

# POOP from Group



791st



790th



789th



788th

Newsletter of the 467th Bomb Group Association

December 1, 2013



## ***New Orleans, Here We Come!***

**2nd Joint Convention with the 492nd & 467th BG**

**April 15th-19th 2014**

**Hampton Inn Convention Center, New Orleans, LA.**

***Full Details, Itinerary & Registration***

**One of America's most culturally and historically-rich destinations, come and join veterans and family of the 467th and 492nd for an occasion to remember**

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# President's Message

By Brian Mahoney

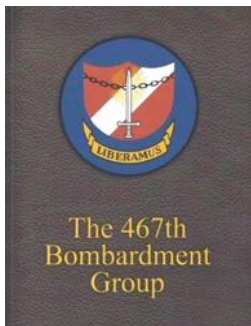
Greetings! Let me start with a little housekeeping stuff. First, a reminder that we want all who are happy to take their "POOP" subscription as an email attached PDF file, should let me know to help us save money. Second, we appreciate your contributions to the mail fund, which subsidizes those and other costs, and has always allowed us to be 'dues-free.' Checks made out to the 467th BGA can be mailed to our Treasurer, Kerry Davis (contact info for all your directors and officers is on this page.) Now to more substantive stuff...

The planning for our next gathering (with the 492nd BGA, in New Orleans, April 15-19, 2014), has us mindful of the passage of time. I will be just about the age my late father was, when he first learned of the Second Air Division Association, and contemplated getting involved in reunions of a large, organized nature. This was long before most of us 'second gens' had an awareness of, or interest in, gatherings of WW II vets. We are mindful of how things will change when we no longer have the company of any of our esteemed veterans, and celebrate all the more the occasions when we will still be able to hear their stories and get their take on the human condition—then and now.

Like so many of my own contemporaries, I can clearly remember my late teens and early twenties, and have regularly tried to imagine myself in the situations where our fathers comported themselves so well for our benefit. Many of us have watched members of the next generation go into harm's way and had another reason to map youth and old age on parallel, life-defining experiences. My perception, informed by the still-living vets, is that 70 years is both a long time, and something that passes in a flash. War made them grow up in a hurry, and in a sense has kept them young forever. Relationships and memories are our most lasting 'possessions.' Their value goes up when shared.

Just because we *can* share with USAAF veterans still, *we should*. It is something to celebrate and I hope this finds you able to join us in New Orleans, for "important fun." May you enjoy every passing day, and have many.

-Brian Mahoney



The 467th BG Association is delighted to offer a Softback limited edition of the original 1947 Allan Healy "467th BG History". This fifth and final edition has text reformatting and photographic restoration by Colin LaRussa, also a fully revised and comprehensive Addendum. \$50 + \$5 shipping

Available from David LaRussa,  
8570 N. Mulberry Dr., TUCSON, AZ 85704  
TEL - (520) 322-9827 [alarussa7@msn.com](mailto:alarussa7@msn.com)

## Notes from the Editor



Many thanks for the overall positive feedback concerning your new-look “POOP from Group” and hoping we can continue on a path of ever improving ideas for your enjoyment. We rely on your contributions to fill the pages and welcome the opportunity to feature your news, thoughts, memories, photos, and more. Do take a moment to see what you may have of 467th related material that would benefit these pages and I look forward to publishing your treasured items.

Our Treasurer, **Kerry Davis**, reports an operating balance for the Association of \$3,485.91 as of the close of October. The cost of publishing and mailing the August “POOP” newsletter amounted to \$680.45 for approximately 750 copies, while income in the form of donations toward the cost of providing “POOP” was \$335.

Contributors for this issue were as follows:

**Francis Jane Kerchner**

**Irene Prichard**

**Tom Johnson**

**Charles C. Russell**

**Frank Baker/Judith Ceton**

**Marilyn H. Gardner**

We deeply appreciate your continuing support and outstanding generosity as always but we need your donations to continue to provide the newsletter for those who require hard copies. If you enjoy the newsletter, please help support it. Any amount is warmly appreciated, please send checks to Kerry to ensure future issues.

### PERRY WATTS MEMORIAL

At the time of going to Press with the August “POOP” we learned of the untimely passing of our great friend and untiring supporter of the 467th BGA, Perry Watts. The Association made a donation to the Priscilla Bacon Lodge Hospice where Perry received the highest care and attention. Further donation received from **Irene Prichard**. A Tribute to Perry by Director Tom Johnson appears in this issue.

### EMAIL FROM FRED MESSINA

I received Poop in the mail today. I had elected to have mine arrive on the Internet. I’m sending this to let you know that you don’t have to go to the trouble of mailing. I did enjoy the pictures. Looks like you guys had a good time in Texas. I can’t get Mrs. Messina to fly anymore. The last reunion we went to was at the Nevele Hotel in New York State. I flew in to the reunion in my Bonanza and landed at a field nearby. I don’t have that plane any longer, too expensive, but I have a Piper Archer II that I still fly about once a

week. I make it a habit now to have another pilot with me as I’m getting a bit long in the tooth. I’m a member of the UFO (United Flying Octogenarians) We get together each Saturday for a fly out to breakfast and a meeting after. We don’t go very far. Sometimes it’s only 35 miles, but it’s just great to still be flying. All the best—Fred Messina 790th & 788th



**Ben O’Connell** from Thorpe, Norwich, kindly photographed an exciting new addition to the Rackheath landscape, the **B-24 Business Lounge and Café**, which was constructed by Tilia Properties who restored the Control Tower. Internally the building has a distinct 467th theme with walls adorned by the “Liberamus” icon and large pictures tastefully presented of Witchcraft and Base scenes in the form of impressive banner-style presentations hanging high above our heads. A lot of thought has gone into creating the smart look and ambience linking the past with the present.

**Carolyn Holt**, grand-daughter of **Henry Kubacek**, original crew member of the Lt. George Reed “Witchcraft” crew, has been very busy scanning much of her late Grandfather’s 467th BG memorabilia and extensive photo collection. I have been privileged to have been given access and view much of this impressive collection and I hope to share some of the wonderful images in the next issue of the newsletter.

## Notes from the Editor...

**Peter Horne**, son of **John Horne**, a member of the original 790th Lt. Kenneth Ford Crew#52 who frequently flew combat aboard “**Tangerine**” is currently engaged in fully researching the history and details of the final disposition of the aircraft. Anyone possessing details or photos which will assist Peter in building a scale-model, please get in touch.

Hope to see you in New Orleans for the April 2014 Convention, along with our great friends from the 492nd BG.

*Andywilkinson467th@btinternet.com*



*New B-24 Business Lounge and Café located on the Industrial Site of the former airfield*



**Christopher Collins**  
467th BG  
facebook page

Not only is facebook the world’s most popular social networking site allowing its members to connect worldwide to those with similar interests and help in the renewing of old friendships and creating new, it is also open to the creation of special interest and historical groups.

And with that it gives me great pleasure to introduce all Association members to The 467<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group facebook page. A facebook group dedicated to commemorating and preserving the legacy, history and sacrifice associated with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, Second Air Division, and 467<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group during World War II.

I have started the facebook page with the express intention to provide a forum for the use of members of the 467<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, their families and anybody with an interest in the Group, the Second Air Division or WWII aviation to easily share memories, photographs and any related history and associated news updates.

As a resident of East Anglia living close to Rackheath and having a keen interest in the Friendly Invasion of the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force during WWII, I could not help but notice the amount of interesting material unearthed by other Bomb Group facebook pages. But upon searching for a page

dedicated to the “Aggies” and coming up short, in a fit of DIY I decided to start one of my own.

Since starting the page in February 2013 and promoting it within other groups, we currently have over 200 members many of whom have direct links to 467<sup>th</sup>, but we are always looking for new members. The Group page can only continue to be of interest and of benefit with the support of and fresh posts from its members. So if you have any photos of the best damn flyers in the ETO gathering dust, stories, or any interesting information you would like to share, find us on facebook by searching for:

### **The 467<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group**

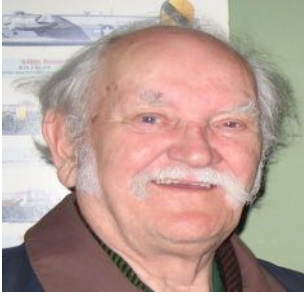
We would love to see you there.

Christopher Collins

The 467<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group facebook page Administrator.

*Editor’s note—*

*I signed up to Chris’s page in August and have enjoyed viewing a daily update of quality 467th BG items and discussion. Recommend you take a look at this worthy project.*



## A Personal Journey with Perry Watts

*By Tom Johnson  
Director 467th Bombardment Group Association*

Where do I begin to enlighten you about my friendship with Perry William Watts? I found him to be a truly multi-faceted man: devoted husband and father, retired dairy salesman, Private in the Royal Military Police, Malaya 1947-49, published author, sage, model plane and car enthusiast, expert tinkerer, artist and painter, public speaker, Probus Club of Broadland member, outspoken opponent of urban spread, dedicated advocate to the well-being of Rackheath and Salhouse and, closest to his heart, Distinguished Member and Historian of the 467<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Heavy) Association and Rackheath Base Contact.

My very first glimpse of Perry was from my window seat on a National Express bus as it pulled to the curb at the Street bus stop in Norwich in March of 2005. He was waiting there on the sidewalk wearing his distinctive reddish-orange 467<sup>th</sup> BG ball cap so I would be sure to recognize him. This was my third visit to England, the first to Rackheath for a 3-day visit to find out about my father's wartime experiences.

Perry greeted me warmly with a hug and hearty handshake and drove me to my B&B. After checking in, we drove to his home "Savona" on Norwich Road in the small village of Salhouse for a home-cooked dinner prepared by his gracious wife Jill. Their genuine warmth and hospitality toward "Doc" Johnson's son overwhelmed me then as it still does today, those feelings never really leaving me in the subsequent nine years of knowing this remarkable man.

The following morning Perry picked me up and drove to the 467<sup>th</sup> Memorial Marker on the Rackheath industrial site where he enthusiastically showed me every remaining 467<sup>th</sup> BG site, explaining each in vivid detail: the old, dilapidated control tower, gymnasium, front guard post, parachute shack, Colonel Shower and Lt. Colonel Mahoney's quarters, the remaining runways, the Golden Gates leading to Sir Edward Stracey's Rackheath Hall among others.

The third day of my visit found Perry and I traveling all across the majestic Norfolk countryside, miles upon miles of 2-lane roads over green pasture lands as far as the eye could see. At one point I exclaimed, "Perry, is that the North

Sea?" to which he smiled and nodded in agreement. We drove on to Cromer, where offshore, long ago, the B-24s formed into combat formations at Splasher Beacon Five; then on to bacon sandwiches for lunch in a quaint coastal village named Wells-Next-The-Sea; followed by Happisburgh (pronounced Hays-borough he studiously informed me) where I experienced firsthand major coastal erosion, many of the cliff side cottages standing vacant and deserted waiting for mother nature to do the inevitable. All were extraordinary, unique English villages unfamiliar, but absolutely delightful, to a middle-aged yank from the drab, crowded, freeway-congested East Bay Area of Northern California.

I will always remember that first 3-day trip to Norwich, Rackheath and Salhouse, all because of the graciousness and enthusiasm of the Watts family. This first meeting with Jill and Perry remains indelible on my memory nine years on, of their kind courtesies and generosity shown to a son of a 467<sup>th</sup> BG veteran.

I made it a point to see Perry and Jill whenever I visited England in the future. In my six subsequent visits from 2006 through 2011, Perry gave me a lifetime worth of wonderful, sensory-rich experiences. I got to know Jim Watts (who Perry always called "James"), his son from London. After my first visit, Perry and Jill wouldn't allow me to stay at the B&B; my room was Jim's upstairs bedroom while he was away in London.

In 2007, I believe Perry reached his crowning achievement as a 467<sup>th</sup> BG Association Distinguished Member and Historian when he wrote and published his definitive history of the 467<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Heavy) during World War II. It was a five-year long labor of love, sweat and more sweat of 400 pages with 400 photos. I had the unique pleasure and honor to read his original manuscript with notes while in my bedroom at a local Rackheath B&B during my first visit in 2005. I know Perry will always be remembered for this remarkable work by future generations of sons and daughters of the original 467<sup>th</sup> BG (H) veterans.

*Continued Page 14*

# 492nd & 467th BG Reunion-New Orleans, Louisiana

**Tuesday April 15<sup>th</sup> to Saturday April 19<sup>th</sup> 2014**

This is the 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion of the 492<sup>nd</sup> BG Association and we are looking forward to the another great joint reunion with the 467<sup>th</sup> BG Association.

Tuesday Night Welcome – Hospitality Suite/Dauphine room on the main floor. A quite night to settle in with friends & family; pick-up your Registration packet containing name tags, meal tickets, reunion schedule and your gift. Norma Beasley (492<sup>nd</sup>) loves to surprise us each year with a wonderful reunion keepsake. You can drop-off goodies to share, raffle prizes you are donating & buy some raffle tickets. Our casual supper is a Chicken Gumbo & Red Beans and Rice. 492<sup>nd</sup> BG Assoc. Executive Meeting after dinner.

Meals – Breakfast at the hotel is included. Most of our dinners will be at the hotel in the Fulton room across from Dauphine which is our Hospitality Suite. Except Wednesday night, this is a chance to sample New Orleans' famous cuisine – as a group at Mulate's Cajun Restaurant with live band or on your own anywhere in the city.

### Tour Choices

Full day at the **National WWII Museum**, including viewing of the movie **Beyond All Boundaries**. Option to add lunch & musical revue at the Stage Door Canteen.

**Guided City Tour - French Quarter, Historic Lighthouse** restored since Katrina at **Lake Pontchartrain, Native American Indian Settlement & Mansions along St. Charles Avenue**. Lunch New Orleans style with a Po-boy.

**Guided Tours of Oak Alley & Laura Plantations** - lunch at B&C Seafood Market.  
**Pearl River Eco Swamp Tour**

Group Photo – Wednesday morning outside the National WWII Museum. Each household will receive a souvenir copy before the end of the reunion.

Formal Banquet – is Friday, our final night. Before dinner-Memorial Service & after dinner-Tribute to Norma & Bill Beasley for their years of service to the 492<sup>nd</sup> BG Association.

### **HOTEL RESERVATIONS - Must be made by March 10, 2014**

*Even if you are not sure of your plans, please reserve your room it is VERY important at this hotel to register early so we have enough rooms currently 40 are being held – You can always cancel up to 72 hours prior at no charge.*

#### **Hampton Inn & Suites New Orleans Convention Center Hotel**

**1201 Convention Center Blvd., New Orleans, LA 70130**

**Hotel Reservation:** 1-866-311-1200 request 492nd & 467th BGs Annual Reunion (coded 4BG)

**Hotel Website:** [www.neworleanshamptoninns.com](http://www.neworleanshamptoninns.com) find the Convention Center location.

Single-Double rate \$89 per night (+tax). Hot Breakfast Buffet Included.

If you would like to register on-line, here is the link: <http://hamptoninn.hilton.com/en/hp/groups/personalized/M/MSYLAHX-4BG-20140414/index.jhtml>

### **HOTEL SERVICES**

- Free Hot Breakfast Buffet in the Lobby.
- Group room rate extended before & after, subject to availability.

- NO HOTEL SHUTTLE For transportation from the airport, you can take Airport Shuttle (per person \$38 round trip-\$20 one way) Tickets for the shuttle can be purchased in advance 866-596-3500 or at the baggage claim area at the airport.
- Hotel offers Valet Parking at a reduced rate \$18.00/day plus 12% sales tax
- Hotel Check-In 3pm & Check-Out 11am
- Internet access, micro fridge, microwave, iron/ironing board in all guest rooms
- Wheel Chair accessible rooms are available
- Hospitality Suite - Dauphine Room-Main Floor – food & beverages-ok but NO-Alcohol
- Outdoor Pool & Courtyard, Fitness & Business Center, & Lounge onsite.

### **492<sup>nd</sup> & 467<sup>th</sup> BG HOSPITALITY SUITE - WELCOME PACKET PICK-UP**

Dauphine Room-Main Floor. Welcome Packets will be in the Hospitality Suite for Pick-up. Please bring snacks & beverages to share. (NO ALCOHOL IN HOSPITALITY SUITE)

⊙Please **NO PEANUT PRODUCTS** due to a member's **SEVERE** allergy⊙

### **OPTIONAL NEW ORLEANS TOURS & DINING**

**WEDNESDAY APRIL 16<sup>th</sup> - Group Photo & Tour National WWII Museum with Movie 8:30-2:30 Free to WWII Veterans, \$40 Adult, \$35 Senior, \$25 Student & Military w/ID.** Price includes transportation, admission to museum and movie 'Beyond All Boundaries'. **Optional Stage Door Canteen Lunch & Show Additional \$35 per person.**

Group Photo outside the National WWII Museum prior our visit. Each household will be given a souvenir 8x10 copy before the end of the reunion.

Self-Guided Tour of National WWII Museum Exhibits. From the Normandy invasion to the sands of the Pacific Islands and the Home Front, you will come to know the courage, teamwork and sacrifice of the men and women who won the war that changed the world.

11:00 Reserved Time for Movie- Beyond All Boundaries in Solomon Victory Theater, narrated and produced by Tom Hanks exclusively for The Museum, is a unique and powerful 4-D cinematic experience available nowhere else in the world. The production plunges viewers into the 20th century's most titanic struggle and tells the tale of the Greatest Generation's journey from Pearl Harbor into the fire of epic battles to America's final victory in the words of the veterans themselves.

#### Lunch Option **Victory Belles Matinee Show in the Stage Door Canteen for \$35 per person**

The Victory Belles present Spirit of America! This uplifting musical revue will have you beaming with pride and patriotism. Includes spectacular dining by Chef John Besh and the American Sector restaurant for the ultimate experience!

Alternate Lunch Option on your own within the Museum is the Soda Shop. Relive the days of shakes, sodas & malts along with a selection of "American" sandwiches.

#### **WEDNESDAY APRIL 16<sup>th</sup> – Dinner at Mulate's Restaurant – Cajun Style w/ Live Band 6:00-9:00 \$55 Adult, \$30 Child (less than a mile from our hotel)**

Price includes transportation, dinner, coffee/tea, tax & gratuities. Liquor/Beer cash only.

C'est Si Bon Group Menu will feature Salad or Seafood Gumbo; Entrees-Specialty of the House Catfish, Seafood Platter, Crabmeat Au Gratin, Grilled Ribeye or BBQ Babyback Ribs & Bread Pudding with Butter Rum Sauce for dessert. Live Cajun Band performs at 7pm.

Alternate Dinner Options are on your own - Brian Mahoney & Cindy Stevens (467<sup>th</sup>) have narrowed down their choices to three- Muriel's Jackson Square (creole) [www.muriels.com](http://www.muriels.com) , K-Paul's (French Quarter) [www.chefpaul.com/kpaul](http://www.chefpaul.com/kpaul) & Felix's Restaurant (Seafood) [www.felixs.com](http://www.felixs.com).

**THURSDAY April 17<sup>th</sup>** - City Tour with Po-boy lunch & tour of New Canal Lighthouse  
**8:30 -3:00 \$80 per person; based on minimum 30 passengers; maximum 52 passengers**  
 Price includes luxury motor coach, driver & guide gratuities, admission fees and lunch

We are fortunate to have an experienced New Orleans guide for the day! As we depart from our hotel we pass by Moreau Convention Center. Next we visit the French Quarter and the City of the Dead "cemetery". We will have a rest stop in City Park, where you may sample world famous beignets or ice cream, and continue to Lake Pontchartrain. At this point we will have a guided tour of the historic lighthouse destroyed in Hurricane Katrina that has just reopened. +More stops.

**FRIDAY April 18<sup>th</sup>** - Two Options (A)Tour of Two Plantations or (B)Swamp Tour  
**(Option A) Guided Tours of Oak Alley and Laura plantations with lunch**  
**8:30 -4:00 \$115 per person, based on minimum 30 passengers; maximum 52 passengers**  
 Price includes luxury motor coach, driver & guide gratuities, admission fees and lunch

If you prefer to visit only one plantation with lunch, please check let us know. We are working on a half-day option. Please understand that travel costs are the largest part of this tour, so the price change will be minimal, but the return time will be earlier.

These are two of the most well-known plantations in New Orleans and are examples of two very different lifestyles. Please note that these plantations require extensive walking and travel time (great for a nap on the way home!) It is approximately 3 city blocks from the bus parking lot to Oak Alley, but our guide does have access to a golf cart for those who require it. Access to second floors is by stairs only. Each plantation involves approximately 1.5 hours of tour time.

Known as the "Grande Dame of the Great River Road", Oak Alley Plantation sits on the shores of the Mississippi River. We will view the beautiful one-quarter mile alleyway of 28 Live Oak trees, each more than 250 years old.

We then proceed to Laura: A Creole Plantation, an operating sugar farm built in 1805. Visit 12 National Register historic buildings, including a slave cabin, and three gardens, on the guided tour. This tour is based on 5,000 pages of documents found in the French National Archives and upon Laura Locoul's memories of the plantation home, in which she details 250 years of the lives of Creole women, slaves and children who lived and worked here. We will then have lunch at the B&C Seafood Market before returning to our hotel.

**(Option B) Pearl River Eco Swamp Tour**  
**8:30 -1:00 Adults: \$50; children under 12: \$30, no minimum or maximum**  
 Price includes transportation by van and admission fee (Lunch is not included).

Explore the wetlands of Louisiana's crown jewel, the Honey Island Swamp, from the safety and quiet of a 26-passenger boat. Honey Island earned its name because of the honeybees once seen on a nearby isle, and it is one of the least-altered river swamps in the United States. Get back to nature in the moss-draped trees and shrubs of the South Louisiana ecosphere. The 250-square-mile Honey Island Swamp is home to alligators, bald eagles, deer, exotic waterfowl, black bears and wild boar. Many opportunities for photography and wildlife observation abound. Captain Neil says this is a great time of year to see alligators and wild pigs.

Visit [www.pearlrivercotours.com](http://www.pearlrivercotours.com) for more information.



## REGISTRATION FORM - RETURN TO FRAN GRAMBERG

NAME(s) \_\_\_\_\_

SPOUSE/FRIEND \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

CAR \_\_\_\_\_ PLANE \_\_\_\_\_ ARRIVAL DATE & TIME \_\_\_\_\_ DEPARTURE DATE \_\_\_\_\_

<b>TUE 4/15</b>	<b>Welcome to New Orleans Buffet</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>
	Red Beans & Rice with Chicken Gumbo Adult		\$20	
	Child (4-12)		\$15	
<b>WED 4/16</b>	<b>National WWII Museum includes Movie</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>
	Adult		\$40	
	Senior		\$35	
	Student & Retired Military with ID		\$25	
	WWII Veteran		FREE	
	<b>Stage Door Canteen Musical with Lunch</b>		\$35	
	<b>Dinner at Mulate's Cajun Restaurant</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>
	Five Entrée Custom Menu Adult		\$55	
	Child (under 12)		\$30	
<b>THU 4/17</b>	<b>City Tour, Lighthouse with Lunch</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>
	Adult		\$80	
	Child (under 12)		TBD	
	<b>Dinner at Hotel, Auction &amp; Raffle</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>
	Fried Catfish Adult		\$40	
	French Cut Grilled Pork Chop Adult		\$40	
	Vegetable & Wild Mushroom Risotto Adult		\$40	
	[indicate meal choices] Child (under 12)		\$25	
<b>FRI 4/18</b>	<b>Option (A) Two Plantations Tour w/ Lunch</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>
	Adult		\$115	
	Child (4-12)		TBD	
	<b>Option (B) Swamp Tour (Lunch not included)</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>
	Adult		\$50	
	Child (4-12)		\$35	
	<b>Formal Dinner at Hotel, Memorial &amp; Tribute</b>	<b>Qty</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Subtotal</b>
	Herb Marinated Chicken Breast Adult		\$40	
	Pecan Crusted Gulf Fish Adult		\$40	
	Fettuccini Pasta with Sun Dried Tomatoes Adult		\$40	
	[indicate meal choices] Child (4-12)		\$25	

**TOTAL ENCLOSED** \_\_\_\_\_

**Send check payable to 492<sup>ND</sup> BOMB GROUP – No later than March 10th**  
to:

**Fran Gramberg**  
7025 West Bruns Road, Monee, IL 60449  
Phone 708-670-8084 or e-mail: [fgramberg@msn.com](mailto:fgramberg@msn.com)



# Rackheath Romance

## Introducing Phoebe Dunn "War Bride"

The U.S. military presence in the United Kingdom during World War II was immense. Between 1941 and 1945, three million U.S. servicemen and women flowed through Great Britain taking some 50,000 British war brides. One such "War Bride" lived and worked in Norwich during 1944/45 recalls attending dances at the Rackheath base where romance blossomed. This is the story of Phoebe Dunn told in her own words.

My name is Phoebe Withers Dunn, I am 86 years old now – but remember so well the lovely dances I went to at Rackheath when my late husband, Lt. Maurice B. Dunn (Pinky) was a 790th Squadron navigator, based at Rackheath. He was a lovely man. We had 63 happy years together. My home was in Norwich, near the Heartsease Pub. Pinky (his hair was sandy red) and I fell in love at first sight and I came to the United States in 1946. (I was the girl in a white sweater and skirt who was a champion at jitterbugging at those great dances that still live in my memory) but now have to use a walker- how sad is that!)

Prior to meeting my husband, I dated Bob DeKerf, who was a gunner on the Witchcraft – but when he was moved back to the States, I (18 then) transferred my affections to my dear late husband...(He was always jealous of Bob!!)

I was the youngest Plotter in the Norwich Observer Corps (17). I liked doing that work. We worked all hours, one week end I only had 8 hours off between 8 hour shifts, the following weeks end, I had a day off. It was on a road just off the



*Phoebe aged 17 in the Royal Observer Corp*



*Maurice Dunn (right) with Pilots, Lee Steele (center) and Fred Hudlow (Copilot) at Rackheath in spring 1945*

Newmarket Road. Our operations room was partially bomb proof, built on the side of a rather nice Georgian style house. We had a large table map, all of Norfolk with parts of Suffolk. It was gridded and we had small "trays" for the planes which we moved along with plots received from the actual "posts" in the "field" which were manned by men. Above us, on a balcony, sat the tellers who were in constant communication with the Royal Air Force, or US Army Air Force who give them actual co-ordinates of where their planes were.

I was out at Rackheath dances several times (Oh! Lovely, food was great!) When we got to the base we were chaperoned straight into the dance hall and it was monitored so you were not allowed outside!

I almost couldn't get over to the United States! After that sad day, when the 467<sup>th</sup> left Rackheath, Pinky called me up to say "Goodbye" and his plane would be flying over my house and Lee (Pilot)

## Phoebe Dunn "War Bride" Continued

would waggle the wings! I stood at the front gate as this B-24 flew over, I lived fairly close to Rackheath, and the Liberator flew over...I just wept! (However, Pinky said they could not pick out my house).---HE WAS GONE!! At that time, American Airmen did not have a great reputation for staying true to their sweethearts! This was NOT so in my case.

Before long, I received 500 English pounds from Pinky with instructions to get a visa and get a fare on a TWA Constellation (Easier said than done!) The transatlantic flights were fully booked with priority people (mostly men) for months. I was on a waiting list. Next, a Visa had to be obtained IN PERSON! (That meant a trip to London and an appointment at the Embassy!). I travelled from Norwich to London by rail (120 miles) and took a taxi to the embassy only to find under the circumstances I would have to enter the US as an immigrant. I obtained the necessary forms (No problem for British people, the British NEVER filled their "quota"!)) Returned to Norwich that evening (Big deal in those days!). The immigration forms were voluminous...a full medical exam was required, no tuberculosis, sexual transmitted disease and on and on. Had to be vaccinated, not to have ever been convicted of anything! And back to the embassy about 3 or 4 months later.

I was now in a room where several would be immigrants were seated. One embarrassing question which was asked of the some 20-ish people was "Are you married?" Which a couple of girls (about my age) with babes in arms had to publicly admit they were not! (A disgrace in those days.) I did feel so sorry for them. But my papers arrived in the mail a few weeks later.

Time passed, I was finally assigned a seat on the TWA Constellation in August, 1946. Oh No! I had to step down for a priority passenger two weeks before. I was on another waiting list – which finally came up on the flight from Croydon to LaGuardia on November 25<sup>th</sup>.

Morning of the 25<sup>th</sup>, I said Goodbye to my Mum, Dad, sister and our dear little dog, Popsy. Train to London, bus to Croydon, carrying all I owned in a tiny suitcase (Clothes rationing was still tight). As I remember, the Croydon Airport was mostly Army barracks type buildings, we passed through the document procedures and were ushered on the Constellation

(Which seemed huge!) All the passengers were men except 3 "girls", one with a baby about 3 months old. We were seated together so we could help this young Mum with the baby. A great help we were!! We knew nothing about babies!!

The plane taxied to the end of the runway ready for take off and there it sat! The pressurization had failed! (The Constellation was the first pressurized plane to fly the Atlantic). Plane returned to the airport building and we were bussed to a nearby hotel for the night. We three girls plus the baby were placed in the same room so that we could help each other. The baby was



*Lt. Lee Steele crew in Greenland during journey over*



*Crew members and passengers packing up to leave Rackheath in June '45 after the War in Europe had ended.*

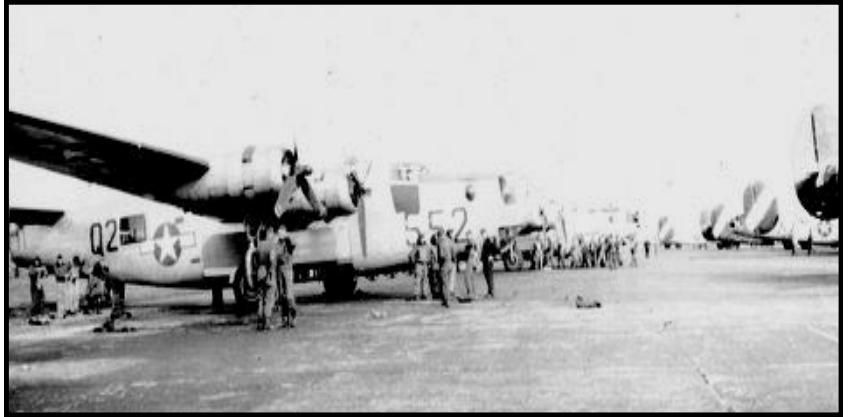
## *Phoebe Dunn "War Bride" Continued*

fussy and cried most of the night – the mother crying along with the baby! We got no sleep...but next morning were finally on the TWA plane and on our way to Ireland to refuel. We were allowed off the plane in Ireland and I purchased a couple of souvenirs there. Then off to the next refuelling airport at Gander, Newfoundland. Keep in mind that jet planes were not in general use so the Constellation had propellers and flying speed was a lot lower. It was 2 hours to Ireland and 10 hours to Newfoundland. The flight attendants were men and the meals were sandwiches and fruit. Of course, no television!

At Gander, the snow was so deep that when the plane landed on the cleared runway, you could only see walls of snow on either side. We were ushered into a barracks building and served a cold meal. The baby and mother were both crying and the mother asked for milk for the baby and they brought her a glass of cold milk. She burst into tears again!

At LaGuardia, they had had a snowfall and the runways had to be cleared – so we were to remain at Gander until that happened, so we were put in an army type building with bunk beds. However, we were not yet undressed when we were told that LaGuardia was now clear and our plane would be taking off in a couple of hours...which it did. Another 5 hour flight. Meanwhile, my husband to be had arrived in New York (from North Carolina) by train and was out waiting at LaGuardia. He was informed the flight was delayed. Other people were waiting. The Red Cross was there serving food and hot drinks. When our plane landed, us three girls- and the baby went down the steps which were brought up to the plane. The Red Cross immediately took charge of the young Mum and the baby. They were to be put on a plane to Alberta, Canada. The other girl had her fiancé waiting or her (From Alabama) as Pinky was waiting for me. It was 5 A.M!!! It was a lovely moment, we had not seen each other for many months...I felt quite shy!

We caught a taxi to the train station, I Said "Let me sit by the window so that I can see what America looks like", Pinky said I was asleep before the train got out of the station! At Washington, we changed trains to North Carolina. There was a girl on the train who knew Pinky and when she learned of our circumstances, she insisted I go with her to her parents house and I could spend the next night there until we went to Charlotte, some distance away, the next day. (How kind everyone was). Next day, on to my future brother-in-law who lent us his car so we could drive to Charlotte. He had returned, some



*Further view of 467th BG crews and B24s readying to leave Rackheath June '45*

months before, from Romania where he had been a POW for 18 months. (Lost 40 lbs). Shot down over the oil fields and parachuted out of his B-24. (He could tell a few tales about that – mostly about lice!!) ANYWAY- to Charlotte where Pinky and I were married 3 days later at my future in-laws Presbyterian Church.

My future mother and father in law were shocked because I had little more than what I had on my back. (Clothes rationing) and the next day, sent me up the city with a sister in law (Her husband just back from



*One last look—the 467th Operations block at Rackheath complete with Stars & Stripes*

## Phoebe Dunn “War Bride” Continued

Guam!) and helped me buy 2 dresses and a pair of shoes! (29<sup>th</sup>). On the next day, November 30<sup>th</sup>, Pinky and I were married. My mother in law had made me a simple, but lovely white wedding dress. It was far more tasteful than the wedding dresses of today, which cost hundreds of dollars. My husband’s brother took our wedding pictures – none of which turned out! However! I needed to send pictures to my Mum & Dad in Norwich, SO – after we returned to Raleigh (N.C.) where my husband was at the University, we then did have a photographer take our picture.

The journey over took all the money he had saved!!! We were poor, but we did not care! Pinky went to North Carolina State College and got his engineering degree. Didn’t have a car, but I was used to that and rode the bus. I got a job right away – but I was used to that too!!

We had an organization of British War Brides here. I had two very dear, close friends from Norwich. I never minded the term GI Bride although, strictly speaking I was not one having to come to this country (unmarried then) as an immigrant. Keep in mind, Southerners (North Carolina) are friendly people and I always felt welcome. My in-laws were particularly helpful. As I grew older and saw my own children leave home, I NOW know how devastating it must have been for my Mum & Dad to see me walk out of the house, at 19 years old, to fly to the States – but I said “Goodbye” and left!

My Mum & Dad, in Norwich, mortgaged the house to come to see me on the Polish ship “Batory” in 1948. My sister (17) came with them. My sister still lives in Norwich, she is 81 now and cannot travel because she is almost blind. I call her every Saturday morning. I then, with children, returned to England every 3 years and stayed for 3 months. My children love England to this day—



Phoebe and “Pinky” Wedding Photo—taken after the event!



Maurice “Pinky” Dunn and Phoebe pictured in 2010

Postscript :After 63 years of happy marriage, Maurice “Pinky” Dunn passed away in 2010 aged 87. Phoebe has 3 living children and 6 grandchildren. Oldest child (Andy) is a Air Force Academy graduate and now retired C-141 pilot. His son, Justin, was born at Mildenhall, England. Phoebe sadly had a baby who died at birth prompting the couple to adopt a daughter, Patricia. She continues to live in Charlotte in a 1.5 acre grass and vegetable garden where family members assist with the chores. Mornings are not complete until the regular cup of tea - Yorkshire, Tetley British Blend...very good says Phoebe.

My deepest gratitude to Phoebe for providing such an interesting, detailed account (including all photos), and responding to questions so comprehensively for this great article. - Editor

## Those Remembered

The summer months of 2013 have seen us lose some very dear friends and veterans who played an immense role in supporting and providing wonderful service to the success and standing of the 467th Bomb Group Assoc. **“Jack” Stevens**, President of the Association during the 90’s also steadfastly represented the Group within the 2nd Air Division for many years. **Vince LaRussa** was formerly President of the 2nd Air Division Association and too played a significant role promoting the 467th BG story. He and the LaRussa Family have been responsible for the publication of four great editions of the original 1947 Healy Group History and still one of the finest BG histories available. Our great English friend **Perry Watts** who worked tirelessly as historian, base contact, tour-guide, and ever generous host. A tribute appears in this issue to Perry.

All three have played an immeasurable and integral part of the history of the 467th ensuring the legacy is secured for future generation and scholars alike. All will be sadly missed, but never forgotten.

*-Editor*



*Vince LaRussa in his element at Rackheath*

### Perry Watts Tribute cont...

Another extraordinary achievement for Perry occurred in June of 2010, when he, with the help and encouragement of his devoted wife Jill and son James, accomplished the near-impossible and ever-changing task of bringing together the 467<sup>th</sup> BG Trip to England, a unique and fascinating 7-day

### Folded Wings

*Dr. Don S. Harp  
Vincent D. LaRussa  
Gloria LaRussa  
Robert T. Moulton  
Edgar J. Powell  
Arthur "Lyle" Prichard  
Sealy B. Smith  
John Everett "Jack" Stevens  
Marshall H. Walker  
Eugene P. Weslock  
James V. Whitcomb*

*Please send news of “Folded Wings” also Obituaries to 467th BG veterans or prominent Associates where we will be honored to record names in the newsletter. Details to our President and Membership/Data Manager*

*- Brian Mahoney [BriCamera@mindspring.com](mailto:BriCamera@mindspring.com)*



*“Jack” Stevens with the B-24 named by his crew*

visit around the beautiful and scenic Norfolk countryside.

Perry was, indeed, an extraordinary human being. It’s the little things, the small, everyday occurrences that I’ll always remember about him during my visits...the laughs, his stories, the smiles...Perry, thank you for making my life a richer one for the nine years I was privileged to know you.

*-Tom Johnson*

# Obituaries

## John Everett "Jack" Stevens



John E. "Jack" Stevens of Point Loma was born in Worcester, Massachusetts to Elizabeth Ursala Crotty and Homer Everett Stevens. Jack was the eldest of three children. He graduated Classical High School in Worcester and attended Colby College in Waterville, Maine, where

he earned a BA in English. Later, he earned an MBA from National University in San Diego. During World War II he was a pilot in the US [Army](#) Air Forces, first, in the 7th Anti-Sub Division (Florida and Port of Spain, Trinidad), next, in the 467th Bomb Group (8th Air Force, stationed at Rackheath, England), then finally, with the 98th Bomb Group, (15th Air Force, stationed at Lecce, Italy). Flying 51 combat missions, Jack earned the Distinguished Flying Cross, an Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters, and a number of battle and campaign medals. While he was in the 98th Bomb Group, it was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation. After World War II, Jack was stationed in Seoul, Korea, where he met Lucile Harshman who was serving in the American Red Cross there. They were married in 1948. In 1958, Jack and his family settled in San Diego where he worked for Convair and other aerospace and engineering firms. He specialized in technical publications and technical writing. Throughout his career and into retirement Jack was a member and officer in professional, veterans, and civic organizations, including the Society for Technical Communication, the Second Air Division Association, the 467th Bomb Group Association, The Pyramidiers (98th Bomb Group Association), the Military Order of World Wars, The Order of Daedalians, and the B-24 Liberator Club. Looking back on his career, Jack would often say with a wide grin, "I got to fly planes and they paid me to do it."

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## Dr. Don S. Harp



Dr. Don Stanley Harp, age 87, died March 28th, 2010 at his home in Oklahoma City. He was born July 28, 1922 on a farm northwest of Vinita, OK, near Estella, to Thomas B. and Katie Ruth Sensenbaugh Harp. He was the youngest boy of 15 children - seven boys and eight girls. He graduated from White Oak High School in 1941. During WWII, he joined the Army Air Force and ultimately was stationed at Rackheath, near Norwich, England, with the 8th Air Force. His crew flew bombing missions over France, Germany and Austria in a B-24 Liberator aircraft. Among his combat decorations were the Air Medal with oak leaf cluster, European Service Medal, American Theater Service Medal and WWII Victory Medal. His 467th Bomb Group also received two combat leadership and bombing accuracy awards. He is a charter member of the WWII Memorial in Washington, DC. After his discharge in Nov. 1945, he attended North-eastern State University in Tahlequah as a pre-dental student. He was accepted to Washington University School of Dentistry, St. Louis, MO, in 1947. On Oct. 22, 1948, he married Lila Jo O'Neal, a student nurse at Washington University School of Nursing. After graduation from dental school in 1951 he served two years in the Korean War at Ft. Benning, GA. Lila Jo (affectionately known as Peggy) and Don both worked at the base hospital outpatient clinics. He and Peggy moved to Oklahoma City in 1953 where he practiced dentistry for 41 years, retiring in 1995. He was a lifetime member of the American Dental Association and the Oklahoma Dental Association. He was a member of the United Methodist Church of the Servant in Oklahoma City. He had a special love of gardening, planting many fruit and shade trees on the acreage where he and Peggy raised their children, and where they lived since 1968. A trip back to the country roads of his childhood to fish on nearby farm ponds was an annual joy.

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*Rackheath Airfield Winter 44/45*