



THE PYRAMIDIARS

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

May 2014

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Pieces of My Mind

Greetings to All,

You may accuse me of waving the flag after you have read a couple of articles I included in this issue of the newsletter. If you do, I must plead guilty. I do, however, have reasons for their inclusion as we approach Memorial Day at the end of this month. It occurred to me that perhaps this coming day of remembrance would assume additional meaning as it will be observed a few days before the seventieth anniversary of the allied invasion of Nazi held Europe—D-Day, and I felt that a bit of flag waving was in order.



As the allies gained a foothold on the French beaches that sixth day of June 1944, there wasn't any time to celebrate their success as tremendous battles lay ahead and tens of thousands of heroic men would make the ultimate sacrifice before final victory was achieved. One only has to view the American Cemeteries in Britain, France, The Netherlands, Italy and elsewhere to begin to understand the high price that America paid to rid the world of the Nazi horror.

Our armed forces have fought several wars to protect our national interests in the period since the final victory was won in August 1945. And while none of the wars threatened world civilization as the Axis powers did in World War II, thousands of our men and women were casualties of those conflicts and should never be forgotten. With these thoughts in mind, please join your fellow Americans as we remember those who fought and died to insure the freedoms we enjoy today.

On a lighter note, I have an offer you can't refuse. How would you like to spend a week with the officers and staff of our association with

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Pieces of My Mind

continued from front cover

unlimited one-on-one time with each one of them? This once-in-a-lifetime opportunity is available to you the third week of August in a unique setting with lots of interesting activities. There will be time to meet others who share some of the same experiences you have, and—as a bonus—you will enjoy good food and

a lot of laughs. All you have to do is attend our reunion in Rapid City from the 24th to 28th of August. The details are included in this newsletter.

With Warmest Regards to All,

Bill Seals

Address Changes

LAST	FIRST	M	ADDRESS	CITY	ST	ZIP	POSITION	AC	SQD
Heape	Robert	L.	8600 E Jackson Street Rd	Du Quoin	IL	62832	NG	B-24	343
Janco	John	A.	406 Sunset Dr	Belle Vernon	PA	15012	GP	B-24	343
Knight	Lyle Lt Col (ret)	F.	1617 W Temple Ln, Apt 4306	South Jordan	UT	84095	P	B-47	344
Peterson	Harold	E.	PO Box 31443	Edmond	OK	73003	N	B-24	344
Smith	Robert	L.	446 Kawaihae St, Apt 222	Honolulu	HI	96825	LM	B-29	344
Wright	Lyle	B.	17527 Little Mountain Place	Mt. Vernon	WA	98274	RO	B-24	415
Blisseck	Mrs. Lois		1400 County Road 3672	Springtown	TX	76082	Honorary	B-29	343
Garcia	Mrs. Jane		3151 S Wadsworth Blvd	Lakewood	CO	80227	Honorary	B-47	A&E
Havens II	Michael	D.	304 Lakeview Dr	Eutawville	SC	29048	Honorary	KC-97	ARS
Roe	Mrs. Earl		501 S Fillmore St	Papillion	NE	68046	Honorary	B-29	345
Syslo	Mrs. Virginia	E.	2855 40th Ave	Columbus	NE	68601	Honorary	B-24	344

Deceased

LAST	FIRST	M	ADDRESS	CITY	ST	ZIP	POSITION	AC	SQD	DOD
Chwastyk	Stephen		40 Burnt Mill Rd	Branchburg	NJ	08876	RO-G	B-24	345	06-30-2013
Coffey	Michael	R.	9730 Oakhaven Ct	Indianapolis	IN	46256	NG	B-24	415	04-10-2014
Maluy	Dale	C.	2405 Calle del Estavan NW	Albuquerque	NM	87104	P	B-29	345	01-30-2014
Gibbs	Mrs. Luverne	D.	6614 SW Garden Home Rd	Portland	OR	97223	Honorary	B-24	345	

Message from the Secretary . . .

With a slight apprehension I risk wishing you all a “Happy Spring!” After a beautiful weekend with temperatures in the seventies, I am told we could get two inches of snow tonight! And I am living in Michigan why????????????? I tell myself that spring wouldn’t feel quite the same without having gone through the winter, but I may have to rethink that after this past winter and a record of 90.3 inches of snow!!

As my thoughts turn to spring and the May publication of the newsletter, I remember Decoration Days (now Memorial Day) of my childhood. This was a very important day to all the members of my family, and to the town where I grew up. I would help my Grandmother place the flags on the veterans’ graves at the cemetery. And I got to see my Dad put on his uniform and march in the parade from the bridge downtown, where a memorial wreath was thrown into the water, down to the cemetery where the ceremonies ended with the traditional rifle volley and taps. My Grandmother Simons, a Blue Star Mother who had three sons who served and returned home, would also wear her uniform and march with the other mothers. She died shortly after Decoration Day in 1951, but had still managed in her weakened condition to put on her uniform and, with her sons supporting her, made it to watch the parade! It was the last time she left the house, where the Blue Star Flag hung in the window as she lived.

And this is part of the purpose of our Association—to remember and honor all who have served, whether they be with us still or in spirit only. We continue to carry their memory and share their stories, so our children, grandchildren, great grand children and others will observe Memorial Day as it was intended to be.

On Memorial Day, Old Glory is raised briskly to the top of the staff and then solemnly lowered to the half-staff position, where it remains only until noon. It is then raised to full-staff for the remainder of the day. The half-staff position remembers the more than one million men and women who gave their lives in service of their country. At noon, their memory is raised by the living; who resolve not to let their sacrifice be in vain, but to rise up in their place and continue the fight for liberty and justice for all.

Thank you all for your service,

Susie M.

The muffled drum’s sad roll has beat
The soldier’s last tattoo;
No more on Life’s parade shall meet
That brave and fallen few.
On fame’s eternal camping ground
Their silent tents to spread,
And glory guards, with solemn round
The bivouac of the dead

Theodore O’Hara

The Power of...

Editor's Note:

If you are at all interested in leadership and the power of speaking the truth, please read the following for a reminder of how things once were and how they can be again if we demand it.

The late Senator Warren B. Rudman (R-NH, in office from December 29, 1980 – January 3, 1993) was awarded the George C. Marshall Award by the Association of the United States Army on October 11, 2006 and gave this short, but very good speech. The speech captures the essence of General Marshall and is as applicable today as it was when Senator Rudman made the speech. There is no spin in the speech or in his subject. America could do well to find another George Marshall, in my opinion.

Thank you, General Sullivan, for your generous remarks.

And I have to tell you what was going through my mind as you were up there speaking. I kept thinking that my late mother and father would be very proud. And my old battalion commander in Korea—from the 38th Infantry, Second Division—would be flabbergasted!

Then again, if you have ever read anything at all about the contribution that George Marshall made to this nation, one message is clear. Virtually no one truly belongs in his class. It would have been an honor for me to carry his boots, let alone an award in his name.

If you reflect on the arc of his life—and what it meant to this nation—it is just staggering. Think about it. When Marshall started his career, he entered the Virginia Military Institute right down the road from here. And this Army was still being run by veterans of the Civil War. This nation was just a kid—barely able to keep itself in one piece. Yet, by the end of his career—and through his vision—America had become



Statesman George C. Marshall

the architect of peace in every corner of the world, the indispensable nation in the largest war in the history of humanity. More important, we had laid the foundations of the modern Army and armed forces to provide global stability. We had poured the cornerstones of global democracy. And through his Marshall Plan we had planted the seeds of a global economy that would lift tens of millions of people out of poverty. That's a record that would leave anyone in awe. You would be hard pressed to find any single person—uniformed or civilian, Roosevelt, Truman, and Churchill included—who did so much, so well, over such a long period of time, to get us to that point. So, in the long sweep of

Speaking Truth

history, I would go so far as to say that Marshall will rank up there with Washington, Hamilton, Madison, Jefferson and the rest of the founders. When you reach that level, it's simply hard to imagine anyone but that one person who could have accomplished the same for our nation.

But the real value of this award is not just the chance to reflect on history. It's an occasion to reflect on the man himself: the values, the traits, the character of this soldier and statesman. If you read anything at all of Marshall's writings, this comes through so clearly. The beliefs that he fought for are just as relevant for today's Army—and for today's leaders—as they were for his time. And I want, tonight, to talk just a few minutes about those:

Foremost, he believed in putting those at the bottom of the ladder—the ground troops, the infantrymen—at the top of his list. From his time at Fort Benning, there's a great story about him ripping an officer because the troops didn't have blankets and stoves. He called the officer on the carpet and said, "Get every damn one of those things tonight. Not tomorrow. Tonight. We are going to take care of the troops first, last, and all the time." **First, last, and all the time...** that is the kind of commitment we owe the troops.

He believed that personal integrity conferred more authority than any ribbon or star ever could. Marshall was a guy who almost never pulled rank to make a point. But he scared the living hell out of people. Think about General Patton, who was no shrinking violet. Patton once said if he had to choose between facing Marshall in an interview or face a whole Nazi Panzer division by himself, the decision would be easy: *face the Panzers*.

Marshall believed that he had a solemn duty to speak truth to power. That's something that you don't learn in



Warren Rudman, during his days with the U.S. Senate.

basic training. In his very first meeting with President Roosevelt—one of the most popular and powerful presidents and commanders-in-chief to ever sit in the Oval Office—Marshall, then Chief of Staff of the Army, had the courage to look him in the eye and say, "I am sorry, Mr. President, I don't agree with you at all."

His very first meeting! And I have to tell you, that takes more than guts. He believed in being candid and direct.

Churchill was once arguing to delay the invasion of Europe in favor of an attack on Rhodes. Marshall

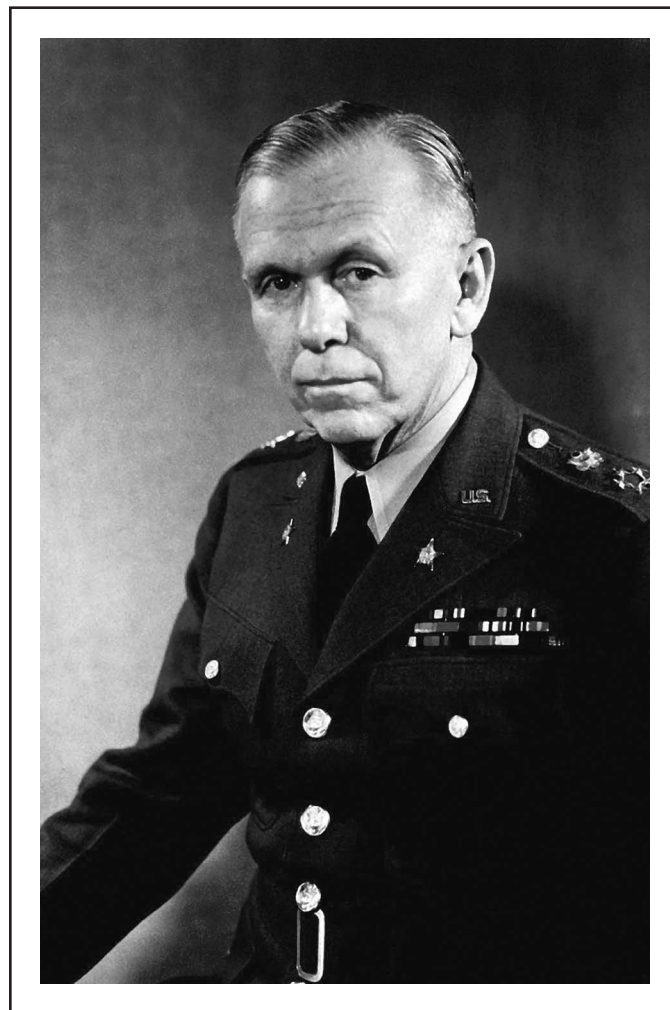
listened quietly for a long time, nodding, and then finally he exploded. He said, "You can plan all you want. But not one American soldier is going to die on that goddammed beach."

He believed in extreme loyalty: the kind of loyalty that goes up and down the chain of command. His view was that you select talented people, you put your trust in them, and then let them do their job.

In 1947, when it became clear after face-to-face talks with the Soviets that the Cold War was going to be a reality, Marshall came back to the State Department and called George Kennan into his office. He told him that he would have to immediately set up a policy office and write a master plan to deal with the threat. So, there you have Kennan, this brilliant guy who immediately sees 389 dimensions to the problem. And you have the grand strategy for the fate of the Western World hanging in the balance. It doesn't get bigger than that. So Kennan tells Marshall, "Mr. Secretary, I am going to need more guidance from you." Marshall paused for a few seconds. And then he looked at him and said precisely two words: "Avoid trivia." And that's one of the things I have always loved about Marshall: he didn't believe that anyone, regardless of rank, should take himself too seriously.

One time, General Walter Bedell Smith—in full uniform—came to Marshall's house to give him a report. And it turned out that Marshall was out in the rain, picking corn in his vegetable patch. After a few minutes in the rain and mud, Smith started to get a bit testy. And he said, "General, do I have to stand out here to make my report?" And Marshall said, "No, Smith. Of course not. Turn over that bucket and sit down."

If there's one idea—one lesson—from Marshall's life that I could leave you with tonight, I think that would be it. No matter how high or how low your rank, you should never let your respect for the privilege and prestige of an office distract you from what you're there to do—to outweigh your obligation to speak truth to power.



General George C. Marshall in 1946.

In that spirit, I believe I would be remiss if I didn't use this occasion to close with just a few words about the current state of this fine institution, the United States Army. When I think about the history of the U.S. Army, places come back to mind . . . Omaha, Bastogne, Porkchop Hill, Ia Drang and, of course, Baghdad. From my own experience in Korea, those places are notable for the courage and uncommon valor of the American soldier. Regardless of one's views about the wisdom of starting the current action in Iraq, I am deeply, deeply worried about its lasting impact on our Army—on all our armed forces, but the Army especially.

By almost any measure, we have asked too small a force to operate at too fast an ops tempo with too little resources over too much territory. To paraphrase Winston Churchill, never have so many, owed so much to so few for so long. And this is doing damage to our Army—active, guard, and reserve—that will take a generation to repair. We are "taking it in the neck." You can say all you want about the theory of light footprints and high-tech warfare. But as far as I'm concerned, you can save that for the classroom. At the end of the day, if you don't have enough boots on the ground, you have more instability, not less. And for families all across this country, that means you have more kids coming home without arms and legs—not less. You have more honor guard funerals—not less. That's just wrong. It's a tragedy. It did not have to be this way. And it's time for us to put the issue right in front of the American people, on the kitchen table, rather than pretend it's not there.

More than 60 years ago, at the height of World War II, Marshall stood before an audience just like this, pleading to get the resources that he believed were essential. This is a man who didn't shrug at the casualty figures. He had them on top of his desk—and in front of his president—every week! And he said, "Just once, in the history of this country, I'd like to see the American soldier be given a fair break in the terrible business of making war." Classic Marshall. Direct. Candid. Loyal. Always on the lookout for the soldiers who are making the greatest sacrifice. And I don't think we could pay him any greater tribute today than to listen to his voice: "Just once . . . a fair break."

As we leave here tonight, let us all take a moment to say a prayer for all of those brave young men and women who are willing to put it on the line for the greater good. Thank you.

From your **(short time to go) !!!**

**Vice President
and
Reunion Coordinator**

This may come as a shock to ya'll but it is time to register for our 2014 Reunion. You may not have decided yet but someone, namely *me*, has to determine how many chickens we need cooked, how many buses to reserve, the number of rooms to hold, and that is just the beginning. All of these decisions and many more will be based on your response. So, **Please** take a moment, consider what you will be missing and **Register** so we have some idea of how many to expect.

You might also remember we have photo's from last year of all those who raised their hand. Let's see your name and some new names appear on the **"Yes, we are coming to the 98th Reunion"** list.

**98th Veterans Association Reunion
Rapid City, SD
Aug. 24th - 28th**

Looking forward to seeing all those
Smiley faces again!



dp

The following is taken from the February 2014 issue of *The American Legion Magazine*

The Face of America

by Alan W. Dowd, contributing editor, *The American Legion Magazine*

The four giants of Mount Rushmore tell our nation's grand story.

The idea for Mount Rushmore was conceived in 1924, when South Dakota's state historian contacted sculptor Gutzon Borglum about creating a sculpture out of a rock formation in the Black Hills. Borglum liked the idea and proposed that former presidents George Washington and Abraham Lincoln serve as the main subjects for the massive mountainside sculpture. That initial idea grew to include Thomas Jefferson and Theodore Roosevelt.

Mount Rushmore is many things—monument, memorial, landmark—but the towering sculpture of those towering leaders also reflects something more. As Borglum put it, Mount Rushmore “bears witness, carries the likeness, the dates, a word or two of the great things we accomplished as a nation.”

FOUR GIANTS.

Washington was more than just a president. He was a warrior, his silhouette reminding us that our liberty and independence come at a price—and that the best way to avoid paying that price in blood is to pay it in preparedness. “There is nothing so likely to produce peace,” he counseled, “as to be well prepared to meet an enemy.”

Washington also represents the birth of what he called a “nascent empire”—a global power. Yet his stoic gaze warns against “entanglements” with foreign lands, providing a constant reminder that America is exceptional. As he put it, “Our detached and distant situation invites and enables us to pursue a different course” than the Old World. Washington himself pursued a different course. So revered was he that he could have been president for life or some sort of benign military monarch. If anyone was bigger than the

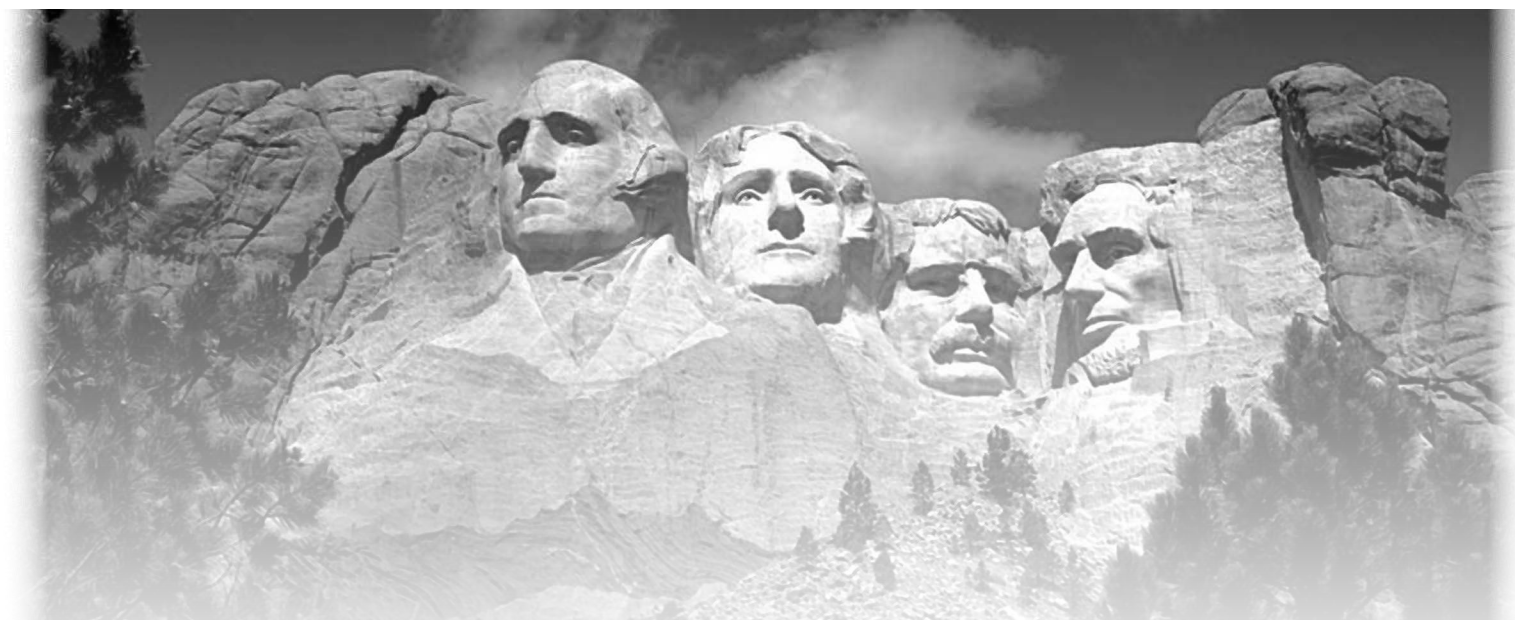
republic, it was Washington, the father of our country. But his actions made it clear to his successors that no president is bigger than the republic. He resisted the temptation to amass personal power and bowed to the rule of law, setting crucial precedents on executive power, time in office and civilian control over the military.

Jefferson represents America's founding document, the Declaration of Independence, which declared to the world that “all men are created equal” and endowed by God with a right to life, liberty and the pursuit of what each defines as happiness. Jefferson's masterpiece was more than America's birth certificate, more than an announcement that the New World was ready to govern itself. It was the flame that lit the furnace of what he called “an empire of liberty.” Indeed, Jefferson's assertive foreign policy expanded America westward, defended U.S. interests on the far side of the world, and made it clear to friend and foe alike that America would fight for its rightful place among the nations.

Just as Washington set lasting precedents in how he left office, Jefferson set them in how he entered office. His election marked the nation's first transfer of power from one party to another. It was a peaceful transfer, yet that was anything but inevitable. The election was bitterly fought, and the outcome was uncertain for weeks. During the long stalemate, there was talk among Jefferson's opponents of transferring presidential authority to a Senate designee or leaving the office vacant. There were even fears of civil unrest.

But Jefferson patiently waited for the system to work. After dozens of ballots, a majority of House delegations chose him to lead the nation.

“We are all Republicans, we are all Federalists,” he said poignantly in his inaugural address, thus laying the foundation for a political system where winners are



not coronated like kings and losers are not treated like defeated enemies.

More than half a century would pass before the promise of Jefferson's masterpiece was fulfilled.

Lincoln initially focused on preserving the Union—as he famously explained in 1862, “If I could save the Union without freeing any slave I would do it, and if I could save it by freeing all the slaves I would do it”—but somewhere between Bull Run and Appomattox, Lincoln realized that saving the Union required America to extirpate the original sin of slavery.

“If God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's 250 years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword,” he declared during his second inaugural, driving home his point and his own transformation by quoting Psalm 19: “the judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.”

In abolishing slavery, Lincoln finished what was left undone at the founding. In laying out his vision for postwar peace, Lincoln reminded us of our responsibilities to those who fight and die for America: “to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow and his orphan.” And in preserving the Union, Lincoln transformed America from a collection of independent states into one nation—the “last, best hope of earth.”

Finally, Roosevelt embodies America's entry on the world stage as a force for good. By building the Panama Canal, he connected east and west. By forging a truly global Navy, he wielded a “big stick” that projected U.S. power and deterred America's enemies.

Indeed, his policies provide a timeless example of how to deter war by being fully prepared to wage it. “We infinitely desire peace,” Roosevelt declared, echoing Washington. “And the surest way of obtaining it is to show that we are not afraid of war.”

Roosevelt also taught his successors that global leadership demands more than pursuing simple self-interest, that in becoming a great power the United States should not stop being a good neighbor. So he challenged America to resist “coldblooded indifference to the misery of the oppressed.” Even when “our own interests are not greatly involved,” he declared, there are times to act “in the interest of humanity at large.”

Roosevelt's was the last visage completed. The monument was dedicated just weeks before Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor—a symbolic parenthesis to America's time of inward-looking isolation.

HEADROOM?

To the novice, there appears to be plenty of room for more super-sized sculptures to the right of Lincoln. But National Park Service officials note that Borglum's

son, who completed the project, concluded that the elder Borglum's design exhausted the carveable rock. Moreover, geoengineers are unsure how new excavations would affect the existing sculpture.

Geology aside, the nature of the monument—four U.S. leaders representing four distinct eras of U.S. history—has always invited discussion about who else belongs on Mount Rushmore. Polls suggest that Americans are open to the idea of adding another face or two. Whether or not Congress ever moves in that direction, it's an interesting thought experiment.

If the geological limitations could be overcome, the political limitations are certainly bridgeable. One can imagine a bipartisan compromise whereby a Democrat and a Republican are added.

A strong case could be made for two very different leaders: Franklin D. Roosevelt and Ronald Reagan. One expanded and wielded the powers of government to fight the Great Depression. The other declared, "Government is not the solution to our problem, government is the problem."

Yet despite their philosophical differences, they had much in common. Both believed deeply in U.S. exceptionalism. Both were optimists and principled pragmatists, skilled politicians and media maestros. And both used these traits to rouse America from periods of self-doubt, rally the country against existential threats, defeat brutal enemy regimes and help it achieve aims arguably as consequential as those achieved by the four men immortalized on Mount Rushmore.

DEMOCRACY'S DEFENDER.

Love him as the man who ended the Great Depression and gave every ounce of himself to defeat the enemies of democracy, or hate him as the man who created the modern welfare state and called Josef Stalin "Uncle Joe," it's difficult to describe FDR as anything less than a towering historical figure.

At home, FDR launched programs aimed at reversing the Great Depression, getting America back to work, creating a safety net for tough times and laying

the foundation for economic progress—everything from emergency programs like the Bank Holiday, Civilian Conservation Corps, the Works Progress Administration and other agencies to enduring programs like the Social Security Administration and Tennessee Valley Authority.

Crucially, FDR's efforts stabilized the country's political-economic infrastructure. "It was Franklin Delano Roosevelt who gave hope to a nation that was in distress and could have slid into dictatorship," Newt Gingrich once observed.

Indeed, Americans approved of Roosevelt's unprecedented government expansion and intervention, as evidenced by his victories in four presidential elections.

Overseas, FDR built the great arsenal of democracy, walked the United States back onto the international stage and steered it to a position of unmatched geopolitical power. He envisioned a postwar world founded on freedom of speech, freedom of worship, freedom from want and freedom from fear. And along with another giant of World War II, Winston Churchill, he crafted the Atlantic Charter, the principles of which still underpin the international system.

FREEDOM'S FIGHTER.

The economic crisis America faced in 1980—double-digit inflation, double-digit unemployment, double-digit interest rates—was compounded by what then-President Jimmy Carter called an "erosion of our confidence," a sense that the country was in the midst of irreversible decline.

Ever the optimist, Reagan believed that America's greatest days were yet to come. The key, in his view, was reviving the economy by cutting nondefense spending, eliminating unnecessary regulation, revamping the tax code and unshackling America's free-enterprise system.

The formula worked, as the nation enjoyed an unbroken 92-month stretch of economic expansion, an 18-percent increase in disposable income and a halving of unemployment.



With the economy reawakened, Reagan had the resources to outspend, outbuild, outmaneuver and outlast the Soviet empire. He challenged Americans to think of the Cold War not as a permanent condition to be managed but as a struggle between freedom and tyranny—one that could be won.

"The West will not contain communism," he promised in 1981. "It will transcend communism ... a sad, bizarre chapter in human history whose last pages are even now being written."

Toward that end, he put a halt to the moral relativism and accommodation that had set in after a decade of detente. Reagan rebuilt a demoralized military, armed anti-communist rebels, rolled back Soviet expansionism, challenged the legitimacy of the Soviet state and used rhetoric like a weapon: "Beware the temptation of ... blithely declaring yourselves above it all and labeling both sides equally at fault, to ignore the facts of history and the aggressive impulses of an evil empire."

By the end of Reagan's presidency, the Cold War had melted away. Nine months later, the Berlin Wall was gone, the Soviet empire was in retreat, and America had gone from a nation in decline into an economic-military-cultural colossus without historical parallel or geopolitical peer.

As President Barack Obama observes, "Ronald Reagan changed the trajectory of America." That may

explain why, for almost two decades, bills have been introduced in Congress to add Reagan's face to Mount Rushmore.

BUILT TO LAST.

There is more to this discussion than politics or geology, of course. Perhaps the real question is a philosophical one: is Mount Rushmore a finished product or a work in progress?

Paul Menard of the National Park Service says his agency considers it "a completed work of art." Writer Ronald Fraser, who advocates adding FDR, counters that the monument is "a running chronicle of the American experience."

Whether or not anything is ever added to Rushmore, nature won't take anything away from it for a very long time. Geologists estimate that its erosion rate is barely an inch every 10,000 years.

That's a powerful metaphor for the timeless truths these men stood for—and very much in keeping with Borglum's hopes. "Let us place there," he wrote, "as close to heaven as we can, the words of our leaders, their faces, to show posterity what manner of men they were. Then breathe a prayer that these records will endure until the wind and rain alone shall wear them away."

Flying Sideways

In April 1944, the ME 262 jet fighter was introduced by the German Luftwaffe. It was superior to anything the Allies had. If left unchecked, it could have changed the outcome of the war. To counter this advantage, in July 1944, the 8th and 15th Air Force conducted a series of raids on the jet manufacturing plants and aerodromes (military air bases). Germany responded by greatly increasing its air defenses around these installations.

In July 1944, I was a 19-year-old pilot who had just finished my training. I was co-pilot on my trip across the Atlantic, delivering a new B-24 to Italy. Bob Fuhrman, whom I had met in training, was the pilot. Fred Winters was our 20-year-old Bombardier / Navigator. Miehagan Plushnick was our Radio / Top Turret. Alfred Pisella was our Nose Turret, and Raymond Dewey was our Engineer. We delivered the new B-24 to Lecce, which is located in the 'Heel of the Boot' of Italy. We were attached to the 98th Bomb Group, 415 Squadron.

On July 20th, we were assigned our first mission: Mission # 266. The target was the Lowenthal Airdrome Installations at Friedrichshafen, Germany. This was a highly defended jet manufacturing plant. We were assigned to ship 186F, the 'Red F Freddy.' Our crew of Fuhrman, Winters, Plushnick, Pisella, and Dewey was augmented by four new guys: ball turret (belly gun), tail gun, and both waist guns. We took off from Lecce at 0637 hours, the third of 28 ships. We joined up with others, making a total of 200 B-24s on this raid.

Friedrichshafen sits on the shores of Lake Constance, a large lake that is bordered by Austria, Germany, and Switzerland.

On raids, only the lead and second ships had designated navigators, the second ship as back-up in the event the first ship was eliminated. All other ships had a bombardier who also acted as navigator. The B-24 is a four engine bomber with two Pratt-Whitney engines on each wing. The stall speed for this plane is 110 miles per hour. If flying at any less speed, the plane will fall like a brick. It did not glide well. During our training we were taught that this particular airship could not be flown with only two engines on the same wing

operational. We were also instructed that the Pratt-Whitney engine could only last for one hour if flown continually at full military power.

Approaching the target, flak was blackening the sky. As we reached the target, Fred Winters saw the lead plane drop their bombs. Fred yelled "Bombs Away" and released our load. Just as he did so, a round of anti-aircraft fire exploded just underneath the front of our plane. A piece of shrapnel came up through the cockpit, right between Bob's seat and mine. Some pieces went through our left wing. A piece went through our front turret, knocking the wristwatch off Pisella, and cutting a hole in his emergency pack. Worst of all, a piece imbedded itself in Fred's head. To the best of my knowledge, Fred's young widow never remarried. Just as suddenly, we lost control of our plane. We found ourselves descending while turning to the left, a 'death spiral' you could call it. In a B-24 there is a hatch that



1st Lieutenant Ralph E. Donnelly

closes off the front turret from the rest of the plane. The latch for that hatch is inside the main body of the ship. It is the navigator's job to seal the front turret gunner in and, also, open the hatch to let him out. The front turret is not a place to be when the plane is in trouble. Not only would it be very scary watching the plane going down, but there is no way to bail-out from there. With Fred now deceased, there was no one to let Pisella out of the front turret. Though not easily done, Pisella managed to force his way out. Both of the engines on our left wing were out. The propellers were 'wind-milling,' creating a drag. Bob tried to restart the engines, but was unable to. We then 'feathered' those engines. Bob and I then pushed down, actually stood on, the right rudder pedals with all our might while giving our two remaining right-wing engines full throttle. This enabled us to slowly regain control of our ship. It kept us from flying in circles and gave us a direction. We were flying at a sharp angle to the left.

We were now at 18,000 feet and were almost flying sideways.

We found that the hydraulics were out, which eliminated the use of all but our Waist Guns. Bob tried a few more times to restart the engines, but the attempts were futile. Dewey, the ship's engineer, then transferred all of the fuel that remained in the left wing into the right wing. Even at full throttle, our ship was now lower and much slower than the rest of the Bomber Group. We were quickly left behind.

We were now separated from the bomber group, 400 miles behind enemy lines, with no navigator, lost, and flying a plane that we were told should not be able to fly. Our top speed was now just about 110 miles per hour, stall speed. We would never have the speed to enable us to climb in altitude. Occasionally, we would dip under it and stall. In order to get up enough speed, we had to put our nose down. This would increase our speed enough to get out of the stall, but we would lose altitude. Altitude which we could never regain again. Each time we had to do this we would get lower and lower. To help keep our speed up, we jettisoned everything that

we thought we could do without, including all ammunition except for the Waist Guns. In those days, there was no GPS, and we had no radar. Plushnick managed to get a radio fix from our base. With that we had a direction to fly towards. We knew we were close to Switzerland, but didn't know for sure where it was. We had given it a thought, as we didn't know how long our engines would hold up. Not wanting to bail out in Austria or Germany and be taken prisoner, we decided to try and make it back. We headed toward home base, via radio fix. Our path took us towards the Alps. The Alps were covered in clouds this day. We knew that we were nearing them, but we couldn't see them. We didn't know if our altitude was high enough to get over them. We didn't know if we were going to fly into the ground, the side of a mountain, or somehow manage to fly through an opening. We prayed for the best and proceeded. We never did see anything in the clouds. We never knew how close we came to hitting. We did however make it through.

Plushnick continued to send S.O.S. messages over the radio and also kept a radio fix on base. Somewhere in the Udine area, northeastern Italy, we spotted two Messerschmitt Me-109 single engine fighter planes heading toward us. We must have looked like easy pickings, flying solo, as well as low and slow. All we had were our two Waist Guns. We didn't see any way out of this one. Then out of nowhere, two Red Tail P-51 Mustangs dropped from above. Unseen, they were part of our escort from the 332 Fighter Group. They must have responded to our S.O.S. They were last seen chasing the two Messerschmitts, who were now high-tailing it out of there. The Red Tail P-51 Mustangs were all Black pilots, known as the 'Tuskegee Airmen.' I didn't find out for another 67 years that, after saving us, they followed us for 160 miles, protecting us until we had to bail out. If not for them, that day would have been my last. *God bless them.*

Still following the radio fix, we entered air space over Venice, which was still occupied by the Germans. Once again we faced anti-aircraft fire. However, now the very thing that was our bane was what saved us.



From left to right: Ralph Donnelly, Bob Fuhrman, Miehagan Plushnick, Alfred Pisella, & Raymond Dewey

They weren't used to an aircraft flying as slow as we were, so they kept aiming way out in front of us. This was also handy because we weren't flying to the front of the ship, but more towards the side. We managed to get through Venice without a scratch.

On the B-24, each pilot had two rudder pedals, a right and left one. If the right one was pushed in, the left one would rise. Conversely, when the left one was pushed in, the right one would rise. Bob and I had been using all our might, pushing on the right rudder pedals for the entire return trip. We were cramping up. Our engineer, Dewey, took a rope out of a duffle bag and tied it to the left rudder pedal. He then pulled up on the rope to try to ease our tension. Unfortunately, the rope was too soft and stretched. It was a good thought, but it didn't work. Our long return trip kept getting longer. It required Bob and me to use all of our physical strength, with no rest. Still flying towards the radio fix to base, we were now over the Adriatic Sea. Our engines cut-out, as we were running on fumes. With the engines stopped, the order to bail out was given. Just as the 'four new guys' prepared to jump, the engines started again. The order was cancelled for now. Once again we had descended to yet a lower altitude. Still over the Adriatic Sea, the engines cut-out for a second time. Once again the order was given to bail out. A rope was

tied to Fred Winter's ripcord, and he was let off the plane. The rope pulled the ripcord and his parachute opened. His body floated down into the sea. The 'four new guys' quickly followed Fred out of the plane. Amazingly, once again the engines restarted. And once again we were flying at yet a lower altitude.

A B-24 was not a ship you wanted to 'crash land,' as it would most likely break in two. We had been flying for about three and a half hours since our ship was first damaged. Our fuel was almost exhausted.

Still following the radio fix from base, we were now over land, near the city of Ancona, Italy. As we started over a hill, our engines gave out for the third time. This was it, we couldn't afford to lose any more altitude and still have enough room to jump. The order to bail out was given. Pisella and Dewey jumped. Pisella's ripcord malfunctioned. Using his hands, he ripped open his chest pack, and his parachute deployed. I quickly checked the plane and found Plushnick sending out one last S.O.S. I grabbed his leg and pulled. I yelled at him to get out. I could not jump until he did. As soon as Plushnick was out, I yelled to Bob that all were out and then jumped. I pulled the ripcord as soon as I cleared

the plane. There was absolutely no time to count to ten. Because of my parachute's canopy above me, I never saw if Bob got out. I did see our ship crash to the ground. It burned in its entirety with the exception of the left wing and tail.

I quickly floated to the ground. As I descended, not knowing if I was behind enemy lines or not, I prudently unbuckled my leg straps and took out my .45. Once on the ground, I saw a group of people running toward me. I didn't know if they were friendly or not, but if not I hoped to take as many of them with me as possible. Seeing me holding my .45, they turned and ran away and started yelling. They spoke Italian, but I could make out the word 'Americano.' I said "Si." They managed to convey to me that they were friendly. It turns out that we landed 15 miles behind the 'Bomb Line,' just inside friendly territory. They led me to Dewey, Pisella, and Plushnick. Pisella and Plushnick had landed a little hard. Plushnick had some back pain, Pisella had a lot. I took some morphine out of the emergency pack and gave them some. An Allied truck

Not much left: crash site of 'Red F Freddy.'



picked us up and took us to a field hospital that was run by either the English or the Australians.

At 120 miles per hour, it only takes seven and a half minutes to go 15 miles. If our engines had gone out only eight minutes earlier, we would have bailed out in German-held territory.

We stayed at the field hospital overnight. The next day we were taken to a small landing strip to await a small plane that would take us back to base. To my joy, I saw Bob there too. He had landed on the other side of the hill and was found by a man who lived there. The man took him home for the night. Amazingly, the ‘four new guys’ were also there. They were fished out of the Adriatic Sea by two British Mine Sweepers. The plane initially took us to Bari, where Pisella and Plushnick were taken to the hospital for back pain. I was taken for stomach cramps and Dewey, for observation. Bob returned to our base at Lecce.

When Bob got back to base, he found that our bags had been packed and stored, and that our tent had been taken down. He also found that we had officially been listed as Missing In Action, with back home notifications and all.

Plushnick went on to become our Squadron’s Lead Radio Operator. Dewey went on to become our Squadron’s Lead Engineer. Pisella’s back injury prevented him from ever flying again.

1st Lieutenant Ralph E. Donnelly, # 044173, US Army Air Force, died in November, 2013. During his service, he flew 32 Missions and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Purple Heart, and two Air Medals.

Epilogue

A Tale of an Unlikely Friendship That Almost Wasn’t

The title above is a bit misleading. It speaks of a friendship in the generation that followed WWII, not one between soldiers of that era. I am one-half of that friendship, one of the children of 1st Lt Ralph Donnelly.

To begin this tale, I must first introduce the ancestor of the other half of the friendship. That ancestor is Earl Roscoe Lane, born July 22, 1920. He graduated training, 4/15/44, and was assigned to the 100th Fighter Squadron, 332nd Fighter Group. He was a Tuskegee Airman. This squadron was among those that fought off the Me-109s and escorted my father’s plane to safety, thus saving Ralph Donnelly’s life on July 20, 1944. Earl was credited with two kills, an Me-109 and, on 3/4/45, an Me-262, one of the first three jet fighters ever shot down. He earned eight medals, including the Distinguished Flying Cross.



Lieutenant
Earl R. Lane
0828052

Earl and Ralph never met, but Earl’s wife, Dorothy, had a sister who had a son—Earl’s nephew. That nephew is Michael Whidbey, who grew up to be a Seattle Police Detective. He is also active in coaching children, a strong Christian, and one of the nicest men I’ve ever



The P-51 of a Tuskegee Airman

had the pleasure to meet. A better man would be hard to find.

Ralph Donnelly, after surviving the war, returned home and had three sons and a daughter. I am one of those sons. I also became a Seattle Police Officer.

I had been friends with Mike Whidbey for over 20 years before our family war histories ever came up. Earl Lane, *Uncle Earl*, was more than just an uncle, he was very close, more like a second father to Mike. Though still living when we became friends, he had passed away before I became aware of his involvement in saving my father’s life; thus making my birth possible. I regret not having met him. I have since had more than one ‘*It’s a Wonderful Life*’-type glimpses at my own life. I can state without any hesitation that my father, brothers and sister have led good, moral lives that contributed to the betterment of our nation, community, and to those around us. Yes, my father’s life was worth saving. And I will always consider Mike my friend.

It just dawned on me that I hadn’t mentioned the Black-White thing. Maybe that’s because I don’t think that way. But looking back at 1944, this country, and world, sure did. What a great loss they had.

Michael S. Donnelly
Viet Nam Combat Vet / US Navy # 6934906
Seattle Police Officer # 3129, Retired

A Little Levity

Pilot conversations with ATC

- Controller:** Tiger 1, say call sign of your wingman.
Pilot: Uh... approach, I’m a single chip.
Controller: Oooooohhhh! You have traffic!
Cessna 152: Flight Level Three Thousand, Seven Hundred.
Controller: Roger, contact Houston Space Center.
727 pilot: Do you know it costs us two thousand dollars to make a 360 in this airplane?
Controller: Roger, give me four thousand worth.
Tower: ...for your information, you were slightly to the left of center line on that approach.
C-5: That’s correct, and my co-pilot was slightly to the right.
Female Radar Controller: Can I turn you on at 7 miles?
Fighter Pilot: Madam, you can try.

A student pilot became lost during a solo cross-country. While attempting to locate the aircraft on radar, ATC asked, “What was your last known position?”

The student replied, “When I was number one for takeoff.”

Reunion Schedule • August 24–28, 2014

98th Bomb Grp/Wing Veterans Association

Hotel: Rushmore Plaza Holiday Inn, 505 N Fifth St, Rapid City SD 57701

Reservations: (800-Holiday) or (605) 348-4000; mention Booking Code BVA

Hotel Rate: \$110.00 Inc — Guaranteed until July 15, 2014.

Day 1 Welcome Dinner “Gateway to the Black Hills” and “City of Presidents”

The expedition led by LtCol George Custer and the discovery of gold brought an influx of settlers into the Black Hills of South Dakota. Rapid City was founded in 1876 by a group of disappointed miners, who promoted their new city as the Gateway to the Black Hills. The City of Presidents project began in 2000 to honor the legacy of the American presidency. Each of the sculptures is [privately funded](#).

Day 2 Tour & Lunch – Buses Depart 09:30

Mount Rushmore National Memorial, one of the most recognized landmarks in the world started as a dream of Doane Robinson, a South Dakota Historian. Carving started in 1927, completed in 1941. Crazy Horse Memorial: carving started in 1948; still a work in progress. Next, we visit the city named for “Custer” !!!

Day 3 Tour & Lunch – Buses Depart 09:30

Ellsworth AFB, one of two bases for the B-1 Bomber. During the Cold War, Ellsworth AFB was home to six different ICBM Missile Squadrons: Titan and Atlas.

Day 4 Tour & Lunch – Buses Depart 09:30

Custer State Park; Establish back in 1912. It is a 71,000-acre vacation paradise, a summer home for President Calvin Coolidge, hunting for President Theodore Roosevelt; home to abundant wildlife including one of the nation’s largest free-roaming buffalo herds, making it common to encounter a “Buffalo Jam” while driving in the park.

Day 5 Banquet & Ladies Event

09:30 – Ladies Event bus departs (**Casual Dressy**)

09:30 – Executive Board Meeting

10:00 – Association General Meeting

18:30 – Cash Bar Opens

19:00 – Association Banquet

Please Any question or concern regarding the Rapid City Reunion Contact:

Dennis Posey Tel: (770) 971-3972 Email: dennis_posey@att.net

Bill Seals Tel: (281) 395-3805 Email: colbillyseals@hotmail.com

... See you in Rapid City ...

Reunion Registration

98th 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 (it’s gonna be good) A previously Selected Combination Plate

Aug 24 Day 1 – 6:30 PM – Cash Bar Opens
7:00 PM – Welcome Dinner

Aug 25 Day 2 – 9:30 AM – Buses Depart for Tour & Lunch – Mount Rushmore,
Crazy Horse & City of Custer \$42.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____

Aug 26 Day 3 – 9:30 AM – Buses Depart for Tour & Lunch
Ellsworth AFB \$32.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____

Aug 27 Day 4 – 9:30 AM – Buses Depart for Tour & Lunch
Custer State Park \$48.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____

Aug 28 Day 5 – 9:30 AM – Bus Departs for Ladies Event (Casual Dressy)
\$20.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____

9:45 AM – Executive Board Meeting

10:15 AM – Association General Meeting

6:30 PM – Cash Bar Opens

7:00 PM – Association Banquet

Reunion Registration Fee \$75.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____

Scholarship Fund (donation) \$ _____

Annual Dues \$20.00 x _____ Persons = \$ _____

Total \$ _____

Make checks payable to: **98th Bomb Grp/Wing Veterans Association**. Please return completed registration form & check to: Ms. Suzanne Miodusezski

1137 Joyce Lane

Ann Arbor, MI 48103

The Good Lord willing we will tell those wonderful stories again this August !!!



The City of Presidents

Historic Downtown Rapid City, SD



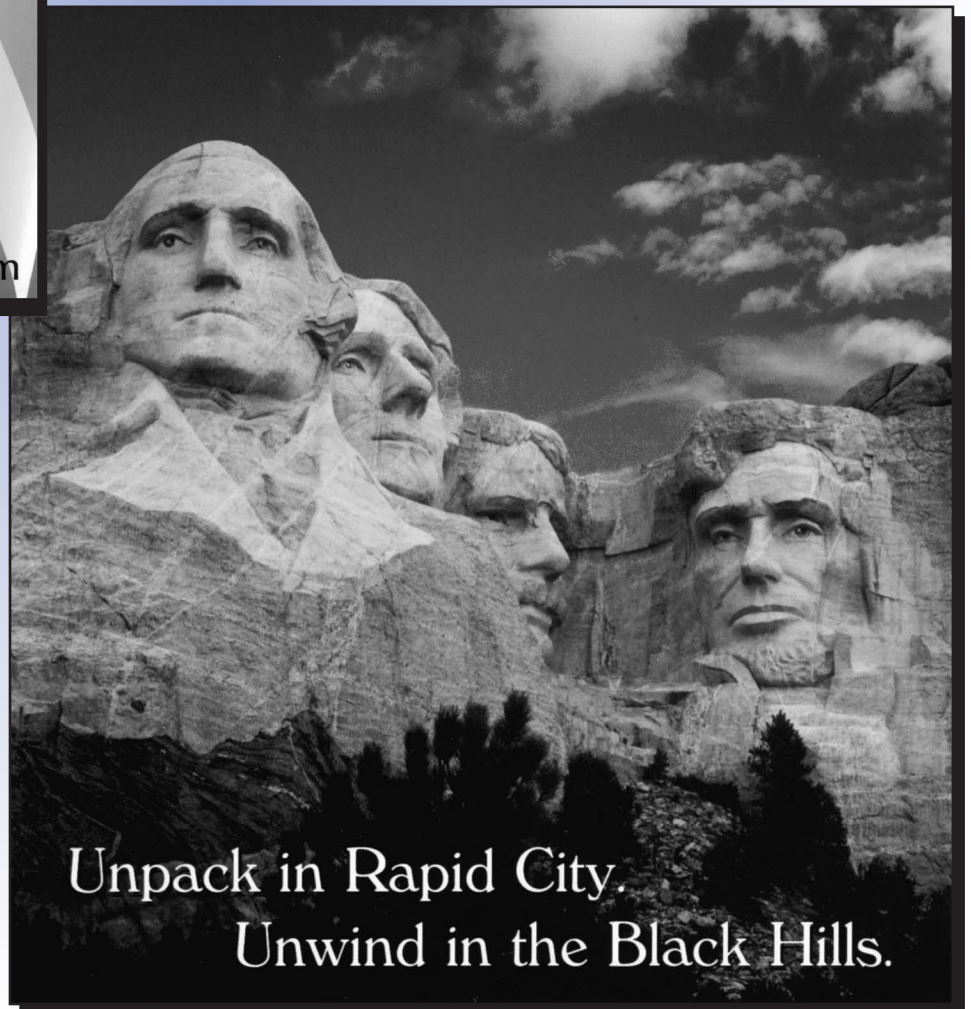
www.CityofPresidents.com

Join Us in Rapid City!

Our next reunion site is another **must see** within our Great United States.

If you're interested in history, come join us in South Dakota. You will learn how Rapid City, "Gateway to the Black Hills," began as a mining town and grew to be a leading trade center for the upper mid-west. In the 40s the Rapid City Army Airbase—later to become Ellsworth Airbase, an Army Air Corp training base, was established. As a result, the population nearly doubled. Of course Rapid City is also home to Mount Rushmore. But there is so much more you'll discover when you visit our next reunion site.

Please see the registration forms inside for all the details regarding our next reunion!



**98th Bomb Group
Wing Veterans
Association**

**2014 Reunion
Rapid City, SD**

Aug. 24 - 28, 2014

**Unpack in Rapid City.
Unwind in the Black Hills.**