

44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor and Casualties

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Foreword

As a ground crewman in the 67th Squadron for most of the time the 44th Bomb Group was at war in England, I watched most of the 44th Bomb Group planes, heavily laden with bombs, ammunition, fuel, and crewmen take off, headed for action against the enemy. I was there, too, when the formations returned, too often learning that not all of them came back. The emotions were always present; at times elated with a successful attack, but upset when one aborted and very depressed when we had losses.

If I had worked on a plane that was missing, I, along with my crew buddies, felt a personal responsibility for the loss. There was always that nagging doubt inside us that I seldom ever voiced that asked, "Could I have been responsible for this loss? Could I, or should I, have done something that would have brought this plane and crew back? Are these crewmen now dead because I failed them?" Several of these brave men were close and personal buddies making the situation worse. But those questions were never answered during the war. The Germans didn't say, of course, and our men that survived to become prisoners, could not say. Evadees did return occasionally, but I saw only a very few. When that terrible war in Europe finally ended, the Group was quickly ordered back to the U.S. to prepare for the final assault on Japan. But once in the U.S. the 44th BG was demobilized, we were split up, and reassigned. Nothing was available to me and I assume most of us, so those burning questions were never answered. Instead, they were pushed back deep inside, but not forgotten.

It was 1972 before I learned that the English had completed the American Room in the new Central Library in Norwich, England and 1976 before I saw the 2nd Air Division Roll Of Honor on display there. Although the Roll of Honor was impressively prepared and presented for all to view with all of the names it contains (now nearly 7,000), it immediately struck me with its inadequacy. I think this was because of my involvement with so many of them. Certainly it honored all of those men who are listed, but I continued to feel that surely we, or at least I, owed them more than a mere listing of names. They had earned far more than that.

With deepened interest, I began my search for information concerning the events that took the lives of these brave men of the 44th Bomb Group. My desire was to supplement this Roll Of Honor with as much data as possible relating to the missions they flew the day they were lost so that all of us could better appreciate their heroism and their sacrifices.

After many years of research, hundreds of letters and phone calls, and assistance from so many (including two other 44th Bomb Group historians: Webb Todd, 68th Squadron, and Norman Kiefer, 506th Squadron), I published a book entitled the "44th Bomb Group Roll of Honor and Casualties" in 1987. Since then I have continued to search for answers. The result is this revised volume. This memorial book is my attempt to make information available to the public about our casualties so that if they read the names of our 44th Bomb Group men killed in action, they can learn more about the circumstances of their deaths and about their crewmates. This book documents the Hell our men suffered while making their attacks against our formidable enemy. I

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think that this book will be especially valuable for those who visit the new American Memorial Room in the great new Forum building in Norwich, England.

Note: The entire Central Library building was destroyed by fire on 1 August 1994. It has since been replaced by the new Forum building.

May their bravery and sacrifices be learned and remembered, not only about the men who gave their lives, but also for the other combat buddies who flew with them and shared their many hardships, wounds and pains, those that crash-landed, those that evaded, those that escaped, those that gave so much.

Due to the dearth of official material available to me, as well as the length of time since the events occurred, there probably are many instances of injury and wounds that have been overlooked. Every effort has been made to locate and obtain as much information as possible whenever records indicate that men were wounded, but it is a certainty that many injuries have not been included in this book. For these omissions I apologize and am truly sorry. However, I am reasonably sure that most, if not all, 44th Bomb Group men killed in action have been identified here.

May the actions and deeds of these 44th Bomb Group combat men be appreciated and long remembered.

Will Lundy

Background Information

A Bit About the Liberator

In the following text there are many references to mechanical problems or enemy inflicted damages to the B-24 aircraft that contributed to the eventual loss of the planes and crews. For the many who were not mechanically involved over fifty years ago as well as those not familiar with engines and mechanics, perhaps a few non-technical words concerning this aircraft would be appropriate.

The Pratt & Whitney engines were designed for high altitude flying (20 to 30 thousand feet). In the rarified atmosphere at this altitude, it was necessary to attain full power through the use of a supercharger to compress the air being sent to the cylinders. To compress the air, the exhaust gases were duct back to the compressor (supercharger) located in the nacelle behind each engine so that the hot gases could be used to spin a “bucket wheel” which, in turn, compressed the intake air and forced it, under pressure, forward to the engine.

Whenever a “loss of power” is referred to in the text, it often meant that a problem occurred somewhere in these two duct systems. Flak or bullets that damaged either the intake or exhaust ducting would probably result in an immediate lessening of power from that engine. Similarly, damage to the controls to the supercharger or the engine could give the same results. Of course, physical damage to the engine itself would lessen the horsepower output as well. But many engines continued to function with a cylinder head pushed completely off the engine block!

The three-bladed propellers were adjustable to “pitch” or the degree of bite that it could take through the air. The pilot regulated this angle according to his power setting all during the flight. In the case of damages to an engine and it could no longer provide sufficient pulling power, the pilots would hit a “feathering” button which would turn the blades sideways into the airstream to prevent the propellers from “wind-milling”. Failure to feather means that the propeller would be turned by the wind flowing past and would hold the plane back and severely reduce speed and complicate handling.

Smoke or fire in the engine section could be the result of damages to the inlet fuel lines, a rupture of the 28-gallon oil tank in that area onto the hot exhaust system, or actual damage to the engine itself. Even a wind-milling propeller could cause severe overheating and possible fire erupting.

Fire in the bomb bay section was quite common as that area was very vulnerable due to the number of inflammable fluid lines passing through it. (Not to mention the gas-filled wing immediately above it.) In addition to the very high octane fuel, there was a large hydraulic oil reservoir that provided hydraulic fluid to operate the landing gear, the flaps, turrets, tail surface controls, etc. Immediately in front of the bomb bay and under the rear edge of the flight deck was an emergency power unit that also had a reservoir of gasoline. Batteries were located here, too,

with their acid. All of these items could contribute to the eruption of flames if damaged. One should not forget that these aircraft were ancient when compared to modern standards. The original equipment, other than the engines, were not well designed for high altitude combat, and had to be modified, as lessons were learned. This was especially true so far as the equipment for the combat man himself. Small oxygen supply hoses to the mask, and the mask itself, were poorly designed and resulted in several deaths before corrective action was taken. Mobility was very hazardous, as it was necessary for the combat man to disconnect completely from the oxygen, interphone, and heating cord systems. Rarified air and extreme cold often caused unconsciousness in a few moments, followed by death in a few minutes, if undetected. Temperatures at higher altitudes ranged from minus 20 to minus 60 degrees, not to mention chill factors in that drafty fuselage with no insulation.

“Walk-around” oxygen bottles, demand-type oxygen systems, large wire-reinforced hoses and improved masks reduced these hazards. Electric heating suits replaced the heavy and cumbersome flight clothing to provide a bit more comfort, and reduced the incidents of severe frostbite.

Modifications to protect the nerve center of the aircraft, the two pilots, included installations of thick glass in the windshields, heavy armor plate on both sides of the cockpit, armored seats, steel or flak helmets, etc. Flak vests were made available for all crewmen, and saved many a man from severe injuries and death.

The elements alone were a formidable enemy long before the German activities occurred! Formation of ice at take off, (and beyond) thick fog and clouds during assembly, flying through high weather fronts while in formation, all took their toll. Close formation flying, itself, was dangerous, causing too many collisions, too many deaths. But our brave men fought their way through all of this, persevered, won!

Notes on Aircraft Numbering and Lettering

[see if Will is okay with this description and also if he can add anything about the numbers 42-etc.]

Each aircraft has a number and a letter associated with it. The very first aircraft in 1942 all had one letter (no bars above or below) over a series of numbers. This was adequate until March of 1943 when the 506th Squadron arrived, at which point there were too many aircraft for 26 letters, so they had to change it. They then started to put a horizontal line (or bar) either in front of the letter or on top of the letter (in the case of the 506th). The 67th Squadron was normally identified by a bar below the letter, but for a short period the 506th Squadron aircraft also had the bar below the letter. And, after April of 1944 the 66th Squadron had a plus (+) in front of the letter. These were PFF aircraft. The 68th Squadron never had anything but the letter itself, with one exception.

[Will, what would be the exception?]

As time went by, the bar was used to identify the Squadron as follows:

[Will, please confirm this]

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- 66th – Plus sign
- 67th – Bar below
- 68th – Just the letter
- 506th – Bar above

Other

[This would be the place to add the information on acronyms, medals, and cemeteries/WOM.

Acknowledgments

The basic listing of casualties incurred was obtained from the microfilm records of the 44th Bombardment Group as provided by the Albert F. Simpson Historical Research Center, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

Missing Air Crew Reports (MACR) were loaned to me by Major David Klaus from his extensive files. David also supplied technical assistance with format and suggestions.

“Ploesti” written by Dugan and Stewart, was utilized for the accounts involved with the low-level attack on 1 August 43 rather than to again subject these men to additional writing about their experiences.

Assistance with aircraft names and numbers were supplied by Tom Brittan and Tony North of England, as well as Webb Todd, John R. Beiting and David Klaus.

Webb Todd assisted with many of the Army Serial Numbers (ASNs) of the 68th Squadron men as well as other data.

Malcolm Cullen, south Wales, located considerable information concerning the 3 January 1943 crash-landings in Wales.

My most grateful thanks go to the many combat men who were kind enough to send me their recollections even though so many of those memories were so sad and full of emotions. But, difficult as it was, so many of them cooperated fully in this effort to recall their sacrifices, especially for those men who did not return. To those that did not return, we all owe an obligation to read and remember – and much more.

So many crewmen have contributed to this book that I have chosen to acknowledge them in the text, rather than in this brief summary. I’m positive that there are many others that should be included on this page and I’m sorry for the oversight. I do thank you one and all even though your names do not appear here as they should. Too, middle initials for several men are still in doubt, but are as accurate as my records permit. For the errors still existing, I do apologize. I’d like to also thank the next of kin for their assistance in several instances. Mothers, nieces, brothers, sisters and in-laws have cooperated when all other avenues had failed.

Jan van der Veer, historian and friend from the Netherlands, is to be thanked for his exceptionally complete files on our planes and crews downed in Friesland.

For this new edition, Jim Hamilton has made it all possible. Without his strong encouragement it would not have been completed. In addition he provided the knowledge and skills necessary to format and data entry. He donated his time, his skills to format, and technical assistance, proofing, and materials. There is no doubt, it could not have been accomplished without him!

Of course, this book would not have been possible, either, without the loving support and assistance of my wonderful wife, Irene. For years she did so many of my “chores” around the

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house, and then spent so many evenings alone while I sat in my "War" room working to put this book together.

Will Lundy

How to Use this Book

To locate an individual, refer to the alphabetical index at the back of the book.

The accounts in this book are organized by date, beginning with the first missions in 1942 and continuing through 1945. The page headings allow the reader to flip through the book and find the desired date. In addition:

- The table of contents entries provide a comprehensive listing that includes the following information (where available): squadron number, aircraft number, pilot's name, aircraft name, and MACR number.
- If more than one incident occurred on any single date, the accounts are placed in Squadron order – 66th, 67th, 68th, and 506th. In some cases, descriptions of aircraft that returned with wounded crewmembers are placed after those aircraft that were lost.
- If more than one crew or incident occurred in the same Squadron on that same date, the crews are shown in alphabetical order by pilot's name in that Squadron.
- Data concerning each mission's target is covered only at the beginning of each date, prior to the incidents.
- The crew tables include the crewmembers' names and ranks and where available crew position, home town, and ASN.

The editor's comments are either in notes or in the case of comments within a quote in square brackets. Misspellings have been corrected and usage of common terms (i.e., crash-land, co-pilot, FW 190, etc.) has been standardized in quotes.

The information is believed to be correct, but in any undertaking of this kind, there will certainly be errors. The MACR numbers are an example. These were copied from paper records and there may be some errors. Anyone sending a request to the government for an MACR should specify the pilot's name and the mission date when requesting an MACR, rather than relying on the accuracy of these numbers.

Other References

In addition to the original Roll of Honor (published in 1987) military data from MACRs, there are some other important sources for anyone who is interested in the 44th Bomb Group:

- History of the 67th Bombardment Squadron, 44th Bomb Group, *The Flying Eight-Balls*, by Will Lundy, originally published in 1982, re-written in 1984, re-printed in 1987
- Webb Todd's History of the 68th Squadron
- Norman Kiefer's *The Green-Nosed Flying 8-Balls*
- The 44th Bomb Group in World War II: *The Flying Eight-Balls Over Europe in the B-24*, By Ron Mackay and Steve Adams, Schiffer Books
- 44th Bomb Group: *The Flying Eightballs*, Turner Publishing Company, Paducah Kentucky, 1997
- Mighty Eighth War Diary, by Roger A. Freeman, Janes Publishing, London and New York, 1981
- Ploesti: The Great Ground-Air Battle of 1 August 1943, by James Dugan and Carol Stewart, Random House, New York, 1962
- 8 Ball Tails: Journal of the 44th Bomb Group Veterans Association (Volume 1, Issue 1 published in 1998)
- The Journal: Official Publication of the Second Air Division Association
- 8th AF News: Magazine of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society

There is a web site dedicated to the 44th Bomb Group at www.44thbomgroup.com. This web site contains more details on a database of 44th Bomb Group information that is available on CD and which has been used in this work to confirm information related to individuals crews. Another source for information on this database can be found at www.8thairforce.com.

Some members of the 44th have published their recollections in books. These include:

- Archie Barlow Jr.'s "Pursuit in the Pyrenees"
- Forrest Clark's "Innocence and Death in Enemy Skies"
- Dan Culler's "Black Hole of Wauwilermoos" (Circle of Thorns Press, 1995)
- Joseph E. Milliner's "An Angel and the Eagle"
- Eddie Picardo's "Tales of a Tail Gunner" (Hara Publishing, 1996)
- Keith C. Schuyler's "Elusive Horizons" and "Sweet Eloise"
- Ted L. Weaver's "The Twenty-Third Mission"

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- Hartley A. “Hap” Westbrook’s “An Iowa Pilot Named Hap” (McMillen Publishing, 2001)

And of course there have been many other shorter accounts and diaries. As an example, Capt. Howard F. Adams (KIA, 26 February 1943) kept a diary that survived the war.

Other books with 44th missions as a central them include:

- Jim Hamilton’s “The Writing 69th” (Green Harbor Publications, 1999)
- Ian McLachlan and Russell Zorn’s “Eighth Air Force Bomber Stories” (Patrick Stephens, Ltd., 1991) – This book includes an account of the 506th Squadron’s Bolin crew crash on 2 February 1944.
- Kevin Watson’s “Ruth-Less and Far from Home” (2000)