

OHIO AIR FORCE GOLDEN GOOSE THUNDERBIRD WANDERING DUCHESS CURLY'S KIDS
 SKY GODDESS ROUNDTRIP TICKET PICCADILLY QUEEN BLUE CHAMPAGNE MARY ELLEN
 SALLY B RAUNCHY WOLF CHOWHOUND YANK GELDING WINNIE THE POOH DRAGON LADY
 HONKY TONK SAL "HAYBAG" ANNIE MISS AMERICA STARS AND STRIPES QUEEN WAR WEARY
 HESITATIN' HUSSY PREGNANT PORTIA DORSAL ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND
 GROUND HOG LEADING LADY HUSTLIN' HUSSY LONESOME POLECAT HARES BREATH
 BIG GAS BIRD LIBERTY BELLE LI'L AUDREY ANGELS SISTER MARY PAT
 STAR DUST SLY FOX
 SKY CHIEF MR. SMITH
 MR. LUCKY PERRY'S PIRATES SLO JO TARGET FOR TONIGHT SHACK N LADY
 BARBARA B MADAME SHOO SHOO GIZMO SACK TIME JUNIOR OL' DOODLE BUG
 PAT PENDING POSSIBLE STRAIGHT MICKY IMPATIENT VIRGIN RAGGED BUT RIGHT SWEET CHARIOT
 ROUNDTRIP JACK HOMESICK ANGEL LATEST RUMOR RUBY'S RAIDERS SWINGING DOOR
 SHACK BUNNY MY GAL SAL HALF AND HALF SLEEPYTIME GAL MISSISSIPPI MISS
 SPIRIT OF CHICAGO BIG STINKY VIBRANT VIRGIN MAIDEN AMERICA SATAN'S MATE
 SOUTHERN BELLE OL' RUM DUM FOOLISH VIRGIN LULU BELLE SLICK CHICK
 MARY ELLEN III VAT 69 YANK MAC'S HACK THE JOKER BELLE OF THE BLUE
 HELLS BELLS PRINCESS VALHOT CHOCOLATE LIL-LU STORK CLUB CRASH WAGON II RAGGED BUT RIGHT KITTY'S REVENGE
 AIN'T MISBEHAVIN' MARY ELLEN II
 FICKLE FINGER OF ?

HARD LIFE



HERALD



NEWSLETTER OF THE 385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION



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

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PREZ SEZ:

Hi Gang;

Well, the election is finally over and we will have a new Commander in Chief for at least the next four years. Now we can all get back to our familiar, normal T.V. schedule.

By the time you read these words of wisdom (?) you will have digested the traditional turkey and given thanks for our many blessings. The greatest of these blessings is that our country remains the free nation that was envisioned by our forefathers. The commitment of the men of the 385th Bombardment Group and their personal sacrifice in the past years did much to ensure that legacy for all Americans. I'm sure you all share my feeling of pride for having served with such a dedicated and professional group as Van's Valiants.

The last issue of "Hardlife" contained the details concerning our Spokane reunion next August. It is evident that Bob Smith has really been working hard to ensure we all have a grand time. Don't forget to make reservations early.

Lee and I wish you and yours a joyous holiday and good health and prosperity in the coming year.

All the best,
 Sid

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**50th Anniversary Reunion—Spokane, WA
 August 25-29 1993**

CHAPLAIN JIM SEZ:

Dear Ed,

On June 17, 1992 John Richardson sent me a copy of the orders that sent three of the 385th. squadrons overseas in 1943. He was on Crew #7 as ROG - S/Sgt. in the 548th squadron. I was on Crew #6 of the 551 st. as Ass/t Fit. Chief - M/Sgt. After I got overseas I was transferred to the 548th as Line Chief.

John was in public office and I have been in an office in the church. What I'm trying to say is a lot has taken place since those orders, sending us overseas, came out. Not only have things been happening but we have grown "old". Old in body does not mean we are losing out on life or living. We must ask ourselves these questions - "Am I hearing everything that is going on?" Really!! "Are we hearing everything we can?"

I recently got hearing aids for each ear. I wear glasses to help me see. I wear a hat to keep my head warm. When I play golf I wear a "counter" to keep track of my score. I drink 8 glasses of water a day to keep my weight in check. When I go from upstairs to down stairs I write down what I'm after so I don't have to make another trip. Etc. - etc.

Knowing what I can and can not do helps me to more fully enjoy what I do do. Know what I mean??

Anyway in the scripture, both Old Testament and New Testament, there are two threads of thought we must keep in mind. They are : 1. Love and 2. Everything in moderation.

Keeping ourselves AS FIT AS POSSIBLE shows our love for our family and God's word. I might be falling apart, but with God's help, I'm going to do all I can to enjoy Life.

Merry Christmas to all.

Love,

Chaplain Jim



Robert G. Arnold	Dec. 1992
H.L. McKee	April 1992
Charles 1. Worley	April 1992
Anthony J. Rosalia	no date
Wayne C. Montgomery	Jan. 1992
Earl Malchow	Mar. 1991
Jay A. Sponberg	
Wilmer (Bud) John	Oct. 1992

'Wilmer "Bud" John, 72, of Boyertown

Wilmer A. "Bud" John, 72 husband of Grace (Keim) John, of North Reading Avenue, Boyertown, died Tuesday morning at his residence. He had been ill for the last six years.

Born in North Coventry Township, he was a son of the late Frank M. and Hannah (Fox) John.

Mr. John was a 1938 graduate of the former Amity High School. He also graduated from Aviation Mechanics School at LaGuardia Airport Field in New York.

Mr. John had been employed at the former Fleetwood Sportswear Co. of Fleetwood, until retiring in 1982.

He was a World War II Army Air Corps veteran and flew 18 missions as a bombardier for the 8th Air Force.

Mr. John was a member of St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church of Boyertown, the Liberty Fire Co. of New Berlinville, and the 385th Bombardment Group Memorial Association.

He Was an avid collector of mechanical memorabilia.

Surviving with -his widow are two sons, Theodore A. John, of Boyertown; and Frederick L. John, of Douglassville RD2; two daughters, Louise K., wife of Robert E. Fatzinger, of Boyertown; and Karen R., wife of Richard Mutter, of Boyertown RD1; one sister, Mildred, widow of John Romich, of West Lawn; and seven grand-children.

NOTICE

Earl Cole heard from Michael Scott, Box 2850, Pikeville, KY 41502. He has worked up a Historical collection of WW2 Air Force memorabilia. He's very anxious to add to his collection of A-2 Leather Flight jackets. If you have one you're willing to sell, please get in touch with him.

□ □ □ □ **LIFE MEMBERS*** □ □ □

Tom Newton	279
W. J. (Doc) Karls	280
Jade King	281
Stanley Podworny	282

EDITOR'S NOTE: Here's an excellent book by Bob Vanderstock who was one of the 3 men who returned to England during the Great Escape from Stalag Luft III.

War Pilot of Orange
Pictorial Histories
713 S. 3rd St. W.
Missoula, MT 59810

Price \$14.45

ANOTHER WEDDING

Another 385th Wedding!
Joe Brockner - December 4, 1992.
3695 Papaya St.
St. James City, FL.

Call him and warn him if your going! 283-5798.

GRANDPA DAVE

My Grandpa Dave was a war hero. He makes World War II come alive for me. Some grandpas told their grandchildren fairy tales when they were small. My grandpa told me true war stories.

In World War II, his part was to be a flight engineer. He was in charge of the mechanical part of the plane. He also helped the pilot and co-pilot at different times. Another one of his jobs in World War II was being the top turret gunner. In that job he would fire at enemy planes. Altogether, my grandpa Dave flew in 30 missions, many of them over Germany.

When I asked how he felt when he was flying he told me he had very mixed feelings. He was scared and also proud. He said he was scared to lose his life, but he was proud because he was helping his country.

My grandpa was very patriotic before and he is still very patriotic. He is now part of the USO and serves his country as a volunteer. My grandpa shares his time in other ways too. He helps elderly people by driving them to places they need to go such as the store or the doctor. He also volunteers to bring food to poor people.

If you drive by my Grandpa Dave's house, you will see that he flies the American Flag every day. Sometimes he lets me help him take it down at night. He is very proud to be an American.

The best thing about my grandpa Dave is that no matter what happens, he will always be my hero. And he will always love my family and me in addition to his country.

Tracey Sosna

EDITOR'S NOTE: This term paper was written by Dave Framer's granddaughter. Got an A+. Dave died Aug. 31, 1992.

WORLD WAR II DISCOUNT

Reprinted from Military Magazine, Feb '92

CHOICE HOTELS INTERNATIONAL will offer a 30% discount for all WWII VETS when they stay at Comfort, QUALITY, CLARION, SLEEP ECONO LODGE, RODEWAY OR FRIENDSHIP hotels.

You must make reservations [1-800-4CHOICE] and request the WWII Senior Saver rate in advance, which includes a free continental breakfast at some locations. Take advantage of it, readers. If you served during WWII you earned it.

Pass this info on.

Don Kabitzke
Milwaukee Chapter
President

MERRY CHRISTMAS

To all our friends of the 385th BGMA we send our greeting for Christmas and for 1993. We are no longer able to send individual letters, so have asked Ed Stern to include this greeting in the nearest Hardlife Herald to the Christmas Season. So good to have met so many of you in Great Ashfield in May.

John and Lucy Ellis

EDITOR'S NOTE: We'd like to add our best wishes to all too!

Jane and Ed Stern
Jan & Bernie from Interstate Printing

WINGS OF REDEMPTION

Past President Earl Cole has published a book detailing his part in the 385th Bomb Group's tour of duty from 1943-45. It is a detailed account, complete with many pictures, and is available for \$14.50 plus postage. Order them from Editor - Ed Stern, Box 2187, Fargo, ND J58108

Here's the preface - a mighty interesting book that you'll read from beginning to end.

This book is more than a mere summary of one man's experiences during the Second World War. It is primarily an effort to help the reader understand the mission and accomplishments of the legendary Eighth Air Force and the 385th Bombardment Group through the wartime sentiments and exploits of one bombardier from the hollows of Kentucky. Oftentimes, one can gain a better grasp of war through the eyes of a single individual's human experiences than solely through a test of remote events and lifeless characters. The author remains indebted to the Colonel for the privilege of examining the long and distinguished military career of one very brave American. Unquestionably, through the heroic "wings" of Cole and thousands like him, Western civilization was redeemed from the legions of tyranny.



GROUP HISTORY BOOKS AVAILABLE

We had inquiries several times in the past few years wanting to know if there'd be another printing. Now, we learn that Jim Young, Box 89, Bridgeville, PA 15017-0089 has a few copies. There won't be any more-if you want one, write to Jim. The price is \$37.50.

DOES ANYONE HAVE AN ORIGINAL OF THIS?



IF YOU HAVE PLEASE CONTACT YOUR SECRETARY

George S. Hruska
7442 Ontario St.,
Omaha, NE 68124-3563
(402) 397-1934

XXXXXXXXXXXX

New Milwaukee Chapter of 8th AF Historical Society elected the following slate of officers on Octo 14, 1992:

Donald J. Kabitzke, Pres
2464 No Sherman Blvd, Milwaukee, Wi 53210

Edward De Peter, Vice President
3916 N Oakland-319, Shorewood, Wi 53211

Robert Abresch, Sec-Treas.
15250 Fieldstone Dr, Brookfield Wi 53005

Directors: Thomas Thomas, Lester Kotlan, Edward DePreter, Robert Abresch

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jack King made these corrections on our December 1991 story from Beatie Orford. You'd be surprised at how hard it is to read some of these letters!

Thanks Jack.



EDITOR'S NOTE:

The following story, written by Ron Hanauer of the 549th, tells in chilling detail of being shot down on March 16, 1944, of evading in France, being captured, imprisoned, beaten, and starved by the Gestapo, of being turned over to the German Luftwaffe and sent to a POW camp, of marching 600 miles in Germany before finally being freed in April 1945.

We're printing it in one issue of Hardlife Herald because we feel it would lose impact if split. To we fortunate ones who did not experience the horrors, it presents a graphic picture of the hell we weren't forced into, as well as an inspiring picture of a 21 year-old's courage in facing and surviving the degradation suffered during more than a year of really un-speakable living.

We recognize the fact that many of you were POWs for longer, and many of you may be tormented by this reminder of the conditions you faced. We hope that you will understand why we think the story should be printed.

After 47 years, it's not possible to forget. It shouldn't be forgotten? Forgiven? Maybe. Hard to buy a Mercedes or an Audi or a BMW? That's up to each one of us and our conscience.

STALAG LUFT IV

Stalag Luft IV was situated approximately two and a half miles south of Kiefheide in Pomerania sector of Germany. It was activated in April of 1944, but was never actually completed, despite German effort, due to the pressure of the war. The first group of prisoners were-transfers from Stalag Luft VI at Hydekrug in East Prussia. The majority of them were American but also included were 800 R.A.F. non-commissioned officers. From that day in April, the flow of Kriegies was heavy until, upon evacuation, they numbered almost 10,000, a number far in excess of that for which the camp was designed. There was continuous construction in the camp, both indoors and out. Indoors, the prisoners were trying their utmost to make their meager quarters more habitable and outdoors, the Germans were feverishly working to complete additional barracks. The camp was set in a forest clearing and one and a half miles square. That particular forest was chosen because the dense foliage and underbrush served as an added barrier to escape. There were two barbed wire fences ten feet high completely surrounding the camp. Rumor had it that the outer fence was electrically charged, but we can't vouch for that, and had no desire to test it.

Between the two fences was another fence of rolled barbed wire four feet high. An area 200 feet deep, from the fence to the edge of the forest was left clear, making it necessary for anyone attempting escape to traverse this area in full view of the guards. Fifty feet inside the wire fences was a warning wire. A prisoner could expect to be shot first and then questioned if he stepped over this wire. Posted at close intervals around the camp were towers which were equipped with several powerful spot lights and bristled machine guns.

The railroad station was named Grosstychow, and the camp was south of the Baltic Sea were the meridians cross on the globe of 54' and 16'.

BOOK OF MEMORIES**RONALD C. HANAUER EX-P.O.W. 3586**
Flight Engineer - Ohio Air Force

This book is but a memory of the days, that I, the one to whom this book belongs, the few here in named, and some ten thousand others, mostly Americans, some British, were cast by fate into the confinement of a German prisoner of War camp, away from all worldly things and those we love.

We hope that in the end, we may see our homes and those we love. Only those who have had the experiences, know the things that exist here, and to them as God fearing Americans, whose duty to their country cannot be questioned, I dedicate this little "Book of Memories".

This is a true story of my days, after I was shot down on March 16, 1944. I was flying with the 8th Air Force, 385th Bomb Group, 549th. Bomb Squadron. We were on our way to bomb the target of Augsburg, Germany. Flying in B-17 Flying Fortresses, we were attacked by German Fighters over Chalons, France. Two of my crew members were killed, but eight of us were able to parachute to safety. I was wounded in the leg by 20 millimeter cannon fire, but was lucky to be alive. I was just twenty one years old and spent the next fourteen months in hell. I was in the French underground for seven weeks before being captured. Since I was in civilian clothes, I was held as a spy. Taken to Paris, I was put- into the bastille called Feron. After the invasion of France, I was transferred to Frankfort, Germany. Finally I was sent to a Prisoner of War camp. After only four months, we were forced to march 600 miles across Germany. We were cold, wet, and hungry most of the time, but knew the War would soon be over. The British forces liberated me from this torture on April 23.

The following pages are a near detailed account of this hell.

When we go to HEAVEN!
To SAINT PETER we will tell.
"Some EX-Prisoners of WAR reporting SIR"
We've served our time in HELL.

March 16th, 1944 started with everything going wrong. My ballturret gunner failed to show up on the base after a night out on the town, we were assigned another gunner. While charging his guns, he left the switch on and several rounds of 50 caliber gullets ricocheted into the air.

At this point the pilot and co-pilot arrived at the plane. The co-pilot could not find his throat mike, so I gave him mine. I still had my mike in the oxygen mask. We were carrying five one thousand pound bombs. As we rolled down the runway, thirty seconds apart, I could not think of anything except those bombs just three feet away. We cleared the trees and followed the B-17's in formation. The sky was so full of bombers from the other fields, I had to keep firing flares to

help me squadron together. If I remember correctly, our colors were Red Red that day. We continued to climb to altitude as we formed into a group of eight hundred bombers, and headed toward the English Channel.

As we were leaving the channel into France, I could see the contrails of the German fighters, forming for the attack. We received orders to drop down 500 feet and fill in the formation left open by an aborting bomber. This position in the formation gave us a very great disadvantage. The next thing I saw was two fighters coming at me head on, their wings lighting up like neon lights, as they poured 20/millimeter shells into our bomber. The airplane seemed to almost stop in midair and one fighter was so close that I ducked my head in fear he was going to take the top right off of my gun turret. I was just turning around in the turret when I caught a glimpse of this German 109 fighter coming up from under the plane. He fell into my sights and I saw my tracer bullets going into him. (We later found out from the French, the German had parachuted down with us, landing on the other side of the town with the ball turret gunner of our crew. He had been wounded in the shoulder and hip.) I received the credit for shooting down the fighter, however he had managed to knock out the ball turret. The ball gunner was not killed and escaped with the pilot and me.

On the enemy fighter pass, we had lost three engines and two men were killed. One 20 millimeter shell hit the bombardier in the head, killing him instantly. The co-pilot also was hit in the head killing him. As I was only three feet away from the co-pilot, the blast blew away my pant legs, a fact I did not know until later on the ground. The navigator was badly wounded with one bullet going through his jaw. His arm was badly shot up and was bleeding through his heavy flying suit. I gave him a morphine shot and asked him if he could get his chute on. Since he could not talk, he shook his head in a yes manner and crawled back to his position. I had asked about the bombardier, but Dwyer only indicated that he was dead. The concussion from the shell that had come through the windshield killing Lt. Waller, had knocked out Lt. Wesley Krause, the pilot. When I had gotten out of my turret, he was also slumped over, and I thought he was dead. I tried looking out of the windows to see where the formation was, but the glass was peppered so badly with small arms fire that I could not see out. There was one small window back along side of the turret I could see through, and I saw the formation high over my head.

My next task was to remove the dead co-pilot from the controls before we flipped over. He was lying across the central control stand and I had to get the bomber under control if we were to get out safely. As I held Waller in my right arm, I adjusted the flight controls so the automatic pilot could be locked in to hold the plane steady while we bailed out to safety. The pilot came to as I started to set the auto pilot. He took over and I reached for the bomb release, but Wesley, having a release next to him, had beat me to it. I hooked on my parachute and stepped out into the bomb bays. The altimeter was reading seventeen thousand feet, and we were flying flat out on a slow turn to the left. I noticed the door to the radio room was closed and I figured Pete, my radio operator was in trouble. I removed my chute from my harness so as to clear the bomb racks. The bomb doors were wide open so I had to be very careful not to fall out into space. After going through the bays to the radio room, I saw

Pete laying on the floor in great pain holding his butt. Pete was bleeding badly. I then unzipped his flying suit to see if he was shot clear through and he wasn't. I picked him up and tried to give him a morphine shot, but he was hysterical and knocked the needle from my hand. After hooking on his chute I headed him to the bomb bay catwalk.

Next, I opened the door to the waist compartment to get the gunners out. They were still firing on fighters as I tore the oxygen from the face of the right gunner, telling him to bail out. Noticing that the ball turret was not operating, I told him to get him out before they parachuted themselves. I returned to the bomb bays where the navigator and radio operator were still waiting to jump. Since they were bleeding so badly they wanted to make sure they'd come down in a town or village so as to get medical treatment right away. As they fell through the bomb bays into space, I assumed my position for jumping. Wesley, the pilot, had come back to the bays by now and facing each other we jumped together. It took two hefty pulls on the rip cord before the chute blossomed out. It was then I discovered the airplane was on fire, a fact I did not realize because I could not see out of the airplane windows. Even though I was high above the clouds, I saw the huge ball of fire as the bomber hit the ground. The airplane still had at least 1500 gallons of gas aboard when it went in. As I entered the clouds I could not see anything but could hear the fighters around me. My first thought was, I hope they see me as I would not like being hit by a fighter airplane. Luckily for me, I came out of the clouds just as two P-47 American fighters came by me. They were so close I could see the pilot salute me as he went by. I think they saw my crew bail out and gave us protection up to now, seeing we were safe from enemy fighters, they went on their way. Suddenly it became very quiet as I floated down to earth, for me the war was over, so I thought, but it was just beginning.

I could see my pilot in his chute a short distance away and gave a hardy wave which he immediately returned. I began to survey the ground to see where I was about to land. To my amazement I was drifting backwards into a large forest. Turning my chute around I saw I could not avoid the trees, so I crossed my legs, put my arms across my face, took a deep breath, and went crashing down through the trees. I came to a sudden stop as my chute caught in the tree tops, my feet just barely touching the ground. Somehow I had become entangled and could not unfasten my parachute harness, so I took out my bayonet and cut the shrouds. After dropping to the ground, I managed to get the chute free of the trees. The leaves were very thick and deep so I had no problem in burying the chute before heading in the direction of where my pilot had landed. Wesley, the pilot, had landed just before me, almost hitting a farmer in the field. He was just outside of the forest I had landed in. I stayed on the edge of the trees until I got his attention. He talked with the Frenchman a few minute and finally came over to where I was waiting.

We layed down to survey our damage while the Frenchman left to get us food and help. As near as I can remember, it was about ten o'clock in the morning. It was at this time that I noticed for the first time that my pant legs had been blown off from the 20 millimeter shell that had killed Lt. Waller. There were several pieces of metal in my legs, but it didn't hurt at this time. Wesley and I talked the rest of the day

about our misfortune and soon it was getting dark. The farmer finally returned with food and drink and took us to a barn in the village. Of course it was very dark by now and we were to spend our first night in France in this cold barn.

Late that night the door opened and in walked my ballturret gunner, Sgt. Mills. He had landed on the other side of town. He told us how he must have been unconscious when the waist gunners pushed him from the airplane, and came to just before he reached the lowest altitude for opening a parachute. What had happened was a 20 millimeter shell had entered his ballturret and blew the right machine gun into his lap and the concussion knocked him out. This explains why I didn't see the turret moving. The waist gunners got him out after I yelled to them to do so. He was still out when they pushed him from the plane, they had no choice, but it did save his life.

The next day we were informed that we would be taken out to a field where an airplane would fly us out of France. However, late that night, the plan fell through as the Germans were looking for us and were very close. Early the next morning we were told that we must leave to protect the French people. We were given civilian clothes, a pitchfork, a garden hoe, a shovel, and down the road we went, just like any other Frenchman going to his field. The first field we came to, we took off not knowing or caring where it led. We wandered around like this until early afternoon. We are now deep into an evergreen forest. Here we found a small stone house with two rooms and a fireplace that probably hadn't been used for a hundred years. It had no doors attached and the windows were long since gone. It made an ideal place for us to spend the night. We had no idea where we were and had only a little bread to eat. Evergreen boughs were cut to make the dirt floor a little more comfortable. We could not start a fire, so we huddled together for another cold March night.

The next morning was Sunday, it had been four days since we were shot down and we are beginning to look quite ragged. We have no food or water and have decided that something must be done. To give ourselves up now is out of the question. The invasion will surely take place anyway now, so we must try to get back into the French underground.

After walking about an hour, we saw a farm house in the valley below us. One of us would have to make contact with the French, if, of course, they would be unfriendly then only one of us would be captured. Wesley flipped a coin, I lost, so it was up to me and I started down the hill toward the farmhouse. I could see Frenchmen standing in the farmyard as I came down the hill, but they could not see me because of the trees. I came along side of the house and as I passed by a window I heard a woman let out a yell and a lot of commotion in the house. I knew I had been spotted so I walked boldly out into the farmyard. The men stared at me for a minute and finally I said I am an American airman. This they understood and quickly took me into the barn out of sight. With the help of a translating booklet all airmen carried, I was able to explain my position. They took me into the kitchen and served me a breakfast of eggs and toast with coffee. This was the first meal I had had in four days. I told them of my comrades up in the hills and some food was fixed for them. Later I guided a Frenchman up the hill to

where Wesley and Mills were waiting for me. We were given an old razor and cold water to shave off our whiskers and clean our faces, we drank most of the water.

The Frenchman told us to stay here until dark and someone would come for us. The thought of another cold night in the forest did not set too well with us, and we hoped the Frenchman was not lying to us, we had no other choice. When it was very dark, a Frenchman did come for the three of us and we followed him through the forest, hanging onto each other so as not to get separated. He finally stopped as we came out of the woods and told us to sit and wait for another Frenchman to take us on to our next destination. (This shuffle procedure by the French underground protected one Frenchman from another in case he is arrested by the Gestapo, if you do not know the other guy you cannot tell on him.)

After about thirty minutes another Frenchman came from the opposite direction, pushing a bicycle. He told us to be very quiet as we came into the village. We were taken into a house and the place was jumping with Frenchmen, drinking champagne and very happy to see Americans, who would soon be setting them free. A table was set as if for a banquet, and we stuffed ourselves like it was the last meal we would get, and it almost was. We drank champagne like it was going out of style and we were half drunk before we knew it. Little did we know, we were about to take a bicycle ride to another village in the middle of the night. We were then taken out to the rear of the house and into a barn where we were given bicycles and told to be very quiet as we would be riding down the main road to the next village. It was about midnight and we were feeling that damned champagne. Suddenly my ball turret gunners, Mills, fell off of his bicycle and made so much noise I don't know how we got through the German checkpoint.

In the next village, we were taken to a house and given a bed to sleep in, we were dead tired, it had been a long, long day. Wesley and I ended up in a bedroom over a chicken coop in a real French feather bed. A woman, the owner of the house, came in with two hot bricks and placed them at our feet. We were asleep before our heads hit the pillows. We were asleep only about three hours when we were awakened by a Frenchman named Andrea', the son of the family whose house we were staying in. The Germans were after him for his part in blowing up the railroads all over France.

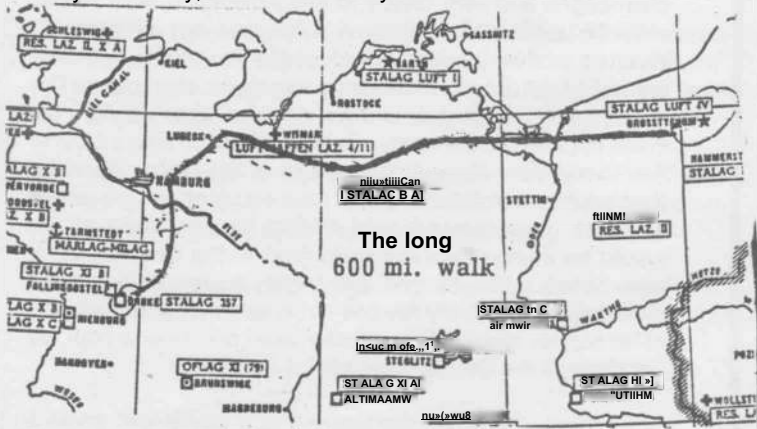
So we were awakened before dawn, fed toast and coffee and the four of us started out the back gate towards the woods. Of course we again had no idea where we were being taken, it was always follow the Frenchman. Once more we were deep into the woods and finally Andrea stopped, stooped down and raised a trap door leading to a cave. It was about eight feet deep, six feet wide and ten feet long. Here we lived for ten days along with Andrea, his brother, and two Italians, all wanted by the Gestapo.

Some day food was brought out to us and some days Andrea' would trap a rabbit, take it in to his mother to be cooked and bring it back to the cave for all to enjoy. Some days Andrea's mother would send out boiled eggs and bread. It didn't take long to find out the cave was only about one block from the end of a runway of a German air field.

The fighters would take off just over our heads, but the forest was very dense and we made sure we were not seen from the air.

One night we were taken back into the house to listen to the BBC London broadcast. After more champagne we returned to our cave. Finally, after ten days, we were taken back to Andreas and introduced to another member of the French underground. This time it was a female and she had a truck waiting to take us out of the village on another adventure. (A picture of us with the female underground member was taken and sent to me after the war.) Once more we found ourselves in the back of a charcoal burning truck, never being told where we were going or how far.

At the next village, the truck pulled into a farmyard and the first thing I saw was the big water wheel on the side of the house. This place looked just like the old calendar pictures we all used to see. Here they made their own white flour and bread. German soldiers were always coming here to buy white bread, little did they know they were being watched by the enemy, three American flyers.



Our stay here was short and one early morning we once again found ourselves in the back of a truck. This truck had very high side boards but the top was open. On the passenger side was a door that could be opened from the outside revealing our presence. We had to make several checkpoint stops, but not one German guard opened that door to check the contents of the truck. What a surprise they would have had!

This new house sat on a hill overlooking the city of Troys, France. The house sat about three hundred feet back from the road. Behind the house, two barn type structures stood facing each other. Here the cattle and horses were rendered for making soap. It was a nice farm and here we stayed for five weeks before being captured.

It was here that we met four other airmen, two being English, one B-17 co-pilot, and a P-51 fighter pilot. (The fighter pilot was a Wing Commander and was on his last mission before going home.) The two Englishmen were brought in after a night bombing mission just twenty miles away. Franzen, the owner of the house, had gone to the site to pick up the dead animals and somehow found the wounded airman. One Englishman was an engineer, the other a bombardier. The bombardier had a lot of pieces of airplane in him. A doctor was brought to the farm and proceeded to dig the pieces out. It was very painful for him as the doctor had no pain killing medicine.

During the day we were free to walk around the farmyard, sometimes going out to the barns to watch them cut up the animals for soap. Everytime there was an air strike close by, Franzen would take off and be gone a couple days returning with a truck load of dead animals. Sometimes we would get up at daybreak to watch the men slaughter hogs to be taken to Paris. There the people were starving under the rule of these German bastards. It was hidden in their little cars in small pieces and away they would go to Paris.

German soldiers would often come into the yard to nose around and to buy soap. If any of us were in the yard at the time, we made sure we did not talk to each other. Very often Frenchmen came to see us and talk about the U.S. They always had plenty of questions. One day two Frenchmen came into the house disguised as underground workers. They said they could get us out of France by way of Spain, and wanted to know how much money we had on us. Also they wanted to know if any of us were radio operators. It was a good thing none of us were, as we probably would have been shot when captured. They said they would return the next day to inform us of the plan. As it turned out, the two Frenchmen were informers and sold us out to the Germans. We were just sitting down to our evening meal when I glanced out the front door and saw two truckloads of steel helmeted German soldiers coming up the road towards the house. I yelled "Germans" and headed for the door leading to the cellar. Three of us escaped through a small opening leading under the large cement porch. All of the others were captured that night. Three of us lay under the porch all night listening to the steel creaked boots of soldiers, as they walked back and forth over our heads. The Germans knew how many there were of us and could not figure out where the rest of us had gone. Later we found out they had searched the near woods all night thinking that was where we had escaped to. The next morning doors leading to the outside were opened, emitting light into our hiding place, revealing our presence.

They made us line up, with our hands up in the air for hours. I thought my arms were going to break off. We were taken to prison in Troys and interrogated by the Gestapo, and placed in a large room with about twenty French prisoners. So began our hectic internment under the Gestapo of Germany. The only thing we had to prove that we were indeed American airmen and not spies, were our dog tags. These they later took away from us, leaving us in a very bad situation. We stayed at this prison several days, sleeping on the hard wooden floor. There wasn't a single blanket, chair, table or anything in the room. During our stay here we were interrogated several times by the Gestapo and told we would be held and treated as spies or shot.

Next we were taken to Paris and placed in the Bastille caller Feron. This prison was twenty miles south of Paris. Here they placed three of us to a cell. The windows were nailed shut, and we were put on half prison rations. This meant we would get two cups of hot water (called coffee), two very small boiled potatoes, two slices of field bread, and one small cup of soup a day. This diet is not enough to sustain body weight.

It was now the middle of May and we knew the invasion of France was not far away. Although the windows had been nailed shut, we could see out through a small opening where a strip of wood between glass panels had fallen out.

By putting my eye close to the crack, I could see out in the direction of Paris. This particular early morning we heard a lot of aircraft flying very, very low over the prison. Looking out I could see many German transports with large red crosses on them, heading toward the coast of France. It had to be the invasion of France.

Three days later, a Polish prisoner was allowed in our cell to cut our hair. He whispered to me that the invasion had indeed taken place. We started to tap out code to our buddies in the next cell, but after two days of this we were caught. A big German guard came into the cell and proceeded to beat the hell out of us. By this time we were all very weak and could not defend ourselves. A few days later we were taken out of this cell and placed in a cell on the main floor to be transported to Germany. Early that afternoon, we heard this soldier or spy crying and trying to get out attention. The cell windows were open down here and we could hear him very well as he spoke through the window. He informed us that he was to be shot in the next few days and wanted us to get in touch with his family. The soldier was forgotten in the next few hours as we were taken away to Paris where we would be put on a train for Germany. There were twenty of us cuffed in pairs. The handcuffs on me were improperly installed and very tight, causing much pain. I could not get the German bastard to adjust my cuffs. By the time we got to Frankfurt, Germany, I had little feeling in my wrist. I had suffered two days.

Arriving in Frankfurt, we were amazed at the damage done by the bombings. The station no longer really existed. Once more we were boarded on a truck and on our way to prison. It was another civilian prison and it didn't take long to find out how mean the guards were here. Our troubles were just beginning, and again we were on half prison rations. This time I was put in a cell with George, the B-17 co-pilot, and the P-47 pilot. Not having any pencils or paper to help us pass the time, we just talked and slept.

Everyday we were taken outside for a walk around the promenade. As the months went by, we could see the stress in each others faces, as we became weaker and thinner. We were not allowed to speak to each other. After several interrogations, I noticed some of our companions were missing. The interrogator told me that some of the prisoners told him what he wanted to know and were sent to a P.O.W. camp. They were now enjoying plenty of good food and were writing home to their families. Off course this is very tempting when you are starving to death. I know I had to keep my mouth shut to protect the people in the French underground. They were doing a wonderful job of protecting downed flyers and getting them back to England.

One day the interrogator became so enraged with me, he hit me a terrific blow in the face sending me backwards into a chair, breaking off two back legs. I went sprawling on the floor, unable to get up. He then grabbed me by the left earlobe and proceeded to lift me up off the floor. In doing so my lobe was split open. (A few years later I found my nose had been broken at sometime in my life and I believe it was this day.) At this time I could not have weighed more than seventy pounds, and I was determined, more than ever, not to tell the bastard anything. I was just as angry with the U.S.

for getting me into this mess, as it was orders to get into civilian clothes, and try to escape. Being held as a spy is no picnic in war time or any other time.

My next experience was solitary confinement. This will do you in if you give it time. I was taken to the basement and put into a cell with very little light. It did have a small window at grade level overlooking the walk area in the compound. There was a chair, a table with a knife and a spoon and a small bowl on it. In the opposite corner was a pot and on the wall was a folding cot. One thin blanket was furnished. There was no toilet paper, I had to use the pockets and lining of my jacket. It was August, but I was so thin and cold all the time, I had to keep the blanket around me all day. I spent my twenty second birthday cold, hungry, lonely and wondering if I would live to see my twenty third.

The interrogations continued and now I was told I was to be castrated. By now I am in a desperate mood. I would walk up and down my cell, counting my steps, and figuring out how many miles I had walked. This and other mental thoughts kept me from going nuts.

One day I heard someone walking out on the promenade and I decided to take a look out the window. To do this I had to stand on the chair. It was some of my buddies, so I tried to get their attention. Hearing a noise at the door, I quickly got down from the chair, but it was too late. The guard had looked in through the little peephole in the door and saw me looking out the window. After several minutes, he came in like a raging bull and beat the hell out of me. He tried to hang me with this little prison neckpiece I had to wear, but there wasn't anything in the cell to hang me on. The bastard finally left only to come back again after a few minutes to give me some more.

A few nights later I was awakened by a guard standing over me, with the cell door wide open, and motioning for me to get out. My first thought was that I was going to be castrated or shot. When we got up on the main floor, I saw Lt. Krause, my pilot, and two guards wearing the uniforms of the German Luftwaffe (Air Force). I knew then that we had beaten the Gestapo of Germany. Five more guys showed up, making just seven of us out of the twenty that were left. We never knew what happened to the others, but we think they got to a P.O.W. camp all right. In over five months I had one shower and I was about to have another. My underwear and socks had literally rotted from me.

A bus was waiting outside for us and we were finally on our way to a P.O.W. camp. It was now the middle of September, I was shot down in March, so I wondered if the people back home had given up on me. I realized the United States Air Force didn't know if I was dead or alive. The Germans weren't about to send our names to Geneva until we became prisoners of war.

It was daylight when we got to the transit camp. Here we were taken to a room full of odds and ends of American and British uniforms and flying gear. We could not travel to prison camp in civilian clothes, so we proceeded to pick out something to wear. Since I only weighed about seventy pounds. I couldn't find an American uniform, so I had to set-

tie for a British uniform. There were no shoes or socks.

Once again I found myself alone in a cell, but this time the window was open but had bars so no one could escape. The window faced a meadow and several yards out stood a cow, the first live one I had seen in a year. It was very peaceful and the war seemed far, far away. Out on the window ledge were two small slices of bread someone had refused to eat. (German field bread is not the most tasteful bread when you're hungry.) I don't know how long it had been there, but as old as it was and as hungry as I was, it sure tasted good to me.

Another GI was put in with me, and I knew he had just been captured because his uniform was clean and he was clean shaven. I tried talking to him, but because of my appearance, he refused to have anything to do with me. I later saw a picture of me the Germans had taken for their records, and I couldn't believe it was me. I then understood why the soldier would not have anything to do with me. With my hair standing straight out, unshaven and those sunken eyes, I looked like a wild man. I truly believed I was on the brink of insanity. But as the doctors said, when you are young you can take a lot of abuse and bounce back.

After a couple hours in this cell, I had my last interrogation, but this time by a German Lufwaffe officer. He placed a paper in front of me with all the details of when and where I was shot down. All the names of the crew members were listed and even the tail numbers of the bomber, numbers I had long forgotten. All these months of torture seemed in vain, but of course I knew my silence had saved the lives of several Frenchmen in the underground. I remember breaking down at this point, and later found out from the other members that the same thing happened to them. We were not ashamed, as we had beaten the Gestapo and the relief of becoming a prisoner of war was releasing great tension.

We only stayed here a couple of days and were put on a train for a P.O.W. camp called Stalag No. 4. This was located up by the North Sea in what was called East Prussia. I don't remember how many cars there were in the train, but it was quite a few. The railroad car I was in looked just like the old streetcars back home, with their seats of wicker and bars on the windows. We had four gards to each car and they slept in a little room up front, with a pot belly stove. We slept sitting up, and on the second morning out I woke up to find I could not walk or bend by left arm. I had been sleeping with my legs crossed and arms folded. Being so thin, cold had settled in my knee and elbow. I could not unlock them even with the help of my buddies. We talked the guards into letting me sit close to the hot stove with my knee and elbows as close as I could stand it. After most of the day in this position, the pain left and I could stand up but not bend my knee.

Passing through Berlin, Germany was our biggest worry as far as bombing attacks were concerned. At this stage of the war, the Allies were hitting everything that moved. The marshalling yards of Berlin were a prime target and we were much relieved when the train was finally through. We arrived at our destination, but it was about two miles to the camp from the railhead. The Germans provided a wagon for those of us that could not walk, the other were made to run most of the two miles, harassed by police dogs. They

allowed some of the prisoners to be bitten just to prove they meant business.

Hustled into a large room, we were ordered to strip. The clothing was searched and those that managed to keep watches and rings lost them here to these German bastards. I with the others were marched across the road into the camp and assigned to a barracks. There were five of these barracks on each side of the compound. In the middle of the compound was a building with a kitchen on one side and a large room on the other side used for books and reading. Also there was a large latrine about two hundred feet away, also in the middle of the compound. Each barracks building had twelve rooms in it. One of these rooms was used for a barracks chief and the other was a washroom for taking a bath, if you could stand the cold water. The floor was concrete, there was no heat, there was no shower, just a bucket of cold water.

Each room had four bunk beds each holding six men (three on each bunk). The mattress was of straw and in the middle of the room was a table and two chairs. Over by the door was a pot belly stove. The fuel for the stove was coal dust compressed into brick form and was very limited.

The Germans gave us a bucket of potatoes each morning per room. After morning roll call we peeled them and they were taken to the kitchen to be boiled into mashed potatoes with corn beef added, that had been taken from our Red Cross parcels. It gave the spuds a little flavor. Also they gave us two loaves of bread per room per day. After being sliced in twenty equal parts, your share wasn't very much. We did not receive Red Cross parcels every week and when we did it had to be shared with two or three people. You can see we didn't have much to eat at P.O.W. camp.

To keep in shape we walked around the compound twice a day. The path we followed was between the back of the barracks and a single wire about two feet off the ground. Beyond this wire was a distance of about thirty feet to a high fence. At each corner was the guard towers. If you stepped over the first wire you would be fired on. At night we were locked in the barracks, so if you had to go you had better do it just before they were locked. The doors were unlocked at six every morning. One morning a GI was running to the latrine just as the doors were being unlocked, when a crazy guard shot and killed him. We knew the Germans were using crazy people for tower guards as their manpower was being used up on the Russian front.

It was now the first of October, and I needed more clothing and some shoes. I managed to get a GI coat, but still could not get shoes. The civilian shoes I had were almost falling from my feet. Remember, they were so big, I still had my heated liner flying boots inside them.

As the snow got deeper and it got colder, we were forced to spend more time in that room. The tempers flared once in awhile, but all in all we got along pretty well. As Christmas got closer, we in our room decided to make a cake. Everyone was asked to try and save a little at a time from their Red Cross parcel. For the next month we all saved what we could and hiding it from the German ferrets was a chore.

Our parcels contained powdered milk, powdered coffee,,

sugar, a chocolate bar, jelly, raisins, meat spread, vitamin pills and five packs of cigarettes. Bread was used as the base of the cake. I know this doesn't sound very appetizing now, but to us it was quite good, even though it was a little heavy. The cake was about two feet by two feet and two inches, thick. The broom of twigs we had for sweeping the floor was made into a Christmas tree. The ornaments were made from the colorful tinfoil wrapping on the prune and raisin boxes in our Red Cross parcels.

There are many stories I could tell about the life of a Kregie, as the Germans called us, but it is not easy for me to put it all on paper. Like the time we made candles so we could play cards after lights out, or the day we threw gloves over the fence to the Russian soldier work crew, or the time the Russian soldiers sabotaged the latrine tank and had to use shovels from then on. One of the highlights was on Christmas when the Germans allowed Red Cross instruments to be brought in and a dance band was gathered together. It surely did raise the moral of the prisoners for awhile. A lot of the men received mail from home, but of course I received none. By the way, I never received one letter from home the whole sixteen months I was overseas. I did receive a telegram from the Red Cross in Geneva, that my mother had received word of my P.O.W. status. I had been missing in action nine months.

On February 6th, 1945 the Germans took all of their prisoners out of the camp and started us on what was to be a long, long hardship walk across Germany. Out of the three compounds at Stalag No. 4 there must have been about six thousand prisoners. The Russians had broken the German lines and were headed in our direction. The British and Americans were moving very rapidly from the West.

Germany wanted to keep all of her prisoners as long as they could for political reasons. We were in groups of about two hundred and after a days march we were locked in barns for the night. Before we left the compound, every man was given a Red Cross parcel. Every morning and evening we could get hot water for our instant coffee, if you had any. We also received three small boiled potatoes at night. Once in awhile we got some bread. I have a complete record of how much bread I received on the six hundred mile march.

I remember one day was a particularly long march. It had rained all day and we were soaked clear through. About an hour before dark, a truck came by with barley soup. As we passed by the truck we held out our milk cans for one cup of the barley. (A milk can is what our powdered milk came in.) Everyone had a can hanging from his belt. The cans soon became rusty, but it was all we had to drink from. That night there were no barns so we were herded into an open field where we just flopped on the wet ground and tried to sleep as we were exhausted. No fires were allowed until daybreak because of air strikes. After daybreak, some fires were allowed giving us a chance to heat water for coffee and to dry out a little. If one had managed to save some bread, he had breakfast. I will never forget this date, as it was February 14th, Valentines Day.

We didn't go far before we came to Swinemundi. This was a large seaport on the North Sea coast of Germany. The Germans had a U-boat base there, and as we crossed on a ferry boat, we could see several subs in dock. It was about 10 o'clock in the morning and we were in the New Bran-

denberg area of Germany. As we headed down the road I felt my legs beginning to stiffen up, the same trouble I had on the train. Getting wet and sleeping on the ground took its toll on me. I could just barely shuffle along the road. Paul my buddy, took my makeshift backpack and went ahead with the others. Of course I wasn't the only one, there were several prisoners in bad shape, and most had their shoes cut away so much they looked like sandals. I finally got to the barn a couple of hours later and Paul had a good warm straw bed fixed up for me. We had no medication so I stayed awake most of the night rubbing my legs and keeping them warm.

During this forced march we would get a days rest once in awhile. This would give us a chance to make pea soup and nurse each other back to health the best we could. (Pea soup also came in the Red Cross parcels.)

The next three weeks or so were uneventful as we just kept on marching from day to day, trying to keep as healthy as we could. Everyone had diarrhea from the dirt and foul water. Our clothes were so dirty they shined. Every once in awhile you would see someone you had not seen for a month, and then you could see what was happening to us. They became thinner and thinner. I was already a walking skeleton so it didn't make much difference. How I managed to keep alive this far I do not know, but I was not about to give up for these bastards. It seemed like it was raining most of the time, and it was very miserable. Once in awhile, we could trade with civilians for bread with our cigarettes. I saw one American trade his clarinet for a loaf of bread. He was very hungry. He had played in the Christmas band.

On March 28th, the Germans put us in a boxcar and locked the door. There was so many of us we could only sit up. It had only one small window at the end of the car, and every time someone had to go he used his milk can and passed it along to be thrown out the little window. The next day we arrived at the British camp, Stalag IIB. We stayed at this camp two weeks, leaving April 17th. It wasn't until April 23rd that two British scout cars and one radio car came into the village where we had held up for a days rest. We were liberated at last! We still had a long walk ahead of us before we would be safe. The few guards we had turned their guns over to us and were now our prisoners. They were as happy as we were that it was all over.

We headed down the road in the direction the scout car came from and soon came upon the British tanks, lined up along side the road. The war was over as far as we were concerned, even though it was not official. The last time we had seen tanks lined up along the road, they were German. (We had been delayed and were standing along the road, with tanks on each side. Those GI's that could talk German asked them about the war. They admitted it was over, as the Allies had too many airplanes and they could not fight them. They were waiting to move up, but had no desire to go into combat.) Now we are with the British tanks forces and all seems very calm.

When we came into the next village there must have been several thousand GI's wandering around raising hell. The six and a half foot guard that had been so mean to us in prison camp, had just been killed. Someone had driven a pick ax through his head. This man was called "Big Stoop". There are a lot of former prisoners walking around today with

busted ear drums because of this man.

About fifty of us took over a German chateau that I suppose belonged to a German Baron. After chasing out the civilians that were living there, we marched around the chateau, tearing down drapes, heads of animal trophies, swords, pictures and anything that was on the walls. In the basement was a large hotel type kitchen with plenty of eggs and odds and ends of food. It wasn't long before we had the stoves going full blast, cooking eggs by the dozen at a time, or anything else we could find. The inside of this chateau was a wreck when we left the next morning. It seemed a shame that such a beautiful place should be destroyed, but these men were on the edge of insanity and no one could have stopped them. People just can't visualize what it was really like.

We started down the road the next morning and about noon we came to the Elbe river. The bridge had been blown up at each end, dropping the structure into the river. The super structure was above water so we were able to climb across the bridge. The next village had another few hundred GI's milling about. They now seemed to be coming from all directions. Someone had drawn a map on the side of a farm wagon, explaining where we were and where SS troops were still fighting. My buddy and I decided to take our chances-and go ahead down the road. We had made the right decision as the SS troops were cleaned out before we arrived. In the next village the British Army had trucks lined up waiting to take us out of the combat area. As soon as the truck was full off it went. We didn't know where we were going, but could care less as we were riding and not walking.

Sometime that evening we came into a village, taken off the truck and put into a room for delousing. This was the term used to kill the lice we all had. The British soldiers all had masks on for the spray, or they just could not stand the smell of us.

We traveled for two days before coming to a British field camp. We stayed here several days, living in tents and gaining our strength. Finally arrangements were made to fly us out by British Landcaster bombers to Brussels, Belgium. The flight was only about an hour long, but we were all happy to get out of that airplane. After landing in Brussels, we were hustled into a mess hall for a quick meal, and then taken directly to the railroad station. The train was leaving for France and our own forces.

It is now the first of May and we are with our own forces in France. The first thing they did was to make us throw away every bit of clothing we had and hit the showers. I was in the shower so long that I damned near washed my skin away. That night we slept in real beds and once again felt like human beings. All I did for two days was to lay around and read magazines, catching up on the happenings in the good old U.S.A. A large staging camp on the coast of France, called Lucky Strike was our next stop. Here I did see two of my crew members but lost track of them again as this was a very large place. The American Army had no real control over us at this point, they didn't know who they had or who they didn't have, it was just a lot of crazy people.

B-17 bombers started to land once in awhile, and word was out that anyone wanting to go back to England could get ,

aboard. So Paul and I caught a B-17 out the next day. The airbase we landed at was already empty so we just walked out the front gate and headed for London. There we found a hotel for ex-prisoners of war, signed the roster and was told we would be informed when we were to be shipped out for the States.

In less than a week our names appeared on the bulletin board to be ready to ship out by train to Glasgow. Later we found out we would be going home on the Queen Elizabeth. It took three and a half days to cross the ocean, landing in New York with bands playing, the Goodyear blimp overhead, and tickertape flying. From here I went to Camp Sheridan in Chicago and home, arriving in Peoria on the 4th of July, 1945.

Bread and Parcels of Red Cross food received on the march across Germany.

Feb. 6th - Day we started.

Feb. 10 - % bread, 2 boiled potatoes, 1 cup soup.

Feb. 12-2 crackers, rest.

Feb. 13- % bread.

Feb. 19 -1/1 Oth bread.

Feb. 21 - 'A Red Cross parcel (pea soup, rest).

Feb. 23-1/5 Red Cross Parcel.

March 1 - '1/5 Bread.

March 4-1/6 Bread.

March 6-1/10 Bread.

March 7 - 2/5 Bread.

March 18-1/5 Bread.

March 19-2/5 Bread.

March 23-1/5 Bread.

March 24 - 3/5 Bread.

March 25 - 3 boiled potatoes.

March 26 - 3 boiled potatoes.

March 27 -1 cup soup (rain).

March 28-1/10 bread, 1 cup soup.

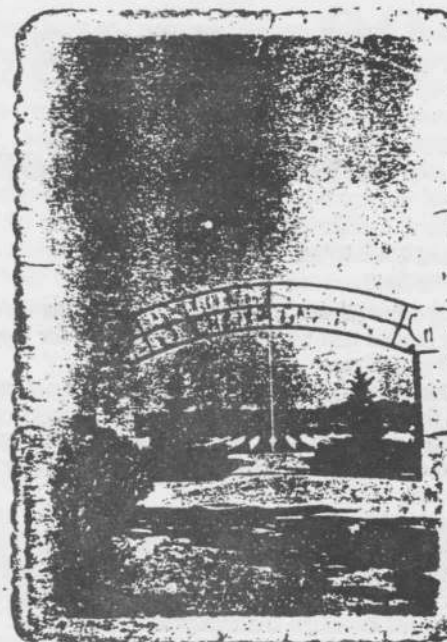
April 7-1/6 Bread.

April 19-2 Red Cross Parcels.

April 24 - Liberated by British Army at Hulenbac at 2:45 p.m.

According to the records of Dr. Leslie Caplan who was on the march with us, the calorie intake per day issued by the Germans was 770. However, in addition we were issued Red Cross food which for the same 53 day period averaged about 566 calories per day. This is far less than the minimum required to maintain body weight, even with out the physical strenuous activity we were compelled to undergo in the march.





The picture on the left was taken just as we were taken from the cave I described in the story. I am on the left of the woman, who was in the French underground. She has brought a truck that will transport us to another area. The other two are my pilot, on her right, and the ball turret gunner.

The other picture is the cemetery in France, where my Co-Pilot and Bombardier are buried. They both were interred in the same grave.



38 years later — medals

Government doesn't explain what took so long

By TOM KITTLE-KAMP
of the Journal Star

Shortly after World War II, Ronald C. Hanauer read in the local papers that he had been nominated for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

He didn't hear any more about it until two weeks ago, when he finally received the Distinguished Flying Cross. Not to mention a Bronze Star, Purple Heart, American Campaign Medal and European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal.¹

A couple of months ago, Hanauer read in VFW Magazine that veterans could write the National Personnel Records Center in St Louis to find out if they had any medals coming to them. He was curious about what he might find out, and still wondered about the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"I thought, well, there might be a chance I got that," recalled Hanauer, a former sergeant in the U.S. Army Air Corps. "(I thought) well, maybe it got lost, maybe I did get the DFC."

The medals came April 18 in a manila mailing pouch. Accompanying them was a form from the records center, listing service medals, with Xs by the ones Hanauer was awarded.

There was nothing to explain why Hanauer, an ex-prisoner of war, had received the medals so late.

"When you're first out of the Army and everything just took place, it's kind of nice, you have to admit," said Hanauer. "But after 38 years, they send you a bunch of medals, no letter or anything — you have to wonder what the hell is going on."

Calls to the National Personnel Records Center failed to turn up any information. Officials speculated that perhaps the service could not find out where Hanauer was living after he was discharged;

"It's not the norm of things," said Joyce Wiesner, a public affairs officer with the Army Reserve, Components, Personnel and Administration Center. She added, however, that the Army can't say how many people haven't gotten medals they're owed, since the records are checked only on request.

Sparked by recent publicity, about 50,000 requests have come into the records center the past few months on behalf of Army veterans alone, Wiesner said, with about 7,200 either processed or being worked on.

Hanauer, 60, already had received three of the medals he got last week. He got the two campaign medals and two Purple Hearts after the war.

The Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded for heroism or extraordinary achievement in flight. Hanauer believes — and the newspapers of the '40s indicated — that the DFC was given him for his actions when the B-17 Flying Fortress he was assigned to was shot down in March 1944 on a bombing mission in Europe.

Hanauer recalled how enemy fire disabled three of the plane's four engines and killed the bombardier and co-pilot. The pilot was knocked out and Hanauer, then 21, was wounded in the leg.

He gave first aid to two other wounded crew members and helped the revived pilot stabilize the plane, giving them and the six other survivors time to bail out. Hanauer said that the wounded navigator nominated him for the DFC, and he believes the enlisted men on board recommended him for the Bronze Star.



Photo by At Horkrodor

Former Army Air Corpsman Ronald C. Hanauer with the Distinguished Flying Cross and Bronze Star that he received about 38 years late.

one among us

"I'm proud of the medals, said Hanauer. "It's too bad I didn't get them when they really meant more."

Hanauer said he and others were sheltered by the French Resistance before capture by the Germans. Since they were in civilian clothes, they were treated as spies and imprisoned, rather than placed in POW camps. As alleged spies, the Germans could shoot them without violating accepted rules of warfare.

"Our orders were to get in civilian clothes," Hanauer said. "The Army shouldn't have told us that, 'cause a lot of guys lost their lives."

He finally was transferred to German POW camps and was freed by the British April 24, 1945. He was careful to record the time — 2:45 p.m. — in a notebook he had made of empty cigarette packages.

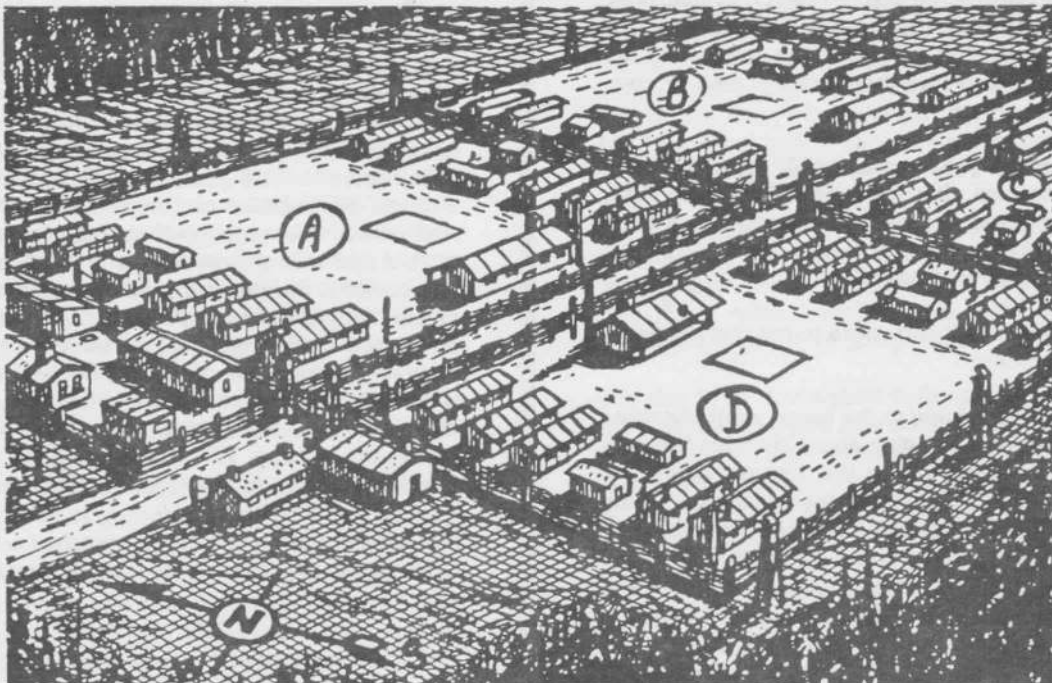
"We were walking skeletons by the time we got out," said Hanauer, who kept a record of the skimpy meals they were

given as the Germans shuffled them from area to area. Hanauer said they were forced to march about 600 miles as the Germans tried to prevent their liberation by Allied forces.

And now, reminding him of the war, is the manila pouch of medals.

Hanauer regards the incident with a bit of amusement and concludes: "You can't understand the government."

His wife, Betty, had her own conclusion: "I told him it was a little late."



STALAG LUFT IV

Dear Ed:

It seems to me there is more than one good story to be told by and about Ron Hanauer.

The main story of course is the one from the time they were shot down until the end. But there are other items of great interest I think that should also be included.

There's got to be a story in why after all that time a DFC and Bronze Star arrive unwaring even to a guy in Peoria. And for what were they?

And I for one would like it mentioned on what Ron said about those phony photos we all carried, designed to fool the Gestapo but, as in Ron's case, only led to German terror, even to some, death by torture, when caught.

I still have my photo, and from what Ron had to say of the program, I'm glad I never had to use it. Of course I'm sure that couldn't have happened, as I refused to lug mine it was so bad, I could have passed for an unemployed pimp, just in from Marseille, it was that bad.

And then, there is the complicated way we came to discover Ron's story: How he saw the OAF picture in a Hardlife article, the plane "with all those swastikas", and recognized it, after 45 years, as the plane he was shot from the sky in, that began his whole painful ordeal.

I have a very personal attachment to all this, too, as not only was that same airplane the Richey crew's property for 23 of its 25 missions and endeared by all of us like a favorite madame, it was in its copilot's seat and top turret both, that both our OAF Flight Engineer Mike Siwek and I were hit, in much the same way the Krause crew was.

Their copilot took a 20mm cannon to the head and I was maybe a millimeter from a like one to the heart.

And Ron was hit in much the same as was Mike I suppose and in the same turret.

As far as telling this story as a concern of reopening old wounds, I say no matter. Maybe it's time the Germans get their due credit for being just as nasty, or even more so than their Asiatic fellow tramps.

Tom Helman
718 Sherman St.
Medford, OR 97504

Letters to Ian

Dear Ian:

Just received your letter and the report with it. Thanks a lot, I had never seen it before. I would say that Rosies report is quite accurate, except that he was a First Lt. at that time. The 8th Air Force promoted the senior pilot at least one grade higher than the other officers in the crew when we arrived in England, just to give them enough rank to command.

I did not know that S/Sgt Stoma was KIA, and Sgt. Goodman died in the hospital after the mission was over. Also, T/Sgt Harold Mack was a German Prisoner and died in Prison Camp. I had a letter some time back from Don Jones, 386 E Wilbeth Road, Akron, Ohio 44301.

He was in camp with Mack and wrote to me that he died, I believe, from Pneumonia.

The only thing that I could add to the report would be that I remember the tail gunner shouting about "Bandits from the Rear", 6 o'clock and then feeling the 20mm's hitting us, then two German Fighters, I dont remember for sure, I think FW190's, overshot us, and Storer the Navigator happened to be sitting in the Bombardiers seat trying to find a way home, and I was handling the swing guns in the nose and we both opened up on them, and I would swear that the one on my right, or approximately 2 o'clock to us, in the nose, was hit and started to fall. After that Rosener gave the bail out order and we went. I got stuck in the hatch, and Johnny Storer, Navigator, stepped on my back and out we went together. When I "Returned to Duty" I requested confirmation of a German Fighter, however, no photos, no witnesses, etc. Anyhow, I lived through it all, and for that I am grateful. For now that's all, and thanks for the info.

Respectfully,

Jerry Leichtman

2288 Westwood Blvd., Suite 214
Los Angeles, CA 90064

Dear Mr. McLachlan,

As a aircrew member of the RAF during World War II, a collector of books on flying, a member of the International Society of Air Safety Investigators and the author of a history of 570 squadron, 38 Group RAF, (still to be published) I vyant to say how impressed I was with your book "Bomber Stories", one of the better narratives of the Eighth Air Force participation

Being based in East Anglia myself during the latter months of 1944 and early 1945 after replacing the 397th BG., at Rivenhall Essex, who had been operating Marauders. My crew was carrying out an exercise on 21 st Jan. 1945 when I observed a B17G 42-102431 of 385th BG, 551st Bomb squadron, based at Great Ashfield in Suffold flying low near

our oase. It crashed behind "The Swan" public house at Bradwell between Coggleshall and Braintree. The pilot had lost control while forming up for a mission, having to pull up sharply to avoid colliding with another fortress. The crew had all bailed out safely, although one was slightly injured. I took photo's from the air at the time of the crash and am particularly interested to know whether you have photo's of This incident taken by Bussel J. Zorn or other official photographers, in your collection. If so I would be happy to pay for copies of crash site and crew.

I was involved in the crash of an Armstrong Whitworth Albemarle at Grove Airfield near Harwell on 27th May 1944 which was occupied by the U.S. 9th AAF Support Command, a repair and maintenance base. We had taken off from Harwell with a glider in tow and lost power on both engines. We crashed on the boundary of Grove near the mail railway line, cutting off six foot concrete posts at the ground and killing three horses in the field. The navigator was buried in the nose and whilst we were attempting to extricate him, dozens of Americans arrived in jeeps and proceeded to take pictures. As Mr. Zorn had such a comprehensive collection of crash photo's is it possible that such a picture would be amongst them, or do you have any idea where I make enquiries?

If there is any way in which you can help me I would be very appreciative and would be willing to send the money order first before receiving copies of photo's. I can provide copies of my pictures taken from the air at no cost if you so require.

Yours sincerely,

H.D. Cherrington
64 300 Sandringham Cres,
London, Ontario
Canada N6C 5B4

Letters to the Editor

Dear Ed,

If you know "Jack King" personally, he's my father. He doesn't write much any more as he has arthritis in his hands, but if ever you want to talk to him, his phone number is 1-503-849-2482. If anyone else would like to call him, I know he'd love to hear from any of you. He was a medic in the 385th BGMA.

Now that he's retired he lives on a small 30 plus acre farm with his wife and one of his daughters.

Thank you,

Jennifer King Rhodes
2nd Daughter to Jack King

Dear Ed,

I found these pictures among my things and I thought you might like them for the archives and also because so many of the G.I.'s knew and like them.

Maureen Smythe was a beautiful red-head from Ireland with skin so beautifully white it was like good English dishware.

All of these people were working at the G.I. Red Cross Club on the base in 1943 & 1944 & 1945.

I hope this finds you and your family well.

As ever,

Frank M Sutter
11652N. Desert Hills Dr. W
Sun City, AZ 85351



Maureen Smythe, Annette Frubank & Brownie Seale.



Dear Ed,

Something I overlooked was in this years April newsletter on Page 17.

"Captain Shankle's Christmas Gift"
by Robert R. Lopiano - 385th BG, 548 BS

Dec. 5 1 943 - Bordeaux
Dec. 11 1943- Munster.

Wow! December 11,1943, we had a run away prop on the spare we were flying. The engine caught fire and we were jumped by an MEI 09 and an FW190 - but we were headed for Emden instead of Munster.

However I feel better. The historical documents of the 385th Bombardment Group 1943-1945 lists the following:

Bordeau - 5 December 1943
Emden -11 December 1943
Kiel -13 December 1943
Munster - 22 December 1943
Ludwigshaven - 30 December 1943.

See you in Spokane in '93.

Best regards.

Bill Nicholls
743 Lake Avenue
Woodbury Hts., NJ

Dear Bill & family,

Thank you very much for your letter and photographs and must apologize for not answering it before now, but we have had a very busy summer.

We were really very pleased to hear from you and you did stir many happy memories of the war, because I suppose we in the country did not really know the horrors of war, not as you did, but realize what great allies you American were to have in those very dark days. I knew many of them, only boys of 18 and 19 years old flying your great big 'Flying Fortresses'. I wonder if some of the youth of today could do so well. Still I hope it never happens again anyway but I suppose every generation has it's heros.

No, we did not live here during the war, but my husband has always been tn farming & was exempt from the services because of this, although he wanted to join the R.A.F., but his father said if he did he would sell the farm, so that held him back.

Cheerio for now,

Yours sincerely,

Mary & Albert Clements

Darsham's Farm
Uppertown
Wetherden
Stowmarket
Suffolk 1 PI 4 3N A
Tel. 0359 40282

Vaults opened at airport...

No secret bomb sight found

Dear Ed,

The opening of the Norden Bomb-sight vault was a success and a thrill for me. Maybe I thrill easily, but it ranked with that of King Tut's tomb for many, though obviously not the local reporter, as you can see. I counted over 76 people there.

I'm enclosing a clipping of the event as well as copy of the story I wrote 15 years ago. I sent one to you then and you sent me the information about Lt. Lindsay and the C-78 incident which I included in a later article, also included.

Now there is interest in building a display case in the terminal building to commemorate the B-17 squadrons that trained here. We'd like an insignia of each unit so would like to have one from the 548th, of course.

Shortly before he died Fred Horner told me he had loaned the wolf-head insignia of the 49th, as he had to me for my first article. We would very much like to have it in the new display case.

We were glad to see Eddie Sykes, formerly of the 548th here. He'd been here for a conference call with former crewmen on the radio a couple of years ago.

In the enclosed clipping group picture I'm in the wheelchair on the left.

Sincerely yours,

Jack Milburn
Giltedge Stage
Lewistown, Montana 59457



by LEE JAMES

There was no Norden bomb sight locked in a vault Sunday at the Lewistown airport, but a French wine list caused a little stir.

About 50 people gathered at the airport Sunday afternoon to take part in a celebration of the airport's 50th birthday and a "rendezvous" of those who served at the training base for bombers during World War II.

The highlight of the afternoon was opening two vaults where the top-secret Norden bomb sight were kept. There was no bomb sight, but a wine list was discovered and two men who had been stationed at the airport immediately knew who it belonged to.

Arnold Kuenning, Helena, and Harry Simons, Shelby, are going to a reunion of members of the 401st Bomb Group in Tennessee and plan to take the wine list to the individual who made it.

Kuenning and Simons were among five people from the bomber group who attended the Sunday festivities. The other three were Carl Pekkala of Grass Range, Jerry Strickland of Lewistown and Ed Sykes of Fort Benton.

Kuenning was a bombardier with the 615th Bomber Squadron who used the top-secret Norden bomb sight. He said the bomb sights were taken out of the planes and put in the vaults each night.

He and Simons were at the Lewistown base during the summer of 1943 and their group may have been the last one stationed here. They took a long, cold trip to England in October of that year.

Kuenning flew 26 missions and the bomber group did 254.

"I was over there 18 months," Kuenning said. "We flew over France and other occupied countries and all over Germany.

"Some days we'd see somebody getting shot up and others nothing," he said.

Simons was a flight chief with the group, and repaired the planes when they came back shot up. He fujwased Kuenning a little when he

confided that some of those patch jobs was merely a piece of fabric painted over.

"Sometimes we didn't have time to patch with anything else," he said.

Kuenning remembers the gathering of up to 2,000 airplanes getting ready for a bombing run.

"There would be 25-30 planes leaving from different locations and pretty soon there would be a line of bombers 40-50 miles long," he said.

Simons remembered that the night they left the Lewistown base, the commander asked him to hide some booze under the plates inside the plane.

One of the guests at the Sunday festivities was Brig. Gen. Bill Yeager of the Montana National Guard.

"When I was a little kid, we saw the bombers flying over," said Yeager, a Lewistown native. "My mother said, 'they're off to the war. Isn't that sad.'"

"That's never left me."

Mayor Lloyd Johnson said he was a police officer in 1943 and he remembered an MP from Texas.

"I wonder what happened to him?" Johnson said.

"Maybe he's in the vault," someone wisecracked to the audience.

The speeches were short and held in the airport terminal because it was gusty and chilly outside. After the speeches, everyone filed to a small building nearby where the vaults were located.

When they were opened, nothing much was found. In addition to the wine list, there was box of Bombing Flight Record forms that were supposed by filled out by the bombardier after each mission.

One of the afternoon's organizers Jack Milburn, Tyler C. Winton of Destin, Fla. was unable to make the rendezvous, but sent \$40 to help cover expenses.

Milburn turned the money over to airport commission chairman and county commissioner Bud Miller.

"Bud said he will use the money to put up some kind of display commemorating the time when the B-17s were here," Milburn said.

Dear Ed,

Hope you and Jane are in good health. I am just back from the hospital where I had a quad by-pass on Oct. 1. Everything seems fine, and I will have a couple of months to take it easy. I've been wanting to send this photo to you for months, and finally have time to do it.

As you know, the group went on several food missions to Holland during the last weeks of the war. Since my 1985 Chowhound trip to Holland, I have been writing to quite a few Dutch people. Among those being Mr. G.V.D. Horst, who received the food which was dropped.

The photo shows Herman Assenberg of Vlaardingen holding a packet of dried eggs. I am holding the dried egg label which was attached to the bundles we dropped. Mr. Horst, who kept this dried egg packet since 1945, gave it to Assenberg to give to me, during his visit to my home.

So you can say this packet made the full circle.

Bob Valliere

P.S. Have you read Roger Freemans new book "The American Airman in Europe"? He's given me a full page (148).

Bob Valliere
18 Whiting Farm Rd.
Branford, CT 06405



EDITOR'S NOTE: Remembering how those powdered eggs tasted, we don't blame the Dutch for saving them as souvenirs instead of eating them - no matter how hungry they were.



Dear Ed:

Where did the time go? It seems just yesterday we were in England, yet almost six months have gone by!

I don't know whether you have heard from George Salvador about the museum we visit in Woolpit. Anyway, we met a man in the Fox Pub in Elmswell who was especially glad to see some folks from the 385th. It seems the village of Woolpit had worked on the museum for over a year in preparation for the visiting tour group and had informed the tour organizers but somehow they were overlooked. It was a really superb display and Bill Hinchcliffe, who was the organizer had done a wonderful job. Needless to say, the folks in the village of Woolpit were very disappointed when no one showed up to view their little museum. They had sandwiches and tea ready for everyone but no show! Bill Hinchcliffe is such a nice man and if anyone is going to be in that area in the near future the museum in Woolpit has some great displays, photos and artifacts from the old airfield and the various squadrons based there. Contact Bill at the following address: Mr. W.J.H. Hinchcliffe, The Old Schoolhouse, Woolpit 1P30 9RU, Suffolk, England.

I remember that I promised to send a photo of Emery and I on our wedding day, September 16, 1944 so here is a copy. This year was our 48th. And they said it wouldn't last!

Hope to see you in Spokane.

Best wishes,

Mary and Emery Blanchette



September 16, 1944 - St. John's Parish Church
London England



May and Emery Blanchette - May 1992



George Salvador, Emery & May Blanchette, Ed Stern and Ed Metcalf - May 1992



Just some of the memorabilia at Woolpit Museum.



Bill Hinchcliffe with some displays



Woolpit Museum -



Dear Ed:

This is the information Art Wiegand asked for regarding Sam Dixon in the Oct. issue of "Hard Life".

Indeed we were one of the original crews of the 550th. We flew twelve raids with the 385th and then were transferred to the 482nd Pathfinder Squadron. Again we were originals. We lead at least two raids as pathfinders with the 385th.

With extreme luck we were able to complete our 25 missions. Our last raid was Eckner Ball Bearing Works, Berlin, March 8, 1944.

Warren Bock, our co-pilot was checked out as a first pilot and was shot down Feb. 4, 1944. He became a P.O.W.

Sam Dixon died in Birmingham, Alabama in 1966. Two years earlier we had met in San Francisco, Calif.

Through the years several of us have kept in close contact. They are:

Warren E. Bock, Co-pilot
711 Langwood Drive
Houston, Texas 77079 •

Ralph D. Bradford, Turret gunner
274 E. 45th St.
Hialeah, FL 33013

Allen Meservy, Waist gunner
11025 Johnson Dr. S.
Bloomington, MN 55437

•Arthur Caldaca, Tail gunner
Recently moved to Beaumont, Calif.
I have no new address.

I'm George Enderlin, Bombardier
17265 Via Melina
San Lorenzo, Calif. 94580

Sincerely,

George Enderlin

Dear Ed,

I wonder how many people realize that Col. Fred Born was responsible for saving the 3 trees?

Early in the war the Air Ministry took over the land necessary for the airfield, our home was demolished and we moved to the Lodge. The trees in one garden were left standing.

Some time after the war my father was there looking at them and planning to cut them down.

Two men were walking there and said they were Pan-Am pilots with short leave in London and had come to see what was left of the airfield.

One was Fred Born; and he remarked to my father that those trees had meant so much to them on returning from

missions. So Geashow Huies said that in that case they MUST be left.

We did not know Fred during the war but since that meeting our two families have made many exchange visits. The Borns to us at the lodge and later here at Hall Favre. We have stayed with Fred and his wife Ivory Deau in St. Calif, and their one in Phoenix, Arizona.

Fred flew 35 missions in 1944 and he now has a picture of "Sleepytime Gal" hanging over his hearth.

There will be 3 trees in that spot for many years or Stephen Miles has already replaced one.

Sincerely,

Beatie Orford

Dear Ed,

About interesting people in the 548th. This time I am going to write about Wayne Detwiler.

Wayne Detwiler wanted to be a gunner but because he could not read all of the numbers in the colored dots they said he had a problem with color perception and was unfit for combat. So because Wayne could type they made him a clerk in the 548th Orderly Room. He was a very good clerk. Had a nice personality and knew everyone by name. However, Wayne was not satisfied as a clerk and felt he was not doing enough to win the war, so, if you remember Ed, after D-Day, the Infantry asked for volunteers. Yep, you guessed it. Wayne Detwiler volunteered for the Infantry. He left the orderly room of the 548th and joined Patton's 3rd Army. He crossed Europe in the Infantry in a Tank Destroyer outfit with the 3rd Army. He also has a very interesting photo album of pictures taken while he was in the Infantry. Anyway I didn't get to see Wayne again from the time he left the 548th until the 385th reunion in Dayton, Ohio.

Wayne also has a very interesting business. At least I think so. Wayne raises egg laying chickens and sells them to farmers in the egg business. Wayne gets or buys the chickens when they are one week old and raises them until they are 16 weeks old and start to lay eggs and sells them (the chickens). This year he has 65,000 chickens and tells me that is not a lot. He tells me most dealers raise over 100,000. He sure knows chickens and eggs. I didn't know there were so many different kinds. He thought he was boring me but I thought it was very interesting.

As for me; I retired last December, as an employee of the State of PA.

I was a Veterans Employment Representative. I worked in a job service office and it was my job to get jobs for Veterans.

Thanks for listening.

Keep up the great work,

Marty Girson

Dear Ed,

Thanks very much for forwarding the letter from Jack Safford.

He was the AROG on Crew 7 and was called back to the states in Oct. '43 to take pilot training. He had applied when he enlisted in 1942 and they caught up with him in England. He had seven or eight missions by that time.

That's all but one of the gunners on our crew accounted for as Eddie Sykes and Bob Lopiano both belong to the 385th BGMA. Aldo (Shorty) Tarini, our original tail gunner, died of a heart condition in 1967.

Still to be heard from is Joe McLavish, our engineer and top turret gunner. Joe became the First Sargeant of the 548th when he finished his missions and was pictured in the 385th history at the 1944 Christmas party for orphans.

Maybe he will surface before the 50th year meeting in Spokane. All these other guys say they will be there, along with Dave Dennis, Kenneth Walsh and Charlie Hill of Crew 1, who have contacted me after I sent them copies of the overseas orders.

Agains, thanks for forwarding Safford's letter. We started out together at Salt Lake City AFB, in January 1943, where we were in the same five-week radio class after graduating from gunnery school. We were shipped to Ephrata WA AFB where the crews were formed and then on to Geiger.

C. Richardson

Yes, Ephrata was pretty bleak when we arrived there about Valentine's Day in '43.

The place was all torn up with sewer lines being put in, etc. Guys were falling down in ditches, stumbling around when coming home from town in the dark.

Living conditions had improved from tents. We had "Yak" huts. They had been designed for Alaska, were square, about 20-feet on a side with a coal stove in the middle. They were set on a square of four 20 x 20 inch timbers.

Six gunners on each crew were housed together. The officers quarters were four to a hut. I believe our navigator, Elmer Baird, lost a coin flip and had to take the one upper bunk.

The flight line crews were still working out of tents, but I believe that by that time they had the huts to live in.

We were in Ephrata for less than three weeks and flew on practice missions about six of those days, in old beat-up D's and E's. The instructor pilots were returnees from the 19th Bomb Group, Col Van's group from the Pacific.

I remember one pilot taking us to a ground target range set up with plane silhouettes on a hill in a narrow canyon, northwest of Ephrata. He really kicked that plane around so that we could get shots from the waist guns. Then he would yell "tail-gunner take a crack at it," as we swung wildly from side to side.

Years later when I was the farm editor at the Wenatchee World (1948-1955) I found out that the target site was owned by a wheat farmer named John Petesorich. I wonder if he ever dug out all of the lead in that hill.

There was also a machine gun range north of Soap Lake, in a gravel pit owned by the state highway department. We also used to shoot skeet and trap there.

A friend of mine in Olympia, Buck Harmon, was in a B-24 group which was organized at Ephrata in mid-1942. They went overseas to the Pacific and even flew a raid on Wake Island from Hawaii. He was in the Pacific for 32 months, flying off bases from Guadalcanal to Saipan!

Another friend, Mel Gaumer, had been a civilian representative for Emerson Electric, checking the performance of that company's turrets. He was at Ephrata from about July to November, 1942 and lived with his wife in Soap Lake.

Mel told me the name of the base commander at Ephrata, but I don't recall it. He was a major, a pretty exalted rank in those days.

Our first co-pilot was named Hopkins and he and his wife were married while we were at Ephrata. We thought she was neat, as she had a purse big enough to carry two fifths of whiskey. Hopkins stayed behind at Ephrata and was given his own crew in the group of trainees that followed us to the base.

Then we got Billy Ruby as our co-pilot. While our stay at Ephrata was short, it was memorable in that except for our pilots, none of us had been in a B-17 before.

We heard stories of three planes which had gone down the previous year. Some of the crashes were in the Mt. Spokane area, I believe.

Generally, we used one fairly short runway that had the planes flying over the P-X and right over town. Tough on sleep for the residents when there were night missions.

They had lengthened the runway a little bit with gravel, with the plane hitting the paved runway as it started its roll.

Little did we know that this was the most primitive runway that we would ever fly from. We thought it was a big thrill.

We had one 24-hour pass at Ephrata and I went to Seattle to see my father. It was my first crossing of the Cascades, from snowy Ephrata to the mild, wet green climate of Puget Sound, in march.

We'll never see those days again, thank goodness. But everything was an adventure when you are 21 years old and full of beans....

All the best,

John Richardson

EDITOR'S NOTE: Your editor and new bride had our first station at Ephrata in Sept. '42. The first CO was Lt. Col. Adams, replaced in a few months by Major E.E. Eno. I was a 2nd Lt. "90 Day Wonder", my bride was drafted to teach in the Ephrata Schools - she earned \$25 a month more than my \$150. We saved all of hers, lived on mine, and got along fine. Watched them install those wooden huts as replacements for the tents-in the wet, snowy November and December. One of our memories-the long lines waiting to use the outdoor latrines. Everything was pretty primitive-living conditions as well as flying conditions.

Dear Ed:

Just a quick note to say after 48 years the remnants of the air and ground crew for the "Latest Rumor" finally held a mini-reunion here in Ormond Beach, Florida, together with their wives. Present were: Pilot Bob Vandiver, TTG Joe Balcerzak, RWG Bob Hach, Ground Crewmen Bill Koon and Lester Crawford.

Unable to attend were CP Lou DesCognets, BTG Jim Leary, and TG Jim Davis. Navigator Phil Vockerath was KIA over Schweinfurt and RO Allen Millican, Bombardier Winston Holmes, and LWG Earl Summers are all deceased. Thanks to the ingenuity of Bob Hach who tracked down the status and addresses through the Veterans Administration Life Insurance Division we were able to update our files.

Apart from perusing photo albums, viewing video tapes of air combat over Europe, and comparing personal histories of the years just past, the men toured the campus of Emory-Riddle Aeronautical University at Daytona Beach while the girls went sight seeing and shopping at St. Augustine (oldest town in U.S.A.)

Prior to the mini-reunion (held 16-19 October) Bob Vandiver had extracted from his memoirs events from crew formation at Pyote, Texas through the combat tour with the 385th BG and had included these, along with crew photograph, in booklets which were passed out to each surviving crew member for retention.

In addition to the missing crew members, Arch Benner, former 549th Squadron Commander and our "Boss" while assigned to combat, sent his regrets and was well remembered by all those present who toasted him in absentia.

I am enclosing a copy of the 2nd Schweinfurt Memorial Association Heritage of Valor certificate which was given each member of the "Latest Rumor" in memory of Phil Vockerath, our Navigator, who paid the supreme sacrifice on that mission.

Sincerely,

Bob Vandiver



Shown left to right: Betty and Bob Hach, Colonel and Jennie Vandiver, Lou and Bill Koon, Les and Dorothy Crawford, Joe and Dorothy Balcerzak.

When we had our mini-reunion in Miami, Florida about three years ago, Gerry Donnelly took us out to the Weeks Air Museum located at Tamiami Airport. There was a B-17 on display and I was so proud that I could get into the front hatch. This was my plane. We have all heard about how sturdy and dependable the B-17 was. It just wanted to keep on flying. So this B-17 on static display decided to fly again. Gerry tells me that Hurricane Andrew picked her right off the stand and landed her about a mile and a half away. She made the trip in good enough condition that they are taking her back for refurbishing and she will be put back on display. How's that for good news.

George S. Hruska

EDITOR'S NOTE: The only other word we had from victims of Hurricane Andrew was the good news that Leo and Anne LaCasse got their motor home out just ahead of it, driving to Orlando.

They went back to Homestead, saw the devastation, and relocated to Roanoke, VA, where their daughter lives. Their address: 4911 Hunting Hills Ct., Roanoke, VA 24014.

Tom Helman
718 Sherman Street
Medford, Oregon, 97504

Sir:

Received my Hard Life Herald yesterday, and was quite surprised at reading your letter to the Ed.

I only met one of your crew members the day before that fateful day. Your Engineer, Mike Siwek, came to me to give me information about the "Ohio Air Force." I had never heard of a B-17 bomber doing a barrel roll, without flying in to the ground.

You indicated you would like to know about Ohio's last battle, so I am sending you the story of my experience. I put this down on paper many years ago for my family.

Thanks again for the picture, it is a nice addition to my scrapbook. I hope you enjoy the story and it gives you some answers about the B-17 called "Ohio Air Force".

I remain your 385th Bomb group friend.

Ronald C. I-fanauer
1821 W. Lake
Peoria, ILL 61614

P.S. The poems were written by some unknown PRISONER OF WAR.

MY BUDDY

They say he died in glory,
What ever that may be.
If dieing in a burst of flames is glory.
Then it's not for me

In the briefing room that morning.
He sat with clear eyes and strong heart.
Just one of the many gunners.
Determined to do his part.
My buddy had the guts all right,
He sought not glory or fate.
He knew he had a job to do.
And his crew all felt the same.
But death had the final word,
For in it's cog it wrote his name,
And my buddy died that morning,
In glory and a burst of flame.

GODS MINUTE

I have only just a minute.
Only sixty seconds in it.
Forced upon me, can't refuse it.
Didn't seek it, didn't choose it,
But it's up to me to use it.
Just a little tiny minute,
But eternity is in it.

A GUNNERS GRIEVANCE

I wished to be a pilot, you along with me,
But if we were all pilots, where would the Air Force be.
The pilot is just a chauffer, his job to fly a plane,
It is we who do the fighting, although we don't get the
fame.
It takes guts to be a gunner, to sit out in the tail,
When the messerschmitts are coming, and the bullets begin
to wail.
So if we all must be gunners, let us make this bet.
We will be the best damm gunners, that Jerry ever met.

385TH BGM A

ED STERN, EDITOR
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