

385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) REUNION NEWSLETTER



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GREAT ASHFIELD RAF STATION 155
SUFFOLK, ENGLAND. JUNE 1943 - JUNE 1945

Pres: Dr. Vincent Masters V.P: Frank Marano

Sec'y: John Ford Treas: James Cooper

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Editor: John Ford

TOUR OPERATOR SELECTED!!!!

The Memorial Trip to England contract has been awarded to David Wade Ltd., a Specialist Tour Operator in Felixstowe, England. The Travel Coordinator for the 385th is John C. Ford, Secretary and Editor. The Wade organization is well recommended by USAF personnel in England and by many professional and business organizations in the United States and Europe. His credit standing and performance rating with the major airlines and Barclay's Bank are excellent. In Ipswich, the hotels will be Copdock International, Post Motel and others as needed. The Cambridgeshire in Cambridge, the Stratford Hilton and Swans Nest in Stratford-Upon-Avon and the Holiday Inn - Swiss Cottage in London. Four modern 44 and 50 seat coaches by Mercedes Benz and Plaxton will be available to our Group and when the Group is located in more than one hotel/motel, the coaches will be at the beck and call of the passengers assigned to that coach. The coaches will be with us for the first eight days and the last day of the tour, unless of course, you also decide to take one of the coach trips in the British Isles or to Paris, Brussels and Amsterdam. Each coach will have its own driver and Registered Courier. Both type coaches are full viewing panoramic style and are equipped with AM-FM radio and amplifiers for use by the Couriers. The itinerary as published in the October NEWSLETTER will be followed. For the benefit of those who may not have that copy around,

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MEET THE FIRST PREZ



Ruel Weikert is a "do'er"! Absolutely no doubt about it. He was born in the city of Dayton, Ohio, where he attended elementary and high school before starting work as a toolmaker for an aircraft company. With war looming,

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TRIP (con'td)

it is repeated in this issue. The cost of the trip is \$480.00 plus \$3.00 USA departure tax and \$2.60 English landing tax, for a total of \$485.60 per person for twin or triple bedded rooms. All hotels are first class with private baths. Single supplement is approximately \$7.50 per day, since the tour operator is charged the same price for all rooms. Those who wish to double up will save the supplemental fare. A deposit of \$100.00 per person is due not later than 1 March for all those who have signed up for the trip. An additional \$100.00 is due per person 90 days before the flight, and the balance of \$285.60 per person is due 60 days before departure. It is at this time we must file our loading list with the C.A.B. The aircraft is a Pan Am 707 and departure and return landing will be at New York's JFK International Airport. Since the contract was just awarded this month, the brochures will be mailed out as soon as all accommodations are firm, but not later than 5 May. These brochures will have information on hotels/motels and telephone numbers where you can be reached throughout the tour. About two weeks before departure, I will mail each traveler a Tour Wallet containing maps, special side trips information, auto rental costs, baggage tags and information for checking in at the JFK airport. At the time of going to press, there are 106 persons signed for the trip and approximately 90 persons indicating they wish to go, but need a little more time to be certain. The 707 holds 180 passengers, but I have been assured that extra personnel will be accommodated by the regular airline flight to London. There is no need to worry about overbooking. This NEWSLETTER contains the contracts for those who have signed up. Others, who wish to join the tour are requested to write the Editor for contracts and to return them as soon as possible. Among those who are making the trip are our former Commanding Officer, Colonel George Y. Jumper and his lovely wife Anita. Many of us have not seen the Colonel since that day late in May 1945, when he departed our base at Great Ashfield for reassignment in the ZI. Other good news is that we may be joined on a

few occasions by members of the 94th Bomb Group Memorial Association, who are also contracting with the David Wade organization for the period 6-21 September 1976. They hope to join us at dinner with Friends of the Eighth (FOTE) in Cambridge on Day 4 of our trip. Their Group is in England to establish a permanent Memorial in or near Bury St. Edmunds. For the benefit of those who may have forgotten, the 94th was stationed at Rougham, near Bury St Edmunds, and their tail marking was "A" in the square. We were both assigned to the 4th Air Combat Wing for many months. When the 385th joined them in the 4th Wing, their Commanding Officer was Colonel (later BG) Frederick W. Castle, a good friend of the 385th and the last USAAF airman to be awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor in the ETO. General Castle went down that Christmas Eve while flying lead in a 487th Bomb Group B-17 from Lavenham. With three engines out, the aircraft on fire and full of bombs, the General refused to dump the bombs because he was over Allied troops. Ordering the crew to bail out, he remained with the aircraft until it exploded. If you should visit Lavenham, go into the Swan Pub. There hangs a portrait of General Castle, a gift from the grateful members of the 487th Bomb Group. There are also the names of many airmen inscribed on the walls and paneling. Chances are you may even meet a member of the 94th in the pub. There are plenty of war stories told in this pub. Back in those days we were chesty and muscular, but that's all behind us now. Following is the trip itinerary:

DAY 1. Depart from JFK International Airport at approximately 2000 hour. Open bar and movies.

DAY 2. Arrive Heathrow Airport, London about 0800 hour. Coaches will take the Group to Ipswich to hotels, with stop enroute for coffee. In the afternoon a trip is planned to Bentwaters RAF Station to visit the USAF 81st TFW, or you may use the balance of this day to catch up on "jet lag".

DAY 3. Travel to All Saints Church
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TRIP (Con'td)

in Great Ashfield village for a Memorial Service at the 385th's permanent Memorial Altar. From there we will visit the old base site, where your mind can take its own walk down memory lane. Luncheon is planned with the Lord Mayor of the town of Stowmarket. In the afternoon there will be a coach tour of Suffolk County. Evening has been left free for small group or squadron dinners at Restaurants of your choice.

DAY 4. Travel to Cambridge via Bury St. Edmunds and Newmarket. Afternoon is free to visit Cambridge Market, the Colleges, punting on the Cam, or for a Pub crawl. Evening dinner is planned with Friends of the Eighth (FOTE) and perhaps, the 94th Bomb Group. Among the FOTE members are several historians and writers.

DAY 5. Memorial Services will be conducted by an Air Force Chaplain from a nearby USAF base, at the Cambridge American Memorial Cemetery, 4 miles north of Cambridge. We can then visit the edifices erected on this 30½ acres of hallowed ground. This plot was given to the USA by Cambridge University in honor of those Americans who made the supreme sacrifice.

After lunch, we travel to Stratford-Upon-Avon. The hotels are on the Avon River banks and within walking distance of the Shakespeare Theatre for those who wish to visit or attend a performance. The day and evening are free.

DAY 6. Morning coach tour of Stratford-Upon-Avon, including a visit to Ann Hathaway's Cottage and many other spots of interest. Afternoon and evening free, but there may be a Pub Crawl by coach to pubs of special interest. A one-drink-a-pub chugalug. Many unique pubs are in the vicinity of Stratford.

DAY 7. Depart for London via a visit to Windsor Castle. After arrival and settling into the hotel, the rest of the day is free. Some members have suggested having dinner at the Elizabethan Room, while others prefer the theatre. Tour Attendants will assist in securing reservations and tickets.

DAY 8. Morning coach tour of London to include the "Changing of the Guards", weather permitting. This ends the conducted tour and you are on your own until departure for the USA. Your hotel room and continental breakfast is included for these days in the tour price.

DAY 14. Coaches will take Group to Heath-

row Airport for the return flight to the USA. Estimated take-off time is 1100 hour and estimated time of arrival is 1430 hours EST, 18 September 1976.

SPECIAL FIVE DAY TOURS

DAYS 9 THRU 13

TOUR #1. Coach trip around England, Wales and Scotland, to include Stonehenge, Bath, Bristol, Southern Wales, the Lake District and Edinburgh. The supplemental cost per person is \$40. Your hotel room and continental breakfast is included in your regular fare.

TOUR #2 Day 9 morning coach to Dover (see the White Cliffs), channel ferry to Calais, France. Arrive Paris late afternoon and evening free in Paris. Day 10 has morning free in Paris for coach tour, but you are on your own for the afternoon and evening. Day 11 is a morning drive to Brussels, Belgium, with afternoon and evening free.

Day 12 has the morning free for shopping in Brussels. In the afternoon, you will drive into Holland, stopping at a cheese farm enroute.

Day 13 morning is free to shop, but in the afternoon the coaches will return to London via channel ferry arriving at your hotel about 2330 hours. All hotels and continental breakfasts have already been included in your regular fare.

THESE ARE RATHER HECTIC BUT COMPREHENSIVE TOURS, BUT THEY ARE A REAL BARGAIN.

* * * * *

DECEASED

H. H. Saunders Homestead, Pa. 1970

HOSPITALIZED

Surgery - Edward A. Elbert
3978 Irma Shores Drive
Orlando, FL, 32807
Coronary- William L. Adamson 1/29/76
P.O. Box 1542
Huntsville, AL, 35807

TAKE TIME TO DROP A BUDDY A LINE!

RUEL WEIKERT (Con'td from page 1)

and with his sights set on the USAAF, Ruel attended Dayton College at night-four hours every night and five nights a week. At the end of six months, he went to the Recruiting office, passed the various tests and enlisted as an Aviation Cadet in November 1941. Pre-flight at Santa Ana, Primary at Visalia and Basic Training at Merced. About this time, Ruel prevailed upon his home town sweetheart, Mary Lindley, to come to Merced and take on a new title. They were married in Merced on 5 September 1942 and from that day, Mary was with him until he departed for overseas. His Advanced Training was at Stockton and California had turned out a future B-17 pilot of the highest caliber. The B-17 training was completed at Hobbs, New Mexico, and off to Ephrata, Washington, went the Weikert's. Here Ruel selected his crew and shortly thereafter, the 385th gained one helluva air crew when Ruel and crew were assigned to the 551st Squadron at Great Falls, Montana. New aircraft were acquired and final combat training was a real "quickie". In early June 1943, the 551st flew to Kearney, Nebraska, and thence overseas to Great Ashfield, arriving in late June. When Ruel and his crew finished the big 25 missions in January 1944, he had completed six months of the worst aerial warfare in the history of the 8th Army Air Force. The average combat of a B-17 crew was only 11 missions. He had been to Regensburg on the shuttle mission of 17 August 43, to Schweinfurt, Marienburg and many other targets. His tour ended, Ruel was then ordered to the 4th Air Combat Wing, and from there he was transferred to the 3rd Air Division, but flying a desk did not fit into Ruel's plans so he volunteered for a second tour of duty with the 385th Bomb Group Operations. It was June 1944 when he returned and by the time VE Day arrived, he had completed 17 missions of his second tour. After a 30 day leave back in the ZI, he was sent to the Reassignment Center at Sioux Falls. VJ Day came shortly after that and he left the service. Mary and Ruel decided Indianapolis, Indiana, was the place to settle down. He became a Manufacturer's Representative for cast-

ings, springs and filters- a position he holds to this day. One day in September 1956, John Nedjedlic, now deceased, Deb Wagner, Vince Masters, Frank Walls, Wally Olewnink, Rudy Cunat and Bob Lambert, met in Cleveland with their wives. It was a very happy get-together and they decided to try for a 385th reunion in Pittsburgh in 1957. Out went 1000 letters. About 50 percent were returned without a forwarding address and only about 225 persons replied. 51 members with most of their wives met in Pittsburgh, Pa., in August, and at that reunion Ruel was elected the First President. Serving with him was Frank Walls as Secretary and John Nedjedlic as Treasurer. When John passed away, Jim Cooper was named Treasurer. Ruel remained as President until the 4th Reunion in Cleveland, when Frank Walls was elected. At the Fifth Reunion in Atlanta, Ga., on 26-27 April 1975, Dr. Vincent Masters was elected as President. Ruel was presented with a large photograph of Brigadier General Elliott Vandevanter, in appreciation of his long hours of hard work that helped to bring 232 people together in Atlanta at the reunion. Mary shared many hours with him in bringing this group back to-gether. They have one son, Lindley, who will be 25 this coming October 20th. He is a graduate of Xavier College, Cincinnati, Ohio. All of us who have been lucky enough to get back into the activities of the 385th Bombardment Group owe a real debt of gratitude to the Weikert's. I've said it before, but I'll say it again - that Ruel Weikert is a do'er. There's absolutely no doubt about it!

GROUP HISTORY INFO

Jim Cooper, our Secretary, reports that only 37 persons have ordered the reproduction copy of the 385th Bomb Group History. It is essential that we receive at least 50 more requests and partial payments before the Committee can approve going to press. In the meantime, prices are going up and we have no idea how long the present bid price will hold. Dig down, all you men who have made inquiries. NOW..NOW.

NEW BY - LAWS

Our Official Name is now the 385TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) REUNION ASSOCIATION, or 385th BGRA for short. At an organizational meeting in Atlanta, Georgia, on 11 February 1976, the originators of the Reunion Group met with the elected officers for the 1977 Reunion. A Constitution and By-Laws, meeting the provisions of Section 501(c)(19) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 and CAB's regulations concerning properly constituted organizations, was read, ratified and adopted by a unanimous vote. Copies are being reproduced and will be mailed to all members. There is a provision for amendment and for proxy voting, as well as provision that no member or elected officer of this Association may receive salary, wages, or any other reimbursement for travel, food, or lodging, while engaged in business for this Association. Several of us traveled over 800 miles to attend, but the bulk of those present were selected and invited due to the close proximity (200-300) in miles. When you receive your copy, you are requested to study its provisions, and if you desire to have amendments, please put them in writing and mail them to your Secretary. They will be discussed and presented to the full membership at the 1977 Reunion in Las Vegas. It is a tribute to those who started this Group and brought it so far!



385th aircraft named after the most beautiful WAC in the ETO. High Flying WAC!

385TH BGRA NEWSLETTER
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Camp Springs, MD, 20031



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

FIRST CLASS MAIL