

86TH FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP ASSOCIATION

MAY 2011 NEWSLETTER



Time Well Spent: 32 annual reunions hosted in 21 different states plus DC. CA, MN, MO, NY, and OH were the site twice, OK thrice, and TX four times.

TIME TO MOBILIZE IN MOBILE

The official dates for this year's reunion (our 32nd consecutive) are Thursday, September 15 to Sunday, September 18, though a number, if not the majority, of folks will be arriving Wednesday, September 14. Kathryn LITTLE, our reunion host, has made all of the arrangements for us.

Headquarters➤ Ashbury Hotel and Suites
600 West I-65 Service Road S
Mobile, AL 36608-5907

Room Rate➤ Is based on single/double occupancy: \$101.48 (includes 14% lodging tax).
Each additional person: \$5.00

Amenities➤ All rooms have microwave, refrigerator, coffee maker, and free high speed Internet access. There are handicap rooms, free parking, and **HOT COMPLIMENTARY BREAKFAST BUFFET.**

Reservations➤ Telephone 1 (800) 752-0398

Be sure to identify yourself as being with the 86th FBG to obtain the special room rate.

Please book no later than **August 13**, one month prior to the start of the reunion. (You can always cancel, if necessary, up to 3:00 pm the day before your scheduled check in, so REGISTER EARLY.)

Transportation➤ The Mobile Regional Airport is 7 miles from the Ashbury, but the Hotel does not provide a shuttle from and to the airport.

- ❶ Car rental is available at the airport.
- ❷ Taxi service is provided by Yellow Cab of Mobile—(251) 476-7711.
- ❸ There is an Airport Shuttle—\$18 one way, \$33 round trip to the Ashbury.
For a reservation, call 1 (800) 357-5373 to schedule your arrival and departure.

Activities Reservation Form (ARF)➤ Refer to the last page of this Newsletter. Please take note of the deadline set for sending your ARF and check to Debbie Rose – **August 10**. This is important for planning purposes.

NOTE to Attendees: It is a good idea to retain a copy of the ARF for reference.



86th FIGHTER-BOMBER GROUP ASSOCIATION

Vol. XXXII, No. 1

NEWSLETTER

MAY 2011

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Our Mission is to perpetuate the history of the 86th Fighter-Bomber Group.

We as veterans of WWII are organized to perpetuate the history of our fight to retain our American freedoms, to meet once a year for a reunion with the purpose of maintaining close ties with the Association and our comrades, and to encourage the heirs of our veterans to join with us in a united effort to pass along memories of those who served in the Group. A way to enrich and amplify understanding of the experiences of the veterans is through broadening of our website by archiving our veterans' experiences. Effective now, a call is issued for your help: feed the Webmaster (John Rice) with your photos, journals, stories, comments. We are hungry for material to archive.

Association Website: www.86fighterbombergroup.com

POTPOURRI

✂ Eight of nine envelopes containing our December newsletter were returned by the post office for additional postage because the person had moved and they would not forward because the change notice had apparently expired.



This causes additional time and expense — a special trip to the post office to pick up the returned mail, pay them 44 cents additional postage, then type a new label, affix label, affix another 44 cents stamp, and then back to the post office. It is such a simple thing to notify your Secretary when you change addresses. It raises the question of whether or not these people care anything about receiving information on their Association.

✂ Rosters are updated as changes occur. Each newsletter carries these changes (under Roster Maintenance), and interested members update their rosters from these items. We have been sending group rosters annually with an issue of this newsletter. This increases our postage costs dramatically, and we believe that many, if not most, members do not use these rosters at all.

This money could be used for better things. Therefore, we are establishing a Roster Mailing List for those who request them, and will discontinue the mailing of the combined roster/newsletter. Rosters will continue to go to those members hosting reunions, officers and board members, **and members who specifically request them.**

✂ Here's an excerpt from the BOUCHARD's Christmas letter that reflects the feelings of all those who regularly attend our reunions. May it serve as inspiration to others who have not been with us for a spell to come join us:

"In October Hubert, Pauline, Ann and Amy traveled to Milwaukee, WI for the 86th FBG reunion. It was a great time and I challenge any group, regardless of age, to have such a

lively and fun time. Leave it to this group to supplement breakfast with some Milwaukee beer at 9:00 am – that was a new breakfast beverage for me.

"Although the number of veterans is getting sparse, the group is supplemented with family and friends who help to make reunions wonderful. We are all happy to be able to spend time together! Those vets who were at the reunion have keen memories of the events from WWII and being there and being part of that experience is **one of the high points of our year.**" (Editor's emphasis.)

✂ The hosts for our last reunion, Debbie and Randy Rose, did an amazing job showing us a great time in Wisconsin. It was incredible when we all went to the local airfield and had a fly-in with WWII vintage aircraft. Although the WWII veterans were thrilled, it seemed that the younger generation felt privileged to meet these men who were an integral part of the "greatest generation."

✂ Here's a sobering statistic picked up on the History Channel – only 10% of those who served in WWII are alive today (less than 2 million of 16.5 million).

✂ Another History Channel WWII shocker – more airmen in the 8th Air Force (based in England) were KIA than the Marine Corps in all theaters of action.

✂ How about this statistic from *Flight Journal* magazine: "The AAF's worst accident rate was recorded by the A-36 Invader version of the P-51: a staggering 274 accidents per 100,000 flying hours. Next worse were the P-39 at 245, the P-40 at 188, and the P-38 at 139. All were Allison powered."

✂ Recently-observed automobile license plate holder: "Alumni – Small Midwest Liberal Arts College." Do you suppose that's "tongue in cheek", or what?

(**POTPOURRI** continued from page 3)

✂ Following is an excerpt from Joe WEIGLE's letter reporting the death of his father:

"In 2006 I did a 6-hour video interview with Graham detailing his life and times, from childhood through, and just after, the war. He related some harrowing tales of flight training and combat. There was the time when he had his first flight in an A-36 dive bombing run and forgot to extend the air brakes, causing the skin of the right wing to ripple and buckle. Then there was the time when his flight was looking for targets of opportunity after releasing their bombs, and Graham strafed a German troop concentration. After he flew over the formation, gunfire hit the aircraft as he pulled up, hitting the propeller and hydraulic lines. The gear deployed after pulling up and the prop was out of balance, creating tremendous vibration. He was able to throttle back to just above stall speed and make it back to base in one piece. I am glad your organization has taken the effort to make public the contributions that the 86th Fighter-Bomber Group made during WWII. In my view it is somewhat of an unsung period of history that should have more exposure. Please pass along my thanks to the remaining members of your organization for their service and commitment."

✂ I recently received an e-mail that recapped the career of George T. Lee, our last Group Commander. One of the things I was not aware of, and I'm sure is news to all of you, occurred during his post-war tour of duty in Europe. He was recalled to active duty at the time of the Berlin Airlift 12/13/48 and served in several capacities, including Commander of (guess what) the 86th Fighter-**Bomber** Group from October 1950 to March 1951. I had always thought that name had disappeared when we were reclassified as a Fighter Group.

✂ After the war ended, at least 85 P-47s and other type aircraft were blown up at Schweinfurt, Germany. The Ordnance officer in charge had to triple the charges to demol-

ish the "Jugs." Another feature of the Group's post-war activities was the formation of a football team. James E. BEAN (527th Pilot) was the star quarterback and the team was undefeated as of November 1945. (Photos courtesy of Perry J. DeSteven (527th Pilot.)



✂ In April a nice letter was received from Jess and Berniece WRIGHT (525), announcing they had made the big jump to assisted living quarters (see Roster Maintenance). Accommodations are excellent amid beautiful scenery, and they are still able to drive and get around. "We miss the reunions (attended 15) and camaraderie of all Jess' old buddies and friends, but enjoy tons of photos and memories."

(**POTPOURRI** continued from page 4)



✧ The above picture does not do justice to the original in-color trophy presented to Debbie and Randy Rose in recognition of their outstanding work in staging our Milwaukee reunion. Dick WIESSNER was the ramrod of this project. The model airplane sits unattached on a mirrored circular platform, seven inches in diameter. The mirror rotates (via battery) at two different slow speeds.

SICK CALL

Jim MICHAUD (526 Pilot) – I talked with Jim last October and he indicated that he missed the Milwaukee reunion because he is experiencing heart valve problems. “Doing OK, however! Hope to get back some day. You are great guys.”

NOTE FROM THE SECRETARY

Copies are available of the following Milwaukee reunion group pix: Board of Directors (4), Wives (2), Veterans (2), and Family and Guests (1) - first come, first served.

MEMORIAL DAY THOUGHTS May 31, 2011

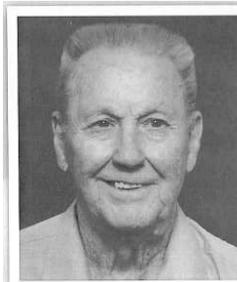
Although no sculptured marble should rise to their memory, nor engraved stone bear record of their deeds, yet will their remembrance be as lasting as the land they honored. (Daniel Webster)

IN MEMORIAM

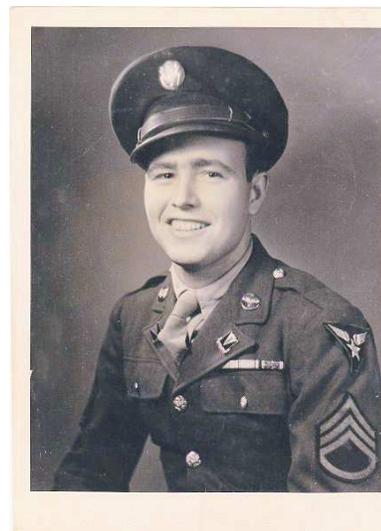


BENDI, Lotte M. (525 Engrg.) – Deceased 08/01/10 as notified by her estate lawyer’s office. Lotte and Louis were Lifetime Members who attended 12 reunions prior to his death (05/09/00). We enjoyed their company on the post-Seattle reunion Alaska tour in 1987.

DUNKLE, Russell J. (527 Sqdn. Supply) – Passed away 7/29/10 at age 91 after a brief illness. Russ served 30 years in the Air force, discharged as SM Sergeant. He and Anne, early Lifetime Members (LM7016), attended three of our first reunions.



FITZPATRICK, Jesse C. (526 Crew Chief) – Died in his sleep 1/28/11 as reported by his son Rick. “Fitz” and Modene (who passed away in 2006) were early and very strong advocates of the Association, witness his Lifetime Membership number LM6002 and his 29 (of 31) reunions attended. (He missed the first two because he was not yet located, but never missed another.)



One of Rick’s favorite pictures of his Dad.

GALLAGHER, George M. (526 Armament) - Deceased 07/01/10 of congestive heart failure as advised by his daughter Karen Stoner. She said her Dad was always very proud of his years in the service. He was an early Lifetime Member (6019) and attended three reunions, including Dayton I in 1983 (see pic).



HOBGOOD, B. Rex (527 Armament) - It especially grieves me to report a phone call last evening (May 6) from his daughter advising that Rex had passed away that morning as a result of Alzheimer's. Rex and I, together with "Brad" Bradford and Jack Johnston, were "shipmates" on the Aquitania in October 1945 heading for home and discharge. It took us some time to locate him, so he and Louise's first reunion was Seattle in '87. They made up for it by attending 9 of the next 11 get-togethers, including a super one they hosted in Myrtle Beach in '92. Unfortunately, a succession of Rex's health problems prevented them from attending after Las Vegas in '97. Flowers, in the name of the Association, were sent to the funeral.



HOOD, Lyle D. (527 A-36 Pilot) - Passed away due to heart failure on 02/10/11 as reported by his son Paul. Lyle, quiet with an almost shy demeanor, was well liked and will be missed by everyone. He and Mildred were Lifetime Members who attended 12 reunions, most recently at San Antonio II in 2008. A donation was made to the Salvation Army in lieu of flowers.



HUFFMAN, William M. (525 Armament) - Died 02/07/11 according to a burial memory card received from his wife. Bill was a Lifetime Member and attended the Atlanta reunion in 1998.

KENNEDY, Dean R. (526 Pilot) - Deceased 02/15/11 according to his daughter Joyce. No details given. Dean was a Lifetime Member who attended two consecutive reunions, San Antonio I in 1989 and Little Rock in 1990.

MAZZOCHI, Carl J. (526 Engrg.) - Deceased 12/08/10 following a prolonged illness, as reported by Ralph LEWTON. Carl was an active participant in the early days of the Association, attending eight reunions, and served a "hitch" as the Squadron Secretary.

TILLESON, Mary Beth (527 Squadron Adjutant) - Deceased 11/23/10 as reported by her daughter; no other details given. She and Owen, our well-liked-by-all Squadron Adjutant were early Lifetime Members (LM7015) who attended three reunions prior to his death in 2003.

WEIGLE, Graham (525 Pilot/ 526 C.O.) - Passed away 01/03/11 at age 94 due to maladies of a year's duration, as advised by his son Joe. We did not locate Graham until a few years ago. He was unable to attend any of our reunions but he was a Lifetime Member. (See **Potpourri** for excerpts from a video interview Joe had with his dad on his life and times.)

WELP, Ronald W. (Rocky) (526 Pilot) - Deceased 12/20/05. He had been on our Inactive Roster for a number of years, with no communication until recently learning of his death from his wife Marie. She did not give any details.

THE SOBERING NUMBER OF NAMES IN THIS **IN MEMORIAM** SECTION SHOULD SERVE AS A WAKEUP CALL TO THOSE COMRADES WHO HAVE NEVER ATTENDED A REUNION, OR WHO HAVE NOT DONE SO FOR SOME TIME. AS OCTO/NONAGENARIANS, WE REALIZE HOW FORTUNATE WE HAVE BEEN. PERHAPS THIS IS THE YEAR FOR YOU TO SERIOUSLY CONSIDER JOINING US IN MOBILE TO ENJOY THE CAMARADERIE OF US OLD TIMERS WHO ARE, AS THE SAYING GOES, "STILL ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE SOD."

ROSTER MAINTENANCE

The contents of this section are intentionally omitted.

APPENDIX to IN MEMORIAM

KUBLY, Donald R. (527 Pilot) - Don died of natural causes on 05/26/11 at his home in Pasadena, CA. He was 93. One of our original A-36 pilots, Don joined the squadron in North Africa 06/25/43 and flew 82 combat missions, completing his tour of duty in Italy 03/09/44. In 1969 he became President of the prestigious Art Center College of Design in Pasadena and served for 16 years until his retirement in 1985.

**HEAR YE, HEAR YE**

Your Association Board of Directors is delighted that Kathryn Little (granddaughter of Ken Suddeth, 527 Engrg) offered to host our Group in Alabama—part of the Deep South, where enduring hospitality is promoted. Now, y'all who still travel, best gather your children, grandchildren, good friends, caregivers and come join us in Mobile on September 15-18. Striving for more involvement of your heirs is imperative. Agree?

FINANCIAL REPORT FOR YEAR 2010

BALANCE AT CLOSE OF 2009 \$4,365.25

Receipts for Year

Annual Dues (14 @ \$10.00).....	\$140.00
Lifetime Memberships (4 @ 1000.00).....	\$400.00
Voluntary Contributions.....	\$1,729.24
Activities Reservation Forms (ARF)	\$4,837.00
Reunion Pins Brochure Sales	\$65.00
	\$7,171.24

..... **\$11,536.49**

Disbursements for First Quarter

Postage and Printing	\$1,101.57
Phone (for 2009-2010).....	\$12.60
Office Supplies	\$91.76
Funeral Flowers/Memorial Donation	\$260.30
Bulk Mail Permit Renewal	\$185.00
Houston Reunion Expense (Incl Van Rental and Event Deposits).....	\$900.94
Search Fees.....	\$37.35
Bank Service Charges (@ \$9.00 per month per account level).....	\$63.00
Milwaukee Reunion Hotel Deposit	\$100.00
Hospitality Room—Milwaukee.....	\$171.08
Tour Buses—Milwaukee.....	\$1,921.00
Saturday Banquet—Milwaukee	\$1,739.43
Reunion Hosts Plaque.....	\$77.75
	\$6,661.78

BALANCE AT CLOSE OF Year \$4,874.71

Footnotes: 1. Annual Dues from Francis REPKE (GHQ Post-War)
 Lifetime Membership from Harold SIMPSON (526)
 Voluntary Contribution from HAROLD Hill (526)

2. Don't forget, all contributions are tax deductible if you itemize deductions on your tax return.
3. Are you a Lifetime Member? If you are, there is an **LM** followed by four numbers in the bracketed information following your name on the roster. If it is not there, CONTACT THE SECRETARY.
4. Lifetime Memberships are family possessions, passed on to surviving wives and children/grandchildren who affiliate with the Association. Such persons shall be known as "legacies". If they choose to pay dues, they may do so and such payments will be treated as Voluntary Contributions until or unless they attain Lifetime Membership status in their own right.
5. DON'T FORGET, ALL CONTRIBUTIONS ARE TAX DEDUCTIBLE IF YOU ITEMIZE DEDUCTIONS ON YOUR TAX RETURN.

