top soil. Mr. Roberts said "The hardest thing was working out how to do an oblique view on a flat surface. You can recognize the B-17 because of its unusual tail fin. Stefan is the skill behind it; he's got a very good eye."

Marking out took two days, discing took six hours, and the pair's handiwork was initially checked with the help of a drone. Mr. Roberts said "It wouldn't have happened without Stefan and Tom. Tom was happy for us to go ahead. He is pleased and thinks it's very interesting. The thing we are always up against is fitting it in with the agricultural calendar and when the tractors are free." The art, which was in place for six weeks, has now been planted with wheat.

Last Plane Down and Reunion News

Last Plane Down

Hosted by Kevin and Meg Brackney

May 7, 2016

9:45 a.m.

**95th BG Memorial in the
Memorial Garden**

**Wright Patterson USAF Museum
Dayton, Ohio**

Each year we gather to honor the last B-17 lost in World War II, a 95th plane on a Chowhound mission to feed the starving Dutch. Please join us if you can for this moving ceremony. Following the ceremony, lunch will be held at the Comfort Inn and Suites across from the museum.

Please RSVP to Meg and Kevin Brackney at meggyjb@aol.com or phone 937-767-2682

HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Comfort Inn and Suites
5220 Huberville Avenue
Dayton, OH 45431
Phone: 937-425-6498
FAX: 937-252-5724
comforthotels@aol.com

Hope to see you there!

Meg and Kevin



Mission Tucson Reunion October 6 – 9, 2016

Join the celebration as we reopen the 95th BG Memorial Room at our October reunion. We will stay at the DoubleTree Hotel – Reid Park, in Tucson, Arizona, which will also be hosting our sister group, the 390th Bomb Group.

Our rate is \$99 plus tax, and includes breakfast, WiFi, and a discounted round trip airport shuttle for \$25. Rate is valid two days prior and after the reunion.

The hotel is four miles from downtown Tucson, and is surrounded by the Sonora Desert. Just across the street is Reid Park that features golf courses and a zoo. A complimentary shuttle will take you to attractions within a 3-mile radius of the hotel.

Included in the amenities of this lushly landscaped facility are a heated outdoor pool and whirlpool in a citrus tree-lined courtyard, a 24-hour fitness center, three tennis courts, therapy rooms, and a gift shop. The Cactus Rose Steakhouse offers patio dining, or enjoy contemporary Southwestern cuisine at the Javelina Cantina.

When making your reservations, please specify that you are with the 95th Bomb Group Memorials Foundation.

DoubleTree Reid Park
445 S. Alvernon Way
Tucson, AZ 85711
520-881-4200

More information will be mailed in the spring and will include the itinerary and registration form.

See you in Tucson!

In Loving Memory & In Honor Of

Our treasurer, Nancy Freemantle, reports that since our last newsletter, the Foundation has received donations "In Honor Of" living veterans, and "In Loving Memory" of those who have Left Formation.

In Loving Memory

Milford Paul Abraham
Edward D. Campbell
Charlie Gallagher
Albert S. Huff
1st Lt. Danny Mangan
William J. Middleton
Keith Murray
Raymond M. Olsen
Edward M. Praisner
Irv Rothman

"We will remember them"

Additional "In Loving Memory"
and "In Honor Of" donations
are noted under

Mission Tucson Donors on pages 2 and 3.



In recognition and honor of all
the 95th Bomb Group veterans
whose stories we never heard.



Military Funeral Honors is a way of expressing the nation's gratitude to our veterans who gave so much to defend our freedom. To make arrangements for Military Funeral Honors, call your nearest Air Force Base. They will be happy to connect you to their Honor Guard. More information can be found at:

www.dmdc.osd.mil/mfh

Keep the Legacy Alive

- Remember a veteran every day
- Donate **B-17's Over Berlin** and/or **Into the Wild Blue Yonder and Beyond** to your public and school libraries
- Give your loved ones a Legacy Gift Membership to the 95th Bomb Group Memorials Foundation (see back page)
- Notify the Foundation of any photos or memorabilia you are willing to donate or share
- Include the Foundation in your estate plan



LEFT FORMATION

Since our last newsletter, we have learned of the following 95th veterans who have Left Formation:

Frank J. Campbell	412	HQ	December 2, 2015
Gerald P. Dechambre	335	Bombardier	October 11, 2015
Joseph W. Goldsbury	335	Radio Operator	November 22, 2015
Joseph M. Gosselin	412	Bombardier	November 29, 2015
James B. Gregory	336	Navigator	January 13, 2016
Benjamin F. Hathaway	336	Bombardier	November 17, 2015
Melvin L. Hayne	412	Navigator	October 27, 2015
Richard W. Creutz	457	Sub Depot	January 24, 2016
George H. Lukens	335	Tail Gunner	January 28, 2016
William C. McMillan	335	Ball Turret	January 12, 2016
Harry W. Redding	412	Co-Pilot	July 21, 2015
Marvin O. Richter	336	Radio Operator	September 26, 2015
Irving L. Rothman	336	Top Turret	December 8, 2015
John M. Roy	412	Waist Gunner	January 1, 2014
Fred C. Stevenson	457	Ground Crew	November 15, 2015



“...we honor all when we honor the Missing Man flag.”

Remembering Joe

I always read your [Linda Endris's] emails with one of two strong emotions hitting me. I either find myself smiling as I read of an individual's happy event and all the wonderful wishes that come to that person, or I find myself quite sad as another member of the 95th BG and the Greatest Generation leaves formation as your organization so eloquently expresses it. The email on Joe Gosselin's passing personally hits hard because he is to me one of the dearest people I never had the honor of meeting. And yes, I'll explain that.

Several years ago my Dad one night said to me in passing "I wonder if anyone ever took a picture of our crashed plane?" I can't even begin to express the fireworks that went off inside me as I silently yelled (not sure how one does that) YES, YES! There must be a picture, there has to be—how could this planet continue to rotate if that picture didn't exist? OK, so I'm being a little melodramatic but not by much, I must admit. I instantly donned my Woodward and Bernstein cap (not sure one existed so I made one up) and began my three-plus-year odyssey to find the elusive, 3 × 5 black and white, faded, cracked photo with the corners torn, sitting near the bottom of some large dusty chest located in an attic of a farm house in northern Germany. My earliest research led to the 95th Bomb Group where I requested any information they had on Dad's plane. I loved my pop dearly but when it came to gleaning even a morsel of information for my research on him, he was, shall we say, of no use—wonderful guy, just no use.

Shortly after my initial contact with the 95th I received a directory with the names and contact info for every vet of the 95th. Someone was kind enough to mark the pages and highlight the names of Dad's crew mates in the book. The first highlighted name I came to was Joe Gosselin and so I emailed him with an introduction and a list of questions...poor Joe! But with that a wonderful working relationship was born. In short order Joe sent me a crew photo and some



BACK ROW (L-R)

Joseph Levasseur (ball turret gunner), William Parry (top turret gunner), Henry Doudican Jr (tail gunner), Ralph Brinson (waist gunner), Harold Goodwin (radio operator)

FRONT ROW (L-R)

Richard Read (pilot), Clinton Kemper (co-pilot), Samuel Blum (navigator), Joseph Gosselin (bombardier)

very important information that made the next leg of the sojourn more precise as to where I should continue the research. As I stared at this picture all I could say loudly was "HOLY SMOKE!" I never saw this before! Now I finally had for the first time faces and names to people Dad proudly served with. And the fact they knew him from another era (and another planet, as far as I was concerned) was an added bonus. Boy, did I have questions, but those would come later. For now I wanted to learn everything I could about Dad's time in the 95th and that fateful day when he and the other crew members of Richard Read's B-17G, 42-39793 were shot down on March 6, 1944. As a matter of fact it's the photo I eventually forwarded on to the 95th and you've been quite gracious in giving me the credit as "submitted by." I respectfully request when time is permitted to please change that to "submitted by Joe Gosselin." If it wasn't for him I never would have had it. I could certainly go on about how great a guy this Mr. Joe was to me. I know I pestered him a lot with my questions with answers that ranged from "Now that's a head scratcher" to (I'm sure he was thinking) "Are you kidding me?" He's way too decent a gentleman to ever express that to me verbally, but if he thought it I couldn't blame him. I think of all the questions I asked he was unable to answer probably two of them. In other words, of the 15,296 questions asked, only a couple couldn't be answered. It was probably with those questions where he may have thought "Are you kidding me?" His answers always led me to the answer I was trying to obtain. Mind sharp as a tack!

Thanks to Joe Gosselin my personal odyssey led me to eventually find all surviving members of the crew. Thankfully all crew that day in March 1944 did survive after being shot down and the only wound that occurred was when one of the guys cut his chin on a metal clasp to his parachute when he bailed out of the plane. By the time I became really nosy about Pop's former life some of the guys had sadly passed on. In time I gave each guy a contact sheet of where their former crew mates were currently residing. Keep in mind the last time they all saw each other was when they jumped out of their B-17, fifty-four years earlier! Within less than 16 months of my having the pleasure to get in touch with them, all had passed except for one and that's Joe. In my research, thanks to him again I unwittingly solved a 54-year-old mystery: got a crew member to actually meet up with the very person who as a young farm hand in Germany helped this guy out of a tree after he parachuted onto it. I was able to locate the spot of Dad's crash site, which was completely different from the MACR Report, and I experienced firsthand that special bond between wartime buddies. I assure you there are very few things in existence that are stronger, even decades later!

continued...

Remembering Joe...

As for that elusive picture that started this quest, it has yet to be found. I still hang on to the belief the picture exists. After an important part of the research ended I came to realize I was given the rare opportunity to peek into the past and what I found was very cool: my dad, the war vet....yay Pop! And along the way had the pleasure of talking and exchanging letters/emails with all his living crew members...and I might add, what a great bunch of guys, everyone so helpful and eager to receive anything I could obtain and always wanting to pay for copying costs and postage.

My personal mission, which started with locating a photo, changed in midflight as my focus unwittingly shifted to pure admiration and pride for a generation I never knew and to Dad of course as I now was just learning this part of his past.

Five weeks after I gave Dad all my research as a Christmas gift and he finally realized he was an important cog in a very large machine that destroyed tyranny on a global scale, he passed away.

Again I say all of these discoveries I made along the way were thanks in part to Joe Gosselin. I have yet to meet or speak to him...that's my loss. We communicate via email and every year since my first inquiry to him our families have exchanged Christmas cards. He's really one of a kind! I'm now convinced that Tom Brokaw must have had lunch with Joe Gosselin and afterwards went back to his office, sat down in front of his laptop, and finally had the title to his new book: "The Greatest Generation."

Please forgive me for taking up so much of your time with this "little note" but when it comes to Joe it's difficult to put it into a few words. For anyone in the 95th BG family thinking about researching your loved one's time during WWII I wish you the best of luck and Godspeed and that each of you find a Joe Gosselin early in your journey.

With great respect and admiration to Joe and his wonderful family as well as all of the 95th Bomb Group vets, I faithfully remain,

Marc Ferrero
Son-in-law of Harold Russell Goodwin
95th BG / 412 BS

Keep 'em flyin'



The Membership Committee has lost one of its champions in the passing of Jackie DeHart on November 8, 2015. She was diligent and caring in sending birthday, condolence, and holiday cards to the widows of the 95th. She will be missed. Her daughter, Cheryl Mollison, will be taking over her duties.

**Do you have a change
of address or status?
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John Mollison
Membership Chair
2605 Featherstone Court
Arlington, TX 76001
membership@95thbg.org
Phone: 402-650-4135

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William “Bill” See, Jr.: 336th TTE, POW, and Very Brave Man

by Phil Samponaro

In the fall of 2015, I received an email from Russ McKnight enthusiastically encouraging contact with Foundation member Dan See of Bucksport, ME. Dan is one of three children of the late William “Bill” See, Jr., 336th TTE and POW from the Michael Russell crew. Russ wrote that Dan is a wealth of information about his dad and really should be interviewed. Excited, I wrote Dan immediately. With Dan’s response, I realized how right Russ was. A few phone calls and additional email exchanges later, it felt as though Bill himself had been speaking all along. This article recreates Bill’s story from the information his son so graciously shared. Told through Dan, Bill’s memories stand as a testament to the experiences of so many airmen who survived both mortal combat in the air and harrowing experiences on the ground in German POW camps. Bill, who loved flying, could not have known what was ahead when joining the Air Corps. However, he met the challenges head on and lived to tell of them, passing those memories to his son for posterity.

“Pop always was so taken by the beauty of flight,” Dan proudly wrote of his father. It thus made sense that Bill See went into the Air Corps when war demanded his service. Bill started out in B-26s and then moved onto B-25s. By the time he was flying 25s, he was at Cherry Point (NC) Air Station, primarily a Marine base but with an Air Corps and Navy presence as well. After that, Bill signed up for B-17 duty. He went to Washington state where pilot Mike Russell’s crew formed up, and then to Rapid City. The crew left Bangor, ME, in December 1943 bound for England and stopping at Gander. The trip across the Atlantic wasn’t easy. On the way over, severe icing covered the aircraft. As a result, the crew got rid of everything, including the guns. The ship got down to 100 feet above the water before the ice came off and the crew was out of danger.

Once at Horham, missions began. Bill and his crew flew some rough sorties, including those of Big Week in February 1944. The men had it especially tough on that week’s Regensburg raid of 25 February, mission #86 for the 95th. As a precaution, See always carried two extra gun barrels with him, even though he used to catch heck from his pilot for the extra weight. On the Regensburg mission, Bill melted the existing barrels and had to swap them out with his spares while in flight.

Bill enjoyed being aloft, but the circumstances and grim realities of air war tinged his experiences. “He would talk about how they worked so hard on a low ceiling take-off and then form up,” penned his son. Recreating his dad’s words, Dan explained the crew would be “in the prop wash of the plane ahead in the clouds, scared that they would hit the plane ahead,



The 336th Michael Russell crew

BACK ROW (L-R)

William M. Bate – Co-Pilot, Michael B. Russell – Pilot, Antonio L. Savoca – Bombardier, Francis J. Boyle – Navigator

FRONT ROW (L-R)

Stephen Dobish – Waist Gunner, George E. Pratt – Waist Gunner, Robert E. Treece – Tail Gunner, William See, Jr. – Top Turret Gunner/Engineer, Daniel R. Giddens – Ball Turret Gunner, George I. Bovenzi – Radio Operator

only to break out into a blue sky and all was well. And here was so-and-so right in front of us!” A specific memory stood out in particular: “He had a buddy named Teddy who was a TTE like [Bill]. They all called him ‘Ready Teddy’ because whatever was going on Teddy would always say, ‘I’m ready!’ Flying along on one of the most beautiful of days, [Bill] waved over to Teddy in his turret and Teddy waved back. Another sweep of the turret, Pop looks over and Teddy’s plane blew up.” Bill never forgot his friend. “My father missed Teddy his whole life,” recalled Dan.

Luck ran out for the Russell crew on the 6 March 1944 raid to Berlin. Things looked ominous when 297495, carrying the crew’s bombardier Tony Savoca (who flew lead bombardier on the mission with pilot James Conley), was hit. Bill saw Tony’s ship go down and said, “We’ll be there five minutes later and go down next.” The enemy attacks were fierce. As Bill told his son, “Geez, we had no cover. All of a sudden, there were fighters everywhere. Must have been a hundred.” Hit hard, plane 495 crashed near Oldenburg after the crew bailed out. All the Russell men survived to become POWs with the exception of ball turret gunner Dan Giddens, who was killed in action.

Bill was imprisoned in Stalag Luft VI at Heydekrug, East Prussia, in what is now Lithuania. His captors sent him there by train in either a “40/8”—40 men or eight cattle—car or a 20/8 version. He quickly realized that imprisonment was so far east that escape was essentially impossible. He remembered fellow POWs always talking about escape and he asking himself after the fact, “Where the hell did they think we were going?”

Bill and the other inmates ultimately did leave Camp VI and not as escapees. The Germans transferred 900 men, Bill included, to Stalag Luft IV in Gross Tychow, Pomerania (now Tychowo, Poland). The journey to Gross Tychow and accompanying indignities made the earlier cattle car ride to Camp VI seem bearable. At the port of Memel, Bill and fellow POWs were forced into a coal freighter and sailed to Swinemünde. At Swinemünde, they were crammed into a train for a long trip and then force-marched from Kiefheide to Camp IV. Before reaching the Stalag gates, their captors compelled the prisoners to run through the town while citizens threw rocks at them. Bayonets and dogs kept the men moving and in line.

Amid such harshness, Bill drew strength from friendships with POWs, and one in particular. Most likely at his arrival at Camp IV, Bill was greeted by a friend he met in flight engineer school, downed waist gunner Ed Herzig from another outfit. Badly burned when shot down, Ed looked up and said, "Hey, Bill." Seeing a pal softened the blow of even harder times ahead.

As an inmate at Camp IV, Bill made the perilous "Black March" that began in February 1945 with the Germans' decision to abandon Gross Tychow as a Russian offensive quickly approached.

At the start of what Bill called "the walking tour," the prisoners' health was already fragile. It only got worse. In the coming weeks, he lived on one "ruderbager" (rutabaga) a day and drank water out of a ditch which the soldiers marching ahead of the prisoners used to relieve themselves. As a result, Bill contracted dysentery. One day during the march, his dysentery was bad enough that he got on a cart. He rode for half a day and then started walking again, fearful that the Germans would shoot him otherwise. Like so many others, Bill credited Dr. Leslie Caplan as the reason he and fellow POWs survived. Caplan, made famous in *The Last Escape: The Untold Story of Allied Prisoners of War in Europe, 1944-45* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003) by John Nichol and Tony Rennell, repeatedly reminded Bill and others that they were young, their bodies were strong, and that they would make it. Bill suffered severe frostbite on the march. He weighed less than 90 pounds when liberated, his body not even registering when he was weighed on a scale that started at 90 pounds. Still, Bill survived the ordeal. Symbolic of overcoming the odds, he and Ed Herzig met up again at Camp Lucky Strike after liberation.

War and the POW experience had a lasting effect on Bill See. As a result of barely surviving the Berlin raid of 6 March 1944, Bill was grateful for every day. He instilled that lesson in his son Dan: "Every day's a gift, my father taught me."



Bill kept poignant reminders of POW life with him throughout his life. He brought home a Luftwaffe knife and spoon—the latter very light because it's made of magnesium, or so Bill like to state—from the war. When Bill got on ship to return to the United States, he threw overboard everything but these mementos from the POW camp. Dan cherishes the knife and spoon to this day.

Sharing a special bond from POW days, Bill and fellow vet Ed Herzig remained friends for the rest of Bill's life. Both men were 100 percent disabled when they got out of the service, Ed due to his burns and Bill because of the frostbite he suffered. Ed, who went to work for Grumman on Long Island, later played an important role where Bill's disability was concerned. In 1949, a government representative convinced Bill to go down to 10 percent disability. At the time, Bill's attitude was "What do I care? I'm alive and can work." In the 1990s, Ed got Bill to have his disability reinstated, arguing that the government never should have taken that away from him. Ed attended the interment service for Bill at Arlington National Cemetery in 2005, still showing the scars of burns received more than sixty years before.

The 95th also stayed with Bill. A fellow 95th-er, 335th pilot George Brumbaugh, got Bill and his son Dan involved in the Bomb Group Association and reunions around 1990. Dan, who considers his father "my best friend," was there to witness lasting friendships that were forged during training and at Horham in the 1940s. Not surprisingly, Bill and other members of the Russell crew kept in regular contact over the decades. As one sign of their closeness, Tony Savoca, whom Bill watched go down over Berlin with another crew, and Russell navigator Francis "Joe" Boyle also attended the service at Arlington.

After the war, Bill held onto his love of flight. Pan Am gave him a job and promised him a position as flight engineer, but no seat was forthcoming. Eventually, he settled on a ground job in another line of work. He and Dan's mother opened a successful nursing home in Bedford, NY, where they raised two sons and a daughter and enjoyed the life and freedom that Bill fought to preserve.

Dan has never forgotten his dad's stories or sacrifices. More than a decade after Bill's passing, Dan carefully keeps those memories, which live on as if Bill were still here. In an early email, Dan wrote, "I have lots to talk about a very brave man." He held true to his word. Thank you, Dan, for sharing stories about a very brave man indeed.

Bill See's flight records available online at www.95thbg.org

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Can You Help Identify These Men?



Phil Samponaro
history@95thbg.org
Phone: 956-882-7447

Wayne Olney Crew (334th BS)

Identified:

2nd Lt Wayne R. Olney – pilot
(back row, second from left),
2nd Lt Alvin S. Kahnoski – navigator
(back row, fourth from left)
Sgt Herbert T. Vance – gunner
(front row, far right)

Unidentified

2d Lt William J. Middleton – co-pilot
2d Lt Blaine E. Wible – bombardier
S/Sgt Norbert C. McCauley – radio operator
Sgt Thomas C. McReynolds – ball turret
gunner
S/Sgt John A. Pauly – engineer/top turret
gunner
Sgt Raymond D. Vickers – gunner
Sgt Robert L. Witt – waist gunner



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