

Hardlife



Herald



## Newsletter of the 385th Bombardment Group Association

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

*The Mighty Eighth*

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### THE STAR SPANGLED BANNER

Your editor received this information about our National Anthem from a Mr. Steve Baldwin. I did not know that the Anthem was four stanzas. Like most of us, I only knew and sang the first stanza.

Following is the story of how it came to be written, and the four stanzas sent to me by Mr. Baldwin:

In 1812, the United States went to war with Great Britain, primarily over freedom of the seas. We were in the right. For two years, we held off the British, even though we were still a rather weak nation. Great Britain was in a life and death struggle with Napoleon. In fact, just as the United States declared war, Napoleon marched off to invade Russia. If he won, as everyone expected, he would control Europe, and Great Britain would be isolated.

It was no time for her to be involved in an American war. At first, our seamen proved better than the British. After we won a battle on Lake Erie in 1813, the American commander, Oliver Hazard Perry, sent a message, "We have met the enemy and they are ours." However, the weight of the British navy beat down our ships eventually.

New England, hard-hit by a tightening blockade, threatened secession. Meanwhile, Napoleon was beaten in Russia and in 1814 was forced to abdicate. Great Britain now turned its attention to the United States, launching a three-pronged attack. The northern prong was to come down Lake Champlain toward New York and seize parts of New England. The southern prong was to go up the Mississippi, take New Orleans and paralyze the west. The central prong was to head for the mid-Atlantic states and then attack Baltimore, the greatest port south of New York. If Baltimore was taken, the nation, which still hugged the Atlantic coast, could be cut in two. The fate of the United States, then rested to a large extent on the success or failure of the central prong.

The British reached the American coast, and on August 24, 1814, took Washington, D.C. Then they moved up the Chesapeake Bay toward Baltimore. On September 12, they arrived and found 1,000 men in Fort McHenry, whose guns controlled the harbor. If the British wished to take Baltimore, they would have to take the fort.

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**385™ BGA REUNION • BOISSER CITY, LA • OCT. 3-8, 2006**

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# Hardlife Herald

385th Bombardment Group (H)

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■ John C. Ford '77-'79  
■ James H. Emmons '79-'81  
'Paul Schulz '81-'83  
'Forrest V. Poore '83-'85  
William A. Nichols '85-'87

'Earl Cole '87-'89  
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■ Robert C. Smith '93-'95  
Robert Valliere '95-'97  
Michael Gallagher '97-'99  
Tom Newton '99-'01  
Leo LaCasse '01-'03  
W. W. Varnedoe, Jr. '03-'05

■ deceased

## Honorary Members

Roger Feller Eldon Nyseth  
Mayor Ferdinand Unsen

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## EDITORS REPORT

Your editor regrets that he will be unable to attend the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA Reunion this year due to a conflict of dates. I trust that the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA Reunion will be as successful and rewarding as those reunions in past years.

Our President, Art, has put a considerable amount of time and hard work in organizing the 2006 Reunion. Give him your support in making this reunion one of the best.

During the past months many of you have sent me outstanding stories of your days at Great Ashfield and other places. You have my humble THANKS. I hope that other 385<sup>th</sup> BGA members who have interesting stories of their days at Great Ashfield, or other places, will send them to me. I would also be grateful for any critique from any BGA member that will help me to provide you a better Hardlife Herald.

When I received the story of The Star Spangled Banner, I felt it was a front page story. I am sure that we all knew who wrote the words, and why it was written. As you read the story again I know that you will feel as I did. Let us pray that it will continue to wave for many more years.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Time is of the essence. Counting the days from now until the Reunion has become a daily practice of your president. Plans are in place for the gathering of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA veterans and their families. We look forward to "Our Reunion Within The Reunion" that is scheduled in conjunction with the 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS Reunion in Boisser City, LA, Oct. 4-8, 2006. Sessions start Wednesday afternoon and conclude with a banquet Saturday night. Information about schedule, registration, and hotel reservations were published in the June issue of the Hardlife Herald

The 385<sup>th</sup> BGA will celebrate special events during their luncheon meeting on October 5,

12:30 to 2:30 PM. See separate article in this issue of HH. Purchase luncheon tickets in advance by mailing luncheon form and check as soon as possible.

The 385<sup>th</sup> BGA hospitality suite will be open daily, mid-afternoons, and evenings after dinner/entertainment programs. Room number and scheduled hours will be posted in the registration area. Tickets for the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA luncheon can be picked up between 4:00 and 10:00 PM on Wednesday. One may sign up for reserve table of your choice identified by the names of former presidents.

Other events scheduled by the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA at the Thursday

luncheon meeting will include a memorial for former presidents who are deceased, and for those who passed away since our last meeting. Celebrations of the first tour to Great Ashfield in 1976, and of the establishment of the 385<sup>th</sup> Memorial Trust Fund at All Saints Church in Great Ashfield will also be celebrated.

Otherwise we will mix with other bomb groups during meals, tours conferences and the Saturday banquet. We trust that the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA will have more persons attending the 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS reunion than most of the 40 bomb groups represented.

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## HISTORIANS HUNT FOR PURPLE HEART STORIES

The National Purple Heart Hall of Honor is currently under construction in New York's Hudson Valley at the New Windsor Cantonment State Historical Site. The mission of the Hall of Honor is to collect and preserve the stories of Purple Heart recipients from all branches of service and across generations in an attempt to ensure that all recipients are

represented. Their stories will be preserved and shared through a series of exhibits, and live and videotaped interviews with veterans themselves, and the Roll of Honor, an intensive computer program detailing the stories of each individual. The Hall of Honor will be the first in the nation to recognize the more than 1.7 million Americans wounded or

killed in action while serving in the United States Military, and will become the nation's sole repository dedicated to the preservation of these stories of sacrifice. For more information, including how to share your story, click on: [http://nysparks.state.ny.us/heritage/purple\\_hrt.asp](http://nysparks.state.ny.us/heritage/purple_hrt.asp)

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## 385<sup>th</sup> BGA 2006 REUNION MEETING

The 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association will have a luncheon and business meeting on Thursday, October 5, 2006 at 12:30 PM. The assigned meeting room will be posted on the Registration Bulletin Board and in the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA Hospitality Room.

During the meeting we will celebrate three historic events:

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the Association.

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first group's return to Great Ashfield.

The 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Trust Fund to All Saints Church.

Former Presidents and families of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA will be recognized and a memorial service will be conducted for those who have passed away. One may reserve a choice of seating identified by the name of a former

president. Sign-up sheets for seating at the luncheon will be in the 385<sup>th</sup> Hospitality Suite.

The cost of the luncheon is \$20.00 per person which includes tax and gratuity. Complete the form on page 11 and mail to Art Driscoll, 4500 Post Rd., H-75, Nashville, TN 37205. Make check payable to: 385<sup>th</sup> BGA Luncheon.



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## CAN'T WE ALL BE FRIENDS?

By Charles D. Hamlin

On my 23<sup>rd</sup> mission, a mission to Kiel, Germany, May 22, 1944, a very strange incident happened.

We were at our cruising altitude about a half hour from our target (I was ball turret gunner and we were number six in the low squadron) when a German aircraft rose up to fly right under our formation about 50 yards away. I could see the pilot very clearly who was looking up at me.

He showed no hostility at all and actually looked quite friendly, sort as if he belonged in formation.

I called the pilot on the interphone reporting the aircraft. The pilot, Elmer White, asked me if I was shooting at him. I said "No! Nobody was shooting!" The pilot said, "Well, somebody better start shooting. What's he doing now?" I said, "He's waving at me." Then as suddenly as he appeared, he rolled to his left and flew away.

The aircraft was a twin engine craft—a little bigger than a fighter. I had never seen one before (or since.)

In the briefing that followed the mission we surmised that it

may have been a pilot from one of the German occupied countries, like Denmark or Sweden as we were quite close to those countries. We never received any further information about this. It's still a mystery today.

Charles D. Hamlin  
Ball Gunner  
"Lil Audrey"

\*M/Sgt USAF, (Ret)  
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## MERCY MISSIONS

May 15-30, 1945

During May 1945, many crews from the 385<sup>th</sup> BG flew Mercy Missions transporting liberated French POWs and/or DPs from Linz, Austria to airfields in France. During the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA 2005 Tour, many of these persons were on hand to greet members of the tour group. Several of these persons, or members of their families, are interested in establishing a contact with any of the 385<sup>th</sup> BG crew members who carried them home to France.

Following are some of the POWs/DPS brought home by 385<sup>th</sup> BG crews, and their specific remembrance of that memorable flight. Should any member of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA remember those special flights, please advise Art Driscoll.

Julien REMINIAC—returned to an airfield between Beaumont sur Oise and Bernes sur Oise on May 19, 1945. A picture of the 30 DPs returned on the B-17 was taken by one of the B-17 crewman prior to leaving Linz.

Albert SILVESTRE—returned to Le Bourget Airport on May 19, 1945. While taking off at Linz, the B-17 blew a tire and returned to the departure area. A jeep brought a replacement tire and the plane took off. The DPs were invited to visit the cockpit by the crew members. The plane flew over the Alps before landing at Le Bourget.

Ernest MOREAU—returned to France on May 15, 1945. Take off from Linz delayed due to late arrival by Ernest who was looking for bread. Friend explained to pilot the reason for the delay, and remained in the cockpit and spoke to pilot all the way home. The pilot made some detours during the flight to show us some of the areas that they had bombed.

Kleber CREVEL—returned to Nancy Airport about 100 miles east of Paris on May 18 or 20, 1945. Letter from Bill Daysh published in November 2005 issue of HH seeking help for Kleber's daughter to make contact with pilot that airlifted her father back to France.

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# 385<sup>th</sup> BGA TOUR TO GREAT ASHFIELD

SEPTEMBER, 1976

*By Vincent W. Masters*

This is my recollection of our first organized tour to England and Great Ashfield in 1976. Any thoughts, corrections or additions are welcome.

In 1975, a group of us of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGMA got together to discuss a possible trip to our former base at Great Ashfield and to England. I had just been elected to the presidency of the Association and sounded out others regarding a memorial tour.

John Ford suggested a tour to coincide with the Bicentennial Year of America. To be honest, I cannot remember all who took part in the preparations for this 1976 tour, but I do know that John and Betty Ford were very active in the planning.

As the plans evolved, it was decided that we would make our return to Great Ashfield in September, 1976. Nearly 180 of us gathered in the Pan American Lounge at JFK airport in New York. We were all excited about the chartered flight to London.

We had an open bar all the way across the Atlantic and we were a pretty loose group by the time we landed. We had four bus loads of enthusiastic members and guests for an exciting tour of England and Great Ashfield.

Our English friends had arranged a reception luncheon for us at the Corn Exchange in Ip-

swich. The luncheon was hosted by the Lord Mayor of Ipswich and attended by the Lord Mayors of surrounding Suffolk Counties. My bride, Judy, and I believe John and Betty Ford were invited to have Sherry with the Lord Mayor and his wife prior to the luncheon. Many toasts were given and speeches made, and a most wonderful time was had by all.

We hosted a dinner in Cambridge for our English friends known as The Friends Of The Eighth (FOTE for short). The speaker of the evening was Roger Freeman, noted English historian and author of several books on the air war including "The Mighty Eighth."

A very special event was a reception given by the Lord Mayor of Bury St. Edmonds at the Cathedral. We also were hosted to a very memorial luncheon by the "Friends of the Eighth" in Bury St. Edmonds.

Even more emotional was the memorial service at the All Saints Church in Great Ashfield, England. The usual Sunday service averaged only about 12 parishioners, but for the memorial service for the 385<sup>th</sup>, the little church was over-flowing with more than 400 persons in attendance. A check for the preservation of All Saints Church was presented to the rector.

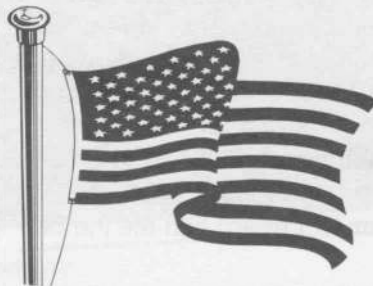
The high-lite, of course, was the reception of the 385<sup>th</sup> members and guests given at the remnants of the Air Base by the local villagers. A thrilling, emotional, tearful reunion was experienced. Vintage WWII vehicles were displayed and driven by various 385<sup>th</sup> members and villagers.

A fly-by by Fortress "Sally B" brought tears of remembrance of days gone by as the beautiful lady swooped low as she made several passes over the field... As graceful and majestic as we all remembered her.

The final tribute to our fallen comrades came at the Cambridge American Cemetery and Memorial. The personnel of the Cemetery had marked the grave sites of all known 385<sup>th</sup> members, so that we could wander throughout the area and reminisce about our wartime buddies. The quiet dignity of the reflecting pools at the Wall of the Missing brought even more somber memories as we placed a wreath in honor of our missing comrades.

It was of the deepest pride of our war time accomplishments and the heartfelt warmth of our English friends that we clambered aboard our buses to return to the US of A.

Great memories..... Vince



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## MY FOURTH MISSION

By Robert A. Stein

Navigator - "Curley's Kids"

It was Easter Sunday 1944 when I was awakened by Gat, our friendly "waker upper," and advised that I, the navigator on "Curley's Kids," was to fly with a crew from another squadron. I was told to check in with Joe Hart, the pilot and aircraft commander of the "Spirit of Chicago." Meeting with the crew, a bunch of grizzled veterans who had made it through 25 missions, we sat through the mission briefing. The target was Warnemunde, a place on the Baltic, where the Germans were working on a special type of weapons, probably the forerunner of our atomic weapons.

It was a miserable, cold, wet morning at Great Ashfield when we tookoff. Climbing to altitude, we formed up and headed out over the North Sea. However, before we got to Helgoland, we experienced all sorts of engine troubles that Joe could not get under control. He knew that we could never reach the target and return, and told the mission commander, who advised us to abort. Giving Joe a heading we begrudgingly headed back to our base. As we approached our base, Hardlife advised us that the field was completely socked in, and to head west where the weather was a little better and to land as soon as possible. In a short time, we spotted a British Airfield and landed. We were greeted warmly, hustled inside, and began a great three days before Headquarters could send a B-17 to pick us up.

The Brits were terrific hosts and have a wonderful sense of humor. Each of us was

dormered in a single room, and each morning a cute WAFI would knock at the door and bring us a cup of tea and a biscuit.

After breakfast we would gather and tell war stories. The British airmen could not understand how we could expose ourselves in broad daylight to the German fighters, and ever make it back.

We were allowed to attend one of their mission briefings, which went like this: "Pathfinder Mosquitos will depart at 1900 hours, and then the other aircraft will depart at intervals of two minutes, and pick altitude between 16,000 and 20,000 feet. The target is the marshalling yard southwest of Paris, and should be well marked by the time of your arrival. Be careful, and keep your eyes open." It was hair raising to us. Joe Hart volunteered to go along as an observer, but no dice. As I recall all aircraft returned safely.

When we aborted, I was wearing the light blue heated suit that looked like a pair of long johns and fleece lined boots. What a ribbing I took for the several days we were there. I was immediately dubbed the Easter Bunny, and they never let it rest. "Hey Bunny lay us an egg." "Hey Bunny do you want a drink or a carrot?" You name it, they said it.

Our hosts were a hard drinking and fun loving lot. George, a quick witted happy-go-lucky Major and an Aircraft Commander whose crew duty was a gunner, was also the Club Officer. The bar was just about open all the time. I heard him tell the bar-

tender, "If I see you taking a farthing from any of these Yanks, you will spend the rest of the war in the kitchen." We loved George.

The following day we attended a Group meeting where the mission data was discussed by the ranking personnel along with praise and admonishments. A talk by the Flight Surgeon was closed by the telling of a joke that brought loud and raucous laughing. Our bombardier, a lean guy from Texas, told one that had them all roaring. Decorum doesn't permit me from quoting it on these pages.

When we were picked up to return to base, Joe got in the left seat and buzzed the field as a bunch of our friends waved goodbye to their "Yank Buddies."

If memory serves me, Joe and crew went down on a Berlin mission not long after that memorable Easter Sunday. The bombardier survived so I believe some or all of them survived. I thought the world of those guys and I don't think that an Easter goes by that a little bit of "that day" does not creep into my thoughts.

Our original crew went on and flew 28 missions by "D" Day. At that time the 30 mission cap was lifted since we were supporting the ground troops. However, Headquarters said that two crews in each squadron with the most missions could go home for a 30 day leave and then return back to base. Shortly we were on orders to return home. However, before our departure date, Al Lages, our Bombardier, and I were required to report to a briefing to fly a maximum effort to Big "B." In spite of

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our "No! No! We're on orders" claim, we reported. We made it back and swore no more until after our leave.

We all had our leave at home, then reported to Atlantic City to travel back to Great Ashfield. The enlisted crew members were told they were not returning back to Great Ashfield. Although the officers were all sure that they would also be told

that they were not returning to base, it wasn't long before we were on the USS America on our way to Great Ashfield. Our pilot, J. O. Leonard, obtained a job in Operations, and our Co-pilot, Gene Hackel, flew C-47s hauling personnel and cargo to the continent and back. Al Lages, Bombadier, and I flew six more missions and finished the new 35 mission limit.

Gene Hackel and his wife wrote and published a book "Skipper Goes to War," a tale about the trials and tribulations of smuggling our mascot, a cocker spaniel named "Skipper" through Goose Bay, Iceland, Charley (in the United Kingdom) until we settled in Great Ashfield. An enjoyable book for any of our Association members to obtain and read.

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## 2005 TOUR OF AIR & SPACE MUSEUM

### LE BOURGET AIRPORT

*By Art Driscoll*

During the 2005 tour in Paris, we met many new friends of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA. Several of these had made arrangements for a meeting with former French POWs and DPs (displaced persons), who were airlifted from Linz, Austria, in May 1945 by 385<sup>th</sup> crews to several French airports. The 385<sup>th</sup> BG airlifted 2490 persons, which included 730 French DPs, to England and France. As one of the 385<sup>th</sup> BG pilots, I airlifted 30 persons to Creil Airport, France which is located near Charles De Gaulle Airport.

On June 23, 2005, the Tour Group visited the Air and Space Museum at Le Bourget Airport and was welcomed at a reception hosted by Bernard Rignault, Deputy Director of the Museum. He welcomed us in French which was interpreted for our group. My remarks and introduction of our tour group was translated into French for the Museum staff and the six POWs and DPs who joined us. In the words of our host, "This French-American Reunion is a Fraternity of Those

Saved with Those Who Flew the Saving Mission." It was an emotional experience for the tour members as the POWs and DPs tried to communicate their thanks and appreciation for those mercy missions in May 1945.

Tour guides provided information about the exhibits of the many types of aircraft of WW I and WW II, as well as modern aircraft and space travel, to both our tour members and the French POWs/DPs. During a lunch hosted by the tour group for the POWs and DPs, stories, through interpreters, were exchanged about liberation from POW camps as well as the airlifts from Linz.

After the afternoon visit of the Museum, the French POWs and DPs presented each 385<sup>th</sup> BGA tour member a book of letters about being liberated by US military forces and being airlifted by the 385<sup>th</sup> BG in B-17s from Linz to airports in France. The books contained a copy in French and a copy in English typed by Alain Charles of Paris. Mons.

Charles helped making the arrangements for our visit to Merville and Le Bourget. He helped arrange for the only B-17 flying in Europe, the "Pink Lady," to be in Merville while our tour was there. He also made a presentation of computerized images and data of B-17 crashes during our visit to the museum.

Assisting Alain Charles in making the arrangements for the tour's visit to the Air and Space Museum were Michel Lugez and Christian Wannyn. Michel Lugez is President of the American Memorial Association of St-Nazarie, and is a French Aviation Historian who has done research on 748 WW II aircraft including B-17s and B-24s, and other fighter and bomber aircraft that crashed in France. Christian Wannyn was a speaker at the morning reception, and was a guide for the museum tours, and was helpful as an interpreter between tour members and the French POWs and DPs.

(See photo back cover))



On one of the ships was an aged physician, William, Beanes, who had been arrested in Maryland and brought along as a prisoner. Frances Scott Key, a lawyer and friend of the physician, had come to the ship to negotiate his release. The British captain was willing, but the two Americans would have to wait. It was now the night of September 13, and the bombardment of Fort McHenry was about to start.

As twilight deepened, Key and Beanes saw the American flag flying over Fort McHenry. Through the night, they heard bombs burst and saw the red glare of rockets. They knew the fort was resisting and the American flag was still flying. But toward morning the bombardment ceased, and a dread silence fell. Either Fort McHenry had surrendered and the British flag flew above it, or the bombardment had failed and the American flag still flew.

As the dawn began to brighten the eastern sky, Key and Beanes stared out at the fort, trying to see which flag flew over it. He and the physician must have asked each other over and over, "Can you see the flag?"

After it was all finished and the American flag was still flying, Key wrote a four stanza poem telling of the events of the night. Called "The Defense of Fort McHenry," it was published in the newspapers and swept the nation. Someone noted that the words fit an old English tune called, "To Anacreon in Heaven"-a difficult melody with an uncomfortable large vocal range. For obvious reasons, Key's work became known as "The Star Spangled

Banner, and in 1931 Congress declared it the official anthem of the United States.

Now that you know the story, here are the four stanzas:

Oh! Say, can you see, by the  
dawn's early light,  
What so proudly we hail at  
the twilight's last gleam?  
Whose broad stripes and  
bright stars, through the  
perilous fight,  
O'er the ramparts we  
watched were so gallantly  
streaming?  
And the rocket's red glare,  
the bomb bursting in air,  
Gave proof thro' the night  
that our flag was still there.  
Oh! Say, does that star-  
spangled banner yet  
wave,  
O'er the land of the free and  
the home of the brave?

On the shore, dimly seen  
thro' the mist of the deep,  
Where the foe's haughty  
host in dread silence re-  
poses,  
What is that which the  
breeze, o'er the towering  
steep,  
As it fitfully blows, half con-  
ceals, half discloses?  
Now catches the gleam of  
the morning's first beam,  
In full glory reflected, now  
shines on the stream,  
'Tis the star spangled banner,  
Oh! Long may it wave,  
O'er the land of the free and  
the home of the brave!

In the third stanza, Key allows himself to gloat over the American triumph. However, dur-

ing World War II, when the British were our staunchest allies, the following third stanza was not sung. However, here it is:

And where is that band who  
so vauntingly swore  
That the havoc of war and  
the battle's confusion  
A home and a country  
should leave us no more?  
Their blood has washed out  
their foul footsteps' pollu-  
tion.  
No refuge could save the  
hireling and slave  
From the terror of flight, or  
the gloom of the grave,  
And the star-spangled ban-  
ner in triumph doth wave  
O'er the land of the free and  
the home of the brave.

Oh thus be it ever, when  
freemen shall stand  
Between their loved ones  
and the war's desolation,  
Blest with victory and peace,  
may the Heaven-rescued  
land  
Praise the Power that hath  
made and preserved us a  
nation.  
Then conquer we must, for  
our cause is just,  
And this be our motto - "In  
God is Our Trust."  
And the star-spangled ban-  
ner in triumph doth wave  
O'er the land of the free and  
the home of the brave.

I hope you will look at the national anthem with new eyes. Listen to it with new ears, the next time you have a chance. And don't let anyone take it away.



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# THE 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMATION AND FIRST REUNION OF THE 385<sup>th</sup> BGA

By Leo LaCasse \*\*

On December 7, 1941, a date President Roosevelt referred to as "A Day of Infamy," Lt. Elliott (Pete) Vandevanter, was flying a B-17 to Hickam AB, Hawaii. He was looking forward to a glorious reception from grass skirted hula dancers and the customary Aloha, and with a coveted Lei draped around his neck. Instead, he was welcomed with volleys of machine gun bullets from Japanese fighter aircraft. In less than two years, Major Van returned to the United States as a Hero from the Pacific Theater of Operations. In January of 1943, he was promoted to Lt. Col. and was given Command of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. He was to organize and prepare the Group for Combat in Europe. Thus began the history of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group (H) which was stationed at Great Ashfield in Suffolk County, England.

This year the 385<sup>th</sup> BG will celebrate three anniversaries: The Golden Anniversary of the founding of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association; the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first return to Great Ashfield by members of the Association; and the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of establishing a Trust Fund to support the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Altar and Stained Glass window in All Saints Church in the Town of Great Ashfield. All three anniversaries will be put forth as a proclamation to the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society during the October 2006 Reunion in Boisser City, LA by our President Art Driscoll.

It was Ruel Weikert and others living in the Cleveland, OH area who felt strongly enough that the legends of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group should be recognized and preserved, and that the camaraderie of the personnel of the group be given a venue to meet and renew old friendships developed during their tour of duty at Great Ashfield. The Group had been deactivated in 1945 and all personnel returned to the United States. Many chose to leave the military and were scattered to the four corners of the country. Since records of the group were not arranged in any manner, imagine the frustrations for Ruel, now a civilian, wanting to get in touch with all members of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group.

First, he started by contacting the pilots of his squadron (551<sup>st</sup>) to obtain their impression of his quest to establish an Association. Next, he contacted the commanders and administrators of each squadron. He asked each of them to contact their crews and staff members and to persuade each of them to contact and persuade their friends, made during the war years at Great Ashfield, to become members of an Association as yet to be formed. By word of mouth and many letters, the Association of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group was organized and at the first reunion in 1957 Ruel became its first President. As the Association grew, Ruel remained as President from 1957 until 1972.

General Van attended the 1972 reunion and said this about the 385<sup>th</sup>,

"Everyone in service says their outfit is the best. Today I am going to tell you how really good you were. Of all the Bomb Groups in the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, the 385<sup>th</sup> was third for bombs on the target. And of all the Bomb Groups in the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, the 385<sup>th</sup> was next to last in losses. If you put those two things together, third for bombs on the target and only one outfit had less losses, that makes you pretty darn good."

General Van died soon thereafter. How proud he must have been over the years to review and remember the accomplishments of his 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group.

From 1957 to 1970, the Association was known as the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. In 1970, it became the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Reunion Association until 1979. In 1980, the name changed once again to the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association. In 2004, the Association once again changed the name to what is now the, 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association. Art Driscoll is the 18<sup>th</sup> President of the Association. This year he plans to Honor each former President during the October Reunion. Special Honors will be accorded to Ruel Weikert, the father of the Association, who worked hard to keep the memory of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group alive and well.

\*\* Leo LaCasse, Col.,  
USAF (Ret)—Consultant to the  
Board of Directors  
regarding Anniversaries,  
Memorials, and Monuments

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## WWII TRAVELS OF "ROGER WILCO"

By Leslie L. Reichard

Growing up in Marion, OH, I never had an interest in flying, and never had a thought of becoming a pilot. After Pearl Harbor and the draft was about to catch up to me, I tried to decide which service branch I was best qualified to serve. Employed as a Teletype Operator, I attempted to enlist in the Army Signal Corps. Failing the physical (owing to a spot on my lung thought to be tuberculosis) and not wanting to be in the infantry, I applied for pilot training with the Army Air Corps. I passed the physical and equivalency test, and was sworn in as an Aviation Cadet

After basic and advanced flight training, I received my pilot's wings and commission in October 1942. From November, 1942 until March, 1943 I was in Ephrata, WA training in the B-17. Due to the poor winter weather there was little flying and we had plenty of time to ourselves. On base, we attended ground school, however, off-base our favorite recreational area was Spokane, WA.

In those days the need was for first pilots, and I was fortunate to have received time in the left seat and checked out as a first pilot.

On one of my visits to Spokane, I bought a two-month old, coal black cocker spaniel. I never considered how I was going to take care of him, feed him, what I would do with him when I flew, or what would happen to him when I went overseas. I thought that he would be sent home to my wife when I went overseas. Little I think that he would become a celebrity, and a world traveler.

With my surprise package snuggled in my lap, I went back to Ephrata. Since he would be living in our four-man hut, it did not take long for the other occupants to spoil him. For food we made visits to the mess hall and later we were able to get him puppy chow. Between both food items, he was well fed.

Unanimously by the hut occupants, he was named "Roger Wilco" with "Roger" for short. Unfortunately house training was a problem since we were either busy in ground school or flying.

Late in March, Roger and I were passengers on a flight to Geiger Field, WA. On the flight to Geiger Field, Roger rode up in the nose, sleeping and curled up on a blanket. It seemed all he wanted to do was eat, sleep and get into trouble. Upon arriving at Geiger Field, I was assigned to the new 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, 549<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, and assigned a crew.

My assigned crew now consisted of Co-pilot Bruno Roti, Nav. Clement Sullivan, Bomb. John Zavisho, Eng./TTG Donald Biggs, Asst. Eng./WG Robert Currie, RO Egbert Rude, BTG Ben Phelper, WG John Cohen and TG John Kelaher. John Zavisho was not friendly to Roger as Roger always used John's room for a latrine. From John, Roger learned the meaning of "NO!" and "BAD DOG!"

In April we went to Glasgow, MT for formation, bombing and gunnery training in preparation for overseas duty. Roger went on practice missions not requiring oxygen, and after several flights he was considered an observer. Most of the time, he slept

curled up in the nose of the plane. When not flying he was well cared for by the girls of the Dental Clinic.

Training was completed in May 1943 and Roger and the crew flew to Kearney, NB to ready our B-17 for overseas combat. A few days later we departed for Great Ashfield with stops in Cleveland, OH and Syracuse, NY. Since the B-17 was considered a big aircraft in those days, there were many sightseers on hand in Cleveland as we taxied up to the terminals. Who was the first to come out of the plane? Roger!

The next day we went on to Syracuse and met the 549<sup>th</sup> Squadron Commander. Continuing on, we were grounded in Bangor, ME owing to weather. While in Bangor, Ben Phelper (a former Walt Disney Studio artist) painted a beautiful girl and the words "Sack Time" on the plane. We chose "Sack Time" for our plane's name since Roger was always on someone's cot or sleeping in the corner of the plane.

When the weather cleared we took off for Gander Lake to wait for our turn to cross the Atlantic. After five days in Gander Lake waiting for the weather to clear, we crossed to Prestwick, Scotland flying below 10,000 feet since Roger had no oxygen mask. From Prestwick we flew to Great Ashfield and were greeted by Col. Vandevanter, the Group Commander. "Solid ground at last!", must have been Roger's foremost thought.

Regular dog food was a problem in England. Roger liked to visit the mess hall, but it also meant visits to the vet. Eventually we found proper food for him in Ip-

swick, but the mess hall was always Roger's favorite restaurant.

On our seventh mission, the first shuttle mission to Africa, we were shot down and imprisoned in Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Germany. T/Sgt. Egbert Rude, our Radio Operator, was grounded for that mission and took over the caring of Roger. "Comrades in Sorrow," a press release picture in the European Theater on December 18, 1943 showed T/Sgt. Rude and Roger consoling each other on the loss of their crewmates.

Sgt. Rude continued to fly and completed his required number of missions. Returning to the USA, Sgt. Rude smuggled Roger aboard the Queen Mary in a duffel bag. However Roger was discovered and Sgt. Rude served K.P. for the balance of the trip.

Arriving in the USA, Sgt. Rude sent Roger to his parents in Greenville, SC, and in December 1944 Roger was sent to my parents in Marion, OH, to await my return. Liberated in May 1945, I arrived home to Marion to be greeted by my wife, my parents

AND Roger, who greeted me as if we had never been apart.

Roger logged 59 hours flying as an observer in a B-17. He flew across the Atlantic to Europe and sailed back to the USA aboard the Queen Mary. He lived in Ephrata, WA; Glasgow, MT; Great Ashfield, England; Greenville, SC; Columbus, OH and Montgomery, AL before his death in 1948. If he could be here and speak for himself, I am sure he could tell many war stories that took place during his short life.

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# Constitution of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association

Adopted at the members meeting October 2004

## ARTICLE I

### Name

The name of this Association shall be the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Association. Its official abbreviation shall be 385<sup>th</sup> BGA. The 385<sup>th</sup> BGA is unincorporated and is non profit in accordance with the provisions of Section 501 (c) (19) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and subsequent amendments.

## ARTICLE II

### Purpose

The purposes of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA are:

- (a) To perpetuate the history and activities of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (H), 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force, that was stationed at Great Ashfield, RAF Station 155, Suffolk, England, during World War II, as well as of subsequent 385<sup>th</sup> BGA.
- (b) To remember and honor the veterans who gave their lives in this Group during World War II and those veterans who have died since.
- (c) To maintain items and documents of an historical nature for the purpose of preserving the history and activities of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (H) and its veterans as well as the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA, both during World War II and since. Such Archives will serve as reference material for historians and for educational purposes.
- (d) To enhance communication among members with the publication of a newsletter. This Newsletter may also serve as a journal of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA activities and as an historical record.
- (e) To hold Reunions and Special Meetings to promote fellowship between members and enhance the esprit de corps within the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA.
- (f) To locate and enroll veterans of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group (H), relatives of veterans of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, and other interested parties so they may participate in and learn of the activities of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA and to pass these on for posterity.
- (g) To maintain a close relationship with other 8<sup>th</sup> AF Groups, historical Societies and organizations whenever possible.
- (h) To educate the public, including school children, about the activities and history of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group during World War II.
- (i) To assist, if possible and feasible, in the maintenance of memorials to veterans of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group.

## ARTICLE III

### Membership

Members shall be either veterans of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (H) of the 8<sup>th</sup> Army Air Force, including members of units assigned or attached for support while this Group was stationed at Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England during World War II, or other persons or organizations interested in the history of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group and its veterans. Types of members shall be defined in the By Laws.

## ARTICLE IV

### Registered Address

Section 1. The registered address of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA shall be the address of the current Treasurer. Due notice will be given to the Internal Revenue Service when such address changes.

Section 2. The following objects should be kept at the Registered Address, subject to the inspection of

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the membership at any reasonable time upon written request:

- (a) A list of the current members of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA, with current addresses; e-mail addresses, if available and permitted; and in the case of Associate members, their 385<sup>th</sup>BG relative, if known.
- (b) A copy of the current Constitution and By Laws.
- (c) The annual budget sheets of the receipts and disbursements of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA as filed, if required, with the Internal Revenue Service for the previous five (5) years.
- (d) A copy of the notification letter of the IRS that the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA is a tax exempt organization, together with all other pertinent IRS documents.
- (e) All other books and documents required by law to be kept at the Registered Address.

#### ARTICLE V Government

Section 1. By Laws shall be passed to implement the purposes and operation of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA, providing no By Law, or any part of a By Law, conflicts with the purposes of this Constitution. The members may repeal or amend the By Laws provided that the proposed amendment has been published in the Newsletter prior to the meeting.

Section 2. The government of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA shall be vested in an Executive Board, whose membership and functioning shall be defined in the By Laws, except, the membership, at a regular called meeting, may repeal any act of the Board.

Section 3. Robert's Rules of Order shall govern all meetings of both the Executive Board and meetings of the members, except as otherwise explicitly stated or required in this Constitution or in the By Laws.

#### ARTICLE VI Officers

Section 1. The Officers of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA shall be President, one or more Vice Presidents, Secretary, Treasurer and Editor of the Newsletter.

Section 2. The Officers of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA will perform the normal duties prescribed for their office.

Section 3. Officers shall be elected by the members at a regular meeting, normally a reunion meeting, and shall hold office until their successor is elected or appointed.

#### ARTICLE VII Duration and Dissolution

Section 1. The duration of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA shall be perpetual.

Section 2. However, if the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA is to be dissolved for any reason, the dissolution shall be implemented as stated in the By Laws.

#### ARTICLE VIII Amendments

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the membership present and voting at any scheduled meeting, provided that the proposed amendment was submitted in the 385<sup>th</sup> BGA newsletter, or by mail, and delivered to the members two months prior to the meeting at which the vote is taken.



## BOOK REVIEW

*By Bill Varnedoe*

"EIGHTH AIR FORCE" by Greg Pons. This is a very good book about the 8<sup>th</sup> AF and the equipment we used. It contains many excellent high quality pictures. The book has 192 pages

of which 53 pages (28%) are devoted to the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. That's a lot for an 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force book!!! The book was originally written in French, but an English version can be ordered directly

on the web site of the author using the following link in English: <http://livres.histoireetcollections.com/en/themes/6/world-wars/l.html>.



## LETTERS/E-MAILS

18 June 06

Dear Chuck,

Thank you for sending the "Hardlife Herald" all the way to Switzerland. Thought I would send you a check to cover the additional expense.

I now again live in Baar, the city I was born in. I was about nine years old when on March 16, 1944, Jerry Legg and his crew from the 385<sup>th</sup> parachuted in from a shot-up B-17. Jerry landed on top of a railroad track embankment and walked to a farmhouse nearby. He had plenty of time to get off the track, as few trains were running at that time because of wartime rationing. Now days he would have to hurry, the dual track is the main track between Germany and Italy, not to mention the many Swiss trains.

After the crew had jumped, the B-17 made a successful ditching on Lake Zug, near the city of Zug. The pilot, Lt. Robert Meyer, was picked up by row boat since there was hardly any gasoline during the war. The bomber was retrieved from the lake in 1952 and was on display for 20 years before being scrapped.

Every once in a while there is an event in this area to refresh people's memory about the crew from the 385<sup>th</sup> parachuting in and the B-17 landing on the lake. Not everthing went well, the chute of the navigator, Lt. Robert Williams, did not open and he died shortly after impact.

Looking forward to hearing from the 385<sup>th</sup>.

Sincerely,  
(s) Bruce Baur



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# LETTERS/E-MAILS

William Lyke  
7104 E. 100th Place  
Tulsa, OK 74133

June 6, 2006

Mr. McCawley

I recently received and read another great issue of the Hardlife. As usual, it was an educational and thought provoking read. On one page are pictures of old men with stoic smiles, then turning the page, we see the same men; young, virile, and confident as they prepare to confront the deadly and vicious Nazi war machine.

These observations are especially poignant on this day, the sixty-second anniversary of the Allied landing in Europe. They are also personally relevant as I look at the recent photos of my 25 year old son who just completed four years of volunteer service as a paratrooper with the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne Division, complete with up close and personal combat in Fallujah for nine months.

As I look at the pictures of him and his company, I see the same determination to protect their country, loved ones, and way of life that I see in the young faces of the men of the Mighty 8<sup>th</sup>. It is heart-breaking to think what these modern patriots might accomplish against a bloodthirsty enemy that killed over 3,000 American civilians and did billions of dollars in damage, if only they enjoyed the same unqualified support, from their citizens and some of our "allies" as the young men pictured in the Hardlife Herald.

With these thoughts in mind, I read the back page of the February 2006 issue which asked all Life Members for donations, large or small. Therefore, with this letter I have enclosed a check which is equivalent to a Life Membership, and by so doing, I issue a challenge to all "Baby Boomers" to match this donation out of respect for their parents. It is a good and right thing to do.

God Bless America

(s)  
William Lyke

Editor's Note: My thanks to Bill Lyke for his donation.

## LETTERS/E-MAILS

Frank X. McCawley  
2309 Cheverly Ave.  
Cheverly, MD 20785

30 June 06

Dear Sir:

Enclosed is a story that happened on one of my missions. You may be able to use it in the H.H.

Thanks,  
(s)  
Charles D. Hamlin  
5500 Shadow Crest  
Houston, TX 77096

The address is new, my old address was 556 Kaiki Dr., Diamondhead, MS 39525.  
Again Thanks

Editor's Note: Charles' story printed in this issue.

From: Cono Damato  
To: fxmccawley  
July 25, 2006

Dear Frank,

I served in the 548<sup>th</sup> BS from late February 1945 to the end of hostilities. I was navigator on Hobza's crew. I am looking for information on a mission on March 5<sup>th</sup>, 1945. My form 5 shows 9:15 flight time. This was my first mission and I flew with a different crew. There is a story there and I am trying to piece it together for submission to the HH.

Our crew went on to be a lead crew. We flew two food drop missions. There is a story there also. We flew one mission to Linz to pick up French POWs. I look forward to the HH and read it cover to cover.

Cono Damato



## LETTERS/E-MAILS

Dear Frank McCawley

I really enjoy getting the Hardlife Herald—I read it from cover to cover.

Last year you printed a diary of my co-pilot, Dale G. Smeltzer, I think sent in by his daughter. I would like to get in touch with her if you can send me an address and/or phone number. I would really appreciate it.

I was at Great Ashfield from January 1945 to June when I flew home with the group. I navigated home with Art Driscoll and Lt. Col. Reid, the Squadron Navigator. Capt. Jakie Palmer was my back-up.

My pilot was 1st Lt. Clarence E. Fauber and our plane was named "IN LIKE FLYNN." We were in the 549th Squadron and flew some 27 missions, plus three food drop missions they didn't count. Gerald Donnelly who was our Group Historian was our Engineer.

(s)  
Art Schaefer

2602 E. Windsor St.  
Tucson, Arizona 85716  
520-318-1611  
E-mail: [marylschaefer@cox.net](mailto:marylschaefer@cox.net)

5/30/2006

From: [mcelroybeved@yahoo.com](mailto:mcelroybeved@yahoo.com)

To: [fxmccawley@aol.com](mailto:fxmccawley@aol.com)

Dear Frank:

I have been a member of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGMA since 1977 and have been receiving the Hardlife Herald over the years. I have also attended many reunions of the group, including the 50<sup>th</sup> reunion in England.

Just recently I realized that I haven't heard from the 385<sup>th</sup> or received the Herald for what seemed a very long time. When I checked, the last Hardlife Herald I found was August 2001. At that time, the label indicated my dues were paid through 2001. On March 15, 2002 I mailed a check for my dues for 2002 to Verne D. Philips, who was treasurer at that time. Tom Newton was the Editor of the Hardlife Herald.

I realize now that I must have been dropped from your mailing list in 2002, but for what reason I do not know.

I would appreciate it if you will reinstate my membership and put me on the mailing list. I will be happy to pay any dues that are in arrears, when I hear from you.

The last Hardlife Herald was correctly addressed to me as follows:

Edward J. McElroy, RO1  
1726 Emerald Cove Circle  
Cape Coral, FL 33991-3494

Edward J. McElroy

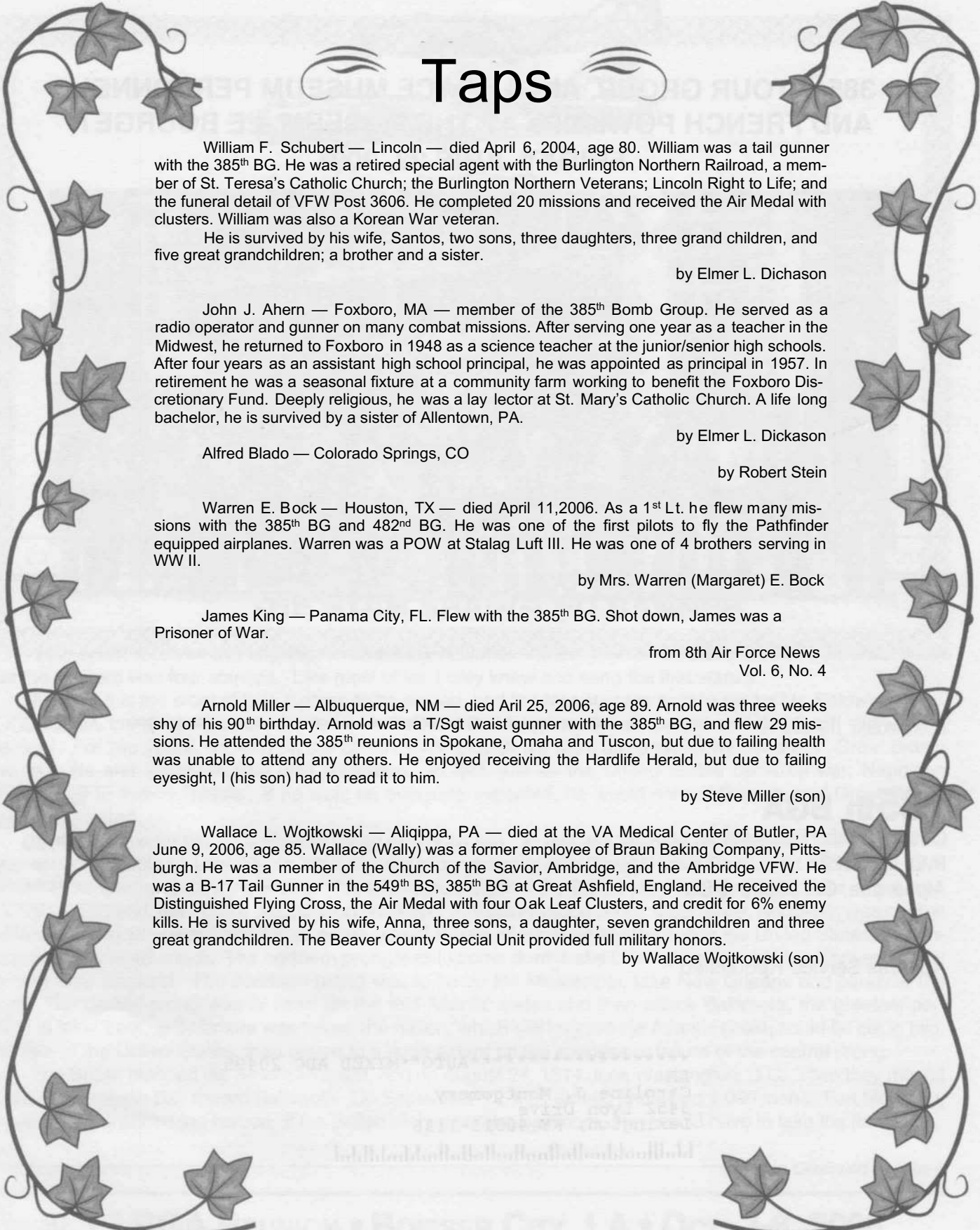
Editor's Note: Mail forwarded to Treasurer.

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# Taps



William F. Schubert — Lincoln — died April 6, 2004, age 80. William was a tail gunner with the 385<sup>th</sup> BG. He was a retired special agent with the Burlington Northern Railroad, a member of St. Teresa's Catholic Church; the Burlington Northern Veterans; Lincoln Right to Life; and the funeral detail of VFW Post 3606. He completed 20 missions and received the Air Medal with clusters. William was also a Korean War veteran.

He is survived by his wife, Santos, two sons, three daughters, three grand children, and five great grandchildren; a brother and a sister.

by Elmer L. Dichason

John J. Ahern — Foxboro, MA — member of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group. He served as a radio operator and gunner on many combat missions. After serving one year as a teacher in the Midwest, he returned to Foxboro in 1948 as a science teacher at the junior/senior high schools. After four years as an assistant high school principal, he was appointed as principal in 1957. In retirement he was a seasonal fixture at a community farm working to benefit the Foxboro Discretionary Fund. Deeply religious, he was a lay lector at St. Mary's Catholic Church. A life long bachelor, he is survived by a sister of Allentown, PA.

by Elmer L. Dickason

Alfred Blado — Colorado Springs, CO

by Robert Stein

Warren E. Bock — Houston, TX — died April 11, 2006. As a 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. he flew many missions with the 385<sup>th</sup> BG and 482<sup>nd</sup> BG. He was one of the first pilots to fly the Pathfinder equipped airplanes. Warren was a POW at Stalag Luft III. He was one of 4 brothers serving in WW II.

by Mrs. Warren (Margaret) E. Bock

James King — Panama City, FL. Flew with the 385<sup>th</sup> BG. Shot down, James was a Prisoner of War.

from 8th Air Force News  
Vol. 6, No. 4

Arnold Miller — Albuquerque, NM — died April 25, 2006, age 89. Arnold was three weeks shy of his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Arnold was a T/Sgt waist gunner with the 385<sup>th</sup> BG, and flew 29 missions. He attended the 385<sup>th</sup> reunions in Spokane, Omaha and Tuscon, but due to failing health was unable to attend any others. He enjoyed receiving the Hardlife Herald, but due to failing eyesight, I (his son) had to read it to him.

by Steve Miller (son)

Wallace L. Wojtkowski — Aliquippa, PA — died at the VA Medical Center of Butler, PA June 9, 2006, age 85. Wallace (Wally) was a former employee of Braun Baking Company, Pittsburgh. He was a member of the Church of the Savior, Ambridge, and the Ambridge VFW. He was a B-17 Tail Gunner in the 549<sup>th</sup> BS, 385<sup>th</sup> BG at Great Ashfield, England. He received the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters, and credit for 6% enemy kills. He is survived by his wife, Anna, three sons, a daughter, seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren. The Beaver County Special Unit provided full military honors.

by Wallace Wojtkowski (son)

**385<sup>TH</sup> TOUR GROUP, AIR & SPACE MUSEUM PERSONNEL,  
AND FRENCH POWs/DPs AT THE MUSEUM, LE BOURGET,  
FRIDAY JUNE 23, 2005**



20 Hardlife Herald

August 2006

**385th BGA**

Chuck Smith, Treasurer

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Alpharetta, GA 30009 USA

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