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"The Mighty Eighth Reunion Group"

385TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP REUNION ASSOCIATION

GREAT ASHFIELD — SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

STATION 155

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NEWSLETTER

Volume VII, No. 2

August 1977

Editor: John Ford

17 - 24 AUGUST 43 HISTORY

It began early in the morning. Maintenance men just in from the flight line were ordered back. Air crews were awakened, told to pack toilet articles, mess kits, and blankets! No extra winks that morning - not after that order. What was up? The dew was on the meadows as crews trekked to the mess hall and then on to the briefing room. The target was Regensburg, with the flight continuing on to Africa. A gasping roar filled the briefing room with this announcement but there was too much to be done before takeoff for any comments. On the flight line, maintenance men were busy getting every available B-17F in readiness to insure spares. Never were engines and aircraft more carefully preflighted. Fuel tanks, including the Tokyo tanks, were topped till fuel dripped from the fuel vents. This was to be the longest mission of the times. Flight engineer-gunners made their inspections and then made a second one when the pilot made his. Was this mission the reason for the night assemblies and the instrument takeoffs and landings that had been practiced in the two preceding weeks? Was this it?? The last question was not answered until after the war, when it was revealed that Colonel LeMay, commanding the 4th Bombardment Wing; concerned over loose formations and floundering air assemblies, had directed those practices specifically for the Regensburg mission. As dawn approached, it seemed that fog would cause the mission to be scratched. There were several delays, but around 0825 hour, the 551st's "Lulu Belle" moved into the takeoff position. The mission commander, Lt. Col. Preston Piper, was flying with the crew of Captain Vincent Masters. Twenty other B-17F's made up the force from the 385th Bomb Gp. High and dense cloud formations made forming a difficult task. The 385th joined with the 94th Bomb Group in a two group wing, with the 94th in the lead and the 385th in

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The following article appeared in the Orlando, Fla., SENTINEL NEWS on April 22, 1977. Columnist Charles Reese is the author, and it is reprinted with permission of the SENTINEL STAR.

WHY SCORN FOR SAVING OUR SKINS?

I had intended to do this one as a satire. I was going say that those politicians and citizens who begrudge the military retirees their pensions could rejoice because a young ex-Marine just blew his brains out before he could collect all his VA benefits.

I had a lot of good lines about President Carter and Rep, Les Aspin (D-Wis), but I can't do it. Those tinhorns are not important. The person who is important is that young boy lying in the ground with half a face.

He never reached age 30, because at age 18 he raised his right hand and swore an oath to defend his flag and his country. He spent 12 months in Vietnam stuffing the mangled bodies of his comrades into zipper bags and it got to him. He began taking dope. And when he came home, he couldn't straighten out his head. He couldn't get rid of those bodies buried in his brain. At least, not until he shattered it with a bullet

This is one of those times when I figure either I am nuts and the country is sane or the country is nuts and I am sane or I am just too thick to understand. I am asking for help.

I don't understand, for example, why the President of the United States is granting pardons to deserters and draft dodgers instead of visiting VA hospitals. I don't understand why the TV cameras are in Canada instead of at this boy's funeral. I don't understand why he is dead and Jane Fonda, who went to Hanoi and viciously ridiculed and insulted American prisoners of war, is getting rich because Americans pay money to buy tickets to see her perform.

It seems to me we are honoring the dishonorable and ridiculing the honorable, and I don't understand that.

I don't understand why Americans belly-ache and gripe over the benefits military retirees receive. They are pittances really and they've earned them, every penny of them; and for everyone who lives to retire, there are others,

like that boy, who don't.

A military career is no holiday. That's why they have trouble recruiting. Even today, the pay is not on a par with civilian life. There are the separations and the constant moves, and when the shooting starts there is the ugly business of dealing with death and fear. For every good duty station, there are a dozen rotten ones.

If ever the urge to complain about a military man's retirement pay strikes you, I suggest you tour a VA hospital.

Those who didn't end up there risked ending up there and that's worth something. In fact, I don't even understand why it's necessary to have to defend the American military. They are us. Those who serve, serve in our behalf and for our protection and those who die, die in our behalf so that we can live.

If you think you would be enjoying the life you are living right now without the protection of the American military, then you are either hopelessly naive or stupid. The world is a mean place and we are not loved and we are not going to be loved and when we are no longer strong militarily, we are not going to survive. You can put that in your peace pipe and smoke it or stuff it up your dove.

The people who are dumb are those who cannot grasp the difference between politicians who start wars and the military men who have to fight them; those who cannot comprehend the difference between protesting to our own government and aiding another government which is engaged in killing and maiming Americans.

I honor and respect the American military and if you value your skin, you will too. You will, like me, pray that enough of them will continue to serve, that you will never have to watch your children being loaded into boxcars.

I honor that boy with half a face, too. Where in the hell is his amnesty, Mr. Carter?

REMINDER....

Those going on the trip to England must have paid their dues for both 1977 and 1978. The dues are \$5.00 per year and should be mailed to John F. Pettenger, Treasurer, whose address appears on the front of this letter.



FRIENDS OF THE EIGHTH

Dedicated to the memory of the U.S. 8th Army Air Force

FOTENOTE

STEVE GOTTS.....

Our FOTE personality for this issue is known to most persons who travelled to England in September 1976. Following the FOTE Dinner at the Cambridgeshire Hotel, our members were treated to an outstanding slide presentation. The creator of this innovative presentation was Steve Gotts. To the foot-shuffling music of Glenn Miller, we were whisked back into the past via a panorama of paintings and graffiti, photographed from the walls and ceilings of storage buildings, latrines, living quarters, messhalls, theatres, officer and enlisted mens clubs. They had been taken at various bases throughout the United Kingdom. When a B-17, B-26, P-47 or P-51 appeared on the screen, the engine of the plane sang its tune on the speakers. It was great entertainment and enthralled most of us. Steve is shown below in the center of a photograph taken during a FOTE meeting on 12 June 1976. On Steve's right is Jim Fletcher, ex-B-17 pilot with the 91st Bomb Group. The gentle-

man on the right of the photo is Witold Lanowski, ex-P-47 pilot with the 56th Fighter Group, who is holding a mounted Thunderbird engine valve which had been presented to him that evening by some FOTE members. This photo of Steve is one taken in a rare moment of relaxation. Steve has been on the go since that Christmas eve in 1946 when he beat Santa Claus to the town of Wymondham, eight miles southwest of Norwich in Norfolk. He was educated at various village schools in the County and at the age of sixteen he decided to enter the electronics industry. In conjunction with a five year apprenticeship with Pye Telecommunications Ltd. in Cambridge, he also studied electronics for six years at the Cambridgeshire College of Arts and Technology, gaining a number of qualifications. Serving his fourteenth year with Pye Telecom, his experience covers almost every aspect of the company work in the area of design, development, production, installation and maintenance of a wide range of Pye's communications equipments and systems. His earliest interest in aviation dates back to his teens and the two main influences were his older brother Chris, and the surrounding countryside, dotted with active and disused airfields. His interest peaked in the 1960's, when he became a serious student of aviation history. In 1969, he was a co-founder of the Cambridge Aircraft Preservation Society (CAPS). The group was devoted to the preservation of World War II aircraft and components, for restoration and display, and the investigation of local aircraft crash sites. Four years later, stirred by publication of Roger Freeman's "The Mighty Eighth", the CAPS gave birth to a specialist organization devoted specifically to the 8th Air Force. This later became known as the "Friends of the Eighth". Its first meeting was 17 November 1973, and since that date, Steve has been deeply involved in planning and running FOTE meetings, editing and publishing the FOTE NEWS, wiring up the Angel Hotel ballroom for sound for a FOTE meeting. In 1977 Steve is more deeply involved than ever. If there is action, he is there! Yet he still manages to work every day for a living, and also



GOTTS....(Cont'd)

finds time to eat and sleep. Of his many hobbies, Steve has combined two special talents - tape recording and photography - into a specialized field of audio-visual aviation history and education. His presentations are made to order for FOTE gatherings - always anticipated with enthusiasm. Those of us who saw his presentation of "Memories of the Eighth", can always visualize Steve rummaging through the dilapidated ruins on some derelict airfield, searching for a bit of graffiti or a painting - camera at the ready. But with all these hobbies, Steve never loses track of his primary concern and role in FOTE. That is to promote and encourage interest in the history of the 8th Air Force. He is the provider of audio and visual concepts that must meet the needs of individual historians and enthusiasts. His special talents provides the illustration for many historical projects, undertaken to give the 8th Air Force a special place in the annals of aviation history. It can be said, without fear of contradiction, that Steve Gotts is the true "sound" foundation of the "Friends of the Eighth".....

8th AFHS REUNION

The 8th Air Force Historical Society's Third Stateside Reunion will be held in St. Louis, Missouri, during the period of October 6 thru 9, 1977. Site of the reunion is STOFFER'S RIVERSIDE TOWERS in downtown near the Busch Stadium. The 385th BGRA has named Don Hale, P.O. Box 126, East Alton, Illinois, 62024, as our Host for a 385th mini-reunion, to be held in conjunction with the 8th AFHS's activity. Any member of the 385th who wishes to participate, especially those in the mid-west area, should write to Don for full particulars. All registrations should be in before 22 September to insure our members of being seated together for all primary activities, such as the meeting and the dinners on Friday and Saturday evenings. Those who are interested may call Don Hale during the day at (618)-259-5400, or in the evenings call (618)-466-2629. On the afternoon of Saturday, 8 October, our members will have a special meeting and

the 385th documentary film of our Memorial Trip to England in 1976 will shown. Entitled "Wings from the Past", this 16mm sound film has been combined with excerpts from the USAAF film on "Memphis Belle", which was produced for the purpose of the Bond Tour of the members of the "Memphis Belle", the first B-17 to finish 25 missions in Europe. It was one of the first productions of William Wyler, who went on to become one of the finest director's and producer's in the film industry. This film was shot in combat from the aircraft of the 91st Bomb Group and the aerial sequences are grim reminders of the early months of 1943 in the ETO. RCN Productions, of 2064 Ridgewood Road, Lake Oswego, OR, 97034, has done a masterful job of editing and overlaying extracts onto our documentary. Jim Fletcher, who is shown in the preceding story on Steve Gotts, was a pilot in the 91st Bomb Group. Members attending the mini-reunion are urged to bring along any photos or memorabilia, as well as their cameras and bifocals. A special treat is in store for those not familiar with the main speaker for the 8th AFHS Dinner on Saturday evening. He is Roger A. Freeman, Farmer-Writer, best known for his impressive books of "The Mighty Eighth", "Mustangs at War", and "The Fortress at War". Roger was one of the speakers at the Cambridgeshire Hotel in England in 1976, when the 385th hosted members of FOTE. This highly talented and witty individual is deeply involved in farming and for all that is known, he may also have written a book on the "Sex Life of the Essex Grub Worm". This is a chance of a lifetime to hear and enjoy the words of the gentleman whose "Mighty Eighth" was the inspiration for the "Friends of the Eighth" (FOTE). If you have a good war story, Roger will provide the "good listener's" approach. When you write or call Don Hale, he will provide you with all the information necessary for attended the 8th AFHS Reunion, as well as sending you a Registration form. C'mon, you 385th members in the mid-west! Get together and meet old friends and try making some new ones. Write Don now!

17 AUGUST 1943.....REGENSBURG SHUTTLE.
(Cont'd from page 1)

the low position. Out front, the lead wing was a three group wing, with Col. Curtis E. LeMay flying as Commander in the lead ship of the 96th Bomb Group. The high group was a new-to-combat unit - the 390th Bomb Group, while the low group was the 388th Bomb Group. The third and final wing was a two group unit, with the 95th Bomb Group flying lead and the 100th Bomb Group in the unenviable low position - the Tail End Charlie's". By the time they were assembled and ready to cross the coast of England, almost two hours had elapsed. Fighter escort had not arrived as had been planned, simply because the fog had pinned the First Bombardment Wing and the P-47's to the ground. Since the First Bombardment Wing was to have flown part way with the Fourth Bomb Wing before heading for their target at Schweinfurt, Colonel LeMay was left with the decision of "Go" or "No Go". To his credit, he decided to go. The 96th Bomb Group led the first wing out over Lowestoft about 0935 hour and at that time, P-47's of the 56th Fighter Group and another group were getting ready to takeoff but were delayed time after time. At approximately 1000 hour, the leading wing crossed the coast of Holland and everyone began looking for the P-47's and finally the 56th Fighter Group rendezvoused over the leading wing. The second fighter group miscalculated its timing and thus the last wing - barren of any fighter support, and about fifteen miles behind the lead wing - was doomed to suffer more than 200 individual fighter attacks by the Luftwaffe before they reached the target. Near Woensdrecht, light flak was sighted. Within minutes, two FW-190's blazed thru the 95th BG, hitting two aircraft, which, though smoking, held their positions. Then all hell broke loose against the second and third wings as more fighters joined the attack. At about this time, fuel low, the 56th FG broke away from the first wing and headed home. As they past the air fight they were unable to assist in repelling the enemy. The air battle for the next two hours has been told in all its fury by Lt. Col. Bernie Lay Jr., who was in

the lead aircraft of the 100th Bomb Group. Some of our 385th members who made that mission state that while it was a tough and grueling mission, Lady Luck played a leading role that day. Two of our aircraft were shot down. Lt. Paul L. Sommers B17F was shot in two and only two chutes were seen getting out of the plane. Lt's. Sommers, Herbert W. Brown, Hugh T. McClatchey and S/Sgt Parker R. Crabtree were KIA and the rest of the crew were MIA or POW's. On 18 October 1943, top turret gunner, T/Sgt Bruno M. Callerani came back to Great Ashfield after evading capture. The other 385th aircraft shot down was that of Lt. Leslie L. Reichardt. Ten chutes were sighted and the crew was captured. Leslie, John B. Zavisho, his bombardier, and Ben H. Phelper, a waist gunner, are members our our Association. Another casualty of the mission was S/Sgt Glenn C. Knecht, one of our waist gunners killed by a "friendly" 50 caliber bullet. A third aircraft was lost when Lt. John T. Keeley Jr. was forced to ditch in the Mediterranean. After twenty or more hours in the sea, they were rescued by Air Sea Rescue. At the target, the 385th lead bombardier, Lt. Louis "Little Doc" Dentoni, unable to see his target, went around twice to drop his bombs in the center of an inferno. To the surprise of the Germans, the Fourth Bombardment Wing turned south over the Alps and there was more fighter attacks before the Alps were reached. Letting down for landing in Africa proved hectic as the formation loosened up. Fuel tank warning lights were blinking in every B-17 and some pilots cut in on final approaches to get on the ground. Lt. John Hutchinson, flying in "Sly Fox", blew a right main tire on landing, then wrestled the B-17 down the runway till the right wheel caught the sand, stopping "Sly Fox" at a 90 degree angle to the runway. Another B-17 close on the rear of "Sly Fox", tore off a piece of tail (all of it), adding to the list of disabled aircraft. 24 B-17F's that left England never reached Africa. The 385th lost three, but the the 100th Bomb Group, taking the brunt of the enemy's fury, suffered the loss of ten aircraft, plus many

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Lt. Col. Piper Capt Masters and Lt. Dentoni



The Alps



Bone, Algeria



Col. LeMay displeased with Army at Telergerma



Telergerma



Arabs visit with crew of "Shack Bunny"



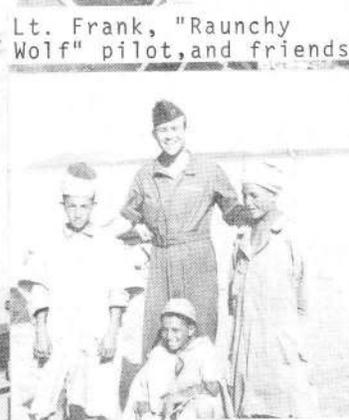
Lt. Frank, "Raunchy Wolf" pilot, and friends



Bare essentials in Africa



Frank Wall ponders transportation



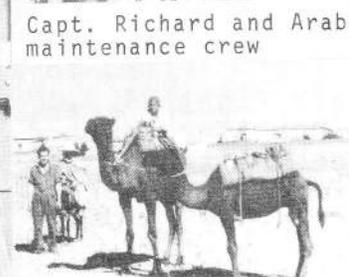
Capt. Richard and Arab maintenance crew



Lt. LaCasse and crew at desert motel and weapons system



What is it and where does it go?



Ships of the desert



Col. LeMay pins DFC's on Richard, Ross and Fryer.

REGENSBURG (Cont'd).....

wounded crewmen and damaged aircraft. Captain Arnold Levine, the Group Maintenance Officer went on the mission as an observer, but it was in Africa his knowledge paid off. Colonel LeMay was furious that the U.S. Army had moved on, leaving little or no maintenance support for the aircraft, despite his having briefed them of the mission in the past month. Captain Levine organized the air crewmen into maintenance teams to prepare the aircraft for the return mission and flight to Great Ashfield. It was the 24th of August before the Wing could muster a force sufficient for a return mission to the port of Bordeaux. Somewhere in the Atlantic Ocean south of Land's End, a tired and battle-damaged "Lulu Belle" finally gave up the ghost and Lt. Col. Piper and Captain Masters were forced to ditch. Four men were lost in the heavy seas. They were Captain John A. Dewey, the Group Navigator; Lt. Lee V. Jones, Bombardier; T/Sgt Edward C. Sanders, Left Waist Gunner, and S/Sgt Archie M. Cameron, Right Waist Gunner. 12 aircraft returned to the base out of the 21 which crossed the Dutch coast on the morning of 17 August for that more than 11 hour flight to the continent of Africa. During this period, it seemed as though a pall was hanging over the base. So very little information filtered back from Africa for the five days following that first shuttle mission takeoff that many men prayed harder than ever before, for those friends whose fate they did not know. It is an ironic after-thought, but Lt. Keeley's crew, who survived those hours in the sea, were to perish in a mid-air collision with Lt. Yanello and crew on the 26th of September 1943, while Captain John Hutchinson's crew was to suffer the same fate in a similar aircraft collision with Lt. Warren Pease, following Hutchinson's 25th mission on 24 February 1944. Both of these accidents occurred on letdown on the way home from a mission.....

It was not until much later in the war what it was discovered that during the Regensburg mission, more than one third of Germany's fighter output had been seriously crippled, but a greater bonus had been earned by the VIII Bomb-

ber Command. The original manufacturing jigs for the Me 262 had been blasted in the bombing, and the program for production of these jets had been set back for months!

ENGLAND TRIP - 1978

The trip is scheduled from 17 May 1978 to 5 June. The aircraft is a PanAm 707 and the departure is from JFK International Airport in New York. 19 days lodgings in overseas billets. The 1st day and last four days and nights are being spent in London. From the 25th of May to the 1st of June, you must take one of the options listed in the last Newsletter (May '77), and one of those options is a "go it your way" - on your own. The second day we will be coached to Ipswich, staying at the Post Motel and the Orwell House. The following day, Saturday, we will have memorial services in the morning and in the afternoon and evening, there will be a mock 100/200 Mission Party held under a large Marquee on part of the remaining runway. Buffet style food, all types of drinks, and music of the 1940's to help you do a "Knees up, Mother Brown", "The Hokey Pokey", Jitterbug, or a good old fashioned Square Dance. It will be an all day affair to entertain our old English neighbors and our many FOTE friends. Pricing should be in within this month and a special letter-brochure will be sent to all those requesting copies. You can help by sending a self addressed envelope with your request. We will spend two days in Cambridge - one to visit Duxford Airfield and other spots of interest, and the next day is Market Day, when women can be women, and the men can shell out. The optional trips will leave from Cambridge, with everyone rejoining the group at a yet-to-be-selected London hotel. At this time we have more than 100 names requesting space on the trip. You are urged to get your name in as soon as possible. When the brochure is ready and the prices are included, there will be a Reservation Form to be filled out and returned with your initial deposit. Full information will be required on each passenger. Those passports should be reviewed to make sure they are valid next May-June. Don't hesitate - make a date - TODAY!

AROUND THESE UNITED STATES....

Since the Reunion, action has been taken to subdivide the U.S.A. into six areas and to appoint a District Chairman in each area. So far, only three areas have had chairmen appointed, but all three areas have been active. Sol Mann, Chairman in District 3 recently sent out a call to visit a member in his district who has been ill. On 9-10 July, the following members travelled to West Bend, Iowa, to visit with August Dykstra and family: Wayne & Eunice Ziegler from the 548th; Engvert & Charlotte Pederson from the 549th; Sol & Ida Mann, Walter & Maxine Phillips & Forrest Keen from the 550th; Marvin & Virginia Benesh and Glenn & Betty Kaloupek from the 551st, August & Katheryn Dykstra were very happy hosts. Then during the period of 29-31 July, Forrest & Pauline Keen (Kansas-District 5) invited a group of ex-maintenance men from the 550th to a get-together on their farm in Kansas. The District Chairman, Larry Russell, failed to show, but from the 550th were August & Katheryn Dykstra, Harlan & Jean Aronson and Jean's sister Margaretta, and Walter & Maxine Phillips from Iowa; Russell & Coleen Jameson, Charles Custer, Forrest & Pauline Keen from Kansas, plus 549th's Kansans Norman and Kay Gaul. Dave and Rosalind Laing drove 22 straight hours from Clairton, Pa., and your editor flew out from Washington, D.C. to complete the 550th group. The frosting on the cake was having Sam & Mary Lyke drive up from Bartlesville, OK, to represent the 551st. Sam was a pilot during the Big 'Un. Campers, trailers and cars filled the ample yard and there was room for everyone at the farm. A dust impregnated view of Kansas (drought area) sharpened the appetite and such food I haven't seen in years. We showed the 385th movie "Wings of the Past" and everyone seemed to enjoy themselves to the utmost. Robert Louis Stevenson said it all when he wrote: "So long as we love to serve; So long as we are loved by others, I would almost say we are indispensable; and no man is useless while he has a friend". Have a get-together and find out!

385TH B GRA

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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