

BACK TO THE SACK
OHIO AIR FORCE
SKY GODDESS
HONEY TONE SAL
HESITATIN' HUSSY
GROUND HOG
BIG GAS BIRD
THOROBRED

HIT PARADE JR
RAUNCHY WOLF
LIBERTY BELLE
ANGELS SISTER
GREMLIN BUGGY II

THE BLACKJACKER
GOLDEN GOOSE
WAR HORSE
"HAYRAG" ANNIE
HUSTLIN' HUSSY
LIL AUDREY

THUNDERBIRD
PICCADILLY QUEEN
YANK
STARS AND STRIPES
DORSAL QUEEN
HARES BREATH
SILY FOX
MR. SMITH
SUGAR JO

OFF SPRING
WANDERING DUCHESS
BLUE CHAMPAGNE
GELDING
PREGNANT PORTIA
ALEKANDER'S RAGTIME BAND
LONESOME POLECAT

CURLY'S KIDS
MARY ELLEN
DRAGON LADY
WINNIE THE POOH
WAR WEARY
MARY FAT

HARD LIFE



HERALD

SKY CHIEF
MR. LUCKY
BARBARA B
LACK BUNNY
SOUTHERN BELLE
MARY ELLEN III
HELLS BELLS
PRINCESS VAL

PERRY'S PIRATES
GIZMO
MADAME SHOO SHOO
PAT PENDING
POSSIBLE STRAIGHT
HOMESICK ANGEL
BIG STINKY
HOT CHOCOLATE
VIBRANT VIRGIN
RAGGEDY ANNE
STORK CLUB
LADY ANN
FICKLE FINGER OF ?

SLO JO
ROGER THE DODGER
MICKY
HALF AND HALF
MICKY II
SLEEPYTIME GAL
LATEST RUMOR
MAIDEN AMERICA
MISSION BELLE
OL' RUM DUM
MAC'S HACK
CRASH WAGON III
RELUCIANT LADY

TARGET FOR TONIGHT
JUNIOR
OL' DOODLE BUG
SWEET CHARIOT
SWINGING DOOR
MISSISSIPPI MISS
SATAN'S MATE
SLICK CHICK
KITTY'S REVENGE

PISTOL PACKIN MAMA
MIS-FORTUNE
SHACK N LADY

RAGGED BUT RIGHT
IMPATIENT VIRGIN
FOOLISH VIRGIN
RAGGED BUT RIGHT
RUBY'S RAIDERS
LULU BELLE
THE JOKER
AIN'T MISBEHAVIN'



NEWSLETTER OF THE 385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION



VOL. XXII. NO. 4

COMBAT UNITS

HQ. SQUADRON
548th BOMB SQ.
549th BOMB SQ.
550th BOMB SQ.
551st BOMB SQ.

Editor: Ed Stern
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AUGUST 1995

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PREZ SEZ:

September 2nd and the 385th BGMA Reunion are just around the corner. I have obtained 40 tickets to the football game and our host George has a bus engaged. He tells me he has sold 32 - so if you want to go, tell George.

On the 7th of June, the 8th Air Force Historical Society presented Ephrata, Washington Dignitaries, including the Mayor, with a plaque thanking them for their efforts to aid and assist Airmen from the many bomb groups that trained there, including the 385th.

I have received many letters and phone calls telling me how much they liked the Schweinfurt lithograph. Those of you who wish a copy please send me \$125.00.

Omaha will be exciting - will see you in Nebraskaland.

God Bless,
Bob and Jean

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

CHAPLAIN

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OMAHA REUNION

September 27, 28, 29, 30, Oct. 1, 1995

CHAPLAIN Str:

Hello from Bellevue Washington,

The other day Geri, my wife of 52 years, said to me "you walk like an old man, what's wrong?" Can you imagine, me, a man who has lived only 74 years walking like an old man. Terrible!! But I guess it can happen. No, I guess it has happened. the years have passed so quickly it is hard to comprehend that I am an old man. Still the truly old are those 15 years my seniors.

Ed Stem and I are comparing names that will be read during the "Memorial Service" at Omaha. Each time we, the 385th Bombardment Group meet, the list gets longer. In 1997 I know it will be longer but as Ed wrote to me 'no improvement can be expected! Just as long as we are still around to make the list and read them.'

But who knows when we'll be on the lists ourselves. All we can do is live life the best we can, enjoy what we have, ask God to guide us and laugh at "bloopers" we commit.

God is blessing Geri and I each day. I pray you are experiencing the same.

See you all in Omaha

Jim Vance



K. Lynn White	May 1995
Larry Russell	May 1995
Harold (Gunner) Tenneson	April 1995
Henry C. Lohff	April 1995
Robert W. Pellman	July 1995
Frank Johnson	July 1995
Jack Pullio	June 1995
Clarence Strout	March 1995
Frank Johnson	July 1995
Oliver Y. Harris	May 1995

JACK PULLIO

Born 7-17-23

Died 6-26-95

Native Californian and long time resident of Baldwin Park.

Member of the 8th Army Air Corp. During WWII, in the 385th bombardment Group, and the 550th Bomb Squad, he served in the ETO and was a lifetime member of the VFW. He completed 55 missions during his tour of duty.

Jack took an interest in the youth of Baldwin Park. He was a member of the Little, Pony, and Colt Baseball Leagues. In the 60's he was a San Gabriel Valley Umpire.

In his free time he enjoyed hunting and fishing. In his later years he became an avid bowler, bowling up to three times a week.

Jack is survived by his wife of 50 years, June, and three children, two daughters, Toni Weissert of Alta Loma, CA, Monica Reeves of Houston, TX, and one son, Roque Pullio of Grosbeck, TX, six grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Dear Ed,

Yesterday I received the enclosed death notice of Ray Baer. Perhaps you have also received notice. Ray was the Sgt. who volunteered to go to the U.S.S.R. from the 385th car pool in Great Ashfield just after the end of WWII. Charles had refused an order to select a man because it was, in Charles' opinion, a questionable, unnecessary, and dangerous assignment.

When, in 1991, Charles found out that Ray lived through his assignment in the Ukraine, Charles was thankful and elated. For 47 years Charles had wondered about Ray. Charles and Ray talked for hours at the Fargo Reunion.

Son, Chuck, treated me with a wonderful Mother's Day surprise; he gave me a ride on "Aluminum Overcast", the restored WWII B-17 that came again to the Atlanta area. The ride was a tonic for my soul.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Charles C. Smith
1025 Oakhaven Drive
Roswell, Georgia 30075

Raymond E. Baer

Raymond E. Baer, 75, of Fenton, died Tuesday, April 18, 1995, after a brief illness at Integrated Health Services in Valley Park. Visitation was at the Schrader Funeral Home in Ballwin, Thursday, April 20, where the Freedom Lodge #636 held their Masonic service that evening. Funeral service was held at the funeral home Friday, April 21 with Rev. Dr. Larry Davis of Third Baptist Church of St. Louis officiating. Burial was in the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis.

He was born November 24, 1919 in St. Louis, son of Elmer and Sarita Aberson Baer. He and Nina W. Houston were married April 16, 1949 in St. Louis. She preceded

him in death on March 3, 1995

He was a member of the Third Baptist Church in St. Louis and a member of the Freedom Lodge #636 in St. Louis. He was a veteran of World War II and a member of the 385th B.G.M.'A. He was employed by the National Lead Company in St. Louis until his retirement in 1982. After retiring from National Lead, worked for Absorbent Cotton Company of Valley Park until 1992.

Survivors include his brothers-in-law, Allen Houston, Douglas Houston and families of Marble Hill; Ray Houston of Mindemines and several nieces and nephews.

In addition to his wife, he was preceded in death by his parents and his brother.

Dear Mr. Stern:

I am sorry to tell you that Lynn is gone.

He had such a variety of ailments. He suffered from arthritis in his upper and lower back and knees. He had been having angina attacks and was hospitalized 3 times in February and March. April 14th he suffered a bad heart attack and everything seemed to shut down. April 21st, we had to let him go.

Our son, Lt. Col. John Buckingham, had just taken his squadron to Turkey to protect the Iraqi "no fly" zone. I knew Lynn would want him to stay and complete the mission. He's home now, and our daughter from Missouri is here.

Lynn was a true patriot in the old fashioned sense of the word. He could never stand to hear "TAPS" - but we hope he'll hear it when it's played for him.

Sincerely,

Kay White
8530 S 114th St.
Seattle, WA 98178-3322

P.S. Lynn really enjoyed all the news. We really thought we'd be at the next reunion.

K. Lynn White

K. Lynn White, 75, Seattle, Wash., a former Joplin resident, died Friday, April 21, at Valley Medical Center, Seattle, after a short illness.

Mr. White was born March 11, 1920, in Joplin. He was employed by Thornhill-Dillon Mortuary while attending Joplin High School and the former Joplin Junior College. He graduated from William Institute of Mortuary Science at Kansas City.



He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps as an aerial photographer with the 385th bomb group in England. He was shot down over Berlin on Oct. 6, 1944, and served as a prisoner of war in Stalag-Luft IV. He wrote a book about his experiences during the war.

To the 385th BGMA,

Enclosed, you will find an obituary of our beloved Larry who was an active member of the 385th.

Our father was so proud of this squadron. We were fortunate to hear about the bravery and dedication of the 385th during this horrific war.


We sent the enclosed so that he could be mentioned in the Hardlife Herald. We know he would appreciate it.

Sincerely,

The Russell Family

EDITOR'S NOTE: Larry was host for our Reunion in Kansas City.

LAWRENCE R. RUSSELL, and past member of the board of directors of the Jewish Community R. Center. He was a volunteer at St. Joseph Russell, 71, Kansas Health Center's Neurological Department City, MO, passed away Tuesday, May 30, 1995, at Overland Park Regional Medical Center. Funeral services will be 10 a.m. Thursday, June 1, at Temple B'nai B'rith Group Memorial Association. He was also a member of the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association. He was born in the University of Utah Bronx, NY and came to Kansas City from Medical Center, c/o Dr. K. C. Wong, there in 1947. He is survived by his wife, Terry S. Goldberg, Leawood, KS, Barbara J. Russell, Port Washington, NY and Irene Ellen R. Rogers, Molokai, HI; sister, Renee Lerner, Port St. Lucie, FL, and grandchildren Leigh Michelle and Lauren Paige Goldberg and Blakely Russell Kay. (Arrangements: Louis Memorial Chapel member of Congregation B'nai Jehudah)



Dear Ed,

A short note to inform you of the death of my tail gunner Robert W. Pellman. Robert was the only survivor of an aircraft lost on the Zwickau raid of 12 May, 1944. He was picked up by the Germans and made a prisoner.

As the Vice President of the Mass. Chapter of the Eighth AF Historical Society, my interest in our activities continues to intrigue me. My continued correspondence with Les and Peg Gordon is a source of information I look to in anticipation.

I will be going to the National reunion in St. Louis, MO and then on to Omaha both in September.

Looking forward to seeing friends met on our trip to England, 1988, Fargo & Spokane.

The additional information gathered since our last reunion will be in my album.

Sincerely,

Albert E. Audeble, L.M.
279 Washington St.
Woburn, MA 01801-2738

Dear Members of the 385th:

I noted in the April issue that Earl Cole had written to you about the death of my husband, Ron Nolan. As I was going through some papers in his office I found a stack of the "Hardlife Herald", he had saved every issue since becoming an honorary member of the 385th. He was so proud of this membership and had been looking forward to Omaha. The two reunions in England, which he filmed, were some of the most memorable times of his exciting and colorful life. Ron loved being with the great people of the 385th. Thank you for adding this pleasure to his life.

Sincerely,

Marv Nolan



ATTENTION - FIRST TIME READERS

Secretary George Hruska obtained the list of 385th member; who belong to the 8th Air Force Historical Society. In cross-checking that list against our membership list, he found almost 100 who do not belong to our 385th Bomb Group Memorial Ass'n.

We're sending each of you the August issue of our Hardlife Herald. It comes out 6 times a year. We'd like to have you as

members! Fill out the membership application, send it along with \$ 10.00 dues to John Pettenger, Box 117, Laurel, FL 34272-0117.

We have some back copies of the Hardlife Herald - if you're interested, write Editor Ed Stern. We'll send them to you as long as we have any left-first come, first served. If you want to send a couple of bucks to cover mailing costs, fine.

And try to get to the Omaha Reunion!! Great reminiscing.

385th BGMAJM'PLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Please Print

LAST NAME, First, MI.

Spouse's Name

Street or P.O. Box #

Telephone Number

City, State, & Zip Code

Squadron or Support Unit

The annual dues are Eight Dollars (\$8.00)
Life-time memberships are one payment of \$100.00
Make out check to "385th BGMA" and mail to:
John F. Pettenger, Treas.
Box 117
Laurel, FL 335"5

POW Capture Data
Date
Place
Stalag Unit

Life-time memberships are used to perpetuate the memorial at All Saints Church in Great Ashfield, Suffolk County, England.

BULLETIN BOARD

HELP! HELP! HELP!

Anyone know the whereabouts of John J. Desmond, who was a waist gunner in the 551st? He was from San Francisco. Send any information to James Bond, 507 W. Queens St., Edenton, NC 27932-1751

ANOTHER 50TH COMMEMORATION

The Washington DC Commemoration Ceremony of the 50th Anniversary of VJ Day will be Saturday, September 2 at 10:00 AM at Summerall Field, Ft. Myer, VA. Ceremonial troops from the 5 military service branches will parade before WW2 veterans, family members, and guests. Vice President Gore will deliver a major address. Call Yeoman Emmett Adams (703-604-0820 or 0824 for tickets. Call between 4 and 6 PM. Tickets are needed for admittance.

100TH BOMB GROUP RESTAURANT

Heard from Bob Knight that there's a restaurant in the Cleveland area that's a "must visit" for all - set up like their Base in England in every respect. And it's one of Cleveland's best eating places. Near the airport - 20000 Brookpark Road. Off Highway 480.

COURAGE AND AIR WARFARE

Courage and Air Warfare - a historical study devoted to the subject of the human element in air warfare is now available. The author, Col. Mark Wells sent questionnaires to many of our members, and the responses are included in the study. Tom Hair, one of our members who responded to the questionnaire, will have the book at our Omaha Reunion.

It analyzes the psychological and physiological stresses endured by Combat crews and individual airmen, morale, whether lack of moral fibre was a problem, effects of leadership, recruitment policies - the first detailed study in the history of air warfare. Col. Wells teaches at the Air Academy at Colorado Springs. •

Write International Specialized Book Services, 5804 NE Hassalo St, Portland, OR. 97213-3644 for details on the availability.

MEMORIES OF A MIRACLE

This book, commemorating the Manna and Chowhound food drops to the Dutch, full of memories and illustrations, is available through Bob Silver, 4510 SW 62nd Ave, Miami, FL 33155. Send him \$25.00 - he'll refund any amount over the actual cost and mailing. Bob volunteered to distribute this book in the USA.

EX GUNNERS

The Air Force Gunners Association is looking for Enlisted Aerial Gunners who served in the USAAF on any type of Bomber as a Gunner - including radio operators and Flight Engineers, contact Jay E. Ingle, 35469 Colossians Way, Shingletown, CA 96088. ...

BULLETIN BOARD

COMMEMORATIVE CERAMIC ITEMS AVAILABLE

We've received a very attractive brochure from Thomas Tiles, 2572 Arboretum Circle, Sarasota, FL 34232, listing B-17 coffee mugs, WW2 50th Anniversary Plaques, Mighty Eighth Plaques, Medallions and more. For a copy, write them. Prices run from \$7.50 to \$22.50.

CONFEDERATE AIR FORCE AIRSHOW 95

Anyone in the area who is not planning on our Omaha Reunion may be interested in the Confederate Air Force AIRSHO September 30 and October 1, 1995 at Midland Texas. For more information, write them at Midland International Airport, Midland, Tex 79711 or call 915-563-1000.

WORTH READING

Charles W. McCauley, pilot of Mac's Hack, has written his life's story, titled "The Three Trees". It's really a wonderful story of growing up on a farm in Kansas during the dirty thirties - things so tough that he was only able to go to 1 year of high school because his help was needed on the farm. From there to Flight Leader and Captain, graduation from Colleger after th War - a wonderful story. days, 50 pages of cadet training, 60 pages of 385th experiences, and 10 pages for the rest of his career. Worth reading - a "different look". We asked if he had any extra copies - has a few - send \$20.00 for a copy - 252 Maple Ave, Timberville, VA 22853.

AIR FARE DISCOUNTS

Who knows-- they have so many!! Ask for a Senior Citizen discount after you "make your best deal". Maybe there's more.

PLANNING A TRIP TO NEW YORK CITY FOR VETERANS DAY WEEKEND?

There'll be a 50th Anniversary celebration of the end of WW2 November 10, 11, 12 in NYC. If you're interested in information on packaged tours, write Canterbury Tours, 11 W. Main Street, Pawling, NY 12564.

YANKEE AIR MUSEUM RESTORED B-17

We've learned from Bill Miller that the "Yankee Air Force" at Willom Run Airport (Box 509) Belleville, MI (48112) has spent 9 years and around 150,000 hours restoring a B-17G. It's expected to fly in early July. call them at 313-483-4030 for more information - and send them a few bucks if you can spare them. A costly operation!

RUPTURED DUCK PINS AVAILABLE

Anybody want to replace their Ruptured Duck as a memento? They're available at no charge - write Air Force Reference Branch, National Personnel Records Ctr, St. Louis, MO 63132. (Editor's note: There must be a more important use of whatever THIS costs!)

EDITOR'S NOTE: More about the attractions of Tucson from Ken Laffoon.

THE 390TH MEMORIAL MUSEUM

Equipped with B-17 aircraft, the "Flying Fortress" the 390th Bombardment Group (H) flew 301 combat missions out of England during World War II. On October 1943 the Group was credited with shooting down 62 enemy fighters. That was the highest kill rate ever achieved by any bomber or fighter group, in a single day, in the European Theater of Operations (ETO). During its operation in the ETO over 300 B-17 aircraft were assigned to the group. On VE Day there were 75 on hand, including 11 "War Wearies". The Group used up more than 200 Flying Fortresses - only 15 of the original 35 combat crews finished their tours of operations - the others were missing in action.

The 390th Memorial Museum is located in Tucson, Arizona on the grounds of the third largest air museum in the United States - the Pima Air and Space Museum, the 390th Museum contains the beautifully restored B-17G ("I'll Be Around"), a General James H. Doolittle display, an 11 x 23 foot mural of "Top Cover for the J Group" (probably the most recognized picture of WWII), an Honor Wall, a Gallery of Crews, art and aircraft models, and many items of memorabilia and artifacts. The Joseph A. Moller Library, in the Museum, contains over 79,000 pages of 390th Combat history, over 9,000 photographs and is a research center for the Air Campaign of Central Europe.

AN EDITOR'S THOUGHTS ON 50TH ANNIVERSARIES

We've seen our share of 50th Anniversaries lately-founding of the 8th AF in England, our 385th start-up in Spokane, D-Day, VE Day, VJ Day, even the "day we dropped the Bomb Day". But how about the personal anniversary memories for each of us?

Combat crews with your memories of terrible missions, of the day you were shot down, of the day you were liberated-indelible personal anniversaries.

We of the ground echelon have anniversaries, too-that troop train ride to Camp Kilmer, the 4th of July turkey we ate on the Queen Elizabeth—that first sight of Ireland's greenery-the comparative safety of Grenoch.

And the sight of the Elizabeth in the harbor waiting to take us home after 2 years and a few months. And how about that early-morning look at the statue of Liberty-and even the first breakfast on the Elizabeth (honey dew melon, fresh grapefruit, real milk, pancakes without a powdered egg taste). Then our first call home after we'd eaten a steak dinner and washed it down with a chocolate malt.

The nervous anticipation as we looked forward to "the girl we left behind." Would it be the same? Had our letters and our longing kept the flame alive in her as it had in us? Would the baby we hadn't yet seen make a difference? We knew WE hadn't changed-but? And the wonderful feeling as we threw our arms around each other and found that it hadn't changed at all except to get better.

Fond memories of all those anniversaries-and of the years since-happy times, sad times, successes, failures, good decisions, bad decisions. And while remembering all those wonderful men who didn't make it, the realization of how fortunate, how blessed we survivors have been. Let's all once again count our blessing and be thankful for the memories.



Ed Stern in 1944



Ed after surviving 51 more years in North Dakota

EDITOR'S NOTE: Here's another chapter from Truman Smith's "The Wrong Stuff". Stories like this make this editor's job easy-and meaningful.

CHAPTER 5

How lucky could I get? Just two years before, I had saved my lunch money by getting free meals for working in the high school cafeteria so I could pay for flying lessons. But in the meantime the Air Force had taught me to fly and provided a four engine bomber to practice with. Using 200 gallons of fuel an hour, at thirty-five cents a gallon-WOW! That was more than I made in a WEEK as a Second Lieutenant. It was great. I could have never afforded to buy such training. Of course, there was that one problem of the Luftwaffe trying to interrupt my career.

MISSION #6: (BERLIN) MAGDEBURG, GERMANY, 29 APRIL 1944, 8:20

It was navigational error. Ears could not be blamed, because he was not on the mission. None of our crew went on this mission except me. For some reason I had been selected to fly copilot with Captain Vance and, what started out to be routine, turned out to be THE WORST DAY OF MY LIFE!

When possible a "Spare" ship or two were assigned to form up with our Group in case someone had to abort before departing England. And sure enough, after 30 ships took off two aborted just as we headed for Germany. So we filled into the tail end of the High Squadron.

Three Squadrons made a Group; Four Groups made a Wing; Four Wings made a Division; Three Divisions made the Eighth Bomber Command, at the time. Numbers varied, but an all-out effort could amount to a Force of a thousand bombers or more depending on losses and replacements. Therefore, organization and scheduling were important to overcome the natural chaos of getting that much traffic, hopefully, to the target and back.

Thus, highways, called "Bomber Streams", were set up in the sky. Due to the difference in the airspeed the Second Bomb Division, consisting of B-24s, had their Stream. The First and Third Divisions of B-17s had their Stream. We of the 385th Bomb Group were in the 93rd Combat Wing of the Third Division.

Each Bomb Group had a precise time and altitude from which to drop bombs from above the target, otherwise there would be collisions and dropping onto each other. Even so, there was no absolute guarantee that accidents would not happen, because they did.

With the development of more high altitude flying a new phenomenon was discovered. For lack of a technical name it was called a "Helluva Wind". It was unpredictable, over a hundred miles an hour and it could be a real threat.

Springtime weather was "bitch"! It was everchanging and hand-capped visual reference to checkpoints on the ground. However, some aircraft were equipped with a primitive radar called "PFF" or "MICKEY", which allowed navigating and bombing through the clouds. Our group did not have such a highly specialized ship or crew, but one of them was assigned to us for this Berlin mission.

From inexperience, or whatever reason, the Mickey operator lead us about forty miles out of the Bomber Stream and we had to pay the price.

As copilot, riding in the right cockpit, in the last and highest ship on the right side of our Group in the High Squadron, my view to the right was unobstructed, except for the tops of the clouds that seemed to drift slowly by. I did not know any more than anyone else at the time that we were actually out of our Bomber Stream.

Jesus - Christ!

Unannounced, I was the first to see, off to the right at a great distance, what appeared to be a swarm of hornets beyond the tops of the clouds. They were insect-small, not because they were insects, but because they were so far away - too far to count or to determine if they were aircraft. Yet, they had to be airplanes, because insects, nor anything else, could live at the altitude. And if aircraft, they had to be fighters, because they were not flying bomber formation.

"BOGIES - THREE O'CLOCK HIGH!"

Our Group Lead spotted them and gave the alert. As "Bogies" they were yet unknown and unidentified, this meant to me that they were assumed ENEMY aircraft, because our Group Leader would have known if they were "Friendly" and not have called them unidentified "Bogies".

Besides, there had been no mention of friendly fighters at the briefing, since our planned-for fighter escorts were still presumed to be somewhere in the "pipeline".

I couldn't see any other bombers in front or to the side of our Group. I checked with the tail gunner and there were none behind us. We were ALONE. Twenty-eight of us and —how many of them?

There were over a HUNDRED OF THEM!

As I studied them and they slowly moved closer, being joined by more of their own, I could identify them and I revised my

best-guess-count to at least TWO HUNDRED Focke Wulf 190s and Messerschmitt 109s! It looked as if they had combined the entire Luftwaffe.

I had trouble figuring math in my head under the circumstances, but we seemed to be outnumbered by seven to one and that came to me as the odds that Custer faced at Little Big Horn. SHIT!

DANGER! Fight or Flee was the natural response. Yet, we couldn't flee and if we fought we couldn't win. It was PANIC TIME!

I had a Panic Attack. I couldn't think. A jolt of adrenaline hit me and I shook all over. I felt the hair that I didn't have try to stand up along my spine, not unlike a threatened dog or wolf reacting with basic instincts.

Fight? I couldn't fight. If I wasn't sitting down, the fear of what was about to happen would have knocked me down. I didn't seem to have a muscle in my body and my brains had turned to mud.

I'm going to die! I'm going to die from fright alone.

"You sure as hell are if you don't get with the program".

I don't know where that message came from, even though it was in my own head, because I was incapable of thinking. It might have come from somewhere in the past, like Coach Sullins in one of those losing football games back in high school; or Coach Claudfelter during a wrestling match when I wanted to quit.

But this "game", the one that was about to begin, was the most important one in my life, because my LIFE was at stake. It was the ultimate test. A lot of people were going to die right here in the sky above Germany. Within moments I would experience DEATH - and I really wasn't ready for that.

No matter. It was coming. There was no place to hide nor any way to avoid it.

Feeling helpless and scared, I wanted to cry.

I was a child about to receive a deserved and painful switching from my father. My father had whipped me only twice and it had never been administered out of rage. It was the damned logic of it that I had difficulty understanding.

"You must assume your responsibilities," he had said. "Grow up and take your punishment like a man."

He was right of course, which had been reinforced in sports; No Pain, No Gain; Play through the pain; Regain self control and never - never - NEVER - quit!

3ut against more than TWO-HUNDRED ENEMY FIGHTERS?

There was one hell of a collision about to happen. Twenty-eight American bombers were in a box formation that was the size of three city-blocks high, three city-docks long and Seven city-blocks wide^

Two-hundred German fighters were going to attempt to penetrate the congested 63 cubic city-blocks of American bombers at near the speed of sound - in a head-on attack.

Since fighters also need their space. It would be much like trying to pass one solid mass through another solid mass even though there was supposed to be fifty-feet between each bomber.

Because the bombers would be using the space between them to maneuver with evasive action, what might be an empty space for one brief moment, would be filled by some bomber within seconds with 63,000 pounds of bombs, gasoline, metal and men that could not be avoided by any one of 200 fighters.

Well 200 will not go into 28; at least not safely. All of which meant, a lot of men were going to die within a short period of time.

That's the way it was going to be without a shot being fired. But add to the imminent disaster the fact that the fighters would be trying to cut holes through the bomb group with their 800 machine guns and 200 twenty-millimeter cannons. We would be firing back at them with our combined 168 forward-firing machine guns. It was going to be one hell of a battle and the suspense was almost paralyzing.

Flying parallel to us off to the right they moved closer as if in slow motion; as if there was all the time in the world before this terrible thing was going to happen. And the closer they got, the more real it became.

I couldn't help but think about tornadoes back in Oklahoma that made people run to hide in a "Fraidy-hole". Except, there was no place to run to and no place to hide up here in the sky.

The bastards. They were showing off; weaving back and forth; bouncing up and down; some of them rolling as if to demonstrate a victory roll - before the fact. The impression they gave was that they were fearless and could not wait for the slaughter to begin.

Then it occurred to me that they were psyching themselves up and trying to psych us down in the performance of their "war dance". That's what it was, a primitive "war dance" just before the battle.

Captain Vance pushed forward, dropped our nose and slid under and to the left of the last ship in the top flight. I could see our Group in front and below us as we relocated and we too were limbering up, bombers oscillating up and down like a giant school of porpoise, large as whales. Such was our "war dance."

Vance switched to intercom and said, "When we get into this, be sure to use plenty of evasive action."

I shook my head as if I understood, but I didn't. We hadn't done what he must be talking about when we got hit by fighters at Stettin. It must be something new, because I hadn't checked out on it. But, I was ready to learn.

We were at the tail end of what was turning into "crack-the-whip"; trying to fly formation on a ship that was undulating up and down, who was trying to fly in formation with another ship that was dancing down and up. As a result we almost collided with the ship on which we were flying. So I grabbed the controls and avoided the crash.

"I can't see from over here!" Vance said, "You've got it!"

Well, SHIT, I thought. Of course he can't see, because he's flying cross-cockpit and has to look through my window. Even with the clear view I had, I had trouble flying on my fluctuating guide. The command performance was about to begin and I could not have felt more incompetent than if I'd been handed a violin for the first time at a great concert and told to "PLAY!"

Well, by God, sour notes or not, I was going to PLAY!

Beyond my guide I caught glimpses of the Bandits high off to our right at 3 O'clock High pulling slowly forward to 1 o'clock High in front of us. Slowly they turned to their left toward 12 o'clock High, from where they would begin their head-on attack.

As busy as I was with left hand on four throttles and right hand on the wheel, I quickly switched to Channel "A" on the radio and heard our Lead, "Hotshot Yellow" say, "Okay boys. On your toes! THIS IS IT!!!"

"God, if you're there, I'm sure you're getting a lot of requests just about now from both sides, but I do want to remind you of our deal; I'm going to do the very best I know how and the rest of it I'm leaving up to You, because it looks like I'm going to be too busy to be worrying about what I have no control over anyway. So please clear my mind so we can get this over with successfully; whatever that means."

It was dramatic!

If the encounter had not been so deadly and terrifying, it would have been beautiful. It was even more than a combination of ballet, football, airshow, hockey or championship boxing, because the final score would be measured by life or death!

Even so, devoid of morality or intelligence, it was sensual. It exceeded all limits of emotional feelings. Physically my muscles trembled. There was an urge to let go of everything; bladder, bowels, my grip on the flying controls and to let my eyelids close - and what? Miss the greatest show of my life on my way out of it?

"COME ON GOD! Don't let me lose control now! It's just beginning!"

Two hundred of those sonsabitches curved downward and into us. Some of their prop-spinners painted yellow, as members of Goering's elite. The leader was in a FW-190. And as the first, he was one gutsy bastard...or was he?

Fascinated, as well as not wanting to collide with the bouncing Seventeen on my right, I banked to the left in a shallow dive to watch the leader, firing into our Lead, rolling upside down to protect himself with his armor-plated belly and electing to drop below our Group instead of trying to penetrate. No wonder he was the leader...he knew how to survive.

Even with their advantage, outgunning us seven to one, they had to know we were no pushover, because Colonel Vandevanter was correct in having drilled us in flying tight and solid formation. We were more invincible as a stone than a sponge.

While the leading "Bandit" might have had the option to avoid us by flying under our Group and picking up his "gaggle" of birds behind us, his followers were as unfortunate as were we. BOOOM!!! Bandits and bombers collided.

When two aircraft met they exploded instantly into a giant flaming red fireball! Such dazzling crimson against the white clouds in the background, at the same time imploding back into the black hole in the center of itself. Sucking back into the vacuum of the explosion, it was both there at the same it was gone. Yet flinging debris in all directions: engines, metal, bodies, props, undefinable pieces, pieces, pieces. It was MAGNIFICENT.

Vance hit my left arm and ordered me to "Get back into formation!" "EVASIVE ACTION!!", he yelled.

What I saw had hypnotized me and I could hardly pull my attention away from the shooting and the total and partial collisions. So much was happening at the same time that I couldn't get it all into my head. However, I did realize that the distractions had caused me to drift out of formation and away from my duties.

"God, DAMN IT, LET ME FOCUS ON MY JOB!!!"

Vance go on the controls and drove us toward the ship we were supposed to be flying on. Unable to see clearly, he nearly rammed us into our guide and it took all of my strength to prevent a collision.

Captain Vance was not a big man. The B-17 did not have power-assist or power-boost on the controls. With stable characteristics, it took a lot of muscle to change its mind. It could be thought of as having obstinate "mulepower" instead of horsepower. Yet, the little Captain kicked her in the ass. And as heavy as she was on the controls, he made her jump to his will.

It was my will that we should not slam into anyone else and to avoid getting behind another Seventeen, because the propwash behind another bomber with fourfans driven by 6,000 horsepower created a tornado effect that could flip a 60,000 pound bomber onto its back and send it earthward in a spin. I knew that, since it was happening to others in the formation. Some were able to recover; some were not.

The tail gunner called, "It looks like a Christmas tree back here with all those twenty-millimeters exploding!"

The Bandits had hurt us badly on their first pass through us. Actual damage was hard to assess. We were obviously not the same, since those of us left in the formation were strung out.

Maneuvering in evasive action had reduced our forward speed and those of us at the rear had dropped farther behind while our leader, Lt. Colonel McDonald, pulled farther ahead, as if he was in some kind of goddamned race. To Where? There was no place to race to.

I switched from intercom to Command Channel to request our Lead to slow down so we could catch up. As a Second Lt. at the tail end of the pack, I had no authorization for any such communication, but it was critical for our Group to maintain its unity. However, someone else beat my transmission.

'HOTSHOT YELLOW - GOD - DAMNIT!!! SLOOOW DOWNNNN!"

The fighters too had gotten themselves strung out and were regrouping back up on their "perch" at 3 o'clock high for another attack, but it looked like they were having the same problem as we had. Their leader, the sonnovabitch who had avoided the attack so he could keep on leading, was pulling ahead of them in a "race" to lead them into another assault.

I allowed myself the luxury of a moment's mental jump into the Luftwaffe, as if I were in their place. Go ahead you sonnovabitch. If you want to be a goddamned hero, you just run the ball over the goal line for a touchdown by yourself.

What the hell difference did it make anyway if we wollided at 500 miles per hour or at 600 mph? The ideal strategy in any conflict is to do the opposite of what your opponent expects you will do -- if you can. I 'd learned that in wrestling - and football. Of course we couldn't have done it, but wouldn't it be a surprise if we could have just lammed on the brakes and stand still just when they were ready to penetrate.

Well, it had served me well when I had to run the "belt-line" in basic training, because it threw off the rhythm of those swinging at me with their belts.

Where was my mind going anyway? I had to get back into the game. I had to get REAL -- as long as reality might last.

Vance took the controls away from me, banked left and dove for our Low Squadron. That is, what was left of it. For as usual, it seemed to have been hit the hardest. Some ships not immediately destroyed were, never the less, wounded and were falling back and downward. Our dive added to our speed and we were able to catch up and we slid into the Low Squadron in time for the next assault. This time Vance was on the driver's side and I was the spectator.

Instead of being Tail-end Charlie in the High, we had dropped down into the Low Squadron and were Tail-end Charlie in Coffin Corner.

I took the opportunity for a "Crew Check" and each station from tail to nose acknowledged. We were all in good shape - so far.

HOLY SHIT!!! The goddamned twin fifties in our top turret, their muzzles just inches above my head, cut loose!

BRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRRROOOOOOOOM!!!

I almost jumped out of my skin and my heart seemed to knot and stop.

I was staring straight forward at the leader of the Bandits in his fucking FW-190! Pink flashes on his wings meant he was shooting at me!

ME!! He wasn't firing at our Group, Squadron or our ship, the sonnovabitch was trying to kill ME personally! I naturally wanted to shoot back, but all I had was a damned steering wheel.

BRRRRRRRRRRRRROOOOOOOOM!!!!!!!!!!!!

RRRRRRRRRRRRRRROOOOOOM!!!!!!!!!!!!

I grabbed my chest because I heard what seemed to be glass tinkling in the pauses between the bursts of the twin fifties.

PUNK—BANG—TWANG—THUMP!!!

We were in a hail of fifty caliber spent shell casings spewing out of the ship above us. Only four inches long, the hundreds of falling brass casings from one of our own ships punched holes into the leading edge of our wing, engine cowlings and shattered our plexiglass nose. What I thought was breaking glass was brass casings from our own top turret spilling into the canvas bags attached below each gun to catch them.

The attacking Focke Wulf was long gone before I checked to see if my hand-to-chest had collected any blood.

It had not.

Maybe???

Although millions of times larger than the exploding twin fifties, the distance and thin air muffled the sound of the exploding B-Seventeen just ahead of us.

FIREBAL RED against the white clouds! BLCK oily smoke! A PROPELLER by itself spun and slashed toward us like a giant whirl-a-gig, which fortunately missed our wing.

A DOOR! I ducked.

A BODY tumbled toward me and barreled past me!

PIECES!

PIECES! PIECES!

AWESOME-----!

I happen so fast that we flew right into the middle of the explosion and out the other side within fractions of a second!

Only by trying to replay it in my head in slow motion could I begin to understand its impact. But there was no time to dwell on it, because the Bandits were pouring in on us; guns blazing and us shooting back. It was truly a GODDAMNED WAR!

Vance somehow "wished" us forward to replace the missing bomber. But even with throttles wide open, it was a struggle. He tagged onto another ship, but it failed and dropped back. He then joined us onto the left wing of another Fortress and higg my arm for me to take over as it was on my side.

I preferred the role of spectator, but I was forced to focus on the guide-ship to hold formation. This spared me seeing the Bandits coming straight at us, but the sound of the twin fifties above my head confirmed their presence, as did the blur of them sliding past us and the shooting back from the ship on which I was flying.

The ball turret on the bottom of the ship on which I was focused took a hit and was disabled!

What followed was a heroic act that was lost in the business of the day, but it was impressive.

Having personally flown and fired from every gun position in a Seventeen on practice missions, I considered the ball turret the worst. It was even more isolated than the tail gun and definitely more uncomfortable, because you sat on the small of your back with legs flexed and your knees almost in your ears. There was no way to stretch or to relax. It triggered both claustrophobia and acrophobia, since you were hanging outside, alone, on the bottom of the ship at the mercy of a single "Jesus NUT". If that nut or bolt came undone??? "Jesus, what a fall!"

There was no room in the ball for a parachute. So if anything went wrong, it was hoped that one of the waist gunners would be there to help you get out of the ball in a hurry and get your

There was also no heat. So cold and cramped muscles inside of a burdensome sheeplined flying suit guaranteed slow and restricted movement.

I watched the forward pointing and silent barrels of the ball's twin fifties starting to move slowly after the hit. Ever so slowly they moved downward, giving proof that there was life inside the ball turret.

Good. I could see that he apparently was able to extricate himself from the ball. But there was even more to it!

The ball gunner is held in his position with a safety belt that is snapped across his back. To snap it on or off usually requires assistance from a waist gunner. There are also two latches on the door at the back of the ball that are difficult to manage alone.

So with everyone else on their guns, the ball gunner was on his own.

Having gotten himself out of the ball, it must have dawned on him that the only guns for him to fire were still in his ball turret and the Group needed all the firepower it could get...at least this was what I imagined was happening. What followed confirmed my thinking.

Slowly the guns that were pointing downward from the ball turret started to move upward and pointed forward to aim at the incoming fighters. Then the twin fifties in the ball turret started firing!

My God! It was really unbelievable. The gunner had gotten himself back into the ball and had gone back to work aiming his guns manually by the hand cranks. He'd had no assistance, because he'd not been able to secure the safety belt across his back, nor had he been able to snap the latches closed on the door, because the door was OPEN and waving in the slip-stream, as was his safety belt!

To duplicate his position would be to sit backward in a dining room chair with your knees over the back and keeping yourself from falling off by holding onto the back of the chair while being pulled through the air at 150 mph at fifty-degrees below freezing- FIVE MILES ABOVE THE EARTH!!!

I could only support him with prayers for strength and enough oxygen. There was nothing else I could do. I dreaded the fact that he could lose his grip and fall backward out of the door without his parachute. How long could he keep it up?

How long could any of us expect to survive?

What had begun with two waves of attacks was changing into a non-interrupted assault, because the Bandits were no longer pausing on their "Perch". Instead, they had formed a circle and were flying "circuits and bumps". It was as if the merry-go-round was running into the roller-coaster-with everyone shooting!

While we had started as a Spare as the last ship in the High Squadron and moved to the last position in the Low Squadron, we were working our way forward through the Low whenever someone in front of us blew up, was shot down, or dropped backwards.

Unable to see the rear it was only a guess as to what our Group looked like. However, it was definitely being altered. There was no reason to believe otherwise than that the battle would not end until we had all been destroyed.

I had a fleeting thought of Ears and wished he had come along, because he could have found us a flak area. I wished for flak, because the fighters would not follow us into it.

Than my wish came true.

Hotshot Yellow had elected to drop our bombs on the alternate target of Magdeburg.

The flak started coming up, light at first to warn away our attackers, then more concentrated as the fighters left us alone and we neared the target. Even so, it was relatively more comfortable and gave us respite from the fighters - for awhile.

Getting rid of our bombs also eased the stress. But with "Bombs Away", leaving the target and diminishing flak, the fighters were waiting for us.

Having done our job in delivering the bombs we were headed back home. Even so, the Bandits continued to hammer on us; although not as ferociously as in the beginning.

Having dropped our bombs, we were not the threat we had been and our value was reduced. The length of the battle had also used up the small fuel load of the Bandits, as well as about fifty of their number, and they eventually left us alone to struggle with our ever present ball of simply staying in the air long enough to get back home.

So in our exodus, without fighters or flak shooting at us, the battle damage still caught up and took ships out of our formation along the way.

Out of the thirty ships that had started out early in the morning, only six of us were still in formation eight hours later as we approached or contacted our "HARDLIFE" control tower.

It felt good to get back. It should have felt GREAT, but our losses and just plain fatigue downgraded any exuberance and took any glory out of it. It would be several hours before it was determined that we had actually lost only ten ships and seventy men, because the others who had dropped out of formation would straggle in later or put down on other airfields. Even so, there were also casualties among those who managed to get back to the base.

The debriefing was not as crowded as usual. I got my standard large cup of coffee and peanut butter and jelly sandwich from the voluntary Red Cross ladies. At mid afternoon it was the first food or drink I'd had for twenty hours. We had simply been too occupied to snack on "K" rations while on the mission. So the aroma and the taste of the coffee and the flavor and texture of the sandwich was wonderful.

Waiting my turn for debriefing, while enjoying my refreshments, I strolled over to the Formation Boards along the wall where crews, ships and their locations in the formations were posted.

I noticed the Colonel Vandevanter was staring at the Formation Boards. It looked pretty grim at the time, since the final count was not in and all crews had been "X"ed over, except the first six of us that had returned together. So it appeared that our casualties were 80% at first-count.

Colonel "Van" had been staring at the Boards before I got there and he remained motionless even as I drew near. He had not moved and was not going to move. He was locked in place.

He had a reputation of leading the tough missions himself. We respected him greatly for that. I guessed that he might even be blaming himself for us getting busted up so badly; feeling that if he'd been our leader we wouldn't have strayed out of the Bomber Stream.

I wanted to speak to him, but what could I say?

While he was physically there I was sure that he was mentally back over Germany, somehow sharing our experiences of the day through his own adventures. So as he stared at our losses displayed on the Formation Boards, I stared at him. There we stood; Colonel Van staring at the losses and me staring at him.

It was a moment of reverence. In time I saw the tears come to his eyes.

There was to have been a large party in the Number One hangar that night to celebrate the Group's 100th mission, but the worst disaster the Group had ever encountered in combat dampened the spirits of everyone on the base. I didn't go to the Party.

Everyone "crawled back onto the horse" the next day, which was Sunday. Twenty-four crews in the Group went to France for a shorter mission and the rest of us flew a three-and-half-hour practice mission over England to improve our skills and to get ready for Monday's mission; a "Milk Run" to Le Grosseiller, France — where we lost only one crew.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Truman's story of his flight to Magdeburg - our 100th mission -- speaks for itself.

Can't blame him for not feeling like going to the 100th Mission Party after returning from one like that. Here's what our Group History book said:

"Preparations were made for a 100th Mission Celebration toward the end of the month, to be held in the Number One hangar, that day seemed doomed from the start, first because our entertainment being unable to journey from Ipswich because of a pre-invasion embargo on transportation. Then mission No. 100 turned out to be the worst licking the Group had ever suffered at the hands of the Luftwaffe. Seven crew; went down this day, the 29th. Our difficulty stemmed from the fact that a Pathfinder ship from another Group was substituted for one of our own. The navigator, apparently inexperienced at leading, wandered some 40 miles out of the Bomber Stream while navigating over the overcast on the way to "Big B", Jerry Fighters took swift advantage of our greatly outnumbered force although our gunners claimed 48 enemy fighters destroyed. With no friendly fighter support, our formation was out in left field and Jerry rarely misses such an opportunity. The beer party celebration fell flat and the spirits were exceedingly low over this loss, but it did re-emphasize that we could not afford to make such mistakes, for the Luftwaffe was far from finished.

BEFORE AND AFTER

Truman J. Smith before and after the 100th mission.



EDITOR'S NOTE: Here's Col. McDonalds explanation of what went wrong on the 100th mission Truman Smith describes so vividly.

Dear Ed:

Page 14, letter from "Mickey" radar navigator Howard Director, -1 think his observations are sound but I would suggest a reason why mickey operators may not have been properly respected.

The the first 8th AF mickey sqdn was activated (somewhere in the 1st division area), we were instructed to send our best crews because these would be our leaders. We did. But many others sent crews with no lead crew training nor experience.

We in the 385th were soured on the people who came to us at 0400 of the day mission and cost us lives.

One example. 1 was the leader on a deep penetration. Two crews arrived at 0430 to lead us. It didn't take long for me to evaluate but what could we do. This was out 100th mission and we were to return for a great celebration in a wonderously decorated hangar. Glenn Miller's band played, (he didn't because he was lost on a flight to England).

I showed up for the party a mightily depressed person. Those two crews cost us 6 crews - that is 60 friends!!

How? My mickey equipment went out nearing the coast. I took the #2 position and relinquished the lead to the other mickey. I became an observer and became increasingly uneasy. We made a turn (with 60 planes depending upon us) about 10 minutes too early. I called the lead and asked why - no explanation. I asked our navigator. He couldn't even reply. I literally picked him up and bounced him on the ceiling - one gets superhuman strength when pressure mounts. He didn't know where we were. We had (by this mistake) left the bomber stream and our protective fighters. The fighter attacks were severe.

I ordered the lead to drop on a railroad yard and to take up a heading of 270 degrees. Even that crew could find England if they headed 270 degrees.

(For those alert readers who ask how could he "bounce" the navigator from the co-pilot seat -1 relinquished my seat to the CP and I found room downstairs.

Thanks again for your
wonderful efforts

Jim McDonald



EDITOR'S NOTE: You might want to check the dates on this story against our missions beginning July 25, 1943.

I FLEW FOR THE FUHRER

Taken from Flying Fortress News Letter.

The airwar in Europe was fought at high altitudes much of the time at temperatures of 50, 60, 70 below zero Fahrenheit...Fantastic aerial duels with the stakes being air supremacy and victory. It is a story of great sacrifices. Most of what you've read about air superiority has been about our side and I think you'll find it shocking to know what a German pilot went through. This story is just nine months of the war in the life of Luftwaffe ace Heinz Knoke in 1944, five years after Germany started the war. (Last issue we saluted aerial gunners. This shows why they had to be good.)

APRIL 17, 1943: Over Bremen today I make three runs at a Fortress and it finally catches fire. It crashes in a field southwest of Bremen near Bassum after only four men parachuted out.

MAY 14, 1943: Today the Yanks bombed the Germania shipyards. I am impressed by the precision with which those bastards bomb; it is fantastic! I dive for a frontal attack upon about 30 Fortresses and my salvo registers hits right in the control cabin of one Fort. It rears up like a great animal that has been mortally wounded and drops away in steep spirals to the right. At about 10,000 a wing breaks off and it crashes near Husum at 12:17 hrs. Today my flight got down five heavy bombers and one was our flight's 50th kill of them.

MAY 15, 1943: Twice I move head-on into a group of Fortresses and they take evasive action by sort of a weaving flight, that makes a frontal attack more difficult, for the firing time is limited to three to four seconds only. Perfect timing is essential due to the terrific closing speed, which is more than 600 m.p.h. I get a fortress on the outer flank and hit his right inside engine, but he simply closes over into the middle of the formation. I dive steeply from behind another Fortress and shoot up his left two engines, they begin smoking, and it loses height. Once he is out of formation it is all over and I fasten on his tail and blaze away with everything I have. Bright flames spread along its belly and all ten men bail out. Their parachutes hang in the sky like washing on some invisible clothesline. the plane goes down trailing a long column of smoke, in a pilotless spin, falling out of control, and then disintegrates.

MAY 17, 1943: At 13490 hours today I bring down another heavy bomber, my seventh.

JUNE 1, 1943: Over Heligoland my first attack on a bomber formation my engine is hit bad, and the oil pipe is damaged. It is only with the greatest difficulty that I succeed in limping back to base.

JUNE 11, 1943: The Yanks don't come over until evening and we attack them as they head for home. On my fourth run at a Fortress it finally goes down after suffering much damage.

JUNE 24, 1943: Our 44th Group fighters rise to meet a bomber stream heading for Wilhelmshaven, at 22,000 I see the Forts 3,000 feet below us. We peel off in a long line and go diving down in a perfect surprise. So many planes, it's just like a beehive has been overturned. I open fire on a Fortress and my cannon shells land beautifully in the fuselage, the tail gunner persistently fires back, as I close in damnly, all guns ablaze. Holes appear in my right wing and I am hit. That bastard of a rear gunner, he will not leave me alone. Must have a lot of guts! I keep blazing away at him, and his turret disintegrates from my cannon fire, so does the dorsal turret. I am under heavy fire from a dorsal turret of another B-17 and I feel three more hits. A waist gunner is firing at me too, even though their bomber is on fire. We are now only 100 feet away but the two gunners blast at my Messerschmitt 109.1 keep firing, the bastard has got to go down, even if it means my own neck. I drop back behind it and see its burning into its right wing. A sudden flash and my head is slammed against the cockpit and my right glove is in shreds and blood is trickling out of it. I line up my sights on it and empty the magazine in one long burst and as my Fortress is falling into the clouds, a flaming torch. Back at base, despite the pain, I do a victory roll. Though my flying suit is covered with blood only one finger joint is amputated. From my ward I see my driver has waited in the courtyard, and seeing no nurse around, I join him. In an half and hour I am back at my base.

JULY 25, 1943: Over Hamburg today I see it's devastated by nightly British incendiary bombings. The death toll is 100,000 there. The Americans hit targets of military importance by day. Great fires are raging and a monster cloud hangs over Hamburg rising to 3,000 feet. I return to action soon by having a leather sling fitted over my hand and the control stick.

JULY 28, 1943: After a check flight I take off with 11 fighters with bombs slung under their bellies. Sergeant Fess dropped one that exploded in a close formation of bombers and three B-17s go down and crash with more than twenty parachutes floating in the air. I have a new plane with 30 mm cannon which punches great holes in the Fortresses I picked as my victim. Its pilot dives and five or six others, some on fire, swerve away from the battered formation. We pick them off one by one, and they go down in flames or crash into the sea. Ten of our fighters return undamaged and our mechanics carry us all shoulder high from our aircraft to the dispersal building, completely overjoyed. Eleven heavy bombers will drop no more bombs on Hamburg. I got my 13th as a result of this "great shooting party."

AUGUST 17, 1943: Shortly after we spot the bombers today the Spitfire escorts are forced to leave and run back to England. Near Aachen I attack but before I am able to fire my plane is hit, a large hole gaps in my left wing, close to the main spar. A lone B-17 is below the formation, at 500 feet I open fire and its gunners reply, their tracers come whizzing all around me, close

to my head. Their shells look like pearl necklaces coming straight toward me. Once again there is altogether too much blasted metal in the air, and I close up to 300 feet and take careful aim; whoof, my fuselage is hit. The B-17 is in flames, swerves off to the left, loses altitude. Four parachutes come out, suddenly my plane is hit hard, is badly shaken by one of the gunners still firing

Flames come belching out at me from my engine and fumes force me to open my side window. My plane is in shambles, they finally got me, but I see my Fortress crash in flames in the Eiffel Mountains. I lose altitude fast as I spiral down the ground comes rushing up at great speed and my engine grinds to a halt, freezes up, the prop is rigid. It stalls, then drops, I'm going 200 m.p.h., then 150, then 100, barely missing tree-tops. I'm smashing through three wooden fences and hit the ground hard as a dike rushes at me, then c-r-a-s-h! My fighter is a total wreck and blood is oozing from my right sleeve. The Medical Officer removes some shrapnel from my upper arm. Our Rescue Patrol was busy all day collecting our pilots who were shot down today.

SEPTEMBER 27, 1943: We take off with new rocket launchers on our planes, my plane is new. All pilots are to fire their rockets when we've closed to 2,000 feet. A simply fantastic scene unfolds before my eyes as my two rockets register a perfect bulls-eye on a Fortress. I fly into a huge solid ball of fire as the B-17 explodes in mid-air with its entire load of bombs. Wennachers also scores a direct hit. Reinhard's rocket damages a Fort and he chases off merrily after it, blazing away with his guns as he fastens onto its tail. Twelve lightnings dive into us as 1 go after another Fortress. Then four peculiar shaped single-engine fighters dive past me. I see white start and white wing markings, my first sight of P-47 Thunderbolts. They go to aid a Fort with two engines dead and a ME-109 on its tail. It is Reinhard so I go after the Thunderbolts as Reinhard calmly keeps blazing away. The leading Yank is firing on Reinhard as a single burst from guns is all that's needed and its bursts into flame and goes spinning down like a dead leaf. Bullets from a Thunderbolt are hammering my plane with two others right behind him on my tail. I dive for cloud cover, but too late, my engine is on fire. The heat quickly becomes unbearable for me so I pull off my oxygen mask, jettison the canopy, and bail out. I pull the ripcord, it's 11:26 hours, only 31 minutes since 1 was airborne; but I shot down two more of the enemy. No. 6 flight, however, lost nine of its 12 pilots, all killed, with the three others forced to bail out or crash land. Not a single one of our aircraft returned.

Here's the list of changes since the roster was made up. A few are marked "new" - most are address changes. Those marked "Lost" represent issues returned by the Post Office with no forwarding address. Anyone with information on any of these, please let us know.

NEW

Robert L. Trout, 15292 Pamming Way Dr, Grass Valley, CA
""-949

Herbert R. Greider, 900 lireder Lane, Dauphin, PA 17018

James M. Miller, Hazelllett Dr., Waterford, MI

Claire Beckford, 50 Willis St., Westfield, MA 01085

CHANGES

Jim Everhart, 2 Frost St., Inamn, SC 29349-1715

Fred Roy, 324 Farmers Rd., Campobello, SC 29322

Raymond J. Zorn, 3764 Bower Rd, Lancaster, NY 14086

James P. Danko, Sr., 1231 N. 10th St.-G2, Spearfish, SD
57783-1518

Orville B. Ross, 45 Bliss Mine Rd., Marlatown, RI 02842.

Gerald W. Van Loenen, Box 386, Prairie View, KS 67664-
0356.

Richard A Wheaton, Sr., 704 S. Elizabeth Rd., Independence,
MO 64056

Ruthela Kramer, 623 Elm St., Campbellsport, WI 53010-
2746.

Robert Cory, Box 26, Berwick, IA 50032-0026.

Wm D. Miller, 842 Ranney St., Akron, OH 44310-3460.

John J. Kerner, 510 Rt. 50, Corbin City, NJ 08270.

James E. Hughes, 124 Edward Wakefield, Williamsburg, VA
23185-5500.

Jim Keefe, 8AFHS Box 72068, Bloomington, MN 55431

Walter S. Gazda, 35425 5 Mile Road, Livonia, MI 48154-
2366.

Henry Ragaz, 1009 6th St. W., Ashland, WI 54806-1318.

Howard Director, 22 Pilgrim Dr - C, Westford, MA 01886-
1072.

Joseph R. Schneider, 8111 N. 19th Ave-1089. Phoenix, AZ
85021-5166.

Kenneth Zinn, PO box 41, Mareta, OH 45750-0041.

Lawrence R. Fostmeier, 3017 Santa Rosa Ave - #A, Santa Rosa,
CA 95407-7629.

Stanley Alenciewicz, 246 Sky Manor, Blvd, Brock, NJ 08723-
6816.

Samantha Scott, 5018 Front St., Wilmington, NC 28401.

Charles H. Hill, Jr. 48 Wadesboro, CA, Franklin, NC 28734.

Frank Walls, 35561 Aboda Way, Calimera, CA 92320-2050.

LOST

Mary M. Bray, Box 3121, Portland, OR 97208-3121.

Patrick J. Hall, PO Box 301, Guyton, GA 31312.

George H. Salkeld, 8112 N. Magnolia, Ave-145, Santee, CA 92071-4547.

Harry H. Bridges, 4228 Newport, Detroit, MI 48215.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Here's what the British had to basic rations for a FAMILY per week all the way through the war! How many of our families waste this much every week?

How about the amount they could spend on meat?

No wonder we were welcome with little supplement, we could bring from our Mess hall when we visited.

RATIONING IN WARTIME - HOW DID THEY DO IT?

Did you know that there were two types of rationing during the wartime years?

The first was the "basic" ration coupon book, introduced in January 1940 to give families their essential foods for the week. To give you an idea of "basic" rations, here are some typical examples of the types of "basic" rations families were entitled to each week:

Bacon and ham	4oz
Sugar	8oz
Tea	2oz
Butter	4oz
Cooking fat or margarine	2oz
Meat	Purchased to the value of 1 s 1 Od (8p) - generally taken as corned beef

These "basic" rations were purchased weekly using the pre-dated coupons in the ration book.

The second form of rationing was the special pink book. Each family was given coupons to the value of 16 points every four weeks. This allowed families to collect points and exchange them for "luxury" food items such as canned meat e.g. boneless chicken @ 20 points, breakfast cereal @ 4 points and dried fruit e.g. prunes @ 8 points.

All Ration Books were issued by the "Local Food Office" run by the government.

Apart from food, families were also given other ration books to purchase sweets, clothing and in special circumstances petrol.

Although the war ended in 1945, it wasn't until October 1951 that most wartime rations were removed. However rationing on meat lasted until June 1954.

Dear Ed,

Two members of our bomb group were invited to participate in the recent celebration of the 50 year Anniversary of the April/May 1945 Food Drop Missions. Besides myself, Bob Silver was also invited.

This is the story of those festivities, 8 days of hectic celebration by many of the towns and cities which received food during that time of starvation. Every day we were greeted by thousands of citizens who wanted to express their gratitude for the food, dropped to them at low level (150-200 ft) and while the Germans still occupied Holland. 25,000 Dutch starved to death during the Hunger Winter of 1944/1945. Many were eating tulip bulbs for their main diet. Tins of food, in burlap sacks were dropped at specified drop zones, collected and distributed. Food dropped was chocolate, cheese, crackers, yeast, lunch meat, cigarettes, bacon, dried eggs and powdered milk.

We were honored in towns of Vlaardingen, Gouda, The Hague, Valkenburg, Katwijk, Rijswijk, Rotterday, Soesterberg, and the Suindigt Race Track.

At Soestdijk Palace we passed in review (about 50 Americans and 60 RAF) for Prince Bernard, who, in early 1945, convinced Churchill, Eisenhower and the Germans to allow the food drop missions with a temporary truce along the way to the drop zones.

B-1 7s dropped 7000 tons of food and the Lancasters dropped 11,000 tons, from April 29 through May 8, 1945.

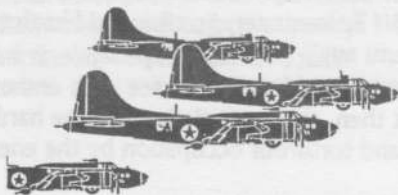
In all the towns visited, we were greeted by thousands of citizens who were anxious to touch us, shake hands and even kiss us, as we mingled with them in the City Hall or Market Places. Schools were dismissed so that the students could join in the celebrations. Nursing Home residents and those in old age facilities were brought to curbside in wheelchairs so we could acknowledge them. We were able to ride in WW2 military vehicles through the streets of The Hague, Vlaardingen, Gouda, and Rotterdam, barely able to navigate the streets filled with thousands of flags waving, shouting and joyous citizens, including the older generation who actually were recipients of the food dropped.

In Rotterday, with an estimated crowd of over 450,000 citizens, we rode in jeeps and thrucks of WW2, and were showered with ticker tape for 1 1/2 hours. A fly past of WW2 planes, B-1 7, Lancaster, Spitfire and Hurricane added to the excitement. What a fantastic experience. It was a most memorable occasion and a thrill to see such enthusiasm and affection. But then, these people learned the hard way about lack of food and torturous occupation by the enemy.

NOTE: Even though a temporary no-fire truce had been signed by the Germans, some planes were fired on. On May 2, 1945, while dropping food in Hilversum, the Stork Club was hit by 20 mm flak causing major damage. Because of this, we were credited with a combat mission and listed as the last plane hit by German flak.

Robert A Valliere
18 Whiting Farm Rd
Branford, CT 06405-3223

EDITOR'S NOTE: Bob Silver sent us a great story on the Holland visit, too.



EDITOR'S NOTE: We had a letter from Bob Silver in the April Hardlife Herald. We had asked him for a "before & after" couple of pictures, but they didn't come in time. Here they are, you know what they say - "Would you buy a used car from this guy?" The "after" picture shows how Bob dressed to go to Holland on the "Manna" trip. Remarkable how young you still look, Bob, after the life you've had!



LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

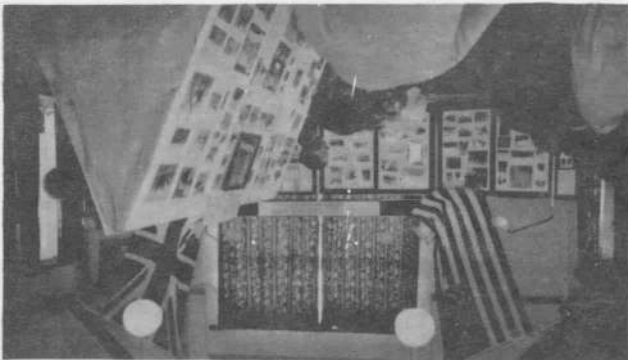
Dear Ed,

Enclosed are a couple of photographs of the Great Ashfield Village Exhibition, held in March 1995 at Lord Thurlow Hall, Great Ashfield, showing the special display they had of the "Village at War." Photographs were supplied by Ian McLachlin, local villagers and other interested persons.

I wonder if any members recognize the old house in the third photograph? I gather it was one of the watering holes, then known as the Onslow Arms Pub, used by the 385th. Many a warm beer was drunk there I bet!

Best wishes,

Vance Pennington
17 Ashdown Court
Cedar Road
Sutton, Surrey SM2 5DG
England



Dear Ed,

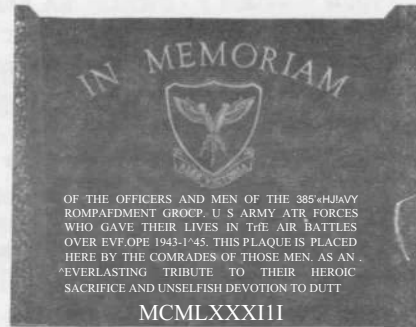
I was invited to attend the Graduation Ceremony at the Air Force Academy this May. While there I re-visited the Memorial Plaque we placed in the cemetery at the Academy.

Thought you might like to print the pictures in the Hardlife Herald for those who may not be aware that the memorial is there.

Take care

Vince Masters

P.S. Doesn't look like we will be able to join the Group in Omaha.



Dear Ed,

After 50 years I finally located the one individual who served together with me for over a year, from Nashville, July 1943, through the 385th at Great Ashfield, October 1944.

I was able to accomplish this through my computer with a telephone data base on CD-ROM which advertises that it has over 80 million phone listings. I bought it for about \$45.00 and now feel it was well worth it. However, it does bring to mind the location of members of our organization who drop off your mailing list.

There are some holes in this data, but I'd be happy to search the list for you if you think it would help. I would need whatever information you have in regard to possible location (State, City, Zip code) and full name or names. For example, one article asked about a Bennie Parker. I've enclosed the result of a search of the western states disk.

With best regards

Paul Gelman
4987 Lamia Way
Oceanside, California
92056-7431

Aloha Ed,

We traveled to England and Great Ashfield last September, and visited the All Saints Church there. I took a photo of the memorial inside the church. Also viewed the new stained glass window.

I had some correspondence with Jim Hill, Editor 8th AF News on another matter and mentioned my trip and the stained glass window.

He wrote me back and asked for a picture of the window for the 8th AF Archives, so sent him the picture I had taken along with the stained glass window picture I had purchased from George Hruska.

I was ever so pleased when the May 1995 Vol. 95 Number 2 issue of the 8th A News came out with the two mentioned photos on Page #41.

I am very proud of the 385th BGMA and was happy to see us get some recognition from the 8th AF News. I enclosed the story of the window as it was printed in our Hardlife Herald for their records.

All for now, I'm getting geared up for the Omaha Reunion and know George is working his tail off, and it will be a good one. See you in Omaha.

Aloha nui loa,

Jerry H. Ramaker
Carson City, NV

Dear Sir,

It is my unpleasant duty to report the death of my father, James O. Dillon, Past Technical Sergeant with the 385th. He passed peacefully on October 8, 1994 at St. Francis Hospital in Indianapolis.

Dad and I spoke often of his experiences with the 385th and it was obvious to me that the time he spent at Great Ashfield truly defined his life in a way that cannot be described by a service record. Here was a young farm kid who was plucked from the heart of Central Indiana and thrust into the greatest conflagration in the history of the world. In the course of 30 missions as a Radio Operator, he saw and did things that would have left most of us blubbering unintelligibly as we bounced from wall to wall in that famous rubber room. He knew the world of flak, ME-109s, FW-190s. He and his crew formed a bond that was enduring over the decades that followed. He and my mother faithfully attended reunions until his health failed him and travel presented simply too much of a challenge.

Most of his missions were flown in the "Dozy Doats", SN297079. His first mission was to Brunswick on Feb. 29,

1944 and his last was on June 6, 1944 (D-Day). His decorations included the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters and Distinguished Flying Cross. The DFC was accompanied by text that stated the award was for "Extraordinary Achievement While Serving as Radio Operator/Gunner on a B-17 Airplane on many heavy bombardment missions over enemy occupied Continental Europe. In addition to warding off many enemy attacks from his gun position, Sergeant Dillon distinguished himself by calm and skillful handling of his radio during aerial combat. The courage, coolness and skill displayed by Sergeant Dillon on all these occasions reflect the highest credit upon himself and the armed forces of the United States." The working of the citation leads me to believe that he and the crew were probably not experiencing many milk runs. While we did talk often of the war and enjoyed books, videos and magazines on the subject, he never spoke of the injuries and deaths of his friends in the 385th. His most animated comment would be that this mission or that mission was a rough one. He was a part of what was known as "Big Week" and did say he felt that going to Berlin twice in three days helped to shorten the war.

This stoic, gentle man came home to marry his beloved Geraldine (Gerry), work his father's farm and raise three children, my sister Andrea, my brother Dennis and myself. His seven grandchildren were a great source of pride and enjoyment to him. The family grew up on 40 acres of farmland that Dad bought from my grandfather. He also worked for 30 years at a Union Carbide Facility in Speedway, retiring in 1985.

As the members of Dad's generation slip from us, we must never allow their memory to be clouded by the passage of time. These men may have been our last true heroes. This is not to demean the actions of brave men and women who have served since World War II, but rather to recognize that the sacrifices of men like my father, many of whom did not have the opportunity to live long, have enriched the lives of millions in the fifty years that have passed since. May the B-17 forever fly and serve as a monument to those who flew her.

Sincerely,

Gregory James Dillon
10051 Hendricks Co. Rd
Canby, IN 46113



Dear Ed,

During a recent reorganization of some old records, I ran across a 385th BG flight clearance form (photocopy enclosed). It recalls a flight that for me was interesting, fun and for a brief time, when we buzzed an air tower, some real excitement, the story of that occasion may be of interest to the Hardlife Herlad readers.

It all began just after midday on October 9, 1944 when a five man crew was put together from among those who just happened to be at base headquarters at the time. The purpose of The trip was to take a couple of U.b. Navy personnel back to their base located a couple hundred miles away near Bristol. The pilot, as shown on the form was Lt. Ihlenburg. The rest of that five member crew, not recorded, was co-pilot, flight engineer, radio operator and me as navigator.

When we arrived at the Naval base about mid-afternoon, we were graciously shown about the base and then wined and dined at the Officers Mess. What a treat that was! There were place settings on white table cloths and the cuisine was out of this world. It made the mess at Great Ashfield (which was plenty all right) seem like K-rations.

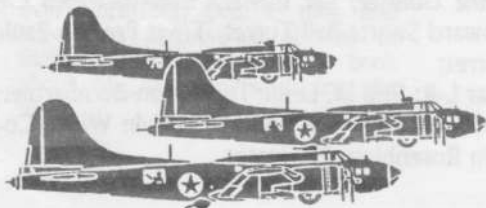
Then it was time to leave. We took our customary positions in the plane and Ihlenburg took off down the runway and headed for home. When we were only a few miles out and a couple hundred feet off the ground, Ihlenburg made an extremely sharp banking turn (almost to the stalling point) and headed back 180 degrees. Accelerating to top speed, he headed for the air tower. We cleared that tower by scant feet and at full throttle. Ihlenburg then dipped the wings a few times (a gesture of friendship or an apology - or both?), and returned on the course home.

Perhaps four members of that crew should have been awarded credit for a mission or even a part of a mission for going on that flight.

Only kidding, Ihlenburg, wherever you are!

Sincerely,

Fred Nestler
21333 Via Colombard
Sonoma, CA 95476



Dear Ed:

What a compendium you published in June!! Can't imagine how you do it!! Thanks anyway.

I'll make a few comments that may be new to some people.

Page 4-Chapter 10. A very clear description of the V-1. It didn't mention tho that when the gas ran out - the V-1 went down wherever it was. A very ineffective targeting device. However, it was very effective psychologically, emotionally, and costly to the British.

Perhaps some don't know that the 385th was chosen for a special mission, to destroy the nerve and control center for the V-2's - a much more accurate and formidable weapon.

This was so special that the lead crew and I had to travel to the 8th AF and view the mockup. And to be briefed on the importance of the target.

The Germans were building a reinforced control center in France. The walls had already been constructed with 6' widths. If we allowed a similarly reinforced roof, none of our bombs could destroy it.

We had been bombing at 21,000 - this required 14,000 for accuracy. You can say we were fearful. I led 20 of our planes and the flak bounced us all over the sky. Enroute from the IP we got hit and lost contact with the bombardier. Didn't know if he was dead or had control of the bomb run. He did - 23 hit it! The nerve center never became operative. London was spared. We were the only group on that target.

Re: Page 11 where it says "...when the 8th conceived the scouting forces to fly ahead of the bomber stream and scout out the weather..." etc., we in the 385th have a right to be proud!! WE CONCEIVED THE IDEA, submitted it to the 8th and requested that I be in command of such a force.

Jim McDonald

Dear Mr. Smith,

As you suggested, I will try to write this in the proper order as I know them. My brother, T/Sgt Benjamin Purdy was originally assigned to Paul Sommer's crew in Montana. The government reported him MIA on July 26, 1943, first with Sommers and shortly thereafter as a replacement with Duncan. After the war Henry Walker from Sommers' crew said Ben was actually with Harris. I wrote to Harris; he could neither agree or deny. I was in contact with the wife of Roy Martinz, bombardier with Duncan. She sent me a photo of Duncan with his crew under guard. This was a propaganda photo smuggled out thru Spain and the men were identified by their families but none returned.

feel that survivors from the other crews may know what happened but I have no idea who they may be except for the pilots, it it possible for anyone to tell me which palne Ben was on and what happened to any of Duncan's crew?

I am enclosing a blow-up of the picture with those identifier narked. An interesting part to this is I'm pretty sure I can iden ify the man 3rd from the right as Howard Sloop from Sommer' original crew. He was reported MIA on the same day, but nc vith Duncan. The more I try to understand, the more confuse become.

Kny help you could give would be greatly appreciated.

Very truly yours,

Claire Bickford
50 Willis st.
Westfield. MA 01085

The names listed from the government were:

- Glenn F. Duncan
- William Lehr
- William Henderson
- Roy Martinez
- Benjamin Purdy
- James Soward
- John Lowle
- James Brophy
- Frank Ramsey
- Charles ProDst



"Little Friend Getting Us Home safely"



We flew our first mission together as a crew in this ship, on September 26, 1944 - Tom Funk's crew (Target-oil refinery at Bremen, Germany).

"Rum Dum on a mission"

(Taken by John Kerner, waist gunner on Tom Funk's Crew. Sent by Captain Leslie Thompson, 2 Carriage Ct., Stony Brook, L.I. NY 11790.



TOM FUNK'S 551 ST SQUADRON CREW

Front L-R: Sgt. Howard Tennant-Tail gunner; Sgt John Kemer-Waist Gunner; Sgt Richard Swanda-Radio Operator; S/Sgt Howard Swartz-Ball Turret; T/Sgt Preston Paul-Engineer/Top Turret;
Rear L-R: 2nd Lt. Leslie Thompson-Bombardier; 2nd Lt. Thomas Funk-First Pilot; 2nd Lt. Calvin Wiche-Co-pilot; 2nd Lt. Sam Rosenblum-Navigator.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Your Editor's daughter, who some of you met on the 50th Anniversary trip to England, was at the White House for the VE Day 50th Celebration (she and her husband have known the Clintons and some of their Arkansas friends since before he was elected President).

She had her copy of the April Hardlife Herald along and got their signatures as show in this reproduction.

Some of you don't recognize the added value of this particular copy, but we must reveal that Susan has yet to vote for a Republican.

Also, we should tell you that she went to the National Archives, wanted to go into the WW2 Museum area, was turned away because she wasn't a veteran. She protested that her father was, still wasn't allowed in. She was wearing our dog tags (don't ask why), produced them and was admitted. Nothing about the 8th Air Force in the whole museum!

SOUTHERN BELLE OF CHICAGO HIG'S HOT CHOCOLATE VIBRANT VIBRANT MISSION BELLE OL' RUM DUM AND BUT RIGHT LULU BELLE SLECK KITTYS RD.
MARY ELLEN III HELL'S BELLS IN LIKE FLYNN LIL-LU STORK CLUB MAC'S HACK CRASH WAGON III THE JOCKER AIN'T MISBEHAVIN' BELL OF THE BLUE MARY ELLEN II
PRINCESS VAL LADY ANN FECKLE FINGER OF ? RELUCTANT LADY

NEWSLETTER OF THE

385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION



COMBAT UNITS

HQ. SQUADRON
548th BOMB SQ.
549th BOMB SQ.
550th BOMB SQ.
551st BOMB SQ.

VOL. XXII, NO. 2

Editor: Ed Stern
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APRIL 1995

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Spokane, WA 99218
509-466-7824

1ST VICE PRESIDENT

Robert A. Valliere
18 Whiting Farm Road

PREZ SEZ:

Ted Wilbur, our artist, reports that the picture is almost complete and delivery should be by June at the latest. Ted's wife passed away on January 4 after a long illness. On behalf of the 385th, I have extended our deepest sympathy to Ted and his family.

George Hruska reports that plans are completed for the Reunion in Omaha--registrations are coming in and we can expect a great turnout. If you haven't yet made your reservations, fill out the form

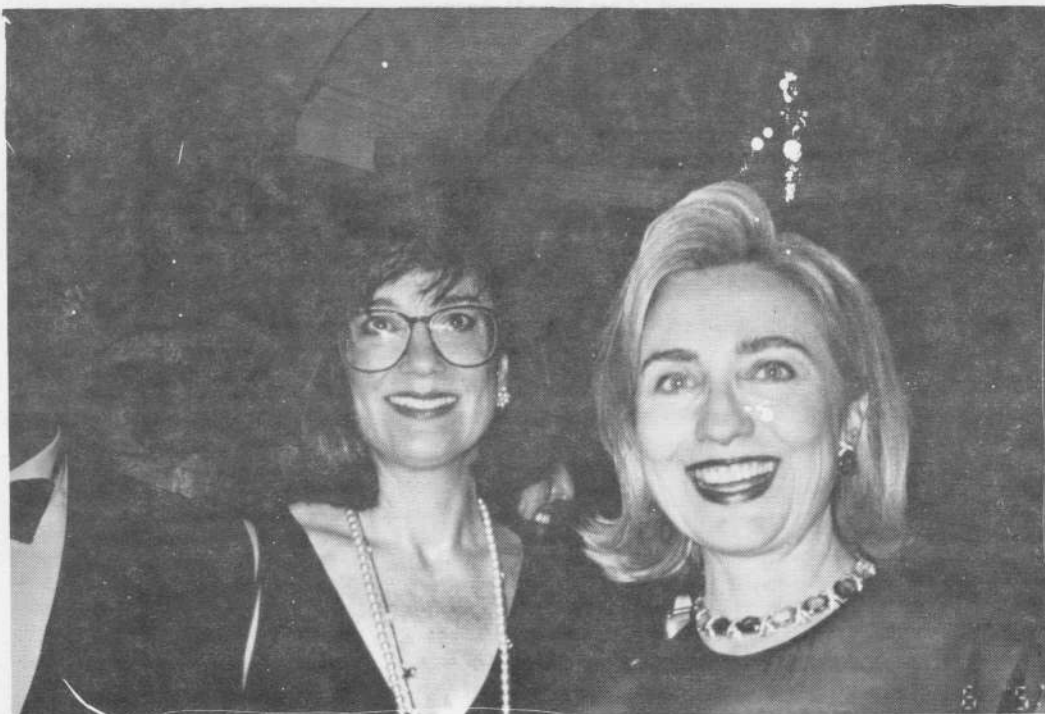
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CHAPLAIN

Rev. James H. Vance
15929 SE 46 Way
Bellevue, WA 98006-3240

EDITOR, HARDLIFE HERALD

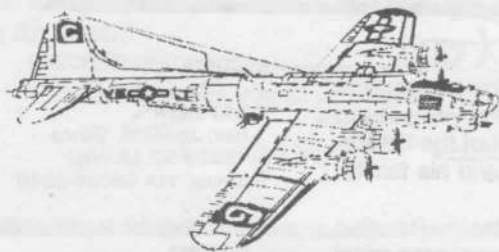
Ed Stern
P.O. Box 2187



Dear Ed:

I'm sending this obituary along because I'm sure some of the 548th people will remember Johnson. I didn't know the Colonel myself, and I don't find him listed among the members of the 385th BGMA, but he IS a 385th veteran. I thought you might want to make some mention of his death in the next issue of the Hardlife Herald.

Sterling Rogers



Johnson was in three wars

Retired Air Force Lt. Col. Frank Johnson was a people person.

"Daddy was a man who took time to talk to people as a person," said his daughter, Ruth Wegenhoft of Altus, Okla. "No matter what he had going on, he was willing to talk to anyone."

Johnson, who served during World War II, died Thursday. He was 78.

Born on Feb. 16, 1917 in Medford, N.J., he graduated from Mount Holly High School in New Jersey.

In 1941, Johnson joined the Army at age 24 and became an aviation cadet. He was commissioned in 1943 as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps.

Johnson served as a B-17 bombardier with the 8th Air Force, 385th Bombardment Group, 548th Bomb Squadron, during World War II.

"Dad was involved in the first daylight bombing mis-

sion on Berlin and flew two missions on D-Day," his daughter said.

Johnson flew 32 combat missions during World War II including six over Berlin.

He received the Purple Heart*, the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Soldiers' Medal, the Bronze Star, the Air Medal with 5 Oak Leaf Clusters and the Air Force Commendation Medal.

On Nov. 21, 1948 Johnson married Ruby Matthys. They had four children.

"The family was very important to him," his daughter said. "My brothers and sister are all close to one another."

Johnson also served in the Korean War and the Vietnam War.

"Wherever we were stationed, Dad made an effort to learn the language to be able to communicate with the natives there."

Johnson's assignments included the Philippines, Japan, Massachusetts and Kelly AFB.

385 BGMA

ED STERN, EDITOR
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