

# POOP from Group



791st



790th



789th



788th

Newsletter of the 467th Bomb Group Association

March 2026

## *Mission Memories of Crew 27 Summer 1944*



IT WAS MID-SEPTEMBER 1944 AND LT CURTIS "SKID" SKIDMORE, Bombardier of Crew 27, 789th Lt McGiverin Crew, had just completed his combat missions and while anticipating the journey home, had time to reflect on sometimes chaotic experiences in the ETO the previous five months. One of the original Wendover Crews forming the air echelon, he suffered a catastrophic take-off accident at Dakar, losing four of the crew, with just three members finally making a delayed arrival at Rackheath. Reassigned to the 789th James McGiverin Crew 27, Lt Skidmore flew regularly with the crew from mid-May, including two D-Day missions, before completing with several other 789th crews. He committed his mission experience with Crew 27 to a description of an anecdotal typical mission in a September 44 memoir we are privileged to feature on Page 6, The Trials and Tribulations of Crew 27.

**\*\*\* Norwich 2026 Reunion \*\*\***

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Jay Shower



The 467th  
Bombardment Group  
The Rackheath Aggies

Rackheath Pathfinders  
Site#6 (467th USAAF)



467bg\_assoc



# President's Message

By Yvonne Caputo

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As I was writing, *Flying with Dad*, I realized I needed to do some research. I was about to tackle the chapters about Dad's time in Texas. He did preflight at Kelly Field, San Antonio; gunnery training at Harlingen Army Air Base; and navigation training at San Marcos Army Airfield. While I was able to discover that not much was left at those air bases, I needed to get a sense of those places.

I made arrangements to visit and tour what was left of Kelly Field in San Antonio. The 1,900-acre field was now an industrial park called Port San Antonio, and several of the WWII era buildings remained. At the end of the tour, my guide handed me a challenge coin. She told me it was a way to honor my keeping my Dad's WWII history alive.

What she hadn't told me, and perhaps she didn't know, was that when the 467th Bomb Group Association was last in England, I was going to find out a different meaning. Some of the board members and I were sitting in the bar at the Maids Head. One took his challenge coin out of his pocket and slapped it on the table. This was followed by all of the other members doing the same.

The group looked at me, waiting for me to produce mine. Of course, I didn't have one; I hadn't been let in on the secret. My ignorance of the practice meant that the bar bill was now mine.

Knowing both meanings of the coin was helpful, and I was surprised when a new coin was handed to me in the oddest of places. It was sitting in physical therapy waiting for my appointment to begin. Across from me was a Vietnam veteran. His pride in his service was displayed on both his ball cap and jacket.

Curious, I asked him where he served. His response was Phomn Pehn, and somewhere in our ongoing conversation, he added that coming back to the United States was awful. He and others were ill-treated, mocked, and derided because of their service. In as gentle a way as I could, I agreed. When I finished, he reached into his pocket and handed me a challenge coin. My eyes misted. I was so honored.

I wanted to do something in return. I took a coin from the 2023 reunion in England to my next appointment. I asked the receptionist if she knew who the veteran was. She did. I wrote a note to go along with the coin. I hoped that when he received it, he would feel as special as I had.

## Notes from the Editor

*Please send news/articles to  
Editor - Andy Wilkinson  
[andy467th@gmail.com](mailto:andy467th@gmail.com)*



### **ANNUAL REUNION 2026, RETURN TO NORWICH, MAIDS HEAD HOTEL, SEPTEMBER 20 – 25: (6 nights)**

Reservations are mounting since our announcement of details in the last POOP (Nov 25) and have received positive reports the process is working seamlessly whether you choose to make a reservation via email or over the telephone. We are highly excited by the program we are putting together, visiting many of the places your veterans once walked and venturing out to “new” and surprise locations uniquely defined by the USAAF WWII experience in East Anglia. A full itinerary and schedule will appear in the summer, June POOP Newsletter, but read more of the proposed activities and details for Norwich 2026 and remember to get those hotel reservations made right away.

### **ANNUAL MEMBERS AND BUSINESS MEETING 16 NOVEMBER 2025 VIA ZOOM:**

Good to have many of you join online to conduct the annual meeting including the business of electing Directors and Officers for the board. Ross and Cindy were both ending their scheduled terms but graciously offered to put themselves forward to continue to serve for a further three and five year term. They were both duly reelected unopposed and we welcome their continuing presence and commitment to the goals of the Association as we navigate challenges ahead and preserving the legacy and history of the 467th. Keith Hughes provided a brief Treasury Report which remains relatively healthy and we continue to rely on the generosity of members to sustain and support future projects through donations. An updated Treasury Report will feature elsewhere this issue. Brian Mahoney as Secretary outlined and presented minutes from the previous AGM which was accepted by members before a discussion on the importance and need for early decision and selection of the 2027 Reunion location, also planning future locations. Half-a-dozen potential locations have been identified for 2027 and a Reunion Committee are aiming to reach out to the membership for opinions and preferences on the most popular suitable destinations. Meanwhile, Andy and Ivan were able to announce planning for the Norwich 2026 Reunion was progressing fruitfully with an itinerary to contain a few surprises and “new” destinations for many. VP Peter Horne presented a brief slide-show highlighting the successful Wendover dedication ceremony, extensively reported in the last POOP, which included images of the three-man trek in the nearby mountains to view the fateful crash-site of Lt Bonville’s B24 where scattered remnants still remain. The Board of Directors subsequently met to elect Officers, resulting in names and current posts remaining unchanged for the coming year.

### **FOLDED WINGS:**

It was with sadness we learned of the news we had lost another of our dwindling number of surviving veterans, Fred J. Messina, just a month after celebrating his 101st birthday. Fred was a flight engineer in the 790th and participated in 24 combat missions, flying the famous WITCHCRAFT on one of them. In the past Fred had contributed to the POOP and remained a keen aviator owning several aircraft and remained an active private flyer into his very senior years. Blue skies and tailwinds, Fred!

We extend sympathy to James Watts, son of Perry and Jill, on the passing of Jill back in January. Many of you will recall Jill a constant companion to Perry at past reunions and a generous host to many who found themselves invited to their home at Salhouse following base visits to Rackheath. A real Norfolk lady whose kindness and charm we will always cherish.

Robin Lestochi contacted to say her brother Ken McCracken Jr. passed in January after battling cancer since April. Ken and Robin attended reunions regularly honoring their late Father Ken, a member of the original 467th air echelon and gunner in the 791st shot-down and taken POW in May, 1944. Ken snr, would later chronicle his POW experiences, visiting local schools and conventions to speak and take Q&A sessions. Robin also mentioned their uncle Richard "Dick" Haywood who accompanied them to several past reunions passed in March 2025.

#### **MIKE BAILEY ARTWORKS SALE:**

Back in November an event was organised in Norwich for the sale of over 130 items of the late Mike Bailey art collection comprising original paintings completed by Mike and numerous framed-prints depicting B-24s of the Second Air Division, previously on display at the American Library. Proceeds from the sales were going directly to Mike's family. Mike during his long painting career undertook many commissions to paint B-24s but he also took on and completed a wide variety of other aircraft, many of which appear in a coffee table-size book, *The Aviation Art of Mike Bailey* first published in 2007. Particular interest was drawn to the four examples depicting B-24s from the 467th that were in the sale. Pleased to report that Keith Hughes (Treasurer) purchased a framed copy of WITCHCRAFT (see Page 18), James Watts procured a further study of WITCHCRAFT, while Ivan Barnard obtained a print of WALLOWING WILBERT. A fourth print depicting SOUTHERN CLIPPER is currently under negotiation for a proposed sale to a Rackheath Pathfinder. Hope to bring further news next issue.



Ivan Barnard is the proud owner of Mike's print of WALLOWING WILBERT that formerly was displayed in the American Library. Interestingly, this B-24 was one of the original 467th ships and was lost on the 6 August 44 mission to Hamburg. Struck by flak shortly before the target, seven crew perished with three taken POW.

**EMAIL AND ADDRESS CHANGES:** report changes to, Brian Mahoney, who deals with membership details **including notifications of Folded Wings and obituaries.** [researcher@brianmahoney.com](mailto:researcher@brianmahoney.com)

## Folded Wings

**Kenneth M. McCracken Jr.** - Legacy Member, January 2026

**Fred W. MESSINA** - Flt Engineer 790th, December 2025

**Jill A. WATTS** - Associate Member Salhouse UK, January 2026

Please send news of "Folded Wings" also Obituaries to 467th BG veterans or prominent Associates to Brian Mahoney [researcher@brianmahoney.com](mailto:researcher@brianmahoney.com)

## MISSION STATEMENT

The 467th Bombardment Group Association keeps alive the memory of the legendary WWII 467th Bombardment Group (Heavy), its remarkable performance within the Eighth Air Force, and the heroic sacrifices of its members. We honor their service by conserving their records and stories, promoting historical research, and hosting educational and social programs.

You can contribute to our efforts through a deeply appreciated DONATION to our Association PayPal/Credit-Debit Card account which is tax deductible, [HERE](#). THANK YOU sincerely for supporting our aims and determined endeavors; all donations will be acknowledged personally and in the POOP Newsletter.

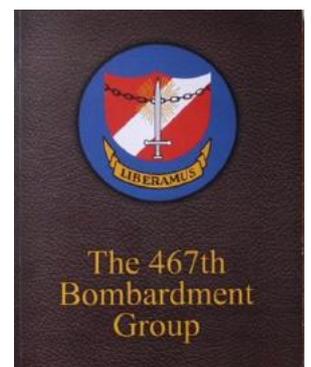
### The 467th Bombardment Group History by Allan Healy

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.

Price \$50 + \$5 shipping - payment via check or PayPal

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## ***The Trials and Tribulations of Crew 27***

*Lt Curtis "Skid" Skidmore's memoir describing a typical mission for Crew 27 during the summer months of 1944. Written following completion of his 35 missions and awaiting return to the U.S. in November 44.*



*Lt Curtis "Skid" Skidmore, bombardier, Lt Robert "Bob" Johnson, navigator, Lt Richard "Dick" Grey, copilot, Lt James "Mac" McGiverin, pilot, officers of Crew 27 at Rackheath.*

"Okay you Jokers, let's hit the deck." The voice of the site Officer of the Day (OD) awoke us at 0030, just thirty minutes past midnight. He turned the lights on, but we lay in our sacks reluctant to crawl out into the cold morning air.

"What's the score, Joe?", asked the Pilot.

"2700 topped off, 52 by 100 GP's [general purpose bombs], pre-briefing in twenty minutes, and breakfast in one hour", called the OD as he slipped off into the night to continue his rounds.

"Twenty-seven hundred gallons sounds like Big "B", doesn't it Skid? Get the hell out of the sack. Come on fellows let's go." The Pilot kept up this running conversation with himself knowing well that no answer would be given, and we knew that none was expected.

Finally with a heartfelt sigh I heaved myself out of the bed and while I was searching for my shoes I couldn't help but wish that I had never joined the Army. "K-kristt this floor's cold"; and by this mild observation we know that Bob has hit the deck.

About six minutes later we stepped outside and headed through the woods for the War Room at S-2 for our pre-briefing. I don't know if Lead and Deputy Lead Crews are supposed to be dumber than the average crew or not, but they think that we need to have an extra briefing before breakfast so that the information has more time to soak in. It is a good idea I guess; because we are better able to understand the problems that confront us later in the day. As soon as the door of the hut closed we found ourselves enveloped by a night that was darker than black. Someone once said that there was nothing any blacker than an English blackout and believe me that is certainly true.

Finally, after much fumbling and stumbling we reached the War Room and entered to find the place a bee hive of activity. Major Ogden finally spotted us and greeted us with "Morning fellows, come on in; be with you in a minute, going to be a honey today". And with that he went his way to prepare the target folders and photos.

We threw ourselves down in the large overstuffed chairs that border the room and silence reigned as each man busied himself with his thoughts. While I was sitting there thinking and smoking, I glanced at my watch and seeing that it was 0045, I thought "Let's see, 0045 here that would be 1845 in Tifton, GA, and last night at that. I'll bet Grace is still eating dinner. I wonder if she is thinking about me and wondering what I am doing".

Before I had time to give myself a satisfactory answer my trend of thought was broken by the voice of Buddie, our S-2 Officer.

Our attention was immediately focused upon his every word for we knew that the success of the day's mission depended entirely upon our ability to comprehend the information that he was about to put over to us. Buddie's voice droned on and on as he outlined the route in, the flak areas that we were to pass over, around, and between; and the route out and the method we were to use for let down from altitude. He gave us all the pertinent information about the type and number of enemy aircraft that we were to meet during the course of the day. He also gave us the details of the target, and helped us to pick out the landmarks that would help us to identify our target. Last he gave to us the type and number of our own fighter escort and the coordinates that they were to pick us up at. Refreshing our minds once more about our fighter reference points, he charged us all with the secrecy of the information he had given and dismissed us for breakfast.

Leaving the S-2 room we followed our noses as it were, at any rate we followed the scent of boiling coffee to the Mess Hall. The only remark that was made on our way to the Mess Hall was a sort of off-hand observation by our Co-Pilot 'Big Dick'; "Christ that's too close to Big "B" to suit me". No one answered for we all knew that it probably would be a rough show. However, in the Mess Hall the tenseness wore off a bit and we kidded each other in the usual way. We had the usual laugh at the smart fellows that would sidle up to us and ask in a confidential tone, "Where is the target? Will it be rough?". Of course, they didn't really expect an answer, but as one fellow said, "Maybe I don't expect an answer, but it doesn't hurt to try".

After breakfast we climbed aboard the waiting G.I. trucks and rode to the main briefing room where we attended the regular scheduled briefing. Promptly at three the old man entered and the briefing was under way. As soon as the doors were locked and guarded the officer in charge of the mission called the roll and assigned the ships that were to be used. During the roll call the Navigator and Bombardiers wrote down the information that they needed to complete their end of the mission.

The S-2 briefing officer stepped up to the front and as he rolled away the curtain that hid the secrets of the mission, a death like hush settled upon the room. The ribbons that marked the course to be flown pointed to a spot just south and west of the dreaded Berlin. From the new crews that had not as yet been initiated into the complicated job of aerial combat, came a long low whistle, and from the old timers came a knowing look and a few low groans. S-2 informed us of the route in and the flak, fighters and all other things pertaining to the mission. He stressed the need for chaff and pointed out the Wing and Group IP's [initial point] and disclosed the MPI's [mean point of impact]. After showing the target photos he gave us the dope about making our escape from Germany if we were unfortunate enough to be forced down over enemy territory. With a final word of caution about the information we were allowed to give if taken POW, we were dismissed for our specialized briefing, where the Navigators drew up their courses and the Bombardiers prepared their bombing data.



*Bombardiers Briefing*



*Main S-2 Mission Briefing*

0430 found us dressed in our electric flying equipment and on our way to the hardstands to await the take-off. We sat around the ship and smoked while we watched the sun rise. No one said a word but I knew that each one was thinking as I was, that is, wondering if we were watching our last sunrise. I wondered too if the fellows that didn't come back yesterday had sat around and wondered if they were watching their last sunrise.

I wandered over to the ship to make my preflight check of the bomb-load and the guns, and to run my sight up to make

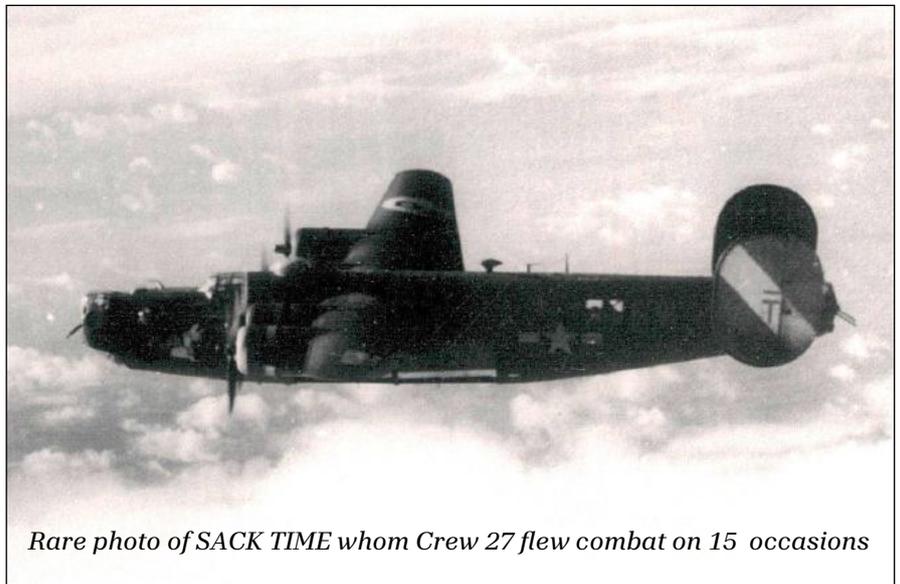
sure that it functioned properly. As I finished, I stepped from SACK TIME and walked toward her nose; patting her fondly on the fuselage, I whispered, "Good old SACK TIME, you sure have taken a hell of a beating. Almost a new ship and so beaten up that you are almost war weary". I tried to remember how many times she had brought us back safely despite heavy damage inflicted by Jerry, but the number was too great for despite the age of this gallant old lady, she had seen a lot of combat. Somehow, I felt safe with her.

With a long stretch and a final puff on his cigarette the Pilot gave the signal to go to stations. Shortly after we were aboard the engines were run up and checked, and with a hearty wave to the ground crew we taxied down the perimeter for the take-off position.

Taking my station between the Pilot and Co-Pilot, I counted the seconds as we waited for the take-off time to roll around. At last, I gave them the hack and with the throttles pushed full forward we trundled down the runway; slowly at first, and then with gathering speed the old ship leaped from the concrete strip and we were airborne for Germany. SACK TIME shuddered a bit as she struggled into the air with her bomb load and the 4,800 horses pulling at her, but when the power was reduced, she settled down to a nice easy climb.

We flew out to the Splasher, which is on the coast of England, and climbed through the overcast to assemble at twenty thousand feet. One hour later we reached the Wing Assembly Line and entered to take our position among the many hundreds of other ships that were to make up a part of our formation. It seemed to be ages before the Wing was assembled to the satisfaction of PETE THE POM INSPECTOR, but at last he dipped his approval and the huge formation wheeled away to enter the Division Assembly Line.

As we approached the line we saw a group of B-17s break through the high clouds and head straight for our Wing. We knew that at the rate of closure, which was nearly five hundred miles per hour, that a crash was unavoidable. With a crash that could almost be heard above the roar of the engines we saw a B-17 and a B-24 crash into one another. The B-24 exploded and pieces flew past



*Rare photo of SACK TIME whom Crew 27 flew combat on 15 occasions*

our ship, and bodies seemed to fill the air. The B-17 had its tail severed and began its mad descent to the earth, which was four miles straight down. Just as the damaged ship entered the overcast we could see three chutes open and we all thanked God silently for saving at least three men from a death that was so cruel.

It was hard to believe that in the space of the last few moments we had seen seventeen men take their last ride for Uncle Sam. It did seem like such a useless waste of young manhood, and I wondered how many of the War Lords who were so anxious to start wars would have traded places with any one of these boys that had just met their death in such a fashion. I felt bitter toward the whole world at that moment; for these men were my friends, and if and when we returned from this mission, I knew that I would miss them. However, realizing that a fogged mind was of no use in the air, I just swept the whole matter from my mind completely and concentrated on the target that we were assigned.

Starting a slow climb we edged our way toward Germany. As we climbed on course, I could see all the aircraft that were going to strike Jerry that day. For more than fifty miles in all directions all that could be seen were the huge four engine Liberators and Fortresses. In that one assembly there were at least one thousand bomber aircraft, each one loaded with fifty-two, one-hundred pound bombs of high explosives that we were to deliver to Hitler's doorstep come hell or high water.

At twenty-four thousand feet we ran into contrails, which laid down a blanket of vapor that hid the earth and the lower clouds from view. It was such a majestic scene that I couldn't help but wonder what MGM would pay just to duplicate such a scene. It truly was such a scene as defies description, and one would expect only to see such a thing in some MGM master production.

Finally, after what seemed to be an endless time we reached twenty-five thousand feet and the small islands just off the continent. At this point we witnessed the many bursts of flak that arose through the overcast to greet us. We hastily donned our flak suits and relaxed once more while we awaited another warmer welcome from the Hun. In a few minutes we made landfall on the continent and everyone tensed for knew we were about to penetrate Germany proper.

As I straightened out into a more comfortable position, I happened to glance at the temp gauge, and it read 42 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, and I started to check my electrical equipment lest it should fail and I should freeze. I thought of Grace, and the letters she had written just a short time ago about the unbearable heat, and wished with all my heart that I could be in Georgia, and soak up some of that good old sunshine. I wondered if even now – for back in Georgia it was only a few hours after midnight – she was tossing and turning, wishing for a breath of cool air. Believe me I thought if she were here, she would have plenty of cold air to make her comfortable.

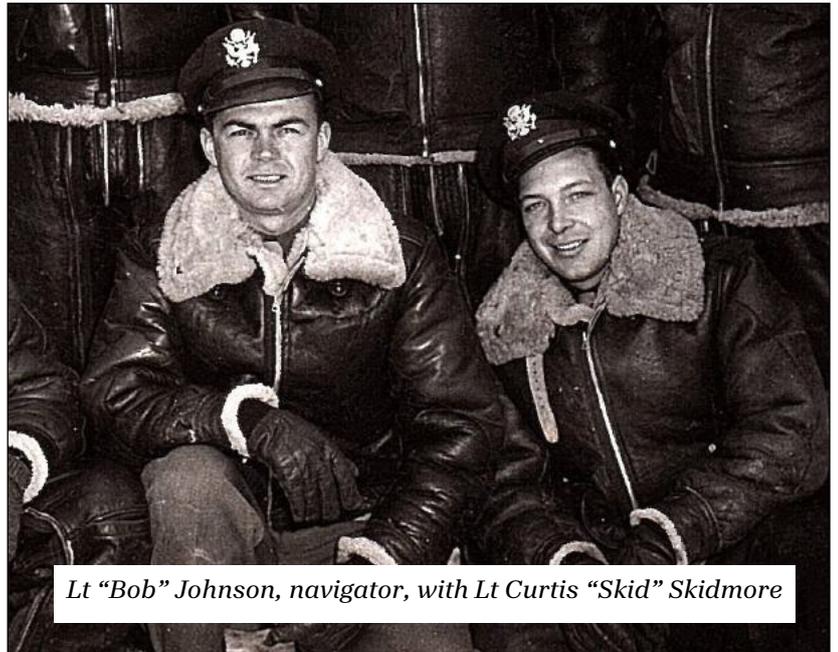
Suddenly my thoughts were interrupted by a sound similar to hail on a tin roof. The belly gunner reported a direct hit in the bomb bays, so I put on my emergency bottle [oxygen] and crept back through the hatch to inspect our explosive load. It had been only a glancing blow from flak, but it had ripped away most of the bomb-bay door. I checked the bombs and found them to be okay. I returned to my station for we were fast approaching the Waypoint Initial Point [WIP], and I needed to check my sight data. Looking through my sight I discovered that the overcast had entirely disappeared, and that Jerry was now able to look down his gun barrel at us.

As I looked through my sight I could see the flashes from Jerry's flak batteries, and about 38 seconds later I

could see the shells bursting around us. The flak soon became too accurate and we had to resort to evasive action to avoid direct hits. As careful as we were, we still suffered damage to our flight control surfaces. It was fascinating to see the guns firing at us, and as I continued to watch, I wondered if Grace would get as much thrill out of this as I was getting.

As we swung onto the General Initial Point, all hell broke loose. As soon as Jerry saw our bomb-bay doors open he knew that we would stay socked in for the bomb run, so he threw up a predicted barrage for us to fly through. While I was sighting for range and deflection, I could see the bursts coming closer and closer until suddenly with a heave that almost stalled us out, old SACK TIME climbed straight up and started a chandelle to the right. Number four engine had received a direct hit that almost tore it from the nacelle and the torque pulled us to the right and the force of the blow threw the ship straight up in the air for several feet. As quickly as we ascended, we fell back down and the next few moments were anxious ones as we dodged wing tips and rudders of our fellow fliers. I wouldn't be surprised if several people in that formation thought that we had had it. I know some of us thought so, and several of the fellows already had their hands on their rip cords. The old queen floundered about for a few moments and then like the perfect lady that she had always been, she settled down with a grand swoop into her number two position.

With the number four engine feathered with its prop blades turned into the wind to cut down drag, we continued down the bomb run. To say that I was too nervous to work the bomb-sight would be an understatement, but the calm voice of the Pilot floated through the intercom as he said, "Okay Skid, let's give them hell and then go home". It was no use to try to fool Mac, he knew that we were soon to hit the bomb release point and he knew that I needed to be calmed down. That was his way of adding moral support. Glancing into my sight I picked up the target and proceeded to work out the errors.



*Lt "Bob" Johnson, navigator, with Lt Curtis "Skid" Skidmore*

Just as I had everything under control, we passed over another flak battery and one of the gunners shouted, "There goes SNAFUBAR down and its burning like hell". Another voice chimed in with "THUNDERMUG is aborting with two engines feathered". Guess they must have had a bad hit, I tried not to think of these things but then the top turret gunner cut in with, "ME 109s at 12 o'clock high queuing up for an attack!". For a moment I was stunned. Was I to have come through this much hell and then never reach the target? As I looked into my sight once more, I could see SNAFUBAR hitting the deck below us and I realized that I was watching ten of my buddies heading for their last few minutes on this earth. I was cold all over and sick at heart as I watched them spin closer and closer to the earth knowing full well that the centrifugal force was too great for them to make a jump. I was sure that I would go mad if I had to watch them any longer, and suddenly my Pilotage Navigator picked out the MPI and cut in the intercom with the sighting information.

Thankful for any diversion I picked up the Aim Point (AP) and made the necessary corrections. Looking at

the small building that was my AP I thought, what a wonderful thing this bomb sight is. Here I am five miles up in the air and I can see the people running for the shelters, and that building which is only seventy by one hundred twenty feet looks as big as a B-24. Just as the bomb release warning flag appeared, I caught sight of SNAFUBAR again; it was about to enter the area that my bombs would soon land on. The thoughts that ran through my mind were all jumbled. I remember wondering if God cared; was I going to murder my own friends before the crash could kill them; should I drop my bombs; would Grace care if she knew that I might kill my friends; would she need to know.

At last, the flag disappeared and the call, “bombs away; if the doors are clear close them”. “Doors cleared and closed, sir”, came the reply from the Radio Operator. I watched the target through my sight; as the impacts started to show I could see several ant-like creatures, which I knew were people scurrying for shelter that they could never reach. Poor innocent people that would soon be dead because the madness of their leader had tainted their country. As a kindly gesture – as if to hide the horrible view from my sight – good old SACK TIME stuck her proud nose in the air and on her three good engines headed for the rally-point.

Almost to the rally-point and the intercom crackled again with the familiar, “bandits in the area, ME 109s and FW 190s attacking at three and twelve o’clock!”. The ones coming at 12 were soon upon us for their speed of closure was about 700 mph. They swept through us and hit the ships behind us. “MISS JUDY has been hit, and FLACK SHACK is smoking like mad.” Blow by blow the tail gunner flashed the attack to us. Although this attack lasted less than three minutes, the Jerries knocked out twelve ships from the group behind us.

Once more the ME 109s queued up for an attack and this time we were to be their target. “Here they come fellows! A bottle of rum to the one that knocks down the first fighter.” No need to wonder who said that; wasn’t “Big Dick” the only one that had any rum? However, at his challenge all guns turned to the front and an ungodly chatter of fifties shook our ship. The Me’s kept on coming in, and as they came closer and closer beads of sweat stood out on my forehead, and above the din of battle I heard a voice pray; “God, please take care of us; let us get home safe”. One of the gunners had apparently pressed the mic switch at the same time he pressed the gun switch. I guess a lot of us were thinking the same prayer; I know that I was.

By increasing the Manifold Pressure (MP) to 47-inches HG [mercury] we were able to pull away from the fighter area, and with a few parting bursts they slow rolled and bid us good bye. A few minutes later we reached the enemy coast, and aside from a few bursts of flak the fighting was done for this day. After we left



*Mission return and safely back on the ground at Rackheath*

the coast, we let the old queen relax a bit by reducing the MP and losing altitude. By the time we were down to 1,500 feet, we had reached England, and made our landfall. Taking a shortcut home, we requested a straight in approach, and with a sigh of real relief we felt the wheels hit the runway at Rackheath.

As we taxied up to the hardstand the ground crew came out to greet us. “Well, how did it go?”, they wanted to know. For weren’t they in this war, too? Just because they had to stay on the ground was no sign that their hearts weren’t with us. As we counted the 121 flak and bullet holes, one of the gunners answered them, “Just a milk run, nothing much to it; saw some flak and a few 109s”. How could he say only a milk run? One bomb bay door gone, 121 holes, and not to mention the number of lives lost.



Well, that’s the story; ten thousand men went to hell that day, but ten thousand men didn’t return. I know, for I watched 150 of these men die; 150 men that had just a few hours earlier sat as I did, and looked at the sunrise. But these men had seen their last sunrise.

It was still mid-afternoon as I hit the sack, and as I tried to drift off to sleep, I wondered if Grace would forgive me for not writing. After all, I was too sick at heart to write; and if I did write, what could I say? Could I tell her how I felt? Could I describe the mission? Of course not, I told myself; write her tomorrow when you’re feeling better, and tell her that everything is swell, and that you’ll be home soon. Maybe by then you will have forgotten about those fellows that saw their last sunrise; after all, one soon learns to forget over here. And with this consoling thought I snuggled down in my sack for a much needed rest.



*Editor:* sincere appreciation to “Ash” Skidmore providing his Father’s original memoir; transcribing , editing and offering suggestions and assistance as well as a number of photos used in this article. A further article concerning Lt Curtis Skidmore and his experience of the tragedy at Dakar enroute to England, also the story of his ornately decorated A-2 Jacket, can be found in the April 2014 POOP from Group, at [www.467bg.com](http://www.467bg.com)

# *Return to Norwich 26*

## *Maids Head Hotel, September 20 - 25*



Built on the success of the 2023 Reunion and by overwhelmingly popular demand, we make a further visit to Norwich, England, and once again our base for the week will be the historic Maids Head Hotel. Overlooking the 900 year-old Norwich Cathedral and located in the heart of the city with a wide choice of pubs, restaurants, historic buildings and all manner of cultural attractions just steps away.

### **RESERVATION DETAILS, MAIDS HEAD HOTEL:**

**Sunday 20 September to Friday 25 September, 2026. (6 nights)**

Classic Doubles @ £155.00 (sole occupancy @£135.00)

Executive Double Rooms also includes Executive Twin Rooms @ £175.00

Single Rooms @ £115.00

Rates are per room per night and include full English breakfast and VAT @ 20%. These special Reunion rates to apply for any additional nights requested by guests, however, there will be a £30.00 per room supplement for staying on a Saturday night. For room details and facilities at this traditional and historic 4-star hotel, see [Maids Head Hotel](#)

Reservations to be made by email to <[Groups@maidsheadhotel.co.uk](mailto:Groups@maidsheadhotel.co.uk)> and in the Subject line state "ID 2609467THB" and clearly register the type of room, names of guests, arrival date and departure date (number of nights), additional requirements such as lift accessible/walk-in shower, with payment method (credit/debit card number including expiry date). Reservations may also be made by telephone to Alex Hassall (Reservations Manager) Monday-Friday to the Maids Head, **011+44+1603-209955**. Payment automatically taken 30 days prior to arrival. Ensure cancellation is made 30 days prior to arrival. Why not extend your stay and maximise enjoyment of the vibrant, historic city of Norwich and its host of attractions.

Email Andy Wilkinson <[andy467th@gmail.com](mailto:andy467th@gmail.com)> for travel advice or questions relating to the Reunion 26.



**BASE DAY**, a full day exploring the former Rackheath airfield, visiting the Control Tower, touring remains of Site 6 domestic site, dropping by at the B-24 Café, walking the main runway, and time at a host of further important local landmarks. We hope to visit Rackheath Hall and grounds, also plan to have lunch at one of the local pubs once popular with many USAAF airman. Opportunity to meet with local villagers, swap stories, and enjoy the magic of exploring the “home” and once familiar locality of the 467th over eighty-years ago.

**IWM DUXFORD AIRFIELD**, also incorporating the American Air Museum which stands as a memorial to the 30,000 members of the US Army Air Forces who died while flying from Britain during the Second World War. Home to the biggest collection of American military aircraft on public display outside the United States, including the wonderfully restored B-24M representing “DUGAN” of the 392nd BG, Wendling Airfield, Norfolk. The airfield is base to many war-birds often seen flying impromptu displays and hangars dedicated to restoration projects; the Air Space Hangar housing heritage aircraft from the British Airliner Collection including a must-see early pre-production Concorde aircraft that can be walked through.



**NORWICH AND AMERICAN LIBRARY**, plenty of opportunity to explore the historic city, famed for its iconic Norman Cathedral and 12th-century Castle, it offers a unique blend of heritage, a thriving cultural scene, independent shops, and extensive open-air markets. We have organised an optional guided walking-tour of World War Two Norwich after spending a morning at the American Library, the living memorial to those men and women of the Second Air Division and those who never got to return home.



**THE EXCLUSIVE NORFOLK CLUB**, just a few minutes walk from our base at the Maids Head Hotel, an auspicious Georgian building and club founded in 1770 where we will hold a group dinner with invited friends and guests. Described as an oasis of tranquillity, sophistication, and welcoming atmosphere where members can choose to work, unwind, or entertain in style.

**AMERICAN MILITARY CEMETERY MADINGLEY,** located in 30 acres of sloping woodland near the city of Cambridge, a place of serenity and reflection where 64 of the 467th are laid to rest or names appear on the Wall of Missing. We will explore the grounds, visit the wonderful Memorial Chapel and option to look around the visitor centre which hosts a collection of interpretive displays, exhibitions, personal stories and more.



**SITE 4 ENTIRE FORMER DOMESTIC SITE, USAAF STATION 125, BUNGAY 446th BG.** The largest and most intact original complex of wartime buildings on any former USAAF Heavy Bomber airfield remaining in the UK. The site recently transferred ownership to the USAAF Heritage Trust and their ambition is to restore the site into a Living History Museum and Memorial to all of the American Servicemen and Women who served in the USAAF throughout Great Britain during 1942 - 1945. The historic Site 4 complex of wartime buildings has remarkably survived the past 84 years; the site has remained virtually untouched with several examples of wartime painted wall-art still adorning the internal walls of the buildings and other than being utilised for the most basic of farming requirements (tractor and grain storage), this historic time capsule has remained largely intact and undiscovered. Restoration continues and we are excited to have been offered an extensive guided-tour in September.



Just a selection of places identified we will be visiting during the September Norwich Reunion. Several other locations are also lined-up, including a surprise trip to an undisclosed destination which we are sure will provide plenty of enjoyment and appreciation. The full itinerary will appear in the summer June POOP along with Registration details; meanwhile recommend you make reservations at the Maids Head right away to ensure your place at this much anticipated Reunion.



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## OPERATION

A poem by Delbert R. Gardner and Adele Gardner

Thanks to Adele for forwarding the following piece of creative writing described as memoir in the form of a poem, written in collaboration with her father, Delbert R. Gardner, a former 790th armorer who served at Rackheath throughout 1944/45 until the war's end. Dedicated to her mother, Marilyn, the poem first appeared in the anthology *Proud to Be: Writing by American Warriors*, Volume 9, Edited by James Brubaker, Southeast Missouri State University Press, Nov. 11, 2020. Following the war, Delbert Gardner put the G.I. Bill to good use and received his BA and MA from Syracuse University, his Ph. D. in English from the University of Rochester. An Associate Professor of English at Kueka College he encouraged students in literary pursuits while himself involved in creative writing and published output. The following poem was begun in 2005 and three-quarters complete while her Dad was alive. It was one of a number of collaborations and projects including writing sessions they conducted together. Read about Delbert R. Gardner's life in an extensive [biography](#) put together by Adele who is Agent and Literary Executor for her father.

# Operation

By Delbert R. Gardner and Adele Gardner

While I was in the operating room,  
 You mended clothing for the family  
 And prayed for me. You wanted me  
 To be without pain, but failing that,  
 Your wish would be to take it on yourself,  
 As much as that could be. When I came back,  
 I complained, "People have been doing things  
 To my body."

"I know, dear," you sympathized.  
 My mouth was dry as sandpaper in the sun,  
 And tasted like burned salmon.  
 So you fed some crushed ice to me with a spoon;  
 It crunched cold against my teeth but helped my thirst  
 And I kept eating it for a while to try to wash  
 The bad taste from my mouth. (The taste  
 Remained throughout the day despite the ice  
 And ginger ale you alternated with it.)  
 The pain of the incision seemed diffused  
 Throughout my body, except when  
 I moved--and then it localized intensely.  
 "I can't get comfortable," I complained.  
 "I know," you said, washing my face with a cool  
 Damp wash cloth. "It will get better, darling,"  
 You promised.

"Yes, I'm sure it will.  
 But if I could just get comfortable and rest,  
 It would be easier to wait. My head--"  
 I didn't finish.

"Your head hurts too, poor dear?"  
 You put your cool hand on my forehead  
 And held it there a spell. Then you spooned  
 More ice to my parched mouth. After a time  
 I managed to doze a little, but fitfully,  
 Aware of your hand holding mine beside  
 The left rail--the hand with the IV feed  
 Taped to the back. Because I felt like groaning  
 From time to time, I said, "I don't want  
 To worry you, dear, but it helps me some  
 If I don't have to suffer in silence."  
 You smiled at that. "You're not to worry  
 About worrying me. You'd groan if I weren't here--  
 And I want to be here."

"All right," I groaned,  
 And closed my eyes; "I'm going to try to sleep."

I drifted in and out of sleep by fits.  
 The aircraft wing as long as a football field  
 Flapped up and down with the air currents,  
 But without the flexibility of a bird's:  
 Uneasy feeling that the wings might break.  
 I'd said a prayer each time I saw them lift--  
 Those precious flights of B-24s from England  
 We'd just loaded with bombs, explosive cargo  
 To drop on Hitler's Germany in World War II.  
 We hadn't known if we'd see home again,  
 Or the fate of buddies sent into the skies  
 On mission after mission. Some came back  
 Butchered by flak. Flight surgeons saved some  
 lives.  
 I cherished the faces I would see no more  
 While servicing the guns and loading bombs,  
 Each with a prayer this strike would end the war  
 Before more people died.

But now I wake,  
 To find you at my side: beloved, rare.  
 Hand trembling, I reach to touch your hair  
 Where you lie dozing in harmonious sleep,  
 Your cheek pressed near my hand. Dream on,  
 dear one:  
 For with your dream of love, salvation comes:  
 Your sympathetic heart; our loving brood.  
 Two minds and flesh made one: this body aches,  
 But not my heart, thank God. Here's all the good I  
 ever wished. What we were fighting for.

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## 467th BGA Treasury Report December 31, 2025

*Prepared for Poop From Group 467, March 2026 edition by Keith Hughes*

Cash on Hand - Three separately accounted funds in our single PNC non-profit checking account (no bills outstanding) as below:

<b>1. Reunion Support Fund</b>		<b>\$4,656.85</b>
<b>2. Wendover Memorial Fund end 2024</b>	\$3,607.08	
<i>Freight Charge to Wendover</i>	2,695.00	
<i>Wendover Memorial Plaque</i>	<u>1,000.00</u>	
<i>campaign cash balance</i>	212.08	<b>\$212.08</b>
<b>3. General Fund ("Mail Fund")</b>		
<i>Reunion Registration Fees</i>	\$8,301.26	
<i>PayPal ytd contributions</i>	235.00	
<i>Cash, Check Donations</i>	500.00	
<i>PX Sales</i>	647.00	
<i>reunion auction</i>	775.00	
<i>reunion 50/50 raffel</i>	140.00	
<i>Colorado Springs reimbursement</i>	132.00	
<i>PNC Bank reimbursement</i>	<u>15.00</u>	
<b><i>Income subtotal</i></b>	<b>\$10,745.26</b>	
<i>Reunion related expenses</i>	\$5,917.52	
<i>PayPal fee</i>	9.62	
<i>Reinstate Wisconsin Non-Profit</i>	240.00	
<i>Gift to 467th Veteran</i>	<u>65.36</u>	
<b><i>Expenses subtotal</i></b>	<b>\$6,232.50</b>	
<i>Net year-to-date (\$10,745.26 - \$6,232.50)</i>	4,412.76	
<i>Carry over from 2024 calendar year</i>	<u>3,375.66</u>	
<i>General Fund current running balance</i>	\$7,888.42	<b><u>\$ 7,888.42</u></b>
<b><i>Total cash on hand</i></b>		<b><u>\$12,757.35</u></b>

**Remarks:**

"Thank You" to Brian Mahoney, Spreadsheet-Superhero. Brian's patience in my mentorship and overwatch as Treasurer is greatly appreciated.

The 2025 Reunion in Savannah, October 17-22, kept expenses to a minimum allowing a \$230 registration fee! Savannah was rewarding to all in attendance and positive financially.

The reunion silent auction brought in \$775 combined with \$647 in PX sales made welcome additions to our General Fund.

Combined PayPal and cash in-kind gifts for 2025 were an amazing \$735.00! **THANK YOU MEMBERS!**

*Editor: an opportunity to acknowledge a recent generous donation to the General Fund from Joe Flynn, Sierra Vista, AZ that will fall into the 2026 financial accounts.*



## Letter from Rackheath

By Ivan A. Barnard [Ivanbarnard999@btinternet.com](mailto:Ivanbarnard999@btinternet.com)

I am often asked, do the “Pathfinders” really turn out every Saturday morning regardless of the weather conditions. Those of you who regularly follow our Facebook page will know that regardless of the conditions, the photographic evidence proves that we do. A recent example being a [snowstorm](#).

### Rackheath B24 Cafe

On behalf of Keith Hughes, I had the privilege of attending an exhibition and sale of the late Mike Bailey's aviation artwork. I was successful in acquiring for Keith a magnificently framed painting of WITCHCRAFT. Keith's original intention was to have it shipped to America. However after further consideration it was decided as a tribute to the “Pathfinders” it should be displayed at the B24 Café at Rackheath, where it now has pride of place.



Another item on display is an original Foot-locker that belonged to Lt Anton J. Looman, a Bombardier with the 789th and 791st Bomb Squadrons. One of the many items contained within the foot-locker on display is a hardback book to those who successfully completed the Bombardiers Class 43-10. A photograph of Anton and a letter signed by Colonel G. M. Palmer, as published in the book are reproduced on the following page.

### Pump room excavations.

A section of the officers mess kitchen boiler-house is some four feet below floor level as it contained the original pumps and steam condensers. It is believed that due to the height of the steam condensers and their location they would have protruded through the roof of the Nissen hut. Therefore a below ground chamber was constructed to house them. Sometime post war this chamber was filled with brick rubble and large pieces of concrete together with a vast quantity of soil.

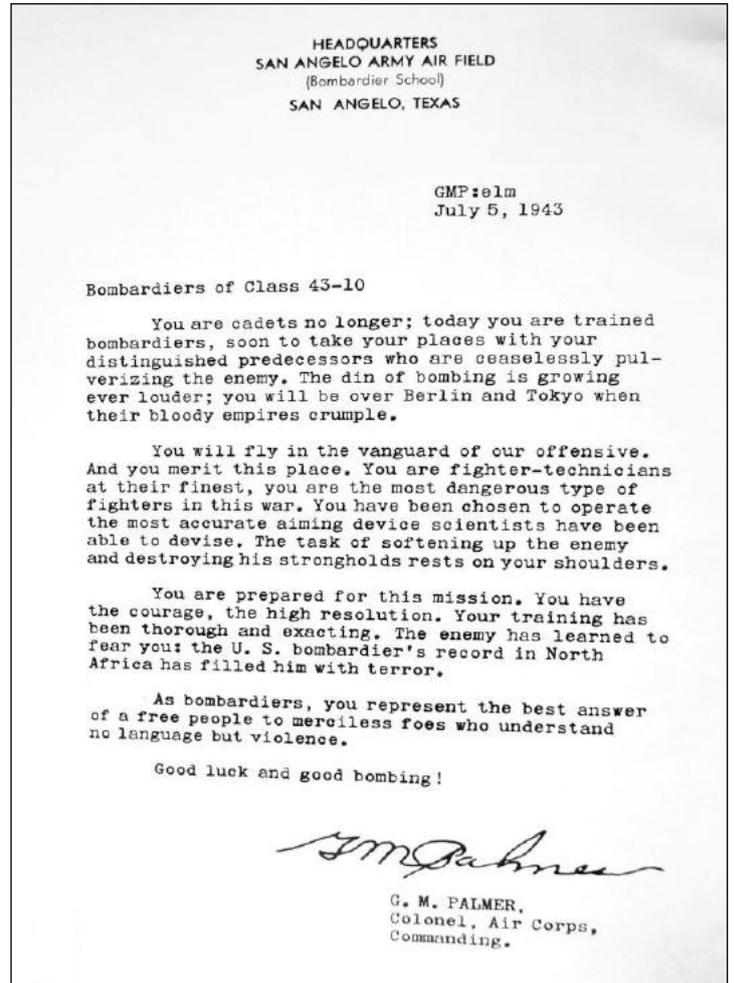
Over a period of several months, the chamber has been completely emptied. The chamber has been systematically photographed and the archaeology recorded. We are currently refilling the chamber

with the brick rubble and concrete, which will then be covered with old carpet. On top of which the last few inches will be soil and then it will be grassed.

#### Lt Anton J Looman display



ANTON J. LOOMAN  
1366 36th Street, S. E.  
Grand Rapids, Mich.



#### A Tribute to the "Pathfinders" from Joe Dzenowaggis

"Thanks Ivan, you and your posse do so much to honor the relationship between the people of Britain and America that was fostered during the hardship of those war years. Your efforts and your words during my visit to Norwich for "Silver Wings" stay with me and I know that they must stay with many people whose lives you have touched."

#### New Housing adjacent to Site 6

As I recorded sometime ago, a well respected Norfolk builder, called Norfolk Homes commenced building in the field adjacent to the rear of the White House. It was also this builder who provided and paid for a foot-path joining the new housing to Site 6 and Newman Road. Recently I have met Karen and Trevor Lennon who moved into their new house just before Christmas. I was invited to visit them as they were most anxious to show me what they had installed on the staircase landing of their new home. None other than a Silhouette of a B24 coming into land.

*Karen and Trevor Lennon:*

*"We sold our house in Cambridgeshire to downsize. Looked at lots of houses in Norfolk - didn't find anything that suited us. Found out Norfolk Homes had one house left at their new Rackheath development,*

*directly opposite Site 6. Went away and fell in love then discovered the history of the Site 6 and its connection to WWII. Very interested as Karen's father served in the RAF after the war. Met Ivan and the team and learned about the history of the work. We wanted to remember the USAAF and the B24's and so had the decal sticker made and put it in a prominent place in our new house to acknowledge the landings every day".*



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## *Caught between September showers*

Had to share these excellent images taken last September by Bill Brookes who had dropped by at Rackheath and took the opportunity to operate a drone-flight between showers during the short visit. Bill offered two of the aerial images capturing the Rackheath Control Tower and we are delighted to present them here. Bill also took a few more images from the Tower platform and roof area, the view magically continue to evoke the memory of the once busy former airfield, now the scene of peaceful open farmland.



*Credit: Bill Brookes*

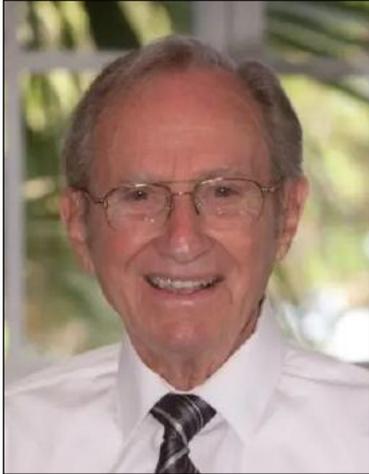


*Credit: Bill Brookes*



*Credit: Bill Brookes*

# Obituaries



## **Fred W. MESSINA, Flight Engineer, 790th**

Fred Messina, a Resident Of Ballantrae for 20 years and the oldest World War II Veteran living there, passed peacefully in his home on December 20th, where he was cared for by his daughters Candace and Carol, while son-in-law Billy was the Master Chef and Phil handled the repairs and things of a mechanical nature.

Fred was very proud of his successful trucking business, North Jersey Express, which he started with one truck and ended with sixty! His wife was right by his side handling the bookkeeping.

He and his beautiful wife Ruthie lived life to the fullest with their airplanes, boats, motorcycles and snowmobiles. They also played tennis and golf. Originally from NJ, they resided at the Ocean Reef Club before moving to Ballantrae, where Fred recently celebrated his 101st Birthday with Family & Friends at the Santa Lucia River Club.

Fred's other daughter Connie, who lives in NJ with her husband Scott, make up the biggest part of his family with 3 grandchildren, 15 great grandchildren, and 4 great, great grandchildren!

We have to thank Treasure Coast Hospice for the wonderful care they took of Fred in his home, along with his daughters. They are the best, and deserve donations if you are looking to give to a charity or need care for a loved one.

A Celebration of Life will be held at 1pm on February 15, 2026 at the Santa Lucia River Club, 3325 Ballantrae Blvd, Port St Lucie, FL

*Editor:* a eulogy was delivered on behalf of the 467th Assoc. by Keith Hughes who in recent years befriended Fred and traveled along with Laura to attend the Celebration of Fred's long and rich life. Keith kindly presented Fred's three daughters each a replica set of his dog-tags and a unique shadow box containing a folded U.S. flag and the same authentic medals he earned flying 24 combat missions in the 790th.



# The 467th Post Exchange



## **RED 467th LIBERAMUS INSIGNIA BALL CAP:**

Universal fit.....\$10.00 ea plus package and mail.

## **SQUADRON PATCHES FEATURING SQUADRON LOGO, 788th, 789th, 790th, 791st:**

Embroidered Patches 4" Dia.....\$3.00 ea plus package and mail.

## **467th LIBERAMUS SHIELD GROUP PATCH:**

Red Embroidered Patch 3"x3" .....\$3.00 ea plus package and mail.

## **SQUADRON PINS FEATURING SQUADRON LOGO, 788th, 789th, 791st:**

Pins 1" Dia. (790th Squadron currently unavailable).....\$3.00 ea plus package and mail.

## **CAR/REFRIGERATOR MAGNET:**

467th Shield/2AD/8th Air Force Round. 4" Dia.....\$2.00 ea plus package and mail.

## **WHITE POLO SHIRT WITH GROUP PATCH:**

Liberamus 467th BG/2 AD - 8 AF. ONLY avail sizes, XL & XXL.....\$15.00 plus package and mail.

## **CHALLENGE COIN in plastic envelope:**

467th Liberamus/Happy Warrior Squadron, Tucson 2018 Reunion.....\$15.00 ea plus mail.

**ORDERS AND ENQUIRIES TO KEITH HUGHES** [keithalanhughes@icloud.com](mailto:keithalanhughes@icloud.com)

**Keith will advise shipping costs and availability**

**PAYMENT: Credit card/Paypal [HERE](#): or via check to "The 467th BG Association"  
to TREASURER, Keith Hughes, 950 Holly Circle, Ormond Beach, FL 32176**