



Echoes

First Over Germany



2025 Colorado Springs Reunion Declared “One of the Best Ever!”



A gathering of 330 people attended the 2025 Eighth Air Force Historical Society Reunion in Colorado Springs, CO, the primary purpose of which was to continue preserving the legacy of the members by bringing veterans and their families together to honor their service, share stories and memories, and pass on their history to future generations. At this reunion, it was an honor to have two veterans in attendance, both of whom are associated with the 306th Bomb Group.



Mr. James Boring was born in November 1924 in Brickton, KS, a town named after the town’s brick plant. However, when the town’s primary industry closed, so did the town.

Jim’s mother died when he was 12, so he was sent to live with his grandparents. At age 18,

Jim was drafted and trained as a gunner and aerial photographer. On February 16, 1945, Jim arrived in England by ship and reported to the 306th Bomb Group, 368th Bomb Squadron in Thurleigh, England. He was a waist gunner with the Gordon Dobbs crew and flew 12 combat missions.

When the war ended, the 306th Bomb Group, along with the 305th Bomb Group, took part in what became known as the Casey Jones Project. During the war, the available maps were so inaccurate that, after the war, General Eisenhower ordered aerial photomapping of Western Europe and North Africa. Jim’s crew was stationed in Rabat, Morocco, and photographed the coastline from Portugal to Turkey. *(continued on page 17)*

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The 306th Bomb Group Historical Association was determined by the IRS to be a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) as a public charity, effective 24 July 2015.



A Message from President Steve Snyder

Greetings! Once again, our annual reunion has come and gone. It was good

to be back in Colorado Springs (this year in conjunction with the 8th Air Force Historical Society) and visit the U.S. Air Force Academy. The last time the 306th BGHA held an independent reunion here was in 2015, when 97 members attended, including 14 veterans.

This year, we had 37 members attend, including two veterans: 306th BGHA member Jim Boring and SSMA member Vince Stokosa, who were the ONLY World War II veterans in attendance (out of 330 total attendees). This marked the third year that the 306th BGHA had the most members at the 8th AFHS Reunion. When the 8th AFHS first started holding reunions in 1975, the 306th BGHA had the largest contingent at those as well.

The two dinner speakers at the Reunion, Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Chris Miller and Lt. Gen. (Ret.) John E. Shaw, were fantastic. They discussed the current state of our national defense, the state of war, and the future of war in space—a fascinating yet also somewhat scary topic.

Unfortunately, this year we were unable to visit the beautiful Air Force Academy Chapel, which is still undergoing renovations. Because similar work at the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force will not be finished in time for next year's reunion in Savannah, GA, we will instead travel to San Antonio from October 14 to 18, 2026, and plan to visit Savannah in 2027.

The 306th BGHA Board of Directors held two zoom meetings this year, in January and April, and an in-person meeting at the Reunion, along with a General Membership Meeting. Through Secretary Chuck Roskovich's dedicated work, we now have an accurate Honor Roll of the 306th Bomb Group men who died during the war, which will be posted to the website. Chuck has served as Interim Secretary throughout 2025 and will officially assume the Secretary position on

January 1, 2026. Due to work commitments, our current Treasurer, Sally Smith, will be stepping down, and Matt Ferrari will assume the role of Treasurer on January 1. I would like to thank Sally for her dedication and hard work in this demanding board position.

The Board is still determining what changes will be made to redesign the website, aiming to make it more attractive and easier to navigate. We're hopeful the redesign will be completed by next summer.

I continue to send historical updates and thank-you emails to members. Serving on the 8th Air Force Historical Society Board also keeps me busy. Thank you to all who donated in 2025!

The highlight of my year was traveling to Europe in June to attend the dedication ceremonies for the new Eighth Air Force Monument at Normandy. I also visited Belgium to see locations and friends associated with my father's story, as shared in my book *Shot Down*. Two articles in this issue of *Echoes* provide more detailed information.

As we look ahead, thank you for your interest and support of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association. Please keep registering, renewing, and donating to keep the memory alive of our 306th loved ones who served and fought to preserve freedom.

It is our duty to remember.

Steve Snyder, President ■

From the Mighty 8th Museum



"We all die twice. First, when we take our last breath. Second, when our name is spoken for the last time." – Ancient Egyptian Proverb

At a quiet airfield in Thurleigh, England, the men of the 306th Bomb Group took to the skies during World War II with courage that defied the odds. Mission after mission, they climbed into their B-17 Flying Fortresses, knowing that each flight could be their last. By war's end, 483 of those airmen were killed in

action and 305 were missing, young lives given in defense of freedom.

Their stories, like so many others of the Eighth Air Force, are what drive the National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force to preserve, honor, and remember.

A Mission to Remember

Through **Honor & Remember**, the museum invites you to be part of this living legacy. This initiative supports *Service Above Self*, a permanent exhibit honoring the 26,000 Eighth Air Force airmen who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Each of these fallen heroes will be represented by a dog tag displayed within the exhibit—26,000 tokens of courage and devotion to country. Together, they tell a story of sacrifice that should never be forgotten.

How You Can Make a Difference

Whether you have a personal connection to the Eighth Air Force or simply wish to express gratitude for those who gave everything, your support helps ensure that their stories continue to inspire.

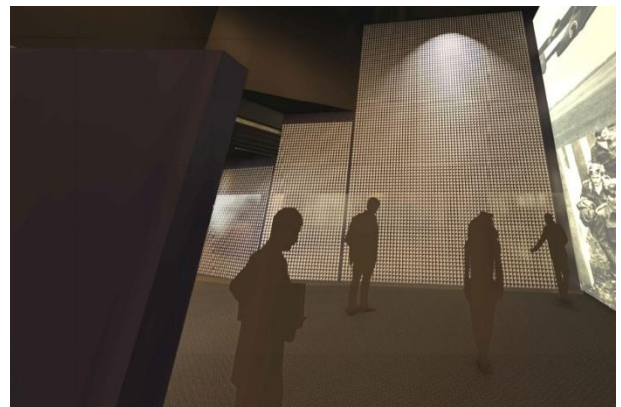
With your **\$100 contribution**, you'll receive:

- A commemorative dog tag inscribed in honor of a fallen Eighth Air Force hero
- A personalized certificate recognizing your contribution
- A heartfelt letter of appreciation from the museum

Every gift helps us preserve the legacy of the men who flew, fought, and fell for freedom—keeping their names spoken and their bravery remembered.

Join Us in Honoring Their Memory

To learn more about **Honor & Remember** and how you can be part of this lasting tribute, visit www.mightyeighth.org. Together, we'll keep their stories alive for generations to come. ■



Matt Ferrari Named Treasurer



Matt Ferrari, newly elected 306th Bomb Group Historical Association Treasurer, was born in 1968 and raised in central Minnesota. After graduating from high school in 1986, he enlisted in the USAF Reserves and

served six years with the 934th Tactical Airlift Group, 27th Mobile Aerial Port Squadron in Minneapolis, MN. At the same time, he began flight training at a local airport and purchased his first airplane at the age of 19. He continued with his flight training, earning his commercial pilot certificate and flight instructor ratings for single-engine and multi-engine airplanes, as well as instrument instructor. He continued to fly and worked as a flight instructor for several years. During that time, he also earned his airframe and powerplant mechanic certificates, supplementing his income with additional work as an aircraft mechanic.

In 1993, he married his high school sweetheart, Ann, and they relocated to northern Minnesota, specifically to the small town of Two Harbors on the north shore of Lake Superior. He continued to fly, and Ann continued her career as an elementary school teacher. In 1994, Ann and Matt started a chapter of the Experimental Aircraft Association, EAA Chapter 1128, in Two Harbors, MN. He was the first chapter president, and Ann served as secretary and treasurer. Together, they built the chapter up to about 30 members and passed the leadership reins on to others after ten years. Both are still members of the chapter as well as Chapter 288 in Daytona, Florida.

In 1996, Matt joined the Minnesota Air National Guard's 148th Fighter Wing in Duluth, MN, where he served for 4 years in the command post. In 1998, he was hired as a Flight Engineer on a Boeing B-727 with

a now-defunct airline called Champion Air. he was upgraded to First Officer in 1999, and then, in 2000, at the age of 30, he was promoted to Captain. He later became an instructor and check airman on the B-727, which remains one of his favorite airplanes.

Their homelife became very busy following the birth of their daughters, Kaitlin in 1997 and Kimberly in 1999. Both daughters are accomplished young women: Kate is an active-duty 2nd Lieutenant in the USAF, currently pursuing her MD and PhD, and Kim is successful in the private sector as a business analyst for a large manufacturing company.

After the demise of Champion Air in 2008, Matt was hired as the director of the Center for Advanced Aviation at Lake Superior College in Duluth, MN, where he oversaw the professional pilot training program. Then, in 2010, he returned to airline flying. Hired by Atlas Air, he was assigned to the Boeing B-747 as a First Officer. He later upgraded to Captain on the Boeing B-767, where he also became an Instructor, Check Airman, and FAA Designated Pilot Examiner, issuing Type Ratings on the B-767. He has since returned to flying the Boeing B-747 as a Captain and Instructor. Atlas is a primarily cargo airline; however, they also operate several passenger planes. The company is a major contractor with the Department of War, transporting both cargo and troops worldwide.

After their daughters were grown and Ann had retired after 32 years of teaching, Matt and Ann decided to sell their Minnesota home and move full-time to what had been their second home in Florida at Spruce Creek Fly-In Community, near Daytona. Here, they have a hangar in the backyard that houses their Acro Sport II experimental biplane and a 1941 Stearman PT-17, which Matt is restoring. The Stearman was used as a primary trainer by the US Army Air Corps during World War II and will be restored to its original Army colors and configuration.

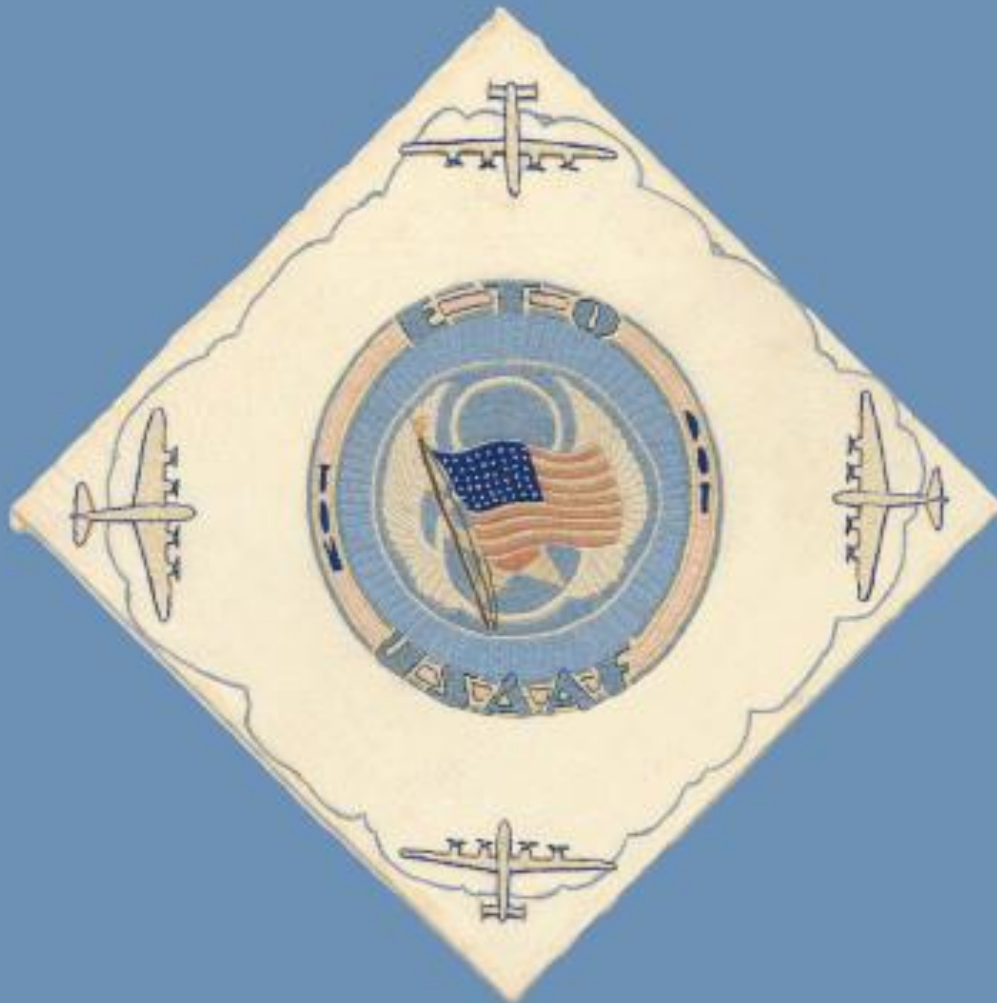
Matt's interest in the 306th Bomb Group comes from his grandfather, Capt. Ronald McCormick, who served in the 306th during World War II as the 367th Bomb Squadron's Adjutant. Capt. McCormick's service has sparked Matt's interest in history, particularly in the 8th Air Force and the 306th Bomb Group during World War II. Matt's willingness to volunteer with the 306th BGHA is a way for him to honor his grandfather and all those who served during World War II and after. ■



THE NORMANDY INSTITUTE

THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE

MONUMENT IN NORMANDY



D-Day 81

306th Bomb Group Historical Association



"The Reich Wreckers"

Maynard "Snuffy" Smith
423rd Bomb Squadron Ball Turret Gunner
Medal of Honor

Bomb Squadrons



367th



368th



369th



423rd

www.306bg.us



81st Anniversary of D-Day Marked with Special Celebration

On June 5, 2025, the 81st anniversary of D-Day, the Normandy Institute, an organization honoring veterans in Normandy, dedicated a monument to the Mighty Eighth Air Force at La Fièvre Bridge in Sainte-Mère-Englis, Normandy, France, the first in the region saluting the valiant men of the Eighth Air Force for their sacrifices that secured the safety of future generations.

Planning for the monument began in 2023 after Don Miller, author of *Masters of the Air*, visited the Normandy Institute and commented that there was no monument to the Eighth Air Force in Normandy. Under the leadership of the Normandy Institute, founded and chaired by Countess Dorothea de La Houssaye, the Institute unanimously determined that this situation should be rectified and undertook the project to ensure that the heroic actions of the Eighth Air Force during World War II would not go unrecognized.

Sculptor Benjamin Victor from Boise, ID, was commissioned to create a memorial to include four men that represent different aspects of the Mighty Eighth: General James Doolittle, Col. Donald Blaksee, Lt. Col. Robert Rosenthal, and SSgt. Maynard Smith. According to Houssaye, the four airmen depicted in the monument sum up the collective courage and fighting spirit of the Eighth Air Force. To that end, the artist Victor immersed himself in learning real-life details about each individual being depicted to ensure the complete accuracy of these life-sized statues.

In recognition of the heroic actions of the Eighth Air Force during World War II, the unveiling ceremony was attended by tens of thousands, including veterans, military personnel, and members of the public. US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth, Commander, Eighth Air Force Major General Jason Armagost, and 306th Bomb Group Historical Association President Steve Snyder, as well as members of the James Doolittle, Donald Blaksee, and Robert Rosenthal families, were in attendance. Of the event, Major General Armagost stated, “I am grateful to the Normandy Institute for ensuring the Eighth Air Force legacy is preserved through the dedication of the monument. Each of these men’s bravery and courage under fire embodies the warfighting mentality that all airmen strive for today. From past to present, the history of the Mighty Eighth is riddled with countless tales of heroism, and today we carry their legacy.” ■



SSGT Maynard “Snuffy” Smith

An Unlikely Hero

B-17 Ball Turret Gunner in the 423rd Bombardment Squadron
Medal of Honor Recipient

The term “Airman Snuffy” has been a part of traditional military jargon used by flight instructors to describe difficult troops on the verge of trouble, but most people do not realize that American Snuffy was a real man and a real hero.



A US Army Air Force Staff Sergeant by the name of Maynard H. “Snuffy” Smith, was one of the most incorrigible personalities of World War II. However, this flawed individual was to become the

first enlisted airman in the European Theater of Operations to earn the Medal of Honor.

Born on May 19, 1911, in Caro, Michigan, he was the son of a school teacher and a successful attorney. Smith’s history gave no hint of his possible heroic actions. When he failed to make child support payments, a judge gave Smith two options: jail or enlist in the military. Smith chose the Army. After basic training, he volunteered for aerial gunnery school, then shipped overseas to Thurleigh, England, and the 306th Bomb Group, where he had trouble fitting in.

At 31, he was older and smaller (5’4”) than nearly all the enlisted men and hated taking orders from those younger than him. Viewed as anything but a team player, he earned the nickname “Snuffy” after the short, shiftless, and obnoxious cartoon character Snuffy Smith in the “Barney Google” comic strip.

On May 1, 1943, six weeks after joining the 423rd Bombardment Squadron, Smith was off on his first combat mission. Because of his small stature, he was given the ball turret position in a cramped, plastic “Perspex” and metal globe that hung beneath the aircraft fuselage. The mission target: the submarine pens at Saint-Nazaire, France, known as “Flak City.”

The B-17 was hit repeatedly by flak and cannon fire from German FW-190s, rupturing a fuel tank and knocking out power. The fighter attacks also knocked out the oxygen system and intercom to the ball turret.

“At this point, I had lost my electrical controls, and I knew something was wrong,” said Smith. “I manually cranked the thing around, opened the armored hatch, and got back in the airplane when I saw it was on fire.”

After Smith escaped the turret, he found a wall of flame by the radio room and in the tail section. The aircraft had suffered severe damage, cutting the wing tank off and causing gasoline to pour inside the plane, catching it ablaze. It was so hot that it began to melt the metal in the fuselage, threatening to break the plane in half.

The situation was so bad that the radio operator and both waist gunners bailed out, never to be heard from again (presumably drowned in the English Channel). Smith recalled later, “The radioman became excited and jumped out of the window without a parachute.”

Smith recounted, “The smoke and gas were really thick. I wrapped a sweater around my face so I could breathe. I grabbed a fire extinguisher and attacked the fire in the radio room. Glancing over my shoulder at the tail fire, I thought I saw something coming, and I ran back. It was the tail gunner, painfully crawling back, wounded. He had blood all over him.”



Smith rescued the tail gunner, who had a pierced lung, and administered a shot of morphine. He also grabbed a fire extinguisher to combat the massive fire. Smith started dumping debris and heavy ammunition cans out while simultaneously manning both waist guns to fight off enemy fighters. Once the fire extinguishers were exhausted, he threw the contents of water bottles at the flames and even urinated on the fire.

Driven by his instinct to survive, he beat the flames with his feet and his gloved hands until his clothing smoldered, and by the time the B-17 neared the English coast, he had extinguished the fires.

Smith's bomber reached England, landing at the first available airfield. "Somehow we got the plane back," Smith recalled. "The plane was riddled with about 3,500 bullet holes; it was all burned out in the center. There was nothing but the four main beams holding it together. Ten minutes after we landed, the plane collapsed."

Journalist Andy Rooney, reporter for *Stars and Stripes*, was at the base where Smith's plane landed and wrote a front-page story about it. On May 17, the *New York Times* reported that Smith would receive the Medal of Honor for his heroic actions.



Through the 90-minute ordeal, Smith had saved the remaining six airmen. However, the B-17, having suffered bullet holes and gaping flak holes, had to be scrapped. Smith and the other crewmen survived, but 75 fellow airmen who had participated in the raid had been killed or were missing.

On July 12, 1943, the day of the award ceremony, Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson flew to Thurleigh to make the presentation. The men of the 306th and a host of dignitaries assembled in front of the control tower; the band was in place; bombers were poised for a flyover; and radio networks were ready to broadcast

the event. But the guest of honor was missing. A search party was released to find the War Hero, who happened to be scraping leftovers from breakfast trays after being placed on KP duty for disciplinary reasons. This scenario, reported in *Stars and Stripes*, was nothing new to the men of the 306th Bomber Group.



Hastily dressing in his uniform, Smith rushed to the ceremony venue where Secretary Stimson placed the medal around Smith's neck. General Ira Eaker, Commanding General of the Eighth Air Force, stated, "Sergeant Smith not only performed his duty, but he also carried on after others – more experienced than he – had given up. Through his presence of mind, determination, and bravery, he saved the lives of six of his crewmates and the fortress in which he flew."

Staff Sergeant Maynard H. Smith may have been an unlikely hero, but he found courage and strength deep within, when it was needed, to do something extraordinary. ■



Shot Down

Captain Howard Snyder, Pilot of the B-17 “Susan Ruth”



On October 21, 1943, pilot Howard Snyder and his crew reported to the 306th Bomb Group at Thurleigh, England, one week after the disastrous Second Schweinfurt mission on October 14 in which the 306th lost ten of the fifteen planes that went on the raid.

The 306th's motto was “First Over Germany” because it was the first bomb group to hit a target in Germany – Wilhelmshaven on January 27, 1943. In addition, the 306th was also the longest continuously serving bomb group in the 8th Air Force. They arrived in England on September 8, 1942, remaining active until December 25, 1946. It participated in the Casey Jones Project after the war, photo-mapping western Europe and northern Africa. The famous 1949 movie *Twelve O'clock High*, starring Gregory Peck, was based on a true story about the 306th Bomb Group. The fictitious 918 Bomb Group portrayed in the movie was derived from multiplying the 306 by 3. Other distinctions of the 306th Bomb Group were Flight Surgeon Thurman Shuller convincing 8th Bomber Command General Ira Eaker to implement a mission tour limit; Michael Roskovich being the first man in the 8th Air Force to complete 25 missions; and Maynard “Snuffy” Smith being the first enlisted man to receive the Medal of Honor.

On a mission to Frankfurt, Germany on February 8, 1944, Howard's B-17, named the “Susan Ruth” after his one-year-old daughter, dropped its bombs successfully, but the bomb bay doors got hit by flak,

and the crew was unable to get them back up. As a result, the plane lost airspeed and fell behind the bomber formation headed back to England. Like wolves, two Focke Wulf 190 fighters swooped in on their prey and shot down the “Susan Ruth.” However, both German fighters were simultaneously shot down. One piloted by Siegfried Marek crashed, and he was killed. The other was piloted by Hans Berger, who was able to bail out and survive the war.

“Susan Ruth” ball turret gunner, Louis Colwart, and radio operator, Ross Kahler, were killed during the attack. With the plane on fire and irreparably damaged, the other eight airmen were able to bail out over the French/Belgian border. All were wounded to some degree, with bombardier Richard Daniels and waist gunner Joe Musial severely injured.

After Howard bailed out, he parachuted into some trees in Macquenoise, Belgium, at the French border. His parachute became entangled in the branches, and he dangled twenty feet from the ground and could not get down. Fortunately for him, two young Belgians, Henry Fraikin and Raymond Durvin, came to his rescue before the Germans arrived.

Howard was taken to the Durvin home nearby, but only stayed one night because the family thought it was too dangerous for him to stay any longer, with German patrols combing the area. The next night, a Belgian customs officer, Paul Tiquin, came on a tandem bicycle to take Howard to a safer location.

Howard was then moved from place to place. How long he stayed at a certain location depended on how brave the Belgian hosts were and how dangerous the Belgian Underground considered it to be for him to remain there. His stays might range from one night to six weeks.

The Belgian Underground looked for escape routes to England, but plans unraveled each time. While in hiding, there were several occasions when he was almost discovered by the Germans, so it was very stressful and frustrating. One day, word came that the Allies had landed in Normandy on June 6, so he decided to get back in the fight and join the French Resistance. Unlike most airmen, Howard was in the Army for a year before joining the Air Force, so he had ground-fighting experience.

Howard was incorporated into Commandant Marais' resistance unit of the Maquis, which stayed at the Hermitage Farm in Wallers-Trelon, France. During the next few months, the group had numerous encounters with the Germans attacking their convoys.

Finally, on September 2, seven long months after being shot down, word came that there were U.S. troops in the village of Trelon. So Howard walked into the town square, went up to an Army major, and identified himself. After being interrogated, he got a ride on a convoy taking German prisoners to Paris, and then he flew on a transport back to England.

"My dad was a wonderful father, and we were very close. Two of my fondest memories relating to his World War II experiences were in 1994 when I made my first of many trips to Belgium to attend the 50th

anniversary celebrations of the liberation of Belgium and my father's plane being shot down. He took me around to show me places where he was hidden, the farmhouse where the Maquis stayed, and the B-17 "Susan Ruth" Crew Memorial near where his plane came down. The other was in 2004 when I accompanied my dad to a reunion of the Air Forces Escape & Evasion Society (AFEES) to visit the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC. He wanted to see it before he died, and it was the last trip he ever took, dying in 2007 at age 91," Steve recalled.

Howard's son, Steve, has written a book, *Shot Down*, that relates the experience of not only his father, but also details what happened to each member of the crew, and about the courageous Belgian patriots who risked their lives to help them. Steve also found and became friends with Luftwaffe pilot, Hans Berger, who told him that the gunners on the "Susan Ruth" shot him down at the very same time he shot them down. ■



The Cover Story

Tom McGory's Handkerchief

By Tiffany Bueno (as published in *The Normandy Institute, Eighth Air Force, Monument in Normandy Program*)

T/Sgt/ Thomas J. McGory, an engineer/top turret gunner with the 489th GB/846th BS, was shot down on 6 August 1944. To combat the daily monotony of Stalag Luft IV, McGory sewed the design of the American flag imposed over the 8th Air Force insignia with alternating B-17s and B-24s in the corners. McGory received a sewing kit and handkerchief as a gift from the Red Cross. For additional materials, McGory traded cigarettes to fellow POWs for cloth scraps, used thread from his shoe lace, and a piece of his blue RAF shirt.

One day while McGory worked on the handkerchief, one of the generals noticed the American flag and snatched the handkerchief from his hands. The guard shouted at McGory that the American flag was "Verboten" and dropped the handkerchief on the ground. McGory nodded in agreement, aware that he could be killed for breaking the rule that banned all patriotic symbols in the camp. The guard stepped on the image of the flag as he left, and McGory proceeded to pick up the handkerchief, wiped away the dirt, and continued his work. In January 1945, the prisoners of Stalag Luft IV began a forced winter march to avoid the encroaching Soviet forces on their march to Berlin. McGory traded for a piece of rolled plastic to protect the handkerchief during the march. He wore it around his waist as he and his fellow prisoners endured harsh temperature, severe malnutrition, disease, fatigue, and anguish during this 565-mile trek through the winter elements. ■

President Snyder Travels to France and Belgium

On June 3, I flew from Los Angeles to Paris, rented a car, and drove 3 ½ hours to Normandy, where I met up with two Belgian friends of mine. The purpose of my visit was to attend the dedication ceremonies of an Eighth Air Force Monument. The Normandy Institute, founded by Chairman Dorothea de la Houssaye, is a non-profit organization that oversaw the project.



It was about time the Eighth Air Force's part in Operation Overlord was recognized because without the Mighty Eighth destroying the Luftwaffe, there would have been no Allied Invasion.

On the morning of June 5, the three of us first attended an Allied Ceremony held at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Statue in Bayeux, France, to honor General Dwight D. Eisenhower and Allied partners on the 81st anniversary of D-Day.



The next event was a luncheon hosted by the Normandy Institute at their headquarters, the Chateau Bernaville in Picauville. The chateau was a hunting lodge in the Middle Ages. When World War II began, a Cherbourg industrialist owned the castle. In May 1944, Germany requisitioned it for the 91st Infantry Division under General Wilhelm Falley and as headquarters for General Erwin Rommel. Rommel was preparing to defend the French coast against the anticipated Allied invasion.

The lunch was quite an affair, a sit-down plated meal with wine for nearly 200 people. Attendees included large corporate donors, generals, admirals (I've never seen so much brass), and representatives from organizations associated with the 8th Air Force,



including Major General Jason R. Armagost, Commander of the Eighth Air Force. As a Board Member, I represented the 8th Air Force Historical Society. As President of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association, I also represented the 306th Bomb Group, and Maynard "Snuff" Smith.

After lunch, everyone drove to the site of the monument, located nearby at La Fièvre Bridge near Sainte-Mère-Église. It's a good thing we had VIP parking, because it was already packed with the public. After several generals spoke, the Monument sculpted by Benjamin Victor was unveiled. The four life-sized figures are spectacular!



They represent an enlisted man, the 306th's Maynard "Snuffy" Smith, a commander, James "Jimmy" Doolittle, a bomber pilot, Robert Rosenthal, and a fighter pilot, Donald Blakeslee.

That evening, a reception and another amazing dinner were held at the Normandy Institute, attended by

approximately 100 people.

The next two days, my friends and I visited numerous locations. On D-Day, June 6, we went to Omaha Beach, the Normandy American Cemetery at Coleville, and the Overlord Museum also at Coleville.

On June 7, we visited the D-Day Experience Museum at Dead Man's Corner, Utah Beach, the Normandy Victory Museum, and memorials associated with "Band of Brothers."

On Sunday, June 8, I left Normandy and drove 5 ½ hours to Southern Belgium. I went specifically to Momignies and Chimay. There, I met my dear friend Jacques Lalot. He has conducted extensive research over many years into events that occurred in the area during World War II, particularly regarding my father and his crew. In fact, without Jacques and Paul Delahaye's help—who were young boys during the war—I could not have written my book *Shot Down*.

This was my eighth visit to Belgium. Each time I come, I learn something new about the story. This time, Jacques had discovered another farmhouse where my father stayed before crossing the border from Belgium into France to join the French Resistance (Maquis). The farmhouse belonged to Elois Patat.

That night, I stayed at the Castle Farm in Macon, where my friend Christel Delahaye is the manager. She is also President of the Duty to Remember Association. Her father, Paul, founded it in 1984 to honor American and Allied soldiers who liberated their country from Nazi occupation. Over the years, the Association has erected many memorials. Several are related to the *Shot Down* story, with ceremonies held each year.

The following day, I visited two places that I had not been to in 20 years, and both had undergone significant changes: the Bastogne War Museum and Brûly-de-Pesche.

The Bastogne War Museum is immersive and interactive. It is especially great for younger generations.



Bois Jacques (Jack's Woods) is located nearby and is also amazing. It's famous for its role in the Battle of the Bulge, where the 101st Airborne Division (Easy Company in Band of Brothers) fought in the winter of 1944-1945. You can still see foxholes dug by the

soldiers. You can also explore the area with a reality app.

On June 6, 1940, Hitler and his High Command arrived in Brûly-de-Pesche. "Wolf's Ravine" became his temporary headquarters for three weeks to oversee the Battle of France. The site also commemorates Resistance efforts of Hotton Service Group D. Many members lost their lives fighting the Germans.



On June 10, I visited the USAF 424th Air Base Squadron (nicknamed the Red Devils) at U.S. Army Garrison-Benelux, Chièvres, Belgium. The commanding officer of the 424th and a color guard always participate in the annual ceremonies at the Susan Ruth Crew Memorial at Macquenoise.

Their squadron's mission is to operate a NATO airfield. They support Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE) and visiting aircraft from NATO nations. After making a presentation to the cadre, I toured the air base. During World War II, the Luftwaffe took it over. Their runways, hardstands, and some buildings remain.



I then drove to meet Erik Mombeek for a couple of beers. Erick is a noted Luftwaffe historian and author. Twelve years ago, he introduced me to Luftwaffe pilot Hans Berger, who shot down my father's B-17. Hans and I became friends. I visited him at his home in

Munich a couple of times. He died in January 2024 at age 100.

Finally, that night, I had dinner with more dear friends, the Gaudrys. Their grandmother and great-grandmother Eva Martin was one of many Belgian patriots who hid my father from the Germans after he was shot down.

On June 11, my last day in Europe, I visited the Netherlands American Cemetery in the morning and the Ardennes American Cemetery in the afternoon.

At Margraten, I reunited with friends who are grave adopters: Danique Bröcheler (303rd BG Vincent Reese), Egid Schoonbrood (306th BG John Gembosrski), and Mariëlle Maas and her mother Leny (369th BG John Pindroch). I also saw World War II historian and guide Arie-Jan van Hees again. It was great to meet Facebook friend Piet van Grinsven for the first time.



Unfortunately, grave adopters (Ivo and Corinna Heijman) of 91st BG Billy Huish could not get off work to join us. After visiting the graves, we all had a very delightful lunch together.



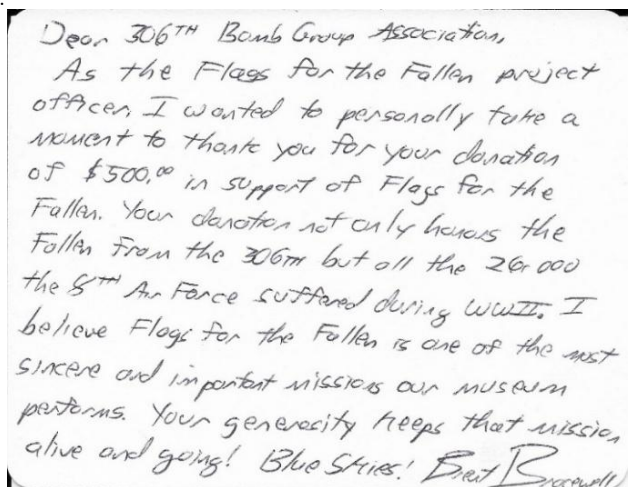
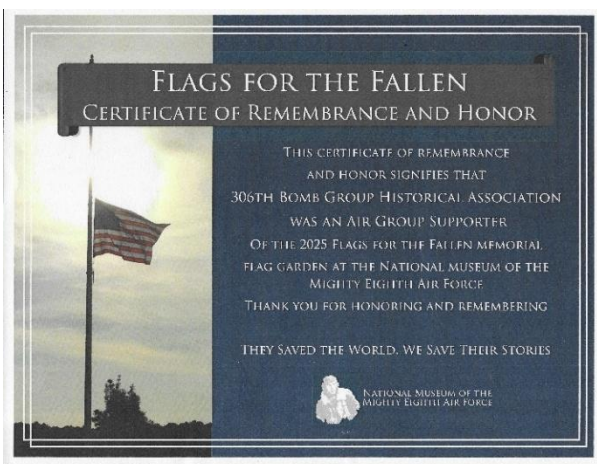
That afternoon at the Ardennes Cemetery, I met my good friend Henri Hannon, who is the adopter of 306th Louis Colwart's grave. Also joining us was Facebook friend Olivier Gonne. Like John Pindroch, Louis was a member of my dad's B-17 "Susan Ruth" crew.

The five U.S. airmen buried at these two American Cemeteries are

a very tragic part of the **Shot Down** story.

Afterwards, I went to Henri's home in Liege to enjoy some charcuterie and Chimay beers with him and his wife, Anne.

I am so blessed to visit so many locations where the **Shot Down** story took place and become friends with so many wonderful Belgian and Dutch people. I'm looking forward to my next visit. ■



Each Memorial Day, at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in Pooler, GA, the 26,000 airmen of the Eighth Air Force, who in World War II, never returned home, are honored in the museum's memorial garden. On display are 26,000 individual 48-star American flags, each posted as a testament to every Eighth Air Force airman lost in aerial combat in the European theater of war. The 306th Bomb Group makes a monetary contribution to this event. Brent Bracewell, incoming Chairman for the Museum's Board of Directors and newly elected Board Member of the 8th Air Force Historical Society, presented the items pictured above to the 306th BGHA in recognition of the Association's donation. ■

Donation Update:

Your Dollars Sustain the 306th BGHA Mission

Because the 306th BGHA does not charge membership dues, we depend on your tax-deductible donations to support the continuing education mission of our organization. Donations may be made online at www.306bg.us or mailed to the Treasurer at the address below. Many thanks to those of you who have donated to date in 2025. As of 27 October 2025, the association has received a total of \$.8,752.39.

The 306th BGHA can also now receive donations through Zeffy (<https://www.zeffy.com>), a zero-fee fundraising software platform for nonprofits. You can donate to the 306th BGHA via Zeffy by visiting our website (<https://www.306bg.us/>) and clicking on the "Donate" button.

Zeffy is a fundraising platform exclusively for nonprofit organizations that allows donors to share one-time and recurring donations with zero fees. Zeffy is solely supported by any additional amount donors are willing to contribute on top of their donation to the specified organization.

We also still welcome donations through PayPal or check!

Memorial Donations

Please consider this significant way of honoring the memory of a veteran or other person who has been part of the 306th family by noting "306th Memorial Fund" along with the veterans name you are honoring on the memo line of your check or as a notation when using PayPal. For additional information regarding memorial donations, see page 22 of this issue of *Echoes*.

All donations are extremely important to the continuing education mission of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association. Although donations are optional, they are greatly appreciated!

**DONATION FOR THE
306TH BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

Make checks payable to:

306th Bomb Group Historical Association

Send to:

Matt Ferrari, 306th BGHA Treasurer

PO Box 290643

Port Orange, FL 32129

Name

By initialing here (_____), I hereby confirm this current contact information should be used for my FREE membership registration/renewal for 2026, indicating my continuing interest in the 306th BGHA.

Address:

eMail:

Telephone Number(s): _____

This donation is being made in memory of:

Name: _____ **Relationship to 306th:** _____

Date: _____



Notes From the Secretary

As I reflect on our recent reunion in Colorado Springs, Colorado, I am moved by how special it is to attend in person. It is not about the excellent venue, the exciting daily excursions, the informative speakers, or even the mile-high weather of Colorado Springs. What I found so special was the people from across the country (and other countries) who came together for this annual pilgrimage. Although this may be the very first-time meeting someone, it is easy to sense the camaraderie and instant connection; common bonds are recognized, and a family-like relationship exists. Stories are shared, contact information exchanged, and handshakes and hugs are constant. Even though we attended and identified through “our” veteran bombardment group and squadron, these “lines” were not boundaries. It was a perfect venue to get to know everyone in attendance, no matter which group they represented. Listening to their stories, you can immediately sense their pride and love as they speak about their father, grandfather, or uncle, and even in one case, their husband. Again, it is the common thread we all share. The next reunion (October 14th – 18th, 2026) will be in San Antonio, Texas.

During the reunion, the Board of Directors met to discuss association business, which was also shared with everyone who attended the 306th BGHA Rendezvous Dinner on Friday evening. The association is financially stable at this time; however, we appreciate all donations, which allow the association to maintain our website, print and mail our bi-annual newsmagazine *Echoes*, and help other Eighth Air Force initiatives such as Flags for the Fallen, the Eighth Air Force Memorial Dedication in Normandy, France, and wreath laying in Cambridge and other national cemeteries. In addition, we contribute to the 306th BG Museum in Thurleigh, UK. Donations are critical to our mission; any amount helps—it all adds up. During our Friday evening group dinner, we recognized Sally Smith, our Treasurer, who will be stepping down after her current term expires, but will stay involved with the association as time allows.

Nancy Huebotter, *Echoes* Editor, provided subscription status, reminding board members that veterans, along with widows, receive a complimentary subscription. Currently, the subscription price is \$20 annually, which funds the printing and mailing of the newsletter. The increases in printing and postage costs and their potential impact on future issues of *Echoes* are being assessed. Association members were encouraged to subscribe to the

newsmagazine.

Membership Coordinator, Bruce Chase, updated the Board on current membership, noting that to date, 26 new members have been added to the membership listing. He encouraged all to renew their membership; for those who attend the reunion or donate to the association, their membership is automatically renewed. There are no fees to register as a member; however, to ensure an accurate mailing list is maintained, members are reminded to update their membership for 2026 by either filling out and submitting the membership form included in each issue of *Echoes* or by logging in to our website (<https://www.306bg.us>). In the search column on the left, click on membership. This will take you to another page; click the blue link “Register or renew” to open a few informational fields that need to be completed. It’s a straightforward process, so please do so today.

The Folded Wings Honor Roll list has been reviewed and reconciled, and, with the information we have today, it is accurate. We will continue identifying names and revise the listing as needed. The Honor Roll can be located on the website under Education and Research, Archives, and in the link “men who died while in military service during the WWII era.”

Steve Snyder, Association President, shared information regarding his visit to Normandy for the dedication of the Eighth Air Force memorial, which includes 306th Medal of Honor recipient, Maynard “Snuffy” Smith. Refer to the story in this issue of *Echoes*.

President Steve and members of the Board of Directors have been researching website improvements. We are very close to deciding on how those changes will be implemented. More information will be publicized when it is available.

Clayton Snyder presented the 2026 Nominations for election and re-election; all were approved by the membership in attendance. Steve Snyder and Sue Sharkey were re-elected as President and Vice-President, respectively, for a two-year term. Membership Coordinator Bruce Chase and PX Coordinator Mike Prentice were re-elected as directors for 3-year terms. Matt Ferrari, incoming Treasurer, and I, as Secretary, were elected to a two-year term. We are grateful to all those who have volunteered their time to serve on the Board to support our association.

In closing, I want to express my appreciation to Cliff Deets, 306th BGHA Historian. As I am transitioning onto the Board, there is so much to learn. Cliff has invested countless hours familiarizing me with the website and the history of the 306th Bomb Group. He is an excellent resource and a great asset to the association. ■

2025 Reunion Continued

(continued from page 1)

When Jim returned to the States, he attended electrician school on the GI Bill, then settled in Wichita, KS, where he worked for several electrical companies. Now, at 100 years old, Jim maintains a very active life, bowling in a league once a week, and is an avid card player.



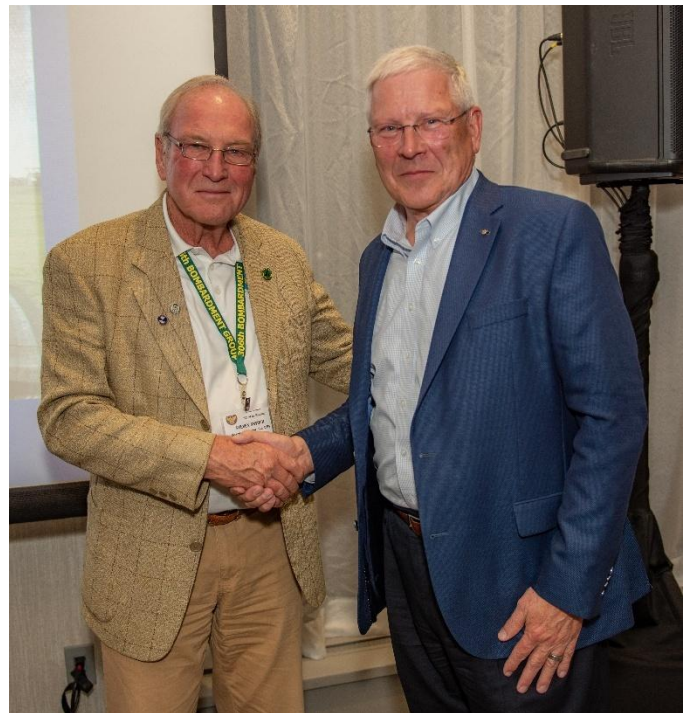
Mr. Vince Stokosa was born in 1927 in Fond du Lac, WI. While in high school, he took an Army Air Corps test and passed. He was sworn in on October 4, 1944, and entered active duty in the summer of 1945. He was 18 years of age.

In December 1945, Vince went to Germany on a troop ship with the 86th Fighter Squadron, 9th Air Force, as part of the US occupation forces, serving as an MP stationed at Schweinfurt. He returned home in December 1946 and went to work for the County Highway Department as a heavy equipment operator. He joined the Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association and began attending their reunions; when the SSMA and the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association began hosting joint reunions, he continued his participation. Vince is 98 years old and continues to lead an active life. Several years ago, Vince decided to learn how to play his father's Pearl Queen concertina, an instrument that had sat idle for more than 50 years.

Those who chose to join the sightseeing tour of the Garden of the Gods on Thursday were treated to a spectacular scenery tour, with tour guides who shared memorable stories, anecdotes, and historical context of the region.

Despite issues brought on by the government shut-down, which compelled scheduled guest speakers to decline the invitation, both the Thursday evening dinner and the Saturday night Gala dinner featured speakers who, although retired from their respective military assignments, were able to share present-day information relative to today's Air Force and most particularly to the role of the recently established US Space Force, whose role it is to protect US and allied interests in space, and is responsible for military space operations.

Lt. Gen. (Ret.) Christopher D. Miller, the keynote speaker for the Thursday evening dinner, was Deputy Chief of Staff for Strategic Plans and Programs, where he led the development and integration of the Air Force's long-range plans and future years defense programs, including methodologies to build, sustain, and employ effective air, space, and cyber forces to achieve national defense objectives. He also led planning, policy, and strategy for US Northern Command and North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD), where he was responsible for homeland defense, civil support, and security cooperation with Mexico and Canada.



In his presentation, Lt. Gen. Miller focused on "Warrior Ethos," which he defined as a characteristic that today's warfighter must have and must understand. Simply stated, ethos is the rhetorical appeal that comprises logic and emotion, establishes corporateness, responsibility, and expertise. It is the guiding principle of a group, informing their actions and beliefs. According to a quote from Samuel P. Huntington, a Harvard University Professor, political scientist, and director of Harvard's Center for International Affairs, and cited by Lt. Gen. Miller, the function of a military force is successful armed combat. . . or "the management of violence."

Lt. Gen. Miller reminded us that the national security mindset shaped by World War II is now radically different, and our national perspective must

change accordingly. The way we used to win a war or conflict is no longer the way we will win today or in the future. War is no longer about lines on a map. . . except when it is. It is about controlling territories, regardless of their location.

According to Lt. Gen. Miller, private industry needs to think more broadly about national defense. Our cutting-edge equipment and tactical excellence, applied in coordination across all conflict domains, remain vital to victory. Continuous, rapid evolution and risk-taking are essential for success. Working across organizational boundaries to ensure that military organizations receive the necessary equipment and training will ultimately lead to holistic planning, preparation, and execution across the national security spectrum.

To fight the right wars effectively, the military's core values, valor, and warrior ethos still matter.

Friday's all-day excursion to the United States Air Force Academy was an unsurpassed opportunity. Being guided around the campus by a cadet who excels in leadership, academics, military training, and character was an experience that reinforces hope, confidence, and optimism for our nation's future. The cadet's dedication to the Academy's core values was evident throughout the visit.

The iconic chapel was unavailable due to reconstruction. However, the tour included views of the Honor Court, stationary aircraft, cadet facilities, and a chance to learn about daily life from a cadet escort. Witnessing the noon meal formation, when cadets march to lunch, was an unmissable experience.



Lunch in the Falcon Club offered another opportunity to interact with the cadets. Afterward, the group attended the wreath laying at the Air Force Academy Cemetery, providing a reflective conclusion to the day's activities.

Friday night's Rendezvous Dinner brought together 37 individuals associated with the 306th Bomb Group.



The event opened with a short business meeting, after which Col. Nancy Taylor, Commander of the 306th Flying Training Wing at the United States Air Force Academy, spoke briefly. She began by noting the group's long

history, which dates back to the 306th Bombardment Group in World War II—a tradition with which cadets are familiar. To highlight this connection, she explained that the film "Twelve O'Clock High," a 1949 portrayal of the 306th Bomb Group's real-life World War II experiences, is sometimes shown to cadets. As a valuable teaching aid, the film helps instill leadership, authority, respect for command, and adaptability to adjust in high-pressure military settings. Col. Taylor then outlined the 306th Flying Training Group's mission: developing leadership and character in cadets through powered flight, soaring, and parachuting programs at the Academy. Remarkably, the 306th Flying Training Group remains the only place where a student's first free-fall parachute jump is solo.

The evening's events were concluded with the traditional Folded Wings tribute, at which time the names of those 306th Bombardment deceased veterans for whom obituaries have been received during the past year were read.

Saturday's tour of the 21-acre campus of the National Museum of World War II Aviation provided visitors with the opportunity to view a remarkable collection of fully restored World War II-era aircraft, as well as additional aircraft in various stages of restoration. In addition to the aircraft, the museum's galleries feature numerous artifacts and historical documents that explore the history and technology of World War II aviation.

The Gala Dinner, a culmination of the week's activities, was held on Saturday evening with guest speaker Lt. Gen. (Ret.) John E. Shaw, who shared with his audience some of the roles assigned to the recently

empowered US Space Force, a crucial branch of the US Military responsible for modern military operations and global communication, including protecting satellites, providing GPS and satellite communication for military operations, and defending against threats in space.



Lt. Gen. Shaw was the Deputy Commander of US Space Command, an organization responsible for conducting operations in,

from, and to space to deter conflict and, if necessary, defeat aggression, and deliver space combat power for the Joint/Combined Force. The Deputy Commander also defended US vital interests with allies and partners.

The Joint Force is composed of elements from two or more military services (i.e., Army, Navy, Air Force) that operate under a single commander. This team warfare approach integrates their capabilities to maximize effectiveness, as opposed to each service acting independently.

According to Lt. Gen. Shaw, “Our way of life and war is reliant on space. Joint Forces have access to space. Therefore, space capabilities have changed the way we fight.”

In his presentation, Lt. Gen. Shaw emphasized that space is gaining power daily, resulting in an increased national emphasis on the role space plays in the security of the US. It is now our moral responsibility to provide space capabilities to the Joint Force and to protect the Joint Force from space-enabled attack. It is well-known that the enemy is developing space capabilities, and those combatants want to deprive the US of our security. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the US military to create a system that will protect the American people from modern threats. As a result, a proposed multi-layer missile defense system for the US is currently under development, with the purpose of detecting and destroying threats from various domains. The defense system includes terrestrial space management, which eliminates ballistic, hypersonic, and cruise missiles before they launch or during their flight. Known as the Golden Dome, the system would employ a constellation of satellites equipped with sensors and space-based interceptors.

Recognizing there is a congested domain above the earth replete with active spacecraft capable of commercial exploitation, executing military advantages, jamming, and initiating cyber activities, Lt. Gen. Shaw concluded the US Space Force is an evolving entity that is crucial to all military operations, including planning, executing, and integrating military space power into global operations to deter aggression and defend national interest. The US Space Force is working to strengthen its position and to ensure the US can continue to operate effectively in this increasingly vital domain.

As a final event of the evening, a special presentation was made to Debra Kawaja.

For thirteen years, Debra Kawaja served as Managing Director of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. Her abilities as a writer, researcher, and organizer are unparalleled. Recognized for her commitment to the organization, compassion, positive attitude, patience, reliability, and diverse skill set, Debra will be a challenge to replace. Sadly, the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the 8th AFHS marked her retirement. In poignant remarks, President Paul Tibbets, as he presented Debra with a plaque noting her dedication to the Eighth Air Force Historical Society, reflected on the support Debra had shown him and the contributions she had made to the organization. Debra expressed her gratitude for all the experiences working for the society had provided, highlighting the special bond that had been created with the Board of Directors, and especially Eighth Air Force veterans and their families. ■



Tibbets and Snyder Lay Wreath at USAF Academy Memorial Wall

As Eighth Air Force Historical Society President Paul W. Tibbets IV and Communications Director and Reunion Chairman Steve Snyder laid a wreath at the Memorial Wall in the U. S. Air Force Academy Cemetery, they read a poem entitled “The Sky Was Never Still,” which was also read by an 8th Air Force Historical Society Board Member on each of the tour buses stopped at the site, paying respects to those deceased members of the 8th Air Force.

The poem was written by Roger A. Freeman, a well-known aero-historian specializing in 8th Air Force operations during World War II. His book, *Mighty Eighth*, written in 1970, is considered the definitive history of the Army Air Corps’ largest air armada aimed at destroying the Luftwaffe and crippling Nazi Germany.

The poem, which is reprinted below, is told from the point of view of someone who remembers when the English countryside was filled with air bases and planes roaring off on bombing raids. It speaks to how those memories can never truly be understood by those who were not there. ■



The Sky Was Never Still

The old man sat in the English pub,
As he had for many a year,
And listened to the stranger's talk,
As he sipped a temperate beer.

A stranger asked how long he'd lived
In the village here about?
“Why all my days,” the old man said,
“An age, without a doubt.”

“I envy you” the stranger sighed
“Your tranquil village life.
The gentle fields, the muted sky,
Devoid of urban strife.”

The old man smiled a wistful smile,
“That's just a townie's dream.
For I have seen the sky aflame
And heard the meadows scream.”

“I've known a thunder at each dawn
That shook the very ground,
As warplanes sought to gain the clouds
From airfields all around.”

“They called some 'Forts' and others 'Libs,'
And there were fighters too.
I've counted hundreds at a time,
Yes, what I tell is true.”

“They'd climb and soar like flocks of rooks,
And round and round they'd mill.
From north and south, from east and west,
The sky was never still.”

“Sometimes there'd be a wondrous sight,
A sight beyond compare.
The bombers going out to war,
Forging the frigid air.”

“Four miles above, just silver specks,
Like sunshine on the dew.
And trailing lines of cloud-like white,
Across the cosmic blue.”

“They set the heavens all a-throb,
That did not fade away.
For others rose to meet the night,
Invisible to stay.”

“And when was this?” the stranger asked.
“And who were those you saw?”
The old man drank and then replied,
“It happened in the war.”

“They were but boys and many died.
Some lost without a trace.
For them the sky in foreign parts,
Could be a violent place.”

“Yes, they were boys and me a child,
but I remember well.
And if you have the time to spare,
There's more that I can tell.”

The stranger said that: “he must go,
Perhaps, another day?”
Indifferent to the old man's tale,
He quickly slipped away.

The old man turned to inward thought,
His memories to tend.
He knew that those who were not there,
Could never comprehend.

Those who'd not known the crowded sky,
The sounds that drenched the land.
Or stood in awe and wonderment,
Would never understand.

The old man left the English pub,
And stood awhile outside.
The evening vault was milky blue,
Cloud-free and stretching wide.

He raised his head and scanned the sky,
That held so still and clear.
And in his mind, a memory,
And in his eye a tear.

Reunion Photo Album







The Gala Dinner



Reunion photos courtesy of Wm. Craig Dubishar, 8th AFHS Photographer.



306th Bomb Group Historical Association



U.S. Military Veterans



8th Air Force Historical Society Board of Directors

Thurleigh Notes

Now that summer has turned into autumn, we come to the end of another successful season here at the 306th Bomb Group Museum. It is now time to reflect on the passing year.

The Memorial Wall was a display added this year. I want to thank all those who donated and sponsored a Memorial Plaque. This has been an excellent addition, and many visitors have commented and asked questions about the individuals honoured on the Wall.



Let's not forget the memorial plaques located in the 306th BG garden. We have rearranged these plaques many times (which is one benefit of them), but we ended up displaying them this season in front of the Memorial.

We have had many visitors this season, not only from the UK, but also families of veterans from the 306th BG who have made time to visit the Museum. We have enjoyed these visits; knowledge and mirth have been exchanged, making each encounter memorable and occasionally overwhelming.

The primary reason for establishing the 306th BG Museum in the UK is to preserve the memories/stories, and achievements of the 306th BG, ensuring they are not forgotten, and to connect with the families

of the 306th BG and the 306th BG Historical Association.

It was a great honour to lay the 306th BG Wreath at Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial at Maddingly for the Memorial Day Ceremony. This year was my first opportunity to participate in the event.

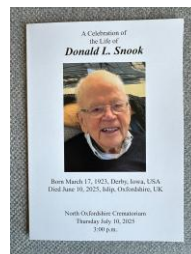
It is still very sobering to walk around the War Graves and the Wall of the Missing, looking at the names of all those who served their country and the 306th BG during World War II.



Pictured (left to right): Lisa Worby, Peter Worby, Mark Fussell, Lynda Clugston, Phil Darrington

This year, for the first time, we represented the 306th BG at the Imperial War Museum's Duxford flying days, which allowed us to showcase the Museum and the history of the 306th BG. It is still surprising that neither the 306th BG nor the location of the Museum is widely recognized. We look forward to participating again next year.

In July, we attended the Funeral of 102-year-old Donald L. Snook, a pilot from the 369th BS. He had a full honour guard and a fly-past. Shortly after relocating to England from the United States to live with his daughter, at the grand age of 100, he visited us at the 306th BG Museum.





This leaves me to thank all those who have donated to the Museum. All funds received will be used to finance the upkeep and new special projects planned for 2026.

A special thank you goes to all the volunteers, including Peter Worby, Lisa Worby, Lynda Clugston, Phil Darrington, Liam Armstrong, Susan Fussell, Roberta Corsini-Fussell, Sam Stants, and Garth Trustram, who make this happen, supporting me every Sunday we are open and keeping the Garden well-maintained and the Museum in good condition.

Please continue to follow the Museum Facebook Page for updates and progress.

We are still accepting donations to display in the Museum, and any photos you have in your collection can be sent digitally to be added to the Museum's digital wall display.

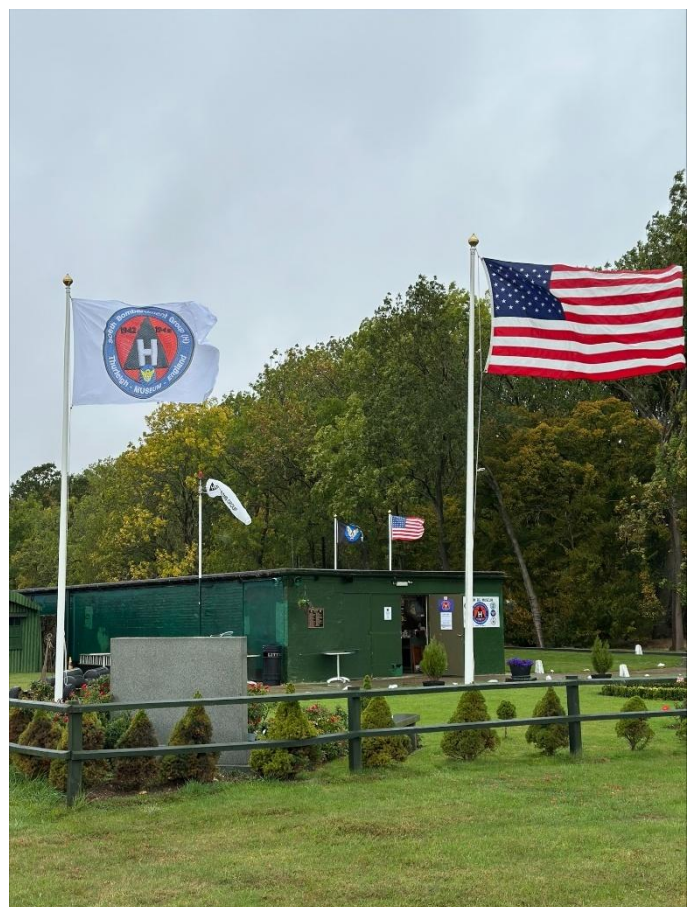
Please get in touch with us via our Facebook page or email us at 306thbgmuseumuk@gmail.com.

All the best,
 Mark Fussell
 306th Bomb Group Museum – Chairman ■



Duxford Air Show display participants (left to right) Liam Armstrong, Garth Trustram, Peter Worby, Lisa Worby, Susan Fussell, Lynda Clugston, Phil Darrington, Sam Stants. Not pictured: Mark Fussell (photographer).

In the garden area of the 306th Bombardment Group Museum, volunteers recently posted 788 flags bearing the names of those KIA or MIA during World War II. These names are also on a permanent wall of remembrance in the museum's Chapel Room.



From the Editor



Thinking About Subscribing to *Echoes*?

by Nancy M. Huebotter
(*Editor's contact information on
page 2*)

It has been a long-standing policy of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association that it would not collect membership dues. Instead, the organization existed on donations from our generous benefactors. Today, those philanthropists are the organization's main source of income. The only additional source of income for the 306th comes from PX sales and *Echoes* subscriptions, the organization's newsmagazine.

Historically, the cost of printing and mailing copies of *Echoes* to every registered member was absorbed by the funds on hand. However, over time, as membership grew and the cost of printing and postage increased, covering those costs strained the organization's budget. To alleviate some of that demand, a modest subscription cost was introduced, with the anticipation that *Echoes* would be self-sustaining. Printing and mailing *Echoes* have never been considered a "break-even" endeavor, but providing readers with print copies has had its benefits. The primary caveat to the subscription process is that no veteran or veteran's spouse pays for a subscription.

When *Echoes* issues were made available on the website, subscriptions decreased. However, the readership has also declined. Members of the Board of Directors frequently receive questions about subjects that have been addressed in *Echoes* or in the frequent blogs posted by 306th President Steve Snyder.

To stay informed about happenings within the 306th BGHA organization and read about the rich history our veterans bestowed upon us, consider a subscription to *Echoes*. Your subscription helps support our primary source of communication. Also, consider submitting an article to me. Don't want to write an article, but have an idea or subject matter you believe bears investigation? I invite you to send that information to me, and I will be happy to pursue it.

For those interested in how to submit an article, the information is included in each issue of

Echoes. Should you have any questions or concerns, please contact me. I am always delighted to be of assistance.

Membership renewal time for 2026 is here. Please complete the simple form provided with each *Echoes* copy or access it on the website (www.306bg.us). Now would be a great opportunity to subscribe to *Echoes*.

When I was named Editor prior to the publication of the Summer/Fall 2014 issue (24 issues ago!), I wrote in my first but very short editorial, that as Editor, my primary responsibility is to YOU, the reader, and that I was sincerely interested in YOU. That statement remains true today. ■



306th Bomb Group Historical Association Mission and Vision Statement

Mission Statement:

The 306th Bomb Group Historical Association is committed to honoring 306th Bomb Group veterans and preserving the 306th Bomb Group historical records.

Vision Statement:

To ensure the intent of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association continues, this organization shall pursue the following core values:

1. Encourage the involvement from descendants of our veterans and from anyone interested in the 306th Bomb Group, the support of which is crucial to our mission.
2. Promote military historical research, provide continued education for current and future generations, and support outreach activities, including reunions and other events, via the organization's social media, periodic emails to membership, presence at annual reunions, and the 306th BGHA newsmagazine, *Echoes*.

The Challenge: Educating Our Younger Generations

Editor's Note: In a blog written by 306th BGHA President Steve Snyder in March 2024, he laments the fact our younger generations have little or no familiarity with the causes and effects of World War II. To today's students, World War II does not feel entirely real – since it occurred so many years ago.

The mission of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association is to Remember, Honor, and Educate: to remember the air war over Europe – to honor the men who fought it – to educate younger generations.

We do a good job of the first two, but the third one is very challenging as World War II fades in people's memories. Younger generations are too occupied with their cell phones, video games, and social media show very little interest in an event that occurred decades ago.

A short 3 minute 50 second animated video entitled "US B-17 Bomber Crewman World War II" is a great way to introduce the air war over Europe to children and grandchildren. It does an excellent job of explaining what flying combat missions entailed and does so in an entertaining way. ■

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5oYj1H2UY5A>



Suggestion: Start conversations about the greatest inventions that came about as a result of World War II, and how they continue to impact today's world. These inventions include the atomic bomb, radar, jet engines, pressurized cabins, computers, aerosol cans, synthetic rubber and oil, penicillin, blood plasma transfusion, flu vaccines, the war on cancer, and more – and even the once popular toy – Slinky. Think about it – maybe the story of World War II isn't so distant after all.

Attention Journalists and Non-Journalists:

Do you have an article you would like to submit to *Echoes*? If the answer is YES, I am interested in hearing from you. Please submit all articles as a Word file attached to an email. Do not use .pdf or any other format when providing your word document to me. Save all images as high-resolution photos attached to the email in .jpg format. Do not embed the images in the text. Including notations in the Word submission draft where the image should be placed is suggested. Remember – submission does not guarantee publication. Due to size constraints of the magazine, the publication of non-solicited materials may be held for a future issue.

The editor reserves the right to modify the article as appropriate. Once the article has been submitted, it becomes the property of the editor and will not be returned for rework. If the editor has any questions and requires clarification, the author will be contacted.

To avoid copyright infringement, any copyrighted materials, including reprints of articles previously appearing in other publications, will not be included in *Echoes* without the expressed written consent from the author and/or editor of the original publication. This information must be included with the article submitted to the *Echoes* editor for consideration.

Articles relative to World War II, the 306th Bomb Group, and individual veterans are acceptable subjects. The focus should be on raising awareness and enhancing the education of second, third, fourth generations and beyond.

Send your articles to:
nmhuebotter306@gmail.com

Echoes
Article Due Date for
Winter/Spring
6 May 2026

Memorial Plaques Posted at Thurleigh Museum

The Memorial Garden and Memorial Wall honoring those who served the 306th Bomb Group are steadily becoming more populated. The 306th BGHA, in partnership with the UK's 306th Bombardment Group Museum, has designed memorial plaques to honor veterans who served at Thurleigh (Station 111). By donating \$25 (US) or more, a plaque will be placed at the Museum in honor of the donor's veteran. Please refer to the form on the following page for more information regarding the ordering process. All request forms shall be sent to Mark Fussell at Fuss306thbg@outlook.com. If you have any questions, please get in touch with Mark at the provided email address. Once you have agreed upon the plaque design, you will be invoiced for your order. ■



306th Bombardment Memorial Plaques (\$25.00)

Order Form:

Plaque Type (check one) <i>See sample below.</i>	Garden		Wall Mount	
---	--------	--	------------	--

Which Squadron Patch? This will be shown on the plaque alongside the Triangle H.

367 th		368 th		369 th		423 rd	
-------------------	--	-------------------	--	-------------------	--	-------------------	--

Aircraft Type and Serial Number

Aircraft Type and Serial Number to allow aircraft artwork creation. Check box if no aircraft image included.

B-17F		B-17G		Tail Letter	
-------	--	-------	--	-------------	--

Serial Number		Plane Name	
---------------	--	------------	--

Memorial Wording

Use these lines to enter your desired tribute wording.

Fin Color (Top Color + Yellow) Refer to sample below. Check box if no fin color to be included.

Red 367 th		White 368 th		Green 369 th		Blue 423 rd	
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Other Wording/Motto Check box if no additional wording to be included

--

Extra Voluntary Donation

\$	
----	--

Email Address

--

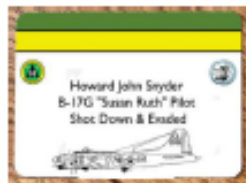
This allows the 306th Bombardment Group Museum to invoice you directly for the Memorial Plaque and any Voluntary Donation.

Please email your form to Fuss306thbg@outlook.com

If you have any questions or need our assistance, please contact us using this email address.

You will not be invoiced until you are happy with the final design.

If ordering multiple plaques, use separate order form for each.



Example: Wall Plaque



Example: Garden Plaque

News Article Reveals Interesting Information to Son

Like many second- and third-generation descendants of World War II veterans, specific questions regarding the veteran's military experiences did not arise until it was too late. Often, the questions were precipitated by one of those descendants who decided to investigate the contents of an old box or trunk stored away in the attic or garage.

Len Blatnica, son of Bombardier 2nd Lt. Leonard Paul Blatnica, discovered among his father's archives a newspaper clipping that relayed the harrowing story of the B-17 *Passion Flower* piloted by 2nd Lt. Paul Paulson, and the crew's encounter with a Focke Wulf fighter during a raid on Frankfurt, Germany, and after being struck by anti-aircraft fire.

The newspaper article recounts the nearly impossible task Paulson executed, saving the plane and its crew from possible disaster. The date was 4 October 1943, and it was the crew's fourth mission after they arrived at Station 111 in Thurleigh, England.

As the plane rapidly descended, an ambitious Focke Wulf pilot, determined to ensure the demise of *Passion Flower*, followed the crippled aircraft. That was when Paulsen's top gunner and waist gunners, with unwavering bravery, unleashed their wrath upon the plane, sending him down in flames.

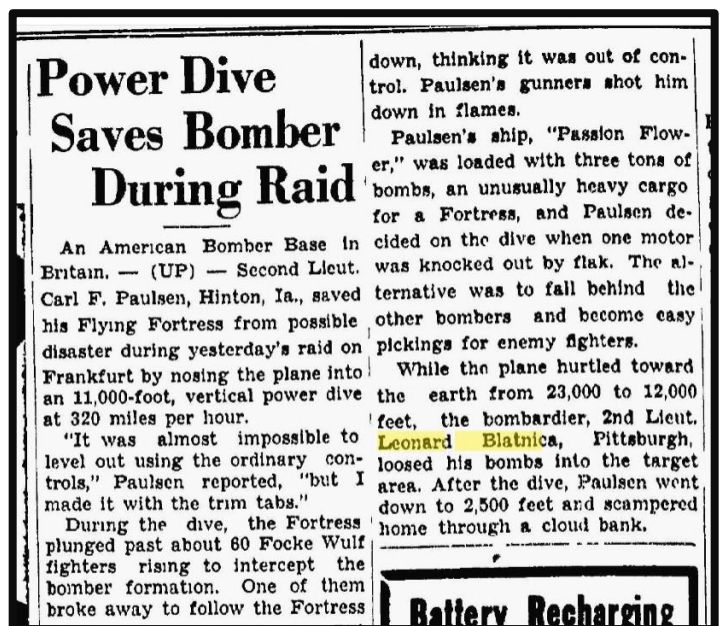
To help stabilize the plane, which at the time was loaded with three tons of bombs, a hefty cargo for a Flying Fortress, it was the quick thinking and resourcefulness of Bombardier Leonard Blatnica to release the payload over the target area. The plane was able to descend to an altitude that would allow Paulsen to guide it back to Thurleigh airfield.

Blatnica enlisted at Fort George G. Meade, Maryland, in June 1941. By September 1943, he had been assigned to the 306th Bomb Group as a navigator, but was transferred to the 482nd Bomb Group in mid-October 1943 to attend a highly specialized course in advanced bombing techniques at Midland Army Air Field, Texas. Following completion of the course, Blatnica returned to the 306th Bomb Group and was assigned to the 368th squadron.

For his part in saving the crew, Blatnica was awarded the Air Medal on 6 October 1943. Ultimately, he was awarded three additional Oak Leaf Clusters. He was awarded the Purple Heart

for wounds suffered on 9 May 1944. In addition, Blatnica was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. He flew 28 missions over enemy-held territory and completed his tour in April 1944.

Following the war, he earned a degree in Accounting from Duquesne University then enjoyed a successful career with PPG until his retirement in 1984. For several years, he maintained communication with Captain Paulsen. Blatnica passed away in 1986. ■





Hugo Riva: Oldest Living 306th Veteran

As the oldest living veteran of the 306th Bombardment Group, Hugo Riva celebrated his 105th birthday this past June. Residing at the Douglas Jacobson State Veterans Nursing Home in Port Charlotte on the southwest coast of Florida, Hugo is quite a celebrity.

His incredible journey began with his birth in 1920. Shortly thereafter, his family immigrated to Taunton, Massachusetts, from Franca Villa, Italy, to be with his father's brother's family in the United States, a move sponsored by his uncle. Like many families, there was some family strife, so Hugo's family decided to return to Italy and the restaurant business. However, this was during Benito Mussolini's rise to power and the formation of his paramilitary wing, the Blackshirts, a notorious group that employed violence and intimidation tactics to gain power, ultimately helping Mussolini establish a dictatorship in Italy. The Riva family had experienced extortion and several incidents that resulted in damage to their restaurant equipment. After experiencing such hostilities, Hugo's parents could see what was happening in Italy and made the best decision of their lives: to return to Taunton, Massachusetts.

Before the war, Hugo, who loved planes, attended aeronautical school in Seattle, Washington, but unfortunately was unable to become a pilot due to a visual impairment affecting his depth perception. He entered the service in July of 1941 and worked hard to achieve the rank of Staff Sergeant with the Army Air Forces. After training, he reported to the 306th Bomb Group and was sent to Station 111 in Thurleigh, England, on February 27, 1945. He was assigned to the Joseph Hahn Crew of the 367th Bomb Squadron, serving as both top turret gunner and engineer. He flew 10 combat missions, targeting all German locations except one, which was to Royan, France. Four of his ten missions were to Berlin.

Hugo recalls that his most memorable mission was to Berlin, Germany, where they experienced heavy flak from German cannons. From his position in the top turret, he noticed a red liquid on the nose cone of the plane. At first, he thought it was blood, but after accounting for every crew member, and upon further inspection, he realized it was hydraulic fluid he was seeing. The flak had cut a hydraulic line that needed to be repaired in flight. This line provided the hydraulic fluid that operated the brakes and the plane's flaps. His quick thinking and response enabled him to remove some caulking from the nose cone and use it to repair the hydraulic line temporarily. He continued to monitor it until they made an emergency landing in

Belgium, where the crew spent the night before returning to Thurleigh the next day. He shared it was "just part of the job."

"By the time we arrived in Europe with our bomber crew, the Luftwaffe had been decimated by Allied aircraft. We didn't put up with nearly as many enemy fighter planes as the guys who came before us did," Hugo recalls. He flew his last combat mission on April 17, 1945, to Dresden, Germany. Of his time in Thurleigh, Hugo thoughtfully shared, it was the kindness of the English people that he appreciated. Often, when they returned from a mission, English citizens would invite the crews to their homes for dinner and give them eggs, which were a special treat at the time.



During his training, Hugo met the love of his life, Lucille Gasaway, at a PX at Chanute Field south of Chicago. Lucille, a civilian at the time, was assisting at the PX when Hugo met her. Shortly thereafter, Lucille joined the service herself, enlisting in the Navy WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service). Lucille and Hugo stayed in contact and married after the war. Hugo's brother, Remo, also served in England during World War II, with the Eighth Air Force stationed near Norwich, England, and served as a Master Sergeant and Crew Chief, keeping the planes operational.

When Hugo returned to the US, he and his brother went into the family restaurant business. They purchased the local German Social Club in Taunton and, after remodeling, named it the Gondola Restaurant. They successfully operated the family restaurant for more than five and a half decades, were among the first Italian-American restaurants in the area, and were the first to introduce "pizza" to their patrons. They gained an excellent reputation, serving guests such as Boston Red Sox great Ted Williams, the Kennedy family, and CBS and NBC news broadcaster Roger Mudd, among others, who frequently visited their establishment.

Hugo and Lucille had two daughters: Carrie and Donna. Donna visits her dad daily at the Veterans home. Hugo and Lucille have two grandsons and two great-grandchildren.

Hugo enjoyed boating and, over the years, has owned many boats. Never losing those engineering skills he learned in the 306th, Hugo was fond of tinkering with cars. He continued to stay in close contact with a few of those brave men in his crew with the 306th and would spend time with Fred Wajcs and John Young over the years. Hugo would also spend time in Florida, initially on the east coast in Pompano Beach, and eventually retired in the Port Charlotte area. He misses his love Lucille, who passed in 2016 at the age of 99. ■

Museum Fundraiser Results Are Remarkable

At the Board of Directors Meeting in 2023, the Board members unanimously decided to initiate an annual fundraising campaign for the 306th Museum in Thurleigh, England, to support the museum's mission. Yearly, the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association donates \$500 and at the same time reaches out to the membership requesting additional donations. The results for 2025 are outstanding and surpassed those of the previous year. The grand total is **\$2,504.66**:

\$1,178.66	Donations received prior to the reunion via PayPal and checks
\$ 826.00	Cash received at Reunion
\$ 500.00	Annual donation from the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors thanks you for your generosity. ■



To ensure an accurate mailing list is maintained, members are reminded to update their membership for 2026 by either filling out and submitting the membership form included in each issue of *Echoes* or by logging in to our website (<https://www.306bg.us>). ■

Note: The "Keep Calm" phrase originated as a British morale-boosting poster during World War II.

In Memoriam

Obituaries – Veteran death information should be submitted to Barbara Neal, P.O. Box 682530, Park City, UT 84068, barb306neal@gmail.com, cell (435) 655-1500.

Snook, Donald L., pilot (369th), a longtime resident of Westport, CT, passed away on 10 June 2024 in England at the age of 102. Don was an active member and past president of the 306th BGHA. He was a graduate of Grinnell College and then earned a Master's degree in International Affairs from Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies. During the 1950s and 1960s, he worked for the State Department in Syria and Libya and Esso Middle East. Returning to the US in 1969, he worked for Exxon until his retirement in 1986. His wife, Katherine, passed away in 2021. He celebrated his 100th birthday in Alpine, TX, in 2023, then shortly afterward moved to England to live with his daughter, Laura, just outside Oxford. In addition to Laura, Don is survived by daughters Ann and Helen, four grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.



Given In Memory Of...



Maurice V. Salada, 423rd Pilot/Sq Op Officer
by Michael and Judith Salada

Capt. Leonard P. Blatnica, 368th Bombardier
by Leonard Blatnica

Harold C. Greene, 369th Comm Officer/ROG
by Michael Greene

Ron and Bari Lissner, 367th Squadron
by Lance and Eiko Lissner

*Gifts may be made in memory of 306th veterans or family by sending a check payable to the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association with the designation "306th Memorial Fund" on the memo line of the check. Send the check to Matt Ferrari, Treasurer, PO 290643, Port Orange, FL 32129. All gifts made will be recognized in the twice-yearly publication of *Echoes*. Expenditure of these funds is at the direction of the Board of Directors.*



306th Bomb Group Historical Association Membership Registration Form 2026 Calendar Year

Print all information.

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Email: _____

Telephone _____

Address: (required if ordering *Echoes* print subscription) [Street Address] _____

[City, State, Zip Code] _____

WWII Vet or Spouse Yes ___

If you have an interest in a particular WWII 306th veteran, please complete the following about him:

I am not related to him _____. **OR:** This 306th WWII Veteran is my (relationship): _____

Veteran's Name: _____ 306th Unit: _____

Duty/Job Title or Additional Information: _____

Additional Information: _____

IF YOU ARE NOT of the WWII generation AND you want US-MAIL copies of *Echoes*, there is a \$20 per calendar year charge to cover cost of *Echoes* printing and mailing. Donations are also welcome.

Membership registration remains free.

Check: Payable to 306th Bomb Group Historical Association; on memo line write "2026 *Echoes*." Please mail (with or without this form) your check to:

Matt Ferrari, Treasurer
PO BOX 290643
PORT ORANGE, FL 32129

PayPal Donations can be made on-line at www.306bg.us using the yellow "Donate" button.

PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH

Membership Registration forms should be mailed to:

Mr. Bruce Chase, Membership Chairman
2324 HATCH HILL RD
NEW ALBANY, PA 18833-8887

We ask that you submit your (free) membership renewal each calendar year to confirm your continued interest in the 306th BGHA and to verify your current phone number and email address.

A free electronic version of the 306th *Echoes*, our official publication, is available via www.306bg.us.

2026 Eighth Air Force Historical Society Reunion
Destination: San Antonio, Texas
October 14 – 18, 2026



**Reunion details to be published in *Echoes* and on the
306th BGHA website (www.306bg.us)
as they become available**