"MILK RUN"

Oregon Chapter 8th Air Force Historical Society News Update
September, 2008

November 2008 Meeting is November 1. 10 AM till 2 PM.

The meeting was changed to this date to avoid conflict with Veterans Day.

NCHA Open House September 16

The National Combat History Archives, http://www.combatarchive.com , is having an Open House for 8th Air Force members, families, friends, and other interested people to showcase the facilities they have for research.
Open house times are from 10 AM till 2 PM on Tuesday September 16.
Along with video, print, reference library and other research tools, they also have a 350 identical scale WW II plastic model aircraft collection. In their building on display are original WW II items from all theatres of the war as well as items from other military conflicts.
Address: 5801 NW Cornelius Pass Road; Hillsboro, Oregon 97124 (on the north side of Highway 26, go around ½ mile and it is on the west side of the road in the business park.)

La Grande Guerre est Finis

Lazare Ponticelli, the very last Poliu, died March 12, 2008, the last World War I veteran still living in France. He actually fought the whole war in Italy in the Tyrol region of Italy where he was wounded. He had lived from the age of 9 in France and joined the French Army at 16 (he lied about his age) but he was still conscripted by Italy and sent into combat by them.
In 1940 he moved a factory to Southern France into Vichy to avoid the Germans and later on joined the Resistance movement in 1942 while still running the pipe factory he had founded.
The other 110 year old French veteran Louis de Cazenave, died in January.

This leaves 13 known WWI veterans still alive, which includes Frank Woodruff Buckles, 107, in the USA, and five men who fought for Britain including one woman who served with the British Royal Air Force.

1.4 million French soldiers died during the war and 4.5 million were wounded.

The Great Escape's "Digger" Dowling dead at 92

Eric Dowling who planned and dug tunnels Tom, Dick & Harry at Stalag Luft 3 (Sagan, Germany) which resulted in the mass escape of 76 airmen in tunnel "Harry" March of 1944, died August 7, 2008. Tom was discovered and Dick was used to store the diggings from Harry.

Not only a planner of tunnels, he also forged documents, created escape maps and other needed tasks which would allow the airmen to make it back to Allied lines.

He flew 29 missions as a bomber command navigator before he was shot down over Germany in 1942.

Out of the 76 men who made it out of the tunnel 73 were recaptured, 50 where shot on order on Hitler as an example, and 3 made the run all the way back to allied lines and freedom.

The 1963 film "The Great Escape" recreated the camp on location in Germany but played with the actual timelines and people a bit to make it a more suspenseful movie.

People Are Still Close in Time to the US Civil War

On August 19, 2008, Maudie Hopkins died at the age of 93 in Arkansas. What makes her special is that she is one of the last windows to a US Civil War veteran - William M Cantrell. She married him when she was 19, and he was 86. This was during the depression and he wanted someone to help him once he got old. Private Cantrell served in Company A, French's Battalion, of the Virginia Infantry after enlisting n the Confederate army at age 16 in Pikeville, Ky., He was captured the same year and sent to a prison camp in Ohio. He was later exchanged for a Northern prisoner. She was interviewed after a report came out in 2004 that the last living widow had died – but it was then shown others were around but most did not want the publicity of their tied to history revealed. (Baxter Bulletin photo)

His veteran pension was $25 every other month when they were married in 1934.

According to United Daughters of the Confederacy, there are a handful of widows still living with documented weddings to Civil War veterans.

Revisionist History

A novelist writer, Nicholson Baker, turned his attention and typing into a non-fiction book called “Human Smoke” arguing that due to PM Churchill and President Roosevelt political postures against Chancellor Hitler, they too are also to blame for World War II. The book takes newspaper articles and other snippets and arranges them (one sided) to make his case.

Baker is an avowed pacifist.

Dog Tag Comes Home

B-24 top turret gunner / engineer Felix Shostak was shot down on Aug 18, 1944 while with the 493rd Bomb Group bombing a Luftwaffe airbase in northern France. Only one crew member Norman Grant, of Richfield, Minn, survived from the 10 man crew when both port engines were taken out by flak over the target.
A French farmer plowing the field discovered them and then further excavation by a French team discovered other items. The crash was well documented, but only 6 crew members were recovered from the cemetery where they were buried after the crash. His effects were presented by the National Guard to his sister in Vermont in July.

More Lab Space for DNA / ID of Remains

The Joint POW/MIA Accounting Command in Hawai'i is tripling its lab space for the analysis of American war dead, a move that should help speed up identification for families around the nation whose wait may seem like a lifetime — and sometimes is — for the repatriation of loved ones.

Friendly Fire

A few of our own members have related how friendly planes shot at them (and almost shot them down), and how friendly ground units also shot at them. At least 1 high scoring ace was shot down by US ground fire during the Battle of the bulge by US troops.

British RAF fighter ace Douglas Bader is now thought to have been shot down by one of his wingmen, not the Germans during aerial combat.

Air to ground ID was at times bad, allied aircraft engaged and sank a whole squadron of allied minesweepers off the French coast in 1944, thinking they were German.

The best known air to ground mistake during the Normandy campaign was when, against advice from the air liaison, it was decided to bomb perpendicular to the allied lines during the St Lo breakout and Lt. General McNair and 400+ others were killed when a bomb group aiming at the German lines dropped short and hit ours – even though troops had pulled back ½ mile from the German lines. After that medium and heavy bombers always dropped parallel along the German lines.

First SkyDive – at 89

Paul Rusch, a WW II engineering officer who was stationed with the 8th, took his first skydiving jump July 13, 2008. He was learning to fly when the war started, but due to

a slight color blindness he was disqualified – and instead was trained to work on Mustangs.

He jumped in a tandem setup with an experienced sky-diver.

Berlin Church – Saving the ruins

Destroyed during the "Battle of Berlin" in the winter of 1943/1944 by the RAF, Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, has a grassroots campaign to keep it from being torn down and instead preserved as a reminder of the war. Charles Jeffrey Gray, 85, a Bomber Command British pilot who finished his 35 mission tour in January of 1944, was one of the first to call publicize the need to rescue this Berlin ruin, he contributed 500 British pounds (634 euros, $930) to help spur the campaign.

The British switched to bombing at night after a series of disastrous daylight raids starting in fall of 1939 thru summer of 1941 - which were unescorted. 50 to 90 % of planes sent on a mission were shot down. They sent only 12 to 30 planes at a time and none had heavy defensive armor or heavy caliber defense guns at all. This left the only way to hit Germany proper at night. Hitting specific industries proved to be impossible – so Bomber Command switched to hitting the city itself and destroy buildings, and kill the workers, to disrupt production, thus causing the Germans to spend time, money, and resources to protect their citizens from the raids and for the people now homeless. Around 8 million people were bombed out / evacuated of their homes due to British bombing during World War II.

The AVG – In USSR

While many of you no doubt are familiar with WWII American volunteer pilots made famous by the Flying Tigers in China and the Eagle Squadron in England, you may not know that there was also a group of Americans who volunteered to fly for the Soviets. Check out this web page. http://777avg.com/unithistory/

Research Resource in East Grand Forks ND

The research section in the Campbell Library's military history collection has been named after Henry Tweten. Mr Tweten was a second lieutenant in Gen. George Patton's Third Army, he earned the Silver Star and Purple Heart.

A Civil War officer's manual, a tome on combat planes, D-Day DVD, and many other items are in the collection.

Oregon Chapter Archive Update

Both online and in physical storage, the Oregon Chapter's research library is 90% original material – the other 10% are books donated to the chapter, most of these are 1st edition books.

The latest collection of books donated was by the widow of the chapter's founding member Andy Brown, she donated all the books that he had collected about the 8th plus the photo books he assembled in the trips to Europe over the years.

Tilven Waarvick's strike photo on Bisburg oil refinery, Germany.

This image shows only 1/8 of the total image and is at ¼ true size A print would be 30x24 inches in dimension.

Titles include Fait Accompli (plus FA II, & FA III), history of the 457th BG(H); Flak Dodger by Roland Byers,; The Air War by Overy; What a Way to Spend a War, by Denner; Class 43H graduation book from Stockton Texas; 8th AF Album; The Mighty Eighth by Roger Freeman; Enemy Coast Ahead by Guy Gibson (mission leader 617 Squadron – the Dambusters); and others.

Chapter meetings are videotaped and put onto DVD for others to view. If you wish to purchase a meeting video the cost is $10 (materials). Meetings are also transcribed and posted onto the web site.

Joani Hamilton, a recent new member, is very active in interviewing 8th veterans and creating a written history for them. She transcribed the past meeting for us.

Clint Gruber has been writing up the meeting notes and sending it onto the 8th AF national newsletter for publication (thanks Clint!) for the past year and a half. Both of these people thus create original material to use in research and their written contributions are also posted onto our web site. www.8thafhsoregon.com

If you have material you would like to loan to Tom Philo (Chapter Secretary and one of the chapter historians) to be scanned and returned contact him for arrangements. Or you can donate permanently your material to the chapter. Either way, you will get a CD / DVD copy of everything turned in.

Local Groups

Old Bold Pilots Club

Meets on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 12 Noon till when people leave. Meetings are at The Village Inn Restaurant; 17070 SW 72nd Tigard right at Lower Boons Ferry Road and I-5 on the west side of I-5 at Exit 290.

ANA – Association of Naval Aviators

Meetings are the last Thursday of each month at the Elks Lodge next to Gateway Transit Center. 711 NE 100th Avenue, Portland, Oregon. Meeting is from 11:30 till around 2 PM.
Contact LtC George Bickford (Ret) at 503-789-8061. e-mail: bick @ teleport.com
Mailing address: Flying Beaver Squadron; PO Box 432; Clackamas, Oregon 97015-0432

Southern Oregon Warbirds Association

If you live in southern Oregon you can meet x-aviation personnel at the Southern Oregon Warbirds Association (SOWA) http://www.southernoregonwarbirds.org.
Their meeting locations keep changing so you need to always check to see where they are meeting for both their luncheon and their dinner meeting. Elmer Giles at 541-957-9260 is the POC. Their dues are $10 a year.

Aviation Breakfast Club

This is the Walt Bohrer Chapter and they meet on the 2nd Sunday of each month (except Easter and Monther's Day) from 10 AM till 12 Noon at J.J. North's Grand Buffet at 10520 N.E. Halsey St, Portland, Oregon. 503-254-5555; e-m,ail: aviationclub @ aol.com

Need to do Photo or Video research?

You are free to go over to and talk, learn, and do photo, movie, and audio research at:

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