These fall days make me dream of Blair and happy boys playing ball and give thanks mine still can.

- Mary Dawson
October 29, 1945
Buck Dawson ’39 .............................................................. 6
   European Theater

Frank Shumann, Jr. ’42 .................................................. 40
   The Navy Cross

George Stern ’39 .......................................................... 44
   A Life Worth Living

Michael Habermann ’41 .................................................. 66
   Normandy and Lt. Elliott Moorhead ’41

Archer Martin ’42 .......................................................... 84
   Normandy Campaign and Student Program

Alan Meskin ’11 ............................................................ 100
   Soviet Union in the Great Patriotic War

W. Don Stewart ’43 .......................................................... 106
   Letter to the Men of Blair

Ching Yin Au ’43 ............................................................ 112
   Blair During the War

Eu-Schelling Families .................................................... 114
   Singapore to Blair

Mark A. Chramiec ’46 ..................................................... 116
   From Poland to Blair
The Blair Review

The 2011 edition of The Blair Review pays homage to the School’s “greatest generation,” the World War II-era Blair boys who participated in the grand struggle for the survival of democracy. Why the current interest in a far-off period, ever so distant from current Blair students? It’s as if the men of 1941 were asked to glance back some 70 years to post-Civil War Reconstruction. Well, a confluence of events and factors led the editors in the direction of the WWII theme:

- a treasure trove of WWII correspondence between soldiers, parents, Headmaster Breed and faculty members was uncovered and painstakingly catalogued in the Timken library archive by Ann Williams, Blair’s librarian and co-editor of this journal;
- in recent years, alumni have written memoir pieces and reached a certain age when reflection, the unforgiving march of biological clocks, and perhaps the wish to convey a message to young folks, all became paramount in their lives;
- a fair number of WWII “vets” are regulars on campus, speaking to students and supporting school programs; they never fail to elicit faculty and student interest in their past experiences;
- teachers have requested accessible, first-person combatant accounts to enliven the curriculum;
- and, yes, we affluent “Boomers” owe a special debt to the “old fellas,” to be partially repaid by presenting the stories of those who sacrificed so dearly for our security and good fortune.

The stellar military career of William “Buck” Dawson ’39, a much decorated officer of 82nd Airborne and an irrepressible spirit, comes to life in biographical pieces, letters from his mother and faculty member Harold Walker. A special thanks to Charlie and Ed Dawson ’87, Buck’s nephews who supplied information and material about their beloved uncle. The Dawson family friend and Pennsylvania neighbor, Frank Shuman ’42, is remembered only by a formal military notice, a brief account of extraordinary heroism during the battle for Okinawa that speaks volumes. And mild mannered, fun-loving George Stern ’39, for many years a Blair Trustee chairman of the Budget Committee, turns out to have been a daring and effective fighter pilot in the European theater. A casualty from a 1944 Normandy campaign, Michael Habermann ’41, describes the destruction of French villages, countryside and the grievous losses among the civilian
population. Archer Martin ’42, another wounded veteran who fought in Normandy, adds a preface to the comments of Blair students who benefited from Archer’s support of a yearly trip to D-Day beaches, museums, cemeteries and local villages.

A 2011 Blair graduate, Alan Meskin, conjures up what historian Timothy Snyder called the “Bloodlands,” the Eastern front where the most hideous slaughters of WWII took place.

The home front is represented by W. Don Stewart’s ’41 reminiscence of daily campus life, Dr Ching Ying Au’s ’43 note about a Chinese youth fleeing the Asian tide of war, a heartwarming story of the Schelling family and the Academy opening their doors to the Eu clan, and a Polish émigré mother successfully beseeching Dr. Breed to make room for dear son Mark Chramiec ’46.

Letter and memoir pieces have been reproduced and copied in their original form, warts and all (i.e. spelling and grammatical errors). One parent, Mary Dawson, though grateful for the survival of her sons, made it clear that mistakes are duly noted. If only they had studied more diligently during their Blair days!

Martin Miller
Editor
History Department
Planning a Boy's Education in Wartime

BLAIRMAY 1942
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August 2011

Dear Reader:

I have the best job in the world. Being the Blair Academy librarian lets me work with students and faculty whose questions, needs, and ideas can take my day just about anywhere. One piece of my job is the sometimes dubious prospect of trying to organize and preserve the school archives. When students are not on campus, I can be found in the dusty archives, trying to make sense of 160-plus years of "stuff." One summer I came across an innocuous-looking cardboard box. Opening it, I found hundreds of letters exchanged among Blair faculty, Blair graduates, and their families around WW II. Reading these letters took the better part of my summer and led me down a path paved by Blair that changed the way I look at duty, service, honor, and loyalty.

I was transported to Blair Academy in the 1940's. The School spent many hours trying to keep track of "Blair boys" during and after the war and learn of their experiences. The School was also looking to expand, and upon learning about all the sacrifices and heroics of Blair graduates and their families, it seemed right to dedicate the proposed building to the remembrance of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice in the service of their country. Out of this outpouring of effort and support came Memorial Hall, the building that houses my favorite spot on campus, Timken Library.

I hope this small offering of a few of the letters, along with a collection of memoirs and journal entries of current Blair students engaged in active remembrance, will take you on a journey of reflection and appreciation for those "Blair boys" who rose to the occasion and gave so much. Their stories and others, many untold, moved me to tears in the midst of my summer dust.

With gratitude,

Ann Williams
Assistant Editor
Buck Dawson ’39 The Dawson family sent two sons to the war, Frank Robertson “Bob” Dawson ’42 and William F. “Buck” (or “Bill”) Dawson ’39, whose exploits start off this edition of *The Blair Review*. Buck’s family has generously granted permission for us to tell his story using their family letters and pictures, along with Buck’s writing.

After leaving Blair Academy, Buck began his studies at the University of Michigan before entering the war. The following biography is taken from his book *Stand Up and Hook Up: A WWII Novel* which recounts some of his recorded adventures in the guise of George “Herk” Herkin.

Buck Dawson was a combat platoon leader and glider trooper with the 82nd Airborne Division in World War II. He was a recipient of 17 decorations, landed at Nijmegen, Holland on Sept. 17, 1944, in “Operation Market Garden” described in Cornelius Ryan’s *A Bridge Too Far*. He participated in the Battle of the Bulge and the attack on the Siegfried Line, later crossing the Elbe River and meeting the Russians at Grabow in Northern Germany. Dawson also occupied Berlin where he was in charge of press relations for General Gavin and the 82nd Division.

After the New York Victory Parade, Dawson wrote *Saga of the All American*, the official history of the 82nd Airborne. His service with the Division was with Company E, the 235-Glider Infantry Regiment, the Divisions Recons, and Division Headquarters.

Previous service with the 10th Mountain Division Ski Troops had given him the experience to handle the deep snow in the “Ardennes Patrol.” He began World War II as a private and retired as a captain after returning to service during the Korean War.
The Adventures of Buck Dawson
by Linda Robinson Walker

With permission from Michigan Today Fall 1996

Hey, kid,” said Bogie. “Whaddya think you’re doing?”

What University of Michigan senior, Buck Dawson, was doing was kissing Lauren Bacall, Humphrey Bogart’s wife, at producer S.P. Eagle’s Hollywood party the night before the 1948 Rose Bowl game.

“It’s New Year’s Eve, said Dawson, backing off. “I’m here with the Michigan team.”

“Oh, yeah,” Bogart said, “who’s going to win?”

“Michigan,” said Dawson.

“What score?”

“50 to 0.”

“O.K., put your money where your mouth is,” Bogart replied, offering a $100 bet on Southern Cal.

Dawson, egged on by others and heady from having bussed the new year in not only with Bacall but also Marlene Dietrich, Rita Hayworth and Evelyn Keyes, took the bet.

The next day, the legendary Michigan squad with stars like Len Ford, Al Wistert, Dan Dowski, Bruce Hilkene, Bob Chappuis, Chalmers and Pete Elliott, Bob Mann, Gene Derricotte and Dominic Tomasi, won U-M’s first Rose Bowl game since 1902, and by the same score--49-0. But with the point difference off by one, Dawson fretted about how he could pay filmdom’s toughest tough guy and what would happen if he couldn’t. But his pal, director Billy Wilder, offered reassurance: “Bogie’d never take your money with the victory so close.”

Recounting the story almost 50 years later, Dawson says, “So I got away with that O.K.”

Buck Dawson was out in Hollywood not only to follow Michigan’s championship team, but also to cast an eye on the film community where he intended to make his mark as a publicist after graduation in June. Newly returned from World War II, Dawson was rekindling friendships made in Europe with Marlene Dietrich and Billy Wilder who had arranged the invitation. He’d begun the evening catching up on things with a former sweetheart, Betty Jane Raze, a beauty queen who had just succeeded Ava Gardner as wife of Mickey Rooney.

Dietrich couldn’t go to the game with Dawson, but he passed the days with her and Wilder at the Paramount lot, where they were making Foreign Affair, and took the Michiganensian yearbook staff--Dawson was the editor--out to meet her. One day on the set, “who should come but [football coach] Fritz Crisler and the entire Michigan team,” Dawson recalls. “They were taking a tour, and so I
introduced everybody and we had pictures of her taken with the team and the staff.”

‘He’s Got the Best Press Agent’s Mind I’ve Seen’

William Forrest (Buck) Dawson, the son of the then vice-president of the Dixie Cup Company (his father went on to be president of Dixie and to head the “Keep America Beautiful” campaign) came to the University of Michigan in 1939 from his home in Easton, Pa. He hit the campus big time and became vice-president, by his count, “of over 17 extracurricular activities,” to the detriment of his studies.

“I flunked out the third year by never going to class,” Dawson says. “I was Mr. Joe College, but my studies suffered. Fortunately, there was an unwritten law that if you went away to serve in the Army, you would get another chance.”

So Dawson enlisted as a private in 1942 and volunteered for overseas duty, ending up in the infantry glider troops in the 82nd Airborne Division, making his entrance into Holland in the September 17, 1944, invasion at the end of a long cable pulled behind a C-47 “Dakota.” “Look, Hermann, no motors.” That’s what we used to say,” Dawson says of the Yanks’ dig at Goering, head of the Nazi air forces. “The gliders were pulled by planes, and they’d cut us loose and we’d crash into the ground. The landing could kill you if there were jeeps or howitzers on board. But ours carried just 14 men, and we landed in a sugar beet patch and only tipped over.”

Once in Holland, whipped up by a kind of bravado engendered by the intensity of the war, Dawson, who thought of himself as a “poor man’s” version of the actor Pat O’Brien, embarked on the first of his film-struck adventures.

Maj. Gen. James M. Gavin, commander of the division, sent Dawson to Paris to get the story of America’s achievements—specifically the 82nd’s Dutch campaign—back to the press. He drove through a British tank column in a captured German car that once belonged to none other than “Look, Hermann” Goering, himself. “The press guys in Paris got a kick out of it. They dared me to go see Marlene Dietrich, who’d just arrived and was staying at the Ritz. I put on the dirtiest combat stuff I could find, didn’t shave, carried my parachute, carbine and helmet. Then I went to the Ritz and told those rear-echelon b****ds who’d never seen combat that General Gavin had sent me and I wanted to see Dietrich.

“Absolutely not,” a fat major said. I sent up a note and waited. There was a hush and there she was, sashaying down the big circular staircase. I went up to her, talking fast because I assumed I wouldn’t have much time: ‘I’m Lieutenant Dawson . . .’

“Let’s go into the dining room
and have tea,’ she replied. All those colonels in full dress and I’m filthy. We start talking. I made up this proposition: She should come up to Holland as guest of General Gavin and the 82nd Airborne, to be the first German and the most famous legs to go into Germany we’d taken Bergendahl near the Dutch border.

“She said it was impossible, ‘a prisoner of the Army,’ she put it that way ‘I’m their guest and I have obligations, but first chance I get, I’ll come up, I promise.’

“She autographed this big picture. All the time I’m surrounded by people staring daggers at me. I drank my tea and got the hell out of there.”

In France, Dawson helped organize a war bond contest to “get rid of some of the back pay.” “We’d go into Rhiems,” he recalls, “to spend money and end up fighting each other. That #%*@! Patton had commandeered our new jump boots for his truckers, so we dragged them out of their cabs and took our boots off their feet.

“A recon guy and I went to Paris to take the war bond money to the finance headquarters. Marlene was there at the George V hotel with [French actor] Jean Gabin and gave me a pair of garters to use as publicity for the war bond drive with a trip to the states as the prize.”

He got back from Paris just in time to move out for the Battle of the Bulge (“terrible conditions, lots of our guys got killed”). In its European campaign, the 82nd Airborne liberated Holland and fought its way through the Bulge, meeting the Soviet troops 60 miles across the Elbe. Dawson was present at the liberation of the Ludwigslust concentration camp.

It was a welcome antidote to see Dietrich driving into camp near Cologne in a general’s staff car. Keeping her promise, she asked for Dawson, telling everyone within earshot, “I wouldn’t be here if not for him,” Dawson says. “My platoon was just amazed. My battalion commander was furious. ‘We can’t have all these disruptions,’ he said.”

The next day Dawson was transferred back to division headquarters and Gavin gave him a job as public relations officer. Maj. Gen. Matthew B. Ridgway had previously assigned him to write the 82nd Airborne’s history, and he published that book, Saga of the All-American, in 1946.

With the liberation of Berlin, Dawson was able to return Dietrich’s favor. Dietrich, who detested the Nazis, left Germany in the 1930s, but her mother, Josephine von Losch, had lived out the war in Berlin. “Marlene gave me a ‘care package’ to take to her mother, and she took more care of me than I did of her, and we became great friends.”

The press job not only got him out of combat but also into a position to meet more of the great and famous, who began to throng
Dawson

through occupied Berlin. Martha Gellhorn, then married to Ernest Hemingway, became a friend and contributed a preface to his book. Ingrid Bergman, touring with Jack Benny, was so reserved that to impress her as he guided her around the war-torn city, “I jumped off Hitler’s balcony and nearly drove my legs up through my chest,” Dawson said.

But best of all, he got a job offer. Marlene Dietrich urged Wilder, “You have to get this man signed, Billy. He has the best press agent’s mind I’ve seen,” Dawson remembers. Wilder promised him a job at Paramount.

The Roses of January Fade by June

With four bronze stars and a goal for his future, Dawson returned to Ann Arbor to complete his BA, one of the millions of war veterans who swarmed onto the nation’s campuses after the war, thanks to the GI Bill. So many, in fact, that he and his roommate, Dick Wakefield, the Tigers’ American League batting champion, couldn’t find a room on campus.

Dawson placed an ad, “Are your evenings long and dull? Do you need company? We laugh at all jokes and won’t study if it bothers you. All we need is a room.” They got almost 20 offers.

Dawson focused his boisterous energy on the Ensian. The yearbook hadn’t made money for seven years, so when the board chose him as managing editor, he offered a deal. “They paid a small salary--$300--but I told them I didn’t want any salary, just half the profits. They agreed and it made $3,200--$1,600 for me.

“We filled the office with volunteers from all the fraternities and sororities and made it an all-around promotion office. To prove it was superbly bound, we threw it off the roof of the Michigan Union tower. Of course, as a paratrooper I knew how to tie it and how to rig a little parachute.”

With less success but maximum exposure, he lobbied the Rose Bowl authorities to choose a queen not from Pasadena, as was traditional, but from Michigan. He personally nominated Ann Gestie, the fiancee of his friend, All-American tailback Bob Chappuis. Her photograph appeared on the front page of the Los Angeles Times as “Overlooked Michigan Beauty,” but the Pasadena women remained queens.

With graduation a mere formality the next June (“since I was allowed to graduate without a major or a foreign language”), Dawson set out with the team to celebrate the new year in Hollywood.

It was during these champagne days, partly financed by auctioning off at Paramount a football he’d had signed by the Michigan team, that Dawson arrived on the set of Foreign Affair to see Billy Wilder about
Russell and people like that. I stayed there six months and then went back east with my tail between my legs and took a job selling hosiery through vending machines for Roman Stripe, and then with Vicks.”

Trying to regain the excitement of nine years of student and army life, Dawson rejoined the Army in Europe during the Korean war and was in on the beginning of NATO. A terrible jeep accident in 1954, a long hospitalization in Walter Reed and a lost eye put an end to that.

**Plunging Back Into the Swim of Things**

Where could he go on shaky legs but back to Ann Arbor? This, his third stint at Michigan, saw a different, more serious student. He took writing classes, and his memoirs of the war won a Hopwood writing prize. And at a lecture at Hill, he found a wife. It was there he ran into Rosemary Mann Corson whom he’d dated years before. Rosemary, a widow with three children, was the daughter of Matt Mann, Michigan’s swimming coach from 1925 to 1954. Buck and Rosemary married in 1955, when they were both 35, Rosemary wearing the other pink garter that Marlene Dietrich had given Dawson.

The Mann family ran Camp Ak-o-Mak in Ontario, Canada, and this was a way of life that Dawson easily fit into. “Since I was 10, I never missed a year camping. Working with kids is the sober underpinning...
of my crazy life. Rosemary always says she doesn’t know whether I married her for herself or the camp,” Dawson jokes.

Rosemary became a women’s swimming coach, and at the camp they trained top swimmers, including Marty Sinn, Susie Thrasher and Diana Nyad. They also founded the Ann Arbor Swim Club, providing competitive opportunities for women swimmers at a time when the University’s physical education program didn’t support women’s competition. Dawson also found time to publish more books on topics ranging from Edwin Forbes’s Civil War sketches to surveys of notable swimming pools.

Swimming led Dawson to the final chapter of his career. In his work with the Amateur Athletic Union he urged the creation of the International Swimming Hall of Fame in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and was its first director from 1965 to 1988.

“To establish an International Hall of Fame took great vision and energy,” says current ISHOF president Dr. Samuel J. Freas. “I was fortunate enough to inherit a viable and solvent institution from Buck. It’s his enduring legacy. It really is a shrine and center for the aquatic sports world, a place for everyone who swims,” Freas continues. “People are moved to be inducted into this hall of heroes.”

Buck Dawson knew a thing or two about heroes.

From Saga of the All American by Buck Dawson.
Adventures

From *Saga of the All American* by Buck Dawson
A sampling of the evocative correspondence between Buck Dawson, Mrs. Dawson, Headmaster Breed and esteemed faculty member Harold Walker takes the reader on a journey through an enormously difficult period in the history of this country. The fascist existential threat to a democratic society was met by determined individuals trying to cope with the extraordinary challenges of daily life. Consider an upbeat, devil-may-care Buck shipping out to Europe, bravado and all, eventually transformed into a mature soldier brooding about man’s inhumanity to man and the responsibility of all Americans to learn from the experience of endless warfare, stunning levels of civilian casualties, and, yes, Holocaust genocide.

Mary Dawson holds down the home front with grit and pride, meticulously following her boys from battle to battle, reveling in their service, indeed heroics, always prepared to add a touch of timely, motherly advice for Buck and Bob. How can you not love a parent who reminds an errant son of improper spelling in the midst of world war? And her musings about fall football days for spirited Blair athletes contrast so poignantly to the deadly “game” of warfare.

We meet Dr. Breed and Mr. Walker valiantly keeping their beloved flock of Blair boys connected to the School with news of classmates, messages of encouragement and plans to honor those who have served and sacrificed during the war years.

As we move back and forth from the grand fronts of warfare to the hopes and dreams of individuals, the courage and downright decency of these “Blair folks” are apparent on every page of writing. They represent more than simply the touted “greatest generation,” rather Americans of all ages ready to sacrifice for the common good. Reading through this material leaves one with the distinct impression that a rather large debt is owed by all of us who have benefitted and indeed thrived during the post-war years. And, oh, to have met Buck and the others before they passed away!
AT SEA

Our New York farewell was terrific. Civilians everywhere along the route waved and threw confetti, and ran out with candy and cigarettes. When we got to our pier I saw for the first time some of the things our Red Cross money goes for every year. The ladies greeted us with doughnuts, candy bars, coffee, and lemonade as we got on the ship. It was swell because, of course, we couldn’t eat for some time. I’m no longer bitter about the money they waste in U.S. camps.

I also saw, when on the boat, what Army Special Services can do. There were no movies or anything like that on our ship so they really help pass the very long voyage. They had hundreds of books. I’m reading Nana, Low Man on the Totem Pole, H. M. Pulham, Esq., Inside Benchley, Long, Long Ago by the last “Town Crier”, and Laugh with Leacock. They also gave each man a free carton of cigarettes—courtesy Liberty Mutual Insurance Company; free cigars from the Cuban government; checker boards, magazines, and V-disc records. We can’t have any electric razors (tough on Pederson who now must shave like a man) or radios, because they would give out signals that enemy Radar might pick up. The V-discs are better than civilian records with all the best bands putting out real jazz for us. I wish I’d brought “I’ll Get By” to bring along but of course I didn’t know about the phonographs.

We couldn’t be on deck until after out of sight of land and, of course, all port holes are blackened and bolted at all times so I’ll have to wait till after I get back to describe Miss Liberty, etc.

For the first part of our trip the ocean was very calm and a lot like Lake Michigan when it is just a little choppy. My first night walking guard on deck it was very dark with only the phosphorous of the little sea animals glowing as they were disturbed by the waves and the ship cutting through the water.

It is usually pretty foggy and cool so sun bathing is “out.” The deep blue of the ocean plus an occasional white cap dotting the huge
panorama is a monotonous but coldly beautiful sight. The other ships in our convoy, their individual characteristics as described by the merchant seaman about, helps break the visual monotony. Occasionally, however, something else exciting happens. Once a school of porpoise followed us for miles, cart-wheeling out of the water and flapping their tails with glee. They are a huge fish that travel in schools up to a hundred or more. They look similar to sharks but, of course, are just the opposite. They’ve never been known to attack man and they dart back and forth across the bow of your ship almost as if saying: “We’re with you soldier. Follow us and you won’t go wrong. We’re your friend.”

We also saw a blimp patrolling along the convoy. It took me back to my kid days when I spent so much time in the ocean and Barnegat Bay near Lakehurst, New Jersey, where the blimps and dirigibles were kept. One of my biggest thrills used to be watching and waving to the men in the Macon, Akron, Los Angeles, Graf Zeppelin, and more often the little blimps which don’t look so little when they fly overhead with their motors roaring and their mooring cables hanging down. I was there when they came out with their first all-metal blimp, a solid sheet of shiny duraluminum, and I remember the experimental trips when they would drop planes out of the bottom of the dirigibles. In fact, seeing the old K-Z blimp was just as if I’d helped build her. It was my childhood thrill just like riding the hook and ladder at the Fire Station is for some other kids. As I proudly explained the blimp to a couple of Buddies I felt almost a part of it, a branch of aircraft that had almost died out until the war showed how important it is to have air-craft that can slow down to a complete stop if necessary to observe the dangerous water below. It is like the romance of the railroads. Anyone ever connected with them hates to see them start to fade and each new development and come-back brings back the days of their glorious history and gives you a new thrill to be an American and be a part of it all.

Later on Catalina Flying boats took the place of the blimps and throughout destroyers and corvettes would dart in and out of the convoy
like hunting dogs dancing and prancing around the bigger more cumbersome grizzly bear.

For quite sometime the sea was so calm that inside the staterooms below deck it was hard to believe we were on board a ship headed thousands of miles to a destination overseas. I'd find myself telling southerners about our farms and mines and mountains and cities here, meaning the northeast, and little realizing I was no longer in New York or New Jersey or Pennsylvania.

The whole trip was not so smooth, however. I have not been so fortunate as to make a trip without seasickness. As wind whips up the water you get the effect while below the deck of a swing ride when you've had enough and the long swoops of the slowing swing moving back and forth begins to hit you in the pit of the stomach. The huge swells don't shake the boat as much as a fast train rides, jerking and swishing as you walk down the aisle and always pitch into the lap of some old geezer instead of the beautiful girl across the aisle, or the jerking side motion that splashes your wash water all over the floor as you try to wash in the Pullman and get through so the man getting off at Wichita or Topeka can make his stop on the Kansas City Flyer.

The feeling isn't the jerk of a whip or a scooter bomber, it's the steady roll of a rocker that your stomach can't quite keep time with. Such was the feeling when one “W.F.D.” said goodbye to the beans and boiled potatoes and corned beef and bacon and cabbage that makes up the bulk of a navy man's chow.

When the feeling begins to come on the best thing seems to be to get to your bunk and when on your back it doesn't bother you. This has been the standard position for most of us. If we went to extremes in staying awake 20 out of every 24 hours in New York we are certainly doing the opposite now. We get up for meals, a salt water bath, not enough fresh water on a boat for bathing, lifeboat drills, calisthenics, and back to the sack and a book or glorious memories of things back home. I'll gaze at your pictures or just doze off dreaming of Suzy the “Sun-Tan
Temptress.” It isn’t a hard life. I dread to think what kind of shape we’ll be in when we get there but I’ve run from scratch before so I’m not objecting to the rest. You know I’m tired all the time. Too much sleep seems to get you just like too little. No insomnia for this kid! (Haw) It is good for a change though not to have bags under our eyes and have the old opals just brown and white instead of brown, red, and white.

The ship does have news broadcasts twice a day and you can imagine my thrill when I heard that Col. Bagby (Uncle Baz – Mr. Peterson) had done it again. What a guy! He’s a hero again, I guess you heard what he did. Went A.W.O.L. Took his first parachute jump to see what the men were up against, landed with the first wave airborne invasion and then showed up four days later —— first to be threatened with a Court Martial in the morning and presented with medal in the afternoon. What a guy! How can I ever live up to a heritage like that? I could capture Hitler and he’d still be up on me. What a guy! He always does the wrong thing and comes off with the goods. He’s the most colorful character since Dizzy Dean. Bob and John must really be proud soldiers tonight and I bet Pop and Mrs. Peterson are busting. Like his pals Rickenbacker and Doolittle, he leads a charmed life, I guess.

There are only Pete, Johnny Talbot, and I left from our gang that left Hale. The Boulder Trio is still intact. Each place we go they’d cut the shipment down but the C. U. kids were lucky and we’ll get there first I guess unless they fly some of those bums in ahead of us. Well, me constant companion and bedfellow Morpheus T. Sleep is tapping me gently on the shoulder so I’d better douse the glimmers and dry the quil until the morrow.

**************************************************************

Just finished eating a standing meal. Some deal. You stand up and eat on long thin tables and you eat fast, too, because you want to sway on out and get back to your old bunk before the soup in your belly starts swaying and slushing one way while the salt soup in the big gully outside sways and slushes you the other way. It’s a vicious circle
especially when you have to chase the soup clear around the bowl before
your spoon catches up with the ups and downs of the vegetable tide.
Anyhow when standing up to eat you have a head start to the HEAD (see
navy man for definition) and my third day out the start was not a bit too
much. By now, however, I'm an Old Salt and Neptune can nip old
transport over three times and I'll never flash my hash again (time out
while I lay down my pen and knock wood). I don't even chew a button
(the famous Mrs. D's remedy for seasickness) anymore.

The sea is terrific tonight. There is a nor'easter blowing and the
waves are breaking over the gun turrets of the top deck on the aft section
of for'castle. (Nautical terms courtesy Springer's Sailing Guide for
beginners of Dawson's or both).

There is a Liberty Ship over to our left in the convoy which
disappears completely every other minute. One of the crew told me that
on his last trip out one went down behind a wave like that and when the
wave went down again the ship was gone. He says it was empty and so
light that the sea threw it over and it sank. I told him I believed it. Let's
see now who was pulling who's leg. Anyhow it is a big thrill to see the
waves so big that a ship that close can go clear out of sight. It reminds
me of the day the storm hit our outboard motor boat in the middle of
Barnegat Bay and the propeller was clear out of water every time a wave
picked us up. It's just as wet too --- a needlepoint shower from all angles.
Just open your mouth and gargle. The atomizer is there, salt water and
all, only it doesn't work with a rubber ball.

It's getting cold here, too. We've had some heavy fog and rain
and it's beginning to feel like a Camp Hale summer, the cold is so bitter.
One of the guys said — "Oh yea, well is this is a Camp Hale summer just
show me a Camp Hale winter. I tried but the Captain objected to my
locking the kid in his frozen food locker so I guess the poor guy will
have to go on doubting.

Played some nickel and dime poker yesterday to avoid
stateroomitis and won 30-dollars. No cracks about the nickel and dime
limit. I simply won four out of every five hands the last two hours. Seriously, though, I’ve had plenty to do on the boat. A lot of the guys are going buggy but the few things we can so are things I’m way behind in. For instance, sleep we get plenty of, and reading, and time to dream, and write letters and do exercises, and get in bull sessions, and plan for post-war enterprises and who I’m going to borrow the money from. Oh it’s wonderful. If we just had mail-call by P.T. Boat or Carrier Pigeon, or even Seagull Express! How those feathered varmit keep up with us beats me anyway, but if they’re going to hang around we might as well use the critters for V-mail anyway. Make that your No. 1 project the next time you see an athletic gull, will you?

Pardon my rather poor style today. I guess it is a stir craziness caused by three things. (1) The show I had to write, produce, and play in Sunday; (2) The book about and by Robert Benchley that I just read; and (3) Being in stir too long.

You should have seen that fiasco Sunday. It was the sort of a Boom Boom day.1/3 Navy 2/3 Ski Troops. First, the Navy had gun practice, then Pete gave a 2-gun sermon, and then I shot the works. (Oh, brother, pass the eggs) with vaudeville for two hours. Pete’s sermon was the best I’ve heard since I’ve been in the Army and the gun practice was terrific. (oh, brother, let’s stop with that). Anyhow it was my largest audience to date (and they couldn’t leave either –Haw!!)

Tonight we set our watches back again. We don’t do anything all day but you sure hate to get gyped out of that hour anyway. It sure stays light out here a long time at night. We must be on super-daylight war time or something. We get International Radio now. Short wave or finger-wave or something. I just heard Dinah Shore and Jerry Colonna. What a combination --- terrific!!!

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Another day --- another night --- another sheet of paper and a pen which, just like my tongue, is loose at both ends and drooling all
over my fingers in the middle. Big day – lots of action. Everything happened but come to think of it not a damn thing I can write about. Well, I suppose it’ll be in the papers before you get this letter anyway.

We haven’t been able to sleep at night lately and nobody knew why. Then some brain figured out there’s a 6 hours difference between here and Chicago so we were trying to go to bed at 4 P.M. That’s just when I start to wake up so I just sleep all morning – that is, except for 20-minutes between 9:00 and 9:20 (3:00 and 3:20 Chicago time) when I’m rudely awakened for calisthenics and then back to the sack. Don’t ask me the exercises we do. How can I remember at 3:00 in the morning?

What a night! We are now 8-hours behind Chicago time so I just stay up all night and sleep all day. No kidding, though, we just saw the sun set and it was 12:30 A.M. It got dark at 1:15. How’s that for daylight super-war time. Night doesn’t come till morning is already here. Land of the Midnight Sun and is it ever beautiful to see the big gray cloud banks with the thin fog mist and the dark silhouettes of the ships moving along over the quiet water with the waves just high enough to give a rippling effect to the dark shadows. Darkness coming is weird but beautiful. The darkness just fades down over the water. You can see the red shade above the cloud bank behind you and the dark sky in front. The moon is up although we aren’t lucky enough to have a full one. If we did I don’t know what we’d do with it. Must stay inside (blackout) after dark and, anyway, hundreds of soldiers but nary a Viao, nurse, or wren.

Whoopee!! Just saw land off to our starboard. What a thrill after all these days! We land somewhere in Scotland tomorrow. If I get to England too it ought to be something. The prodigal returns to both sides of his family. If the Robertson’s from Scotland are still feudin’ with the Dawson’s from England I guess I’ll just have to stick to my claims of Indian blood and stand off with a superior air shouting “E Hunya Ga”
and refereeing the match. I forgot to bring my plaid pattern anyway so I’d probably look very revolting with borrowed kilties from the local Credit Clothiers. I’ll stick to the olive sack, I guess.

Well, pretty soon now I’ll be seeing and writing you all about the customs of our allies, the English, and the mistakes of our kraut-loving enemy. Please write ‘cause I never know where I’ll be next but one thing is sure and that is that the mailman will be there waiting.

The end of the voyage and the beginning of another new adventure.

BUCK
September 19, 1944

My dear Mr. Walker,

As it is time for schools to get underway, I expect you should send the boys present addresses to their Island State. Thought you might be interested in Bill's account of the trip over and first impressions.

He felt the brave troops were not going to acquiesce as it went on in the Infantry Replacement office. Of the officers present in England, the Adjutant of the 53rd Airborne Division came up and interviewed about half of them, and selected Bill to write the history of the division, to be published as a book later.

We have some other duties, allowing writing reporters around, mostly in putting in absences and attending writing condolence letters etc. We ran into A. B. March III & his girl.
MRS. C. F. DAWSON
624 CENTRAL STREET
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

This is the decision that
I arrived at. Bill's uncle, Col. B. C. Bickford, and his friends with him on D-Day, a day before he
left the first time, all went behind the lines and returned to England to be
superintended - decorated by all in a day.

Imagine his surprise when he heard
Bill come in with this outfit - their no
officers of his. He flew up and introduced him to
Bickford. Bickford is out for decision foot-
ball and hopes to sell the ball again.

Lt. Wm. F. Dawson 8-13-1758
Ngt. 2nd Artillery Div. 7th. M. A.
A. D. 1869

Pvt. F. R. Dawson 36746916
Battery A 6th. Field Artillery
Camp Rippon Alabama. A. D. 1863-4

Bill is still running into old
friends or friends of theirs in
their athletics; a number of the latter will
be here. Best wishes to all friends
in the faculty and for a successful year.

Wm. F. Dawson (McG)
Dear Mom:

The past few days have been the busiest in my life. Never before has so much happened in so short a time. Never again in a lifetime will experience be so vital. I have met the Russians --- been in on the last bridgehead in Europe (Elbe River) --- watched an entire army, 160,000 men, surrender to our Division --- see why Germany never ran out of oil and gas --- and what is most important, I saw why we fight and why Victory must follow Peace. In short, I was first man into a concentration camp. You, I, everyone is a criminal if we ever let it happen again. No human in the world can live and die like that again. That is why every man, woman, and child in the United States must see and suffer a small part of the pain and guilt for these crimes to humanity. Peace brings no automatic return to the good old days. It brings hard work, sacrifice, and social responsibility for our fellowmen until all shall be free and able to make for themselves.

I’m sorry I haven’t written this week but I’ve written you and as many others as I could reach through LIFE, LOOK, OUTDOOR LIFE, W.L.S., NEWSWEEK, TIME, and any other channel that could get the truth to the most, to those who need it far more than you who have suffered and sacrificed and felt your social debt as others should have.

I’m safe and well and I hope a better man, if not a more successful man for the war in Europe.

Your very, very loving and devoted son,

BILL
Dear Mr. Walker,

Here is my latest newspaper relating the 82nd's achievements in the final phases of battle Germany. I still haven't had a chance to use my Spanish but I feel very keenly about the situation down there and while I've had my fill of combat, I certainly would not feel right about returning with concentration camps and fascism still swarming over the people of Spain. The principles we fight against are just as strong in Spain as they were here even if the personal danger to our own shores is not.

Enough of the serious. After a spell as line platoon leader—through the Bulge and Rhine campaigns—I was lucky enough to get the opportunity to bend a few left handed pen points journalistically. My artist depicts me at work on the reverse side but so help me, it's heaven better! The paper was fun and can be chalked up to experience.

The occupation of Berlin by our Division I imagine will be still more valuable experience in trying to understand what we can do to help straighten out this crazy world of ours. I met Goon Altenholt in Paris when I was on pass. He's a great guy and the only Blair man I've seen recently. My mother's probably written you that I received the Bronze Star for heroic conduct in Holland. I also have five campaign...
Stars and a bronze assault arrowhead, a Combat Infantryman's badge, and a Pres. Citation but still not enough pts. to come home so I'll be in this someplace a few more yrs. Anyhow, Some day soon I'll be seeing the old Blair Campus. Incidentally, Hanover, where I spent 2 wks. printing the paper, is a very pleasant reproduction of Penna. & Jersey around Blair and Easton. The country is swell even if the people are bastards. I hope we can find a way to make the people to match their countryside. What a job to tackle. We can hope and work like hell, anyway.

Your estabhile pupil and admiring friend,

Buck Dawson
My Tour with --- PETER G. MARTIN

(By: Lt. William Forrest Dawson, 82nd Airborne Division)

My guide was Peter G. Martin, 67-year old Paris works manager who two years ago made the mistake of questioning Nazi politics. Somehow he had had the strength to carry on where younger men died by his side.

The first barracks was filled with Jews. Most were too weak to get up and go outside. We had to step gingerly because traces of chronic dysentery spotted the already filthy floor. Pitiful starving men lay in the nauseating stench beside those already dead. Living and dead side-by-side, only the blue black skin color of the dead to differentiate between the two. One man still strong enough to sit up and talk was crying and jabbering with Peter like a baby. “Why don’t you move outside?” I asked him. He reached down and lifted a black greasy bundle from his gaunt leg to reveal a long festering infection with maggots oozing about in the stinking pus.

He hurt his leg on our trip here five weeks ago, Peter said. We worked in the salt mines between Magnenberg and Brunswick. When the Germans heard the Yanks were coming they shipped us here. It took us eight days in box cars to go 120 miles. We had no water and nothing to eat except a few raw potatoes. At each halt we got off our box cars to bury the dead. All of us suffered from malnutrition and dysentery. Only the strongest could stand it.

I was about to vomit from the stench, myself, when we finally got back outside. One old pump furnished the water for the 4,000 political prisoners in this enclosure or should I say 3,000. In the last three weeks almost a quarter had died of starvation.

The next two living skeletons we saw were Robert and Paul from Budapest. Robert was 23. He had been educated at Chattenhein school in England. His father was a world exporter of ladies finery in clothes but they had committed the unpardonable crime of being Jewish, so Robert’s
mother and dad were killed and he was thrown into a concentration camp. He tried to write his name for me but his fingers wouldn’t respond. He humbly apologized for his clumsiness and introduced me to his adopted brother Paul. Paul was 13. At the age of 10 he had been thrown into a concentration camp. He, too, was a Jew. Paul got the same treatment the others received. His growth was stunted by the complete lack of proper nourishment. Four times Paul had been to the gas chambers and four times they had withdrawn him at the last minute, one of a few, they always pulled out to tell of the hundreds not given the chance to live or die on the starvation-disease line margin.

The next barracks we hit had been some kind of a washroom. Long cement troughs were filled with filthy water and beside them swung a border of dead bodies. In the corners were tiers of dead stacked like logs in a wood pile so that they could be easily counted. The Germans had been systematic to the last -- even in storing the dead. An English speaking Dutchman had joined us. Death had been heaviest among his people whose bodies, long accustomed to rich foods, seemed the first to disintegrate.

He and Peter told of the S.S. Yes, the S.S. had begun to soften up on them gradually after Stalingrad, but it had not helped. The Germans never managed the slave laborers themselves, but turned it over to contemptible internee overseers, released convicts who took out their personal revenge on the peoples of the country who had convicted them, or just for the extra privileges and better food the S.S. permitted them. The Dutch man took off his shirt and showed me half-healed welts dealt him by one of these overseers. In the last week the S.S. had run away turning their weapons over to the convicts. These scum would stand outside the double barbed wire fence and shoot at anything they saw moving.

Only a few of the internees still had the mental or physical strength to feel resentment. Hysteria was common, sanitation was nil, and medical care consisted of advice from the two prisoner doctors who were given no medical supplies.
We heard a commotion outside and walked out. The first Allied wagon of chow had arrived. Loaves of black bread and cans of meat from a German warehouse in town. The people were like cattle. They stormed and clawed the wagon; they stepped on each other in the stampede, and they fought like savages over each others food. One frenzied man got up off his sick bed, (the black, lousy straw they slept on) ran a few yards and dropped dead in convulsions. Grown men looking more dead than alive, bawled and screamed at my feet to do something, to get them food. One licked the crumbs off the black, scorched ground where three others had torn a loaf of bread apart.

Today things are different. American Army doctors and captured food from the over-abundant German breadbaskets have saved the survivors. Many are too far gone mentally to carry the bitterness, but for those of us who came and saw it in the faces of the living and the rotting bodies of the dead there can be no forgetting the crimes of the most uncivilized era in the history of the world. There can be no forgetting that the Poles, Czechs, French, Dutch, Danes, Norwegians, Belgians, and the still dying Spanish Republicans have no less right to life, food, and happiness as our nextdoor neighbor in Philadelphia, Dallas, or Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

I thanked the old Frenchman who had fought against the English in the Boor War way back in 1899, and promised I’d let as many as possible know what he’d somehow lived to tell. I wiped the filth off my Jump boots and climbed in to the jeep to go. The old man was smiling, but I didn’t have the strength to return the smile.

May 1945
The 82nd Airborne Division drops into Holland

photo from *Saga of the All American* by Buck Dawson
July 30, 1945

Dear Bill:

Thanks for your long and unusually interesting letter and the copy of your newspaper. I also received the copy which you sent me shortly after your arrival in Holland. Naturally, I prize these two papers very much.

I have attempted to keep up correspondence with as many Blair boys in the service as I possibly could. I have received letters from them from all parts of the world. I have heard and read much of the great morale builder of our letters to the boys in service. However, I can assure you that the letters we receive from Blair boys certainly have helped our morale. I do not believe that there can be any reason why boys in service with all of their tough experiences can have realized that we, on the so-called home front, have also at times needed plenty of encouragement to keep up our moral.

I wonder if you have been receiving the Blair Bulletin. Since such a publication is exactly up your alley, I do hope that you have had an opportunity to see the last two copies. They have been well worthwhile. Our service flag shows about a thousand boys in the services, of whom we have definite information. Naturally, there are many of whom we know nothing. Our gold star list stands at thirty-six. However, we have not considered, even yet, several who have been marked as missing in action for such a long time. You probably have heard that Frank Shumann of Easton was one of the latest casualties.

Here at Blair, as a part of our effort to do all that we can to help things along, we have been in session the year round now for over three years. We graduate a class September 1, February 1, and June 1. In this way, we have been able to grant diplomas to many boys before their eighteenth birthday.
who otherwise would not have received them. Then, too, we have streamlined certain courses, dropped others, and emphasized mathematics and sciences. In this way we have also prepared many boys for important work in various branches of the service.

It is astonishing the number of our boys who have some commission. Congratulations on your many awards and decorations. I only wish that there might be some way that we could have accurate information on all of the citations and awards that have been won by Blair boys. By the way, in the not too distant future, some of us must be giving serious thought to a publication concerning Blair in World War II. I know that one of our alumni, Art Richmond, who has been for some time in New Guinea, will be unusually well qualified to do some of this work. I can help out here and there. I am sure that your better than usual publication work will make you well qualified to advise on this work. Be sure to keep it in mind.

Some of us have already started in a small insignificant way plans for a big Blair reunion of boys in service. Naturally, this is all vague and indefinite as yet, and, of course, some good time away; but we must have it. I wish that you might see the Blair campus right now. Because of our unusual rainy season, everything is a bit greener and more beautiful than ever. Here and there you would find changes, all of which you would enjoy seeing. For instance, the chapel has be reversed so that the platform is at the south end and the seats run the long way of the building. It has added much to the dignity of the room. It now looks like a real school platform. Right now the workmen are all busy putting up a fine big garage beyond the workshop, so that members of the faculty will not have to keep their cars off the campus. Plans are well underway for a building program, which will include an auditorium, hobby shop, recreation rooms, and so forth. Mr. Blair himself is very
actively interested in this, and I am sure that actual work will be under way before too long.

Do you ever hear from either Bert Stiff or Wakefield? I understand that the latter is out of the service and back in baseball uniform again. Bert and his bride blossomed forth on the pages of several of our magazines some time ago figuring in the Woodbury Soap advertisement. Bert has already been cited for heroic actions. I can imagine that he would go into things the same as he did in football.

I appreciated the sketch of your artist, particularly your right arm with its decorations. Doubtless you value that more than any of the others. You struck a real cord in my heart when you wrote as you did about Spain. Perhaps now with the change in government in England, a bit of a cleanup can be started there.

It seems like only yesterday that I used to look across to your table and watch you consuming the Knox’s gelatin. I am sure that you have never had time this past year or so to bother about that. You can’t imagine how big a thrill it will be to many of us to see you back here on the Blair campus some day. It is only natural that, of those many, many Blair boys in service, some have been able to do very big things. You, of course, are among that number. Not that that has anything to do with the welcome that you will receive, but I do want you to know that we realize it.

Sincerely yours,

hfwjc
My dear Dr. Breed:

Your request for information about the boys came as I was wondering if I should have told someone at Blair about their post war careers in the army. Both are still in Europe. Bob’s division came home without him; Bill’s is due to return soon and he is not sure whether he will be left behind minus one point or get another decoration and make it before Christmas.

It is still or again, Lt. William F. Dawson, 0-1321775, Hdq. 82nd Airborne Division, c/o Postmaster New York, N.Y., A.P.O. 469, and Bob’s is now Pfc. Frank R. Dawson, 36,746,916, Bty. A, 392nd Field Artillery Bn., c/o Postmaster New York, N.Y., A.P.O. 4111. He is in the 42nd Rainbow Division now.

Bob’s division, the 66th, spent the winter and spring near the French Coast, keeping the Germans pocketed there in bounds, and following the peace he got to visit the famous submarine bases. The French treated them royally. He made a trip into Germany and then was sent to the staging area near Marseille to camp in the sand and help run the area. This summer he went on leave to Paris, England, and Scotland, and on his return went out for Division football. He only weighs 190 pounds now!! Imagine his delight when he discovered the ex-Lafayette “Tony” Cavello as coach and one of the squad a fellow on the Lehigh Freshman team that defeated Blair his first year on the team here. Tony changed him from a halfback to a quarterback and he was surely surprised and delighted when he made the team of big time players and they won their first and only game. The schedule was cancelled and Division ordered home – Bob transferred to the 42nd Rainbow Division. After five days in a 40 and 8 they arrived at Bad Gastein in the Bavarian
Alps and were quartered in a resort hotel with civilian staff, amid snow clad mountains. He thought he was dreaming. When the coach asked them to put a team on the field the following Saturday, using their own plays, he knew it. The boys from the 66th made both the touchdowns of the 12-0 score. He is traveling around with the team every week and playing ball, so we know he is happy.

Bill is now Public Relations Officer of the Division as well as Historian and Editor of the “ALL AMERICAN” PARAGLIDE. He is a First Lieutenant. He has been with that famous 82nd Airborne Division through five campaigns and the occupation of Berlin. In addition to five campaign stars he wears the bronze arrowhead for airborne assault on the Nijmegen bridge in Holland; the bronze star medal for meritorious service and heroic conduct in the Holland campaign; the Oakleaf Cluster to this for heroic conduct on a three-day snow patrol behind enemy lines in the battle of Ardennes Bulge in Belgium. Wears Willems Order of Nassau, the Netherlands highest award for gallantry and valor; the Belgium fourragere 1940 for individual and unit gallantry in liberating Belgium; the Combat Infantry badge; and the Presidential Citation.

He qualifies for both the rarely given foreign awards as an individual as well as unit member since he fought in both campaigns. He left Headquarters and led a combat patrol of the 325th Glider Infantry during the worst fighting last winter, returning to Headquarters after they were in Cologne. In the Siegfried Line last winter he wrote me but for the sight of it he could imagine he was looking out over “the hills of Blair,” the peace was unbelievable after the preceding days. Since he came through safely I’m glad he had the combat experience and made good.

His career at Headquarters has been fabulous. He has met all the big entertainers, Hollywood stars, Press and Publicity people. WLS broadcast his descriptions of the air borne invasion of Holland on four programs. The United States treasury Department used the last “MESSAGE TO AMERICA” in the Bond Drive a year ago and over three hundred papers printed it. Their Assistant editor, who was in Europe then, says somebody should write a book about him. If I do not
stop you will think I aim to do so now. The boys would love his exploits with Marlene Dietrich, Ingrid Bergman, Bob Hope, etc.

My great regret is that he did not have Junior English at Blair. Five off for every misspelled word would have left him with a minus grade far below zero, but he might have improved his form as Bob did. He does all the supervision of the printing of the PARAGLIDE as well as editing it, however.

Did you know Frank Shumann received the Navy Cross posthumously? The account of his brave finale is worth printing for the boys to read. His death came close to home to us and the way Bob wrote about it made me prouder than all the honors. His is a rare Christian spirit. He has the Good Conduct medal and was the only private in the 66th's class for discussion group leaders.

These fall days make me dream of Blair and happy boys playing ball and give thanks mine still can.

Our regards to Mrs. Breed and to you.

Sincerely,

Mary R. Dawson

I'm sending the last two Paraglides. Think the first one went to Blair and a couple of other things I thought you might be interested in.
Former Eastonian Receives Cluster To Bronze Star

First Lieut. William F. "Buck" Dawson, son of Mr. and Mrs. Cecil Dawson, formerly of Easton, now of Evanston, Ill., has received an Oak Leaf Cluster to his Bronze Star Medal at a ceremony in the German capital where he is on occupation duty with the world famed 82nd "All American" Airborne Division. Dawson's second Bronze Star Medal is for heroic conduct on an all night snow patrol action in the Bulge.

The citation reads in part: "For meritorious service near Herresbach, Belgium, First Lieutenant Dawson voluntarily offered his services to accompany elements of the Division Reconnaissance Patrol on the latter's first foot patrol in deep snow. During the entire twenty one hours, his skill and knowledge of snow patrolling guided the platoon through the dangerous and hazardous routes. Acting as lead scout, Lieut. Dawson and his second scout succeeded in surprising an enemy road block, killing one of the enemy and taking several prisoners. The patrol continued and, through his skill, flushed several more of the enemy and forced the withdrawal of the numerically superior enemy force under intense fire. His aggressive action, courage and skill instilled great confidence in the men and enabled the platoon to successfully accomplish its mission."

Lieut. Dawson received his first Bronze Star for service in the invasion of Holland. He also received the Netherlands highest decoration, The Military Order of William; the Belgian Fourragere to the Croix de Guerre; Presidential Citation, Combat Infantry Badge, ETO ribbon with five stars, Invasion arrowhead, Glider badge with combat star; and the American theatre ribbon, Pearl Harbor ribbon, Victory ribbon, and German occupation ribbon.

Coming overseas in June, 1944, after a year in the Ski Troops at Camp Hale, Colo., Dawson joined the 82nd Division in Africa, Sicily, and Italy.

He attended Easton High School and was graduated from Blair Academy in 1938. He is a graduate of Michigan State.
Frank Eppele Shumann, Jr. ’42  Frank’s name can be found on a plaque in Timken Library (formerly Memorial Hall) honoring 55 Blair boys who made the ultimate sacrifice in WWII. He was an Easton, Pennsylvania neighbor and friend of the Dawson family. Jim Pender, a venerable science teacher and track /cross country coach (1941-80), told the story of young Frank racing from the gym on Sunday, December 7, 1941, proclaiming to all that Pearl Harbor had been bombed, then leading other students to the ‘map room’ in Clinton Hall to actually locate the Hawaiian naval base. Apparently, the boys marched en masse to the First Presbyterian Church in town, the site of required Sunday service (nightly vespers were held on campus), whereupon the minister exhorted the boys to prayer for ALL sides in the coming conflict. An outraged student body rushed back to campus and proceeded to boycott the church. Sadly, Frank Shumann never returned from the war, killed in action on Okinawa and awarded the Navy Cross posthumously. The official Marine Corps account of a hero fallen in battle was forwarded to the editors by Charlie Dawson, Buck Dawson’s nephew.
The Navy Cross
Awarded to Frank Shumann

Lt. Col. Thomas E. Williams of the Sixth Marine Division wrote: “There is a maxim out here among us all which says the best go first. I have found that maxim to be true and what’s more to be the key to the tragedy that is war . . . . The country cannot afford to lose men like Private (1st class) Frank E. Shumann, Jr., nor can we. The qualities he possessed are too rarely found.”

Shumann served in the Marines with the Sixth Division on Guadalcanal and later joined the fight for the occupation of Okinawa. He died at Okinawa on May 13, 1945.

The circumstances which led to his death are recounted in the book Uncommon Valor: Marine Divisions in Action.

“Patrols from the Fourth and 22d Marines began to venture into the outskirts of Naha, on the north bank of the Asato. Frank Shumann, 18, from Easton, Pennsylvania, had been a clerk at Division Intelligence Headquarters. His pleas to Colonel Thomas E. Williams, G2, that he be permitted to see action finally were granted and he accompanied a patrol into the little village behind whose shattered walls waited dead-eye snipers.

“On one patrol the youth, whom his buddies called Eager Beaver, wiped out a machinegun nest with a pistol after his BAR [automatic rifle] had jammed. Later in the day, he led a tank company into the danger-filled streets to show where the Jap center of activity was concentrated and was one of the first men hit by snipers.

“Despite his wounds, he crept forward on his elbows, firing away at another machinegun nest. Strings of Nambu bullets whipped through his legs, but he pointed out the Jap mortar position. He was about to fire his last shot at the machine gunners when, from another corner of the town, several grenades came flying. He died then, but the advancing tanks, guided by his shouts, pounded away at the enemy, killing 100 Japs.”

On September 9, 1948, the parents of Frank Shumann received the Navy Cross on behalf of their son from Col. W. C. Hall of the Marine Barracks at the Philadelphia Naval Base.

The citation said in part: “Private First Class Shumann brought about the fall of the town with a minimum loss of life and, by his tactical skill, presence of mind under fire and indomitable devotion to duty in the face of overwhelming peril, upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.”
Frank Eppele Shumann, Jr.
Private (1st Class), U.S. Marine Corps Reserve:

The President of the United States of America takes pride in presenting the Navy Cross (Posthumously) to Private First Class Frank E. Shumann, Jr. (MCSN: 543326), United States Marine Corps (Reserve), for extraordinary heroism as a Member of a Division Observation Post Team, serving with Headquarters Company, Headquarters Battalion, SIXTH Marine Division, during operations against Japanese forces on Okinawa Shima, Ryukyu Islands, on 13 May 1945. Twice volunteering to enter the town of Amike when it was still in hostile hands, Private First Class Shumann on the first occasion went forward on a reconnaissance mission during which he engaged and killed one of the enemy and, returning to his command post through a barrage of close-range hostile fire, brought information of material value in future operations. Later joining a combat patrol and assuming a point position because he was familiar with the territory, he courageously reentered the ruined town, kicking grenades out of his path and blazing away with his gun to account for seven or eight Japanese who opened fire on him. Although mortally wounded during this action, he continued to direct the movement of the patrol and of the tanks which accompanied it until he succumbed. Private First Class Shumann brought about the fall of the town with a minimum loss of life and, by his tactical skill, presence of mind under fire and indomitable devotion to duty in the face of overwhelming peril, upheld the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country.
George T. Stern ’39 attended Blair as a post-graduate student, matriculated at University of Virginia, and graduated with a BS degree in engineering. He reported for duty as an aviation cadet in September 1942 in Richmond, Virginia and received his wings as a flight officer in July 1943. Later that year, he joined the 66th Fighter Squadron, 57th Group in North Africa, finally arriving in Italy, January 1944 as a P-40 Warhawk/P-47 Thunderbolt pilot and eventually received a battlefield commission as 2nd lieutenant. After serving as a decorated fighter pilot in the Air Force, he earned his graduate degree from Newark College of Engineering and has retired as owner, president, and CEO of Pneu-Hydro Valve Corp. and Angar Scientific Corp. His two sons graduated from Blair, Andrew ’73 and Gary ’76. He and his wife, Carolyn, reside in Tequesta, Florida and Maryville, Tennessee. Mr. Stern served on the Blair Parents’ Executive Committee and became a member of the Alumni Association Board of Governors in 1977. He joined the Board of Trustees in 1978 and served as chairman of the Budget Committee until 1997 when he was elected as an Emeritus Trustee. Mr. Stern was honored with the 1996 Alumnus of the Year award.

The following account of George Stern’s experience as a fighter pilot was excerpted from his memoir, A Life Worth Living.
A Life Worth Living

We arrived in Italy January 1, 1944. The nearest town was Foggia on the east coast of the Italian peninsula. The weather was rainy, cold, and miserable. Our airfield did not have metal or concrete runways. It was dirt, grass and mud, which made take-offs and landings very difficult. We were disappointed when we learned that the 57th did not fly the P-47 Thunderbolts that we used for training in Perry, Florida. They were still equipped with P-40 Warhawks. The Warhawk was a sturdy, good plane, but it was underpowered to have to compete with enemy planes in 1944.

Our airfield was named Amendola and we lived in tents. Although the 66th Squadron was building a block mess hall and club for officers and a Niesen Hut Club for crew chiefs and enlisted men, our present mess halls and bars were large drafty tents. My tent mates were: Buzz Yoder, Herky Waggaman and Red Wise. We had been together for a long time and a strong bond developed between us.

The commanding officers of the 66th Squadron (called “The Exterminator Squadron”) were rather unique. They were both new at the job. Both were still 1st lieutenants (but not for long). William (Benny) Benedict was the Squadron Commander. Charlie Leaf was Squadron Operations Officer. Charlie came from my hometown of South Orange, New Jersey. He went to Columbia High School and he was a sophomore when I was a senior. I did not know him in high school.

Both Benny and Charlie went to Canada before America entered the war and received their training with the Royal Canadian Air Corp. When America entered the war they transferred to the 57th Fighter Group in North Africa. Benny and Charlie were famous in the Mediterranean Theater. They were written up in The Stars and Stripes and the book Mediterranean Sweep. They were called “the Scrouters”. They would raid abandoned enemy dumps after the Germans had left and end up with all sorts of goodies. They had to be careful because the Germans left booby traps on most of their left behind equipment. Anyway, our squadron had an abundance of mobile vehicles. We had Fiat autos, trucks, generators, rebuilt transport planes, rebuilt observation planes and Benny even scrounged a large house trailer that afforded Benny and Charlie a life of comparable luxury. They were also excellent pilots.

Due to losses and revolving pilots home for a while, the 66th only had fifteen healthy pilots when our group joined the squadron. As we were new pilots and had little or no flying time in the Warhawks, Benny
and Charlie thought it would be a good idea if we flew a few practice missions.

In the first, Charlie led the flight. I was his wingman and Red and Herky completed our flight. We were flying really close formation with my wing tip just a few feet away from the fuselage of Charlie’s plane. All of a sudden I had to duck under Charlie’s wing and I went shooting past him.

“Sterno, where in the hell are you going? Get back in formation.”

“I can’t Charlie, my throttle is jammed in the full open position. I can’t move it.”

After a few minutes of trying, Charlie’s voice came over the radio: “Jackpot two, (Jackpot was the radio call identification of the 66th Fighter Squadron) you better land at the B-17 field next to Amendola. They have a long metal strip runway.”

“Roger, Jackpot one, over and out.”

I did not know the call identification of the B-17 field so I buzzed their runway wagging my wings. I pulled up and cut my engine on the final approach. I made a good dead stick landing (landing without power) and rolled to a stop on the runway. I was very proud of myself.

Voice from the tower, over the radio, “Warhawk – What in the hell are you doing? I have a flight returning from a mission. Get the hell off of our runway.”

They were not very nice. I replied, “I can’t. My throttle is jammed wide open.” In less than two minutes they had a tow truck there and pulled me off the runway in time.

They were not very understanding of my predicament and I was pissed off at them. They called Jackpot and within one half hour, my planes crew chief arrived. I was not very happy with him either. He said a bolt had come out. He fixed it and I flew back to Amendola.

Our second practice mission did not turn out very well either. Red, Buzz, Herky and I were up practicing simulated dogfights. Along came a British Spitfire to join the fun, but he flew circles around us. He then came in to do a victory roll over our field but he was too low and his wing hit the ground. He crashed and his plane caught fire. We landed and watched the ground crew try to put the fire out and save the pilot. It was hopeless. The accident had a sobering effect on my buddies and me. It was awful to see a man burn in his machine. We later found out that the pilot was one of the leading aces in the RAF - Wing Commander Lance Wade with 26 victories. It was a lesson for us. One of the allies’ best pilots had been lost to an inflated ego and carelessness.

For reasons I will never understand, Herky was shipped out and sent to serve in a fighter group in the CBI (China, Burma, India) Theater. It was a sad goodbye to my good friend. We received a new pilot as
a tent mate. His name was Wilber (Bill) Bailey. Bill was crazy enough to fit right in with our group.

On our second combat mission, Sheldon Weber was shot down just off the coast of Yugoslavia. He bailed out and although his parachute never fully opened, he survived. He was rescued by the Yugoslavian partisans and he spent a month with them before they were able to return him to Italy and the 66th. He had quite an experience as he fought the Germans along with them until they could arrange for a means to transport him back to us. Shelly had many interesting stories for us, including the night he slept between two partisan girls in order to keep warm, but they would not allow him to become intimate with them. They could not fight if they became pregnant. Unfortunately, Sheldon was shipped home to become an instructor. If he fell into enemy hands, he knew too much about the partisan operations.

Of the group that came overseas together, our 66th squadron had the best record. In the first five missions we only lost Shelly and he was not killed in action (KIA). The 64th had two KIA and the 65th had one. We were told (and it was true), if a pilot gets past his first ten missions, his chance of survival increases dramatically.

I had been corresponding with Tommy (girl back home) since we parted. She wrote to me at least twice a week and I wrote to her about once a week (a lot for me). Our letters were warm and romantic. As time passed, her letters became more factual and less romantic and less frequent. After about three months our correspondence ceased. I am sure Tommy was lonely and found someone else. I hope she had a happy life.

Back to the war. I think Benny was sick of seeing the blue bars on my shoulders and put me in for a battlefield promotion. It came through and I became 2nd Lieutenant George Stern, Officer and Gentleman. Please do not believe the Officer and Gentleman part. With the promotion came a cut in pay. As a flight officer I received 20% overseas pay while as a lieutenant I received only 10%.

When I joined the 57th, we were considered in the ninth Air Corp. We were supporting the British Eight Army and received British rations. The food was not good. Our main staple was a canned meat called bully beef. It was really canned corned beef. We had not eaten fresh or frozen meat since we arrived. Scrounger Benny decided to do something about it. “Buzz, Sterno, Walt, Gerry, come on. We are going scrounging.”

We took one of our large scrounged trucks and headed north. We soon came to a fair-sized farm. There was a bull and three cows in a pasture out back. We approached
the farmer, who understood some English. Benny said, “We are here from the United States Air Corp and we were ordered to requisition one of your cows.”

“Oh, Momma Mia, you can’t take a cow.”

The farmer was very upset but Benny wrote out a meaningless requisition and we loaded the cow onto our truck and left the poor farmer standing there cursing us in Italian. The whole operation left a bad taste in my mouth and I told Benny I could not go out on any more scrounging expeditions. In spite of my objections to our taking the farmer’s cow, I was enough of a hypocrite to thoroughly enjoy the steaks it produced.

Most of our missions were dive-bombing and strafing bridges and enemy positions behind the enemy lines and around Cassino. The flak was heavy, especially around Cassino. We could see these little black clouds popping up all around us. They looked so innocent, but they were lethal. The black puffs were the explosion of German 88 millimeter antiaircraft cannons. We were also exposed to their rapid-fire 50 mm guns plus anything ground personnel could put in our way in order to bring us down. I knew that my brother Mort was in the fighting around Cassino, so I wanted to do everything I could to help him and his friends.

Near the end of January 1944 there was some juggling of our alignment and the “high mucky mucks” decided that the 57th should discard our war weary P-40’s and acquire new P-47’s. Sixty of our old Warhawks took off from Amendola and flew over the mountains to Naples to pick up our new planes, Thunderbolts. We were only picking up 45 new planes, so 15 pilots would return on a C-47 transport plane. All of the new pilots of the 57th had experience in the Thunderbolts so we were all scheduled to fly one back.

When I landed in Naples and was climbing out of my Warhawk, I noticed three Army officers watching us. They all had 1st Armored Division patches on their uniforms. This was Mort’s division so I went over to ask them where they were located.

“We are all camped out at the King’s Palace about one mile down that road.” They pointed to show me the right direction.

An idea formed in my meager brain. I went to find Benny. “Benny, could I have a couple days off? I think my brother is close by and I have not seen him in over two years.”

“OK, George. We will be out of operations for at least ten days while they paint our squadron emblem on the new planes and teach the old farts how to fly them. I am sure you can bum a ride back with MATS (Mediterranean Air Transport Service).”
I grabbed my parachute and checked it at the MATS counter and headed off in the direction the officers pointed out for me. Because of a typhus epidemic Naples had been declared off limits for all US troops. There were no American G.I.’s on the streets to give me directions. I was out of uniform. I only wore my flight coveralls, no hat, no wings, no rank and no insignia. I spoke no Italian and I was lost. The Italians looked at me as if I were a spy. Finally, I passed a small wine café and heard some American slang. Inside, I found four tipsy A.W.O.L. dogfaces with First Armored markings. I had a glass of wine with them and asked where the King’s Palace was. They pointed me to a stone wall about eight feet high and when I explained my mission, they told me that their entire division was on the other side. I finally found a place where I could climb over the wall. It was quite a sight from the top of the wall. There appeared to be more than a thousand troops camped out there. I had Mort’s address so I knew his company and battalion numbers. With a lot of friendly help I found my brother sitting on a log “shooting the bull” with some of his buddies. When I approached him, Mort was dumbfounded. He did not expect that his kid brother could find him in such a remote spot. It had been over two years since we had seen each other and we hugged and cried together. We had a lot of hometown gossip to discuss. Mort wanted to know all about my experiences in the Air Corp and I wanted to hear about his with the First Armored. Mort was a first sergeant in charge of a mortar company. He had a lot of friends and they all wanted to shake my hand and meet me. If that wasn’t the most emotional experience in my life, it was close to it. We had dinner together (“C” rations out of a mess kit) and drank a large amount of wine to keep warm and have fun.

It was the last week of January in 1944 and I would turn 24 years old on the 29th of the month. My brother made sure that everyone drank to my good health. That night I was given extra blankets and slept on the ground between my brother and his best buddy in order to keep warm. The next morning after breakfast the First Armored assembled all their troops and marched down to the docks in Naples Bay. There they boarded landing crafts and headed north behind lines to land and form the Anzio Beachhead.

The landing caught the Germans by surprise and the Americans went ashore with almost no opposition. They started to move inland in order to hit the Germans from behind and sever their supply routes. For some unknown reason, the General in charge of the operation decided to stop, dig in, and consolidate his position. This was a colossal blunder for it allowed the Germans to
bring in their troops, take all the high ground around the beachhead and make Anzio a living hell for the Americans trapped on the beachhead. Every time we had a mission in support of our men at Anzio I would look at the mess and worry about my brother.

After Mort and his friends left, I walked back to the Naples Airport (Capacauchino). MATS found me a plane that would drop me off at Amendola. It was a B-25 (Mitchell) Twin Engine Light Bomber. I climbed in and went to the bombardier section in the front of the plane. This compartment was not very large and was noisy in flight. The pilot and co-pilot welcomed me aboard and told me they would be happy to drop me off at Amendola. I squeezed in and stretched out to take a nap. Two other passengers, a man and a woman, joined me in the bombardier compartment. I recognized the man immediately. He was the movie star Humphrey Bogart. The re-headed lady with him was his wife. Her name was Scrapsey and she was a terror. “Humph, how did you get us on this bucket of bolts? It does not look or feel safe. Why didn’t the USO book us on a transport plane?”

“How would you know?”

“Because I am a pilot in the United States Air Corp.” This shut her up for a while, but soon they were again back at each others’ throats. I had a chance to talk with Humphrey for a while and he was quite a nice guy. He was interested in knowing about what I was doing and what it was like to be a fighter pilot. Finding my brother after two years on the very day he moved to the isolation of Anzio was one of the high points of my life. Sometimes thinking about it still brings tears to my eyes. It almost made a believer out of me. Meeting Mr. Bogart was icing on the cake.

A few weeks later, I was on a mission that put my life in jeopardy. It was some time in February 1944 and twelve planes from the 66th Squadron took off from Foggia to fly over the Adriatic Sea to Yugoslavia in order to dive bomb and strafe German shipping in a harbor. I was number four in the first flight of four planes. It was an overcast day with a low ceiling and Benny, leading the squadron, decided not to go directly into the harbor, but go around between two mountains and slip in through its back door. The trouble was we were under a low cloud cover and we had antiaircraft machine guns firing on us from both sides. We had very little room for evasive action. As we passed through single file to make our bomb run on ships in dock, I felt and heard my Thunderbolt taking hits. It was a sickening sound. We
were carrying two 500 pound bombs (one under each wing) and although I knew my P-47 had taken a lot of punishment, I did not receive any wounds and my sturdy “Jug” was still flying.

When my turn came, I pulled up and peeled off to make my bomb run. I was diving at a large freighter. Golf balls were flying by me and I was firing my eight fifty caliber machine guns in return. As we were taught, I pulled up the nose of my plane through the target and pulled the bomb release handle. Only one bomb dropped, the other hung up. The unbalance took me by surprise and almost turned me on my back. Before I could recover, I was close to the water. I skimmed the harbor, retrimmed my plane and climbed to rejoin my squadron.

Benny on the radio, “OK Jackpot – good work. Now let’s see what we can find to shoot up.”

“Jackpot leader, this is blue four. I was hit and have one bomb that is hung up. I do not think I can strafe.”

“No, Benny, but I do not know the condition of my bird.” Benny decided it would not be safe for me to strafe and assigned my friend Red Wise to escort me home while the rest of the squadron “did their thing.”

As we flew back over the Adriatic, Red tried to assess my damage. He saw a lot of holes in my plane, but my reliable “Jug” was still chugging along. It was considered bad practice (in fact it was very dangerous) to try and land a Thunderbolt with a hung up bomb. I tried everything possible to break it loose on the way home. I would dive and pull up sharply. I rolled the plane violently from side to side, but nothing worked. As we approached our field I called Jackpot Tower, explained my problem, and asked for landing instructions. Jackpot Tower was not very happy with my request to land. Sometimes a bomb would break loose on landing, bounce down the runway head over heel and despite thearming pin still being in place, explode causing extensive damage to the aircraft, runway, and anything else in range. I did not know if my bomb was armed or not. I had pulled the bomb release which also arms the bomb during my attack on the freighter, but I returned it as we approached Amendola. I intended to make a very smooth landing. Jackpot asked me to go back over the Adriatic and try again. Red watched as I put my Jug through more violent maneuvers with no success. We were running low on fuel so I notified Jackpot I was coming in. Our usual landing procedure was to dive at the front end of the runway, pull up in a steep turn, let our landing wheels down and circle in to land. With my dangerous cargo, I was in no way going to land that way. I was on my downwind leg, flying straight and gently when the damn bomb fell off. I landed and taxied back to my space. I was distressed and shak-
en. As I climbed out, my crew chief said, “Geeze, Lieutenant, you ruined my plane. Look at all the holes in it.” (They counted thirty-two). “Let me take a picture of you beside it.”

I was upset. “I don’t want any damn picture of me beside this holey jug.” I wish now I had that picture to remind me of that day. As was the custom, I stomped off to the intelligence tent for de-briefing.

“Sterno, I heard you had a rough day. What happened?”

“Bill, I had a bad day at the office.”

Bill told me that my bomb landed on our ammunition dump, but fortunately it did not explode. If it had, I probably would have been court-martialed, have had to stand before a firing squad, have my “C” rations withheld, or been given some unpleasant duty. I was lucky to get out alive.

The 57th in Naples

Early in March 1944, it was decided that the 57th Fighter Group would no longer support the British 8th Army on the east coast of Italy. We were to move to Cercola on the west coast at the foot of Mount Vesuvius, about four miles from Naples. The purpose of the move was to better support the American Fifth Army under General Mark Clark in their drive toward Cassio, Anzio and Rome.

Upon our arrival at Cercola, scroungers Charlie Leaf and William Benedict went to work. The pilots of the 66th found themselves living in a lovely villa half-way up the slopes of Mount Vesuvius. The views were spectacular. We heard some rumbling on the mountain, but it did not concern us. Wilber Bailey was my companion on most of these climbs. Naples itself was a fun place with good restaurants, opera, hotels, and best of all, friendly, pretty señoritas and good vino.

I had my first pizza in Naples. It was not much like the American version. It had thick crust and was filled with a tomato paste. It was a new taste for me, but I liked it.

I made several trips to Pompeii. Most of the old city was in ruins, but part of it was restored. I loved it. I have a vivid imagination and I could picture chariots dashing down the cobblestone streets with men in togas all over the city. They even had a house of ill repute. Every room had a fresco on its wall depicting what the customer may expect in that room. In the month we were at Cercola I visited Pompeii twice.

I had another close call early March 1944. We were on a dive-bombing mission in Northern Italy trying to knock out a major railroad bridge. The flak was heavy. On my dive, something hit my radial engine and created a small leak. Oil came back and covered my front windshield. I had no forward vision. I informed our flight leader, Bob Bell. “Red” Wise (my savior) heard my radio transmission and volunteered to lead me home. I had some side vision.
so I tucked my Jug next to Red’s and we flew close formation back to Cercola. Landing was another problem. We had to try something that neither of us had ever tried before, land in close formation. We notified Jackpot and received permission to land. I was flying blind. The metal strip runway was fine for landing one plane, but it was a little tight for landing two planes together. Red instructed me when to lower my landing gear. My only reference for landing was to imitate every motion of Red’s plane. Two planes landed as one. This was the second time Red brought me home and with my tongue in cheek, I told him that I would only fly on missions that he was on.

Although I did not have much religious feeling, before every mission as my crew chief helped strap me into my Thunderbolt, I said a silent prayer, “Please, ever so please, God, let me return from this mission.” After a while, I began to think, “Maybe about three hundred miles away some German pilot was being strapped into his ME-109 and maybe he was saying the same prayer. Which one does God listen to?” I did not know.

I did not smoke cigarettes until I was a junior in college, but I made up for it since then. In the Air Corp I was a one or two pack a day man. I would not go on a mission unless I had at least five packs of butts and matches tucked in the leg of my flight suit. I could not stand the thought of being shot down and not having a cigarette to calm my nerves. We could not smoke during a mission because we wore an oxygen mask with a built-in microphone that covered our faces. On the way home, it was a different story. Once we crossed enemy lines into friendly territory, I would unbuckle my mask and light up. This practice was frowned upon by the Twelfth Air Force because of the possibility of gas fumes in the cockpit. Most of us did it anyway.

On March 14th, 1944 we were escorting a squadron of B-25’s on a bombing mission on railroad marshaling yards in northern Italy. We were jumped by German Folk Wolf 190’s as the B-25’s approached the target. My friends Walt Henson and Bob Bell each had a confirmed victory. We also had two “probables” with no losses for the 66th. A dogfight like this one was very confusing for me. Planes are darting all over the sky. The Folk Wolfs and the Thunderbolts both have radial engines and with all the action, it was sometimes difficult to differentiate between friend and foe. This action was only my third dogfight and I was unlucky enough not to have a German cross in front of my gun sights and lucky enough not to cross in front of theirs.

My buddy Buzz Yoder and I received a two-day reprieve from combat. We were sent on an ”R and R” leave to the island of Capri. Six of our squadron had orders for this
and we took a boat to this beautiful island. We were registered at a nice hotel with good food, great showers, and soft beds. There were some Army nurses and cute Italian girls at Capri. We engaged in sun bathing, boating and water sports. It was a great two days and our rested minds and bodies were again ready for the rigors of war.

On March 19th we were returning from a late afternoon mission of dive-bombing and strafing German positions at the Anzio Beachhead. I always felt a sense of accomplishment on Anzio missions because I hoped I was helping my brother. The only trouble was, because of the close proximity of the opposing forces, both sides would sometimes shoot at us. As we approached Naples, we noticed a smoke-filled sky and a deep orange glow. My first thought was that Naples had been bombed. When we were close to our field, we saw large columns of smoke bellowing from the top of Mount Vesuvius. As we landed, an excited group from the 57th were making ready to evacuate Cercola and move to a field four miles to the north out of harm’s way. Vesuvius was erupting.

On the 21st of March, we were on a long escort mission to the south of France. I had a hero in our squadron. His name was Bob (Bud) Schuren. Bud had two or three tours of duty with the 66th Squadron. A tour is when a pilot completes between fifty and a hundred missions and gets sent home. Bud kept coming back and had more missions than anyone in our group. On this mission I was Bud’s wingman. The dive-bombing mission was long and we encountered a lot of flak. It was the custom of the 66th that when we returned from a mission we tried to put on a show for our friends on the ground crew. We would come in low over the field and the left-hand line would peel up, lower their wheels and land in rapid succession. Then the middle line and then the right-hand line would follow. One after another the Thunderbolts would land.

As we approached our landing field, Bud called on the squadron to form a box formation. Because of the eruption of Vesuvius, the air in the vicinity of the volcano was very unstable. It was extremely rough and heavy black clouds were all around us. Bud made the mistake of leading us through this cloud cover. I was in the middle of the box and it was the thickest, darkest cloud I was ever in. I could not see Bud in front of me or the planes on either side. Bud called for a squadron turn (about 180 degrees sharp turn to the left). I felt it would be suicide to make the sharp turn under these conditions. I pushed my stick forward and soon broke out of the bottom of this thick cloud. Ten of our twelve Jugs did the same thing. Bud, however, ran into a plane piloted by
Jim Carrick, a kid on his first or second mission. I watched as the two planes crashed and exploded.

I felt sick. Bud had safely returned home from about two hundred missions starting in North Africa at el Amaine to here. Jimmy Carrick was a new pilot in the squadron. He was a nice, eager, clean-cut kid. Because of the weather, Jackpot closed our field. I hooked on behind two of our planes and we found a landing field nearby. It was a landing strip for A-20’s. An A-20 was a twin-engine attack bomber. I was upset about the loss of two friends and did not use very good judgment on my landing. I was coming in too close to the plane in front of me and was climbing up on his tail. I pulled off to the side and landed on the apron next to the runway. The trouble was that one of the A-20’s was parked in the middle of the apron. I wanted to give it the gun and go around for a new landing, but I was too close to clear the A-20. I jammed on the brakes to slow my plane, but it became clear I could not stop my Thunderbolt in time. A collision was inevitable. Just before impact, I released one brake so that my Jug would ground loop and not slam into the main body of the A-20. This worked, but I did take one wing with its engine off the A-20. My plane was totaled.

I made another blunder. I landed with my canopy closed. The impact buckled my plane and jammed the canopy shut. My big engine started to smoke and I thought I was trapped inside. I was scared shitless. I un buckled my shoulder harness (it had saved my life on impact) and my parachute, stood on the seat, and with my back, I lifted the canopy off and jumped out of my plane. It is amazing how much strength we have when we are frightened. Fire trucks arrived and extinguished the fire. I stayed with my Thunderbolt until my crew chief arrived to evaluate the damage and take me home. He decided that my plane could only be used for spare parts. He unscrewed the cockpit clock and gave it to me. I kept it and treasured it for years before turning it over to the New England Air Museum at Bradley Field in Windsor Locks, CT.

On my trip back to our base I began to think. I had been with the 66th only three months and already I have three planes to my credit. The only trouble is, they were all American planes. The two today and the one with all the bullet holes I received over Yugoslavia. Not a very pleasant thought.

On March 29th I was on another dive-bombing mission in north Italy. Heavy enemy air action was reported in the area so Charlie and Benny decided that four planes would fly “top cover” to protect our planes in case they were jumped by enemy planes while they were trying to wipe out a major enemy bridge. I was scheduled to fly with the top
cover foursome; the flight (four planes) was led by Charlie Leaf. I was his wingman. The other element (two planes) had a leader and his wingman was Dave Coughlin, a pilot and friend who had been with the 66th about two months longer than me.

As we approached the target, the radio blasted, “Bandits at two o’clock, low.” That meant that unidentified aircraft were below us and to the right where two o’clock is on a clock dial. This call put us on high alert.

Charlie Leaf responded, “It’s OK. They are Spits (British Spitfires).”

I then did something no fighter pilot should ever do. I relaxed and started to think of other things. We were flying a loose box formation, swerving back and forth so that we could monitor the other eight ships in our squadron.

I happened to glance over at Dave who was flying to my right. I was horrified. I shouted over the radio, “Dave, brake right. There is a bogey on your tail.” Dave broke right under us and I could see it was a Spitfire, but for some unknown reason it was pouring tracers into Dave’s Thunderbolt. Dave was on fire and started to go down. I broke right and was about ready to blast the Spit away with my eight, fifty-caliber guns.

Charlie over the radio, “Sterno, don’t shoot. DON’T SHOOT!” Charlie envisioned Jugs and Spits mixing it up all over the sky. I did not shoot and broke away, but I was pissed. Why would that dumb British pilot make such a terrible mistake? Dave plunged into the Mediterranean and was gone. That evening, the guilty British pilot paid us a visit to apologize. I know it was a mistake and he was sorry for what he did, but I could not bring myself to talk with him.

Our new field, north of Vesuvius, was crowded and inadequate, so the 57th Fighter Group was going to move to the island of Corsica. While preparations for the move were underway, the 66th was out of combat operation.

Buzz, Red, Wilber and I decided (without permission) to hijack a jeep and see what kind of trouble we could get into in Naples. We arrived about noon and had lunch and a few drinks at an outdoor café. I do not remember why, but we split up with the promise to meet the next morning at nine and return to the base.

I was sitting at another café when I noticed an attractive brunette two tables away. Our eyes met and we flirted awhile and I made a move on her. I asked her to have dinner with me but she said she was expected at home. She invited me to have dinner at her home. I accepted. There was Mamma, Papa, Gran-ma and a younger sister. They were nice, but communicating was a little difficult. Their homemade vino was delicious.
Life Worth Living

of food, but the pasta was very good. When no one was looking, I slipped forty American dollars under an ashtray, kissed Ruth and Mamma goodbye, and was on my way.

I met my co-delinquents at nine. We whizzed back to camp and were surprised to find it practically empty. The 57th had moved to Corsica. There were five P-47’s and Captain Bob Bell waiting for us. Bob told us we were in deep shit. We were AWOL and Benny would probably string us up upon arrival at Alto Field in Corsica. Bob had been left behind to lead the goof-offs to our new home.

The 57th in Corsica

It was a miserable day when five planes of the 66th Squadron of the 57th Fighter Group took off from our Italian field to fly to Corsica. Captain Bob Bell was leading the four delinquents to our new home on the western coastal plain of the island and the wrath of our CO, Major Benedict. Benny was now a major. We flew back “on the deck”, just a few feet above the whitecaps until we reached our destination, Alto. We peeled up and landed. Despite Bob’s dire predictions, Benny was easy on us. As he was a “f-up” pilot himself, he understood how we thought and operated.

Alto was a new field. We were again housed in tents. Our boys were already in the process of building an officers’ mess and club at a lovely spot overlooking a creek. We could swim and boat right in our own front yard. Alto was well behind German lines, so we were instructed to dig foxholes to protect us in case of enemy bombings.

We were to be involved in what the high command named “Operation Strangle.” It was the 57th’s task to attack and destroy all the enemy’s methods of transporting troops and supplies to reinforce their troops fighting at Anzio and Cassino. Our job was to destroy bridges, roads, and railroad tracks. Also, we must stop ships, trucks, and trains moving to the south. Operation Strangle was a success and because of our efforts, the Americans were able to break through at Cassino and Anzio and march into Rome.

When we were not flying, our life in Corsica was both dull and interesting. Corsica was not like Italy. The countryside was rugged. The natives were friendly and believed in our cause, but they were not too happy to have Americans in their own backyard. They were very protective of their wives and daughters. Since the women and girls were not allowed to associate with our fly-boys, we made our own fun.

During the day we swam in the ocean and our creek. A crew chief made us a couple of boats out of old belly tanks. We read and played poker, bridge, cribbage, baseball and touch football. We did a lot of daydreaming about girls we knew at
home or girls we hoped to meet. Wilber Bailey and I shared a tent. I still remember a popular song of the day that expressed our dreams. We used to sing:

Will I ever find the girl on my mind?
The one who is my ideal?
Maybe she's a dream and yet she may be,
Just around the corner waiting for me.
Will I recognize the light in her eyes?
That no other eyes reveal.
Or will I pass her by
And never even realize that she is my ideal.

We were very sentimental. We lived life to the fullest, but we knew death could be right around the corner for any of us. Remember, the 66th Squadron lost about two pilots each month. When one of our pilots failed to return, it was like losing a brother. I know that in private I would shed a few tears. In public, we would have a few drinks in his honor.

Our nightlife consisted of a lot of drinking and singing around our bar, constructed of a wing from a downed ME-109. To me and most of my buddies, it did not make any difference whether we were on schedule to fly the next day or not. Many times I would be strapped into my plane with a hangover. Once my mask was on, I would turn on the oxygen to clear my head. It was amazing how a shot of pure oxygen could straighten you out.

Our favorite song was not the Air Corp song: Off we go, into the wild blue yonder. Flying high, into the sky. Etc.

No, our favorite song was “I Wanted Wings.” It had many verses, but the first verse went like this:

I wanted wings
til I got the goddamned things.
Now I don’t want them anymore.
They taught me how to fly
Then they sent me here to die.
I don’t want them anymore.

Touching song, is it not? Another favorite was sung to the tune of “The Wedding Bells are Breaking Up that Old Gang of Mine.” Our version was “The Eight-eights (German antiaircraft canons) Are Breaking Up that Old Gang of Mine.” Our favorite drinking game was “The Limerick Circle.” We sat in a circle, drink in hand. We had memorized lots of limericks. The first person would start with his favorite limerick.

It was then up to the next person in the circle to sing his limerick. If he ran out of new limericks, the circle would chant, “Drink, chug a-lug, chug a-lug, drink, chug a-lug.” The pilot who had run out of limericks had to bottom up his drink. It was silly, but fun.

There are no words to express the easygoing camaraderie in the 66th Squadron. I was probably closest to the pilots who joined around the same time as me and we usu-
ally roomed together, but every pilot in the squadron was a close friend. I depended on them and they depended on me. It was a close relationship.

One day our Squadron Flight Surgeon, Doc Auerback, took me aside and said, “George, I am required to give you a physical exam. You remember the crack-up accident you had in Italy. Air Corp rules, after an accident, the pilot must take a physical. I did not have a chance in Italy because of Vesuvius, but you have to take one now.”

“Sure, Doc. Let me know when.”

In the meantime, my position in the 66th was improving. I was promoted to First Lieutenant. Although I flew as wingman on some missions, most times I was an Element Leader or Flight Leader. Charlie Leaf told Buzz, Red Wilber, and I that we soon would be assigned our own Thunderbolts. Up until now, when we were scheduled for a mission, we would fly the plane of one of the older pilots who were not flying that day. With our own plane, our name and rank would be stenciled under the cockpit, followed by the name and rank of our crew chief. The crew chief, of course, thought all the planes were his and he only let his pilot fly it. The plane would have our own armorer, radio-man, oxygen man, and at least two mechanics. The pilot also had the privilege of decorating and naming his plane. I originally planned to name my plane something like “Tommy’s Tail Spin,” but as Tommy and I were no longer an item, I had decided on “Canned Heat.” Get it – Sterno, Canned Heat? Unfortunately, this dream never became a reality.

Meanwhile, Operation Strangle was progressing with amazing success. The bad weather of the Italian winter was over. During the winter we were lucky if we could fly two or three missions a week. In Corsica we would fly over the Mediterranean to northern Italian targets once or twice a day. Although the flak was heavy and we lost pilots, we were wreaking havoc with German efforts to supply and reinforce their troops fighting south of Rome. At night, sometimes the sirens would blast and we would scamper to our foxholes. These raids were an inconvenience, but they did very little damage.

About a week after approaching me, Doc Auerbach summoned me to his office for my physical. I passed with flying colors with one exception. I failed the eye test. Instead of different letters, Doc’s chart had block E’s facing in different directions. At the 20-40 line I was having trouble and at the 20-20 line it was impossible. I did not think much about it and my life went on as usual for about a week. One day Charlie Leaf informed me that I was to appear before the board of the 57th Fighter Group the next
day at 8:00am. The board consisted of Group Leader (Archie Knight), Group Operations Officer, and the squadron leaders and operation officers of our three squadrons. Archie informed me that my eyesight was correctable and I could still fly, but I was restricted to fly only with eyeglasses. He also informed me that flying combat missions using eyeglasses was a no-no. I could either return to the states and become a flying instructor or stay overseas and become a member of one of the two ferry squadrons in Tunis or Casablanca. He asked that I let him know the next day.

I went back to my tent and cried. I did not want to leave my squadron and my friends. It was lucky my tent mate Wilber was on a mission and did not witness my meltdown. Although returning to the United States was tempting, I knew that I did not want to become a flight instructor. Casablanca and Tunis sounded interesting and I would be flying every type of our fighter planes. In my mind, I reluctantly decided that I did not want to leave the war zone until Adolph was defeated. I chose to join the Ferry Command.

That night I informed Buzz, Red, Wilber, and all my friends of my problem and decision. We all got drunk and they tried to convince me that I was lucky because no one would be shooting at me anymore. Maybe they were right, but I did not feel that way. I had been with Red Wise and Buzz Yoder for about one and a half years through flight school, overseas training and at our 66th Fighter Squadron. It was tough to leave.

Two days later a C-47 landed at Alto. Billy Head, Freddy Martin, five other pilots and I boarded for a flight to Naples and from there to various spots in the United States and other destinations around the globe. I had a tearful but nice sendoff.

On my flight to Naples, I remembered the good and the bad times with my squadron. I was heading to Casablanca. I had one regret about my experiences with the 66th. Although I knew in my heart that I was motivated by patriotism and believed that our goal of eliminating the German threat of Adolph Hitler was just, I had some remorse about
the people that I must have killed or wounded in our attempt to make our world a safe place in which to bring up our children. I knew that I had killed men who only wished to kill me, but most of them probably had wives, mothers, or children at home that loved them and prayed for their safe return. War is a license to kill. War is hell.

The 66th Fighter Squadron consisted of over two hundred fifty men meeting the needs of about twenty-five pilots. It made us feel like prima donnas. That all changed when I sat on my parachute with the seat of an inflatable dingy and a survival kit awaiting take off on a mission. Then I had thought, “What in the hell am I doing here? I wonder if I will be enjoying drinks, banter, and dinner tonight?”

**Casablanca**

I arrived in Casablanca early June 1944 via Mediterranean Air Transport Service on a C-47. Casablanca was located in Morocco on the northwest coast of North Africa. It had two sections. The French section was nice with good entertainment, facilities, restaurants, and lovely beaches. The other section was a different story. It was the Arab section, called Medina, and it was dirty, dangerous, and “off limits” for American servicemen. We were told the Arabs were not friendly to us and would cut our throats for a dollar.

The 328th Ferry Squadron was made up of about thirty or forty pilots. Approximately three quarters of us were old combat pilots and about ten were new pilots sent after completing air cadet training. Although we did not have the same camaraderie as I experienced in the 66th Fighter Squadron, the 328th was a great group. I made many friends and I enjoyed their help, friendship, and company in the year I was with them.

The 328th had barracks, mess hall, ready room, and a bar on the airfield at Casablanca. We were, however, allowed to get our own apartment off the field in town. After a month, I found living quarters in Casablanca. I shared an apartment with a new friend, Captain Robert (Robin) Hood. We were compatible. Robin was an old P-51 Mustang pilot who hailed from Oklahoma. Robin was very laid back and spoke with an Oklahoman’s drawl. He was great with one exception. Robin chewed tobacco. He was always looking for a place to spit or he carried an empty Coke or beer can for expectorating. This was a habit I found hard to take. In spite of this, we remained good friends.

There were three types of fighter planes that I was required to deliver to various squadrons in the Mediterranean Theater of Operations. The P-47 Thunderbolt, the P-51 Mustang, and the P-38 Lightning. I, of course, was familiar with the
Thunderbolt, but I had never flown a Mustang or a Lightning. I was supposed to be an experienced pilot, so I was given a tech manual, sat in the cockpit and studied the levers, gadgets, and instruments in order to try to figure out how to fly these new birds. Once I figured out where everything was, I called the tower for takeoff instructions and away I would go.

Casablanca was a major port of entry for this area. Ships would arrive with stripped down combat planes. The wings were off and they were covered with grease to prevent corrosion on the trans-Atlantic crossing. The planes were delivered to our airfield where they were cleaned up and reassembled. It was our job to test fly them and deliver them to their destinations.

I do not remember why, but for some reason we did not fly in groups, but usually alone. We were assigned a plane and told where we were to deliver it. About fifty percent of our deliveries were to Tunis, which was about 500 miles east of Casablanca. There was another ferry squadron in Tunis to relay planes to more distant combat units. We had two or three C-47 transport planes that would pick us up (usually the next day) and fly us back home to Casablanca.

I had some interesting experiences during my time with the 328th. Once, I was trying to deliver a Thunderbolt to the 79th Group in Italy. I was flying just north of Sicily when I ran into the roughest weather I ever encountered in my flying experience. The air was unstable and I was flying low so that I would not have to fly into the nasty looking clouds. The P-47 is a stocky, strong aircraft, but this unstable air was tossing me around like a cat on a hot tin roof. At times I found myself flying upside down. This was not for me, so I turned around and entered Italy from the south side of Sicily. It was rough, but I was able to make my aircraft delivery. When I was on the north side of Sicily I ran into a phenomenon known as Saint Elmo’s fire, which is an electrical discharge in stormy conditions. Bright balls of fire run up and down your wings. It is not dangerous to plane or pilot, but it sure looks spooky.

Once I was delivering a Thunderbolt to our sister squadron in Tunis. I had been partying the night before and was sleepy. Thank goodness I was flying higher than usual for me (about 1000 feet) because I fell asleep. When I awoke I was heading straight down. I had time to recover and finish my trip.

One of my worst ferry experiences was when I was flying a P-15 Mustang between Casablanca and Tunis. While ferrying a fighter we did not need a helmet with oxygen mask and built-in radio transmitter. We wore our jaunty crushed hats and earphones. Because of some sloppy work by an unknown me-
chanic, my bubble canopy was not secure. It flew off in flight, just missing my head, and pulled off my earphones, cap and eyeglasses with it. The roar of the wind and engine affected my hearing. When I reached Tunis Air Field without earphones, I could not ask for landing instructions. I observed the traffic flow and properly landed my Mustang. Itaxied to my designated area, cut my engine, and climbed out. I could not hear a thing except a ringing in my ears. I was deaf for three days. Our flight surgeon told me he thought my hearing would return and gradually it did. To this day I sometimes have a problem understanding what people are trying to tell me.

After the invasion of southern France, I was delivering a Mustang to a new field there. It was a long trip but I figured I would have enough fuel to make it. I figured wrong and I was lost. I radioed the field and asked for a heading to fly. When I finally located the airstrip, my fuel gauge registered zero. On my final approach I ran out of fuel and had to glide in. Deja vu of the landing of my P-40 Warhawk in Foggia, Italy. They had to tow me off the landing strip.

On one trip to Tunis I ran into bad weather. It was so bad that I decided to set down in a field in Cape Bonn, Tunisia. Cape Bonn was where the 57th Fighter had its greatest victory of the war (seventy-five enemy planes shot down with only six 57th losses). I checked in an officer’s hotel for the night. I met with two British officers and we decided to go into town for a cocktail and dinner. We were sitting at an outdoor café about 5 o’clock when the promenade started. Young French girls in pretty dresses walked gaily up and down the street gossiping and laughing. There is nothing more musical than French girls giggling and talking. It was a pleasant experience that I will never forget.

I had to deliver a P-51 to a fighter squadron stationed on the east coast of the Italian peninsula. It was winter and, as usual, the weather was bad and as usual, I was flying under the low cloud cover in almost blinding rain. I found a hole between the mountains and under the clouds that allowed me to fly from the west to the east coast. I managed to bring my Mustang down safely under adverse conditions. That evening, while I was partaking of drinks and dinner with some of the pilots, the squadron commander who witnessed my landing approached me. He asked, “How would you like to leave the Ferry Command and become a member of my squadron? We need experienced pilots.”

I replied, “If you can arrange it I would love to become a member of your squadron, but I must tell you I am restricted from flying without eyeglasses.” He withdrew the offer.

On the ground in Casablanca, I was content with my life and my
job. I had made many good friends. We ate, drank, played, and “shot the bull” together. There was one problem in my year with the 328th. I do not remember any of us receiving a promotion. We stayed in rank, but it was a good life.

On the more serious side, I now had a French girlfriend. Her name was Gabriel (Gaby). She claimed she was an actress, but she was more of an extra and chorus girl than an actress. Gaby was fun and she often came with me to the Officers’ Club.

While flying in northern Africa I sometimes encountered a phenomenon that I could not explain. I would hear music. No military aircraft radio channels played music, but I heard not only music, but a full symphony orchestra and chorus playing and singing beautiful music. It was spooky, but it was nice to hear. None of my fellow ferry pilots ever heard my symphony, so I have no explanation for how I was entertained by this lovely music.

I logged hundreds of hours in our three types of combat fighter planes. They were all good aircraft, but, of course, I preferred the Thunderbolt. It was fast, dependable, nice to land, and I had trained and flew combat missions in it. The Mustang handled beautifully and had a greater range than the Thunderbolt (it could fly further without re-fueling). It had six guns rather than the eight that the Jug carried, but its liquid-cooled engine made it more vulnerable to enemy air and ground fire. The P-38 Lightning was also a nice handling plane, but it was two engines made me nervous. I was a single engine pilot and if my engine quit I knew what to do. I would look for a place to land - wheels down if I was able to locate a good field and wheels up is it looked questionable. If it was real serious and I had enough altitude I could bail out. In a Lightning, if one engine quit I would have to feather its propeller (a procedure I read about but never tried) and proceed from there.

As the Germans were retreating behind their own boundaries, I had a chance to make deliveries to Rome and Paris. In Rome I had the opportunity to visit or see the Vatican, the catacombs, the coliseum, art works by da Vinci and Michelangelo and many other historic spots. In Paris I visited the Eiffel Tower and the spicy part of Paris, Pignalle. The Louvre fascinated me. I spent many happy hours on the banks of the Seine River and at outdoor cafes sipping wine.

On May 8, 1945 I was flying a P-47 Thunderbolt when a voice came over the radio, “Attention all United States military personnel. Today we received an unconditional surrender from the German government. The hostilities in Europe are over. No more shooting.” I was elated. I did a loop and victory roll and for the last time, I went on to make my delivery in Tunis.
While we were awaiting orders to go home or be sent to the Pacific, most of our squadron was sent to Italy in order to become members of the 52nd Troop Carrier Squadron. The high mucky-mucks did not know what to do with us. In the troop carrier squadron I had a chance to fly as co-pilot in two and four engine planes. I flew some C-46 and C-47 transports and B-17 and B-29 bombers. It was interesting, but I did not like flying those “trucks” of the air.

During my waiting period, I met my mystery lady. With a few of my buddies, I was sun bathing on a beach north of Milan in Italy. Lo and behold, this attractive mermaid swam onto our beach. She had dark blonde hair in a ponytail and a slim athletic body. Although she was Italian, she spoke almost perfect English. Her name was Ki-Ki. After an afternoon of swimming and sunbathing with her, I asked, “Ki-Ki, I would like to go out with you tonight. How about it?”

“George, it’s time I did something crazy. Let’s try it. Come with me to my house so that I can change.”

I had already put my uniform on, so I followed her to a large house on a cliff overlooking the Mediterranean. Ki-Ki had a room on the lower level. She said, “Turn around George and close your eyes. I must get out of this wet suit.” I complied, but I must confess, I cheated a little bit. She said, “Come upstairs, George. I want you to meet the people who live here.”

After introductions, I didn’t know for sure, but I had the feeling that these people were there in order to look after Ki-Ki. She took me to a cookout. We had a great time. I was able to get Ki-Ki alone and I tried to kiss her. She turned away and asked, “Why do you want to kiss me?”

I answered, “Because I like you and would like to know you better.” This was not the answer Ki-Ki wanted to hear, so I took her home. In my later years when I thought about this episode with my mystery lady, I fantasized that Ki-Ki was an Italian Countess or some great lady.

Two days later I received my order – 1st Lt. George T. Stern was going home.
Michael Habermann ’41 was drafted into the army in 1943 and served with the 9th Infantry Division in Normandy, France. After WWII service, he attended the Georgetown University School of Foreign Service and then returned to France to marry a French woman, Marguerite. A lengthy business career in Canada and Central America was complemented by wide-ranging travel and interests in Mayan and Meso-American civilizations, the cave art of France, 19th century French literature, opera and classical music. He and his wife raised four children and then lived for many years in Hackettstown, NJ; Marguerite passed away in the fall of 1999. Michael continues to visit the Blair campus quite often and supports various student programs, including summer language study in Quebec.

He presents readers with three evocative submissions: an account of a WWII campaign, homage to the civilian casualties of Normandy and an overview of the daredevil military career of Elliot “Buzz’ Moorhead ’41.
Cobra Breakout

The decisive battle of the Normandy campaign which lasted from June 6, 1944 to the end of August was the “Cobra Breakout” in late July.

The massive aerial attack by the U.S. Air Force destroyed the German forces facing the U.S. First Army, forcing the Germans to retreat in complete disarray. It signaled the entry of the U.S. 3rd Army, under the command of General Patton, into the battle. Patton’s armored forces, faced with only sporadic resistance swept down the western side of the Norman peninsula, prepared to attack the enemy army in Brittany. The U.S. 1st Army infantry divisions fought their way down to the base of the peninsula and faced north to complete the expected rout of the Nazis.

The American Command expected little opposition from the defeated Germans, although the British and Canadian Armies on the east had not breached the German front. But the American G.I.’s and the U.S. Army leaders were optimistic that the strength of the German Army in the west was depleted.

We were soon to learn differently.

By July 31st our troops had driven the enemy from Granville and Avranches, and Patton’s tank divisions were passing through Pontaubault, the entrance to Brittany. The town of Mortain, located a short distance inland from Avranches, awaited the arrival of their American liberators, congratulating themselves because the town was undamaged. Little did they or the Americans who were close to Mortain realize that Hitler, in an attempt to cut the U.S. advance, ordered what remained of German forces to attack towards Avranches on the coast. Mortain stood in his path.

The U.S. 30th Division had ventured into the center of the town while the 9th Division, in which I was a driver of a 2-1/2 ton truck, went south of Mortain. The Germans began their attack on August 5th. The battalion in which I served was cut off but the bulk of Germany’s offense was directed at Mortain. The U.S. troops were driven from the town center, but the 2nd Battalion of the 120th Regiment, 30th Division held out on Hill 317 for seven days; absorbing and repulsing all German attacks. The unit was later called “The Lost Battalion.”

After the battle, the French survivors feted these troops and for many years afterward, celebrated their liberation with special ceremonies for all the soldiers of the 30th.

I narrate the above events because they relate directly to my own experience and memories of Mortain. In 1994 I attended the 50th anniversary of D-Day. A friend of mine from the 39th Regiment also attended the festivities. He took the opportunity
to revisit the “Cobra” battlefield and went on to visit Mortain. He was overwhelmed by the welcome he received from the people and authorities of the town. On his return to the U.S. he contacted me, explained the visit he made to Mortain, and, knowing I spoke French, asked me to write to the mayor of Mortain to express the honor he felt when he was there for the 50th D-Day celebration.

I wrote to the mayor and exchanged several letters with him. He extended an enthusiastic invitation to me to visit him and Mortain. Unfortunately, I have been unable to accept his invitation. In fact, I can now locate only one of his letters in my disheveled mass of papers.

Although I was unable to visit Mortain, the mayor described the cultural impact that the American presence had on the townspeople. The inhabitants of this relatively small town in an out-of-the-way section of lower Normandy knew almost no Americans. Our lifestyle, music, popular culture, and habits were completely foreign to them. The impact on the people, especially the young, was immediate and immense. He sent me copies of poems and songs they composed in imitation and celebration of these new ways of thinking and doing. I still have some of these in my possession. They even organized their own jazz band, inspired by our G.I.’s. Of most interest to me was a video I received which shows how the villagers survived the destruction of the town. The destruction was severe. I have appalling pictures of the town after the battle. The film I received and still have is called “Ete 1944.” The actors are townspeople mixed with more experienced performers, acting as Americans and Germans. The film depicts the daily life of several families and shows requisitions forced upon them by the Germans, the peoples’ flight to caves close to Mortain, and their contact and collaboration with the American forces. It is a fascinating production.

A curious coincidence happened to me and my French wife in 1997 in Paris. We took a taxi to go to a museum across town. We began to talk with the driver and my wife, noting a slight French country accent in his speech, asked him from where he came. He said Normandy. At this, I perked up, told him I had been in the Normandy campaign, and asked him what town he lived in. He answered Mortain. We began to talk about Normandy and life during the German occupation which both he and my wife experienced. He stopped the taxi and the meter. We chatted for at least an hour, especially when I told him about my correspondence with the mayor of Mortain and the film. He remembered the cave where he took shelter as a 10 year old. I told him that one of the incidents I recalled from the film was of an elderly woman who refused to remain in
the cave shelter. She was concerned that her animals were cared for. She stomped out despite the pleas of the family to remain. Later she was found dead from bullet wounds.

At this point the driver became emotional and said, “Yes, I know what happened. That was my grandmother.”

I still hope to visit Mortain one day.
I originally wrote much of the following article in response to the George W. Bush administration’s policies and above all to express my love for France and my admiration for their miraculous recovery from the effects of the terrible deprivations of WWII in Europe. I have made numerous changes to the text that I wrote in 2004, which was written in French and published in the France - Amerique.

Like millions of people in the United States and throughout the world, I watched the TV programs (2004) showing scenes from the beaches of Normandy in 1944. These scenes of the landings and of the following battles in the hedgerow fields were very moving and meaningful to me because I participated in the campaign in Normandy. In mid-June of 1944 I landed at Utah Beach and went through the Normandy battle until mid-August when I was sent back to a military hospital near Cherbourg.

After the war I returned to France, met and married a French girl and remained in France for several years. During that time I continued my studies at the Sorbonne, traveled widely about France and developed admiration for the French people who made a remarkable recovery from the extensive ruins caused by the fighting that inflicted such heavy damage to so much of the country.

That is why I was so upset by the anti-French propaganda of the Bush administration, echoed by many TV announcers and radio broadcasters, which had an impact on the American public’s attitudes toward the French. My own experience, living in France, visiting every region of the country and talking with many, many French people, paints a completely different picture.

It is quite natural and right that we all admire the courage and feats of the men who fought and suffered serious losses during the three months of intense battle against the German military forces. But the American public remains totally ignorant about the terrible impact of the Normandy battle on the Norman people. Thousands of allied army soldiers lost their lives on those fateful days. A large number of French civilians, most of whom were women, children and elderly French men, were also killed or wounded at that time.

Actually the heaviest fighting and the largest number of troop and civilian casualties took place in the hedgerow country of the Cotentin region. Every hedgerow plot of land became a death trap. The hedgerows provided excellent defensive positions for the Germans. To advance hedgerow by hedgerow, it became a separate battle for each field. American artillery fired thousands of shells and fighter bomb-
Normandy

ers dropped an endless number of bombs on each field; you can imagine the resulting destruction of French farms and villages. Streams of French civilians seeking refuge were caught in this hellfire.

I was assigned to the 39th Infantry Regiment in June and made my way towards Cherbourg, about to be assaulted by three infantry divisions. The first large town we came to was Montebourg; I say “was” because it was now a phantom town, an “ocean of destruction” in the words of one American army reporter. We then passed through and around the town of Valognes, equally destroyed, just a pile of rubble.

For me, these first sights of the total destruction of once lovely small towns, was overwhelming. It was as though I was witnessing the end of the world. At that moment I made a vow that if I survived the war I would return to Normandy and revisit these towns again. I survived, returned to Normandy, and visited Valognes and Montebourg just four years after I saw them in June 1944.

The names of so many of the towns and cities we attacked and fought at, remain etched in my memory,...Cherbourg, Sante-Mere-Eglise, Les Pieux, La Haye-Du-Puits, Periers, Coutances, Mortain and Saint-Lo. To describe St. Lo and Caen (which I first visited in 1948) is really impossible. Nothing remained of these cities. At the time I could not imagine how they could be rebuilt. The destruction in Normandy was immense. I remember vividly the thousands of craters in all the fields, the hundreds of dead cattle and horses, the destruction of roads and bridges, the damaged dikes and flooded agricultural fields, the farms and villages burning and in ruins.

Many thousands of French families fleeing from the fighting crammed the roads and slept in makeshift beds out in the open air. I often took refuge in an abandoned barn or farmhouse still intact, only to encounter French families and refugees there. These were the perilous and terrible times the French people of Normandy had to face and overcome to rebuild their province.

The impact of the military action on the Norman countryside can best be measured by the incredible destruction resulting from the “Cobra” breakthrough. To break German resistance, the U.S. Command mounted a major bombing of German defenses just across the St. Lo-Periers highway. In an area of about six square miles between four and five thousand tons of bombs were dropped—mostly 500 and 250 pounders—to cause massive destruction of German troop concentrations. It was effective and decimated the German forces which had to retreat.

I was among the first American troops to pass through the bombed
area. It looked like the other side of the moon, craters everywhere, nothing standing at all. French farmhouses and fields had disappeared, roads were completely destroyed. The British also conducted huge bombing raids in the Caen zone with equally devastating results.

You can appreciate my admiration for the Norman population who were faced with the vast rebuilding needed to restore the province. The restoration of Normandy required years to accomplish but miraculously it was done - many cities were rebuilt copying as closely as possible the pre-war structures. Visit any of the cities and towns mentioned earlier and you will find few if any traces of the terrible destruction that once laid its deadly hand on the province.

In the 1970’s and in 1984 I attended D-Day celebrations. The warmth of the reception of the Norman and French people was exceptional and sincere as anyone, especially veterans of the Normandy battle, can confirm. The mistaken impression that the French people are anti-American and ungrateful is an ignoble falsehood. Each time I have attended a D-Day celebration I have been warmly, even royally greeted. This is why I admire the French and Norman people.

29th Division Monument visited in 2010.
Elliott S. Moorhead, Jr.  
Courage and Valor

Rolande Moorhead, widow of Elliott “Buzz” Moorhead ’41, visited the Blair campus to fulfill a wish from Buzz. She said, “He always spoke with great pleasure of the student life he enjoyed at Blair Academy, especially the teachers and friends he made. He told our sons that it was the best all-around education, teaching students to be outstanding citizens with pride, love and respect of God and country.”

Buzz came from a prominent Pittsburgh family and starred on the local football team before entering Blair in 1940. At Blair he quickly established himself on the football field and earned a second varsity letter on the soccer team. He also participated in the Glee Club and the Choir. After graduating from Blair, he enrolled in the University of Maryland.

Like so many young men of that time, he was eager to serve in the military. He volunteered for service and joined the Army Air Corps. After completing his training as a pilot, Buzz found himself in England where he was assigned to the 9th Tactical Air Force, the 322nd Bomb Group, 452nd Bomb Squadron. He piloted the B-26 known as the Marauder, a fast, difficult-to-handle aircraft. Buzz flew formation leads on both tactical and strategic missions over enemy occupied territories. The missions included the Rhineland, northern France, the Ardennes and central Europe. He was honored with numerous decorations; the Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters, the European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Ribbon with four battle stars and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

Buzz was shot down twice over Germany and made his way back to Allied lines after some horrific and heroic efforts. Another time his B-26 crashed over England. The events after these crashes are unforgettable and illustrate Buzz’s tact and practical intelligence.

Buzz continued his aircraft service in the Korean Conflict. In that war he piloted F-86 Sabre jets, a remarkable achievement after flying propeller driven planes only a short time earlier.

Buzz’s courage, intelligence and heroism were displayed on November 28th, when his group attacked the German city of Merken, a city six miles behind the bombing line. The report made by the colonel in command of these operations speaks for itself. Elliott himself wrote more extensively about the crash and what he did to get back to Allied lines in the middle of a fierce battle between American and German troops, but I will let the official report speak for itself.
SECRET
Elliott S. Moorhead, Jr., 2nd Lt., 0-823919, DFC

For extraordinary achievement and heroism while participating in aerial flight on 28 November 1944.

Elliott S. Moorhead, Jr., 2nd Lt., 0-823919, was a Co-Pilot of a B-26 leading the high flight, 2nd box in an attack upon the city of Merken, Germany. The objective was to destroy the city, which lay in the path of the American advance. Flak and fighters were anticipated, and Group had been briefed to fly not lower than 5,000 feet. The city lay six miles behind the bombing line.

Approaching the city at 7,000 feet, an easterly heading was made into the specific target, one of the streets of the city. The street was then under a rain of bombs from the high flight of the first box, and it was observed that the bombs were falling slightly beyond the main section of the street. For this reason, the bombardier asked for another bombing run in order to correct the bombing angles so as to accomplish the most destruction. Meanwhile, each flight was picked up by the defenses, and each, in turn, became the target for a concentrated barrage of flak. Contemplating another run, the pilot ordered the navigator to join the bombardier in the nose of the aircraft for the purpose of assisting in verifying the most logical point to be attacked.

Just as the turn was started, which would carry them into the second run, a burst of flak struck in the nose wheel nacelle, obliterating the floor of the pilot's compartment. The wheel and strut disintegrated, fragments flying through the top of the aircraft. The side windows and the windshields were either shattered by the fragments of blown out by the blast. Lt. Moorhead was thrown against the top of the airplane and his flak helmet was torn from his head. (Returning crewmen later reported at interrogation that he was probably killed by the blast.) As his seat was broken into pieces, Lt. Moorhead rebounded into a cavity in the floor frame, his body partially blocking the strong air currents emitting from
the openings. When the pilot recovered his senses, he too was on the floor tilted towards the hole. His seat likewise had been blown off, and the brackets rested on the twisted mass. Both the pilot and Lt. Moorhead were recovering their senses when Lt. Moorhead pushed the pilot to an upright position. The pilot immediately attempted to regain control of the aircraft.

Lt. Moorhead's column was destroyed. The floor beneath the pedestal was gone. Controls were inoperative and disintegrated, and the pedestal was suspended by the merest brace from the instrument panel. A moment later a burst hit the right engine, and tore away much of the wing surface.

The force of the burst threw the right wing high, and caused the airplane to fall off to the left. Fortunately, it helped them into a 180 degree turn, which headed them towards Allied held territory. The right engine immediately began to run wildly, and lost all power.

Still dazed from the blast, the pilot and Lt. Moorhead, both suffering from shock, continued to make corrections by automatic response of their faculties. Other aircraft in the flight observing the aircraft out of control broke formation and continued to the target.

Kneeling on what remained of the floor frame, Lt. Moorhead held the pilot in an upright position and helped him with the controls. It became obvious that they were going to crash, and thereupon Lt. Moorhead took up a position in the doorway leading to the navigator's compartment and assisted the navigator and bombardier as they come out of the nose. It was necessary for him to bodily lift them across the opening in the floor. He told them to get on their packs and wait for the bail-out order. They, in turn, relayed the order to members in the aft of the airplane, and together they hovered over the catwalk in the bomb-bay, waiting for the signal to jump, which they hoped would not come until they reached friendly territory. Returning his attention to the pilot, Lt. Moorhead shouted and prodded to keep him alert. Together, the crew tensely waited to see whether the pilot would be able to stretch the glide of the disabled, disintegrating aircraft as far as friendly territory.
At 4000 feet and directly above the enemy's concentrated strength, weapons of every type directed their fire at the crippled airplane, and further damage was sustained. Four separate hits severed the control cables, and the pilot applied every known emergency procedure, which proved of little value at this time. As a result, the rate of fall increased and it became apparent the aircraft would not reach friendly territory.

At 3000 feet Lt. Moorhead gave the bail-out order by the means of visual signs. He then lifted the pilot from his cramped position and hurriedly pulled him across the hole in the floor. Checking the pilot's parachute quickly, he assisted him in readying for the jump. When the aircraft began to veer sharply into a right bank, both jumped, and both struggled hard to clear the aircraft.

Touching down in "No Man's Land," Lt. Moorhead landed within a short distance from where the aircraft had crashed. Crouching for several hours under the fire of the enemy's artillery, he was at last approached by a scouting party, who on witnessing his descent, had come to lead him back to Allied Divisional headquarters. Within a few days he arrived back at this home station for further duty.

PROPOSED CITATION

Elliott S. Moorhead, Jr., 2nd Lieutenant, 0-823919, 452nd Bombardment Squadron (M), Air Corps, United States Army. For extraordinary achievement and heroism while participating in aerial flight on 28 November 1944. The courage and cool-headed judgment displayed by Lt. Moorhead when his aircraft became disabled while on a bombing run against the enemy lent greatly not only to the ultimate safety of his own crew, but to that of the other aircraft in the flight as well. His actions bespeak the innate gallantry of America's airmen. Home town: Silver Springs, Maryland.

John S. Samuel
Colonel, AC,
Commanding.
CONFIDENTIAL
HEADQUARTERS
322 BOMB GROUP (M)
APO 140

20 April 1945.

SUBJECT: Recommendation for Award of Distinguished Flying Cross.

TO: Commanding General, 9th Bomb Division, U.S. Army.

1. a. It is recommended that Elliott S. Moorhead Jr., 0-823919, 2nd Lt., Air Corps, 452nd Bombardment Squadron (M), be awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. (On day with 322 Bomb Group)
b. Elliott S. Moorhead Jr was serving as 2nd Lt, Copilot of a B-26 airplane, 452nd Bomb Squadron (M), at the time of the service for which this award is recommended.
c. Name and address of nearest relative: Elliott S. Moorhead Sr, 8385 16th St, Silver Springs, Maryland. (Father)
d. Entered military service from: Washington, D.C.
e. Decorations previously awarded: Air Medal with 4 clusters.

f. The entire service of Elliott S. Moorhead Jr has been honorable since the rendition by him of the act or service upon which this recommendation is based.
A similar recommendation for this individual has not been submitted. Others recommended for the same act: Chester F. Strzalka, 1st Lt, awarded Silver Star.

2. The officer recommending this individual has personal knowledge of the act or service upon which this recommendation was based.

3. For Distinguished Flying Cross: For extraordinary achievement and heroism while participating in aerial flight on 28 November 1944.

Lt Moorhead was copilot of a B-26 leading the high flight, 2nd box, of a formation of bombers carrying out an attack against the heavily defended city of Merken, Germany. The object of the attack was to sever communication arteries whose continued existence was a threat to our advancing ground forces. Flak and fighters were anticipated and group was briefed to fly not lower than 5,000 feet altitude. The city itself lay six miles behind our bomb lines.

As Lt Moorhead's flight approached the city at 7,000 feet altitude, an easterly heading was made into the specific target, one of the streets of the city. Shortly, it was observed that the street was undergoing a bombing from the preceding flight and that the bombs were falling slightly beyond the desired point of impact. When informed of the situation, Lt Moorhead and his pilot chose to make another run on the target with their assembled flight. During the ensuing moments, while the turn off target was flown, Lt Moorhead's flight was picked up by strong enemy defenses and
became a target for a concentrated barrage of flak. Lt Moorhead's bombardier was asked to make ready for a second bombing run and the navigator was sent forward to assist him in verifying the aiming point.

As the turn off was started which would carry Lt Moorhead's aircraft away from the target, and align them for the second effort, a burst of flak struck his aircraft's nose wheel nacelle, and obliterated the floor of the pilots compartment. The wheel and strut disintegrated and fragments were shot upwards into the body of the aircraft. Both side windows and windshields were shattered by the fragments [sic] and blown out by the blast. Lt Moorhead was thrown against the ceiling of the pilots compartment and his flak helmet was wrenched from his head. When he rebounded he landed in a cavity on the floor which had been torn out by the flak burst. His copilots seat was demolished. Likewise, Lt Moorhead's pilot had suffered from the flak burst, and while both were sprawled out on the floor of the pilots compartment they started to recover their senses. Lt Moorhead pushed his pilot to an upright position, and crouching, without a pilots seat, the pilot attempted to regain control of the aircraft.

With the instrument panel a shambles and control levers broken and destroyed, while the pilot fought to right the aircraft a second burst of flak caught the right engine and tore away large sections of the right wing. The blast action thrust the right wing high and caused the airplane to fall off to the left, fortunately, spinning them into a 180 degree turn which headed them towards friendly lines.
Still dazed from the first blast, both the pilot and Lt Moorhead attempted to make corrections and flew the bomber by what amounted to almost automatic response of their faculties. When their right engine began to run wildly and loss of power resulted, the rest of their flight, observing the aircraft out of control, broke formation and continued on to bomb the target.

When it became apparent that the aircraft could no longer be held in flight, Lt Moorhead instructed the crew as to bail out plans. When the pilot signalled the bail out order, Lt Moorhead assisted the navigator and bombardier from out of the nose, across the openings in the floor, saw them safely out the bomb bays. When the crew in the aft of the aircraft were safely away, Lt Moorhead gave his attention to making the pilot ready for bailing out. He also shouted and prodded him in order to keep him alert. When the aircraft began to veer sharply to the right, both jumped, and both struggled to clear the aircraft.

Lt Moorhead finally landed in No Man’s land, within a short distance from where the aircraft ultimately crashed. Crouching to escape injury from an artillery engagement, when it subsided he was approached by friendly troops, and later escorted back to CP headquarters. Several days later he returned to the 322nd Bomb Group (M) for further duty. His courage and coolness under the most pressing circumstances were largely responsible for the successful abandonment by his crew of the disabled aircraft.
Another incident worth telling occurred in August, 1944. Elliott was co-pilot on this mission. Immediately after takeoff the engine showed some malfunction, but the mission over northern France was completed. On the return both engines failed, despite desperate efforts by the flight engineer to correct the problems. The plane was over England but unable to continue flying. The pilot ordered everyone to abandon the plane. Only the pilot remained at the controls in a desperate effort to avoid hitting a village ahead. This was the crash over England that killed his friend, pilot Roy B. Edge, on his 66th mission. Elliott jumped, believing Roy to be right behind him; he later discovered his friend had stayed at the controls to avoid killing English civilians. Elliott’s parachute was caught up by ground swells, which carried him a few miles over the English countryside. He had absolutely no control over the chute. Let Buzz describe what happened then:

I was passing over farm houses and fields, when I saw large buildings looming in front of me, right in my path. I was sure I was going to hit them. So I braced myself, ready for the collision. I struck the chimney at the third floor level at full impact. The fall to the ground was prevented by the parachute enveloping the chimney of the house.

When the parachute was caught and snapped back, I was slammed hard against the wall. I was almost knocked unconscious from the impact. When I recovered my senses, I immediately checked the chute’s attachments to make sure they were secured, so that I wouldn’t drop to the ground and injure myself falling from such heights. Also, there was dangerous farming equipment just below, which would have compounded the injuries. So, I just hung there, hoping for someone from the house to come out and help me down.

An old man finally did, carrying an old musket—the type with a flared gun barrel—dating probably from the War of the Roses. He was brandishing that old weapon in a very aggressive manner, pointing it in my direction while yelling, ‘Don’t you move, you damn Kraut, or I’ll shoot you dead. Don’t you move.’ I yelled back, ‘I am an American pilot; my plane crashed a few miles from here. I am a Yank.’ He wouldn’t even listen, and continued yelling, all the while threatening me with this antique musket. ‘Shut up you
Habermann

Kraut. You think we don’t know how you infiltrate our country; but this time you are caught, damn you, don’t you move.’ I didn’t know if it was loaded or cared to find out.

The situation was dangerous—a Mexican stand-off in England.

Meanwhile, the airfield had seen the plane going down and dispatched an ambulance to the site. A jeep had been following my travels over the English countryside. When they arrived at the house and saw the situation, they told me afterwards that it was almost funny. I was trying to convince the old man that I was a Yank, while hanging from a parachute, and he was threatening to blow my German ass off with an old gun. They finally managed to convince him that I was who I said I was.

After securing ladders and a rake to pull me over the rooftop to the nearest window, one floor below, I was able to reach the safety of friendly hands which pulled me inside the window. It was not easy to move me from the position I was in. That’s when I was thankful for all the sports I had practiced. I knew how to move and use my muscles. What an adventure!

The old man kept a suspicious eye on me—never letting go of the musket—which probably would have knocked him about 10 paces back, flat on his arse, had it fired.

When I was back at the airfield, all the men were there, or so I thought. They had been rounded up. However, looking at their expressions I knew that my friend Roy didn’t make it. What a terrible waste of a beautiful young man, with so much to give the world and his family. At briefing, they told us that he had died a hero’s death in order to save the hamlet—nice words. He is a hero. But the real tragedy is that he is dead.

After his stint in Korea, Buzz returned to the U.S. and married Rolande. He fathered four sons, Elliott Swift, Edward Marc, Roland Elliott and Romy Bruce. But he also continued his service in the Air Force and became Director of Intelligence for Air Defense Command. He later formed a management consulting firm. For the last 35 years of his life, he lived in Fort Lauderdale.

Buzz was buried with honors in the Arlington National Cemetery with a 21-gun salute and an overflight of Air Force planes. He was 83-years-old when he died on July 30, 2005. He earned our admiration and respect as a great Blair alumnus of the Class of 1941.

Thanks to Rolande for providing the above information.
FIRST LIEUTENANT ELLIOTT S. MOORHEAD - DECEMBER 1944
AFTER A MISSION - PILOT - B-26 - 9TH AIR FORCE - E.T.O.
Archer Martin ’42 was wounded in battle serving in the Normandy campaign (1944). He received the Bronze Star Medal, the Purple Heart Medal and participated in four campaigns in the European Theater of Operations as a private with the 29th Infantry Division. He retired in 1980 as a Major in the Air National Guard. After a long and productive career as a public relations executive for Corning, Inc., he retired to a life of writing, skiing, travel, sailing, and various civic activities. He and his wife Ellen reside at Keuka Lake, NY.

Archer offers Review readers some timely observations about Blair Academy’s “introduction” to WWII and his reasons for supporting Blair’s annual student program in Normandy.
Normandy Campaign
Annual Blair Student Tour

December 7, 1941. Then-President of the United States Franklin Delano Roosevelt called it "a day that will live in infamy." Everything was changed on that day. And everyone was changed on that day. The world's not been the same since.

Those who lived then and had reached the age of comprehension can remember that Dec 7, 1941 was a Sunday. News of the morning attack by the Japanese on Pearl Harbor and elsewhere reached the U. S. East on Sunday afternoon -- at that time, only by radio. I imagine, and probably rightly, that members of the faculty and staff at Blair Academy were enjoying their respite from week-day instruction, supervision and mentoring of their students. In the residence halls, the boys (there were no girls at Blair then) had been to church and Sunday dinner and were at the moment mostly boisterous and noisy -- "chewing the fat," listening to the symphony, sharpening their bamboo phonograph needles for playing the latest records by big bands, showering, devising pranks -- doing all those things that happy, active boys do when living together at a boarding school. (Perhaps, though, some were studying, because exams loomed.)

Soon, though, the effect of December 7, 1941 took hold. For the Blair boys, home with their families, the Christmas holidays draped them with a more serious aura than they could remember. Indeed. The simple concept of graduation was threatened. Patriotically, many Americans enlisted quickly. Strong in my memory was that "Frenchy" Turner (Claude Sydney Turner, '42) son of a French stepmother and English father went off to war, to England, and lost his life as a pilot. By the time the war was over, more than a million Americans were killed or wounded or went missing. Of those killed, 55 were from Blair Academy. Their names are inscribed on a plaque in the Timken Library, which we remember as Memorial Hall.

If a Blair boy were 16 years old, say, on December 17, 1941, by war's end he had spent 20% of his life in wartime, and likely half of that in the military.

So, everything went topsy-turvy on that day, and forever after.

Poignant recollections have been contributed by some Blair boys who encountered and survived this gigantic milestone, December 7, 1941.

Then fate brought the past and present together. Fortuitously for about a score of "Blair kids," a last-minute cancellation in 1994 made room for my wife, Ellen, and me to go to Normandy with the 29th Division Association to commemorate the 50th anniversary of D-Day.
in France. There, I was very impressed by the Normans' devotion to educating their children about the allies' role in the landings. In American schools, I discerned an unfavorable contrast. So I resolved to try to remedy it. Soon, I learned about the yearly summer study trips by Normandy Allies, and started helping Blair students go every year, too. In return, I've charged the students to describe what happened in June and July 1944 to everyone. The results have gratified me, and I think have gratified them, too, because I've been told that the trip was life-changing. The students particularly valued living with French families and especially valued hearing first-hand accounts by those who were there in 1944 -- American veterans who accompanied them on the trip and French witnesses still living. The Normandy Allies team is superb in correlating events, times, places, people, celebrations and movements from home towns to, within and back from France. I know, because I've gone back with Normandy Allies twice, for the 60th and the 65th anniversaries -- and I really enjoyed being with the "Blair kids."

![29th Division veterans](image)
Vincent Rowell, Robert Henne, and Archer Martin '42

photo by Colleen Green

The editors are grateful to Normandy Allies, Inc. for allowing us to reproduce parts of the student journals created as part of their program.
Student journal entries:

Students were asked to respond to a few items each day of their trip. Excerpts from their journals follow in response to these prompts:

- List the program events of the day
- Describe 1-2 events of this day
- Describe your experience of the French during this day (include your host family)
- Tell the main thing that you carry away from the experience of this day

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<th>Student: Lejla Agic</th>
<th>Date Reported: July 14, 2005</th>
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Caen Memorial to the Peace, Pegasus Bridge and Museum, Canadian Center, Juno and Sword Beaches, Commando Keiffer/Ouistreham.

Caen Memorial to the Peace: The first part of the Caen Memorial is in a spiraling room that transports you to through the time period after World War I through the end of World War II. We got to see stunning pictures and memorabilia from the failure of peace after World War I to the vast destruction inflicted on the world by the Nazis during World War II. The pictures we got to see, especially those of ghastly faces of prisoners in concentration camps, struck our hearts with the reality of the horrors of war. We also got to watch a short movie called "Le Jour J et la Bataille de Normandie". This movie depicted the two sides, the Allies and the Germans, with incredible and stunning footage of D-Day. The entire memorial was a treat to see.

Pegasus Bridge and Museum: This is the historic place where the first attack of Normandy took place. Four horsa gliders, the second largest glider, landed at the Pegasus Bridge to secure the left flank for the Allies. It was an incredibly dangerous mission and one that ended phenomenally well.

The only French we really encountered today were waiters at restaurants. I spoke a little bit with them and they seemed to be pretty nice and receiving of foreigners.
It was amazing for me to actually see the real devastation of World War II and of D-Day itself. But as a Frenchman said in the movie we saw in the Caen Memorial, “The destruction was worth the liberation from the Nazis.”

Student: Steven Brandwood   Date Reported: July 14, 2005

Memorial to the Peace at Caen, Pegasus Bridge, Canadian Centre at Juno, Commando Museum at Sword.

The Memorial to the Peace at Caen was truly remarkable, both in terms of its breadth of material covered and in terms of the depth of each exhibit. Exhibitions were available on nearly every type and period of 20th century warfare, from the Sino-Japanese War (19th century) to the invasion of Normandy by the Allies in 1944. Each exhibit was interesting, conjuring up the various epoch depicted through various media, giving us a truly unique and pleasing experience. Juno Beach, despite the tourists and dearth of remaining Atlantic Wall fortifications, was truly evocative of the invasion, and at the same time, particularly moving. When one is able to look through the swaths of tourists, it is certainly possible to mentally create such a harrowing and significant event.

Today, my only French contact came at meals, where the waiters were all French. They showed the group real hospitality without any traditional French superiority.

The main thing I will carry away from today is the great importance of the individual to every event that took place at the various sites visited. From Generals to Commandos, today taught me that everyone in a military operation is totally necessary, no matter how expendable.

Student Name: Katherine Crevi   Date Reported: July 13, 2006

Caen Memorial to the Peace, Pegasus Bridge, L’Abbaye d’Ardenne

I really enjoyed the Caen Memorial to the Peace. In the morning we looked at exhibits about the Fall of Germany, the Resistance, the Holocaust, and D-Day. The pictures were great and started to bring
the story together. We read letters home from kids our age which were really moving. The movies after were also very good. They didn’t have words: instead there was just music or shooting and sight. The best part of the movie was when the beaches on June 6th were shown and then the beaches today: wow—what a difference. After the movie we saw two more exhibits about the Cold War and peace today. These were good too. In the afternoon we went to the Abbey Ardenne. I loved the Frenchman, M. Vico, I just wish I understood what he was saying (instead of needing the translation). He told us his whole story about being in the resistance, and many stories about the Canadians; this was my favorite part of the day.

M. Vico at the Abbey was wonderful. He has to be one of the most selfless people I’ve ever met. He risked his life to save Canadian soldiers and Jews and it didn’t seem like he ever thought to do any different. I admire that he put the lives of many people before his own and his happiness. As the American veteran Vince Rowell said, the memories are “ingrained” in his head, and I am sure it is the same for M. Vico.

When Alvin Fried, Vince Rowell, and M. Vico were telling stories of their experiences, I realized that these were real guys fighting the war. They had families and friends and they risked their lives for the freedom we have today. I am truly grateful for all the men who fought.

Student Name: Isabelle Gordon
Date Reported: July 15, 2006

Pointe du Hoc, visit/reception at Chedal-Anglay home, Omaha Beach-Bedford Association luncheon, People-to-People ceremony, Graignes

The visit at Pointe du Hoc was certainly an eye opener. Having already grasped (as best as could be possible) the idea that the Allied soldiers fighting in Normandy were mere boys of my own age—I was astounded to see what exactly they had to endure: scaling a mountain with grappling hooks while under German fire; seeking refuge in craters resulting from Allied bombing only to find isolation and solitude—as they could not even hear each other yell from one crater to another. These components prove the bravery of the young men who enlisted either under peer pressure (as one of the veterans explained to me) or had joined the National Guard, often to widen their social circles, never expecting to see a battle. These young boys became men far before their time—and in addition to the literal loss
of lives, I was horrified for these boys for the dances they missed, the family time they did not share, even the individual meals they were unable to eat as they fought for the independence of another nation. The reception at the Chedal-Anglay home was also very interesting as I learned the story of M. LeJemtel, the president of Omaha Beach-Bedford Association. He explained that the war had started before his birth, and it wasn’t until he was 5½ years old, and liberated, that he was able to enjoy such common peace things in my life today as bananas, chocolate, candy, and gum.

The members of the Chedal-Anglay family were so thankful for the Allied liberation. I had always imagined they would be thankful, but had never fathomed to what degree the Normans felt indebted to the Americans. When Madame claimed “No American must ever thank a Norman, it is always the Normans who must thank the Americans”, I was struck. This, combined with the story of the veteran Alvin Fried in which a young lady offered him thank you cards from her 7 and 8 year-old children—only to realize the teacher herself had not been alive for the war, meaning that the feelings of gratitude and reverence for the American soldiers have been passed down from generation to generation, is just amazing.

Finally, at the People-to-People ceremony, I experienced a feeling of pride for somebody else—of a completely different nationality. Having known Jimmy Green only one day, he has already stolen my heart with his easy manner and comfortable conversation. Jimmy often explained to me the generally overlooked aid of the British throughout France. The Americans are hailed as heroes and their flag flies freely everywhere including beaches such Juno, Sword, and Gold—on which the Americans had little if any influence, while the British flag is rare past the beaches of Sword and Gold. Jimmy himself was in charge of one of the LCA’s that delivered American soldiers onto Omaha Beach. Therefore at the Omaha Beach-Bedford Association/People-to-People ceremony, when the British flag was raised, billowing dramatically in the wind, I felt so proud and honored for Jimmy. I could just imagine how wonderful it was for him to watch his flag raised, his country honored, and his fellow soldiers remembered.

As mentioned earlier, I was really touched by the gratitude the French feel towards the American soldiers who liberated them. Even though their homes, churches, and towns were bombed by the Americans, the absolute respect they feel for us is astounding.

Although it is difficult to choose one main experience, I really was amazed by (a.) how little I know of this war (even though I have
studied it rather extensively in school) (b) how impossible it is to truly understand numbers, ages, and lifestyles of soldiers and French citizens without visiting where the battles were fought, the lives were lost, and the bodies buried. Finally I was intrigued by our final visit of the day at Graignes: for that site to be considered a "well-kept secret" as Gene Johnston called it—it is crazy! How many other battles were fought? How many other soldiers died anonymously? How many French citizens risked (and often lost) their lives aiding the Allied troops? Nobody will know the answer to those questions—leaving this "landing" a mystery. A mystery filled with the joyous result of Victory, but also held back by the immense sadness of the 50-60 million lives lost.

Student Name: Dylan Evans  Date Reported: July 16, 2007

Utah Beach, Ste Mere Eglise, Communications Bunker, Airborne Museum, Isigny ice cream

Today our lunch consisted of a reception of our group by the Ste Mere Eglise Town Council. The lunch was buffet where members of their town council were intertwined with our group. I was very impressed with the lunch for two reasons. 1.) The hospitality that was shown by this Council. 2.) An 82nd Airborne veteran (who was not part of our group). This veteran was the town "mascot" and insisted on telling that story many times. The lunch, as a whole, was very enjoyable.

We also visited Utah Beach today. This was a great event since Russell DeLuca, one of the veterans on our trip, landed there exactly 63 years ago today (7/16/44). We also visited an old communications bunker, which was full of collected equipment from the time period. The equipment was really fascinating as it was the original.

I was most impressed by the hospitality of the French today. First at the luncheon where the deputy mayor was very nice and then later when my host family and I had dinner. The dinner included lobster and lamb, totaling at least six courses.

I will always remember the kindness that was shown to us today by the French. Their attitude today was very different than the stereotype that most Americans believe.
Student Name: Sarah Brandwood  Date Reported: July 17, 2007

LaCambe German Cemetery, Colombières inundated area and Chateau, Luncheon with French who were civilians in 1944 at Trevières, Cider Farm

Today's luncheon with the men and women who were young during the occupation and liberation of France was fascinating to me. I have been so lucky to have had all the privileges I've had in my life, including participating in this trip, and it was interesting to hear the reactions of people who had had those privileges revoked by an occupying force and liberated by foreign soldiers. Although it was a very busy day, I had plenty of time to properly appreciate the various sites that we visited and I learned a lot about the marsh area that I hadn't known.

I enjoyed the historical and military significance of the Chateau de Colombières—not to mention how beautiful the property was. It is always interesting for me to see things that date back to the 14th and 15th centuries.

Dinner with Jean-Claude and Nicole was very nice—it is helpful sometimes that he speaks English but I have enjoyed the opportunity to improve my French. We went out for ice cream and a nice walk along the sea, and it made for a very pleasant evening.

I will always remember the emotional stories of the French men and women who were children of the occupation/liberation. I learned more from their accounts of living history than I could have in any book or film.

Student Name: Sarah Brandwood & Tyler Browse  Date Reported: July 18, 2007

Wall of Remembrance, rue Captain Carter, 63rd Commemoration of liberation of Saint-Lô

Tyler: Our day began with a gracious reception and ceremony at the Wall of Remembrance at Saint Jean de Savigny. Seeing the respective plaques of Malvin Walker and Captain Norval Carter was a truly impressive sight on the already well-traveled students.
Afterwards we visited the site of the death of Captain Carter, father of Walter Ford Carter. Actually witnessing the exact spot where, 63 years previous, a German sniper had taken the life of the heroic West Virginia doctor, all of the students and visitors were entranced and in awe of the story of Captain Carter, a stark reminder of both the heroism and horror of war.

*Sarah:* This morning’s ceremony at the Wall of Remembrance was a lovely event. I was glad to speak broken French for it enabled me to speak to some of the men who built the Wall. I am continually impressed at how appreciative the Normans are of Americans, even those who, like me, were not around during WWII. I was particularly moved at the Wall when our National Anthem was played and Russell sang along with it. Much the same, this evening at Major Howie’s ceremony when the French sang La Marseillaise with the recording, I was moved.

Walter’s recount of his father’s heroic death was emotional and moving, but interesting nonetheless. Another long and information packed day, but another fun and memorable day as well. I am so happy that the group gets along so well—it makes for lots of fun.

*Tyler:* The visitation of Captain Carter’s last moment was a truly moving experience.

*Sarah:* Walter’s story showing the heroism and devotion of his father was an extremely emotional experience. I will never forget the passages of letters that he read from the soldiers and his father.

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<th>Student Name: Rebecca Merrifield</th>
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Overview of the trip schedule and briefing on events leading up to the Normandy Campaign by team members, Caen Memorial to the Peace, Pegasus Bridge, Abbaye d’Ardenne.

We started our day at the Caen Memorial to Peace, where we began our walk through time at the end of WWI. We learned of the world events leading up to WWII, such as Mussolini, Stalin, and Hitler coming into power, while also viewing newspapers and war propaganda. The lists of registration numbers in concentration camps and pictures of young boys and girls during the Nazi occupation were intriguing as well. The old uniforms, firearms, model ships, and simple personal items like soldier’s cigarette packs were brought to
real life in the movie shown towards the end of our visit. In addition to learning about WWII and the Holocaust, we also explored the 9/11 section, which followed a similar memorial theme.

During this day we met André Heintz, a member of the French Resistance, at the Abbaye d'Ardenne, and we were extremely fortunate to hear his story. We heard a detailed account about the Germans executing the Canadians at the Abbaye, and about how M. Heintz was involved in the resistance.

From this day I was able to learn more about WWII on a broad scale, while also hearing a personal experience and learning the intricacies of military and war operations. Each individual story and fact gave me deeper understanding of what occurred during WWII, but expanded on the big picture.

Visit bocage area, visit Saint-Lô, attend ceremony at Major Howie memorials and new 35th Division memorial.

Today's first event was visiting the bocage area to see the hedgerows. The farm we went to has been kept almost exactly as it was during the war. The owner of the land generously keeps it so in order to allow us and others to see what the sunken roads were like for the 29th to fight in. Even though the fields seemed tended and we were in broad daylight, we could all imagine the fear of being in the hedgerows at night while under fire.

As we processed from the new 35th Division monument to the Major Howie memorial, Marsha was able to get us a ride in the military vehicles with the re-enactors. The vehicles stopped, but not at the memorial. We had no idea what to do, but we got in touch with Marsha and got to the memorial. It added a little excitement to the day.

The French have always seemed very appreciative of the veterans. Even lots of young Normans came to the ceremony.

Seeing the hedgerows really made me think about the fear and danger that the 29th encountered while fighting through the bocage.
Visit Graignes, Pointe du Hoc, Luncheon with Omaha Beach/Bedford Association hosts, visit Lebrec Cider Farm and monument, reception at Chedal-Anglay house

Graignes was a great place to visit. It was very interesting to learn the story of the airborne troops that defended the area and how they interacted with the town. It is amazing how much of the town was destroyed.

Pointe du Hoc has definitely been the best place to visit so far. It was amazing to see the craters and how much destruction came from the early bombardments. Also, the cliffs climbed by the Rangers are outrageous. You cannot fathom how they could have accomplished such a feat. Unfortunately, still no casings to be found...

Especially in the area of Normandy, the French seem almost obsessed with the invasion and the liberation. The home of my host family, the Lefrancs, is filled with memorabilia from the landings.

I will always remember how much the French, even still, appreciate the sacrifice of the men who liberated their nation.

Colleville cemetery, Omaha Beach, Colleville sur Mer Town Hall

Vincent was in the second wave near Vierville s/Mer, and he described his landing. Seems pretty traumatized—described how the water was saturated in blood, bodies everywhere, etc. Vince and I talked while the rest of the group visited some of the bunkers near Omaha and he described how he made it all the way from Normandy to Berlin. He said that by the time the US Army had reached inner Germany, the Germans began conscripting kids under 15 and men over 60 due to desperation and lack of manpower—it was a heartache, he said, to pull the trigger.

Colleville cemetery was an intense experience. Many of us, myself included, got choked up when we saw the 10,000 or so graves. Every so often the crosses would be punctuated by a Star of David, indicating a fallen Jewish-American soldier. I made a point of visiting these while Walter Carter visited his father’s grave and those of us lucky enough to be led by Tom—myself not included—saw the resting place of Major Howie, an American hero.
We students got to retire the colors at the cemetery—this made me nervous but was also a great honor.

The French treated our veterans like rock stars—many either wanted to take a picture with them or simply shook their hand. My host family, like the vast majority of people I met in Normandy, have been extremely kind and give me wine and delicious cheese.

I am extremely proud of my country.

Student: Ben Brandreth  Date Reported: July 15, 2010

Caen Memorial to Peace, Pegasus Bridge and Museum, Abbaye d'Ardenne

The day began with a visit to the Caen Memorial to Peace. There we walked through an exhibit that began with the Armistice, and paid special attention to the Holocaust and the liberation of France. Afterwards the group watched a short film entitled “D-Day”, which was a compilation of war footage and gave me a sense of what truly happened when the Allies attempted to liberate France. Lastly, there was an exhibit on the war efforts on the Eastern Front, which was something I knew little about and was grateful to learn about.

The Abbaye d’Ardenne was by far the more moving event of the day. Upon arrival we met an historian of the French Resistance, Mr. Vico, who gave us a lecture and then tour of the area, mostly pertaining to its role during the Allied landings. We concluded the day with a ceremony to 20 Canadian soldiers who were prisoners of war and were murdered by the Nazis in 1944.

My relations with the French are improving by the day. This morning I went to breakfast and exclaimed, “Bonjour!” which I would not have been able to do when I first arrived in France. Mr. Vico was a very kind and knowledgeable Frenchman, which are attributes that can be found in most of the natives.

I came away from the day with a sense of gratitude for those Canadian soldiers who voluntarily entered the war and as a result lost their lives. The most striking part about this was these soldiers were just about my age when they were murdered. This fact makes me extremely grateful for the life I am able to have now, which is a result of great sacrifices made by soldiers, such as those Canadians, during the war.
Student: Rebecca Dewey  Date Reported: July 16, 2010

Mulberry Museum, 360° Circular Theater, Boat trip to Omaha Beach, German battery at Longues sur-Mer

360° Circular Theater was incredible. It truly showed what the soldiers went through. I believe that we can never truly understand what the soldiers experienced, but this video truly helped expand my understanding of what the soldiers went through as they landed in Normandy. I also enjoyed seeing the German battery. The guns were larger than I had expected and it was there, standing on the cliffs, that the difficulties the Allies faced hit home. They had to rush onto beaches, soaked in sea water and defeat German soldiers in protected concrete bunkers. Chunks of concrete were missing where they had been hit. I would much rather have been in the bunkers since they seemed safer than the beaches. But the Allies were well prepared and were able to overcome the challenges placed before them. All we can do today is thank those men for their services and remember their sacrifices.

Our tour guide at the Mulberry Museum was so knowledgeable and friendly. He expressed such gratitude for the Allied liberation which occurred before he was born. I was also surprised by the many signs around town thanking the Allies for the liberation.

The difficulties faced by the Allies truly hit home today. Without seeing the places where the battles were fought, we can't understand what happened during the Battle of Normandy. I have learned the facts about D-Day and now I am beginning to understand the reality of the battle.

Student: Billy Klein  Date Reported: July 17, 2010

Courseulles-sur-Mer, Canadian Center, Juno Beach, Reception at Chedal-Anglay home

Following a morning of shopping in the Bayeux market, we boarded the bus and departed for Courseulles-sur-Mer. Upon our arrival we strolled around the town and dined. After this, we entered the Canadian Center, which was the focus of our visit. The Center afforded me a glimpse of the scope of the Canadian war effort, a topic of which I had very little knowledge prior to the visit. Many of the exhibits at the Center focused on the dramatic growth in Canadian military capability in preparation for the war, and I was truly impressed by the contributions and sacrifices the Canadian people made for the sake of the Allied cause.
Following our visit at the Center we traveled to the Chedal-Anglay home, where we were warmly received by Madame Chedal-Anglay. Our hostess and her family treated us to delicious food and drink, as well as a tour of their lovely property. Overall, we were shown wonderful hospitality. In addition, this visit offered a glimpse of what a French home is like.

My experience with the French today was overwhelmingly positive. The kindness shown to us by Madame Chedal-Anglay was truly wonderful. I spent much of our time in the Chedal-Anglay home talking with the Madame’s granddaughter. She mirrored her grandmother’s graciousness, and I found our comparisons between youth lived in France and in America to be enlightening as well as entertaining.

The main thing that I carry away from this day is a broader understanding of those involved and affected by WWII. I gained knowledge about Canada during the war, as well as of the people of Normandy as a whole. In short, I gained a more comprehensive idea for the context in which the war was fought, as well as a more personal understanding of the peoples affected by it.

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For me the most meaningful part of the International Experience was hearing the gratitude expressed by all the Norman people we encountered. It soon became clear to me exactly how much respect the people of Normandy have for the sacrifices made by the American people to liberate them. I don’t believe that the American people fully understand that gratitude. In truth, I do not believe that many Americans understand as well as the Normans the sacrifices made by their own fathers and grandfathers. That is something I hope to play a part in changing. –Billy Klein, student, Columbia NJ

This trip showed me just how great of a sacrifice young men made in order to ensure that future generations could enjoy peace. Such a lesson has given me a greater appreciation for war veterans and for the comfortable and free world I live in. –Ben Brandreth, student. Long Valley NJ
French countryside and hedgerows from *Saga of the All American* by Buck Dawson.
Alan Meskin ’11 a four year Blair day student and cum laude graduate, is currently attending Rutgers University Honors Program. His Russian language and cultural background added immeasurably to last year’s European History Advanced Placement class and other Blair courses. The emphasis on the Russian “Eastern” front during World War II is a necessary corrective to an American tendency to focus inordinately on the US military’s role in defeating fascism.
The Realities of World War II
Living in the Soviet Union
During the Great Patriotic War

No taxis, no city lighting and few trolleys on the roads of Moscow in 1943 paint a picture of a war-like but optimistic capital of the Communist state and the focal point of the revolutionary ideology. The period of the Second World War in the USSR was one dominated before, during, and after by the malicious and paranoid tyrant Stalin, who created a fearful country and a cult that spread to the Eastern European satellites. Yet my story is not one dealing with the names and dates of battles like the Battle of Kursk in 1943 – the largest series of tank battles and a decisive Soviet victory – but rather, the personal connection I maintain to that repugnant time and place. My grandparents Vilya and Feliks lived during that era of constant surveillance, Gulag camps, evacuation and threat of Nazi takeover.

Although my grandmother vaguely remembers running as a child through the woods with her mother, hand-in-hand to escape the Nazis, her story during the war represents another imposing aspect of Soviet reality. Vilya’s parents had been accused as “wealthy farmers” in Romania at the time their country joined the Axis Powers in 1940, and they decided to run away into the Soviet Union than face oppression. Instantly in 1941, as the Nazis broke their pact with the USSR (Molotov-Ribbentrop Treaty), my grandma and her parents were evacuated to Uzbekistan to live in the East. That whole process, while an interesting account of life for many in the Soviet Union, does not illustrate the depth of my grandfather’s story. First of all, Vilya was only six years old when her family was sent to Tashkent as refugees so her memory and experiences were limited. Second, Feliks had lived in Moscow throughout his life and had a convoluted journey during the time, thereby giving him greater topics.

Feliks Bochacher was born into a family of high-level Communists in Moscow, with his father being a professional journalist and organizer of the Communist Party of Moldova (where he emigrated from) and his mother a director of a teaching institution. Those same parents who were part of the hierarchy of the Party, later were arrested and shot during the Great Purge of 1936–38, leaving Feliks a nine-year-old orphan at the eve of war. After being taken in by his close family and living with his aunt, the family evacuated in 1941 as the Germans
began Operation Barbarossa and the attack on the Soviet Union. The invasion was the largest military operation in human history by both numbers in manpower and casualties: about 3.6 million German and Axis soldiers along with 3,600 tanks fought against an initial Soviet force of 3 million soldiers and 15,000 [obsolescent] tanks. The campaign lasted through all of 1941 but the oncoming winter stopped the German Army within 20 miles of Moscow, which Stalin declared was “unyielding.” Feliks claims that the Communists and the majority of people believed the war would last a short time with a quick, easy victory: “Any opponent was considered weak, perhaps even defeatable in three days time.” His family was also evacuated to the countryside, but to the Ural Mountains in the center instead of Central Asia, while many people remained in Moscow. As a young boy at the start of the war, taken from a 7th grade classroom in the city to survive in the country, he adjusted remarkably. Within a short time, Feliks had learned the rural ways of life; that is, going out to the woods to chop wood for heating the farmhouse the family lived in and exploring the woods for mushrooms for dinner. As they were hosted by a local family, my grandpa befriended their son and the two teenagers spent days walking the forests and fishing. At this point, Feliks argued, “Basic survival was a priority, and the rationing system with the use of cards provided a mitigation to the rise of food prices.” The rubles lost their value so the people exchanged whatever they had extra, whether it was milk or eggs in exchange for other goods: in his case, the family traded wool his cousin supplied from the Russian-partitioned Poland.

Once the situation on the Eastern Front started to change in the favor of the Soviets, primarily with the victory at Stalingrad in the beginning of 1943, my grandfather returned to Moscow on the 25th of May after passing health examinations (in the so-called Sanitary facilities) that guaranteed he was free from diseases like exanthematic typhus, specifically because it was carried by lice. As Feliks noted, “People washed themselves less, kept after their hygiene much worse than in normal times.” However, Feliks’ cousin Mark bribed the security guards and the family walked out of the terminal; since the taxis were not running, people who wanted to make extra money used human-drawn carriages to move luggage. “So we followed the man on foot for two miles to Mark’s apartment, which would hold all six of us [his wife, children, mother and my grandfather],” Feliks recalls.

The same older cousin Mark, who had kept the family supplied with wool, silk, and furs to exchange, supported Feliks by placing him in
an airplane factory. Yet, my grandfather only lasted two weeks before running away. Without any prior education specializing in engineering and drawing, he was unsuited for the work so Mark, since he was Deputy to the People’s Commissar of the Aviation Industry, put Feliks into technical school where he studied from 1944-47. At the same time, Feliks moved out to live on his own at sixteen, thrusting him deeper into the responsibilities of adulthood even with the support of family. The situation occurred as follows: Mark coveted my grandpa’s apartment that he kept since his parents were killed, and wanted to take him under his family name to own it and give it to his actual brother. Feliks received scholarship money for basic needs like transportation, apartment renting and clothing, while also acquiring the ration-card for food. Still, “it was not enough for a normal life; I basically starved,” as he remembers, which prevented him from being sent to camp for training as part of the army reserve. After finishing school, my grandfather worked at a different aviation factory where he designed and built propellers and engines. His cousin held a high position in the factory and was able to prevent my grandpa from losing his work because of his parents’ deaths as political enemies. Since the factory dealt with war secrets, background checks were necessary but he stated that they were lost due to an “unknown” cause. The idea behind secrecy continued in the public view as people never talked about their specific work and kept commentary to themselves, creating a “whispering society” that was conscious of any opposition to the government. One of the worst encounters that exemplified this system was when Feliks faced a probing, six-hour interrogation by the KGB regarding his step-mother’s so-called views against the state. Now Feliks reminisces, “Six hours means one agent would get tired and leave on break, while another would come in. They demanded that I would give evidence against my step-mother, but I told them I didn’t understand why she was detained. They tried to scare me by threatening to throw me out of work, and I admitted that she had made political jokes. In a few days, I was called into the main KGB headquarters of Lubyanka where I signed new papers that did not concern my well-being and was let go.” As a Commissar or leader of political dealings at one of the main hospitals in Moscow, she was fairly important, sending out brochures of propaganda weekly. One of her associates visited her apartment to discuss a recent work and later turned her in for making jokes about Lenin and having Trotsky literature from Feliks’ father; she was sent to the Gulag for eight years.

Daily life was harsh during the war and even in the few years after 

Soviet Union
it ended as the rationing continued because of the destruction of the wheat-producing lands in the Ukraine and Western Russia until the disbanding of the card-system. As the Nazis retreated, they burned down the houses so the farmers could not plant and harvest, leading to food shortages. Feliks remembers how “American Lend-Lease was sent to the USSR not only in the form of military weapons but also foodstuffs like eggs, flour and stewed meat.” At the same time, the economic situation was in critical mode since the German Army put a great amount of counterfeit rubles while the Soviets over-printed the ruble – all of which led to inflation and the eventual devaluation of the currency. By 1947, those individuals who had more ruble notes than the government allowed for exchange (for newer ones), ended up burning or throwing away their old money. For example, a person who had 100,000 rubles could only exchange 10,000 of them and not use the remainder. From the aspect of food rationing, the “card system was taken down simultaneously as food began to appear in the stores and things began to go back to normal.”

Also, clothing and material goods were of poor quality during and even after the war for many years, until imports began to grow in the 1950s.

From the social perspective, people hoped for the best in terms of new freedoms, that as a gift for the dedication and loyalty of the masses they would receive fewer restrictions – this view was seen as some Western films and music was allowed into the country. Jazz became extremely popular, but the Soviet regime became quite fearful by the effects of the loosening of control and returned life to pre-war status. The opening was not powerful enough to defeat the Stalinist government, but it offered a glimpse of a future with liberties for all.

My grandparents did not serve in the army, navy or air force during the Great Patriotic War but their experiences portrayed the variety of political circumstances that occurred in the USSR throughout Stalin’s rule. Yet they lived like many citizens lived during war, struggling to receive enough food and a safe shelter to survive in the harshest of times. My grandfather remembers not being well-fed and the fight to receive enough food was a daily task; yet he recalls that various people lived differently during that time. For him as a student, receiving food and education were the two main worries, but he did not receive a salary as others did, like his cousin Mark, which would allow him to get more food. My grandparents’ stories illustrate the gruesome control of the people by Stalin and the overall repressiveness of the regime, which are symbols of the Communist hold on government. The endeavors they
went about during the Great Patriotic War and later on in the USSR imprinted in them a hope for escape and greater opportunities, leading to their immigration with my parents to the United States in 1991. Connecting with my grandparents’ histories influences me to connect with the Old World my family left behind and the conditions they lived through in order to appreciate the world I live in as a first-generation American.
W. Don Stewart ’43 was drafted just after his 18th birthday and served for three years in the Navy. Post-WWII he received a BA from Rutgers University and pursued a lengthy career in government service. He was one of the first investigators on the scene to investigate the Kennedy assassination and was later appointed the chief civilian investigator in the Pentagon. In the 1990’s, he lectured periodically at Blair’s Society of Skeptics on such topics as the links between Pentagon spying and the Watergate scandal, and how the US could have avoided the My Lai massacre. Don passed away on November 25, 2008.

The following reminiscence was originally sent as a letter to his classmates after an Alumni Day reunion.
Men of Blair,

I would like to acquaint the newer Blair students with the atmosphere at Blair during the year I graduated – some 45 pounds ago in 1943.

The class of ’43 was actually the first Blair war class. Hostilities began on December 7, 1941, well after the class of ’42 was under way and the country was in a temporary state of confusion followed by a rapid armed services build-up and a general overall gearing up for World War II, the length of which was unpredictable. The die was pretty well cast for the class of ’42, but during that academic year and the summer of 1942, Blair Academy made plans for its first World War II class entering that September.

First of all, we quickly were informed by then Headmaster Charles Breed that we were no longer boys, but now the “Men of Blair.” Our destination in June 1943 was clearly charted. There were few things that still reminded the senior class we were not totally men – that being we’d better not get caught with any alcoholic beverages or we could expect to be on the 9:05 A.M. train leaving Blairstown daily and also we’d still need a letter of authorization from our parents and the girl's parents any time we expected to do any weekend visiting. Final permission rested with Dr. Breed.

Before we arrived in September, we were told to bring our food ration books. At our first meal in the dining room, we were advised that we were allotted three teaspoons of sugar per student per day to be used at our discretion in the beverage or on the cereal or whatever. This, of course, was an honor type thing, but each table had about nine or ten self-appointed honor guards all watching each other. Butter, too, was in short supply and figured out to one pat per person per meal. In fact, during the war years, the best way to charm your way into the heart of your favorite girlfriend and her family was to come calling on her with a pound of butter neatly or even un-neatly wrapped. You could have probably asked for and instantly been granted her hand in marriage for a gift of a few choice steaks.

My recent visit to the site of my old classroom caused me to recall the wooden floors, now replaced with beautiful tile. In ’43 we had shoe coupons to buy a limited number of pairs of shoes per year. Those shoes we had were protected often with metal cleats on the heels and toes. I often sounded like an old milk horse as I hurried across the wooden floors.

How was the food at Blair? It was great – not abundant – but great. In
those days the only fat boys were the waiters. As I recall, having grown up in the depression years, there never was any bad food. As we were often told at home, “If it wasn’t good, it wouldn’t be on the table.” It was not uncommon to see some of the “Men of Blair” getting an afternoon “fix” (a chocolate milkshake) at the town pharmacy then operated by two charming elderly ladies.

Discipline was definitely at the highest level in the history of Blair. The newly formed draft boards had voracious appetites. Most of the 21-year olds had already been digested and now those between 18 and 21 became fair game. Needless to say, an unexpected ride home on the 9:05 train could make you a quick Private in the Army. My roommate, through no fault of his own except being nineteen, was devoured by December 1942, and others slipped away during the January-June period for their draft physicals. It depended on the demands of their local boards whether they would return. Yes, discipline was pretty good, but there was still plenty of hell-raising, none of which I will relate here because everyone would simply take the 5th.

World War II was a popular war. We felt slighted if we weren’t called and often had to be restrained by our parents to keep from enlisting before graduation. I was one of several who obtained necessary written permission to absent himself from Blair for a day to go to Camden, New Jersey and take the test for the Army Air Corps. Can you imagine that at 17, had I passed the eye test, I’d have been in pilot training and graduated as a 2nd Lieutenant before I was 18-1/2 years old? Some of my classmates left for pilot training in April and were graduated in absentia in June.

Besides the food rationing, we were also experiencing gasoline rationing. Some of our athletic contests were conducted by Registered Air Mail. At 2:00 P.M. on a certain date in April 1943, the 50-yard dash between Blair and the Western Prep School Champs got underway, but a thousand miles apart. When each team swam all of its events, the times were quickly recorded in an Air Mail Registered Delivery letter and sent off. Initially, gloom hung over Blair when the results were reported in the above meet, but after a series of recalculations by Chet Williams, our coach, he dashed through the halls of Blair with the type of excitement only he could exude. As a result, somewhere I have a split B letter for our undefeated season.

Those who didn’t participate in a varsity or junior varsity sport were signed
up for Commando Training. This consisted of running an obstacle course or taking a long hike a couple of times a week. Probably the worst of the “toughen-em-up” drills was getting up one-half hour earlier in the morning than the previous year’s schedule called for. I believe I could have adjusted to that when drafted without any pre-training.

One of the funny things I recall was everyone’s dedicated seriousness about the war. Most everyone, if not a student, was enrolled in some kind of Civil Defense activity. Chet Williams was a Senior Air Raid Warden. When the test signal would go off, he’d hasten to his post. On one evening, upon arriving at his command post, he learned of a house on the hill with all lights blazing. Much to his embarrassment, it was his house. He thought Mrs. Williams had “outened the lights,” but, not so, as she too had hurried to her Civil Defense post thinking Chet would “outen the lights.”

As the academic year drew to a close, we all began fearing from our draft boards. Some fellows had already taken military exams for the V-12 (Navy) and A-12 (Army) programs which promptly enrolled them in college in July for eighteen months. They drilled as sailors and soldiers on weekends. I had to get special permission from my draft board to remain at Blair during exam week as my birthday was a week before the exams and graduation. The graduation ceremonies, normally about three days long, had to be telescoped into one day as travel was quite difficult by then. In New Jersey, the license plates reflected your county of residence. It was not unusual to be stopped miles out of your county by the police and questioned as to how you got so far on your “A” or “B” sticker which allowed only four or five gallons of gas per week. My parents owned a store and our customers chipped in gas coupons so they could come to my graduation. Their four hour trip was achieved by utilizing back roads during early morning hours.

The day after I arrived home, I registered for the draft; three days later I had a questionnaire. By this time I was about ten days past my eighteenth birthday. A week later I had my pre-induction physical at my old high school in Atlantic City. The doctor examining me didn’t even use a stethoscope to hear my heart, but merely put his fingers on my chest. While it’s always a great feeling to be wanted, I wished Uncle Sam wasn’t so eager at the time. Shortly thereafter, I was in the Navy for the next three years.

As I jog my memory, I wonder how the “Men of Blair” possibly coped without tranquilizers, television, x-rated movies, long hair, and the right
Stewart
to challenge authority. But then again, no one thought of saying anything more to Dr. Breed than “Yes, sir,” “No, sir,” “Goodbye” and “Good morning, sir,” and the same applied to all the Masters at Blair. Any less show of respect would have made you a candidate for the 9:05 train.

Would I trade any of it? Absolutely not. The discipline and character building we received at Blair, I’m sure, made our war time responsibilities and those encountered in years to come, much easier to handle.

As I take a final reflection, I can well imagine how some of our old Masters felt as they say the “Men of Blair” in successive war time years leave, knowing that the necrology clocks of those classes were ticking much faster and knowing time and again they would dry an eye when the word filtered back that one of the “Men of Blair” would not return.

And that’s the way it was in 1943!
ADDRESS TO THE SCHOOL
ON DECEMBER 8, 1941

By CHARLES H. BREED, Headmaster

YESTERDAY Japanese airmen dropped bombs on Pearl Har-
bor, our great naval base in Hawaii. Many American citi-
zens and many of our soldiers have been killed. The attack was entire-
ly without warning. Within a few hours Congress will undoubtedly declare war
upon Japan. We shall be a country at war. What does this mean to us, as
we sit here in this secluded spot, in the midst of these beautiful hills, sur-
rounded by this peaceful landscape?

First of all we must keep our heads. We must keep our feet on the ground and
think clearly how each one of us can best serve our country in this
time of need. We have a duty right here: to train our minds. President Roosevelt has em-
phasized the importance of having the youth of our country continue so far as possible their education, uninterrupted.
Experts must be trained to meet the needs of tomorrow.

Some of you will study medicine, others engineering, all must fit yourselves to
serve. The future will need the best training you can find. You and your gen-
eration will have the task of putting to-
gether the pieces of a post-war world. Above all there will be need of trained
minds to deal wisely with all peoples in
establishing a just and lasting peace.

The greatest thing we can do at Blair in this emergency is to do the job at hand. To each one of you I say: complete your prepara-
tion for college, so that you will have your ad-
mission assured, for then, if you go into service you can return later to
complete your education. If you should stop now, you probably would never go back to finish
a secondary school edu-
cation.

Blair, today is an ex-
ample of international fellowship. Here
is our group of boys from England, France, Poland, Czechoslovakia, China, Japan and South America. We are all friends. Between us there is no ani-
mosity, but a sense of unity. Above everything let us keep that spirit of world-
wide friendship.
Ching Yin Au ’43 fled the invading Japanese in 1940 via a boat from Beijing to San Francisco and then traveled by train to New York City, eventually finding a refuge at Blair Academy. He was the third Chinese boy to enroll at Blair; all had the same guardian, a Columbia University professor. Since it was impossible to communicate with family members during the war, it was unclear whether they had survived the conflict intact. Happily, a visit home found everyone safe and sound; the family had wisely migrated to the Cantonese hinterland to avoid the worst aspects of occupation.

An undergraduate education at California Institute of Technology Tech and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and then a Ph.D. completed at Stanford University, prepared Dr. Ching Ying Au for a long and fruitful research career at Columbia University. Among other accomplishments, he collaborated on devising a system to transfer information across the country, the nascent Internet system in the United States.
Dear Blair,

I will always remember the moment when President Roosevelt declared war with the Axis which now included Japan, which had attacked Pearl Harbor. I had just traveled across the Pacific Ocean and the continent to enter Blair earlier that year in March.

Yes, I was that young foreign student from China who was buffeted by the tremendous world event, not able to pick up a phone to call my parents for their advice because they lived in Hong Kong, now in Japanese occupation. In fact, all communication with them had been cut off for the duration. How long would the war last? What could happen to my family? In fact, what was going to happen to me? Did I have enough money to keep me in Blair until graduation? I had no answer for all those questions. I just had to let destiny solve all my problems.

Fortunately, the problems were solved, one after another. I graduated from Blair. It was easy to find jobs in college and universities as I went along. When the war ended, I was very happy to find that my entire family survived the war.

Ching Yin Au

Class of 1943
The Eu-Schelling Families

The Eu-Schelling Scholarship was established in May 2007 by Richard and Mary Eu. The Eu family was the first international Asian family to attend Blair. Five brothers—Alexander, Charles, Andrew, John, and Fred—all graduated from Blair in the 1940s at a time when few American boarding schools had students from Singapore. During the war years, Mr. George Schelling '39 acted as guardians for the boys, and his brother Lou Schelling '44, remained a life-long family friend.

Today Richard '03, Anthony '06, and Christopher Eu '07 represent the third generation of the Eu family at Blair. This half-century legacy and connection between one of Singapore's most distinguished families and Blair Academy represents a unique and historic relationship in American boarding schools.

As the world becomes an increasingly international "community," the Eu family's legacy at Blair stands out as an example of what is best in international and secondary education. The courage, ambition, openness, and curiosity represented by these young men willing to travel halfway around the world for an education that would broaden their understanding of the world is a model that the best boarding schools and universities in the world actively seek to create today. Eu Tong Sen possessed that vision in 1943-long before others saw such a future.

This scholarship is intended to honor the historic Eu family legacy and the more than half-century friendship between the Eu and Schelling families at Blair and to encourage and support those values inherent in an international education.

Mr. Eu was originally prepared to matriculate at Cambridge University, but due to the European conflict, the decision was made for him to pursue higher education at peaceful Princeton University, where he met George Schelling. This was the initial link with the welcoming Schelling family of Stillwater, New Jersey. This supportive, heartfelt connection was the impetus for five brothers to attend Blair Academy, just down the road from the Schelling's homestead.

The following are the words of Richard Eu Keng Mun, older brother of five Blair graduates noted above, transcribed in a recent conversation with his grandson, Chris Eu.
During the war years, I had it easy. Being an alien, mostly they don’t draft you, unless they cannot fill the quota, then they will draft you. In Princeton, things were quiet, so I was not drafted. I was just an ordinary civilian who went through the usual discomforts, such as gas rationing, food rationing, meat rationing and so forth. It did not harm anybody. Things were cheap in those days, compared to life now, and you could buy a car for a thousand dollars. My father remitted me some money before the war started, the money was sent to Bank of China’s New York branch. The man in charge was an American Chinese who lived in the US, so he said I better put the money in a safe deposit for you. This money was distributed equally among me and my two brothers. We had about $30,000 each. I left Singapore in 1940, and that was one and a half years before World War II started. What actually happened was I was supposed to go to Cambridge, but then the war in Europe broke out in 1939, and my father said: better not go that way, cause we could do nothing about it. Luckily he had a friend, who was a finance minister for the Chinese government, and he was a Harvard man, so he recommended for my father to send me to Princeton, as it is a college town, and life there is better for me, as Harvard in Cambridge was in a city.

On meeting the Schellings:
In those days, when you lived in a dormitory, you had to get someone to take care of your laundry. They will collect your laundry and do it for you, and they will engage some students to go around and con people to sign up. As I was living in a dormitory, George Schelling came in to convince me, and he did. He was curious as I was the only Chinese student in the entire university and Ken Ikeda was the only Japanese student. So he started asking me about how I came here because I am Chinese and it was unusual. At Princeton we were busy on weekdays, but very free on weekends. Many students would go home if they lived nearby, or go to the city with their friends. I had nobody, so I would just stay at school by myself. So George felt sorry for me, and invited me to his home, to stay with him, and there I met his parents, Mom and Pop Schelling. They were staying in Seacaucus, NJ. His mom was a good cook, and always cooked up certain meals for me and her best dish was roast pork. After he invited me to stay over the weekends, I became like a son to the parents, and they would look after me. I was lucky to have somebody who more or less adopted me like a son. George was ‘43, I was ‘44, and Lou was ‘46 or something, a bit younger.

On surviving economically through the wartime years:
My father gave me enough to survive for all four years. Money was sent to the Bank of China, the New York branch. The man in charge he told me he would put the money in a safe deposit for me. For my 3 brothers and I, we each had $70,000 US, in $10,000 dollar notes, enough for us to pay for living expenses, etc.
Mark A. Chramiec ’46 was an unofficial member of Blair’s “War Orphan Adoption Program” from 1941-44, a lad who found a prep school refuge from war-torn Poland. He later earned a BS degree in Ocean Engineering and a MS degree in Physics from Virginia Polytechnic Institute, and then pursued a distinguished 34 year career at Raytheon’s Submarine Signal Division developing, testing and improving various types of military and oceanographic sonars for the U.S. and numerous international navies. He was the father of Peter Chramiec and Ann Goguen and two grandchildren, and was married to Leslie Addlem for the last 20 years of his life. Mr. Chramiec passed away January 28, 2011.

Reprinted below are a sampling of the many evocative letters written by his mother, Alexandra Chramiec, pleading the case for her son’s inclusion in the Blair community. Supporting the family while her husband was serving with the Royal Air Force during World War II, she presciently observed that the Yalta Conference might not bring freedom to her homeland. And, yes, Mrs. Chramiec was ever so grateful for the scholarship assistance provided by Headmaster Breed. A final note written by young Mark speaks volumes about a Blair boy’s success story.
Dear Dr. Breed:

Since my visit to the Blair Academy, I am indeed a very happy person, but I can't find the proper words to express my gratitude for what you did for Mark. Every time I picture him at your school I have a feeling of contentment and security. Besides it is not only for what you did that I am grateful, but for the way you did it. It certainly helps to restore my faith in mankind in these troubled times. I honestly think that your generosity won't be lost on Mark, as he has always shown the right spirit in school or in camp and as he is very eager to make the best of any cultural or recreational opportunities offered to him.

As you would probably like to know it, I will explain our attitude towards religious practices. We were all born Catholics, but as both I and my husband do not attend any services at the Catholic Church, we think that a broadminded undenominational Christian education will be the best for our children. I don't think that Mark will want to attend services at the Catholic Church.

And now, just a few questions on practical matters. Does Mark need a lamp and an easy chair? I could provide both, but it is a matter of transportation. How often is the laundry going out, so that I could give him the proper amount of articles? Is any color or style preferable to others?

Kindly remember me to Mrs. Breed and tell her how we enjoyed our visit with her.

Sincerely yours,  

(Mrs. A. Chramiec)
4115 Wisconsin Avenue  
Washington, D.C.  
April 28 (1942)

Dear Dr. Breed:

As this registration card was sent to me I am returning it filled, though of course Mark’s return to Blair depends entirely on his getting a scholarship next year.

It has been most generous of you to keep him so far and I will never be able to express all my gratitude. Thinking of him at Blair makes me extremely happy. Every time he comes home he looks so well and shows such a good spirit that is a joy for me to have him, even though we are extremely cramped in my one room and kitchen.

Our circumstances have not changed since last Fall. My husband is still stationed near Liverpool doing administrative work in the air corps. So far he has been able to send me $70 monthly. I have taken a secretarial course and have just started to work in this new field, besides giving a few lessons in French. I take temporary jobs, mostly typing, in order to be able to go to camp in the summer as secretary. This will mean being with the boys, which is very important as we do not see much of each other.

Mark has only once been on the honor roll, at the beginning of the year. He told me that was so because he had a room to himself at the time and because now he cannot study so well. He even wanted me to ask for a transfer to a single room, but then changed his mind.

Will you be so kind and tell me if Mark has a chance of getting a scholarship for next year? If not, the only thing I could do with him would be to send him to public school and let him take care of himself while I am at work. The older he gets, the less I like to do it.

I do wish he could perform some kind of service for the school, isn’t that possible? Won’t you let me know your decision soon if possible?

Yours very sincerely,

(Alexandra Chramiec)
Washington, February 6, 1945

Dear Dr. Breed:

I feel very guilty for not having written you at least my usual Christmas letter, but if you knew how many times I did it in my mind perhaps you would forgive me. My repeated expressions of gratitude must be getting a little monotonous, but the very least I can do is to tell you how I feel about all you are doing for Mark. I realize fully that you have been contributing through all these years towards making an entirely different future possible for him – different from the one I would have shaped if left unaided. Three weeks of Christmas vacations are long enough for me to see that a tired mother is no educator for a young boy. Though probably it is good for Mark to see me working hard and trying to do my best for my children. . . Knowledge of all the tragedies his country is going through does not constitute an ideal spiritual food. [A] child instinctively turns away from such thoughts, which is only natural.

My husband is now doing liaison work between the Polish Army and General Eisenhower’s headquarters. I heard the details from a Red Cross official who saw him recently in Versailles. If only for political reasons our future is uncertain. The Russians seem to be doing a thorough job organizing Poland their own way with tribunals to punish all the “traitors” who collaborated with the London Govt., sending trained communists to organize every community, even widening our railroads so they would match the Russian ones.

Well, we shall soon see what the Big Three have decided upon this time and we should be happy that the Germans are out of the country even though the “liberation” is doubtful!

I dream about paying a visit to Blair but there always seems to be so many obstacles. Would you be kind enough to advise me whether Mark should try to graduate next year, as he says he could, or whether he had better stay two more years at school? Also can anything be done ahead of time to secure some kind of scholarship in college for him?

Thanking you again for all our kindness and with best regards to yourself and to Mrs. Breed, I am,

Sincerely yours,

(Mrs. A. Chramiec)
Dear Mr. Walker,

Well, life up here, rather down here, hasn’t eased up any. In fact it’s gotten a little rougher. Seeing we rats have been here for practically two months we’ve got to know everything.

Maybe I didn’t tell you, but I joined the band. I guess I thought I’d be getting away with something, or getting off easy. I sure was disillusioned. The band has had the best rats, best drill, best everything, since the school was founded, and it hasn’t stopped. Just tonight two *!!* sophomores came in and informed us that it was advantageous to have full dress A over overcoats ready at all times.

Just send anybody who thinks Blair life is tough right down here. Right now I’d give everything I’ve got, which isn’t too much, to be living back in room 231 of East hall, where you don’t have to fold up your mattress every time and can sleep during the day, don’t have to jump to attention, and much more.

I guess you have your own troubles, without me telling you mine.

By the way, I saw Chan Robinson and we had a good session about old times.

Sincerely yours,
Mark Chramiec