FORCE FOR FREEDOM

THE PYRAMIDIERS

The Newsletter of the 98th Bomb Group/Wing Veterans Association *May 2015*

OFFICERS

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

DENNIS POSEY
Vice President
& Reunion Coordinator
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
15275 Payne Road
Marysville, OH 43040
937-644-1158
wjhayes@imetweb.net

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

Pieces of My Mind

Greetings to All,

By the time you read this, the 70th anniversary of VE-Day, Victory in Europe, will have been observed on May 8th.

Seventy years previously, the men of the 98th Bomb Group were in the process of returning to the United States from their base in Italy with orders to report to McCook Field, Nebraska, following a 30 day leave. At McCook Field the aircrews were to begin training to fly the B-29 with subsequent deployment to the Pacific Theater.

The 98th had been in the Mediterranean Theater for nearly three years following their arrival in Palestine in June 1942, as the first heavy bomber unit in-theater. Yes, I know the B-24s of the Halverson Project (HALPRO) proceeded the 98th, but they had not been designated the 376th Bomb Group yet. Besides, most of the HALPRO crews had been "stolen" from the 98th while they were in training in Florida. So, in any event, some of the 98th crews were the first in the Med.

During the three years the 98th had been in Palestine, North Africa, and Italy, the unit had flown 417 combat missions against Axis targets, lost 108 aircraft, and suffered hundreds of casualties. It had participated in sixteen campaigns and was one of the most highly decorated groups of World War II. Colonel John R. Kane and Lieutenant Donald Puckett were awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor, and numerous men were awarded Distinguished Service Medals, Silver Stars and hundreds of Distinguished Flying Crosses and other medals. The accomplishments

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Pieces of My Mind *continued from page 1*

of the 98th Bomb Group during World War II are the basis upon which the heritage of the unit rests, and are the foundation of our association. Please help to keep that heritage alive by supporting the activities of our association.

If you haven't made plans to attend and registered for our reunion in August yet, I encourage you to do so as soon as possible. We have discussed the reasons we feel this reunion has special meaning in prior issues of this newsletter, so I won't repeat them is this space. Suffice it to say, the issues we need to resolve to insure a viable association must be addressed at this meeting. Your participation would be much appreciated.

Hope to see you in Dayton.

With Warmest Regards to All,

Bill Seals

Message from the VP/Reunion Coordinator

I write this with mixed emotions. I am pleased my tour of duty as Reunion Coordinator is coming to an end. But, I am also sad to think this may well be our last 98th Bomb Group/Wing Veterans Association reunion. Although, we know miracles do happen.

I cannot express the pleasure my tour in service to this organization has been. The honors and praise given over these many years by the members, associate members, honorary members and all others have brought tears to my eyes and joy to my heart. I thank you all for the memories and the opportunity to serve you.

God willing I'll see ya'll in Dayton!!!

Please Register.

Dennis Posey

If you haven't yet registered for our August Reunion in Dayton, please see pages 18 and 19.

NEW MEMBERS

Last Name	First	M	Address	City	State	Zip	Membership	AC	SQD
Parssinen	Carol	E.	3150 Fallen Oaks Ct, Apt 114	Rochester Hills	MI	48309	Associate	B-47	
Seals	Amy	E.	2954 Corte Diana	Carlsbad	CA	92009	Associate	B-47	345

Message from the Secretary

I have always been particularly fond of the saying "Spring is a new beginning..." and here we are well into the beginning of another year! It's time to begin thinking about our Dayton Reunion in August and seeing old friends and meeting new ones.

I can't help but think that this Reunion will be a very special, memorable time; and one not to be missed! It will be a time for us to remember those men whose friendship, respect, and love for each other ran so deep that they came together to form this Association and this wonderful tradition of the annual reunion. Gathering every year was a way to stay in touch, a way to remember those who had fallen in service, and a way to maintain that special bond they shared between them. This tradition began in the early 1950s when I was a little girl. Vividly, I remember accompanying my Mom and baby brother on a long car trip from Ohio to New York so my Dad could attend his Reunion. From that point on it became an annual family event to look forward to. One that, all these years later, I still look forward to.

So, I write you today in admiration of the tradition of the Reunion, for those who brought us together over 60 years ago, and for those who have attended all these years. It's been an amazing event to have been a part of. And it is almost as amazing as all those men of that "Greatest Generation," who long ago gave their full measure to defend our country. Their feelings for each other and need to stay connected were incredibly strong, as evidenced by the number of B24 members we have had over the years, and a few of them still are coming to the reunions. In the early days, they may have begun this tradition for themselves, but what a gift it has been for the rest of us! Just think of all the truly amazing people we have been fortunate enough to meet and get to know over the years.

This may well be our last opportunity to meet as a group, and I hope that as many of you that can come will make the trip and that we will have a huge turnout! Get your reservations in soon! See you in Dayton!

Susie

ADDRESS CHANGES

Last Name	First	M	Address	City	State	Zip	Membership	AC	SQD
Garcia	Mrs. Jane		12791 Walameda Pkwy, Suite 215	Lakewood	CO	80228	Honorary	B-47	A&E
Haritos	Mrs. Peter		44 Mall Rd, Apt 219	Burlington	MA	01803	Honorary	B-24	345
Morgan	Mrs. Ann	M.	9 Branson Pl	Jackson	TN	38305	Honorary	B-24	345

DECEASED

Last	First	M	Address	City	State	Zip	Membership	AC	SQD	DOD
Kostner	Victor	L.	1312 N Broadway St, Unit A	Kingman	KS	67068	Member	B-24	344	03-19-2015
Miller	Harold	R.	201 Linkside Dr	Tullahoma	TN	37388	Member	B-24	415	05-20-2014
Moore	Jack	W.	8450 Royal Palm Blvd, D641	Coral Springs	FL	33065	Member	B-24	345	
Shell	Harry	T.	113 So. Gersham Ave	Hamilton	OH	45013	G	B-24	344	02-20-2015
Winchester	Allan	F.	131 Bonita Ave	Sierra Madre	CA	91024	Member	B-29	345	2012
Kuhlenbeck	Audrey	E.	310 So. Peters Ave	Fond Du Lac	WI	54935	Honorary	B-24	343	

They Wanted ...WINGS

by Walter J. Boyne

This article comes to us from the February 2009 issue of **AIR FORCE MAGAZINE**. It is reprinted with permission.

Cadets at Kelly Field, Texas, in 1918. Between April 1917 and November 1918, US and European aviation cadet schools graduated more than 10,000 students.

The Air Force's predecessor organizations—the Army Air Service, Army Air Corps, and Army Air Forces—ran aviation cadet programs over a period of some 48 years, from their inception during 1917 until their final termination in 1965. These programs varied greatly in size and scope. They came and went.

Still, all of the cadet programs had this much in common: They all were set up and launched when time was short, facilities limited, and combat imminent.

Each of the programs produced the pilots, navigators, bombardiers, and other personnel to meet the country's needs, and did so in huge numbers, sometimes almost as if by magic.

The Air Force Academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps, and Officer Training School—all leading to or requiring a college degree—are now well-established as the paths to a military commission. Yet it is worth recalling the times when aviation cadets gave the nation huge numbers of officers, often straight out of high school.

Although aerial warfare had developed rapidly in Europe during the Great War of 1914-18, inherent conservatism and tight budgets of the US Army kept the American air component to a minimum during the early years of that conflagration. Not until America's entry into the war in April 1917 did President Woodrow Wilson sign into law what was then the largest Congressional appropriation in history—$640 million for aeronautics. This began a huge production effort and the creation of the training programs the vast new "flying corps" would require.

In these years, Benjamin D. Foulois, a future Chief of the Air Corps, was the Air Service's first military pilot (an airship pilot). He went to Canada to examine the flying training systems in place there. These, especially the School of Military Aeronautics (SMA) at the University of Toronto, were used as models for the Air Service to follow.

Maj. Howard Bingham was tasked to create a similar American system, and by July 1917, eight universities had similar programs. Bingham even adopted the Canadian term "flying cadets" for the pilot candidates, who had to be under 25 years of age, have two years of college, and be "athletic, honest, and reliable."

Ten Hours Then Solo

Almost 40,000 applied for the program, with 22,500 passing the very tough physical examination that became an enduring characteristic of the aviation cadet programs.

American schools of military aeronautics grew to 20 weeks' duration. Emphasis was on military training, aerodynamics, aircraft rigging and maintenance, engines, gunnery operation, and theory of combat tactics.

A simultaneous effort created 24 more flying schools. The flying cadets received 40 to 50 hours in aircraft such as the Curtiss JN-4 or Standard J-1.

Those who survived the training (the accident rate was high) and passed their pilot qualification tests received commissions as second lieutenants and were rated as either a reserve military aviator or junior military aviator.

With their new wings, the pilots then received a month of specialized training to qualify for pursuit, bombardment, or observation work. Most sought assignment to pursuit squadrons.

The growth of the Army Air Service from April 1917 to November 1918 was amazing. Although promises to "darken the skies with aircraft" were not fulfilled, the Air Service, American Expeditionary Force, fought for seven months at the front, mustering 740 US-built and squadrons of foreign aircraft. Cadet schools in the US and Europe graduated more than 10,000 students.

The 1918 armistice began a series of reductions in funding, personnel, and aircraft. The Air Service bottomed out from 1923 to 1926 with 880 officers and 8,000 enlisted. The numbers would improve only marginally until just before World War II.

A small aviation cadet program was required to offset the loss of reserve officers. A new era began on June 20, 1930 when Randolph Field, Texas, opened, consolidating several training efforts.

Standards for the flying cadets were extraordinarily rigorous from the entrance exams to the flight line. An estimated 90 percent of applicants failed the physical or the entrance exams.

Flight instruction was often conducted in a rigorous, almost brutal manner, with the average student expected to solo in 10 hours. The cadet was continuously monitored by instructors for any failure in technique or discipline. (The time-to-solo gradually increased as training aircraft grew more complex.)

Washouts were frequent, either for a perceived lack of flying ability or a failure to meet military standards. Students of the time were actually counseled not to be ashamed about washing out—the standards were considered so high, only the most gifted could meet them.

During the interwar years, funds were so limited that graduating classes were tiny. Between 1919 and 1926, some 1,494 flying cadets entered primary flying school, but only 415 graduated.

Even in the 1930s, a newly graduated second lieutenant pilot would often be immediately placed in the reserves without ever seeing active duty.

The interwar years also saw changes in equipment from World War I surplus Jennys, S.E.5as, and de Havilland DH-4s to specialized trainers.

It is difficult to overstate the importance of the flying cadet program to the Air Force. The aviation cadet program produced leaders such as generals Jimmy Doolittle, George C. Kenney, Curtis E. LeMay, Thomas S. Power, and Elwood R. Quesada. Ten of the service's top aces of World War II were former cadets. And 28 of 38 USAAF Medals of Honor were awarded to aviation cadets.

"Stanine"

With wars raging around the world, the United States finally ordered a buildup with bewildering speed. The forecasted size of the Air Corps rose to an unprecedented 24 groups in July 1939. This called for annual pilot training classes of 1,200—six times the previous annual rate.

In March 1941, the goal grew to 84 groups, 30,000 pilots per year, and 100 training bases.

Graduating 30,000 pilots required 60,000 candidates and 300,000 applicants. The numbers were clearly beyond the capacity of the Air Corps to handle.

In June 1941, the Army Aviation Cadet Act created the grade of "aviation cadet" instead of "flying cadet." When the uncannily accurate Air War Plans Division Plan No. 1 was accepted in August 1941, the annual pilot requirement was estimated to be 85,236—with complementary requirements for navigators, bombardiers, gunners, radio operators, mechanics, and other skills necessary for a wartime air force.

It was immediately apparent that aviation cadet qualifications had to be lowered to get sufficient numbers into training. In the years to come, these qualifications would be adjusted according to the perceived need of the service. Among the first restrictions to go was the requirement for two years of college.

Three general classes of aviation cadets were sought. They were "aviation cadet (pilot and bombardier),

A group of cadets gather around an AT-6 Texan during a training session. Texans are among the most famous of World War II-era training aircraft.

aviation cadet (navigator, nonpilot, flying), and aviation cadet (ground duty, as meteorologist and engineer.)"

The size of the programs grew to staggering numbers. When war began in December 1941, there were 16,733 cadets in flying training. One year later, there were 89,973, peaking at 109,000 two years later.

Aviation cadet examining boards around the country gave candidates a three-part classification test in addition to the physical exam. These were intended to determine whether the candidate would be best suited as pilot, navigator, or bombardier. The new test measured judgment, mathematical skills, mechanical ability, comprehension, and leadership qualities. Another section measured reflexes, hand-eye coordination, the ability to perform under pressure, and visual acuity. An interview with a psychologist formed the third part.

Scores on the three tests were aggregated on a nine-point scale—the famous "stanine" (for "standard nine") score. Most of the volunteers wanted to be pilots, and many were dissatisfied if assigned as a navigator or bombardier.

The Air Corps Chief, Maj. Gen. Henry H. "Hap" Arnold foresaw the extent of the new pilot requirements and solicited aid from established civilian flying schools.

The initial group of nine primary flight training schools increased to 56 by 1943.

Contractors were paid per student. The Air Corps supplied the aircraft, flying equipment, and a cadre of supervisory officers. Contractors were then frequently inspected. They had to supply "adequate" facilities, but the degree of "adequacy" was often challenged by cadets who were alternately freezing or sweating in the barracks.

A typical school with a 300-student class size had 278 civilian personnel, with 128 flying instructors. They were supported by a 56-man military component, with a major commanding. Similar arrangements were made on a smaller scale to train technical personnel. In time, Air Corps schools were provided for nonpilot rated officers.

Arnold also developed the College Training Program to help qualify potential aircrew members. From March 1943 to June 1944, the program examined aircrew candidates—those who passed were enrolled at one of 153 colleges affiliated with the program.

Almost 100,000 men entered aviation cadets through the CTP.

In the short term, World War II's aviation cadet program helped produce the sheer volume of officers needed for the war. Along with the almost 200,000 pilots, the aviation cadet program graduated about 100,000 navigators, bombardiers, and observers. Another 2,576 graduated as enlisted pilots.

With America's massive postwar demobilization, aviation cadet training was closed down from shortly after the end of the war until December 1946, when it was opened on a very limited basis to unmarried enlisted men with at least two years of service remaining. In 1947, aviation cadet training was opened to civilians with at least two years of college.

The new United States Air Force had an annual pilot quota of 3,000, requiring 4,800 candidates.

The requirement for navigators, bombardiers, and radar observers was recognized by the establishment of the Aircraft Observer Bombardment program, which was opened to aviation cadets in 1949, with the same standards as for pilots.

In June 1950, North Korea invaded South Korea, the US came to South Korea's aid, and this meant another massive explosion of pilot training. Air Training Command needed 10,000 candidates to produce 7,200 pilots per year, based on an expected 29 percent attrition rate.

Unfortunately, recruitment was low and the attrition rate was more than 50 percent. ATC expanded, but the only solution was to repeat World War II's aviation cadet success. Nine contract pilot flying schools were opened between 1950 and 1953.

A Change in Focus

During those three years, entry conditions were eased and the stanine test score requirement was lowered. Airmen who had served for 18 months no longer needed two years of college, although civilian applicants did. The minimum age for applicants was lowered to 19.

In 1952, a "revitalized" program was introduced with the hope of reducing the washout rate below its then current 34 percent level. Preflight training at Lackland AFB, Texas, was lengthened to 12 weeks, permitting flying training bases to concentrate on flight activities. Wings and commissions were awarded after 12 months, but an additional four months of specialized training followed.

Collectively, the requirement for 7,200 pilot graduates was almost met in 1953.

When the Korean War drew to its grudging halt with the 1953 armistice, the Cold War persisted. The Air Force became a permanent force in being, not just a cadre waiting for the next emergency.

USAF decided to stabilize pilot training at 4,800 per year and to improve training quality. The Air Force sought higher quality students by increasing the entrance requirements once again.

Then came a permanent change in focus spurred by the shocking launch of the Soviet satellite Sputnik on Oct. 4, 1957. At that time, only 31 percent of the officers in Strategic Air Command and Tactical Air Command possessed college degrees. USAF began an immediate effort to recruit scientists and engineers for officer training schools, and after 1961, 95 percent of Air Force officers were to have degrees.

Gradually, graduates from the academy, ROTC, and OTS supplanted the aviation cadets. The last cadet pilot training class was in 1961, the last navigator class in 1965.

The final pilot aviation cadet was William F. Wesson, who graduated Oct. 25, 1961. Wesson had entered flight training in December 1959, but broke his back and hip in an ejection. He fought a medical dismissal, and in June 1961, resumed training as the sole aviation cadet at Webb AFB, Texas.

It was a lonely time for the only member of the specially designated Class 62-B, but Wesson persevered and won his wings and commission. Sadly, he died in a civil aircraft accident a few years later.

On March 3, 1965, the very last aviation cadet to graduate was navigator Steven V. Harper. Foulois, who had helped start the program so many years before, presented Harper with his wings.

Lt. Gen. Russell C. Davis is thought to be the final aviation cadet who was on active duty. He retired in 2002 as chief of the National Guard Bureau.

No matter the time period, from World War I to the 1960s, all of the aviation cadet programs had some essential characteristics in common.

First, and certainly most important, they attracted people who wanted to serve their country, fly, and who were hungry for an upward career path.

Second, the aviation cadet programs were usually done in concert with a sector of the civilian flying population.

Third, they created an environment that most participants enjoyed, despite the danger, discomfort, and hard work implicit in the program.

Lt. Gen. Russell Davis, who retired in 2002, is believed to have been the last aviation cadet to serve on active duty.

Former aviation cadets have often called for a return of the system, but the decline in total pilot requirements makes a return of an aviation cadet program unfeasible for the foreseeable future. Memories, however, are being cultivated at the still growing Aviation Cadet Museum in Eureka Springs, Arkansas.

About the Author

Walter J. Boyne, a former aviation cadet, is a retired Air Force colonel and author. When this article was published (February 2009), he had written more than 600 articles about aviation and 40 books, the most recent being **SUPERSONIC THUNDER**. He also authored the article *Forceful 'Argument,'* which appeared in **AIR FORCE MAGAZINE** just three months prior (December 2008) to the article above.

Back to Basics

Editors' note: *I have no idea who wrote this, but I thought it might be appropriate for the generations who never heard a large rotary engine start up and run to know the feelings of many of us who made the transition from round engines to jets.*

We gotta get rid of turbines, they are ruining aviation. We need round engines. Anybody can start a turbine, you just need to move a lever from "off" to "on." My PC is harder to start.

Cranking a round engine requires skill, finesse and style to start. Turbines start by whining for a while, then give a small whistling sound.

Round engines give a satisfying rattle-rattle, then click-click, bang-bang, more clicks, a lot of smoke and finally a serious low pitched roar. We like that. It's a guy thing. When you start a round engine, you know flight is ahead. Starting a turbine is like flicking on a ceiling fan.

Turbines don't break often enough, leading to aircrew boredom. A round engine looks and sounds like it's going to blow at any minute.

This helps concentrate the mind.

Turbines don't have enough levers to keep a pilot's attention. There's nothing to fiddle with during the flight.

Turbines smell like a Boy Scout camp full of Coleman lanterns. Round engines smell like God intended flying machines to smell.

Gotta go! I hear the nurse coming down the hall with my lunch.

An Olde Fly Boy

—Letters Address Downed Flight—

*Both of the **Letters to the Editor** (below and on the opposite page) were received in response to articles in recent issues of* **THE PYRAMIDIERS**. *Both make note of an ill-fated flight during the Korean War (in November of 1952). Please read on for more details.*

Dear Sir;

I read with some interest your *Pieces of My Mind* in the August issue of **THE PYRAMIDIERS**. I agree with Mr. Ed York in that many missions were flown by the "98th." I served in the 345th squadron, and I knew, quite well, Morton Jensen who flew 100 missions, although he was shot down on that bomb run and never made it back. I like to believe that he did indeed complete the 100th run.

Mort was a quiet person with a very strong sense of duty, and I liked him. He told me his goal was to have a hundred missions before his tour was over, and I told him then that he did not need to prove anything to anyone. He said that was not on his mind, he just wanted to have a hundred missions.

A few months before his last mission, Jensen was flying ECM and they encountered a lot of either, fighters or flak, I don't recall which, and that the plane became hard to manage. At any rate, the A/C gave the order to bailout, and ECM was the first in the bailout order. Well something told Jensen not to jump, he stepped back and said, "I can." Not waiting for Mort, the rest of the crew (in the aft compartment) bailed out leaving Jensen all alone in the rear of the plane. Jensen began having second thoughts about what he was doing. He made it to the rear door to try to jump when he noticed he still had his ear phones on. Instead of taking them off, he plugged into the intercom box and called the A/C. The A/C answered with, "Don't Jump," and Jensen said that he was the only one back there. So the A/C instructed him to watch the engines and report any problems. Mort was hungry and went to work on his in-flight lunch and when that didn't satisfy him, he ate two more lunches before they made an emergency landing in a field in South Korea. I don't recall him saying any more about that incident.

Somehow, word got to the Air Force news people about him going to make his 100th run. They arrived in time to set up, film, and interview our preparations for the mission. All planes got off OK, despite the rolling cameras. Our run was completed and we made it back to Yokota with-out incident. Our truck dropped us off at operations. It was there I noticed the news people were loading their gear with downcast faces. When we went into operations, I learned the reason. Major Sawyer's plane had been hit by fighters and they bailed out into the cold ocean on the way to Chodo, which was a safe pick-up island off the coast of North Korea, manned by the Navy.

The following day, I was at my desk and looked up to see Capt. Winchester coming in. We spoke a little about the mission and he told me that he nearly froze trying to get into the dingy. By his recollection, he spent a lot of time at that and another five hours in the dingy before the Navy found him. Major Sawyer, the lucky devil, never even got his feet wet as his chute carried him to the island. The only survivors were the A/C, Major Sawyer and the radar man, Capt. Winchester.

Sincerely,

Harold Beathe

January 2, 2015

Dear Bill;

I read with interest in the November **PYRAMIDIERS** John Baker's reminiscence of his experiences flying with the 98th Bomb Wing out of Yokota AFB during the Korean War. John's tour pretty much paralleled my own. I flew 29 missions with the 345th Bomb Squadron between July 1952 and January 1953 as the left gunner on 1st Lt. Byron Anderson's crew. Our B-29 had tail number 44-69668, but had no nose art, it having recently been reconditioned in the States. At one time it was called "Wild Goose."

I would like to expand on John's comments in a couple regards. First, Editor's comment notwithstanding, John was correct in stating that the normal bomb load on our mission was thirty-eight 500-pound bombs. In addition, we carried a 250-pound photoflash bomb in each bomb bay timed to light up the target triggering an on-board camera photographing bombing results.

John also discussed the loss during his tour of a 98th B-29 to a MIG attack. That was Maj. William F. Sawyer's 345th Bomb Squadron crew which went down in the early morning hours of November 20, 1952, with only two survivor's, the Aircraft Commander, Maj. Sawyer, and the Radar Operator, 1st Lt. Allan R. Winchester. Two bodies were recovered, one in the water, and the other on the North Korean mainland with a bullet hole in his head. The remaining ten crew members, including a spare Pilot and a spare Radar Operator, and including John Baker's friend, Navigator Robert J. Bird, were declared missing in action and after a year were declared presumed dead.

All of this is set out in graphic detail in the post-incident interrogation report and the finding of death memorandum which I enclose herewith.

As an aside, T/Sgt. Morton H. Jensen was the ECM Operator flying with Maj. Sawyer on the night they went down. Mort bunked with our enlisted crew members in the 345th Bomb Squadron's barracks. As the old saying goes, fact is sometimes stranger than fiction. This was Mort's 100th mission, that number being virtually unheard of, and a celebration of that accomplishment was planned to take place at Wing Headquarters on his return, with dignitaries and the press all present. I was also there. Obviously, the party came to an abrupt end when news of the loss of Maj. Sawyer's crew reached Headquarters.

I also enclose a copy of the November 17, 1952 Order awarding Mort his Fourth Oak Leaf Cluster to his Air Medal, issued three days before he went down. Mort was never heard of after that mission and was one of those declared presumed dead by the attached memorandum. Coincidently, John Baker's friend, Robert J. Bird, received the Air Medal by the same Order.

For an excellent narrative of the B-29's part in the Korean War, I recommend the book, **BLACK TUESDAY OVER NAMSI**, by Earl J. McGill, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret.), published in 2008 by Heritage Books, Inc.

Bill, as editor of **THE PYRAMIDIERS**, please use, edit or discard the matters discussed in this letter and attachments as you see fit. You will see that I am sending a copy to John Baker at the last address I have for him, 4943 Middleboro Road, Morrow, OH 45152

With best regards for the New Year,

Richard W. Iler
302 Conway Circle, apt. 3407
Masonic Home, KY 40041
dickandciel@aol.com

***Editor's Note:** The order for the Air Medals was not reproducible, but the recreation of the post-incident interrogation of the flight survivors begins on the following page.*

The Fate of Aircraft 44-66392 November 1952

*The ill-fated flight noted in the previous two **Letters to the Editor**, took off on the night of 19 November, 1952. What follows is a recreation of the post-incident interrogation of the two survivors.*

Begin Interrogation

Interrogation of:

Major William F. Sawyer, AO 660295, Aircraft Commander

1st Lt. Allan R. Winchester, AO 288660, Radar Operator

(Aircraft Serial Number: 44-66392)

Time: 1615 hours, 20 November, 1952

The take-off was normal and the mission was flown as briefed to the I.P., a point on the shoran arc on approach #3, station pair Baker-Charlie. The planned I.P. time was 00291, and to the best of the knowledge of the two survivors being interrogated, actual I.P. time was 00311. The only equipment failure at this time was the IFF, which was completely out. The run into the target was normal, at an altitude of 23,250 FLPA. The target time was unknown, however, it was approximately 1 1/2 minutes prior to the "bombs away" time of aircraft #2173 which was 0049. Shortly after the bomb impact and the taking of strike photos, three flares were dropped in the path of the bomber. The first was 5000 feet high at 1 o'clock, a 20 degree turn to the left was made, and approximately 20 seconds later, the second flare appeared at 11 o'clock, 5000 feet high. Again a 20 degree turn to the right was made and approximately 20 seconds later, the third flare appeared at about 2 o'clock, and still at 5000 feet high. Immediately after this, two (2) searchlights came on and locked on the B-29, followed by between fifteen (15) to twenty (20) more. The lights remained locked on the B-29, followed by more for approximately four (4) minutes. At the time they came on the ECM equipment was operating fully, and the ECM operator, Jensen,

Begin Page 2

said over the interphone: "there are too many frequencies, I haven't enough equipment to jam them all." At this time the tail gunner called out two (2) aircraft at 6 o'clock high, however, no pass was made at this time. Approximately two (2) minutes later, four (4) burst of fire described as "Red Tennis Balls" were received from 6 o'clock level and hits were received in the number 2 engine which caused damage and had to be feathered. As soon as this was accomplished, hits were received in the number 3 engine which was almost immediately feathered. Hits were then received on the wing between the fuselage and number 3 engine. A fire was started here and could not be put out. All crew members were on oxygen during the bomb run, and no difficulty was encountered due to loss of pressurization. Right after the hits were received, the lights went off the aircraft, and the fighter made no more passes. Dutchboy was contacted on Dog Channel right after leaving the lights. At a point approximately ten (10) miles north of the Congchon River, the heading of 200 degrees was received as an initial steer. At a point abeam of Pyongyang, and approximately 5 miles off shore, a corrected heading of 220 degrees was received from Dutchboy. At this time, the aircraft was decending (*sic*) at from 500 to 200 feet per minute, at an indicated airspeed of 280 miles per hour. At a point 10 miles northwest of Chinnampo, a third correct heading of 236 degrees was received. The route south at all times was generally parallel with the coast, and at no time more than 5 miles off shore. Right after the searchlight left the aircraft, the crew was alerted for bail-out, and all crew members prepared for bail-out. The situation was so critical

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that the task of taking off the chute to put on the anti-exposure suite and (get it) re-adjusted was not considered feasable (*sic*). The aircraft kept trim and was flown manually until two (2) minutes prior to actual bail-out. The radar equipment was functioning at all times and the V.O. was able to make radar images(?) up to the time just previous to leaving his station for the bail-out. The vacuum system and the majority of generators were out, the fluxgate compass was out, and shortly after receiving the last steer, the VHF faded out. The last message received from Dutchboy was that they were sending up flares. At this time the fire was burning the right wing, very close to the gas tanks, and streaming back as far as the Right Scanners blister, and the final decision to bail-out was made. The aft door was tied back, the bomb bay door was opened, the nose wheel lowered and the hatch salvoed. Approximately two (2) minutes later, having not seen any flares, the order to "bail-out" was given both verbally and on the alarm bell. The actual location of the island of Cho-do was unknown, but Major Sawyer felt they could wait no longer. The altitude was believed to be slightly more than 4000 feet. The bail-out order was as follows: AFTER ESCAPE HATCH—ECM Operator, Spare V.O., Tail Gunner, and V.O. AFTER BOMB BAY—CFC, Left Gunner, Right Gunner. FORWARD BOMB BAY - Radio Operator, and Navigator. NOSE WHEEL HATCH—Spare Aircraft Commander, Bombardier, Engineer, Pilot, and Aircraft Commander. The estimated time taken to clear the aft section was forty (40) seconds, and for the front section one (1) minute. At the time the Aircraft Commander bailed out, the aircraft was approximately at 2800 feet altitude. After leaving the aircraft made a slow 270 degree turn to the left and hit the

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water approximately 1/2 mile north of the northern tip of the island of Cho-do.

Major Sawyer's bail-out was accomplished in the following manner. After observing the crew members bail-out, and getting interphone calls from the rear saying the last man was leaving, he got out of the seat and stepped over the crash bar which was in position, climbed down the rungs on the side of the nose wheel well, and let go. As soon as he was clear of the aircraft, he pulled his rip cord and the chute opened normally with no perceptible shock.

He was starting to slide back into the seat when he observed the first flare approximately 1 1/2 miles north of him, and could see he was over the island and close to the ground. He slipped the chute to prevent severe oscillation and to be sure of hitting the island. However due to closeness to the ground, he soon stopped this measure and hit the ground backwards at the start of a new oscillation. He struck on the side of a hill and was rather gently lowered to a prone position on his back. The Major then rolled over, collapsed his chute and got out of his harness. He could see a glow from lights to the north of him, so he started walking in that direction. Shortly after starting off, he encountered a ROK Marine, and asked him if there were Americans to the north, and the ROK nodded "Yes" and left him. Major Sawyer then walked the balance of approximately 1 1/2 miles to the Americans.

Lieutenant Winchester's experiences were as follows. After seeing the men in the rear bail-out, he called the Aircraft Commander and told

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him he was leaving the ship. He went through the after pressurized door and stood by the escape hatch in a croutched (*sic*) position with his arms crossed and leaned out falling into the slip stream. As soon as he encountered the block (?) of the slip stream, he pulled the ripcord and the chute caught without a noticeable jar. He had tightened his harness straps to the point where he could not sit back in the seat, which caused him to hang in a slightly flexed position. He could not see the shore and tried slipping the chute to guide him in that direction. At this time he observed one (1) parachute to the southeast of him, and two (2) to the northeast. He had unfastened the chest strap prior to hitting the water. The leg straps were not unfastened because he could not sit in the harness. His striking the water was described as "just sitting down in it," and he was submerged less than in a dive. He popped his Mae West and then collapsed his chute. Due to the tightness of the leg straps some difficulty was encountered in getting free of the harness. However, this was accomplished by slipping the straps down on his legs and unsnapping them. Because he could not open the dingy (*sic*) case by the zipper strap, he reached inside and released the CO2 bottle, which immediately inflated it fully. The Mae West was holding him in almost a horizontal position and he attempted to slide into the dingy (*sic*) on his back. This was unsuccessful and he finally climbed in at the small end in the approved fashion. He covered himself with the poncho cover of the dingy (*sic*) and opened the equipment case. Due to the cold and nervousness, he was only able to get out one paddle. He checked other equipment and decided not to use any of it at that time. However, he did attempt to contact

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some of the others by means of the whistle, but with no results. He visually fixed his position in relation to two mountains on the shore and attempted to paddle towards Cho-do. He could see no apparent motion and decided it was due to still having his parachute, harness, and dingy (*sic*) cover attached to the dingy (*sic*) and acting as a sea anchor. After paddling for an indefinite period of time, Lieutenant Winchester passed out due to coldness and exhaustion. After daylight he came to, and noted his position to be apparently off the west coast of Sokto island, in almost the same position in which he was the night before. Shortly afterward, a sam-pan sent from Cho-do picked up up (*sic*).

Lieutenant Winchester was wearing long handled winter underwear, his wool overalls, and the L-2 flying jacket as well as a winter-type flying helmet and jump boots. His probable length of time spent in the water was approximately fifteen (15) minutes and from bail-out to rescue about seven (7) hours.

The remains of 1st Lt. Beverly A. Swingle, Pilot, and 2nd Lt. Myron F. Sestak, Spare Radar Observer, were located soon afterward. The remaining crew members are officially listed as *Missing In Action* and are as follows: Major Kassel M. Keene, Spare Pilot; 1st Lt. Robert J. Bird, Navigator; 1st Lt. James K. Peck, Bombardier; M/Sgt Horace H. Tiller, Flight Engineer; T/Sgt Morton H. Jensen, ECM Operator; A1C James H. Porter, Radio Operator; A/1C Raymond Thompson, Left Gunner; A/1C William Whitman, Right Gunner; A/2C James L. Nichols, CFC Gunner; and A/2C Robert J. McLoughlin, Tail Gunner.

End of Report

Times noted in the interrogation were likely Greenwich Mean Time, rather than local time.

Let Me Tell You About Snugglebunny (44-9967)

Snugglebunny was a workhorse B-29, but not without its quirks!

by Ed York
with help from Gunner, Bill Hughes
and Pilot, Eliot Potter

Snugglebunny was probably the oldest B-29 amongst both the 92nd and 98th Bomb Groups. She completed 65 missions in the Pacific Theater during WWII, then was declared "war weary" and returned to the States. I was told that she originally had electrically operated bomb bay doors but had been modified to have the standard pneumatically operated doors. This may account for some of the problems we encountered during our missions with her. I also have been told she had a sag in one wing.

The first time I saw this plane was the day we left Fairchild AFB—we were the last plane to leave for Yokota. What impressed me most when I looked Snugglebunny over was the big ***red bomb*** with the number '65' painted on the nose. Bill Clausen, with whom I'd served before, informed me about the plane's WWII missions, thus explaining the number.

Few of us who were to crew Snugglebunny at Yokota knew each other. The only crewmember I knew was Bill (Clausen), the Flight Engineer. We had served together in another outfit called Squadron T in Salina, Kansas (Smokey Hill AFB) in 1947.

My path to Snugglebunny was quite 'round about.' I had been working as a gunnery instructor at Fairchild's Base Gunnery School since arriving at Spokane in 1947. In 1948 I was assigned to the 343rd Bomb Squadron of the 98th Bomb Group for a 90-day training exercise at Kadna AFB on Okinawa. Upon returning to Fairchild, I was transferred back to the Gunnery School until the 98th was slated to move to Puerto Rico as a permanent change of station (PCS). I was reassigned to the 345th Bomb Squadron for the Puerto Rico move. But when Korea happened, I ended up in the 343rd Bomb Squadron. Bill Hughes and Marvin Root (gunners) were students at the Base Gunnery School and were "graduated" and immediately assigned to duty as crewmembers when the school was closed down.

So not only were we the 'tail end Charlies,' we were also mostly unknown to each other. That being so, the Scanners, Tail Gunner and I got acquainted real fast. Many of the officers were recalled reservists but our A/C (Airplane Commander) Potter was regular AF. Marvin Root and Bill Hughes were scanners and George Skarpac flew in the tail position. I was the CFC (Central Fire Control) Gunner. I am not sure but I think we almost missed the Hawaiian Islands on our way over to Japan. However, we did arrive at Yokota in late June, to be greeted by signs *'Rum and Coke 5 Cents'* or *'Welcome Ramey'*—all put there by our friends in the 92nd Bomb Group.

The first thing we learned at Yokota was that the bomb loading crews had yet to arrive, and the flight crews would have to load their own bombs. I didn't know how much anyone else knew about loading bombs. I had loaded one bomb while on TDY with the 98th to Okinawa. I did know that there were two ways to load—one was using a hand crank and cranking up each bomb into position (we normally carried 38 to 40 500-pound bombs), the easier way was to use an electric hoist which could be moved from rack to rack. Needless to say there was considerable confusion at first. Bill Hughes scrounged an electric hoist, and we eventually managed to get all 40 bombs hooked up. As time went on we got a little better at this, but frankly it didn't give the gunners much of an opportunity to check their equipment. So for the first few missions we hoped for the best. Eventually the bomb loaders arrived, and things got back to normal.

At first flights went pretty well, but after one of our missions the bomb bay doors refused to close. We had to return to base with them wide open which slowed us down considerably. It also got us a lot of attention from the 7th Fleet when we crossed the Sea of Japan. The Navy didn't take kindly to us flying over them with the doors open and invariably sent up a few carrier planes to give us a closer look. Fortunately we passed inspection but this was just one of the many times this happened. We usually were the last ones to land at Yokota after a mission.

We also had some occasions when all of our bombs did not release, and they had to be released manually. On most of those occasions, Bill Hughes was the one who volunteered to go into the open bomb bay to release them. So we had to have someone watch when "Bombs Away" was called to let the Bombardier know when all bombs dropped. On one occasion it was my turn to watch the bombs release and call in the 'all clear.' When the 'bombs away' call was made the bottom bomb on the right forward rack did not release. I had to sit there and watch the three bombs above bounce off the hung-up bomb as they released. Finally, the last bomb broke the hung-up bomb's shackle and it dropped.

During the period when things had quieted down, we were sent out alone on a mission to bomb a road in the northern part of Korea. When we got to our target area, the bombardier wanted to make a "dry run" first, which we did. When we came back for our final run, we began to pick up flak from some small ground units, which I reported to the A/C. The Squadron Operations Officer was with us on that day getting in some flight time. I knew something was wrong after we left the target area because there was a lot of talking going on in the cockpit. We learned upon landing that we had over flown (and maybe bombed) a part of China. There was quite a reception of Brass waiting for us when we landed. The only reason I can offer for this error is that the terrain in Korea made it difficult to differentiate where Korea ended and China began.

One of our missions we took off in bad weather, we couldn't see the ground from the time we left until our return. We were to 'radar bomb' the target. Because we could not see the other planes, we had an assigned slot in the line. When it was our turn to drop and we were on our bomb run, the bay doors were opened. I was up in my CFC seat and as I watched the tail section started to shake and vibrate considerably. We dropped out of formation and had to go around to the tail end of the line. I was told that we had started to stall out when the bomb bay doors were opened. Of course this meant that we were 'tail-end-Charlies' again.

The following memories of Snugglebunny were provided by our A/C Capt. Eliot H. Potter.

"As I remember Snugglebunny was removed from the nose but you could still see where it had been. By vote of the crew, we elected to keep the name and had a local artist repaint it because it apparently had completed 65 successful missions in the South Pacific.

"The bomb bay doors never did work. After coming back from one mission with them open, Frank Manley, the civilian Boeing tech rep, said that it wasn't possible and proceeded to jump on the doors, promptly falling through to the ground

"We did have to load our own bombs. I remember doing some loading myself. On that weather mission we returned with the doors open and didn't have enough gas to go to an alternate field. It was snowing on landing, just like flying inside of a ping-pong ball. GCA (Ground Control Approach) did an excellent job of guiding us and at 50 feet when he said, 'Round out and take over for landing,' I watched Al Burnett (Bombardier) in the nose and as he reared back I followed. With the new snow on the runway, it resulted in a smooth landing but when we came to a stop on the runway we had to have a 'Follow Me' truck take us in to park. On roll out I couldn't see the edge of the runway so it was following the directional gyro all the way.

"I think we all had over 50 missions. I had 55."

The following comments are from Gunner, Bill Hughes.

"Ed, your story looks good, however, you failed to tell of my most shining moment in the bomb bay of Snugglebunny. It was one of those missions during which several groups were to bomb what was believed to be a large concentration of enemy troops. We dropped 100-pound fragmentation bombs. As usual, one of the bottom racks failed to release. When I went into the bomb bay to release it, I found that a bomb had fallen from a shackle higher up and was lying on a bomb that had not released. It had dropped far enough so that the arming wires had been pulled and the little feller was armed.

"What's going to happen when it gets tossed out into the slipstream?

"As luck would have it, nothing happened. Tossed it out, released the bottom shackle and went back into the compartment—still scared to death. You know, you could not wear a parachute into the bomb bay because there was not enough room to move around. Another worry was catching the ripcord on something and opening the chute. It would tear you to bits dragging you out of the bay. She was quite a ship, quite a pile of parts."

We continued to fly this ship on our assigned missions until she was scheduled for a *2000 inspection* that would take some time. During this time we filled in on other crews. All in all, Snugglebunny added 45 missions to her credit. Most of us did about 54 while at Yokota.

The crewmembers (R-33) were:

- A/C Captain Eliot "Painless Peter" Potter
- Pilot Captain Grady B. Williams
- Flight Engineer Bill Clausen, replaced by Lee "Shorty" Gordon
- Bombardier 1st Lt. Albert Barnett
- Navigator Captain Karmen Heider
- Radar Captain James Masuraca
- Radio Sgt Lyle J. Layer
- Scanners Sgt Bill Hughes
Sgt Marvin Root
- CFC Gunner Ed N. York
- Tail Gunner Sgt George Skarpac

Postscript: Snugglebunny (44-9667) was badly damaged on a mission to bomb a bridge over the Yalu River and had to make an emergency landing in South Korea. She survived and was "reclaimed" at Tiner AFB on 3-10-1954. Snugglebunny served with the 6th Bomb Group during WW II. The ship we used a lot while Snugglebunny was out for inspection was called "Squeeze Play," 44-86415. It was lost on 9 October 1951 in the Sea of Japan. There were no survivors.

To Snugglebunny's Credit:

65 Missions During WWII

45 Missions After

Reunion Schedule • August 24–28, 2015

98th Bomb Grp/Wing Veterans Association

Hotel: Crowne Plaza, 33 East 5th St., Dayton, OH 45402
Reservations: 1-800-Holiday (465-4329) or (937) 224-0800
Hotel Rate: $117.00 Inc. – Guaranteed until July 10th, 2015.

Day 1 Welcome Dinner

Dayton is the Birthplace of Aviation and that beautiful thing we call a flying machine! It's also home to more registered patents than you can count on all your fingers and toes!!!

Day 2 Tour USAF Museum / IMAX Theater – Buses Depart 10:00 a.m.

Today is our first and only (stay as long as you like) visit to the Official United States Air Force Museum!!!

Day 3 City Tour & Lunch at WPAFB Club – Buses Depart 9:30 a.m.

Historical venues and city tour.

Day 4 Free Day!!!

No tours; take a day to roam the city on your own, maybe have some conversation about the future of the 98th Vet's Assoc!!!

Optional: **Dinner at the Top – "View 162"** – 7:00 p.m.

Come join us atop the Crowne Plaza for dinner at the restaurant "View 162"... for or a beautiful sunset and nighttime panoramic view of the city that gave Birth to Flight!!!

Special Dinner (three choices on the menu) and a glass of wine!!!

Let's tell some "true stories," and enjoy a bit of laughter ... just a little something special!!!

Day 5 Banquet & Ladies Event

9:30 a.m. Executive Board Meeting
10:00 a.m. Association General Meeting
10:30 a.m. Ladies Event – Bus Departs 10:30 a.m.
4:00 p.m. Depart for USAF Museum
4:30 p.m. 98th Monument Re-Dedication Ceremony
5:00 p.m. Gift Shop Opens
6:00 p.m. Cash Bar Opens
6:30 p.m. Association Banquet

Please Any question or concern regarding the Dayton Reunion Contact:

Dennis Posey Tel: (770) 971-3972 Email: dennis_posey@att.net
Bill Seals Tel: (281) 395-3805 Email: colbillyseals@hotmail.com

Ladies: FYI, no high heels on any scheduled tours or the AF Museum.

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 Choice: #1 Grilled London Broiled w/Rich Demi Glaze Sauce
2 Almond Crusted Chicken w/BVB Sauce # 3 Crab Meat Stuffed Tilapia w/Lobster Sauce

Choose Two (2) Assoc Member #_____ #_____ Spouse/Guest #_____ #_____

Reunion Registration Fee . . . . . $75.00 x ____Persons = $ _____

Aug 24th **Day 1** **Welcome to the 2015 98th Veterans Assoc. Reunion**
6:30 p.m. / Cash Bar Opens – 7:00 p.m. / Welcome Reception (Heavy Hors d'oeuvres)

Aug 25th **Day 2** 10:00 a.m. – **USAF Museum** $12.00 x ____Persons = $ _____
(Lunch not included; but the Museum offers both a Cafeteria and the Refueling Café)

Aug 26th **Day 3** 9:30 a.m. – **Historical Venues and City Tour**
Lunch at WPAFB Club $25.00 x ____Persons = $ _____

Aug 27th **Day 4** **Free Day**
Dinner at the Top "View 162" Please see details on the opposite page
$27.00 x ____Persons = $ _____

Aug 28th **Day 5**
9:30 a.m. **Executive Board Meeting**
10:00 a.m. **Association General Meeting**
10:30 a.m. **Ladies Event** (Dressy Casual)
$20.00 x ____Ladies = $ _____
4:15 p.m. **Depart for AF Museum**
4:30 p.m. **98th Monument Re-Dedication Ceremony**
5:00 p.m. **Gift Shop Opens for 98th Vet Assoc only**
6:00 p.m. **Cash Bar Opens**
6:30 p.m. **Association Banquet**

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 Mioduszewski, 1137 Joyce Lane, Ann Arbor, MI 48103

God bless; be safe till we meet again!

Join Us in Dayton in 2015

An aerial view of the National Museum of the United States Air Force, located at Wright Patterson Airforce Base, Dayton, OH