



# THE PYRAMIDIERS

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

May 2013

## OFFICERS

**JOHN FORNWALT**  
Founding President

**BILL SEALS**  
President and Editor  
2526 Plumfield Lane  
Katy, TX 77450  
281-395-3005  
colbillyseals@hotmail.com

**DENNIS POSEY**  
Vice President  
1780 Chasewood Park Lane  
Marietta, GA 30066  
770-509-7734  
dennis\_posey@att.net

**SUZANNE MIODUSZEWSKI**  
Secretary/Treasurer  
Scholarship Chairperson  
1137 Joyce Lane  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103  
734-678-3838  
suzannes@me.com

**LURA HAYES**  
Assistant Secretary/Treasurer

**BONNIE HENSEL**  
Memorabilia Chairperson  
317 Bristol Drive, Apt. C  
York, PA 17403  
717-848-9546  
bjhnewstart@hotmail.com

**HERB HARPER**  
Historian Emeritus  
3290 NO. Pone Road N.W.  
Georgetown, TN 37336-4809  
423-336-2768  
BOMBGRP98@aol.com

**DEVON POWELL**  
Historian  
10382 Green Mountain Circle  
Columbia, MD 21044  
240-398-8018  
98thbg.historian@gmail.com

## Pieces of My Mind

*Greetings to all,*

I trust that spring has arrived in your neighborhood. It passed through here last month on its way north. Now we are into our long, hot summer which will last until October. The flip side is that we didn't have any snow or ice this winter. In fact, we didn't even have a freeze.



We have recently discovered that we have Veterans of the 98th who are in nursing homes, or other extended care facilities who are not receiving our newsletter. There are many reasons why this happens, lapsed membership, address changes we were not aware of, etc. If you know of a 98th Veteran who is not receiving the newsletter, please let us know and we will ensure they get them. All we need is their name and address. The membership requirement is waived in their case.

With a little luck, our new web site will be up and running by the time you read this. The address is "The Pyramidiars.com". To post information on the site you will need a username and the password. Your username will be the first letter of your first name and your last name (example: bseals). The password is "Veteran". The new site took a lot of work and a bit of money, but hopefully it will be useful to our members and others who wish to learn about our association and the 98th's history and heritage. Please take the time to check out the site, it is yours as much as it is anyone's. As always, your comments and suggestions are welcome. The goal is to expand and improve the site as it matures.

The registration form for our reunion in Charleston is included in this issue and I urge you to complete and mail the form to Susie as quickly as possible. The sooner we have a good idea of how many people

*continued on page 2*

# Pieces of My Mind

continued from front cover

are coming, the sooner we can make any necessary adjustments to the arrangements. Dennis has done his usual super job of setting up the reunion, and I promise you will have a great time if you attend. If you are able to come, I sincerely hope you will.

Four years ago in this space I preached a sermon on the reasons why it is important for us to correctly observe Memorial Day. I just re-read it and I think it was well done and worthy of repeating. I have little doubt that the majority of Americans need to hear the sermon.

The problem is this isn't the place to preach it—none of the readers of this newsletter need to be reminded of the true purpose and meaning of the day. In fact most, if not all, could preach a better sermon than I. So I'll simply say, please join with me in observance of Memorial Day.

I hope to see all of you in Charleston.

With Warmest Regards,

*Bill Seals*

## ADDRESS CHANGES

LAST	FIRST	M.I.	ADDRESS	CITY	ST	ZIP	SQD
Crosby	Richard	O.	1261 W Argyle St, #309	Chicago	IL	60640	
Davis	Donald (Lt Col)	V.	218 S Collier St	Centralia	MO	65240-1350	345
Gutman	Arthur	J.	502 Washington Ave, Ste 800	Towson	MD	21093-3630	343
Haggerty	Gerard	A.	2401 Pennsylvania Ave, Apt 410	Wilmington	DE	19806	A&E
Hagler	Ronald	E.	268 Painted Hills Dr	Ivins	UT	84738-6081	343
Iler	Richard	W.	320 Conway Circle, Apt 3407	Masonic Home	KY	40041-9510	345
Kalous	Paul	J.	3061 N County Rd K	Ornro	WI	54963	343
Laniga	Kenneth	G.	400 Parkside Dr, Rm 117	Zeeland	MI	49464	345
Mennell	Robert (Lt Col)	C.	750 Weaver Dairy Rd, Apt 5115	Chapel Hill	NC	27514-1448	345
Murray	John	E.	10000 Rhineland, Unit 218	San Antonio	TX	78239-3139	345
Seal	Kenneth	B.	399 E Los Rincones	Green Valley	AZ	85614-2908	343
Shea	Dr. Jeremiah	Y.	Fairview Odd Fellows Home of CT 235 Lestertown Road, Rm 114A	Groton	CT	06340	345
Smith	George	E.	Sterling House, Rm 112 1709 E Walnut Grove	Derby	KS	67037	344
Smith	Steven	R.	707 Catalpa Dr	Shreveport	LA	71115-3702	
Thomas	Roger		923 La Paloma Rd	Key Largo	FL	33037-4668	345
Anderson	Mrs. Rachel	J.	PO B0x 1010	Vinton	VA	24179-8010	Hon
Badaluco	Mrs. Betty		7151 Elmhurst	West Bloomfield	MI	48322-2613	Hon
Bihuniak	Theodore	D.	10100 Cypress Clove Dr, Apt 385	Fort Myers	FL	33908-7668	345
Braemer	Lucille	M.	1731 S 38th St, #10	Lincoln	NE	68506-5253	Hon
Briggs	Mrs. Dorothy		104 40th Ct	Vero Beach	FL	32968-2442	Hon
Garcia	Mrs. Jane		10695 W 17th Ave, Apt 252	Lakewood	CO	80215-6228	Hon
Guanu	Mrs. Shirley	M.	4 Lynwood Ln	Westford	MA	01886-1308	Hon
Himes	Mrs. Merle	D.	1177 Queen St, Apt 2905	Honolulu	HI	96814-4147	Hon
Hussey-Milligan	Mrs. Lucy	B.	3191 Astor Dr, #303	Prescott	AZ	86305-3743	Hon
Johnson	Mrs. Nanette		6170 A1A S, Unit 313	St Augustine	FL	32080-7539	Hon
Kidd	Mrs. Nancy		15050 E Becker Ln	Scottsdale	AZ	85259-4623	Hon
McCormick	Mrs. Mary	J.	PO Box 60131	Sacramento	CA	95860-0131	Hon
Opsata	Mr. Andrew	W.	929 Trosper Rd SW, Apt 227	Tumwater	WA	98512-6961	Hon
Park	Mrs. Lois	H.	4530 Lamar Ave, #40	Paris	TX	75462-5119	Hon
Tomerlin	Mrs. Jane	S.	14 Cedar Hill Rd	Longview	TX	75601-8700	Hon

## NEW MEMBER

LAST	FIRST	MI	ADDRESS 1	CITY	ST	ZIP	MEMBERSHIP
Schizak	David	A.	41815 Sheiloh Way	Hollywood	MD	20636	Associate

## DECEASED MEMBERS

LAST	FIRST	M.I.	ADDRESS 1	CITY	ST	ZIP	SQD	DOD
Asher	John	G.	15 Schwartz Dr	Ottuma	IA	52501	343	4/10/13
Kemp	Kenneth	L.					345	6/28/2011
Nicholson	Amos	E.	1543 West Downer Place	Aurora	IL	60506-4653	343	10/6/2012
Arnold	Edison (Pete) Col	F.	1320 S Miller St, Apt 113	Wenatchee	WA	98801-4201	345	10/23/2012
Lassiter	Newton	D.	830 Marimba	El Paso	TX	79912	415	1/6/2013
Measley	Donald (Maj)	W.	214 Salida del Sol	Santa Barbara	CA	93109-2020	415	
Mergen	Donald	E.	128 South 10th Street	Salina	KS	67401-2543	345	8/21/2006
Osgood	John	C.	6832 Fairfield Ave	Boise	ID	83709-2018	344	12/4/2012
Pettit	Donald	F.	4111 Hollenbeck Rd	Columbiaville	MI	48421-9323	415	4/19/2011
Terry	Edsel	B.	7704 Guess Road	Hillsborough	NC	27278-7132	415	12/29/2011
Diehl	Mrs. June		308 W 6th St	Milledgeville	IL	61051-9120	Hon	5/24/2012
Rockwood	Mrs. Virginia	E.	1436 SW Greens Pointe Way	Palm City	FL	34990-7778	Hon	
Yamnitz	Mrs. Grace	J.	2122 PCR 936	Perryville	MO	63775-7398	Hon	1/4/2013
Mayfield	Mrs. Mary		PO Box 339	Taylorville	MS	39168-0339	Hon	1/9/2013
Lenker	Mrs. Kathryn	M.	879 Hickory Ln	Middletown	PA	17057-4521	Hon	11/ /2012

## Message from the Secretary

Spring 2013 has arrived (?) and here we are already getting ready for the May issue! I only wish the weather in Michigan reflected that — we had freezing rain this morning! So far, the only good thing about it being spring, is that it means we are that much closer to the Charleston Reunion and the chance to be together again! I think you'll all agree that it looks like Dennis and Bill have once again done a great job at setting up a wonderful schedule of activities for us. If you haven't seen Charleston, it's not to be missed! Hopefully, we can make this a record turnout, so get your reservations in early.

One of the best parts about being secretary is hearing from so many of you that I haven't yet had the opportunity to meet. I very much enjoy the little notes and letters you send, information you share, and every once in a while I get a call and the chance to chat. I recently had the pleasure of speaking with Charles Durgin, of Plymouth, New Hampshire. Charles is a proud 98th man, 415th Squadron, and at 91 years young

it was a delight to hear him talk about places where my Dad was! Thank you for your service, Mr. Durgin! (Get your daughter to bring you to Charleston!)

A favorite person of mine to talk with is Bill Seitz, (Hillsboro, Oregon) 344th Squadron, who is faithful about staying in touch with other members and their family members; and sharing his experiences. A B-24 pilot, he has authored articles for our newsletter and is a wealth of information. I urge you, too, to please write down or record your stories and share them with your families. One of my greatest regrets is not having my Dad do that for our family.

Lastly a Reminder — the Association's new year begins July 1, and it will be time to pay the \$15 membership dues. Contact me if you have any questions regarding your status — you don't want to miss a single copy of *The Pyramidiers!* I think we forget sometimes what a first class publication we have. I have yet to see any that compare. A big thank-you to all who make this possible! . . . *Susie*

# The Doolittle Raider Who Shunned

Now, he's flying with the angels. Tom Griffin, one of just five surviving Doolittle Raiders, died Tuesday (February 26, 2013) in his sleep at the Fort Thomas VA nursing home.

He navigated one of the 16 B-25 bombers from an aircraft carrier in the middle of the Pacific to launch a surprise daylight attack on Tokyo, lifting American morale.

The longtime Green Township resident was 96.

By his own count, Mr. Griffin cheated death eight times during World War II. The first time was when he took off in a land-based bomber from the deck of the USS Hornet at 9 a.m. April 18, 1942. The mid-ocean takeoff made history. No land-based bomber had ever taken off from an aircraft carrier in combat. The Raiders made history later that day when they bombed Tokyo in partial payback for Japan's December 7, 1941, surprise attack on Pearl Harbor.

Mr. Griffin's plane, which he named the Whirling Dervish, knocked the lights out in Tokyo. The Whirling Dervish's bombs flattened the Tokyo Gas and Electric plant.

After spending months and traveling thousands of miles behind enemy lines, he returned home — "they gave us three weeks off" — only to be sent on bombing runs from North Africa to Europe. He was shot down and taken prisoner on July 4, 1943, after a mission over Sicily. He was freed nearly two years later.

"What a life I've had," said Tom Griffin this past November. At right, he holds a photo of the crew of Hell's Cargo.

"Spending the last 22 months of the war in German prison camp was no fun," Mr. Griffin recalled. His last day in camp was supposed to be his last day on Earth. The Germans had planned to execute all of the prisoners of war on April 30, 1945. But on that day, the camp was liberated by American Troops.

"That was a glorious day," Mr. Griffin recalled. "I never saw the sun shining so brightly."

The ranks of the Doolittle Raiders once numbered 80. (67 survived the war) Mr. Griffin's passing leaves just four survivors: Dick Cole (a Dayton native and the copilot of Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, the leader of the raid and its namesake), Robert Hite (Nashville, Tennessee), Edward Saylor (Puyallup, Washington), and David Thatcher (Missoula, Montana).

The remaining Raiders will have their 71st reunion April 17-21 in Fort Walton Beach, Florida, where Mr.

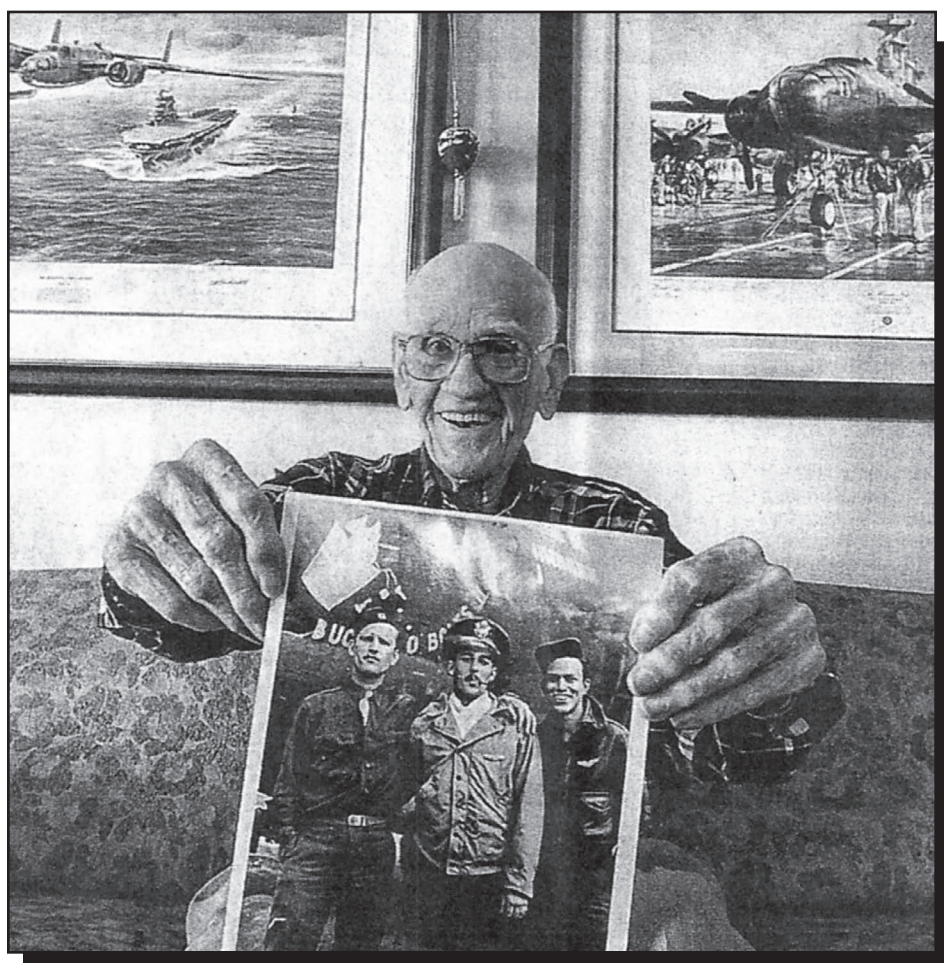


Photo: Glenn Hartong, *Cincinnati Enquirer*

# The Title 'Hero' Dies at 96.

Griffin's passing will be noted with a toast and the words: "To those who have gone." He had hoped to attend the event.

"I had planned to live to be 100," Mr. Griffin said during an interview just after a heart condition landed the retired accountant in the Fort Thomas facility in late November. "But the way I feel with my ticker, I might have to eat my own words." He said with a satisfied smile.

"What a life I've had," Mr. Griffin added, leaning back in an easy chair his sons had installed in his room. "It's a great old life if you get a good design for living and you can come up at my age and say: 'Well, I didn't do too badly.'"

In anyone's book, he did quite well, as a GI, a husband and a dad.

After the war, Mr. Griffin, a native of Green Bay, Wisconsin, moved to Cincinnati with his wife Esther. They raised two sons, John and Gary, and he opened an accounting office in Cheviot. His tall, lanky frame was regularly seen walking from his office to the nearby post office.

Mr. Griffin kept quiet about his time as a Doolittle Raider. That ended in 1977. When his son, Gary was hired to play keyboards with the Beach Boys, the musician told an interviewer, "You should be talking to my dad. He's more important. He's a Doolittle Raider."

With that, Tom Griffin's secret was out. For the next 35 years, he went to schools and hospitals and community groups to tell his stories.

He did not talk about his heroics as a husband. When his wife became ill and needed to go into a nursing home, he visited her every day. He walked from his house to the nursing home, fed his wife and at the end of the day brought home her clothes.

At night, he washed and ironed her clothes. Then, he walked them up to her room the next morning. He did that for three years until her death in 2005.

During his years as a public speaker, Mr. Griffin was regularly introduced as a "hero."

Every time he heard that word, he would wince, shake his head and humbly decline the title.

"I'm no hero," he said one last time in November in his hospital room.

"I just did my job as best I could."

## Epilogue:

The Doolittle Raiders held their last reunion on April 17-21 in Fort Walton Beach, Florida. Of the 80 men who flew the raid on Japan from the deck of the USS Hornet on April 18, 1942, 67 survived the war, and four were in attendance at this last reunion: Lt. Col. Richard Cole, the oldest at 97; Lt. Col. Robert Hite; Lt. Col. Edward Saylor; and Master Sgt. David Thatcher.

The Raider's historian, Tom Casey, said that the Raiders had conducted a special private ceremony at each of their prior seventy reunions to honor their departed comrades and had planned to continue until there were only two survivors to have their last toast. However, in view of the advancing ages of the four remaining Raiders, it was decided to have the final toast at the 71st and final reunion this year.

The private ceremony will include only the four Raiders, the Raider historian, Casey and two Air Force cadets. There will be a roll call of the names of all the Raiders. When Tom Griffin's name is called, Richard Cole will give a report on Griffin. At the end of the reading of names, the white-gloved cadets will pour cognac into the goblets of the survivors, and they will drink their special toast: "To those who have gone."

With those simple, but elegant words, the Raiders will enter the final chapter of their long and distinguished history. In many ways their passing will mark the end of an era unparalleled in the lives of man. An era that should never be forgotten.

# Lucky Number 13

My name is Edgar McElroy. My friends call me “Mac.” I was born and raised in Ennis, Texas the youngest of five children of Harry and Jennie McElroy. Folks say that I was the quiet one. We lived at 609 North Dallas Street and attended the Presbyterian Church.

My Dad had an auto mechanic’s shop downtown close to the main fire station. My family was a hard-working bunch, and I was expected to work at the garage after school and on Saturdays, so I grew up in an atmosphere of machinery, oil and grease. Occasionally I would hear a lone plane fly over and would run out to the street and strain my eyes against the sun to watch it. Someday, that would be me up there!

I really liked cars and I was always busy on some project and it wasn’t very long before I decided to build my very own Model-T from spare parts. I got an engine from over here, a frame from over there, and wheels from someplace else, using only the good parts from old cars that were otherwise shot. It wasn’t very pretty, but it was all mine. I enjoyed driving on the dirt roads around town and the feeling of freedom and speed. That car of mine could really go fast, 40 miles per hour!

In high school I played football and tennis, and was good enough at football to receive an athletic scholarship from Trinity University at Waxahachie. I have to admit that sometimes I daydreamed in class, and oftentimes I thought about flying my own airplane and being up there in the clouds. This is when I decided to take a correspondence course in aircraft engines.

Whenever I got the chance, I would take my girl on a date up to Love Field in Dallas. We would watch the airplanes and listen to those mighty engines roar. I just loved it and if she didn’t, well that was just too bad.

After my schooling, I operated a filling station with my brother, then drove a bus, and later had a job as a machinist in Longview, but I never lost my love of airplanes and my dream of flying. With what was going on in Europe and in Asia, I figured that the country

would be drawn into the war someday, so I decided to join the Army Air Corps in November 1940. This way I could follow my dream.

I reported to primary training in California. The training was rigorous and frustrating at times. We trained at airfields all over California. It was rough going and many of the guys washed out. When I finally saw that I was going to make it, I wrote to my girl back in Longview, Texas. Her name is Agnes Gill. I asked her to come to California for my graduation. And oh yeah, I asked her to marry me. I graduated on July 11, 1941. I was now a real, honest-to-goodness Army Air Corps pilot. Two days later, I married “Aggie” in Reno, Nevada.

We were starting a new life together and were very happy. I received my orders to report to Pendleton, Oregon and join the 17th Bomb Group. Neither of us had traveled much before and the drive north through the Cascade Range of the Sierra Nevada was interesting and beautiful.

It was an exciting time for us. My unit was the first to receive the new B-25 medium bomber. When I saw it for the first time I was in awe. It looked so huge. It was so sleek and powerful. The guys started calling it the “rocket plane” and I could hardly wait to get my hands on it. I told Aggie that it was really something! Reminded me of a big old scorpion, just ready to sting! Man, I could hardly wait.

We were transferred to another airfield in Washington State where we spent a lot of time flying practice missions and attacking imaginary targets. Then there were other assignments in Mississippi and Georgia for more maneuvers and more practice missions.

We were on our way back to California on December 7th when we got word of a Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. We listened with mixed emotions to announcements on the radio and, next day, to the declaration of war. What the President said, it just rang over and over in my head, “With complete faith in our armed forces,

with the un-bounding determination of our people, we will gain the inevitable triumph. So help us God.” By gosh, I felt as if he was talking straight to me! I didn’t know what would happen to us, but we all knew that we would be going somewhere now.

The first few weeks of the war, we were back in Oregon flying patrol at sea—looking for possible Japanese submarines. We had to get up at 0330 hours to warm the engines of our planes. There were 18 inches of snow on the ground, and it was so cold that the engine oil congealed overnight. We place big tarps over the engines that reached down to the ground. Inside this tent we put plumbers’ blow torches to thaw out the engines. I figured my Dad would be proud of me, if he could see me inside with all this machinery, oil and grease. After about an hour of this, the engines were warm enough to start.

We flew patrols over the coasts of Oregon and Washington from dawn until dusk. Once I thought I spotted a sub and started a bomb run, even had my bomb doors open, but I pulled out of it when I realized that it was just a big whale.

Lucky for me, I would have never heard the end of that!

Actually it was lucky for us that the Japanese didn’t attack the west coast, because we didn’t have a strong enough force to beat them off. Our country was in a real fix now, and overall things looked pretty bleak to most folks. In early February, we were ordered to report to Columbus, South Carolina. Man, this Air Corps sure moves a fellow around a lot! Little did I know what was coming next!

**After we got settled in Columbus,** my squadron commander called us all together. He told us that an awfully hazardous mission was being planned, and then he asked for volunteers. There were some of the guys that did not step forward, but I was one of the ones that did. My co-pilot was shocked. He said, “You can’t volunteer, Mac! You’re married and you and Aggie are expecting a baby soon. Don’t do it!” I told him that I got into the Air Force to do what I can

and Aggie understands how I feel. The war won’t be easy for any of us.

We that volunteered were transferred to Eglin Field near Valparaiso, Florida in late February. When we all got together, there were about 140 of us volunteers and we were told we were now part of the “Special B-25 Project.”

We set about our training, but none of us knew what it was all about. We were ordered not to talk about it, not even to our wives. In early March, we were all called in for a briefing, and we gathered together in a big building there on the base. Someone said the fellow who was the head of this thing is coming to talk to us and in walks Lieutenant Colonel Jimmy Doolittle. He was already an aviation legend, and there he stood right in front of us. I was truly amazed just to meet him.

Colonel Doolittle explained that this mission would be extremely dangerous, and that only volunteers could take part. He said that he could not tell us where we were going, but that some of us would not be coming back. There was a silent pause; you could have heard a pin drop. Then Doolittle said that anyone of us could withdraw now and no one would criticize us for this decision. No one backed out! From the outset, all volunteers worked from the early morning until well after sunset. All excess weight was stripped from the planes and extra gas tanks were added. The lower gun turret was removed, the heavy liaison radio was removed, and then the tail guns were taken out and more gas tanks were put aboard to extend the range of the plane from 1000 miles out to 2500 miles.

Then I was assigned my crew. There was Richard Knobloch the co-pilot, Clayton Campbell the navigator, Robert Bourgeois bombardier, Adam Williams the flight engineer and gunner, and me, Mac McElroy, the pilot. Over the coming days I came to respect them a lot. They were a swell bunch of guys, just regular All-American boys.

We got a few ideas from the training as to what type of mission that we had signed on for. A Navy pilot had joined our group to coach us about short takeoffs and

also in shipboard etiquette. We began our short takeoff practice taking off with first a lighter load, then a normal load, and finally overloaded up to 31,000 lbs.

The shortest possible take-off was obtained with flaps full down, stabilizer set three-fourths tail heavy, full power against the brakes and release the brakes as the engines revved up to max power. We pulled back gradually on the stick and the airplane left the ground with the tail about one foot from the runway. It was a very unnatural and scary way to get airborne! I could hardly believe it myself, the first time I took off with a full gas load and dummy bombs within 700 feet of runway in a near stall condition. We were, for all practical purposes, a slow flying gasoline tank.

In addition to take-off practice, we refined our skills in day and night navigation, gunnery, and low-level flying. We flew cross-country flights at treetop level, night flights over the Gulf of Mexico without the use of radios. When we started the short-field takeoff routine, we had some pretty fancy competition between the crews.

I think one of the crews got it down to about 300 feet on a hot day. We were told that only the best crews would actually go on the mission, and the rest would be held in reserve. One crew did stall on takeoff, slipped back to the ground, busting up their landing gear. They were eliminated from the group. Doolittle emphasized again and again the extreme danger of this operation and made it clear that anyone of us who so desired could drop out without any questions asked.

On one of our cross-country flights we landed at Barksdale Field in Shreveport, and I was able to catch a bus over to Longview to see Aggie. We visited a few hours together and then we had to say our goodbyes. I told her I hoped to be back in time for the baby's birth, but I couldn't tell her where I was going. As I walked away, I turned and walked backwards for a ways, taking one last look at my beautiful pregnant Aggie.

Within a few days of returning to our base in Florida we were abruptly told to pack our things. After just three weeks of practice we were on our way. This was it. It was time to go. It was in the middle of March 1942 and I was 30 years old. Our orders were to McClelland Air Base in Sacramento, California on our own, at the

lowest possible level. So here we went on our way west scraping the treetops at 160 miles per hour, and shimmying along just 50 feet above plowed fields. We crossed North Texas, then the panhandle, scaring the dickens out of livestock, buzzing farmhouses and many a barn along the way.

Over the Rocky Mountains and across the Mojave Desert dodging thunderstorms, we enjoyed the flight immensely and, although tempted, I didn't do much daredevil stuff. We didn't know it at the time, but it was good practice for what lay ahead of us. It proved to be our last fling. Once we arrived at Sacramento, the mechanics went over our plane with a fine-tooth comb. Of the twenty-two planes that made it, only those whose pilots reported no mechanical problems were allowed to go on. The others were shunted aside.

**After having our plane serviced,** we flew on to Alameda Naval Air Station in Oakland. As we came in for final approach, I excitedly called the rest of the crew to take a look. There below us was a huge aircraft carrier. It was the USS Hornet, and so gigantic! Man, I had never seen a carrier until this moment.

There were already two B-25s parked on the flight deck. Now we knew! My heart was racing, and I thought about how puny my plane would look aboard this mighty ship. As soon as we landed and taxied off the runway, a jeep pulled in front of me with a big "Follow Me" sign on the back. We followed it straight up to the wharf, alongside the towering Hornet. All five of us were looking up just in awe, scarcely believing the size of this thing. As we left the plane, there was already a Navy work crew swarming around attaching cables to the lifting rings on top of the wings and fuselage. As we walked towards our quarters, I looked back at them lifting my plane up into the air and swinging it over the ship's deck. It looked so small and lonely.

Later that afternoon, all crews met with Colonel Doolittle and he gave last minute assignments. He told me to go to the Presidio and pickup two extra cases of "C" rations. I saluted, turned and left—not having any idea where the Presidio was and not exactly sure what a "C" ration was.

I commandeered a Navy staff car and told the driver to take me to the Presidio, and he did. On the way over, I realized that I had no written orders and that this might get a little sticky. So I walked into the Army supply depot and made my request, trying to look poised and confident. The officer asked, "What is your authorization for this request, sir?" I told him I could not give him one. "And what is the destination?" he asked. I answered, "The aircraft, Hornet, docked at Alameda." He said, "Can you tell me who ordered the rations, sir?" And I replied with a smile, "I cannot." The supply officers huddled together, talking and glanced back towards me. Then he walked over and assured me that the rations would be delivered this afternoon. Guess they figured that something big was up. They were right. The next morning we all boarded the ship.

Trying to remember my naval etiquette, I saluted the Officer of the Deck and said, "Lt. McElroy, requesting permission to come aboard." The officer returned the salute and said, "Permission granted." Then I turned left and saluted the flag. I made it without messing up. It was April 2 and, in full sunlight, we left San Francisco Bay. The whole task force of ships, two cruisers, four destroyers, and a fleet oiler, moved slowly with us under the Golden Gate Bridge. Thousands of people looked on. Many stopped their cars on the bridge and waved to us as we passed underneath. I thought to myself, I hope there aren't any spies up there waving.

Once at sea, Doolittle called us together. "Only a few of you know our destination and you others have guessed about various targets. Gentlemen, our target is Japan." A sudden cheer exploded among the men. "Specifically, Yokohama, Tokyo, Nagoya, Kobe, Nagasaki and Osaka." The Navy will get us as close as possible and we'll launch our planes. We will hit our targets and proceed to air fields in China." After the cheering stopped, he asked again, if any of us desired to back out, no questions asked. No one did, not one.

Then the ship's Captain went over the intercom to the whole ship's company. The loudspeaker blared, "The destination is Tokyo!" A tremendous cheer broke out from everyone on board. I could hear metal banging together and wild screams from down below decks. It was quite a rush! I felt great actually. We finally knew where we were going.

I set up quarters with two Navy pilots, putting my cot between their two bunks. They couldn't get out of bed without stepping on it. It was just fairly cozy in there, yes it was. Those guys were part of Torpedo Squadron Eight and were just swell fellows. The rest of the guys bedded down in a similar fashion to me, some had to sleep on bedrolls in the Admiral's chart room. As big as the ship was, there wasn't any extra room anywhere. Every square foot had a purpose. A few days later we discovered where they had the ice cream machine!

There were sixteen B-25s tied down on the flight deck, and I was flying number 13. All the carrier's fighter planes were stored away helplessly on the hanger deck. They couldn't be moved until we were gone. Our Army mechanics were all on board, as well as our munitions loaders and several backup crews, in case any of us got sick or backed out. We settled into a daily routine of checking our planes. The aircraft were grouped so closely together on deck that it wouldn't take much for them to get damaged. Knowing that my life depended on this plane, I kept a close eye on her.

**Day after day,** we met with the intelligence officer and studied our mission plan. Our targets were assigned, and maps and objective folders were made for study. We went over approach routes and our escape route towards China. I never studied this hard back at Trinity. Every day at dawn the ship was called to general quarters and we practiced finding the quickest way to our planes. If at any point along the way, we were discovered by an enemy fleet, we were to launch our bombers immediately so the Hornet could bring up her fighters planes. We would be on our own, and try to fly to the nearest land, either Midway or Hawaii.

Dr. Thomas White, a volunteer member of plane number 15, went over our medical records and gave us inoculations for a whole bunch of diseases that hopefully I wouldn't catch. He gave us training in emergency first aid and lectured us at length about water purification and such. Tom, the doctor, had learned how to be a gunner just so he could go on this mission. We put some new tail guns in place of the ones that had been taken out to cut weight. Not exactly functional, they were two broom sticks, painted black.

The thinking was they might help scare any Jap fighter planes. Maybe not.

On Sunday April 14, we met up with Admiral Bull Halsey's task force just out of Hawaii and joined into one big force. The Enterprise was now with us, another two heavy cruisers, four more destroyers and another oiler. We were now designated as Task Force 16. It was quite an impressive sight to see, and represented the bulk of what was left of the U.S. Navy after the devastation of Pearl Harbor. There were over 10,000 Navy personnel sailing into harm's way, just to deliver us sixteen Army planes to bomb the Japs, by order of the President.

As we steamed further west, tension was rising as we drew nearer and nearer to Japan. Someone thought of arming us with old .45 pistols that they had on board. I went through that box of 1911 pistols, they were in such bad condition that I took some of them apart, using the good parts from several useless guns until I built a serviceable weapon. Several of the other pilots did the same. Admiring my "new" pistol, I held it up and thought of my old Model-T.

Colonel Doolittle called us together on the flight deck. We all gathered around, as well as many Navy personnel. He pulled out a medal and told us how these friendship medals from the Japanese government had been given to some of our Navy officers several years back. And now the Secretary of the Navy had requested us to return them. Doolittle wired them to a bomb and we all posed for pictures. Something to cheer up the folks back home.

I began to pack my things for the flight, scheduled for the 19th. I packed some extra clothes and a little brown bag that Aggie had given me, inside were some toilet items and a few candy bars. No letters or identity cards were allowed, only our dog tags. I went down to the wardroom to have some ice cream and settle up my mess bill. It only amounted to \$5 a day and with my per diem of \$6 per day, I came out a little ahead. By now, my Navy pilot roommates were about ready to get rid of me, but I enjoyed being with them. They were alright. Later on, I learned that both of them were killed at the Battle of Midway. They were good men, very good men.

Colonel Doolittle let each crew pick its target. We chose the Yokosuka Naval Base about twenty miles from Tokyo. We loaded 1450 rounds of ammo and four 500 pound bombs. A little payback direct from Ellis County, Texas. We checked over our plane several times. Everything was now ready. I felt relaxed, yet tensed up at the same time. Day after tomorrow we will launch when we are 400 miles out. I lay in my cot that night and rehearsed the mission over and over in my head. It was very hard to sleep as I listened to sounds of the ship.

**Early next morning,** I was enjoying a leisurely breakfast, expecting another full day on board, and I noticed that the ship was pitching and rolling quite a bit this morning, more than normal. I was reading through the April 18th day plan of the Hornet and there was a message that said, "From Hornet to the Army—good hunting and God bless you." I still get a lump in my throat from reading this. All of a sudden, the intercom blared, "General quarters, general quarters. All hands man your battle stations! Army pilots man your planes!!" There was an instant reaction from everyone in the room and trays went crashing to the floor. I ran down to my room jumping through hatches along the way, grabbed my bag, and ran as fast as I could to the flight deck. I met my crew at the plane, my heart was pounding. Someone said, "What's going on?" The word was that the Enterprise had spotted an enemy trawler. It had been sunk, but it had transmitted radio messages. We had been found out!

The weather was crummy, the seas were running heavy, and the ship was pitching up and down like I had never seen before. Great waves were crashing against the bow and washing over the front of the deck. This wasn't going to be easy! Last minute instructions were given. We were reminded to avoid non-military targets, especially the Emperor's Palace. Do not fly into Russia, but fly as far west as possible, land on the water and launch your rubber raft. This was going to be a one way trip! We were much too far out and we all knew that our chances of making China were somewhere between slim and none. Then at the last minute, each plane was loaded with an extra 10 five-gallon gas cans to give us a fighting chance of reaching China.

We all climbed aboard and started engines and warmed them up, just feet away from the plane in front of us and the plane behind us. Knobby, Campbell, Bourgeois and me in front, Williams, the gunner, in the back, separated from us by a big gas tank. I called back to Williams on the intercom and told him to look sharp and don't take a nap! He answered dryly, "Don't worry about me, Lieutenant, if they jump us, I'll use my little black broomsticks to keep the Japs off our tail."

The ship headed into the wind and picked up speed. There was now a near gale force wind and sea spray was coming straight down the deck. I looked down at my instruments as my engines revved up. My mind was racing. I went over my mental checklist, and said a prayer. "God, please help us." Past the twelve planes in front of us, I strained to see the flight deck officer as he leaned into the wind and signaled with his arms for Colonel Doolittle to come to full power. I looked over at Knobby and we looked each other in the eye. He just nodded to me and we both understood

With the deck heaving up and down, the deck officer had to time this just right. Then I saw him wave Doolittle to go, and we watched breathlessly to see what happened. When his plane pulled up above the deck, Knobby just let out with, "Yes, yes!" The second plane, piloted by Lt. Hoover, appeared to stall with its nose up in the air and began falling toward the waves. We groaned out, "Up! Up! Pull up!"

Finally, he pulled out of it, staggering back into the air, much to our relief! One by one, the planes in front of us took off. The deck pitched 25 feet or more, it looked like. One plane seemed to drop down into the drink and disappeared for a moment, then pulled back up into sight.

There was a sense of relief with each one that made it. We gunned our engines and started to roll forward. Off to the right, I saw the men on deck standing and waving their covers. We continued inching forward, careful to keep my left main wheel on the white guide lines that had been painted on the deck for us. Get a off a little bit too far left and we go off the edge of the deck. A little too far right and our wing-tip will smash into the island of the ship.

**With the best seat on the ship,** we watched Lt. Bower take off in plane number 12 and I taxied up to the starting line, put on the brakes and looked to my left. My main wheel was right on the line. I applied more power to the engines, and I turned my complete attention to the deck officer on my left who was circling his paddles. Now my adrenaline was really pumping! I went to full power, and the noise and vibration inside the plane went way up.

He circled the paddles furiously while watching the pitch of the deck. Then he dropped them, and I said, "Here we go!" I released brakes and we started rolling forward, and as I looked down the flight-deck you could see straight down into the angry churning water. As we slowly gained speed, the deck gradually began to pitch back up. I pulled up, and our plane slowly strained up and away from the ship. There was a big cheer from the crew, but I just felt relieved and muttered to myself, "Boy, that was short!"

We made a wide circle above our fleet to check our compass headings and get our bearings. I looked down as we passed over one of our cruisers and could see the men on the deck waving to us. I dropped down to low level, so low we could see the white waves breaking. It was just after 0900, there were broken clouds at 5,000 feet and visibility of about three miles due to haze. Up ahead and barely in sight, I could see Captain Greening, our flight leader and Bower on his right wing. Flying at 165 mph, I was able to catch up to them in about 30 minutes. We were to stay in this formation until reaching landfall, and then go our separate ways. Now we settled in for the five hour flight. Tokyo, here we come!

Williams was in the back emptying the extra gas cans into the gas tank as fast as we burned off enough fuel. He then punched holes in the tins and pushed them out the hatch against the wind. Some of the fellows ate sandwiches and other goodies the Navy had put aboard for us. I wasn't hungry. I held onto the controls with a firm grip as we raced along westward just fifty feet above the cold rolling ocean, as low as I dared to fly. Being so close to the choppy waves gave you a true sense of speed. Occasionally, our windshield was even sprayed with a little saltwater. It was an exhilarating

feeling, and I felt as though the spirit of our whole country was pushing us along. I didn't feel scared, just anxious. There was a lot riding on this thing and me.

As we neared land, we saw an occasional ship here and there. None of them close enough to be threatening, but just the same, we were feeling more edgy. Then at 1330 we sighted land, the Eastern shore of Honshu. With Williams now in his top turret and Campbell on the nose gun, we came ashore still flying as low as possible and were surprised to see people on the ground waving to us as we flew over the farmland. It was beautiful countryside.

Campbell our navigator, said, "Mac I think we are going to be about sixty miles too far north. I'm not positive, but pretty sure." I decided he was absolutely right and turned left ninety degrees, and went back just offshore and followed the coast line south. When I thought we had gone far enough, I climbed up two thousand feet to find out where we were. We started getting shot at by anti-aircraft guns. Then we spotted Tokyo Bay, I turned west and put our nose down diving toward the water. Once over the bay, I could see our target, Yokosuka Naval Base. Off to the right there was already smoke visible over Tokyo. Coming in low over the water, I increased speed to 200 mph and told everyone to get ready.

**When we were close enough,** I pulled up to 1300 feet and opened the bomb bay doors. There were furious black bursts of anti-aircraft fire all around us, but I flew straight through them, spotting our target, the torpedo works and dry-docks. I saw a big ship in dry-dock just as we flew over it. Those flak bursts were really getting close and bouncing us around, when I heard Bourgeois shouting, "Bombs away!"

I couldn't see it, but Williams had a bird's eye view from the back and he shouted jubilantly, "We got an aircraft carrier! The whole dock is burning." I started turning to the south and strained my neck to look back and at that moment saw a large crane blow up and start falling over.

Take that! There was loud yelling and clapping each other on the back. We were just ecstatic, and still alive! But there wasn't much time to cheer. We had to get out

of here and fast! When we were some thirty miles out to sea, we took one last look back at our target, and could still see huge clouds of black smoke. Up to now, we had been flying for Uncle Sam, but now we were flying for ourselves.

We flew south over the open ocean, parallel to the Japanese coast all afternoon. We saw a large submarine apparently at rest, and then, in another fifteen miles, we spotted three large enemy cruisers headed for Japan. There were no more bombs, so we skirted them and kept on going. By late afternoon, Campbell calculated that it was time to turn and make for China. Across the China Sea, the weather out ahead of us looked bad and overcast. Up until now we had not had time to think much about our gasoline supply, but the math did not look good. We just didn't have enough fuel to make it.

Each man took turns cranking the little hand radio to see if we could pick up the promised radio beacon. There was no signal. That was not good. The weather turned bad and it was getting dark, so we climbed up. I was now flying on instruments, through misty rain. Just when it really looked hopeless of reaching land, we suddenly picked up a strong tail wind. It was an answer to our prayer. Maybe, just maybe, we can make it!

In total darkness at 2100 hours, we figured that we must be crossing the coastline, so I began a slow climb to be sure of not hitting any high ground or anything. I conserved as much fuel as I could, getting real low on gas now. The guys were still cranking on the radio, but after five hours of hand cranking with aching hands and backs, there was utter silence. No radio beacon! A red light started blinking, indicating twenty minutes of fuel left.

We started to get ready to bail out. I turned the controls over to Knobby and crawled to the back of the plane, past the now collapsed rubber gas tank, I dumped everything out of my bag and repacked just what I really needed, my .45 pistol, ammunition, flashlight, compass, medical kit, fishing tackle, chocolate bars, peanut butter and crackers. I told Williams to come forward with me so we could all be together for this. There was no other choice other than to get as far west as we could, and then jump.

At 2230 we were up to sixty-five hundred feet. We were over land but still above the Japanese Army in China. We couldn't see stars, so Campbell couldn't get a good fix on our position. We were flying on fumes now and I didn't want to run out of gas before we were ready to go. Each man filled his canteen, put on his Mae West life jacket and parachute, and filled his bag with those "C" rations from the Presidio.

I put her on auto-pilot and we all gathered in the navigator's compartment around the hatch in the floor. We checked each other's parachute harness. Everyone was scared, without a doubt. None of us had ever done this before! I said, "Williams first, Bourgeois second, Campbell third, Knobby forth, and I'll follow you guys! Go fast, two seconds apart! Count three seconds and pull your rip-cord.

**We kicked open the hatch** and gathered around the hole looking down into the blackness. It did not look very inviting! Then I looked at Williams and gave the order, "Jump!" Within seconds they were all gone.

I turned and reached back for the auto-pilot, but could not reach it, so I pulled the throttles back, turned and jumped. Coming down quickly, thousand one. Thousand two, thousand three, I pulled my rip-cord and jerked back up with a terrific shock. At first I thought I was hung on the plane, but, in a few agonizing seconds that seem like hours, I realized I was free and drifting down.

Being in total darkness, I was disoriented at first but figured my feet must be pointed towards the ground. I looked down through the black mist to see what was coming up. It was a thick mist or fog, and the silence was so eerie after nearly thirteen hours inside that noisy airplane. I could only hear the loud whooshing sound of the wind blowing through my shroud lines and then I hear a loud crash and explosion. My plane!

Looking for my flashlight, I groped through my bag with my right hand, finally pulled it out and shined it down toward ground which I still could not see. Finally I picked up a glimmer of water and thought I was landing in a lake. We were too far inland for it to be the ocean. I hope! I relaxed my legs a little, thinking

I was about to splash into water and would have to swim out, and then I jolted suddenly and crashed over onto my side. Lying there in just a few inches of water, I raised my head and put my hand into thick mud. It was a rice paddy! There was a burning pain, as if someone had stuck a knife in my stomach. I must have torn something or broke something.

I laid there for a few minutes, and after awhile struggled to my feet. I dug a hole and buried my parachute in the paddy. Then I started trying to walk, holding my stomach. But every direction I moved, the water got deeper. Then I saw some lights in the distance. I fished around for my flashlight and signaled one time. Sensing something wrong, I got out my compass and to my horror saw that those lights were off to my west. That must be a Jap patrol! How dumb could I be! Knobby must be back to the east, so I sat still and quiet and did not move.

It was a cold dark lonely night. At 0100 hours I saw a light off to the east. I flashed my light in that direction, one time hoping it to be Knobby. I waited awhile, and then called out softly, "Knobby?" And a voice replied, "Mac is that you?" Thank goodness, what a relief! Separated by a wide stream, we sat on opposite banks of the water communicating in low voices. After daylight, Knobby found a small rowboat and came across to get me. We started walking east toward the rest of the crew and away from the Japanese patrol. Knobby had cut his hip when he went through the hatch, but it wasn't too bad.

We walked toward a small village and several Chinese came out to meet us, they seemed friendly enough. I said, "Hoo megwa fugi! Luchu hoo megwa fugi!" meaning, I am an American! I am an American! Later that morning we found the others. Williams had wrenched his knee when he landed in a tree, but he was limping along just fine. There were hugs all around. I have never been so glad to see four guys in my life!

Well, the five of us eventually made it out of China with the help of the local Chinese people and the Catholic missions along the way. They were very good to us, and later they were made to pay terribly for it, so we found out later. (*Editor's note: The Japanese massacred*

*continued, see Lucky 13, on page 15*

# Honor Those Who Bore the Burden

by Phil True, November 11, 2012

In early October, some 14 men, ages 86 to 93, gathered at a Philadelphia hotel. On their blue caps were the words “9th Bomb Group, Tinian Island, 1945” superimposed on a silver B-29. They came together again, joined by some 20 family members and friends, for one more reunion — probably their last.

For two days, the veterans toured Philadelphia and nearby Princeton. In the evening they retold their stories of what they saw and did some 67 years ago, reliving the time when they were very young, tanned and flying 14-hour missions to Japan and back. Reminders of days past were seen in photographs of planes and crews, in maps of the island and combat missions flown.

One pilot recalled that he had been ordered to shoot down a B-29 circling Iwo Jima — that volcanic hunk of rock and ash halfway between Japan and Tinian where more 2,000 B-29s, damaged or low on fuel, found safe haven during the last few months of the war.

The circling B-29, a danger to air traffic at Iwo, was empty — but strangely kept flying. Minutes earlier the entire crew, except for the pilot, who had been killed in the explosion that ripped off half the nose, had bailed out safely near the island. At the last minute, a nearby P-61 night fighter was given the task of shooting down the B-29, much to the relief of the B-29 pilot reluctant to shown down one of his own.

The reunion was a reminder of the relentless passage of time. Nearly 16 million men and women served in our armed forces during World War II. A scant 1.5 million remain today, their numbers shrinking daily by about 800.

In returning to civilian life in 1945-46, veterans were anxious to restart their lives. Many on the home front were puzzled that few returnees felt comfortable in talking about their wartime experiences, especially those who had been in combat.

Veterans found that only when they talked to other veterans, particularly those with whom they had served

and who also had seen combat, would talk about “the war” come easily.

Some kept in touch with those with whom they served. A few even met at times with their fellow comrades. Not until the 1970s, however, and particularly the 1980s when retirement gave more time, did veterans begin to organize and hold reunions.

For three or four days, they and family members would meet to take tours, to be entertained and most of all to enjoy one another’s company. It was also a somber time to remember the true heroes of the war, those who did not return to parents, wives and children.

Reunions stir memories. On November 11, 1918, the Great War (1914-18) — as it was then called — ended with the signing of an armistice. The war left 10 million dead and many more with shattered lives. Optimists had called it “the war to end all wars.”

No such optimism marked the end of World War II, despite the celebrations when Japan finally surrendered. The harvest of death, at least 60 million, was too recent, too destructive to be forgotten.

Soon afterward, conflict resumed in then-French Indochina, in the Middle East, in what was to become Indonesia, and in China. A Cold War followed, as the United States and the Soviet Union girded for future battle. And just four years after the end of World War II, the Korean War began — and a few of those who had served in World War II found themselves once more in combat.

To honor those who had paid the ultimate sacrifice in the first World War, President Woodrow Wilson in 1919 designated November 11 as Armistice Day. In 1954, President Dwight D. Eisenhower changed the name to Veterans Day as additional veterans were added to the nation’s honor roll. No end was in sight, however, to the list of those who had served their nation in war.

America soon found itself engaged in a long and exhausting war in Vietnam. A pause, then the brief Gulf War in 1991, followed by the much longer

and more costly wars in terms of lives and treasure in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Let Veterans Day be a time of solemn acknowledgement of the world’s inability to settle disputes and reach agreements. Wars have been thrust upon us, as at Pearl Harbor, or engaged in to repel aggression and provide military support to maintain world peace. But whatever the reason or cause of war, the results are the same: Those whom we ask to serve bear the burden of tragedy and trauma, of death and of injuries both physical and emotional that continue long after the last shot is fired.

## Lucky 13

continued from page 13

*250,000 Chinese civilians in retaliation.*) For a couple of weeks we traveled across country. Strafed a couple of times by enemy planes, we kept on moving, by foot, by pony, by train and by airplane. But we finally made it to India.

I did not make it home in time for the baby’s birth. When I finally arrived in India, I stayed on flying a DC-3 “Gooney Bird” in the China-Burma Theater for the next several months. I flew supplies over the Himalaya Mountains or, as we called it, “Over the Hump” into China. I also flew combat missions over Burma, and then, later in the war, I flew a B-29 out of the Marianas Islands to bomb Japan again and again.

After the war, I remained in the Air Force until 1962, when I retired from the service as a Lt. Colonel, and then came back to Texas, my beautiful Texas. First moving to Abilene and then we settled in Lubbock, where my Aggie taught school at MacKinley Junior High. I worked at the S & R Auto Supply, once again in an atmosphere of machinery, oil and grease.

I lived a good life and raised two wonderful sons that I am very proud of. I feel blessed in many ways. We have a great country, better than most folks know. It is worth fighting for. Some people call me a hero, but I never thought of myself that way. But I did serve in the company of heroes. What we did will never leave me. It will always be there in my fondest memories,

Rest in peace, all those who lives were snuffed out in all our wars, regardless of cause. Let us also remember, in word and deed, those who survived and in particular those who came home with lasting injuries and never-ending memories. To them, we owe our gratitude and a heartfelt prayer for healing of mind and body.

*Phil True served as a B-29 navigator in World War II and flew a number of combat missions over Japan. He lives in Glen Allen and can be reached at [ptrue25@gmail.com](mailto:ptrue25@gmail.com).*

and I always think of the fine and brave men that I was privileged to serve with.

Remember us, for we were soldiers and young. With the loss of all aircraft, Doolittle believed that the raid had been a failure, and he would be court-martialed upon returning to the states. Quite to the contrary, that raid proved to be a tremendous boost to American morale, which had plunged following the Pearl Harbor attack. It also caused serious doubts in the minds of Japanese war planners. They in turn recalled many seasoned fighter units back to defend the home islands, which resulted in Japan’s weakened air capabilities at the up-coming Battle of Midway and other South Pacific campaigns.

*Edgar “Mac” McElroy, Lt. Col., USAF (Ret.) passed away at his residence in Lubbock, Texas, early on the morning of April 4, 2003.*

*This story has been around on the internet, and you may have seen it previously, but it is worth reading again. Mac McElroy was only one the eighty men who flew the “Doolittle Mission” which was not only a military success, but also provided a much needed “shot in the arm” for America. Their heroic accomplishments should remain in our memories for as long as American men and women fight to preserve our freedoms.*

*Submitted by: Bill Seals.*



# The Korean War:

On June 25, 1950, the North Koreans invaded South Korea, and concern about the spread of Communism reached a new peak in the United States. I was 20 years old at the time and was a sophomore at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Many of my classmates were worried about the likelihood that they would soon be drafted into the army and urgently sought student draft deferments. I was motivated to apply for the Air Force's Aviation Cadet Program, and I did, in August 1950.

Things don't happen as quickly as one might expect at the age of 20. I was first sent before a review board at Rantoul AFB in Illinois (with positive results). But, then, I had to wait until May of 1951 before I finally got orders to report to Greenville Air Force Base in Mississippi, as they say, "in the heart of the delta." Another recruit from Milwaukee accompanied me on the very long train ride from Milwaukee.

We thought we were rather smart—saving our meal tickets (that had been given to us for the very long trip) until we would arrive at our destination—thinking that food would be less expensive once we got off the train. But, when we finally arrived, we saw signs for



Pictured above: Joseph Seng . . . "We were given our navigation training in C-47s — called *Gooney Birds*."

"Catfish & Greens"—not a very appealing menu for two Yankees from the Midwest!

No, things don't happen as one might expect. I had applied for training as a navigator—but they needed pilots, so they sent me for flight training at Greenville Air Force Base. But even those plans failed. I injured my leg playing intramural football and had to spend three weeks recovering in a hospital in Selma, Alabama.

When I had recovered, I was schooled in navigation and combat crew training at Ellington AFB in Houston and also James Connolly Air Force Base in Waco, Texas. I received a commission as 2nd Lieutenant on September 10, 1952.

Meanwhile, the war in Korea was still going on.

I finally arrived overseas in July of 1953. In fact, our plane landed in Japan to the sounds and sights of fireworks in the sky. Yes, it was the *Fourth of July*! And I was so surprised that they would have fireworks there.

My assignment was as a radar navigator on a Boeing B-29 "Superfortress." Our unit was the 345th Bombing Squadron of the 98th Bomb Wing. Our first bombing



# My Story

By Joseph Seng



Joseph Seng is pictured in both photos shown here. The left-hand image is of a crew briefing in South Korea. Seng is holding a pipe.

mission over Korea was with an already experienced crew. After that, we were on our own.

We had a crew briefing before each combat mission, as shown above. I am pictured on the left (holding my pipe) and also on the right.

My assigned position on board the aircraft was in the rear area of the plane, aft of where the waist gunners were positioned. My equipment consisted of AN/APQ-13 radar for navigation—and also SHORAN equipment—which was used for short-range navigation and also for guidance in making bombing runs. On our second combat mission, I recall that we were making a bomb run on an enemy airfield close to the border between North Korea and South Korea. In particular, I recall seeing the Yalu River appear below on my radar screen as we made our sharp turn to head back to our home base in Japan.

I also well remember our plane being confronted by enemy MIG fighters. I was at a position where I could

see them heading straight toward us, and I was sure that we would be fired upon. I announced on our interphone: "Bandits at four o'clock, going from four to six!" But, to my surprise, they abruptly turned and fled.

After all the intensive training, all the briefings and pre-flight preparations—there suddenly was a cease-fire, and subsequently a truce was signed. We continued to maintain our readiness for many months, by flying training missions, for example, to the Philippines, before returning to the United States in April of 1954.

Later, it was my great pleasure to help welcome General Douglas MacArthur back home in a special parade for him in our hometown of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. As he once said, "Old soldiers never die; they just fade away."

Joseph F. Seng  
4308 Moxley Valley Drive  
Mt. Airy, MD 21771

# Reunion Schedule • September 15–19, 2013

## 98<sup>th</sup> Bomb Grp/Wing Veterans Association

*The Secretary/Treasurer will post registration times.*

**Hotel:** Sheraton Airport, 4770 Goer Dr., North Charleston, SC 29406  
Reservations: call 1 (888) 747-1900 • 98<sup>th</sup> Hotel Rate of \$100.00 Inc: Guaranteed until August 12<sup>th</sup>

- Day 1 Sunday September 15, 2013**  
6:00 PM Cash Bar  
6:30 PM Association Welcome Dinner
- Day 2 Monday September 16, 2013**  
9:30 AM USS Yorktown (\$14.50 P/P not included with tour) Golf Cart will be available from the Bus to the Carrier Elevator. Tour & Lunch at The Citadel
- Day 3 Tuesday September 17, 2013**  
9:30 AM Tour Charleston — Free Day  
“Hotel Shuttle to Historic Old Town”
- Day 4 Wednesday September 18, 2013**  
9:30 AM Joint Base Charleston (AFB)  
Tour & Lunch at the Club
- Day 5 Thursday September 19, 2013**  
9:30 AM Ladies Event  
9:30 AM Executive Board Meeting  
10:00 AM Association General Meeting  
6:30 PM Cash Bar  
7:00 PM Association Banquet

**Please** Any question or concern regarding the Charleston Reunion Contact:  
Dennis Posey Tel: (770) 971-3972 Email: dennis\_posey@att.net  
Bill Seals Tel: (281) 395-3805 Email: colbillyseals@hotmail.com

... See ya'll in Charleston ...

# Reunion Registration

## 98<sup>th</sup> Bomb Grp/Wing Veterans Association

**Registration Fee \$75.00**

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_  
Name as you would like it to appear on your name tag \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_  
City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Sqd \_\_\_\_\_ Years \_\_\_\_\_ A/C \_\_\_\_\_ Duty \_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse/Guest Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_  
Spouse/Guest Name as you would like it to appear on name tag \_\_\_\_\_  
Address if different \_\_\_\_\_

### Banquet Food Choice . . . Choose One (1) Plated Entré

#### # 1 *Steak & Chicken*

Grilled Sirloin Paired w/ Sautéed Chicken Topped w/ Lemon Dill Cream Sauce. Served with Creamy Garlic Whipped Mashed Potatoes and Fresh Vegetable Medley.

#### # 2 *Salmon & Chicken*

Broiled Salmon Paired w/ Sautéed Chicken Breast Topped with Lemon Dill Beurre Blanc. Served w/ Herb Rice Pilaf and Fresh Vegetable Medley.

#### # 3 *Steak & Salmon*

Grilled Sirloin paired w/ Broiled Salmon topped with Lemon Dill Cream Sauce. Served w/ Herb Rice Pilaf and Fresh Vegetable Medley.

Your Choice # \_\_\_\_\_ Guest Choice # \_\_\_\_\_

**Sept 15 Day 1** – 6:30 PM – Welcome Dinner

**Sept 16 Day 2** – 9:30 AM – Buses depart for The City, The Yorktown & The Citadel  
Tours with lunch at The Citadel \$32.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ Persons = \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Yorktown Carrier Tour \$14.50 x \_\_\_\_\_ Persons = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Sept 17 Day 3** – Free Day for touring Old Town Charlestown (Hotel Vans)

**Sept 18 Day 4** – 9:00 AM Buses Depart for Charleston Joint Base  
Tour with lunch at the Club \$32.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ Persons = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Sept 19 Day 4** – Bus departs for Ladies Event (Dress Real Nice)  
\$20.00 x \_\_\_\_\_ Persons = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Fee	\$75.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____
Scholarship Fund	(donation) \$ _____
Annual Dues	\$ _____
<b>Total</b>	\$ _____

Make checks payable to: **98<sup>th</sup> Bomb Grp/Wing Veterans Association**. Please return completed registration form & check to: Ms. Suzanne Miodusezski  
1137 Joyce Lane  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103



# CHARLESTON

## **98th Bomb Group Reunion**

September 15-19, 2013

*Schedule and Registration Information Inside*



### **Directions to Sheraton Hotel**

4770 Goer Dr., North Charleston, SC 29406

From the Airport; ask for directions or follow your GPS.

From I-26; Exit # 213 and there it is !!!

***The Pyramidiars*** is the newsletter of the  
98th Bomb Group/Wing Veterans Association.