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 42d Anniversary
 1985
 Los Angeles**

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GREAT ASHFIELD - SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

STATION 155

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NEWSLETTER

VOL. X NO.4 OCTOBER 1983 EDITOR, VERNE PHILIPS

PREZ SEZ

During our business meeting at our 9th reunion, the membership voted to establish the office of "Historian". It was felt that there was a lot of memorabilia scattered around. This should be collected, evaluated, prepared for display and preserved. Therefore, I am asking for a volunteer to fill this office.

I have had the pleasure of inviting aboard former 385th personnel who have been located through the Ex-POW bulletin, or through a member. George B. Menkoff, DDS, of Tulsa, Oklahoma, who heard of the 385th BGMA at the 8th AFHS, has ^joined and has sent me the names and addresses of six others. ~~FF~~~you know of any other 385th personnel who aren't members, please send me their names and addresses. I will gladly write s letter welcoming them to join the 385th BGMA.

Florence and I had the pleasure this summer to visit Paul and Elaine Schulz in their home. He was a great help in getting me started. He has corresponded with me since and its so good to have him to fall back upon.

Don't forget to send in your news items and any story item to Verne Philips, P.O. Box 5970, Austin, Texas 78763.

Verne Philips ^S V — *if*

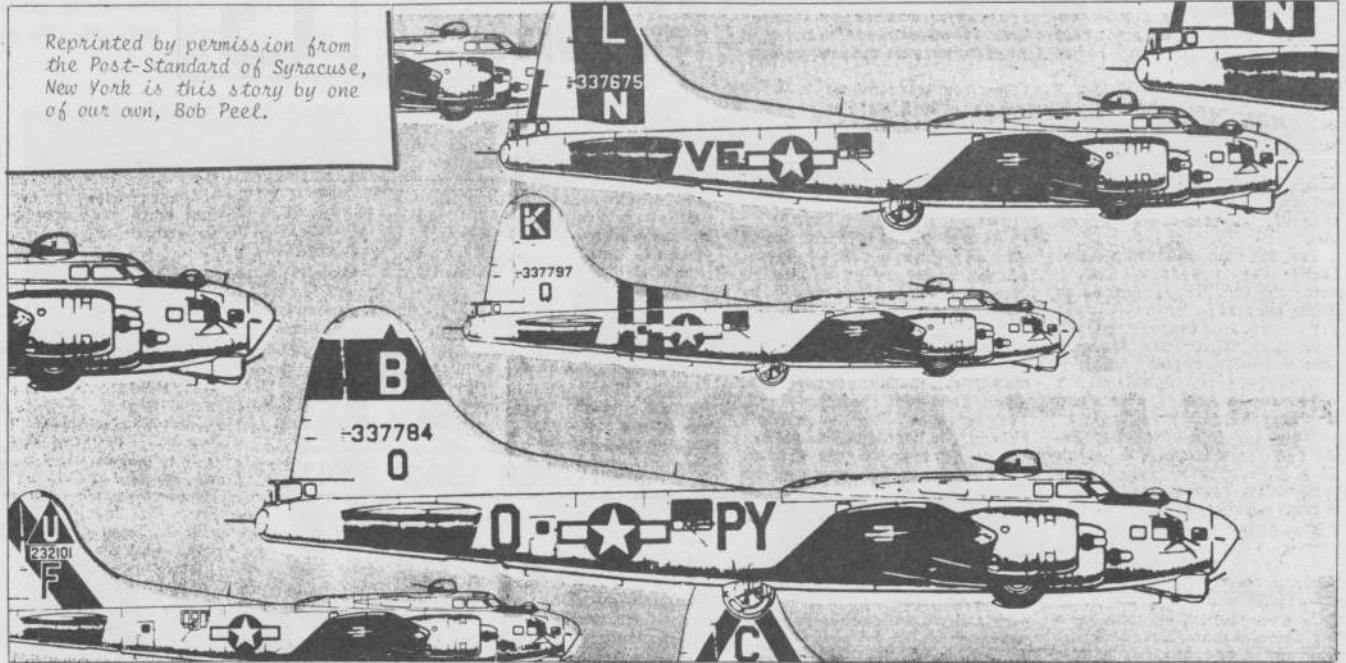
TREZ SEZ

Members of the 385th BGMA, it is now that time of the year when we welcome your dues and donations. This past year we placed a memorial at the Air Force Academy and donated \$1100.00 to the All Saints Church in Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England. The Life Membership Fund and donations made this accomplishment possible while still keeping our dues at only \$5.00 per year. In the near future we plan memorials at Arlington National Cemetery and the museum at Dayton, Ohio.

Our new computer system makes it possible for you to check your dues status on the newsletter sticker. LM999 Life Member, A999 A83 Associate Member (Family Member), F999 English Friend, R83 year dues paid, R00 delinquent. Only members with an 'R' prefix will be billed for dues. We are trying to keep our roster correct and up to date, so please advise me if your records disagree with the newsletter sticker or your address is not current.

Flying with Fear

Reprinted by permission from the Post-Standard of Syracuse, New York is this story by one of our own, Bob Peel.



B-17 Bomber Crews Recall Deadly Raids

Oswego Man Tells of Being Shot Down

SOME OF US RELIVE the most exciting moments of our lives in lonely dreams, but this summer Neil Duell of Oswego had over 400 people join him in re-experiencing split seconds, hours and days few men on this earth have ever survived.

He flew mission after mission over Europe during World War II, plowed straight through two exploding aircraft, bailed out of a flaming bomber, parachuted from more than 20,000 feet to land with a broken neck, was taken prisoner by the Germans, survived the strafing of his prison and escaped from the middle of a triangle being pounded by three attacking armies.

Neil lived it all over again during the 40th reunion of his 385th Bomb Group from the World War II legendary 8th Air Force. He and his wife, Nanette, joined hundreds of others assembled for the reunion at Colorado Springs, home of the U.S. Air Force Academy. It was an experience none will forget.

As one former bomber pilot put it: "No matter how many times we refight this war, it still turns out the same way!"

The 385th was a B-17 (Flying Fortress) outfit flying out of Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England. It flew its first combat mission July 17, 1943, and by the end of the war in Europe had completed a total of 296 raids and dropped 18,494 tons of bombs. During that period it lost 129 of its planes in combat but exacted a toll of 287 enemy planes

confirmed as shot down. Another 170 were listed as probably shot down or damaged.

Neil Duell played a strong role in the drama of the 385th, although he will stress that he was only one of many who chose to fight the war in the air. It was cleaner there, no muddy trenches or steaming jungles. But there were long days spent trying to live on oxygen four miles in the sky where temperatures hung at minus 40 degrees and only the thin aluminum skin of the bomber protected the crewmen from thousands of anti-aircraft batteries and hundreds and hundreds of attacking fighters.

On March 2, 1944, Duell's luck all but ran out on a raid to Dresden. He was assigned to fly "toggl-er" — an aerial gunner turned bombardier. Many bombardiers had been lost and the gunners who replaced them often watched the lead aircraft, waiting for the "Bombs Away" signal, rather than use a bombsight. When they saw the bombs falling, they simply tripped their own bomb release toggle switches.

The mission may have been doomed from the start. The Luftwaffe's ME 109s and FW 190s waited until the American's own air cover of fighters had to turn back, then attacked from all sides. Three or four of the Flying Fortresses had already been lost. Others were trailing smoke. Even worse, a 60-mile headwind had burned up so much gas that a return to England was almost impossible. Flight plans were already being explored to get the bombers to

Russian lines in eastern Europe after the target was hit.

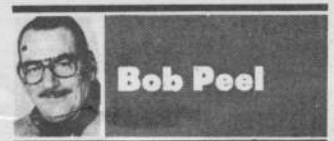
Duell had survived such terror in earlier missions. Once two bombers directly in front of him had exploded and his plane had flown through the wreckage, then had gone straight down in a power dive. The pilot pulled it out and they limped home. Another time he had crash landed in France. That luck was now gone.

This time they had to bail out for their lives when a direct hit blew up a wing tank. Duell dove out the "chin hatch" underneath the nose of the plane. As he floated to the ground he saw the whole tail section of his airplane spin past him in the air.

The parachute dropped him, heavily and almost head first, right in the middle of the Luftwaffe airfield used by the pilots who had shot him down. The fall broke his neck; the wind caught the chute and dragged him in agony across the ground. German pilots waiting for their planes to be fueled and rearmed caught the chute and, unaware that the fall had broken his neck, stuffed him into the sidecar of a motorcycle to take him to their field dispensary.

"It was a rough ride," Duell recalls. "I was paralyzed from the neck down and fell out of the sidecar twice."

In the dispensary a nurse pushed his wristwatch well up his sleeve to hide it. "The Gestapo will take it," she whispered in his ear. After first aid he was fed chicken soup, interrogated and moved on to a makeshift hospital for prisoners where he lay on a straw mattress for three weeks.



Bob Peel

The paralysis from the neck fracture seemed to go away. At the end of the three weeks he was escorted by a German guard to the town jail. That night he apprehensively counted the multitudes of calendar marks on the cell wall made by former prisoners. The next morning Allied fighters attacked the town and his jail was strafed with machine gun fire. Smoke from fires started in the jail by the air attack filled his cell but Duell was all right. A few days later he was transferred to a small prison for captured Russians.

The war was now in its last weeks. Confusion was rampant. The prison guards seemed to disappear. Finally, Duell and two other Americans decided to just walk off, even though all three of them were still badly injured. No one stopped them.

They limped along with artillery fire in their ears from the attacking Russian, English and American armies. Refugees were everywhere. So were deserters. One night a huge German soldier jumped out in front of the Americans and pointed his gun at them.

(Continued on Page 3)

Flying Fort reminder of air war



Ian McLachlan (right) presenting the photograph of a Flying Fortress to Reg Sims of The Fox Hotel, in Stowmarket, last night.

A STOWMARKET public house, a regular meeting place for US airmen during the 1939/45 War, was last night given a permanent reminder of its links with the past.

A photograph of one of the Flying Fortresses which

operated from Gt. Ashfield was presented to hotelier Mr. Reg Sims of The Fox Hotel, by local aviation historian Mr. Ian McLachlan from the Friends of the Eighth, UK.

The presentation is part of the US Eighth Air Force Memorial Museum Foundation's "pictures in pubs" project which aims to put photographs in 70 pubs and hotels throughout

East Anglia that were used by US airmen.

From July, 1943 to April, 1945, the 385th Bombardment Group flew 296 missions from Gt. Ashfield and lost 169 heavy bombers.

Piloting one of the B-17s to go down during a raid on Munster was Lt. John F. Pettenger, and it was at his request that The Fox was chosen to represent the 385th.

He revisited The Fox last year and recalled many boisterous occasions when the bar was full of Yanks drinking pints of "half 'n' half." Although the airfield is fading back to farmland he hopes the picture will remind visitors in the future of its links with the past.

NOTE: The story above ran in an East Anglia newspaper on June 24, 1983. The number of the aircraft in the picture was reported to be 4230651. Does anyone know who flew it? If you have a clue, please let us know so the crew can be identified on the picture. «»



MEMORIAL SERVICES IN CAMBRIDGE, ENGLAND

John W. Archer, an English friend of the 385th Bombardment Group, sent information about the Memorial Day ceremony on Sunday, May 22, 1983, at the American Military Cemetery in Cambridge, England. Presiding at the ceremony was Chaplain (Lt. Col.) James E. Somma, Jr., USAF.

Addresses were presented by Robert D. Emmons, acting Consul General, U. S. Embassy, London; Sir Peter Proby, Bt., The Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire; Councillor Betty Suckling, The Right Worshipful, The Mayor of the city of Cambridge; and Major General Carl H. Cathey, Jr., Commander, U. S. Third Air Force. Music was provided for the ceremony by the Regimental Band of 1st The Queen's Dragoon Guards.

Memorial wreaths were presented by a great number of persons and organizations, both British and American. Following the volley from the firing detail, taps and a hymn were heard. After the benediction, the United States and British national anthems were played to conclude the ceremony.

The American Memorial Day ceremony is conducted under the auspices of the United States Embassy, London, and the United States Air Force in the United Kingdom - with the cooperation of the American Overseas Memorial Day Association, British friends, and the American Battle Monuments Commission.

B-17 Bomber Crews Remember Raids

(Concluded from Page 4)

"He probably didn't know what army I was in," laughed the Oswego County native while telling the tale. "I was wearing an Australian jacket, English boots and G.I. pants. He let us go when I gave him some of my French and Polish cigaretttes."

The next day the trio came to a small town practically covered with white flags. The whole town had just surrendered to a pair of Americans who had been scouting almost 30 miles in advance of their lines in a Jeep. One of Duell's companions had a badly infected wound, so the scouts took over an abandoned German ambulance to drive him back to needed care.

A short time later Neil was also returned to the American forces and eventually was discharged to return to Upstate New York.

Back home he met his future wife, Nanette, on the Syracuse University campus. They raised a family while Neil was operating a mill in Oswego. A natural outdoorsman, he began a series of hunting and fishing columns for weekly newspapers under an "Old Hickory" pen name.

With the family grown, the Duells began to travel more and this summer's reunion trip has been one of their top adventures. They took a U.S. Air flight from Syracuse to Denver then rented a car to drive down to Colorado Springs. They climbed Pikes Peak and, after the reunion, toured the Rockies then traveled to South Dakota.

One of the reunion highlights had to be the dedication of a special memorial in

the Air Force Academy cemetery to all of the 385th Bomb Group's fallen fliers. Former group commander Gen. George Jumper, USAF, Ret., unveiled the plaque as robins sang amidst the apple blossoms. Tall pines made a cathedral of the setting.

In other business the 385th approved its annual contribution for maintenance to All Saints Church at their former base in England. Many worshiped there during the war and a special altar holds a book containing the names of all the group's dead.

That night a dinner dance brought a climax to all the reminiscing. It was not all somber. One pilot watched another on the dance floor and observed: "Now I know why you couldn't fly formation." And one ball turret gunner bet another that he could never crawl back into his position again.

"Time is erased and we are all young men again," former 551st squadron commander Dan Riva told his fellow fliers. "I told you in 1943 that you were the cream of the crop. You still are!" «»



Sam Sheffield, Tarboro, N. C., September, 1982. Sam flew as bombardier on Jerry Mudge's crew in the 549th.

Jack V. Cole, Indianapolis, IA, March, 1983.

C. W. "Sam" Price, May, 1983. He was a member of the 94th BGMA, who made the 1976 bicentennial trip to England with the 385th BGMA.

Martin Iverson, June, 1983. He was a Lt. Col., USAF, retired and a life member of the 385th BGMA. He served in a B-47 squadron at Lockbourne AFB, Ohio with Paul Schulz. He is buried at Barrancas National Cemetery, Pensacola, Florida.

Sheldon M. Phillips, Chicago, IL, August, 1983. Sheldon was the 549th Communications Officer

(Note: The Incarnation on She^CleZd came &/iom hli daughter; on Cole, Phlce and loetion {/iom Paul Schulz; and on PhlUlpi C^iom hli widow.)



NEIL DUELL

Danny Riva Leads The 551st Once More

Danny Riva, original commander of the 551st Bomb Squadron, gathered the troops again at Colorado Springs on June 4, 1983. He took them back 40 years, spoke of them with pride and gratitude, and led the prayers for missing comrades. Set out below are his earnest and sensitive remarks.

It is almost four decades to the day that the 551st Bomb Squadron went into combat. Yes, it's 40 years since a diverse gathering of young men from all corners of the United States were joined together to fight a large air war over Europe.

It was not our task to ponder the morality of the war -- or the innate nature of man which excites him to combat -- or why the most intelligent of all God's creatures -- MEN -- had once again organized to kill each other. We just said that we were defending our country and we let it go at that. It was easier to handle the sadness that way.

At the end of 1942 or at the beginning of 1943 (time clouds my memory,) it was my great, good fortune to be appointed Squadron Commander. I was a 1st Lieutenant. I was about 23 years old. Within a couple of years I would be a Lieutenant Colonel and shortly thereafter, a Colonel. To me -- at that time -- it was right that I be the C.O. But later as I thought about the why of that appointment, the why became more of a mystery.

Certainly, Masters, Klein, Keeley, Yannello, Walls, Weikert, Pettinger, and many others were better pilots than I. Certainly, Sgts. Jacobson, Eddelstein and Goldman were more intelligent than I. Certainly, I was not the most courageous or brave -- far from it! Do you know why it was? It was God's gift to me. I am absolutely convinced that when I was given command of the 551st Bombardment Squadron -- an appointment for which I was not ready and did not deserve -- God had singled me out for a very high gift -- a growing experience supreme -- which would give direction to my whole life. A gift for which I shall always be grateful.

We have come together again after 40 years. Some of you have been in touch but many have not seen each other for 40 years. But a few minutes after we see each other, war stories abound, the 40 years are erased and we are young men in our 20's again. How can this happen?

One can only conclude that the intensity of war, the knowledge that you are playing the ultimate game with life itself -- the prize for which you fight, builds a bond, a oneness and a love for one another which endures and transcends all other life experience.

It makes no difference if you are combat crew, ground crew, or support crew. That all blurs into nothingness. You are all fighting the war again. You are all very special friends.

We are in our sixties now. By many standards, we are old men. In 40 years we have grown in knowledge, enlarged our formal and informal education, improved our understanding of man and lived the human experience. But, if we could put our 60 year old intellects into our youthful bodies of 40 years ago, could we have fought the war better? I think not! You were the best -- you believed it -- I knew it! You rose to the task. Inexperienced boys quickly became men tempered by fire. I shall always puff up with pride as I say, "The 551st was my squadron -- those men were mf men!"

We can. not end this talk without a prayer for our comrades who did not survive the war as well as those who were physically or mentally maimed by it. So let us -- each in his own way -- right now -- bow his head and say a short prayer for them and their families.

Men of the 551st -- thank you for what you have given me, thank you for what you have given each other, and thank you for what you have given your country.

«»

WOLF

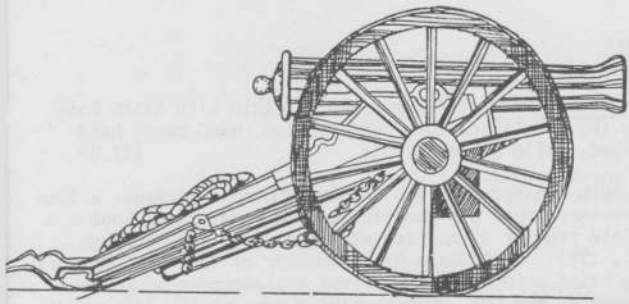


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John Ellis, of Fox Farm, Wetherden, has sent this photograph showing the floral arrangements on the 385th memorial altar in All Saints Church, Great Ashfield, on June 5, which he had described in his earlier letter published in our July issue.



Short Bursts



WAITING FOR THE L N E R..... Our New Jersey Vice President, William A. Nicholls, provided us with a photograph of three of our best on the platform at Elmswell. Nearest the tracks and ready to be first on the train is our leader, Forrest Poore; the debonair pipe smoker in the middle is Nick himself; and the third is not yet identified. If you recognize him, please let us know.



* •--& ft =©'

KENTUCKY REUNION OF 385th AND 486th CREWMEN

Earl Cole sent us a story from the Barbourville, Kentucky Mountain Advocate telling of an "old flyers' reunion" September 3-6 of five former 8th Air Force airmen. Three flew together on the same 385th crew, Earl Cole, Wesley Brasher, and Glenn Weisgarber. A. L. Benefield flew as pilot of another 385th crew and Sam Cole as radio operator on a 486th crew.

The story related how "Wesley, Glenn and Earl's B-17 once had three engines cut out and it was looking like a channel landing, but Wes, recalls Glenn fondly, discovered the reserve gas tank switches hadn't been switched over and when he flipped them, the three seemingly dead engines came to life."

The story also told of Wesley Brasher's return to combat flying in the Korean War and his later experiences in Germany and Vietnam. It also reported that A. L. Benefield was shot down over Germany on his 17th mission and imprisoned until May, 1945.



Five former U.S. 8th Army Air Force flyers from World War II got together for a reunion Sept. 3-6. From left are Earl Cole, A. L. Benefield of Ozark, Ala., Wesley Brasher of Colorado Springs, Colo., Glenn Weisgarber of Massillon, Ohio, and Sam Cole of ADDle Grove, Kentucky.

Dear Verne:

I was pleased to act as FOTE guide for a 385th couple, Willard and Lois Hagman, from Atkin, Minnesota, who came over on the Eighth Air Force Tour. Willard hadn't been back to Great Ashfield since 1945 so it was very moving to return after all these years. I bought him a pint at the Finningham White Horse and the beer may cost more, but it's still warm. We then drove to Great Ashfield and spent some quiet moments in the church looking at the memorial and recalling names from the Roll of Honour. We then went up on to the field and listened for the echoes of B-17's taking off - the best I could do was a cassette tape but it's the first time for many years that the sound of Fortresses has been heard on Station 155. The tower's gone, of course, so all we could do was stand on the spot it once occupied, but Willard did pick up a couple of pieces for souvenirs and I even managed to locate a piece of B-17 for him to take home. Finding where his quarters had been was trickier still but after some head scratching we eventually located the foundations and pictures were taken of him standing by his bunk. To me, helping him was all made worthwhile in the obvious satisfaction he felt finding the remnants of the hut he'd once made his home at a time when he never knew from one day to the next whether he'd get back. He did 35 missions. Some of those who lived in that hut never made it to any reunions, ever.

John and Lucy Ellis were as kind as always and there is no more comfortable place to enjoy an English afternoon tea than at Fox Farm. I hope Willard and Lois enjoyed their day, I know I did.

Best wishes,

Ian McLachlan

From time to time the Association has received inquiries concerning the availability of specialty items such as the Group history, back copies of the newsletter, programs from past reunions, belt buckles and other items. Since the 385th BGMA has several of these items in stock, we offer them here to our members. Those items not in our inventory will be supplied by the vendors at no inventory cost to us. The 385th BGMA will realize a profit on all items sold. Following are items for sale, prices include postage and handling.

The Letter, author Frederick H. Ihlenburg. Hard cover, novels A story of a B-17 crew based at Great Ashfield, how they lived and fought. Fred Ihlenburg is a 548th pilot who wrote the book ten years ago while recuperating from open heart surgery. \$5.95

Pennsylvania Dutch Gourmet Cookbook, paper cover. Authors Laverne and Shirley Rohrbaugh. Laverne was a 385th member and a member of Rosener's crew. They were shot down August 15, 1944 and ended up at Barth, Stalag Luft 1. This cookbook contains 333 recipes of the Pennsylvania Dutch (German) origin. If you like German cooking, this cookbook is for you. \$5.00

Squadron Tee Shirts.

Men's	S-M-L-XL	\$6.75
Women's	S-M-L-XL	7.75
Squadron Sweat Shirts	S-M-L-XL	7.75
Children's T-Shirts	S-M-L-XL	5.25
Golf Shirts	S-M-L-XL	9.00

Please state size and Squadron desired on shirts

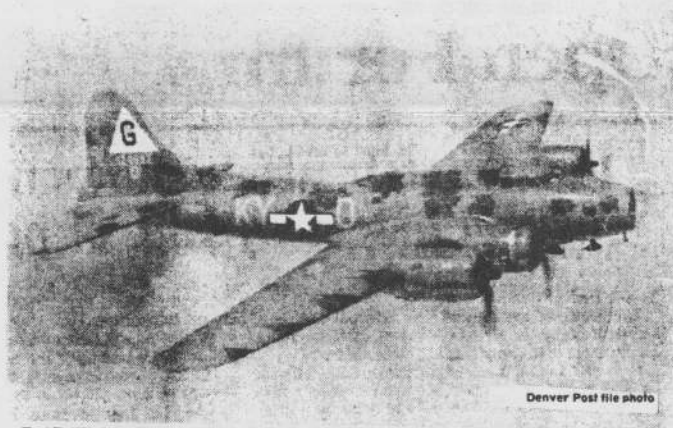
Belt Buckles, 8th Air Force insignia with 385th Bomb. Group (H) identification. Hand crafted, hand cast, hand polished, solid golden bronze. \$21.00

40th Anniversary, 9th Reunion Souvenir package; a 40th Anniversary lapel pin and 9th reunion paper cover book - a complete reprint of newsletters from July, 1981 through April, 1983. Includes a brief summary of the 385th history and a brief account of the career achievements of Colonel Vandevanter and Col. Jumper, plus a copy of the 385th BGMA memorial plaque which was dedicated at the USAF Academy on June 4, 1983, plus 2 385th BGMA decals. \$5.50/ea
 40th Anniversary pin 3.75/ea
 385th BCMA decals ,75/ea
 9th Reunion book, soft cover 2.00/ea

ADDRESS ALL ORDERS TO: 385th BGMA PX
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 Billings, MT 59105

Make all checks payable to 385th BCMA-PX. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery

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B-17 'Flying Fortress' over Rebel Field, September 1970

Air show brought back memories of B-17 missions in World War II

TO THE DENVER POST:

The big plane sat parked among all the others, the planes that flew and fought in World War II, but my husband had eyes only for the B-17. He was a pilot in that war, stationed in England from where he flew missions into Germany.

We stood in line to go through the plane and the closer we came to going inside, the more excited he became. He said it brought back so many memories. He told me about the feelings for that wonderful plane that carried him on so many missions and brought him back safely each time.

I crawled through it and marvelled at the simplicity of it and also marvelled at the men who had flown in these birds, flown so many countless hours, never knowing if it would be the last time for any of them. But the cause was just, and that was all that mattered.

He patiently explained all the instruments, the guns, the positions of his crew - and I could sense the love and respect he had for the big plane and the men who flew it.

And then, wonder of wonders, it was possible for us to fly in the B-17 during the air show on Monday, the Fourth of July.

The pilot invited my husband to fly up front in the cockpit. I sat in the main body of the plane. He had told me, "Listen to those engines as they start up. Isn't that a sweet sound?" If it is possible for a 65 year old man to be transformed back into his younger years, then this was it.

As we flew around the area of Arapahoe County Airport, I imagined what it must have been like to fly into a war-torn country. It is not too hard to imagine, because I was a young girl then, living in Berlin.

Sitting in the basement of our home when the big planes droned overhead, I remember wishing they would go away, so we could be safe for another day and could go out and play again.

It is so many years later now, 40 or so. America is my home now and I share my husband's love for it, as well as a love for the place of my birth and the many memories it holds.

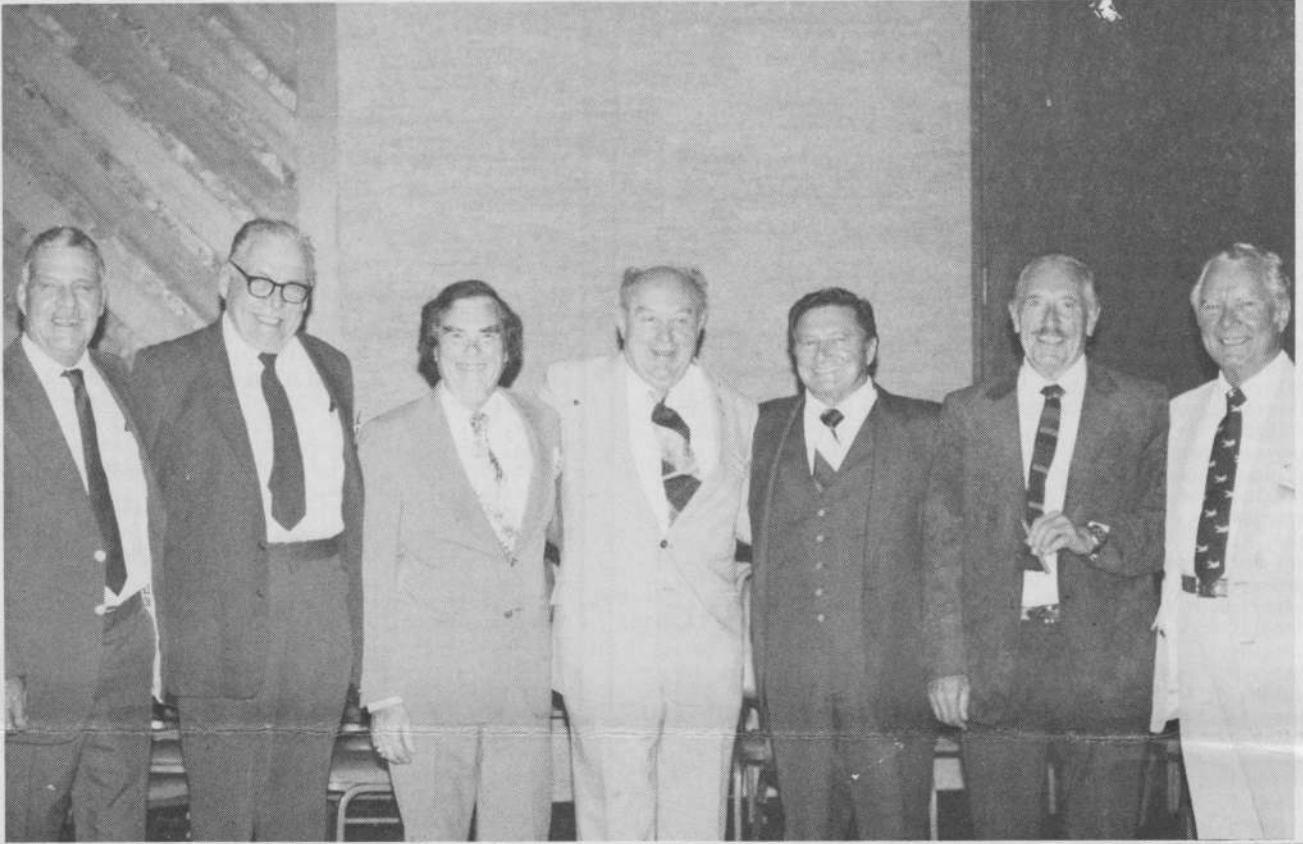
We celebrated the Fourth of July together, the man who used to fly B-17's over Berlin and the little girl, now grown up, who sat in the basement of her home and waited for the planes to go away. We celebrated by flying in one of those B-17's, later watched fireworks illuminate the sky and sang our national anthem together. I could not help but feel that truth is stranger than fiction.

INGRID RUTKOWSKI FALKENSTINE - Littleton

(Note: Paul Schulz relayed the above letter from the Venven Post which he had received from J. Charles McGill, 486th Bomb Group Association. "The man in the Attle Is Tolten Talkenstine, 11167 Wild House Peak, Littleton, CO 80117, a long lost member of, the 385th.")

551st PILOTS AT COLORADO SPRINGS

After 40 years the surviving command pilots of the 551st Bomb Sq. finally got together at the same time and place. From the left, John F. Pettenger, Frank B. Walls, Vincent W. Masters, (lead crew), Donald E. Jones, Daniel F. Riva, (Sq. CO.), Wilmont C. Groti, Ruel G. Weikert. Missing are John C. Keeley and Paul M. Yannelo, killed in a mid-air, and Irving H. Frank, who died since WW 2. ~



385 TM **B G M A**
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There was an old flyer from Laurel,
Who was known but rarely to quarrel,
But our John Pettenger,
Our serious treasurer.
Thinks late payment of dues immoral.
— So please pay those 'eighty-four dues now due!

