

CHAPLAIN JIM SEZ:

HAPPY HOLIDAY to all!

Since retirement, I help Geri (my wife) once in a while with cleaning the house. The only thing I do is run the vacuum sweeper in the bedrooms, bathrooms, hallway, steps, living room, dining room and kitchen. I do it in that rotation. The other day I changed my routine and, man, was it ever awkward. I wasn't sure I had cleaned all the rooms, etc. It took longer, It didn't seem I had done a very good job and yet I knew everything was vacuumed.

Maybe doing things the same all the time is best or perhaps changing things once in a while is good but getting in a 'rut' with no ability to change is not good. Some say it is a sign of old age. Maybe so, but I pray I never reach that stage of not being able to tolerate any change.

I can't always be right. I hope I will always be able to hear/know when I need to change.

This Christmas our whole famiy will be with Geri and me. This will be a first and will entail several changes. Geri and I are looking forward to this experience knowing some changes may be hard but needed.

Don't make changes just to be doing something differently. But don't let changes throw you.

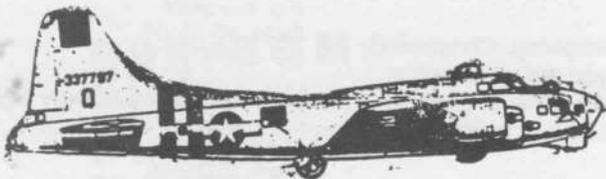
Keep the faith. Make peace when you can. And know when to make things different!

Blessings on you, your families and friends.

sincerely

Jim Vance

P.S. Keep as fit as possible and hope to see you all in Omaha.



Boyd J. Henshaw
John Miller
Henry C. Lohff

Sept. 1994
Feb. 1994
1994

Dear Ed,

I am enclosing the obituary about my husband, John Miller who passed away on February 6th after a long battle with Diabetes and Cancer. John would want me to tell you how much he enjoyed the 385th reunions and the news in the Hardlife newsletter.

Our first reunion was in Dayton, Ohio where he was reunited with Carl Larson a member of his crew who was shot down in Switzerland.

Next we went to Fargo, ND and here we met Joel Henshaw, John's Co-pilot, Carl was there too. What a reunion that turned out to be, our very best. We shopped in your stores and the people of Fargo couldn't have been nicer.

We all made it to Tulsa, OK and it was a great time again, everyone that comes to the reunions are so friendly, the food is always good and the entertainment is well planned.

We were planning on Spokane, WA, but by then John was too ill. I hope that the Reunions will continue to grow, for it is there that the men who served our country can get together and relive many memories.

We who are left are proud of the Eighth Air Force and the 385th.

Sincerely,

Betty Miller

John Miller

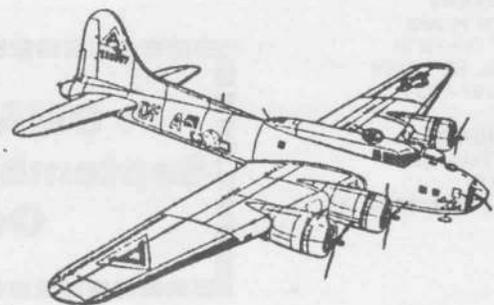
VIENNA — John Miller, 78, 63 N. Outer Drive, died Sunday at 5 a.m. in his home following a long illness.

He was born July 12, 1915, in Shadyside, a son of John F. and Bertha Bouchet Miller.

Mr. Miller was employed for 38 years by the Youngstown Sheet & Tube, Brier Hills Works, retiring in 1976, as a foreman in the electric weld department.

He attended Liberty Township High School and was a member of the Vienna United Methodist Church, and the Mahoning Valley Management Association.

He served with the 550th bomb squadron division during World War II and was a P.O.W. in Switzerland.



BULLETIN BOARD

ADDRESS CHANGES

We get about 30 address changes after each Hardlife Herald issue! Incredible as it is, that makes 180 a year. Most of you send notifications. When you don't it costs us \$1.86 each time the Post Office returns a Newsletter - and we lose contact with you on top of it. If you don't get a Hardlife Herald every two months, we've lost contact because you've moved or something. This is like the minister lecturing the congregation about not showing up for church - he misses the no-shows who need the message. But—send us a card when you change address.

Art Boyer's letter in the October Hardlife Herald listed the Raunchy Wolf crew, and we misspelled the name of the Radio Operator - should have been T/Sgt Moomaw. Thanks for the correction, Art. Sometimes we have a hard time reading letters.



THE 8TH AIR FORCE MEMORIAL CONTROL TOWER

Our project, The Eighth Air Force Memorial Control Tower, is proceeding very nicely.

We have set the dedication date as 22 April 1995 at the U.S. Air Force Museum - Dayton, OH.

We are asking that each bomber and fighter group in the WWII 8th AF, send me a (8 by 10) photo of their control tower, so it can be mounted in a formal display of all the towers of the 8th. They will be properly identified as to airfield location and the Group number.

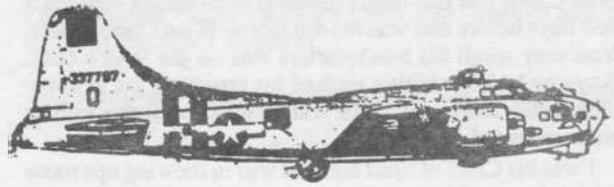
We can still use contributions of equipment, and of course, monetary contributions to cover construction costs.

Best wishes,

John E. Greenwood, President
607 State Street
Alton, IL 62002

SCHWEINFURT RAID LITHOGRAPH ORDERS

Still time to add your name to the list of over 100 who've reserved theirs. \$125-or \$200 framed. Send your order to President Bob Smith. And those of you who've ordered, please send your checks if you haven't already.



Want of copy of Ian's "Night of the Intruders" 8th AF stories? John Pettenger will order them in bulk and sell them to you at about \$10 savings if he gets enough response. Don't send him money - just tell him how many you want. His address - Box 117, Laurel, FL 32472-0117.

ATTENDING THE 1995 REUNION?

How many times have you thought of putting your experiences on tape but never can get around to it? If we have enough people to agree to participate we will plan on recording history in a format which focuses on the people involved. You and your family will get the real feel of what it was like to experience the times and events that affected our lives.

This is your opportunity to have a professional - a trained historian to lead you on a one on one interview — and get your story told and recorded. If you promise to come to the 1995 reunion prepared with some WW'II and post war experiences to tell to "Personal Histories on Videotape", please let me know as soon as possible and I will get the information and costs together and let you know.

George S. Hruska

EDITOR'S NOTE: From Nostalgic Notes, the 94th BG newsletter - the Lt. Col MacDonald referred to is no doubt "our" Col. Jim MacDonald, who had been moved up to 3rd Division from the 385th. If we're wrong, let us know, Jim!

Gen. Castle's Last Mission How he Happened to be There

Recently another publication reported details on how Gen. **Castle** happened to lead the 8th AF on 24 Dec 44.

In our Aug '75 issue of Nostalgic Notes (pp 6-7) we ran a narrative as follows:

Col Nick **Perkins** remembers how Gen Fred Castle happened to be flying that last mission:

... Remember the Germans had broken through (Battle of the Bulge) and were advancing like mad, but we couldn't do anything because the fog was so bad we couldn't take off for about three or four days as I recall. It was Christmastime. Fred Castle had just been promoted to Brigadier General a few days before and was the 4th Bomb Wing Commander. You may recall his headquarters was on the 94th's base. Anyway he was visiting each of his groups to get to know them better and to get a little rest because the doctor said he was exhausted.

I was his Chief of Staff and so I was in the ops room this night... and the division weather officer informed us that the fog might lift at last. Lt Col MacDonald was due to lead the wing and I was to be in the second group. The orders kept coming down - we were to put on a maximum effort - everything that could fly, training aircraft as well, whether or not they had guns - then we were assigned to lead the 3rd Division. I realized then if Gen Castle knew this he would take the lead himself, so I told the people in the ops room that if he came in to keep busy and not to volunteer information about the mission unless they got a direct question. We all knew what he would do if he heard about the mission and we all know that Mac was a fine leader and wanted to go. Then we got word that the 3rd Division was to lead the entire 8th AF on the biggest mission in history!

Shortly Gen Castle walked in looking very tired and said his chauffeur had just let him out at the ops room and he only wanted to say he was home and was on the way to bed. He asked if we were "stood down" again and I said no - we might be able to get off. He said, "Fine. It's about time because we have to stop that breakthrough. I'll see them off in the morning, but I've got to get to bed."

To our relief he walked on out after saying goodnight. But he didn't walk far, because within less than a minute he stuck his head in the door and asked who was leading the Division. I had to say the 4th Wing. He came all the way in and asked who was leading the 8th AF, and I had to say the 3rd Division. He thought a minute and said as I recall, "I'm sorry, Mac. I'm going to have to take your place tomorrow. This is the kind of thing they pay me for, and this is what they would expect me to lead." He almost didn't fly that day.

The next day I was in the second group and over France I saw a great ball of flame in the lead group.

Ed Note: Col Perkins later succeeded Col Dougheras CO, 94 BG.



EDITOR'S NOTE: From the 94th BG newsletter, a good article by our Dan Riva.

Radar Comes to the 333rd BS

by Daniel F Riva, 1st Commander of 333rd as Lead Crew Squadron

Although time clouds my 75 year old recollections, I will tell you what I remember of those few months during which I was the Commander of the 333rd Bomb Squadron with head crews - approximately March to August 1944.

Background: I came to England in June 1943 as CO of the 551st Bomb Squad, 385th BG stationed at Great Ashfield. The 94th BG was our nearby neighbor and had recently become operational. Several of us from the 385th flew as observers with the 94th on operational missions to get a feel for combat.

After flying about 16 missions as a squadron commander in the 385th BG, mostly in the lead A/C, I became group training officer and a few months after that was transferred to the 4th Combat Wing as A-3. Colonel Castle was Wing Cmdr, Lt Col **Thorpe** was Chief of Staff. Both these officers had originally been in the 94th BG. Approximately March 1944 I was assigned as CO of the 333rd Bomb Sqdn, when it became the wing lead crew squadron flying radar equipped aircraft I found that we were step-children in the 94th BG family. I was the first CO of the 333rd, I believe, after it became an all lead crew squadron.

The raison d'etre for this radar squadron follows. The mission of the US bombers was to accomplish **daylight precision bombing**. However, because of frequent foul weather over target areas in Europe, often we could not "see" the targets, and thus were forced to strike secondary targets, drop our bombs in the channel or return our ordnance to base. The radar equipment in the 333rd (developed by the British) was to give us the capability of bombing through cloud cover, smoke, etc., thus turning abortive or unsuccessful missions or *no*, into successful missions.

The crews were supposed to be qualified and experienced lead crews, contributed to the 333rd Sqdn by the three groups of the 4th Wing (94th, 385th, 447th). These lead crews were supposed to be the best the groups had and when they arrived at the 333rd they were to be given qualified Mickey Operators as well as the additional radar equipment and training needed to "upgrade" them to **radar** lead crews.

Therefore, when bad weather was anticipated in the target area for the next day's mission, one or two radar lead crews were dispatched from the 333rd Sqdn to each of the three Groups. This was done the night before the mission, or sometimes during the early hours before the morning take-off (as directed by 94th BG Ops or the Wing, I forget which). When possible, the radar lead crews were sent to the groups from which they had originated so that they would not be considered "strangers." This was not always possible, however.

The concept of this kind of bombing held promise but the actual operation a success realized was far from resounding.

First of all, the groups did not readily accept this unproven concept. After all, their lives were at stake.

Further, the radar lead crews were not wholeheartedly welcomed back to their bases and to the groups they were to lead - and often for good reason. The Groups had not sent **their best crews to the 333rd.** The groups had retained their best crews, holding them in their own groups to be available to lead on good weather missions. In fact, some of the "lead crews" arriving at the 333rd were not lead crews at all and

had to be given routine flying training before they could be trained as **radar** lead crews. The confidence level among these crews and concerning these crews, was not high in any quarter.

Although the radar equipment was somewhat primitive, it could pick up excellent "returns" for certain type targets. I believe that the radar or Mickey operators did well with it. However, our bombing was "area bombing" - not precision bombing.

I flew a few hairy missions with the 333rd and even led the 94th BG. Then about August 1944, I returned to the USA.

I expect that the performance of the pathfinder lead crews of the 333rd Sqdn improved as the radar lead crews gained experience, the groups became more familiar with the radar function, the radar equipment was refined and the slate of the art improved, the enemy fighter opposition abated, and the pressure from higher headquarters to get US bombers over the target almost at any cost, eased up a bit. However, that chapter is for someone else to write.

I do know that my frustrating tenure as CO of the 333rd was disappointing. During my time, my squadron could not attain our expected level of proficiency, although we were probably as good as we could be at that moment in history and under the given circumstances.

Answers to questions you raised:

1. The term "Mickey" may have come to us from the British - with the equipment. It could have been a snide reference to Mickey Mouse.

2. The 333rd was probably assigned to be the lead crew squadron in the 94th because of the close connection between leadership personnel of the 94th Gp. After all, both Col Castle and Col Thorpe were 94th alumni. Also the geographic proximity of the 4th Wing and the 94th at Bury St Edmunds was a factor.

Finally, if anything I have said conflicts with your research or anything Marvin Tipp has told you, I am probably wrong.

94th Bomb Group Mickey Operators and Technicians

Mickey Operators

Tom R Abernathy
Raymond Fleck
William Harmon
Jerome Medney
Andrew Murphy
Roy Raibum
Sidney Rapoport
Homer L Stranger
Garnett T Tunstall
Lester Ulvestad
Sam Venable
David Wilson

Lost Souls

M L Smith
J Windberg

Deceased

Brodie Bryant
Gilbert E Klippel
J J O'Donnell
Robert R Smith
J S Stepanski

Technicians/Mechanics

Capt Orr (Unknown)
Capt Rawlins (Unknown)
Michael K Budich
Nicholas DiLallo
Max Engel
Alton Fitts
Robert Iverson
Bernard A Mills
Clarence Patterson (Unknown)
Maxwell Herbert (Deceased)
William Gilmour - Blinker receiver, 23 missions (POW)
Larry Wittenberg, Radar observer and Hq clerk
Raymond H Kohler

The above listing of Radar Personnel is incomplete and certainly incorrect. Unless those concerned send in corrections, the list stays as is.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Here's the way it was told by Reader's Digest in 1944. We guess they had it about right!

IT'S GRIM HARDSHIP ALL THE WAY IN THE BIB BOMBERS

Condensed from AIR FACTS

The least known front on which our young men are now fighting is in the high altitude battle line. Anyone who has, felt bitter cold may have some idea of the Russian front. Movies have given a glimpse of the man who fights in a submarine or tank. But nothing short of an actual bomber mission can tell the whole story of conditions on the 25,000 foot front. The cold is worse than Russia, the cramped quarters as bad as a tank's, the problem of oxygen as vital as in a submarine.

Leave out danger from the enemy and consider only the natural hazards at this great height. A bomber crew is whisked at dizzying speeds from sea level to 25,000 feet. Making a deep penetration into Germany the men are in the air from eight to ten hours, every minute packed with intense danger and hardship, they must fight for their lives, possibly suffering wounds without proper medical help, and expertly control some of the most complicated and fast moving machinery ever invented.

Quick, accurate jobs are done by everyone from tail-gunner to pilot, but they have to be done in clothes that are aggravatingly bulky, for the cold may reach 60 degrees below zero. First a man dons the heaviest of long underwear. Over it go regular clothes. Then comes a bulging, binding winter flying-suit of leather lined with sheepskin. He is already moving awkwardly, but there is more to come; an armor vest of steel plates, a yellow Mae West life preserver, and, over all, the parachute harness. On his head he wears a warm cap and a steel helmet. On his hands go thick heated gloves.

More items remain, not clothing but gear. Without oxygen a man would lose consciousness in about 30 seconds, so he slings an oxygen mask around his neck. Later its grip on his face will be maddening, then there are the intercom headset and the throat microphone - the one clamped over his ears, the other strapped snug around his Adam's apple.

Worry No. 1 is take-off. The pilot is strapped in his seat by his crew chief, another restriction on movement, and he must take about 30 tons of steel and aluminum loaded with gasoline and high explosives, into the air. From the time the throttles are advanced at the head of the runway, the tension begins. The speed mounts to 100, 120, before the heavy laden plane gets off the ground. Should the plane get hit, the copilot is the one who won't jump. He fastens on a walk-around oxygen bottle, worms out of his seat and starts aft. Every fold in his clothing seems bent on catching on knobs, levers and corners that crowd the interior. His walk-around oxygen is giving out, and he seems slower and more tired than a strong young man should be. At the deep frame of the top turret, he has barely room to squeeze by when the turret is still, if the gunner is "searching", he may get caught in the powered track and be seriously injured. The narrow bomb-bay passage is fringed with sharp brackets and fixtures; many a crew member has suffered bad cuts from them during violent action.

(EDITOR'S NOTE: They "condensed" a little too much here.)

The Right Waist is unconscious at his station. The slipstream shrieks in through the gun aperture at 60 degrees below zero. He needs a tourniquet and a compress, sulfa dust, and a [hypodermic.it](#) is no job for heavy gloves. The copilot slips his off. If he is fast he may get the necessary things done in two to three minutes.

Now the Forts converge toward the bomb release line. German fighter Staffeln and anti-aircraft gunners reach their frenzied peak of resistance. The air is alive with flak. Horsing the bomber through violent evasive action takes all the

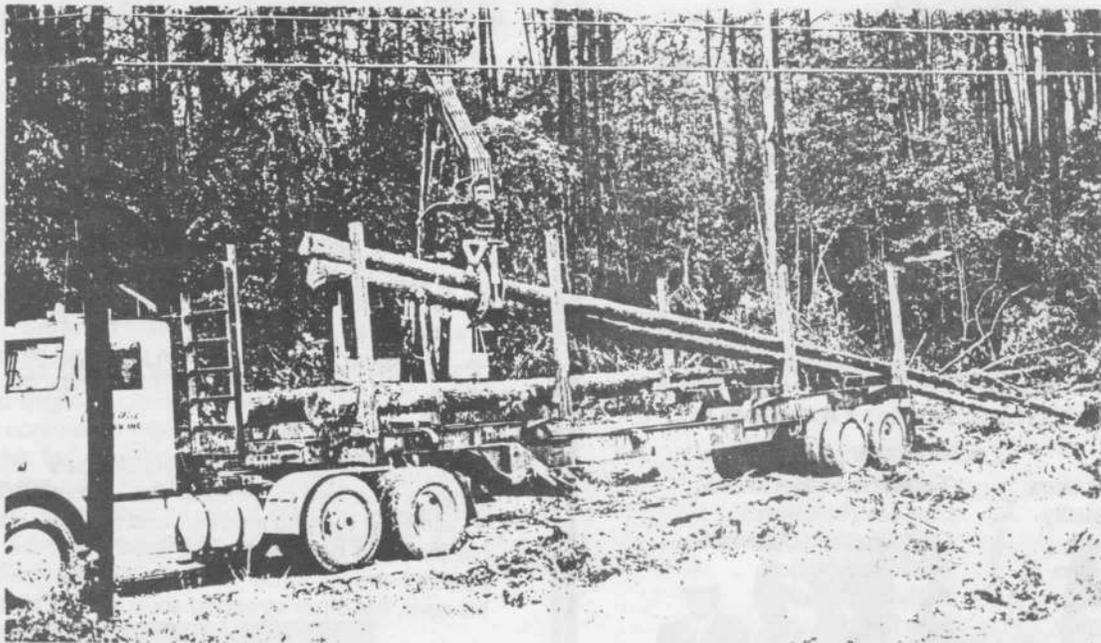
strength of the pilot. The crew counts each excruciating second. Finally the bomb run and the thrilling shout "BOMBS AWAY".

The bomber swings toward home and goes through the whole harrowing experience again until that blessed moment when it slides down across the Channel in the protective custody of the Spits.

In spite of these fantastic hardships, no American Heavy Bomber formation has been turned back from its target by enemy action. The boys in the FORTS and LIBS can take it!

EDITOR'S NOTE: If you're in the area, stop and see the progress. Check at the Heritage Center's temporary offices in a red brick building just East of the construction site on US 80 beside the Comfort Inn Motel.

CONSTRUCTION UNDERWAY!



Work crews began clearing land on October 3 to make room for construction of The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Center in Savannah.

"We expect it will take about a week to clear the land," said Lt. Gen. E. G. Shuler, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Heritage Center. "After the land is cleared the surveyors will lay out the "footprint" of the building, memorial gardens, and parking lot. It's a big job but it's great to be started."

The 12 acre tract of land is located in the northeast corner of the intersection of U. S. Highway 80 and Interstate Highway 95 west of Savannah. It will be home to the 95,000 square foot Heritage Center scheduled to open to the public in the late spring of 1996.



EDITOR'S NOTE: A touching story sent us by Sam Lyke.

Wartime Vignette Recalled

Social Group Will Picnic On Tuesday

BELGIQUE POMMERCAL, NOVEMBER 1945

Armand Ferraro, Dunmore, has announced that the 8th Air Force WWII social group will gather Tuesday for a picnic at Lackawanna State Park.

Ferraro also calls attention to a reunion of the 20th Fighter Group of the 8th Air Force Sept. 25-28 at Annapolis.

"My wife and I look forward to this every year. I usually have my grandsons with us and they love it. They have a great respect for those of us who spent the years 1941 through 1945 making the world a better place to live," he said. Ferraro also calls attention to a human-interest vignette published in 20th Fighter Group Association's magazine.

ORDINARY AMERICAN, ULTIMATE SACRIFICE

On Oct. 20, 1943, on a mission co Duren, Germany, a B-17 Flying Fortress, Shack Rabbit III, had engine trouble, fell out of formation and was shot down by German fighters over occupied Belgium. Copilot Art Pickett was among those who got out, but his parachute opened too late and he died soon after landing in a Belgian churchyard.

For more than two years the circumstances surrounding his death were unknown to his family and squadron mates. Then in November 1945, his family received a package in the mail containing his personal belongings — letter, his pilot's ring, his gold-capped pen, some parachute cords and three locks of his hair. Also included was a letter in which a woman the family had never met vividly described his final moments. The letter is reprinted here.

Dear Madam

I am writing this to let you know that you are not alone
Though great sorrow has befallen you, we feel it as our own.
In his last hour, dear madame, your son had loving care,
Almost as though, dear madame, that you were standing there.
Until now we could not tell you of what we dared and did
Or send this sacred little box which that dark hour we hid.
Through those years of the monster, we who watched your son's

last breath

Dared not let these things be known. The penalty was death.
The parachute opened much too late, almost to earth it trailed
He fell by a shrine — of Calvary, where the Gentle One was

nailed

And — The Gentle One seemed to quiver upon His cross anew
I know how strange it seems, this tale I tell you.

quake.

It may have been a distant bomb that made the wracked earth

shake

But I saw Christ shudder on His cross, and seemed to writhe and

shake

And a whispering sigh seemed filling the air, from the lips of the

Gentle One

To the sluggard guilty of all the earth: 'O Behold! Behold! Thy son!
He lived a few minutes, but just before he died

Crucified.

Our priest put a cross within his hand by the shrine of the

Crucified.

His church it did not matter. His soul was God's alone.

And it seemed fitting to us all to treat him as our own.

The last blessing of our church was given to your son

One.

By the pastor of our village church by the shrine of the Gentle

One.

We laid him to rest with a rosary within his boyish hand

It was our love more than our church. We hope you understand.

about

Now in this little box, dear madame, are the things we spoke

about

We took them from his body before the Gestapo could find out.

Some letters from home we found, his pilot's ring and then

Another ring and a pin, and his gold-capped fountain pen.

We had to hurry, madame, but before the Germans came

Name

We cut short cords from his parachute, by the shrine of the Holy

Name

And reverently, dear madame, as though you were standing there

brother

We took from the head of the one you bore three locks of light

brother

Now before I close, dear madame — there is one impression I had

As I looked, before we buried him, on the form of your dying lad

He looked to me like the Gentle One, like a younger, fair-haired

brother

As he died by the shrine of Calvary, near the Son of another

mother.

Sincerely Yours, Madame Fraz Lefebse

Presidente de la Section Locale, Crois-rouge Belgique

Pickett was reinterred on Dec. 6, 1948, in the Netherlands

American Cemetery at Margraten, Holland.

EDITOR'S NOTE: An interesting story from Don Hayes, Editor of Flying Fortress newsletter.

THE BLUE OX

By Earl Hanson

It was America's secret! Everyone seemed to know about the highly secret Norden bomb sight. It was America's best-known - and widely publicized - wartime secret. Some say its nom de guerre, 'The Blue Ox' was the Norden code name.

Very few ever saw it because it was supposedly secured behind concrete block walls - covered and hidden by a GI canvas bag. According to propaganda newsreels, of the day, our secret was guarded by a squad of MP's who protected it while being carried to and fro by an Air Corps bombardier. The bombardier was given explicit instructions to maintain the security of our technological military advantage. However, a recent A&E TV documentary (Spies) revealed that the Germans knew about this secret weapon in 1940-41. They kept it secret, more so than we did, because nobody knew they had it. They didn't share in those days.

In New York, a German alien engineer working for the Norden Company, stole and copied blue prints of the bomb sight and via an intelligence agent smuggled them to Germany in the hollowed out handle of an umbrella. Previously he had sent the Germans bits and pieces of information and when he arrived in Germany to collect his rewards, sadly for him, they had already made a prototype.

Ironically, they knew we had it...we knew we had it...they knew they had it...we didn't know they had it. Espionage carried the day.

But perhaps our knowing Intelligence Branch cleverly allowed the charade to continue in order to bolster the morale of our troops at a time when we were building a badly needed national confidence. We'd like to think that's so.

The Blue Ox weighed only 45 pounds but from 25,000 feet straight up it could gore a bull ox right in the pickle barrel, so claimed the Air Corps. The Blue Ox was a pseudonym for the highly secret Norden bombsight. Nobody knows the source of the nickname but it may have been a feeble attempt at military security and deception. Another name was The Football.

Carl Norden, an eccentric Dutch engineer, invented the bombsight and a necessary gyro-stabilized automatic pilot (auto-pilot) which was needed to hold a high-flying aircraft on a level bomb run. Norden also designed and built other military and naval hardware.

In 1935 the Army Air Corps installed the bomb sights in planes of the 7th and 19th bomb groups. Tests were made with the Norden and Sperry-made bomb sights but the Norden proved to be the most accurate. In time the device was improved by adding complex state of the arts components that enabled the bombardier to control the aircraft approaching the target for 15 to 20 seconds, enough time for the bombardier to direct the path of the plane, take aim, and drop the bombs. The bombsights weren't applicable to

Altitudes below 1,800 feet but were used mostly for high altitude air attacks by planes like the B-17, B-24 and B-29.

In early 1941, before Pearl Harbor, Norden was turning out 800 bombsights per month, but by the end of 1943, they produced 2,000 per month. Security at the Norden plant was maximum. Two body guards accompanied Norden wherever he went and the plant had 350 well-trained security guards. However, through a security breach, the Germans gained full information about the bombsight and in a short period both Axis enemies had captured Blue Ox's. The Germans developed a bombsight somewhat similar to the Norden. By 1945, 43,292 Norden bombsights had been sent to the Air Corps, although 6,500 went to the navy. The bombsight was declassified in 1965 and sold at some surplus sales for \$50.00. Norden died in 1965 at age 80. He contributed greatly to the success of our WWII and Korean campaigns.



Big 27_v

May 7, 1945

V.E. DAY!!
"Spam Run"

To: AMSTERDAM -- "of all places"

With Fauber and crew in "Queenie"

Last mission flown by the 8th. Air Force in E.T.O.!

"Doolittles Delicatessen" taking 10-0-1 rations and food into Holland to keep the Dutchmen alive - dropped 75 sacks of food on airfield at 400 ft. altitude - buzzed Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague, and half of Holland - knocked a gal off her bike with prop wash - 100s of Dutch, flags out everywhere-- one joker was even waving his long-handled drawers at us - saw a bunch of Krauts at fortifications along North Sea Coast.- waved to them - they even waved back - some sore-head took a shot at us and we came home with a big hole in our wing - major battle damage! I - -

Saw some flak towers at close range - almost tempted to drop a grenade on them but, held my fire - lots of guts, but no grenades 11., More legal buzzing I * ve never seen.

Went over in single ships so had to do lots of navigating!1

**NEW GROUP HISTORY
BEING PRINTED**

Bill Varnedoe, whose diary of missions has been printed in recent Hardlife Heralds, has been working for several years to compile material for a new hard-cover Group History.

Our first Group History, which many of you have, was printed some 40 years ago. It was put together by 385th Ground Exec Marston Leonard, and it was a very complete history of the administrative and ground functions from our organizing in Spokane through the end of the War in 1945. It did not cover much of the actual combat side -- which was, after all, our reason-for-being.

Here's what Bill wrote us:

Dear Ed,

Already, I have 74 crew pictures, ID'd by pilot's name and 64 more unidentified. I have 67 nose art pictures. True, most of these are copies and some are not the best quali-

ty, but any picture of a given crew or aircraft is better than none, especially if it's of you or one you flew in! I have 53 pages of air stories, copied, edited and pasted from back issues of the Hardlife Herald as well as many other pages of text. I also want to include my list of B-1 7's assigned to the 385th by serial number (and name where known.) I've put all this together, in order, in a draft to serve as a good start.

This is enough already for a full book, but it's a good idea to try to get more and better pictures and some stories that members may want included.

W.W. Varnedoe, Jr.

They're ready to reserve your copies. Fill out the coupon, mail it with a \$10 deposit. If you want copies for grandchildren or others, tell them how many - they'll send a gift certificate you can use for a Christmas present. They're aiming at July 1 1995 for publication.

385th BOMB GROUP UNIT HISTORY

Southern Heritage Press is now accepting manuscripts and original photos for publication in a new unit history of the 385th Bomb Group. This book will be approximately 200 pages and will consist of the history, personal remembrances and photos of the members of the 385th. Please submit "your story" of the 385th either type

written or on computer floppy to Southern Heritage Press, NLT 1995. All photos should be clearly marked to identify each person in the photo (first and last name) location, actions taking place and photographer if possible. This will be a limited edition, hard cover volume that will increase in value the minute the last copy is bound. Reserve your copy now. Anticipated publishing date, 7/95.

385th Bomb Group History *please print*

Book	Qty	Price	Total
385th Bomb Group Unit History		39.95	
Gold Foil Name stamped on cover		5.00	
(Florida Residents add 7% sales tax)			
Postage and handling (\$3.95 for 1st book \$2.50 for each additional)		Shipping	
		Total	



send to:

385th Bomb Group History
Southern Heritage Press
 PO Box 10937 St. Petersburg, FL 33733
 (800) 282-2823

Name(s) to be embossed on cover (up to 24 spaces)

Payment: Check VISA Mastercard

Name on Credit Card

Credit Card Number

Expiration date

Name

Street

City, State, Zip

Phone

EDITOR'S NOTE: A bit of interesting background vis-a-vis the relationship and use of B-17s and B-29s.

SUPERFORTRESS

B-29 "Kee Bird" brought about quick end to World War II

by TSgt. DAVID P. MASKO

Air Force News Service Features

KELLY AFB, Texas — News that a B-29 Superfortress was unearthed — like an old dinosaur from the Mesozoic Era — on a frozen lake 250 miles north of Thule, Greenland, must have given World War II buffs a warm feeling rather a cold chill. Unlike other war relics, B-29s have almost disappeared since the last one retired from the active inventory nearly 40 years ago.

In fact, experts say the "Kee Bird" is a rare bird indeed. Of 3,970 B-29s built during World War II, only the Kee Bird and one other is still reported in flying condition.

The miraculous discovery of another flyable B-29 comes at a time when the United States is entering the last period of a five year commemoration of World II's 50th anniversary. The end of 1994, in particular, marks the advent of America's super bomber. From an Air Force perspective, the B-29 was a key weapons system in the war with Japan.

Ironically, when the sound and fury of World War II was coming to a close, one of its mightiest war machines was just beginning to cut a swath in history. The B-29 entered the Army Air Forces inventory in July 1943. One year later, Superfortresses were the first to attack the heart of the Japanese empire.

Prior to 1943, bombers such as the B-17 Flying Fortress were doing an outstanding job in the war in Europe. Still, the United States needed a newer and bigger bomber. The B-29 was considered by Gen. H. H. Arnold, commanding general of AAF, as a big stick in the air war over Japan.

"The advent of the B-29 makes possible the softening-up attack on Japan very much earlier than would be possible with aircraft hitherto known to combat," said Arnold in a statement about the bombing of Japan by B-29s.

"The Superfortress," said Arnold "is not going to win the war by itself nor has anyone thought that it will do so. It will, however, like its predecessors, the B-17 and B-24, strike at the sources of enemy strength and prepare the way for ultimate decision by our well-established team of land, sea and air forces."

The strategic thinking at the time was to make the B-17 and B-24 medium bombers instead of long-

range bombers. In turn, the B-29 — with a capability of carrying 18,000 pounds of bombs for a distance of 4,200 miles — would be designated a long-range, heavy bomber.

Because the B-17s and B-24s were able to take care of business in Europe, B-29s were never sent to that theater. B-29s were instead the means of carrying the air war to Japan. Superfortresses in the Pacific operated out of three main staging areas: Kharagpur near Calcutta in India, Chengtu near Chungking in China, and the Mariana Islands in the Pacific Ocean, about 1,400 miles south of Tokyo.

After the Mariana Islands were liberated in August of 1944, AAF construction crews began work on construction of five runways to accommodate 900 B-29 bombers.

When the B-29s got their footing, AAF history records tell of rapid success against Japan.

- On Oct. 28, 1944, B-29s flew their first mission out of the Marianas, hitting the Japanese Naval staging base at Truk in the Carolines.
- On Nov. 1, 1944, an F-13 (de-bombed version of the B-29) photo-recon plane named "Tokyo Rose," became the first American land-based plane to fly over the Ginza in downtown Tokyo.
- On Nov. 24, 1944, B-29s of the 21st Bomber Command made the first bombing raid over the capital city — the beginning of the Battle of Tokyo.
- On Aug. 6, 1945, the B-29 "Enola Gay," piloted by Col. Paul Tibbets, dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese city of Hiroshima.
- On Aug. 15, 1945, Japanese Emperor Hirohito accepted an unconditional surrender ultimatum from the United States War Department.

Col. Donald Putt, chief, bombardment branch, Air Force Materiel Command, wrote the following in 1944: "In the development of the B-29, we have witnessed the beginning of a new era in aerial bombardment."

Putt, who also served as the project officer for the B-29 prototype, the XB-29, predicted the success of the plane even before the first production model was completed.

"The B-29 is the first of our AAF extra-heavy, extra-long range bombers that can strike our enemies in all parts of the world and it is destined to play a major role in knocking them (Japan) out of this war."

The last B-29 was retired in November 1954, after 11 years and four months on active duty. The B-29s used an 11-man crew that included pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, radar operator, flight engineer, radio operator and four gunners to man 12 machine guns.



Offutt's Martin Bomber Plant produced 531 of the 3,970 B-29s manufactured.

Letters to Ian

Dean Ian,

Recently I received a letter from Verne Philips (our navigator on Mudge's crew) enclosed were copies of letters you and he were discussing, the matter of the 20 M.M. cannon and the Vitry En Artois mission. I was the waist gunner and armament man of our crew and he thought I could help clear up a few things. It has now been fifty years and I will do my best.

We had been having big problems with the German fighter and their level frontal attacks. The ground armament people came up with the idea of a 20 M.M. in the nose. They did set one up and test fired it on the ground. The recoil and vibrations were very strong and caused damage to the nose compartment. They modified the best they could and went up to the Wash and test fired the gun while in the air. As far as I know the tests were not favorable. I don't remember that it was ever used on a mission.

Now the Vitry mission. It was a real rough one. I am enclosing a caption of the mission. It was written by Lt. Mazo, group P.R. officer and sent to 4th Wing and for general release. He does not mention Lt. Stone because at that time we did not know whether Lt. Stone had made it or not. I will fill you in as much as I can about the fighters attacking our ship and Stone's.

By that time we were almost to the French coast. Two of our engines were out. Lt. Stone had joined us down on the deck and two or three fighters were attacking our two ships. At this time Stone was flying on our left wing and was taking the brunt of the attack. One of our engines was smoking and burning. Maybe the enemy thought we were done for and concentrated on Stone. The last I saw of Stone was when he had taken a hit or hits and glided directly behind us, and it looked like the plane was out of control. We were

quite busy with the wounded and trying to lighten our plane. We did land at an English fighter base on the coast, where some of us were hospitalized and some returned to Great Ashfield the next day.

The enlisted men of Lt. Stone, Mudge and Reichardt (18 of us) lived in the same hut. We trained together in Spokane, Washington and Glasgow, Montana. Some of us were at the same gunnery school in the States. I do have pictures of the enlisted men only of the three crews, 16-17-18, but I cannot put the names to all the faces. The Vitry mission was on 15 August, 1943, by the 17 August 1943, there were only four of us left in our hut. Reichardt's plane went down on the 17th going to Regensberg.

I hope I have been of some help to you. Good luck and hope to see you again.

I remain,

Joe DiGiacomo

P. S. In 1943 I was S/Sgt Joseph DiGiacomo, 549th Sqd., 385th BG.

**By Lt. Sam Sheffield and S/Sgt Joe DiGiacomo
(Bombardier and Waist Gunner,
the Fort "Hesitatin Hussy")**

A USAAF Bomber Station, England, - Our pilot, Jerome Mudge, is the best flyer in the world, barring none. We know, because we saw him in the roughest action possible, and he brought us through, every one of us on the "Hesitatin Hussy".

It was during the raid on that German fighter base in Northern France. Before we came in for our bombing run, one of our engines went out, and the propeller was feathered but we went on in with the formation, bombed hell out of that place, and came out.

The real hell, though, came on our trip back. One lone Nazi fighter was sitting out on our left, and he whipped in through our formation, then went out and whipped in again. This time he got another of our engines and hit our top-turret gunner, Burnell Cook. Cook stayed right with his guns, but our ship couldn't keep up with the formation on just two engines, and we fell out on our own. It was almost to the coast of France, and there we went, right through flak-happy city of Dunkirk at only 8,000 ft. The Nazis down there threw everything in and out of the book at us: flak, fighters, coastal defense guns and even ground machine guns. It was a regular inferno. Lt. Mudge weaved and tossed our Fortress like a fighter, and that cool skill of his kept us from all being shot down in flames right there.

It was a fight that we will never forget.

Those Germans kept on. We thought We'd never see the end of it. Finally, we got out over the channel, German fighters still tailing us. They thought we were dead meat, but we made them change their minds quickly. S/Sgt John Moniz, who was at his guns in the tail all the way through, shot down one of their ME-109's right in the thick of things,

and we all think we got in some damn good shots at others of those Nazis.

Finally we were out over the channel far enough to take stock of things. The plane was so badly battered that we can't yet see how Lt. Mudge kept it under such wonderful control. It must have been will power or praying or something. But we didn't have time to think of that then. The German fighters were still around, and there were some wounded that had to be taken care of. I (Lt. Sheffield) went back to the radio compartment with Lt. Verne Phillips, the navigator, to give Sgt. Cook first aid. He was hit in the face, too, by a 20 mm that exploded right in front of his turret, tearing it apart. And one of the waist gunners, Harlan Villers, was also hurt. At one time we thought surely we would have to ditch, so S/Sgt James McGarvey, the ball turret gunner, and Lt. Phillips started throwing excess stuff overboard, while Sheffield and T/Sgt Leonard Ensele, the radio gunner, took care of the sick. Moniz and I (DeGiacomo) kept at their guns through the whole thing.

At long last we sighted the coast of England, and found an RAF fighter field. The commander of that field told us later that our landing then was the prettiest he had every seen, despite the fact that we had no flaps, no stabilizer, no trim tabs, and no brakes, and the whole ship was so hot full of holes that we couldn't understand how it kept together.

After we came down we found out that during the fight the co-pilot's head-set had been shot right off of his head during the big scuffle over Dunkirk.

Right now we want to relax a little, then get back to work.

The crew of the Hussy included: Lt. Mudge, 23, of Corina, California and Minneapolis, Minn.; Flight Officer William Clark, 22, Lovelland, Texas, Co-pilot; Lt. Phillips, 24, San Antonio, Texas; Lt. Sheffield, 21, Tarboro, N.C.; Sgt. Cook, 22, East Troy, Wis.; Sgt. Ensele, 23, Coquille, Oregon; Sgt. McGarvey, 23, Lynn, Mass.; Sgt. Moniz, 25, Fall River, Mass.; Sgt. DeGiacomo, 25, Winchester, Mass.; and Sgt. Villers, 21, Warren, O.

1st Lt. Earl Mazo
PRO 385th Bomb Gp
Aug 17, 1943

Dear Mr. McLachlan,

The Eight Air Force Historical Society has given me your address as contact to the 385th Bomb Group Station in England.

I am working on a documentation concerning the series of British and American air-raids in the time from 20th till 25th of February, 1944, against the German Aircraft Factories. I would like to know whether there exists a chronicle about the missions of the 385th Bomb Group and whether the BIG WEEK is mentioned therein. If that should be the case, I would be very happy if you sent me a copy of the appropriate pages.

One mission of the 385th Bomb Group are of a special interest to me. On 24th February, 1944, the Group attacked Rostock. The 385th Bomb Group lost two bombers. I think, that I have been able to locate the crash sites of one

of them:

B-17 G NR. 42-31349 der 385th BG - Rostock (Sea?)
Between Jorntorf and Korchow near Neubukow. I have the information, the SS have shot the crew. Do you know more details of the destiny of the bomber-crew?

B-17 F NR. 42-30662 der 385.BG Rugen (Sea?)

It would also be very nice if you if you could give me some further information from your side.

Thank you for your help!*

Yours sincerely,

Christian Loop
Hamburg, Den

Dear Mr. Loop

Strangely enough, my own interest in the 385th began as a result of researching one of their aircraft lost during the **Big Week** operations. Back in 1964, I found wreckage of the aircraft buried on marshland near my home and investigating what happened eventually led to my involvement with the 385th and my continuing pride in researching their achievements. Mind you, the task will probably outlast my lifetime. In case you're interested, I used the story in my first book, FINAL FLIGHTS and enclose a flyer giving further details.

I have some information on the two ships you mentioned beginning with 42-30662 which I believe was called 'Clarissa Jean'.

Pilot - Terrace John A., Jr. 1st Lt. (I believe he was shot by a "Home Defence" guard.

CP - St. John, Eugene E., 2nd Lt. POW
Nav - Harrington, Thomas C. 2nd Lt. POW
Bomb - Edwards, Claude C. 2nd Lt. POW
TTG - Worley, Charles T., Jr., T/Sgt POW
ROPG - Morrison, William P. T/Sgt POW
BTG - Goldsmith, Robert L., S/Sgt POW
TG - Coleman, Charles C., S/Sgt POW
RWG - Wilkinson, Clyde W. S/SGT POW
LWG - Lovely, Joseph V. - S/Sgt POW

The MACR I have says "The ship was flying in the low group of the Combat Wing and was lagging slightly behind the formation when it suffered attacks by enemy fighters. The ship was last seen, under control, gliding toward cloud cover, the number 3 engine was on fire. Ten chutes were sighted." When last seen it was near Demmin. Anything you can add to this story would be welcome. In the past, I've been in touch with Gene St. John and Bob Goldsmith so will copy them with this and see if they can say more about what happened.

42-31349:

Pilot - Mcllveen, Clarence S., Captain
CP - Lapczynsky, John, 2nd Lt.
Nav - Dickman, Charles W., 2nd Lt. KIA
Bomb - Williams, William D., 1st Lt.
TTG - Scarbrough, John D., T/Sgt

ROPG - Rotunda, Charles E., T/Sgt
 BTG - Rigg, Donald G., S/Sgt
 TG - Barrett, Edward A., S/Sgt
 RWG - Mahoney, Jean A., S/Sgt
 LWG - Malmfelt, Raymond F. S/Sgt

1338 Hours. "This ship was last sighted in the vicinity northwest of Rostock, Germany, over Mecklenburg Bay. The ship had earlier sustained rocket attacks from two JU88's which caused the loss of one engine and consequent lagging in formation. The ship dropped about 1000 feet below the formation and was jumped by three enemy aircraft which set the number three engine on fire. The ship was last seen under control gliding toward cloud cover with a JU88 and ME110 following it. Seven chutes were sighted." Other than Dickman, I have no information and would welcome your input.

There isn't an up-to-date chronicle of the 385th but I've copied the relevant pages from a reissue of the group's history and hope this will help.

I'll look forward to hearing from you.

Kindest regards,

Ian McLachlan



McIlveen, Cigan, Williams with "Stars & Stripes" - must have been right before they were lost February 24, 1944 coming back from Rostock.



Letters to the Editor:

Dear Ed:

While working at the Temple of the Church of Latter Day Saints (Mormon) I met a missionary who told me he had served in the 8th Air Force also. When I further queried him, he told me how he had been called into special service and how he made his way to Russia via North Africa. When I asked him about the shuttle bases we had in Russia, he told me that I was the first person in 50 years to know about what happened. He finally finished his missionary assignment down in Glenview, Illinois and went home and dug out his diaries and wrote the story I am enclosing.

Had this story broke in the newspapers back home, our bombing program might well have come to a halt. An officer in the 385th told me at the time that the program was abandoned and he sure filled me in on what really happened. Over 60 brand new bombers were lost in a matter of minutes. The Russians failed to provide the promised protection of those bases.

I remain,

Don Kabitzke
 2464 North Sherman Blvd
 Milwaukee, WI 53210

21 JUNE 1944 PIRYATIN, UKRAINE, RUSSIA

At the Yalta conference with President Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin, arrangements were completed for the United States Air Force to operate three Air Force Bases inside Russia. The purpose was to receive U.S. Air Force Bombers and Fighter Planes from England, service those planes, send them on to Air Bases in Italy and then send them back to England so they could be serviced for another run to Russia. Airplane casualty losses were reduced because of this arrangement.

The bases were located at Piryatin, Poltova and Mirograd, Ukraine, Russia. Headquarters were located at Mirograd and this was the larger bomber base. The other two bases housed the fighter planes, etc.

I have often wondered what it would feel like to be on the receiving end of a bombing raid. My mental quires were taken care of in a most impressive manner. Our base had been operating without any excitement other than the usual arrival and departure of our aircraft. This afternoon a large number of fighters and bombers had arrived from England. The landing and placement of the planes had been completed. The pilots and crews had been billeted for the night and all of us were making a raid on the Mess Hall.

High in the blue sky was seen a vapor trail and a German reconnaissance plane could be seen above us. This German plane had followed the U.S. Planes and took pictures of all three of our air fields. Our Russian fighter Guard Planes took off after the German Plane, but was unable to make contact. Tonight a dispersment of fighter planes on our

field or the other fields was not made after the photo planes had completed their work.

We went on about our evenings work and retired to bed after ten o'clock. Just six hours after the German Photo Plane was over our base our air raid alarm went off. In less than a minute I was dressed and outside trying to find out the reason for the alarm. In a couple of minutes all of us who were up could hear approaching aircraft and soon a lone plane was overhead. This plane dropped parachute flares and our field was lighted up like a holiday Christmas Tree. Men started to literally pour out of every tent and the search for a much needed fox hole was on. A couple of minutes later the first wave of bombers came over followed in quick succession by two more waves. I do not know how many planes came over us but the sky was full of them.

The Russians were firing every anti-aircraft gun they had but seemingly no damage was done. Some of their guns were powerful enough to shake the ground around us. For some reason or other no bombs were dropped on the Piryatin Air Base. Our field was lighted up for, it seemed, for more than an hour. We could hear planes overhead all the time and some of them were low enough that we could see the Swastika Emblem on their wings. The Air defense on our base was very weak. After the planes left we could see large bursts of light to the East toward our other two bases.

The next morning we were told that our Headquarters base had been bombed heavily. We were told that out of seventy-four B-17s, only nine were able to fly when the raid was over.

22 JUNE, 1944

This afternoon at precisely the same hour as the day before our Jerry Photo Planes were over us again. The sky was clear and our field was covered with fighter planes. We knew that the Germans had secured some excellent pictures and the bombers would be over us again tonight. Precautions were immediately taken for the safety of the field. All planes were dispersed to other fields in Russia. The majority of personnel were taken away to another area to spend the night. I happened to be asked to stay on the field. I did not know whether I liked the idea or not. Anyway, I stayed. But before I retired I placed my clothes, gas mask and helmet in a convenient place next to my bed. I could not sleep. It did not matter very much because at twelve o'clock we received word that the Jerries were on the way. I don't think that my heart even beat while I was getting dressed and on my way to my special fox hole. There was no need to kid myself. I was worried. No sooner had I reached the trench than the flares began to fall. Soon the entire sky above us was full of planes and it was so light in the bottom of my hole that I could have read a newspaper if I had had one.

Bombs were falling in the area but as yet had not hit the field. I cannot help but think that the Germans were not certain of their location. When their Photo Plane was over the field in the afternoon the field was crowded with planes but now at midnight they were elsewhere. Nevertheless, as I crouched in my hole and watched those bombers loaded with bombs circle over my head for an hour or so and still drop no bombs,—well, you can imagine just how thankful I was.

As the bombers were leaving one of our fuel dumps was hit. We would see the fire from the camp. The entire sky was red with flame. I am sure that it was fortunate for us at the camp that the bombers did not return after they had hit the fuel dump.

JUNE 23, 1944

For two nights now we have been clay pigeons for the Germans. Late this afternoon another German Photo Plane was over our field taking pictures. This plane was chased off by Russian Fighter Planes. Again we expected a return of the night bombers, but they did not come.

JUNE 25, 1944

Two nights "have now passed without the return of any bombers. They probably did enough damage the first two nights to last them awhile.

We continued to operate the bases during the summer but activity slowed as the war in Europe intensified.

7 OCTOBER 1944

Today we began our trip back to England for reassignment.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Dave Endler, your Editor's roommate in the 550th and our Ordinance Officer, went to Russia as part of this effort. As we recall, he returned but did not re-join our outfit.

We saw him once after the war - in Bellevue Hospital in New York. Had an unusual nerve problem and really wasn't conscious when we saw him. Never had a chance to learn anything about this fiasco. Don sent some pictures taken after the bombings, but they didn't reprint for us.

Dear Ed,

Thank you for your offer of some back issues of your newsletter.

I saw a copy of our ship that was in your newsletter. It showed a B-17 with its propeller off, only the engine mount with oil on it. I am the tall fellow under the engine. You cannot see my face, only my helmet. If you have an extra copy of this, would you please send it with the others. If that is not possible, could you make a copy from an old issue and send it along. I am so happy I found you with the hopes of coming to your next reunion.

Ramon G. Smith
PO Box 311
Saufind, NC 27331

P.S. I found my pilot in Peoria, IL., talked to my co-pilot, Robert Baldwin, in Santa Cruz, Calif. My tail gunner Robert Warden of Center, Ohio and my Top Turret Gunner Cameron Cathey of Central Valley, Calif. I wish we could find our Ball Turret gunner, Louis Meyers of St. Louis, MO and Bombardier Bill Wilson of Chicago. Thanks again.

Dear Ed,

I recently had cause to be asked to write a short article and I thought the 385th B.G. would generally be an excellent choice of subject. I finally decided to base the article on the beautiful stained glass window in the Church of All Saints.

The article was well received by my peers so I thought it appropriate to share it with you and any others who care to read it. I hope I have done it justice!

Very sincerely yours,

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

PIECES OF FLYING GLASS

by
Vance Pennington

At 07:50 on Sunday, December 7th, 1941 Pearl Harbour, the largest American naval base in the Pacific Ocean, was brutally attacked by the Japanese. After just two hours the entire US Pacific Fleet's battleship force was put out of action. A shocked and shaken United States had now entered the war. Four days later Germany declared war on the United States.

Anglo-American strategic discussion, before the attack on Pearl Harbour, had already concluded that the main weight of the Allied effort would be concentrated directly against Germany with the use of air power to destroy both her industrial and economic structure.

The formation of the USAAF's Eighth Air Force, in Britain, was proposed to carry out high-level precision daylight bombing raids over Germany and some parts of Europe, utilizing their heavily armoured, high flying, long range B-17 Flying Fortresses.

In preparation of the forthcoming invasion of American servicemen and their war machines, airfields were hurriedly constructed throughout the U.K. and in particular, the suitably flat areas of East Anglia.

One such field was built on the edge of the small Suffolk Village of Great Ashfield, 2.5 miles north of Elmswell, in the heart of rural countryside.

A small and typically peaceful village, steeped in history, with its little church dating as far back as the record of its existence in the Domesday Book of 1086, she had little knowledge then of the part she would play in the history of World War Two..

The airbase of Great Ashfield was opened in March 1943. Its original purpose was for the use of the nucleus of the newly formed 1665 Conversion Unit who would occupy the base until the rest of the unit could be formed there or at some other base. However, the first aircraft to land at Great

Ashfield were Sterlings from the 1651 Conversion Unit who occupied the base until the arrival, in June 1943, of the 385th Bombardment Group (Heavy) of the United States Army Air Force, with their Boeing B-17s. The Group commenced operations on July 17, 1943 with a raid on Germany.

Meanwhile, the populace of this one time quiet little village lived side by side with their newly found American friends; a friendship that has not just lasted but can be witnessed to this very day. A friendship too, that may not have existed but for that fateful day back in December 1941 when Japan invaded the tranquil Hawaiian Island port of Pearl Harbour.

In the sacred grounds of Great Ashfield's All Saints Church there sits a plaque-bearing stone, which can be seen quite clearly from the road side, in memory of the men who served with the USAAF 385th B.G. There is, however, an even more distinct memorial which can only be appreciated by viewing from inside the church.

Upon entering the church, through its great old 13th century English oak doorway, one's eyes immediately fall upon the splendour of the American Altar and a 20th century stained glass window, designed so as to tell, forever, the story of the 385th B.G.

Behind the design of the window, by Surinda and Rowland Warboys, and constructed in five pieces to fit the existing ancient stone tracery, are embedded symbols of nostalgia. Each piece of coloured glass has been carefully encased by the lead skeleton to portray the existence and exploits of the young men and machines who served here.

The top section of the window clearly shows the runways of the original airfield in the much favoured shape on an "A" (inverted). Long piercing rays of light bursting from the centre of the window highlight symbolic aeroplanes flying high on yet another hell raising bombing mission. Superimposed upon them can be seen "the loop" symbolising the flight path of the B-17, "Satan's Mate," which was forced to make this astonishing feat during a return flight from a bombing mission over Germany.

The formation of B-17s flew into cloud which persisted for much of the homeward stretch of the journey home to Great Ashfield. Frustrated by the cloud cover, but almost home, the pilot of "Satan's Mate" decided to climb higher to raise itself above the cloud level. Whilst performing this manoeuvre the aircraft caught herself in the slipstream of another unseen aircraft. The force of the slipstream up-ended the climbing B-17, forcing her to fall backwards into a 380 mph power dive.

A combination of skill, determination and luck enabled the pilot to keep control of the aircraft and land her safely. The aircraft, certainly not designed for such a feat, had managed to make a complete 360 degree loop at the cost of 74 broken rivets and a strained tailplane. This B-17 was hence known as "the fort that looped", and it is believed to be the only one that ever managed to do so.

Looking at the window as a whole, one can distinctly see the graceful shape of a B-17 tailplane rising from the large Group number 385 (depicted in varying shades of yellow glass) and bearing the letter "G"; the identifying code let-

ter for all aircraft that served from Great Ashfield. To the right of this can be seen the unique insignia of the Group, with its two-winged bombs flashing zig-zag rays of power, as a fearsome warning to her enemies, and situated proudly above the Group's motto "Ales victoria".

Above the squadron number can be seen the shapes of three trees. These represent the cluster of three poplar trees that were eagerly searched for by both pilots and navigators during the return flights from their terrifying missions. The trees stood high above the ground mist that lay across the damp fields and meadows of East Anglia, indicating to the crews that they had found their way safely home. The trees still stand in the fields today as a symbol to the courage and determination of the men of the 385th B.G.

A further imaginative look at the window will reveal the head of an eagle, the symbol of the USA, cleverly woven in the tracery and glass.

One visiting veteran of the Group, from the USA, tells how he is able to discern the shape of a parachute and lines, reminding him of the day he was forced to leave his dying aircraft and bail out over the foreign lands of Europe.

To others the window portrays memories of lost friends and past missions; of companionship on one hand and the fears and horrors of war on the other. To modern day visitors it represents the respect and appreciation of the men and women of the 385th Bombardment Group of the United States Eighth Army Air Force, and the village and villagers of Great Ashfield who each played their part, and made their sacrifices, in the bitter struggle against the oppression of dictatorship for the freedom of democracy.

Upon leaving All Saints Church a final glance back at the beautiful and brightly stained coloured glass stirs the imagination to conjure up many visions and stories of those long past days, but none so vivid as the memories and experiences of the men to whom the window is dedicated. To these men each colourful ray of piercing light through the five sections of the window, holds a memory; and to whom tells its own story.



Dear Ed,

As we have done every year for the past 15 years, the engineering Dept., ground crew, plus a few add ons, of the 548th Bomb Squadron had a get together from Sept. 22-25. This time it was in Indianapolis, Indiana. It was hosted by Wayne and Carol Detweiler and they did a great job. We all enjoyed ourselves sightseeing and getting together as we had done in the same city, four years ago. The group included 11 men and their wives, namely Wayne Detweiler, Jerry Bielli, Marty Girson, Hy Siederer, Forbes Tenbrook, Dale Leggett, Ave Beam, C.J. Thomas, Sam Luckie, Buck Huber and Henry Dworshak.

Next year our reunion will be held again in Myrtle Beach. Hopefully, Moe Bridges and Tony Ragone, Tommy Gentile and Herb Granger will be able to make it. These men have always attended our reunions. We wish them a speedy recovery from their illnesses.

Respectfully,

Hy Siederer



Dear Ed,

After these many years, I now have proof of the fact that my crew (reduced) flew the last combat mission in the ETO. On May 7, 1945 flying in our ship "Is This Strip Really Necessary" with a reduced crew of Pilot: Clarence Fauber, Co-Pilot: David Smeltzer, Navigator: Art Schafer, Bombardier: Art Schloss, Engineer (from our ground crew) & Radio Operator: John Elder ? others - we flew to Holland on the last "Mercy Food Drop."

After dropping our food (picture enclosed) we went on a "Buzzing Tour" of Holland (the only time I ever buzzed with a B-17.) We came close to this windmill (picture enclosed) & on to see Glass Houses disintegrate, people waving whatever they could find. We ended up very close to the beach with Kraut Troops still in the trenches. There was supposed to be a truce on, but as I waved my plane from side to side in a gesture of friendship a sorehead Nazi took a shot at us. It went through the right wing - entered as little as my middle finger and came out as big as a football. Needless to say, we cut out to sea and headed home. The bucket of sand we took out of the ball turret was evidence of our low-low flight.

As evidence, I have the independently kept logs of both my Navigator and Co-Pilot, of which I was unaware until recently - more later on the 2nd log of Dale Smeltzers, that is another story I will write later.

Sincerely,

Clarence Fauber, Pilot



Fauber's Crew - From L to R
Front Row

Bob Hake - Tail Gunner - Eaton, OH
John Dummucci - Ball Turret - Philadelphia, PA
Jim Elder - Radio Operator - Boston, MASS.

Jerry Donnelly - Top Turret Gunner - St. Louis MO
Art Schafer - Navigator - Tucson, AZ
Clarence Fauber - Pilot - East Chicago, IN
Dale Smeltzer - Co-Pilot - Boseman, MT
Bill Schloss - Bombardier - Cleveland, OH
Bob Hatch - Waistgunner - Duluth, MN

Dear Ed,

Just had to write in regard to the Pres Sez column in the August issue.

I agree with Bob in his complimenting the ground support personnel. You don't have to be a genius to realize that a bomber could not fly without fuel. And if it had fuel, there would be no use of it flying without bombs, and if it had bombs, there would still be no use of a bomber flying if the bombs did not have fuses to make the bombs explode. And then there had to be radios for communication, and medics to keep us healthy and cooks to feed us.

And, of course, we needed the air crews to fly and fight their way to the target. To hit the target and to battle their way back home. In other words, we were all essential and we made a good team.

I was always friendly with my crew and I always told them to bring back MY airplane.

You really are doing a good job and we all appreciate it.

Best regards,

Marty Girson

Dear Ed,

I can't adequately express the joy you bring to me and my family when you reprint something Jump (family name) had written.

The Community College was nice enough to duplicate the video John sent me. Each of my children have a copy. A treasure to all of us.

The 50th Anniversary of D-Day made my heart burst with pride for all of you. I regretted not thanking Jump enough for all he had done for me and our country. At this late date, I want to thank each and every one of your brave airmen and those that supported you. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

I don't know if I sent my response card in for the lithograph. If I didn't, would you please get my order in and the amount of money I should send.

I still have one son flying for the U.S.A.F. He is so proud of his dad and will treasure the lithograph.

Fondly,

Anita Jumper

God Bless all of you!



Aloha Ed:

Hope this finds you well and happy. We just returned from a trip to the U.K. where we visited my wife Janes' family. While there we, of course, couldn't let Great Ashfield go unvisited.

We arrived by train in Stowmarket and took a taxi to Woolpit and the Swan Inn B&B, which we had made reservations for sometime ago. It was a very lovely place. While there we visited the Woolpit museum, and it was well worth the effort. We arrived rather late, so bedded down, after sinking's couple of pints of mild & bitters.

The next day, after a great English breakfast, we drove to Elmswell and visited the Fox Pub for a cup of tea and a shandy. enclosed a photo of myself and The Fox. Of course, the picture of the B-17 with signatures of 385th people. First time I had stepped foot in the Fox in 50 years and 3 months almost to the day. Well, the pub hadn't changed that much, but the old man who stepped in had.

By the way, the old LN&ER station, which we all used many times is now a travel agency. I was very happy to see something made of it and not torn down.

Next stop, the Kiln Farm and Mr & Mrs. Roy Barker. They both gave my Jane and I a most wonderful welcome and we were invited in to their beautiful home for tea and cookies. I took a photo of them and if possible would love to see it in the Hardlife Herald. Roy has lots of material relating to Great Ashfield, and had a map of all the hardstands and the squadrons they belonged to. He took us out to the field and showed me where my hardstand was that I had picked out on his map. What a trip back in time that was for me to see once again the place where our ship "Wells Cargo" had been parked. That's where we started our missions and that's where they ended. I felt nostalgia creeping into my thoughts and remembered the crew and the crew chief that serviced #4231778 and did a great job too as she never failed to bring us back home to Station #155, sometimes with dead engines, sometimes with more than 150 holes in her skin, but always home.

I want to thank the Barkers again for a most wonderful day with them.

Roy took us to All Saints Church to view the stained glass window, which I had never seen. Every member of the 385th BG(H) should make the pilgrimage to the church and view this beautiful tribute to the 385th BG(H). It is something to behold.

Mrs. Barker took us back to the Swan Inn in Woolpit and I had trouble not sinking all the beer in the pub that night. What a day to remember.

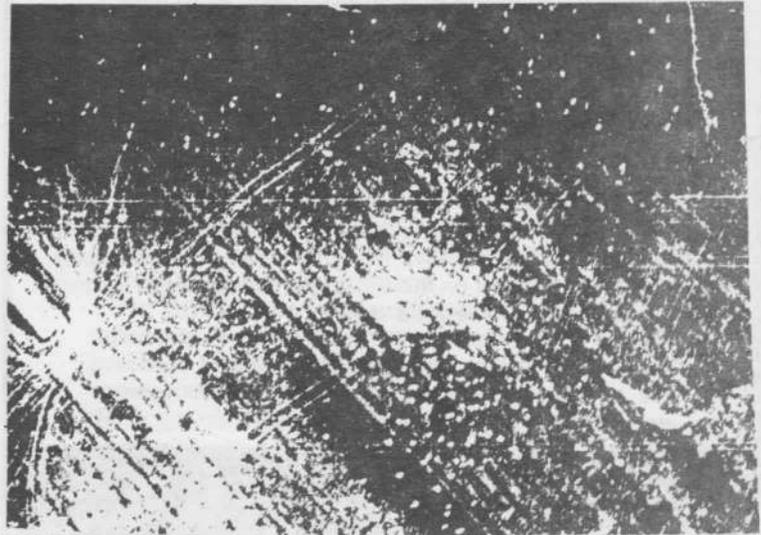
On to London and Ramsgate, Kent the next day and had dinner at the Jolly Farmer at Manston Air Base where many of our 385th boys landed from time to time.

Looking forward to seeing everyone at Omaha next year. Take Care.

Jerry Ramaker
Carson City, NV



The Windmill in Holland



Food Drop in Holland, May 7, 1945. 400' - 90 MPH Ind. Air Speed. Full Flaps, Cowles open, Wheels down. The hollanders were in the stands, cheering.



Dear Ed,

The Pima Air Museum continues to grow and gets better all the time. Hanger #3 now has some 21 planes inside including the B-24 and B-25. Hanger #4 is now open with the center show piece being the B-29. It is such an improvement to get the plane in out of this hot desert sun.

I seldom see any 385th members, but Sebastian (Hank) Koenig was in last fall and we had a nice visit.

Sure wish the 385th had a museum of our own as does the 390th. All we need is money, and a lot of help.

Regards,

Ken Laffoon
4780 N. Snyder Circle
Tucson, AZ 85749
(602) 749-4333



Dear Ed,

This letter is in reply to page 20, Oct. '94 newsletter concerning the picture of the main hangar and several engines laying on the floor.

Joe Galvin and I were returning from a night trip installing bomb sights for the next day.

We were going by the hangar when we noticed the door cracked open about 12 inches, at the same moment a German fighter bomber passed overhead, saw the crack in the door, turned and made a U-turn. This is when Joe and I decided it was time to depart. By the time we got under the bench in the bomb sight shop, six bombs about 100 pounds let loose. A fire in the hangar destroyed 2 planes and I believe destroyed or damaged 3 others on the hard stands nearby. Several thousand rounds of 50 cal. cartridges exploded and the planes gas tanks ruptured and blew up. I remember the fire burned for about 12 hours. The floor was foot deep in foam laid down by the firemen. On the floor was several large lumps of melted aluminum.

Sincerely,

John P. Walker
1812 Vinton
Memphis, Tenn

Dear Ed,

From the left - Don Skee, Harold Trousdale, Ed Stermer, Jack Noble and Dean Leyerly got together with the wives of Wayne Montgomery (Pilot) and Gerald Miller (Co-Pilot) at the Confederate Air Force "Airsho '94".

They are standing in the front of "Target for Tonight" the nose art from a B-17 of the 385th on display in the museum. The nose art was the work of T/Sgt Bob Garner and S/Sgt Eddy Saville.

Fifty years later we're in pretty good shape.

See you in Omaha,

Dean Leyerly



A great picture of Major Springfield the 1st C.O. of the 549th. He was killed on one of our first raids July 26, 1943 - when we lost 3 crews - Harris, Daniel and Duncan.

Season's Greetings

Jane & Ed Stern

EDITOR'S NOTE: What a great way to send 1300 Christmas cards! And all of you are invited up for a slice of turkey -- Jane asks two days notice, please!



Merry Christmas

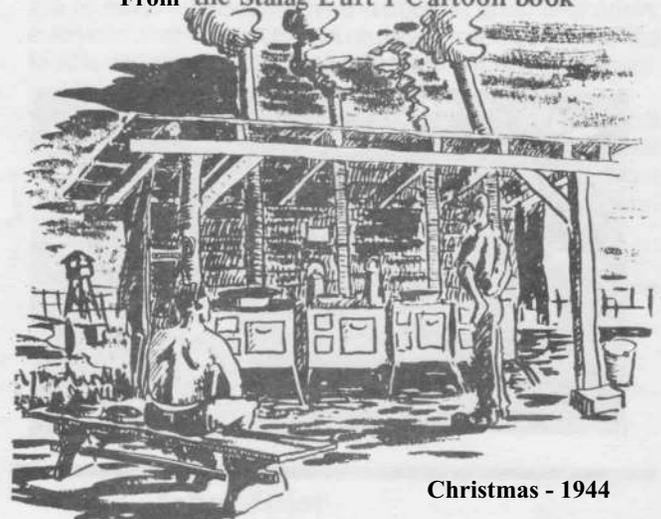
From Jan & Bernie
Interstate Printing

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS FROM JOHN AND LUCY ELLIS

Once again we are happy to send our Christmas Blessings and Greetings to all our friends in the 385th, also our very best wishes for 1995. The past years have very many happy memories for us of our association with the "385th", dating back to the memorable visit of 1976, when we first met so many members, of the many friends who called on us at Fox Farm, of later reunions at Great Ashfield and, of course, to so many friends made during our visit to you in America in 1979 and our part in the Kansas City Reunion. Please forgive us for not writing personal letters.

Lucy and John Ellis

From the Stalag Luft 1 Cartoon book



Christmas - 1944

It was merely a flimsy shed with four sagging stove chimneys poked through the low roof. But out of the chimneys rolled smoke, and out from the ovens came appetizing odors that made one dream of home as it was on baking days, and out of the oven came cakes—on rare, not to be forgotten occasions.

385™ BGMA

ED STERN, EDITOR
P.O. Box 2187
 Fargo, ND 58108

FORWARD & ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
 Fargo, North Dakota
Permit No. 1761