



Est. July 1971 ▶ Bentonville, AR

September 2013 ▶ Vol. 43 Issue 79



▶ Special Report

State-side Reunion 2013

Dayton, Ohio



▶ Wright Patterson Air Force Base & National Museum of the U.S. Air Force

Eleven WWII veterans began to gather on Wednesday, June 19, 2013 with friends and family at the Hope Hotel in Dayton, Ohio. Thursday marked the start of the 457th Bomb Group '2013 State-side Reunion' and the memorabilia room was open for viewing. Many great reviews were offered on behalf of the outstanding and memorabilia items and display work. Thank you to Lori Barnett, who spent many months prior to the reunion



▶ The memorabilia room is a popular spot to gather and hear accounts of WWII.

coordinating this long-distance event. Lori was, as usual, on hand as members registered for the occasion. That evening, members of the Bomb Group gathered for light refreshments and social gathering at a Welcome Reception.

Our Friday agenda began early, as we set out for the Wright Patterson Airforce Base and National Museum of the USAF. Officials treated the group to a special early bird tour of the museum before



▶ Members enjoy a Thursday evening meet and greet reception.

the doors were opened to the public, and the men were given a close-up inspection of the B-17 aircraft, the 'Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby'. Each of the men took the opportunity to enjoy reminiscing about the old days, providing personal accounts of the jobs assigned to each man on their aircraft.



▶ Our WWII Veterans pose in front of the B-17, "Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby", at the Wright Patterson Air Force Base and Museum.

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► Return to Glatton

May 23 - May 28, 2014

The mini-reunion of the 457th Bomb Group Association will meet in Peterborough at the Bull Hotel for Memorial Day Weekend activities. Registration will begin Saturday, May 24th. Attendees can convene beginning May 23rd. Final details to be announced via our February edition of the Fireball newsletter and the website.

Contact: Candy Fluman
717.432.1067
Flumancl@aol.com

Visit the website today
www.457thbombgroupassoc.org



► Book Review

Send your book review now

Have you written a book about your experiences during WWII? Do you know someone who has, or have you read a book worthy of sharing? Send your book review to Chris Sechrist at Fireballnews@outlook.com.



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, 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

► Donations

Your Contributions Count!

The 457th Bomb Group Association continues to undertake new projects, as well as maintain those that have been completed over the years.

Please consider a donation to support our ongoing Projects Fund.

Contributions should be mailed to
Lori Barnett, Treasurer.

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: _____

(continued from page 1)
State-Side Reunion 2013



► Del Schwab in front of the Shoo Shoo Shoo Baby

Once the doors were officially opened to the public, museum attendees were on hand to give small group tours to the 457th Bomb Group. Members were also allowed to roam the rest of the museum at their leisure, as well as peruse the museum gift shop before heading back to the hotel. The evening was then free for individuals to grab a bite to eat and enjoy the town of Dayton, or stay and socialize in the hotel restaurant.



► James Hanley, Antonio Enriquez, and William Gearhart exchange war-time stories.

Saturday, the bus was loaded and we were on our way to the Champaign Aviation Museum. The museum is home to the 'Champaign Lady'. This spectacular B-17 aircraft is being reconstructed and the public is permitted a bird's eye view of the work. Our men were given an opportunity to see rivets being fitted and walk through the cargo area of the aircraft. They were also asked to sign a section of the airplane. Volunteers of the aviation museum provided a wonderful luncheon which included a selection of tasty specialty pies. One local pilot, Dewey Davenport, offered his airplane and his time, and treated members of the 457th to a magnificent and delightful surprise; a ride in his biplane! Four of our Veterans had the privilege of taking to the skies once more, in this unique experience.



► Eleven WWII Veterans pose in front of the "Champaign Lady", a B-17 being reconstructed at the Champaign Aviation Museum.



► Pilot, Dewey Davenport prepares for takeoff with several veterans.

► Antonio Enriquez



► James Hanley



► William Gearhart



► Angie Friedman

This year, during our State-side Memorial Service, we honored 48 WWII Veterans who passed away.



► 2013 Memorial Service

Following the candlelight service, the General Meeting of Members was held. Bill Siler was nominated and chosen as the new president for 2014-2015. This day also marked Bill's 97th birthday. Bill was given his very own birthday cake and the group took part in singing and merriment as part of the celebration.

During the Closing Banquet on Sunday evening the Bomb Group enjoyed a word from our new president, the National Anthem was sung, a wonderful dinner was enjoyed, and group pictures



► Group pictures were taken during the Closing Banquet.

were taken. The following day, after a farewell breakfast, good-byes were said and everyone departed for a safe journey back to their homes.

Mark your calendar for two upcoming events: Spring 2014; the Mini Reunion in Peterborough, England; and Spring, 2015; the next State-side Reunion in Savannah, Georgia! More to come!

submitted by Justina Sechrist

Web Viewers:

[Click here for more 2013 State-side photos.](#)

[Candle Light Service](#)

[Scenic Dayton](#)

[Champaign Aviation](#)

[Welcome Banquet](#)

[Closing Banquet](#)

[Wright Patterson](#)

[Memorabilia Room](#)

[videos: WWII 457th Bomb Group](#)

► President's Review

Dear Fireballers,

Thank you for this privilege of serving another term as president of our civil association. Recognizing that many contributed more and are more deserving than myself, it is indeed personally humbling as reflection rolls back the 42 years since our organization was founded based on our 457th WWII experience.

It is not unusual for letters of this type directed to members to typically draw conclusions and advise operational changes that frequently require time to test and thus judge their worth. That is not being proposed at this point but some ideas are offered herein for members to consider and offer much needed critical feedback and/or alternative methodology in dealing with future controlled and uncontrolled events.

Very likely there are superior approaches to some existing or developing problems that regular and associate members can contribute to the solution of, downgrade or upgrade the importance thereof, or offer plans for these or problems not noted in this communication. In some cases previous officials or Board of Director action may have dealt with certain issues and my awareness remains blank; hopefully a matter soon to be corrected.

► Highlights

A War Story: My Long Lost Mission

by William Gearhart

This saga is one that began in 1943, and one I actually lived, but sometimes it seems like a dream rather than reality. My name is William Gearhart, and I was a veteran of the Army Air Force in WWII.

On December 1, 1943, I enlisted as an Aviation Cadet at the age of 17. I was activated to active duty on February 14, 1944. During the time I was in basic training as an Aviation Cadet. I was assigned as a gunner and went to gunnery school in Las Vegas, Nevada. After completing gunnery school, I became a Ball Turret Gunner. Then I was assigned to a flying crew consisting of ten persons and we trained together for four months. Upon completing training, my crew and I were sent to England on a troop ship called the USS Wakefield. We left the U.S. on December 13, 1944 and arrived at Liverpool, England on December 22, 1944. We were transported from Liverpool by train to Glatton air base. We were then assigned to the 457th Bomb Group and the 748th Squadron of the 8th Air Force. I flew my first mission on January 17, 1945 and 27 more, making a total of 28 missions. Three of these missions were to the

Recent contribution of sums greater than normal from new members intended for projects contemplated but lacking definite establishment may need to be held in separate accounts with provision for return to donors in the event of future developments whatever that may be.

Whatever the future of the 457th Association is to be, we all recognize it will differ greatly from that enjoyed in the past. This may require revision of the Bylaws effecting change in nearly all aspects of operations, Membership response to this request for feedback can be valuable in considering such issues as dues and future funding of operations, reunion continuation and resultant re-planning, committee assignments, etc. Additionally, consideration should be given to the possible situation of the younger generation assuming more responsibility in the organization structure and continuing operations.

They may desire to get some kind of pledge from present members as to their willingness to support such continuation.

It would be my great pleasure to greet all who can find the time and develop the effort to join other "fireballers" at the Bull in Peterborough next May.

Thanks, from your grateful president,
William (Bill) Siler

target, Berlin and my last mission to Berlin was March 18, 1945. This last mission was my most memorable. It was mission #212, and the target was Berlin. It was the largest mission the 8th Air Force ever made, with 2000 bombers that day. Out plane S/N 43-38902 named "Lady Be Good" and piloted by Lt. Elmer Witten, was one of the 2000 B-17 bombers. We were flying in the upper element of the lower Squadron when we were attacked by ME-262's German jet fighters, along with a great amount of flak. We sustained damage to three of our four engines, causing my pilot to lose control temporarily. We lost altitude from 26,000 ft. dropping down to 9,000 ft. over the target. Fortunately, we got an engine back and now with two engines we were able to maintain altitude. My pilot and co-pilot, now having control of the plane, made it possible for the bombardier to drop the bombs. My pilot then requested our navigator for a heading for the closest friendly air base where we might make landing. Then my pilot ordered me to drop the Ball Turret to lighten the plane. I proceeded to drop the Ball Turret with the help of a crew member. I believe that I am the only person alive to have had the distinction of dropping the Ball Turret over the Berlin area. We flew for 19 minutes with two engines and through the grace of

► Editors Note

Lifetime member seeks info

Last spring I received a note from Stan Krohn asking for assistance to locate information with regard to the 23 missions he and his crew flew, beginning June 1944. Their last two missions took place two days after D-Day. Stan was part of the 751st Squadron and, although the spelling may be incorrect, I believe the name of his pilot was Capt. Mays.

At 96, Stan is a lifetime member of the 457th Bomb Group. If anyone would be willing to research Stan Krohn's missions, I know he would be ever so grateful. You may contact me for Stan's address and phone number.

Thank you, in advance, for assisting this brave warrior of WWII.

Chris Sechrist
fireballnews@outlook.com

God we made a safe landing on a base made with steel landing mats. The name of the base was called Lemburg and located in Poland. It was occupied by the Russian army. We were interned in a camp for a short time and then we were transported by truck to an American army base called Potava in Russia where we received special orders (#42), dated March 21, 1945, directing us to proceed to London, England. Upon arrival there, we reported to the Escape Officer, Headquarters, 8th Air Force. We traveled by rail surface vessel, belligerent vessel, and/or air in military or commercial air craft. The following is my account of the round about way, and the way we returned to our home base; Glatton, England. We were flown by a Russian pilot on a C- 47 transport to Tehran, Iran where we were able to get some regular uniforms, since all we had to wear was our heated flying suits. We continued making short flights or hops to different countries to get back to Glatton England. The flights were as follows: Cairo, Egypt; Athens, Greece; Naples, Italy; Rome Italy; Marseille, France; Paris, France; Brussels, Belgium; London, England; and finally to Glatton, England on approximately April 8, 1945.

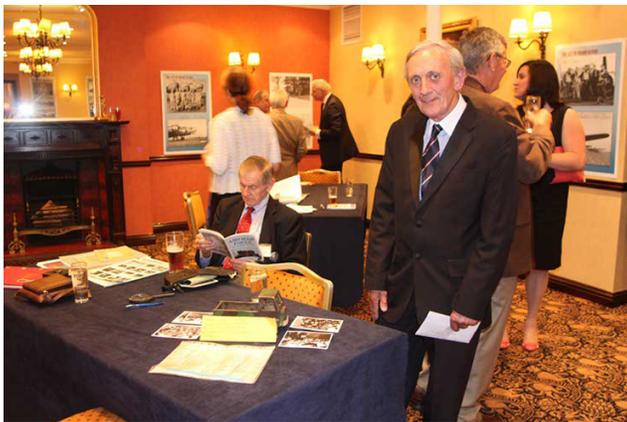
Upon returning to Glatton, I and part of my crew were sent to Spetchley Park, AAF Station 562, on April 9, 1945 for rest and recuperation.

► Highlights

A Christmas Party: 1943 & 1944

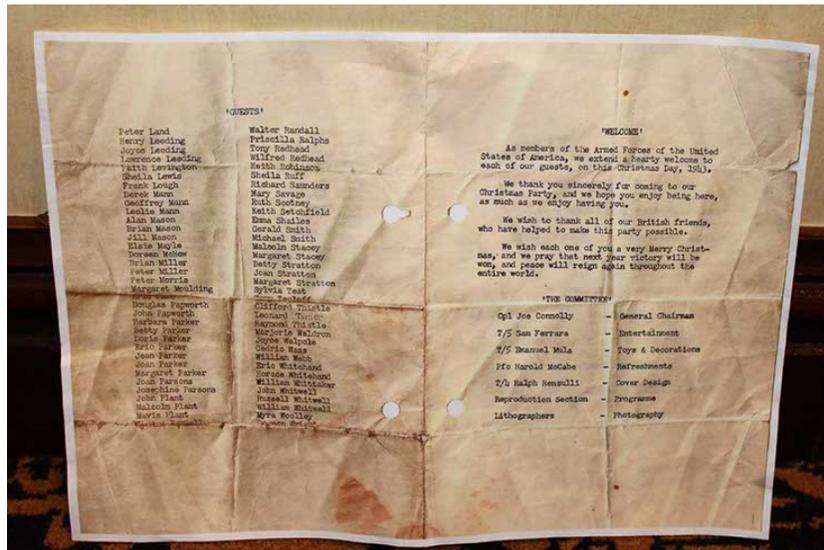
by Peter Hall

My name is Peter Hall and I am 75 years old at the time I am writing this account of my recollection of 1943 to 1944. The school I attended was in a village by the name of Conington in what is now Cambridgeshire, England. American Army Engineers built the Airdrome, and we had Nissen huts at the back of the school and even one over the other side of the road to the school. Before the Airdrome was completed an American service man came to the school and asked if any children would like to spend Christmas day with them. A note was sent with us to my mother, and we both said we did not want to go as it would be Christmas day and we would like to stay home with mother and play with the toys we hoped to get from Santa.



► Peter Hall stands with his collection, including his wooden toy lorry, a gift from Santa.

Mother became very cross with us and said the Americans have come a long way from their homes to come here to help us with the war. If you will not give up one Christmas day of your life to help them enjoy their Christmas as they must be missing their own families at this time, you should be ashamed. So, after breakfast mother took us to the pick up point. There, waiting for us, was a large American Army lorry. We were lifted onto



► This photo is the original guest list of the 1943 Children's Christmas Party.

the back of the lorry, with two American service men for company. We felt a bit lost, just the two of us, as no other children came from the village we lived in.

Upon arrival at the Airdrome, we found ourselves surrounded by a tent city. Most tents had a wooden door. Each child was given an American service man to entertain us. Mine was a very kindly chap I remembered with glasses. He took

me to a tent he lived in with three other service men and he showed me a photo of his little girl back in the States. We talked until lunchtime. He also gave me candy and hot drink, as it was cold outside but the tent did have a stove in it. We went to a very large tent for lunch and he sat next to me, having his lunch in a mess tin. We had ours on a white plate. We had turkey meat, brussel sprouts, baked potatoes with a white sauce.

Also on the plate was a Christmas pudding with a brandy sauce. We had not seen this all on one plate before. By now I was really enjoying myself. After lunch we were shown the lorries and jeeps. We were given candy and chocolate bars. We then said goodbye to our hosts. There had only been about ten of us in all, but we had a most enjoyable day.

The next Christmas party was not on Christmas day but was on a much grander scale. We were

picked up again in a large American lorry. The Airdrome had been completed by then. On arrival we were told that Santa would be coming in an aircraft. A small aircraft landed and out came Santa, complete with sack.

We were then transported to a very large Nissen hut and played games. After singing Christmas carols, we were shown a Disney film, and had tea and cakes, given candy. Santa gave us all a present. Mine was a wooden toy lorry made by a service man on the Airdrome, which I still have. It

was built out of spare timber.

Another memory I have of the time the Americans were here was waiting for the Red Cross van to come back to our village to see if any doughnuts were left at the end of the day. The girls that operated it lodged in our village. To watch the airplanes come back from raids with engines not working and holes in the fuselage, having taken off when we were in school. Some, we noticed, never came back. The noise on engine testing and take off was sometimes so great we had to stop lessons in school, and we were allowed to play with toy bricks.



► The toy lorry, given to Peter by Santa made by a service man on the Airdrome.

The 457th Bomb Group Association would like to extend a deep appreciation to Peter Hall for sharing his childhood memories during the 2012 Glatton Mini-Reunion. The collection is truly a wonderful piece of history!

► In Memory

Bartley M. Foster



Bartley Foster of Edina, MN and Naples, FL was born on August 19, 1921 in McGregor, IA to

Charles and Ella Foster. He was a WWII Veteran of the 8th Army Air Force, serving as a B-17 navigator. After the war, his business career was spent at Northwestern National Life Insurance Company. Bartley was married to his loving wife, Mary Lou, for 39 years. Together, they had two sons, David and Thomas, several grandchildren, and a great grand child. Bartley M. Foster passed away on June 12, 2012. He also leaves behind a brother, Charles and a sister, Eleanor and their families. The 457th Bomb Group Association would like to express our condolences to the family of Bartley Foster.

submitted by the family

Albert Francis Porta



My father passed away on November 17, 2012 at the age of 92. He was always very proud to have served in WWII as part of the 457th Bomb Group in England as part

of their armaments team. He lived most of his life in Atlantic City and Pleasantville, New Jersey.

He passed away peacefully from natural causes. The VA was kind to him during his lifetime and helped him thru his final years financially.

submitted by Tom Porta

Joseph L. O'Rear

Joseph O'Rear, 92, passed away June 29, 2013 preceded in death by his true love, Joan O'Rear on May 15, 2013. He proudly served in WWII in the 748th Bomb Squadron of the 457th Bomb Group as a Radio Mechanic in England. He received a Bachelors degree of Science in Trade and Industrial Education from Purdue University and was a member of the American Legion and Rotary International. After retiring from his insurance career with Rollins Burdick Hunter, formerly J.S. Kemper Agency in Chicago, he was a Score Volunteer in Indiana. He is survived by his two daughters, Mary Michele and Annetta Hubata and two grandchildren. He lived life his way and will truly be missed.

submitted by his loving daughters

William D. Bird

William D. "Bill" Bird, 89, died January 29, 2013. He was born September 19, 1923 at Birds



Point, Missouri, a small town on the Mississippi River settled by his ancestors preceding the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, before it was part of the United States.

He served ten years as an Air Force officer, flying as a navigator with the 457th Bomb Group of the 8 Air Force out of England, during WWII. His crew led twelve planes on a successful mission on January 14, 1945 to take out the bridge at Cologne without damaging the cathedral which was close nearby. Three of his crew have the exact same memory of their orders. -- "If you damage the Cathedral, just don't bother to come back". This was recalled by Bill and by Bob Viles (deceased) and Ken Kuckler (now the only survivor of their crew).

After WWII, Bill trained as a weather officer and radar officer. Then he returned to Missouri University for his degree in Electrical Engineering. After his graduation, the family came to California. His license plate frame reads "457th Bomb Group, Mighty Eighth Air Force".

His wife of 64 years, Nancy, survives. Their descendants live in California, Missouri, Idaho, Mexico and Finland.

submitted by Nancy Bird

John M. Tabak



John Michael Tabak was born on April 5, 1921 in Stratford CT, son of Mary Hrasch Tabak and Andrew Tabak. John graduated in 1941 and served in WWII and the Korean War.

He worked as a Logistics Engineer for 39 years at Sikorsky Aircraft. In 1948 John and Beverly Virginia Gaito were married and enjoyed 64 years together.

John Tabak was very proud of his WWII service. He was a T/Sgt Flight Engineer with the 749th Squadron of the 457th Bomb Group, stationed in Glatton, England. The photograph below was taken of his crew in 1944 as they began their heavy bomber training together. They flew 57 missions with the 749th Squadron until VE Day, May 8, 1945. Their last mission was to fly their B-17 home. On June 6, 1945, with their crew and an additional ten passengers, they left Glatton and, via Wales, Iceland and Labrador, they arrived at Bradley Field, Windsor Locks, CT on June 8, 1945 – a total of 21.3 hours flying time. Following a 30-day recuperation leave, John reported to Sioux Falls for reassignment. Fortunately, VJ Day meant the end of the war and he spent his last three months as an MP with the Office of Provost Marshal in Harlingen Field, TX. He was discharged in time for Thanksgiving.

John was recalled to active duty during the Korean War, which was spent at Langley Airfield Base in Virginia as a Helicopter Specialist during 1951. He returned to Sikorsky Aircraft after the war. He also kept in touch with members of his B-17 crew; Donald Beck, Navigator; David Omelich, Pilot; and Carl Hanneken, Waist Gunner.

John M. Tabak, devoted husband, father, and grandfather, passed away on September 12, 2012, at the age of 91. He was honored to be a member of the 457th Bomb Group Association.

submitted by Beverly Tabak



► T/Sgt Flight Engineer, John Tabak pictured with his crew in October, 1944.

► In Memory

Memorialized at the Dayton Reunion in 2013

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

Joe Ambrosetti	Melvin J. Kieffer
Donald D. Beck	Worth G. Kirkman
Paul A. Birchen	Wade E. Knudson
James D. Blackmore	Thomas E. Lee
John Bouzoudes	Charles J. McClane
Wallace F. Boyes	William J. McKelvey
Charles J. Brady	Peter Mihalik
Stanley Brown	Albert L. Mikels
Calvin D. Campbell	Stewart Moody
Patrick Connelly	William D. Moore
William N. Davidson	Donald E. Polen
Fayette Dennison	Albert Porta
Clifford Digre	Cedric N. Priest
Jim Everhart	Richard C. Seely
Will Fluman, Sr.	Walter R. Sprankle
Norman Franz	Edward R. Stevens
Don Gravelle	John M. Tabak
John F. Gwin	Robert Viles
Stephen L. Griff	William W. Ward
Ejner Norman Gunderson	John D. "Zeke" Ward
Paul Hertenstein	Clinton E. Wells
Robert Hooper	Robert A. Whitby
Russell Karl	Hal H. Willet
Eugene Key	Thodore C. Yates

► Travel Fund

English Travel Fund

Our sincerest appreciation to all of you who have contributed to the English Travel Fund in the past. You have helped the Association cover a portion of our English Historians' expenses when they join us in the U.S. This small, but extremely important, group is now leading the way as we prepare for our Return To Glatton in May, 2014. Although our 2115 Savannah reunion 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

► Officers & Appointments

William W. Siler President	bs3939@charter.net 2661 Nutmeg Ave., Morro Bay, CA 93442	P: 805.771.9589
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Delbert Schwab Director - 2 year		
James Hanley Director - 4 year	hanley25@hotmail.com 2552 Thorn Oak Drive, #80, Medford, OR 97501	P: 541.840.1301
Will Fluman, Jr. Director - 6 year	MR-SHORT-CUT@hotmail.com 132 Ore Bank Road, Dillsburg, PA 17019	P: 570.971.5757
John Pearson Immed. Past Pres.	jandjtoth@comcast.net 449 Sunset Lane, Pueblo, CO 81005	P: 719.566.1714
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► English Historians

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Chris Cronin	chris_cronin@live.co.uk	

► Past Presidents

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



Visit the website today at www.457thbombgroupassoc.org

▶ 2013-2014 Calendar of Events

▶ December 30, 2013

Winter newsletter article deadline

▶ February, 2014

Winter Newsletter

▶ May 23-28, 2014

Return to Glatton mini-reunion

▶ June 30, 2014

Summer newsletter article deadline

▶ August, 2014

Summer Newsletter

▶ Editors Report

Newsletter by mail or online?

I hope you have had an opportunity to see the full color **FIREBALL** newsletter online.

www.457thbombgroupassoc.org

We will continue to print and mail a black & white version of the newsletter. If you would like to be notified by email when a new **FIREBALL** issue is available, **in lieu of a printed version** please contact Trisha Mach at

secretary.457thbombgroupassoc@yahoo.com.

She will send you a link that will take you directly to the latest newsletter.

Chris Sechrist, *editor*

Our Departed Veterans

During each of our State-side reunions a ceremony is held to honor those veterans who have passed away during that year. Please let us know if your dear Veteran has passed away, by contacting:

Trisha Mach

1862 Halekoa Dr., Honolulu, HI 96821

or by emailing Trisha at:

secretary.457thbombgroupassoc@yahoo.com

She will add the name to a list of those who will be honored at the Dayton Reunion, June 19-24.

Additionally, if you desire, we will recognize your loved one in the **FIREBALL** newsletter. **Feel free to submit obituaries, memoirs, & family stories... past or present to Chris Sechrist.** I will place your article in a future newsletter.

Contact

▶ mail:

Chris Sechrist
36 Shank Road, Carlisle, PA 17015

▶ email:

Chris Sechrist
fireballnews@outlook.com

Visit the website today at
www.457thbombgroupassoc.org