

Hardlife



Herald



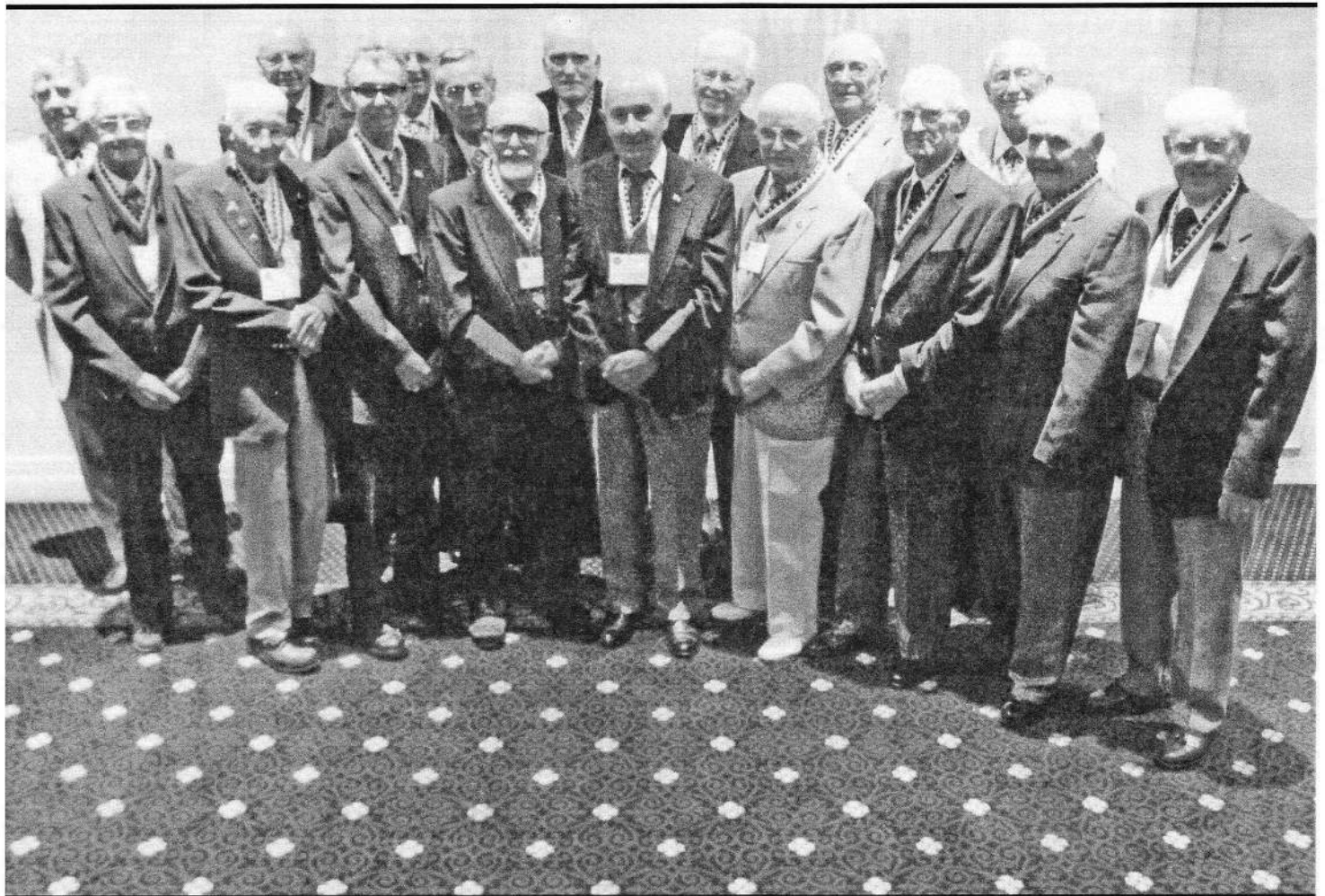
Newsletter of the
385th Bombardment Group Association

1942 - 1945 • Great Ashfield - Suffolk, England • Station 155

The Mighty Eighth

VOL 26. NUMBER 3

DECEMBER 2009



385TH BGA REUNION • TUCSON, ARIZONA JULY 19-23, 2010

Hardlife Herald

385th Bombardment Group (H)

Federal IRS Tax Exempt Code #501 (C) (19) • 52-1068468

Officers and Directors

PRESIDENT

Thomas Gagnon
50 Bonnie Lane
Tewksbury, MA 01876 (S)
814 Staffordshire
Sun City, FL 33573 (W)
(813) 394-0338 (C)
Teg00@aol.com

VICE-PRESIDENT

Susan Stern Fineman
13400 Cheltenham Dr.
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423
(818) 789-4097 (H)
(818) 802-9924 (C)
tandsfineman@aol.com

TREASURER

Chuck Smith
P.O. Box 329
Alpharetta, GA 30009
(404) 683-2896
chucksmith@
smithindustrial sales.com

*LIFE MEMBER CONTACT

385TH HISTORIAN AND ARCHIVIST

W. (Bill) Varnedoe
5000 Ketova Way, Huntsville, AL 35803
(256) 881-3288, billvar@comcast.net

Directors

Vincent W. Masters

389 Westview Dr.,
Athens, GA 30606
(706) 546-1324
jayjaymasters@yahoo.net

Lindley R. Weikert

6155 Grand Vista Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45213-1719
(513) 731-7116 (H); (513) 477-2774 (C); Lweikert@fuse.net

Advisors to the Board

*MONUMENTS, MEMORIALS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Leo L. LaCasse USAF, Ret.
4911 Hunting Hill Ct., Roanoke, VA 24018
(540) 772-1907 • bigleo1920@live.com

John W. Hyatt

6754 East Eagle Crest Dr.,
Flagstaff, AZ 86004
jwhyatt823595@aol.com

Burton Gelbman

1706 Wedge Court,
Sun City Center, FL 33573
Burtg23@tampabay.rr.com

Past Presidents

*Ruel G. Weikert	'56-'72	Sam Lyke	'89-'90
*Frank Walls	'72-'75	*Sid Colthorpe	'91-'93
Vincent Masters	'75-'77	*Robert C. Smith	'93-'95
*John C. Ford	'77-'79	*Robert Valliere	'95-'97
*James H. Emmons	'79-'81	*Michael Gallagher	'97-'99
*Paul Schultz	'81-'83	Tom Newton	'99-'01
*Forrest V. Poore	'83-'85	Leo LaCasse	'01-'03
*William A. Nichols	'85-'87	W.W. Varnedoe	'03-'05
*Earl Cole	'87-'89	*Art Driscoll, Jr.	'05-'07

Albert A. Audette '07-'09
*deceased

Honorary Members

Roger Feller Eldon Nysether Mayor Ferdinand Unsen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

- 2Cover/Editorial/Officers and Board Members
- 3President's Message/Speedibg Incident
- 4385th BG Reunion photos, August 2009
- 5385th BG Mid-Air Collisions
- 6First B-17 Raid 66 Years Ago
- 7Three Generations in a B-17
- 8Air Corps or Air Force
- 9Mission to Merseberg
- 10Silk Maps
- 11Scouting Force Story
- 12Flying Supplies to the Maquis
- 13Letters and Emails
- 15Taps

FRONT COVER

The picture shows the 385th Bombardment Group (H) veterans who attended the 385th Bomb Group Association and Eighth Air Force Historical Society reunions in Cincinnati, Ohio during the week of August 18-23, 2009.

EDITORIAL

The 385th BGA Reunion in Cincinnati in August was great success, as usual. The 385th BGA had one of the largest number of attendees at the Eighth AFHS gathering. Again as usual, Chuck Smith was the host of our Hospitality Room. All of us who were invited by Chuck to the room enjoyed his liquid, and other, refreshments. Thanks Chuck!!

One of our highlights of the Reunion was the presentation of a Waterford 'cut glass' bowl with the 385th BG insignia "ALES VICTORIA" cut into the side of the bowl to Chuck for his Hospitality contributions to the success of our reunions over the years, and to his time consuming control of our funds as Treasurer. Al Audette, our Past President, and your Editor were presented with plaques for their contributions to the BGA for the past several years. We thank the association for their confidence in us.

Our drive for donations to the 8th Air Force Museum in Savannah, GA for the restoration of the B-17 Flying Fortress is still in high drive. We thank all those who have already contributed. For those of us who may have intended and then forgotten to send in a donation, it is not too late. Any donation amount, large or small, is gratefully accepted. For every dollar donated by you, the 385th BGA members, the 385th BGA will match, dollar for dollar, and present the total amount to the Museum. Make your check out to 385th BGA, identify it for the Museum, and mail your donation to: Chuck Smith; P.O. Box 329; Alpharetta, GA 30009-0329.

The 385th BGA Reunion for 2010 will be held July 19-23, 2010 in Tucson, Arizona. Again it will be held in conjunction with the 8th Air Force Historical Society. Full details of the reunion will be in a future edition of the *Hardlife Herald*.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It was an honor to be elected your President at the 385th Bomb Group Association reunion in Cincinnati. (For those of you who are not aware, I am also President of the Florida Chapter of the 8th AFHS and editor of their newsletter.) As the first NextGen president of your association (my Dad was a pilot in the 385th), I hope to continue the efforts of your past presidents to preserve the legacy of "The Mighty Eighth" and in particular, the legacy of the 385th Bombardment Group (H). As your Vice President, I represented the 10th Anniversary celebration of the 385th Bomb Group Memorial Museum in Perle, Luxembourg in June, 2008. I was struck by how informative this visit was to me as a NextGen. I am also aware that many of you have visited Great Ashfield since the war and that some of these trips also included a visit to Perle. I am also aware that some of you veterans may be interested in making one more trip, and that several NextGens would like to do so, some for the first time and others as repeat visitors. I am interested in organizing such a trip next Spring (in the May-June timeframe) if there is sufficient interest in participating. I encourage any of you who may be interested in making this trip to contact me (e-mail, snail mail or telephone) as soon as possible. I hope there is sufficient interest for us to put together a trip. I look forward to meeting more of you and working with you as your President.

Tom Gagnon
President 385th BG, 8th Air Force

SPEEDING INCIDENT

Two California Highway Patrol (CHP) Officers were conducting speeding enforcement on I-15, just north of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) at Miramar. One of the officers was using a hand held radar device to check speeding vehicles approaching the crest of the hill. The officers were suddenly surprised when the radar gun began reading 300 miles per hour. The officer tried to reset the radar gun, but it would not reset and then turned off. Just then a deafening roar over the tree tops revealed that the radar gun had in fact locked on to a US Marine Corps F/A-18 Hornet which was engaged in a low flying exercise near their location. Back at CHP Headquarters the Patrol Captain sent the Commander of MCAS a complaint about the low flying aircraft. The reply came back in true U.S. Marine Corps style:

Thank you for your letter. We can now complete the file on this incident. You may be interested to know that the computer in the Hornet had detected the presence of, and subsequently locked on to your hostile radar equipment and automatically sent a jamming signal back to it, which is why it shut down. Furthermore, an Air-to-Ground missile aboard the fully armed aircraft had also automatically locked on to your equipment. Fortunately, the Marine Pilot flying the Hornet recognized the situation for what it was, quickly responded to the missile alert status and was able to override the automated defense system before the missile was launched to destroy the hostile radar position. Furthermore, the pilot of the aircraft suggests that the officers cover their mouths when cussing at him, since the video systems on those jets are very high tech. Sergeant Johnson, the officer holding the radar gun, should get his dentist to check his left rear molar... It appears the filling is loose. Also, the snap is broken on his holster.

Thank you for your concern.

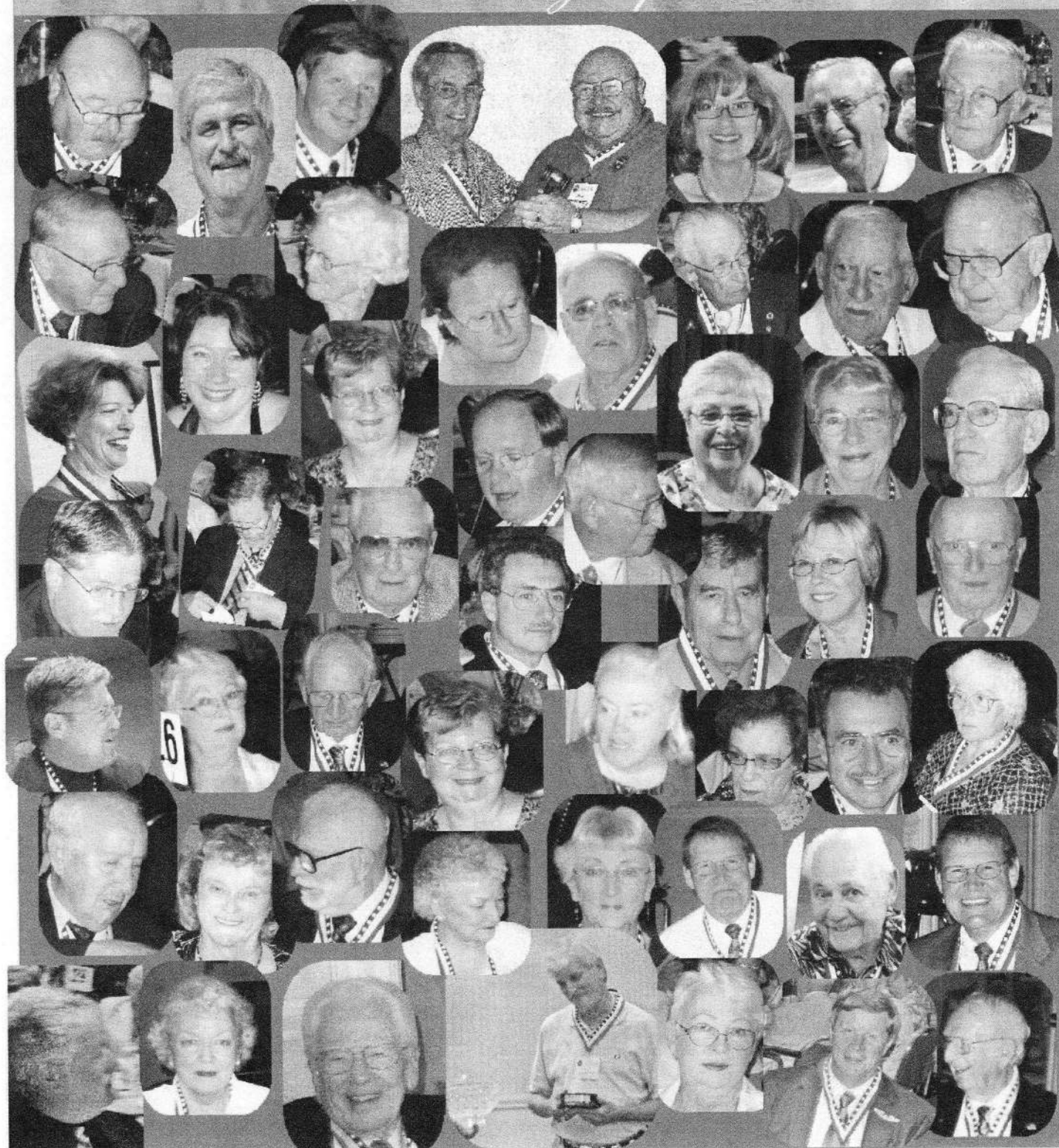
Semper Fi



Cincinnati, Ohio

385th Bomb Group Reunion

August 09



385TH BG MID-AIR COLLISIONS

The 385th BG had twelve separate incidents involving twenty-four aircraft of the Group. Listed are those of which the facts are known.

- On Mission 5, 28 July 1943, three aircraft collided. The Storr crew in 42-3316, *Big Stinky*, collided with the Robbins crew in 42-39257, *Lady Susie II*, and also with the Noel crew in 42-30285, *Round Trip Ticket*. Robbins had been hit by flak and thrown into Storr, with Noel caught between them. All three blew up and all crews were lost.
- On Mission 21, 26 September 1943, the Yennello crew flying in the No. 3 position of the Low Squadron in 42-30264, *Dorsal Queen*, flew ahead of its position and collided with the Keeley crew in 42-3290, *Raunchey Wolf*, flying in the No. 1 position. The *Dorsal Queen* lost its tail and the *Raunchey Wolf* lost its left wing. They crashed in England at Thornton and Bulphen, respectively. There was only one survivor who had bailed out.
- On Mission 34, 13 November 1943, the Dawruski crew flying in 42-30717 *Man O' War*, collided with the McCall crew flying in 42-39860, *War Cry*. *War Cry* had overshoot his position below, *Man O' War*, and *War Cry's* tail section collided with *Man O' War* and knocked off six feet of its left wing. *Man O' War* went down in a tight spin, and all crewmen were killed. Eight feet of the tail section of *War Cry* was severed, however the aircraft managed to ditch near England. Only the tail gunner of *War Cry* was killed.
- On Mission 57, 30 January 1944, the Lojinger crew in 42-31181 collided with a B-17 from another Group. The entire crew became POWs.
- On Mission 58, 3 February 1944, the Morse crew in 42-39938, name unknown, collided with the Heuser crew in 42-39952, also name unknown. All crew members were KIA as the B-17s crashed near Saarbrücken and Nettersheim.
- On Mission 66, 21 February 1944, the Pease crew in 42-31370, *Hit Parade*, collided with the Hutchinson crew in 42-37963, *Sleepy Time Gal*. Both aircraft crash landed at Reedham, England. Both B-17s had to be salvaged.
- On Mission 150, 12 July 1944, the White crew in 42-31917, *Off Spring*, collided with the McDonald crew in 42-102606, *Curley's Kids*, near Perle, Luxembourg. McDonald had been caught in propwash, and had stalled. He collided with *Off Spring*, cutting off the fuselage just before the tail. There were two survivors from the McDonald's crew. The people of Perle have built a Museum and Memorial to honor these crews and the 385th Bomb Group. Several 385th BGA members and tour groups have visited the Museum and Memorial.
- On Mission 213, 21 November 1944, the Webb crew in 43-38270 collided with the Foss crew in 43-38566. The names of these B-17s are unknown. Webb overshoot his position and his vertical stabilizer hit the ball turret of 43-38566 and continuing forward impacted the nose section of **566. The tail section of Webb's aircraft was torn off and his aircraft spiraled down out of control. Foss landed 42-38566 safely, but with several casualties.

-
- On Mission 224, 24 December 1944, the Volt crew in 43-38233, *Sweet and Lovely*, collided with the Bash crew flying in 43-37983, *Betty-Jo*. *Sweet and Lovely* was hit by flak and went out of control. It made wild climb and dive motions until rising into the *Betty-Jo* above it. The *Betty-Jo*'s No. 2 engine cut *Sweet and Lovely* in two. There were no survivors from the Volt crew. However, *Betty-Jo* landed safely, and after replacing its rudder, it continued to fly missions.
 - On Mission 260, 1 March 1945, the Armbruster crew in 42-38035, *Mr. Lucky*, was cut in half by the Rusecki crew in 43-38273, name unknown, over Ostend, Belgium. The only two survivors were a waist gunner of the Rusecki crew who bailed out, and Joe Jones, the tail gunner of the Armbruster crew. Unable to bail out, Joe rode the severed tail of *Mr. Lucky* down from 12,000 feet. A local farmer cut Joe out of the tail wreckage and carried him to a British field hospital. He had only minor injuries, and since the war has visited his Belgian rescuers and has attended many 385th BGA meetings.
 - On Mission 283, 4 April 1945, the Ritchie crew in 43-38210, *Angel's Sister*, in the No. 4 position in the Low Flight of the Lead Squadron rose up into the Crimmins crew in 43-38639, *Shady Lady*, flying lead in the Low Flight of the Lead Squadron. The collision occurred over the North Sea as the Group was returning from a mission to Kiel. Air Sea Rescue was notified of the position of the collision, but neither of the aircraft or their crews were found.
 - On Mission 285, 7 April 1945, there was a collision of a 385th BG aircraft and a German ME 109. It was a deliberate action. A German pilot in the German Rammkommando flying a ME 109, deliberately ran into the Burick crew flying *tail-end-charlie* in 44-8603, no name. The collision took the left wing off the B-17. Both it and the ME 109 disintegrated. The entire Burick crew was killed. The collision was witnessed by an American POW on the ground, and as part of a work party organized by his German guards, retrieved the tail gunner's body for burial.
-

FIRST B-17 RAID 66 YEARS AGO

It was on August 17, 1942, 66 years ago, that twelve B-17s from the 97th Bomb Group hit the marshaling yards of Rouen/Sotteville, France. The lead ship was flown by Major Paul Tibbetts, pilot of the B-29 "*Enola Gay*", which dropped the 1st nuclear bomb on Hiroshima. The commander of the Rouen mission was Colonel Frank A. Armstrong. B/Gen. Ira C. Eaker flew in the second squadron lead plane "*Yankee Doodle*".

NATIONAL WW II MEMORIAL

The National World War II Memorial/Museum is compiling a list of persons, military or civilian, who have contributed and/or served in WW II. The names and the activity of these Honorees will be listed in The World War II Memorial Registry of Rememberances. The Honorees data will include name, status, specific activity and hometown and state. One may contact the WW II Memorial Processing Center, P.O. Box 186, Calverton, NY 11933-0186; by toll-free phone at 1-866-364-2406; or by www.wwiiregistry.org.

THREE GENERATIONS IN A B-17

By Tom Gagnon

My Dad, Henry Gagnon, flew 36 combat missions with the 385th Bomb Group in 1944, but rarely spoke about his wartime experiences after the war. Later as I had sons of my own, Dad began to open up a bit about his experiences.

My eldest son, Eric, loved to build plastic model airplanes, and he also had a special bond with his grandfather. Upon learning that his grandfather had flown B-17's, Eric built every B-17 model he could find. He and his grandfather would spend hours talking about the models, and he, with my Dad's help, would paint and decorate those models with the markings of the 385th. As time went by and Eric grew older, he asked his grandfather more pointed questions about his wartime experiences. With the answers he received, Eric, using a drill, razor-knife, wood-burning tool and paint, modified some B-17 models to depict battle damage incurred on some of Henry's combat missions.

As an adult, Eric's interest in WWII airplanes continued to grow as he attended air shows around New England. Seeing the Collings Foundation's B-17 "Nine O Nine" on its Wings of Freedom Tour, Eric decided to take his grandfather for one more ride in a B-17. Initially reluctant, Henry said, "I've been there, done that. Who's maintaining this 65 year-

old airplane?" But he eventually agreed to join Eric and me in February, 2004 for a flight out of the St. Petersburg/Clearwater airport.

After an up close personal look at the aircraft, we were seated on the floor of the waist of the plane and fastened our belt for the taxi and takeoff. The engine roared and we taxied out to the runway. The takeoff seemed to take a long time, and the rate of climb was shallow compared to today's commercial airliners. I could only imagine a B-17's takeoff and climb with a full load of bombs, fuel and ammunition.

A 25-minute flight down the Florida coast at an altitude of 1000 feet and a speed of 160 mph gave us an unparalleled view of the coast below,

first from the nose of the plane at the bombardier and navigator positions, and then from the waist gunner's positions. A small metal walkway above the bomb bay led from the top turret gunner's position, right behind the pilot and co-pilot position, to the radio operator's room. We were cautioned not to misstep on the walkway because the bomb bay doors below would not hold our weight, and it was a long way down. It was now clear why we had to sign a liability release form before boarding! Much too soon, we were back in our seated positions on the waist floor, fastening our belts for the landing.

It was truly a special day for me with my father and my son, three generations, flying together in a B-17.



Henry, Tom and Eric Gagnon
and B-17 *Nine O Nine*.

AIR CORPS OR AIR FORCE

by John T. Correll, Contributing Editor of the *Air Force Magazine*

Most of us know that the United States Air Force began in 1907 as a three-man Aeronautical Division of the Army Signal Corps. Over many years it went by various names, but the lines between most of these eras was clear. But there is one era where there is confusion about the name for the current Air Force's predecessor organization. That era is World War II.

Research confirms that the nation's air arm during World War II had the name US Army Air Force (AAF). Some go on to claim that the name Army Air Corps (AAC)* was abolished in 1941 when the Army Air Force came into being. Yet, one finds many who insist on calling the wartime air force the Army Air Corps instead of the AAF. And some use the two names interchangeable.

Neither side is entirely correct.

To begin with, the Air Corps did not die in 1941. The fact is that the AAC was alive and kicking until 1947. Wartime photos of Henry H. (Hap) Arnold, Commanding General of the AAF, show him to be wearing on the lapels of his uniform the AAC insignia – a two bladed propeller superimposed on wings. One may remember during that time, the official song began, "Off we go into the wild blue yonder" and finishing the song with a rousing, "Nothing'll stop the Army Air Corps!" However, the wartime Air Corps did not control, as it once did, the affairs of Army airpower.

Every Army officer was commissioned into a specific Army corps or branch. When Arnold graduated from West Point in 1907, he wanted assignment to the Cavalry, but instead was assigned to the Infantry. There he stayed, although detailed to one flying assignment after another, until 1920. In that year, the Army Reorganization Act made the Air Service a combatant arm of the Army, putting it on a par with the Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, and other branches. Airmen were permitted to transfer to the new Air Service, and among those who did so was then-Major Arnold, who moved over from the Infantry.

In 1926, Congress passed and President Coolidge signed the Air Corps Act. This legislation changed the name from Air Service to the Air Corps. However, it did not alter the status of the branch. Since the Air Corps was established by Congress, it could only be abolished by another statute by Congress. This did not happen until the National Security Act of 1947.

The Chief of the Air Corps, a two star general, spoke for the air arm within the War Department. The Air Corps insignia was a modified version of the Air Service insignia.

In 1935, the Air Corps was still the most junior branch of the Army. It was famous and popular with the public, but it trailed the Infantry in clout inside the Army organization.

The activation of GHQ (General Headquarters) Air Force in 1935 took all Air Corps tactical units away from individual field commanders and put them under a single organization headed by an airman. GHQ Air Force reported to the Army General Staff, not to the Air Corps itself. Thus the leadership of the Army air arm was divided.

In the late 1930s, then-Major General Arnold was Chief of the Air Corps, and then-Major General Frank M. Andrews** was commander of the GHQ Air Force. The division of power was roughly equal until Andrews went on to other things.

The Army reorganization of 1941 created the new Army Air Forces (AAF). GHQ Air Force was named Air Force Combat Command and was assigned to the AAF. The AAF controlled both the Air Corps and the Air Force Combat Command.

In 1942, War Department Circular 59 divided the Army into three autonomous Zones of the Interior commands: Army Ground Forces, Army Air Forces, and Services of Supply (later, Army Service Forces). General Arnold's title was changed to Commanding General, AAF. The offices of Chief of the Air Corps and Chief of Air Force Combat Command were abolished and their functions taken over by the AAF. The Air Corps dropped off the organization chart.

Large combat field organizations

might have personnel from several different corps. Almost everyone in the AAF was in the Air Corps, although some AAF support personnel were from other corps. In May 1945, 88 percent of the AAF officers and 82 percent of the enlisted personnel were in the Air Corps.

When the Air Force became a separate service in 1947, it did not

continue the Army corps system. The Air Corps was no more, but the last vestiges of it were slow to fade away. The Air Force Band adjusted its rendition of "Off We Go" right away, but not until 1951 did the official published version of the song change over to conclude. "Nothing'll stop the US Air Force!" The wing-and-propeller insignia, which had

served through the Air Service, the Air Corps, and the AAF periods was worn briefly on the new blue uniform. It was finally eliminated in 1948.

*Your editor has several copies of orders issued in 1942-44 from the 385th BG and 452nd BG that are entitled Army Air Corps.

** Lt. General Frank M. Andrews was killed in an air accident while on his way to Europe in 1941. Andrews AFB is named in his honor.

MISSION TO MERSEBERG

by John Hyatt

November 25, 1944—We departed Great Ashfield, home of the 385th Bomb Group, to bomb Merseberg, Germany, flying B-17 43-37919, the *Rio Tinto*.

Before reaching the target, the #4 engine on *Rio Tinto* lost oil pressure and had to be feathered. Unable to stay with the group, we dropped out of formation. The air below us was completely covered with clouds. We salvoed our bombs and headed for home. We attempted to join another group returning from Merseberg, but before we could join them #3 engine had to be feathered.

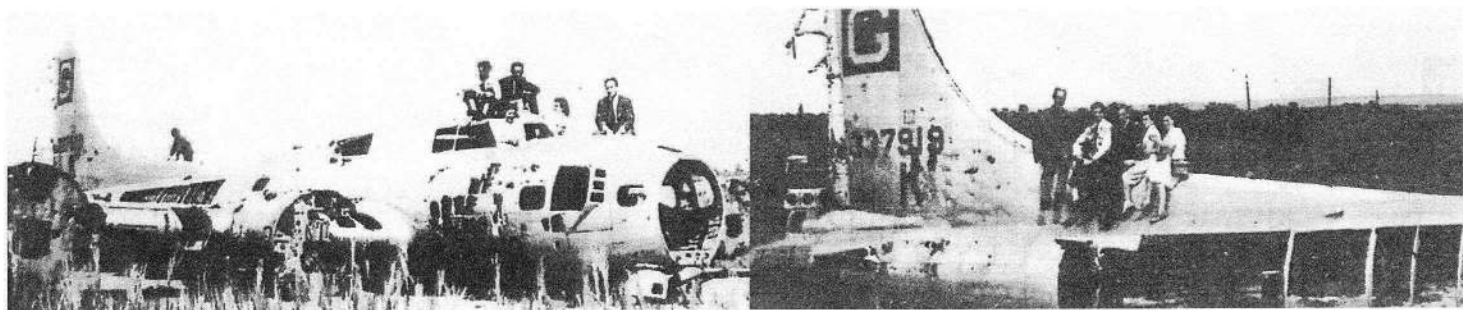
This puts us all alone with two engines out on the starboard side and slowly losing altitude. In addition fuel consumption on the

remaining #1 and #2 engines was very high. The engineer attempted to transfer fuel from #3 and #4, but was unable to do so with the electric pump or the hand pump.

We crossed over the American line and began looking for an airfield where we could land. However, just north of Liege, Belgium, both #1 and #2 stopped for lack of fuel, and the *Rio Tinto* was bellied-in on a green slippery field. We were then picked up by an Army truck and taken to Liege where we spent the night. The following day we were transported to Lyon, France where we boarded a C-47 for a return to Great Ashfield. I have often wondered what happened to the *Rio Tinto* that was left in the field near Liege.

Last year (2008) through e-mail, I made contact with Albert Demuyer of Belgium, son of Gustaaf Demuyer who was a member of the Belgium underground and a member of the White Brigade and the Secret Army. Albert Demuyer contacted Fabrice Voisin of Belgium who found pictures of *Rio Tinto* which I believe was taken after the war in Europe was over. I believe that the people on the plane were friends of the photographer.

Crew members on *Rio Tinto* were: John Hyatt – Pilot; Robert Bedell – Co-pilot; Louis Long – Navigator; Robert Serva – Bombardier; Gordon Williams – Top Turret; Troy Rouse – Radio Operator; Robert Manning – Ball; Earnest Helsley – Waist; William Anderson – Tail.



SCOUTING FORCE STORY

THE 385TH BG ROLE IN THE 3RD SCOUTING FORCE

By John C. Ford – 385th BG

A few members of the 385th BG made a major contribution to the 3rd Air Division bombing efforts, and yet very little is written about their work.

The Scouting Force concept was devised by Colonel Budd J. Peaslee. He was the Commander of the 384th BG and later became Commander of the 40th Combat Wing. As a Task Force Commander he flew on many missions and was the leader of the Schweinfurt mission in October 1943, a very costly mission, but not because of his leadership. Weather was damaging to our bombing efforts and he faced the decision to bomb or not. During the mission, he maneuvered an entire B-17 wing around the area, just to find a cloud break that would allow them to bomb the target.

From that experience, Colonel Peaslee evolved a plan to set up a Weather Scouting Force (WSF). Weather scouts would fly minutes ahead of a task force to appraise the force commander of the weather conditions. The force commander could then make a choice of options on how to avoid changing weather fronts and seemingly impassable cloud formations. This allowed the wing force enough time to change course or altitude to avoid trouble.

He sold his idea to General Doolittle and began his planning of a

WSF for the 1st Bomb Division (BD) in May 1944. A short time later Major Merrill J. Klein, 549th BS Operations Officer and a 385th BG Command Pilot, moved to the 3rd BD Operations staff. Klein convinced General Partridge, 3rd BD Commanding General, that Peaslee's idea should be adopted for the 3rd BD and Klein suggested that Major Vincent W. Masters of the 385th BG be tasked to organize the force. Major Masters, one of the original four lead pilots of the 385th BG, was flying his last (28th) mission when he learned of this new opportunity.

In August of 1944, the same month that the 1st WSF became operational, Masters was faced with the job of selecting personnel to activate the 3rd Scouting Force (3SF). He selected only lead or command pilots who had completed their tours and wanted to transition to the P-51. Those chosen had to volunteer for a tour in fighter aircraft with no R&R Stateside between tours. Other 385thers selected for the new unit were O. V. Lancaster, and Edward J. Grabowski.

After a very few hours in the one AT-6 trainer available and when they demonstrated their ability to handle the trainer, they graduated to the P-51 Mustang. With as few as 20 hours in the P-51, the chosen airmen were declared combat ready.

The 3SF was assigned to the 55th

Fighter Group (55FG) at Wormingford and the ground units and P-51s were on detached service from 55FG squadrons. Since the 55FG was not over-excited about bomber personnel messing up their field, the 3FSers felt they were being treated like a babies born out of wedlock to unwanting parents.

With too little personnel assigned, Major Masters doubled as Commander and Operations Officer, and his Ground Executive Officer doubled as his Intelligence Officer. Administration had only two enlisted personnel to do every job imaginable. Despite these obstacles, the 3rd Scouting Force flew its first mission on 15 September 1944, just two months after the 1st Scouting Force had blazed the way.

The main purpose of the Scouting Force missions was to report weather conditions enroute and over the Primary Target, arriving about ten minutes prior to the bombers arrival. Later they also helped in forming the bomber streams in the assembly area. Pilot turnover was rapid as the 3SF flew every operational day. The SF aircraft were fully armed but were under strict orders to avoid engaging the enemy, except in self-protection.

In February 1945, the 3SF became the 3rd Scouting and Weather Force (3rd SFW) and the unit inherited the Table of Organiza-

tion (T.O.) from the 862nd BS, 493rd BG, and ten B-17s with their crews and several additional fighter crews were assigned to the 3SFW. This placed all weather aircraft under the command of Lt. Col. Masters.

The B-17s assigned to the 3rd SFW were stripped of their turrets which increased their speed.

Despite growing too fast, the 3rd SWF moulded into a formable unit and was presented with a commendation by General Partridge.

Flying more than 1300 sorties, by war's end the 3rd SWF had encountered more than 20 enemy aircraft and had five confirmed destroyed enemy aircraft. Four pilots were

KIA, three of the death were due to weather conditions.

Editor's Note: This story was abstracted from a story written by John C. Ford printed in the Journal of the Eighth Air Force Society, Vo. 8, No. 3 (July 1982). The original story was printed in the 385th Bomb Group Reunion Association Newsletter of July 15, 1979 edited by John C. Ford.

FLYING SUPPLIES TO THE MAQUIS

by Wilbur R. Dennis

July 14, 1944 - The briefing, earlier than usual that morning, increased the feeling of tension behind the jostling crowd of men. There was something important in the air, and they were waiting for the officer who would give them the details. When he rose to speak, silence fell over the group, and the combat crews, suddenly serious, leaned forward to hear the information about their target for the day.

Instead of the colored yarn extending on a map from their base to a German industrial or military target controlled by the Nazi, the crews saw a screen with one sentence: "Your target is an open field in France."

The briefing officer, explained that today, instead of dropping bombs on enemy objectives, they were going to drop supplies and equipment to the Maquis, the French underground. Since it was Bastille Day, July 14, the mission had a double significance, for on this historic date we were going to supply the French with equipment to once again fight for their freedom.

I had been assigned to fly with 1st Lt. Laurence V. Volrath and his crew on the B-17 Fortress, "*Miss D-Day*," so named because it had flown its first mission on June 6, 1944. It was dark when I arrived at the bomber, and the ground and air crews were busy checking last minute details. The engineer was so intent at his work that when a voice behind him asked to see the bomb load, he said over his shoulder, "Sorry, bub, it's a secret." The silence had the necessary effect on the sergeant, who turned and found himself looking at the 3rd Bombardment Division Commanding General. Needless to say, the general saw the bomb load.

Climbing aboard the plane, I went to the nose of the plane to observe the mission. We took our position on the runway and waited for our turn to take-off. It was still dark and we could see the red and green lights of the Fortresses ahead of us. Soon we roared down the runway and took off flying in the direction of the French coast.

The weather was perfect. As we approached the French coast we

put on flak suits expecting a barrage of flak, but it never came.

The field where we were to drop the supplies to the Maquis was in the south of France, close to the base of the Alps. The weather over France was bright and clear and we flew in a straight line for our objective. I could look down and see the rolling fields of the quiet countryside. There was no sign of war or the enemy. It seemed fantastic that the world was at war and this was part of the battleground.

At times during the flight I looked through the astro-dome at the formation spread out and proceeding with majesty toward its objective, the silver bombers gleaming in the sun, the olive drab ones against the sky.

Checking landmarks, the navigator told me that we were in the vicinity of our target area. We dropped low over the field and dropped the containers which drifted to the ground attached to colored parachutes. I thought about how our cargo would be used by the French behind Nazi lines. It would be smuggled into towns and distributed

to men who had never forgotten how to fight the enemy.

Upon reaching the ground, the Maquis would run out, grab the supplies and drag them back to the trucks concealed in the trees, some of them pausing to wave at us as we circled the field.

Twenty minutes after we left the target, six Messerschmitt 109s attacked from the rear, and I could hear the ball turret and tail gunners open fire. Four of the attackers zoomed past the nose and soared into a steep climb. The bombardier and I fired at them but they were out of range. After we

returned to base, I discovered that four of the six Nazi fighters had been shot down by our Group's bombers gunners. We had not lost a plane, and we had delivered valuable equipment to the Maquis, equipment to be used to our mutual advantage against our common enemy.

SILK MAPS

How many remember those silk maps that were part of the packages that was carried by each crewman for each mission? Here is the story of why each crewman carried them in their escape kit.

In 1941, many British airmen found themselves involuntary guests of the Third Reich and the Crown was looking for ways and means to facilitate their escape. One of the most helpful aids to that end is a useful and accurate map, showing not only where material was located, and also showing the locations of 'safe houses' where an escaped POW, or downed airman, could go for food and shelter.

Paper maps had some real problems—they make a lot of noise when you open and fold them, they wear out rapidly, and if they get wet, they turn to mush.

Someone in MI-5 (similar to America's OSS) thought of the idea of printing escape maps on silk. It is durable, can be scrunched-up into tiny wads and unfolded many times as needed, and makes no noise whatsoever.

At that time, there was only

one manufacturer in Great Britain that had perfected the technology of printing on silk, and that was John Waddington, Ltd. When approached by the government, the firm was only too happy to do its bit for the war effort.

By pure coincidence, Waddington was also the U.K. Licensee for the popular American Board game, *Monopoly*. Another coincidence was that 'games and pastimes' was category of an item qualified for insertion into 'CARE packages', dispatched by the International Red Cross to prisoners of war. Under the strictest of security, in a securely guarded and inaccessible old workshop on Waddington's grounds, a group of sworn-to-secrecy employees began mass-producing escape maps, keyed to German and Italian areas where POW camps were located. When processed, these maps could be folded into such tiny dots that they could fit inside a *Monopoly* playing piece. As long as they were at it, the clever workmen at Waddington's managed to add:

- A playing token containing a small magnetic compass

- A two-part metal file that could easily be screwed together
- Useful amounts of genuine high-denomination German, Italian, and French currency hidden within the piles of *Monopoly* money!

Before taking off on their first mission, aircrews were advised how to identify a 'rigged' *Monopoly* set—by means of a tiny red dot, cleverly rigged to look like an ordinary printing glitch, located in the corner of 'Free Parking'.

Of the estimated 35,500 Allied POWs who successfully escaped, an estimated one-third of them were aided in their flight by the rigged *Monopoly* games. All who did escape were sworn to secrecy indefinitely, since the British government might have wanted to use this highly successful ruse in a future war. The story wasn't declassified until 2007 when the surviving craftsmen from Waddington's, as well as the firm itself, were finally honored in a public ceremony.

It's always nice when you can play that 'Get Out of Jail' free card!

LETTERS/E-MAILS

November 4, 2009

Dear Frank,

"Taps" for the last crew member of the "*Slick Chick*" that flew thirty-five missions out of Great Ashfield. My late husband, Donald W. Johnson, was the radio man and said that Sartnup was wounded on their 13th mission. Although the plane was shot up, their pilot, Dick Fellers, was able to land the plane at Great Ashfield.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Janyce Johnson

From: Andre De Munck alfdemu@gmail.com

To: billvar.comcast.net

Subject: Lokeren, Belgium

Date: 6 Nov 2009

Hello Bill Varnedoe,

I have problems to send you a mail, so I try it this way. Sorry if you received already this mail. I have send yesterday the English version of my publication to you. I hope that you like it. My best regards to you and your family and once again, thanks for all the help a get from you both. I forgot something: both publication, in Dutch and English, are also available on my website now (in screen resolution):

<http://users.fulladsl.be~spb6276/demunck/demunck wo2.htm>

My best regards,

Andre De Munch

From: billvar@comcast.net

To: aeaud@aol.com: and others

Date: 6 Nov. 2009

Hi all. This is a not-so-good mission of the 385th Bomb Group. Scroll to the URL to get the English version of the book. It is 104 pages long, but I was able to download it and print it out OK. It is a well researched story of how, unintentionally, things can go wrong. I sent him most of the 385th's input.

Bill

LETTERS/E-MAILS

From: Jim and Nancy Rickenberger <puppetbear@tampabay.rr.com>
To: billvar@comcast.net; fxmccawley@aol.com; and others...
Subject: Crew 22, 550th Sqn, Fryer crew
Date: Oct. 15, 2009

To all concerned,

My father, (Edwin) Dale Rickenberger, was the bombardier in Crew 22, assigned to A/C "Mary Ellen" (II & III). I am trying to identify the crew members, all of whom flew the Atlantic July 2, 1943 in the original ^—No. 42-3285. I am attaching a photo of the crew, probably taken in Kearney, Nebraska before flying to England. Does anyone know for sure when and where the crew photo of the cadre was taken?

The officers in the front row are: Lyle Fryer, pilot; Clifford McIlveen, co-pilot; John Durakov, navigator; and Dale Rickenberger, bombardier. The enlisted men in the back row are not known to me for sure. I believe the man on the left is "pop" Browning. And I think the man on the right is George Good. Second from left may be Chester Lisiewski, whom apparently was an evader after their being shot down.

If you or anyone reading the *HH* can help us ID these men we would appreciate it.



Taps

Thomas A. Helman – Melord, OR, died December 16, 2008 at age 88. Tom was born in Spokane, WA, was a member of the 549th Bomb Squadron and was the co-pilot on the Richey crew. He flew from September 1943 to March 1944, mostly in 42-30737, the Ohio Air Force.

Thomas (Tom) Kelly – died January 27, 2008. Tom was the Navigator on the Gagnon crew.

Jack Popp – died October 11, 2009 Of Alzheimers. Jack was a waist gunner on the Art Ray crew and flew most of his missions on the *Raggedy Ann*. Surviving is his wife Bette Popp.

Richard W. Hartnup – Kendallville MI, died October 2, 2009. Most of his life was spent in Fort Wayne where he retired as Vice President of the Coverall Rental Service after 28 years of service. He was a member of the Masonic Lodge, Scottish Rite and the Shrine all located in Fort Wayne. He was awarded the Purple Heart and several other meritorious awards. Surviving are his wife, Katherine J. Hartnup, a daughter, Judi, and a son, John, two grandchildren, and several nieces and nephews.

Jim Cooper – died September 22, 2009 at age 88. He was the Bombardier on the Shack Bunny, with the Frank Wall's crew. During the early years of the 385th Bomb Groups Association, he was the association Treasurer handling the organization's finances. He also organized several of the Association's reunions. During his 25 missions he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and three Air Medals. After his combat tour, he was a bombardier instructor at Big Springs Army Air Field, Texas until leaving the Air Corps in 1944. He spoke of his time at Great Ashfield as the most meaningful of his life.

By his son, J. Duncan Cooper

385th BGA

Chuck Smith, Treasurer
P.O. Box 329
Alpharetta, GA 30009 USA

Address Service Requested

PRSR STD
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MV PRINT
20785

LA
THOMAS E. GAGNON
50 BONNIE LN
TEWKSBURY MA 01876-1310



The passing of the 385TH BGA President's Gavel from the 2007-2009 BG "Veteran" President, Al Audette, to the "Second Generation" 2009-2011 President, Thomas Gagnon.