

483RD BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION

(1943) Ephrata, WA – MacDill Field, Tampa, FL – Steparone, San Severo-Pisa, Italy (1945)

VOLUME 40

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NUMBER 2

President's Message



It's getting closer and closer - yes, the reunion is just a short time away. Sandee West Maeda has been working away in getting all the details taken care of to help us have the best reunion in San Diego as possible. In the last newsletters we have lined out some of the activities

that will be a part of the reunion tours. A few more details have been added to this newsletter. Lots of great activities and any excuse is a great excuse to have the opportunity to visit the warmth, we hope, of Southern California. Looking forward to the trip and visting with all of our members in attendance. As we are all aging up, (yes it does sneak up on you; arthritis is no fun - ask me, or just watch me walk!) and some of our veterans are no longer able to travel, these remaining reunions may be a dwindling opportunity to visit with old friends.

So - those of you who have not made arrangements for this year's reunion - today is the day to get the date on the calendar and get your reservation form into Sandee for the reunion and to reserve your room!

As Sandee would say, Aloha, but hope to see you in San Diego.

Dennis

2017 Reunion – San Diego

The 483rd Bombardment Group (H) Association Reunion in San Diego will be from October 17-21, 2017. Don't wait to make your hotel reservation:

Holiday Inn Bayside
4875 N Harbor Drive
San Diego, CA 92106
Toll Free: 800-662-8899
Email: res@holinnbayside.com
Website: <http://www.holinnbayside.com/>

The room rate is \$125 per night (single or double) and if you would like to extend your time in San Diego, this rate will be valid for 3 days prior and post reunion dates. Make sure you reference that you are with the 483rd Bombardment Group.

From our President Elect:

Dear 483rd Association members,

As we look forward to our upcoming reunion, I am very excited about new opportunities and new directions for the Association to continue to be a vibrant and growing organization now and in the future. Earlier this week, I was contacted by an individual from Georgia, who had two relatives who served in the 483rd. These new generations of individuals are becoming a new focus for us, as we keep alive the legacy of our veterans and their contributions to our liberties.

Members of our Association have been hard at work putting together plans for picking up the torch which has been carried by our founding members and carrying it forward. We have been exploring

Continued on page 2 -

TAPS – Deceased Members Not Previously Reported in Newsletter			
Name	Squad	Date	Reported By
BOWLES, FLOYD S	815	1-16-17	GUY VENIER (OBIT)
BURNEY, RUSSELL W	840	1-31-17	GUY VENIER (OBIT)
EICHENBERG, RICHARD K	840	5-12-16	GUY VENIER (OBIT)
GARBERA, THEODORE	816	3-2-17	GUY VENIER (OBIT)
JOHN, GEORGE J	815	1-25-17	GUY VENIER (OBIT)
LISSAU, JOHN R	817	2-27-17	GUY VENIER (OBIT)
MCCALMAN, ROBERT L	816	8-7-16	GUY VENIER (OBIT)
THOMPSON, PHILLIP O	840	9-18-16	BARBARA THOMPSON

Membership News

Dear Comrades:

After every newsletter mailing, I get one or two newsletters returned to me because of an incorrect address. Naturally, I try to contact the member whose newsletter was returned and I find that he has no phone number listed or it is disconnected. Right now I have about 70 members who are active but there is no way to contact them to rectify their addresses. I have no choice other than to take them off the mailing list. If you have any friends who have no phone number listed in the roster, please contact them some way so that they can be reinstated.

Thank you and God willing, will see you in San Diego.

Guy



continued from page 1-

Message from our President Elect

new ways to improve the structure of the Association, which should make it easier to fund projects in the future. This includes some subtle, but necessary changes to our current 501-C tax exempt status (a different category of tax exempt 501-C, technically a change from 501(c)19 to 501(c)3), which should allow the Association to request grants from public and private foundations.

Several of us feel that this is very important to creating a vision for the future of the Association. These types of issues will be brought into a sharper focus at our upcoming reunion, but include the possibility of a fund raising campaign to create a "nest egg" which will finance in perpetuity our current scholarship grants, as well as the maintenance of the Warner-Robbins museum exhibition and other projects which the Association would like to take on.

I have been in close discussion with others in the Association and we think that these are very realistic and worthy goals, which will continue to honor our veterans on an ongoing basis. Now, we need to put these ideas in front of the Association at large and decide whether or not others feel the same way. These will be important topics of discussion at our upcoming meeting, so mark the dates on your calendars and attend if you are able. It is an exciting new mission for the 483rd to fly.

Best regards,

Russell Daniel

2017 Reunion – San Diego, CA

October 17 - 21, 2017

Hi Everyone! Only 4 more months until we will be together for our 39th Reunion in beautiful San Diego, CA.

★★★ IMPORTANT – PLEASE READ ★★★

Our meal on Friday night will be on the submarine base that is very close to our hotel. However, this venue necessitates another layer of information to be included with your registration. On the back of the attached registration form, you will find a form to fill out and send in with your registration. This must be completed for each person covered by the registration form and match each person's ID. I know that this is a bit hectic to include but I guarantee the venue will be worth the effort. The view will be of the entire San Diego Skyline. You will notice there is also a place for a number. That number says it is your registration number but it is really for your social security number. I have called it your registration number to make it more secure. Also for security purposes please DO NOT use hyphens (-). An example would be 111111111 rather than 111-11-1111. If you have any questions, please feel free to call me. If I am unable to answer the phone please leave me a message and I will get back to you as soon as possible.

I can't wait to see everyone. Please encourage your family members, friends and veterans to come this year. To date we have had two regular attendees pass away and another who cannot come this year due to health reasons. We need our numbers as high as we can get them. See you all soon!

Sandee West Maeda

Reunion Chair

PS: If you have already sent in your registration form and have more than yourself included on your registration form, please fill out the Friday Night Information form for all that your registration form covers. Thanks!

We will be staying at the Holiday Inn Bayside. Our room rate is \$125.00 plus tax per day. The Holiday Inn Bayside caters to reunion groups, especially the military and it was the "best deal in town". Be sure that when you make your reservation you tell the person on the other end that you are with the 483rd Bombardment Group (see page 1 for hotel contact information).



Here's some information on the tours:

Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery

Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery is a federal military cemetery in the city of San Diego, California. It is located on the grounds of the former Army coastal artillery station Fort Rosecrans.



Cabrillo National Monument



Climbing out of his boat and onto shore in 1542, Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo stepped into history as the first European

to set foot on what is now the West Coast of the United States. The park is home to a wealth of cultural and natural resources.

La Jolla Lighthouse

The Old Point Loma Lighthouse stood watch over the entrance to San Diego Bay for 36 years. The lighthouse was first lit



on November 15, 1855. What seemed to be a good location 422 feet above sea level, however, had a serious flaw - fog and low clouds often obscured the light. On March 23, 1891, a new lighthouse was opened closer to the water at the tip of the Point.

Junipero Serra Museum



Operated by the San Diego History Center, the Junipero Serra Museum is an iconic regional landmark. Located just above Old Town San Diego

State Historic Park, the site of the first permanent European settlement in what is today the State of California.

Old Town San Diego

Old Town is the historic heart of San Diego. Created in 1769, Old Town San Diego was California's first



settlement with only a mission and a fort. Here you can experience life from the early Mexican-American period of 1821-1872 through rich living history programs.

Balboa Park

Balboa Park is a 1,200-acre urban cultural park in San Diego. In addition to open space areas, natural vegetation zones, green belts, gardens, and walking paths, it contains museums, several theaters, and the world-famous San Diego Zoo. There are also many recreational facilities and several gift shops and restaurants within the boundaries of the park. Placed in reserve in 1835, the park's site is one of the oldest in the United States dedicated to public recreational use.

The Veterans Museum at Balboa Park



The Veterans Museum at Balboa Park honors the men and women who served their country in the U.S. Armed Forces and Wartime

Merchant Marine by documenting their contributions and experiences and preserving their legacy for future generations through their individual stories.

Air and Space Museum at Balboa Park

Aviation history is truly a remarkable story, and it all unfolds at the San Diego Air & Space Museum. The motto of the Museum is:



Preserve - Inspire – Educate - Celebrate

Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum & Historical Foundation



Flying Leatherneck Aviation Museum is a one of a kind U.S. Marines aviation museum. This museum is located at MCAS

Miramar San Diego.

USS Midway

Explore a floating city at sea and relive nearly 50 years of world history aboard the



longest-serving Navy aircraft carrier of the 20th century. Exhibits range from the crew's sleeping quarters to a massive galley, engine room, the ship's jail, officers' country, post office, machine shops, and pilots' ready rooms, as well as primary flight control and the bridge high in the island over the flight deck.

Seaport Village



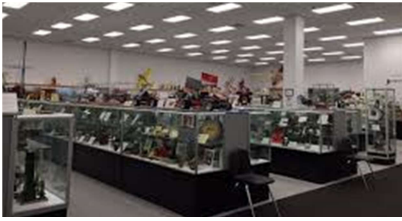
Seaport Village is a waterfront shopping and dining complex adjacent to San Diego Bay.

Craftsmanship Museum

The museum features the best craftsmen from around the world and their miniature projects in metal and wood and is the world's largest permanent collection of model engineering excellence.



Gemological Institute of America (GIA)



GIA, is a nonprofit institute dedicated to research and education in the field of gemology and the jewelry arts. Founded in 1931, GIA's mission is to protect all buyers and sellers of gemstones by setting and maintaining the standards used to evaluate gemstone quality. The institute does so through research, gem identification and diamond grading services and a variety of educational programs.

Museum of Making Music

The museum's mission is to "explore the accomplishments and impact of the music products industry through educational and interactive exhibitions and programs and directly connect visitors with hands-on music making."



Admiral Kidd Center



The Center is located on Naval Base Point Loma at the Naval Mine and Anti-Submarine Warfare Command (NMAWC).

Rare Luftwaffe Fighter Pilot's Jacket

By Richard Gurka, son of Lt. Edward F. Gurka, 815th

Shown in the next column is a picture of a rather rare Luftwaffe item. It is an electrically heated gray leather fighter pilot's jacket which was issued in late-1944 to early-1945 to pilots who flew ME 262 jets.

My research has discovered that it most likely was worn by a member of JG-7 or JV-44 - the "Galland Circus", which was comprised of the most famous Luftwaffe fighter pilots of WWII. Both of those elite jet fighter units were part of the "Defense of the Reich", and did battle with the 483rd Bomb Group throughout the campaign.

The father of a friend served in the 90th Infantry Division in WWII. He was on station on 08 May 1945 when a number of mixed unit Luftwaffe personnel surrendered. Just two days prior, several fellow soldiers were killed by some SS soldiers



("SS" is short for Schutzstaffel, the "Protection Squadron" under Adolf Hitler) who were driving a captured U.S. jeep. The SS soldiers were killed, but the 90th was in ill mood. So when the Luftwaffe personnel surrendered, my buddy's dad "liberated" this rare leather jacket, a forage cap and the uniform belt and buckle from the Luftwaffe pilot. (I wish he would have taken his pants too!!).

These artifacts had never seen the light of day until my buddy called me and asked if I would like to have them. He knew that my late father, Lt. Edward F. Gurka, of the 815th, flew with the 483rd when these ME262's were being utilized by the Krauts.

I know of one other similar jacket; it is in the RAF museum in London, England. It is remarkable that such WWII items still exist in the dusty attics of non-descript run down homes in small towns all over the country.

Regards,

Rich Gurka



German fighter pilot, Willie Unger, prior to transferring to JG-7 to fly the ME-262 jets

Did You Know?

This section contains reprints of selected stories and other interesting information from newsletters published during the past years and other 483rd BG publications.

An Unusual Story Came to Our Attention

MAD GUNNER OF THE FORTRESSES

Taken from "Big Week" by Glenn Infield

(reprinted from 483rd Newsletter, Vol. 6, No.1, Dec 1985)

"Big Week" was a combined Eighth and Fifteenth Air Force bombing operation against concentrated German aircraft industry targets during February 21-25, 1944. On February 25, 1944, the last day of the Big Week, approximately 1200 bombers took to the air - escorted by 1000 fighters. The Fifteenth assigned target was the Messerschmitt aircraft component plant at Regensburg Profenig.

The intensive daily maximum effort against tough targets caused a heavy loss among combat crew members. The survivors were under heavy stress after a whole week of steady combat flying. As a result, some were treading that rather delicate borderline between the normal and the abnormal - a condition which was often undetected by flight surgeons and commanders.

The story of the mysterious mad gunner goes like this:

A flight surgeon of the One Hundredth Group of the Third Division Eighth Air Force had first notified High Wycombe about the possibility of a mad gunner when a dead crewman, brought home in a bomber after the bombing of Brunswick on February 21, 1944, was discovered to have died from a fifty-caliber shell. At first it was thought to have been accidental. During the confusion and tenseness of an air battle, when one group of bombers flew almost within arm's reach of another group and both groups being penetrated by Luftwaffe fighters, it was entirely possible that some fifty-caliber rounds could go wild. When several other airmen died from fifty-caliber shells within the next three days, however, it became evident that there was more than an accidental firing involved. When a bombardier of a Third division group was killed by the gun of another B-

17 while the formation was crossing the target area on February 24, 1944, and there were no anti-aircraft or enemy fighters within miles, there was no longer any doubt that a mad gunner was on the loose among the crewmen.

At a meeting of division flight surgeons it was agreed that the mad gunner was probably a crewman who had been unable to withstand the mental stress of so many long-range missions and had gone berserk. It was also agreed there was a possibility that this man was not even aware of what he was doing; that during the intensity of battle he was temporarily insane. Each pilot in the division was ordered to assemble his crewmen on the night of the twenty-fourth and explain the situation to them and warn them to be on the alert for such a crew member. Naturally each pilot denied the mad gunner was on his crew.

One of the pilots who denied the possibility of his Flying Fortress harboring such a man - a veteran flyer of the Ninety Fifty Group of the Third division who testified later at a division staff meeting- was shocked when he heard a gun on his B-17 open fire as the plane crossed the enemy coastline on February 25, 1944. When he couldn't see any enemy fighters approaching from the left side of the heavy bomber, he asked the co-pilot if there were any Luftwaffe fighters in view on the right side. The answer was negative.

A waist gunner reported that it was the ball turret gunner, a crewman who ranked as one of the most courageous men the pilot had ever known. The ball turret was a dangerous and vulnerable three-foot diameter glass ball hanging from the belly of the Flying Fortress and few men volunteered to ride in it. This man, a West Virginia coal miner before the war, never complained and stayed in the glass ball from just after takeoff to just before landing, protecting the underside of the aircraft from Luftwaffe fighters.

"Ball turret, what are you firing at?" the perplexed pilot asked. There was no immediate answer. Instead, the guns in the ball turret continued to fire for several seconds. Finally the tense voice of the ball-turret gunner came over the interphone.

"They're coming after us. Can't you see them? See, there's one now." A quick check by the pilot revealed that another B-17 was moving into the

wing position on the left to fill an empty slot and the mad gunner in the ball turret was firing toward it. The pilot knowing there was a distinct possibility of his ball turret gunner killing someone in the other bomber or perhaps, in his mental condition, even shooting it down quickly pulled his plane out of formation and drifted about a mile to the left of the group. He maintained his altitude, however, since he wanted to rejoin the formation as soon as he got the crazed ball-turret gunner out of the glass ball. A lone B-17 over enemy territory was nearly always a sure statistic for a Luftwaffe fighter pilot.

When the other crew members tried to get the mad gunner out of the ball turret, however, they soon discovered they had a problem. The gunner kept the turret revolving electrically so fast that they could not stop it in the stowed position. The bewildered pilot considered cutting the electrical power long enough to crank the ball turret into the stowed position by hand. This would be too risky; too much of the equipment in the plane was operated by electrical power and to shut it off; even temporarily, might cause disaster. While he was still trying to discover a way to get the gunner out of the ball turret, his B-17 was attacked by four FW-190's, and two engines were damaged so severely that they had to be feathered. On the second pass the Luftwaffe fighters made at the lone Flying Fortress, part of the control cables were severed and the life raft over the radio compartment was jarred loose and caught in the vertical tail section of the bomber, jamming the rudder.

The pilot had a difficult time holding the plane level, even with the control wheel turned all the way to the left and using maximum trim. Knowing it was only a matter of time before he would lose complete control of the aircraft, he ordered the crew to bail out. Unfortunately, as the gunners appeared to jump, two of the FW-190's roared in for another attack and it was impossible for them to bail out unless they wanted to risk being struck by the fire from the enemy fighters.

At that moment the ball-turret gunner, firing at any plane, American or German that approached the B-17 in which he was riding, swung his guns toward the two FW-190's. He shot the canopy off the lead fighter and evidently wounded the pilot,

because according to testimony of the surviving crew members, the first FW-190 swerved sharply and collided with the second Luftwaffe plane. They both burst into flames and spun to earth.

This gave the crewmen aboard the doomed Flying Fortress the time they needed and they all bailed out except the pilot, who struggled to hold the plane straight and level a few minutes longer. After he was certain his crew had jumped, the pilot checked his own parachute pack and prepared to release the controls and try to get out through the nose hatch before the B-17 went into a spin and trapped him. Just before he released the controls however, he called the ball-turret gunner once more on the interphone.

"Ball turret, do you hear me?"

There was no answer and the pilot, knowing he had very little time left to get out of the burning aircraft, turned to head for the nose hatch. At that moment, a pitiful call reached his ears through the earphones still on his head.

"My God, what did I do?"

The pilot recognized the voice of the ball turret gunner immediately and asked him if he was all right.

"I guess so, but when I came to my senses a while ago, I was shooting at another B-17. I didn't hit it, did I?"

The pilot tried to convince him that everything was all right, that the important thing now was to bail out immediately, but the ball-turret gunner, realizing that he probably had shot at other planes in the formation on earlier raids; that he was the "mad" gunner everyone was searching for, refused to jump.

The desperate pilot stayed with the doomed B-17 as long as he could, but when it finally did a wingover and started into a spin, he bailed out. He was rescued from the Channel four hours later. The remainder of his crew, which had bailed out earlier, were captured by the Germans and taken prisoner. Only the ball-turret gunner died, and the fact that he was the so-called mad gunner was never revealed except at a private meeting at High Wycombe a week later. It was decided that he had given his most treasured possession - his life - in return for the hope that he would be forgiven. He was . . .

Planned Giving

As you know, the members of the 483rd Bombardment Group (H) have gradually been leaving us, but certainly not their legacy of heroism. Our efforts to perpetuate their legacy must match their sacrifice during World War II. There are many ways that this can be done, both today, as well as in the future. In that regard, we have begun a fundraising effort to help preserve the history of the 483rd - see the article "Fundraising Appeal" in the March 2017 newsletter.

There is also a way that you can help our organization to perpetuate the legacy of our fathers and grandfathers in the future, and that is through "Planned Giving". The way this works is simple --- designate the 483rd Bombardment Group (H) Association in your estate-planning documents as a beneficiary of some amount of funds from your estate after you're gone. This does not have to be for your entire estate, but can be for some designated amount or portion. Whatever amount you would consider would make a huge difference in our long-term efforts.

Your planned giving will not only keep our organization vibrant, but it will also help us perpetuate the history of the 483rd at the Museum of Aviation at Warner Robbins Air Force Base in Georgia. It will also help us to continue granting annual scholarships to college students pursuing a future career in military aviation.

For more information on how this can be done, we encourage you to consult with your personal accountant, or estate-planning attorney. If we can also be of help to you in achieving your planned giving goals for the 483rd, please feel free to contact us.

YOUR 2017 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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PAST PRESIDENTS

Phillip A. Luetke (Deceased) 1980
William A. Haskins (Deceased) 1981
James V. Reardon (Deceased) 1982-83
Lynn M. Borders (Deceased) 1984
Joseph W. Gawthrop (Deceased) 1984
M.L. "Bob" Hottman 1985 (Deceased)
Harry K. Keller (Deceased) 1986
Donald R. Speegle (Deceased) 1987
James "Russ" Heflin (Deceased) 1988
Evan M. "Jack" Edwards (Deceased) 1989
Ralph H. Simpson (Deceased) 1990
Harry P. Millnamow (Deceased) 1991
William P. Dunn (Deceased) 1992
Edward T. Cotton (Deceased) 1993
Harry D. Whye (Deceased) 1994
Ray H. Whitaker (Deceased) 1995
Harold D. Leveridge (Deceased) 1996
William I. Jeffs (Deceased) 1997
George F. Stovall 1998 (Deceased)
John A. Campbell (Deceased) 1999
Verne H. Cole (Deceased) 2000
Benjamin H. Adams Jr. (Deceased) 2001
Robert W. Mitchell (Deceased) 2002
John P. Nobel 2003
Curtis B. Clark 2004
Fredric A. Hicks (Deceased) 2005
Wilfrid Hebert 2006
Stanton "Mike" Rickey 2007
Ellis Maxey (Deceased) 2008
Jim Ashley (Deceased) 2009
Dennis West 2010, 2011, 2012
Sandee West Maeda 2013, 2014, 2015
Harold Chubbs, 2016

483rd Bomb Group San Diego Reunion Registration Form

Listed below are all registration, tours and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total amount. Make check payable to "483rd Bombardment Group " and send to Sandee West Maeda, 1050 E. 5th Ave., Escondido, CA 92025. Any questions concerning Hotel Reservations, Meals, Tours, Registration or general reunion questions, call or text: Sandee: (760) 213-5022 or e-mail: 483rd reunion@gmail.com

First Name _____ Last Name _____ Nick Name _____

Squadron (or friend) _____ Spouse name (if attending) _____

Guest Names _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____ Phone (____) _____

Arrival Time / Depart: _____

Disability /Diet Restrictions _____ E-mail _____

REGISTRATION FEE PER PERSON IS \$25.00

Late registration fee per person is \$25.00 if not registered by September 16, 2017

Date	Event	Price	No. Attending	Total
Tuesday pm Oct. 17	Early Bird Tour: 1:00 pm Rosecrans National Cemetery, Cabrillo National Monument, Point Loma Light House, Junipero Serra Museum	\$33.00		
Wednesday am Oct.18	Tours: Old Town San Diego, Balboa Park, The Veterans Museum, San Diego Air & Space Museum, (Lunch in Old Town on your own)	\$50.00		
Wednesday pm Oct.18	483rd Welcome, Memories Night and Dinner Meal: Rosemary Chicken (No Host Bar)	\$39.00		
Thursday am Oct. 19	Tours: Flying Leatherneck Aviation, USS Midway, Seaport Village (Dinner at Seaport Village on your own)	\$50.00		
Thursday pm Oct. 19	YounGuns Dessert Reception 7:30 p.m. (Suggested Donation)	\$12.00		
Friday am Oct. 20	Ladies Brunch With Entertainment : Surprise Creation	\$25.00		
Friday pm Oct. 20	Tours: Miniature Museum, Gemological Institute of America Tour, Museum of Making Music, Admiral Kidd Center <u>Dinner included:</u> Buffet with dessert, coffee tea (No Host Bar)	\$75.00		
Saturday pm Oct. 21	483rd Banquet Combination Dinner: Tri Tip Beef and Grilled Chicken Includes Caesar Salad, Roasted Red Potatoes, Green Beans Almandine, Rolls and Butter; Dessert (No Host Bar)	\$45.00		
	Registration Fee Per Person (EXCEPT VETERANS)	\$25.00		
	Late Registration Fee Per Person after September 16, 2017 See Note Below **	\$25.00		
TOTAL				

Mail Registration Form and check payable to 483rd Bombardment Group (H) Reunion Association to Sandee West Maeda, 1050 E. 5th Ave., Escondido, CA 92025

** A late registration fee will be imposed for registering after the registration deadline of September 16, 2017, with special exceptions for health issues. (This was initiated at the 2013 483rd General Business Meeting to help plan tours and schedule busses.) Reunion registration cancellations will be accepted until October 10th, 2017 without fee or penalty, so . . . please help by registering early. Come - Enjoy - Have Fun!

Friday Night Dinner Information

1. Exact Name on ID	
Exact Street Address on ID	
City, State, Zip on ID	
Registration Number	
2. Exact Name on ID	
Exact Street Address on ID	
City, State, Zip on ID	
Registration Number	
3. Exact Name on ID	
Exact Street Address on ID	
City, State, Zip on ID	
Registration Number	
4. Exact Name on ID	
Exact Street Address on ID	
City, State, Zip on ID	
5. Exact Name on ID	
Exact Street Address on ID	
City, State, Zip on ID	
Registration Number	
6. Exact Name on ID	
Exact Street Address on ID	
City, State, Zip on ID	
Registration Number	