



THE PYRAMIDIERS

The Newsletter of the 98th Bomb Group/Wing Veterans Association

March 2018

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Message from the President

Linda and I are wishing we were still in beautiful Tucson, the site of our recent reunion. What a beautiful city Tucson is, and our reunion was scheduled at a perfect time! The weather was in the high 70s and low 80s (*we had some snow the day we flew out of Dayton to Tucson*), with very low humidity and clear skies. I was able to swim laps at a nearby outdoor pool twice during our reunion, and there is NO WAY I could have done that here in Ohio (*our outdoor pool on Wright-Patterson AFB closed the day after Labor Day*). Our hotel, Radisson Suites, could not have been nicer, with large, accommodating suites, and a wonderful breakfast buffet each morning, right next to their beautiful pool. The Radisson had shuttle services to local shopping areas, for those of us without cars, and a very nice hospitality room where we did more than 'hang out.' It's also where we enjoyed our 'welcome' event, annual banquet, and a scrumptious lunch buffet after our tour of beautiful Saguaro National Park. We also enjoyed a wonderful tour of the Pima Air and Space Museum, and The 309th Aerospace and Regeneration Group (309 AMARG), the aircraft 'boneyard' for all excess U.S. government and aerospace vehicles. If you have never been to either of these sites, you have to go, and the best news is they are practically across the road from one another. The greatest part of our reunion was, as it always is, just spending time with our friends and fellow members of the mighty 98th.



Bill West

This was Gary Schinsing's first time managing a reunion, but you would never know it, as everything was superbly planned! He made it a family

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Message from the President *continued from page 1*

affair by involving his dad, wife, daughters, and son-in-law in the planning and execution, and even included his beautiful granddaughter. One change made to the 'normal' reunion schedule was moving the time of the annual meeting so all could participate, which made for a more open and inclusive flow of information. Gary is already planning for our next reunion, near Gettysburg, PA, and he asked for comments on the site at the meeting—looks like it's a go for our first time ever reunion at this very historic area.

Here is some recent news from Wright-Patterson AFB and The National Museum of the USAF: A Marine Corps aircraft dubbed "Chilly Willy" which usually spends frigid, icy winters in Canada came instead to Wright-Patterson in December for use in medical research. Aerospace researchers are using the MV-22 Osprey for ergonomic and musculoskeletal studies

on crew members. The tilt-rotor turboprop was rolled into a hangar after it landed on the runway next to the museum. The research is being conducted by the Air Force School of Medicine. Aviation medical personnel at the school train to load patients into the Osprey in a dual use of medivac and cargo transport, to ascertain how injuries occur to crew members while performing under the extreme conditions they are tasked to undertake. The most common injuries are neck and back pain, so the research is looking for ways to mitigate the stress which causes neck and back pain.

As this newsletter will arrive in 2018, Linda and I wish all of you a very blessed year!

Best wishes,

Bill

Message from the Secretary/Treasurer

My Mother was right! The older you get, the faster times goes by. It's hard for me to believe that as I write this, we are facing down the end of February! We had a great time in Tucson, and are now looking forward to the next reunion (which rumor has it may be in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania). Hopefully, with extra time to plan, we will see more of you this year. This remains a critical time for The Association and we need all the support our members can give.

We are so very fortunate to have articles from members to share with you in this month's publication. This is living history!

Charles Dever has written two more accounts of missions from WWII. He is now 101, in pretty good health, lives on his own and still drives!!!

Alex Tejada shares another of his WWII stories, which was most appropriate considering our reunion location, and where part of his story took place.

Joseph Kmeck Jr. shares WWII stories and pictures from his father, from the very important line crew point of view.

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We continue to loose members who have played a special role in The 98th Bomb Group Association:

Robert W. Sternfels, 97, died peacefully in his sleep the morning of January 24, 2018. Beloved father, grandfather and great-grandfather, Robert joins his wife Nancy and son Robert. He is survived by his son Mark and his wife, four grandchildren, seven great-grandchildren, and his daughter-in-law, Bobbie, and her family.

After enlisting as an Air Force pilot in WWII, Robert achieved the rank of Major and later was awarded the Silver Star for his role in the execution of Operation Tidal Wave, which sought the destruction of Axis oil refineries in Ploesti, Romania in 1943. A photograph

Message from the Secretary/Treasurer — *continued*

of his B-24 Liberator "Sandman" flying low over the destruction is often associated with the occasion and was a source of pride for Robert. He cherished the Thursday morning breakfasts with his WWII friends talking about their experiences. The two things Robert loved most in the world were his country and his family.

Robert and Nancy early on settled in beautiful Laguna Beach, California, where they built a house on a hill overlooking downtown and the Pacific Ocean. Robert enjoyed spending time tinkering in his garage, fixing things around the house, working on their motor home, reading the morning paper, and hosting parties and holiday festivities for their friends and family. As strong as he was prideful, a "do it myself" kind of guy, Robert was truly a prime specimen of The Greatest Generation. He was a fighter through-and-through, and had a sarcastic wit, which reminded us that no matter how much he pushed us to do better he was still our Robert, our Dad, and our PopPop. He fought, he loved, and he lived.

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Joan Harper — We were greatly saddened to learn of the passing of Herb Harper's lovely wife, Joan, on Sept. 28, 2017. She was born in Liverpool, England, where she lived until shortly after she met and married Herb, who was serving in England with the United States Air Force. Shortly after their marriage, they moved to the U.S., and in 1961, Joan became a naturalized citizen. She was a devoted, loving citizen of her newly adopted country. Through the years as an Air Force wife, Joan was active in the NCO Wives Club and served as a volunteer in the Air Base Chapel Ministry.

After her husband's retirement from military service in 1970, Herb and Joan continued to participate in Air Force activities, including the annual reunions they attended where they formed many new friendships with fellow veterans and their families. Herb is the Historian Emeritus for our group, having served loyally for many years, as such he and Joan were a fixture at many of our reunions; and we have greatly

missed them. Many of our ladies will remember Joan who faithfully offered the prayer at our brunches.

To say Joan was an asset to the U.S. would be an understatement. She was a warm, loving and genuine lady who contributed her whole life. Whether it was for her community thru Head Start, the county Food Bank, the Creative Arts Guild, the Symphony and Opera Association, etc.; or as a member of the Episcopal Church Women Caring and Sharing Ministry or Prayer Chain Ministry.

During the many years after departing her beloved homeland, she was an active member of the Transatlantic Brides and Parents Association (TBPA). She communicated with many expatriates via the Internet and was instrumental in forming The Brit Pack Association, which provided an opportunity for British nationals living in the U.S. to meet and share in their heritage while living abroad.

In addition to her husband of almost 61 years, a daughter, two sons, and four grandchildren survive Joan.

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Lt. Col. William Clinton Boede, USAF (RET.) — William "Bill" Boede passed away peacefully in his sleep in the early morning hours of Tuesday, January 10, 2017. As a young man, he flew 50 combat missions over North Korea as the bombardier, navigator and radar operator on a B-26. In 1964 Bill left active duty and moved to Arizona to work for Hughes Aircraft as a managing engineer. During his career, he worked on many weapons platforms, including the Maverick, Phoenix and TOW missile systems. He also worked as a recruiter in the Air Force Reserve; helping numerous young men from the Tucson area attend the Air Force Academy. In his free time he enjoyed going shooting with friends. His wife of 56 years, AlVonnie Lue, and his son, Kurt, survive Bill. He will be missed.

Susie

For The Record

Deceased

Last Name	First Name	MI	Street Address	City	State	Zip		
Braun	George	T	6196 27th St N	Oakdale	MN	55128	B-24	415
Sternfels	Robert	W	Las Palamas 24962 Calle Aragon, #B305	Laguna Woods	CA	92637	B-24	345
Boede	William (Lt Col)	C	9410 E. Magdalena Rd	Tucson	AZ	85710	B-47	343
Kmeck Sr.	Joseph	J	107 Victoria Garden Dr	Kennet Square	PA	19348	B-24	343
Rosenblum	Beverly (James)	W	135 Craigie St	Portland	ME	04102	Honorary	B-24
Tomerlin	Jane (William)	S	14 Cedar Hill Rd	Longview	TX	75601	Honorary	B-24
Clark	Jane (Jack)		15223 Fontana St	Overland Park	KS	66224	Honorary	B-29
Cherrette	Jane	M	13175 Huron House Dr	Skanee	MI	49962	Honorary	B-24
Morgan	Helen (Davd)	M	40 Tommy Marks Way	South Weymouth	MA	02190	Honorary	B-24
Harper	Joan (Herb)		3290 No Pone Rd	Georgetown	TN	37336	Honorary	

New Address

Last Name	First Name	MI	Street Address	City	State	Zip	
Potter	Ronald	G.	376 E Corte Pasadera Verde	Green Valley	AZ	85614	Associate

New Member

Last Name	First Name	MI	Street Address	City	State	Zip	
Short'Arline	Mrs Robert	L.	1118 9th Ave, Apt 208	Langdon	ND	58249	Honorary
Swimley	Alison (Mrs Hugh)		16617 N West Point Pkwy Apt 237	Surprise	AZ	85374	Honorary
Watt	Mrs Esther		635 Willow Valley Square	Lancaster	PA	17602	Honorary
Mowris (Driscoll)	Wynne		PO Box 1905	Smithfield	NC	27577	Associate
Potter	Carol		376 E Corte Pasadera Verde	Green Valley	AZ	85614	Associate
Clemons	Tom		612 W Main St	Lebanon	TN	37087	Associate

Memories from My Years of WWII Service

by *Alexandro M. Tejada, San Diego, CA*

On the 10th of May 1941, I enlisted in the Army Air Corps at March Field, Riverside, California. I joined a small group of recruits that were the beginning of a new unit: the 6th Reconnaissance Squadron, activated on January 12, 1941. While waiting for more recruits to fill the ranks, we had no training of any kind, but we did have entertainment. One of the shows featured Bob Hope in his first appearance in a USO Show. The comic that had been scheduled to appear had failed to show and Bob Hope had been called to substitute. *(He had struck a gold mine. And in May 1997 he was voted an honorary GI by a Congressional Subcommittee.)*

There was a new aircraft on the field that was being tested: the B-19 that had the same design as the B-17, but larger, with increased range and load capacity. The B-24, however, with the similar upgrades had been tested in San Diego, California in 1939 and was already in production. The B-19 was the precursor of the B-29 that was built for service in the Pacific where longer range and a heavier bomb load were required.

With additional recruits having joined our group, still with no training, we were transferred to David-Monthan Air Base that was under construction at Tucson, Arizona. When we arrived the bulldozers were still at work leveling the field and plowing up rattlesnakes by the barrel. Our group was then scheduled to go to Boot Camp. Luckily for me, as the only one in the group that could type, I was allowed to skip Boot Camp and assigned instead to the Orderly Room, charged with setting up the Pay Roll Section. Apparently, the Pay Roll had more priority than training, and I never did go through Boot Camp.

In addition to my typewriter, the only other equipment we had was a PT-17 that was flown by our one and only pilot to put in his required flying time. Having yet no PX on our base, the plane was also used to go shopping at the PX of nearby Fort Huachuca. The pilot, knowing this was my first flight, hedge-hopped all the way to Fort Huachuca, and on the way back put me through some fancy, show-off aerobatics.

On leave in Tucson I met a Japanese girl that spoke native Spanish, having been born and raised in Mexico. Shortly before the attack on Pearl Harbor, while she was at school, she told me that two Japanese men (she called them "Japs") from the West Coast had visited her mother. These men knew that her daughter was a soldier from the Air Base and were interested in using her daughter to obtain and provide them with information about the Air Base. Her mother, shocked and angry, threw them out threatening to call the police. They never heard from the Japanese again. This girl, with her mother and teenaged brother, were interned during the war in a detention camp for Japanese.

We arrived at our new Base at Muroc, California on December 9th. This base was an aerial gunnery training range. It was equipped mostly with old open cockpit, double-winged B-10s that were used for towing aerial targets. Other Air Corps units were also converging at the Muroc Range in response to an expected Japanese threat to the West Coast. With no flying equipment or training, these units were to be used as emergency ground troops (Infantry) should the Japanese threat materialize.

Initially, armed with shotguns, all we did was guard duty on the flight line. We were then taken out into the desert for infantry training armed with wooden make-believe rifles. I was issued the only real weapon: a 30 caliber water-cooled machine gun with no water and no ammunition. Some of the "Emergency Infantrymen" said they had seen some tanks during our desert maneuvers. The tanks turned out to be cows armored with signs in big black letters spelling "TANK." Luckily these hurriedly organized slapstick maneuvers lasted only one day. Later, we were told that the only Japanese offensive activity on the West Coast was a nighttime attempt by a Japanese submarine to shell some oil storage tanks that were near the Santa Barbara beaches.

During the early 1930s the Japanese had established a fishing fleet with Headquarters and a cannery on

Cedros Island, located just off shore about halfway down the west coast of Baja California. The crews on these fishing boats were staffed with Japanese Naval Officers. Their fishing operations were a front for conducting espionage activities against the US. During the same time Germany and the Soviet Union had also intensified their espionage activities against the US, obviously in preparation for the coming war.

In 1938, when Japan was already at war with China, Japan prevailed on Mexico to deport all Chinese living in Mexico, purportedly, as an intelligence security measure, together with their Mexican wives and children. Eventually, the Mexican wives returned to Mexico, minus their children. Their children were lost to them during the long sea voyage to China by their gambling husbands who used their children as money.

Captain Elliott Roosevelt joined our squadron on December 16, 1941. (*At the end of the war he was flying out of England as a General.*) On Christmas Eve Captain Roosevelt got in touch with his Commanding Officer (President Roosevelt) about our lack of equipment. We soon received a full complement of LB-30s (B-24s). These planes had been destined for England and were equipped with English gun mounts and they had to be flown to Fort Worth, Texas for the installation of American 50 caliber guns. The planes were then quickly pressed into service for submarine patrol that included the west coast of Mexico. Due to the sudden change of the planes' destination, the TOs were late in catching up with the planes. It took about two weeks after patrol operations began before it was discovered the planes were wired with explosives to blow them up to avoid capture as they were ferried to England. A covered switch on the instrument panel armed the explosives and triggered a timing device that gave the crew time to bail out or get clear of a crash landing. Fortunately, during the weeks that the planes were flown before the TOs arrived, no one got curious enough to try all the switches.

In response to a call for applicants from the ranks for West Point, I applied and was rejected on the grounds that I was—six months too old? I was 21. I did have the option of going to OCS (Officer Candidate School), but that was ground duty and what I wanted was flying duty. So, I applied for Flying Cadets. That

required two years of college, which I didn't have, or the equivalent in written exams. I passed the written exams but flunked the physical exam—Color Blind, Red/Green. That left the possibility of joining the 10 member crews on B-24s as a gunner, if I wanted to fly.

From Muroc the 6th Reconnaissance Squadron was transferred to Sacramento, California and designated the 396th Bomb squadron (M). Due to the demand for typists I was transferred from Sacramento to San Francisco to join the 4th Bomber command HQ & HQ Squadron that was responsible for bomber crew training on the West Coast. With tie, I was promoted from typist to Sergeant Major in charge of the Adjutant General Office. The main offices were in the Federal building with billeting at 49 4th Street, just off Market Street, and the HQ Squadron activities were at Hamilton Field across the Bay.

One day the Personnel Officer came into my office looking for a document he needed and expected me to produce. I kept a log of all documents that made the rounds through all our offices. When I showed him the log, with his signature as the last to take control of that particular document, he turned angrily heading for the office door. On his way to the door my secretary and I exchanged smiles. He had stopped at the door to give me an angry look and caught the smiles, then slammed the door as he left. It turned out, unknown to me, that my secretary was his girlfriend. My very next promotion was to the top of the list of those to be shipped overseas.

On January 22, 1944 I shipped out to the ETO (European Theatre of Operations) from Newport News, Virginia in a huge three-section convoy destined for Russia, England and Italy. It took the Italy section 30 days to cross the Atlantic, dodging German submarines, to reach Naples, Italy. We sailed through the Straits of Messina at night just in time to see the spectacular eruption of the volcano Stromboli on its lonely island. At Naples we disembarked by climbing over a capsized Italian ship on the waterfront that was still full of Italian troops. From Naples we proceeded to Lecce, in the heel of the Italian boot. There I joined the 415th Squadron of the 98th Bomb Group. I volunteered for combat duty and flew as a combat photographer/waist gunner on B-24s until the end of the war in Europe.

Remembering and Honoring Joseph Kmeck, Sr.

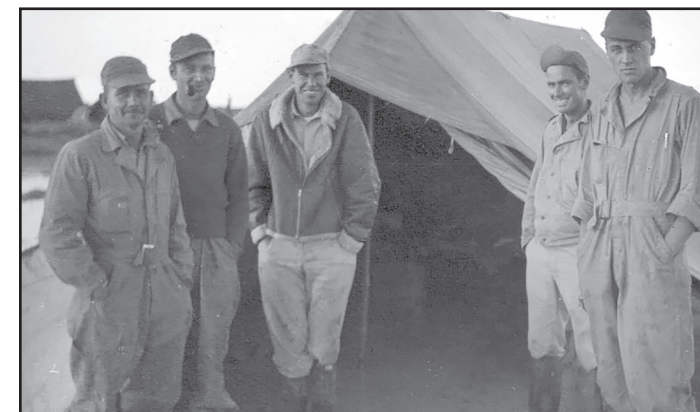
by Joseph Kmeck, Jr.

With regret I inform members of the 98th BG Veterans Association of the passing of my father, Joseph Kmeck Sr., on April, 18, 2017 at the age of 94. He was in the company of his loving wife, Julia, and his closest family. My Dad was a loving husband of 71 years of marriage to Julia. They attended the reunions often, including the second, at the Statler Hotel in New York City on Sept. 27, 1952.

I have read many stories written by the flight crews and their heroic efforts during the war, but thought it might be appropriate to write an account from the perspective of my father who was a member of the ground crews supporting the bombing missions. He did two tours of duty as a B-24 mechanic in North Africa and Italy and kept a daily diary from January 1, 1943 to January 16, 1945, briefly detailing the day's activities, bombing missions, bomb loads, and aircraft maintenance. These

daily accounts give a historical ground crew perspective of what was going on during this time. They lived in tents which often filled with rain or sand from the dust storms of North Africa, Figures 1, 2, 3.

Joe's entry into military service began at the age of 18, when he enlisted in the Army Air Corp in Newark, NJ on October 13, 1941, weeks before the attack on Pearl Harbor. After nine months of B-24 maintenance training in Wichita Falls and San Diego, he boarded a troop transport in Florida for North Africa in July of 1942 and began his service with the 343rd Squadron, 98th Bomb Group supporting bombing missions to Nazi occupied countries in Europe. There were slow days when no missions were launched and Joe could catch up on repairs to his "hotel," Figure 4. There were much busier times when diary entries were more robust. For instance, his February 23, 1943 entry is typical: "Air raid siren blew tonight. Planes went on mission last night with 500 lb. bombs and came back at 8:00 this morning. Bombed Messina, Italy—all came back. My ship 'Skippy' was riddled with shrapnel. It had at least 50 holes in it. Waist gunner was hit in back of neck, but not serious. Bombardier was also hit but not serious. Both received 'Purple Heart.' I worked all day." I believe the photo of Joe and "Skippy" were taken prior to this mission (see Figure 5). Joe saved



Figures 1, 2, and 3.



several of these shrapnel and they are still located in his tool box.

Another notable entry is that of August 1, 1943: "Ships took off for a mission (Ploesti) at 7:15 loaded with 6-500lb bombs. All ships in my squadron went (12) and all ships on the 344th went. My ship (Edna Elizabeth) came back with one engine feathered (#4), my engine. Reason for feathering was a supercharger oil line broken. Came back an hour later. 'Prince Charming' also turned back due to trouble. Three of the 344th came back due to trouble. One of them, 'Kickapoo,' salvaged bombs at sea and returned with #3 feathered. It hit a power line and crashed a mile from our base." He noted that three came out alive. Seven were burned to death. " 'Kickapoo' burst into flames immediately on hitting ground. There is nothing much left of plane."

An entry from Italy on January 9, 1944 caught my attention: "Ships went on practice missions this morning & afternoon. I went up this afternoon on 'Snafu,' and we had a bail out alert due to tail quivering, but it came out all right and we removed our chutes. We came in after 45 minutes of flight."

There are many more interesting accounts of weather, specific engine repairs, 100 hr. inspections, and late night maintenance readying a ship for a morning mission. It could be a source of historical significance if anyone is interested.

As the war advanced Joe was relocated to southern Italy in January 1944, where he remained until returning to the US in February 1945. He arrived at the troop transport dock but, at the last minute, was ordered onto another troop transport for the trip back to the States. He did not have time to remove his travel bags, which had many souvenirs. That ship was subsequently torpedoed and sunk. I have often heard my Dad reminiscing about those lost souvenirs, but thankful he was not on the ship.

After almost four years without seeing his family, Joe was finally able to visit family on leave in New Jersey. Between this period and his honorable discharge as a Staff Sergeant in Fort Dix on May 21, 1945 Joe met the love of his life, Julia, and entered the next stage of his life. He kept in touch with several of his 98th buddies

throughout the years. One of them was his crew chief, Amos Nicholson. I'm not certain but think he is the one on horse to the right of my father (Figure 6). Another was Arthur Rockwood, the 343rd photographer. I include photos taken in his North Africa base hoping that family members may recognize some of the people. Ultimately the letters between his buddies ceased and my Dad learned of each person's passing through either the newsletter or next of kin.

Joe met Julia at a Catholic sponsored dance in Manhattan. He was in uniform. Julia did not want to attend the dance, but her friends convinced her to go. Julia immediately recognized Joe's well-worn uniform, with some Italian wine stains, and knew he had just returned from overseas duty. They both fell for each other and the rest is history. Married on September 1, 1946 they were blessed with 71 blissful years of marriage.

Joe was able to utilize skills learned in service and worked for Eastern and American Airlines as an airplane mechanic until settling down with his permanent career with the Bendix Corp as an aircraft instrument technician. During this 5 to 10 year period after the war he also pursued a professional singing career, attending the NY School of Music, studying voice. He took jobs singing at weddings, dances, and banquets. He also entered a memorable singing contest on a NYC radio station. Nervously singing an Italian opera, he was only able to get the runner up award, which was a one-gallon can of olive oil manufactured by the station sponsor. Joe dutifully carried it back home under his arm on the subway to Julia. He eventually left the professional singing circuit and concentrated on his job at Bendix and raising he and Julia's two children, Joey and Joan. But he always loved singing and continued to sing everywhere he went. One of his favorites was the Lord's Prayer. Over the last several years he sang it daily before his morning coffee.

Settling in to the family life of marriage and raising two kids in the 1950s Joe once again became restless for activity. They bought a house in Maywood, NJ and in 1960 he and Julia purchased a boat for use "down the shore." It was during the 1960s that the family enjoyed many wonderful summers boating, fishing, blue claw crabbing, and riding waves. Dad was disciplined with

his kids, but never held their adventurous spirit back. Many times Dad would take his family fishing out in the Atlantic Ocean or in Barnegat Bay.

Joe loved sharing his love of the outdoors with his family on camping trips to Montauk Point, upstate NY, and the Maryland shore. He was a barbecue grill master and felt right at home cooking up fresh caught fish with his family.

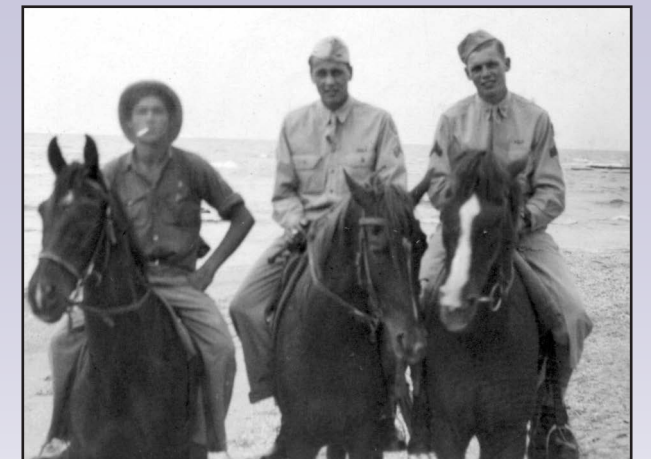
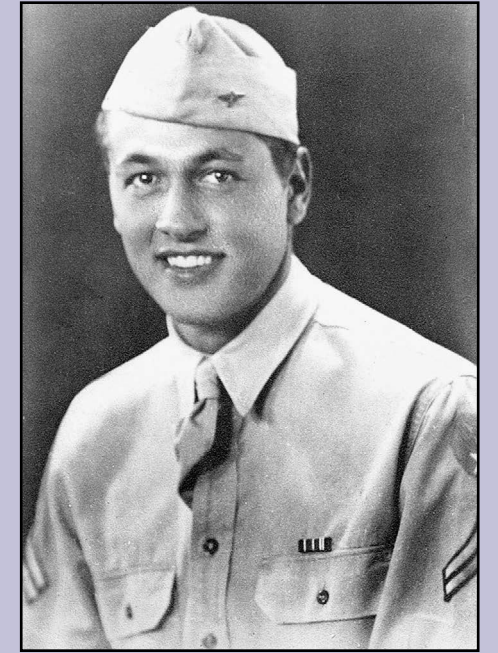
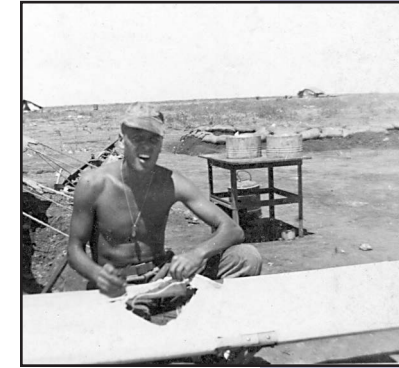
Joe was a proud and loving father to his two children, Joey and Joan and was thrilled to welcome his new son-in-law, Lou, into the family in 1975.

Retirement from Bendix came in 1987. Joe and Julia moved into a new home in Monterey Beach, NJ, relocating from Maywood in December 1988. The boat sold and only 1200ft from the ocean, Joe now enjoyed more fishing and daily swims in the surf during summers. He was now able to spend more time with Joan's children, Julianne, Emily, and Mark, and show them how to get around in the surf. He spent precious hours teaching them how to catch crabs in Barnegat Bay. Joe and Julia travelled more now, spent time travelling to Europe, the Caribbean, and, of course, the 98th reunions.

The last 10 to 15 years marked a slowdown in physical activity. But he welcomed new members to his family. Joan's daughters, Julianne and Emily brought husband's Travis and Adrian into the family. Julianne and Travis also brought Joe's three great grandchildren, Gabriela, Claire, and Jack into the family. He adored them all.

The word loyal is insufficient to describe Joe's dedication to his country, Christian faith, Julia, and his family. *Joe...*, *Dad...*, *Papa Joe...*, you will be deeply missed. Your legacy of firm but gentle discipline, relentless love for God and family lives on. God be with you and may you rest in peace.

Joe received a military burial at the Brigadier General William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Wrightstown, NJ.



Top right: Joseph Kmeck, Sr.; Top left: Figure 4; Middle: Figure 5; Bottom: Figure 6

WWII Mission Notes

Sulmona Marshalling Yard

Italy, September 3, 1943

Upon arriving at Benghazi, things were quiet with very few planes around. Maybe the losses on low-level Ploesti were mentioned, but it didn't sink in. We probably had three or four planes in our squadron.

On September 3, 1943, the target was Sulmona, Italy, marshaling yards. It was considered an easy target. Flak and fighter strengths were given to us at briefing and not much opposition was expected.

We were awakened at 4:00 a.m., got dressed and attended briefing. Cooks didn't get up that early, so there was no breakfast except maybe a piece of bread and a cup of coffee. This prevailed throughout the combat tour. No breakfast on combat days and no dinner if we arrived late returning to base. We were given two K-rations for our daily meals.

It was my first mission, so I was assigned as an observer to Knickerbocker with Huckleberry as pilot. We took off around daybreak, crossing the Mediterranean Sea, past the heel of Italy, where we started to climb to bombing altitude. Around Foggia we were in loose formation when 100 ME-109s hit unexpectedly. They were German fighters, evidently coming down to Foggia from the Western Front to support German troops who were engaging British troops crossing the Straits of Messina.

We were flying below 11,000 feet, so we were not on oxygen. With the 376th Group we probably had 24 to 36 planes in the air, many with double officer crews as observers.

The formation was all over the sky when the fighters hit. One B-24 at 3 o'clock was way behind his formation when 20 MM shells from a ME-109 started popping on his tail. He must have put it in super-rich to sail right through the formation and end up leading both groups.

Knickerbocker was firing the nose guns, and the other guns were also in action. The waist gunners needed more ammunition, so I carried it back to them, walking

by 1st Lt. Charles A. Dever, Navigator DFC,
US Army Air Corps

through the bomb bay with a chest pack on. I don't believe I could do that on the ground! I heard bees buzzing and later realized it was bullets!

Travis Edwards, I believe that was his name, took the plane we ferried over with most of my navigational equipment on board.

I saw our plane, "Sweaty Betty," getting hammered from below. The ball turret had been taken out as we had been told the Germans didn't attack from below. Huge flames were coming from the #3 engine. "Sweaty Betty" was going down!

Later, Edwards came into camp that I believe was Lecce. He had escaped at Bologna and had walked down the center of Italy. All of his clothes were black. He said he went out the top hatch, lucky to make it without hitting the tail. He also had to wait until the plane was over land, as the attack was over water. This was unusual for German planes.

After the formation closed up a little and the fighters ran low on gas, we approached the target. Everyone was in disarray, planes all over the place, hardly any real formation. Bombs were falling everywhere. A load dropped in front of us and almost hit our plane. There was some light flak. We crossed Italy without incident, then, picking up some more light flak, we flew south over the Straits of Messina. We could see the British crossing and landing on the Italian toe. Then, we realized why the Germans were so tenacious.

Losses for the day were six B-24s and an estimated 30 – 40 ME-109s. I cannot recall any of the other planes from my squadron returning.

I thought this was just a normal mission! I didn't run into such opposition again until Weiner-Neustadt and Ploesti.

Time: 12 hours

Plane: 656L, "Rowdy Ann," (I was aboard for her 64th, 105th and 113th missions)

The Bravest of the Brave

On November 2, 1943, the 98th was in Hergla, Tunisia, near the Kasserine Pass where the Allied Forces suffered their first defeat in North Africa.

Across the Gulf of Sidra from Benghazi the 98th moved during the dry season. This was to reduce flying time to the battle zone. Sousse was a landfall near our base. The unit stayed there until the wet season, when the dry lake turned into a wet one with a foot of water in some parts. There were still some dry sections from which planes were able to take off for another base.

The encampment was on the beach, with a minefield between it and the beach. There was a roped off path where there was the grave of a German soldier, his rifle stuck in the ground with his helmet on top.

There were guards on the planes, as explosives were put in the wheel wells by saboteurs and set to explode at a set altitude.

Aerial combat was like playing a giant pinball machine. Neither side was especially trying to kill the other, but each was trying to disable the other's machine. It was as though we were flying against our second cousins, as a lot of us were just a few generations removed from Germany. So, it amounted to who could win the game.

With that in mind, we learned our mission for the day was Weiner Neustadt, a small town twenty miles south of Vienna.

We were awakened at the usual 4 o'clock to get ready for a 6 o'clock briefing. It consisted of the hot spots, what fighters could expect and flight information, such as compass heading, indicated speed, temperature, and handing out escape packets. One person got out of the mission by shooting himself in the leg. The lead navigator refused to fly with the lead pilot, so my bombardier and I were separated. It turned out that he was with the second flight over the target. I saw his plane pull up and leave the formation and he was never seen again.

At the briefing it was announced that Weiner Neustadt's plant was making ball bearings. We were suspicious of that and thought that with the furious defense they put up, they must be producing something like ME-109 fighters. The target had been bombed many times and the Germans tried to camouflage the repairs by leaving the holes in the roof and rebuilding underneath.

As mentioned, the group was on a giant dry lake. This enabled the planes to take off like fighters, in threes, saving time assembling.

We flew across the Mediterranean to Italy, up the Adriatic Sea and over the Alps, into Austria staying on the outskirts of Graz. There, the enemy put up some light flak and we, also, caught some half-hearted flak over the Po Valley.

The group approached Weiner Neustadt through a long valley. The gunners were in the valley on the hills and on top of the mountains. The fighters attacked. It was the most vicious battle we encountered. The flak over the target was intense right at our altitude. One five-shell volley exploded a few feet ahead of us. We came out with little damage in a dive at maximum speed.

The gunners at Graz were waiting for us and along with those in the Po Valley, took half hearted shots that were way off.

The group started down the Adriatic. The plane on our right was there one minute and gone the next. No one knew what happened.

We continued on and arrived at our base.

Flying time: 9-1/4 hours

Losses: 5 B-24s, which equates to 50-60 men.

Enemy attacked with 60-80 ME-109s, FW 90s, Ju88s

• • Reunion 2017 – Tucson, Arizona • •

by Susie Mioduszewski

We were a somewhat smaller group than we have been used to, but what we lacked in numbers we made up for in enthusiasm being together once again. It has been fifty-two years now that members of this group have met together in some sort of fashion to celebrate their camaraderie, and remember with honor those among them who had made the ultimate sacrifice. There isn't a doubt in my mind that John Fornwalt isn't smiling down from Heaven, as it was his dream that these reunions never end. For me there were many memories, as I could not help but remember our last visit to Tucson, which happened to be my first reunion and my Dad's last.

Gary did an absolutely *fantastic* job for his first 'real' foray into the world of Reunion Coordinator on his own. Somehow he found the time to locate great accommodations and plan an interesting week for us, all while he cared and supported his wife, Sue. With his whole family in tow (oldest to newest, and Sue!) he didn't miss on anything.

Saguaro National Park was one of our first destinations. Its two sections are on either side of the city of Tucson—the West (where we toured) and the East, and the park is named for the large Saguaro Cactus, native to its desert environment. One of the most unique national parks in the country, the Red Hills Visitors Center at the Western Section of the park is very nice, with rangers at this location very friendly and super knowledgeable, and there are stunning views of the mountains and Saguaros off its patio deck!

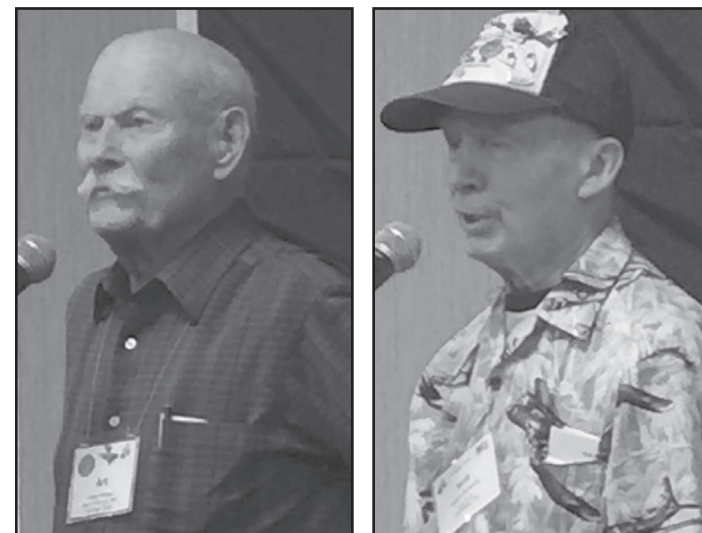
Driving the scenic Bajada Loop Drive was worth the trip in itself. This is a 5.2 mile unpaved loop drive through the desert with touring Saguaro Cacti, and amazing views. It is said that this drive may be a bit challenging for smaller cars, but can be done if adventurous, especially on a bus! At the midway point of the Bajada loop is the Signal Hill Picnic area, with large stone covered pavilions. There is also a trail that

cuts directly through the Picnic grounds that will take you to the top of the rocks in about five minutes, where you will see ancient Native American petroglyphs.

“Living History” Stories – We all look forward to hearing the stories that are shared by our members at Reunions, but we aren't always near to get to hear them. So this year we set aside an afternoon where all members were invited to share stories from their time in the service—whether a particular event, what their job was, or even what they did after they were discharged. It gave us an opportunity as a group to listen, appreciate, and recognize their contributions to our country.

The Pima Air & Space Museum is one of the world's largest non-government funded aerospace museums. Opened to the public in May 1976, the museum features a display of nearly 300 aircraft, from a Wright Flyer to a 787 Dreamliner, spread out over 80 acres on a campus occupying 127 acres. The museum encompasses six indoor exhibit hangars, three of which are dedicated to WWII. It has also been the home to the Arizona Aviation Hall of Fame since 1991.

Sharing memories: left to right: Art Palmer, 415 SQ / B-24 and Bob Schinsing, 345 SQ / B-29



Above: a Saguaro. Below: On display at Pima



Sharing memories: left to right: Ralph Hayes, 343 SQ / B-29 and Alex Tejada, 343 SQ / B-24



98th Scholarship

The 98th Bomb Group / Wing Veterans Association will award a \$2,000 Scholarship each year to a young person who wants to continue their education at a university, community college, technical or trade school. They should have at least a 2.5 GPA in high school, be a patriotic person who believes in the American ideals and be recommended by a member of the 98th BG / WVA.

The young person should also have a fairly clear idea of what they want their continuing education to do for them and the career they are hoping to follow. It is hoped that this scholarship will go to an individual that would otherwise not have an opportunity to further their education, not to someone who already has several scholarships. The \$2000 will be paid directly to the school chosen by the young person for their tuition.

A complete **Application for the Scholarship** consists of:

- The Applicant Form to be filled out by the person applying for the Scholarship.
- The Member Form to be filled out by the sponsoring member of the 98th Bomb Group / Wing Veterans Association
- An official transcript of the applicant's high school grades (upon completion of three quarters of senior year).

Applicant and Member forms may be obtained through the Scholarship Chairman and should be returned to the Chairman no later than 1 May 2018:

Suzanne Mioduszewski
1137 Joyce Lane
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

The Scholarship Committee will review all applications and select the applicant to receive the Scholarship. Selection will be made based on need, realistic goals for the education sought, Patriotism, and how well the person is thought of by the sponsoring member. Their decision will be forwarded to the President who will contact the recipient and sponsoring member in June.

The museum is adjacent to **Davis-Monthan Air Force Base**, where many of our members spent time during their careers. The 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group (AMARG), affiliated with the base, also known as the “Graveyard of Planes” or “The Boneyard,” is the largest aircraft storage and preservation facility in the world. 550 people are currently employed to take care of the 4,400+ aircraft that call this airfield their permanent residence. It was a beautiful day as we toured the area on covered trams. Both the Museum and the Boneyard have grown and acquired many more additions since our last visit some 17 years ago!

The Ladies Event (its location and setting traditionally a surprise for the attendees) was this year selected and planned for by Simone Schinsing. A lovely and delicious brunch was held at **Tohono Chul Park** in its Garden Bistro; followed by an informative presentation on the history of the park and many of the plantings and indigenous wild life by a Park Staff Member.

Tohono Chul is a botanical garden, nature preserve, and cultural museum located in a suburban area of Tucson. The words “tohono chul” translate as “desert corner” and are borrowed from the language of the Tohono O’odham, the indigenous people of southern Arizona. With views of the majestic Santa Catalina Mountains forming a backdrop for the natural desert habitat; Tohono Chul’s mission is to enrich people’s lives by connecting them with the wonders of nature, art and culture in the Sonoran Desert region and inspiring wise stewardship of the natural world.

As is customary, on our last evening we held the Banquet Dinner, which was at the hotel this year. Here is where we all shared stories of the week, and the many wonderful experiences that were ours. As a special tribute to the many we lost from our ranks this past year, we celebrated them, and our memories of them, with a toast of champagne by all. Once again we said our goodbyes until next year, vowing to keep this tradition—begun for us so many years ago—and knowing that John was still smiling down on us.



Outside the Garden Bistro at Tohono Chul Park.



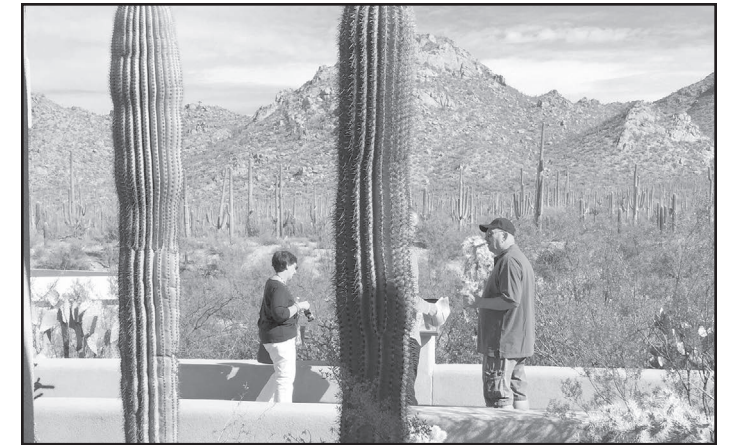
The Ladies enjoy lunch inside the Garden Bistro.



Tohono Chul Park is filled with beautiful vegetation.



Breath-taking vistas at Saguaro National Park.



Saguaro Cacti were all around!

• • Our 2017 Reunion Attendees • •

LAST	FIRST	BG	SQ	AC	CITY	ST
Bynum	John	98	343	B-29	Tucson	AZ
Carver	Carol (Mrs. Norman)	98	353	B-29	Victoria	TX
Carver	Norman	98	353	B-29	Victoria	TX
Carver	Roger	98	353	B-29	Flower Mound	TX
Catlin	Joyce	Assoc	343	B-29	Pocomoke City	MD
Conley	Patricia	98	343	B-29	Port St Lucie	FL
Gerfen	John	98	343	B-29	Port St Lucie	FL
Gladding	Herb	98	343	B-29	Pocomoke City	MD
Goodall	Robert	98	A&E	B-47E	Milan	IL
Hayes	Bill	Assoc	345	B-24	Marysville	OH
Hayes	Lura	Assoc	345	B-24	Marysville	OH
Hayes	Ralph	98	343	B-29	Clearwater	FL
Hegedus	Arlene (Mrs Jack)	98	343	B-47	Lincoln	NE
Hegedus	Jack	98	343	B-47	Lincoln	NE
Hensel	Bonnie	Assoc	344	B-24	York	PA
Hensel	Joan	Assoc	344	B-24	York	PA
Hobbs	Kim	Assoc	513	B-24	Hennessey	OK
Johnston	Mary Kate (Palmer)	98	343	B-24	Wasilia	AK
Mioduszewski	Suzanne	Assoc	345	B-28	Ann Arbor	MI
Palmer	Art	98	343	B-24	Mount Vernon	WA
Rawlings	Judith	Assoc	344	B-24	Cynthiana	KY
Rawlings	Melinda	Assoc	344	B-24	Cynthiana	KY
Rivas	Frank	98	345	B-47	Plattsmouth	NE
Rivas	Sharon (Mrs. Frank)	98	345	B-47	Plattsmouth	NE
Schinsing	Bob	98	345	B-29	Newark	NY
Schinsing	Gary	Assoc	345	B-29	Surprise	AZ
Schinsing	Susan (Mrs. Gary)	Assoc	345	B-29	Surprise	AZ
Schinsing	Simone	Assoc	345	B-29	Oceano	CA
Tejeda	Alex	98	415	B-24	San Diego	CA
Tejeda	Barbara (Mrs. Alex)	98	415	B-24	San Diego	CA
West	Bill	Assoc	343	B-24	Fairborn	OH
West	Linda (Mrs. Bill)	Assoc	343	B-24	Fairborn	OH
Whalen	Jack	Assoc	345	B-29	San Pablo	CA
Whalen	Lily (Schinsing)	Assoc	345	B-29	San Pablo	CA
Whalen	Paloma	Assoc	345	B-29	San Pablo	CA



Plenty of time for camaraderie outside the Pima Museum.



More time to chat!



B-24 at Pima.



B-24 at Pima.



A resident of The Boneyard.



B-24 at Pima.

**Look for registration info to come on our next reunion...
tentatively set for Gettysburg, PA.**