

Hardlife



Herald



Newsletter of the  
385th Bombardment Group Memorial Association

1942 - 1945 • Great Ashfield - Suffolk, England • Station 155

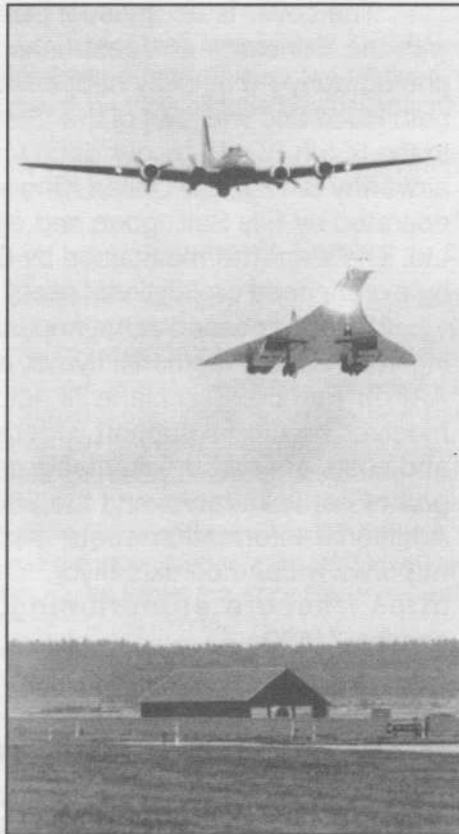
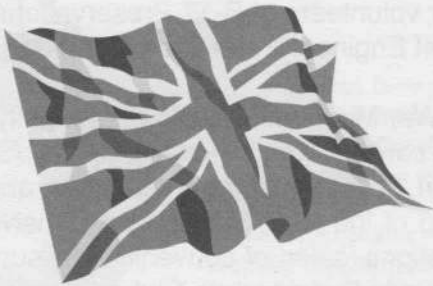
*The Mighty Eighth*

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Vol. 21 Number 1

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**385 BGMA REUNION • KANSAS CITY, MO • OCTOBER 5-10, 2004**

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# Hardlife Herald

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Mayor Ferdinand Unsen  
Eldon Nysethler

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### Cover

The cover is an unusual picture of the B-17 "Sally B" in formation with the Concorde at Vaesteraas, Sweden in 1987. This was not trick photography—it actually happened. The photograph was taken by Kenneth Hudd and was part of the "Sally B Newsletter". The picture was sent to the 385th BGMA by our good friend Bill Daysh. The Sally B is the last airworthy B-17 in the United Kingdom. Since 1982, the Sally B has been operated by Elly Sallingboe and other volunteers of B-17 Preservations, Ltd. The aircraft is maintained by Chief Engineer Peter Brown and flown by experienced professional pilots.

Sally B is based at the Imperial War Museum Duxford when not flying in air shows, memorial flybys, and commemorative events to the USAAF in Europe. The plane is not part of the Museum's collection and receives no official support. Operation of the B-17 Sally B is expensive and costs are met by charitable donations, sales of souvenirs, the support of her volunteers, and the 6500 Sally B supporters Club Members. Additional information about the Sally B is available at its web site: <http://www.delta.co.uk/sallyb/>. Online donations may be made at: <https://secure.efundraising.org.uk/tailored/donation.asp?charity=71590>.

### Corrections

Page 11 of Vol. 20, #4 omitted the name of Coralie Wilson, wife of Bob Wilson, from the list of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGMA, 19<sup>th</sup> Biennial Reunion Attendees.

Page 2 of the Vol. 20, #4 incorrectly showed the address of 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Chuck Smith as P.O. Box 239. Correct address is P.O. Box 329.

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## PREZ SEZ

*Bill Varnedoe*

Although there were 163 attendees at the Hampton reunion, not every one received the full story of the next reunion and why we will meet in 2004. The simple truth is that we simply lacked a host willing to put one on either in 2005 or 2004. Owing to the logistics of hosting a reunion, everyone agreed that no reunion should take place except at the host's residence location.

At the last minute, we did get two proposals, ( Fargo, ND and New Orleans, LA) but in both

cases neither proposer had checked back with a relative who was to assist as host.

Furthermore, several members had requested that we hold reunions every year.

At the same time, the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society invited all Bomb Group Associations to join with them in a reunion at Kansas City, MO in October 2004. They would act as host.

Putting all this together, the members voted to go to Kansas City in 2004, and allow the 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS to be our host.

To attend, you do not have to be a member of the 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS, and if enough of us sign up at the hotel, they will furnish a Hospitality room for our Group.

As someone commented, "this may be the passing of an era." And it may be. But the fact is, like it or not, most of us are getting too old to shoulder the enormous task of hosting a reunion.

We can still get in together with our wives and buddies, swap stories, catch up on family matters, and hold our meeting—let the other fellow drive.

## EDITOR'S REPORT

*Frank McCawley*

For the many years I have enjoyed reading the *Hardlife Herald* edited by Ed Stern and, for the past several years, edited by Tom Newton. It was with some apprehension that I have accepted the job to be the next editor of the *Herald*. I have some difficult shoes to fill. Like Ed and Tom I will need you, the members of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGMA, to help me continue to publish an excellent newsletter. For the past several years I have been reviewing the 385<sup>th</sup> BG mission folders at the National Archives. The folders contain the official reports of each mission as submitted by the Command Pilots for each element of the group formation. The navigators, aerial gunners and other debriefing reports for each mission are also in the mission folders. I was quite surprised to read some of the events that happened on the missions that I had flown. After reading all the papers in the folder, I realized how lucky I was to have survived thirty missions. I guess that is why I received a "Lucky Bastard" certificate. My luck must still be with me, since Tom's last Editor's Report, indicated that I was the "lucky editor of the fine *Hardlife Herald* that we have all enjoyed for so many years." I will give the job a good try and with your help, and some luck, I know I will succeed. God Bless You and God Bless America.

## BOOKS BY

### 385<sup>TM</sup> BGMA MEMBERS

The Diary of a Serviceman	Roger R. Hartman
My Teen Years	Ronald Webster
Letters to <i>Hardlife</i>	Thomas A. Helman
And No Purple Heart	Frank R. Mays
The Three Trees	Charles W. McCauley
Forever Yours	Howard A. Munchow
Fear, Faith and Courage	Willard Richards
Hunkered Down	Sterling Rogers
The Wrong Stuff	Truman Smith

### Books By Associate Members

The Munster Raid: Before and After	Ian L. Hawkins
Help From Above	Stephen Ingles
Final Flights	Ian MacLachlan

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## REUNION 2004

The 385<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group Memorial Association will hold its 20<sup>th</sup> Reunion in conjunction with the 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society in Kansas City, MO from October 5 through 10, 2004. The reunion headquarters will be at the Weston Crown Center Hotel. We have been invited to participate in all functions of the 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS.

385<sup>th</sup> BGMA members do not need to be members of the 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS to attend the reunion. All are welcome. A free Hospitality room will be provided to 385<sup>th</sup> BGMA with at least 50 persons in attendance. A request has been made for a room for a half day

business meeting of the 385<sup>th</sup> BGMA and for 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group seating at scheduled meals. Any unit with at least 10 persons registered will be eligible to receive a \$5.00 per person rebate after the reunion providing they have paid the registration fee 30 days prior to the reunion, and are staying at the reunion hotel.

Tours and banquet(s) will be organized by the 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS. All tours are optional, as well as some group meals. Tours will be available Wednesday through Saturday, and costs are:

Bus tour of Kansas City and Hallmark Visitor's Center—\$30/person.

Steamboat Arabia Museum/Toy & Miniature Museum—\$40/person.

Stephenson's Apple Farm/Truman Museum—\$44/person.

New Theater Restaurant and Show—\$58/person.

Rooms at the Weston Crown Center Hotel are \$92.00 plus tax. Airport shuttle to hotel is \$23.00 round trip per person. The 8<sup>th</sup> AFHS Registration Fee is expected to be approximately \$40.00-\$45.00 per person.

Additional information and registration forms will be provided in future issues of the *Hardlife Herald*.

## Censoring the Mail

by Sterling Rogers

Author of "Hunkered Down"

Censoring the mail was one of the most uncomfortable necessities of World War II. We all understood that it was important, but didn't expect to exercise it personally beyond following the rules about what we said or wrote. It came as something of a surprise to find the enlisted men's outgoing mail was censored by ordinary officers of the unit. We came into our hut at night after a day of flying or training to find a stack of letters on each of our bunks—unsealed letters which must be checked for any possible violation of the rules. Once approved they could be sealed and the censoring officer's name signed on the envelope. They were picked up the next morning and put into the mail.

Forbidden to be discussed were such things as exact loca-

tion (you could talk about being in England but not about Great Ashfield), unit status or equipment (no mention of damaged aircraft, etc.), and combat missions. We were also told not to keep a diary since it could become valuable propaganda for the Nazis if it ever fell into their hands.

I was never comfortable reading letters intended for someone else but I couldn't just sign my name without looking at the contents. And the contents of one in particular really brought me up short. It started off: "One down and 24 to go." It went on for several pages to describe every blessed minute of the man's first combat mission from pre-dawn takeoff to final landing. It described the weather, the target, the flak and fighter opposition, everything in minute detail.

It violated all the rules of censorship and common sense and, to my mind, committed that most unforgivable sin: it mentioned casualties by name. If I had physically cut out the unacceptable parts there would have been nothing left but an empty envelope.

I didn't destroy it. I took it back to the man who wrote it. I told him it was unacceptable. I gave him the standard lecture about what was acceptable and what was not. He didn't argue, but the look in his eye said he would get that letter out one way or another.

A day or two later my crew and I were prisoners in Germany. I would bet dollars to doughnuts that man got his letter marked as censored by somebody else. Without changing a thing in it.

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# THE HOLLAND INVASION—September 18, 1944

by Fain H. Pool

How many of you remember where you were and what you were doing on September 18, 1944? Probably not very many of you do who were in the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, because I was the only pilot in the group who flew a combat mission that day. I was selected to take five full colonels from 3<sup>rd</sup> Bomb Division on a mission to monitor and photograph the air and ground activity in the invasion of Holland in the vicinity of Neimeggen. My copilot on the mission was Colonel Richard Martin, operations officer at 3<sup>rd</sup> AD, who retired later as a Lieutenant General, and the other colonels were at windows in the plane watching as we S'd back and forth about 500 feet above the C-47's which were carrying paratroopers and towing gliders. The line of airplanes extended as far as we could see from the Eng-

lish Channel to the invasion area. When we reached the drop-zone and landing zone for the gliders, I started circling to the left as we all watched the activity. Gliders were landing between gliders so closely that they were tearing the wings off as they landed and slid between the ones which had landed earlier.

As I circled to the left, which is natural for a pilot who wants to see what is taking place, I noticed that Col. Martin was leaning over my right shoulder in order to see the activity, so I banked the plane to the right so that he could have a better view. As we started circling to the right a big rocket with white smoke coming from it came right by the copilot's window, and Col. Martin said, "Go left, and keep circling to the left," which I did.

As we were returning to England and Great Ashfield we

saw a C-47 ditch in the English Channel, so we decided to call Air-Sea Rescue and direct them to the downed crew, which had successfully inflated their life raft and were in it waiting to be picked up. We continued circling them until we could see the rescue ship approach them, and they waved to us as we departed.

In the summer of 1946 I was with a group of pilots who were gathered in a hangar telling war stories as we worked, and I was telling this story. One of the pilots said, "Did you have a big 'G' on the tail of your aircraft?", and when I answered in the affirmative he said exuberantly, "I was the pilot of that C-47!" WHAT A COINCIDENCE!!!

You see—I was flying the only aircraft with a "G" on the tail that day!

## HOLLAND INVASION—PART II

by Truman Smith

*Author of "The Wrong Stuff: The Adventures and Misadventures of an 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Aviator"*  
*University of Oklahoma Press*

Richey could not wait to start giving it back to me. Having completed his tour of combat, he was well acquainted with a B-17, having explored it like a curious and mischievous monkey to beat the many hours of boredom waiting his turn to drop bombs.

So having survived the weather, fear of a midair and sleeping crew members, I tried to relax during the return to base when lo and behold (as the saying goes) the ship yawed to the left, like the engines one and two had quit simultaneously!

Hard right rudder to keep the nose pointed in the line of intended flight—with an assist from the trim tab—while I started to focus on which engine might have failed, or if they had both failed.

Okay? No, not Okay. All of a sudden the ship yawed violently to the right, as if both engine three and four—or both—had failed!

Hard right rudder, assisted by right rudder trim! Had all four engines failed?

A B-17 can get very heavy when four engines fail, because it weighs as much as a 32 ton tank

when it is light. But Wait! It was still flying and I could hear the engines running; all four of them (???). What? How? Why? What was happening?

I thought of Richey. Was he back asleep in the nose?

I don't think he would have been gone back to sleep. Therefore he was awake. And if awake, he was probably seeking revenge. I checked and I was right.

The flight engineer found him underneath me in the tunnel to the nose—where my control

*Cont. on page 6...*

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## HOLLAND INVASION, PART II

... Cont. from page 5

cables were. So with all of his strength and weight, he had taken hold of the rudder cable and pulled it downward, as if to chin himself and the whole ship yawed to the left for which I — thinking we had lost an engine or two on the left wing — I compensated and got us going straight ahead with a lot of right rudder and trim tab.

However Richey could not hold it and turned it loose. And all the right trim I had cranked in, jerked us back to the left, as if the right engines had quit.

The little bastard. I would deal with it when we got back on the ground and give him my full attention. So with the problem resolved, we sailed peacefully back to the base.

*"Hello Sailfirst, This is Jetty "X" Xray, entering downwind leg".*

*"Roger, "X" Xray; Sailfirst. "X" Xray, Sailfirst. What is your position?" (????)*

*"Sailfirst, This Jetty "X" Xray. I just entered the downwind leg". (????)*

*"Hello "X" Xray. This is Sailfirst. What is your position?" (????) (What the hell? Can't he see me?)*

The gear is down, high RPM, cowl flaps in trail and we're approaching the base leg and I call for "one third flaps".

*"Hello "X" Xray, This is Sailfirst. .. What is your position?"*

*"Hello Sailfirst, this is Jetty "X" Xray! I'm two thirds down the downwind leg, approaching Base leg. "*

*"Roger, "X" Xray; Sailfirst" (????)*

(What the hell? What a screwed up day! I'm flying North on the downwind leg and the sur-

rounding sky is full of C-47—over a hundred of them—at least—all flying North in my same direction. What in hell is going on and—)

*"Hello, "X" Xray; This is Sailfirst (calling impatiently). What is your position?" (????)*

(I too am confused and impatient.)

*"Sailfirst! "X" Xray! I've turned onto final approach!"*

(There is a B-25 running and ready to take the active runway as soon as I clear it — and I hope he does wait until I clear it!)

*"X" Xray!! What is your position??" {He is really pissed and so am I! I'm really steamed. I'm on final and about to touch down and Sailfirst has still not spotted me. Even so, it was probably the best landing I ever made—not even hearing or feeling the wheels kiss the runway.)*

Fate stepped in and— going almost 80 miles per hour straight down the runway—I glanced to my right and behind the copilot. On a spare intercom, was Richey, stooped over in pain—trying to keep from laughing.

I heard him say, *"X" Xray! What is the name of your pilot?"*

I yelled at the copilot, "You got it!" and I went for Richey and took him to the deck, hammering him badly as we continued speeding down the runway. He was laughing so hard he didn't feel the pain.

I was careful only to not to hit him in the face, because I had learned early on: If you don't have the gloves on, don't go for the face, because the teeth can sure cut up your knuckles!

I guess I'd gone a bit crazy and would have really done him

damage, but the flight engineer took me from behind and saved Richey and myself.

I later learned a couple of things: All the C-47s were returning from the Holland Invasion and I was told that General Jimmy Doolittle was piloting the B-25, waiting for me to clear the active runway. If he wasn't impressed with my "perfect landing", I wonder what he would have thought about me beating the hell out of my bombardier—almost simultaneously.

I learned later that Richey had pulled the same stunt on Captain Jack Ford—having him "Report to the Tower!"

Jack reported as ordered, but nobody in the tower knew why he was reporting. Therefore, he would just leave. "No!" If he was ordered to report, there had to be a reason for it and he would not be dismissed. The problem was never discovered and he was held all day for the inquiry.

Richey and I became good friends, because he was full of surprises and fun to be with.

## GROUP AND SQUADRON LOGOS



All members of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group and the 548<sup>th</sup>, 549<sup>th</sup>, 550<sup>th</sup> and 551<sup>st</sup> Squadrons are familiar with the unit logos or patches. The group logo was a Shield with crossed lightning daggers and the Motto "Ales Victoria". The Squadron's were a Rabbit carrying a Bomb (548<sup>th</sup>), a Devil riding a Bomb (549<sup>th</sup>), a Panther with Bomb in its mouth (550<sup>th</sup>), and a Wolf head (551<sup>st</sup>). The majority of us had one of these logos sewn on our jackets to show our proud group or squadron heritage. A flag which depicts these logos was designed and made by our Past President, Col. Leo LaCasse. He presented this 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group flag to Col. Jim McDonald at the 19<sup>th</sup> Annual Reunion in Hampton, VA. The flag is now in safe keeping and in the future it will proudly be displayed at all 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association functions.

Several months ago, Bill Varnedoe received a picture of a Porcupine carrying a bomb. A memo included with the picture



claimed that this logo was the official logo of the 550<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron. Bill undertook an extensive search to obtain the truth about the 550<sup>th</sup> Squadron logo. Ed Stern, the 550<sup>th</sup> Executive Officer, said that he only knew of the Pan-

ther logo. However Bill received the following letter from Ray Borman, an English author of several Eighth Air Force books:

A great many of the emblems taken up by the units of the USAAF during WWII were in fact "unofficial" insignia which were never ever approved by the USAAF Heraldic Section who were supposed to assess each design and accredit them with the official seal of approval. The war produced such a vast number of insignia in a short time that they never could deal with them all—or any where near them all.

The shield emblem used for the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group as a whole was in fact never officially granted approval.

The emblem for the 548<sup>th</sup> Sqn. was initially approved as a B-17 with a lightning strike and this was replaced by an approved emblem of Bugs Bunny riding a bomb (not sure when).

The 549<sup>th</sup> Sqn's. emblem of the Devil riding a bomb was never approved officially but was in use throughout the war.

The 550<sup>th</sup> Sqn's. insignia is an unusual case. Its emblem of the Panther biting a bomb was never officially approved, but curiously it actually replaced, as a result of common usage, the officially approved motif of a Porcu-

pine carrying a bomb—this happened sometime during 1943. Perhaps the Porcupine was not considered to be aggressive enough(?)

Finally, the 551<sup>st</sup> Sqn's Wolf head was an officially approved insignia.

We never stop finding interesting facets in our search to record history. As always, one is left with the burning question: how the squadron CO did not know of the official approved insignia? Maybe he did and just took a dislike to it. Maybe a revised design was submitted to the Heraldic Section but just got stuck in the pipeline. The new panther head logo must have been used with (at least) local official approval. But Gt. Ashfield was a long way from Washington when it came to such things...."

In an inquiry to the Department of the Army, The Institute of Heraldry, Bill received a letter signed by the Chief, Heraldic Services and Support Division, dated December 31, 2003. In the letter they categorically state that the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group, the 548<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, the 549<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron, the 550<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron and the 551<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadron had no approved logos during World War II. Later after the war, the 549<sup>th</sup>, 550<sup>th</sup> and 551<sup>st</sup> Bomb Squadrons were re-

*Cont. on page 8...*

# MINUTES OF 2003 385<sup>TH</sup> BGMA MEMBERS MEETING

*Jerry Mudge, Secretary*

Meeting called to order by President Leo LaCasse at 8:30AM, October 27, 2003.

1. A flag designed and made by Leo LaCasse was presented by Leo. The members voted it to be the official flag of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association.

2. Secretary Jerry Mudge gave a summary of the Board meeting of the Executive Board.

3. Treasurer Verne Philips gave a report of the finances.

4. A motion was made (and unanimously approved) to recognize the contributions of all the Ground Crews.

5. A motion was made (and unanimously approved) to recognize the POWs of our group.

6. The drawing for the Schweinfurt Raid Framed Print was held, and Joan Pickett held the winning ticket.

7. An award and plaque was presented to Tom Newton by Bill Varnedoe on behalf of the Executive Board for his excellent job as Editor of the Hardlife Herald.

8. The officers nominated by the Board at the Executive Board meeting of October 22<sup>nd</sup> were elected unanimously, and Bill Varnedoe took over the Chair.

9. Chuck Smith, on behalf of the Executive Board, gave an award to Leo LaCasse for his hard work as President and his diligent work in Hosting the reunion.

10. A short discussion concerning the next reunion was held. Prior to the meeting, no one volunteered as host or had proposed a location. At this meeting three proposals were made:

1. Ed Stern proposed to have it in Fargo, ND again in

2005. However, he proposed that his son(s) be hosts, but had not discussed it with them at this time.

2. John Pickett proposed New Orleans in 2005, but he lives some distance away, and had not discussed this with a relative who lives in New Orleans and might act as Host.

3. The Board proposed that we meet in 2004 in Kansas City, MO hosted by the 8th Air Force Historical Society. They do not require us to be members of the 8th AFHS, and they will make all the preparations. Several members had requested annual reunions. This (proposal) was made, seconded and approved.

The Members Meeting was then adjourned at 9:28AM until 2004.

## LOGOS

*... Cont. from page 7*

activated as Atlas Missile Squadrons and received approved logos. These logos did not resemble any of the logos of the Bomb Squadrons.

Editor's Comment: Although the logos and the patches that we wore on our jackets were not "officially" approved by the Department of the Army, they have been and still are recognized and honored by the important people, "the Veterans of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group (H), and the members of the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Memorial Association".

## NEW AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM

The new National Air and Space Museum annex opened on December 15, 2003. The Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center at Dulles Airport, VA is 28 miles from the main National Air and Space Museum on the Mall in Washington, DC. The ten-story annex building exhibits 81 one-of-a-kind air and spacecraft including the B-29 Superfortress "Enola Gay," the space shuttle "Enterprise," an SR-71 Blackbird and an Air France Concorde. Officials at the Smithsonian Institution reported that during the first three weeks, the Center attracted 250,000 visitors. The National Air and Space Museum on the Mall attracts more visitors than any other of the 17 Smithsonian museums. According to officials, the "millionth" visitor to the flagship facility was counted only 25 days after it opened in 1976.

At the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy center, aircraft and space vehicles are exhibited both on the floor and from suspended wires. Elevated walkways allow visitors to see exhibits from several angles. There are several hands-on exhibits for both old and young to enjoy.



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## NAVIGATING THE NORTH ATLANTIC

To the editor,

This is a little long, but very interesting story that I copied from "Ocean Navigator" magazine. I thought that anyone who has navigated a ship, small boat, or plane (or ridden in one for that matter) would find it fascinating. If nothing else, it certainly helps one to appreciate today's modern navigational aids.

*Paul A. Tanksley*

Late in 1944, Capt. Daniel L. Boone and Navigator Willie Leveen were at Santa Maria in the Azores preparing their Douglas C-54 transport for a flight to Ayr (Prestwick), Scotland. Boone had flown the mail since the open-cockpit days of the early 1930s. Leveen had been a flight radio officer on the North Atlantic routes for several years but had recently switched to the position of navigator and was making his fifth North Atlantic flight in that capacity.

The standard flight plan route called for a great circle track from Santa Maria to 50°N, 7°30'W. The flight would then alter course slightly to fly over St. George's Channel and across the Irish Sea toward Prestwick. The trip would be about 1500 nautical miles and would require about nine hours' flying time. They knew a cold front was approaching Great Britain from the west, but the weather forecast did not call for the front's arrival at Prestwick until about one hour after the flight's ETA of 0100 GMT.

The flight departed Santa Maria about 1600 GMT with a flight crew of five, a purser and 18 passengers. Shortly before 2200 GMT, Willie Leveen noticed a mass of clouds ahead - the fore-

cast cold front was obviously moving faster than anticipated. He quickly shot a four-star fix while the C-54 was still in the clear. The fix showed the plane to be on course with a revised ETA of 0105.

Once the plane entered the clouds, radio bearings and dead reckoning were the only navigational options. About 2300 GMT, Hoag, the radio operator, got a fix from a ground radio station at The Valley, Wales. When Leveen plotted the LOP, it was just about at a right angle to the projected course. Willie scratched his head, if the fix were correct, the airplane's ground speed had been drastically reduced.

About 2400 GMT, Leveen approached Capt. Boone and asked if he would climb out of the clouds so he could take a star shot.

"Not a chance," Boone reportedly responded. He was concerned that the clouds rose to extreme heights, and he didn't want to waste fuel.

Leveen returned to his chart table. According to the flight plan it was time to catch the eastern leg of the Nutt's Corner (Belfast) LF radio range and ride it in to Prestwick, but the radio signal could not be found. Leveen pondered his predicament: no definite fix and fuel burning at a rate of 240 gallons per hour. Leveen went again to Boone and renewed his request. Boone again demurred, not only for the original reason but also a celestial fix would be of little help in landing at Prestwick. Leveen and Hoag continued to monitor all radio frequencies. Occasionally signals could be heard, but none could provide an LOP.

The flight crew was aware of their predicament. Those in the passenger cabin, however, were unaware of the mounting problems. The safety of the aircraft rested in the hands of Daniel L. Boone. He consulted with Leveen and both reasoned that the Irish Sea must lie to the west of their current position. Boone suggested that the aircraft turn to a westerly heading and descend to the point where it would break out of the clouds over water. Perhaps from that point the plane could find its way to Prestwick visually. Boone pulled back the four throttles, turned to a heading of 270, and watched as the altimeter unwound.

The altimeter's pressure setting had not been adjusted since reaching cruise altitude. Because the aircraft had entered a very strong low pressure area, there was a risk that the altimeter reading would be too high. As the altimeter's needle passed through 2000 feet, Boone eased back on the yoke and slowed the rate of descent. There were no breaks in the clouds. At an indicated altitude of 1500 feet, Boone turned to Leveen and said: "You win Willie!" The throttles were advanced and the plane began its reach for the stars. Passing through 19,000 feet, the crew donned their oxygen masks, but the passengers did not have that luxury. For them the only option was an occasional draw on a small tube hooked up to the plane's oxygen system. As the plane passed through 20,000 feet, the limited amount of oxygen available to the passengers was useful only to keep them alive.

*Cont. on page 10...*

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## NAVIGATING

... *Cont. from page 9*

Perhaps it was better that their senses were dimmed.

In the thin air, the C-54's rate of climb slowed. The plane could go no higher. It wallowed along between 25,000 and 26,000 feet. Leveen stood on the navigator's stool in the astrodome looking for something to shoot with his octant. Every time he exhaled, frost would coat the inside of the Plexiglass dome. Toward the east, Leveen noticed a pale white glow. Thinking it was more frost, he tried to rub it away, but the glow remained. Then it came to Leveen: the moon! Leveen took off his oxygen mask and raised the octant to his eye. Shouting at Boone to keep the plane level as possible, Leveen aimed the octant and pressed the button.

Several minutes passed before Leveen returned to his chart table, where he applied the readings from his octant to the sight-reduction tables. At first he thought the lack of oxygen had caused him to make a computational error, but he rechecked the figures several times and the answer came out the same each time: The plane and the 24 souls aboard were just off the coast of Norway.

Somehow the tremendous head wind calculated many hours before had turned into an equally tremendous tail wind. "Dan, do a 180!", Leveen yelled. Trusting the navigator implicitly, Boone turned the aircraft to a southwesterly heading and began to descend. The engines were leaned to the maximum, and the propeller revolutions slowed as well.

Boone took the plane down to 500 feet, where occasional glimpses of whitecaps below

were used to reset the airplane's altimeter. Boone then lowered the plane to 200 feet in order to minimize the head wind. By now the flight was in peril. Boone turned to the flight engineer and gave the order: "Prepare to ditch!"

As the passengers put on their Mae Wests and the life jackets were readied for use, Leveen and Hoag continued to check radios but could not make any contacts. Almost 30 minutes went by before Boone exclaimed: "Land." The ball was now back in the captain's court. His plan was to fly inland for 30 minutes searching for an airfield or flat place on which to belly-land the airplane. If this failed, the plane would return to the coast and ditch as close as possible to shore. In reality, this option provided no more chance for survival than did a ditching in the open sea.

The allotted 30 minutes was rapidly running out when Hoag shouted: 'I've got Prestwick!' It was 0430 GMT. The plane had been in the air for more than 12 hours and without a fix for 6% hours.

Hoag's fist beat a "QDL" into the code key, a request for a series of radio bearings. Then he held the key down for two minutes so that stations could orient their direction finding antennas toward the plane's signal. Shortly, Haag received a "QTF" (latitude and longitude) from Prestwick. He scribbled the figures on a scrap of paper and handed it to Leveen: 3' 35"W, 53' 20"N. For the second time that night, Leveen turned toward Boone and yelled: "Make a 180!" The plane's position was near Colwyn Bay, Wales. Boone again complied without question.

During the time since Boone had first sighted land (probably near Grimsby), the

plane had flown across England and was on the verge of heading out over the Irish Sea. There was no chance of making Prestwick. The plane had to land—now!

Leveen's mind continued to work. From his days as a radio operator he remembered that the RAF had an emergency radio direction finding system called "Darkee" to help disabled bombers find landing areas. He said later that he was praying to God when the frequency came into his head: 4220 kilocycles. He dialed in 4220 on the command set, keyed the microphone and called: "Darkee! Darkee! Darkee!" Out of the ether came the reply: "This is Darkee. Circle. Circle."

Boone rolled the C-54 into a steep bank, picked up the 120 degree heading given by Darkee and reset the altimeter to the pressure provided. The plane was at 600 feet, but Darkee assured them that the highest obstruction in the area was "only" 400 feet. More vectors ensued as the plane worked its way toward the unseen landing area. Darkee finally radioed that the plane was directly above the airport, but the ground was still dark. Further instructions to descend to 500 feet, then 400 feet, and then 300 feet were complied with.

Darkee finally radioed that the airplane should circle to land. Even at 150 feet no runway lights were visible. Boone asked for the airfield to shoot off a flare and a green arc appeared in the sky. He banked the aircraft sharply, causing engine no. 4 to sputter for lack of fuel. Boone feathered the prop and continued his approach. Suddenly, two rows of lights appeared through the windshield of the C-54. In all the excitement Darkee had forgotten to turn on the runway lights!. Boone ordered

the landing gear and flaps lowered and dove for the first of the lights. When the runway finally appeared Boone firmly planted the wheels and then applied the brakes. As the far end of the runway came closer, he triggered the emergency braking system and locked the main wheels. When the plane came to a stop, Leveen noticed that engine no. 3 had also quit from lack of fuel.

The runway at the RAF fighter base was not very long so the taxi back to the hardstand was quick. It was just as well, for the other two engines were suffering symptoms of fuel exhaus-

tion as well. The local time was 0700 GMT, six hours past the ETA for Prestwick. The plane had been in the air for 15 hours. As the airplane came to a rest, nos. 1 and 2 engines quit out of fuel.

What happened to Boone, Leveen and company proves that sometimes you can do everything right but still are the victim of circumstances. Obviously, the cold front had moved in more quickly than predicted with winds stronger than anticipated. As for the radio problems, it seemed that Mother Nature had picked this moment in time to send forth a massive solar flare. The plane

had actually flown over Prestwick, and their radio signals had been heard on the ground. Repeated warnings from Prestwick that the flight was heading over the North Sea went unheard.

Oh yes, one final note. The 18 passengers did arrive safely and went on to complete their duties. They were all generals of the U. S. Army returning from a conference in Washington. Had Willie Leveen not gotten his good moon shot and remembered the Darkee frequency, the Battle of the Bulge might well have had a different outcome.

## THE AIR FORCE (ARMY AIR CORPS) SONG

Today "The Air Force Song" is the official song of the U. S. Air Force. It is as well known and is equal in status to the Army's "Caissons," the Navy's "Anchors Away" and the Marine's "Montezuma" songs. We all remember our days of Cadet and /or Basic training when we belted out, "Off we go into the wild blue yonder,..." as we marched. The tune and lyrics of the song are steeped in the tradition of the Air Force. For more than 65 years it has been the rallying cry, the victory song and the time-honored salute to our fallen comrades. But how many of us know the history behind the music?

With references from the June 1964 issue of Airman Magazine, "The Sound of Music" by William A. Kinney, and of the September 12, 2003 issues of The Beam, "Air Force Song is Musical Tribute to Those Who Fly" by Chief Master Sgt. Joe Tersero, The United States Air Force Band, this is how it all happened:

Brig. Gen. H. H. "Hap" Arnold felt the Army's "Caissons"

song did not fit the new role of the Army Air Corps. The army's "rolling along" was OK for armored vehicles, etc., but did not quite fit the image of the new flying service. Maj. Gen. Oscar Westover, Chief of the Army Air Corps, agreed and requested his friend, Bernard MacFadden, to find a solution.

Mr. MacFadden, editor of Liberty Magazine and an aviation enthusiast, decided to hold a competition contest with the winning song to be the official song of the Army Air Corps. In the Sept. 10, 1938 issue of the Liberty magazine, a cash prize of \$1000 was offered for a winning song. Gen. Arnold selected a panel of Air Corps wives with musical backgrounds to determine the winner. The panel was chaired by Mrs. Mildred A. Yount, wife of Lt. Gen. Burton K. Yount. Almost 800 musical scores were submitted. However, the panel did not find a suitable song that would be outstanding and fit the image of an armed service and an image of flight.

In June 1939, Captain Robert M. Crawford, a pilot and composer, composed the song in his head while flying from Newark, NJ to Bridgeport, CT. Arriving home, he told his wife, "Hessie, I've got it, that is the music! When I flew home, it just seemed to come to me ... I even have a few words ... 'Off we go into the wild blue yonder'." The next day he completed the song.

Since the time limit for submission was almost over, Capt. Crawford and his wife flew to Washington and submitted the new song, which was not yet on paper, to Mrs. Yount. Mrs. Yount listened to Capt. Crawford's audition, was impressed and submitted the song to the full committee. Approved by the committee, the song was then submitted to Gen. Arnold for final approval. In his capacity as Assistant Chief of the U.S. Air Corps, Gen. Arnold approved the song on Aug. 18, 1939, thus making it official. The song was officially introduced at the Cleveland Air Races on Sept. 2, 1939.

12/10/2003

Hi Frank,

Since last writing to you I decided to send you one of the short stories I wrote a few years ago. It is set in the aftermath of the First World War, but it seems to be timeless and has relevance to any war really. It was kindly appreciated by one or two 385<sup>th</sup> Vets that I know. If you ever have a space in some future issue of the HLH that you don't know what to do with, you are welcome to put my story in—or discard it, as you wish (I shall not be offended). As it is my copyright, I have to tell you that I am pleased to agree to its publication in HLH, but it is not for circulation elsewhere without my permission.

I hope you like it.

Bill

## My Brother

by William Daysh

(After Zbigniew Herbert's "The Rain")

The hairs on my neck stiffen with expectation. I see the autumn sky darken and thicken with rain. I know he's coming. He returns each year, my older brother, regardless of how many years have passed since he left with such finality.

Always reluctant to come in, he stands there in the pouring rain, tapping the window for me to come out. Excitedly, I rush to greet him. Always in the rain, that is when we take our annual walk together and talk incessantly all the while. Passers-by stare at us, some smiling benignly, others clearly convinced that we're mad. But we don't care. We're together again. I, for one, treasure these precious moments. I miss him so much, and tell him so, pleading with him to come home. But he just shakes his head. He knows that it saddens me when he has to say that he can't, but I have to ask. So we walk on, and he continues with his unbelievable tales of life, and war.

He seems thinner, paler, these days, but lucid none-the-less; coherent and stronger than he was when he left. His stories then used to pour out in many different languages. Words and subjects were all tangled up in a colourful tapestry of bewildering confusion. Infinite patience was needed to listen, but I had it in abundance, for him. I didn't even consider that it was a debt repaid for taking good care of me in my earliest days. After all, Ben was the willing pilot who guided me safely through the shallows of my youth; the selfless life-boatman who risked all to rescue me from my storms; my clear, bright window to a world I had never seen. No, nothing could repay him for all that.

I remember clearly my sadness when he went off to the war. He went willingly, cheerfully, believing that in doing so he would save us all from catastrophe, while I, too young to fight and of the wrong sex, was left at home to

wait. The next time I saw him he couldn't talk about it. He couldn't tell us of his bravery at Verdun. He couldn't even remember it. The truth came much later, of how he'd struggled back through rain and thigh-deep mud, hell-bent on rescuing wounded friends. And it was there in the crater of Hell that a shell-burst changed his life in one brilliant flash. He survived, and came home calling the names of dead comrades, rallying them on, though they were all under the ground. The tiny fragment of shrapnel that pierced his forehead had turned his world into a black abyss. Unable to see or remember, all he had left was touch. He talked with his hands. The right spoke of romances, the left of soldier's memories.

But now it is different. His eyes are no longer dry buttons that fasten the skin of his face. They are clear and bright as he talks to me. We walk the streets with the rain washing the tears

# BORN IN MAINE- BROUGHT UP IN THE 8<sup>TH</sup> AIR CORP

by Charles D. Hamlin

The Hardlife Herald—What a great Publication.

We vets have been trying to tell our war stories to anyone who'd listen for 60 years... Finally a forum where we get to tell our stories TO EACH OTHER—great idea.

\ OK, here's my tale:

I was fourteen when the war broke out in 1941 and tried to join the Marines. They sent me home after my mother called them. I then joined the Army at age 15 in Nov. 1942 and was sent to the Air Corps basic in Miami Beach.

After radio school in Pyote and Dalhart, Texas, we formed a crew and assembled in Langley Field, VA. My original crew broke up when our pilot thought twice and got a job as operations officer at Langley. The whole crew became replacements for other crews needing a crew member. I was offered a spot as Ball Turret gunner and grabbed it. I wanted to

get into the war before it stopped.

The only problem was that radio operators were promoted to T/Sgt and gunners were only S/Sgts. My operations officer promised me that I would be made a T/Sgt like the other radio operators even though I flew in the ball.

When we got to combat our radio operator, a guy named Murphy, had a nervous breakdown and quit flying.

I flew a couple of missions as Radio Operator, then went back to the Ball Turret, which frankly I preferred. I would rather shoot back than be cooped up in that little cabin throwing out chaff and trying to get under a flack jacket.

A radio operator on a bomber maintaining radio silence is as useless as a volleyball coach on a submarine.

I guess my crew went through most everything a crew

goes through except that our pilot, Elmer White, was killed on his way back home, after finishing his 35 missions, in Scotland in a plane crash. A very sad moment for our crew. Our navigator had a shell link go through his hand.

I flew tail gunner a few times which I enjoyed. I finally got my 35 missions in and left on the Queen Mary from Glasgow, and spent the next 18 years in the service retiring in June 1963 at age 36.

There were a lot of likes (and dislikes) about wartime service. The troop trains, rationing, blackouts and the fact that everything seemed to be in "LIMBO" until the war was over.

I did like the patriotism, people liked each other, everyone pulled together and we took our losses and went on no matter how tough it was.

## MY BROTHER

... Cont. from page 12

from our cheeks, ecstatic at being together again. Then, outside our front door, he bids me farewell once more and walks away to nowhere.

Inside, back in this lonely consciousness, I feel the icy hand seizing my heart once more. Re-entry is painful but I force myself to remember. Until next autumn when he'll come home again, Ben will be resting beneath the forest of stone on the hill, where we walk each year and he shows me his name.

## World War II Aerial Photos

A huge British archive of World War II aerial reconnaissance photos, including pictures of the D-Day landings in Normandy is now on the Internet. Five hundred Royal Air Force photos of western Europe were produced by a digitalization project in the United Kingdom. British archivists announced that the photos are available to the public on web site "[www.evidenceincamera.co.uk](http://www.evidenceincamera.co.uk)."

The photos were a key source of intelligence for Allied Commanders during the war. The photos include the American troops landings on D-Day, the effects of the bombing of Cologne, Germany and German battleship Bismark being hunted by the Royal Navy.

Editor's Comment: The 385<sup>th</sup> BG attacked targets in Cologne on Oct. 14, 15 and 17, 1944.



# LETTERS

24 Jan. '04

Dear Frank,  
Thanks very much for your note. Sorry I sent the paper to the wrong place.  
In answer to your questions, I was in the 551<sup>st</sup> Squadron on the "LiL Audrey" piloted by Elmer White of Cleveland, OH.

I was in Great Ashfield from about Jan/Feb 1944 to about the middle of August 1944.

My first mission was March 16<sup>th</sup> to Augsburg—my last was to Furth, Germany on Aug. 9<sup>th</sup> 1944.

Is there a way to contact other members of my crew thru the HH? My crew members were:

Copilot	..... Crawford
Navigator:	Terry Giallerine
Engineer:	R. Schremmer
Gunners:	R. Grant, Jim Berry

Thanks again for your note. I'm looking forward to the next Reunion. Hope to meet you there.

Cheers,  
Chuck Hamlin  
5505 Shadow Crest  
Houston, TX 77096  
713-721-1428

1/26/2004

Dear Frank,  
I would like to inform your readers, that copies of my book, *Help From Above*, which is the story of My father's (Harlan K. Inglis) experiences with the 385<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group during WWII are now ready to be distributed to members and others who may be interested. I am very sorry that I was unable to sell any of the books that I had with me at the Hampton, VA reunion due to printing problems, but I can safely say now, that the books are ready. The cover price is \$12.95. When ordering, please include \$3.00 for shipping. Also please allow 2-3 weeks for delivery.

Sincerely,  
Stephen R. Inglis  
21717 Inverness Forrest Blvd. #2504  
Houston TX, 77073-1352

Ed: Order books directly from Steve.

Tom,

The "Hardlife Herald" of August 2003 mentioned the ramming of the Burich crew aircraft by an ME-109, submitted by Bill Varnedoe.

I was the pilot of the aircraft just forward of the incident, and my recollections are as follows:

The date of my log book and Form 5 shows is February 21 on a Nuremberg raid. I was flying in low element lead position, and Burich was tracked under me. My tail gunner was A. G. White and my ball gunner, Bruce Carol still resides in nearby Mobile, Alabama. Carol confirms my account.

During the fighter attack, one or more aircraft attempted to complete pursuit curve maneuvers from the rear. White and Carol both tracked and called out, "109 approaching from the rear." Carol cannot confirm whether the aircraft was firing or not, but did say the pilot was slumped over just before impact.

Upon impact, I did detect a brief fireball, and clearly remember a B-17 engine and cowling floating over my port wing with the prop still turning. Other debris flew by, but quickly fell away. Both gunners lost vision for a short time from the bright explosion.

We completed the mission and returned home after a 7 hour-50 minute flight.

Joy Dunlap

My first mission was Jan. 20, 1945, to Heilbraun, and I completed my 35<sup>th</sup> on April 15<sup>th</sup> to Royan. 2 Months, 20 days for my tour. My log shows April 7<sup>th</sup> was to Gustro, with no mention of the ram incident.

# Taps

## Ted C. Findeiss

Ted C. Findeiss, Colonel, USAF (Ret.), died on December 21, 2001 in Oklahoma City, OK. Born in Wichita in 1920, he was the youngest of three sons of John and Ruby Findeiss. In 1942 he earned an engineering degree from OU. In 1944 he married Martha Lou Miller, then went to England where he flew 35 combat missions as pilot of B-17s and earned the Distinguished Flying Cross.

After the war Ted was an instructor at the Air Force Test Pilot School at Wright-Patterson AFB. Leaving active duty, he earned a law degree from OU, and joined Big Chief Drilling Company as a lawyer, pilot and engineer—a job that took him around the world.

In 1964 Ted was elected to the Oklahoma State Senate. After serving one term he moved to London as Managing Director of a British oil company. He and Martha Lou lived in London for 12 years. He is survived by his wife of 57 years, Martha Lou Miller Feindeiss.

## Joseph F. DeGiacomo

Joseph DeGiacomo died in Woburn, MA on December 20, 2003 after a long illness. Born in Dorchester in 1918, he was the oldest of four children of Foster and Frances DeGiacomo. After high school he was employed by the New Haven Railroad, a position he left to enter the Army.

Graduating from Army Air Gunnery School, Tyndall Field, FL, he was assigned as a tail gunner in the European Theater of Operations and received numerous decorations include the Air Medal, the Presidential Unit Citation and the Purple Heart which was awarded after being wounded in both legs by flak on his seventh mission. He was honorably discharged from the Army Air Corps.

In addition to his wife, the former Melba "Sue" DeSimone, he is survived by two daughters Susan Hammond and Sandra Rogers two brothers, Foster and William, and one sister Rosemary Nolan, two grandchildren, Heather Hammond and Rachel Rogers, and two great grandchildren.

After a funeral mass at St. Joseph's Church, East Woburn, Joe was buried on December 23<sup>rd</sup> in Woodbrook Cemetery, Woburn.

## Stanley B. Lamica

Stanley Bernard Lamica died January 1, 2004 in Alpharetta, GA. Born in Malone, NY, his family moved to Chichipe, MA. After graduating from high school in May 1943, Stanley joined the Army Air Corp and in April 1944 graduated as a Navigator. Assigned to a B-17 crew he was sent to England. On his fourth mission scheduled for Berlin, they were hit by flak over Kiel, forced to ditch in the North Sea, and were rescued by the British. He flew 35 combat missions and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and six Air Medals. Discharged in 1945, he married his wife, Jewel and moved to Troy, NY to attend Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute graduating as an electrical engineer. He joined the Hartford Electric Light Company in Connecticut and the CT National Guard. Federalized during the Korean War, he was a platoon leader in the infantry of the 13<sup>th</sup> Ranger Company. Later living in Jacksonville, FL, he joined the Army Reserves and became the commanding officer of the 13<sup>th</sup> Special Forces Group.

He is survived by his wife of 58 years, Jewel Lamica; daughters Karen and Diana; sons John and David; two grandchildren; and a sister Gertrude Lamica.

Memorial Services were held at the Roswell Presbyterian Church on January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2004.

## DECEASED

Joseph F. DeGiacomo	Dec. 2003
Stanley B. Lamica	Jan. 2004
Ted C. Findeiss	Dec. 2001
Rusty Briaton	Sept. 2002

## 60th Anniversary of Mission 28



Two pilots and a navigator help celebrate the 60th anniversary of Mission #28 to Schweinfurt, Germany, during the 385th Reunion at Hampton, VA. Less than 10%, or about 30 of those who flew Mission 28 on February 14, 1943, are still alive. However, only three were able to attend the Reunion. Vince Masters, Jerry Mudge, and Verne Philips are smiling and counting their blessings.

We were able to secure signatures from 15 of the 30 still living, to mount on the border of ten copies of Schweinfurt lithograph. The exhibit included autographed copies, loading list for Mission 28, pictures of crews, and written accounts from crew members involved and other sources.

One autographed print was won by John Pickett, as part of the raffle to raise money for the 385th Association. His wife, JoAnne Pickett, won the beautifully framed print, provided by our 2<sup>nd</sup> VP, Chuck Smith. We sold several copies of the lithograph print for \$25.00 each. Thanks to the 15 guys who responded by providing signatures for this purpose. Stay well, do good work, and keep in touch. —Art Driscoll, 1<sup>st</sup> VP

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## Notice of Annual Dues Payment

**Annual Dues for Year 2004  
are now being accepted.**

Check your mailing address label. If your label shows an R02, A02, R03 or A03, dues for Year 2004 are now due. For members residing in the United States, the annual dues are \$25.00. For all others, annual dues are \$30.00. Payment of 2004 dues will continue your 385<sup>th</sup> BMGA membership and your subscription to the Hardlife Herald.

Send payment to:  
Verne Philips, Treasurer  
385<sup>th</sup> BGMA  
P.O. Drawer 5970  
Austin, TX 78763

\*\*\*\*\*

### 385th BGMA

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Austin, TX 78763 USA

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