



THE PYRAMIDIARS

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

July 2023

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Message from the President

As this newsletter is mostly about our upcoming reunion in Washington D.C., I thought I'd use this space to reflect on past reunions Linda and I have attended, and maybe resurrect some past memories for you as well...

Because we live just outside Wright-Patterson AFB, we have been able to attend a couple of reunion banquets when the reunion was held nearby (once in Dayton and one in the Cincinnati area). We sat at the same table as Phil and Doris Tarpley (Linda's parents) and met some super nice people (and future friends!). Our first "full" reunion was in 2012 at Colorado Springs, and the highlight for me was meeting a young lady from Rio, Wisconsin (the Tarpley's home town, population about 1,000) who had recently been accepted to The United States Air Force Academy, and had been invited to our banquet by Phil. I picked her up at her dorm and brought her to our banquet hall. As soon as we entered, all eyes turned towards her...here were all these Air Force veterans looking at the future of the USAF, and this super-sharp young cadet looking at some of the history of the Air Force! So cool.

At our last our last reunion in San Antonio our daughter Lindsey, husband Rob and their daughter Bess drove down from their home in Dallas for our banquet. After the meal and as Dennis Posey was auctioning off one of Bob Schinsing's B-24 bird feeders, Bess was playing with some toys on the floor. Every time she threw her arms up in joy because of something the toy did, Dennis took the act as a bid...and that's how we bought our first B-24 bird feeder!



Bill West

Message from the President *continued from page 1*

Every reunion has always had some memorable tours, and here are a few that still stand out for me: Touring Fort Sumter and the USS Yorktown in beautiful Charleston, SC, the majestic Royal Gorge railroad tour near Colorado Springs (I was blessed to sit by “Herk” Streitburger on that trip, and got to know this amazing man!), being part of the ‘retiring the colors’ ceremony one evening at the outdoor amphitheater near Mount Rushmore, and then seeing the Crazy Horse Monument the next afternoon. Even though we live in a suburb of Dayton, OH, I had never been to the Wright Brother’s Bike Shop, so that was a real treat, as was having our banquet inside The National Air Force Museum. While in Tucson we got to go on a tour of the Air Force “bone yard” (sadly, these tours are now paused indefinitely) and I will never forget the tour bus going by a slot for a static display, and only a ladder for entering an airplane was standing there...and then I noticed the sign that this was a display for F-117 Stealth Fighter—pretty clever!

A couple of great memories from our Dallas reunion in 2019: First there was the visit of AT&T/Cowboys Stadium. We were met by an excellent staff of tour guides, and our first stop was the 50 yard line, where we all lined up for a group photo (which all of us received as a souvenir of our visit). We toured the Cowboy’s dressing room (did you know that the offensive team dresses on one side of the room, and the defense on the other?). We then toured the press box, one of the luxury suites, and then the locker room of The Dallas Cowboy Cheerleaders—we were briefed on the history and organization of the cheerleaders (did you know there are 40 of them, and over 5,000 young ladies try out for the team each year?). During the time for questions, one member of the reunion group, a 95-year-old WWII

vet, raised his hand and asked for the phone numbers of the cheerleaders! We then enjoyed a gourmet lunch in the fabulous Stadium Club. Just a truly wonderful tour! That evening was our ‘all-groups’ banquet with entertainment by Ladies Liberty, an Andrews Sisters-type group who were excellent! During a performance of a slow song, one of the singers announced, “I’m looking for someone to dance with” and selected a gentleman who turned out to be 104 years old! He danced well, but the best dancers, by far, were our own Barbra and Alex Tejada!

By the way, one of the unexpected joys of attending our reunions is getting to know other adult children like ourselves who accompany a parent. For example, at the Charleston reunion, Linda and I helped Stanley and Regi Siberski, (what a neat couple!), and their adult children celebrate their wedding anniversary at the hotel’s bar. After Doug and his siblings helped their parents up to their room for the night, they returned to the bar and all of us had a ball! At the Colorado Springs reunion we had the pleasure to get to know Ken Laninga Jr—what a fine man, as is his much taller brother Randy, whom we met a year later. When we gathered in Dayton, we met their other brothers and one of the grandsons at the dedication of the 98th memorial monument. At Colorado Springs reunion we also became friends with Gary and Sue Schinsing, and their two daughters, Simone and Lilly. Of course Susie and Lura, Bonnie and Joan are also ‘second generation’ leaders within the 98th—what a great legacy we are blessed to be a part of!

Best wishes,
Bill West

Here’s to making new memories at our October Reunion!

Please see pages 15-19 for a full description of reunion plans and registration details regarding the combined reunion of the 15th Army Air Force (alumni, family and friends), October 12-15, in Virginia, near our Nation’s capitol.

Message from the Secretary

Hello all! Hope this finds you doing well and enjoying 2023—the year we may have finally realized the environmentalists sure knew what they were talking about when it came to ‘global warming.’

With Memorial Day so soon passed, I just wanted to make my own mention here and include Longfellow’s famous poem *Decoration Day*. I grew up with this being a very important day in my family and the town we lived in. Everyone took part. My Grandmother Simons was a proud Blue Star Mother and would take me with her downtown with her to ‘sell’ Poppies. I also helped them put the small American Flags on the veterans’ graves. This is still a vivid memory for me, along with the parade starting in the heart of town where the Honor Guard would toss a red, white, and blue wreath off the bridge into the Big Darby River to honor all those who served. From there it would be a march to the cemetery, with the whole town following, for a small ceremony with Taps and a rifle volley salute. I remember my Dad putting on his uniform and joining the march—I was a proud little girl! It was a very long time ago, but a place I still go to in my mind every year. And now an annual tradition for me is to watch on PBS The National Memorial Day Special from Washington DC—(sometimes twice!). This was the 34th year for it and, as always, it was memorable and not to be missed (and still viewable online).

The “*Honoring Lost Heroes*” article was a result of a Harry Smith Segment on the *Today* show May 26 that I happened to catch. It was about finding and bringing home a WWII veteran. (*Of note: this day was 79 years to the day that he had been lost.*) I was so touched by it and proud that we are truly still searching for our missing, I wanted to share it and the link if you want to watch it.

While doing some online research for this newsletter, I ran across an article that caught my eye, and found it so fascinating, I couldn’t stop reading it. When I got to the section where Billy Hadley talked about his brother, I had to include it, as his brother was the pilot of the

98th Bomb Group’s B-24, *Hadley’s Harem*, lost in the famous Ploesti Raid. You can find this article beginning on page 5, headlined with the name of the publication it came from: the *BARTLESVILLE OKLAHOMA EXAMINER ENTERPRISE*.

You may notice there are no updates in this issue, as there are none that I have been made aware of recently. This is a reminder to tell you how important it is to make sure you are registered correctly with the Association and keep us updated on any of your information changes and any of your buddies that you come across. Dues are still just \$20 per fiscal year. (FY 23 will begin July 1, 2023 and end June 30, 2024).

Last but certainly not least, included in this newsletter is information that everyone has been waiting for regarding our next Reunion to be held October 12-15 in Washington DC (Fairfax County, Virginia). Our Reunion Committee Chair, Dave Blake of the 461st BGA, 15th Army Air Force, has done his usual excellent, thorough job of planning and has put together what promises to be a memorable time! For me, DC is a must for the group—a sacred place for all it stands for, a symbol of what our members fought for, and that we have pledged to never forget. I still remember my first reunion there in 2004 and all we did and saw—I never in my life expected to be in the Officers Club at Fort Myer for lunch, staring up at a life size painting of General Patton, and in the company of so many of the 98th’s “Old Guard.” And for me now, it is the place to “visit” my parents niche at Arlington Cemetery.

New this year! ... you can fill out the registration online, and even pay (should you choose) that way. If not, you can still do it the ‘old fashioned’ way this year. Whatever you do, please make your hotel reservations early and don’t wait too long before registering. Please join us all to make memories like Bill West talks about in his message and those I have related to you.

Stay safe until we can be together again.....

Susie



In Remembrance of Memorial Day...

Longfellow's "Decoration Day" may not rank among his canonic *Atlanticverse*, but it imparts a burnished poignancy all its own. In the solemn, hymn-like strains that were a hallmark of the country's foremost "Fireside Poet," the poem pays tribute to what was then a new form of civic observance: a day set aside to commemorate those who had perished in the Civil War, by placing flags and flowers on soldiers' graves, a

custom that gradually gave rise to our modern Memorial Day honoring all who give their lives in military service. Its first readers likely felt an elegaic pang all the more acutely: by the time the poem circulated in the June 1882 *Atlantic*, it would have been national news that Longfellow had died just a few weeks earlier at his home in Cambridge, at the age of 75.

Decoration Day

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow

Sleep, comrades, sleep and rest
On this Field of the Grounded Arms,
Where foes no more molest,
Nor sentry's shot alarms!

Rest, comrades, rest and sleep!
The thoughts of men shall be
As sentinels to keep
Your rest from danger free.

Ye have slept on the ground before,
And started to your feet
At the cannon's sudden roar,
Or the drum's redoubling beat.

Your silent tents of green
We deck with fragrant flowers;
Yours has the suffering been,
The memory shall be ours.

But in this camp of Death
No sound your slumber breaks;
Here is no fevered breath,
No wound that bleeds and aches.

All is repose and peace,
Untrampled lies the sod;
The shouts of battle cease,
It is the Truce of God!



from the
**BARTLESVILLE OKLAHOMA
EXAMINER ENTERPRISE**

November 5, 2019

EDITORS NOTE: Historian Joe L. Todd interviewed Billy Hadley on July 25 in Bartlesville.

Billy Hadley was born in Arkansas City, Kansas, June 6, 1924, to Perry Hadley and Beulah Hadley. He attended school in Arkansas City and graduated in 1942.

T: Where did you go after high school?

H: After high school, I went in the service. I graduated in May 1942 and I decided to join the Aviation Cadet Program. In November of 1942, I went down to Oklahoma City and put in Aviation Cadet Training.

T: Where were you December 7, 1941?

H: I was in Arkansas City and I was at a movie. When I came out of the movie, people on the street were all visiting and I asked what was going on and they said Japan bombed Pearl Harbor. I said, "Where is Pearl Harbor?" They said it was in the Hawaiian Islands. I said that can't be much of a problem with Japan.

T: Were you accepted into the Aviation Cadet Program?

H: Yes, I was.

T: Tell me about the program.

H: I wasn't taken in November. They sent me back home and in February of 1943, I was called. I went to Jefferson Barracks in St. Louis for Basic Training. When we finished Basic Training, the Aviation Cadet Program was so full of people that they sent us to the College Training Detachment. They sent us to Albion, Michigan to college and kept us there. We lived in a fraternity barracks in the basement of a Methodist Church. There were probably three hundred of us there at the college.

T: What did you do at Albion?



Bill Hadley during his military service.

H: We took training and courses and we had our military training.

T: Tell me about Basic Training at Jefferson Barracks.

H: It was quite different for me. We lived in wooden huts, ten people in a hut. We had a stove in the middle of the hut for heat and fueled with coal. The hut was probably twelve feet by twelve feet. We did regular military training, PT and so forth.

article continues on the following pages, 6-11

T: What weapon did you train with in Basic?

H: We didn't have a weapon. It was mostly marching and PT.

T: What is your most vivid memory of Basic?

H: The most vivid memory was how cold it was and keeping that stove going. Meeting guys from all over was very interesting. I liked it.

T: Were you allowed to go to St. Louis?

H: No.

T: Basic lasted how long?

H: Probably three months.

T: How long were you in Albion?

H: I was in Albion about four or five months.

T: What is your most vivid memory of Albion?

H: Living in the fraternity barracks and had our meals in the Methodist Church. We lined up and marched. It was all right. It was quite different and a very nice, small college.

T: Did you have contact with the students at the college?

H: No.

T: Did you go downtown?

H: Yes, we had weekends to go downtown.

T: What was the reaction of the local people to you?

H: We got along quite well. In fact, I visited and got acquainted with a girl that lived behind the fraternity house and we had dates on weekends.

T: What type of classes did you have at Albion?

H: Mostly, it was mathematics and physics.

T: Were the classes geared toward aviation?

H: Yes.

T: From Albion, where did you go?

H: From Albion, I went to San Antonio to the Aviation Cadet Center. We took tests to determine whether you would take pilot training or become a bombardier or navigator. I was classified in the pilot program.

T: What type of training did you have at San Antonio?

H: Regular Army training, marching and the whole thing. We were not at an air base, we were separate and near Randolph Field.

T: What type of quarters did you have?

H: We had regular Army barracks, two story.

T: Tell me about your instructors.

H: It is difficult for me to remember, but they were very thorough and quite a nice program.

T: Why did you apply for the Aviation Cadet Program?

H: I had a brother in 1938 joined the Aviation Cadets. He trained in Texas and it was just interesting to me. He was two years older.

T: That was during the Depression.

T: What is your most vivid memory of San Antonio?

H: I really can't remember much about San Antonio. When we left San Antonio, we went to Primary Flight Training in Missouri. That was in 1943 and a directive came that said there were too many people in pilot training and they cut ten percent. I was one that was cut.

T: Where did you go after you were cut?

H: They sent me to Denver, Colorado to Buckley Field to armament school. After armament school, they sent us to Las Vegas to gunnery school.

T: What type of training did you have at Buckley Field?

H: Fifty caliber machine guns and anything that dealt with an airplane.

T: Had you flown before?

H: I had flown. We had an airport near our home and had a sod field. We used to go and hang around in the hangars. A guy came in with a bi-plane. He had taken off someplace and was very muddy. He said, "If you guys wash my plane, I'll give you a ride". There were four of us and he put all of us in the front cockpit, all four of us. It was an open cockpit and took us up and flew around. He flew over our home. My mom told me later, she was worried because we had not come home for supper. That plane flew over and she said,

"He might be on that plane." Sure enough, I was.

T: How long were you at Buckley Field?

H: Probably three or four months. It was armament training on military planes. We trained on the fifty caliber machine guns mainly because that is what they carried on the airplanes.

T: Did you fire the weapons?

H: We didn't fire the weapons, we were trained to take them apart and fix them.

T: Tell me about gunnery school at Las Vegas.

H: I didn't to go gunnery school. They sent me to gunnery school. I said if I can't fly as a pilot, I am not going to fly as a gunner. So, they sent me to Lincoln, Nebraska for reclassification. I was classified as an armorer and sent to El Paso, Texas to the B-24s. We did armament work there and we loaded one hundred practice bombs and fifty caliber machine guns.

T: Was that at Fort Bliss?

H: No, at Biggs Field, next door to Fort Bliss. We loaded bombs and took care of the armament.

T: What armament?

H: Mainly the fifty-caliber machine gun. We took them apart and loaded them.

T: What was the attitude of the crews on those B-24s?

H: We didn't associate with the crews. We were ground crew.

T: How long were you at Biggs Field?

H: Probably four months.

T: Was there a fear that the Germans may try an invasion through Mexico?

H: Not that I was aware of.

T: From Biggs Field, where did you go?

H: They sent us to Dalhart, then I didn't go to Dalhart. Someone told me to send a wire to the commander where you are being transferred and request and delay in route. I did and I got one. All the time I was in service, four years, I never had a furlough, I had a couple of delay in routes. When my brother, the pilot

was killed, I got to go home for five days when that happened.

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T: *When was your brother killed?*

H: *In 1943, August 1st. They were bombing Ploesti Oil Refineries. He was the pilot and as they went in, they took a shot in the nose and it killed the bombardier and injured the navigator. They went ahead and made the run, dropped their bombs, but he lost an engine. They flew out of Africa, which was about a two thousand mile flight. As they were coming back, he was with Killer Kane. He was one of five guys that got the Congressional Medal of Honor for the Ploesti Raid. Gib, my brother was wing man to Killer Kane. As they were flying back, they were trying to get to Cyprus to a British base because they knew they couldn't make Africa. As they were flying, Gib realized they were not going to make it with the damage they had on the plane (**Hadley's Harem**). He decided to ditch the plane. They ditched the plane off the coast of Turkey. The B-24 was weak in the center section and it broke it two. When they ditched, the water came in through the hole in the nose and Gib and the copilot drowned. Seven of the crew got out. They were taken by the Turks and turned over to the Air Force. One of the gunners in 1995 said, "I know where that plane is ditched and I am going back over there and we are going to find it." He went over and went to the town they were in and couldn't find anybody because this was 1943 until 1995. He was very discouraged and came back. He lived in California. He got a letter from a Turk and said, "I know where they plane, is. My son and I practice diving on that plane." He went back over and found the plane. They got enough money to raise the plane. Divers came from Saudi Arabia and put balloons on it and raised the plane. Today, that plane is in a museum in Istanbul, Turkey. They got the remains of my brother and copilot and sent them to Hawaii. They took blood samples from us and identified them. We had a funeral in 1943 and had a marker in the cemetery, but we didn't have a body. We were going to have another funeral and a man from Washington came with a book and they had the skull, an arm bone and leg bone is all they could get. They lost a lot when they raise the plane. They assigned us a major from Broken Arrow to be*

our contact for the funeral. She came up and she was very good and thorough. The day before the funeral, she said, "I want you to open the coffin and want to see what you have." They opened the coffin and she said, "They don't have the right uniform. It is not an Air Force uniform." They said, "This is what they sent us." She got in her car and drove to Kansas City and got an Air Force uniform. She drove to Kansas City, got the uniform and drove back and we had the funeral the next day at 10:00 in the morning.

T: *When was the funeral?*

H: *January 1996.*

T: *What was your brother's name?*

H: *Gilbert. That was quite a time.*

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T: Did you go to Dalhart?

H: I never went to Dalhart. They sent the group to Dalhart, but I was home five days and when they left Dalhart, they sent them to McCook, Nebraska. They changed planes from B-24s to B-29s. The B-29s were a stripped ship. They wanted to carry more bombs to bomb Japan. The only armament on the B-29 was the tail gun and one turret in the top. We could load fifty-four 500-pound bombs in the B-29. In Gib's plane, the B-24, they could load ten 500-pound bombs.

T: Were you assigned to a unit at McCook?

H: Yes, the 331st Bomb Group, 315th Bomb Wing.

T: How long were you at McCook?

H: We were there four or five months.

T: What is your most vivid memory of McCook?

H: All I remember of McCook, we had some extra time on our hands and they were working on the air base and I took a job with a contractor pouring sidewalks on the base.

T: Were you loading practice bombs at McCook?

H: Yes. When we got to Guam, we loaded real bombs. The ground crew went on a boat. We went to Seattle and loaded on the boat and it took us thirty-one days to go from Seattle to Guam.

T: What ship were you on?

H: The USS Newport.

T: When you were on the ship in Seattle heading out, what were you thinking?

H: We weren't too concerned about being hit by submarines, so it was kind of a cruise. We had two meals a day and you stood up to eat because there were so many on the ship. We stopped in Pearl Harbor then we went to Kwajalein and they were going to treat us to a good meal. They brought turkey on board and with two meals a day, we really loaded down on that turkey. The next morning, we were down in the bottom of the ship. We were in a room about twenty by twenty feet and all our barracks bags were piled in the middle and the bunks were along the wall. When we started out, the pile was about as high as the ceiling, but we didn't stay in our bunks, we lounged on the barracks bags and they were packed down.

T: How did you pass the time on the trip?

H: We didn't do much. When we ate all that turkey, I got up that morning early and went up on deck and there were guys in line and I thought they were in line for breakfast. It was not breakfast, they were in line to get in the latrine. Everybody got sick. I was enlisted but couldn't wait. I went to the officer's place and got in as soon as I could. On deck, I saw two guys sitting back to back on an apple box going to the bathroom, or a guy would take his helmet and go to the bathroom then throw it overboard. We had quite a time with that turkey. We mainly played cards.

T: Did many guys get seasick?

H: Yes. One guy I remember. He was sick from the time we left Seattle and the only thing he ate was crackers we took to him. He stayed in his bunk practically the whole time.

T: Did you have lifeboat drills on the ship?

H: No, there were not enough boats. It was a Merchant Marine ship but had a Navy crew.

T: If the ship was sinking, what were you told to do?

H: We all had life vests. The only armament on that ship was a 20 mm on the tail. There were two of them.

T: What did you do in Guam?

H: We landed in Guam and there was an airbase, but it wasn't for us. They sent us to the north end of Guam and we were in pup tents and there were four of us in each pup tent. The air base wasn't finished yet. The Seabees came in and they cleared that whole area almost overnight. While they were working on the airbase, we were building barracks. We had pre-fab barracks that we built. When the runway was ready, we started loading bombs.

T: When did you arrive in Guam?

H: I believe it was April 1945.

T: Were you still with the 331st Bomb Group?

H: Yes. We were with the 331st through the war. We were told the 331st had the last bomb run on Japan.

T: What was your average day on Guam?

H: We got up about five o'clock and first we were building barracks. Another armament guy and me were told there was a P-61 Night Fighter Group in the Navy and they transferred out and they had bunks with mattresses on them. The first sergeant and the other armor guy and me took a weapons carrier and went down and got three mattresses out of their barracks. We got back to our barracks and they guys said, "Can you get some more?" We went back with the weapons carrier. We loaded some mattresses and were driving out and this jeep came and it was the MPs. I was in the back of the weapons carrier and tried to sneak out, but I don't know where I would have gone. But when I got out, they heard the gravel and came back and got me. They put us in a detention pen. They had us marching around with our arms folded in front of us. We were worried sick about what we were going to do. When our major found out the first sergeant was gone, he asked, "Where did they go?" They found out where we were. The major and his master sergeant got us out from the Navy.

T: Why did they detain you?

H: Because we were stealing their mattresses. There were still some P-61 pilots there and they came back and some of their mattresses were gone.

T: Did you have a mattress to sleep on?

H: No, they took them.

T: How do you load a B-29?

H: There were fifty four bombs out in front of the B-29 and they were pushed to us and we had shackles to hang them in the bomb bay.

T: How do you get them in bomb bay?

H: There is a hoist.

T: How long does it take to load a B-29?

H: There were several of us assigned to one ship. They would fly out at nine o'clock in the morning and get back around five and we would load for the next day. It would take five or six hours to load a B-29.

T: Was there a maintenance crew?

H: Yes, they pulled maintenance while we loaded the bombs.

T: Did you load the fifty caliber machine guns?

H: We loaded them, but there was nothing they could fire at. There were night missions.

T: Did you work on one specific airplane or any airplane that came in?

H: We were not assigned to any particular airplane.

T: Did many airplanes not come back?

H: Not that at time, we were very fortunate. We didn't lose a plane.

T: How long were you on Guam?

H: We were there until the war ended and we thought they would take the bomb racks out and put in seats and fly us back to the states immediately. But in February 1946, I was sent to Saipan then to Tinian. There wasn't much for us to do.

T: Why didn't they send you home?

H: I don't think they had facilities to send us all home.

T: Were there natives on Guam?

H: Oh, yes.

T: Did you have any contact with them?

H: No, we couldn't go in the native places.

T: Did you know how the war was progressing?

H: Oh, yes.

T: Were you preparing for the invasion of Japan?

H: We weren't thinking about it, but I think they were.

T: When you heard about the atomic bomb, what did you think?

H: I wasn't aware of how strong it was, when you handle five hundred pounders.

T: What did you do on V-J Day?

H: Nothing, we were just happy it was over. There was no celebration.

T: What did you do on Saipan and Tinian?

H: We didn't do much of anything because the war was over. The atomic bomb was a plane that flew off Tinian. When we got there, it was all over. I recall the runways on Tinian, those B-29s would go down the runway then drop down and you thought they went in the ocean, but they came back up.

T: Tell me about coming home.

H: We were on a Navy ship coming home.

T: Do you recall the ship?

H: No. We went to San Pedro.

T: How did you pass the time on the trip coming home?

H: Mainly playing cards. It was a much better trip coming home. It was faster. It took about five days coming back.

T: When you saw the coastline of the US, what did you think?

H: It was at night.

T: You got off at San Pedro and what did you do?

H: We were sent to Colorado, where we were discharged.

T: When were you discharged?

H: February of 1946.

T: Did you come back to Ark City?

H: Yes.

T: What did you do after you were discharged?

H: I came back to Ark City and was working at this refinery when I went into the service, so they were obligated to take me back.

T: What did you do at the refinery?

H: I worked in the warehouse. When I went in the service, I was in the weed gang on the tank bottoms. We cut the weeds around the bottom of the tanks. We had to do it all with hand tools, we had no power tools. When I went in the service, I was making ninety cents an hour. When I came back, I was making ninety cents an hour.

T: Did they still have the berms around the tanks?

H: Yes.

T: What are the berms for?

H: In case of spillage.

T: What refinery is in Ark City?

H: Kan-O-Tex. Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas.

T: How long did you work at the refinery?

H: We had the 54-20 program. We got fifty four dollars a month for twenty months and I spent time in the pool hall. I met this girl and we were married.

T: Where did you meet her?

H: In Ark City.

T: What is her name?

H: Mary Edith Gibson.

T: When did you get married?

H: January 19, 1951.

T: After the refinery, where did you work?

H: I went to Kansas State College.

T: What did you study?

H: Industrial Engineering—went to work for Phillips in 1951 and came to Bartlesville. We got out of college in Manhattan and had a fourplex apartment and we were paying fifty dollars a month. I worked for a building specialty house in Wichita. I came home and we had a baby and Mary said, "They raised the rent five dollars a

month." I had to get another job and got in the car and came to Bartlesville and interviewed and they hired me. In Wichita, I was making two hundred and sixty five dollars a month and came down here and made three hundred and fifteen dollars a month.

T: Who were you working for in Wichita?

H: Lukso Brick and Stone.

T: What were you doing?

H: We took building plans and bid on the projects.

T: Who did you work for at Phillips?

H: I came into the engineering department. They loaned me to R&D. I went to R&D and worked on the island.

T: What is the island?

H: Down inside, we had some pilot plants inside the big buildings and that was the island. It wasn't good to work for engineering and work for R&D. I asked to be transferred to Ramp and was transferred.

T: When did you retire from Phillips?

H: 1968.

T: What have you been doing since you retired?

H: I played golf and right now, I go to the golf course every morning at 6:00 and we get the golf carts out.

T: Which course?

H: Adams. My wife passed away and I live alone and have all that work to do. I don't hire anybody to do anything.

T: The best thing I have done is join 55 Plus. That is great because you are with a lot of people your age.

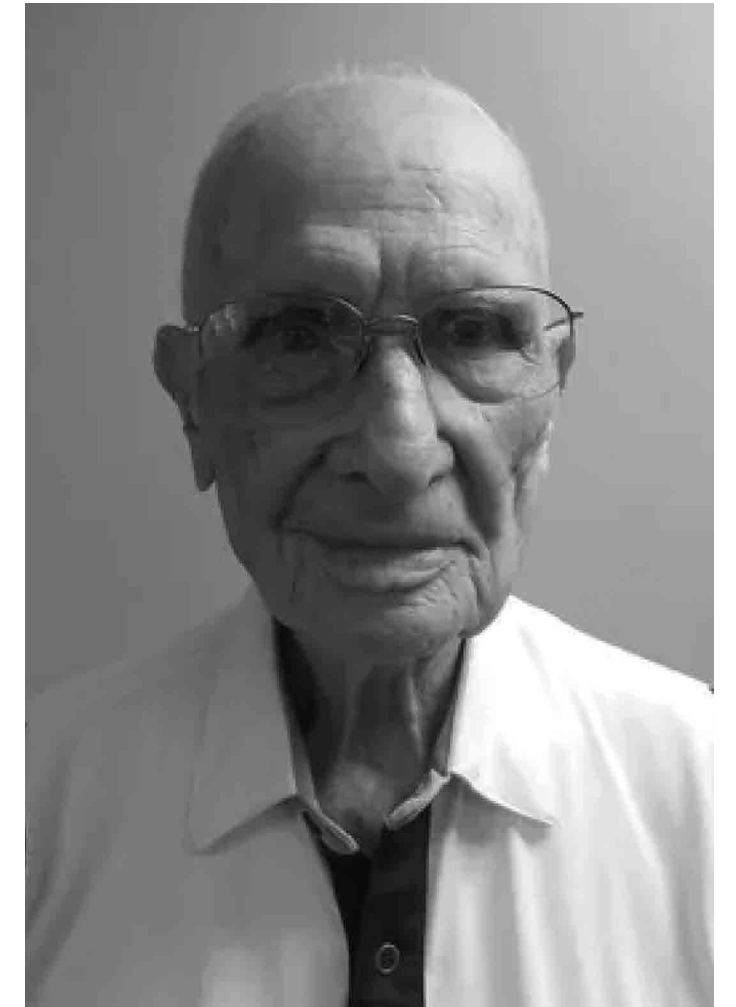
T: Would you join the Air Corps again?

H: I imagine.

T: I'd like to do a word association. I'll give you some words and you give me your reaction. The first one is Basic Training.

H: Very interesting and it was so different because of what you had to do and people told you what to do. I enjoyed Basic Training.

T: Aviation Cadet Program.



Bill Hadley in his later years.

H: A very good program. I had nothing against the program, I thought it was a very good program and was very disappointed when I was cut.

T: Albion, Michigan.

H: Albion was very nice, because I met this girl and that made it nicer.

T: McCook, Nebraska.

H: It was king out of the way. It didn't seem like there was much to do there.

T: USS Newport.

H: It was just too long, thirty-one days. We were traveling twelve knots an hour.

article concludes on page 17; see HADLEY

William E. Wells, in His Own Words...

My Dad was in the 7th Calvary stationed at Fort Riley Kansas. My brother fought three years in the jungles of New Guinea and the Philippines in World War II. The Korean War started in the summer of 1950. I was 20 years old and knew this was 'my war.' I didn't want to be drafted and because I worked at North American Aviation, I chose the Air Force. Actually, I was working in the cockpit of F86 Number 1 the day the Korean War started.

I signed up on September 19, 1950. When I told my buddies about it, five of them did the same thing. Then it happened. Family and friends of we six buddies of south-central Los Angeles gathered at the train station to see us off as we headed for San Antonio, Texas and Basic Training. It was a big deal, even making the local newspaper.

It was great being together. How can you get homesick if you are with five of your best friends? We stayed together during Basic Training, each going different directions at the end. Me to Primary Weapons School in Denver, Colorado.

During the Korean War, B-29 crews were formed at Randolph Field San Antonio, Texas. Combat crew training was held there, and advanced combat training was held at Forbes Field Kansas. Then we went back to Randolph Field. Straws were drawn by the Aircraft Commanders for assignment. We drew the Far East Air Force stationed at Yokota, Japan.

The "No-Sweat" Raid

After two missions in North Korea, our crew was sent on an R & R. The enlisted men were sent to a luxury hotel in the mountains near Tokyo. Linen tablecloths, silverware, finger bowls, etc. We earned this treat after our first two missions.

On our first scheduled long range combat mission, our number two engine caught fire on takeoff. The pilot, Captain Joseph Unhalt, refused the flight engineers request to "feather the engine" to put out the fire. He explained that even though the engine was in flames, we were still drawing power from it, and we needed the power to climb enough to clear the upcoming

U.S. Air Force S/SGT.

Service: 09-19-50 thru 12-31-53

Positions: B-29 and B-50 side gunner

Stations:

Yokota Air Force Base, Japan (during Korean War). 15th Air Force, 98th Bomb Wing, 345th Squadron. Flew 26 combat missions as side gunner on B-29.

Biggs Air Force Base El Paso, Texas. 9th Air Force, 97th Bomb Wing, 345th Squadron. B-50 side gunner on an A-Bomb crew until discharge.

Decorations: Air Medal, Korean Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal, National Service Medal, Korea War Service Medal, Republic of Korea "Ambassador for Peace" Medal.

mountain which was 4.9 miles ahead. I, being the left side gunner, was the one watching the ground and engine, and advising the pilot of our position to the ground.

We barely cleared the mountain, then feathered the engine, dropped our bombs in the ocean, and returned to base.

After that engine was replaced and on our next mission, we lost two engines over North Korea. We could not maintain the altitude or air speed to stay in formation. The other crews could not reach us, so during the debriefing after the mission, we were listed as "missing in action" by a reporter from the *Stars and Stripes* news: 18 planes went out and only 17 returned.

Meanwhile back at our plane, we the crew voted on what to do; bailout, try to land at a fighter base in South Korea with a landing strip too short for a B-29, or to try to reach Japan. We all voted to try to get back to Japan.

An F-80 fighter plane was sent to guide us through the mountains in Japan. Regretfully, that fighter plane crashed into a mountain. We made it back to our base



S/SGT William E. Wells

and read the *Stars and Stripes* article. (*Pacific Stars and Stripes*, February 1951, "Anxiety Follows 'No-Sweat' Raid") The ending of the mission had to be revised with—"the lost plane returned to base." So, thus the earned R&R we received.

A few weeks later, our plane—with a different crew aboard—crashed into the same mountain we barely cleared, killing 14 on board.

After six months at Yokota, my next assignment was Biggs Army Airfield in El Paso, Texas.

My discharge was equally unique as my enlistment.

September 1953 the B-50s were declared obsolete. Also said was that all gunners with three years of service were to be given an early "out." My name was not on the list in September. Again, the same in October, November and December. Each time I was becoming more frustrated. I had a job waiting for me at North American and I was excited to return to my civilian life.

Also, in December, my squadron commander said there would be no Christmas leave. I complained saying that I had missed being discharged all those months and I at least deserved Christmas Leave. He said there was nothing he could do and if I wanted to pursue it, I needed to talk with the commanding general. I have always respected authority, but I am not afraid of it, so I went to the general. I explained the situation and thankfully he granted my leave.

I also asked my squadron commander why I was not allowed the early discharge. He answered that I was not replaceable, as I was on the lead crew of our squadron. During a squadron competition of the "Strategic Air Command," they told me I had the highest gunner test score ever recorded by SAC. (When I took the test again in September 1953, I had a perfect score!) So, I assume my status kept me off the early out list September through December. When Congress learned that all eligible gunners were not discharged, the squadrons were ordered to release those eligible. Hence the phone call to get me back to Biggs Air Force Base the next day.

December 30, 1953, I am in bed at home in Los Angeles with the flu when the call came. They said, "If you can get back tomorrow morning by 8:00 a.m. you can be discharged." Whoa!!! That's great, but how? My mother, using her 'mother authority' told my brother, "Bill has to be in El Paso tomorrow morning, and you have to drive him there." My car had to go with me because the window sticker had to be removed by them.

So off we went and did arrive on time. Every place I went to clear out they said, "Are you Wells?" Yes, bang, bang, bang, and bang went the sound as my papers were stamped and off I would go to the next station. "Are you Wells?" Okay. More Bang, bang, etc. and repeat. Finally, at the end of the day they handed me a folder of papers including my 214 Form (aka: Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty Form), and my car and I were free to head home to Los Angeles and civilian life.

Honoring Lost Heroes

The Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency (DPAA) continues its mission to recover missing personnel from past conflicts (more than 72,000 Americans remain missing from WWII alone). In 2019, the organization, along with help from History Flight, Inc. excavated the crash site of Carl Nesbitt's downed plane and found remnants of human remains.

History Flight is a non-profit organization dedicated to researching, recovering and repatriating America's servicemen listed as Missing in Action. Since its founding in 2003, History Flight missions have recovered the remains of over 100 missing servicemen and helped return them to their families.

Carl Davis Nesbitt graduated from Lima Central High School with the class of 1939 and left Allen County to attend college at Miami University in Oxford. Nesbitt completed his junior year at Miami and then enlisted in the Army Air Forces. He received his wings in August 1943. Nesbitt, 23, was assigned to the 569th Bombardment Squadron, 390th Bombardment Group (Heavy), 13th Bombardment Wing, 3rd Air Division, 8th Air Force.

On May 29, 1944, 1st Lt. Nesbitt was the pilot on a B-17 Flying Fortress, named "The Yankee Doodle Dandy," with a crew of 10. The crew was part of a huge bombing mission against enemy targets over Leipzig, Germany. During the mission, Nesbitt's plane was damaged by enemy fighters, catching on fire and falling out of formation roughly 28 miles northeast of Leipzig. (On this raid the B-17s suffered a mortality rate more than 50 percent.)

Six of the 10 crew members were able to escape the plane before it crashed near Horst, while Nesbitt and the rest were killed. Their bodies were believed to have been buried in a local cemetery and, after the war ended, there was no evidence of Nesbitt being a prisoner of war or having survived. In July 2012, an investigation team from the Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command, located the site of Nesbitt's plane crash and recovered evidence of the B-17. In 2019, the DPAA partnered with History Flight to excavate the crash site.



1st Lt. Carl Davis Nesbitt

On Sept. 9, 2022, based on available evidence and DNA, the laboratory at Offutt Air Force Base was able to identify 1st Lt. Nesbitt and bring him home to his family. Yet another promise fulfilled by DPPA and Honor Flight. He was laid to rest at Indiantown Gap National Cemetery Pennsylvania on May 15, 2023. Attending was a surviving crew member along with his son who explained just how much of a hero Nesbitt was to his entire crew. "He did everything he could to keep the plane steady as possible, at one point holding it upside down as long as he could, so the others could get out." This son also, in no small measure, owes his own life to Lt Nesbitt.

To view the Today Show segment:

<https://www.today.com/video/wwii-mystery-solved-thanks-to-dna-giving-peace-to-vet-s-family-177214021702>

•• Our 2023 Reunion HQ ••

WESTIN WASHINGTON DULLES HOTEL



FIFTEENTH ARMY AIR FORCE REUNION

October 12-15, 2023

Westin Washington Dulles Hotel 2520 Wasser Terrace Herndon, Virginia 20171

To reserve rooms, please call 1-866-932-7062 and tell them you're booking with the **FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE REUNION** or book online using the information found on page 17.

- Room rate is \$112 per night plus tax and includes full, hot breakfast buffet for two.
- Rooms are available at the group rate from October 9 – 18, 2023 to allow extra time before and after the reunion to take advantage of the nearly endless list of things to see and do in the Washington DC area.
- Reservations must be made by September 22, 2023 to be guaranteed the group rate.
- Cancellations at no charge may be made until 48 hours prior to arrival.
- The hotel is pet friendly.
- Parking is usually \$10 per day but is free for our group.
- The hotel offers a free airport shuttle to Dulles International Airport (24/7 service to Dulles Airport) and to the nearby Metro light rail station.

Questions? Call Dave Blake at (913) 523-4044 or E-Mail: reunion@461st.org



FIFTEENTH ARMY AIR FORCE REUNION

October 12-15 Fairfax County, VA.



Veteran/Fallen Hero _____ Group _____ Sqdn _____ Highest Rank _____

Registrant Name: _____ One form per registration packet. Multiple people on same registration form okay.

Address _____ City _____

State _____ Zip _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Name Tag Names: _____

Registration fee # people _____ @ \$20.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 12TH

Tour of George Washington's Mount Vernon # people _____ @ \$65.00 Sub Total \$ _____

Lunch on your own at Mt. Vernon Food Court

Welcome Dinner Sandwich Bar Buffet # people _____ @ \$41.00 Sub Total \$ _____

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 13TH — National US Army Museum and Udvar-Hazy Air & Space Museum

Lunch on your own at Air Museum # people _____ @ \$61.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Individual Group Dinners

Char Crusted Flank Steak # people _____ @ \$61.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Pan Seared Salmon # people _____ @ \$61.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Artichoke & Spinach Ravioli # people _____ @ \$61.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 14TH

All Groups Banquet, Entertainment & Dancing

Grilled Top Sirloin # people _____ @ \$61.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Chicken Piccata # people _____ @ \$61.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Vegetable Wellington # people _____ @ \$61.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

SUNDAY, OCTOBER 15TH

Memorial Service at Air Force Memorial, Arlington Cemetery Tram Tour, National Mall & WWII Memorial tour, box lunch included. # people _____ @ \$92.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Farewell Dinner

Fajita Buffet # people _____ @ \$54.00 each Sub Total \$ _____

Do you need a wheelchair? Yes _____ No _____ GRAND TOTAL \$ _____

Dietary Restrictions: _____

Emergency Contact _____ Phone# _____

Please send this form along with your check payable to Fifteenth AAF Reunion to:
 Fifteenth AAF Reunion Attn: Dave Blake | 648 Lakewood Rd. | Bonner Springs, KS. 66012-1804
 Registrations MUST BE RECEIVED AT THE ADDRESS ABOVE NO LATER THAN October 5, 2023
 Unfortunately no changes may be made after that date.

Electronic Registration Details

If you wish to register for our Reunion electronically, please visit:

https://15thaf.org/47th_BW/98th/Reunion/PDFs/Registration%20Form.pdf

Download the form (it has "fill-in fields" that allow you to type in your responses). Save the PDF when you've completed it. Then email it to Reunion Chair Dave Blake at: reunion@461st.org

Of course, you don't have to register electronically. You can still use the form on the opposite page, write in your responses, then send it with your check to Dave via U.S. Mail (his address is at the bottom of the form).

Registrations must be received no later than October 1, 2023. No changes can be made to tours or meals after that date.

If you register electronically, you will still need to pay for your registration. Many banks now support Zelle (which sends money electronically at no cost to you or the reunion). This is the best electronic method for payment. Send your Zelle payment to Dave at reunion@461st.org or 9135234044. If your bank doesn't support Zelle, you can still send a check to Dave at his address on the Registration Form. If you need help using Zelle, call your bank. Additionally you can pay registration fees through Venmo. Here are the "rules" for using Venmo:

- Send payments to: Fifteenth-Air-Force-Reunion
- To avoid paying an additional fee, payment must be made with a bank account number or debit card.
- Credit card payments will incur a 3% processing fee. If a credit card is used, add 3% of the total to the payment.

Do You Have Old Pyramidiers Newsletters from 1977 through 2001?

We need them for our website (the98thbombgroup.org). We'll photograph them and, if requested, return them.

If you have any, please email Susie M at: suzannes@me.com; and she'll provide further instructions.

HADLEY

continued from page 11

T: Guam.

H: Guam was an interesting deal, because they weren't ready for us when we got there, and to see it develop the way it did as quickly as it did. We were the advanced crew and got there long before our planes got there. I took a job as bartender in the officer's club. We didn't have hard whiskey but we had beer and so forth.

T: B-24.

H: A B-24 was a workhorse. It wasn't a very fast plane, but was a very good plane. I think it was underrated against the B-17. I think everyone thought the B-17 was superior.

T: B-29

H: The B-29 was a wonderful ship. You could send out twenty or thirty planes and get twenty or thirty back.

T: Tojo.

H: I never met him.

T: Adolf Hitler.

H: I think he was crazy and insane.

T: Franklin Roosevelt.

H: I was all for Franklin.

T: Harry Truman.

H: Very down to earth.

T: How do you want to be remembered?

H: I would like people to remember me as a nice person who would help anybody.

T: Anything else you want to talk about?

H: No.

T: Sir, this is an excellent interview. I want to thank you for your service and thank you for the interview.

H: Thank you.

ITINERARY – Tours, Events and Meals

THE 2023 FIFTEENTH ARMY AIR FORCE REUNION

Westin Dulles Airport Hotel, Herndon, VA.

October 12-15, 2023

Thursday, October 12, 2023

Arrival and check in day. Hospitality room open from 10:00AM on in Rivanna ABC. Special check-in arrangements can be made for early arrivals.

Optional Mount Vernon tour. The bus departs the hotel at 9:15AM. Lunch on your own at Mt. Vernon Food Court. The bus departs Mt. Vernon at 2:30PM to return to the hotel.

6:00PM – Welcome dinner and Information meeting in Rivanna EFG room.

(If you can't or don't care to have dinner with the group, please come in about 7:00PM for the information part of the meeting.)

Friday, October 13, 2023

8:15AM - Buses leave the hotel for tour of the National US Army Museum.

12:00PM Buses leave US Army Museum and proceed to Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Air and Space Museum. Lunch on your own at the Air & Space Museum.

4:20 PM - Buses leave the Udvar-Hazy Air & Space Museum for return to the hotel.

5:30PM - Happy hour for Individual Group dinners in the pre-function area. *(Due to the ever-growing number of groups participating in the reunion, the format of this meal event will likely change this year as no hotel has enough meeting rooms to accommodate every group. More details to follow.)*

6:30PM - Dinner served.

Saturday, October 14, 2023

8:00AM - Ladies Craft Demo in Rivanna G.

10:00AM – 12:00PM - Veteran and Speaker Presentations in Rivanna D.

12:00PM – 2:00PM - Lunch on your own.

2:00PM – 4:00PM - Presentations continue in Rivanna D.

5:30PM – Happy Hour and Veteran and group pictures taken in pre function space.

6:30PM - Dinner is served in Rivanna DEFG.

7:30PM - Musical entertainment by The DC Three.

Sunday, October 15, 2023

9:15AM - Buses leave the hotel for the Military Memorial service held at the Air Force Memorial. Box lunch after the Memorial Service.

12:00PM – Buses leave the AF Memorial for Arlington Cemetery tram tour.

2:00PM - Buses leave Arlington Cemetery for the National Mall tour.

3:00PM - Buses leave first stop (Vietnam Wall & Lincoln Memorial) at National mall for a second stop (WWII Memorial)

4:00PM – Buses leave for return to hotel.

6:30PM – Farewell dinner in Rivanna G.

Fifteenth Army Air Force Reunion Menus Include...

Thursday, October 12 Chilled Dinner Buffet

- Salads (choice of two)
- Fregola pasta salad with peppers, onions, avocado, citrus honey dressing
- Baby field greens, sliced radishes, shredded carrots, cucumber, cherry tomatoes, and citrus vinaigrette
- Entrée:
 - Make your own sandwiches ~ Roast beef Smoked turkey Honey ham Grilled chicken breast Cheddar, Swiss, Provolone, and Pepper Jack cheeses Kaiser rolls Sliced white & wheat bread Condiments
- Desserts (choice of two)
- Carrot Cake
- Warm Apple Crisp
- Fresh brewed Starbucks coffee and Tazo tea



Friday, October 13 Plated Dinner

Entrees:

- Char Crusted Flank Steak with wild mushroom ragout
- Pan-Seared Salmon with citrus buerre blanc
- Artichoke & Spinach Ravioli tossed with red pepper basil sauce and shaved parmesan reggiano

Plated dinners include starter, entrée, dessert, artisan rolls with butter, freshly brewed Starbucks coffee and an assortment of Tazo herbal teas.

Saturday, October 14 Plated Dinner

Entrées:

- Grill Top Sirloin with cauliflower and yukon gold potato puree, port demi-glace and chimichurri
- Chicken Piccata with a lemon caper butter sauce
- Vegetable Wellington: puff pastry filled with portabello mushrooms and seasonal vegetables on roasted red pepper coulis

Plated dinners include starter, entrée, dessert, artisan rolls with butter, freshly brewed Starbucks coffee and an assortment of Tazo herbal teas.

Sunday, October 15 Dinner Buffet

Aztec Buffet

- Chicken tortilla soup with avocado, crispy tortillas, and Monterey jack cheese
- Baby romaine salad with queso fresco chipotle parmesan dressing
- Chipotle three bean salad
- Braised lime chicken fajitas with peppers and onions
- Spanish rice
- Refried black beans
- Warm flour tortillas, crispy corn tortillas
- Fresh guacamole, pico de gallo, sour cream, & shredded cheddar cheese
- Caramel flan
- Tres leches cake
- Freshly brewed Starbucks coffee and Tazo tea



Washington DC

**Our reunion hotel will be located
in Fairfax County, Virginia**

Oct. 12-15, 2023

Please see pages 15–19.