

HARDLIFE HERALD

Newsletter of the 385th Bombardment Group
Association



548th



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1942 - 1945 Great Ashfield - Suffolk, England Station 155 - The Mighty Eighth

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HARDLIFE HERALD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

- 02....Officers and Directors / Cover Credits
03....President's Message
04....A Veteran's Story - George Rich
12....385th Board Meeting Minutes
14....Pin-Up
15....Calendar
16....2013 385th Reunion Photo Memories
18....385th TAPS
20....Masters' Patriot Award Presentation
21...."There I was..." - Bob Stevens Cartoons
22....Dues, Donations and Special Contributions
23.... Featured Pin-Up Artist - George Petty

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Front Cover: 42-31174 "Spirit of Chicago"

Back Cover: 385th Reunion Veterans

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Association



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

385th Bomb Group Association Reunion October 16-20, 2013

This year's 385th BGA reunion was held in Bloomington, Minnesota at the Hilton Minneapolis/St. Paul-Airport/Mall of America. A small but enthusiastic group of attendees enjoyed several days of socializing and activities. Chuck Smith and Royanne Donnelly once again outdid themselves hosting our hospitality suite, providing a wide range of libations and a plentiful variety of snacks. Over the course of the reunion, the hospitality suite was our HQ and featured "hanger flying" stories and recollections, music from the Big Band era, interesting videos on topics associated with the Mighty Eighth in WW II and, of course, the World Series and College Football games.

Thursday, October 17, featured our group luncheon and annual memorial service honoring those who have "flown their last mission."

Friday, October 18, we took an extended guided tour of the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul that everyone found interesting and informative. Highlights included stops at the Guthrie Performing Arts Center, the Minnesota State House and the Minehaha State Park, site of the scenic Minehaha waterfall, and the Mall of America. A Friday night pizza party in the hospitality suite was enjoyed by all.

Saturday morning was our Annual Meeting including a discussion of future direction of the 385th BG Association, a demonstration of our Web Site and FaceBook page and an interesting presentation on the evolution of uses for pilotless aircraft (drones) ranging from pizza delivery to tornado mapping to whale watching. Our Saturday evening banquet featured music by the Bend in the River Big Band featuring vocalist Linnea Marrin. The band included saxaphonist Reuben Haugen, himself a WW II veteran and pilot of an L-4 Grasshopper spotter during the Philippines campaign! Video highlights are posted on our website,

Next year, our reunion will be held in conjunction with the national 8thAF Historical Society reunion at the Music City Sheraton Hotel in Nashville, TN. Registration information will be in a future issue of the Hardlife Herald.

Future of 385th Bomb Group Association By Tom Gagnon

In a recent issue of the Hardlife Herald, I described selected options for the future of our association and asked for your comments, thoughts and suggestions. I appreciate the responses I received. I want to provide you with an update on this subject.

This subject was considered by the Board of Directors at its meeting during the October, 2013 reunion. The sense of the Board is that the Association should make every effort to continue in existence and to hold reunions at least as long as there are Veteran members willing and able to attend. The eventual focus of the Association will shift from reunions to maintaining an electronic archive of 385th information and preserving the legacy of the 385th WW II accomplishments.

A VETERAN'S STORY

BY GEORGE RICH

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This is a story of a young air->man who faced death over the skies of Nazi Germany in World War II (WWII). His story resonates with adventure, terror, determination, courage, and in every sense of the word, heroism. It would be very hard to make up a story like this one! But, it is also a story that could be mirrored in thousands of tales from those who faced combat defending our freedom. Many of you have "heroes" in your family tree. So this story is for those of you who haven't had the opportunity to hear the tales from your hero including those who won WWII. Please take a moment to remember and thank those who saved you from being a member of Hitler's Youth Corps or a worshiper of a Japanese Emperor.

In WWII, the American 8th Bomber Command, based in England, lost more "Killed-In-Action" over occupied Europe than the Marines did in the Pacific. Losses were so high that serious consideration was given to stopping the daylight bombing as it was believed replacements couldn't keep up with losses. Late in 1943, a capable American escort fighter, the P-51, arrived to save the day. Bomber Command was organized into three Divisions, each with four Wings that had four Groups of 30
04 HARDLIFE HERALD

planes each; a total of 1,440 B-17 aircraft. Each Group had an assigned altitude and time to drop bombs; otherwise, there could be aircraft collisions and bombs dropped on other B-17's. Organization and scheduling were crucial to overcome the natural chaos of getting over 1,000 B-17's to the target and back.

On an April morning in 1944, one more bombing run to Hitler's Third Reich was planned. Wake up call was at 3 AM on a dark, damp, overcast, cold English morning. Bud couldn't find his "lucky" shirt. It wasn't where it had been every morning for the last 5 months! The fear of going on another mission was bad enough, but going without THE lucky shirt could be mind chilling. Some SOB in one of the two new crews probably had it. Bud hoped the sleeves reached the thief's knees. As the right waist gunner in a B-17 bomber, Bud was a little taller than most of the crew. The briefing was at 5 AM where all "valuables" were put into an envelope to pick up after they got back, IF they came back. "Nuts, we are going to Berlin today and it will be well defended," said someone.

Bud was scheduled for his 23rd bomb run over Nazi Europe that morning. Usually, after 25 runs, an airman was

"through" and could return to America. But, this limit was changed to 29 in 1944 because of higher than expected losses. Fortunately, the limit for anyone already having over 20 runs was frozen at 25. Staff Sergeant Bud was a very experienced airman with only 3 more runs to make. And like most seasoned airmen, Bud knew staying alive required a fair dose of luck. Lucky charms became part of the ritual of preparing your mind to face another mission. The loss of a lucky charm could prey on the minds of these young airmen far from home and in harm's way.

Bud's plane was named "The Spirit of Chicago" with nose art depicting Chicago's colorful reputation. The nose had a whiskey jug labeled XXX with a ghost spirit, floating out of the jug holding a violin case slightly opened to show a machine gun. So far that ghost had been very lucky. And "Spirit" had sprayed bullets and bombs all over Germany as part of the 385th Bomb Group.

Bud's troubles continued when he found that his heated shoes were out for repair. The only shoes available were two sizes too big. And that made the search for some fur lined boots time consuming. Two beat up, mismatched boots were finally found, but Bud was

FEB 2014

now behind schedule. Then a new Major stopped him and demanded to know where the Major's plane was parked. After being shown to his plane, the Major refused to drive Bud back to his own plane; the Major claimed he couldn't find his way back. More proof that new Majors and experienced Staff Sergeants don't play well together. So Bud walked a mile across the muddy field, carrying his parachute and duffel bag, shoes flopping, and almost missing his flight. He had to put on his flight clothes in the plane, in the dark. A bad start for a dangerous mission.

The weather man predicted poor visibility and he was right. The haze was so bad that the Group was late forming up in the air and heading out over the English Channel. Bud fired his waist gun to check its operation, and each of the ten man crew reported in to the pilot every 10 minutes for the rest of the mission. With the cold and lack of oxygen at 25,000 feet, everyone needed to keep in touch and be alert.

On April 29th, 1944, the 8th was scheduled to "visit" Berlin with Magdeburg as an alternate target if Berlin could not be bombed for any reason. Berlin was heavily defended as the German Air Force (Luftwaffe) tried to save its leader, Reich Marshall Herman Goring from Hitler's wrath. Goring had boasted that no Allied plane

would ever be seen over German skies. Now they were as plentiful as clouds! Allied experts were divided on why Berlin was a "good" target. It contained several important factories and was the capital of Nazi Germany. Just as importantly, the Luftwaffe was determined to protect Berlin and so could be coaxed into coming up for a fight on every mission instead of waiting for opportune conditions to attack American planes. This caused the Luftwaffe to lose more planes and pilots than it could replace. Some believed bombing Berlin would soon kill the Luftwaffe and give the Allies uncontested air superiority. So Berlin became a magnet for repeated bombing attacks. This "grand strategy" seemed to justify the cost of these repeated attacks that was paid in American airmen who never returned.

Precision bombing from five miles high was difficult and, in 1944, primitive radar, called MICKEY, was being deployed on lead aircraft to get each Group to its assigned spot on time even if the weather didn't cooperate. The "Spirit" flew above a solid under-cast following its lead aircraft with a new, inexperienced MICKEY operator.

Unfortunately, the 385th got a "bad" MICKEY operator. Over Germany, the Group discovered that it was alone in the sky. The MICKEY operator had strayed about 40 miles away from the main

Bomber Stream. Bud was about to get a Mickey Finn! If only he had found that lucky shirt! All of a sudden, the "Spirit" ran into flak fire from the ground. Shells ripped into the right wing, shooting off the flap and wing tip. Fuel started to leak out of one fuel tank. Then the lead plane saw a landmark, changed direction, and decided to hit the alternative target, Magdeburg, as it was too late to reach their assigned spot over Berlin on time.

As the Group started its bomb run on Magdeburg, with open bomb bay doors, Bud's bombardier called out, "Flak at 12 o'clock! Oh shit, that ain't flak; it's German fighters! There are hundreds of them!" In fact, the 385th had probably run into the rendezvous point of many of the Nazi fighters defending Berlin. A best guess was a mix of at least 200 Focke Wulf 190's (the Nazi's best fighter) and Messerschmitt 109's. Bud started to cuss out the unknown SOB who had taken his lucky shirt. The odds against the 385th were the same as Custer faced at Little Big Horn! It looked like "luck" had finally run out.

One hell of a collision was about to occur. Thirty B-17's in a box formation 3 city blocks high, 3 blocks long and 7 blocks wide equaled 63 cubic city blocks of metal, guns, bombs and flesh. Two hundred Nazi fighters were going to try to fly through this occupied space at full

speed, in a head-on attack with all guns blazing. Considering that the American Bombers would be firing all their guns while taking evasion actions, what might be empty space one moment would be filled the next. Well, 200 fighters don't go into 30 bombers safely, so many men were going to die in a short time period.

To the watching Americans, the attack seemed to develop slowly. The Nazis moved in closer, flying parallel to the B-17's, weaving back and forth, bouncing up and down like they were trying to psych themselves for the attack. The B-17's started to "dance" up and down, side to side, tasting the maneuver room available. There wasn't much as the Bombers were trained to fly "cover" for each other, requiring they maintain positions close to one another so all guns could support a united defense. At least that was the theory. There wasn't an atheist in the 385th as the Nazi fighters pulled slowly forward and climbed to 12 o'clock high to start their attack. Everyone was praying, mostly for help in controlling the fear washing over them. No one wants to die young and most of these American airmen were very young. The B-17's couldn't turn around and quit the fight. Strapped into their positions, the men could only sit and watch death approaching. Then the lead Bomber came on the radio, "Okay, boys. On



your toes! This is it!" And the Nazi fighters turned into the Bomber formation.

The enemy attack was deadly, terrifying, and yet dramatically beautiful as it flowed toward the 385th. The lead Nazi had a yellow nose and, as he fired, he rolled upside down to expose his armored belly and dived below the Group instead of trying to penetrate. He knew how to survive. But the followers weren't as fortunate as they continued straight into the Bomber formation in rows of 10 fighters, five rows at a time. BOOM! One fighter collided with a B-17 and they exploded instantly into a giant, flaming, red fireball. Debris was flung out in all directions: engines, metal, bodies, propellers, and unidentified pieces. And it was spectacular, colorful, frightening, and happening way too fast.

The first pass had hurt the 385th badly. The formation was strung out from evasive maneuvers and had lost altitude. Several B-17's were "gone", along with their 10

man crews. Bombers were jockeying to reassemble the Group and re-establish cover fire. The Nazi fighters were also strung out and had to regroup but quickly swung into a second attack. The noise of the fifty caliber guns in the B-17's was deafening. Spent shell casings spewed from other planes and inside each plane.

With all the exploding shells, the air looked like a lit Christmas tree. Then Bud's ship shuddered as Nazi bullets tore into the plane. The "Spirit's" chin turret was shot away and a 20 mm shell exploded, knocking the oxygen regulator off the wall beside Bud and knocking his goggles off. But Bud got a solid hit on an FW 190 as it streaked by. Then the "Spirit" was hit again; it shuttered as though hitting a wall, and all four engines were knocked out.

With its engines shot up, wing and tail control surface in pieces, Bud's "Spirit" B-17 immediately pitched nose up. Then it slid off toward the right wing and headed down. It went into a deadly spin, pinning everyone where they were. Death was rushing to claim the crew when a miracle happened. The "Spirit" somehow stopped spinning and flattened out for just a moment. It could have been the pilots desperately fighting the controls or more probably the weight of the still loaded bombs that helped stop the spin. Or it could have been

the "Spirit's" ghost lending a hand. The pilot was repeating, "Bail out! Bail out!" Bud leaped off the waist wall where he had been pinned, grabbed a parachute, snapped it into place, kicked out a small emergency door in the waist of the Bomber, and jumped out before the spin could re-start. Everything was still happening too fast, but training aided his survival instincts.

As soon as he was "in the clear", Bud pulled the rip cord and the chute opened. But he was still way too high and too near the continuing attack on the 385th. He wished he would have waited until he lost some more altitude. But there hadn't been time to think of anything but survival. Nazi fighters flashed by and wreckage rained down around him. Bud saw several smoking fighters go by and one was burning. Two B-17's were spinning down as the sun reflected off their unpainted metal wings. Another B-17 exploded above Bud. Remarkably nothing came too close. Maybe, just maybe, the "Spirit's" ghost was helping Bud this morning. Bud drifted slowly away, down through the clouds toward Nazi Germany, where most citizens already knew of at least one relative or neighbor killed by an Allied bomb. Bud had lost his luck this morning, but he was going to have to get some back quickly if he intended to stay alive down there!

Above, the Nazi fighters broke off their attack as the remains of the 385th came over Magdeburg and flak mushroomed around the Bomber formation. Later it was found that over 25% of the 385th was shot down that day. Sixteen planes made it back to England, only to crash land at the nearest airport. Only six B-17's were still in formation eight hours after take-off. Over 70 Nazi fighter "kills" were claimed by the returning B-17 crews. But, in all the chaos of air combat, kill estimates were seldom accurate.

Bud drifted slowly toward a small German town and landed in a plowed field. Unfortunately he wasn't alone. Townspeople had seen the parachute and were pounding across the field in a mob. With pitch forks and old shot guns they faced the dazed airman. Bud couldn't raise his arms to unlatch the chute harness. He had such a death grip hanging on to the chute risers it took a few minutes to get enough blood into his hands to let go the ropes and get out of the parachute. "Deutscher?" asked one. Bud shook his head no. "Englander?" Again no. "Amerikanisch?" screamed the man with his voice getting higher. Bud didn't have to answer as it was obvious he was an American. Another man speaking English said, "So you are an American gangster! You are sent to murder our people and, Gott dammit, we hang mur-

derers!" With lots of shouts and arms waving, the townspeople marched Bud and his floppy boots back into the town square.

In the square was an old horse trough with a lamp post in the middle. As Bud was marched up to the lamp post, he noticed someone had found a long rope. A solid citizen started to tie the rope into a noose, and they urged Bud to get up on the rim of the horse trough. A good old fashioned town hanging was in full progress to the delight of the mob. As they were trying to get the rope around the top of the lamp post, a Nazi officer walked into the town square. The SS Major started to lecture the crowd. But the crowd started yelling back; finally, the Major pulled his Luger pistol and aimed it at the loudest citizen. All became quiet. The noose was taken off Bud's neck and the Major pushed him down the street.

Now being rescued by a SS Major was a mixed blessing.



The SS, in their black uniforms with skull and crossbones insignia, was Hitler's private Army of dedicated fanatics who often raped, tortured, and executed those Hitler found "annoying." Bud was taken to a nearby building, strip searched, and thrown into a solitary cell. After he ate a meal of potato soup, black bread, and ginger ale, a couple of Luftwaffe soldiers came and put him into a truck. For the first time that morning, Bud thought he might be alive to see the next sun rise! The truck also collected the "Spirit's" left waist gunner, Smitty, and tail gunner, The Greek, among others. Bud was busted along side the head with a rifle butt while helping a man with broken ribs into the truck.

For the next three weeks, Bud spent time in and out of solitary confinement. The Nazis wanted to know about Bud's past flight history but he would tell them only his name, rank, and serial number. Twice a day prisoners got a potato and a slice of black bread. One day Bud's questioner said he didn't need any information as they already had everything they needed. The officer proceeded to tell Bud about his military history, including home address and next of kin. But there was a one month gap. And the officer wanted to know where Bud was during that time. Bud didn't dare say. During that time he had been assigned

to a MICKEY unit which was a secret the German would have loved to hear more about. Eventually the Nazis gave up, allowed Bud to wash up for the first time since he was captured, and transported him to a Luftwaffe prison camp in East Prussia (Lithuania), Stalag Luft 6, the last part of May. In Luft 6, prisoners were given food rations of one Red Cross food box to split with 7 men for one month; daily each got one slice of bread plus some boiled potatoes. Red Cross boxes contained 1 can powdered milk, 1 package hard tack biscuits, 6 oz. cheese, 4 oz. instant cocoa, 1 chocolate bar, 1 tin sardines, 1 lb margarine, 1 can Spam, 25 cigarettes, 1 package prunes, 4 oz coffee, 2 small bars of soap, and 1 package sugar. They were intended to last one man a week, not 7 men for one month. The result was a very low calorie diet and no worries about gaining weight! Police dogs were turned loose in the compound at night and guards harassed the airmen at every chance. Every so often, the guards would machine gun the barracks while the prisoners were locked inside. The camp had some Englishmen who had been there some time. They were very well organized, with a crystal radio to hear about the war, and escape attempts always ongoing. One day in early July, a new prisoner told them the faint rumbling they heard, that got loud-

er daily, was the sound of the Russians getting closer. Then they learned that the front lines had cut the area off from Germany! Bud's joy didn't last long as they were quickly taken by rail to the Baltic Sea and shipped back into German occupied territory on an old, coal steamer named The Masuren.

The steamer hold was so jammed with prisoners there was no room to sit. The hold had no toilets, no food, and no water. Bud climbed onto a ledge and tied himself there with his belt looped through a ring. At least the air was breathable there in the summer heat! During the next 48 hours, buckets of water were lowered twice for the prisoners to drink. The same buckets were also used for toilets! But there wasn't enough for everyone, even when they shared drinks. Prisoners became sick, fell asleep while leaning on each other, went to the toilet where they stood, and even passed out. One prisoner "cracked", jumped through the hatch and dived overboard. The guards machine gunned him in the water, which was probably a blessing as the ship was miles from shore. After more than two days, the ship docked with weak, tired, hungry, thirsty and sick prisoners. They could be smelled from blocks away. At least they hadn't been torpedoed, bombed, or strafed.

A failed attempt to kill Hitler in July 1944 resulted in

a general command shake up. The Luftwaffe lost command of its POW camps and they were taken over by the SS and Gestapo with orders to stop coddling the prisoners. Fortunately many Army guards were retained instead of being replaced by scarce SS men. Bud's life was about to get more "interesting."

Once off the ship, the prisoners were shackled with iron cuffs and loaded on a train for transport to Luft 4, a camp for non-commissioned officers (Sergeants.) Water was again a problem as everyone was exhausted and thirsty. Bud pushed his way to the side of the cattle car and stuck his spoon outside through the slats. When it rained, he was able to get a trickle of water down the spoon into his parched mouth. Bud lost track of time, but after days, they arrived, were unloaded, and marched through a thick pine forest. A large group of young Nazi Marine guards with dogs accompanied them along with some black shirted SS men. A red headed Nazi Captain told the guards, "These are the men who bombed our country and killed your mothers, wives, and children. Take your revenge now!" The Captain ordered the prisoners to "fast walk", then to double time and finally to run. Anyone who faltered was set upon by the dogs or bayoneted by the guards. A man ahead of Bud wasn't moving fast enough and was jabbed

repeatedly with a bayonet until his shirt was bloody. Another prisoner fell down. The Nazi officer ordered a guard to use his bayonet on the fallen man. When the soldier hesitated, the officer hit the soldier in the face with his Luger pistol! In the confusion, the fallen, shackled man was helped up and resumed marching. No one knows how many prisoners died on that march.

The prisoners were halted just outside Luft 4 and made to sit down. While waiting to be processed, a prisoner made a key out of wire and unlocked all the shackles. When everyone threw their shackles into the woods, the guards didn't know what to do. So the guards had the prisoners stand until their new "home" was ready to process them.

The Prisoner Of War (POW) area had dormitory type barracks; 10 sleeping rooms with 24 POWs and three tiered bunks. Some of the men slept on the floor. Each room had a small coal stove for heat, that was only used at evening before light out. Each barracks had a two hole latrine for 240 POWs, to be used at night only, and each compound had two open air latrines with two, 20 holers back to back with urinals. There were no facilities for bathing or delousing and parasites, fleas, lice, and bedbugs feasted on the prisoners.

Slowly, from September on, Bud's new prison camp, Luft

4, became a "typical" Luft. Red Cross packages began to dribble into the Nazi camp. But the prisoners had become skin and bones scarecrows. At Christmas, each prisoner got their own Red Cross package including a 12 oz can of turkey that amazed the starving prisoners. Finally they had something to barter with the guards as the Nazi soldiers were forbidden to steal the Red Cross packages.

A pond was built in the compound to help fight any fires that might occur, and the prisoners built boats to race. Some Englishmen bartered Red Cross supplies with the guards for various things. Then they were able to build a crude crystal radio which they hid in one of the boats. This radio could receive BBC broadcasts from England and get war news. News was summarized, written on cigarette wrapping paper, and passed around the camp with the unwitting help of the guards. A Nazi "ferret" guard circulated around the camp looking for anything suspicious. He would be distracted and a "message" paper was slipped between his pistol belt and his coat. When he went to another building, he would be distracted again and the message retrieved. The Nazi guards searched but were never able to find this "floating" radio!

The Englishmen had a system for dealing with the guards. They would "select" a guard and barter with them for

small items using something like chocolate bars or soap in return for sewing needles or thread. After this "barter" had gone long enough, the English would threaten to expose this bartering to the Nazi Commandant. If the charge was believed, the guard risked being sent in disgrace to the Russian front. And the guards knew that few men ever came back from the Russian front! The threat was used to get more valuable "stuff" from the guards such as crystals for a radio or even Nazi uniform items. The guard was eventually completely subverted as they faced being killed at the Russian front or shot for aiding enemy prisoners.

The English also set up their guard "con" game with more elaborate ruses. In one ruse, a detested guard was "allowed" to overhear prisoner hints about a pistol hidden in the compound. He was then "allowed" to glimpse the end of a polished, charred lump of wood while the prisoners talked about burying this "gun" at a specific place for an escape attempt that night. When the guard told his officers, they staked out the camp that night; in the cold. Eventually the Nazi officer gave up in disgust and dug up the lump of wood. Soon after the guard disappeared! The English could now claim they had arranged for the guard to be sent to the Russian front and had an "example" to threaten an-

other "select" guard with. By February, 1945, the Russian front had caught up again with Bud. He was loaded into another box car and headed toward Luft 17B near Nuremberg. The route took him westward through Berlin. But German rail traffic was a chancy thing in 1945. The train was put on a siding track to make room for more important trains. That night the British bombers came back to visit Berlin. The box car jumped with each explosion and the brilliant flashes blinded the prisoners. Bud's luck started to seep back as there were no bomb hits near the box car.

Luft 17B wasn't any better than the other camps Bud had seen. Five Red Cross trucks came into the camp one day and unloaded on the ground. Only one truck had food. Another had sports equipment and a 3rd had musical instruments. Some prisoners told Bud the instruments were very good ones, and if he found one he liked, be sure to take it. Now Bud didn't play, but his grandfather had played the banjo. And there was a beautiful, ornamental banjo and case in the pile. So Bud took it to give to his grandfather. After only a month (at the end of March, 1945) the Western front was nearing Luft 17B and Bud had to move again. This time they were to march on feet that were in poor shape.

The German guards were a different breed than on

his last trip. These guards were mostly old men with a few very young men mixed in. The fiery fanaticism was missing as they were part of a last gasp "Home Guard". The prisoners had fashioned some "storage bags" out of Red Cross containers. Bud, remembering the problems with getting water, had a can stuck in a sock that he could use as a canteen. He carried it on a string around his neck and had a small sack along with his banjo. The guards marched them toward Luft 7A. Every night they slept in a field on the ground. One night it rained all night. Bud was soaked and his banjo was also soaked. He couldn't take the instrument any farther. But he wasn't about to leave it for the Nazis so he stomped it and the case into the mud.

Food was especially scarce so the prisoners bartered their Red Cross items for food from the local townspeople. Shaving soap was the biggest seller. Bud traded some cigarette wrapping paper to a French laborer who spoke some English for a tin of beef. His group found a discarded chamber pot and scoured it clean with sand and dirt. They then picked some vegetables and made a stew. But the rich food made all of them sick. One night they camped next to a cow herd. Bud snuck off, crawling on the ground to the first cow he could find. In spite of not being a farmer, Bud milked a can-

teen full and crawled back, only to bump into a German boot. The guard motioned to the canteen and Bud tried in his fake St. Louis German accent to explain it was just milk. Finally, the guard motioned him on.

The next day one of the guards suddenly threw his rifle away into the woods. Others looked at him and started to do the same. The guards realized the war was lost and didn't want to be involved in any fighting. They started throwing away all sorts of equipment. Now the prisoners knew the end of the war was near. But they also had a big problem. First there was no place to run to and they were in no condition to run. And if they marched through a town with "gun-less" guards, the townsfolk might decide to settle some scores. The big danger was the possibility of meeting some SS troops. These fanatics would probably take the prisoners AND guards into a field and shoot them all! So Bud and his fellow prisoners picked up the guns and carried them to the next town. Then they gave them to the guards to march through town. Once past town, the prisoners took up the rifles again. It was becoming a crazy march.

Days blurred but finally they came to Luft 7A. It was a big sprawling camp. All nationalities were represented. There were even some Mongolians with their funny, upturned hats. Bud "cele-

brated his birthday, 28th of March, just outside the camp southwest of Berlin. By April, the war caught up with Bud one more time. This time there was no place left to hide the prisoners. As the German Army retreated past the camp, P-51 American fighters started strafing them. The prisoners hit the ground as bullets flew close by. Then, over the top of the rise overlooking the camp, American tanks clanked into view. The tanks stopped and began to shell the retreating Germans. The shells flew over the prisoners' heads with big swooshing sounds, sucking the air out of the sky. Bud still needed some luck to survive the day. The camp guards started to fire back which only increased the prisoners' worry. Finally the Americans began to come down the hill and past the camp gate. Some soon opened the gate and an American reconnaissance car braved the flying bullets to driving into the camp.

Bud couldn't believe his eyes. The man standing calmly in the car was old Blood & Guts General Patton with his pearl handled pistols and starched riding pants. Emotion overcame Bud's common sense, and he jumped up and threw the General the best salute he knew how. Patton looked at Bud and returned the salute. Patton drove around the camp, back to the main road, and headed toward town, past a still firing German machine gun in a church

tower. A tank soon "finished off" the machine gun and the noise started to die away. Bud's luck had returned! He was alive and no longer a prisoner.

It took some days to arrange transportation for all the prisoners. About a week later. Bud found himself in camp Lucky Strike in Northern France. He was placed in charge of ten ex-POWs that were headed for St. Louis' Jefferson Barracks. They were housed in a barracks that seemed like a palace compared to Luft 7B. The guy across from Bud's bunk was a wise guy named Willy and soon became Bud's friend. One day Bud couldn't stand it any longer. He told two of his ten "charges" they were going to town on "liberty." The first "liberty" in over a year for these POWs. Willy warned Bud that they had no official passes. Bud could have cared less. "What do you want me to bring you?" asked Bud. Ever the wise guy, Willy said, "Bring me a bottle of Coke!" There hadn't been any Coke in France for years and he knew it. Bud said, "You got it!" And off he went.

The Red Cross had supplied them with lots of cigarettes that they proceeded to barter with the French for booze. Finally, they staggered down some steps to a bar and bumped into two sailors coming out. The sailors got mad and were ready to start a fight when one said, "Don't I know you?" to

one of Bud's guys. "Yes!" yelled the airman, "You were my neighbor back home!" All was forgiven and the sailors listened to the POWs story. The sailors invited the airmen back to their ship where supplies weren't so limited. So Bud had a great meal on board ship. He asked the sailor if they had any Coke onboard. The sailor said, "Sure. Up in the Officers mess. I'll get you one." Outside the ship, the Military Police (MP's) caught up with the staggering airmen. "Where is your pass?" they asked. After Bud explained their story, the MP's drove them back to their camp. Nothing like using MP's for a taxi!

Back in camp, Bud kicked the wise guy's bunk and tossed him the coke. "Here is your damn Coke. Too bad you didn't ask for more!" said Bud. Of course the ship's rich food made him sick so it was a long night.

Some weeks passed and Bud was back in St. Louis with thankful parents and trying to fill up his lean frame. He got a call from Willy asking him to come to his wedding. Off Bud went. There he met his future bride, Mary Lou, who is still his wife! Imagine finding a wife for the cost of a Coke.

Bud's story had a happy ending. We hope your hero came back too.

385TH BOARD MEETING MINUTES

OCTOBER 1, 2013

- 1) Call of Order
- 2) Accepted last years minutes
- 3) Presidents Report: Year End Review

a) Suzy will be responsible for contact information for the electronically switch over. Names, address , emails, etc. Dues form- ask for it to be returned from members Save \$5 cut in dues for electronically.

If people do not renew, find out why , cost issue, etc. Will be better in keeping track of roster and veterans, what the Veterans did during WWII Form - Suzy (content)

Website : Have been significant changes since last meeting. Facebook has been good for others to be in touch and for others to find us.

Commending Charles for such a great job with Hardlife Herald. Feel we need to drop the calendar but keep the nose art . Stories continue to be "Good News"

This year reunion was a split from National, due to the location and dates of the 8thAFHS. Its been a lot of work but seemed to be working out great. A lot of work and Thanks to Barbara and Suzy. Thanks to Chuck for the fabulous "Hospitaliity Suite"

Vince Master asked for Veterans ? would like information as to what they did in the 385th(What position,duties, how did you occupy your time and prepare for battle)

b) Future of 385th BGA What are we to do .There is much effort and discussion at the National 8th AFHS as well as the

4) Treasure report: Chuck Smith
\$ 5000. MM \$ 9300 Ck Account before reunion expenses
6 or 7 years of issues HL unless go virtual postagae .45 bulk rate
Dues collection - purge 15-20 not responded deadline
Suzy will send response letter reminding members
Will try to hold back a year before going electronic.

5) Web site : Tom Gagnon

a) status : up and running lots of work remains

b) Cost: development -\$5100 Ill for graphic and developer Hosting \$155 (3yrs)
Security Operating cost \$ 200 monthly. Tom ,Fronted , next steps. Chuck will split
w/ Tom. Albert Audette will make a donation of \$ 1000. Towards cost of development

c) Administration: Preparing user guide for web administrator. Tom is webmaster for now.Charles and Ian have been set up to load content.

d. Next Steps: signficiant effort to sort through and organize and upload all content in our archives.

6) HardLife Herald - Tom for Charles

cost \$1700 per issue? Frequency: how many can we afford to do and for how long till money runs out. Are we getting enough content? When to add electronically and some hard copies to those who are not in computers or unless they want hard copy .

7) Slate of Officers and Board Members - Tom Gagnon

Will Retain current slate. Formally recognize Bill Varnedoe as Historian Emeritus and Special advisor.

Formally recognize Charles as Assistant Historian Ian, as our Historian

8) Facebook Page: Tom for Charles

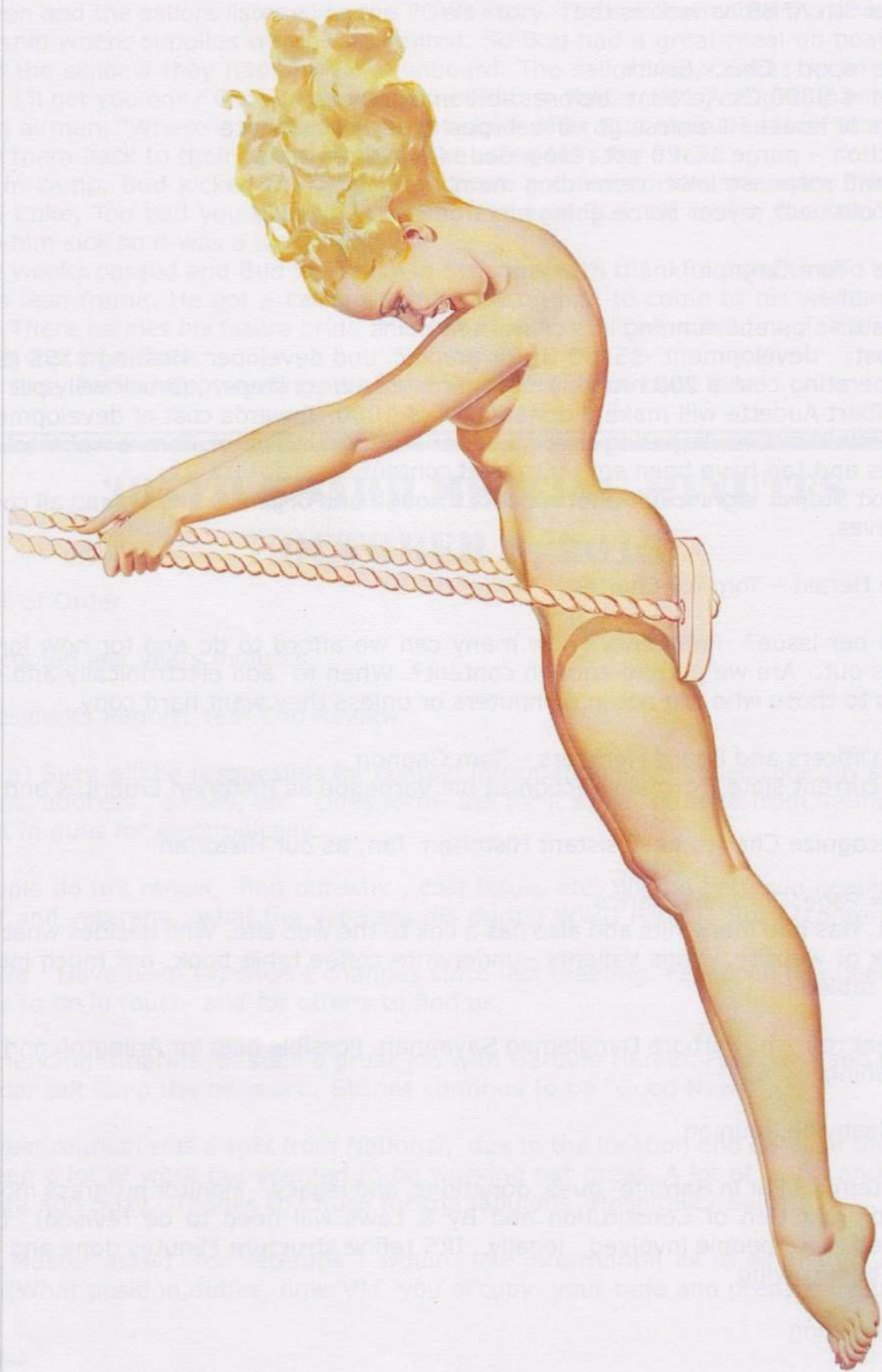
Doing great. Has had many hits and also has a link to the web site. Who decides what goes to Facebook or website. Vans Valients -underwrite coffee table book, not much interest so its been tabled.

9) monument refresh: Barbara Dangleman Savannah. Possible help for Arlington and Dayton refurbishing.

10) 2014 Nashville Reunion

11) Revist item #3 Put in Hardlife- dues, donations, and legacy. Monitor progress monthly
Research for Nex Gen of Constitution and By & Laws will need to be revised; board change, need more people involved legally, IRS refine structure Minutes done and completed by Thanksgiving

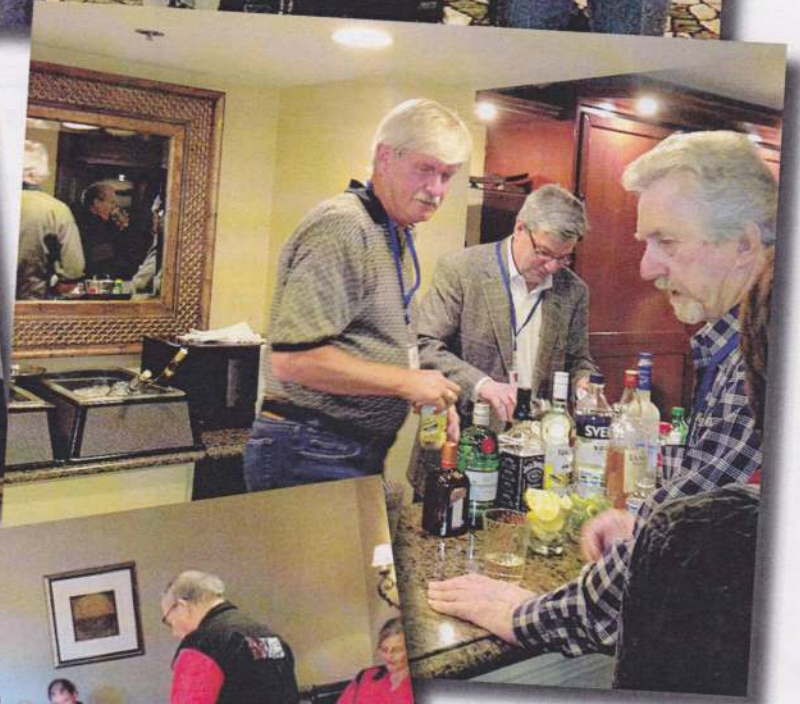
End Board Meeting

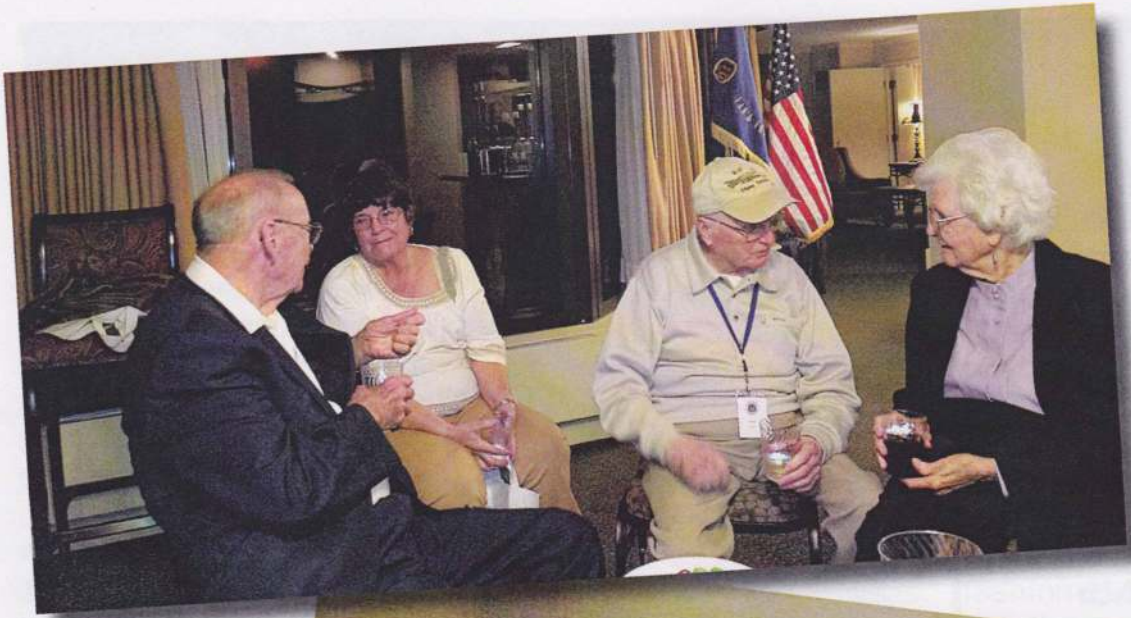


February

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2 Ground Hog Day	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14 Valentine's Day	15
16	17 President's Day	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	

Minneapolis Reunion Memories





385TH

BGA

TAPS

During the October 2013 385th BGA Reunion in Minneapolis, MN, the following Bomb Group Association Members were honoured in their passing by the reunion attendees:

John F. Bertsch

William D. Carte

Albert "Bereke" Demuyer

Marty Girson

William Jarvis

Harry Livingston, Jr.

Paul R. McDonald

Edmund George Nowicki

James Payne

Herman W. Siederer

Oscar Winifred



18 HARDLIFE HERALD



Nowicki, Edmund George Age 90, of Minneapolis, passed away peacefully on 2/5/13 in his final residence in Longmont, CO. Ed was surrounded by his loving children up until the very end. Preceded in death by wife Genevieve (Tenny) and sons David and Mark. He will be dearly missed by his children, Mary of Longmont, CO, Gregory (Loree) of Poquoson, VA, Janice of Longmont, CO, Stephan (Maren) of Mpls., John of Mpls., daughter-in-law Judy of Plymouth, MN and 5 grandchildren, Trisha Oppedard (Mark), Karin, Johanna, Daniel, and Genevieve, his brother Richard (Phyllis) and sisters Harriet Peterson and Dorothy Sorlie. Ed was born and raised on St Paul's east side. He was a highly decorated WWII airman who flew 35 missions with the 385th bomb group. Ed spent his career at Northwestern Bell Telephone and U.S. West and served more than 30 years as a volunteer with TELCO Credit Union (now Topline), the last twelve as elected Chairman of the Board. Ed was a longtime resident of Kenwood-Isles condominium before a transition to Longmont, CO where he spent his final years with

his 2 loving daughters. His generosity, smile, humor, and unflappable spirit will be greatly missed. The Nowicki family would like to thank all of Ed's MN and CO caregivers who over the years gave so much to Ed so we could have so much more of him. Private interment at Ft Snelling. Memorials to the American Diabetes Foundation preferred in lieu of flowers.

GIRSON, MARTIN C. (MARTY):

On Tuesday, May 14, 2013; Beloved husband of Edith Herskovitz Girson. Loving father of Robert Girson, James (Sherry) Girson and Jon Girson (Harry Mull). Brother of the late Rita Friedman. Grandfather of Jessica, Summer and Naomi. Great-grandfather of Caleb. Mr. Girson served three years in the United States Air Force as Crew Chief of a B-17 Bomber in the 385th Bomb Group, 548th Bomb Squadron in WW II. Interment Adath Jeshurun Cemetery. Contributions may be made to American Cancer Society, 320 Bilmar Drive, Pittsburgh, PA 15205.



Marty Girson (far right)
Crew Chief of 42-31833, Mickey II

FEB 2014



James Darrell Payne, of Irving, passed away March 24, 2013. He was born to George W. Payne and Minnie (Franks) Payne on February 24, 1921 in Wilton, Arkansas. He was a World War II Veteran; having served in the 8th Army Air Corp as a line mechanic on the "Flying Fortress" from 1941 to 1945 in the European Theater Operation. James worked for Braniff Airlines, retired from Bell Helicopter, and was Manager of Valley Oaks Mobile Home Park for thirty years. He is survived by his daughter, Valerie Warren and husband Jesse; grandchildren, Shannon (Warren) Hayes and husband Bobby and Stacy Warren of Keller; great grandchildren, Nicholas Hayes and Brianna Hayes, all of Irving; and longtime and faithful friends, Frank and Beulah Fisher of Irving. A graveside service is planned for 10:30 AM, Thursday, March 28, 2013, at Dallas/Fort Worth National Cemetery, with Chaplin Byron officiating.

Herman Siederer, 94, passed away at the JFK Hospital, Edison, NJ on Monday March 11, 2013. He born in New York City, grew up in Brooklyn and has lived many years in Highland Park, NJ. Herman served in the United States Air Force during World War II. He was employed by David Smith Steel Company of Brooklyn, NY & South Plainfield, NJ as a Steel Fabricator Estimator for many years. Herman retired only ten years ago. Herman was predeceased by his parents Max and Esther (Nerlinger) Siederer, he will be deeply missed by his devoted wife Doris (Orland) Siederer, his loving son Martin Siederer and his wife Francine and daughter Joan and her husband Richard Kaplan, and his cherished grandchildren David, Emily, Ariel, Ethan and Lillian. Interment at Floral Park Cemetery, Deans, (So. Brunswick Twp.), NJ. Memorial Contributions may be made to the Highland Park Rescue Squad or the Hebrew Burial Society, Brooklyn, NY.

High Flight

*"Oh, I have slipped the surly bonds
of earth,
And danced the skies on laughter-
silvered wings;
Sunward I've climbed and joined the
tumbling mirth
Of sun-split clouds - and done a
hundred things
You have not dreamed of -
wheeled and soared and swung
High in the sunlit silence.
Hov'ring there,
I've chased the shouting wind along
and flung
My eager craft through footless halls
of air.
Up, up the long, delirious, burning
blue
I've topped the windswept heights
with easy grace
Where never lark, or even eagle flew
And while with silent, lifting mind
I've trod
The high untrodden sanctity of
space,
Put out my hand, and touched
the face of God*

John Gillespie Magee, Jr



CITIZENS MARKSMANSHIP PROGRAM PRESENTS WWII VETERAN WITH PATRIOT AWARD

U.S. Representative Paul Broun, M.D. (GA-10) recently joined the Citizens Marksmanship Program, to present WWII veteran Lt. Col. Vincent Masters with the Patriot Award.

The Patriot Award is presented to veterans who have demonstrated valor in military service and a continued dedication to his or her fellow Americans after returning from service.

The Patriot Award is commemorated by the presentation of a beautiful antique M1 Garand rifle and certificate.



From right to left: U.S. Congressman Paul Broun, Lt. Col. Vincent Masters, Scott Maddox of the Civilian Marksmanship Program and Mayor Pro-Tern Kathy Hoard



Masters Crew photo with B-17 42-30187 "Lulu Belle" circa 1943

"There I was..." The cartoons of Bob Stevens

A NEW B/6 COMMANDER OF A B-17
WINJS APPROACHING A REAL NA4TY
TARGET FOR THE FIR4-T TIME... y



and FAD BEHIND IN THE &DUBER
STREAM WE HEAR FROM A I£I
JOHN ON PIG Z4TH MISSION...



OFFICER RANKS EXPLAINED



Thinks he has authority.
He doesn't.
Everybody knows it.



Think he's better
than him. But
nobody knows
the difference.



He's in charge.
And makes it up
as he goes along.
We all know it,
but do it anyways.



Thinks he's this guy.
Hides in an
office all day.
Nobody misses
him.



First real rank
achieved by an officer.
He's termed a 'good'
officer if he still
does PT with the men.



Stopped doing PT.
Nobody questions it.



Gives a lot of speeches.
Thinks troops actually
listen and are inspired.
Neither is true.



If you noticed more than one star... you've been
staring too long. Your CSM has already
verbally assaulted you for something you
didn't do because you were there

Dues, Donations and Special Contributions

That time of year is upon us when it is time to pay your dues. If you check your mailing address on this issue of Hardlife Herald, the top line contains a code indicating the status of your membership. The codes are as follows:

A = Associate Member Annual Paying
M = 385th BG Veteran Annual Paying
C = Complimentary Member
FC = Foreign Complimentary Member
L = 385th BG Veteran Life Member
LA = Associate Life Member

If your code is an A or an M, the two digit number following the code indicates the year through which your dues are paid. For all those with a code ending in 13, it is time to renew your membership and send in a dues payment at least for the coming year. Dues are \$35 per year and should be mailed to Chuck Smith, P.O. Box 329, Alpharetta, GA 30009-0329.

Dues payments are an important part of our funding for the continued production of the Hardlife Herald and for expansion and operation of our Internet web site, www.385thbga.com. However, dues alone are proving insufficient to fund these activities. Time is taking its inexorable toll on our veteran members and our membership roster is shrinking accordingly, reducing the amount of dues collected each year. At the same time, nearly half of our members are Life Members who pay no dues at all.

Annual dues payments do not fully cover the cost of producing and distributing the Hardlife Herald. We are looking at ways to reduce Hardlife Herald costs by reducing the number of issues produced each year and by reducing the number of pages per issue. We are also hoping to convince many of you to receive your Hardlife Herald electronically, further reducing our production and delivery costs.

Your Association officers and directors are committed to maintaining an active association for the foreseeable future to preserve, maintain and celebrate the legacy of the thousands who served in the 385th Bomb Group. We are asking your help. Please pay your dues promptly and if you can, please consider making an additional donation. If you are a Life Member or Associate Life Member, please consider making a donation in lieu of dues. And for those who are able, we ask that you consider making a special contribution to help defray the cost of our ongoing operations.

We have already received a few substantial special contributions from generous members to cover the initial web site development and installation costs that have exceeded \$5,000 so far. We will incur additional expenses as we acquire more content and expand the web site into a full electronic archive for the 385th BG Association. If you can, we ask you to consider making a special contribution to help sustain the Association and these important efforts.

And for those of you doing Estate Planning, we ask you to consider a bequest to the 385th Bomb Group Association. You can rest assured that any and all contributions will be used for the preservation of the 385th Bomb Group's legacy.

FEATURED PIN-UP ARTIST

George Brown Petty IV (April 27, 1894 - July 21, 1975) was an American pin-up artist. His pin-up art appeared primarily in Esquire and Fawcett Publications's True but was also in calendars marketed by Esquire, True and Ridgid Tool Company. Petty's Esquire gatefolds originated and popularized the magazine device of centerfold spreads. Reproductions of his work were widely rendered by military artists as nose art decorating warplanes during the Second World War, including the Memphis Belle, known as "Petty Girls".

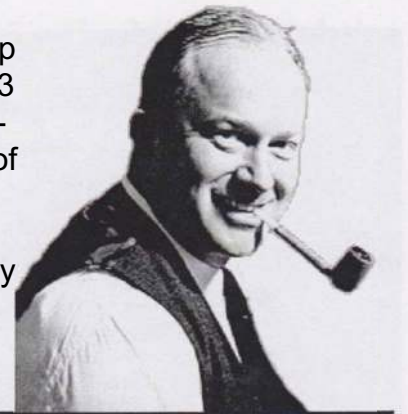
During his high school years, he enrolled in evening classes at Chicago Academy of Fine Arts under the tutoring of Ruth VanSickle Ford, where he taught his own art course, charging classmates \$5.00 per session. He also worked in his father's photo shop where he learned how to use an airbrush. Petty studied art at the Académie Julian with Jean-Paul Laurens and others until 1916, when World War I caused Joseph P. Herrick, ambassador at that time, to order all Americans to return home.

Petty returned to Chicago, and worked as an airbrush retoucher for a local printing company. He was able to establish himself as a freelance artist, painting calendar girls and magazine covers for The Household. By 1926, he was able to open his own studio.

Petty is especially known for "the Petty Girl", a series of pin-up paintings of women done for Esquire from the autumn of 1933 until 1956. Petty frequently depicted these women with the relative lengths of their legs being longer—and the relative sizes of their heads being smaller—than those of his actual models.

Petty appeared as a guest on the popular TV program What's My Line.

Petty died in San Pedro, California, on July 21, 1975.



BEFORE YOU RECYCLE THIS NEWSLETTER...

Please consider donating it to your local School, VFW, or American Legion.

HARDLIFE HERALD

Newsletter of the 385th Bombardment Group
Association



1942 - IMS Great Athfidd - Suffolk, England station 15S - The Mighty Eighth

Volume 30 - Number 3 OCTOBER 2013



385th BGA REUNION - MINNEAPOLIS, MN - October 2013

FOR SUBSCRIPTION INQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:

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Previous issue pictured at left

385th BGA

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2013 Reunion Veterans (L-R): Norma Schulte: Nurse; Walter Schulte: Navigator/POW; John Hyatt: Pilot; Albert Audette: Radio Operator; James Bond: Tail Gunner; Joe Caruso: Radio Operator