

HARDLIFE HERALD

Newsletter of the 385th Bombardment Group
Association



548th



549th

550th



551st



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

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385th BGA REUNION - ST. LOUIS, MO - OCTOBER 2016

HARDLIFE HERALD

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Check us out online:

www.385thBGA.com

www.facebook.com/385thBGA

Front Cover: Checkered Tails in Formation

Back Cover: 43-37842 "Lenora Linda"

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1942 - 1945 Great Ashfield - Suffolk, England Station 155 - The Mighty Eighth
Volume 53 - Number 1 March 2016



385th BGA REUNION - ST. LOUIS, MO - OCTOBER 2016

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I was listening to some Willie Nelson songs recently. One included the line: "time flies by in the wink of an eye". In another, Willie sings, "You can't turn back time or put more sand in the glass."

I was reminded of the frequent telephone calls and emails I get from people trying to learn about the WW II experiences of a deceased relative. Invariably, sometime during these conversations, I hear the lament, "If only I had talked to him before he was gone" or "I'd give anything to be able to talk to him now and ask him these questions." I always encourage these folks to come to our reunion while they still can talk with the vets in attendance to "hear it like it was."

Time is flying by, and each year, fewer and fewer veterans are able to attend our reunion. Soon, these veterans will have all passed on and their voices will be lost to us. I urge all of you who have told yourself, "Maybe," or "Someday," or "When I have more time, I'll go to a reunion," now is the time. And for those who have attended in the past, please join us once more. It will be great to see you once again.

-Tom Gagnon

Letter from the Editor

First off, I'd like to thank you all for your patience with the *Hardlife Herald* releases over these past two years as I attended grad school. Hopefully I can get back to a regular schedule with these newsletters.

I'd like to point out that the front and back photos were provided by the Muchow collection; This is the first photograph we have on record of "Lenora Linda" 43-37824.

On page 18, there is a letter regarding Bell Crew on Mission 26. In our book, Bell stated that he made an emergency landing at a Danish airfield. Some sources state the crew bailed out before hand and that the plane had sustained damage. One photo shows the plane with 1 prop feathered after landing in Denmark but no other visible damage. It is believed that the plane was fully loaded when it landed, yet other sources indicate it was after the bombing run. Mr. Moll's letter contradicts Bell's story and we believe in hearing all sides of a story as is our freedom.

I'm looking forward to attending this year's reunion in St. Louis and I hope to see you there as it's a great opportunity to go directly to the source and ask veterans of the Mighty 8th about their experiences. It was great to see many second and third generations attending last year.

St. Louis is home to the National Personnel Records Center. While many of their records have been claimed by a fire (and subsequent water damage) in 1973, there is a chance you may be able to do extensive research and locate additional information. For more information, I recommend visiting their website: <https://www.archives.gov/st-louis/> and setting up an appointment with an archivist if need be.

As always, I look forward to email, letters and phone calls from you all; please let me know how I, along with Ian McLachlan and Bill Varnedoe, can help you with your research and please keep sending in those 385th pictures and stories for us to share.

-Charles Lundsberg

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO "RUM HUM ?"

BY SHANNON E. MUCHOW

"Whatever happened to Rum Dum?" The question flashed across my computer screen after Googling the words "rum dum" in connection with the famous B-17. I had started the search to help me name the production company I was creating to support my filmmaking endeavors. My grandfather, retired Lt. Col. Howard A. Muchow, told stories of Rum Dum and his other plane, Mr. Lucky. A quick search revealed that Mr. Lucky Productions is already in use by a company in the adult entertainment industry.

I knew what happened to Rum Dum - the bomber that flew 103 missions without aborting, the plane that so many crews had gone up in and had brought them home again, the plane with such personality that she had been referred to me as the plane that was "a bitch to fly." In 2001, my grandfather self-published his memoirs of his tour in England as a newly married 21-year-old pilot, in a book entitled "Forever Yours - If I Ever Get Home Alive." It is told through the letters he sent home to his new wife along with memories of what the censors allowed him to say and what he didn't want to say. While doing research for his book, he had enlisted the help of former South Da-

kota Senator Tom Daschel to find any information on the last mission of Rum Dum.

On his 33rd mission, they took on extensive flak, had an engine on fire and had to make an emergency landing on their way home from Neuruppin, about 40 miles northwest of Berlin. They were in German-occupied territory. They spotted a field and they headed for it. Red flares came up from the ground signaling, "Don't land here, unsafe!" They had to land. Lt. Muchow made a perfect landing on the field and soldiers came out from behind the trees. It was the Canadians; they had taken the airfield only days before. They had been clearing the field for the smaller Spitfires to land and didn't want a heavy B-17 crashing there and churning up their field. So, the crew was safe, but Rum Dum wasn't going to be able to fly home this day.

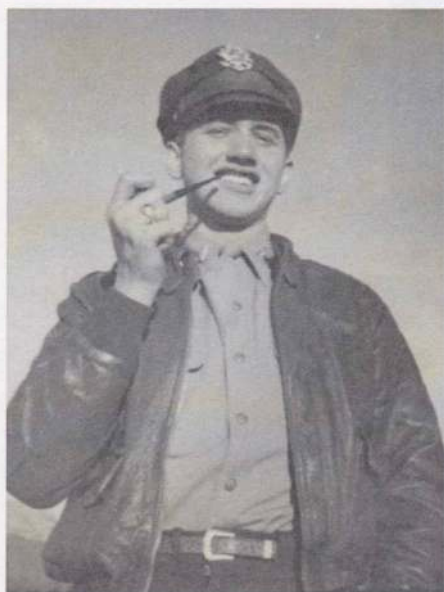
My grandpa, having been told by his father to get a receipt for anything expensive, asked the disgruntled Canadian officer to draw one up. The rudimentary receipt listed the tail number and the secret landing field B-100. With a final look at the grounded aircraft, Howard and the crew headed back to England.

The receipt was vital to my grandfather's search for this area, and Scotland Yard was enlisted as the "secret runway" my grandfather had landed on was actually becoming the first British airfield on German soil. In preparation for the final push to the Rhine, the British built this Advanced Landing Ground (B-100 Gogh), which later became RAF Laarbruch, next to the town of Weeze, about 50 miles northwest of Düsseldorf. Scotland Yard also informed my grandfather, in 1999, that the base was reverting back to the Germans.

My dad and grandfather made the journey and were escorted around the base just days before they were handing it over to the Germans. They were given a tour of the base and then taken to the field where Grandpa had made his emergency landing. A flood of memories came back to him, coming in on a wing and a prayer, all those years ago. My father looked around and said, "It doesn't seem like it would be too hard to land a B-17 here." Grandpa laughed and replied, "I don't remember it this way."

I wasn't able to go on that trip and I have always wanted to visit the location that was so important in my grandfather's life. I finally made it in March 2015. I had some time off between jobs and decided to create an audiobook version of "Forever Yours - if I Ever Get Home Alive," and went over to do research and see what has happened to runway B-100.

My husband had been to Berlin when he was very small in the 1980s and I had never been, so we decided to start our trip in this historic city. RAF Laarbruch had closed, but an international airport had sprung up in its wake. I knew Ryan Air serviced that airport so I thought it would be neat to get some footage coming from Berlin into Weeze, basically on the same approach Rum Dum made coming from Neuruppin just north of Berlin.



**Howard Muchow, Co-pilot
Armbruster Crew**



42-31378 "Rum Dum"

I knew Ryan Air serviced that airport so I thought it would be neat to get some footage coming from Berlin into Weeze, basically on the same approach Rum Dum made coming from Neuruppin just north of Berlin.

I contacted the airport media relations and explained the reason for my visit and asked if I could shoot some footage at the airport. The marketing manager replied yes and mentioned that there was a museum at RAF Laarbruch and he would pass along my information to the curator, Heinz Knechten, in case I wanted to see the museum as well.

I probably should mention that I hadn't really made an agenda ahead of time. I purposefully didn't want to make plans, just explore things when we got there. So upon our arrival in Berlin, my husband went up to the room to rest and I made myself cozy in the hotel lounge near the window with a cup of coffee and my grandfather's book and the computer.

Mr. Knechten had sent an email that he was currently working on a special exhibition, opening March 25th, to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the liberation and place a memorial stone. He also mentioned that he was unaware of any B-17 emergency landing. Immediately, I began scanning the pages from the book and emailing them to him. We arranged a meeting on Friday and I set about scheduling a flight from Berlin to Weeze.

Best laid plans of mice and men.... There were no flights from Berlin to Weeze! You could catch a flight from London to Weeze, from Barcelona to Weeze, from Stockholm to Weeze.... I went upstairs to the room, looked at my husband, and immediately burst into tears. What was I thinking?! I had no plans, a scheduled meeting in three days, a vacation to enjoy in the meantime, and no way to get to Weeze. My husband calmed me down and reminded me that we could take the train, a VERY early train....

My brother, Robbert, who lives in Holland, met us at the train station a few miles from the airbase and we headed over to the museum. Heinz and his co-worker, Manfred were there to meet us and give us a tour of the museum and the theater where they would soon display a real Spitfire. We had coffee and biscuits and chatted for a few hours and then went out to runway B-100.

It was hard to tell exactly where Grandpa had landed, but he had been there. The old runway that had been used by the Spitfires 70 years ago, had returned to nature. The clear path remains, covered by grass. The busy airport bustles nearby, but I didn't notice it. I realized a few days later that we never did go to the airport. I didn't get the footage of what it has become.

The museum now has an exhibit featuring the story of Rum Dum and my Grandfather's emergency landing. There is a plaque on the wall with photos and they have also included the story in their history book of the airbase that can be purchased in the gift shop. It's in German, but I'm hoping to get it translated into English.

After Rum Dum landed, the crew went back to England by way of a P-47 USAF base in Brussels. I have some photos of the airmen in Brussels, sitting in an anti-

artillery gun, in front of a tent and on a bicycle. I'm researching these photos to put names to these faces. The photos aren't labeled and he doesn't say who was on the crew with him in the book, but he does mention "we had some REAL eggs- not powdered eggs! -and bacon too!"

From what I understand, Rum Dum was repaired and flown back to England. During its next mission, unfortunately it met with an accident while taxiing, and never flew again.

My work continues on the audiobook and I hope to finish it this summer.



**Above, Right and Below:
Unknown Crew Members**



**Right: Model of Rum
Dum on display at
RAF Laarbruch.**

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

Although your record's quite impressive,
Your arrogance now seems excessive.
When tallying this morning's score
One's as good as sixty-four!

ONE DAY OVER FRANCE SHORTLY
AFTER D-DAY ...



WWII VETERANS RECEIVE A HIGH DISTINCTION

BY YANA RANAIVO - THE ROANOKE TIMES

One of Leo LaCasse's most memorable conundrums occurred more than seven decades ago when he was stuck in Nazi Germany for four months after he and his aircraft had been shot down for the third time during his tour.

LaCasse was never captured, but he said steering clear of enemy troops was far from an easy task. He said he spent a lot of time hiding in bushes and kept himself from starving by eating dug up potatoes and other foods from nearby farms.

"I avoided them all the time," LaCasse recalled during a dinner honoring veterans Sunday night. "It was pretty difficult. Four months is very difficult to hide from Germans when they have 4,000 troops looking for you."

Not every heroic act will be remembered, but some people are trying to engrave as many stories as they can of sacrifices past.

On Sunday, LaCasse, 96, and three others were each given the French Legion of Honour knight rank during an annual dinner at the Sheraton Roanoke Hotel and Conference Center for men and women who served during World War II.



Brig. General Leo LaCasse (Ret.) After Receiving the Legion D'Honneur

Brig. Gen. Vincent Cousin of France conveyed the Legion of Honour awards, which also went to Lt. Col. Thomas Boyer, Pfc. Forest Wireman and Pfc. Charles Faulconer.

Established in the early 1800s by French military leader and later emperor Napoleon Bonaparte, the Legion of Honour's distinction is comparable to that of the Medal of Honor.

"It's something bestowed by the French president, who decides who's going to be awarded," Cousin said. "It's the highest distinction in France."

Cousin described giving out the awards as a great honor and pleasure.

"It's a great moment to say thank you to all these veterans who have struggled

and fought for us in France and in Europe," he said. "We should never forget what they have done for us. It's a great honor, great pleasure, to have dinner with them tonight."

About 360 people attended Sunday's festivities, 52 of whom were veterans.

Bernard Marie, a native of Normandy who was 5 years old during D-Day, gave a simple reason for organizing the annual gala. "These guys need to be remembered," he said.

Marie said World War II veterans didn't fight for economic or political reasons. Mentioning the Holocaust, he said the veterans fought to defend the free world from evils of the time. "That's a good reason to remember them," he said.

CAN YOU QUALIFY AS AN AVIATION CADET?

HERE ARE THE REQUIREMENTS

TYPE OF TRAINING	FLYING DUTY (Bombardier, Navigator, Pilot)	GROUND DUTY (Armament, Communications, Engineering, Meteorology, Photography.)														
THOSE ELIGIBLE	Citizens of the United States for at least ten years, including: 1, Civilians; 2, Personnel of the Army of the United States.															
AGE REQUIREMENTS	18 to 26 (both inclusive, EXCEPT candidates for meteorology course, who may be 30)															
MARITAL STATUS	Single or Married															
MINIMUM EDUCATIONAL REQUIREMENTS	<p style="text-align: center;">WRITTEN EXAMINATION</p> <p>Every applicant must take a qualifying educational examination designed to determine whether or not he has sufficient education to enable him to absorb and comprehend the technical instruction of the Aviation Cadet course. The examination is of the short-answer, multiple-choice type. A well-read, intelligent man should have little or no difficulty in passing this examination. - Formal schooling is not a prerequisite.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">NO FLYING OFFICER CANDIDATE IS EXEMPT FROM THIS EXAMINATION</p>					<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">Armament</td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">Communications</td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">Engineering</td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">Meteorology</td> <td style="width: 15%; text-align: center;">Photography</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="font-size: small;">Two years' college engineering course, except for former Aviation Cadets with two years of college credits, including one year of college Physics or</td> <td style="font-size: small;">1. Two full years of college credits, including one year of college Physics or 2. Two full years of college credits and an amateur or commercial radio license</td> <td style="font-size: small;">Completion of at least three years of Engineering in an accredited college or university</td> <td style="font-size: small;">Three years' training at an accredited college, majoring in the Sciences or Engineering. Must have completed thorough course in Mathematics Differential and Integral Calculus, and in Physics to include Heat and Thermodynamics</td> <td style="font-size: small;">Completion of three years of Chemistry or Geology in an accredited college, preferably with professional or considerable amateur Photographic experience. Exceptions to above requirements may be made for men with extensive technical Photographic experience</td> </tr> </table>	Armament	Communications	Engineering	Meteorology	Photography	Two years' college engineering course, except for former Aviation Cadets with two years of college credits, including one year of college Physics or	1. Two full years of college credits, including one year of college Physics or 2. Two full years of college credits and an amateur or commercial radio license	Completion of at least three years of Engineering in an accredited college or university	Three years' training at an accredited college, majoring in the Sciences or Engineering. Must have completed thorough course in Mathematics Differential and Integral Calculus, and in Physics to include Heat and Thermodynamics	Completion of three years of Chemistry or Geology in an accredited college, preferably with professional or considerable amateur Photographic experience. Exceptions to above requirements may be made for men with extensive technical Photographic experience
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PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS	Candidates must meet the same physical standards as are set for Reserve Officer commission, except that visual acuity must be 20/20 and color vision normal. Minimum height, 60 inches (64 inches for pilots); maximum, 76 inches. Maximum weight for maximum height, 200 lbs.—Minimum weight for minimum height, 105 lbs.					Same general standards as for Reserve Officer commission, with requirements as to vision, hearing, etc., somewhat lower than those for flying officer. Maximum height, 78 inches.										
PERSONAL REQUIREMENTS	Character standard suitable for commission in the Army of the United States.															
LENGTH OF TRAINING	Bombardier, 26 weeks	Navigator, 29 weeks	Pilot 36 weeks	12 weeks	16 weeks	19 weeks	30 weeks	12 weeks								
GRADE WHILE TRAINING	AVIATION CADET															
PAY AND ALLOWANCES WHILE TRAINING	Pay, \$75 a month; subsistence, \$1 a day.															
BENEFITS AND ALLOWANCES	1. FREE — Quarters, medical care, hospitalization, uniforms, clothing, and equipment. 2. \$10,000 Government life insurance policy at Government expense while training; after graduation, at individual's expense while on flying duty; optional thereafter..			1. FREE — Quarters, medical care, hospitalization, uniforms, clothing and equipment. 2. \$10,000 Government life insurance policy, optional at individual's expense.												
GRADE AFTER GRADUATION	FLIGHT OFFICER OR SECOND LIEUTENANT, ARMY OF THE UNITED STATES															
PAY AFTER GRADUATION	Up to \$327 per month				Up to \$252 per month											
ALLOWANCES AFTER GRADUATION	Otte uniform allowance of \$150 when appointed a flight officer or second lieutenant.															
FUTURE PROMOTION	Flight officers may be promoted to second lieutenants and second lieutenants may receive promotion in accordance with eligibility requirements to and through higher commissioned grades.															
SERVICE REQUIRED AFTER GRADUATION	Active duty until relieved by competent authority.															
THREE WAYS TO ENLIST	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As a private in the Army Air Corps, to await training as an Aviation Cadet when facilities permit; 2. As a private in the Army Air Corps Enlisted Reserve, to be ordered to duty as an Aviation Cadet as soon as training facilities permit; or 3. If a college student (or a high school senior about to enter college), as a private in the Army Air Corps Enlisted Reserve, to be ordered to duty as an Aviation Cadet upon graduation or withdrawal from college or, if the necessity of war demands, at any time as directed by the Secretary of War. This plan is for students only. 															
WHERE TO APPLY FOR INFORMATION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Nearest Aviation Cadet Examining Board 2. Any U. S. Army Recruiting and Induction Station 3. The Adjutant of any Army Post or Organization 			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Local American Legion Post 5. Local Veterans of Foreign Wars Post 6. Local Elks Lodge 10. To the Commanding General of the Service Command in which applicant's State is located 			<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Local Junior Chamber of Commerce 8. College or School Faculty Air Force Advisor 9. The Adjutant General, Washington, D. C. 									
METHOD OF APPLICATION	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Fill out application blank. 2. Provide three letters of recommendation, signed by reputable citizens in applicant's community or college. 3. Submit birth certificate or other certified documentary evidence of date of birth and citizenship. 4. Present application and papers listed in 2 and 3 above to an Aviation Cadet Examining Board, or mail them to the Commanding General of the Service Command in which the applicant's State of residence is located. 															



(Revised to August 1, 1942)

United States Army Recruiting and Induction Service

...JgaL...

15-47-1110-9-11-42-5047



Featured Pin-Up Artist - Robert Skemp (1910 - 1984)

Robert Skemp was born in born in Scottdale, Pennsylvania.

A member of the Sundblom school of illustration, he first attended the Art Students League in New York in 1928-29, then went on to the Grand Central School of Art, studying in those years under George Luks, Thomas Hart Benton, and Harry Ballinger. But it was not until his association with Haddon Sundblom in Chicago that he came into his own as an artist.

Skemp and fellow Sundblom protégés like Gil Elvgren, Al Buell, and Joyce Ballantyne, modelled their art in large part on that of the older artist.

In the field of advertising, Skemp developed national campaigns for companies like Schlitz Beer, Studebaker Cars, the Ford Motor Company and, most notably, for Coca-Cola, where his images coordinated well with Elvgren's and Sundblom's work for the firm. He also created many story illustrations for mainstream magazines, including The Saturday Evening Post, Collier's, and Sports Afield. Skemp often adopted Elvgren's "situation" poses in his work, depicting girls caught off-guard in various activities. The use of primary colours was another characteristic of his work. He painted in a large format, usually 40 x 30 inches (161.6 x 76.2 cm), in oil on canvas.

Skemp was a member of the Society of Illustrators and the National Arts Club. His paintings are in both public collections (the Pentagon, the United States Coast Guard, and the New York Public Library) and corporate ones (AT and T, Reynolds Tobacco, and the Franklin Mint). Between 1949 and 1953, Skemp won numerous medals from The Art Directors Club of Chicago.

During his pin-up and glamour career, Skemp worked for several major publishing houses, but his original paintings are very rare today

He died in 1984 from injuries sustained in an automobile accident in Southampton, New York, on the way to his summer home.

(Left)

"No Milk Today"

Robert Skemp biography borrowed from The Great American Pin-Up by Charles G Martignette & Louis K Meisel.



42nd ANNUAL 8th AFHS REUNION
Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, MO
October 19-23, 2016

HOTEL RESERVATION INFORMATION

314-878-1500 or 888-627-7066

(Reference 'CHALET' and 8th AFHS)

Location

The Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet is located in Westport Plaza, (191 Westport Plaza, St. Louis, MO 63146) which features 18 shops, popular restaurants, and entertainment venues like the Westport Playhouse, The Funny Bone Comedy Club, Jive and Wail Piano Bar, and Backstreet Jazz and Blues. Guests will enjoy convenient access to popular destinations and attractions. We're located just 10 minutes from historic St. Charles, 15 minutes from Forest Park, home of the Saint Louis Zoo, Science Center, Art Museum and the History Museum. We're also close to the world-famous Gateway Arch, the St. Louis Cardinals baseball stadium, Six Flags® and Missouri's Wine County.

Shuttle Service

For those of you flying into St. Louis, there is complimentary shuttle service to and from the airport to the hotel. Go to Baggage Claim/Hotel Shuttle exits—the shuttle runs every half hour.

Upscale Amenities

Enjoy complimentary wireless High Speed Internet in all public areas, concierge service, plus signature amenities you'll only find at Sheraton. Wake up energized after a restful night's sleep in a plush Sheraton Sweet Sleeper® Bed. Sheraton Club rooms and suites provide guests with special access to the Sheraton Club Lounge, offering complimentary breakfast, evening hors d'oeuvres, and a variety of beverage options. Stay connected at our lobby's connectivity hub, the Link@Sheraton™ experience with Microsoft®. Stay fit with a visit to our Sheraton Fitness center, programmed by Core Performance™.

Dining Options Abound

The Terrace Restaurant and Lucerne Restaurant feature a wide variety of menu items served in a friendly, casual atmosphere. There is also a private dining area perfect for intimate gatherings. In the summer, enjoy poolside refreshments every weekend at the Tiki Bar, serving snacks, beer, wine and frozen drinks. We also offer guests the convenience and privacy of in-room dining service. Stroll through the Westport Plaza Complex and visit any one of their many casual and fine-dining options, from seafood restaurants to specialty cafes.

RESERVATION INFORMATION

Group Name: 8th Air Force Historical Society
Reunion Dates: October 19-23, 2016
Rate: \$109 + tax (currently 15.363%) Rates are offered 3 days prior and 3 days post reunion based on availability.
Cut off Date: 9/15/2016
Cancellation Policy: All reservations have a 48 hour cancellation policy, or attendee will be charged one night room rate plus tax.

WHEELCHAIR RENTALS

ScootAround: (888) 441-7575 or ScootAround.com

HOSPITALITY SUITES

This year, the 8th AFHS is pleased to announce that we are offering **HOSPITALITY SUITES** to groups at **NO CHARGE**. The number of suites is limited, so we ask that you reserve your suite as soon as possible. Suites are located in close proximity to one another and most are large enough for two or more groups to share space.

In order to guarantee your suite, please call or email ASAP:

Debra Kujawa
Managing Director
912-748-8884

ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org



42nd ANNUAL 8th AFHS REUNION
Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, MO
October 19-23, 2016

REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

STOP!

o RESERVE YOUR HOTEL ROOM FIRST!

The reunion hotel has a liberal cancellation policy—in the event you are unable to attend the reunion, you will be able to cancel your reservation without penalty within 48 hours of your scheduled check-in time. However, if you wait until the last minute to book your room reservation, you may not receive the reunion rate or rooms may no longer be available at the reunion hotel. Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that our vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less a \$5 processing fee.

Canceling your hotel reservation does NOT cancel your reunion activities.

o COMPLETE THE REGISTRATION FORM

Please fill out the registration form completely.

- => Fill out your name as you wish it to be on your name tag—and for any others registering with you. If you are a WWII veteran, and/or affiliated with a bomb or fighter group, please indicate which group.
- => Meal packages include either seven [7] hotel meals [package #1] or five [5] hotel meals [package #2], If you purchase a meal package, do NOT select separately priced meals. If you plan to attend some or all of the dinner functions, but do NOT wish to include breakfast, simply select the dinners you wish to attend in the area indicating “Separately Priced Meals.” Be sure and select your entree if you plan on attending the Saturday evening gala.
- => There are three [3] tour options available during the reunion. Please read the information [here in this issue] on each tour and then make your selection on the form. **The Military Heritage Tour INCLUDES a box lunch.**

o MAIL IN YOUR REGISTRATION FORM

Once you have completed your registration form, please total up the amount owed and include a check, money order, or complete the credit card information on the form, payable to the **8th AFHS** and mail to:

8th AFHS
P O Box 60369
Savannah, GA 31420-0369

ALL registration forms **MUST** be received by September 15, 2016 in order to guarantee your place. If you have any questions or problems in completing your registration, please contact:

Debra Kujawa
Managing Director
8th AFHS
912-748-8884

ManagingDirector@8thAFHS.org

ALL reunion information and forms are available on our website: 8thAFHS.org



REGISTRATION FORM
42nd ANNUAL 8th AFHS REUNION
 Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, MO
 October 19-23, 2016

CUT-OFF DATE IS September 15, 2016	Price Per	#of People	TOTAL
REGISTRATION FEE	\$40	#	\$
Registration fee for children ages 8-16	\$25	#	\$
MEAL PACKAGES			
#1 Includes 7 hotel meals beginning with breakfast Thursday, Oct 20	\$212	#	\$
#2 Includes 5 hotel meals beginning with breakfast Friday, Oct 21	\$ 148	#	\$
Please select your entrée choice for the Gala banquet Saturday, Oct 22:			
Sliced London Broil with Bordelaise Sauce		#	
Pan Seared Salmon w/Balsamic Reduction		#	
SEPARATELY PRICED MEALS (If not purchasing a meal package)			
Thursday, Oct 20 - RENDEZVOUS DINNER Chicken Marsala	\$46	#	\$
Friday, Oct 21—EVENING DINNER BUFFET Roasted Pork Loin & Grilled Chicken Breast	\$46	#	\$
Saturday, Oct 22—GALA BANQUET (Please select entree)			
Sliced London Broil with Bordelaise Sauce	\$46	#	\$
Pan Seared Salmon with Balsamic Reduction	\$46	#	\$
TOUR OPTIONS:			
Thursday, Oct 20: Military Heritage Tour-INCLUDES BOX LUNCH	\$45	#	\$
Friday, Oct 21: Gateway to St. Louis City Tour—Lunch on your own	\$25	<i>it</i>	\$
Saturday, Oct 22: Anheuser-Busch Brewery/Grant's Farm Tour	\$37	<i>It</i>	\$
Total amount payable to: 8th AFHS			\$

MEMBER NAME (for name tag):

WWII Veteran BG or FG Affiliation POW: Other:

SPOUSE or PERSON attending:

ADDITIONAL GUESTS:

ADDRESS: CITY: STATE: ZIP:

DAYTIME

PH

#: EMAIL:

EMERGENCY

CONTACT: PH

#:

PLEASE INDICATE ANY PHYSICAL OR DIETARY RESTRICTIONS:

IF PAYING BY CREDIT CARD:

CARD #: EXP. DATE:

SIGNATURE: *Your contact information will only be shared with attendees.*



42nd ANNUAL 8th AFHS REUNION

Sheraton Westport Lakeside Chalet, St. Louis, MO
October 19-23, 2016

Wednesday, October 19

1:00pm — 6:00pm
1:00pm — until
1:00pm — 4:00pm
6:00pm — 7:00pm

Reunion registration open
Memorabilia/Gathering room open throughout reunion
8th AFHS Board Meeting
Welcome Reception, followed by dinner on your own

Thursday, October 20

7:30am — 8:30am
8:00am — 12:00pm
8:30am — 9:45am
10:00am — 11:30am
11:45am — 4:00pm
1:00pm — 6:00pm
6:00pm — 9:00pm
7:00pm — 9:00pm

Continental Breakfast for Package #1 participants
Reunion registration open
Individual Group Meetings
American Indians in WWII
Our Military Heritage Tour*
Reunion registration open
Cash Bar Open
Rendezvous Dinners

Friday, October 21

7:30am — 8:30am
8:00am — 12:00pm
9:00am — 1:00pm
1:00pm — 6:00pm
2:00pm — 3:30pm
3:45pm — 5:00pm
6:00pm — 9:00pm
7:00pm — 9:00pm

Full Breakfast for Meal Package participants
Reunion registration open
Gateway to St. Louis City Tour*
Reunion registration open
Presentation on AAM Duxford
Q & A WWII Vets
Cash Bar Open
Dinner Buffet—Donald Miller Presentation

Saturday, October 22

7:30am — 8:30am
8:00am — 12:00pm
8:45am — 10:15am
10:30am — 11:30am
11:30pm — 4:30pm
12:00pm — 4:00pm
1:00pm — 6:00pm
6:00pm — 9:00pm
7:00pm — 10:00pm

Continental Breakfast for Meal Package participants
Reunion registration open
General Membership Meeting
Researchers/Webmasters Meeting
Anheuser-Busch Brewery/Grant's Farm Tour*
8th AFHS Board Meeting
Reunion registration open
Cash Bar Open
Gala Dinner and Program

Sunday, October 23

7:30am — 8:30am

Full Breakfast for Meal Package participants

* It is important that you be in the bus boarding area at least ten [10] minutes prior to the scheduled departure times. All tours require a minimum of 40 participants, unless otherwise stated. Driver and Staff gratuities **ARE** included in the tour prices.

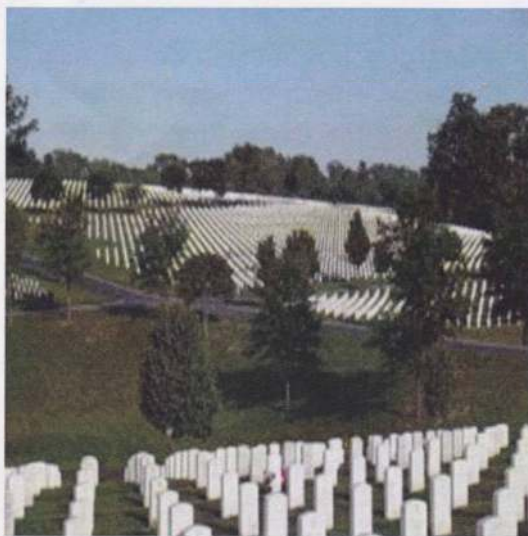
WWII VETS ATTENDING THE REUNION IN ST. LOUIS MAY BE ELIGIBLE TO RECEIVE A \$250 REBATE TOWARDS REUNION REGISTRATION FEE AND MEALS!

Our Military Heritage Tour includes the Missouri Civil War Museum and a driving tour of Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. A boxed lunch is included.



Your first stop of the day is the Missouri Civil War Museum. Originally designed and built as an athletic and activity center for soldiers, it was later transitioned into a troop barracks for World War I and World War II. After abandonment in 1964, it took 60 years for a restoration project to transpire. Through grassroots efforts of fundraising and hard work, the Civil War museum came to fruition. Enjoy viewing the artifacts significant to the Civil War efforts in the Missouri Area.

Enjoy your boxed lunch while driving through the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery. The 4th largest cemetery in the nation, it was established after the American Civil War in an attempt to put together a formal network of military cemeteries. It started as the Jefferson Barracks Military Post Cemetery in 1826 and became a United States National Cemetery in 1866. The cemetery is administered by the Department of Veterans Affairs on the former site of Jefferson Barracks. It covers 331 acres and the number of interments as of 2014 is approximately 188,000. The cemetery is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Cost is \$45 per person—includes box lunch.





A Kick in the Ass

The head-on vulnerability of the B-17F frightened aircrew. An impromptu mod of 1943 was intended to hit back.

WINTER, 1942/1943 saw USAAF commanders increasingly concerned about the ferocity and effectiveness of frontal attacks on the B-17F. Clearly, there was a need for improving its forward-firing weaponry. Several independent initiatives resulted and one of these was the adaptation of a 385th BG Fortress to take no-less-a-weapon than a 20mm cannon!

B-17F-30-VE 42-5897 had been christened *Roundtrip Jack* and wore an appropriate Jackass caricature with a golden tooth. This was based on the antics of a crew chief John C Ford — *Jack* to his friends — who had some knuckled dentistry and lost a tooth during a bar-room brawl en route to England.

Roundtrip Jack was one of the 550th BS's original ships flown by Lt Gerald D Binks and his lead crew. Commanding the 550th was Captain Bill Tesla and it was his mission-critiques with pilots and 385th armament personnel that inspired W/O Nugent *Tommie* Thompson, the 550th's Armament Officer, into action.

Tommie listened in awe and shared their fear as aircrew described vicious head-on assaults by enemy fighters. Hearing how the B-17F's weak forward armament failed to deter the enemy, *Tommie* conjectured that a 20mm cannon would have more dissuasive charm — but how to get one and try out his theory? USAAF red-tape would be insurmountable but then providence provided the solution when *Tommie* had the

Ian McLachlan



Chief Warrant Officer Nugent Thompson.

opportunity of liberating one by "midnight requisition" from a damaged P-38. Having obtained the weaponry, *Tommy* approached Bill Tesla who balanced the time bureaucracy would take to approve the trial installation, with the needs of his combat crews and sanctioned the work on his own initiative.

In June/July 1943, *Tommie* chose Technical Sergeant Elmer Blank and a small team of specialists to modify *Roundtrip Jack*. Installation was achieved by welding a new frame to accommodate the cannon in a cone of converging steel tubes through a modified and toughened Plexiglas pivot-hole. Heavier plate ensured attachment to the fuselage and the team created a crude cradle for their baby. Handgrips were provided, between

which was a hinged metal plate responding to thumb pressure to actuate a microswitch circuit for the firing solenoid below the cannon. Ammunition was fed from the right with clips and casings ejecting noisily onto the floor.

Early in August, *Roundtrip Jack* trundled to the firing butts and completed some ground-firing tests. Following modifications, a flight test was planned over the Wash for the 13th. On board the B-17 as it climbed eastwards from Great Ashfield were the men responsible with *Tommie* taking the firing honours. Releasing the cannon from stowage and moving it forward was reminiscent of preparing a man o'war with the weapon's black length extending well aft and *Tommie* bracing himself against the instrument bulkhead.

Apprehensively, he pressed the firing-plate and a short burst boomed from the B-17. The effect was startling. Recoil punched hard and ejected shell casings angrily around the nose compartment, some clattered into the rear of the instrument panel and blew its circuits. An alarming crack also appeared in the nose Plexiglas but nothing vital fell off, no serious damage resulted and the idea's feasibility was proven with the expenditure of more rounds. However, the recoil needed dampening; sighting was crude and they needed to overcome the risk of self-inflicted damage from ejected casings.

Modifications made, the cannon was pronounced ready for a mission on August 15 to Vitry en Artois. *Tommie* flew as cannoner but not one German fighter came out to play and *Roundtrip Jack* landed with a disappointed crew only to learn from the Group Armament Officer that the new B-17G with a chin turret would soon be arriving and further plans for their 20mm conversion had been scrapped.

Tommie's footnote in Eighth Air Force history typified its spirit. Later, he fought rheumatoid arthritis with similar determination until his death in the early 1970s. This year saw more fortunate veterans return to England — many for the last time. As a nation, we should remember how individual contributions of courage, energy and enthusiasm created a powerful force fighting for the freedom we have since enjoyed.



Roundtrip Jack survived the war and was salvaged in May 1945.

Letter Regarding Mission 26

The other day I got my copy of the 385th Bomb Group book and as I was reading all about our missions, I came to Mission 26: Target Marienburg, East Prussia. Being a Tail Gunner, I got a full view of Clayton Bell pulling out of formation all engines running, deserting and taking his crew to Sweden to be interned. That's what we (Ink Crew) had thought, but the traitor had flown to a landing field (very long and cleared) in Denmark near a German series of barracks. Naturally all of his crew were captured, but Clayton mysteriously escaped. He met up with two Dane "friends" who helped him make his way back to England via Sweden. All of this happened even though his Navigator was part of the crew and Sweden was just minutes away. Almost anyone could have flown there.

After the Germans had flown the B-17 out of there and evaluated it, they learned the blind spots where they could attack a B-17 and they did so with good success. A Pilot in an armored obsolete ME 109 would fly in and hit the trailing edge of the wing breaking it off and the B-17 would go into a spin. Plane, crew and all would crash while the German Pilot would bail out and live to do it again.

Clayton Bell had to be in cahoots with higher ups in the Mighty 8th Air Force. "No one could believe any story he made up" but they (without punishment) sent Clayton to China where he was assigned to fly fighters, P47s, P51s or whatever. I think the firing squad would have been more appropriate. He surely split his take with someone for that B-17.

Another thing that's been on my mind: Why did they send us in at only 24,000 feet on the Munster Raid? When we went into Paris, we went in at 31,000 feet away from the medium-range FLAK anti-aircraft. They flat tore our butts up! Three really tough raids in three days; no wonder our completion percentages were so poor. October 8: Bremen, October 9: Marienburg and October 10 Munster.

Just reminiscing!
X S/Sgt Frank Moll



Above: 42-30336 "Miss Nonalee II" at rest in a Danish field.



The Germans renamed "Miss Nonalee II" as "7+8"



Right: "Miss Nonalee H's" nose art.

The 385th Bomb Group

8th Army Air Force
World War II
History and Data



ORDER NOW!!!

The 385th BGA announces publication of a new book: "The 385th Bomb Group, World War II History and Data, by W.W. Varnedoe, Jr. and Charles W. Lundsberg, III."

The 265 page, 9" x 12" hardcover book focuses on the 385th's combat missions, targets and losses incurred. Several stories and first-person accounts of combat experiences are included along with crew and aircraft photo appendices and a table with detailed information (serial #, name (if any), squadron, last pilot and ultimate fate) for each of the B-17s flown by the 385th BG.

Anyone interested in purchasing a copy of this book should contact 385th BGA President, Tom Gagnon, via email at The385thbga@aol.com. Price is \$50 shipped.



BEFORE YOU RECYCLE THIS NEWSLETTER...

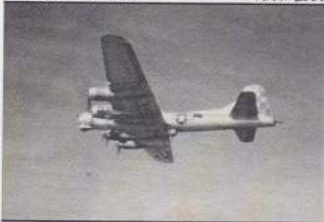
Please consider donating it to your local School, VFW, or American Legion.



HARDLIFE HERALD
Newsletter of the 385th Bombardment Group
Association



1942 - 1945 Great Ashfield - Suffolk, England Station 155 - The Mighty Eighth
Volume 33 - Number 3 March 2016



385th BGA REUNION - ST. LOUIS, MO - OCTOBER 2016

FOR SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:

Chuck Smith - 385th BGA Treasurer
chucksmith@smithindustrialsales.com
(404) 683-2896

P.O. Box 329

Alpharetta, GA 30009-0329

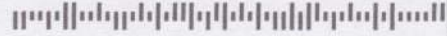
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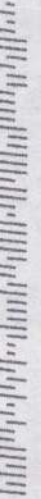


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