



# 483RD BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION

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

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## President's Message

We hope you have been enjoying time with family and friends. Nancy and I have enjoyed two vacations this Spring. We recently celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary at the same Woodstock Inn in Vermont where we had honeymooned in 1981. This past week we drove 750 miles one-way north to a remote Lake of the Woods Ontario Canada fishing lodge. I had made this trip several times with college buddies, but Nancy had not experienced a wilderness adventure. We hired an expert fishing guide and caught walleyes for shore lunches, large northern pike, and smallmouth bass. We had enormous muskies follow lures up to the boat but could not get them to bite; very exciting. In our retirement we plan to continue to enjoy the wilderness and America's beautiful national parks.

We look forward to coming together again at the Reunion in Wichita Kansas in September 2022. The committee has secured some excellent tours and musical entertainment. If you plan to attend the Reunion, you can wait to send me the registration form, but, if possible, please let me know your tentative plans so we can share approximate attendance with the Reunion committee.

We are blessed to be part of the 483rd family. I am proud to continue to serve as your 483rd Bombardment Group Association President. Please contact me with any questions or suggestions or just have a friendly chat.

Happy Summer!

*Jay Clifton*



## From the Publicity Chairman

Kenny Ray Horton has graciously agreed to provide musical entertainment for the reunion. He has recently retired from the US Navy (I know, Navy, right?! But we'll forgive him that transgression. LOL!) as the leader of the Navy Bluegrass band, Country

Current. Kenny Ray is an outstanding songwriter, singer and acoustic guitarist. Kenny Rogers recorded some of his music. He has played for US Presidents, many other world leaders and military brass. He is the grandson of a 484<sup>th</sup> BG veteran and is excited to play for us at the reunion. As a solo performer, he is a great musician and acoustic guitarist, a really genuine, great guy and a Patriot through and through. Whether you're previously a Bluegrass fan or not, his talent, style and personality will captivate you. Please spread the word within your group. He will be performing before and during the Saturday night banquet and will, at random times offer a song or two in the Hospitality room.

The link below is a song he wrote and performed with Country Current while still on active duty. Turn on your speakers and enjoy.

And now, Kenny Ray Horton....

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VYn4PlpJv2k>

*Sandee*

## Heroes of the 483<sup>rd</sup>

New 1st edition hardcover books about the crew histories of the 483<sup>rd</sup> are now available. These books are on sale in Ebay from \$399.<sup>99</sup> in used condition. Our books are brand new, never been opened and have been stored away for many years in a box. We are offering them for sale for \$250.<sup>00</sup>, shipping included. If you are a member of the 483rd Bombardment Group Association, they are only \$200.<sup>00</sup> with free shipping. Great gifts for family members. Make checks payable to the "483rd Bombardment Group Association". All proceeds go to the Association.



**Heroes of the 483rd on CD** are also available for \$30.<sup>00</sup> with free shipping

Available from Dennis West, 1050 E. 5th Ave., Escondido, CA 92025

TAPS – Deceased Members Not Previously Reported in Newsletter			
Name	Squadron	Date	Reported By
Crampton, Robert	816	11/16/2021	Sheryl Norton
Garthe, Louis	840	1/26/2022	Robert Garthe

## From the Publicity Chair

The Itinerary for our next reunion in Wichita, Kansas is as follows:



### 2022 REUNION ITINERARY



**Thursday, 9/15/22** - Registration desk open from 10:00am till 9:00pm; Hospitality room closes 11:00pm

- 6:00pm Welcome dinner and meeting. Those who choose not to participate in this dinner are encouraged to come in about 7:00pm to attend the informational meeting.

### **Friday, 9/16/22**

- 9:00am - Tour McConnell AFB – with lunch at the Dole Center on base.
- 12:45pm - Depart McConnell AFB.
- 1:00pm - Tour Kansas Aviation Museum next door to McConnell AFB.
- 3:00pm - Depart Kansas Aviation Museum.
- 3:15pm - Tour Wichita Veterans Memorial Park. Depart
- 4:15pm – Depart for return to hotel.
- Return to hotel by 4:30pm
- Individual group dinners. Cash bar opens in common area at 5:30pm. Dinner served at 6:30pm

### **Saturday 9/17/22**

- 8:30am – 9:45am Ladies Craft Demo presented by Nancy Clifton
- 10:00am – Noon Veterans & Others Presentations Morning Session
- 10:00am – Noon 449<sup>th</sup> BG Private Memorial Service
- 2:00pm – 4:00pm Veterans & Others Presentations Afternoon Session
- 5:15 - Veterans group picture at a location TBD
- 5:30pm - All Groups Banquet. Cash bar opens in the ballroom at 5:30pm with dinner served at 6:30pm. Entertainment by Kenny Ray Horton during “happy hour” and resumes after dinner.

### **Sunday 9/18/22**

- 9:00am – 10:00am - 483<sup>rd</sup> BG private memorial service.
- 9:00am – 10:00 am - Non-denominational church service.
- 11:00am – Noon - All Groups Memorial Service.
- 12:30pm – 2:00pm - Lunch on your own in Old Town Wichita
- 2:00pm – Tour Museum of World Treasures in Old Town Wichita
- 4:15pm – Depart Museum for return to hotel
- 6:30pm – Farewell dinner

*Hospitality room will be closed during the times the Thursday, Friday, Saturday, and Sunday dinners take place between 5:30pm – about 8:00pm. **Closing time for the Hospitality room will be 11:00pm each evening.***

**Fifteenth Air Force Bomb Groups Reunion  
483rd Bombardment Group Reunion  
September 15-18, 2022**

**Wichita, Kansas Host Hotel**

Wichita Marriott  
9100 Corporate Hills Drive  
Wichita, Kansas 66207  
Phone: 316-651-0333



- Room rates will be \$102 per night, plus tax and will include a full, hot breakfast buffet, including made to order omelets, for up to two per room.
- Rooms at the group rate will be available for probably three days before and after the reunion dates. Exact dates are yet to be determined.
- Free airport shuttle from 7:00 am – 10:00 pm.
- This hotel has been recently renovated and is spectacular. The staff is outstanding, and our Hospitality room will be second to none.
- ***NOTE: This room block is NOT YET AVAILABLE TO MAKE RESERVATIONS. When that becomes possible, the Reunion page of the 483<sup>rd</sup> BG website will be updated with all the latest information. So please check the website regularly.***

Wichita Kansas is a surprising gem of a city smack dab in the middle of flyover country! Wichita has a very rich history in aviation and in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the municipal airport was the busiest airport in the country due to its central location. There are MANY things to see and do; much more than we will have time to experience. The tour options include:

**McConnell Air Force Base Tour**

Located four miles southeast of the central business district of Wichita, a city in Sedgwick County, Kansas, United States, the airbase was named in honor of Fred and Thomas McConnell of Wichita, who had both been Air Force pilots and veterans of World War II. It is the

home of Air Mobility Command's 22nd Air Refueling Wing, Air Force Reserve Command's 931st Air Refueling Wing, and the Kansas Air National Guard's 184th Intelligence Wing.



**The Kansas Aviation Museum**

Housed in the former Wichita Airport terminal building, there is much to see in this beautiful Art Deco style building including aircraft on static display outside on the ramp. It is also a great place to watch the aircraft from McConnell AFB take off and land, which happens on a regular basis.



**Veterans' Memorial Park**

A lovely park along the banks of the Arkansas river in the beautiful riverfront area of Wichita. It features seven memorials to veterans of all wars and Gold Star mothers.



**The Museum of World Treasures**

A quirky and fun museum in the heart of the Old Town district of Wichita. Old Town is a fun area loaded with restaurants and shops and is very walkable.





## **A Link Between Today's Invasion of Ukraine by Russia and World War II**

### **Revival of the Lend-Lease Act -**

In late-April of this year, the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate overwhelmingly backed legislation that makes it easier for the U.S. to export military equipment to Ukraine, reviving the "Lend-Lease Act" that helped defeat Hitler during World War II. The measure revives a World War II-era program that allowed Washington to lend or lease military equipment to U.S. allies. Members of Congress hoped the act would work as it did eight decades ago by allowing U.S. companies to quickly resupply partner nations without having to clear bureaucratic hurdles. In this case, it will help those affected by Russia's invasion, such as Poland and other eastern European countries as well as Ukraine. The bill allows the United States to provide equipment to Ukraine now, with just a technical requirement to pay at some later date. President Biden asked Congress to approve \$33 billion for Ukraine, including more than \$20 billion for weapons, ammunition, and other military assistance as well as \$8.5 billion in direct economic assistance to the Ukrainian government and \$3 billion in humanitarian aid. It is intended to cover the war effort's needs through September, the end of the U.S. fiscal year.

Did you know the Lend-Lease Act of 1941 was a program instituted by the United States of America and signed by President Franklin Roosevelt on March 11, 1941 - 4 months before the United States became directly involved in World War II? At that time, the United States still wished to maintain its neutral status and as of 1941 the British were the only nation capable of engaging in war with Germany.

The Lend-Lease Act gave the President authority to sell, transfer title to, exchange, lease, lend, or otherwise dispose of, to any such government whose defense the President deemed vital to the defense of the United States. The Act ordered the delivery of war materials to the allied nations of World War II. The aid took the form of military supplies of which the allied nations were required to return military goods. In return the United States would receive food, access to military bases, and logistical support from the allied nations. Its major goal was to supply

the United Kingdom, France, China, and the Soviet Union with supplies to combat the Axis powers during World War II while avoiding the United States direct military involvement in the war. The Lend-Lease Act was essential to circumvent the prohibitions of the Neutrality Acts, a series of Acts that were passed by Congress, starting in 1935, that limited the United States involvement in foreign conflicts. The Neutrality Act of 1935 initiated an embargo on trading in arms and war materials with all parties associated with military conflict. The Act was instituted over the growing disdain in the United States over the nation's involvement in World War I. Many Americans felt that the use of American troops and military supplies during World War I was a usurpation of power and an unnecessary meddling in foreign affairs. As such the Neutralization Act was intended to prohibit any involvement in foreign affairs and impose a doctrine of neutrality in foreign conflicts.

### **Now the link with World War II - the Army Air Force involvement with transferring aircraft to the Soviet Union over the Alaskan-Siberian Air Ferry Route -**

Reacting to German as well as Japanese aggression, President Roosevelt alerted the American public to the dangerous situation that existed in a world being consumed by war. Especially alarmed by Germany's lightning-fast conquest in Europe and the isolation of Great Britain in 1940, he called for American rearmament. He mobilized the military services and the arms industry to expand their capabilities for the defense of the nation.

In desperation, Great Britain made cash purchase of American-made arms, however Roosevelt realized that funds of the besieged island defenders were limited. Therefore, he proposed to share American arms production and supplies with Great Britain and other threatened nations. He presented the Lend-Lease legislation to Congress with the argument that military aid should be provided whenever the defense of any country was considered to be vital to the defense of the United States. After much debate, the Lend-Lease Act was passed on March 11, 1941 and ultimately benefited 32 nations.

The German invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 set the stage for a renewed Alaska-Siberian connection. The U.S. Lend-Lease program held

together an unlikely Soviet-American alliance. Various seaborne and airborne routes funneled vast amounts of Lend-Lease supplies and military equipment, including aircraft, to the embattled Soviet Union. The Alaska-Siberian Air Ferry ("ALSIB") route was one of the funnels for the Lend-Lease aircraft that reached the Soviet Union war front from 1942 to 1945. The Army Air Force's Air Transport Command ferried factory-new airplanes from Great Falls, Montana across Canada to Fairbanks, Alaska over the Northwest Staging Route. From there, Red Air Force pilots with the Soviet Military Mission at Fairbanks began the relay of the aircraft from Alaska across Siberia. Americans and Soviets in Alaska were presented challenges of building and maintaining confidence of one for the other, and unforeseen problems were frequent even though liaison personnel were fluent in each other's languages.

The birth of the ALSIB Lend-Lease route was a lengthy ordeal with complications. On one hand, the Soviets knew from the beginning of American aid that an ALSIB route could provide a rapid flow of urgently needed aircraft to the battle front. However, the ALSIB route had to be remote from the southern border of the Soviet Far East in order to be as far from Japanese attention as possible. On the other hand, the U.S. searched for ways to deliver supplies and weapons, especially aircraft, to ensure the survival and potency of the Soviet armed forces. The War Department proposed that American airmen could ferry combat aircraft to the Soviets in Siberia. By furnishing such a ferry service, the Army Air Forces hoped to gain access to air bases in Siberia for future use.

In the midst of mobilizing American resources and industries to support Lend-Lease promises to other nations, in December 1941 the United States herself was abruptly at war with Axis foes. Churchill rushed to Washington to confer with Roosevelt. In the Arcadia Conference at Christmastime in 1941, they agreed on a war policy that also would guide their future relationship with Stalin. Defeat of Germany was the primary objective. Defeat of Japan would come later. While the Red Army engaged the German forces in the Soviet Union, the Western Allies pledged a "second front" in Europe. Launching the second front, however, depended on extensive planning and preparation. Therefore, the

flow of Lend-Lease aid to the Red Army must not only be maintained but must increase.

Once the United States was at war, pressure mounted in Washington for ways to get American base rights in Siberia. Stalin was more suspicious than ever of any U.S. move that he believed might involve the Soviet Union in war with Japan. He refused to allow American airmen to fly Lend-Lease planes over Soviet soil. He was especially upset by the trickle rather than full flow of Lend-Lease assistance that had been promised.

Over time, the logistics of moving aircraft to Fairbanks was remedied. In all, U.S. factories produced 14,798 airplanes for the Soviet Union, of which 14,108 arrived via various Lend-Lease routes, including the ALSIB route, and the remaining 690 were lost enroute to the Soviet Union. Other routes included transporting planes via ships, which was a time-consuming process in which the planes were disassembled, crated, and loaded aboard freighters. On arrival at a debarkation port, they were off-loaded and reassembled for final delivery. Many of the freighters were sunk by enemy submarines and ships. Ferrying bombers over a long aerial route via the South Atlantic Ocean, North Africa, and the Middle East was feasible, but took more time than the ALSIB route.

The Soviets accepted 7,924 Lend-Lease aircraft (about 54% of produced aircraft) at Fairbanks along the ALSIB route, which included AT6-F trainers, P-40, P-39, and P-63 fighters, A-20 and B-25 bombers, and the C-47 transport. Additionally, three P-47 high-altitude fighters were delivered for testing by the Soviets. The Soviets were critical of the B-25s and requested B-17s in their place, but the U.S. firmly rejected the request for the heavy bombers, stating the B-17 was not suited for Red Army-style ground support. The Soviets rejected many of the planes due to mechanical problems and the U.S. remedied those issues in Fairbanks so the planes could be transferred. There were other problems such as the A-20 being vulnerable because of light armor and machine guns being its only defense. As a result, the U.S. developed the A-20G model that was modified to add more armor and four 20-mm cannons mounted in the plane's nose.

When the ALSIB route first became operational, the facilities and accommodations at the Siberian bases were primitive, dangerous, and uncomfortable. However, the route had an irresistible attraction for

important officials, mostly Soviet. The attraction was the time element – it provided the quickest avenue for travel between Moscow and Washington. Ambassadors, generals, diplomats, and political personnel all passed through Alaska in what seemed an endless stream, putting the ferrying schedules at risk.

American official reaction to the May 8, 1945 German surrender was swift. On May 12th, orders were flashed to cease any further Lend-Lease shipments and deliveries to the Soviet Union. The abrupt action caused a diplomatic storm in Moscow. The Soviets bitterly resented the unilateral U.S. announcement that was issued without any warning to or consultation with the Soviet Union. The bitterness added fuel to resurfacing Soviet suspicion of American policies. American envoys rushed to assure Stalin that the orders pertained only to Lend-Lease deliveries for use in the war with Germany. They emphasized the Lend-Lease supplies for use in the Far East against Japan would be forthcoming as promised.

The transfer of aircraft to the Soviet Union continued through the summer of 1945 until Japan surrendered. On September 2, 1945 the last aircraft left Fairbanks for the Soviet Union and in November 1945 Soviet military presence in Alaska ended.

Soviet military historians now concede that the extent of American Lend-Lease assistance to the Soviet Union was considerable - the Red Air Force had been nearly destroyed in the first months of war with Germany, and even with the Soviets being able to relocate much of their aircraft factories in order to continue production of their own aircraft, the Lend-Lease aircraft provided the supplemental aircraft necessary to defeat the Germans. Even at a November 1943 summit meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin (18 months after the beginning of Lend-Lease), Stalin announced that without the miracle of American production, the war with Germany would have already been lost.

*More on this subject can be found in the book  
The Alaska-Siberia Connection by Otis Hays, Jr.*

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## **Internment and Escape from Siberia**

You may know that Edward York was Deputy Group Commander of the 483rd and flew 25 combat missions with the 483rd before returning to the

United States in July 1944. However, are you familiar with his experiences prior to joining the 483rd?

Edward J. Cichowski was born on August 16, 1912 in Batavia, New York and later changed his last name to York. He enlisted in the Army in 1930 at age 18 and served at Chilkoot Barracks in Alaska before winning an appointment to the United States Military Academy at West Point. York graduated and was commissioned a 2nd Lt. in the U.S. Army Air Corps on June 14, 1938, and then attended pilot training, earning his pilot wings in May 1939. His first assignment was as an A-17 and B-18 pilot at March Field, California. He also trained on , from August 1939 to June 1940, followed by service at McCord Field, Washington, as a B-23 and B-25 pilot until June 1941. York then served as a B-25 pilot at Pendleton, Oregon, where he was selected to participate in the Doolittle Raid in February 1942. Running low on fuel, he landed his B-25 in the Soviet Union and was interned for more than a year. In recognition of his participation in the Doolittle Raid on Tokyo, Japan on April 18, 1942, he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. After his return to the United States in late June 1943, York trained in B-25 Mitchell, B-24 Liberator, and B-17 Flying Fortress bombers before being assigned to the 483rd Bomb Group in Italy, where he flew combat missions between March and June 1944. Lt. Colonel York, the 483rd's first Deputy Group Commander, joined the group shortly after its activation. For his performance with the 483rd in Italy, he was awarded the Air Medal with two clusters and the Bronze Star. After leaving the 483rd, he continued his Air Force career in various positions and duties, ultimately serving as Deputy Commander at Headquarters U.S. Air Force Security Service until his retirement from the Air Force on September 2, 1966.

A total of 291 American airmen from 37 Army and Navy bombers disabled while on combat missions against enemy targets in Japan, Manchuria, and the Kurile Islands landed in the Soviet Union and were interned as peacetime prisoners - the Soviet Union had announced its neutrality in America's war with Japan. The Soviet Union assumed that Japan knew that American bomber crews had been interned after their disabled aircraft had landed in Siberia, but if the Japanese learned that any of the internees had been released, it may have been an indication that Moscow had violated its neutrality by

freeing the airmen and that act would be considered anti-Japanese provocation, giving Japan an excuse for taking military action against the Soviet Far East. Aware of this delicate situation, Washington in late 1942 began negotiating with Moscow for the release of the first group of internees – the York crew. Internees were under the control of the Soviet NKVD – the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs. After taking custody of the internees, the NKVD moved them thousands of miles to south-central Asia and arranged clandestine escapes from the Soviet Union.

In early-1942 the U.S. began planning a secret plan for a bombing strike against the Japanese heartland. The plan called for the B-25s used in the mission to try to reach safe haven in China. At this time, the Soviet Union was beginning to receive Lend-Lease aid and the U.S. suggested the bombers could be landed at a closer location in Vladivostok as Lend-Lease delivery, but after initially agreeing, the Soviet Union changed its mind due to its neutrality in the Japanese-American war.

After being spotted by a Japanese fishing boat, the 16 B-25 bombers had to take off prematurely from the deck of the aircraft carrier Hornet on April 18, 1942, 700 miles from Japan (200 miles sooner than planned). Lt. Col. James Doolittle was the lead bomber and Captain Edward York was the eighth B-25 to take off. York's aircraft fuel burn was greater than expected and after dropping his bombs on a large factory near Tokyo, he determined the only safe landing location was at the Soviet naval airbase in Vladivostok. Initially, it appeared the Soviets would furnish fuel to York and allow him to continue to China, but after the airbase commander conferred with his superiors, the Soviets determined York's crew should be interned.

The Soviets wanted to keep the whereabouts of the Tokyo bombing crew a secret. York's crew was placed in a private railroad car with black-out curtains for a three-week, 5,000 mile trip westward across Asia and the Ural Mountains into Europe to Okhuna. They had been locked in their car except for a few times when they were allowed to detrain and pace the length of the coach. At a stop in Kuibyshev, they were told they would not be permitted to visit the American Embassy because of the presence of Japanese diplomatic representatives and workmen in the city. So, the train continued on to Okhuna where they were transferred to

automobiles and transported to their new living quarters at an internment facility near the town of Penza, about 300 miles southeast of Moscow. In late-May, 1942 they were visited by American diplomats that assured the crew that the American Embassy was working on a plan that might lead to freeing of the internees without creating an international incident. Time passed without any mention of their release and finally in mid-September U.S. Ambassador Standley and Major General Bradley (who had been in Moscow helping with the final planning for the ALSIB ferry route) visited the crew. The Soviets allowed the Americans only a brief visit with the internees, who made their feelings known quickly. The American diplomats arranged for a doctor to visit the internees in mid-October to bring medicine and vitamins in order to combat the onset of scurvy and pellagra.

Leading into winter, both food and wood for heating their living quarters was in short supply. The men were allowed to cut and split wood for their stoves – a welcomed exercise to fight the boredom of playing ceaseless games of cards and studying the Russian language. With the wood supply diminishing, their use of the steam bath was limited to twice monthly. Finally, in January 1943 they decided to write a letter directly to Stalin with their appeal for release. The letter was never delivered, but the NKVD used this as an indication that the internees were ready to make an escape.

In mid-March the internees were transported by automobile 80 miles to Molotov where they were given Red Army uniforms to wear so they would not be conspicuous when moving through the town. In late-March they boarded a DC-3 type of transport plane and flew almost 500 miles due south to Chkalov where they were placed on a train to Ashkhabad, near the border of the Soviet Union and Iran. On the train, York shared a compartment with a Russian identified as Kolya, an official with the Foreign Trade Ministry. York and Kolya became good friends. In mid-May, York approached Kolya and asked him to help with an escape plan. After first hesitating for a few days, on May 10th Kolya arranged for York to meet with a smuggler, who in exchange for \$250 American dollars agreed to take them by truck across the border to Meshed, Iran.

After suspenseful delays with motor trouble, crossing Soviet checkpoints undetected, driving through checkpoints without stopping, and crawling

across the border through a mine field undetected by the Soviet border guards, the York crew arrived at a checkpoint post at the bridge just outside Meshed on May 11th, where the driver refused to take them any further. The men hid themselves and the crew's luggage in a nearby bomb crater near the checkpoint. York and Emmens then dressed in Soviet work clothing and boldly walked undetected across the bridge with other pedestrians into Meshed where they went immediately to the British embassy since no American embassy was in the city. The British Consulate arranged for the other 3 airmen to be picked up by British Army lorry, which the Russians commonly saw in the area and would not raise any suspicion. Over the next two weeks the York crew was transported to various locations and ultimately arrived in Miami on May 24th then escorted directly to Washington for debriefing.

After all was over, the crew noted that they had been in the Soviet Union long enough to know that one unexplained action could be a simple coincidence; however, a series of conveniently related actions, such as those enroute to Meshed could have occurred only with the knowledge, blessing, and engineering of the NKVD. After their escape, other interned airmen escaped the Soviet Union in similar fashion.

Over the years, a mystery theory has developed about York's plane going to Russia. Some people believed that York and his co-pilot, Emmens, had secret orders to land in Russia after the raid on Tokyo. No evidence has ever been found to confirm this mystery. When Doolittle was asked if Crew No. 8 had orders to go to Russia his response was "Well if they did, I didn't give them." But he never outright confirmed or denied the rumor. (*I may provide more on this in a future Newsletter.*)

*More on this crew and other American airmen interned in Siberia can be found in the book Home From Siberia by Otis Hays, Jr.*

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## **The Bartusch Crew**

*By Charles E. Stanley Jr.*

The story of the crew led by Lt. Robert Bartusch shows that anything could happen - and often did happen - to members of the 483rd Bomb Group.

Bartusch looked and acted like a prototypical pilot. His compact 5'10" frame always seemed

coiled for action. Somehow the self-disciplined pilot clicked with his ebullient navigator/bombardier, Seymour Rosenthal. Rosenthal, whose parents were Jewish-Hungarian, often kidded Bartusch about his German surname. "Hey Bart," Rosenthal would tease, "if we ever get shot down over Germany, I'm going to say, 'I'm with him!'"

Bartusch had complete confidence in Rosenthal, copilot Jene Hirschfield and the rest of his crew: flight engineer Carl Bush; radio operator Raymond Klapp; waist gunner Don McFadden; and mustachioed Robert E. Steele, the ball turret gunner. Tail gunner Zack Johnson was perhaps the friendliest and most likeable of them all. Assistant Engineer Cletus J. Kramer, the eldest member of the crew, was the son of a German immigrant and spoke his father's native language.

The crew joined the 483rd in Sterperone, Italy, and began flying missions against tough targets like Blechhammer, Moosbierbaum, Regensburg, and Vienna.

Bartusch's objective on November 22, 1944, was the marshaling yards at Munich. Don McFadden, who had been injured, was replaced by Sgt. Paul Bergschneider.

A half hour before the target, a bad engine forced Bartusch to drop back from the formation. Rosenthal dropped his bombs as best he could, and Bartusch headed for home.

Over Hungary, another engine began to act up. Bartusch turned on the autopilot, told Jene Hirschfield the plane was in his hands, and left his seat to help Carl Bush with the engines.

Ten minutes later, the automatic pilot malfunctioned and threw the B-17 into one stall, and then another. Bartusch returned to his seat and fought with the controls as the plane nosedived thousands of feet in seconds. Doubt crept into his mind. He pressed the bailout buzzer but heard no sound. Orders or not, the enlisted men jumped. Moments later, Bartusch leveled the plane off.

Rosenthal made his way to the cockpit and informed the pilots that the rest of the crew had bailed out. Bartusch seemed neither surprised nor disturbed. He did not blame them for abandoning the plane. They could not know that Bartusch would pull it out of the dive. Neither did he.

Over Yugoslavia, the gauges showed they were nearly out of gas. Bartusch decided he would try a crash landing. Just as they were running out of time,



Hirschfield spotted an open area next to a bend in a river. Bartusch banked, leveled the plane, and plopped down. The B-17 scraped to a halt with its nose hovering over the river's edge. Bartusch had made the landing of his life.

Soon a group of townspeople appeared. Some of them wore the red stars of the Partisans on their caps. They guided the three airmen to a nearby town named Sanski Most.

Over the next six weeks, several other crews arrived in Sanski Most. British secret agents tried to arrange for an evacuation by air, the field outside of town had flooded and had become unsuitable as an airstrip.

Eventually, the number of airmen stranded in the war-ravaged town grew to eighty-four, far too many for it to support. Food became scarce. Medical supplies were exhausted, and some of the airmen were badly wounded. Relations with the Partisans reached a crisis point.

Fortunately, the airstrip froze solid enough to allow transports to land. On January 5, three C-47s finally arrived and carried away 66 men, including Bartusch, Hirschfield, and Rosenthal. The remaining 18 airmen were forced to walk across the Dinaric Alps to safety.

Bush, Kramer, Klapp, Steele, and Bergschneider were captured by the Germans shortly after reaching the ground. One of their captors showed them a bloodied life vest bearing the name of Zack Johnson. Their crewmate was dead.

Johnson had landed near the sleepy town of Oberndorf, Austria, famous as the birthplace of the Christmas carol "Silent Night." An off-duty Waffen SS officer found Johnson and summarily shot him in the head. The murderer was never identified.

The five prisoners were interned in Stalag Luft IV, one of Germany's cruelest camps. The Stalag overflowed with POWs relocated from other camps in the face of Russian advances. On February 6, Stalag Luft IV was abandoned too, and the infamous Black March began. The guards set a murderous pace through the cold with threats and rifle butts. After a 470-mile hike, the column reached Stalag XIB. No one knew how many had died.

Soon relief turned to despair. After just a week, Stalag XIB was evacuated as well. The exhausted men retraced their steps back toward the east, away from the Anglo-American lines.

Clete Kramer staggered onward despite frostbitten feet. Some of his guards wanted to shoot his whole group. Others argued against it. Kramer chimed in using his German. Perhaps using their language humanized him. The sympathetic guards prevailed. "You're on your own," one of them said. Kramer and the other POWs from Bartusch's crew ran into British troops on April 26, 1945. The odyssey that began when they bailed out of Bartusch's plane was complete.

The full story of the Bartusch crew - and the other twelve crews who gathered in Sanski Most - is told in Charles Stanley's new book *Lost Airmen: The Epic Rescue of WWII US Bomber Crews Stranded Behind Enemy Lines*, available from Regnery Press.

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### \*\*\* Fundraising Appeal \*\*\*

The 483rd Bombardment Group Legacy Fund is dedicated to preserving the memory & the legacy of the heroic men who bravely comprised this B-17 bomb group during World War II. Without their determination and sacrifice the World War II may not have had the same outcome as it did.

We are asking you to consider contributing to the 483rd Bombardment Group Legacy Fund to help us continue their legacy.

The 483rd Bombardment Group Legacy Fund is an IRS recognized 501(c)3 organization that will provide a long-term vehicle to continue the goals and purposes of the already existing 483rd Bombardment Group (H) Association. These goals and purposes include, financially supporting the wonderful 483rd display at the Museum of Aviation at Warner Robins Air Force Base in Georgia and providing annual scholarships to college students who are pursuing a future career in military aviation.

Please help us perpetuate the memory of the 483rd Bombardment Group! There are two ways that you can make a charitable contribution:

- You can write a check for the 483rd Bombardment Group Legacy Fund and send to - 53 Principe De Paz, Santa Fe, New Mexico, 87508.
- You can also go to [www.483rdLegacyFund.org/](http://www.483rdLegacyFund.org/) and contribute using your credit card.

Please feel free to share this appeal with your family and friends thru e-mail and social media. If you have any questions, or want more information, contact David Raffel at 913-709-3382.

\*\*\* Donations are tax-deductible. \*\*\*

## **YOUR 2022 BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

### **PRESIDENT**

Jay Clifton  
cliftonjay57@gmail.com  
847-217-7485

### **PRESIDENT-ELECT**

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847-217-7485

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**SECRETARY**  
(vacant)

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### **WEB SITE**

483rdBombGroup.org

## **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 (Deceased) 2003  
Curtis B. Clark (Deceased) 2004  
Fredric A. Hicks (Deceased) 2005  
Wilfrid Hebert (Deceased) 2006  
Stanton "Mike" Rickey (Deceased) 2007  
Ellis Maxey (Deceased) 2008  
Jim Ashley (Deceased) 2009  
Dennis West 2010, 2011, 2012, 2017  
Sandee West Maeda 2013, 2014, 2015  
Harold Chubbs (Deceased) 2016  
Russell Daniel 2018  
Mark Halebsky 2019  
Jay Clifton 2020, 2021

## **McConnell Air Force Base Tour**

If you are signing up for the McConnell AFB tour, you will need either a DOD identification card or prior security clearance. If you do NOT have the DOD identification card please provide the information below.

Submit this page along with your reunion registration form. McConnell needs time to process this information so your registration including this page must be sent in time to be received no later than September 1, 2022 if you intend to go on the McConnell tour.

If you are NOT signing up for that tour, please ignore this page.

Thank you!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Drivers License Number: \_\_\_\_\_

State of issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

If you do NOT have a drivers license please fill in blanks below.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

State ID Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

State of issue: \_\_\_\_\_

Social Security Number: \_\_\_\_\_

# BOMB GROUPS REUNION

September 15-18, 2022 Wichita, KS



Veteran/Fallen Hero \_\_\_\_\_ Group \_\_\_\_\_ Sqdn \_\_\_\_\_ Highest Rank \_\_\_\_\_

Registrant Name: \_\_\_\_\_ (One Form per Registration Packet)

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Name Tag Names (Include Veteran Relationship): \_\_\_\_\_

Registration fee \_\_\_\_\_ # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$20.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 15TH—Welcome dinner,**

Lasagna with meat # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$39.00 Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Eggplant Parmesan # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$39.00 Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 16<sup>TH</sup>— McConnell AFB with lunch, Kansas Aviation Museum &**

Veterans Memorial Park tours # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$58.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**Individual Group Dinners**

London Broil # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$47.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Chicken Cordon Bleu # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$39.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Penne Pasta # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$39.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11<sup>TH</sup> DO NOT include 461<sup>st</sup> veteran in meal sub totals**

**All Groups Banquet**

KC Strip Loin # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$51.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mediterranean Salmon # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$45.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Grilled Portobello w/Spinach on Wild Rice # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$39.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 12<sup>TH</sup>**

**Tour Museum of World Treasures**

with lunch on your own in Old Town Wichita # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$41.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Farewell Dinner — Pork Tenderloin # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$43.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Roasted Fall Vegetable Plate # people \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$43.00 each Sub Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Do you need a wheelchair? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_ GRAND TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency Contact \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

Please send this form along with your check payable to:  
Jay Clifton: 7589 Bittersweet Dr, Gurnee, IL 60031

*Registrations must be received at the address above by September 9, 2022.  
No changes may be made after that date.*