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# 10th Reunion 42d Anniversary 1985 Los Angeles



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## "The Mighty Eighth Reunion Group"

385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

GREAT ASHFIELD — SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

STATION 155

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Forrest V. Poore  
23253 Westwood St.  
Grand Terrace, CA 92324  
(714) 825-2465

#### VICE PRESIDENTS

William A. Nicholls  
743 Lake Ave.  
Woodbury Heights, N.J.  
(609) 845-4378

Mary L. Weikert  
6306 Green Leaves Rd.  
Indianapolis, IN 46220  
(317) 257-3969

#### SECRETARY

Robert E. Douglas  
29512 Hillside St.  
Pueblo, CO 81006  
(303) 948-3814

#### TREASURER

John F. Pettenger  
Box 117  
Laurel, Florida 33545  
(813) 488-7569

#### EDITOR, BGMA NEWSLETTER

Verne Philips  
P.O. Drawer 5970  
Austin, Texas 78763  
(512) 458-1359

#### 8TH A. F. HISTORICAL SOCIETY UNIT CONTACT

Gerry Donnelly  
10770 S.W. 46th  
Miami, Florida 33165  
(305) 221-3592

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Ruel G. Weikert  
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Vincent W. Masters  
John C. Ford  
James H. Ermons  
Paul Schulz

# NEWSLETTER

**VOL. XII, NO.2**

**APRIL 1985**

## PREZ SEZ

Allen Chealander called a meeting of the Southern California members of the 385th BGMA at the Hyatt Hotel at L.A. Airport last month. Although many couldn't attend, some sent in letters volunteering to head up or work on the committee assignments for the upcoming reunion.

Our meeting was held in the suite (#4) that the Hospitality Suite will occupy during the reunion. Later we were given a tour of the hotel and its facilities. The attitude of the hotel staff along with the excellent accommodations for our different meetings was very pleasant. I am looking forward to a very exciting program for our reunion.

I would like to take this opportunity to personally invite all the widows of the deceased members of the 385th Bomb Group to the reunion. We are hoping to see you, and honor you. You are always welcome to our group.

*Sincerely  
James*

## EXECUTIVE POSITION AVAILABLE

HIGH LEVEL PUBLISHING, EDITORIAL POSITION AVAILABLE. ABILITY TO SPELL AT THE FIFTH GRADE LEVEL HELPFUL. ACCESS TO TYPEWRITER AND PILOT THEREOF PROBABLY NECESSARY. IMPORTANT TO KNOW A REASONABLY UNDERSTANDING PRINTER SOMEWHERE. PAY IS NOT MUCH - NOTHING, IN FACT - BUT VERY REWARDING IN ENJOYABLE REKINDLING OF OLD MEMORIES. SPLENDID TITLE CAN BE DEVELOPED AND BESTOWED ON SUCCESSFUL APPLICANT: PUBLISHER, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, MANAGING LITERARY DIRECTOR, OR WHATEVER STRIKES YOUR FANCY WILL BE YOURS FOR THE ASKING.

APPLY TO PRESENT EDITOR WHO WISHES TO SHARE THESE GOOD TIMES WITH ANOTHER.

SUBJECT TO FINAL SELECTION BY NEW 385TH BGMA PRESIDENT, UNKNOWN AT THIS TIME BUT GUARANTEED NOT TO BE PICKY.



#### CELEBRATION PLANNED FOR FLYING FORTRESS FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY

Seattle — In July 1985, the fiftieth anniversary of one of World War II's most famous airplanes, the Boeing B-17, will be celebrated in Seattle, its birthplace, according to a release from the Boeing Management Association.

A three day birthday party will honor the people who designed and built it and were involved with it during its distinguished history.

It all started on July 28, 1935 when the granddaddy of the B-17, the Boeing 299 -- for its design number -- first lifted off from Seattle's Boeing Field. This prototype, built with company funds, was a one of a kind test airplane built for an Army Air Corps competition for the "bomber of the future."

The Flying Fortress Fiftieth Anniversary commemoration in Seattle is being sponsored by The Boeing Company and the Boeing Management Association, a large group of present and retired company supervisors and managers.

The three day birthday party will begin on Friday, July 26, 1985 with special activities for invited former members of WW II B-17 bomber groups and units which were involved with the Flying Fortress. Saturday, July 27, will be reserved for present and retired Boeing employees and families. Sunday, July 28, will be a public open house.

All of the above activities will be at the new Museum of Flight on Boeing Field, Seattle.

Some B-17 groups will be having reunions in Seattle in connection with the Boeing celebration. While the 385th does not have its reunion scheduled for Seattle in July, but in Los Angeles in September, individual 385th members are invited to participate either individually or on an organized basis.

T. J. Johnston, of the Boeing Management Association, has written Forrest Poore: "The B-17 Veterans Composite Wing" has been organized to accommodate such veterans. If you or others in the 385th are interested, it is suggested you contact:

Mr. Donald L. Hopkins  
c/o Galaxy Tours  
P.O. Box 326  
King of Prussia, PA. 19406"

Forrest Poore has reported that it is likely that Dutch representatives will participate and that they will want to meet with some 385th people because of food drops made by the group in May, 1945 for the Dutch people. He has told us that he thinks Paul Schulz and Bill Nicholls will be there. Jerry Mudge, who lives not far from Seattle, will be there and asks that those planning to attend call or write him of your intentions. Jerry can be reached at 850 Alder St., Edmonds, WA 98020, telephone (206) 774-4260. He is in touch with those planning the Boeing celebration.



## LAS VEGAS FLEXIBLE GUNNERY SCHOOL WWII REUNION

Clarence Abrahamson has written about a reunion November 14-16, 1985 of those who served during WWII at the Las Vegas Flexible Gunnery School, the home of Pete, the horned toad mascot.

Those wanting details should contact one of the Reunion Co-chairmen, STAN JANESIK, 123 Palma Del Rio, Las Vegas, NV 89110, (702) 453-1680 or HARRY CARLISLE, 3755 N. Nellis Blvd., Las Vegas NV 89115, (702) 643-1844.

#### RUSSIAN SOLDIERS AND AMERICAN POWS TO RELIVE LIBERATION EVENT

Russian soldiers and American airmen will meet in May of this year in eastern Germany to commemorate the liberation of the airmen in Stalag Luft I in May 1945. These airmen, including Edwin Dunlap, of the 385th who gave us the story, were imprisoned at Barth in eastern Germany near the Baltic Sea in an area liberated by Russian forces and beyond the line reached by the armies of the Western Allies.

Edwin Dunlap, of Santa Rosa, California, had a very brief tour with the 385th. He received his wings at LaJunta, Colorado and was then assigned to a B-17 crew. He was sent with it to the 551st. He flew his first combat mission to Kiel on 13 December 1943 and did not return. He was a prisoner of war until released by the Russians.

While a prisoner he was part of an attempt to dig out of the camp. He and others worked for about five months to complete a tunnel 80 feet long under the fences. He went through, emerged outside the camp, and was immediately recaptured and forced to await the coming of the Russians.

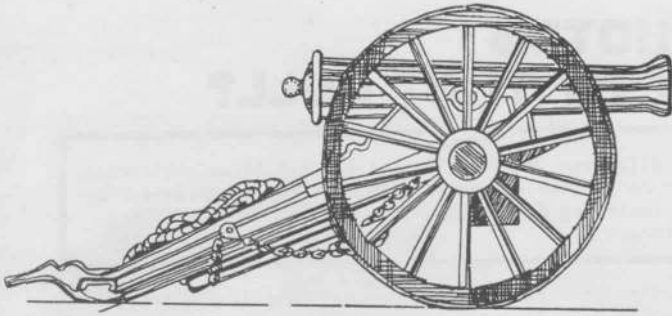
He has told us that more than 60 former prisoners of war from Stalag Luft I are making the trip back to Barth, now within the territory of the German Democratic Republic (East Germany). Representatives of the Russian forces are expected there, he understands, along with East German representatives.

If this issue gets out early enough some of our people may want to contact Edwin V. Dunlap, 4257 Santa Rosa Avenue, Santa Rosa, California 95407 for details about the trip. We hope to secure the story of the meeting at Barth from him and pass it on in the next issue of the newsletter.

#### WARREN LARSON WITH FURTHER WORD FROM BOEING

Warren Larson wrote in March to tell us of the Boeing B-17 Fiftieth Anniversary Celebration in Seattle. In addition to navigating Lil Audrey, one of Boeing's products, around Europe for the 385th, he was employed with Boeing from 1946 to 1960.

He sent us excerpts from a recent issue of Boeing News, one of which contains a request for B-17 stories. If you have one for them, send it to Boeing News, P.O.Box 3707, M/S 1F-6, Seattle, Washington 98124.



## Short Bursts

### DICK WINGERT AND THE

### "Hustlin' Hussy"

WISH WE WERE THERE .....

Bill and Doris Nicholls and Paul and Elaine Schulz are in Holland and Germany this month.

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#### RADIO HARDLIFE CALLING!!

Editor:

My husband, Clarence Cragoe, who was a 385th Bomber Pilot remembers the call from October '43 to June '44 (radio) was "Hardlife." His airplane number was 507. Today, Clarence (Ray) is not good physically, due to much cancer surgery. He said to say his mind is good - I would say it is sharp!

Although he cannot eat food served at the convention, we have sent in our money for the events. He does want to renew his acquaintances. Phil Bomser, who we saw in Colorado Springs, was his navigator. Hope this bit of information will help some questions.

Sincerely,  
Bernice Cragoe  
549th Squadron

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#### CREW OF THE 'RAGGED BUT RIGHT' AND THE HOMESICK ANGEL

Editor:

Read the article in the January issue involving "Homesick Angel" and can furnish some information about its last mission. On August 15, 1944 The Rosener Crew, of the 549th Squadron, was assigned "Homesick Angel" for the Munster mission. Two engines were lost to flak over the target and in the attempt to reach the North Sea, the plane lost altitude, forcing a premature ditching in the Zuider Zee. The ship held together and the crew, (10 in all) were successfully transferred to dingies. We were picked up by a Dutch fisherman and eventually welcomed aboard a German Patrol Boat, who then started us on our adventures in Stalag Luft III.

G. Flynn, Co-pilot  
"Ragged But Right" Crew  
549th Bomb Squadron

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#### FROM THE CCC'S GREEN CALM TO THE AC'S WILD BLUE YONDER

Editor:

A while after leaving the 182nd Co. CCC's, I entered the United States Army Air Corps and received my training at the Aerial Gunnery School in Wendover, Utah. I thought it might be of interest to you to know that this school was built from a former 3C's barracks that was disassembled in Idaho and reassembled at Wendover. Capt. Keys, U.S.A.A.C., commanded the operation and the camp.

A poem was written about this happening and was titled, "Capt. Keys and His Forty Thieves." (No disrespect intended.) I have since lost my copy of it and if anyone still has a copy of it, I would appreciate receiving one. Thank you.

Ralph B. Joye

Editor:

I'm writing this letter in the hope that you might be able to assist me.

I have just completed a book, the Flying Fortress Almanac which covers B-17 operational history and some of the more fascinating sidelights. There is a chapter about B-17 nose art, and one of the photos I have used shows the 385th's Hustlin' Hussy (as shown in the October '84 newsletter).

The painting on the airplane is signed "Wingert," and I've seen that same signature on a number of cartoons which I believe appeared in Stars and Stripes.

If possible, I'd like to find out something about "Wingert" - his full name, and his connection with the 385th. I'd also like to confirm that his work appeared in Stars and Stripes.

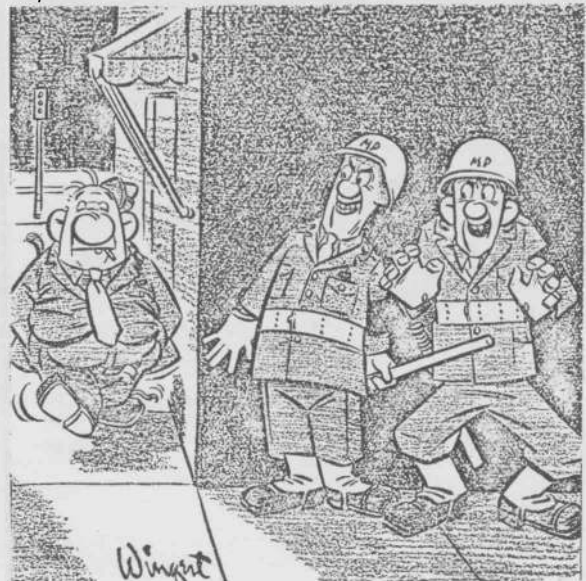
Any help you can offer will be warmly welcomed, and thanks, in anticipation.

Steve Birdsall  
21 Parkland Road  
Mona Vale 2103  
Sydney, Australia

*Editan'h note: Yeh, the ant wonk hhowing the. B-17 "Huhttin' Huhhy" wah done, by Vick Wingert. Aa I necatt, one of the heengeanth on our crew nan into Wingert when he wees vdhitting our base and tatted him into doing home work on our aintpane. We had come from the h tat eh in a B-17 which we catted the "Hehitatin' Huhhy" whtch had no ant wonk, but onty the tettening on it. It wah toht tn an accident on the bahe and we were ahhigned ano then aintpane. We felt we needed a name that wah mone pohitive than "Hehitatin' Huhhy" and hettled on "Huhttin' Huhhy" and ah fan ah I necatt, it wah Wingert'h idea for the pontnayay of the Picaditty Commando tuning Hubent by chopping hen. handkenchief ah hhe pahhed him. You can atho hee the connen of the undengground hign which wah hupphed to funthen place the event in Picaditty Cincuh.*

*Wingert wah a cantooniht for the Stanh and Stripeh. He finht drew a hketch, which Jenny Madge, our pitot, htitt hah, and then painted it on the aintpane. "Hubent" wah Wingert'h cantoon chanacten then appealing in the Stanh and Stripeh.*

*Example below:*



# HOW ABOUT THESE PHOTOS - AND WHO SHOT AT THAT BULL?

Ian McLachlan continues to seek more details about the 385th. With his letter of March 4 he sent three photographs about which he sought information. We passed them on to four of our people who responded with most of the answers. We suspect you will find these questions and answers interesting and stimulating of old memories. Please send us or Ian any thoughts that come to mind about the photographs and the bull story.

Dear Verne,

A line to let you know I'm still busy on the 385th's behalf and, hopefully, I'll be able to scrounge some space in the newsletter again. Several parcels of photos have been sent back to their original owners and I have some letters from people seeking their pictures, so I'll try and identify them and get them shipped back. I've also had the idea of submitting some of the pictures to the newsletter because they'll obviously interest 385th members and, maybe, they'll draw some response which will help add to the knowledge I have of them. Many of the pictures I've got are uncaptioned and undated, so it's impossible to relate what they are about, and this is sad considering that every picture tells a tale about the Group and the only people who can throw light on them are the men of the 385th so I reckon on sending a few in as and when I can afford to get prints.

This time around there are three:

1. This picture came, I believe, from Mrs. G. Peek, whose husband, Clifford J. Peek, was a combat photographer. It shows Clifford (?) with a spaniel who is, I guess, the subject of the "Roger Wilco" caricature. Can anyone remember the story behind this picture? It's also a puzzle because the letter 'Q' has been painted over this piece of fuselage art and 385th B-17's didn't usually carry any fuselage letters.
2. Taken by Raunchy Wolf - these two guys obviously mean business, but who are they, when was it taken?
3. Mr. Smith and crew - but which crew, when, and what happened to them? I'd also like to tie a serial number in to Mr. Smith, so if anyone out there can help, you'll be putting a bit more to your own history.

Lastly, I have an eery tale to tell and, again, I hope some of the Group will remember this incident. On 20th February, 1944, during the BIG WEEK operations, 385th BG Mission number 65 was launched when 36 aircraft too part in an attack on Tutow. 1st Lt. Billy E. Ruby and crew, one of the 548th's originals, were assigned as No. 1 in the High Group and were climbing to assemble when a flare pistol malfunctioned starting a fire in the forward fuselage of their B-17, serial 42-6004. Ruby rang the bail out alarm and seven of the crew parachuted to safety, but the information I have indicates that Cletus D. Crouse was trapped in the Top Turret so Ruby and co-pilot, Lt. Edward Kregulac, stayed with the ship, perhaps seeking a crash landing. Residents of the Norfolk village of Tuttington saw the stricken Fortress coming down, its cockpit area now well ablaze. Whether those on board were still alive will never be known but the B-17 bellied into some fields, slithered through several hedges and smashed into a group of trees, causing it to disintegrate. Those on board did not survive.

I don't have full names for the rest of the crew, but my records give the following:

Navi gator	Crai g
Bombardier	Thomock
Radi o	Parker
BTG	Zu i nta
TG	Anderson (Howard E?)
LWG	Roddy, Edward G.
RWG	Rase

According to local sources, one of these airmen landed in a field occupied by a fearsome and somewhat unwelcoming bull, and, the story goes, the American had to use his .45, firing in front of the bull to keep it at bay while he exited the creature's territory as fast as he could. So far, the tale has both sadness and humour but the events which ensued promote an eery aspect, one which I cannot explain and would like to verify. The crash occurred at 0940 hours so it must have been about 10:00 when the seven survivors assembled and made their way towards a nearby farmhouse only to be greeted at the door by a woman who announced that she was expecting them - the breakfast table was laid for seven places'. The housewife told them that she dreamed of their crash the previous night, so she knew they would be arriving and had arranged breakfast. For the survivors, this was an uncanny experience and Sgt. Roddy reported it when they got back to Great Ashfield and it four its way into the Stars and Stripes, but I don't have a copy of that account.

Late last year I sent this story to the local papers and the tale of the airman and the bull was one response but I haven't been able to find out who this mysterious woman was and doubt if she is still alive. Some weeks after the crash a local resident, George Spinks, found a ring belonging to Lt. Ruby and returned it to his squadron headquarters. Later this year I plan to visit the crash site because I'm told parts of B-17 42-6004 can still be found scattered across the fields where she crashed and I'd like this strange tale to be related in the museum at Parham supported by parts from the aircraft and, hopefully, pictures of the ship and her crew.

In 1980, R. Wayne Detwiler wrote to John Ford asking for recollections of this incident and I'm indebted to him for some of the information given above. Other sources were my own files and those John held, but the account still has huge gaps which will, I hope, be filled by those who read it in the newsletter.

Yours sincerely,  
Ian McLachlan

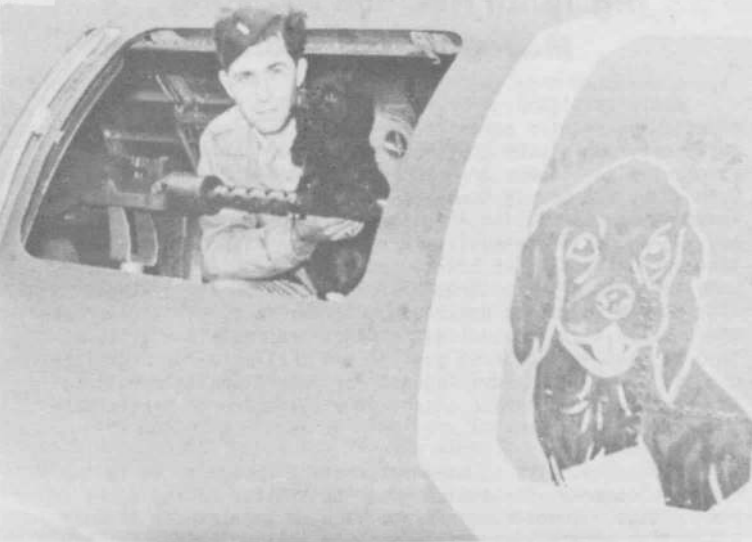


IAN MCLACHLAN, taken by Eant Cote loiot 385th member.) on Eebnuany 27, 79S5 at the Anget Hotet at Buny St. Edmundi. L to R: Stewant P. Evant, Ian, and Ctndy Cote HaAman (Eatit'i daughter. )

(SEE "PHOTOS" CONTINUED)

PHOTOS (-zon.tinu.ed)

1

JOHN ZAVISHO AND LES REICHARDT TELL US ABOUT "ROGER WILCO"

John Zavisho: "Sure enough - the photo ... is of me and Roger. The wife has a duplicate in her album."

Leslie L. Reichardt: "The Lt. pictured was my bombardier, John Zavisho, and our crew mascot 'Roger Wilco.' Our aircraft was #25 914 and we were one of the original crews of the 549th Squad., 385th BG. We had 'Q' markings on the tail and fuselage. Our bill turret gunner, Ben H. Phelper, was the artist who painted 'Roger' in the center of the Q. Perhaps you know, our crew was shot down over Germany on 17 August 1943 where we all remained a guest of the Germans until 1945. However, Egbert R. Rude, my radio operator, begged off that fateful day and went on to finish his tour with another crew."

Egbert took care of Roger and upon the completion of his tour, brought Roger back to the states. This was no little task, I am told, as Sgt. Rude smuggled Roger on board the Queen Mary for the trip home in his duffle bag and when the dog was discovered. Rude had to serve on KP the balance of the voyage. Perhaps you know, Egbert passed away a few years back.

Subsequent correspondence with Sgt. Rude brought Roger to my home in Marion, Ohio to await my return from POW camp. Roger joined my wife and I for a tour of duty at Maxwell AFB, Alabama and was later to be a constant companion to our son. Les, Jr. Roger died in 1948."

JOHN PETTENDER RECALLS RAUNCHY WOLF GUNMEN

"The man on the left is Wasserman, the bombardier on the crew. I think his first name was Bernard. I think the man on the right was the co-pilot, named Farrell. Wasserman and my bombardier, DORNEY, were good friends." →

CHET DORAN PROVIDES THE WORD ON MR. SMITH

"I'm returning your photocopy with names and information on the back. I'm sorry I can't ID all the crew. I have all their names but my memory is shady and rather than guess I won't try."

I am working with Allan Chealander on organizing the LA reunion this September. This reunion will give me a good opportunity to renew old friendships.

The photo you copied was taken from a full page article which appeared in the 40th Anniversary handout. (January, 1983, 385th BGMA Newsletter, page 2.) Mr. Smith crash landed in England on her 35th mission. However, if my information is correct, scuttlebutt has it, she was rebuilt and went on to complete 60 C missions." 37



2



Front row: (L to R); Hugh Cuttell (B); Chester Doron (P); Sid Colthorpe (N);

Rear Row: 1 - , 2-T/Sgt. M. Andrews; 3 - 4-, 5-T/Sgt. Don Hughes, 6-Sgt. Ed Berowski

Crew Chief, Sg. Wilson  
Mr. Smith 985

Other crew members not ID  
Bill Wheeler, CP; Loren Johnson, Herb Jacobs,  
Ray Gould



# LA's the Place



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## Big Tenth Reunion Planning Moves Right Along

Activity planning for the L.A. Reunion is moving right along. The reunion organization committee is setting up the three main activities that most members are believed to be interested in. These are visits to Universal Studios, The Queen Mary and Spruce Goose (on the same site) and Disneyland. These three attractions are being planned for September 11, 12, and 13, but not necessarily in that order. Each trip will take approximately 4-6 hours, including bus time. Of course, some members may have already visited some or all of these attractions and might desire other activities. The preference chart below lists the activities that are readily available to our group. Since cost savings are available for organized groups, it would be advantageous for your planning committee to know how many reunion attendees will desire to participate in specific events.

Obviously, with so many interesting things to do in the Los Angeles area, the choices must be limited to the dates of our reunion. However, those who wish to participate in more activities by arriving early or by extending their visit may stay at the Hyatt at our special reunion rates. To do so, you must provide your names to the hotel with the specific dates before or after the September 11-14 reunion dates that you desire additional accommodations.

Some members may wish to continue on to Honolulu or Hilo for a Hawaiian vacation after the reunion. There are any number of special one or two week reduced fare/hotel packages available from Los Angeles. It may be advantageous for those desiring Hawaii to include that destination in their original ticketing. Most travel agencies can provide details on the reduced fare/hotel vacation packages.

----- cut here -----

Please indicate your activity choices and the number in your party in the spaces below, clip it out and mail it to Al Chealander, 10491 Barbara Anne St., Cypress, CA 90630, without delay.

Activity Yes No Undec Nr in Pty

Universal Studios				
Queen Mary & Spruce Goose				
Disneyland				
Marineland				
Ports O' Call				
Catalina Island Boat Trip				
Museums, Art Exhibits, etc				
Beaches				
Deep Sea Fishing				
Beverly Hills Bus Tour				
Horseracing				
Golf				
Other- describe				

If you plan to arrive early, indicate date of arrival:

If you plan to say after reunion, indicate date of departure:

# Reunion Reminders

In the event some 385th members might have missed a 385th Newsletter or two, or may have misplaced some recent issues, it seems appropriate at this time to reiterate the specific details for the 1985 reunion in Los Angeles.

It will be the 10th reunion for the 385th Bomb Group since the Group left Great Ashfield in August, 1945. The reunion will be held at the Hyatt Hotel at Los Angeles Airport during the period September 11-14, 1985. The registration fee for each person planning to attend is \$58.00, payable in advance, as soon as possible. Checks should be mailed to Sam Lyke, 4992 S.E. Princeton Drive, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74003. The registration fee will cover registration expenses, the Friday night Mexican Dinner, Coffee and Danish for the Saturday morning Ladies Coffee Klatch Program, the Saturday night dinner dance and program, the band for Saturday night, and the Sunday morning business breakfast, which will conclude the reunion. If that seems like a great deal for \$58.00, it is only because it is a great deal!

But there is more. We have been fortunate to have secured room accommodations at the Airport Hyatt for a flat rate of \$50 per room per night. That means that 1, 2, 3, or 4 persons can stay in the room for the \$60.00 rate. Each room will be furnished with a king-size bed or two large double beds. You should indicate on your reservation requests whether a king-size or two large double beds are required. Rollaway beds are also available.

Reservation post cards will be mailed to all members soon in a separate mailing. It is suggested these reservation requests be completed and mailed directly to the Hyatt as soon as possible. The cut-off date for these rates is September 1, 1985. Incidentally, one whole floor of the Hyatt has been set aside for non-smokers at no extra cost. If you desire the non-smoker floor, please indicate the same on your reservation card. Reservations and payment for room accommodations will be handled directly between reunion attendees and the Hyatt Hotel.

Complimentary transportation is provided to and from Los Angeles International Airport 24 hours per day. Auto parking will be complimentary for all registered guests and at a reduced rate for conference participants not staying at the hotel. The hotel can make arrangements for campers and RVs to be parked in the parking lot across the street from the hotel if the hotel is given advance notice.

There will be a hospitality room available to all 385th attendees in an outside cabana, next to the swimming pool. Check with the registration desk for its location. And, of course, since this will be a 385th bar, operated by 385th people, volunteer bartenders will be more than welcome.

A number of special attractions, tours, and other activities will be available to all attendees. Reduced rate packages will be available for these events.

All suggestions, questions, and requests for additional details or information concerning this reunion should be referred to Al Chealander, 10491 Barbara Anne St., Cypress, CA 90630. (714) 761-1682.



## March 21 Howgozit Report On Reunion From Sam Lyke

Below is a list of those pre-registered members and wives for the 385th reunion in Los Angeles: A total of 78 people have registered as of March 21.

Archer, Vance D. and Mrs.	Long, Robert and Marietta
Bash, Robert W, and Geraldine	Lyke, Sam and Mary
Chealander, Allan and Geneva	Milligan, Robert and Ann
Cerrone, Warren and Ales	Moll, Francis and Rose Laswall
Conrow, Edmund C. and Statia	McDonald, James
Cragoe, Clarence and Bernice	McWilliams, Clovis and Mildred
Doran, Chet and Betty	Nicholls, William and Doris
Duell, Neil and Nanette	Poore, Forrest and Florence
Eckhardt, Reuben and Irene	Richard, Septine and Teresa
Eshleman, E. Richard	Rollins, Clark and Mrs.
Framer, David and Rose	Ross, Orville and Dorothy
Gasda, Walter S. & Elizabeth	Smith, Charles and Peggy
Gaul, Norman and Kay	Stern, Edward and Mrs.
Gorchak, Joseph and Pat	Solenberger, Cleve and Angela
Graboski, Edward & Mildred	Sutter, Frank and Antobelli
Heckel, Herman	Taubkin, Milton and Helen
Heydon, Thomas and Helen	Traudt, Ernest and Ruth
Hite, John	Weikert, Ruel and Mary
Howe, Homer and Jean	Weisgarber, Glenn and Erma
Hoagland, William and Mary	Wrightley, H, J and Vera
Hunter, Bill and Ruth	



## THE GROWTH OF THE 385TH BGMA REUNIONS

By Ruel Weikert

During the weekend of September 7, 8, and 9, 1956, Deb Wagner, John Nejedlik, Rudy Cunat, Frank Walls, Jim Cooper, Jesse Ashlock, Wally Olowniuk, Bob Lambert, Vince Masters, myself and our wives got together in Cleveland, Ohio to discuss the possibility of having a reunion for the members of the 385th Bomb Group. At this meeting I was elected President, Frank Walls, Secretary, and John Nejedlik, Treasurer.

It was decided to plan our first reunion for August 2, 3, and 4th, 1957, at Bedford Springs, Pa. The location was later changed to Hotel Webster Hall in Pittsburgh, Pa.

The only roster we had for the names and addresses was a an old one from WWII. I sent out well over 1000 letters, 90% of which were returned undelivered. From the few that answered, I received more names and addresses and eventually in 1957 we were able to publish an up to date roster with 281 members. Today we have over 1100 members on the roster.

At our first reunion we had 51 members and 36 wives who attended, and needless to say, everyone had a great time. At that time the registration fee was \$12.00 per person, which included the Friday night get-together, Saturday dinner dance and Sunday Brunch. The hotel charge was \$10.00 per night per couple. Frank and Winn Walls were host and hostess.

During the business meeting at the first reunion it was decided to have a second reunion in 1958. Six cities were suggested, a vote was taken and the Pick Congress in Chicago was selected for the weekend of August 1, 2, and 3, 1958. J. K. Hughes and his wife were host and hostess.

The attendance at the second reunion was slightly smaller than the first, but we had several new faces present. The cost at Chicago was \$15.00 per man, \$10.00 per woman and the hotel cost was \$12.00 for a double room. At the business meeting it was decided to plan a third reunion in August, 1960. The cities selected were New York or Denver. New York won the vote and Charlie Edelstein and his wife, Helen, were to be the host and hostess.

The third reunion was held at the Park-Sheraton Hotel in New York where the rooms cost \$14.00 per double and the registration fee was \$18.00 per man and \$12.00 per woman. Even though we raised the registration fee, we lost \$201.00, due mostly to no-shows. Ninety people had planned to attend, but only sixty-six made the reunion. During this reunion it was decided to plan another reunion for 1962. The cities of Cleveland, Ohio, St. Louis Mo., and Denver, Co. were suggested. Cleveland won.

Due to many different circumstances, children growing up, college tuitions, job requirements, etc., the fourth reunion was delayed until July 21, 22 and 23rd of 1972. It was held at the Holiday Inn in Cleveland. Rudy Cunat, Jim Cooper, and John Nejedlik and their wives were hosts and hostesses. The registration fee was \$20.00 per person, hotel cost was \$20.00 per double. This was by far our largest reunion, 73 members were present along with most wives. The hotel served 138 dinners on Saturday night. There were many new faces and everyone had a great time. During the business meeting it was decided to plan the next reunion in 1975, this would be 30 years since the 385th left Great Ashfield. A vote was taken and it was decided to have the fifth reunion at Atlanta, Ga. We also voted on new officers, and Frank Walls became President, Jim Cooper, Treasurer, and Rudy Cunat, Secretary.

In 1975 our fifth reunion was held at the Townhouse Motel in Atlanta during the weekend of April 26, 27, and 28th. Charlie and Peggy Smith were the host and hostess. The registration fee was \$25.00 per person and the motel rates were \$22.00 per double. This was our largest reunion,

nearly 200 people attended. We again elected new officers and Vince Masters became President, Frank Marano, Vice-President, John Ford, Secretary and Editor. It was voted to have our sixth reunion in Las Vegas, Nevada during 1977.

Before we had our sixth reunion the 385th BGMA had a mini-reunion to England to visit our old base at Great Ashfield. This was a two week trip starting September 5, 1976. There were 186 of us who made this trip and we were the first large group of WW II veterans to visit their old base, and we had a ball 1

As mentioned above, the sixth reunion was held at the Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas during the weekend of April 22, 23, and 24, 1977. Arkey Huber was the host. The registration fee for those not staying at the Aladdin was \$33.00 per person. Those staying at the Aladdin paid \$75 per person double occupancy for two nights, which included the registration fee. Our Saturday night dinner dance was held at Nellis AFB and 260 people were served dinner. On Sunday we elected new officers, John Ford was elected President, Earl Cole, Secretary, and John Pettenger, Treasurer. Kansas City was selected as the site of our next reunion.

Our seventh reunion was held during the weekend of May 4, 5 and 6, 1979 at the Hilton Plaza Inn in Kansas City. The hosts and hostesses were Larry Russell, Jerry Ink and their wives. The registration fee was \$35 per person and the hotel rate was \$94 per double. We had one of the best reunions with 270 people attending. John and Lucy Ellis from Fox Farm, Wethersden, Stowmarket, Suffolk, England, were our guests. During the Sunday business meeting we elected new officers; Jim Emmons, President, Warren Cerrone and Winn Walls, Vice-Presidents, John Ford remained as Editor, Charlie Edelstein, Secretary and John Pettenger remained as Treasurer. We voted to go to Fort Walton Beach, Fl. for our next reunion.

This, our eighth, was held May 15, 16 and 17, 1981 at the Ramada Inn, Fort Walton Beach. Our host and hostesss were Joy Dunlap, Ty Winton, and their wives. The registration fee was \$50.00 per person and the hotel rate was \$45.00 per night per double. We had lovely weather and a large turnout with 250 people. All types of sports were available such as swimming, fishing, golfing, plus a tour of Eglin AFB. That evening we returned to Eglin AFB for our dinner dance. We again elected new officers, Paul Schulz became President and Editor, Ty Winton, Vice-President, Ed Stern, Secretary, and John Pettenger, Treasurer. We also selected Colorado Springs, Co., as the site for our next reunion in 1983.

Our ninth reunion which was the fortieth anniversary of the 385th BGMA, was held at the Four Seasons Motor Inn at Colorado Springs the weekend of June 2nd through June 5th, 1983. Our hosts and hostesses were Bob Douglas, Bill Fife, Wes Brashear and their wives. The registration fee was \$55.00 per person and the room rates were \$58.00 per double per night. This was our largest reunion with over 400 people attending. There were many new faces, including my ground crew chief, John Deberg, whom I had not seen since 1945. We all had a great time, especially those who were fortunate to be on the 298th mission led by our great leader, Frank Walls. Of course, this was not a dry run because the leader knew where to take us - where else, but to the Coors Brewing Company. Our elected new officers are Forrest Poore, President, Bill Nicholls and Mary Weikert, Vice-Presidents, Bob Douglas, Secretary, John Pettenger, Treasurer, and Verne Philips became Editor.

Los Angeles, Ca. will be the site of our 10th reunion in September, 1985. The host there will be Allen Chealander. Let's all get together and give our officers and host our full support and make the 10th reunion our biggest and best. It will be 40 years since the group left Great Ashfield. Many members have not attended a reunion nor have they seen their buddies, so please make a special effort to attend this reunion in L.A. Mary and I will see you there.



# LOOKING BACK TO GREAT ASHFIELD

Jerry and Vera Mudge were in Europe last year and timed their visit to be at Great Ashfield on September 16 to have tea with other 385th people and with English friends. Jerry took several photographs which he has sent us. We are printing five this issue which show John and Lucy Ellis, great friends of the 385th, and some buildings you will recall from days when they looked a bit more sturdy.



OU buildings moved to a. nunuiay. Tec. was served inside.

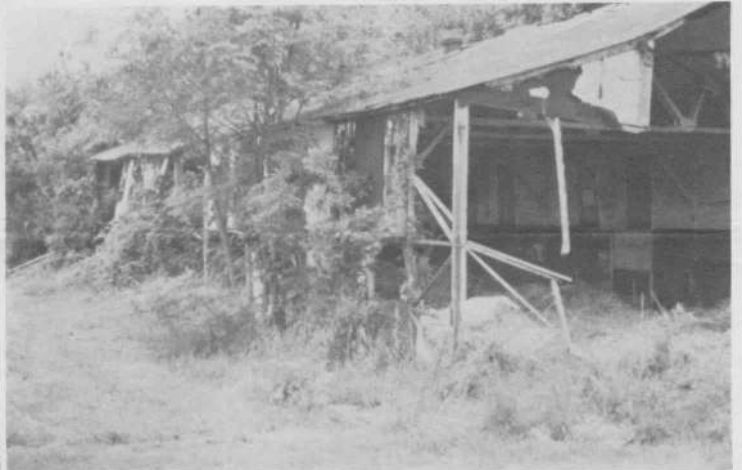


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MSES

John and Luey BUis ofa Fox Fatm, WeZheAsden



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The old bath house. Without the M/ofi it is ptwbabty even eootes. than it was in 1943.

August 5, 1984

C. Arthur Austin  
(aka) Charles A. Austir  
16 Padanaram Ave.  
Danbury, Ct. 06811

385th B.G.M.A.  
Verne Phillips, Editor  
P.O. Drawer 5970  
Austin, Texas 78763

Gentlemen:

I have been receiving the newsletter for about two years - reading them has been very interesting to me.

Since I have had these several photos of B-17's I thought someone somewhere might be interested - so I've packed them up after having them enlarged. Surely someone out there might like to see them.

My connection with the 385th is through the 549th Squadron - stationed at Great Ashfield at Elmswell from June '43 to June '45. In charge of the telephone switchboard for the full 385th group, I worked under Lt. Phillips of Group Headquarters.

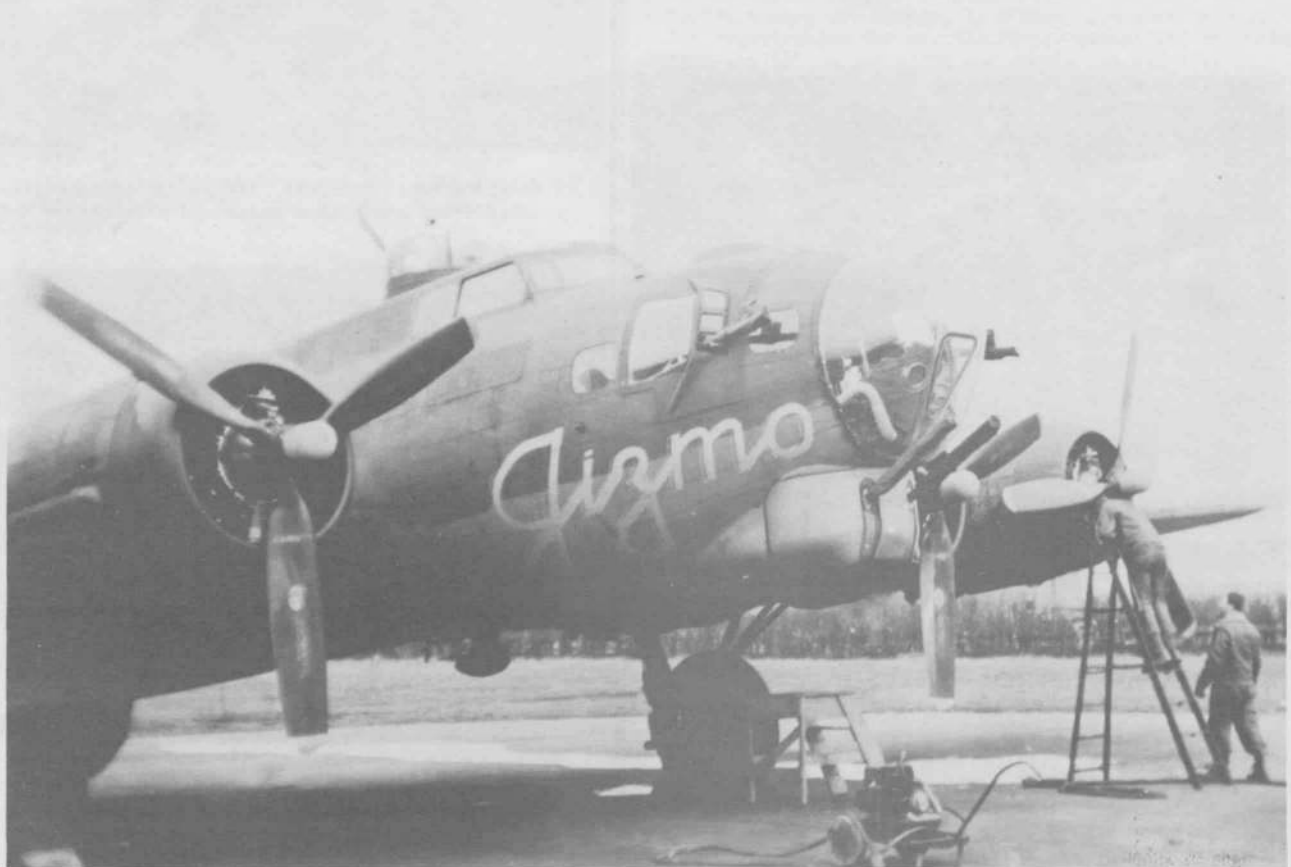
My address is above for anyone that would like to contact me for copies of the pictures, or whatever else.

Very truly yours,



C. Arthur Austin

C. ARTHUR AUSTIN  
16 PADANARAM AVE.  
DANBURY, CT 06810



# Flying Fortress crew's reunion

*Ed. Note: The 385th's Nett Duett writes some interesting stories for upstate New York papers. Recently, he told the story of the reunion of the crew of the "Leading Lady" and shares it with us.*



CREW OF THE "LEADING LADY" - 550th Squadron, 385th Group at their reunion last fall in Tennessee. Left to right: Marj and Eugene Vaadi (pilot); Nan Duell, Jino DiFonzio, (ball gunner); Pauline Giltz, Neil Duell (nose gunner); Margaret Conway, Art Giltz (radio operator); Jesse Brown, (co-pilot); Tom Conway (navigator); and Marion Brown.



There are only six of the original nine left as far as we know, the tail gunner, Philip Penchi died in 1982 and the top turret gunner and engineer, Ray Anthony passed away on March 10, 1984, and the waist gunner Burke Marshall has completely disappeared. The crew that remains are all from the ball turret forward.

We came from all corners of the U.S. and finally met at Gatlinburg, Tenn. where the co-pilot Jesse Brown and his wife Marion have a summer camp, they live at Gulf Breeze, Fla. and it was only due to their efforts that we got together at all.

The ball or belly turret gunner Jino DiFonzio came from Pinion Hills, Calif. Jino is a retired engineer, Art Giltz and his wife Pauline flew down from Pennsylvania. Art is now a retired Air Force Major and a commercial pilot, they came down in his company's Cessna 310.

The pilot Eugene Vaadi is also a retired Air Force Major and flies a Cessna 414 for a company in Florida. He and his wife Marj also landed their company plane at a small airport just outside Gatlinburg, the navigator Tom Conway and his wife Margaret came down from Cleveland, Ohio where Tom has an air conditioning company, and Nan and I also landed at Knoxville on Friday, my position on the ship was way out in front, I fired the twin nose guns and dropped the bombs.

Our hosts Jesse and Marion had arrived a few days before from Florida to get ready for the screaming horde, as Gene so aptly put it. Jesse had operated control towers and flew for the FAA after the service and now he also was retired.

Jesse and Marion's camp, as they referred to it, was our headquarters and base of operations. Camp is a misnomer, this was a very beautiful chalet type home set very picturesque on the side of one of the Smokey Mountains.

As usual the men got together in the game room and lounge which was in the basement while the women

got acquainted on the first floor and in the kitchen.

Everyone seemed to be holding up real well except as I remarked some of them were looking a little older than the last time I had seen them. But I didn't have much room to talk as I was the oldest one of the crew, I was flying combat at 25, sort of unusual at the time.

The last time I'd seen Jino was in 1959 and Jesse and Tom was at the end of the Korean War when a few of us got together to welcome Jean back after over two years in a North Korean prison camp. He had been shot down again in that war in a B-29. I had seen Art and Jean and Tony every year or so since that time. Art had not seen Jino since 1945 when they were both leaving a German prison camp. I had talked with Ray or Tony as we called him on the phone on March 2 from Seagul, Pa. We had been working on a crew reunion then and Tony had a heart attack eight days later and passed away.

March 2 is a red letter date for this crew as that is the day our plane the "Leading Lady" came out second best after battling German fighters at 25000 feet over Leipzig, Germany and went down in flames. It was rather miraculous for all of us to successfully clear the plane before it blew up shortly after it started to burn.

We did a lot of reminiscing as I guess all service men do. The women said they never saw men talk so much but we had 40 years to catch up on.

It is amazing how clearly some incidents are remembered. These were not necessarily hairraising things that happened in the air either, very often they were humorous ones on the ground such as one Jesse remembered when we were down at a small field in France getting major flack damage repaired and fuel enough to get back to Great Ashfield, England. The group was getting ready for the return trip and we were riding out to the hardstands in G.I. trucks. The trucks were plodding along through the mud and

the fellows were dropping off as they reached their respective ships, just before we got to our ship, the truck hit a hard runway and speeded up. I jumped out anyway, rolling over several times before I finally came to a stop a short way from the crew. I stood up and pulled a bottle of champagne out of my jacket and held it up, still intact. They got a big kick out of it.

Many of the details that happened when we had the mid air collision between two 17s less than 100 yards in front of us the day before we were shot down and the next day when Tony blew a German fighter apart that got too close while we were burning and partially out of control over Leipzig.

We did a lot of sight seeing in the Great Smokeys, went up a couple mountains, had some excellent meals, plus a cook out, where some of the boys demonstrated their culinary arts. The women did a thorough job on the shops of Gatlinburg, and there were plenty of them as Gatlinburg is very much a tourist oriented town.

We enjoyed one another's company until Sunday noon when we broke up at the airport. Tom's wife Margaret flew back to Sarasota with Gene and Marj Vaadi, Tom was driving down later, Nan and I came back north with Art and Pauline in the Cessna 310. Tom drove back to Cleveland and Jino returned to Calif, by the way of Chicago.

This long overdue reunion was very meaningful to all of us but we did agree, it won't be so long to the next one. In fact at least three of us will be at the 385th Bomb. Gp Memorial reunion in Los Angeles this Sept. I was the only one of the crew that went to the one two years ago in Colorado Springs but this one coming up I will have some of my own crew there. So I'm really looking forward to this one.

So, after Sept. I'll have the story of a lot of combat crews that came back, and a bunch of swell guys on the ground that were the reason they did.

*Ed-ctoV-d note: In addition to these photographs shown here of BZue Champagne., Gizmo, and Junior, Arthur Austin also sent photographs of Ohio Air Force, Fickle Finger o& T, Mission Bette, Sky Goddess, and too others o& Blue Champagne.*