



HERITAGE HERALD

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FAREWELL TO THE 2ADA FROM ANDREW HAWKER, GOVERNOR



I was born in June 1944, so my sole contribution to the war effort was to lie in my pram and watch the Liberators and the Lancasters fly overhead. However, my father was in the RAF at the time, and I grew up in Norwich with its many bombed-out areas and surrounded by the airfields on which you served. In 1965, when your first memorial was opened in the Norwich Central Library, I was a student in Liverpool, another city which had suffered severely from aerial bombardment. I was back in Norwich in 1994 and I saw from my 8th floor office window the terrible fire which engulfed the whole building. Later that day, I walked past the smoldering ruin and I was saddened because,

by that time, I had come to know some of your predecessors; Jordan Uttal, Geoff Gregory, Evelyn Cohen, Bud Koorndyke, Bud Chamberlain and others, who had been on Executive Committee visits to Norwich in the past. But it was such a joy, and what a party in 2001 when you came to Norwich in your hundreds to dedicate your new library! Not one of you dropped out in the aftermath of the dastardly deeds of September 11th. By this time, my wife, a Norfolk-born American citizen, and I had become Friends of your Memorial. We had been to one of your bomb group reunions in the States, and we had such fun acting as couriers on your coach trips and attending many of the convention functions. After that, I was honored to be selected by Jordan and Geoff as a Governor of the Memorial Trust. It's been both a privilege and a pleasure to serve as such for the last ten years. In particular, it has been a pleasure for both Andrea and me because of the great conventions we've attended in seven different American cities; last year in Bermuda, and the trips we've made in conjunction with the conventions, several times enjoying wonderful hospitality as guests in your homes. Incidentally, Andrea sends her greetings to you also. Unfortunately, she is prevented by family commitments at home from coming with me this time. Now, we say farewell to your Association, but not to you as individuals or to your children and grandchildren, many of whom have also become our friends. You will always be the most welcome of visitors at your Memorial Library in Norwich, at the museums, and on your bases.

At the end of the war, Winston Churchill paid a tribute to RAF Bomber Command from which I'd like to read a short extract because I believe it applies every bit as much to all who served in the Second Air Division. These are Mr. Churchill's words,

"All your operations were planned with great care and skill. They were executed in the face of desperate opposition and appalling hazards; they made a decisive contribution to Germany's final defeat. The conduct of the operations demonstrated the fiery, gallant spirit which animated your aircrews, and the high sense of duty of all ranks.

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Photo Courtesy of Brian Mahoney, 492nd BG

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



This year's 2nd Air Division reunion was unlike any convention I have ever attended and there will never be anything like it again. Held in Chicago, a group comprised of 41 Veterans, their families and friends joined together to say good-bye to the 2nd Air Division. As the decision to dissolve the Veteran-created and managed organization was confirmed, a sixty-five year tradition came to an end. It was a poignant illustration that time marches onward.

An emotion filled weekend, we all know how special our time together was and our days were very busy. We attended meetings and symposiums and enjoyed authentic Chicago-style pizza while celebrating a 90th Birthday for Albert Biel. There was ample time to enjoy the well-stocked hospitality suite as we heard stories, caught up with and made new friends surrounded by two incredible collections of authentic memorabilia, clothing, pictures, letters and numerous other items used by the airmen of the 8th Air Force so long ago.

I would like to extend a special thank you to Chris Clark and George Bruckert for setting up and maintaining their displays. Somehow, the experience was surreal as we immersed ourselves in a time from so long ago with our veterans and friends and the underlying emotion was profound as we dedicated our time to celebrating friendship, honoring the veterans and their service during WWII and committed to preserving their memory in the future.

No one will forget the final Banquet which included a candle lighting ceremony and each veteran received customized challenge coins from the Heritage League. This gesture to our veterans was to let them know that the Heritage League recognizes and accepts the challenge of maintaining the memory of the 2nd Air Division. We are honored to carry the torch onward. These coins represent our appreciation and gratitude for their service; and as they were handed out by representatives of the bomb groups present the admiration and love was tangible.

It was an emotional night that no one wanted to end. I was privileged to have my large family with me and we were all so touched to witness the reunion of my father and uncle who served in the same bomb group during the war. They hadn't seen each other in two years and as they embraced each other we were so

joyful. It was something none of us thought would ever happen again, and none of us will ever forget it.

I would like to send a special thank you to the members of the 453rd BG who voted to donate their remaining funds to the Heritage League a total of \$2,036.00, and to the 445th BG for their contribution of \$136.00. We are sincerely grateful for your support.

In 1948 the 2nd Air Division Association hosted its first event in Chicago and after 65 years of fellowship, friendship and fun, it is time for the Heritage League to continue the tradition! Next year, the Heritage League will join the 8th Air Force Historical Society and 392nd Bomb Group in Savannah Georgia during the week of July 22, 2013. It promises to be a fun-filled time. We will be in touch with every active member and hope you will join us with your families.

To all the 2nd Air Division Veterans--Thank you for allowing us to join you in all your conventions and most of all thank you for your service so many years ago. We will work hard to make you proud.

Until we meet again.....

Marybeth Dyer

Farewell to the 2nd ADA, Continued from Page 1

I believe that the massive achievements of Bomber Command will long be remembered as an example of duty nobly done.”

I'm very conscious that my father, who will be 93 next month, wishes to be associated with these remarks—that almost all of you were volunteers. Yet, despite the chilling odds, the flow of volunteers never faltered. The price was known to be enormous, but it was a price which continued to be paid with unquestioning courage, in the case of nearly 7,000 colleagues, with the supreme sacrifice. If today, it represents a debt which can never be repaid, it is at least a debt which must never be forgotten. All of us involved with the Memorial Trust will do all in our power to ensure that it is never forgotten. Your library continues to be an agent for knowledge about the USA to young and old in the UK and, thus, to contribute to the understanding and friendship between our two countries. Above all, it will stand as a unique and worthy memorial to those 7,000 men who weren't able to return home to enjoy the freedom you all fought bravely for and which my generation and our children's have been blessed to enjoy. I'd like to finish with the words of Pericles of Athens in 431 B.C. which are proudly displayed in your library in Norwich, because they were as relevant in the 1940s, as they are today and all those years ago:

“Take these men as your example, Like them, remember that posterity can only be for the free, And that freedom is the sure possession of those alone who have the courage to defend it.”

Thank you for what you did for us seventy years ago. Thank you to you and your families for being our friends today and whichever way you vote in November, may God bless you and keep you.

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Challenge Coins—A New Tradition with a Deep History

by Brian Mahoney



About 10 years ago, I became aware of a new tradition, then popularized primarily by active duty USAF personnel, one combining fun with history. It held a natural appeal when 467th Veteran and Group President Ralph Davis presented handsome ones to those attending the 2002 Covington/Dayton meeting; thus the games began.

I could not wait until the end of the program that night, and very publicly 'lost' a challenge to the guest speaker, a colonel commanding the 'enemy squadron' of fighters our front line pilots practice against.

A fun way to stay involved is to carry your coin and be consistently 'in' or 'out' of the game within our circle. Players presume that their fellow coin challengers always have their own coin representing their specific military organization—any outfit, actually, and there are now

thousands to collect and trade. When a 'coin check' is called, it behooves you to produce yours, or you stand to buy a round of drinks for all the others present. But if you challenge one or more who 'should' have his or her coin on them, and they DO produce it, you will be buying. (That colonel was a great speaker and a gracious winner!)

One story has it that a WW I American flier, downed near the front with no ID and 'captured' by French, ready to execute him, was able to produce his keepsake commemorative coin, a gift of his squadron's wealthy and charismatic commander, and it saved him. A modestly high-stakes drinking tradition ensued, one which encouraged his comrades to keep their coins close. There are numerous stories about challenge coins and their uses throughout US Military history and now they serve as a connection to the past. If you would like your very own custom painted Heritage League Challenge Coin you can purchase a plain one for \$15 or pay \$25 with customized hand painting. Let Brian know which you would like, and send your check (made out to the Heritage League). Shipping is included, painting to your specified group will take a few weeks. Brian's contact info, and that of all of your board members, is on the back page of *The Herald*. Join the rest of us in our new tradition and cherish a coin of your own!

More from East Anglia....At the Queen's Estate



392nd BG Liaison John Gilbert
of the Norfolk Regiment

In September, John Gilbert, British Liaison to the 392nd Bomb Group was invited to attend a memorial service for the Battle of Gallipoli in World War I at Queen Elizabeth's estate at Sandringham and Dersingham Church. Last year Lady Angela Oswald, Lady in Waiting to the late Queen Mother Elizabeth and her husband, Sir Michael Oswald were so impressed with John's extensive collection of 392nd BG memorabilia they asked him to take part in this year's celebration which commemorates the World War I battle and the Norfolk Regiment with men from the Kings Estate at Sandringham. The highlights of John's his collection included period photographs at Sandringham during World War II including the 392nd BG VE Day Parade at Kings Lynn, with King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

John's dedication to the 392nd Bomb Group has taken him and his collection all over the UK and he welcomes Americans and other visitors who are interested in seeing what remains of Wendling Air Base throughout the year. John is a regular guest at the Queen's estate at Sandringham.

Thanks For The Memories

by Irene Hurner



Albert Biel's Gals

Before it was decided that the 2nd Air Division Association would dissolve, a very special vet asked me to write something “profound” for The Journal, their official newsletter. My trouble is that I am still just a kid who has never learned to be a deep thinker, a story teller, or a jokester. I have thought for several weeks about what I could write. So here are some of my reflections regarding the veterans, their families, and friends who have become a part of my life. My philosophy over the years has become one of enjoying the day because, when I get old, all I will have are the memories. Truly, even this idea is not original. The viewpoint came from my mother-in-law. My memories of the 2ADA began with the 1987 convention in Norwich.

My parents, Claire and Albert Biel, invited me to attend it with them and it is truly one of the most spectacular memories in my cache. I believe that there were nearly 8,000 members in the 2ADA at that time and hundreds of us from the US attended. We filled two trains from London to Norwich, a band met us at the station, most hotels in the city were occupied and we used many buses for transportation to get around. We had dinner in the castle, visited the American cemetery at Cambridge and attended a blessing in the cathedral. We women had lunch at Anne Barne’s wonderful estate, visited the American Room, and I witnessed my first fly over of World War II planes. To this day I seem to remember that our dinner was served in a tent that was used previously by Queen Elizabeth and it is one experience that I will never forget. Tables were set with china, silverware, and cloth napkins--not paper plates and plastic ware that would be common here. There was a band playing familiar music of the 40’s, and the portable dance floor was crowded with appreciative attendees. To top it off, we were served our meal; this was not a buffet! Evelyn Cohen and her amazing organizational skills coordinated our entire visit as she had before and would continue for many years afterwards. The first meeting of the Heritage League was held during this convention. It was my first experience meeting our British friends.

Twenty-five years have come and gone. I have attended most of the annual conventions. I have gotten to know many veterans, their families and friends, the Trust Governors, members of The Friends (now disbanded), and have developed lifelong friendships because of my affiliation with both the 2ADA and the Heritage League. I have come to care about the World War II experience. When I was in school, World War II was the last thing that I wanted to study; perhaps it was too close in history. I loved history and studied most historical topics but when I was growing up, my father and his friends did not speak of their experiences in World War II, and we children did not ask. It really wasn’t until I began to travel to conventions, listen to dad and others discuss their time in training and near Norwich that I developed an appreciation of everything that they did. To think that most were just in their early twenties!



Albert Biel celebrated his 90th Birthday with his fellow air-men, and was surrounded by his friends and family in Chicago, Illinois

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“Thanks For the Memories, Continued from Page 5



2nd ADA President Dick Robert President of the 2nd Air Division, Richard Robert

Some of the things I have learned to admire and still marvel at are the awesome responsibilities of ground crews to keep the planes flyable, the pilots finding their targets and safely bringing the flight crews home. They helped the commanders in their strategizing to send the “boys” out from the bases hoping they would come back, yet knowing many would not. When I remember what life was like for me or for my children at twenty years old, I cannot imagine life during the war. Being able to visit Old Buck with dad and members of the 453rd Bomb Group is another memory that cannot and will not be duplicated. Conventions have become a family affair with my husband, sisters, nephews, brothers-in-law, and even special friends gathering to honor dad and our veterans.

My daughter has been able to attend several conventions with me and even traveling to England in 2001 with my parents, sisters and me for the rededication of the new library. I have become active in the Heritage League, a group begun by veterans and their spouses to ensure that we will continue to honor the memories and support the memorials of the 2ADA once that organization is gone.

During conversations with “my” veterans, I have heard several lament that their children don’t care about their experiences during the war. My answer is always the same. “You are a hero.” Taking a cue from my younger self, I continue, “Even if your children seem uninterested, to your grandchildren you are their hero. Tell your story. Show them any pictures. If you can’t write your story, record it. You are special and your story is something that will be cherished into the future. Through your grandchildren, your children will come to know and love your story also.”

Time is short. “My” veterans are leaving too quickly. I am so thankful that dad and mom invited me to accompany them to Norwich twenty-five years ago. My life would not have been the same. I am one of the luckiest kids in the whole USA. Thanks, Mom and Dad. Thanks for the memories.



Karen Merrell, daughter of Oliver “Mo” Morris, and Mo Morris (453rd) showing his challenge coin presented to him by Irene Hurner.

2nd Air Division Memorial Library

Report of the Trust Librarian for the 2ADA Convention

by Libby Morgan (Trust Librarian), 2nd Air Division Memorial Library

Dated: 3rd September 2012

It's a pleasure and a privilege to present my annual report on the activities of the 2nd Air Division Memorial Library in Norwich.

Statistics 2011/12

Our daily average number of visitors for 2011/12 was the same as in 2010/11, whilst our annual statistics show that our book issue figures are continuing to rise.

2011/12	Visitors	Open Days	Daily Average	Book Issues
Q1	11199	73	153	2352
Q2	10997	72	153	2504
Q3	11943	74	161	2156
Q4	12288	77	160	2516
Total	46427	296	157	9528

2010/11	Visitors	Open Days	Daily Average	Book Issues
Q1	11695	74	158	2179
Q2	12365	78	158	2049
Q3	11506	75	153	2372
Q4	11883	75	158	2627
Total	47449	302	157	9227

Library Visitors

In addition to our regular Norfolk library patrons, we continue to welcome visitors from across the world to the Memorial Library, including of course 2nd Air Division veterans, their families and friends. It was a special honour to welcome 3 veterans from the 466th Bomb Group to the Memorial Library in May this year: Bill Campbell, Melvin Demmin and Earl Wassom.

Comments from our visitors' book continue to show how much the Memorial Library is appreciated by those that visit us....

A great testament to those who served.

Thank you for keeping the memory of my father's unit alive.

Thanks for sharing this important history of heritage and valour.

Wonderful !

UEA American Scholars

Our UEA American Scholars Elizabeth Rawitsch and Kate Anderson have had another busy and successful year. The launch of our Autumn public lecture series in 2011, with invited speakers from the University of East Anglia, was extremely well received, and attracted a new audience to the Memorial Library. Another series of lectures is planned for this Autumn, focussing on Norfolk's American Connections. Kate and Elizabeth have also been busy developing and running a variety of activities for children, assisting with school visits, and participating in reminiscence activities, as well as maintaining an active and vibrant social media presence on facebook <http://www.facebook.com/2ndair> and the Memorial Library's blog www.2ndair.wordpress.com. We're delighted that Kate is staying with us for another year, and we're looking forward to Chad Ryan joining us at the beginning of

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October.

Events and Activities 2011/12-This is a selection from the Memorial Library diary...

26/9/11 - Visit from Langley Prep School (30 children)

27/9/11 - Lee Marsden (UEA) : Race and Obama's foreign policy (lecture)

4/10/11 - Reminiscence Event - Women in WW2 Afternoon Tea

10/10/11- Banned Books 2011: Down the river with Huckleberry Finn

13/10/11 - Banned Books 2011: Discussion Evening

18/10/11 - Rebecca Fraser (UEA): Inventing a Southern Self (lecture)

19/10/11 - Visit from Alington and Bergh Apton School (61 children)

27/10/11 – Children's half-term activity at Norfolk Record Office "Far From Home: Evacuees and American Airmen in Norfolk during WW2"

15/11/11 – Memorial Trust Biennial Lecture : speaker Sir Sherard Cowper-Coles

16/11/11 – Memorial Library 10th Birthday Party

22/11/11 - Yvonne Tasker (UEA): Hollywood & military Women in WWII (lecture)

26/11/11 – Visit from The Friends of the Eighth

28/11/11 – Visit from USAF Commanders from Mildenhall and Lakenheath

6/12/11 – Dr Olly Gruner: American Folk Music & Politics (lecture)

8/12/12 – Memorial Library staff visit new Heritage Trail at Wymondham College

15/12/11 – Visit from Mark Howell, 100th Air Refueling Wing, Mildenhall historian

20/12/11 – Visit from the Airfield Research Group

13/1/12 - Visit from Beccles Middle School

24/1/12 - Creative writing activity for home educated children's group

9/2/12 – Visit from chaplaincy teams from Lakenheath and Mildenhall

06/3/12 – "Friendly Invasion" schools workshop at Thetford Ancient House Museum

12/4/12 - Catching dreams with Pocahontas – children's holiday activity

19/4/12 – "American Memories Morning" reminiscence activity (2AD Archive)

10/5/12 – Visit from 12 "gifted and talented" children from Costessey School

25/5/12 - Nickerson Family – US tour group visiting Heritage Centre and 2AD

11/6/12 - Visit from Magdalen Gates Primary School (28 children - year 3)

20/6/12 - LM and KA talk to Mid Norfolk Family History Society @ Dereham

26/6/12 - Visit from Anglia Ruskin University Library Staff

2/7/12 – Dr Vernon Williams presented his new film Deopham at War: The Anglo-American Experience in

Wartime Norfolk, 1939-1945

5/7/12 - LM talk to NHS Retirement Fellowship (Ipswich)

13/7/12 - LM interviewed for podcast by local radio station Future Radio.

14/7/12 - Norfolk's American Connections Big Day Out at The Forum: Time Tippers, re-enactors in the Memorial Library - daily visitors 362 !

26/8/12 - Attended Gressenhall Museum "Village At War" event with display about the Friendly Invasion, collection of memorabilia, and children's craft activity

Working with the Norfolk Record Office

What was the impact of the Second Air Division in East Anglia during the Second World War? This online learning resource which includes sound clips, digitized copies of photographs and documents from the 2nd Air Division

Archive and Memorial Library collections, was published at the beginning of July 2012.

It can be downloaded from the Norfolk Record Office website at <http://www.archives.norfolk.gov.uk/e-Resources/Teaching-Packs/NCC098692>.

This Autumn staff from the Memorial Library and the Record Office are joining forces to deliver a number of workshops about the Second World War to primary schools in Norfolk.

Looking Ahead-This year.....

Looking ahead we have a series of events organised for the Autumn as part of the Norfolk's American Connections project www.norfolksamericanconnections.com, celebrating Norfolk's historic links with North America, including the 70th Anniversary of the US Army Air Force arriving in Norfolk

27/9/12 - Diamond Lil Homecoming - talk by David Hastings MBE

2/10/12 - Attlebridge Airfield - talk by David Gurney (County Archaeologist)

11/10/12 - Memories of the 392nd Bomb Group at Wendling - talk by John Gilbert

6/11/12 - From Alaska to the Mississippi - presentation by Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts

13/11/12 - The Mighty 8th Air Force in East Anglia - a lecture by Dr Sam Edwards

20/11/12 - Ribbons across the Atlantic - a lecture by Professor Geoffrey Plank

27/11/12 - Pocahontas: the making of a Norfolk Gentlewoman - Professor Malcolm Gaskill

Next year....

We are currently working to support the application of a bid for funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for a region wide project called "The Eighth in the East". This ambitious project aims to record the history of the 8th Air Force in East Anglia, with a community archaeology and an oral history programme, and then to share that history as widely as possible. The HLF have already provided funding for two consultants to assist in the work required to put together the final bid, which we hope to submit before the end of the year. Should the funding application be successful the project will run from 2013 - 2015.

Remembering the Past / Inspiring the Future

As I write this report I know that the members of the 2nd Air Division Association have voted to dissolve the Association at this year's Convention. This heralds a new era for the Memorial Trust and the Library, and we will feel the loss of our friends "Across the Pond" keenly. However, the Memorial Library here in Norwich is a permanent memorial to the 7,000 young Americans of the 2nd Air Division who lost their lives during the Second World War. We shall continue to tell their story, ensuring the achievements and sacrifices made by the men and women of the 2nd Air Division and the Mighty 8th Air Force during World War Two will never be forgotten by the people of Norfolk and East Anglia. On the 13th June 2013 we will be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the original dedication of the Memorial Room in 1963. On that occasion the US Ambassador read the following message from President Kennedy:

"On the occasion of the dedication of this Memorial, I would like to join in paying tribute to the members of the Second Air Division who sacrificed their lives in the defense of free men everywhere....May their sacrifice continue to strengthen the bonds of friendship between our two nations, allies past and present, against tyranny. May it also inspire us to pursue with energy and patience the opportunities for securing peace with justice preserved for us by those whose memorial we dedicate today."

Here's to the next fifty years!

More Than Just Brothers

by Marybeth Dyer and Lucille Birmingham, Daughter and Wife of Frank Birmingham

Frank and Bob lived very close to each other, Frank lived in Milwaukee, WI and Bob was in a small suburb- Greendale, WI. Even after they finished raising their families- a total of 9 children combined, they remained close- vacationing and traveling together. But in 2010, Frank decided he could no longer tolerate the cold Wisconsin winters and he and his wife Lucille moved to sunny San Jose, CA to enjoy the weather and be close to their two daughters, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. It was a hard decision- one that Frank did not take lightly. This would be the first time that he would be far away from his brother since they were children and before he entered the war. When saying goodbye, Frank and Bob knew it was a possibility that they would never see each other again. It was difficult to travel and even though both were in good health, there were a lot of miles separating them. This year-Frank and Lucille decided to make the trip to Chicago for the last 2nd Air Division convention if they could stay strong and healthy. With the help of family, the trip went well and Frank reunited with his brother again. Those observing the reunion were as touched as the brothers were embracing. Frank looked at his brother and said, "What took you so long?"



Brothers reunite for the first time in 2 years at 2nd ADA Reunion in Chicago, IL, A joyous event and very touching.



Bob greets his Sister-in-Law Lucille Birmingham while Brother Frank wipes his tears of joy.



Frank Birmingham with his impressive collection of memorabilia, letters and pictures right before reuniting with his brother Bob.

Less than one and one-half years separate them in age and only one year separated them in school. Always together, they were best friends and became known as the Birmingham Boys. Deciding to go to different high schools resulted in sibling rivalry in football and even when they followed each other into the U. S. Army Air Corps during World War II.

Frank was older and entered the service in July 1943 and was stationed at Kessler Field in Biloxi, Mississippi for basic training. Frank wrote home, “We do a lot of marching and physical training in hot sun without much rest, plus studying in the lecture hall.”

Around the time Bob started his senior year in high school, Frank was finishing basic training. Happy to leave the Mississippi heat, he was sent to the University of Vermont in Burlington. Located on beautiful Lake Champlain in a valley surrounded by mountains, he said it was, “One of the most beautiful places I’ve ever seen., as he prepared for a future assignment in the U. S. Army Air Corp Cadet Program.

In January 1944, Frank left Vermont to continue his training in the cadet program with his goal of becoming a bombardier; but that changed on the way to his next assignment. In Nashville, Tennessee, he again wrote, “My scores were high, but the quotas happened to be filled.” He was told there was a pressing need for training in armor and gunnery. An improved bomb sight, which only required one bombardier in the lead plane of a squadron during combat, may have also contributed to his not reaching his goal. He was definitely disappointed, but it eventually became a Good News-Bad News situation.

Frank was assigned to a Technical School Squadron at Buckley Field, near Denver, Colorado to study the armor on a plane, which involved guns, bombs, fuses, etc for twelve weeks before going to gunnery school in Harlingen Texas. In early 1944, he wrote home, “So the Army finally got Bob.” He learned that his brother Bob had enlisted in the Air Corp and was going to Miami Beach for basic training. Frank realized how lucky he was to have finished high school before going into service. Bob was taken out of high school during his senior year and was not given the opportunity to graduate with his class in June 1944.

After six weeks, Frank received his Armor-Gunnery wings and a Corporal rating. In the meantime, after basic training, Bob was only a few hundred miles away training to be a gunner at Lowry Field in Texas. Unfortunately, they were not able to see one another, not even for a short visit.

After over a year in service Frank was finally able to come home on furlough in July 1944. Basic training and time spent in the cadet program, plus going to armor and gunnery school, delayed his going overseas and into combat. That was the Good News. Not continuing in the Cadet Program did deny him an opportunity to become a commissioned officer with the rank of Second Lieutenant. That was the Bad News. Bob did not get the extra training that Frank did. After his basic training he was sent immediately to gunnery school and became eligible to go overseas. It was obvious, especially to Frank, during that time in the war they really needed gunners. This is where the lives of these two brothers took an interesting and almost unbelievable turn.

At Chatham Field in Savannah, Georgia, Frank was assigned to a flight crew. With his extensive training as armor-gunner, he was given the rank of Staff Sergeant and placed in charge of all armament on his crew’s B-24



Grandson-in-Law Aaron Shapiro and Grandson Dylan Birmingham with Frank Birmingham, wearing Franks original uniforms from his time with 458th BG.

More Than Just Brothers, Continued from Page 11



Bob and Frank Birmingham in Chicago, Illinois

Liberator bomber. He was also given the responsibility of taking pictures over the target during combat. What happened next is unbelievable.

When Frank arrived in Georgia, he learned that his brother, Sergeant Robert C. Birmingham, was assigned to his crew and his B-24, as a nose gunner. After a great deal of discussion they both decided against flying into combat together on the same plane. It was too much of a risk. If their plane was shot down, it was possible both brothers would be lost. Bob was transferred as a nose gunner to another crew. However, they did end up together on the same ship that took them overseas. Both were stationed at Horsham St. Faith Air Base in

Norwich, England as part of the 8th Air Force, 2nd Air Division, 458th Bomb. Frank was in the 754th Squadron and Bob was in the 752nd squadron.

After D-Day and the Invasion of Europe in June 1944 the Allies advanced and reclaimed a great deal of territory in France. By December, Paris was liberated and they were beginning to push the Germans closer back into Germany. Bad weather and a lot of snow kept the Allied Air Force from supporting the troops on the ground. Taking advantage of the situation, the Germans broke through the American lines, bringing the Allied effort to a halt and thus began the Battle of the Bulge with heavy fighting near Bastogne, Belgium. The weather finally cleared around December 24th, and Frank had his first combat mission and flew 31 combat missions over continental Europe before the war ended in May 1945.

Bob's fate overseas took a completely different turn. On his 5th mission in January 1945 his B-24 was heavily damaged by anti-aircraft fire over Hamburg, Germany. With a great deal of fear and uncertainty, they flew successfully over the North Sea. When their B-24 finally ran out of fuel, most of the crew safely bailed out including Bob but two of his crewmembers remained in the plane, crash-landing in a farmer's field. They were not seriously hurt and the crew spent the remaining days of the European conflict in Sweden.



The Frank Birmingham Clan today

Uncertain of his fate, Frank spent two weeks worrying about his brother. He began to question their decision to take Bob off his plane. Now one of them was missing anyway. How would he justify this decision with his parents? It was a very difficult time for Frank, until he discovered his parents knew what happened to Bob within 48 hours.

After the war, Frank married first and Bob's marriage took place a year later. They began their lives where they left off before going into service. What is so remarkable is they carried on their "their more than brothers relationship" after they got married, while raising their own families. These two families became more than just wives and cousins to each other, they also became best friends.

My Day with Witchcraft and the Collings Foundation

by Laurie Bedus



My Grandmother "Kitty" and I in the air on Witchcraft

The breezy air was coming into the open waist gun windows and mingling among the other passengers, I explored the plane. I clawed my way into the navigator's area, avoided spring loaded doors and tried to untangle myself from my scarf. I fingered the concrete pieces of the hardstands taken from Wendling and cuddled the small urn in my pocket as I thought about my grandmother, her brother and the amazing journey that has become my life with the 392nd Bomb Group. I was thankful for the friends and veterans I've met because he left his diary behind for me to chase his clues. The short time I was on Witchcraft, I also thanked my lucky stars that I would never have to experience this flight in war time. While fun and leisurely that day, I began to develop an understanding of what the airmen of the 8th Air Force endured-it was loud, uncomfortable, cramped and dif-



In the window prior to take off

2012 has been quite a year for me. I have worked to close the final chapters on the story that has dominated my life for over a decade-that of my Great Uncle John Slowik and the war journal he left behind in 1944. John was a lead navigator with the 392nd Bomb Group and served at Wendling Air Base for eight months before he was KIA on a mission to Friedrichshafen Germany March 18, 1944. In May, I walked in his shadow at Wendling as John Gilbert, British Liaison to the 392nd BG, helped me retrace John's adventures so long ago. I knew this personal journey would end with my own ride on a B-24. On the anniversary of my grandmother's death, I climbed into the plane through the bomb bay and found my seat to sound of the growling of the motors.

The breezy air was coming into the open waist gun windows and mingling among the other passengers, I explored the plane. I clawed my way into the navigator's area, avoided spring loaded doors and tried to untangle myself from my scarf. I fingered the concrete pieces of the hardstands taken from Wendling and cuddled the small urn in my pocket as I thought about my grandmother, her brother and the amazing journey that has become my life with the 392nd Bomb Group. I was thankful for the friends and veterans I've met because he left his diary behind for me to chase his clues. The short time I was on Witchcraft, I also thanked my lucky stars that I would never have to experience this flight in war time. While fun and leisurely that day, I began to develop an understanding of what the airmen of the 8th Air Force endured-it was loud, uncomfortable, cramped and dif-



My mother Lorraine and I next to Witchcraft prior to take off

ficult to move through with ease. I cannot imagine a flight in that plane at 25,000 feet during enemy attack, mechanical problems while trying to navigate through temperamental unpredictable weather. When we landed, it was disconcerting and strangely emotional but also cathartic.

That night, as I counted my numerous bruises, I also counted my blessings and silently sent thanks to all of the men who served in the 2nd Air Division-my friends. My Heroes-thank you for doing what I know I could never do.

Renewal / Application for Heritage League of the 2nd Air Division (USAAF)

Please return this page with your check, payable to the Heritage League

c/o Marybeth Dyer- President
1020 Glacier Avenue
Pacifica, CA 94044
smbdyer@sbcglobal.net



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NAME of related veteran or HL/2ADA contact _____

Their BG or Unit No. _____ Their relationship to you _____

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Membership type- Adult (PDF Newsletter via Email) \$25 _____

Veterans of the 2nd Air Division are eligible for Free Honorary Lifetime Membership

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ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Contribution to the Heritage League operations \$ _____

In Memory of _____ In Honor of _____

Contribution to the Mighty 8th Museum (Savannah, GA) \$ _____

TOTAL ENCLOSED \$ _____

We strongly encourage you to pay through PayPal. It is safe and secure way for you to pay your membership and contributions. If you prefer to pay by check, please send the check to me at the address below.

LOGON TO <http://www.heritageleague.org/>

University of East Anglia Scholars Report-September 2012

by Andrew Hawker, Governor

When the Fulbright Commission ended the program of supplying American librarians for the Memorial Library, your association recovered the money that it had raised for this purpose and gave it to the Memorial Trust to use in the best way possible in order to continue providing an American presence in the library. The solution that we found was to engage two post-graduate students from the University of East Anglia in Norwich to work ten hours each week in return for a contribution of £6,000 towards the fees for their PhD courses at the University of East Anglia. These posts are advertised early in the calendar year in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities. Applicants submit a CV and a statement of why they would like to be a part of your library. Libby, others, and I interview them in April. This October we shall start the fifth year of this arrangement. We have appointed two very impressive young people to perform this role for the forthcoming year. They will present the human face of the USA in the library alongside Libby and her excellent and experienced colleagues Jenny Christian and Lesley Fleetwood.

In 2011-12, for the first time, we had the benefit of one of our UEA Scholars doing a second year with us. Elizabeth Rawitsch from New Hampshire provided very useful continuity for the projects that she was working on and a helpful additional staff resource during the summer holiday period. You have seen her articles in the *Second Air Division Journal*. We shall enjoy that advantage again in 2012/13 as Kate Anderson from Ohio, a student of literature, drama, and creative writing, who has also written articles for *The Journal*, has been appointed for a second year. That these two young ladies have wanted to extend their time with us while working to complete their PhDs, is a tribute to the intrinsic interest of your Memorial Library and what it stands for, and to the excellent way in which Libby runs it and has extended its outreach with the scholars help. Both Elizabeth and Kate have grandfathers still alive who served in the US military during World War II. Our other UEA Scholar for 2012/13 has actually spent time in the USAF himself! Chad Ryan has lived in Georgia, Oklahoma, and Oregon. He now has an English wife. After serving four years as a public relations officer and investigator in the United States Air Force, and traveling widely in Europe and Asia, Chad has returned to furthering his education.

In addition to helping with the day to day staffing of the library and answering the many queries which come in from visitors in person, on the phone, and by email, our UEA Scholars have been involved in much of the outreach work which has increased significantly over the last few years. They've run the fiction reading group which has been going on for five years, helped to develop Libby's own new fiction collection, and write most of the blog and Facebook pages that have brought the library to a much wider audience. If blogs and Facebook are not entirely up your alley, ask your grandchildren to show you. They're just a click of the mouse from the library's website. Our UEA Scholars have also devised and delivered a number of successful programs for schoolchildren at the library and in their own classrooms. They've helped to line up some very interesting speakers for the Autumn Lecture Series in the library and they have been much involved in planning the Norfolk American Connections Project which is under way now to mark the 70th anniversary of the Friendly Invasion of East Anglia by United States forces.

In addition to all of this, a useful by-product of our UEA Scholar scheme is that a scholar from two years ago, Beth Southward, is continuing her association with the library by having become one of our permanent part-time Saturday staff members and serving as a relief staffer on other occasions. Overall, we feel that this arrangement with the UEA has worked really well and we look forward to it providing a flesh and blood American presence in your library for many years to come.

Ending It Where It all Started: Second Air Division Association winds it up in the Windy City with a little help from its friends at the Heritage League

by *Brian Mahoney*



Veterans of the 392nd Bomb Group. Top (L-R) Joe McNeil, Jack Rotzien, Aubrey Burke, Harvey Nabor, Oak Mackey, Jim Goar Bottom (L-R) Robert Harned, Martha Baumbauer, Allen Duff, Tom Perry

The initial program, partly developed by Maxine Mackey before her untimely death this spring, left some room for the League to contribute some substance. We hosted a three-part symposium on Friday afternoon, with Dr. Mike Perry, a historian at the Army's Heritage and Education Center (in Carlisle, PA) leading off with an overview of their program and a strong pitch for all to document the stories of our vets. Our past VP for Volunteers, Norfolk native, and committed 392nd BG researcher, Ben Jones, took us through the history and traditions of the Roll of Honor in the American Chapel at St. Pauls, London. His understanding of the art and craft, as well as the history and politics of this important symbol and memorial, inform his great ideas to extend it and improve it with a 'virtual surrogate' (online.) His excellent presentation was matched by that of Greg Hatton, whose 392nd BG father was one of many inspirations for his authoritative, extensive research on Prisoners of War; he spoke on the *Stalags Luft*, which held US and British airmen in Germany.

On Saturday, nearly double the number we had planned for, came along with us to sample authentic Chicago-style pizza at Giordano's. We supplied a bus to this fun lunch, where good time was had by all, and 90-years-young Bert Biel blew out candles on a delicious birthday cake.

We also operated the Hospitality Room, providing snacks and company as well as ambiance and education, in the form of authentic period artifacts brought by our friend and reenactor George Bruckert, and 445th son and researcher Curt Reus, and an extensive, beautiful display by current VP for Volunteers, Chris Clark.

Sixty-seven years after the end of WWII, and 65 years after some Chicago-area vets of the Second Air Division decided to get together socially and remember shared experiences—the amazing organization that resulted, finally exercised its 'last man out' dissolution with dignity, grace and class, with 41 of the 'Greatest Gens' surrounded by loving family, friends, and relatives.

Looking around the convention at its stars—those who served in the Liberator bomb groups of the Mighty Eighth Air force in England—we admired how strong and clear they remain, showing us that age is sometimes 'just a number.' A certain shared attitude about life, visible to all of us 'youngsters,' is possibly the most valuable legacy they leave us—right behind saving civilization as we know it!



HL VP Bob Books assisting Ben Jones with his presentation about the Book of Honor at St. Paul's Cathedral. London UK



Men in uniform-Veteran and admiring reinactor George Bruckert at the final banquet

We were delighted to pitch in here and there, and support the ceremonies and rituals that have characterized our ‘parent organization’ and will inform our solemn commemorations from now on. In the long-anticipated hand-off from their organization to ours—truly, from the war generation to the proud and grateful descendants—there were a few special moments. In moving one-on-one interactions at the Final Banquet, our members presented every attending veteran with a Heritage League Challenge Coin hand painted with his group’s tail fin marking.

We savored the ‘quality time’ we caught with the vets, at meals, in the Hospitality Room, and whenever else we could catch them. We cherished seeing one in his uniform, several dancing with their brides, and all basking in the great companionship. We were encouraged by the open generosity of folding bomb group associations to the League, by the 2ADA’s repeated call to the Governors of the 2AD Memorial Trust to work intimately with our board into the future, by their dissolution distribution, and by their

financial support for preserving their *Journal* in accessible, digital form. The dissolution could have occurred at any of the previous *five* conventions, and in recent years it was hard for them to ‘be of one mind’ on *when* to do it, and whether all of the specifics were right.

But as all came together in their ultimate Executive and Business Meetings. At the end of the final Final Banquet, when the last officers of the 2ADA shared brief thoughts, followed by those of our three Trust Governors, it really started to hit us—harder than we could have anticipated—that “the party is over,” that the colorful, rich long run of the Second Air Division Association is now history.

It falls to us to ‘continue the party’ of annual conventions to which *all* are invited. We hope ‘our party’ may be graced by all interested remaining veterans for many years to come, and that we enlist the full participation of their descendants. We are keen to take up this ‘fun’ part of our mission, and humbled to continue with the serious, core one, which will sustain us when the last of the veterans are gone: honoring and remembering the services and sacrifices of the ones we were privileged to know, and their fallen comrades, who they never forgot.



392nd Veteran and Widower of Maxine Mackey, received his wife’s recognition by the Heritage League

The Late Maxine Mackey is Honored

During the Final Banquet of the convention, President Marybeth Dyer took the podium briefly to make, posthumously, a presentation to Maxine Mackey, with whom Marybeth had become very close in recent years as they integrated Heritage League participation in 2ADA conventions planning and operation. We were delighted that Oak, our last Representative from the 2ADA to the Heritage League, came to the convention so soon after his loss, and was able to receive this honor, as well as the condolences and good wishes of all in his extended families.

Here is the text of the citation, which Marybeth read out after her own touching personal remarks:

“The Executive Committee of The Heritage League of the Second Air Division (USAAF) does proudly induct Maxine Mackey into the Heritage League Hall of Fame, posthumously, Class of 2012. The Hall of Fame has been established to call attention to valuable and unstinting service by individuals over many years to veteran organizations of the USAAF 8th Air Force of World War II. Inductees have practiced the honoring and remembering which is the core activity of the League, and moreover have inspired

“The Late Maxine”, Continued from Page 17

and encouraged others to serve effectively, with dignity and grace.

Maxine was a modern thinker, an ‘organization’ lady, and a true believer in the League’s mission and purpose. She took to heart the inclusive language in the bylaws of the Second Air Division Association, and of the Auxiliary it created in 1987. She was a straight shooter, a doer and a communicator. Maxine effectively ‘led from the middle,’ because she took leaders at their word—then held them to it. Maxine’s energy, wit and intelligence were brought to the assistance of all the organizations she belonged to, and her grace and warmth sweetened what was already an awesome deal. She served the 2ADA Executive Committee energetically as Director of Correspondence, as a convention planner, and as informal but sound counsel. Until her recent passing, Maxine, with Oak, served the Heritage League as liaison from the 2ADA to the Heritage League, formalizing a role she had assumed since our beginning 25 years ago: advocating for an entity that would keep the memory of the veterans alive and accurate, long after they were gone. We cherish the time we had with her.”

It is dated September 7, 2012, and bears signatures of the current Executive Committee members.

Highlights of the 2nd Air Division-Chicago 2012



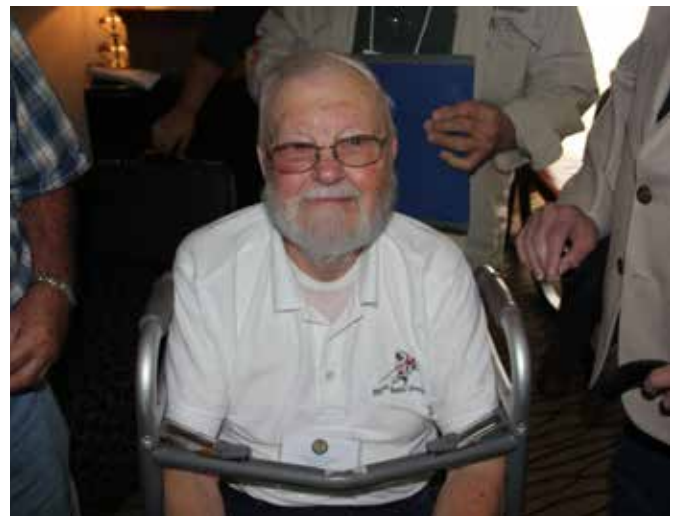
392nd Veteran Robert Harned with sons Bill and Bob



Ray Paytel, Editor of the 2nd ADA Journal hands over his extensive collection to the Heritage League



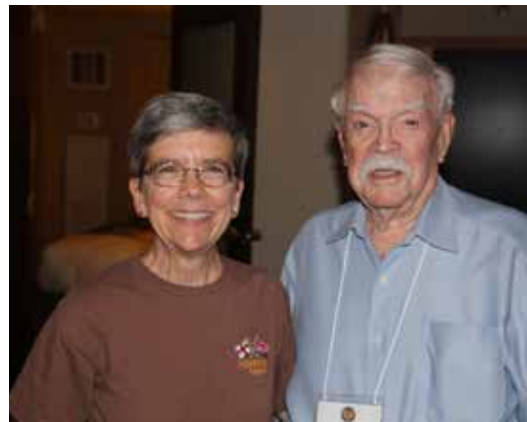
392nd Research Ben Jones, presented a well attended forum about the Book of Remembrance at St. Pauls Cathedral



Some of these guys need to be contained! 392nd Veteran Tom Perry is quite comfortable in his “cage”.



The Books Crew Today: Jim Marsteller, Nephew of Old Glory Engineer Everett Morris; Laurie Bedus, Great-Niece of Navigator John Slowik; and Bob Books, Son of Pilot Dallas Books with a flag flown at Wendling Air Base in May for Bob's father, standing with flags presented to the 392nd by John Gilbert in East Anglia.



Annette Tison and Joe McNeil catching up in the 392nd hospitality suite



Dennis Rogers with his brother Don and Sister-in-Law Mary



392nd POW Researcher, Greg Hatton presented on Prisoner Life during WWII



The Women of the Heritage League, Irene Hurner, Laurie Bedus, Sue Risley and Marybeth Dyer



Ed and Rosemary Zobac at dinner with the 392nd BG 2nd Gens

All photos courtesy of Laurie Bedus, 392nd BG

Heritage League of
the Second Air Division (USAAF)
Marybeth Dyer (458th BG)
1020 Glacier Avenue
Pacifica, CA 94044

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Second Air Division Association
Richard C. Robert (453rd BG),
President
333 Lee Drive #206
Baton Rouge, LA 70808
(225) 769-2138
Robert453@msn.com

Acting 2AD Memorial Trust
Liaison to Heritage League
Matthew Martin, *Chair*
Dairy Farmhouse, Swardeston
Norwich, Norfolk
NR14 8LG, England
Mtmartindairy@aol.com



2012 Heritage League Executive Committee

President
Marybeth Dyer (458th BG)
1020 Glacier Avenue
Pacifica, CA 94044
(650) 355-8383
smbdyer@sbcglobal.net

Executive Vice President
Bob Books (392nd BG)
1432 Little Creek Drive
Pensacola, FL 32506-8257
bob@heritageleague.org

Secretary
Lisa Niehoff (Friend and Supporter)
P.O. Box 383
Huxley, IA 50124
(515)-597-3241
lisa@huxcomm.net

Treasurer
Sue Risley (446th BG)
682 Slade Avenue
Elgin, IL 60120
(847) 741-8692
skrisley@aol.com

Communication VP
Laurie Bedus (392nd BG)
46 Dewey Ave
Windsor, CT 06095
(860) 519-6707
hxwriter@gmail.com

VP for Volunteers
Chris Clark (489th BG and 44th)
8427 Willow Glen Court
Manassas, VA 20110
clarkhistory@aol.com

Past President
Brian Mahoney
1543 North Glebe Road
Arlington, VA 22207
bricamera@mindspring.com
(202)-232-1423

Past President
Irene Hurner (453rd BG)
46400 San Antonio Valley Road
Livermore, CA 94550
(408) 897-3029
ihurner@hotmail.com

Past President
Billy Sheely Johnson (492nd BG)
1526 Mt. Pleasant Drive
Colonial Heights, VA 23834
(804) 526-1624
bcsjohnson@comcast.net

2ADA Rep to HL
Oak Mackey
(392nd BG Vet)
6406 East Presidio St.
Mesa, AZ 85215
(480) 641-3033
oak.mackey@msn.com