

## 1994 REUNION—HAMPTON, VIRGINIA

The 8th Annual Reunion was dedicated to the memory of Millie O'Bannon who died on August 1, 1994. Her tireless efforts contributed so much to the growth and strength of the 461<sup>st</sup> Bomb Group (H) Association.

Four hundred fifty members gathered at the Holiday Inn, Hampton, Virginia, from October 12—16, 1994, to renew friendships, many dating back 50 years or more. This ranks it near the top of the reunion attendance records.

As many of the members of the Association have attended most of our reunions, they and their wives have established additional friendships. Each year there are members attending for the first time who are able to meet former crewmembers, tent mates, or men from their section. If you haven't attended a reunion, plan to attend one soon—you will enjoy it.

On Thursday our first bus tour was to historic Langley Air Force Base. Langley is among the oldest continuously active air bases in the United States. It was established in 1917.

The present host unit is the 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing maintaining on of the largest fighter bases in the U.S. They fly the F-15 Eagle. The 1<sup>st</sup> Fighter Wing has the three oldest and most famous fighter squadrons in the USAF, the 27<sup>th</sup>, the 94<sup>th</sup> and the 71<sup>st</sup>. They all flew in WWI. Eddie Rickenbacker was a member of the 94<sup>th</sup>. All three units flew P-38's and were based in Italy during WWII. Each received three Distinguished Unit Citations, including one on May 18, 1944, at Ploesti.

An F-15, F-16 and the F117 "Stealth Fighter" were parked in a hanger for our inspection (see centerfold pictures). Air Force personnel were available for questions.

After a tour of the base, an excellent lunch was served at the NCO Club located on the shore of the Back River and Chesapeake Bay.

It was then off to historic Fort Monroe, the largest stone fort in the U.S. which was completed in 1834. It is moat encircled and requires visitors to drive through narrow moat gates to reach the fort and the Casemate Museum. It is still an active army base.

Thursday night Squadron dinners were held for the first time. It was good to meet and socialize in smaller groups. It provided a special opportunity to renew old and make new friendships. Attendance was broken down as follows:

|                |     |
|----------------|-----|
| Headquarters   | 25  |
| 764th Squadron | 130 |
| 765th Squadron | 115 |
| 766th Squadron | 105 |
| 767th Squadron | 76  |

Despite heavy rain and strong winds on Friday, two of three scheduled boat cruises of Hampton Roads were completed. We made the best of the rain and windy conditions (the first rainy day for any of our reunions), however, the captain did request that there be no running on the deck.

After lunch, we visited the new Air and Space Museum, located in Hampton. The tour included as IMAX theater showing of “Destiny in Space”.

On Saturday, we toured Jamestown and Yorktown. Jamestown was the first permanent English colony and Virginia’s colonial capital for 92 years.

At Yorktown, our visit coincided with an encampment of colonial troops celebrating the 213<sup>th</sup> anniversary of General Cornwallis’ surrender and the end of the Revolutionary War (see centerfold). We walked the fields where the eight day battle took place.

The rest of the group elected to visit Colonial Williamsburg. We arrived around 10:00 and were met by tour guides who took groups of about 25 people. The guides were very well trained and gave us a good insight into the life and times of Colonial Williamsburg. They turned us loose about noon and we had the rest of the day to explore the area by ourselves (see centerfold).

The Saturday Night Dinner/Dance was one of our best, due in a large part to an excellent dance orchestra, that featured a “Boots Randolph” style saxophonist. Their music had everyone on the dance floor.

The Sunday Morning Memorial Service was conducted by an Air Force Chaplain. It was time for reflection and remembrances of comrades and friends. Then, after a delicious buffet breakfast, it was time for goodbyes until the next reunion—see you there!

Editor’s note: Thanks Bob Hayes, Association Director for the 766th Squadron, for providing this summary of the 1994 Reunion.