



# 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:**

I hope by now everyone has rested and recovered from our grand 50th Reunion. Thanksgiving day--hopefully was bountiful and happy.

It is now time to wish you all a very Merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year. I think it is time for all of us to be ever mindful of all the sacrifices we have made these past 50 years--combat, loved ones, family and friends. More especially, all who have paid the price, and recent family losses.

Jean and I wish the very best Holidays  
 Bob Smith

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**OMAHA  
 1995 REUNION**

**' CHAPLAIN JIM SEZ:**

Hello all and Happy Holidays,

My mind works, sometimes, like the leaves that fall all around us when the trees want to get rid of them. There is nothing (at least at this time) more frustrating than trying to get the leaves into piles by a "hand" blower, to be picked up or shredded for mulch. I know. I keep trying.

In the parking lot of the church where Geri and I attend, the leaves fall, seemingly, just to keep the Wednesday Wonder Workers busy. The "W.W.W." are a group of retired men volunteering together each Wednesday to perform various needs in and around the church building. Some rake the leaves. I use my "hand" blower. Well, when the wind decides to blow them one way and we try to pile them in another direction our patience is tried.

My mind keeps changing direction much like these leaves. And that tries my patience; my wife's patience and Ed Stern's, (He didn't say so -1 just imagine it. Ha!) But now, as I write these mixed up thoughts BEFORE Thanksgiving, our minds MUST turn to Christmas, Hanukkah and the New Year.

Here are some rambling thoughts: What is important about these occasions? What am I supposed to do about them? Why are they important to me? Should I think - ■ about these thoughts? You see my mind is rambling!!

OK! I'm settling down now. Soooooo the happenings of this past year; the hectic times of the holidays and the unknown ahead in the new year have all of us anxious. But just like dry falling leaves that eventually end up in piles, mulch or yard waste dumps, we, by God's claming presence, are able to leave the past, enjoy the holidays and look forward to the New Year.

Keeping God at the center of our lives we eventually will understand much of the mysteries that we must endure, (not all, but many) May your holidays be happy ones, your New Year be promising and yopr life blessed and a blessing to others.

Love, Holiday Greetings & Happy New Year  
Jim

**LIFE MEMBERS**

- Robert L. Bailey 287
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- George W. Barnett Julv 1993
- Cleon Holderbaugh July 1993
- John Alcock June 1993
- Richard A. Cowan December 1992
- Thomas Roberts February 1993
- William Rouse, Jr. November 1989
- George L. Sutherland February 1993

**GEORGE W. BARNETT**

George W. Barnett, 69, of La Marque, Texas passed away on July 5, 1 993. He was born in Jenks, OK, on October 9, 1923. After graduation he entered the military. He was a member of the 385th Bomb Group. Most of his missions were on the "Mississippi Miss". He was a gunner's mate. After the war, he went to work in the oil fields of West Texas. From there he joined the Air Force. He served for over 20 years and another war, Vietnam. After retirement from the service, he went to work for the La Marque Independent School District. At his retirement from the School, he was diagnosed with cancer. He fought a long and hard battle for 5 years. He left behind a wife Laura, of 47 years and a daughter Sue.

**Old Soldiers Fading Away, I Salute You**

By Lewis Grizzard

It's happened to me before, running into men who served with my late father in World War II.

This time I was in Greensboro, N.C., at a bookstore. I was signing copies of one of mine.

I noticed the old man at the first of the hour. He stood at the entrance of the store, looking at me.

After the hour, the signing was over. Meekly the man walked to where I was sitting.

He had one of those faces that said here's somebody's beloved grandfather. There was a lot of knowledge and caring in it.

Without another word, he said, "Your daddy was my first sergeant in World War II."

I've studied my father's record as a soldier closely and i know he was in France, then in Germany, and I know he later was sent back to Korea.

"He saved my life in Germany," the man continued. "He saved a lot of lives, and they gave him a battlefield commission."

According to a copy of the citation I have, the colonel had been killed and the unit was under heavy German fire. Sergeant Grizzard reorganized the company, running in the open where the bullets flew, and saved himself and his men from certain annihilation.

"If it weren't for your daddy," the man said, "I wouldn't be here today."

How do you respond to something like that? I certainly was proud of my father at that moment - to think this man had carried for half a century the memories of what my father did that day. And to think he would come to me after all this time. It was like he was trying to thank me for something my father did 50 years ago.

I think I managed a "Bless you," or a "Thanks for looking me up."

**Continued on Page 17**

# BULLETIN BOARD

## CORRECTION

We listed the wrong artist for the picture that was raffled at the Spokane Reunion. Jerry Ramaker tells us that our English member Ray Bowdon was the artist. Thanks Ray!

## NOTICE

The list we received of those attending the Spokane Reunion was incomplete--it was made up from those attending the Geiger-Fairchild tour, and a number of you were missed. We'll be running a list of those we missed as we hear from you.

Also, the October Hardlife Herald included color Group pictures at no charge for all of those we had listed as attending. If you did not receive yours, but did attend the Reunion, write to President Bob Smith, who has any that were left. He will send them out as long as they last.

## EIGHTH AIR FORCE HERITAGE CENTER BEING BUILT IN SAVANNAH

As predicted at the Spokane Reunion, Savannah is going ahead with the sale of revenue bonds to finance construction of a facility to house materials, memorabilia, artifacts, and archives to preserve the 8th Air Force history.

The County will build the building and lease it to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Center to operate as an autonomous unit.

All of our members are asked to identify and hold items that will be of interest so that they can be made available when the center is ready to open. You will be notified in the Hardlife Herald when they're ready.

Also, we are asked to be prepared to offer substantial financial support to complete the interior, unit displays, and special presentations.

Construction will begin in December, with completion expected in 1996. General Buck Shuler, who was scheduled to speak to us at the Tulsa Reunion is Chairman of the Heritage Center. We'll print a pledge form for individual pledges from our members. A group pledge will be at the discretion of the Officers.

## BOMBARDIERS HISTORY BOOK IS NOW AVAILABLE FROM

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**NOTICE**  
THE FOLLOWING WERE LEFT OFF THE LIST OF ATTENDEES AT SPOKANE REUNION

C.E. Brackett  
Ivan Klohe  
Gerald Blinks







**EDITOR'S NOTE:** We asked Andy for his ok to reprint this story sent to us by a member. Haven't heard from Andy, but know he won't object!

## Memories of 'Old Ironpants' LeMay

By Andy Rooney

There were a lot of great American soldiers I knew during World War II. I was glad to have them on my side but we wouldn't have been friends when the war was over. Chief among those I admired but did not like was Curtis E. LeMay, who died last week at age 83, as a retired four-star general.

LeMay was one uncompromising cookie. I have an enlisted man's opinion of most generals but I know he was the kind of guy who won the war for us. I read the obituaries and watched the televised reports of his death and anyone who had not heard of LeMay would not have learned what kind of a man he was or how much he did for our country. He was just the best bomb group commander there ever was.

I knew Curtis LeMay when I was a young reporter for 'The Stars and Stripes' covering the 8th Air Force and he was a colonel with the 305th Bomb Group in England, flying B-17s over Europe. I dreaded having to interview him, which I frequently did. He did not suffer fools or newsmen gladly, and I suspect he thought of me as one of each.

LeMay had been paralyzed on the right side of his face as a young man and couldn't smile because his face wouldn't move. I don't think he missed it much.

He may have done his best work as commander of the 305th even though it was hardly mentioned in his obituary. He later went on to become chief of staff of our Strategic Air Command, and it was LeMay who got the order from President Truman to drop nuclear bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Truman picked the right man for the job. In later years, it was LeMay who epitomized the American hardhat attitude when he suggested we bomb the Viet Cong back into the Stone Age.

LeMay was a tyrant and, as a result, his B-17 crews had one of the lower loss rates in the 8th Air Force. Every crew had to fly 25 missions before being sent home. The loss rate per mission averaged 5 percent. A crew member didn't have to be a math major to figure the chances of getting home alive. Eventually a total of 43,743 8th Air Force men were killed or reported missing in action.

When LeMay saw, from the aerial photos, that too many bombs were missing their targets because pilots were taking evasive action to avoid being shot down, he ordered his pilots to hold a steady course over target for seven minutes - an eternity.

On days when there was no raid on Germany, while the other pilots were in London having a good time, LeMay made his crews practice flying tight formations as though they were members of the Blue Angels. The closer together the bombers flew, the more difficult it was for Luftwaffe pilots to dive through the formations with their machine guns blazing.

When a group of officers in his command asked him to have dinner with them, he refused. "A general should have dinner with his friends," he said. "A commander general has no friends."

In about 1954, in one of the most unpredictable meetings of my life, I saw him once more. I was writing for Arthur Godfrey and had written a speech for Godfrey that he was to make at a dinner in front of an assembly of automobile executives and generals.

I went to Godfrey's hotel room with the speech, and as I came in, I saw the rumped figure of the stone-faced LeMay with a huge cigar stuck in his mouth.

These two geniuses in their own fields were talking politics, about which they were both ignoramuses.

In 1968, LeMay destroyed the image I had of him as the tough but fair, smart but silent American hero by running for vice president of the United States on a ticket with the despicable racist and Alabama governor George Wallace. It was as if I'd found out Abe Lincoln's log cabin had been built by slaves.

I felt sorry when I read of LeMay's death but unmoved - as he would have been at news of mine.

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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** In the next few issues we'll be printing excerpts from Bill Varnedoe's story about his tour with the 385th. Makes interesting reading after 49 years! This may seem like a "to be continued story" but we know it's worth reading.

## COMBAT

I will introduce each mission on a separate page, followed by the date/my mission number/the group mission number.

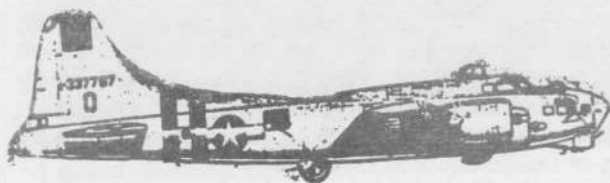
Each mission report will contain my story of that mission and will also contain the position of our aircraft in the Squadron formation. The crew loading the coordinates of the route with times and altitudes. Official mission summary and selected other data that was copied from the U.S. Archives at Maxwell Air Force Base in Montgomery, AL. Some of this will be missing for a few missions because not all data survived and is in the archives. Most of the narrative is personal memory. As I, and others, recall incidents, every effort has been made to attach them to the proper mission. Given the official narratives of the individual missions to act as a guide, I feel most are accurate, but I am not so conceited as to believe the story is totally error free.

Persuant to SO 40 of the HQ 70th Replacement Depot, the next train dropped us in East Anglia at the Elmwell railroad station, the stop for Great Ashfield, on 10 February 1945. Great Ashfield, Station 1 55, was home for the 385th Bomb Group, commanded by Col. G.Y. Jumper, of the 93rd Wing of the 3rd Division of the 8th Air Force.

Pursuant to SO 42, paragraph 9, Crew 37 (Crow's Crew) was assigned to the 550th Bomb Squadron, commanded by Maj. Thrift. The 385th also had the 548th, 549th and 551st Squadrons as well as 424th Air Service Group, 877th Chemical Company and Det. 155, 18th AWS 31st Sta. Comp. Sq. The Group marking had been the letter G in a square on the tail up to now, but as we arrived it was changed to a red checkered design.

The 385th Bomb Group became famous for a new record set for B 17's just as we arrived. Satan's Mate made a loop, the only known Flying Fortress to do so. The story goes like this: Lt. James L. Fleisher was on the way back from a raid on Rheine. After dropping his bombs, and while over Karlsruhe another Fort got out of position. As Fleisher moved Satan's Mate to avoid a collision, he got into the upstream turbulence of the B-17 ahead. Satan's Mate shot straight up, flopped over on her back and then went down in a screaming dive. The airspeed indicator registered 380 knots. (The B-17 is red-lined at 300). Finally the pilot and his co-pilot Lt. Paul H. Cowling were able to pull the plane out of her dive. Two of the gunners Sgts. Bob Cory and Trevor J. Kevan, were pinned to the top of the airplane during the loop. Flying Ammo boxes and other debris bruised many of the crewmen. Some radio equipment blew out rough the hatch in the top of the radio room. Yet, no one sustained any serious injury. Expecting the ship to fall apart momentarily, they all sighed with relief when the landing was uneventful. An inspection amazed everyone that the only damage was 74 rivets missing from the stabilizer.

From arrival until right at the month's end, we flew practice missions, getting familiar with the formations and routine we would use in combat. In theory, the Group would fly with 3 Squadrons, a Lead, a High and a Low Squadron, the High above and slightly right of the Lead, while the Low would be below and slightly left, so that the High was not directly over the Low. Squadrons had Lead and Low flights, (High Flight, if High Squadron.) The Flights were, in turn, made up of one of two Elements of 3 planes each. These 3 aircraft formed the familiar "V" of a lead and two wing men. In a tight formation their wingtips would almost (and sometimes did) overlap. The wing planes were supposed to be back only so far from the lead so the wings could overlap without touching, otherwise they were nearly abreast. Occasionally a 4th plane would be added to an Element. He would then "fill in the diamond", and be slightly lower and trail the lead., (unless it were the High Squadron, High Flight, then he would be above.) If this happened in the Low Element of the Low Squadron, he was called, "Tail End Charlie." It was a bad place, vulnerable to fighter attack. The Group would fly from 36 to 38 Forts, but on the nominal mission, the Group would fly 36 Forts: 3 Squadrons of 12 aircraft: the Squadron would consist of two Flights of 6 each, a two Element Lead and a two Element Low (High, if High Squadron). This is illustrated on the next two pages. This basic formation could be and occasionally was altered to accommodate from as many as 42 as few as 7 in the group.



28 FEBRUARY / V 1 / G 259

The target for Varnedoe's first mission and the 259th for the Group was a railroad marshalling yard of the Henschel Tank factory at Kassel, Germany.

General Spaatz had issued Directive No. 3 on 12 January giving the order of priority for strategic targets: First was oil, and synthetic gas plants. 2nd was lines of communication (especially leading into the Ruhr), this included railways. 3rd was (for the RAF mostly.) industrial areas, 4th was against aircraft production, 5th was ground support and finally in 6th place, submarine pens.

As a new crew on our first mission, our pilots were split up. Don Black flew with Bob Starkel's crew while we had Henry C. Zmudka as our co-pilot. Crow and most of us flew in B-17 No. 42-31922, with Alla Knipf as Bombardier in the place of McDaniels.

There were 10/10 (ground completely obscured) clouds at the target so we bombed a PFF, sometimes called "Mickey" or H2X. This was an early type ground image radar. It showed a clear contrast between land and water, but was difficult to interpret over land. The lead Fort had a radar dome in place of the ball turret.

Over the target there was light flack, but no fighters. The British called anti aircraft explosions "ack-ack," but the Germans called it "flack," short for Fliegerabwehrkanon. We also called it flack. At this time, Jerry did not attack each raid, but would at random times, send up a massive fighter attack. The flack was inaccurate because of the clouds. We jammed the German's radar with "window," strips of metal foil that looked like Christmas tinsel, which the radio operator threw out in bundles. Occasionally a British Mosquito would fly ahead of us and lay a blanket of window below our formation. Also, occasional a "jammer" B-17 would accompany us. This Fort had a radio room filled with transmitters. The Radio Operator would scan the frequency band, and when he picked up a radar, he'd fire up a transmitter on that exact frequency. All this jamming seemed to work well. On this mission the 385th lost no planes.

Although non-visual, the bombing results were usually good and several of the day's targets were removed from the target list for good.

1 MARCH 1945 / V2 / G 260

Although this was the 2nd mission for each of us, it was our first as a full crew. We didn't have a bombardier and F/O Morton W. Cousens was assigned to fly with us on this one. This time the target was another railroad marshalling yard at Ulm, which caught 1,300 lbs of bombs that day. We flew in No. 42-31922.

We were Left Wing of Ruseki's crew who was in the Lead of the Low Element of the Lead Flight of the Lead Squadron in No. 43-38273. Left Wing of the Lead Element was Armbruster's crew in a Fort named "Mr. Lucky," No. 43-38035. This put Mr. Lucky above and to the right of us.

After assembly over England, we headed out over the channel and began to climb to our cruising altitude en route. As we approached the Belgian coast, we also reached 10,000 feet and went on oxygen according to Standard Operating Procedures (SOP). There was a cloud deck just below the Group. It was mostly flat and smooth on top, except there were occasional humps of cloud here and there.

Just as we reached the Belgian coast, the Low Element and Ruseki passed into one of these humps. Suddenly, Rusecki came up out of it in a steep climb. He came up just over us and into Armbruster. Mr. Lucky was contacted by numbers 1 and 2 engines and Ruseki's B-17, which cut into Mr. Lucky about the rear of the Radio Room. Ruseki slid back chewing up the waist section of Armbruster's plane which was now in two separate pieces. I lost sight of Ruseki's Fort and the tail of Mr. Lucky, as I focused on the front half, which was sliding to the left and dropping and was now mighty close to us on our level. I could clearly see Chuck Armbruster looking back over his shoulder trying to see what was happening. As he continued to slide toward us, Crow pulled us left out of formation or there would have been three planes in the collision. Armbruster's front half went into a flat spin and disappeared into the clouds, so near below. We then edged back into the lead slot, where Rusecki had been moments before. I believe the whole thing was over in less than 15 seconds but that sequence is very vivid in my memory to this day!

It was very eerie seeing all that metal ripping apart only yards away, but without making a sound as if in a silent movie. Of course, it was making noise, but the constant, deafening roar of our own engines drowned out everything. We were so used to our engines, that the impression was one of silence. Another lasting image was the sight of the Radio Operator falling out of Armbruster's plane, without his parachute.

On B-17's, crew members generally wore a parachute harness, but not the chute itself. These chest packs had clips which could be quickly attached to our harness. However, after this incident, and seeing that tumbling crewman, several of us wore our parachutes all the time while in the air, cumbersome or not.

We later learned that there were only two survivors. The waist gunner of Ruseki's crew, who bailed out, and the tail gunner of Armbruster's crew. This has become a unique and classic air story of the war in B-17's and in fact, any aircraft.

Joe Jones was on his 22nd mission as Tail Gunner in Mr. Lucky with Armbruster's crew when he knew something was terribly wrong. The intercom was dead and there was no contact with the rest of the crew. He tried to bail out his tail hatch, but it was jammed shut, he tried to go to the waist, but twisted metal blocked the way, so he sat back down in the tail. Joe remembered a new technique some airplanes were experimenting with, namely, using a drogue parachute as a brake. So he popped his chute and tried to stuff it out of a broken window, but the air rushing by was too strong and this came to naught. In the end, he says he just sat down and had a smoke, waiting. Six days later he woke up in a British hospital.

The tail of Mr. Lucky had landed in a cow pasture on a farm near Slijpe. A Belgian ferryboat Stewart, beached by the war, named Gilbert Deschepper, found him, cut him out of the tail with an axe, and evading German sympathizers took him to that British hospital. He fully recovered.

Varnedoe met Joe Jones at a 385th reunion in Atlanta many years later and exchanged stories. He hadn't known how the collision occurred and Bill learned of his 10,000 foot ride to earth in a severed B-17 tail.

To be truthful, no one knows to this day why that Fortress came up abruptly like that. It is speculated that the cloud hump may have had an updraft, or perhaps Ruseki flying formation, concentrating on the plane he was flying off of, didn't see the cloud coming, then, suddenly losing visibility, got vertigo. We'll never know.

Some of the debris struck the Fort in the low diamond and it dove straight down to nearly the water. But, although there were oxygen leaks, two guns out of commission and the rudder jammed, it rejoined the formation and finished the mission.

#### VARNEDO'S TRIP HOME

It was on this first leg that we began to learn the shortcomings of our aircraft. It was an old war-weary one that flew in a permanent 5 degree crab. No amount of trimming could eliminate this quirk, which I just subtracted out for navigation, since it was NOT wind drift.

While on the ground at Valley, a P-51 buzzed the field to salute his brother in a bomber crew, but misjudged the water at the end of the runway and crashed. We were parked nearby, and Lentz and Max swam out and retrieved his body. Also, while there the 385th ship, "Haybag Annie", lost brakes on landing, ran off the runway end and had to be salvaged. No one was hurt on her, however.

This is the story of "Haybag Annie". When the B-17G, serial number 42-97280 came to Great Ashfield, the name "Haybag" had already been painted on her by someone among the ground crew of M/Sgt Ed Hallisley, a witty newspaperman from Aliquippa, PA. Robert I. Means, some "nameless" member of that crew came up with the idea of putting "Annie" under the "Haybag." It was after this that Annie Hayward, our English artist and Red Cross worker (now Annie Gordon) was kidded into painting her own portrait on the nose next to those words. Years later Annie tells us that she knew she was having her leg pulled, but it brought many a laugh then, and the nickname stuck to Annie. The swan song of Haybag Annie, a ship with over 100 missions, is best related by one of her passengers on that day in Valley Wales.

Robert E. Lee, of Cocoa, FL wrote:

We took off at 1530 hours on 19 June 1945 from Station 155. (The beginning of) that flight home was quite an experience...and for some of ..at least, probably the most hazardous one we had! When we touched down at Valley,

Wales at 1739 hours - the first time we got there - Dick Ettling checked the brakes, then let her roll down the landing strip. Planes were landing pretty close behind each other at the time. We were well down the strip, brakes were applied, and there were no brakes. We veered right, then left, on down the strip, off the end, through a ditch, over a dirt reversion which was there for the purpose of holding back the Irish Sea, but this time served instead to hold Haybag Annie out of the sea. We knocked one wheel off, and the other went up into the wheel well as we continued to skid for some distance. CWO Nugent Thompson yelled, "Let's get the hell out of here!" and proceeded to do just that! He had plenty of followers but none quite so fast.

The next leg was to Meeks Field at Keflavick, Iceland. During the whole trip of over 5 hours, we were embedded in clouds. Icing became a problem. I'm not sure if Sweet Chariot had wing deicing boots, but the props, themselves, would ice up and lose their pulling power. Don would rev up the engines, one by one, to sling off the ice, it would rattle against the side of the big gas bird.

We couldn't let down to lower altitude because of other traffic headed the other way, as well as other 17's going our way at different assigned altitudes. Although struggling, we stayed aloft, the LORAN which was supposed to be (and later became) such a boon to navigation, quit the moment we were airborne. I couldn't get it to stay aligned, so the LORAN technician/passenger stuck his head in the scope to see if he could get going. He kept trying all the way to the states, but never did get it to work. These early versions were just too sensitive to altitude (pressure) and temperature.

On days the 385th didn't fly a combat mission, we would often fly training missions over England. They trained new crews, and experimented with new formations or techniques. These training missions never counted toward mission totals, but in doing them we fought the English weather just like on the real ones. They also got us up just as early. As a result, I never ate but two meals a day while at Great Ashfield. Either I flew and missed the noon meal or didn't fly and slept through breakfast. In combat missions we were issued a lunch, of sorts. It was a small box (about 3 inches cube) of candy. I understand it was British issue it was not hard candy or like anything I can describe, so if you call this a meal, then maybe I had 3 on combat days.

I only came close to jumping with a parachute once and it was on one of these practice missions. There was a Smart Alex, goof of a pilot, a new replacement who was always fighting with his co-pilot. (Every outfit seems to have one.) Once he took a swing at him, missed and hit the stovepipe. Soot flew everywhere. Can you imagine the morale of that crew? Well, on one of those practice missions, this eightball slipped in behind the Fort he was supposed to be on the wing of. Propwash caught him and he did a peeloff right through the formation. Planes scattered everywhere, but somehow there were no collisions.

Then on another one, this fool was flying below us. Either he couldn't or wouldn't keep his position. We were on a left wing, and Crow had to watch his lead intently and couldn't be concerned with other 17's in the formation. However, the rest of us had swivel necks looking

everywhere. In combat this helps spot enemy fighters. We could see this nut below us rising and falling. He would come up very fast so fast we were sure he was going to hit us.

Instinctively we would call out on the intercom. Did I say, "call out?" "Yell out" is more like it. Poor George Crow couldn't look, but all the screaming got to him and he ordered us all to shut up. Of course, he was correct. He couldn't do anything about it in the air, although he could, and did, talk at the debriefing. But as I watched that bird barreling up, it looked just like Armbruster on our 2nd mission. I had my chute on and seriously considered getting out before he could hit us. But I didn't and he didn't.

There was another "character" in our BOQ. Wild Bil wasn't bad, just different. Once when someone would not be quiet, Wild Bill, perhaps with a few sheets to the wind, pulled out his 45 and fired a round through the roof. Everything got very quiet then and we all went to sleep. He'd also been known to put bottles on the rafters and shoot at them!

Sleeping was easy, as tired as we normally were. But it was cold. Nothing is quite so chilling as a damp English winter. Our stoves were minuscule affair?, slightly larger than the stovepipes. Coal was rationed, and never enough. Every barracks resorted to "midnight requisitions." As it was, this boy from the deep south slept under seven, count 'em, seven GI wool blankets. But I did sleep soundly. I remember waking up one night to the sound of a buzz bomb flying overhead. I said to myself, "I won't get up and go to a bomb shelter unless the motor shuts off, and it starts to fall." "Did the motor quit?" you ask. I don't know, since I fell fast asleep while it was still overhead.

As stated, we flew a very tight formation. This gave maximum firepower where Fortresses protected each other from enemy fighters. More than once when a Jerry fighter was seen, still way out of range, we'd all fire at him. every 5th round was a tracer bullet. As we would all shoot, that wall of tracer fire leaving a Group was very impressive. Usually, Jerry would just go away, which suited us fine! Being in a tight formation also allowed us to carry two Bombardiers in each squadron, in the lead and deputy lead. As he would drop his bomb load, he'd also release a couple of smoke bombs; at this signal, all of the other bombers in the Squadron would also release their bombs. A measure of the tightness and discipline of the Squadron was the percentage of bombs that landed within 500, 1000 and 2000 feet of the main point of impact. The 385th Bomb Group finished tops in the 8th Air Force by this measure!

One of the things learned during these training flights was the use of the English G-Box. The G-Box was a new navigation aid that gave us a fix on specially marked maps. All B-17s in the ETO were equipped with it. It resembled an early cathode ray oscilloscope that gave numbers by counting pips along a trace line. But it gave a very accurate location, and gave it quickly. While very efficient over England and out into the channel, it could not be used over Germany due both to jamming and to distance.

Before starting combat we were given a 3 day pass. As a crew, we took the train from Elmswell, changed at Stowmarket and went to London. There, all 9 of us piled



into an ancient taxi. But the poor thing refused to run with such a load. It was equipped with a belt drive which just kept slipping. So we split up. The officers went to a hostel run by the Red Cross where we could get a cheap bed, coffee and donuts.

We were impressed by the darkness of London at night during the blackout. (Every night.) One could stand at Piccadilly Circus and see absolutely nothing, just hear the incessant clacking of wooden heels as people walked about. One could barely make out the features of the Piccadilly Commandos. (girls, so called because of their aggressiveness.) While in London, we hired a disabled British soldier to act

as guide and show us the sights. We witnessed the changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. Although the fancy dress uniforms had given way to wartime khaki, the ceremony was still impressive. We also toured the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, etc. We became quite proficient at getting about London on the Underground (subway). I left a store-bought uniform coat with a tailor to make into an Eisenhower type jacket. I was optimistic enough to think I'd be back in London later to pick it up. (I did) At night, we saw the girlie shows at the Windmill Theatre.

But all good things must end, and I back to Great Ashfield we went to start our part of the war in earnest.

SUMMARY

B-17'S Varnedoe Flew in

<u>Ser No.</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>No. Msns</u>	<u>Crew flew w/</u>
43- 39123	Possible Straight	7	Crow's Crew
42- 31922		2	Crow's Crew
42-107054		1	Crow's Crew
43- 37786	Madam Shoo Shoo	1	Crow's Crew
43- 38549		1	Crow's Crew
42- 97668	Leading Lady	1	Crow's Crew
43- 38559		1	Crow's Crew
43- 38980		1	Crow's Crew
43- 38743		1	Crow's Crew
42-102636	Sleepy time Gal	1	Crow's Crew
43- 39088	Gypsy Princess	1	Crow's Crew
42-102481	Kentucky Winner	1	Crow's Crew
42-102684	Sweet Chariot	(0)	Black's (Crow) Crew
43- 39088	Gypsy Princess	(2) 1	Mu chow w/ Crow's Crew
42- 32078	Barbara-B	1	Muchow w/ Crow's Crew
42-102481	Kentucky Winner	(3) 2	Audrain's Crew
43- 38566		1	Muchow's Crew
43- 38118	Miss Fortune	1	Kari's Crew
44- 6569		1	Lovegreen's Crew

Total 15 different B-17 s

26 missions for Varnedoe

<u>Crew Mem.</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Missions</u>	<u>Missions w/ Crow's Crew</u>	<u>w/ Other Crew</u>
Crow	P	18	18	0
Black	CP	20	18	2
Varnedoe	N	26	20	6
McDaniels	CTG	17	15	2
Lentz	TTG	20	20	0
Kozosky	RO	24	20	4
Barnes	BG	22	20	2
Peters	WG	20	18	2
Lancaster	TG	21	19	2

	<u>Averages</u>	<u>Earlest</u>	<u>Latest</u>
Take off time:	8:50	05:36	13:39
Landing time:	15:50	13:12	18:59
Length of time in air:	7:28	5:20	9:33

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** An interesting story from Tulsa -- not a 385th crew but quite a story, sent in by Sam Lyke.

## B-17 Crewmen Reunited During Governors' Meet

By Fount Holland II  
World Staff Writer

Gov. Bruce Sundlun and Bill Ramsey last saw each other as they prepared to jump out of a B-17 just hit by enemy fire in World War II.

Ramsey, a retired Colcord chicken farmer and Sundlun were reunited Tuesday at the National Governors' Association meeting in Tulsa.

"We both bailed out of the plane and we haven't seen or heard of each other for 50 years," said Sundlun, who has been Rhode Island's governor since 1990.

Ramsey said he didn't know Sundlun was a governor until a few months ago.

After hearing Ramsey talk about his war experiences, one of his daughters, Marsha Mullen, decided to track down Sundlun, the pilot of his plane.

Mullen was dialing all the Sundluns in Rhode Island when someone told her she must be searching for the state's governor.

She called the governor's office and Sundlun called back.

Another daughter, Kay Hilton, arranged for the two men to meet at the Maxwell Convention Center during the governors' convention. She said she guessed the governor was staying at the Doubletree Hotel and contacted him.

Tuesday, the two 73-year-old men shared stories about World War II.

There were 10 men in the B-17 crew when the Germans shot it down over Belgium on Dec. 1, 1943.

Sundlun was the pilot and Ramsey was an engineer.

The plane had lost two engines and dropped to 3,000 feet when Sundlun told the men to jump.

Sundlun was the last man to parachute. Ramsey said he had thought Sundlun was dead until he got back to the states.

Sundlun spent six months with the underground before finding his way to Switzerland.

Ramsey was captured and spent the next 18 months as a prisoner of war at an Austrian prison camp.

Six members of the crew survived the war. Sundlun said Ramsey was the only person he had been unable to locate.

On Tuesday, Sundlun said the reunion left him

with a funny feeling.

"I don't feel like 50 years have gone by. It's like we picked up where we left off," Sundlun said.

Ramsey said he had tried to forget his painful memories. That's why until Tuesday, he had never contacted other survivors.

"That was quite a life, 18 months in a prison camp," Ram-

sey said.

Ramsey told his story publicly for the first time in a recent Veterans Day speech to the Colcord Chamber of Commerce. That prompted his daughter to search for Sundlun.

Ramsey said finding out Sundlun was governor was surprising, although he always knew Sundlun could be whatever he wanted.

He said Sundlun was already a lawyer when he entered the service in World War II, and had practiced at a Providence, R.I., law firm with his father.

Ramsey said Sundlun always tried to help the men of his unit.

"Anytime one of us would get a leave, he'd pull out his billfold to see if we had enough money."

Sundlun is a former federal

prosecutor and business executive. He was elected governor in 1990 and again in 1992.

Ramsey jokingly said life has changed a little since their time in the U.S. Army Air Corps.

"He was a captain and I was a sergeant. I used to have to salute him. But now he wears the same kind of pants that I do," said Ramsey.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Here's another recollection from Don Kabitzke. Ivan Klohe made the Sookane Reunion-his first. We had an interesting visit.

### CAPTAIN KLOHE

Captain Klohe was a Command Pilot from one of the Bomber Group Units. He loved to come into our woodwork shop and use the tools to make something for himself or as a gift to send back home. He made a nice record cabinet and a clock base which he mounted an Elgin Air Force 8 day clock which came out of a bomber. It was a work of art. We enjoyed having him associate with us as he never pulled rank. Just a downright decent fellow.

That isn't what we remembered best about him. We heard story after story about the mischief he was getting into while on missions. On the ground he was forever riding a motorcycle trying to break his neck. Before leaving on a mission, at the plane he would ask for volunteers to wrestle with him. He just was different. On one mission, they spotted a Fortress which was pretty well shot up, yet flying. It kept falling behind and one of the crew spotted a German Fighter waiting to move in for the kill. When he was told about it, he asked if the crew was with him to drop out and protect the wounded plane. They all agreed and they were successful in getting the plane back to England.

Klohe was called on the carpet for dropping out of formation just to chase a German and shoot him down. The brass frowned on this. One day he come into the shop, did some work and told us he was taking a Fort up for testing in the afternoon. If anyone wanted to go along they were welcome. One sergeant had the time and took the trip. He was scared silly when he got back. When done testing, he started to Hedgehop on the way back. While testing, He barrel rolled the ship, corrugating the fuscilage, over a wooded area he got down too low and tore off the left aileron. He scared the daylights out of everyone. This was too much, and they grounded him.

About a week later he was transferred out to some fighter group where he was retrained to fly them. He never was cut out to pilot the heavies. He was a fighter pilot from the beginning. He now was doing what he wanted. Free like a bird. We loved and missed him.

Donald J. Kabitzke



Arch Benner  
2nd V.P.



Bob Valliere  
1st V.P.



President Smith with  
Vice President Jane



How we were in 1944  
Another shot of Bob Smith



Another look at Saturday night in Spokane



What a Party!

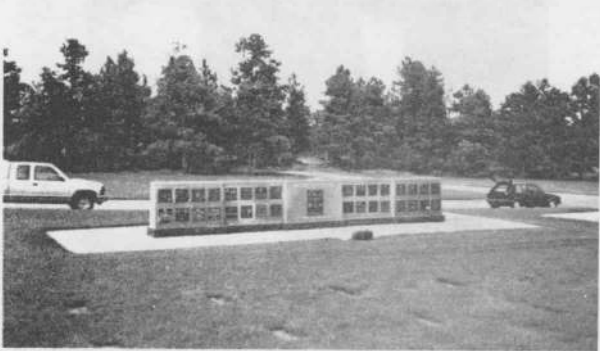


Marvin Tipp



Members of crew #17

L-R Jerome Mudge-Pilot, Burnell Cook-Top Turrent-Engineering, Joe Pegiacomo-Waist Gunner, Plato Gallan-Waist Gunner, Verne D.J. Philips-Navigator, Bill Clark-Co-Pilot



Wall on which 385th plaque is mounted, AF Academy



Looking down the spillway at Grand Coulee Dam



### WRONG PLACE, WRONG TIME

BY George Kuhl--the story of the 305th Bomb Group and the 2nd Schweinfurt Raid, October 14, 1943.

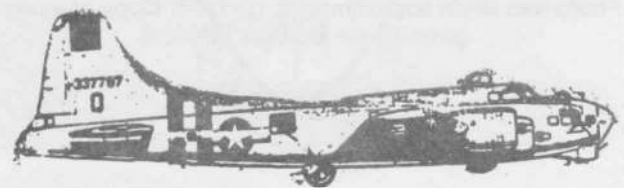
Here's a brutally honest, meticulously researched history of one of the tragic 8th Air Force raids deep into Germany in October 1 943--it and the Munster raid caused the Commanders to abandon deep-penetration daylight raids until adequate fighter coverage became available.

The author, a pilot in the 305th, tells of the errors, poor judgment, lack of leadership, combined with bad luck and constant German fighter opposition that caused the loss of 60 B-1 7s that day, 45 of them from the 1 st Division. By contrast, he shows the comparative low losses (15 planes) of the 3rd Division with their superior flight formations.

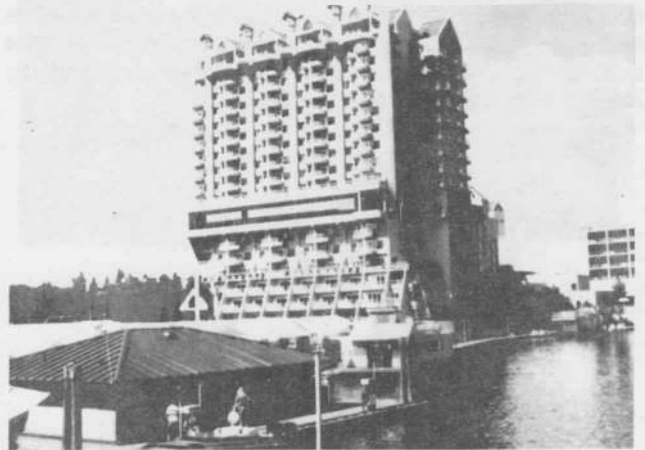
He follows each crew from beginning to whatever happened--shot down, returned to Base, eaptured, POW, Evader, Detainee--the whole gamut. It's almost as though you were there--and it's "must reading" even though it wasn't our Group. According to our records, we lost just one plane from our Group that day--Vockerath.

You'll be especially interested in the surprising lack of in-depth questioning by top Command at the "thorough assessment" held after the Raid, the reassessment of damage claimed and enemy fighters destroyed. As we say, it's really "must reading" even 50 years after the fact.

It may be available from your local book store or if you'd like an autographed copy, order direct from Geo. C. Kuhl, 2329 Redwood Dr., Augusta, GA 30904, at \$23.80, which includes postage.



Frank telling it like it is.



The Hotel on Lake Coeur de Alene



Kay Harvey (left) receiving picture painted by D. Pleasance of Diss, England, with Nancy Valliere.

### WALL OF MISSING IN NEW YORK CITY

At the foot of Manhattan while waiting for a ferry to visit the Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island, we found a Memorial to those "Who gave their lives and who sleep in the American Coastal Waters of the Atlantic Ocean."

Listed on the Wall of the Missing were the members of Richard Gilder's crew of the 548th who were lost on the way over, plus others from the 550th who we couldn't identify. Gilder's crew was thought to have "missed Ireland" and gone down in the North Sea. Those lost were Richard W. Gilder, Jean H. Souffront, Ponce B. Wilson, Fred E. Moroto, Don S. Diefferding, Dalmus Morrison, Regis B. Funk, Leroy E. Ogline, Richard W. Garther, and William F. DeElmo.

We didn't study the whole Wall, but we found two other names-Morris Meyer and Fred Montgomery. Meyer was listed as a 550th member, with Montgomery just listed as 385th Bomb Group.

If anyone has any recollections of these men, please let us hear from you. And anyone who visits the site, please take time to go over the whole Wall and send us names of any other 385th members that you spot.



BOMB GP <HJ - N Y	MOORE ROBERT C	S SGT	AIR CGRFS	WASHINGTON
PS OKLAHOMA	MOORE POSS B JR	SGT	34 ** 309 FERRY CP	TEX.
HR RY GP	MORAN GLENN J	CPL	AIR CORPS	ILLINC
UNIT * TEWESSEE	MOREHEAD EMMETT I H	PVT	OM CORPS	CH
<Y> ** GEORGIA	MORITZ MILTON A	1LT	A IP CORPS	CH
BOMB CP <H>	MORIEY JAMES J	PVT	AIR CORPS - PENNSYLVAF	
.ORFS OHIO	MORRIS FRANK X	1LT	AIR CORPS - NEW YO	
ORFS OHIO	MORRIS JOE 1LT	411	BOMB SO 5G2 BOMB GP <VH> CALIFORN	
ICE UNIT OHIO	MORRECH	DELMAS SGT	548 BOMB SO 385 BOMB GP - MAIL	
BOMB GP <VH> N	MORRESEY	MICHAEL SGT	501 BOMB GP - N	
5 - PENNSYLVAF	MORTON FRED	E 2 LT	54E BOMB SO 385 BOMB GP (H) MA	
48 GP (H) - MD	MORTON	JOHN 0	PFC - AIR CORPS	MICHIG/ILLINC
SCAF	MOSLER CARROLL J	FLT	555 AAF BASE UNIT	MICHIG/ILLINC
F Q	MUILLETAUX EUGENE M	2 IT	AIR CORPS	
EGY	MOYA JOSE E	1LT	328 BOMB SO 93 BOMB - Cp <H> - CAMFCR/	
EVY	MUELLER ALBERT J	CPL	6 BOMB SO 29 BOMB GP <VH> OH	
MY	MULDERIG JOSEPH J	PVT	IN PENTRY - PENNSYLVAF	
VA	MULLIN CHARLES L	CPL	FIELD ARTILLERY - NEW JERFS	
VA	MULLIN WILLIAM R	PVT	COAST ARTY CORPS	
VA	MURPHY MAUK ICC P	2 LT	459 BOMB GP <H>	MICHIG/ GP MA
VA	MURPHY WILLIAM F. JR	CAPT	43 FTR SO 16 FTP	MAI
VA	MURPHY ANDREY J	2 LT	AIR CORPS	CEORC
VA	FERNEY P	PVT	U S ARMY	ARK ANS.
VA	ROBERT C	2 LT	24 FTP SO	MICHIG/ GP <H> I
VA	ROBERT S	2 LT	AIR CORPS	NEW YO
VA	YDE E 2 I	LT	758 BOMB SO 4 59 BOMB	
VA	FEDERIG	CPL	28 SO 6 FERRY -GP	

### 385th BGMA - Balance in checking account as of October 7, 1993

Beginning Balance	600.00
Deposits from registration	57,903.90
Deposit from bar	817.00
Deposit from raffle	888.00
Deposit from A. Huber raffle	276.15
Deposit from Tulsa pins	78.00
1992 and 1993 interest payments	462.42
error adjustment	<u>1.30</u>
Sub-total	61,026.77
Total Expenses paid out	5162155
Balance in account	7,401.19



2nd Lt. Jim F. Burch  
Co-Pilot, 549th  
MIA, Munster, 10/10/43

Photo was taken approximately 10/1 /43. Copy of a photo given to me by Dick Whitlow.

## Letters to the Editor:

Dear Ed,

Please find enclosed a story of the "Rum Dum" and some of the men who flew her. This story is a publication done by my son, Chris, who is a History/English major at the University of Minnesota Morris. Chris did this paper originally as a History project. He then decided to have it published so the people involved could have a copy. Due to the limited time he had to do the paper it was impossible to contact many or all of the men who flew in "Rum Dum", but he found enough info to cover this great B-17G. I have always been proud of the fact that I flew with the 385th and this great ship, and I know Chris would like to hear from other men of the 385th that flew in "Rum Dum" and get their stories about her. If he could collect enough additional material, he would like to add it to what he already has and print a new book.

Sincerely yours,

George J. Hunter  
RR 3, Box 243  
Sauk Centre, MN 56378

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Chris' publication is a great job that deserved an "A" from his History Professor. Anyone who would like to write Chris about their experiences in "Rum Dum", please do so.

Editor, Publisher of the Hard Life Herald,

I appreciate all the work the Editor-Publisher and his staff do in turning out such a good publication and I want to congratulate all of you who work so hard to keep our memories alive.

What ever happened to all the strike photos of our missions? Are they anywhere in existence now and if so how to get a copy?

Where could I find or buy an old bubble sextant, or 24 hr watches, or some old flak maps of Europe, or the G maps or those old RAF maps of the area of our base?

Every time I fill my car with gas I think of "full Tokyo's Topped off" - does anyone have a published glossary of such phrases or words used during our tour with the 385th?

Best wishes, and keep up the good work.

Rodger J. Walsh, Navigator  
0723718 1st Lt.  
551st Squadron 385th BG  
6-44 to 3-45

115 West Lexington  
P.O. Box 1078  
Independence, Missouri 64051-0578

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Some interesting questions. If anyone writes to Rodger with answers, please send us a copy.

Dear Ed,

What a nice reunion! Seeing Ivan Klohe and Wayne Horn (born a "Horn" made my day - not having seen them since early 1944. It was their first reunion. We arrived back in El Paso about 11:30 pm Sunday night and we've been exhausted ever since.

Be sure and stop by if you're ever in the neighborhood.

Kindest regards,

Arch Benner & Bonnie

Dear Ed:

The reunion at Spokane was another memorable occasion to be long remembered. We enjoyed the atmosphere of Spokane for the brief time we were there. The hotel was excellent. We are now looking forward to the Omaha reunion.

Three of the remaining members of our crew made the trip and renewed old friendships. It is a good feeling to know we have been able to keep in touch over the years even though we are many miles apart.

One of the highlights- of our trip to Spokane was a visit to The Cathedral of Saint John The Evangelist. We had a superior guided tour through the cathedral and a detailed description of the building and its many interesting details.

Sincerely,

Elmer Snow  
139 Runnymede Rd  
West Caldwell, NJ 07006-8114



L-R: Elmer Snow, Jerome B. Harmon, Jr. & Dale Dykins



L-R: Jerome B. Harmon Jr., Elmer Snow & Dale Dykins

Dear Ed,

Here's a tidbit you might want to print, it is on my two favorite Okies, George and Marie, their picture inclosed. They sat with the nine of us of the Richey crew at the Saturday night banquet. They are neat people.

I can't tell you what George was mouthing the camera, but he is the coy one isn't he? It might have been only his "just-say-no" to my asking a discount root canal from this rich ex-dentist. Note that very pregnant Nooooo!

It was in the Fargo airport restaurant where I first met these two, we were by chance sitting together for a bite on our way out of town.

As first impressions are usually best, both of them rated tops. Marie was but a couple hours from her hi-pro promo for the Tulsa reunion which really impressed me and George bought the lunch for the whole table. That did it.

And not to forget that Marie tendered me a Tulsa reunion souvenir tooth brush that night in Spokane, only two years late. I have no idea how she knew I missed Tulsa but I sure did, for that was the year I started growing a new prosthesis for the old left leg.

I got a real kick out of George when he treed retired airline pro Richey with a technical nooky poor old John couldn't handle. I had no idea where this was going.

After George explained that before his heart problem, he flew his own airplane, a Cessna 310. All he wanted out of Richey, did he know the stalling speed of a "loaded" B-17? This was important to him for he said he knew exact the stall-speed of a "loaded" 310. "Loaded" you say?

John only looked confused and could only answer with a murmur that he had never landed a "loaded" B-17.

In John's defense, I think he thought this a "loaded" question and somehow a throw-back to his drinking days.

But we all had a good laugh when Richey, who had never flown anything less than a DC-3 but with maybe 30,000 hrs in the "bigguns", mused that, come to think of it I can't tell you the stall-speed of a "loaded" 747. All I know is that when low and slow you'd better be close when you kiss pavement.

Tom Helman  
718 Sherman St.  
Medford, OR 97504



Dear Ed,

Please find enclosed a change of address and pictures of my collection of the planes of the 8th Air Force, some British and German planes. I have also completed a model of the 385th air base and a model of Emswell. I am waiting for the pictures of the airbase and of Emswell to be developed, then I will send you a copy of them.

I am still collecting pictures, books and VCR of the 8th AAF and the 385th.

I have been thinking of building or buying a place to put my collection in. Also I have been thinking of buying a 5th wheel trailer to put the collection in. I have about 2 rooms filled with my collection and I'm still looking for more items.

I just sent Sid Colthorpe a model of the B-17F. He has been looking for one. I also sent him copies of the enclosed pictures.

I'm sorry that I missed the reunion in Spokane. I was all set to go but due to illness I was unable to attend.

My new address is as follows:

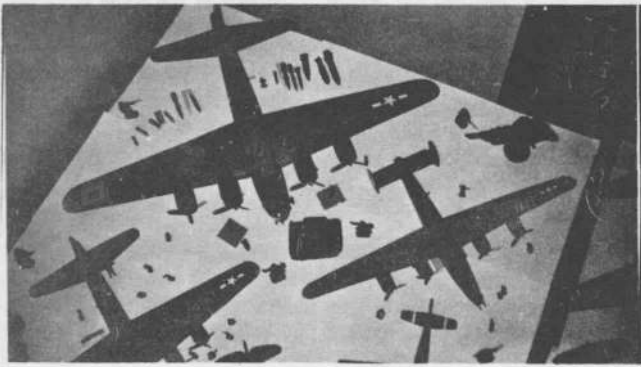
Merritt F. Andrews  
111 East 11th St., Box 172  
Erie, PA 16502  
Telephone - 814-455-5949

Will write more later.

Yours,  
Merritt F. Anderson  
"Andy"







Dear Ed,

This was our first Reunion and it won't be our last, it was just great and we are looking forward to Omaha.

Let me give you a few particulars regarding Bob and Marge Bailey. I was on Crew No. 21, 549th Sqdrn. (Clarence Moats crew). Name of our aircraft was "Hit Parade, Jr." We joined the 385th in October, 1943, finished up on May 1 st, 1944. Most of the crew then returned to the U.S.A. Yours truly as a Master Sgt. stayed on as Radio Relay ship operator until October, 1944 then on home.

Marge joins me in expressing our pleasure in meeting you folks and do hope that you will be able to work-in the name of our aircraft "Hit Parade, Jr." on the masthead of the Hardlife Herald.

Cordially yours,

Bob Bailey  
Gerrish Island  
P.O. box 285  
Kittery Point, ME 03905

Dear Ed,

Just thought I'd let you know, the old 548th Bomb Squadron Engineering department held a Mini reunion in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, from October 7 to 10. The hosts were Tommy and Fran Gentile.

A good time was had by all. The gathering included Martin Bridges, Dave Beam, Jerry Bielli, Dale Leggett, Forbes Tenbrook, Henry Dwarshak, Sam Lockie, Tommy Gentile, Charles Huber, Wayne Detweiler, Herb Grainger and me, including all our wives.

We collected \$145.00. This will be sent to John Pettenger to be forwarded to All Saints Church in Great Ashfield, in memory of John Alcock who passed away recently. He always attended our reunions.

The next mini reunion will be the end of September, 1994, in Indianapolis, Indiana, with Wayne and Carol Detweiler as hosts.

Herman (Hy) Siederer  
601 Benner Street  
Highland Park, NJ 08904

Continued from Page 2

We shook hands and the old man walked away. My eyes feared as he did.

My parents' generation, I sincerely believe, had more to bear than any other in this country's history. Their lives were affected - and some were ruined - by World War I, the Great Depression, World War II and Korea, and some lost children in Vietnam. And, now, the last of them are fading into the shadows cast by the young they brought into this world.

Few of my generation really know the meaning of sacrifice. What did we ever want for and couldn't have? When have we ever been hungry? When did most of us ever have to run through a hail of bullets in a foreign land in order to save comrades? I never have and neither has Bill Clinton.

After the man in Greensboro had walked away, I realized I had made a mistake by not sitting with him and asking him to tell me what had happened that day in Germany. I would have liked to have known about it from a survivor, not from some document.

But you know how it is. We're all in a hurry. We just don't know where it is we're hurrying to.

Goodbye, Old Soldiers, and thank you.

You are the very best of us.



Jim McDonald & Sep Richard



Dear Ed:

Enclosed is an article regarding the Greenland Expedition which you may want to include in a future newsletter.

I visited the hanger in Middlesboro, KY, to see the P-38 and enjoyed seeing this aircraft or I should say all the component parts as the plane was disassembled at recovery site and is being put together again.

I congratulate you on the excellent newsletter you send out each quarter.

See you in Spokane,

Robert McGhee  
4404 Del Mabry Dr.  
Knoxville, TN 37914

# Back from the ice cap after 50 years

## World War II fighter plane due to be restored, flying, group told

By Dean Stone  
of The Daily Times Staff

The world's finest P-38 Lightning fighter plane, a World War II veteran, is expected to be completely restored and flying within 18 months at Middlesboro, Ky., Bob Cardin told Air Force Association members Thursday at McGhee Tyson Armed Forces Club.

Project manager for the Greenland Expedition Society, Cardin retired in 1988 as a lieutenant colonel from the U.S. Army where he served as an aviator and an airfield commander.

Cardin, addressing the General Bruce K. Holloway Chapter of the Air Force Association, told the story leading to the successful effort to raise a P-38 from the Greenland ice cap 50 years after two B-17 bombers and six P-38s landed there after running out of fuel.

The U.S. had been sending lend-lease planes to England by ship but because of heavy losses to German submarines it was decided to ferry the planes across the Atlantic. This was one of the early such flights, some of the airplanes having been modified to increase their range. They flew from California to Maine then Greenland and were to land in Iceland en route to England.

A phantom radio message advised the flight that the field in Greenland was weathered in, an incorrect message which may have

been sent from a submarine by Germans who had broken the U.S. code. Running out of fuel, the planes landed on the Greenland ice cap some 10 miles from the coast, the crews all being rescued three days later. (Eight of the survivors are still alive.)

Not much was thought about the planes for 40 years, their exact location being a mystery because of movement of the glacier. In 1981, Pat Epps, owner of Epps Aviation at Atlanta's DeKalb-Peachtree Airport and his friend Richard Taylor, a well-known Atlanta architect, formed the society to find and retrieve the Lost Squadron. Over the next decade they made seven expeditions to the ice cap, the planes being located by subsurface radar in 1989, three miles from their original location.

A year later expedition members made it down to B-17 Big Stoop only to find that the glacier had crushed the big, thin-skinned bomber. Figuring the smaller but sturdier P-38s had fared better under the weight of the ice which had accumulated over half a century, society members returned in 1992 and retrieved P-38 Delta.

Cardin was in charge of preparation for that event which was financed chiefly by J. Roy Shoffner, a Middlesboro, Ky., businessman involved in real estate and home building and owner of several Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants.

Shoffner is a former Air Force fighter pilot.

A veteran of 800 hours of combat flying in Vietnam, Cardin headed the expedition which took 28,000 pounds of equipment and 8,000 pounds of food for the four-month stay on the ice cap. They had 150 barrels of fuel used for planes and to operate some of the heating equipment.

Cardin showed color slides of the operation and how specially designed equipment was used to melt down through 268 feet of accumulation of ice and snow to the plane. The glacier or ice cap is 2,500 feet deep and tapers to the coast, the planes being located about midway.

The unusual event of a ground blizzard which brought 120-mile per hour winds and -20 degree temperatures during the summer months, temporarily stopping work.

There was an interesting accumulation of persons working on the project. One of them was Norman Bond, now 87, who was chief dog sled handler for Admiral Richard E. Byrd in his 1923 Antarctica trip. Byrd named a mountain for Bond who plans to dog sled across Antarctica in December of this year and climb the mountain named for him.

By July 15, 1992, the 50th anniversary of the forced landings, the 2,500-pound engines, the propellers, wingtip panels, tail section, and tail booms had been brought to the surface. They were flown to a less remote area of Greenland on the expedition's ski-equipped DC-3.

The plane's 20mm cannon and four 50 caliber machineguns were still loaded when removed from the ice. They were checked out and fired effectively using ammunition which went down with the planes.

New shafts had to be sunk to remove the 3,500-pound center fuselage section which includes the 17-foot-long main wing spar which were brought to the surface Aug. 1, 1992. It was loaded into a sling and flown by helicopter Sept. 12 to a ship which transported it to Savannah, Ga., by way of Denmark and Sweden. Oct. 28, 1992, the trip ended with arrival at Middlesboro where the plane was dismantled and is being restored.

Three mechanics and a painter are working seven days a week at the restoration. The public is invited - free of charge - to visit the restoration site in the big hanger at the Middlesboro-Bell County Airport.

Except for the wing and fuselage skins which are being replaced, about 15 percent of the restored P-38 Lightning will be new. About 65

percent of the plane is usable as is and 20 percent of the project needs straightening or repairing.

Aluminum and steel portions of the plane were in excellent shape but most of the magnesium parts will have to be replaced because of deterioration.

Components of the plane are being restored over a wide area of the world. It is costing 827,000 to rebuild the radiators in England, Al Boshera of Wheatfield, Ind., is rebuilding the two Allison V-12 engines, the instrument panel is being rebuilt in New York, and B. F. Goodrich Aerospace is rebuilding the landing gear, wheels and brakes. Many parts are being renewed by the original manufacturers for little or no charge.

It has cost \$630,000 in cash to get the project where it is and it is anticipated it will be worth \$1.3 million when restored and flying. There are seven flyable P-38's in the world, part of a total of 22 such planes still around. The last restored P-38 sold for \$1.2 million. The plane cost \$125,000 new.

The government did not attempt to recover the planes at the time because it was cheaper to make another with production running about 15 of the fighters per day. Cardin added that production planes in wartime during that period were not built to be longlasting as are Air Force planes today. One enemy plane manufacturer said theirs were built to last about 20 minutes because that was often the limit in combat.

The plane being restored was very new, having been flown only 50 hours.

A book is being written about the restoration and a video is being made. The event received national publicity last December in both Life and Air and Space magazines. The idea is not to make money on the project but to make the P-38 available for the American public to see.

Plans call for taking the restored plane to an air show every two weeks and already a small display of memorabilia and pictures are on display at the restoration site which is open to the public free of charge.

Current Blount leaders in the General Bruce K. Holloway Chapter of the Air Force Association include Gen. Fred D. Womack, president, who introduced the speaker, and Co. Billy S. Linebaugh, vice president.

Dear Ed,

The Group may be interested in the Reunion that took place in France for my crew during the Aug. 13 to 24, period. The reunion was organized by the Groupe Archeo and the Aero-Club Mirandais of Gilmont France. As a result of their persistence all former crew members on the last mission have been located with the exception of one. The Air Forces Escape and Evasion Society and the VA were also quite helpful.

Four of us were able to attend this cost free trip. Jack Hughes-Co-Pilot, Del Kneale-Navigataor, and Denver Canaday, Waist Gunner and myself plus all wives and Jack Hughes daughter Mary Beth who was most helpful. Two other crew members were unable to attend due to ill health, John Astyk and Melvin Frazier. Unfortunately Eugene Cavitt, George Elliott and Robert Really are deceased. No one was able to locate the whereabouts of Claude Sharpless.

As you can tell from the enclosed program, this was a continuous round of receptions from morning to night with at least 14 communities participating in receptions and financing. To say the least we were all dumbfounded as to the immensity and extent of this reunion. Virtually everyone who had assisted us (or their relatives) during our trying period after being shot down were there to welcome us and exchange memories of that experience, plus newpeople, TV people. Each couple stayed at individual homes with meals and all transportation provided. The generosity and kindness of our hosts is indescribable.

We each have our own individual stories and hopefully we can get together at the next 385th reunion in 1994.

The Old Shilleagh II was shot down over France August 24, 1943.

Sincerely,

Bill Grodi, Pilot, 551st Sqdn

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** The next column is the English translation of the story by the French Hosts.



551st Sqdn, 385th BG

Jack Laroux & Jack LaJoux French Organizers  
Volk Hughers, Bill Grod, Del Kneale, Denver Canaday



## THEY HAVE NOT FORGOTTEN THE FLYING FORTRESS

"August 24, 1943. An American Flying Fortress B17 F crashed near Boulaur, at Le Gers. Seven members of the crew were rescued by the local inhabitants. Almost 50 years later, the Archeo group of Gilmont tracked down six of them, and started a grand project: A reunion of them for next August in Le Gers to celebrate the anniversary of their rescue."

August 17, 1943: In the early morning an American Flying Fortress B17 F took off from its English base with a crew of ten men aboard. A "Fortress," the term is truly well chosen: a (wing) span of 31.6 meters, a length of 28.6 meters, and a height of 5.8 meters-such were the measurements of this mastadon, which the Germans familiarly called, among themselves, the "big automobiles."

Around twelve o'clock, the B 17 started its bombing run on Ratisbonne (Editors note: I thought this was Regensburg?), in the center of Germany. It was the first time that the risk had been taken to bomb the interior of Germany by day. Everything went off without mishap and the crew set out for Algiers.

A week later-August 24, 1943-the Fortress set out to return to its base in England. The victim of engine trouble, it crashed near Boulaur, in the territory of Saramon, at Gers. The crew of ten had just enough time to eject by parachute.

At this time, Monsieur Lejoux was eight and a half years old, and was present, astounded at the descent of the parachutists. He thinks that he even remembers the red tracers of German bullets streaking across the sky.

Three Americans were seriously wounded and were made prisoners by the Germans. The other seven were saved as a result of assistance by the populace and the efficiency of the Resistance, who later led them to the Spanish border.

Time passed, but in the region of Saramon, this episode of history was not forgotten. The proof: thirteen years ago, M. Lejoux, then a teacher of French at the CES (Editors note: this is probably the abbreviation for the local high school) of Gimont, told his students the story of the american Fortress. The next day, six of them had stories to relate on the subject: Sandrine's grandmother had hid-



den an American; Dominique's grandfather had assisted another, who had offered to give him his watch...the impetus had been given, and the research could begin.

The search began, quite naturally, in the woods where the aircraft had crashed. At first, the search for debris was fruitless.

It is necessary to mention that after the accident the Germans had for twelve days stripped the machine to remove spare parts which their own people needed.

It was the way-some people called it "the crisis"-and everything was in short supply. For the local people, the leftovers of the Germans were manna from heaven. Some had salvaged metal plates to make rivets. Others had cut shoe soles from the tires on the wheels.

But the obstinacy of M. Lajoux and his students paid off. They ended up finding pieces of sheet iron carrying the name "Boeing," some tubing, some castings, some plexiglass.. it was sufficient to organize an exhibition at the college of Gimont.

Sufficient? Not quite. Because among many families the memory of the Americans remained fresh, and one question became more and more pressing: "What happened to the parachutists?"

Then, about a year ago, M. Lajoux and the enthusiastic members of the Archeo group from Gimont, decided to go further. They questioned nearly a hundred persons, wrote to the American Embassy, made contact with French people living in the USA and....succeeded.

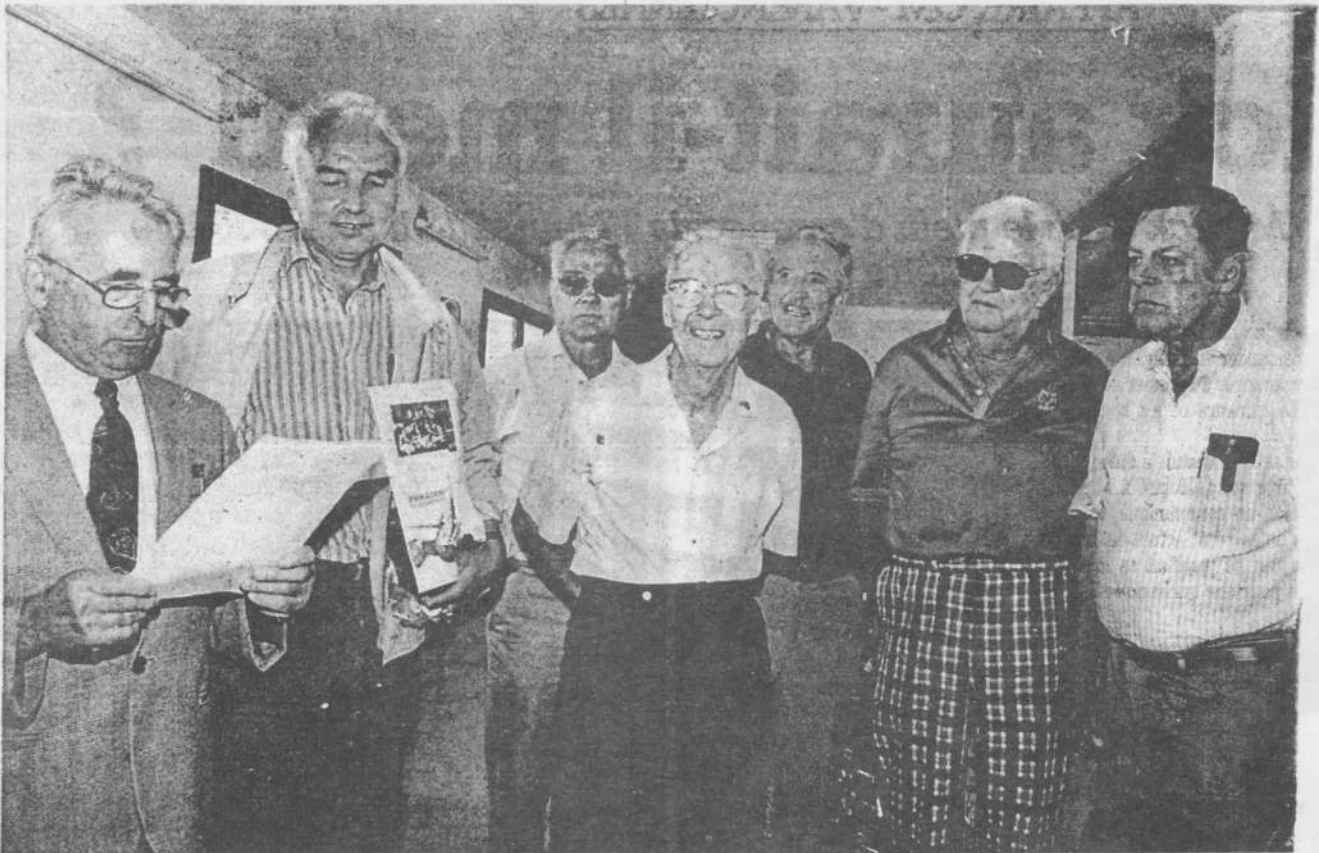
First of all they found two of the parachutists who were still in contact with each other, then, quite fast, four others who had dropped completely out of sight.

If one can believe the letters exchanged, the gratitude of the Americans with respect to their "saviors" is still quite strong-a gratitude which is blended with astonishment for having been found after so long a time.

Next August 24, exactly fifty years will have elapsed since the crash of the aircraft at Boulaur and the rescue of the parachutists.

To celebrate this anniversary, the Archeo group has a grand project: to bring the six Americans who are now between 72 and 76 years of age, for a kind of pilgrimage to the place where they were helped.

For M. Lajoux, this anniversary does not resemble a traditional commemoration. It concerns itself above all with evoking an important moment in local history with the principal actors (protagonists). A manifestation of life, with living testimony to help the memory.



Bill Grodi, Jack Hugues, Dell Kneale et Denver Canaday accueillis par Jacques Lajoux: première étape & Montégut D'autre visites suivront (PtXo Jean-Claude Compayrft, • Sud-Ouest»)



Dear Ed,

Thank you very much for the latest newsletter. Very interesting as usual. I've donated all the 385th BG newsletters received to date to the new research library at the 390th BG memorial Air Museum. If you recall you and I had a chat outside this new building during the 385th's last visit to the museum in 1992.

Please find enclosed relevant information concerning a new memorial project at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford. The brochure is possibly a future item for the 385th BG newsletter.

I hope you have had a enjoyable summer. I don't know where the time has gone. . . .

All the best for now. Thank you again,

Ian Hawkins & Family  
 29 Birch Avenue  
 Bacton, Stowmarket  
 Suffolk, 1P14 4NT

More than four hundred thousand visitors come to Duxford each year and provision of more visitor seating is a priority. The exhibition area is over a mile long and your memorial bench would also help improve our visitor facilities. The benches are five feet long and are made from hardy and attractive plantation teak, taken from sustainably developed state-controlled plantations in Java. They are manufactured in East Sussex by GEEBRO. The Museum undertakes to place your memorial bench within its grounds on permanent display and maintain it. A Duxford Memorial Bench costs £300.00. To order your Memorial Bench please complete the order form below.

**ORDER FORM**

**DUXFORD MEMORIAL SEATING PROGRAMME**

I wish to purchase a Duxford Memorial Bench at a cost of £300.00.

Title Mr/Mrs/Miss  
 (Delete which not applicable)

First Name

Surname

Your Address

Post Code

**METHOD OF PAYMENT - PLEASE TICK PAYMENT CHOICE**

VISA  CARD DETAILS

MASTERCARD  NAME ON CARD

EUROCARD  CARD NUMBER

ACCESS

AMEX  EXPIRY DATE

CHEQUE  (Payable to Imperial War Museum)

I would like the Memorial Bench Inscription (maximum 50 letters) to read:-

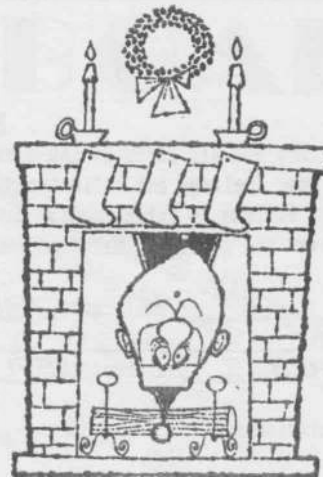
I would like a photograph of the bench after it has been installed at the Museum (please tick choice)

Yes

No

Please return this completed form with payment if appropriate to:

Vanessa Crosby  
 Memorial Seating Programme  
 Imperial War Museum  
 Duxford Airfield, Cambridge CB2 4QR  
 Telephone: (0223) 835000



Mr. Thomas Hair  
 631 Camborne Ave.  
 Fort Walton Beach, FL 3254"

Dear Mr. Hair,

I obtained your name and address from Colonel Allan B. Chealander, USAF (retired). He suggested you might be willing to help me. I am an active duty U.S.A.F. pilot currently undertaking a PhD program in War Studies at King's College, London. This program is jointly sponsored by the Air Force Academy and the U.S.A.F.'s Office of History.

The focus of my dissertation is in the human dimension of air combat during WWII's Combined Bomber Offensive. I would like to relate aircrew selection, training, morale, and cohesion, to combat effectiveness. Much of what I'm concentrating on deals with "operational fatigue," its causes, frequency, impact and official disposition.

To that end, I've included a series of questions with this letter. Busy with mounds of "official" information, especially on the medical-technical side, I am curious to get the reactions of those men from the 385th Bomb Group who were actually there. I hope the questions aren't off-base. Feel free to comment or suggest different angles.

I'm aware that a letter of this sort amounts to something like an invasion of privacy. I apologize for any offense. My only goal is to produce a study which accurately details the stresses so magnificently endured by thousands of American combat airmen. Thanking you in advance, I remain,

Respectfully

Mark K. Wells, Major, USAF  
 P.O. box 74  
 FPO New York 09510

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Tom Hair sent us his 20 page response to this questionnaire. We don't know if Major Wells has finished his study - but each of you might want to think about the way you would answer the questions. And please don't be too hard on your poor Exec. Officer!

Feb 11, 1991

385th Bomb Group Questionnaire

INSTRUCTIONS: Any and all parts of the questionnaire are optional. Please use separate paper as required. I am most interested in your feelings and reflections. The more detailed, anecdotal or descriptive, your answers are, the better. No part of what follows is intentionally designed to be too personal or offensive. Reweaver to use a lot of adjectives and try to answer the questions based on your thoughts as they were during the period 1941-1945.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ WWII rank: ~rS6FT > V *COMBAT*  
 Current address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Combat aircraft: B-77 position: J-EF1 IA7A1 c7"

Thomas L. Tbird  
 631 Camborne Avenue  
 Ft Walton Udi FL 32548

7 Why did you join the AAF?

8 What's your opinion of the psychological and medical tests you took prior to flying training?

3 Did you receive good quality flying or technical training which prepared you adequately for what you faced in combat?

4 Has there any "Mickey Mouse" stuff which you can describe?

5 Were you satisfied the way your crew was formed? Was it cohesive?

6 Did you ever see crews who didn't get along?

7 How effective was your upgrade training to operational type aircraft?

8 What were your views of nonfliers? of Flight-surgeons?

9 How many combat sorties did you complete?

10 What was the worst thing about being in action? best?

11 Did you ever have a bailout? crash?

12. How did this affect you?

13 Did you ever come across a man in your squadron or in combat who refused to fly or failed to measure up?

14 Why would you say something like this occurred?

15~Were these ten dealt with fairly? severely?

16 Did you ever reach the point where you felt you couldn't go on?

17 When was this (approximate mission)?

18 What helped you the most? Chaplain? Flight-surgeon? Other Crewmembers?

19 Was there one thing, above all others, that you feared (e.g., fighters, flak, ditching, accidents, lost, bailout, fire etc.)?

20 How would you define "combat effectiveness" for B-17s and their crews?

21 Can you cite personal characteristics of some of the crews you would have identified as superior?

22 Could you spot crews beforehand who were headed for certain disaster, or did casualties appear to strike at random?

CHRISTMAS TIME 1944




Almost a year has passed since we asked Ed Stern to include a Christmas Greetings from us to all our friends in the 385th BGMA. With the assaults of our old enemy, Anno Domini, we find it impossible to write all the letters of greetings as in the past, so we have asked Ed to include our greetings in the nearest edition to Christmas, 1993.

The year past has seen several members answer their last roll-call, one we personally sadly miss is Charles Smith who, with smiling face, greeted us at Atlanta Airport in 1979 on our arrival for our memorable visit to the 385th in America. Once again, Greetings to you all.

Lucy and John Ellis

And from us too!  
Jane & Ed Stern  
and  
Bernie & Jan at Interstate Printing

Merry **ChhMtma4**  
Happy New Year 

Dear Ed,

I'm enclosing a picture of B-17 "Princess Vai". Robert H. Storkel crew, Sqdn 550th, 385th AF HBG.

Would like to locate some of the crew, maybe some of the HLH people could help.

Back Row: L-R Nose gunner Charles O. Johnson, Clinton SC; Navigator Robert Pogge?; Co-Pilot Henry (Hawk) Zumdka?; Pilot Robert H. Starkel, Vernon CT.

Front Row: L-R Ball gunner Wilton (Zoot) Evans?; Engineer Robert Phillips?; Radio Clayton Lond, Seneca, SC; Tail gunner Al Bergman?; Waist gunner Dana Sweet?

Thank you

Clayton E. Lond  
303 W. Quincy Rd.  
Seneca, SC 29698

P.S. Really enjoy HLH.



# 335th B G M A

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