



## ▶ President's Review

It was a great reunion in Savannah. Many thanks to Lori Barnett for again organizing this get-together. We were in an excellent hotel and had a very good memorabilia room. Much appreciation goes to Carl Sechrist for the magnificent display he set up.

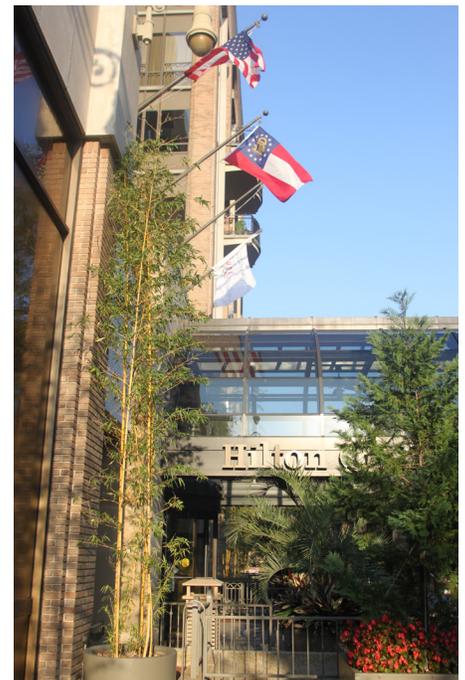
It was good to again get to the Eighth Air Force Museum. The memorial in the Chapel was impressive and we were able to dedicate the gazebo that the Association had donated. There were excellent tours led through the Museum.

During the banquet we were very pleased as Justina Sechrist sang the National Anthem. What a great voice!

It was real good having British Historians in attendance. At the banquet, for a while it looked as if I would be the only one at the head table (there was no guest speaker!) But before I knew it, our British Historians Richard and Erin Pobgee and Tim and Angie Newell were sitting up there with me. It was truly enjoyable having these good folks with us in Savannah.

A listing of the current Board of Directors is enclosed. Note that new to the Board are Trisha Mach as Secretary and Jim Hanley as 4-year Director. Cliff Digre was elected to the 2-year Director slot. Unfortunately, Cliff had to give up that position.

I wish to mention two people to whom we owe a lot. First, Joe Toth had a real good term as President. Then, Nancy Toth left the position of Secretary, a job she held for many



years. Some of you may recall that Mickey Briggs handled all of the Secretary/Treasurer duties from the start. Then Nancy became the Secretary and for quite a few years handled all the Secretary duties as well as doing the newsletter. The duties included handling all the membership records and handling many, many inquiries about the Association and its members. She did a magnificent job. For that, we are grateful.

Already plans are in the making for our reunion in England next May. I sure hope a bunch of us will be able to make it!

At the final Board meeting, it was decided to plan the 2013 reunion for Dayton, Ohio, where the U. S. Air Force Museum is located.

John S. Pearson, President

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## ► In Memory

### Memorialized at the Savannah Reunion in 2011

These men were recognized during a ceremony that honors those of the 457th Bomb Group who have passed away.

|                     |                     |                     |                  |                     |                     |
|---------------------|---------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Edward F. Ambrose   | Louis Dahle         | Joseph L. Hibbs     | Ervin E. Leach   | James R. Ogletree   | Ray Struble         |
| Benny Bigley        | William N. Davidson | Ralph D. Ice        | Edward Levine    | William C. Oliver   | John B. Tonkin      |
| Charles Bowers      | Richard R. Garland  | David S. Kahne      | Robert Mattox    | Albert L. Rothbauer | Roy E. Truba, Sr.   |
| Tommy Brines        | William C. Girard   | A. John Kajander    | Richard McDonald | Samuel W. Sayer     | Harland Van Deiland |
| Kenneth W. Burkhart | Thomas Goff         | John Kearney        | Larry McDonnell  | Amos W. Shepard     | Simon C. Wareck     |
| Hugh Burton         | James M. Graves     | Maurice H. Keesling | John P. Medica   | Harmon A. Smith     | Bernard H. Weinberg |
| Dick E. Coffman     | Clyde Grimm         | Oscar Koirtyohann   | Paul L. Morris   | Francis G. Spillane | Irwin Welling       |
| Anthony H. Colin    | C.H. Harrel         | Julius Kornblatt    | Alan Morton      | Robert E. Springer  |                     |

## 457th Bomb Group Association: Membership Dues & Subscription Form

### ► Dues

**Annual Dues:** \$25 per person  
(2 years)

**Life Dues:**

| Age      | Cost  |
|----------|-------|
| under 60 | \$110 |
| 61 - 65  | \$90  |
| 60 - 70  | \$75  |
| 71 +     | \$60  |

### ► Mail Form To: make check payable to:

**Lori Barnett, Treasurer**

457th Bomb Group Association  
304 Old West Point Road  
Starkville, MS 39759

**check applicable:**

- New membership
- Renewal
- Address Change

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Nickname \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip (+4) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone \_\_\_\_\_ email \_\_\_\_\_

**Are you a (check one):**

Fireballer     Relative of Fireballer     Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**If you are a relative:**

Name of Veteran \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to you \_\_\_\_\_  
 Birth Date of Veteran \_\_\_\_\_ Squadron # \_\_\_\_\_ Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
 Dates Assigned \_\_\_\_\_ Duties \_\_\_\_\_  
 Plane Name \_\_\_\_\_ Plane # \_\_\_\_\_ Pilot's Name \_\_\_\_\_  
 Plane Name \_\_\_\_\_ Plane # \_\_\_\_\_ Pilot's Name \_\_\_\_\_

POW? / Evadee? \_\_\_\_\_ Captured Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Escape/Release Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Retired Military? \_\_\_\_\_ Rank: \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

► 2012 Glatton

**457th Bomb Group Assoc.  
Mini Reunion**

Contact for room  
reservations & plans:

Candy Fluman  
717. 432. 1067  
Flumancl@aol.com

# 2012 Return To Glatton

## May 26 - 30, 2012

### Peterborough, England at the Bull Hotel

Agenda:

**Saturday:** May 26th

Registration at Hotel

**Sunday:** May 27th

Day in Conington  
Memorial Services  
Airfield visit

**Monday:** May 28th

Memorial Service at Madingley

**Tuesday:** May 29th

Closing Banquet

**Wednesday:** May 30th

Departure

**Other Activities to be announced**



## ► Highlights

### **The Saga of the Cliff Hendrickson Crews**

by Cliff Digre

On September 9, 1944, I flew my first mission as a ball turret gunner - a member of the Robbie Robertson crew, 749th squadron. On November 29, 1944, after our nineteenth mission, we were told Robbie had been promoted to be a squadron lead pilot, so that was the last mission several of us would be flying with him. However, Sid (Stanley P. Szydowski), Bernie Stutman, and Louie Dahle would continue to fly with Robbie.

Since the ball turret had been replaced with "Mickey" radar equipment, my position would be eliminated. Others who would no longer be flying with Robbie included copilot Cliff Hendrickson, bombardier Charles Carbery, and waist gunner Julius Kornblatt. As of now the status of our navigator, Elmer Mankin, and gunner, John Brown, was uncertain. What's ahead? Who knows? As of today we were orphans; the uncertainty was not a pleasant prospect. We would all miss the feeling of security we had with Robbie in command. He was one of the best.

A few days after Robbie was chosen to be a lead pilot, Robbie and Cliff Hendrickson came over to our Hut #20 to tell us a new crew was to be formed - The Cliff Hendrickson Crew. The core would be the orphans from the Robertson crew - Cliff as pilot, Carbery as bombardier, possibly Mankin as navigator, Brown and Kornblatt as gunners, and me. The copilot, engineer, and another gunner had not yet been chosen.

Cliff asked if I could check out as radio operator. I assured him I could and wanted to. Although I felt a strange security in the ball turret, it was not the most comfortable position. That same day I went to talk to the communications officer to inquire what would be required for me to be reclassified from a AROG-611 assistant radio operator gunner to an ROG-757 radio operator mechanic gunner - the classification I needed to fly as the crew's radio operator. After checking my Signal Corps school records, he was certain I could test out of code and radio mechanics.



► *Clifford Hendrickson, Co-pilot & Pilot, 749th squadron*

Within two weeks I tested out of code and mechanics and passed both the written and oral test with perfect scores.

Back on November 29, the day I learned I would no longer be flying with Robbie, things looked bleak and the future uncertain. It was depressing! But now, things really had turned around as we looked forward to flying as The Cliff Hendrickson Crew. To be sure, no one looks forward to flying combat missions, but knowing I must, I wanted to fly with a crew in which I had confidence. Cliff had flown hundreds of hours as Robbie's copilot; he had had the best instructor, so we all had the ultimate trust in Cliff's flying skills. Our new crew flew practice missions almost on a daily basis to hone each individual's skills. Not only did we have a great pilot in Cliff, we had quality in every position.

The weather in mid December was horrible, with very heavy fog, drizzle, and light snow - typical English winter weather. Because of the weather, the 8th had not put a plane in the air for the past two days, and our ground forces were paying the price as the Germans were mounting an offense in the Ardennes forests in Belgium.

We learned on the afternoon of December 18 that a slight clearing was expected that night, and if so, a mission tomorrow was a certainty. Cliff said, "If there is a mission tomorrow, we will definitely be flying, so all passes have been cancelled." Late that evening I checked at the orderly room, and yes, there was a mission scheduled, and yes, our crew - the Cliff Hendrickson crew - was on the loading list, and there was listed "Clifford Digre, radio operator," so it was early to bed!

It had been almost four weeks since I had flown my 19th mission, and today was to be my first as a radio operator, so I was wide awake when I heard the orderly room clerk walking around to the huts, waking up crews. I was half dressed when he came into Hut #20. His first words were, "What are you up for Digre; you're not flying today." Since I had personally seen the Hendrickson crew, with my name on the loading list, I was certain he was wrong, and told him so. Kornblatt and Brown, though, took him at his word and were glad to get back into their sacks. But not me. I finished dressing, and cutting my way through the fog, walked up to the mess hall for breakfast with Sid, Louie Dahle, and Stutman who were flying with Robbie.

It wasn't until I met Cliff at the briefing room and he told me we were not flying, that I admitted the OR clerk did know what he was talking about. Cliff explained, "For some reason, in the middle of the night someone in operations decided that I should fly as the pilot for a new crew on their very first mission." Cliff was certain, though, that the Cliff Hendrickson crew would be flying the next mission together.

The fog lessened somewhat as the sun started to rise, but I was still certain the mission would be scrubbed, so I stayed on. To my surprise, taxi and takeoff flares were fired and planes proceeded to take off. I knew the planes Robbie and Cliff were flying; within minutes both were airborne. I stayed on to watch about twenty planes take off. When the fog really got heavy, the field was declared closed to takeoffs and landings. Those twenty planes that had taken off did join other groups in the 94th wing and flew on to the designated target, Gemünd, Germany.

By mid afternoon, when it was time for the planes to be back, Kornblatt and I went down to wait for them. The fog was still very heavy and just a few planes, four or five, landed, when again the field was closed. All other planes, including Robbie's and Cliff's, were diverted to southern England. We checked with operations and were told none of the planes would be back tonight.

continued on page 6

## ► Special Report

### Savannah 2011

These images are just a few of the typical photos from our very successful 2011 Savannah Reunion. Hopefully these will share some of the highlights of this event with those who were unable to attend. We're sure the attendees will enjoy them as well.

Additional images can be found when you view this newsletter page online and click on the link at the bottom of the page.

[www.457thbombgroupassoc.org](http://www.457thbombgroupassoc.org)



► Pictured here are twenty of the airmen from Glatton who attended the 2011 State-Side Reunion.



► Thanks to some members of the 457th an Old English style Gazebo & monument dedicated to the memory of the airmen of the 457th are now part of the gardens of the Mighty 8th.



► The Hilton Hotel Savannah



► A new display was added as part of the memorabilia. The exhibit included photos from the Mach collection.



► A memorial Service was held in the Chapel of the Mighty 8th Museum.



► Angie & Tim Newall discuss images from the memorabilia collection.

**web viewers:**  
[Click here for more Savannah 2011 photos.](#)  
[Banquet](#)  
[Memorabilia Room](#)  
[Mighty 8th](#)  
[Miscellaneous](#)

continued on page 6

## ► Special Report

### More Savannah 2011 Highlights



► Memorabilia room.



► Erin & Richard Pobjee study photos from the memorabilia collection.



► John Pearson receives gavel as he becomes the newest president of the 457th Bomb Group Association.



► Jim Bass & Nancy Toth are seated in front of one exhibit while others meet in the center of the room-like display.



► Touring the Mighty 8th Museum.

(continued from page 4)

## The Saga of the Cliff Hendrickson Crews

Weather conditions continued to be horrible with heavy fog, a mist, and at times a light snow. Each day we checked to see if our group was returning, and each day same answer - we doubt it. The evening of December 22 showed some signs of the fog lifting, so maybe tomorrow they would return.

Late on the evening of December 23, we learned that our original Robertson crew copilot, and most recently my new crew's pilot, Lt. Clifford Hendrickson, had been killed when his plane crashed near Oxford. It just didn't seem real. We were truly in a state of shock. This was to have been the first mission for our new Cliff Hendrickson crew. My name, with the others, was on the official loading list, until someone, for some reason decided Cliff should fly as the pilot for Lt. Walter Graves' crew that consisted of Joseph L. Kilmer, David E. Williams, George H. Bruer, Robert Riedel, George B. Hawley, and Edmund T. Fitzgerald on their first mission. Why was the change made? Was it fate? Predestination? Answer to prayers? I'm sure I'll never know, but for certain, it just wasn't my time to die.

We did not know the official cause of the crash, but this is what we knew at that time. After the mission to Gemünd, Germany, on December 19, our group had been diverted to a base at Portreath in the county of Cornwall in far southwest England. The morning of December 23, the weather started to clear, and the planes took off without incident.

Robbie and Cliff had decided they would fly somewhat together. They were in radio contact, and Cliff was flying off Robbie's left wing at an altitude above the clouds. As Bernie Stutman described it, "We were both in clear blue skies, when suddenly we lost radio contact. Then slowly, but seemingly in control, Cliff's plane descended into the clouds and out of sight, and continued to be out of radio contact."

Robbie's crew assumed Cliff was having malfunctions that included radio transmitter failure, and that Cliff had decided to descend and visually find a field where he could land and get necessary repairs. Robbie continued on back to our base at Glatton, expecting to learn that operations had been notified that Cliff had made a safe landing. Operations had heard nothing, but at that time there was still little concern.

It was two hours after Robbie had returned to Glatton that we learned Cliff had crashed into a grove of trees near Great Rollright in Oxfordshire and that all men aboard had been killed. I had always admired and respected Cliff, but now that I had been flying with him being the pilot, I had gotten to know him even better and felt closer to him. Cliff was tall, dark, and truly handsome. He had a striking resemblance to the famous movie star, Clark Gable. He even had the same groomed Gable mustache. Clark Gable was a B-17 pilot, too, stationed only a few miles from Glatton. Mankin and Carbery said when they went on pass with Cliff, he was often mistaken for Gable, and Cliff enjoyed every minute of it, especially the attention from women. What a sad ending to one great person, Lt. Cliff Hendrickson, from Jasper, Indiana. It was also the end to a capable and well-trained crew that flew only one combat mission.

» This is an edited excerpt, pages 110-117, from *Into Life's School: My World War II Memories*, the book written by Cliff Digre, available at the website: [www.intolifesschool.com](http://www.intolifesschool.com). This is the first of a 2-part article.

## ► Travel Fund

### English Travel Fund

Our sincerest appreciation to all of you who have contributed to the English Travel Fund. You have helped the Association cover a portion of our English Historians' expenses when they joined us in Savannah. This small, but extremely important, group is now leading the way as we prepare for our Return To Glatton in May. Although our 2113 reunion in Dayton, Ohio, seems a long way off, the Travel Fund is an open account with our Treasurer and your contributions are welcome at any time. Contributions should be marked "English Travel Fund" and mailed to:

Lori Barnett, Treasurer  
457th Bomb Group Association

## ► Connington News

### Glatton Monument Maintenance Fund

As a follow-up to our agreement with the Connington Parish Council which has assumed responsibility for maintaining the Monument and monument grounds, Spring 2012 is an excellent time to donate funds for this ongoing work. Donations for the Maintenance Fund can be sent to Treasurer, Lori Barnett. Contributions received this spring will be delivered to the fund during our mini-reunion in Glatton, May, 2012.

## ► Thank You

"I appreciate this opportunity to thank the members of the 457th Bomb Group Association for allowing me to serve as Secretary and News Letter Editor these past several years. It was an honor and a privilege. I will still take care of the PX and after the holidays Chris will include an order form in a future newsletter.

I have made many friends and have come to love you like family. I will always remember the honor paid to me at the Savannah Reunion. Thank you so much. Please keep in touch! I hope to see you at future reunions."

Sincerely, Nancy Toth

## ► Officers & Appointments

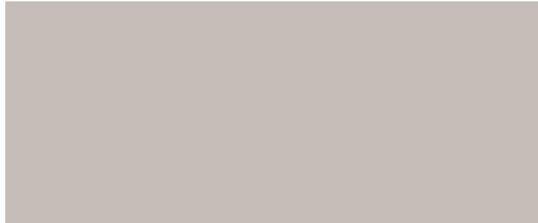
|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| <b>John Pearson</b><br>President             | jonpearson@cavtel.net<br>1900 Lauderdale Drive C-315, Richmond, VA 23238          | P: 804. 740. 2635                      |
| <b>Joe De Luccia</b><br>Vice-President       | jaadeeluu@aol.com<br>214 Cambridge Ave., Saddle Brook, NJ 07663                   | P: 201. 797. 9245                      |
| <b>Trisha Mach</b><br>Secretary              | kai967@yahoo.com<br>3101 Woodbridge Drive, Bedford, TX 76021                      | P: 817. 354. 8624                      |
| <b>Lori Barnett</b><br>Treasurer             | Lpbarnett223@aim.com<br>304 Old West Point Road, Starkville, MS 39759             | P: 662. 418. 8563                      |
| <b>Vacant</b><br>Director - 2 year           |   |  |
| <b>James Hanley</b><br>Director - 4 year     | hanley25@hotmail.com<br>2552 Thorn Oak Drive, #80, Medford, OR 97501              | P: 541. 840. 1301                      |
| <b>Will Fluman, Jr.</b><br>Director - 6 year | MR-SHORT-CUT@hotmail.com<br>132 Ore Bank Road, Dillsburg, PA 17019                | P: 570. 971. 5757                      |
| <b>Joe Toth</b><br>Immed. Past Pres.         | jandjtoth@comcast.net<br>449 Sunset Lane, Pueblo, CO 81005                        | P: 719. 566. 1714                      |
| <b>James Bass</b><br>Legal Advisor           | jlbas@bassandbass.com<br>P.O. Box 500, Carthage, TN 37030-0500                    | P: 615. 735. 1122<br>F: 615. 735. 3149 |
| <b>Curt Musheno</b><br>Webmaster             | webmaster@457thbombgroupassoc.org<br>2001 Heim Hill Road, Montoursville, PA 17754 | P: 570. 974. 1940                      |
| <b>Chris Sechrist</b><br>Newsletter Editor   | nephoto@embarqmail.com<br>36 Shank Road, Carlisle, PA 17015                       | P: 717. 776. 5313                      |

## ► English Historians

|                       |   |                   |
|-----------------------|---|-------------------|
| <b>John Walker</b>    | 29 Chancery Lane, Eye, Peterborough,<br>England PE6 7FY   | P: 44 1733 222994 |
| <b>Tim Newell</b>     | tim.newell@ymail.com<br>Virginia Cottage Church Lane, Conington, Peterborough,<br>England PE7 3QA | P: 44 1487 830450 |
| <b>Richard Pobgee</b> | richardpobgee@hotmail.com<br>42 New Road, Whittlesey, Cambridgeshire,<br>England PE7 1SU          | P: 44 1733 701872 |
| <b>Chris Cronin</b>   | chris_cronin@live.co.uk   |                   |

## ► Past Presidents

|                                    |                                     |                             |
|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| <b>1973-75:</b> William Willborn   | <b>1986-87:</b> Clayton Bejot       | <b>2001-03:</b> Will Fluman |
| <b>1976:</b> Howard Larsen (d)     | <b>1988-89:</b> Donald Sellon       | <b>2003-05:</b> Don Nielsen |
| <b>1977-79:</b> Bill Siler         | <b>1990-91:</b> John Welch          | <b>2005-07:</b> James Bass  |
| <b>1980-81:</b> Edward Reppa (d)   | <b>1992-93:</b> Roland Byers(d)     | <b>2007-09:</b> George Grau |
| <b>1982-83:</b> Daniel Graham (d)  | <b>1993-97:</b> Billy Hightower (d) | <b>2009-11:</b> Joe Toth    |
| <b>1984:</b> William Good (d)      | <b>1997-99:</b> Lee Zimmerman       | <b>2011-13:</b>             |
| <b>1985:</b> David Summerville (d) | <b>1999-01:</b> Craig Harris (d)    | <b>2013-15:</b>             |



Visit the website today at [www.457thbombgroupassoc.org](http://www.457thbombgroupassoc.org)

## ▶ 2012 Calendar of Events

▶ **March 30, 2012**  
Newsletter article deadline

▶ **April 2012**  
Spring Newsletter

▶ **May 26 - 30, 2012**  
Return to Glatton mini reunion;  
details will be posted on the web.

▶ **June 30, 2012**  
Newsletter article deadline

▶ **July 2012**  
Summer Newsletter

## ▶ Editors Report

### **A note from Chris Sechrist**

Thank you to those who sent articles and other related items of interest for inclusion in the December newsletter. Please realize that, although I will do my best, I may not be able to include attachments with your article.

### **Future newsletter articles**

I encourage your continued contribution to future **FIREBALL** Newsletters. Feel free to submit memoirs; family stories... past or present; or other bits of information that you would like to add. Please submit your typed stories to me by the deadline date noted in

the Calendar of Events of the newsletter. If I receive an article after the deadline I will hold it for the following paper.

This is your newsletter; bring it to life with your story!

### **Contact**

▶ **mail:**  
Chris Sechrist  
36 Shank Road, Carlisle, PA 17015

▶ **email:**  
Chris Sechrist  
[nepphoto@embarqmail.com](mailto:nepphoto@embarqmail.com)

Visit the website today at  
[www.457thbombgroupassoc.org](http://www.457thbombgroupassoc.org)