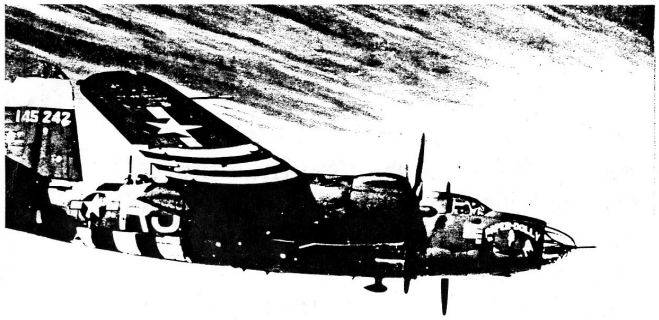


454TH BOMB SQUADRON
323RD BOMB GROUP

# The WOLF HOWL-L-L

**May 2013**

## GREETINGS TO EVERYONE

Here we are preparing for our upcoming reunion already; this will be our 38th Annual Reunion which will be held in the beautiful and historical Charleston, South Carolina. Once again this year, the 344th BG will be joining us. We are looking forward to seeing everyone again as we have created some special friendships.
Our Directory has some more changes and additions, thank you to everyone with your input. With your assistance we can keep our directory current and we will continue to pass along all up-dates for our directory in the next newsletter. So, if you know of anything in our current directory that is incorrect please contact me preferably by email at kville93@centurylink.net or you can call me at 480-984-3676 and leave a voice message and I will return your call as soon as possible.

## Our Mail Bag News

Marion Whelpley - Sent us a thank you card expressing their thanks (hers and her dad's Santos Endrizzi) & gratitude for us inviting the 344th to the reunions and they are already looking forward to Charleston.

Maxine Devlin - Wrote saying she hopes to attend another reunion and how much she looks forward to receiving our newsletters. She has her volunteer work at the hospital once a week and she has been volunteering now for over 30 years. Way to go Maxine!

Lisa Izdepski – Wrote unable to attend future reunions due to health issues. She hopes we enjoy all future reunions and she will be thinking of us.

## 454th B.S. 38th Annual Reunion at Charleston, SC

Here is information and facts about our Reunion location, the Hotel we will be staying at this year is the Radisson Hotel. It is located near the airport with limited shuttle service to downtown area. The shuttle service to and from the hotel is complimentary.

## Schedule of Events

(Register for tours in advance – Tour Reservation Form – **Attachment 1**)
Tours verify participation, must reserve 30 days prior to our reunion

**Charleston, SC Reunion - Tours, Events**

**Charleston City Tour** **Thursday, Sep 26th 1pm – 5pm $38**

This city tour features many notable sites of Charleston. Our chartered motor coach will take us to downtown Charleston where we meet our step on guide. There we take a narrated tour to see such prominent sites as: 4 Corners of Law, St. Michaels Church, Battery Park and Gardens, The Citadel, and Rainbow Road of Historic Houses, it's a comfortable, mostly riding tour. After the tour, you will be on your own to explore the Historic French Quarter of Charleston for 1 ½ hours prior to returning to hotel. You are encouraged to eat some lunch prior to this tour, so that you can spend your free time exploring this unique area. (Tour Includes; Professional Guide, Fees, Motor coach, Driver, limited walking or more at your option).

**Harbor Tour, Fort Sumter Cruise** **Friday, Sep 27th 11am – 3pm $43**

Our tour begins with a motor coach drive from our hotel to downtown Charleston, we have to be there a minimum of 30 minutes prior to sailing for your check in and boarding. This cruise experience (taking about 2 ½ hours) is actually two cruises in one. Your cruise (there is a snack bar on board) includes a Charleston Harbor narrated tour as well as a stop at the Isle of Fort Sumter where you will have a short presentation about the Fort and then some time on your own. After the cruise, we return back to our hotel, about 25 minutes away. (Includes; Tour Leader, Fees, Cruise, Fort Sumter, Motor coach, the Driver, limited walking).

**Special Dinner/Entertainment Evening** **Friday, Sep 27th 6pm – 8:30pm $39**

Tonight you will attend a special dinner and entertainment event right at our hotel. You will enjoy a 3 course dinner and a special entertainer who does a very unique presentation. Many of you have enjoyed this special dinner event over the years. It's convenient and a good time for all (Dinner, Entertainment, At the Hotel).

| **Saturday Sep 28th** | **9:50am** | **Executive Board Meeting** |
|---|---|---|
| | **10:00am** | **Business Meeting** |
| | **5:00pm** | **Cocktail Hour / Cash Bar** |
| | **6:00pm** | **Farewell Dinner/Entertainment** |

**Farewell Dinner Evening** **Saturday, Sep 28th 5:00 – 9:00pm $38p**

Tonight we will have our traditional farewell for this reunion, cocktails, a nice dinner, with a musical background. After a relaxing day around our hotel, we have this last event. The cocktail hour will start at 5:00pm, the dinner (a 3 course meal, duet entrée meal) will be at 6:00pm. A wonderful time to see all your friends, and say farewell till next year, it's sure to be a night to remember, see you there in your dress ups (Dinner event at Hotel)

| | |
|---|---|
| **9:00pm** | **Banquet Room Closes** |
| **9:00pm – 12:00a.m.** | **Hospitality Room Reopens** |

***The tours require minimum of 35 participants, fully refundable if minimum number not achieved, must reserve 30 days prior reunion, 1st come 1st serve. Fully refundable if medical situation arises; tour operators not responsible for delay, injury and/or cancel due to mechanical problems and/or "Acts of God" incidents and conditions***

Our Hotel is several miles from the downtown Charleston area, to see the Historical downtown sites and to do the harbor cruise, our tours will be the most convenient and comprehensive way to enjoy these locations.

## 2013 -Reunion Registration – Charleston, SC

**Mail to: 8250 E. Obispo Ave Mesa AZ, 85212**
**Inquiries – call George Cornett at (480) 984-3676**

**Name _____** **Group _____ Unit _____**
**Address _____** **Name Tag Names (If Needed)**
**Phone _____** **_____**
**Wife's Name _____** **_____**
**Guest Name(s) _____**
**_____**

---

**Arrival Date: _____** **Departure Date: _____**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Unit Registration Fee (Complimentary Hospitality Room)** | | **$10 _____** |
| **City Highlights Tour*** | **Thur Sept 26** | **$38 _____** |
| **Harbor/Ft Sumter Cruise*** | **Fri Sept 27** | **$43 _____** |
| **Special Group Dinner** | **Fri Sept 27** | **$39 _____** |
| **Farwell Dinner Event** | **Sat Sept 28** | **$38 _____** |

**Registration Fee & all events $168 per person # ___ x $_____ = Total Enclosed $_____**
**Make Checks to 454th BSA**
*(Full Refunds, if cancel prior reunion) * See Your Tour Description Information*

**Free Airport Shuttle Service (from airport, call hotel direct 843-744-2501 ext 0) (Southwest 1-800 435-9792), Delta (1-800-221-1212), many others service Charleston.**

**Emergency Contact Person:**

**Name _____**

**Phone _____**

## Please complete and return Attachment 1 by no later than August 24th.

### Hotel Accommodation Reservation – Charleston, SC 2013

**Radisson Hotel Charleston Airport**

**Main Dates, Sept 25 Wed – Sept 28 Sat** **Radisson Charleston Airport Hotel**
**454th / 344th Air Force Reunion (4 nights)** **5991 Rivers Avenue**
**Charleston, SC 29406**
**Our Room Rate Avail, Sept 22 to Oct 1** **Hotel Direct 843-744-2501 ext 0**

**** Hotel Reservation Cut Off Date (to secure $96 rate) is Sept 4, 2013**
**Hotel Room Resveration 1-800-967-9033; Hotel Guest Services 843-744-2501 ext 0**

**For discounted rate be sure to mention "454th Air Force Reunion" – Available Sep 22 – Oct 1.**

**The following information needed to make a reservation - up 4 in room same rate**
**Name _____**

**Address _____ # of persons in Room __ # beds, Rooms __**
**Phone _____ Check in, at 3pm Check Out, Noon**
**Name, if shared room _____ Rate $96 per room + 13.5% taxes +$1**
**Arrival Date _____ Depart Date _____ A First Night's Deposit Is Required**
**Credit Card # _____Exp _____**
**Parking at Hotel Free of Charge Signature _____**
**Complimentary Airport Shuttle Complimentary Shuttle nearby Tanger Mall**

## Make your Hotel room Reservations by NLT Sep 4th.

---

## Final Flights & Obituaries

It is always a sad time when we lose loved ones. These are some more of our finest that we have the disappointing news to pass along to you. They will not be with us at our future reunions physically, but will be with us in spirit and their special stories they have shared with all of us. **GOD BLESS to all of them.**

### MAJOR GENERAL JOHN O. MOENCH

**Retired March 1, 1974. Died April 3, 2013.**

Major General John O. Moench is the director, Plans, Policy and Program Formulation, Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs).

General Moench was born in Chicago, Ill., in 1921, and is a 1939 graduate of Valparaiso High School, Valparaiso, Ind. He has a bachelor of science degree in military science and a master's degree in political science from the University of Maryland. He began his military career in May 1942, entered pilot training the following October, and received his pilot wings and commission as a second lieutenant in August 1943.

He then was assigned to the 479th Bombardment Squadron at Avon Park, Fla. Subsequent assignments were to MacDill Army Air Field, Fla., and Lake Charles Army Air Field, La. He was assigned in May 1944 to the 323d Bombardment Group, Ninth Air Force, and served in the European Theater of Operations as a pilot and later assistant group operations officer, flying 60 combat missions in the B-26 Marauder.

General Moench returned to the United States in August 1945 to become assistant chief, Aircraft Section, Air Materiel Command, at Wright Field, Ohio. This was followed

by a three-year tour of duty at U.S. Air Force Headquarters where he held several positions including assistant for materiel in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Materiel; and staff plans officer in the Office of the Assistant for Programming, Deputy Chief of Staff for Operations.

From March 1951 to December 1953, General Moench was assigned to Headquarters U.S. Air Forces in Europe, as programs officer, Requirements Division, and later to U.S. European Command as plans officer, Assistant Chief of Staff for Plans. Following a six-month course at the Air Command and Staff School, Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala., he returned to Headquarters U.S. Air Force in Washington, D.C., as chief, International Standardization Branch, Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff, Development. In August 1958 he was selected to attend the Air War College at Maxwell Air Force Base

In July 1959 General Moench began his third overseas tour of duty when he went to the Pacific area. He served in Korea as commander, 6175th Air Base Group, Kunsan Air Base, and later as director, Plans and Programs, 314th Air Division, Osan Air Base. In June 1960 he transferred to Pacific Air Forces headquarters at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii, serving successively as director of policy in the Office of the Deputy Chief of Staff for Plans; and assistant to the deputy chief of staff for plans and operations.

In June 1963 General Moench again returned to the Pentagon for assignment to the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff as assistant to the deputy chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Special Studies Group; in June 1964 he was assigned to the Strategic Plans and Policy Division, Joint Staff.

General Moench returned for a second Pacific assignment, in April 1966, to serve on the staff of the commander in chief, U.S. Pacific Command, Camp Smith, Hawaii, as chief, Plans and Policy Branch. In August 1968 he assumed the position of deputy chief of staff for plans, at Headquarters Pacific Air Forces, at Hickam Air Force Base, Hawaii.

In January 1971 General Moench began his fourth assignment in Washington, D.C., this time in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, as the director, Plans, Policy and Program Formulation, in the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense (International Security Affairs) responsible for the foreign military assistance plans and policy of the Department of Defense.

He is a command pilot. His military decorations and awards include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal with 11 oak leaf clusters, Joint Service Commendation Medal, Air Force Commendation Medal, Army Commendation Medal, and the Distinguished Unit Citation Emblem.

He was promoted to the grade of major general effective Aug. 1, 1970, with date of rank Feb. 1, 1966.

## ClaraJane Berton "CJ" Mancuso

Age 88 of Newark and Lewes Beach, DE passed away on February 1, 2013 while wintering with her son in Orlando, FL.

CJ was born July 4, 1924 in Freeport, Long Island, NY, daughter of the late Rosalie B. Amy and Albert C. Berton.

During WWII, CJ was secretary to the dental assistant at a convalescent hospital in St. Petersburg, FL, which is now the Don Cesar Hotel. It was during this time she met her husband Frank E. Mancuso, who predeceased her in 2010 after 65 years of marriage.

Prior to raising her family, CJ was a secretary. She worked for the president of U.S. Flying Services, Inc. in St. Petersburg, FL and at Hawthorne School of Aeronautics, Spence Air Base, Moultrie, GA.
After moving to Delaware, CJ became very active in Republican politics and was secretary for her husband, a general agent for Allstate Insurance Company. She was also an active member of St. Margaret of Scotland Catholic Church.

CJ was also predeceased by her beloved daughter Jane A. Volk in 2009.

CJ will be dearly missed by her son Frank A. Mancuso of Orlando FL, both her granddaughter Jessica A. Volk and her son-in-law John W. Volk of South Port, N.C.

The family wants to express their thanks for the support and kindness given to them by the Kennard sisters-Chris Hancock and Carol Missimer.

Mass of Christian Burial will be celebrated on Monday, February 11, 2013 at St. Margaret of Scotland Church, Rt. 40 and Frazer Road at 11:30 AM. Visitation will begin at 10:30AM. Burial will be in the Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Bear.

## Directory Updates:

We have received the following changes since the publishing of our December 2012 Newsletter; please update your directory as follows:

Section 1 page 6 – New Address and delete Phone Number

***Old***
Lutz, Robert (+ Floss)
603 63rd Ave. West Apt. 5F
Bradenton, FL. 34207-4916
941-753-9083

***New***
Lutz, Robert E. (+ Floss)
45 Williams Street
Mansfield, MA. 02048-2014

Section 1 page 8- Replace Old Address

***Old***
Ms. Jane Noyes
C/O Mrs. Hazel Noyes
723 S. Laclede Station Rd. # 153
St. Louis, MO. 63119-4911

***New***
Ms. Jane Noyes
505 Couch Ave. Room 34
Kirkwood, MO. 63122-5577

Section 2 page 1- Update email address

***Old***
Cornett, George & Mary
kville93@cox.net

***New***
Cornett, George & Mary
kville93@centurylink.net

Section 2 page 5 – Replace old address and email address

***Old***
Michael "Buzz" Thompson
205 Garfield Ave.
Masaryktown, FL. 34604-7133
calusaconcepts@aol.com

***New***
Michael "Buzz" Thompson
7532 Merchantville Circle
Zephyrhills, FL. 33540-2065
calusacustomconcepts@gmail.com

## Missing Members

This is a section where we will list the names and addresses for newsletters mailed out and returned. If you know someone on this list please contact me with an updated address or have them contact me direct if they wish. There name will only appear in one newsletter after that if they have not been updated then they will be removed from our mailing list.

There were no returns this past mailing.

## Financial Report

Here is our financial report to date for 2013. We would like to thank everyone for their past contributions because that's what keeps us going strong with our organization. I'm sure our next report will be much longer because as the year continues so will our contributions and expenses.

**Contributions Jan 1, 2013 – May 15, 2013**

| Name | Amount |
|---|---|
| Cornett, George & Mary | $100.00 |
| Devlin, Maxine | $200.00 |
| Tycott, David | $25.00 |
| Miller, Mary K. | $100.00 |
| Gunkel, Walter & Jean | $100.00 |
| Graham, Michael | $200.00 |
| Izdepski, Lisa & Sons | $100.00 |
| Eith, Walter & Mary | $35.00 |
| Wilson, Walter J. | $10.00 |
| **Total** | **$870.00** |

If there were contributions from January 1, 2013 to May 15, 2013 sent that are not posted please contact me (George Cornett) at below address or call me at 480-984-3676.

If you wish to make a contribution to the 454th Bomb Squadron Association please send to 454th BSA c/o George Cornett 8250 E. Obispo Ave. Mesa AZ 85212-1618.

The below balance does not include postage, printing, or additional envelopes, for this Newsletter mailing.

| | |
|---|---|
| **Balance as of Jan. 1, 2013** | $10,287.99 |
| **Contributions** | $870.00 |
| **Reunion Monies Rcvd.** | $0.00 |
| **Total Received** | **$870.00** |
| **Expenses** | $311.05 |
| **Balance** (As of May 14th) | **$10,846.94** |

**Our Elected Officials**

| | |
|---|---|
| President_____ | Brad Urey |
| 1st Vice-President____ | Dan Richey |
| 2nd Vice-President____ | Howard Cross |
| 3rd Vice-President____ | Rick Bragg |
| Secretary/Treasurer_ | George Cornett |
| Historian_____ | Roy Bozych |
| Sergeant-at-Arms ___ | David Garvin |
| Previous President __ | Leo G. Fehlman |

George Cornett
8250 E Obispo Avenue
Mesa, AZ 85212-1618
480-984-3676
kville93@centurylink.net

HISTORIAN'S HANGER
Roy Bozych - Squadron Historian

# *Spring 2013*

## ***Major General John O. Moench USAF (Ret) 1921 - 2013***

A few weeks ago on Wednesday, April 3rd the Marauder community lost one of its staunchest supporters, John Moench.

My first encounter with John was in the fall of 1998. I was trying to get a copy of John's book "Marauder Men". My father had passed in 1997. Like most veterans at the time he did not speak much about his wartime experiences. However since the war had shape his life and by default mine, I was hoping to get better understanding of what this period of his life was like.

When I got a hold of John on the phone, he went right into recruitment mode, trying to get me involved as a second generationer. I thought to myself, geez John all I want to do is get a copy of your book. Little did either of us realize where that first encounter would lead us.

In October of 2003, I became the Historian for the 454th Bomb Squadron. John was the person who convinced me not only to be just the Historian for the 454th Squadron but to also be the Historian for the entire 323rd Bomb Group. In the succeeding years, John pretty much taught me everything I needed to be a historian and archivist.

John leaves behind an incredible legacy. Major General of the United States Air Force, book author, founding member of the Marauder Historical Society and Archives, MHS Historian, family man, friend, mentor the list could go on and on. His book "Marauder Men" alone insured that the 323rd Bomb Group and all of her Veterans and the B-26 Martin Marauder will have a lasting place in history. His legacy will continue to educate and inspire future generations long after we are all gone.

A private family service was held for John after he passed. He will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery. Because of the backlog of burials at the Arlington the date is still to be determined. When I get the details I sent out an e-mail to everyone who is on our list. In addition John is being honored with a memoriam on the front page of the 323rd BG website.

These past few years, our Veterans and their wives have been leaving us at an ever increasing pace. Usually when I receive a notice that one of our Veterans or his wife has passed, I will send out an e-mail with and obit to everyone who is on our mailing list. Lately John took to teasing me about all the obits. He said "Roy, one morning I fully expect to open my e-mails and read my own obit from you!" Well my friend, I am sorry to say this one is for you. Your journey to enlightenment is over. May you rest in peace and in God's love. You earned it and we will miss you.

## ***Remembrance***

On the closest Sunday to March 24th each year the 323rd BG and her Veterans are remembered in the Operation Varsity Commemoration at Marks Hall on the edge of the Earls Colne Air Field. This year was the 70th anniversary! Vic Lewis, on the right in the picture prepares two wreaths, one for the 323rd BG and another for the 94th BG who was stationed at Earls Colne before the 323rd arrived. During the ceremonies, the wreaths are laid at the foot of the permanent monument dedicated to the all groups who served at the air base. A note on the wreath in part reads; "WE WILL REMEMBER THEM – USAAF Station 358 Earls Colne – We remember the many sacrifices made by the 323rd Bomb Group during their time here for June 1943 to July 1944…" It is a very moving ceremony filled with pageantry. For those on our e-mail list, I sent out an e-mail earlier in the year with pictures. For those who aren't or don't have e-mail I have added some of the pictures on the last page of this issue of the newsletter. Thank you, Vic and all the other Veterans in the United Kingdom, for remembering us every year.

Thanks also go out to Ken Stanton for providing us with all the excellent pictures. You remember Ken? He was the artist who submitted the painting of "the Mission Belle" to Guild's Exhibition at the Mall Galleries in London. That painting is now on display at Marks Hall. This year Ken is submitting a marvelous pencil drawing of the "Rock Hill Special" to Guild Exhibition. I will have more about that in the fall newsletter.

## ***The Mission***

One of the things that most family members of Veterans want to know is what was it like to fly a combat mission. For those of us who were never in combat, we will never be able to fully comprehend the stress and terror of a combat mission.

Since the 323rd BG was located at Earls Colne, not too far from London, we were fortunate enough to be visited by many famous journalists during the war. One of those journalists was William Randolph Hearst Jr. the son of the son of **THE** William Randolph Hearst.

In June of 1944, He wrote a four part series for the Detroit Times on what it was like to fly a combat mission. Thanks to Karen Denzler, the daughter of then Lt. Paul Cottingham, who flew Mr. Hearst on that mission, I am able to share that story with you. That is Lt. Cottingham second from the left and Mr. Hearst on the right. Karen was kind enough to send me Xeroxed copies of the newspaper articles. I have transcribed them below for you. As I said this is a four part series. The first two parts will be in this newsletter and the final two will be in the fall newsletter. Since it is sweeps month in TV land and everybody is ending their series' with cliff hangers, I thought it only appropriate that we do the same. (ha-ha)

**The Detroit Times Wednesday, June 14, 1944**

AT A B-26 MARAUDER BASE IN ENGLAND, June 14—I had come up here the night before determined to go on a mission.

"Anybody who says he wasn't scared starting out on his first mission is just plain—well—perhaps I should say that anybody who says I wasn't scared starting out on any first mission was just plain mistaken.

The boys had gone out that morning around 5 a. m. getting back about 9 a. m. "Since then the weather had gotten worse. I was told at lunch over at headquarters that the weather was deteriorating on the other-side and that in all probability there would be no more flying that day.

*As a consequence I was sitting in the office of Maj. Clayton Smith, for my money the best public relations officer in the business, reading a copy of Stars and Stripes when suddenly a voice came over the field's public address system, "all alerted crews report to the briefing room at 1400." (2 p. m,)*

I looked at my wrist watch. It was then 10 minutes to 2.

I looked at Clayton, He was getting up. He was getting up '' "Come on," he said. "This is for you.” My stomach felt funny but I got up. We drove over to the briefing room.

Crews were converging on it from all directions. When we got there we were all shuffled into a room about 60 feet long by 30 feet wide.

It was laid out like a little movie theater with big maps on the wall at the far end and with an aisle running down the center flanked by a row of benches.

To make the illusion still more complete, a little projection machine was set up on the table halfway down the center aisle, pointing at the -maps.

The room was lighted by shaded bulbs hanging from the ceiling. The maps were brilliantly illuminated like a stage.

## About 200 'Kids Crowd in Room

**Boys kept coming in until pretty soon the room was three-quarters full All in all, there were about 200 kids.**

**Then through the door at the back several officers with their arms full of maps and large photographs entered and made their way up front.** I

*The room which had been humming with conversation suddenly became very still. A few minutes passed while new transparent maps on which were marked our course target were pinned over the big map of southern England and the northern coast of France.*

This work completed, Col. Wilson R. Wood, only 26, of Chico, Tex., stood up and began briefing.

With a pointer he followed the course we were to fly from our base to the coast, where we were to cross the channel, where we were to enter the French coast and finally our target.

It looked to me as if our target was half-way to Africa, but actually it was only some 50 or 60 miles inland.

**Even so, it was to be the DEEPEST PENETRATION THEY HAD MADE SO FAR IN SUPPORT OF OUR GROUND TROOPS.**

He told us the exact time we were to take-off, leave our coast, sight France, and be over the target

After the bombing, we were to make a big swing to the left and come back pretty much over the same route.

## Details on Compass Reading

The group navigator then gave more detailed instructions to the navigators as to the exact compass readings of each leg of the trip.

Then about half of those in attendance got up and left; gunners, radiomen, engineers who were to make last minute checks on their respective equipment and navigators who were to lay our course on their own maps.

With only the pilots and bombardiers remaining, the group bombardier took over the meeting.

The room was darkened and a rolling screen let down in front of the maps.

*On it the little projector showed three photographs of the target*.

*It was a town where intelligence had reported a concentration of enemy troops.*

*One group of our craft was to bomb the town and another was to drop bombs on the railroad bridge nearby.*

*We were then told the number and weight of our bomb loads and the lights came up again.*

**"Any questions"** was the query. A few were offered and answered and the bombardiers then left to further study their problem.

Now only the pilots stayed and again Col. Wood took over. He reviewed the course of the entire mission once snore and then came to the two subjects we were most interested in—flak conditions and the weather.

## Low Clouds; Bomb at 2,000 Feet

Of the former he said they had no reports. We were to keep our eyes open and bring them back information as to its nature and location.

As to the weather, he went on, there would be low clouds. We would probably have to bomb from about 2,000 feet.

**The boys let out a whistle at this as the customary altitude from which they bomb is between 10,000 and 12,000 feet.**

There would be two boxes of 18 planes.

Each box would be broken up into three flights—the high flight up on the right, the lead flight below and out to the front, and the low flight under and on a parallel with the high flight.

Each flight of six has a lead plane with two wing men flying on either side on the same level but just a little back.

Three planes immediately behind him fly in the same formation.

All this time I had been sitting with Clayton listening to the briefing as I had done dozens of times before, but this time I knew he was talking to me as well—and what a different feeling it was.

Col. Wood dismissed the meeting with a curt: **"You have six minutes until time for starting the engines."** The boys got up and left the room.

As they passed, Clayton stopped one of them and introduced me to him.

**"This is Lt. Paul F. Cottingham from Greenville, S. C.,"** he said. **"He's one of our veterans with 57 missions under his belt and is leading the high flight. You will ride with him as co-pilot."**

**The Detroit Times Thursday June 15, 1944**

AT A B-26 MARAUDER BASE IN ENGLAND, June 15— When told that I was privileged to fly as co-pilot with Lt. Cottingham in the immediate flight of B-26 Marauder bombers over the battlefields of France, I had got my wish, and I tried to summon an enthusiastic expression, but I didn't know with what success.

**"Go with Lt. Cottingham,"** Maj. Clayton Smith said, **"and get your equipment."**

We went to an adjoining room and there I looped a Mae West over my head and climbed into the bulky harness with a parachute strapped to my back.

Clayton appeared with a little leather fur lined cap and a regular G.I. helmet.

**"There will be a flak suit on the plane,"** he added.

The latter is like a bullet-proof vest, only bigger and bulkier. It slips over your head, coming down to the waist at the back and extending down between your legs in front. It weighs at least 60 pounds.

We had no time to lose so the three of us jumped into a jeep and were whisked around the perimeter of the runway of the field to where Lt. Paul Cottingham's plane was parked in one of the dispersal areas.

*I can't begin to tell you the thoughts that passed through my mind.*

*I unquestionably was scared yet I wanted to go through with it. "At the same time, I was fully aware of the possible consequences if we got hit in the bomb bay. That would be curtains.*

If we were badly crippled we would have to bail out and if I got down safely it meant either being taken prisoner and being parked somewhere in Germany for the duration or hiding out until able to make contact with our own troops.

We were out at the plane now and other crew members were standing around waiting for us to get in.

## Hundred and One Things to Do

There was another lieutenant and two sergeants, but there was no time for introductions so we climbed up through the hole just aft of the nose of the ship—the space where the tail wheel comes up when retracted. *(Historians note: I believe he meant the nose wheel)*

**Bombardier Lt. Thomas Shirley of Louisville, La., also with 57 missions to his credit, got into the co-pilot's seat to help the pilot do the hundred and one things they have to do on these big ships preparatory to starting.**

There is a little cabin the width of the plane aft of the cockpit.

*Here, Radio Operator Sgt. W. A. Meister of Fort Wayne, Ind. sat by his equipment, while Engineer Sgt. W. E. Charleston of Jacksonville, Fla., leaned forward into the cockpit and helped with the business of getting the plane under way.*

*Over enemy territory he mans the top-turret. They each had been on 51 of these jaunts.*

The tail gunner was already in his position. I didn't see or meet him until we got home.

The engines previously had been warmed up, so within two minutes after they both were running we were moving down the runway.

**Now, believe it or not, I was no longer scared.**

**I don't know whether I forgot to be, or whether there was too much going on.**

**At any rate, it was just the same as taking off in any airplane I had ever flown in.**

We taxied around the rest of the perimeter strip down to the end of the mile long runway.

There were six planes ahead of us—the lead flight—and as each one took off the others would edge up a little bit.

Finally came our turn.

## Paul Gives Motors the Gun

*We got into position and then Paul gave both of the 2,000 horsepower motors the gun.*

WITH THE BOMB LOAD WE HAD, THE SHIP WEIGHED IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD OF 40,000 POUNDS

It hasn't got much of a wing spread and we were doing an indicated speed of 150 miles per hour before Paul lifted her gently off the runway.

For the next 20 minutes I knew we would just be circling around the field gaming altitude and getting into position, so I sat back in the radio compartment talking with Charleston, while Meister was fiddling with the radio.

**When he learned this was my first mission, he immediately took a rather paternal Interest in me.**

**He gave me a set of earphones and showed me where to plug them in when I got up in the co-pilot's seat.**

"Then reassuredly he said, **"Keep it tuned to the ship's inter-communication system and if you hear me say 'BALE OUT' come back here into the bomb bay and bale out. Don't wait for anything."**

Immediately behind our compartment was the bomb bay and access to it was through a little door.

**"What about Meister?"** I asked.

**"Don't worry. By the time you get back here he will be out,"** he grinned.

## String Releases Flak Suit

He then helped me into my flak suit and showed me how by pulling a little string on the front it loosened some fastenings on either shoulder and the suit fell off.

*They make them this way because with the parachute on, your motions are restricted enough, but with the flak suit on top of this, you can hardly move about in the cramped interior of the plane, so I took it off.*

Shirley, the bombardier, now turned and asked us to pass him up his bombsight, which we did.

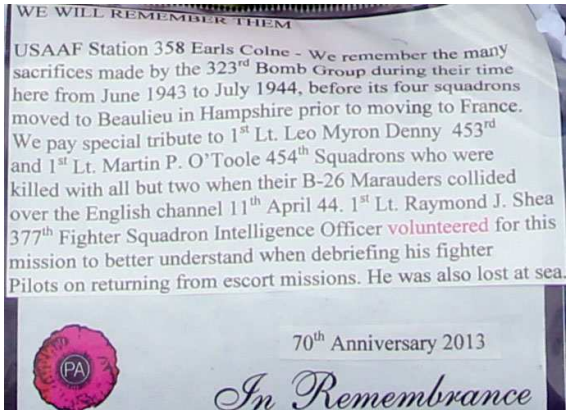
**Then he crawled forward through the little door directly in front of the co-pilot's controls into the nose and I got into the co-pilot's seat.** (To be continued)

## ***The 323rd BG Vs. Thw Me-262 German Jet Fighter***

This just into our website. I just received an e-mail from the British television production company Darlow Smithson. They are working on a program about the German jet fighter the Messerschmitt 262 and Adolf Galland's JV44 Squadron. I have already referred them to Robert Forsyth's book "Battle over Bavaria" for background information. They would also like to talk to any Veterans who had an encounter with the Me-262 during a combat mission. If you had an encounter with a ME-262 and are interested in being interviewed by them, let me know.

Until next Time… ***Keep 'em Flying***

Roy R. Bozych
49 E Lucas Dr.
Palos Hills. IL 60465-3100
708-870-6605
Historian@323bg.org

http://www.323bg.org

# Operation Varsity Commemoration
March 24th 2013
**70th Anniversary**
Marks Hall Estates – Earls Colne – Essex – England