



6th Bomb Group
Association

TINIAN ISLAND
1944 - 45

January
2018



6TH BOMB GROUP 2017 REUNION WRAP-UP

With the 2017 reunion behind us, we now look forward to 2018 in Boise, Idaho!! Thank you, Kelly and Kristi Vincent for taking the reins for next year!

The main focus for this year was education. In keeping with that theme the Tornado Battalion ROTC from Galveston Ball High did not disappoint. They sent 75 uniformed students to our event at the Lone Star Flight Museum and impressed us all. In full dress uniform each of our board members and veterans had personal assistants to guide them through the museum. The color guard was sharp and gave honor to our country's flag. Many thanks to Major Mark Knight and his cadets for taking the time to make our event very special.

A hearty well done to David Wilson and Phil Crowther for presenting the history of the 6th, the B-29, and how it hastened the end of WW 2. Great questions to our veterans came from the students, and I know our vets enjoyed answering them along with sharing some stories of their own.



Our tour of the east end historical district was going along fine until our guide took us by the many tree sculptures that were carved after hurricane Ike in 2008. This is when things got exciting. It seems that after the 2008 storm, Galveston lost many treasured trees, some over 200 years old. Chainsaw wielding carvers came in from around the country and turned the trunks of these trees into spectacular works of art. Everyone on the bus wanted to get out and take some pictures of the one I have included here. Don't tell anyone, but I think they enjoyed it.

This year we had 28 people attend. Of the veterans: 1st Lt. Ed Vincent, Sergeant Wallace Gake, and S. Sgt. John Dragoni were our special guests of honor. The stories, jokes and history they provided us was just a real treat. Thank you, gentlemen, for making the trip, we all cherish your company more than you will ever know!

A shout out to Larry Dananay, John Creek, and Shirley and Fran Bates, for their assistance in helping me put this together. A big thank you to Mary Gresko and all who provided the auction items. If I missed anyone – my apologies, but a **special** thank you to all of you that attended. These reunions would not happen if it were not for your attendance.

I hope everyone enjoyed the Festival of Lights/ Iceland and all the attractions at the hotel. But most all, thank you for allowing me to put this together. It was my pleasure, and I will see you next year.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

☆ Dick Masceri ☆



MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Another GREAT Reunion is now part of our history. Many, many thanks to Dick Masceri for his creative planning, excellent accommodations and, of course, the many surprises he brought us at the Reunion. I shall refer to only two of them as he will provide details later in the Newsletter. About eighty ROTC Cadets from the local high school attended our first educational event at The Lone Star Museum. Second, in advance of the event, little did we know that the Tinian Island ROTC sent a "Hurricane Harvey" gift to this Galveston ROTC group. Perhaps some divine intervention occurred. Dick will give details, so I do not wish in any way to steal his thunder; it was quite outstanding. As a note, we did manage to raise \$971 at the Saturday auction.

Additionally, we are extremely grateful to Kelly and Kristi Vincent, Ed Vincent's son and daughter-in-law, for **volunteering** to host next year's Reunion in Boise, Idaho. For those who do not know, Idaho is a wonderful and beautiful state that is among my personal western favorites. Much cowboy history and Mountain Man anthology resides in the mountains of Idaho. We are planning for September or early October, although no firm date has been set yet as their planning efforts begin. We have put them in touch with Bob Oliver who is a Military Reunion planner who Fran Bates met on his visit to Europe for his own father's part in WWII. We are in hopes that this will simplify the planning effort required for our Reunions. So, we hope to view this as a test using a pro planner which may help to get future volunteers. More will follow of course, but I felt it important for you folks to all know of next year's plan and hopefully keep your calendars open as planning progresses.

Another great announcement I am very happy to provide to our group: We have formed a "Marketing Committee" for the 6th BG's future. It will consist of Don Kane who initiated the idea in a short note to me at the Reunion. This committee will also include my dearest, Renee Myers, and Dick Masceri. In the next few days I will be sending them a general mission statement consisting of organizing our archives and how to use them as marketing tools for our future. Additionally, we will ask them to organize the future expansion of our group rather than the historical shrinking. This will not be an easy task, but I have already heard some wonderful ideas from them as I requested their voluntary efforts to keep the 6th BG Association alive, well and expanding.

It is always one of my personal worries that our group will perhaps not continue as we lose our Veterans. Many good things happened at this last Reunion that gives me confidence that this will not occur. So many good thoughts race through my brain as we form our Marketing Committee and find volunteers to keep the understanding of what our MEN did for all of us, and indeed the entire world, by bringing WWII to an end. Any other result would have had horrendous impact on my life and all of yours as well.

To our Veterans, again, I can only say THANK YOU.

☆ John Creek ☆

FROM THE EDITORS



In this issue of your newsletter we want to honor and recognize two of our Sixth Bomb Group Veterans, Marty Eichelman and Bernard Wilson. We appreciate the information and photos provided for us by Marty's son-in-law, John Handy, and by Bernard's son, David and granddaughter, Brooke Wilson Hallock. Marty was interviewed for "The Flyer", the magazine published by the Commemorative Air Force in April 2017. Bernard Wilson was inducted into the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame in November 2017.

After attending several Sixth Bomb Group Reunions, one concern we have heard over and over from our Veterans and their spouses is that they hope future generations don't forget what the Veterans did so that we might enjoy our freedoms today. It is wonderful and noteworthy that now after more than 70 years, we are recognizing and honoring these men not only for what they did during the war but also for what they accomplished after they came home. In a almost strange coincidence Major Knight of Ball High School JROTC, in Galveston, received a letter that speaks volumes to the legacy of our group. We have printed it on page 5.

David Wilson's daughter Brooke Wilson Hallock recently stated, "It is an incredible honor that my grandfather's legacy will be remembered in the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame. For me, I will always remember my kind and gentle grandfather as the most patriotic person I have ever met. And for my sons, I hope they remember there are heroes among us all, and we just happen to have a pretty amazing one in our family."

As we focus on the legacy of the Sixth Bomb Group, we acknowledge that several of our Veterans have recorded their stories. If you have done this or know of someone who has, please let us know how we can access the stories. If you have not recorded your story yet, please do so if it is possible. It is important for us and the legacy.

☆ Fran and Shirley Bates ☆

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2017 REUNION IN GALVESTON, TEXAS



Lone Star Museum



Ball High Honor Guard



Honored Veterans



Major Knight and the Veterans



The Benesh Family



Wallace Gake



The Vincent Family



Jean LaFitte House



John Dragoni



PLAN AHEAD! Our 2018 Reunion will be held in Boise, Idaho in September or early October 2018. It will be hosted by Kelly and Kristi Vincent

PHOTO HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2017 REUNION IN GALVESTON, TEXAS



John Creek presenting a "wounded warrior" an honorary medal



Cowboy Vincent at the auction



Our youngest Associates



The Gake family



Paula Thomson



Lunch at Willy G's



John Creek and Ed Vincent



Dick Masceri planning



Christmas decorations at Moody Gardens



A Letter to the 6th

In one of those unique events that happened just before the reunion took place, Major Knight of the Ball High School JROTC program and Capt Joseph Santos of the Tinian JR/SR High School JROTC battalion were communicating about Hurricane Harvey. When Capt Santos found out that the Ball High cadets were going to support the 6th Bomb Group Reunion and that the 6th had been based on Tinian, he wrote the following letter. It is a moving and very personal tribute to the legacy of the veterans in the group.

“Major Knight,

On the chance that we do not communicate prior to your ceremony with the WWII Veterans, please relay the following to them:

Because of your service you liberated the Mariana Islands from a hostile, evil occupation. You liberated us from an army that would bayonet you or cut your head off with a Samauri sword for not bowing properly. BTW the Northern Mariana islands celebrate their “Liberation Day” every July 4th and Guam celebrates its “Liberation Day” every July 21st.

Because of your service it gave the Mariana Islands an opportunity to thrive after World War II.

Because of your service it gave my parents a chance to meet, marry, and raise 6 children in peace.

Because of your service my wife’s parents met, married and raised 8 children in peace.

Because of your service I had the opportunity to enlist and become an Army Officer in the greatest country in the world and retire from the greatest Army in the world.

Because of your service I met and married my wife, have two beautiful children and have a grandson and one on the way.

Because of your service I am afforded the opportunity to teach students the sacrifices you have made. To appreciate the freedoms you all fought for. To respect the flag and the country that the flag represents.

Because of your service the world is a much better place, although the evil that has happened in Las Vegas, NY and there in Texas reminds us that we must remain forever vigilant

I thank you for all you have done for our country and most especially for how you all have directly influenced my life.

For that I remain eternally grateful. God Bless You All and God Bless America!!!”

John A. Santos, USA (Ret) Field Artillery



STAFF SERGEANT MARTY EICHELMAN INTERVIEWED

SSgt Marty Eichelman of Baltimore, MD enlisted in the US Army in September 1943 and did basic training at Greensboro, NC. He subsequently began pilot training at Shaw Field SC in an AT6, but the Army had other plans for him. There was a need for aerial gunners, so SSgt Eichelman was reassigned to aerial gunnery school at Buckingham Field in Fort Meyers, Florida. After completion of the school he was assigned to Grand Island, Nebraska in the newly formed 6th Bomb Group and the B-29 aircraft.

He moved to Tinian with the Group and flew as a right gunner on “Our Lady”.

His second mission was Operation Meetinghouse, the first night incendiary raid over Tokyo and one of the deadliest missions of the war. In all he and his crew flew on 35 missions — 23 of them with the 6th and the rest with the 504th Bomb Group. His 19th mission was the scariest as the aircraft was damaged during the mission, and the bomb bay doors failed to close. Not only that but two engines failed and they were flying on fumes when they made an emergency landing on Iwo Jima. Marty flew his last mission on August 6, 1945.

Marty tells a funny story about how the porch on his crew’s assigned “hooch” was made. There was a secured area on Tinian that housed a special mission aircraft (the 509th), but he had a friend who had access and who seemed to know where a supply of useable lumber was being kept. With a little GI ingenuity, that lumber was “borrowed” from the secure area and moved to a “more suitable location” in front of his living quarters.

Marty had four brothers who also served in the military during World War II in the US Army, the Army Air Forces, the Navy, and Coast Guard. Fortunately, they all returned home and went on to successful and productive lives. Marty came home and married Jeanne in 1951. They have been together for over 66 years and have three children. In November 2014 he took part in an Honor Flight to Washington DC where he was able to see the WWII Memorial. Thinking back on the war years, Marty feels fortunate to have served with some great ‘fellas’. Not a one of them was necessarily special, but they looked out for each other and did their duty.

Note: much of this information was taken from *The Flyer* a publication of the Commemorative Air Force, March –April 2017.

Here are all of his WW II photos: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskeJBSsR>

Photos from his navigator, Arch Miller: <https://flic.kr/s/aHskjMas9D>

Photos from his tail gunner, Charles Jones: <https://flic.kr/s/aHsjPr91Vi>

Photos of Marty’s 2014 Honor Flight visit to the WW II Memorial: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/39925216@N00/KV0ELf>

Our Lady Crew: Standing L-R: SSgt Mario DiFerdinando (left Gunner), SSgt Mary Eichelman (Right Gunner), SSgt James Brooks (CFC), SSgt David Evans (Radio), Sgt Charles Jones (Tail Gunner) and SSgt Elio Casal (Radarman). Kneeling L-R: 1Lt James Woodman (pilot), 1 LT Archie Miller (Navigator), 1 Lt Dennis Inkel (Bombardier), 1 LT R.S.”Rocky” Dawson (A/C) and 1 Lt Lawrence Steward (Engineer).



6TH BOMB GROUP VETERAN BERNARD WILSON HONORED

BY FLORIDA VETERANS' HALL OF FAME



Standing L-R: S/Sgt Bernard E. Wilson (Left Gunner), Cpl Jack B. Denny (Right Gunner), Cpl. Marion L. Long (Tail Gunner), Sgt Malcolm W. Douglas (Engineer), S/ Sgt. Raymond E. Raetz (Central Fire Control), Sgt James C. Bishop (Radio Operator). Kneeling L-R: 2/Lt Phillip R. Pilling (Radarman), 2/Lt Charles E. Pickett (Bombardier), 1/Lt Claude A. Johnstone (Aircraft Commander of Big Joe), 1/Lt John C. Howett (Pilot), 2/Lt James H. Aiman (Navigator).

In 2013 the State of Florida established the Hall of Fame to recognize and honor veterans who, through their works and lives during or after military service, made a significant contribution to the state.

Bernard Wilson, father of David Wilson, was selected this year over twenty-nine other candidates. In David's words, "We are extremely proud of my father." He was part of crew #2404 R and served as a Left Blister Gunner under Lt. John Howett. Like many of The Greatest Generation's experiences during WWII defined him for the remainder of his life. This honor entails primarily the things he accomplished after WWII."

Bernard Wilson passed away in 2009. He was a humble man who quietly accomplished much in his lifetime. David feels like he would be uncomfortable with this attention, but he would be proud and make sure to share credit with those men of his crew and the 6thBG. The events that he was most proud of were flying in the longest bombing mission of the war (his crew flew on the mission but had to abort), flying the last mission of the war, and flying over the USS Missouri on 2 September 1945 as the Instruments of Surrender were signed. Perhaps, many of our readers also remember these events, too.

Some but not all of Bernard's civic/veteran related activities included:

- Being active in American Legion for 64 years and Commander of three American Legion Posts. Active in VFW for 64 years, active in Rotary, and his church.
- Had a monument erected to those Madison County citizens who made the ultimate sacrifice.
- Served as Veterans' Service Officer for Madison County for 23 years.

Wilson will join other exceptional inductees in the Florida Veterans' Hall of Fame. Several were previous governors, state and federal representatives, and General Officers.

For more information, go to the newspaper article written by James Call. <http://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/2017/08/06/world-war-ii-tail-gunner-leads-balloting-veterans-hall-fame/534091001/>

Left to right, Richard Wilson, Dr. Rick Raines and Helen Wilson Raines, Martha and David Wilson, behind Martha and David is Betsy Wilson Sasnett, Major John Haynes, USMC Retired, Governor and Mrs Scott.

Major John Haynes is from Madison County Florida, born in Dowling Park, he is a veteran of WW2, Korea, and Vietnam. He was inducted in the first class of Veteran Hall of Fame Inductees in 2013 and is Chairman Emeritus of the Florida Veterans Foundation. He nominated Bernard Wilson for the Florida Veterans Foundation Hall of Fame Class of 2017.



IN MEMORIAM

Melvin Thompson. Died in Lincoln, Nebraska on December 12, 2008.



Joseph Whitney. Died on April 27, 2015 in Smithtown, New York. He was a 2LT radar operator on crew 2422

Patsy Hudson. Died on December 3, 2015 in Culpeper, Virginia.

Florence Matthews. She was the wife of SSgt Lawrence Matthews, CFC on Gravel Gertie. She died in Battle Creek, Michigan.



Steve Hays. He was the nephew of Jim and Carolyn Hays, the chaplain of the 6th bomb group and acted as memorial service chaplain for several reunions. Steve was on the board of directors of the Sixth Bomb Group. He died on Sept 28, 2017 in Nashville, TN. Steve was the co-founder of Gobbell Hays Partners, and was an International expert on indoor air quality and asbestos abatement. He is survived by a daughter, Diana Hays, and a sister, Connie Richardson.

Mary E. Gake, 92, passed away on Oct. 30, 2016, in Lincoln NE. She was a Graduate of Wheaton College, a member of Christian Business and Professional Women's Association and an Associate member of Telephone Pioneers. Retired from Nebraska State Historical Society. She was married for more than 69 years to Wallace Gake, an aircraft radar maintenance technician with the 40th B.S. 6th B.G.



Richard "Dick" Randall died on October 3, 2017 in Dunlap, Iowa. He was 94 years old. Dick served his country for over 26 years as a bombardier and navigator during WWII, Korea and Vietnam. Mr. Randall was very active in his community and church and was the president of the Dunlap Savings Bank at the time of his retirement. He loved to sing. He was preceded in death by his two wives and an infant son and is survived by four children.

STORIES OF SERVICE: AN OPPORTUNITY TO PRESERVE THE LEGACY OF THE 6th

Stories of Service invites young people from across America to join our national campaign to capture the stories of the World War II generation.

Any motivated student with access to a computer can join us in preserving the memories of the men and women who overcame the Great Depression, saved freedom and democracy, and rebuilt the postwar world. These "ordinary Americans" left a legacy of service that educates and inspires a new generation of Americans as we face the challenges of the 21st century. Help us make history by ensuring that the stories of those who defined the highest standard of service will forever be part of our nation's permanent memory!

6th BOMB GROUP SCHOLARSHIP

The 6th sponsors a scholarship fund managed by the Truman Heartland Community Foundation.

The 2017 scholarship recipients are:

Jess Warren Higgins attends the University of Wisconsin-Madison studying Biology and Communication Arts. He anticipates graduating this spring. He is the grandson of Warren Higgins.

Gina Turner attends North Dakota State University where she is studying Medical Lab Science. This is her sophomore year. She is the granddaughter of John “Jack” Nichols.

Information on the scholarship can be found here: <http://www.thcf.org/grants-scholarships/scholarship-funds/high-school-scholarships/sixth-bomb-group-memorial-scholarship/> .

The 6th Bomb Group sponsors a scholarship for relatives of 6th veterans. The Truman Heartland Community Foundation manages the fund. To apply for the scholarship visit their website at www.thcf.org . On their homepage look for the “Grants and Scholarships Seekers” tab; pull down to “Scholarships”; then “High School Scholarships”; then choose “6th Bomb Group Memorial Scholarship”. High School Students or Undergraduates may apply. This is a renewal scholarship. You can also contact the Truman Heartland Community Foundation, 300 N. Osage Street, Independence, MO 64050, (816) 836-8189.

Highlights of the Board of Directors’ Meeting on November 11, 2017 at the Moody Gardens Hotel, Galveston, Texas

- President Creek called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.
- The treasurer’s report was read and a motion was made and seconded to accept the report as presented. **Approved**
- The Minutes of the September Board meeting in Tampa were read and a motion was made to accept them as read. **Approved**
- The board discussed the size and uses of the scholarship fund.
- The board discussed the size of the board and the idea of assigning specific tasks to non board members on an ad hoc basis. A motion was made to accept this idea, and it was seconded with the provision that President Creek make such appointments as necessary. **Approved**
- The idea of using a reunion planning organization was discussed and the consensus was to try to use a professional organization in conjunction with the volunteer at the 2018 reunion.
- The meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

☆ BOARD MEMBERS ☆

John Creek, President
Virgil Morgan, Vice President
Ed Vincent, Secretary
Larry Dananay, Treasurer

Shirley Bates
Robert Frick
Mary Gresko
Warren Higgins
Herb Horst

Jack Koser
Glenda Richards
Kent Vincent
David Wilson



Period of October 01, 2016 to September 30, 2017

Checking Account

	Balance Checking Account 10/01/2016....	\$7,056.04
Income:		
Membership Dues.....		\$2,825.00
DVD & Pirate Log Sales.....		\$360.00
Proceeds From Reunions (Auction & Raffle Proceeds).....		\$3,272.10
Scholarship Contributions (Jerry Benesh Memorial Donations).....		\$485.00
Memorial Contributions (Herb Hobler-9th BG, & Memorials for Bill Moran & Fred Astroth).....		\$610.00
	Total Income.....	\$7,552.10
Expenses:		
Misc Expenses (New Check Charges).....		\$15.00
Newsletter Expenses.....		\$2,704.52
Mailing Costs.....		\$212.04
POW Reunion Reimbursements.....		\$0.00
Memorial Donations (Miller, George, Savala, Blaisdell, Post, Weida, Hill, Benesh, Alfred, Van Brunt, Herring).....		\$566.70
DVD Reproductions, Etc.....		\$0.00
Scholarship Fund Donations (Jerry Benesk Memorials - \$485.00, Donald Kane - \$60.00).....		\$545.00
Reunion Expenses (Dick Masceri Advance & Reminder Cards).....		\$1,328.00
	Total Expenses.....	\$5,371.26
	Balance Checking Account 09/30/2017.....	\$9,236.88

Trueman Heartland Community Foundation

Scholarship Fund

Period of January 01, 2017 to September 30, 2017

	Balance Scholarship Account 01/01/2017....	\$31,197.86
Additions:		
Contributions/Gifts to Fund.....		\$545.00
Interest Income.....		\$275.55
Dividend Income.....		\$286.34
Capital Gains/Loss.....		\$2,633.12
	Total Fund Additions....	\$3,740.01
Distributions/Expenses:		
Grants (Gina Turner - \$500.00, Jess Higgins - \$500.00).....		\$1,000.00
Administrative Fees.....		\$370.90
	Total Fund Distributions/Expenses.....	\$1,370.90
	Ending Scholarship Fund Balance 06/30/2017.....	\$33,566.97

6TH BOMB GROUP MERCHANDISE

THE PIRATE'S LOG, 6TH BOMB GROUP DVD, AND OUR DISTINCTIVE T-SHIRTS AND HATS NOW AVAILABLE



THE PIRATE'S LOG: first published in 1946 and often reprinted. It is a 74 page book chronicling the 6th Bomb Group from reactivation in 1944, training in B-29's at Grand Island, over-water flights to the Caribbean and departure for Tinian in the Pacific. The book follows bombing and mining missions over the Japanese Empire and the conclusion of history's greatest conflict in September 1945. With second, third and fourth generation young people continuing to show more interest in WW 2, this is a must for family members. **Each copy of The Pirate's Log costs \$30.00 which includes mailing.**

DVD: contains 450 photographs and runs 58 minutes. It tells the story of the 6th Bomb Group and all of the support personnel from reactivation stateside in April 1944. The DVD follows the bombing and mining missions culminating with the dropping of the Atomic bombs and the signing of the unconditional surrender of Japan on September 2, 1945. **Each costs \$30.00**

which includes shipping.

To order The Pirate's Log and/or DVD, contact Larry Dananay at: beagle22b07@yahoo.com or Larry Dananay, 501 Stonecliff Lane, Butler, PA 16001.

For T-shirts, hats and squadron pins, contact Steve Dananay at www.6thbombgroupgear.com

DUES REMINDER

There is in envelope enclosed in this newsletter to remind members and associates of the need to pay their dues to the organization. A couple of notes:

- ALL PAST UNPAID DUES ARE FORGIVEN
- YOUR DUES ARE PAID THROUGH THE YEAR THAT FOLLOWS YOUR NAME ON THIS NEWSLETTER ADDRESS LABEL (*for example: Smith 16 means dues are paid through 2016*)
- DUES ARE \$20 PER YEAR AND THIS IS REFLECTED ON THE ENVELOPE. YOU CAN PAY FOR MULTIPLE YEARS.

PRESERVE OUR HISTORY

As you come across diaries, photographs, articles, magazines, or other items of interest from the time your Sixth Bomb Group Veteran spent with the organization, please consider donating them to The Sixth if no one in your family wishes to hold on to them.

David has worked hard to preserve and share this memorabilia with other members who attend the reunions and visit the history room. All donated items will be cared for properly and at some point in time, archived at a central location containing all that relates to the Sixth Bomb Group. We all must strive to continue the legacy of The Sixth.

For more information or to arrange for a donation contact David Wilson at damabrca@

**TINIAN ISLAND
1945**

Larry Dananay
501 Stonecliff Lane
Butler, PA 16001

Address Service Requested

FOLLOW THE 6TH BOMB GROUP

☆ FaceBook - Sixth Bomb Group (Very Heavy)

☆ On the Web - www.PhilCrowther.com and www.6thbombgroupgear.com

