



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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Hardlife Herald

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Roger Feller Eldon Nysethter
Mayor Ferdinand Unsen

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COVER

The Air Force Color Guard from Spangdahlem Air Force Base, Germany at the 385th BGA Memorial in Perle, Luxembourg. Members of the Air Base were participating in a Commemoration of the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge by the citizens of Luxembourg. The Memorial is located in the center of the Town of Perle and honors the memory of two 385th Bomb Group crews that crashed nearby after a mid-air collision. In the background, one can observe some of the crosses maintained at the Memorial. There is an individual cross for each member of the two crews who perished in the collision.

EDITORIAL

As we begin a new year with the publication of Volume 22 of the Hardlife Herald, I wish to thank all those who submitted articles for publication during this past year. An attempt was made to put as many of your stories in the Hardlife Herald as possible. However, I know there are many good stories which you, the 385th Bomb Group Association members, have not written and submitted to the Hardlife Herald. I urge you to put your memories down on paper less they be lost, and if you wish, send them for publication.

PREZ SEZ

The next Officer and Board of Directors elections will be at the Reunion this year. If we elect our present 1st Vice President (VP) as our next President, and elect the 2nd VP to be 1st VP, the offices of 2nd VP, 3rd VP and 4th VP will need nominees!!! I assume (and hope) the present Treasurer and Editor will continue to serve again, and be willing to be nominees for these offices. Election of the 1st VP to President and the VPs moves-up is traditional, but not as mandatory according to our By-Laws. It would be perfectly legal to nominate a willing candidate for any office. However personally, I like the tradition, and hope it continues. But come on guys, without officers, the Association cannot function. Please find and nominate some willing candidates, including yourself!!

Although we do not yet have all the details, start planning to attend our 2005 Reunion. Again in 2005, the 385th BGA will co-join with the 8th Air Force Historical Society (AFHS) from September 27 through October 2, 2005. The 8th AFHS will host the Reunion with the same rules that we enjoyed at the Kansas City 2004 Reunion. As a result of having at least 50 attendees, we will be provided with a (385th BGA) Hospitality Room and a private Meeting Room. Because of our excellent attendance at the 2004 Reunion, we received a dollar refund for our treasury from the 8th AFHS, plus a finders fees for enlisting new 8th AFHS members. The Association hopes at least 50 members will attend again this year.

A quick look at our year-end treasury balance shows that we

are holding our own very well. Thanks for paying your annual dues, and a special thanks to those who made additional donations.

I want to add a word of appreciation to our 2nd and 3rd Generation Members and our Associate Members. I very much appreciate your joining our Association. As the TAPS column in each issue shows, we veterans are dropping by the wayside all too frequently. Not only that, but as we age, travel is becoming more of a chore for many of us. Our future, our memory and our Association lies with you to carry on. Also remember, Associate members are eligible for any office!!

Bill Varnedoe

BOOK REVIEWS

EIGHTH AIR FORCE BOMBER STORIES A New Selection

by Ian MacLachlan

Ian MacLachlan, has published another notable book about the 8th Air Force and the 8th Air Force fliers. Each chapter is a story about an individual crew and their experience, including the personal histories of the crews that flew the aircraft. Several stories about crews from the 385th Bomb Group, and a chapter dedicated to Haybag Annie, who decorated many of the 385th BG planes and crew members flight jackets. The book may be purchased from Sutton Publishing, Suffolk, England, or through your local book store order service.

Abstracted from 8th AF News, Vol 04, No. 4, Dec. 2004

REMEMBERING Essays on Life as a Military Man

by Sterling Rogers

Sterling Rogers has published a book of remembrances in a series of short essays. The 600 to 1000 word essays are arranged in a somewhat chronological order, beginning with the start of World War II, his days as a POW and carrying through retirement from military life to complete retirement. Several of these essays have been published in earlier editions of the Hardlife Herald. The essays are easy reading and once having started reading, "Remembering" is hard to put down. The book may be purchased from the author (305 Reimer Ave., San Marcos, TX 78666) or Wordwright.biz, PO Box 1785, Georgetown, TX 78627, or through the internet with Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble.com, Borders.com or Buynow.com.

385th BGA 2005 TOUR

Celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the End of WW II in England at Great Ashfield, and in Europe at Luxembourg, France, the Netherlands and Belgium during June 15-30, 2005.

Three tour options are offered:

OPTION 1. June 15-21 — England. Six nights with a weekend at Great Ashfield.

Cost: \$1140pp Two persons per room, or \$1510 single person per room.

Includes full breakfast daily, 2 lunches, and 3 dinners.

OPTION 2. June 20-30 — Europe. Eight nights including a night in London prior to and end of tour, as airfares are less to London than other European areas.

Cost: \$1580pp Two persons per room, or \$2120 single person per room.

Includes full breakfast daily, 2 lunches, and 5 dinners.

OPTION 3. June 15-30 — Combination England and Europe itinerary.

Seven nights in England and eight nights in Europe.

Cost: \$2450pp Two persons per room, or \$3160 single person room.

Includes full breakfast daily, 4 lunches, and 7 dinners.

"Friends of the 385th" will welcome the tour members June 17-19 at Great Ashfield, England, and June 24-26 at Perle, Luxembourg. On June 22-23, the tour will include Merville, France and the Chantilly area near Charles DeGaulle Airport north of Paris. The tour will also include visits to the American Cemeteries in Cambridge, England; Liege, Belgium; and Maastricht, the Netherlands where members of the 385th BG are buried. Memorial services will be held at each of the cemeteries for the those 385th BG members.

A special Memorial Service will be held at All Saints Church for the 413 men who died while stationed at Great Ashfield; and at the 385th BG Memorial in Perle, Luxembourg for the members of the two crews who perished in a mid-air collision near Perle.

We will visit the "Sally B" which flies out of Duxford, England and the "Pink Lady" which flies out of Orly Airport, Paris France. These are the only airworthy B17s in Europe.

Brochures which include reservation forms; the tour itinerary; costs; refund policies; and other essential information are available from Art Driscoll,

4500 Post Rd., Nashville, TN 37205. Phone (615) 352-3530; FAX (615) 352-6995; e-mail - artdriscoll1@hotmail.com

Mail reservation form with \$250 deposit, per person, to Art Driscoll. Make checks payable to "385th Tour Group." Arena Travel will mail Confirmation to you. Balance of payments due to Arena 72 days prior to departure.

Costs of the three options do not include airfare to Europe. The Tour Director, Art Driscoll, has arranged for a group airfare for an overnight flight from Atlanta, GA on Tuesday, June 14 aboard Delta flight #10 at 10:00PM to arrive London Gatwick Airport at 11:15AM on Wednesday, June 15. Delta offers a group 15% discount for ten or more passengers leaving Atlanta together. Delta also offers discounts on airfares from the feeder airports to Atlanta. However, the discounted flight arrangements, including return flights, have to be made by the Tour Director, Art Driscoll, interested persons, contact Art, and mail a \$100 deposit payable to the "385th Tour Group." Tickets cancelled after March 15 may be penalized by Delta; and are non-refundable after April 15, 60 days prior to departure to Gatwick.

HELP CELEBRATE THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WW II

60TH ANNIVERSARY OF VE DAY

"We'll Meet Again" - Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of VE Day.

The British Broadcasting Company is looking for former WWII members of the U.S.

Forces who are interested in tracing and/or finding wartime friends or relations in the United Kingdom. On May 8, 2005, BBC1 will transmit a programme of wartime stories and bring the episodes

up-to-date to celebrate the 60th Anniversary of VE Day.

Interested 385th BGA members should contact the BBC production team on Tel: 08705 12 22 30 or e-mail: wma@bbc.co.uk.

MY MILITARY SERVICE

by Kenneth Torrence

Sunday afternoon, December 7, 1941, while tidying up my hunting camp after a weekend visit, my little old battery radio interrupted the ongoing program for a news bulletin — "The Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor Naval Base."

Sort of expecting the United States to be drawn into an ongoing war, attitudes changed from 'oh well' to 'let's go'. Thus after about a year, I entered an Army Recruiting Station in Syracuse. However, since I had a BS degree in mechanical engineering, I was considered more valuable to the war effort in civilian ordnance, and I was assigned to a Locomotive Plant in Schenectady to test 37mm cannon on thirty ton tanks. Later in 1942, deferments for Civil Service employees was stopped, and I was inducted into the Army in July 1942.

After the usual assembly line physical examination and I was declared 'fit', (although I had a little finger missing on my right hand), I was sent to Camp Upton where I was classified as a skilled tractor mechanic, received all my shots, and issued a uniform and assigned to the Army Air Corps; and I was sent to Atlantic City for basic training.

In Atlantic City, we were quartered in Hotel Chelsea, however the hotel had no mess facilities so we went to adjoining hotels for meals. The hotel plates were not adequate for Army type K. P. serving, so many times the ice cream ended up on the mash potatoes. Marching was done on the Boardwalk, but when done in new boots and in winter uniforms in hot August weather, it was quite unbearable. After enduring

additional shots of typhoid, malaria, etc., I was assigned to an advanced armament school. Loaded aboard a troop train consisting of only Pullman cars, and with two men to a lower and one to an upper compartment, and with no kitchen car, we survived on cold food except for a stop-over in North Platt, Nebraska, where, during a stop, the town folks supplied us with homemade cakes, cookies, pies, etc. After several days of cold food out of a can, this was heaven.

On Labor Day weekend we arrived at Denver's Lowery Field to be schooled in the operation and maintenance of power operated gun turrets. Another person and I were retained as instructors, but after three months I applied for Engineering Cadet Training. Instead I was accepted for Meteorology training and sent to Boca Raton, FL for a month in Officer's Tactical Training before being sent via troop train to U. C. L. A., Los Angeles aboard another Pullman troop train, however this one had a freight car with a stove for cooking meals.

Completing the course in Meteorology, I was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps and ordered to report to the Air Intelligence School in Harrisburg, PA. It seems that the Army Air Corp needed fewer meteorologists than originally thought so they sent the older graduates to intelligence school. At the Harrisburg Academy, a private school on the banks of the Susquehanna River, I enjoyed the course which mainly covered navigation, map reading and methods of interrogation. However, after training at three

schools, I was ready for active duty. Orders sent me to Seymour Johnson in North Carolina then to Camp Kilmer, NJ. and finally to overseas duties. In March 1943, I boarded the Cunard liner, Queen Mary, for a week's rough voyage on the wintery Atlantic Ocean.

There were several thousand men aboard the Queen. Enlisted men were billeted two to a bed so they took turns sleeping. Officers were assigned their own bunk in a state room, rebuilt to accommodate nine to twelve men in three decker stacks. Naval vessels could not match the Queen's speed, so we traveled unescorted, on an evasive course to prevent German submarines from attacking the ship. Arriving in Scotland, we boarded a train for Stone, a recreation center in Staffordshire.

As a casual officer, I was to be assigned to an operational unit. At Stone, I became acquainted with English currency, warm English beer, and English language differences. Finally, I was assigned to the 385th Bomb Group (H) in the 3rd Air Division of the 8th Air Force. Upon arrival at Division Headquarter, I was greeted by no less than Brig. Gen. Curtis LeMay, who later became Chief of Staff of the military.

The 385th Bomb Group was located on a former R.A.F. installation located in East Anglia. I was assigned to the 549th Bomb Squadron, but since my work was primarily at the group level, I was housed with the base engineer, ordnance, signal and other visiting officers.

Cont. on page 8...

CEREMONY AT PERLE, LUXEMBOURG

Commemorating the 60th Anniversary of the Battle of the Bulge

by Roger Feller

To commemorate the Liberation of Luxembourg and the Town of Perle, a Memorial Celebration was held by the citizens of Luxembourg on December 28, 2004 at the 385th Bomb Group Memorial in the Town Square of Perle. The ceremony took place to remember the US Army Air Corps' Eighth Air Force during the Battle of the Bulge sixty years ago in December 1944. The ceremony was done to honor the 18 young men of the 385th Bomb Group who died in a mid air collision over Perle, and to honor all the members of the 385th Bomb Group.

Mayor Ferdinand

Unsen, representing the Town of Perle, hosted the Commemoration and Roger Feller was the Master of Ceremony. Attending the Memorial Commemoration as guests of the Town of Perle were the Honorable Dr. James Roche, Secretary of the Air Force, his Excellency Mr. Peter Terpeluk, US Ambassador to Luxembourg, Lt. General Arthur Lichte, Vice Commander, US Air Forces in Europe, Major General David T. Zabecki, US Army, Colonel Dave Goldfine, Commander 52nd Fighter Wing, Spangdahlem AFB, Germany, and approximately 50 airmen from around Europe. Spangdahlem AFB provided an Air Force Honor Guard and Color Guard for the ceremonies.

The Ceremonies began with the ringing of the Church



Mayor Unsen and Mr. Terpeluk at the 385th BG Memorial.

bells and a 3-minute sounding of the town sirens, followed by a moment of silence. Dr. Roche, Mr. Terpeluk, Mayor Unsen, Generals Lichte and Zabecki and Col. Goldfine each laid a scoop of hallowed ground from the site of the crashed B-17s at the base of the 385th Bomb Group Memorial. Floral wreaths were also laid by the guests at the Memorial.

Following the playing of Taps by an Air Force bugler, Mayor Unsen and Dr. Roche spoke to the assembled persons. They were followed by a fly-over of four A-10 fighters from Spangdahlem AFB. The Anthems of Luxembourg and the United States were played by the Music Corps of Perle to close the ceremony. The Friends of the 385th BG, Perle invited all for coffee and sandwiches.

The guests toured the 385th BG Museum and each were presented a Certificate of Appreciation by Roger Feller. Mayor Unsen invited all to attend lunch at the hotel in Perle.

We (the citizens of Perle) hope that we presented a worthy ceremony when we did it for the 385th BG. Thank you for all you, our heroes, did for us. 60 YEARS OF FREEDOM. We never forget you. God Bless America and all our friends from the 385th.

Editor's Note: I, and hopefully all 385th BGA members, appreciate our wonderful friends of the Duchy of Luxembourg and the honors they bestow upon the Association.



Mrs. Terpeluk, Ambassador Terpeluk, Secretary of Air Force Dr. Roche and Lt. Gen Litche at 385th Bomb Group Memorial Service, Perle, Luxembourg.



Secretary of the Air Force Dr. Roche placing dirt from the crash site of the two 385th BG B-17s at the 385th BG Memorial in Perle. Ambassador Terpeluk in attendance.



Fly-by of US Air Force A-10s from Spangdahlem AFB, Germany.

Cont. from page 5...

Because of man to man briefings with the lead and deputy lead navigators and bombardiers, I would arrive at the group headquarters war room as soon as the advanced battle order stating the target, bomb load and number of aircraft was received. Prior to their arrival, we assembled the needed material and briefed the navigators and bombardiers, an hour before the general briefing, about the mission, pictures of the target, anti-aircraft positions, and other information such as snow coverage and previous damage from prior bombings.

When the ships returned, we interrogated the crews and prepared a bombing report and casualty report for Division Headquarters. One of my additional duties was, with four men, to store target maps and photos for future missions. This information was mainly obtained from British intelligence

Spare time was spent in the Officers Club where the bar was open from evening mess until midnight. Card games were in session every evening and once

a week, a dance would be held with the local English girls as guests. During the evening, three activity forecasts were sent by headquarters, namely; alert, stand-by, or stand-down. Alert meant a mission, stand-by meant a probable mission, and stand-down meant no mission was planned. I did not get too friendly with the flight personnel as it would be unfortunate if one of the crew persons was a close friend. It was unfortunate to interrogate returning crews and listen to their description of an exploding ship, or no parachutes was seen.

On D-Day, we had the battle order on June 4th for a mission on June 5th, but it was delayed until June 6th. We were all confined to base, and we knew why, but could not tell. When the Germans were finally about to capitulate, we were to turn in all firearms, but at the announcement of V-E Day, one would have thought it was the 4th of July.

During my stay at Great Ashfield, I was a 1st Lieutenant in S2. After VE Day, I returned home via of Wales, Iceland, Greenland, Bradley Field in Windsor Locks, CN, and finally

Camp Devens, MA, where I was sent home on leave for a month. As one of many persons, I was then sent to Sioux Falls, SD where one was expected to be sent to the Pacific Theater. With Japan's surrender after the Atomic bombings, I was sent to Camp Dix, NJ for discharge.

Later I joined the Reserves when the Army Air Corp became the US Air Force, and as a Captain, I was Commander of a flight in Saranac Lake, NY. When my civilian work made it difficult to continue as a reservist, I resigned from the Reserves, and after ten and one half years of total service, I was placed in a stand-down status.

As can be surmised from the above story, during my early period of service, I was sent to three different schools for training. My brief, but interesting, period of military service, could be considered as government inefficiency, but would more correctly be characterized as "haste makes waste." However, on second thought, we were lucky to have had, at that time, people brave enough to forge ahead, and in spite of inefficiency, get things done.



OCTOBER 7, 1944

"Off the Record" (31) by Frank Mays

Under a starry sky, chilly night air of an October night ate through clothing of several airmen as they lay prone in the grass outside their hut. Other men rolled and tumbled in their bunks. Sleep would not come easy to anyone this night.

Gone! Gone from the squadron were many buddies that only yesterday - talked of home - laughed - told tall tales - and kidded around - all full of life. From this one hut - nineteen men missing. Other huts were completely empty of men. Memories! Sadness! A sadness that would linger for the balance of men's lives as they remembered this day. Five airmen from one crew and five from another, these were all that remained of the thirty airmen on five bomber crews that called this hut - home.

The day had started like so many before. Men awakened before the sun would rise - leaving the hut to prepare for another combat mission. A mission that all learned to dread.

The 385th BG had put many B-17s in the air that morning, October 7, 1944, for a bombing mission to Berlin, Germany. The 549th Bomb Squadron scheduled to fly composite with another B-17 Group short of bombers. A long hard day of flying to a target fiercely defended by many anti-aircraft guns and German fighters. Experience had taught that there would be casualties at the Berlin Target. Bombers would probably be severely damaged.

As the men on base sweated back their Buddies, it became obvious that something terrible had occurred. The afternoon

sky was void of bombers returning to Great Ashfield. Other bomber Groups on the same mission had reported to HQ word of what they saw happen. Word spread quickly from HQ to the waiting men. Knowing the American bomber crews would not be expecting the tactic, German fighters - a total of 75 had attacked the formation in three waves of 25 planes each - flying through their own flak to get at the bombers. While the gunners cringed from the many bursting anti-aircraft shells, they still accounted for themselves by shooting down many enemy aircraft.

Yet - the entire 549th Bomb Squadron had been lost! Every B-17! Nine bombers! Ninety men - 36 officers and 54 gunners! All - shot down over Berlin!

THE PRICE OF FREEDOM

The following prices were what the US Government originally paid for these WWII aircraft:

Stearman PT-13 "Kaydet" (The 'Yellow Peril'):
\$11,000 (Now selling for \$85,000 to \$110,000)
Curtiss P-36A "Hawk": \$23,000
Boeing B-17G "Flying Fortress": \$276,000 (Now well over \$1,000,000)
Curtiss P-40E: \$45,000 (Now close to \$1,000,000)
Piper L-4 "Grasshopper" (Military version of J-3 "Cub"): \$2,600 (Now worth up to \$45,000)
North American T-6G "Texan": \$27,000
North American B-25B "Mitchell": \$96,000
Douglas A-20G "Havoc": \$74,000
Lockheed P-38L "Lightning": \$115,000
Bell P-39Q "Aircobra": \$46,000
Consolidated B-24D "Liberator": \$336,000 (Now worth virtually any price)
Waco CG-4A Troop Glider: \$24,000
Martin B-26G "Marauder": \$227,000
Republic P-47D "Thunderbolt": \$94,000

North American P-51D "Mustang": \$54,000
Northrop P-61 C "Black Widow": \$170,000
Douglas A-26C "Invader": \$192,000
Boeing B-29 "Superfortress": \$639,000 (Present worth?? Incalculable)

Post WW II aircraft:

Lockheed P-80 "Shooting Star": \$108,000
Republic F-84F "Thunderstreak": \$769,000
North American F-86A "Sabre": \$178,000
Convair B-36J: \$3,701,000
Boeing B-47E "Stratojet": \$1,888,000
Convair B-58A "Hustler": \$12,442,000
Douglas A-1E "Skyraider": \$414,000

Pre WW II aircraft:

Wright 1909 Military Flyer: \$25,000
Curtiss JN4 "Jenny": \$5,465
DeHavilland D-H4: \$11,250
Curtiss P-6E "Hawk" \$13,000
Martin B-10: \$55,000

DELIVERY OF 'LIBERATION BREAD'

by Tjeerd Hulstra

VLAARDINGEN (The Netherlands) - Experts say that 55 years after the fact, some Dutchman may well remember the taste of Liberation Bread made by Dutch bakers who in May 1945 had received their supplies in massive Allied air drops. For many people, this year will be the first chance to taste the bread their parents, grandparents or siblings - after prolonged hunger - raved about in early May 1945, and perhaps ever since.

Following an initial humanitarian delivery of so-called Swedish bread to ports in the western part of the Netherlands in early 1945 (to help ease the ravages of the Hunger Winter), the Allies mounted massive air drops of supplies, dubbed 'Operation

Manna' by the RAF and 'Operation Chowhound' by the US Air Force (US Army Corps 8th AF). Between April 29 and May 8, some 5,200 planes dropped over 11,000 tons of food above the Netherlands. Part of the delivery by the 'Eagles of Mercy' was Canadian and American wheat which allowed Dutch bakers to make white bread which for many in the starving country tasted like cake or better.

As has happened a number of times in the 55 years since the Liberation, Dutchmen again will be able to buy Liberation Bread. This year's remake will be made of special wheat, butter and sugar, making the bread taste mildly sweet as before. The top of the bread will have an 'imprint' of

an 1945 transport plane. Some 2,700 bakeries all over the country have been asked to participate in the event.

The actual commemoration of the air drops - the flight will also be over a dozen other cities in the western part of the country - is in Vlaardingen (near Rotterdam) with a fly over of over 20 planes, including Dutch Royal Air Force and U.S., British and Polish Air Forces. One of the planes will singly make an additional low-level fly-over and drop - unlike in 1945 - Liberation Bread on the city. Those able to grab that "Manna" will not mind that the happening historically is incorrect: the Liberation Bread will certainly taste as good as ever.

Published May 8, 2000

LETTERS

January 20, 2005

Dear Editor,

The first thing that I do when my copy of the "HH" arrives is read it cover to cover.

I would like to make a suggestion for future issues: All of us flying members of the 385th have seen plenty of flying/combat stories but very little of the other interesting activities that took place at and near Great Ashfield. For example, the 100th and 200th mission parties — beer stands around the base — a train load of girls from London — mission standdowns, — etc.

- * Buzz Bomb going over the base on their way to London.
- * Trips to London and Scotland.
- * Details of the hard work the ground crew did to repair planes over night for the next days missions.
- * Stealing coal for the hut stoves
- * Plus many other experiences.

Thanks,
Charles Price

Editor's Note: I agree with your suggestions; and I will be waiting for a story from you. I can only print what you, the BGA members, submit for publication.

LETTERS

Frank McCawley
Hardlife Herald Editor

Dear Frank,

About twenty years ago, after telling numerous people that the Army Air Corps had sent me to three schools before they could assign me to active duty, I was finally talked into writing up my military career. I am not a writer, so it is much too wordy, but accurate.

Whether or not you can use it, rewrite it, use part of it, or destroy it, is up to you. I am a feeble old man hoping to live until April, my 90th birthday.

Sincerely,

Kenneth R. Torrance
5177 Cascade Road
Lake Placid, NY 12946

Editor: Happy Birthday Ken!. Looking forward to receiving another story on your 100th Birthday.

11-14-04

Dear Tom,

I have read the HH for many years, and have re-read the (many) accounts of our 385th Bombardment Group members.

I visited our Museum (8th AFHS Museum) in Savannah, Georgia. I found my name in the Memorial Garden.

Please use the pictures and article in your next Newsletter of the 385th Bombardment Group Memorial Association.

Sincerely,

Ellis Harding Murrey
47 Barbados Drive
Lake Worth, FL 33461-2829

P.S. Please forward to proper person.

December 10, 2004

Frank,

As the enclosed material indicates, I was contacted recently by a Henry Kwik of Leiden, The Netherlands, a collector of World War II memorabilia. I imagine he has contacted many others of our organization. For anyone who may wish to write to him, his address is indicated in my letter answer. Please note, however, that the address heading in my reply to Mr. Kwik, needs to have "The Netherlands" added to it.

Insofar as the letter is concerned, most of it is "old hat" to the members of the 385th BGMA. The portion of the second page of my letter, however, may be of interest because of the incredible series of incidents leading up to my unexpected breakfast with a lady born in Holland. If any one of the chance occurrences had not taken place, including our friends not showing up for breakfast aboard ship — well, the lady and I would never have met!!! As I said to Mr. Kwik — "go figure!" I hope he understood the American idiomatic phrase.

If you think the letter is of sufficient interest to the members of our group, feel free to include it in some forthcoming issue of the Hardlife Herald.

Sincerely,

Oscar Sinibaldi
1000 Stevenson Lane
Towson, MD 21286

LETTERS

THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY THE UNIT AND CHAPTER COMMITTEE

Jim Erskine, Chairman
568 Colima Dr.
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Nov. 24, 2004

William Varnedoe, President
385 Bomb Group

Dear President Varnedoe,

The enclosed check for \$230.00 is the Unit rebate for having 46 pre-registered attendees at the Eighth Air Force Historical Society reunion in Kansas City, MO. This was a fine turnout by your Bomb Group.

The Committee wishes that more Units such as yours would attend the Historical society reunions.

For the Unit and Chapters Committee,

Jim Erskine, Chairman

| | | | |
|----------------------|----------|--|----------|
| 353 FG | \$ 90.00 | 447 th BG | \$255.00 |
| 94 th BG | 225.00 | 466 th BG | 135.00 |
| 96 th BG | 390.00 | 493 rd BG | 275.00 |
| 385 th BG | 230.00 | 801/492 BG | 300.00 |
| 392 nd BG | 165.00 | KMMA (Kassel Mission Memorial Association) | 340.00 |

Dear Frank and Peg,

I missed the Kansas City Reunion so I am going to the UK and Europe in June on the '05 tour.

Hope you can make it.

Eldred Harrington

January 13, 2005

Dear Frank,

We just heard from his nephew that Jim Ford died July 1, 2004 of a heart attack. He was on the base at Great Ashfield, Sussex, with Joe during the war. We believe he was a member of the Association at one time since we met him at one of the reunions. We didn't make the last one in Kansas City, but had a great time at the previous meeting in Newport News, VA, and also many others going back a lot of years to about, I think, 1985. We are slowing down a bit now (83 and 84 years old), but hope to make the next one if our health holds up.

Sincerely,
Doris and Joe Derer

Editor: Jim was a member of Association. Hope to see you youngsters in Arlington, VA in 2005.

LETTERS

November 17, 2004

Mr. Henry Kwik
Alexander Dubcekplaats 7
2332 HX LEIDEN

In reference to the mail I just received from you, I have some "input" which may be of interest to you. I was a Bombardier-Navigator in the 549th Squadron, 385th Bomb Group, and we took part in the food drop at Schiphol airfield on May 2, 1945. As soon as the first airplane dropped sacks of food, the people were so hungry they ran out on the field to pick them up, even though the following planes continued to drop food. I always wondered whether anyone had been hurt by being hit by sacks of food.

Even though a truce had been declared, the Nazi anti-aircraft gunners near the field fired at us, missed us, but put a few small holes in the plane just behind us. In fact, the records show that we were the last bomb group to be fired on in Europe in World War II! Our pilot, the only member of the crew that was older than me, was a very conservative, serious man. However, on that day, knowing the war was about over, he did something unusual for him — he "buzzed" Holland. That is he flew at a very low level, a few feet above the ground — I had never seen cows galloping before — several actually tumbled into canals! Sorry!

Another interesting point: as we continued northward, finally over the Zuider Zee, I tried to close the bomb bay doors. I was unable to do so — the warning light indicated that they were still open for some reason. I made my way back to the bomb bays — an incredible sight met my eyes! There was our flight engineer hanging head down in the open bomb bay, wearing no parachute, with two of our crew up above him — each man holding on to one leg, while he tried to cut the ropes which were part of the jury rigging to adapt the bomb bay to (drop) sacks of food — 10,000 feet over the Zeider Zee!!! I screamed above the roar of the engines "pull him up!!! Pull him up!!!" And they did - Thank God!!!

Recently, a completely different, but related, incident; an extraordinary incredible coincidence occurred. In our lifetime, my wife and I have been on only two cruises, but this year (2004), a friend called my wife, and during the conversation, happened to mention that they were going on a cruise. And, that the cruise would be leaving from Baltimore, our home city, on April 16th. That did it — a cruise leaving from OUR home city on OUR 65th wedding anniversary! That was enough for my wife — we went on the cruise. One evening, aboard ship, my wife and I decided to go see a movie. Not our usual version. The next morning our friends did not show up for breakfast, so we wound up sitting at a small table with two strangers. We struck up a conversation, and it turned out that they happened to see the same movie. The movie was about Holland back in the 1600's, and the lady sitting with us said it was very realistic. She knew what she was talking about: although she had lived in the U.S. many years, she had been born in Holland. I said that I have never been to Holland, even though I had been only 100 feet from it - in the air above it. I went on to explain that I had been involved in a food drop over Schiphol airfield. The lady nearly fell off her chair!. Her father had run out to pick up sacks of food that we dropped!! She was 13 at the time.

Here we were 59 years later, this strange woman and I, sitting at the same table because of an unbelievable series of unrelated occurrences, having breakfast together. — And — that 59 long years ago, she may have eaten food that I had dropped, and her father had picked up, from the airfield at Schiphol!!! As the saying goes — go figure!!

Well Mr. Kwik, that is it. I hope it is of interest to you.

Oscar Sinibaldi
Capt., US Army Air Corps
(long, long ago)

LETTERS

January 20, 2005

Via: Didier Vanden Bossche

Fain & Smitty,

I have a question concerning the B-17!!! I saw on a small video documentary, when the 385th BG fly over the Netherlands and drop food over the city, Amsterdam, that every B-17 fly with wheels down!!!! Was this a sign to the Germans that you came in peace to help the people of the Netherlands, or was this because you fly so low a level and was it to safety???

Smitty, can you give me your postal address please.

Greetings,

Bereke

Dear Bereke "Little Bear" (Little Brother),

You are so very important to us (Your Friends in the 385th Bomb Group) and we are grateful to your Friend, Didier, who makes it possible for us to communicate through the use of his computer.

I had finished my Combat Tour before the FOOD DROP and was back here in the States. However, I might have an answer to why the B-17s had their wheels down while dropping the (food) supplies.

Normally we flew at 150 miles per hour. But dropping anything to people below at that speed would really tear up everything that was dropped, and everybody underneath.

I had a friend (now gone) telling me about the Food Drop. He said he saw an elderly women running like hell down the street, trying to out-run the food bundles that were chasing her. He didn't know if she was able to escape.

Therefore, the slowest you can fly a B-17 is just a bit over 90 miles per hour — if the wheels are extended (for DRAG) and some wing flaps are used. [THAT IS MY GUESS FOR HAVING THE WHEELS DOWN].

I HAVE NOT YET RECEIVED Bill Daysh's video presentation, but I hear it's really fantastic and we are all grateful for his talents, generosity and dedication.

When my good friend, Jake McNiece, of the "Screaming Eagles", 101st Airborne, the Filthiest one of the "Filthy 13" called me on his return from Bastogne last month, I read him your last letter to me and he said that you folks treated them like royalty.

He said that the President of the bank there remembered and thanked him for having saved him during the Battle of the Bulge, because the President was a 14 year old boy at the time. Some things are not forgotten.

My postal address is: Truman Smith, 4568 E. Prospect, Ponca City, Oklahoma, 74604.

Thank you, Bereke, for your letter. You are much better at English than I could be with Flemish.

Your Friend,
SMITTY



Taps

Ralph Joye - Member of the 385th Bomb Group. Services were held in Wesley Chapel, Florida.

from 8th AF News, Dec. 2004.

James (Jim) T. Ford - Member of 385th Bomb Group. Died July 1, 2004 of a heart attack.

from Joseph Derer, Jan. 2005.

Alexander Stephen Sherry - Pilot, 551st Bomb Squadron, 385th BG. USAF Ret. Colonel Sherry died November 26, 2004 at the age of 83 in Abilene, TX. Born in Weedville, PA on November 20, 1921, he is survived by his wife of 57 years, Mary; his daughters, Rosemary Woodrow and Kayna Sherry; his sons Stephen Sherry, Dr. David Sherry and Michael Sherry; 11 grandchildren; his sisters, June Welch and Marge Nissel; and his brothers, George Sherry and Joseph Sherry; plus numerous nephews and nieces. He was known for his positive attitude and his embroidered story telling. Col. Sherry was recognized for his military service receiving numerous air medals for his service as a B-17, SA-16, C-130 and helicopter pilot, serving in both WW II and Vietnam. After retirement from service, he pursued his hobby of working on cars with his friends. Entombment was Monday, November 29, 2004 in Abilene.

from James M. Bond, Dec 2004

“Now the laborer’s task is o’er;
Now the battle day is past;
Now upon the farther shore
Lands the voyager at last.
Father in thy gracious keeping,
Leave we now thy servant sleeping
Earth to earth and dust to dust.
Calmly now the words we say,
Left behind we wait in trust
For the resurrection day.
Father, in thy gracious keeping.
Leave we now thy servant sleeping.”

Written by John Ellerton in 1870, a Civil War veteran.