

Chaplain Sez

Blessing on Each of You in this New Millennium!!

In every ending, there is a new beginning;
In every curtain-closing, there is an encore;
In every absence, there is a Presence.

With every detour, there is a way back to the main;
With every "good-bye", there is a "hello";
With every departure; there is an arrival.

Hidden within failure, lies success;
Hidden within the curse, lies the blessing;
Hidden within the question, lies the answer.

Not only the destruction; there is re-building;
Not only the refusal; there is acceptance;
Not only the mystery; there is insight.

When there is fear; we must learn to hope;
When there is anger; we must learn to forgive;
When there is despair; we must teach the future.

Now is not only "Yesterday;" it is "Tomorrow;"
Now is not only "My Want;" it is "Your Need;"
Now is not only disappointment; it is fulfillment.

Therefore, we live with these three; Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow;
The greatest of these - is Tomorrow.
And we have been given these three: Faith, Hope, Love;
The greatest of these - is Love.

Lord of the New, you who create order out of chaos,
Life out of death: free us from the fears and
Disappointments of yesterday, so that we may - this
Day - be free to accept the possibilities of tomorrow. Amen.

Sincerely with Love
Jim

HOTSHOT star Ben Affleck (pictured) is to produce a movie about one of the greatest wartime survival stories of the century whose hero is buried in the American Cemetery at Cambridge. In 1942, pilot Damon 'Rocky' Gause escaped from his Japanese captors in the Philippines and spent an incredible 159 days island-hopping 3,000 miles across the Pacific through enemy fire to Australia in a tiny, leaky boat. He kept a journal of his escapades, which included an affair with a Filipino woman who hid him from the Japanese. His widow was so disturbed by this aspect of the story she kept his diary hidden for 50 years. Rocky died in 1944 when his P47 bomber crashed on the Isle of Wight.



President's Report

Well, Roger Feller and his Luxembourg friends have surprised me again. I will quote from the e-mail I received from him on January 16th. "Hello Tom, I'm planning for your stay in Perle. I will try to get a parade again with the WWII vehicles and the Honor and Color Guards for the ceremony on 25th of June. We at Perle changed our National Day from June 23rd to the 25th June when you all are with us. Last Friday I was invited to Spangdahlem Air Base and the Group Commander Colonel Jean Marc Jouas agreed to organize an over flight by 4 F-16."

So having a US town change from July 4th to July 6th would be more than we can comprehend. Anyway, we are grateful for that special connection we have in the 385th with Roger and those involved in the 385th Perle museum. I only wish that more of our members had attended the dedication of the museum and monument in Perle in 1998. It was a fabulous occasion, one that I will never forget. At the museum dedication in Perle the 385th presented the museum a beautiful display of insignias of rank from PFC through Colonel, and wings and metals typically worn by 385th members during WWII. However, we were unable to obtain a Flight Officers bar. Does any of our members have a Flight Officers bar they would donate to the museum in Perle to make our display complete. If so please contact me.

I am getting positive response on our June 13th to 27th European reunion tour. We will again have a wonderful time. David Wade and Arena Travel have served us well on our past tours. For complete information on the tour refer to the tour brochure with this issue of HH.

The 385th has a number of beautiful lithographs of the 385th Schweinfurt Mission featuring 385th aircraft, of course. If you do not have one of these prints now is the time to purchase one at a greatly reduced price. Also, if you have an outstanding air museum in your state the 385th will provide you with a print to donate to the museum in the name of the 385th. We do ask the member to have it properly framed for presentation. Chuck Smith has volunteered to handle the sale of the prints for us. Check over Chuck's article in this issue of the HH.

I wish you all the best for the year 2000 and hope to see you in London in June.

Tom Newton

EDITOR'S NOTE: Jesse Brown sent some old newspaper clippings from the 40s. Look for them throughout the newsletter

BULLETIN BOARD

A GREAT READ

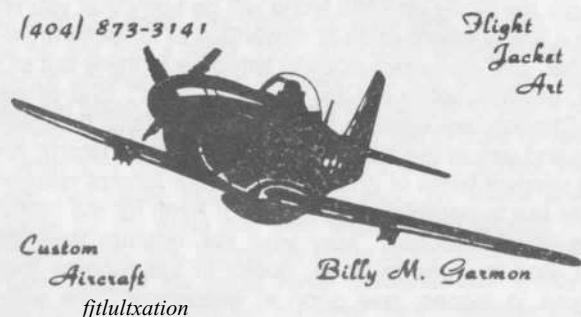
Get a copy of the recently published novel; entitled "Only a Paper Moon". Which is based on the adventures of the crew of the 8th Air Force Bomber, TAIN'T A BIRD', returning to its base in England, and forced to land in West Cork, Ireland; - a true incident which took place during World War II. The author acknowledges the contributions made by the surviving crewmen interviewed in 1996, to get this heart warming story. The USA publishing rights are still under negotiation, but it is already on sale in the UK, and Ireland. You can order a copy on the internet at: <http://www.amazon.co.uk>, or at <http://www.eason.ie/searcher.phtml>? For about 10 pounds (under \$15.00) delivered, less than it will sell for here.

Enjoy a sentimental journey.

Ed:

I received the 385th decal today and I want to thank you very much. Since I wrote you I found a person who made me a 385th patch which you could sew on a jacket. I saw Billy Garmon's work on a flight jacket of a B-17 and it was beautiful. I have enclosed his card in case you may be interested.

Thanks again
Tommy Williamson



LIMITED EDITION LITHOGRAPHS

Limited edition lithographs of the 385th Schweinfurt Mission (14 October 1943), painted by artist Ted Wilbur, are now available again at a reduced price from the initial offering several years ago. The lithograph shows a formation of B-17's with square "G" on the tails, led by Capt. Robert C. Smith in the "Liberty Belle", coming off their successfully bombed target in Schweinfurt. Overall dimensions of the lithograph (including margins) are 17" high x 21" wide. Apologies to those of you (like myself) who purchased lithographs at the higher initial price several years ago. Now is the time to buy additional copies for your kids and grandkids to lower your average costs.

Our 385th BGMA would also like to donate one of these lithographs to a quality air museum in each of the 50 states throughout the nation. We need your help in accomplishing this goal. If you have an outstanding air museum in your state that you think would be receptive to a lithograph donation, check with the museum's curator to get their approval. The 385th BGMA will provide the lithograph to you no charge, but we would ask that the donating 385th BGMA member provide appropriate framing and matting for the print, along with an engraved plaque stating that the lithograph was donated to the 385th Bomb Group Memorial Association. The print to be donated can be shipped with your personal order for your own print(s), or if you are requesting only a single print to be donated to an air museum, it will be shipped to you on a no charge basis freight free. Just fill out the order form below. For personal prints, please make your check payable to Chuck Smith (all funds will be turned over to your 385th BGMA).

385TH SCHWEINFURT MISSION LITHOGRAPH ORDER FORM

Please check the appropriate lines:

- | | | |
|---|-------------|-------------------------|
| 1 | Lithograph | \$45.00 (UPS included) |
| 2 | Lithographs | \$60.00 (UPS included) |
| 3 | Lithographs | \$75.00 (UPS included) |
| 4 | Lithographs | \$90.00 (UPS included) |
| 5 | Lithographs | \$105.00 (UPS included) |

1 Lithograph (No Charge) for donation to:

(name of air museum, city, and state)

Send Prints To: Name: _____

Street: _____

(no post office boxes please for UPS shipments)

City, State, Zip: _____

Daytime Phone: ()- _____

Please make checks payable to and send order form to:

Chuck Smith
P. O. Box 329
Alpharetta, Georgia 30009-0329

EDITOR'S NOTE: Probably a good addition to Roger Feller's Museum in Perle.

1/12/00

Dear Roger: Moien!!!

With this note, I am sending you an item that I once told you about. Because you do have things in your museum from the days of the German Occupation, I thought that you might like to have this as well...although it is, in my opinion, a terrible reminder of some very bad times.

As you will see, it is one of the very large banners used for displays by the Nazis. I acquired it when the 385th Bomb Group sent a team to the Luftwaffe Airbase in Linz, Austria in the days immediately following the surrender. The banner was completely new and in perfect condition when I got it. I was sent on the team as an interpreter of French.

Of course, it is still in almost perfect condition...but it was "modified" from its original proportions in order to make a bed-spread! Therefore, you will probably want to get a seamstress (a person who knows how to sew) in order to take off the side pieces and restore them to either the top or bottom so that the original length of the banner can be correct. As a guide-line, I am enclosing a picture of the banners in use so that you may get the proportions as close as possible.

It is, as you well know, a genuine pleasure for me to assist you in view of all that you have done to honor the memories of the 385th BG.

A Bientot....
Bob Silver



A GOOD HAND IN ANY MAN'S GAME



That don't necessarily make them supemen—just because they can eat our canned rations without making a face!

FRIEND GALLAGHER

Many of our members and associates had the opportunity to meet and speak with Charles Gallagher. Charles was one of the co-founders of "Friends of the Eighth" (FOTE), and has been a driving, innovative force in the growth of the group. Fondly referred to as the "Benevolent Dictator" - only out of ears reach - Charles has the great ability to "look down the road" with the inbred skill of a great navigator, and when advice and guidance was needed, his ability was utilized. As a result, FOTE members have been enriched by his active participation in the associations activities. Now word reaches these shores that he is giving serious thought to retirement and a return to Ireland. To me, this means that Charles can no longer be as active in FOTE and we of the 385th will also feel the loss of your activity. To this silver-haired, silver-tongued Son of the Auld Sod, may he join me in following the advice of Johnson, who said, Quote: "Don't think of retiring from the world until the world will be sorry that you retire. I hate a fellow whom pride or cowardice or laziness drive into a corner, and who does nothing when he is there but sit and growl. Let him come out as I do, and bark". End of quote. Yes, Charles, we want to hear you bark. Your thoughts on paper and use of the mail will let your voice be heard. And in those verdant fields of green back in your land of retirement, I would like to paraphrase the Bard of Avon for the members of the 385th and say, "May your life, exempt from public haunt, find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything". We with the best of everything.

DEBERG'S "LI'L AUDREY"

"Mary Pat" was his first B-17F sent into combat over Europe and it also was not John DeBerg's last. That's all, because after "Mary Pat" flew many more missions, she was declared "War Wary" (WW). She had been a grand lady and had served the crew of Lt. Ruel G. Weikert (who had named it after his wife) very well indeed. But B-17F's were being replaced with the chin turreted B-17G's and John DeBerg became the Crew Chief of serial number 43-2008, better known to 385th flying crews as "Li'l Audrey". The day after DeBerg received her, "Li'l Audrey" made her first mission - the 8th AF first bombing of Berlin. The date was :

6 March 1944. It was the third day the 385th had led the way to Big "B", but the first time that conditions permitted bombing. From the proud start, John DeBerg and his crew of Ralph Levick and Ian Kilgour maintained and sent out "Li'l Audrey" on more than 100 missions - 73 in a row without an abort - and went out on an average of once every three days through March 1945. She had 18 engines, plexiglass nose change and uncountable flak and gunshot holes, but no air crew member was ever killed or wounded in her. She also flew to Berlin that 6th day of October 1944 and returned, when the 385th lost 11 B-17's. Among the flyers missing and KIA that day was Captain Edwin R. Herron, one of our finest Operations Officers. "Li'l Audrey" was piloted that day by Henry I. Jones, Jr. and it was his 35th and probably among his most remembered combat missions. A Captain White also finished his tour in Li'l Audrey. Many pilots

talk about her including John Peterson and Earl L. Cole. Other crew members, many of them, sing her praises, and one of her Navigators, Warren L. Larson, of Donald R. Williams crew, wrote a poem about her. She was a Sky Queen among other flying ladies and many claim her as their own, but no one, and I mean no one, ever have her more tender loving care than John DeBerg and his assistants. They owned her.

THE 100 CLUB

Only three persons replied to our call for help in locating all the 385th aircraft that flew 100 or more missions. You Editor is researching all the available records, but unfortunately, not too many maintenance records survived the original records screening before the 385th deactivation.

--- RESTRICTED ---

HEADQUARTERS
AAF STATION 155
APO 559

G-B-3

22 March 1945

SPECIAL ORDERS)

E-X-T-R-A-C-T

NUMBER 81)

M*

•iHt*

3. M Sgt John H DeBerg, 17037566, 551st Bomb Sq WPR e/a 23 Mar »45, from this sta on TDY for approx two (2) days to London, England, to attend radio broadcast, reporting to Lt Col Ben Lyon, 28 Grosvenor Sq, London, England, prior to 1400 hours 23 Mar *45* EM will report to Casual Center, CBS, 44 Cadogan Place where govt billets and messing facilities will be provided. Rail. CTRS. QMNT. TDN. PAC European TO U S Army Cir #113 dated 22 Nov '44.

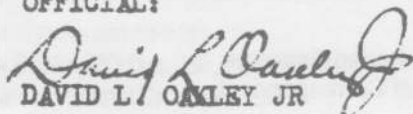
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3HHJ-

By order of Colonel JUMPER:

DAVID L. OAKLEY JR
Capt. Air Corps
Adjutant

OFFICIAL:


DAVID L. OAKLEY JR

Capt. Air Corps
Adjutant

MARCH 23, 1945

ALBAN: And now the last out of the bag for this week is from Lt. Daniel Nee from Dover, N.J., who's also in transition training in Lockbourne Army Air Base. He writes: "WHAT IS THE AVERAGE NUMBER OF MISSIONS THAT A B-17 CAN MAKE BEFORE BEING UNSERVICEABLE AND UNFIT FOR COMBAT USE? Here's the crew chief of the B-17 "Li'l Audrey", which has a record of 118 missions and 1138 total combat hours. He's M/Sgt. John DeBerg from Henry, S. Dakota. What do you say, Sgt?"

DEBERG: Well, I believe that we might compare a Flying Fortress with a human being. One person, living a quiet life and taking good care of his body, may live to be eighty or ninety, while another that hasn't received as good care or has lived a rougher life may not live so long. A Fortress should, with proper maintenance, inspection, and overhaul, be able to reach somewhere between eighty and one hundred missions. We watch "Li'l Audrey" pretty close and pamper her every whim, and it's my opinion that she'll keep going until the war ends. But to a crew chief, good maintenance, a good pilot and crew, plus a generous portion of luck, is the best answer explaining a plane's length of service.

ALBAN: Thanks Sgt. DeBerg. And that winds up the 8th Air Force Combat Classroom for this week. We'll be with you again next Sunday at the same time. This is Capt. Frank Alban somewhere in England, returning you now to the Blue Network in New York.

**YANKS IN THE E.T.O.
MARCH 18, 1945**

A lot of people can share the credit for the fact that, as of last week, LI'L AUDREY, a Flying Fortress of the 385th Bomb Group, had chalked up 111 missions, but no one is any prouder of that accomplishment than M/Sgt. John R. DeBerg of Henry, South Dak. As the plane's crew chief, he has had her under his care since her first mission and has kept her up in the air for 1020 hours.

There are probably only three or four Forts in the 8th Air Force that can rival LI'L AUDREY'S record. Those that reach the 100-mark do so as a result of luck, expert maintenance and good pilots who have the knack of bringing a plane back on two engines if they have to.

LI'L AUDREY'S first mission was way back on March 6, 1944, the date on which the 8th Air Force flew its first daylight raid over Berlin. She had been placed in DeBerg's care the day before.

Since then, she has missed only two Berlin raids and, not counting practice missions, has averaged a mission every third day for the past 11 months. She has had two turn-backs, for mechanical reasons, both after she had completed 73 missions. She has had 18 engines, her plexiglass nose and wings are studded with flak holes, she has come back three times with only two engines, yet not one of her crew has ever been killed or wounded.

DeBerg and his ground crew are naturally pretty pleased by all this. In two years DeBerg has never lost a ship. MARY PAT, his ship before LI'L AUDREY, was declared war-weary.

Two pilots have completed their missions on LI'L AUDREY. The third and present pilot is 1st Lt. John H. Peterson of Chester, Pa. He has 19 more missions to go. DeBerg thinks that the way LI'L AUDREY can take it, she'll probably just about last him out.

—By Cpl. Edmund Antrobus
YANK Staff Correspondent

MARY PAT flew back to the U.S. on 11-25-1944.

EDITOR'S NOTE: George Czerwinsky sent this great article from the Springfield (IL) Magazine.

ON NOVEMBER 11 TH WE AS A NATION CELEBRATE VETERAN'S DAY—a day set aside to remember those who served in wars to help the cause of freedom everywhere. Illinois has played a major role in all wars—sending thousands of its men and women always to support our nation's commitments. There were more men from Illinois at the battle of Vicksburg during the Civil War than from any other state. World Wars I and II were supported by Illinois natives in huge numbers also as well as the Korean, Vietnam, and Gulf Wars.

While many veterans of 20th century wars are still with us, we also must pause to remember and honor the countless men and women who lost their lives and those who remain missing in action. Every life is worth loving and remembering. Inscribed on the Illinois Vietnam Veterans Memorial at Oak Ridge Cemetery are the words, "To those who died honor and eternal rest, to those still in bondage remembrance and hope, and to those who returned gratitude and peace."

lke/i-17 Q-licfld t

by Lee J. Schuster

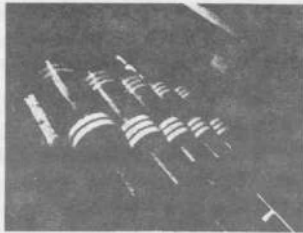


Photo: David Blanchette

As I strapped myself into the seat occupied by the radio operator and wedged my legs underneath a small table full of radios, dials, and other assorted gadgets, I was struck by the fact

that this huge 4-engine bomber wasn't nearly as big once you were crammed inside of it with nine other people. As the bomber gained altitude into the crisp morning sky, I had an overwhelming sense of vulnerability. I reached above my head, felt the skin of the aircraft, and discovered that it was aluminum, which offers little protection to the occupants when someone is trying to kill you. This B-17 was built of lightweight Plexiglas and aluminum, designed to be light so that it could carry a maximum bomb load. After takeoff, I staggered through the plane from the tail to the nose of the aircraft where the bombardier sits. What courage it must have taken for these 19- and 20-year-old kids to fly through enemy anti-aircraft fire while German fighter planes were shooting machine guns and cannons at them, all the while riding atop thousands of pounds of bombs with nothing more for protection than the plane's thin aluminum shell. I understand now how we lost so many planes and so many crews over Europe. The desire to do one's job would have to have been overwhelming to get these young men to fly mission after mission once they had been exposed to intense enemy fire. Thanks to their courage and their willingness to get the job done, I was privileged enough to ride in this plane over Springfield with no one shooting at us. B

El Springfield Magazine ■ Hmabar/NcMk* 19M

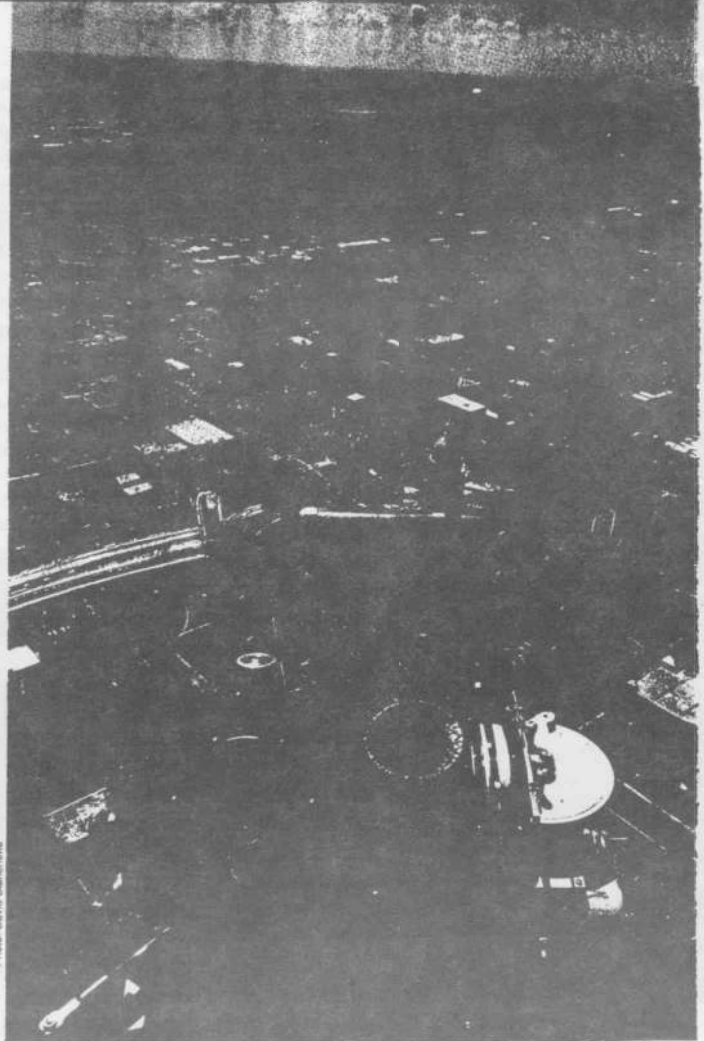
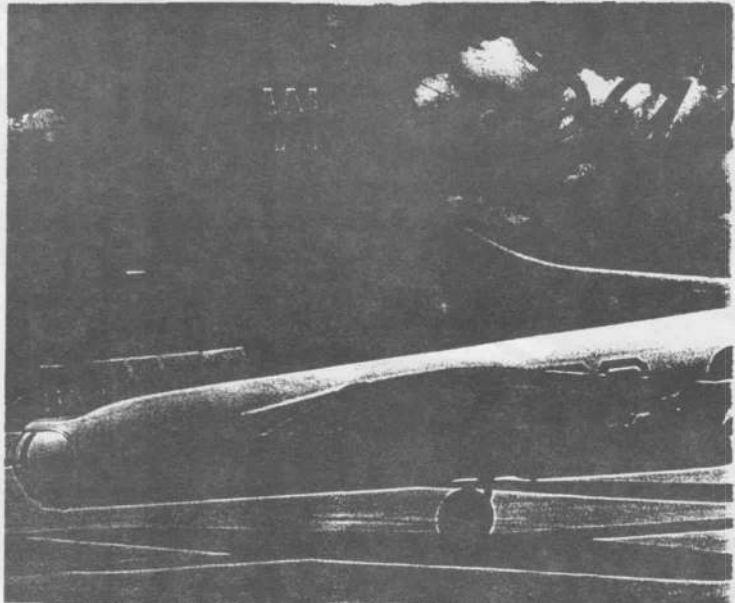
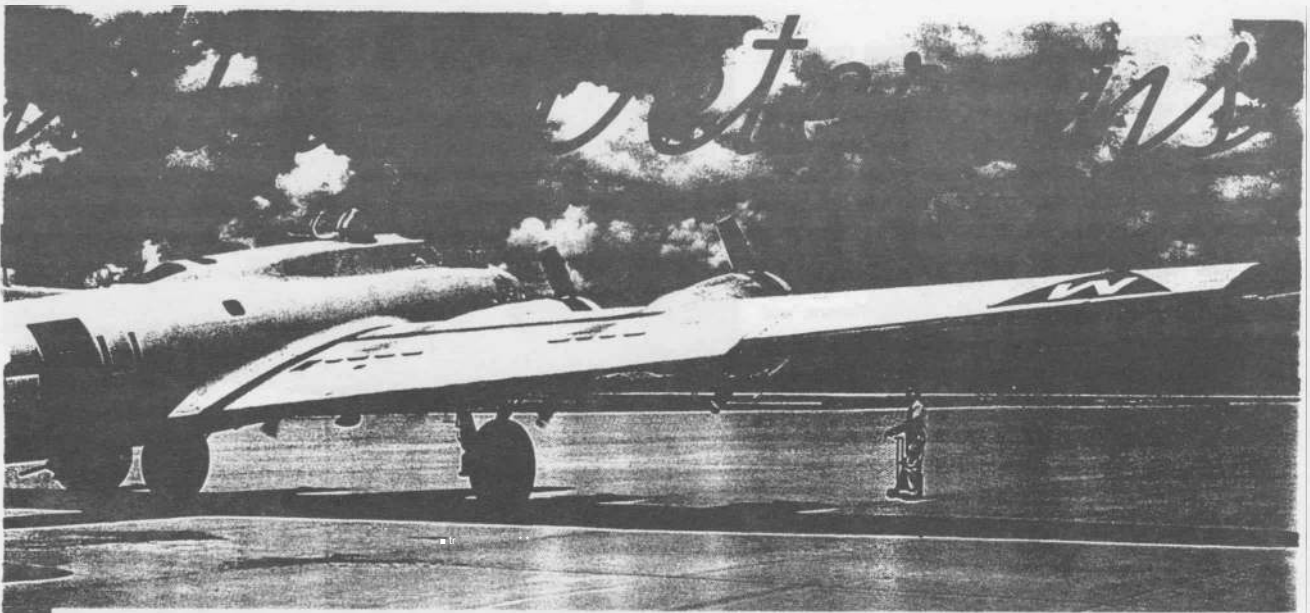


Photo: David Blanchette



Freedom Isn't Free

by Amber Armstrong



A 20-year-old Behl stands by the tail guns of a B-17 bomber.

service he continues to provide today. Since 1986 Behl has been the commander of the Inter-Veterans Burial Detail of Sangamon County. At memorial services, he and a group of veterans that make up the honor guard perform a military ritual to recognize and respect soldiers who gave themselves to serve and protect this country.

Adjutant of the local chapter of the Military Order of the Purple Heart, Rick Alan Richards says that Behl represents the only generation of Americans who gave freedom to the world. Recently Behl was compensated with a ride on a B-17 bomber as a token of appreciation for the sacrifices he made for this country.

"In the overall picture of the WWII, you can't pinpoint something or someone and say, 'that's how we did it, that's how we won'," says Behl. What you do say about the soldiers and D-Day is, "There they were—they prevailed," he explains.

An honorable man, a hero. In fact, if you were to look up the word patriot in the dictionary, you might see a photo of World War II veteran George Behl of Springfield. To many he symbolizes what a true patriot is for all that he did and all that he does for this country.

Behl says that he looked into joining the military right after the attack on Pearl Harbor. He enlisted in the air force, and his first overseas mission was in 1943 for the 385th Bomb Group of the 548th Squadron.

Behl completed 30 air raids over Nazi Europe as a tail gunner and radio operator in the B-17 bombers, but his list of missions grows longer when you include the

The outcome of the war was a result of the greatest combined efforts of military power in nearly all of history according to Behl. If the United States had not been successful on the D-Day mission, this country and world would not be what it is today. This is why Behl and others have directed their resources to getting D-Day recognized as a national day of remembrance. "People probably don't think about what might have happened had we not been successful," he says.

Behl is honored with the Purple Heart for a flak wound he got while flying over Berlin. The Presidential Group Citation was awarded to his unit for accuracy of bombing targets. His medals include: Distinguished Flying Cross for valor and extraordinary achievement; Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters for meritorious service while participating in aerial flight; World War II Victory Medal; Good Conduct; American Defense for active duty service; and European Theatre of Operations with two battle stars for service overseas. Additionally, the French government has recently honored Behl and other soldiers who fought on D-Day with a medal.

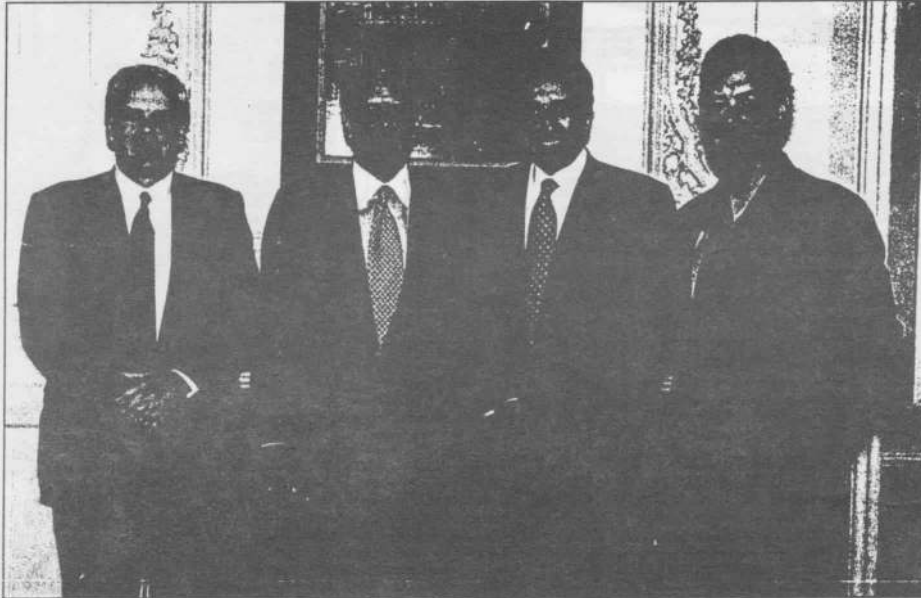
If you would like to get involved in the effort to have D-Day recognized as a national holiday, write and petition your congressman. ■



Behl's recent flight on a B-17 allowed him to make a silent tribute to all of his comrades.

BROKAW, HANKS RAISE MEMORIAL PROFILE IN NEW YORK

On May 13th, Tom Brokaw, anchor of NBC Nightly News and author of the best seller, *The Greatest Generation*, hosted a luncheon at The 21 Club in New York City to raise awareness and funding for the memorial campaign. Guest speakers included Tom Hanks and campaign co-chairmen Senator Bob Dole and Frederick Smith. To date, over half a million dollars has been raised as a result of this event.



Frederick Smith, Tom Brokaw, Senator Dole and Tom Hanks at New York luncheon.

BLOCKBUSTER INC. PLEDGES \$250,000 IN SUPPORT OF MEMORIAL

Blockbuster Inc. recently pledged \$250,000 in support of the National World War II Memorial.

Blockbuster made the pledge on behalf of local veterans organizations across the country and worked with them to stage events at select Blockbuster stores during the week of Memorial Day to raise awareness of fund-raising efforts for the memorial.

"Blockbuster chose to make the donation in the name of veterans organizations to support their commitment to raising funds for the first ever national World War II memorial," said Jim Notarnicola, chief marketing officer and executive vice president for Blockbuster.

"Memorial Day has traditionally kicked off our summer renting season. Since our members are so good to Blockbuster during this time, we wanted to show our gratitude by honoring veterans in this very special way."

In addition to the cash pledge, Blockbuster stores throughout the country are featuring a National World War II Memorial public service announcement on in-store monitors. The public service spots will run during the months of June, July and August.

The popular video retailer also features the memorial in a special section on their company web site at www.blockbuster.com/company/community/wwii/.

SHOE

by Jeff MacNelly



FLYING FORTRESS NEWS LETTER

Page 7

FALL 1999

A Truly Proud Success Story
"Operation Manna/Chowhound"

A great debt of gratitude is owed Vince Hurlman of Charlotte, NC and the Manna/Chowhound Brotherhood for this wonderful story.

From April 29 thru May 8, 1945 the 8th Air Force and British Bomber Command flew many terribly urgent and important World War II missions under a special truce that was negotiated with the Germans, but not a bomb was dropped.

The truce for 9 days just prior to VE-Day was to forestall further starvation of the Dutch people, which had been going on for years during the occupation in World War II. The British flew 3300 sorties with Lancaster and Mosquito bombers and dropped 6,000 tons of food during their "Manna" missions.

The 8th Air Force flew 2,200 sorties and dropped 4,300 tons of food in this huge humanitarian effort for which the Dutch people are ever grateful.

It was not possible to bring the food to Holland by surface ships as the Dutch ports were strewn with wreckage. So Operation Manna/Chowhound was put into effect. To prevent the Germans from moving troops by rail Queen Wilhemina ordered railroad workers on strike. The Germans countered by not allowing food to be shipped, and blew the dikes so no food could be grown locally in the west. It was necessary to modify the bomb bays so a wooden platform was rigged to carry C-Rations, flour, sugar, and other essentials. Next we practiced flying at low altitude at low air speed to drop the food into a 50ft. circle. With B1 7s we gave up trying to fly them in formation so flew one-

plane missions after several near mishaps. We learned it was best to fly over the ground at 4-story building height and 130 m.p.h. with wheels and flaps down which kept the food intact at the drop point.

The truce specified we fly to Holland in a narrow corridor and any planes that strayed would be signalled with a red flare. If that plane didn't depart promptly it would be shot down. On one mission we strayed, the red flare appeared, and we made the sharpest turn ever for a B17.

The Dutch got the food, and were saved from starving to death.

In 1995 (50th Anniversary of the fooddrops), the Dutch people invited air crews that had taken part in the food dropto Holland for a 8-day celebration. The gracious treatment by the Dutch of all ages was great. There is a strong relationship between the Dutch Food & Freedom Foundation Assn. and the Chowhound Brotherhood, of which I am a member, says Vince. On May 16th, 1998 we were invited to attend the presentation of a Proclamation of Thanks from the Netherlands at the Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum, Savannah, Georgia. The proclamation is signed by H.R.H. Prince Bernhard, and it artfully shows the ten bomb group insignias in color around the text. They are the 452nd, 95th, 3rd Scout Force, 34th, 96th, 493rd, 490th, 385th, 100th, 388th, and 390th Bomb Groups. A Museum volunteer there stated that as a young boy in Holland he watched the air drops, he and his family were saved, and he graciously thanked us.

If any members who read this would like to become members of the Chowhound Brotherhood, they can write to: Bob Cooperman, t.M./C.B Chairman, 17 Alden Place, Syosset, NY 11791

Letters to the Editor

Dear Ed:

In addition to all of our back copies of HH, I have copies of "Bombers Bulletin" from 7/29/43, 8/6/43, and 8/15/43. These were printed at the 385th Base, are on brown paper and rather faded but otherwise in excellent condition. Interesting to me is that there is an article written by Jerome Mudge who, as you will recall, is the person whom you identified for David Lewis when he turned to us for information about his father who was on Mudge's crew. These last three items were given to me 27 years ago by John McPartlin whom I met at a function in Michigan. I see that he is still on our roster. I wonder if he has any more of these?

Bob Silver

Dear Ed:

I have been looking over the records of the 385th BG during the month of August 1944.

During August, the 385th flew 18 missions and had a total of 583 planes in the air. We lost a total of 5 planes including my pals on the Bristol crew on Aug. 9th as we attacked Furth, German's tank factory.

If each of the planes carried the designated amount of 6000 lbs of bombs, then we dropped 3,498,000 lbs of bombs during the month. It was the mission 166 that merited the 385th another Distinguished Unit Citation, as we bombed underground storage near Berlin, Germany.

I think all 385th BG vets can be very proud of the accomplishment they did for the country.

Kenneth J. Laffoon
Squadron 548
4780 N. Snyder Circle
Tucson, AZ 85749-9674

Dear Ed:

In October the 548th Bomb Squadron held their annual reunion in San Antonio, Texas. The gathering was hosted by Sid and Wanda Carney. They did a tremendous job with just the right amount of sightseeing and chatting.

They also videotaped the seven couples who attended. Each couple told about their life before the war, their war experiences and post war life. Even though we have been getting together for many years, we learned much listening to each individual's account.

Enclosed are pictures of the attendees.



Front L-R: Martin Girson, Charles Huber, Sid Carney, Herman Siederer.

Back L-R: Henry Dworshak, Sam Luckie, Wayne Detwiler



Front L-R: Doris Siederer, Wanda Carney, Edith Girson
Back L-R: Joyce (sister of Irene Huber), Nita Luckie, Irene Huber, Carol Detwiler, Dru Dworshak.

Ed, you continue to do a great job editing "The Hardlife Herald". Thanks for all you do.

Sincerely,
Herman Siederer
601 Benner St
Highland Park, NJ 08904

TOM HELMAN

718 SHERMAN STREET

MEDFORD OREGON 97504

(541) 772-7876

April 27, 1999

Mr Ed Stern, Editor
Hardlife Herald
Box 9466
Fargo ND 58106-9466

Dear Ed:

Maybe I should know better, but I do hope I am of some help to your copy writer by formatting the enclosed copy for paste-up onto Hardlife. I am aware you haven't called for a columnist just yet, however I'm only calling myself a reporter, which I am sure you have need of, even a lousy one such as I.

As I see it, it's not too late to make the moves necessary in order to bring to order the good ship 385 and keep it at full sail straight ahead. It could be a sad state of affairs if we get lost up the creek without a paddle and no water, don't you think?

All of us owe a great deal to our leader people who saw fit to create such an exciting and colorful monument. And to those who carried on with such an emotional fanfare. None can say this is not the best there is!

This is a great start for the Group to stand out the best among all the others of the Mighty Eighth, a feature that can be added to a healthy list of attainments we are so proud of.

Although I am sure some may be weary of hearing the Ohio Air Force tune, I've got to say that the book LETTERS TO HARDLIFE is really the story of any one of the many other Forts and crews of Great Ashland. The thing is, as far as combat experiences are concerned, no one crew or a squadron of crews went through all the Group's history, each has had but a small and brutal part.

For instance, only the crews on the mission to Rjukan, Norway (and not the O.A.F. alone) took part in wrecking Adolph's nuclear program, an event the media has completely ignored, for shame.

And on the same mission, it was when a gunless and unmarked and tan colored jerry B-17 tacked on our wing, until we scared him away with a flare gun.

It wasn't until the Boeing 50 years B-17 birthday party in Seattle in 1985 that I first heard the story of the checkered-tail 385th food-drop to the Dutch.

It was just this year (1999) I read in Ray Bowden's great book TAILS TO NOSES OVER BERLIN of the 385ths heavy losses more than a year after my time.

These are but a few things of our proud history that somehow should be chronicled for all to see and hear. So how to do any of this must be worked out in a period of soon. I think it can be done. And a good start is a job for an Historian.

One help I need is the names and addresses of all our POWs, they are rich in a forgotten even unknown part of our history, we need them.

You will note enclosed, is copy of the flier that accompanies the LtoHL book in the Museum. The only difference is the sales code, which is "Dept-385" a very essential mark and most important inclusion so that the Group gets paid. I would hope you will print the whole sheet. If not, be sure the application form is.

Here is to hope you one soon and happy return to the North Dakota branch of Fargo. Have a nice trip.

Tom Helman
Tom Helman

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tom Helman's full of great ideas.

This came after the Savannah Reunion and we misplaced it—but the ideas are still current.

NEWSY STUFF

AND

FRESH AIR

BY TOM HELMAN

KNOW IT OR NOT dear ol'Beegee Ma (meaning BGMA) is about to break-in an old guy on the block who was unaware you never apply for a job that doesn't exist.

BUT BE THAT of it is, this guy will take editor Ed at his word, that he'll print anything almost, 'cept telling good stuff on oldtime execs and anytime haberdashers.

HAVING JUST RETURNED from a fun trip to one more great reunion of about 300 old but young vets and families at Savannah, I came away with the thought that somebody oughta say something nice about the great time we all had. And so, I volunteer.

THIS JUST HAD TO BE one rough job to get it all glued together, as all our officers did, being as how most all arrangements were made at arms-length, by phone or snail-mail, maybe even by steamboat on the river, AND a real live river Savannah does have, and how!

NOBODY NOT ONE was from even nearby to the beautiful state of GA (Pronounced as GAW by one guy I heard). The commute from Ohio and Florida, Nebraska, Connecticut, Oregon, Washington, even Fargo Arizona must have been rough and mean, okay for young pups.

BUT PUTTING THE REUNION together wasn't the only thing in the works. Somebody bled real sweat while negotiating that absolutely fantastic Memorial rock. No-way could anyone have done better, or even equal, I'm saying. And the guy in charge, Bob Valliere I hear, never attended the show, hence he never got a bow, sorry Bob.

HOWEVER I DO THINK his committee overheard ail the happy remarks approving the most fitting scene of peace and monumental serenity; our pretty three trees. You did us proud guys, surely a loving memory of our old-time home, Great Ashfield, twas a very nice place.

NEVERTHELESS a Memorial stone, no matter how strikingly beautiful it may be, is by far more than remembrance of a place, but of our Living and our Dead.

THE BEAUTY OF THE THOUGHT for me at least, helo so, when Chaplain Jim Vance enhanced the ecstasy or Amazing Grace by everyone's response to a most timely Reading, "We Remember Them". more

I THINK IT BEST to go no further and not forget that dynamo cornhusker country boy from Omaha that ran the show. Seems we'd seen this man before. Sure enough that's right, it was Omaha at the Omaha show where his dad, the BGMA secretary George Hruska ram-rodged that one and George the younger was ahelping.

THIS TIME AROUND it was George the elder that was tagged to work a miracle in Savannah, but sad to say he sorta ran out of gas along the way and was pressed to call in from off the bench good son George. And that's just the beginning of the story. Have you ever seen a guy hoe corn on roller skates? We owe you Georges, both!

IT WAS FROM conversation with George the husker that I learned of the fiscal shortfall on the dinner boat cruise. Somehow the fifteen dollar price was little more than half enough, a revolting development. Several that I talked to indicated they were willing, as was I, to ante up whatever was asked. But alas, we left for the airport during breakfast and heard no more. What gives?

DISCUSSIONS OF NOTE that I heard talked on, of course concerned two main themes: Any more reunions? And WHERE? AND, from ANYWHERE, the MONEY to make things GO the way we wish.

MY ONLY THOUGHT on reunions is that we hold down hotel costs all we can. And the event is held on a weekend, keeping in mind the airlines require all us peasants to travel through Saturday night for the rate.

AS FOR MONEY, I have a golden offer only a bombardier dare refuse. I think it a most meaningful alternative to tinkering with dues, either annual or life, each for obvious reasons. Raise a man's dues and he rides off to the sunset. And to sunset the lifer? Noway.

HERE'S THE DEAL: As you may know, my book LETTERS TO HARDLIFE, is and has been for sale in the 8th AF Museum in Savannah. My offer to the 385th BGMA is much the same as to the Museum, simply a commission on each sale, payable to the Group by me on receipt of code "Dept 385" noted on order blank.

IT GOES LIKE THIS: You send me twenty bucks and the Group gets back ten, and YOU get a book. Now a quick roster count shows "about" 1300 members, so this by 10 (\$) means "maybe" 13 grand. How's that!

SO HAVE WE GOT A DEAL? Your cards and letters folks, and a twenty dollar bill, that'll do it.

NOW FOR ANOTHER WAY to make a buck. For quite some time I have had a yen to gather into a book the many great stories of the Group's POWs. There must have been a dozen of them that stood up front at the Savannah meet. I must make contact with these men!

I DO HAVE SOME NAMES, like Nichols and Gillis and Hanauer and Pettenger, but tell me, how do you like this nifty title? FROM HARDLIFE TO HARDLIFE. 30

Ed:

This article was in the Tulsa paper. He gave quite a talk about his experience in Europe. The only code talker left. I talked to him after our meeting of 8th veterans. A great sense of humor, also a great American who has served his country well.

He told some funny stories. One, he was going to D.C. and they asked how they would know him. He said he was a short broad shouldered Indian who looked like Geronimo. Any of us native born oakies would have recognized him.

Hope things are going well for the Albuquerque Reunion.

Best regards,

Sam & Mary

Last code talker is honored

» The elite group is credited with saving thousands of lives.

By JIM MYERS
World Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON — "Fighting is fierce. We need help."

That was the first message Charles Chibitty of Tulsa sent as a member of a signal company serving in Europe during World War II.

To confuse the enemy, the young Chibitty sent the message in his American Indian language.

A 78-year-old retired glass worker, today he says he is the last surviving member of the elite Comanche Code Talkers, who were credited with not only saving thousands of lives but shortening the war.

Military experts believe the 17 Comanche Code Talkers, recruited specifically because they could speak their native language fluently, were instrumental during the historic Normandy invasion.

Code talkers were used to relay radio messages because the enemy could not decipher their language.

Chibitty was honored Tuesday in the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes.

Arthur L. Money, assistant

secretary of Defense for Command, Control, Communications and Intelligence, presented him the Knowlton Award for his "significant contributions" to military intelligence efforts.

That award, established in 1995 by the Military Intelligence Cojijis Association to recognize individuals for outstanding intelligence work, is named in honor of Lt. Col. Thomas Knowlton, who served under Gen. George Washington during the American Revolution.

Chibitty also received the Citizen's Award for Exceptional Service from the U.S. Department of Interior.

Kevin Gover, a native Oklahoman and fellow Comanche who now heads the Bureau of Indian Affairs, presented that award to Chibitty and took the opportunity to note the irony of the code talkers' wartime service and the "difficult history" that existed between Indians and the U.S. government.

At the beginning of this century, Gover said, the BIA was dedicated to destroying native languages while the U.S. military was willing to recruit Comanches and Navajos for the war, as they did Choctaws in World War I.

Chibitty did not speak of

SEE CODE A-17



DENNIS COOK / Associated Press

Charles Chibitty of Tulsa receives the Knowlton Award in a ceremony Tuesday at the Pentagon's Hall of Heroes. Chibitty was honored for his service as a Comanche Code Talker during World War II.

CODE:

Chibitty wishes his comrades could have received similar honors.

FROM A-15

that history in accepting the honors but did ask why the code talkers' efforts were not recognized earlier.

"When I talk about my comrades, I wonder why it took so long," he said.

"They are not here to enjoy what I'm getting after all these years."

More than a decade ago, the French government honored the code talkers with the Chevalier of the National Order of Merit.

With a voice choked with emotion, Chibitty listed the others, saying something about each one.

Several suffered serious injuries during the war and later in Korea but all survived.

There was a light side to the ceremony as well.

Chibitty regaled his audience and later reporters with the way the Comanche Code Talkers got around U.S. military terms that had no Comanche equivalent as well as the German names.

"Tank" became "turtle," and "bomber" became "pregnant airplane" because it reminded the Comanche of a catfish full of eggs.

Chibitty was in the middle of his senior year at Haskell Indian School in Lawrence, Kan., when the call came for a small group of Comanches.

He told how he had to talk his mother into letting him drop out of school to join the Army.

Born near Medicine Park, in the Lawton area, Chibitty moved to Tulsa after the war.

His other military honors include the World War II Victory Medal, the European Theater of Operations (5th Bronze Star) Victory Medal, the Europe African Middle East Campaign Medal and the Good Conduct Medal.

Jim Myers, World Washington Bureau reporter, can be reached at (202) 484-1424 or via e-mail at jim.myers@world.com.

Dear Ed,

Reference my last letter to you requesting that any member who has knowledge of US aircraft in enemy markings write to the editor of the US Air Force Museum magazine.

At attachment 1 is the first article about this incident which as you can see covers that particular aircraft. After reading this I really wonder if any of those surviving members attend or are requested to attend Group Reunions. I mean that is embarrassing!

Speaking of reunions I do hope that all of you had a great one.

Sincerely,

Allen P. Holtman, MSgt, USAF, Ret.
Assc Mbr, 38th Bomb Gp Mem Assoc.
705 Mendocina Ct #12
Florissant, MO 63031 -6093

B-24 WITH GERMAN MARKINGS

[The photo of a B-24 with German markings, submitted to our Winter Issue by Mr George Boving brought numerous responses.]

From Carlton A. Stidsen, Tolland, CT (excerpt):

The B-24 in question was a B-24H-5-DT (41-28641) that was part of the 733rd Bomb Sqdn., 453rd Bomb Gp. (H), operating out of Old Buckenham, Norfolk, about 15 miles southwest of Norwich.

On 4 February 1944, this aircraft was part of a 453rd training flight launched to practice formation flying. The weather was bad, and "641" got separated from the group during the climb-out through the clouds. The pilot, 2Lt John Turner, was new to England, as was the navigator, G. G. McClure. The B-24 headed eastward out over the English Channel, possibly looking for a break in the clouds to descend through, or looking for its flight. Unfortunately, it strayed over France in the process. The lone aircraft was intercepted by German fighters, and with at least one seriously wounded crew member, was forced down at a Luftwaffe airfield in northern France. The aircraft was damaged but intact. The crew became POWs, and the aircraft was turned over to Kampfgeschwader 200. The only missions (that I know of) that KG 200 flew using this B-24 were resupply missions to the island of Corfu, staging from airfields near Vienna.

From Ken Van Wickler, Floresville, TX.

An interesting book documents the B-24's odd career and those of many other American aircraft which fell into enemy hands. The work is titled, "Strangers In A Strange Land" by Hans-Heiri Stapfer. It was published in 1988 by Squadron/Signal Publications.

[Our thanks to the many other similar responses on this photo. Ed.]

Dear Ed:

The reunion in Savannah was an overwhelming highlife in my lifetime. This was the first I attended only due to the fact that my job kept me from doing and going to places that I had always wanted to be. Needless to say, meeting all the "kids" again was a wonderful step back to the past. The camaraderie of everyone, including our ladies who attended was beyond anything we had expected. By the way, we enjoyed breakfast with you and your wife on the Friday after the ball.

A most memorable happening was meeting with Gerry Genitis and his wife who I had not seen in 54 years. I was joyous and heartwarming, as though we had just come in contact with our family again. Rehashing old and new times was an absolute pleasure. It is the beginning of a new relationship including our wives who felt the same way.

An interesting event that happened in a restaurant on the seafront one evening. During dinner, my wife and I were talking about airplanes (what else) and a young couple sitting next to us questioned whether I had flown a particular aircraft mentioned in my conversation. It turned out he was a marine fighter pilot flying F-16 and F-14 out of Beaufort, South Carolina. We compared notes on aircraft then and now. The big question on his part was "weren't B-17s pressurized."

I hope the committee chooses Albuquerque for our next reunion. Great country and weather.

Again Ed, thank you for all the effort you put in to make this meeting the best for me, and my wife and everyone else we met at this wonderful event. We were sorry it ended so quickly.

Hope to see you at the next one wherever it may be.

Best regards,

David (& shirlee) Schwartz

EDITOR'S NOTE: Did you go into a lot of detail in answering that question about a "pressurized cabin"?

THIS IS WHAT WE'VE BEEN WAITING FOR



Dear Ed,

Sorry for the delay in responding to your request for a resubmission of my suggestions for 385th cap and T-Shirt designs.

First for the cap. I've recently seen a baseball style cap with the bill a combination of red and white stripes waving as in the wind. Then the front of the crown to be solid dark blue with white numbers/letters "385 BG" (I thought of using Bomb Gp but then this is probably getting a little expensive). The rear/side 2/3rds of the cap to be white with red squares indicating the last tail code of the Group, the Purena Checkboard Squares.

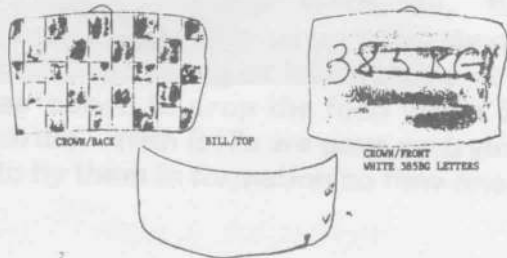
The T-Shirt to have a dark blue shoulder, maybe ten inches down in the front and equal on the back, whatever with white stars. Then from this point up and down red and white striped maybe two inches in width. However, on the front, again to save some \$\$\$ a circle maybe the size of a basketball and in this circle appropriate size lettering in a half moon reading "385th Bomb Group, 8th Air Force" and "Great Ashfield, England." This circling some king of view of a B-17, maybe like the rubber stamp that I use in corresponding with you (I'll use that stamp on this sheet somewhere).

I am beginning to think that I should draw some kind of example for you so let me close this and get on with that.

Blue skies,

Allen P. Holtman, MSgt, USAF Ret
Assc Mbe, 385th Gp Mem Assn
705 Mendocina Ct #12
Florissant, MO 63031-6093

Dear



We were both disappointed to have missed you when you visited the area in the summer. Next time we will have to make a date if you decide to come again and I give my telephone number above, as we have a static caravan at Felixstowe, we make a point of visiting it as often as we can in the good weather, never the less MAYBE for sure on the 13-27 of June, 2000. We have the intended program and will entice more guys and dolls to come back.

We visited Rattlesden base in July and we found quite a number of grandchildren of the vets were there and in talking to them, they were quite sure they will come back again.

Also with the 447th were Vets from other groups and in talking to some of them, they said there was not enough members of their group to come on a reunion so they tagged along with the 447th. Maybe this could be a good idea for the 385th to advertise in the newspaper, "We are anticipating visiting the UK (date) any other guys from other groups may like to join us, or 385th to join some other group." It's not quite the same but could make up a trip worthwhile.

While the 447th were here they spent two days at Rattlesden, but they also spent a day with US Forces at Lakenheath and also Mildred Hall. We weren't aware of this until the 447th news letter came. Do you think it is worth David Wade being informed of this?

Enclosed some news clippings which may help with some of the news of way back. These were given to us from Peggy's cousin, who was going to bring them to us and bring them, and bring, well anyway they have been BRUNCHED NOW, Thanks to her.

Sorry you didn't see the trees and the runway when you visited Ashfield, but rest assured they are still there.

Our best wishes to you both from
Les & Peggy

P.S. I knew there was a good reason not writing sooner, but had the roof blown off twice (different rooms) on the house two months ago and last week roof blown of my big shed 16' by 18'.

A... THE ONES THAT WEREN'T IN THE BOOK



Inside Story THE SEARCH

The Mail on Sunday, May 8, 1994

By VICTOR DAVIS

THE pine box has rope handles, is three feet long and is stacked on a shelf in the mortuary of William Harvey Hospital, Ashford, Kent. It contains the mortal remains of, officially, An Unidentified Male. Soon, at a coroner's inquest, he will be identified as John Stanley Gilders, aged 21, long ago a Royal Air Force sergeant pilot.

The clinching evidence will be provided by an intense man of 24 named Mark Kirby who confesses that he has Gilders' identification tags.

He took them from the remains and has them hidden in a bam. Kirby is an obsessive collector of wartime souvenirs of the damaged

kind. It was he who dug up Battle of Britain hero John Gilders, together with his Spitfire, from a wartime crash site in Kent that the Ministry of Defence long insisted did not contain a body.

For years, the pilot's devastated father, George Garmham Gilders, an accountant who once ran The Bell Hotel at Hampton, bombarded the Ministry for more information.

'I want my son to have a Christian burial,' he insisted.

Reluctantly, Whitehall finally revealed the location of the crash site but said it contained no body. After the MoD finally conceded there might be a body they refused permission to excavate, arguing it was a grave.

In 1969 Mr Gilders died defeated, aged 82. To this day his other son, Geoffrey, and daughter, Mrs Margaret Lawson, find it hard to talk about a painful struggle that has only now been ended.

Margaret, 83, says: 'Mark Kirby kept on and on at me until, finally, I said go ahead. All I really wanted for my dear brother was a little stone bearing John's name placed on the site.'



DISCOVERY: The Spitfire crash site



WARNED: Researcher Mark Kirby

GEOFFREY'S Dutch wife, Bolly Gilders, is indignant on the family's behalf.

'How could the Ministry claim it as a grave that must not be disturbed? It was never an official war grave. It was just a field that was ploughed up every year.'

'Geoff is 70 now and John would have been 74. Geoff is desperately sorry that his father did not live to see his elder son laid to rest with dignity in a proper grave.'

When Geoffrey attempted to place poppies on the site on Remembrance Day 1987, he was turned away.

'You can see it from the road, can't you?' someone on the property told Geoffrey.

Gilders — 'Gilly' as his RAF friends knew him — was 18 when, believing the clouds of war were gathering, he joined the RAF Volunteer Reserve in 1938 as an ordinary airman. The day war was declared he was called up and sent to pilot school.

He was one of the Few who drove back the Luftwaffe in the high summer of 1940, credited with destroying three enemy aircraft and damaging four. His last flight was on Friday, February 21, 1941.

There were six Spitfires in tight

formation at 20,000 ft and still climbing. They were jumpy.

Climbing into the sun from RAF Hornchurch in Essex and across the Thames Estuary, as 41 Squadron did, was a hazard. On the previous day a patrol had been bounced by Messerschmitt 109s over Dover and they had lost two of the squadron.

Sergeant Pilot Bob Beardsley, later to become a Squadron Leader with a DFC, remembers he was tucked in behind his friend Gilly.

They were looking forward to Gilly's 22nd birthday thrash to be held in the Mess, now just 13 days away.

Then, at 1305 hours, Gilders broke off from the formation into a steep dive. In his headphones, Bob could hear their startled flight commander, Johnny Mackenzie, shouting: 'Where the hell do you think you're going, Gilly?'

The radio waves came alive with calls from the others. 'Gilly.. what's up?' 'is it bandits, Gilly?'



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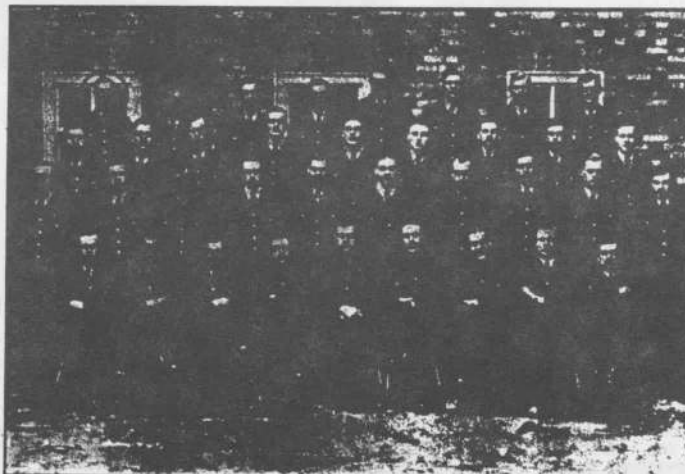
CONDEMNED BY WHITEHALL THAT WILL END IN RAF HONOURS FOR A LOST PILOT



LOST LOVE: Sergeant Pilot John Gilders with his fiancée Molly



'On Friday, February 21, 1941 at 1305 hours Gilders' Spitfire broke formation at 20,000 ft and went into a steep dive'



LOST COMRADE: John Gilders, circled, with the men of hard hitting and hard-hit 41 Squadron

Battle to bury a Spitfire hero

Then, as the earth rushed up to meet him: 'Pull out! Pull out!'

Thinking Gilly had spotted Luftwaffe bandits, the other five took evasive action and followed him down.

But there was no keeping up. The other five levelled out and lost sight of their comrade.

Oilly's Rolls-Royce Merlin engine was still at full power when his Spitfire plunged into a field alongside the River Stour at Chilham.

The impact melted the metal and parts of the aircraft buried themselves 16 ft down.

For a while the squadron nursed a sliver of hope that Gilly had baled out.

But when hopes faded, the news had to be broken to Oilly's parents and to Molly his fiancée, who later married another RAF man.

Sergeant Pilot John Stanley Oilders was missing on active service. Official.

An RAF salvage team inspected the great wound in the Kentish

earth and decided, for reasons still obscure, that Oilly had somehow baled out and come down in the sea where he perished. The field was bulldozed level once again.

'We could not believe it at the time,' says Bob Beardsley. 'Not only the way he went, but them saying he wasn't there with his aircraft. It was a great trauma for his family.'

The mystery still remains. Did Gilly, despite his youth, suffer a heart attack?

HIS comrades had a more likely explanation. In those early days of the Battle of Britain, oxygen equipment in the cockpits was not always reliable.

Says Bob Beardsley, from his home in Woodbridge, Suffolk: 'It happened to me once. A butterfly nut on the supply line came off in my hand at 25,000 ft. I think

something like that must have happened to Gilly.

'He probably blacked out before he realised he wasn't getting any oxygen.'

For such a banal reason another gallant life in the squadron where death was always a five-to-one chance was wiped out.

Mark Kirby is a builder's labourer from Tonbridge in Kent whose curious hobby, pursued with fervour, is to use a metal detector to locate and excavate the remains of Battle of Britain crashed aircraft that pepper the South-east corner of England.

It was he who led the team of 16 that dug up Spitfire No P786 this spring and discovered the remains of Sergeant Pilot John Oilders.

Now Kirby is being condemned by the Ministry for desecrating the grave that it only reluctantly, and after years of pressure from Oilders' parents, acknowledged might contain a body.

Said a Ministry spokesman last

night: 'These unauthorised excavations, involving the possibility of finding human remains, often cause great distress.'

It is an illegal and distasteful practice and causes a lot of protest from the Royal British Legion, the RAF Association, and also from the families — although not on this occasion.'

Kirby has the threat of prosecution hanging over him under the Protection of Military Remains Act, 1986. The maximum fine is £5,000.

Yet another Mark Kirby 'unauthorised excavation', of a Hurricane fighter last summer, led to the remains of Sergeant Pilot John 'Hugh' Mortimer Ellis being identified and accorded a funeral with full military honours.

The pilot's cousin, Peter Mortimer, of Burgess Hill, West Sussex, himself ex-RAF, said last night: 'I approved of what young Kirby did. I have no time for the holier-than-thou crowd. He

cleared up a mystery that had haunted our family.'

Kirby, a meticulous researcher who has recovered artefacts from more than 200 crash sites, was only able to excavate Spitfire P786 because the much-ploughed land's new owner, Sir John Swires, gave him the go-ahead as long as he could get the relatives' approval.

Bolly Oilders, 67, has no reservations about Kirby's activities. 'We owe him our thanks,' she says.

The Spitfire's engine was found at a depth of only 5ft and Mark Kirby says of the 1941 digging party: 'They did not dig down very far, denying John Oilders a Christian burial and the family's opportunity to visit him and be by him.'

I don't want any hassle from the authorities. But, when I'm not working, these excavations are my life.

'I just think men who went missing should be found and given Christian burials.'

HE ADDS: 'If I had applied to the Ministry for permission, it would have strangled me in red tape and then refused me access. I thought I'd do it and worry about the consequences later.'

Whatever your moral stance over Mark Kirby's freebooting ways, one fact is worth weighing in his defence: this-summer the Oilders family will be offered a flag-draped coffin, borne by six airmen, a bugler and an honour party to pay the RARs final respects to Sergeant Pilot John Stanley Oilders.

At rest at last, as his beloved parents wanted for so long.



To Bob Silver:

Hi all,

If I could, I would give an Air Medal or maybe even a Silver Star to Frank McCawley!!

This guy has spent countless hours in the National Archives digging out all sorts of data of the 385th BG missions. He has sent it to me and I am accumulating a massive file on these missions. When I'm gone, all my files will go to the Mighty 8th AF Museum in Savannah, but in the meantime, with all this data, we (he and I) have been able to help quite a few relatives of veterans and some veterans themselves.

I just want to publicly acknowledge the work Frank has done and is doing! I think the 385th Memorial Association ought to issue him a thank-you certificate.

Bill Varnedoe

From Bill Varnedoe

Dear David McKee,

I understand from your e-mail to Roger Feller that your brother, James D. McKee, was co-pilot on *Fickle Finger of ?*. Can you tell me the pilot's name? Crews were known by the pilot's name. I may be that I have a crew picture and all of the crew names, but they will be filed by the name of the crew (pilots). With this info we can check the latest roster of the 385th Memorial Association to see if any are still with us. You might also want to put a query in the *Hardlife Herald*, which is the newsletter of the association. The editor is Ed Stern, P.O. Box 9466, Fargo, ND 58106-9466

You might be interested in joining our association. Ed can give you the particulars.

Bill Varnedoe

Dear Ed,

Thanks for the last letter.

I'm enclosing some photos; I hope they will transfer ok. If not, let me know and I'll try to improve them.

To refresh your memory, one is of "HAYBAG ANNIE" in Wales postwar. Another shows our bombardier, Bob Joiner, next to the latrine with co-pilot Jer Herman (deceased). Joiner is the only crew member as yet untraced. His only known address is someplace called "Stuckey" Georgia. For the life of me I can't locate any such place. If you can print this picture-please to the brethren, perhaps someone knows of

Of this town?

Incidentally I have an e-mail address-md pier@hotmail.com. If anyone wishes to correspond.

Another snap is of a Capt. Duncan Randall with myself at a place called "Garden of the Gods" near Colorado Springs when we were briefly at Peterson AAF prior to discharge. I haven't seen his name in the "Hardlife Herald" to date. I would be interested to hear what happened to him. I believe he was a West Pointer and perhaps stayed active postwar.

The others show Mark Suffin (radidoman) at a POW retrieval mission in Linz, Austria, Arthur Wohl (engineer) and myself, and finally radar Navigator Rockwood.

Will be looking forward to hearing from you.

As ever,

Miichael Pierik
197 Old Mountain Trail
West Kingston, RI 02892



Radar Navigator Rockwood



Mark Suffin, Linz, Austria



A Wohl, M Pierik



Latrine



Capt. Duncan Randall on left



Overshooting Runway



Interior D6cor-Officers Club Bar

Dear Ed,

A clay tablet found in an archeological dig in the Near East was translated as: "Times are no longer what they were. Children no longer obey their parents and everybody wants to write a book." Well, I've gone past the "wants to" stage and have a book being published in June. It is a memoir of my days in a German POW camp.

I was very briefly a member of the 550th Squadron in 1944 (bombardier on Len Sexton's crew). We arrived at Great Ashfield the first week of April in 1944 and were shot down on 29th April. We didn't have time to get very well acquainted with others in the unit. But I have been a member of the 385th BGMA since working with John Ford in Washington in the sixties.

My book, called "Hunkered Down", is being published by JoNa Books of Bedford, Indiana for \$14.95 (paperback). The publisher is offering 20% off for pre-publication sales. That is \$11.95 if paid before actual publication. I am including a copy of his order form and hope you can include it in the next issue of the Hardlife Herald.

The book is being published as a memoir. That means it is what I remember even if my facts are sometimes not right. For instance, I remember the target of 29th April as being Berlin, but a list of missions published in the Hardlife Herald indicates it really was Magdeburg. Some of my other "facts" are, no doubt, wrong. But a memoir is just what the word says, a memory. And this book is how I remember by year as a POW.

Sterling Rogers
305 Reimer Ave, San Marcos, TX 78666

JONA BOOKS

PRE-PUBLICATION ORDER FORM

HUNKERED DOWN

by Sterling Rogers



CLASSIFICATION History/Military WWII
AUTHOR Sterling Rogers
RETAIL PRICE \$14.95 US
PUBLISHER JoNa Books
DIMENSIONS 5½ x 8½ Trade Paperback 280 pages, photos

SYNOPSIS...

"Hunkered Down" is a collection of little tales that tell the story of one man's experience in during World War II. The first brief tale (from which the book takes its name) sets the scene in a POW camp in Germany and relates the advice of the long-time prisoner to "hunker down. This war can't last forever."

The story then goes back in time to describe some of the bombing missions, including the last one that resulted in the entire crew being taken prisoner. The sensations of a parachute jump, of riding through the countryside on the back of a German soldier's motorcycle, of being jailed and stared at by civilians. All the happenings of that first day of captivity are told in detail. The stories follow the crew through training to captivity.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR...

Hunkered Down is an autobiographical collection. Sterling Rogers joined the army in 1942. He was a member of the crew on the most celebrated four-engine strategic aircraft B-17, the legendary Flying Fortress. His aircraft was shot down over Germany on 29 April 1944 and his entire crew captured. They spent the next year as prisoners of war. The stories are based on his memories of this period.

Following the end of World War II, he served in the Air Force during the Berlin Airlift, the Korean Conflict, and the early stages of the build-up in Vietnam before retiring as a Senior Master Sergeant.

Sterling and his wife of 53 years have two sons and three grandchildren.

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Dear Ed:

Here is a picture I just aquired.

I thought members might like to see the end of *Rum Dum*. After all it went through, even to being flown off that field where it went down in Germany, it finally crash-landed when landing at Honington for repairs. It was then salvaged. The date of the first crash-landing in Germany was 10 April 1945 after mission no. 288 to Neurippen; I was just behind Muchow and saw him leave the formation under control. The second crash-landing at Honington was 30 May 1945.

Bill Varnedow
5000 Ketova Way
Huntsville, AL 35803
(256) 881-3288
Viivar@bellsouth.net

EDITOR'S NOTE: How about sharing some of your memories of *Rum Dum* with us?



Dear Ed,

You always do a great job so I am sending a copy of a request that I sent to everyone I can reach.

The WWII Memorial needs a lot of help. A run in the newsletter may help.

The vets didn't drag their feet when they were called to serve. So many people and a lot of the States are looking the other way, leaving the job to someone else. I have donated 4 times, for myself and three brothers. I can't wait to see it in person. We have waited long enough. Our day will come-----

Thomas Gentile
2661 Highway 50
Little River, SC 29566

From: Bill Varnedoe

This is a true story that I thought you would enjoy. Bob Silver of the 385th BG sent me the details and I think they ought to be passed on: Events do chain; seemingly unrelated things can have far reaching consequences! This is a true story taken from the diaries of Bob Silver and Otto Schramm telling of some events as they unfolded in World War II. One day, a kind Dutch lady, Frau Nell deWijs, took a young German soldier, Eric Schramm, her enemy, in her house to let him get warm and gave him something to eat. He wrote of this kindness to his father, Otto Schramm, who was an anti-aircraft gunner. Sgt. Schramm had the job of supplying the shells to his battery. This battery was renowned for its accuracy and had been decorated for their skill. On the morning after he got Eric's letter, Sgt. Schramm bicycled to get his battery's ammunition for the day. On the way, he remembered the letter and reached into his pocket to see if he had it. He did. But just at that time a dog ran in front of his bicycle. With only one hand, he swerved and crashed. He was injured, not badly, but enough so that his shells were not available for the guns and they were silent that day, the 5th of March 1945. Sgt. Schramm wrote in his diary in 1945 that he was sure, if he could have delivered the shells, they would have knocked down some of the Fortresses that flew over. The 385th Bomb Group went on that mission and among those flying was Bob Silver. There was no flack, and all returned safely. Later in April 1945, Bob and the 385th participated in the food drops to the starving population in Holland. Much, much later, in April 1995, Bob Silver was part of a group of 385th veterans visiting Holland. I will quote Bob: "As I was giving out some of the cards to the children who came to greet us, the mother of one little girl was standing behind her and handed me a note which said. 'We are so very grateful that you survived the war-mainly, of course, for your sake but also for ours: If you had not survived you could not have brought the food which saved our nation. My grand-mother told us that the food which she received from you in 1945 kept her family from starving to death after the horrible 'hunger winter' of 21945

Horrible 'hunger winter' of 1945. Her name is Nelly deWijs."

I was also on that mission of 5 March 1945, and I, too, was on the Dutch food drops. Makes you think! The kindness of Nelly deWijs may well have saved our lives. Eric wrote of her kind act to Sgt. Schramm who fell because of that letter and an errant dog, causing a flack free mission from a battery which was known for its kills, so we could live to feed Mrs. Wijs.

Bill Varnedoe

Ed:

I received the following e-mail: Carl Hannon e-mailed me. Bill, maybe you can help me as I am trying to locate any info on the B-17 *Blue Champagne* that flew with the 385th Bomb Group. My friend's father who was the navigator, George Kontos. He would like to gather all info on the plane and crew, as he can put his mind to rest. You see he really loved his dad, as his father would never talk about his days in the service, for he was a POW in Luft 1, Barth, Germany. God bless.

I tried to answer Carl at <papa99@mediaone.net>, but it keeps coming back as faulty address. I used his e-mail address as he sent it to me, but, no luck. Does anybody know him and his address? I don't know how to contact him now. In answer I found the following:

Carl:
Blue Champagne was B-17G, serial number 42-37977. According to my records it was assigned to the 385th BG on 1 December 1943. Due to German fighters it crashed in Germany on 11 April 1944 on 385th BG mission No. 89 to bomb Plitz. I have two pictures of the nose art. They are different!? I note that it was modified to add a cheek gun, perhaps this caused the original nose art to be messed up and it was redrawn after this gun was added. I will send you copies if you'll send me a self address, stamped envelope. These copies will be scanned versions, and folded to fit in the envelope. The pilot at the time it was shot down was named Bailey, so your George Kontos would have been a member of the Bailey Crew. There is a picture of this crew, including George Kontos, the Bombardier, on page 126 of the book, "History of the 385th Bomb Group (H)." Unfortunately, this book is not out of print. The Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah has a copy of the book and might be willing to make a copy of the picture for some consideration. Be Aware, however, the picture is not top quality, being itself a copy of some older picture.

I hope this helps. Have a very nice New Millennium!

Bill Varnedoe

Dear Ed:

I am writing to you about 2 B-17s - Mary Pat and Lil Audrey.

1.

Mary Pat #423292 was flown over to England June 20, 1943 by **Pilot Reul** Wickert. The rest of the original crew were: T.J. Kleuser, F.D. Albert, T.H. Betow, D.K. Mushrush, W.V. Olownick, S. Wysokinski, J.W. O'Keefe, L.E. Degrow & S.H. **Day**. I became the crew chief of this plane when our group was formed at Spokane, WA.

I believe that Mary Pat had made over 100 missions before it was made war weary on March 5, 1944.

I wonder if this plane, one of the originals, does hold the record, that it was the only one in our group, or maybe in any group, that had flown over early in the war and flown back to the USA after making that many missions, plus getting in more flying time being used by officers. This was after we had stripped out its armament. It was flown back to the USA, still camouflaged, on Nov. 25, 1944.

2.

I became crew chief of Lil Audrey #432008 on March 6, 1944. The rest of my ground crew on both Mary Pat & Lil Audrey were: Ralph Levick and Ian Kilgour.

This plane, Lil Audrey probably holds a record too. At that time, March 23, 1945, she had made 118 missions. Lil Audrey kept flying more missions until the end of the war in Europe.

I flew in her on the 1st "Operation Chowhound" food mission in May of 1945. We dropped food over Holland. Chaplin Kinnannon was in one of the other planes that was shot at and hit that same day.

I flew back in Lil Audrey, the only camouflaged plane I saw to fly back to the states. The others were newer and silver colored.

I wish I had the official number of combat missions flown by both Mary Pat and Lil Audrey. I'd like to get in touch with any of the men that flew them both back home.

Ed I hope you are doing well. Keep up the good work, as editor. I enjoy all of the Hardlife Heralds.

I'm sorry we had to miss the last 2 reunions.

As Ever

John DeBerg, 551st Dq
1432 S Lake Drive
Watertown, SD 57201
Ph: (605) 886-5132

Dear Ed,

I recently received a copy of the roster of the 385th Memorial Association as of October 1, 1999. I noticed that the names of our ball turret gunner, Robert Collins Sr., 47 Willow St., Rockland, Maine and Charles Flynn, our tail gunner of 275 East Drive, Copiague, NY were still listed. Both of these men have passed on, I believe in 1998.

More Sad news, I also recently had a letter from Fiona Gordon in regard to her mother, Anne (Haywood) Gordon. Anne passed away on Oct. 31, 1999 after surgery which was believed to have been minor but proved otherwise. We have corresponded, frequently phoned, and visited Anne in 1992. In fact, we talked with her, on the phone, the week before her surgery and she was so confident that all was going to be A-OK, but it wasn't to be. Many of us will remember Anne as a hostess at the Aero Club and a part time "Nose Artist."

Ed, at the Savannah reunion I gave you a video tape to put in the hospitality room for viewing by anyone who was interested. This tape had stickers with my name & address on it and it had to do with a search for remnants from the mid-air collision in Feb. 1944 between the Hutchinson and Pease Crews. The search was at Reedham Marshes. At the end of the reunion the tape was nowhere to be found and no one seemed to know anything about it. I would like to have it back if anyone knows its whereabouts.

Sincerely,

Francis R. Fuller
98 Valley St
Keene, NH 03431

Mr. Clifford Manlove,
1124 Walnut,
Dexter, MO 63841

Dear Mr. Manlove,

Vince Masters asked me to write with any information or recollections I have on "Stars and Stripes".

The first Stars and Stripes was piloted by McIlveen (Clarence I think). It was #42-31349. It was assigned to the 550th Bomb Sq, 385th Bomb Gp on Nov 28, 1943 and went down on Feb. 24, 1944. It was hit by fighters and crashed in Germany.

42-3544 joined the same Squadron in Sept. 1943. It changed its name to Stars and Stripes II after the first was shot down. It ended its missions and was salvaged on July 7, 1944. It had crash landed in England.

Andy Rooney, who was a reporter for the newspaper Stars and Stripes, came over and flew a mission with Stars and Stripes II. He mentions it in his book about WW2.

I have very fond memories of McIlveen and his crew—fine young men—but they were almost all 19-20-21 years old (I was 26 when I enlisted and I was their Squadron Exec Officer). Incidentally, we had a few pilots were not old enough to have drivers licenses.

Regards,

Ed Stern
PO Box 9466
Fargo, ND 58106

Robert C. Smith, one of our Past Presidents passed away quietly in Spokane, January 18, 2000. He attended Franklin High School, in Nebraska, where he was senior class president and captain of the football team. An outstanding track & field athlete, his 100 yard dash record stood for 40 years. He attended the University of Nebraska, class of 1941. He was a gifted musician and formed a jazz quartet in the late 30's, playing the clarinet. Selected for Army Air Corps aviation cadet training he was awarded his wings on December 3, 1942 in Stockton, California. He volunteered for and was assigned to B-17 aircraft commander upgrade training in Hobbs, New Mexico where his classmate and friend was Lt. Jimmy Stewart. Upon graduation he became part of the initial cadre of the 385th Bomb Group at Geiger Field, Spokane, Washington under the command of Col. Elliot Vandevanter. His crew christened their aircraft Liberty Bell. Lt. Smith participated in some of the most vicious air-to-air combat in history, including the October 14, 1943 mission to Schweinfurt, Germany. On this mission his aircraft was seriously damaged by Luftwaffe fighter aircraft. A group lead pilot, it was only because of his decisiveness, leadership, and the determination of his crew that the Liberty Belle survived the mission. Their luck ran out on November 30, 1943 when a cockpit fire early in their 20th combat mission forced them to abandon the aircraft. Four men were killed, and Capt. Smith was badly injured. In early 1944 he returned to Spokane and in April married Jean Irene Thompson. The couple had three children: Earl Robert of Coronado, CA., Sally Jean Ryan of Seattle, WA., and Hal Clarke II of Seattle, WA. During his 28 year US Air Force career he had twelve command assignments. This included a tour as commander of a squadron of Super Constellations at McClellan AFB, Sacramento, CA., and commanding officer of Palos Verdes Air Force Station, CA. He also had headquarters staff tours at NATO, US Air Forces Europe, North American Air Defense Command, and Pacific Air Forces in Honolulu, HI.

Dear Mr & Mrs. Elbert,

I received your Christmas card to my father, William C. (Kelly) Melillo. I knew this was going to be the worst part of the holidays, since he really never kept addresses up since my mother died. Every year he waited until the cards came, then he would finally get around to replying. It comes with great sadness to have to tell you this this way at the time of

Peace and joy, my wonderful dad was killed in a car accident on September 18, 1999. I remember him getting cards from you over the years. My sisters all live far away. Maria the oldest in Maine, Mary the 3rd is a Major in the Air Force stationed in Yakota AFB in Japan, and the youngest Rosie is in Nashville. I am Kelly Ann, my husband and I bought dad's house from him this summer, so he could travel. His accident was while he was on his way to the Ohio Seniors Golf Championship Tournament. I am sure everyone who knew him knows he lived a wonderful full life, and that since my mother died he has been very lost. Our feeling is that they wanted to be together, and they are.

Sincerely,

Kelly Ann Melillo Carlsten

P.S. Kelly was Col. Van's bombardier and later went to the Pathfinder Group. Outstanding Bombardier-551st Squadron while 385th.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Gladys Smith, whose husband Ralph was on the same crew with Ed, sent this obituary. She had taken a picture of his name on the Wall of Valor at Savannah and sent it to him..

McGHEE, ROBERT MACK, JR. - age 77, of Knoxville, was taken by angels to be with his Heavenly Father on Tuesday morning, May 11, after a short illness at St. Mary's Medical Center. He was a member of Hals Christian Church and a graduate of Central High School Class of 1941. He served as a Bombardier in The 551st Bomb Squadron, 385th Bomb Group of The 8th Air Force in The European Theatre during World War II. He flew 26 missions before being shot down and spent 9 months as a P.O.W. He was awarded The Purple Heart and Air Medal with 3 Clusters. He was also a member of The Exclusive Caterpillar Club, whose member's lives had been saved by a parachute. He worked in the trucking industry in Knoxville for over 40 years and founded Knox Cartage Company in 1979 along with his two sons.

Hamilton County

Edgar Asliley

Edgar A. Ashley of Hixson and the Big Ridge Community died Saturday, May 15, 1999, at his home. He was 75.

He was a member of Fairview United Methodist Church and was a member of Hill City Lodge #603.

He served in the United States Air Force where he was awarded 4th Oak Leaf Cluster and flew on 33 B-17 raids.

Survivors include his wife, Alma Cate Ashley; one daughter, Rebecca Ashley Walker, one son, Anthony L. Ashley, both of Hixson; three brothers, Raymond Ashley and Wayne Ashley, both of Hixson, and Floyd Ashley, Harrison; six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

Services will be Tuesday at 10 a.m. at North Chapel, Chattanooga Funeral Home, with the rev. Patrick Kelly officiating.

Burial will be at Hamilton Gardens Cemetery.

Visitation will be today from 2 to 4 and from 6 to 8 p.m. at the funeral home.

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Mail to: **Verne D. J. Philips, Treasurer PO Drawer 5970, Austin, TX 78763**

Give any info about yourself, such as crew position or assignment at Great Ashfield, names of crew members, missions flown, etc. Any interesting experiences in the 385th.



Robert C Smith	Jan. 2000 (Past President)	Edgar A .Ashley	May 1999
Bob Douglas	2000 (our Bartender at Reunion)	WM. J. Wilson	1995
Anne Hayword Gordon	1999 (Our Nose Art Artist)	Robert Collins	1998
Bob McGhee	May 1999	Charles Flynn	1998
Kelly Melillo	Sept. 1999		
	Ruel Weikert	Dec. 1999 (Founder & Past President)	