

# HARDLIFE HERALD

Newsletter of the 385th Bombardment Group  
Association



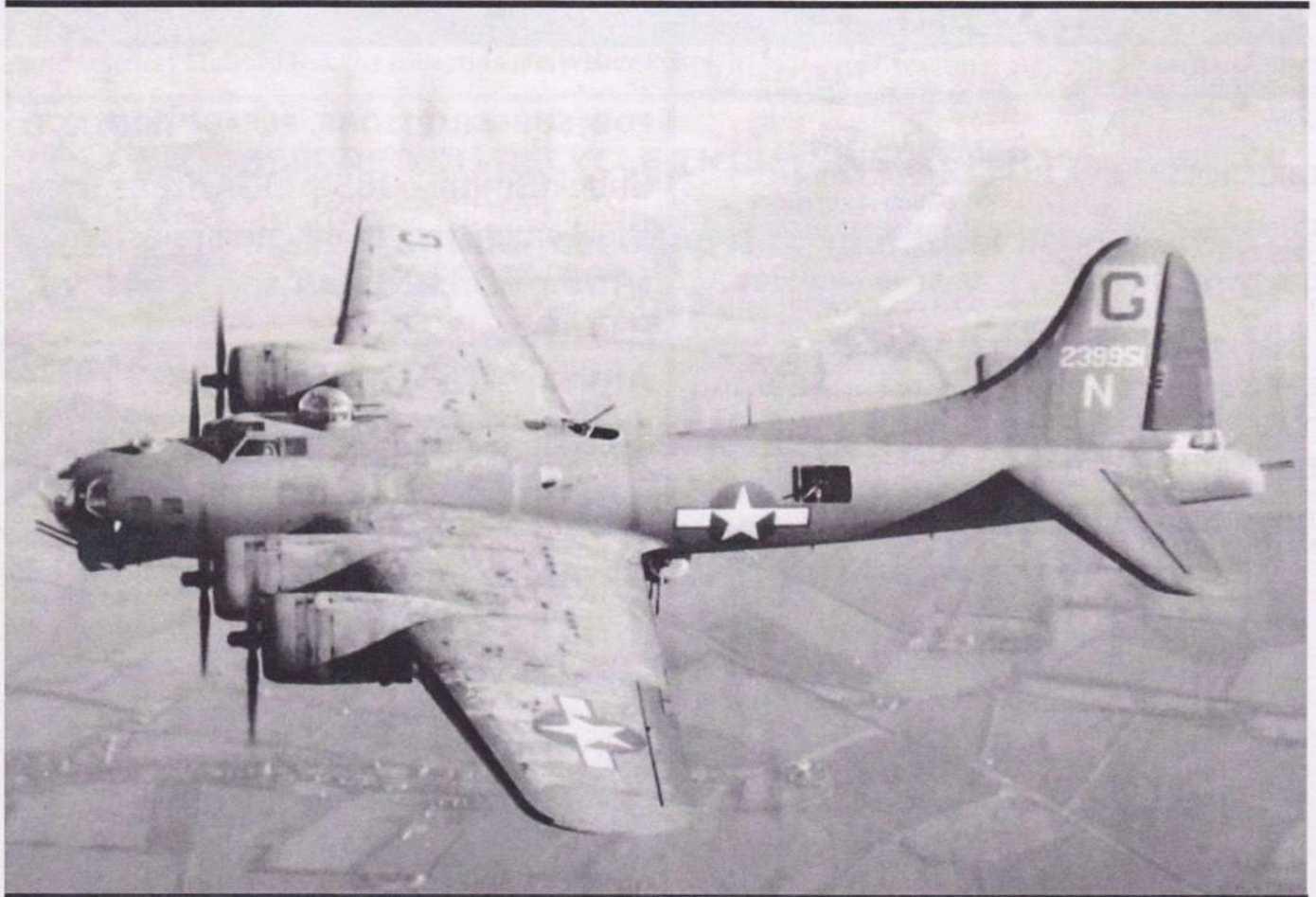
1942 - 1945 Great Ashfield - Suffolk, England Station 155 - The Mighty Eighth

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Volumee 36 - *Number* 1

APRIL 2019

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**385th BGA REUNION - ST. LOUIS, MO - OCTOBER 2019**

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# HARDLIFE HERALD

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**Front Cover:** 42-39951 "In the Mood"  
**Back Cover:** Unidentified 385th circa 1945

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## A CLOSE CALL

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42-107035 narrowly escaped destruction from one of seven 500 pound bombs a German JU 88 dropped on Great Ashfield the afternoon of May 23,1944. Only 1 bomb met its mark destroying hanger No. 1 containing "Powerful Katrinka" (42-31928).

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### Letter from the Editor

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Last issue, I gave a special thanks to Mrs. Doris Siederer. It saddens me to write that she joined her late husband last November. It was an pleasure to be able to speak with her about her husband's time in the 385th and she shared some wonderful photos that I had posted in a previous newsletter. Her recent help with sending me names of 548th ground crew members (they held their own separate reunions locally) is invaluable and because of her I have connected with more 385th families.

Thank you, Doris.

And thank you all who have reached out, helped add to, and keep the 385th memories alive. I am proud to have met so many of you over the years. Some no longer grace this existance (or as the late Ted Souza would say "Well, I'm still on this side of the grass.") and many still do. I take neither for granted.

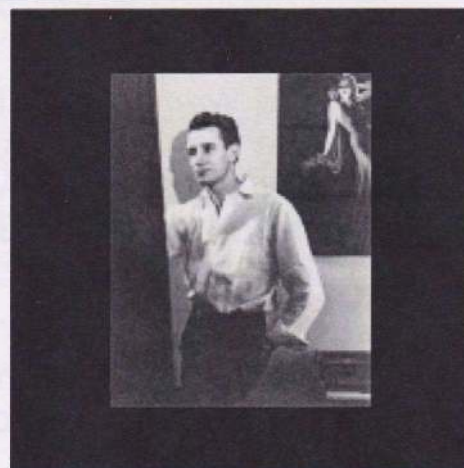
God Bless You All-  
-Charles Lundsberg



## Featured Pin-Up Artist - Billy De Vorss (1908-1985)

Billy De Vorss created lush and vibrant pinups, often inspired by New York's theatres and nightclubs.

Billy De Vorss was entirely self-taught and sold his first three published pinups to the Louis F Dow Calendar Company in St Paul c.1933 ... until then he had been working as a teller in a bank in St Joseph, Missouri. There he had met the stunning woman, Glenna, who became his wife and first official model.



Encouraged to develop his talent by Gene Sayles, the manager of Brown & Bigelow's Kansas City branch office, De Vorss soon received his first commission from the company. To celebrate, De Vorss and his wife moved to New York and set up a penthouse studio in the Beaux Arts Building, at Eighteen East Tenth Street. Signing up with the, prestigious American Artists group, De Vorss spent the next several years working for calendar-publishing houses such as Brown & Bigelow, Joseph C. Hoover, and Louis F. Dow. Most of his pastel originals were large and bore his highly distinctive Art Deco inspired signature.

Covers for Beauty Parade and the King Features Syndicate as well as calendar commissions from the Osborne and Goes companies followed in the early 1940s. In 1949, the artist illustrated a highly successful campaign for Botany Woollen's robes with depictions of handsome men lounging at home with their own De Vorss pinups.

De Vorss used an incredible variety of pastel colours for his work, and he applied them directly onto the board, blending them dry with his fingers. His occasional oil paintings bear the rich, painterly brushstrokes of the Sundblom School. He displayed a fine sense of composition, a flowing, graceful line, and a daring blend of colours. Like Rolf Armstrong, De Vorss always worked from live models for the final painting. He did, however, employ photographs for preliminary stages.

In 1951, Billy and Glenna De Vorss returned to St. Joseph, their first home. After some time there, they settled in Scottsdale, Arizona, where De Vorss died in 1985.

*Billy De Vorss biography borrowed from The Great American Pin-Up by Charles G Martignette & Louis K Meisel.*

# CROSSING THE ATLANTIC OCEAN

**BILL VARNEBOE**

During World War II I was the Navigator on a B-17. Having just completed crew training my Crew was scheduled to fly our B-17 non-stop from Gander, Newfoundland to Ayr, Scotland over the vast, very empty North Atlantic Ocean to join the 8th Army Air Force stationed in England. It was engrossed in bombing Nazi industry and was engaged in heavy combat with the German Luftwaffe.

The B-17 cruised at 150 mph, so this crossing would take many long hours between lift-off and touch down!

We took off just after sunset to take advantage of the night to navigate by the stars. This was long before such modern aids as GPS, even LORAN was just beginning to be developed. I would be totally dependent on celestial navigation to cross the trackless ocean. There were no land or ship positions to use, nor could allied airplanes home-in on what could be a false enemy generated signal. German submarines prowled these waters, and the aircraft maintained strict radio silence.

I had an A10 aerial sextant, a map of the north Atlantic Ocean, all blank, except for the North American and European coasts, with the Latitude and Longitude grid printed on that otherwise big blank sheet...I was issued a small chronometer (clock) set to accurate Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) in England and two books: One, a table of star altitudes (angles ) by latitude for the North Hemisphere stars and two, an Air Almanac for that date. I had a pair of dividers to transfer distances from a scale and a Weems plotter (protractor,) to measure angles on the map. The navigator's position in the B-17 was equipped with the readout of a Flux gate compass for accurate aircraft headings (which way the B-17 was pointing, not going.) Winds aloft often had us flying partially crab-wise, (going in a direction different from the way we were pointing.) It is easy to see this side motion over land but its invisible over water. The Air Force meteorologists had given me their estimated winds over each part of our intended course, but thunderstorms ahead would make them useless, not to be trusted.

Before I could relax, right away, we were confronted with our first obstacle: A massive line of thunderstorms lay directly across our path. We were forced to climb and cruise at 20,000 feet to escape the violent turbulence in the storms; this made wearing oxygen masks a necessity for the entire crew.

Later after letting down past those storms to a more comfortable altitude,

off oxygen, I decided to check our position. Normally a star position location is made using three stars, positioned 120 degrees apart for maximum accuracy, but again fate reared its head: I found that stars in the whole northern sky were invisible due to a vivid display of the Aurora Borealis. Therefore I chose stars only 30 degrees apart to the South, a less accurate technique, for our celestially located position. It was very sloppy. It showed us 100 miles north of our intended course! Since conditions were so abnormal and far from ideal, I decided to do nothing and wait another hour then try another star fix. Alas, this one, although in line with the last one, was likewise fuzzy and showed us now 200 miles north of course! However, I could wait no longer - it was decision time! I must either do nothing and assume those storms had pushed us north or choose to believe my poor messy star fixes and make a huge course correction. I chose the latter and hoped that back on the pre-storm track was the proper course.

The sun soon arose and I was stuck with my decision to move us over 200 miles south, clueless, while we droned on and on over barren, gray, empty ocean. Finally, a joyful sight, the coast of Ireland came in to view — hal-lay-lu-iah, We were exactly on track!! Those sloppy star fixes turned out to be life savers. If we had not made the big course correction from the way we were gong, we would have run out of gas north of Scotland over a landless, frigid North Sea! But after this 12 hour flight, we landed safely in Ayr Scotland, soon to be assigned to an 8th AAF Unit and start flying our combat missions over Germany.



**Bill Varnedoe (Front Row Far Left) with Crew**

# REFLECTIONS ON DAYTON

Ray Fordyce

This was yet another remarkable event, both enlivening and melancholy, honoring those heroes that ensured our freedom endured. With an attendance in the neighborhood of five hundred, it was encouraging to see that not only were second-generations well represented, but even third- and a few fourth-generations.

With a meaningful agenda, including the Premiere of the HBO documentary "The Cold Blue," we had the opportunity to visit with, learn from and salute those aviators and support personnel of *The Greatest Generation*. Our "Rendezvous Dinner" on the second night, shared with the 96<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, was particularly poignant, with the traditional "ringing of the bell" to commemorate those who have flown west.

Barbara Dangleman's emotional response to the bell-ceremony, as she participated in it, reflected not only on the character of those gone, but of hers. (And, BTW, if you ever need advice about how to restore, rebuild and install a small-block Chevy V8, Barbara is your go-to!)

I would be remiss if I did not say that the 385<sup>th</sup> was well represented, with nearly three dozen attendees. Once again, Chuck Smith *completely* outdid himself both in effort and generosity by providing a *truly* open bar in our hospitality suite. (Which really was a "hospitality suite," and by far the most popular venue in the hotel.) And with the sole exception of the Gala Dinner the final night, was seen continuously in Bermuda shorts. In Dayton, Ohio. In October.

Charlie Lundsberg was much in evidence, he of the unsung behind-the-scenes work on our publications and other administrivia, offering sage questions and opinions at our meetings. I also had the great pleasure to meet and get to know Walter Schulte (Sr.) and his effervescent wife, the "nurse errant" (my term). Walter (Jr.) and I had the opportunity to become acquainted as well, to my profit. And again I had the opportunity to chat with Wes Lundsberg, and avail myself of his vast flight experience.

Presiding over all of this was Tom Gagnon, unflappable as always. His dedication to our group, and the direction he both solicits and provides, through the years is an unmistakable value-add.

Dayton itself, with the nearby Wright Patterson AFB and the National Museum of the US Air Force, was long overdue on my "got to visit list." The museum defies description. I spent the better part of a day, and only visited two of the nine(!) exhibit "halls." (I chose well: pre-WW2 and WW2.) When you go, plan on a MINIMUM of two full days, and resign yourself to not seeing everything.

I'm glad I went. I'm glad to be small part of the fabric of this group. I am proud to be, however tangentially, associated with *The Greatest Generation* and (especially) the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group.

Now, if I can just get Barbara Dangleman to come work on my 2008 - one of the first three in the country - smartcar cabriolet...



525  
Edward V.  
Rickenbacker  
Suite



## **S/SGT. LOUIS RESCH CITED FOR COURAGE OVER GERMANY.**

An Eighth AAF Bomber Station, May 12 - The distinguished flying cross has been awarded Staff Sergeant Louis Resch, 23, New Kensington, ball turret gunner of the Eighth AAF Flying Fortress "Aimless Wonder." for "courage and extraordinary achievement" while defending his ship during numerous bombing attacks upon military and industrial objectives in Germany and Nazi-held countries.

In addition to the DFC, the sergeant also has received the air medal with three oak leaf clusters since beginning active combat last November. He is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Fred H. Reed, 209 Freeport Road, New Kensington. Prior to entering the AAF in September 1942, he was employed by Aluminum Company of America.

After finishing army air mechanics school at Gulfport, Miss, and the specialist school at the North American Aircraft plant at Inglewood, Calif., he volunteered for aerial gunnery and was sent to Tyndal Field, Fla. for training. Upon receiving his wings in June, 1943, he joined a flying crew for several months of operational training.

Since beginning his operations he has flown through some of Hitler's most intense "flak fields" to bomb important war production and transportation centers and has traded bullets with the best and most daring Luftwaffe fighters. On his first trip over an enemy target, his bomber was riddled with fragments of bursting anti-aircraft shells receiving a total of 58 holes without injury to any of the 10-man crew.

### **Warnemunde**

From the height at which the bombs are dropped it is difficult for the flyers to determine the extent of the damage done to a target, but in describing what he saw after the bombs hit the airplane body parts factories at Warnemunde, Sgt. Resch said, "My squadron led the formation that day, and I saw our bombs land squarely in the midst of the factory area. It couldn't help but have been a good job. The target lay between the town and the water and I didn't see a bomb explode either in the city or the water. The flak they sent up was intense, but none of it hit my ship. No fighters bothered us, either."

### **Munster**

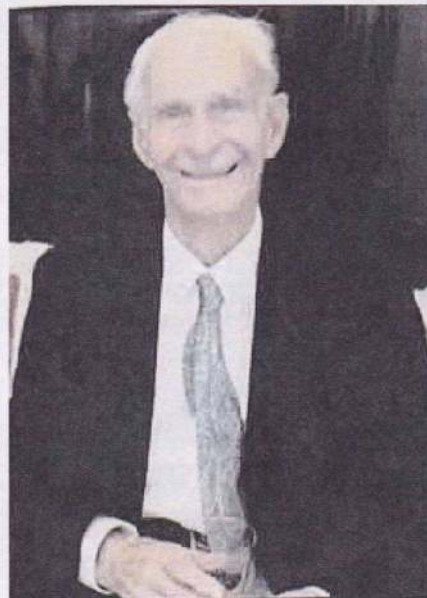
"I know our bombs hit our objective when we went to Munster. It was a clear day and I could see explosions all through the target area. I didn't see any German fighters, but I had a close call from the flak. A chunk of it smashed against the door of the ball turret I lean against. Fortunately the metal door stopped it."

"On my first trip to Berlin we were after the Erkner ball bearing factory and the Nazi fighters were after us, They did not attack my bomber, but I saw them knock down eight other B-17s in five minutes. The heavy anti-aircraft fire helped them get the bombers. At the same time our Forts were getting their share of the Germans and also pounding the factories below."

"The longest aerial battle I have been in lasted for two hours. We were attacked by at least 20 Junkers and Messerschmitts that made pass after pass at us. The sky was full of bursting 20-mm shells, but they didn't scratch us or keep us from dropping our bombs."

### Regensburg

Sgt. Resch has taken part in the bombing attacks upon the Messerschmitt factories at Regensburg; the rail transportation centers of Munster and Frankfurt; the warplane parts factories of Brunswick; the U-boat pens and sock installations of Bremen; and the Focke Wulf plants in Paris.



**Louis Resch then (top left) and now (top right)**

**Louis Resch served with Bartley Crew (bottom)**



# "There I Was..." The Cartoons of Bob Stevens

IN WWJT, STORIES OF BOMBERS WANIN'  
TO6CTUEG W0as LEOENP...



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ED WHOSE CHUTE WOULD NY OPEN. AT  
5000' HE MET A <SUY COMIN' £/A\*/





Photo courtesy Howard R. Lenz collection c/o Walter Pence, Jr.



**BEFORE YOU RECYCLE THIS NEWSLETTER...**

**Please consider donating it to your local School, VFW,  
or American Legion.**



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Volume 35 - Number 2 SEPTEMBER 2018



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Previous issue pictured at left

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