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"The Mighty Eighth Reunion Group"

385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

GREAT ASHFIELD — SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

STATION 155

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SEE YOU
IN THE
SPRINGS
IN '83

WHEN IT
IS
SPRINGTIME
IN
THE
ROCKIES

NEWSLETTER

Volume IX, No.1

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Editor: Paul R. Schulz



the Antlers

THE ANTLERS HOTEL stands in the midst of downtown Colorado Springs' exciting hub, welcoming the 385th BGMA with friendly hospitality. Though contemporary in design, today's Antlers Hotel is rich in tradition, boasting a 100-year reputation as "Little London's" premiere downtown hotel. There are over 275 guest rooms, each offering a spectacular unobstructed view - with Pikes Peak straight to the west and to the east lies the entire cityscape. The elegant, comfortable accommodations have repeatedly earned the coveted Mobil Four Star Award of Excellence.

The Antlers Hotel is truly a "landmark of excellence" in Colorado Springs, as historical as the town itself. Like the city, The Antlers has evolved from the gold rush days when it was the luxury hotel of the Old West, to the modern, prestigious hotel of today. It stands on the original site, at the foot of Pikes Peak.

General William Jackson Palmer, founder of Colorado Springs, built the first Antlers and derived its name from his large collection of deer and elk trophies housed within. Opened on June 1, 1883, The Antlers soon became a famous resort.

The Antlers enjoyed an illustrious reputation for many years but despite a major restoration in the 1950's, the grand old building was showing its age. By 1960, the necessary renovation was not economically feasible. H. Chase Stone, president of First National Bank, then proposed developing a business center on the Antlers' land.

Although Colorado Springs residents raised a furor over demolishing such a great historic landmark, the old Antlers saw its last guest check out on September 20, 1964.

When the new Antlers Hotel was ready for business in March, 1967, the public was more than satisfied with the modern structure - it had lost none of the warmth and elegance of its forebearers.

Reminiscences of an Exec ED STERN

Looking back, I'd have to say that my Air Force career could be used as a good example of the old saying, "it isn't what you know, it's who you know that counts".

After basic training, for example, I was assigned to an AF unit because one of my home-town buddies worked in Base Records. He pulled my card from a group headed for Infantry and put it into what he figured was a better assignment - Geiger Field and the AF. And when I was assigned to my first Unit up there, the CO turned out to be an old University classmate. (I didn't remember him, he didn't remember me, but he had seen it on the Classification card.)

He had the First Sergeant give me the full treatment of KP, Guard Duty, Latrine orderly etc, to let me know what it was really like, and then he asked if I wanted to apply for OCS. And when did I next run into the head of the OCS Board that approved me? Good old Col. Goldman who was Group Exec of the 385th when I was assigned there after 6 months as a Base Officer in Ephrata!

For that matter, when I got to Ephrata, my old unit was stationed there, and all of my old enlisted buddies were around to wise me up on all the things that were wrong with the place. And what did the Base Commander decide to do with a new 2nd Lt. that he didn't need? He asked me to dig around and write him a report on what could be done to improve conditions at the Base-----and I was always good at writing reports.

My brand new wife had been a school teacher, and who do we meet but a fellow North Dakotan who was Supt. of Schools there-----so she ended up teaching school and making more money than I did.

I didn't know how good we had it, so I asked my CO if I was going to fight the whole rest of the War in Ephrata. A week later I found myself reporting to Col. Van who proceeded to tell me to get rid of my car (I didn't have one), to send my wife home (I didn't), and to get ready for a rugged war in the South Pacific where he had just come from.

When the Squadron Exec of the 550th got in some kind of difficulty, my old guardian angel, Col. Goldman, probably wanted to prove that his Board had been right in sending me off to OCS. So-----for all you guys who have been wondering since 1943, that's how I happened to end up as 550th Exec. TS to all of you-----someone had to be lucky!

Come to think of it, I almost didn't make it overseas. Remember, you ground-pounders, that Troop Train from Great Falls to Kilmer? Fordyce (Group Photo) and I went looking for an ice cream cone in Billings (the rest of you found a bar close to the Depot). We came back to find the train pulling out 15 minutes early. After a wild taxi ride that took all our money (probably \$15), we caught up to the train waiting for a freight at a siding. We slunk on the front end to a few catcalls and made it to the back of the train where my old friend, Col. Goldman, the Train Commander, sat complaining about why the train was sitting so long at the siding.

Two years, 2 months, and 4 days at Great Ashfield had to be about the best duty a guy could pull during a War, although we Ground-pounders had to have an uncomfortable feeling as we sat there safe and comfortable while a great group of flyers were out getting shot at and shot down with us getting the same 'battle stars' as they earned.

Every one of our 385th Reunions has brought back memories-----some fond, some sad, some hilarious. It's been heart-warming to visit with a number of couples who have reminded me of what I said when they were asking for permission to marry----- but I keep wondering about some of those whose marriages didn't work out. What are they saying?

And whatever happened to good old Sgt. Touvell, the guy who kept our Site winning those "Best Site awards" every inspection because he knew how to get the yellow stains out of the urinals?

He also knew how to "midnite-requisition" some extra coal from the 549th coal pile, while their Duty Sergeant was out stealing it from a British stockpile of World War 1 coal

that he had discovered. Marano has never forgiven us for that!

Touvell also managed to widen the concrete on the road in to our Site with concrete the British were using to increase the thickness of our runways. Col. Lewis, the Group CO, found out about it after the concrete was well 1-hardened--(Marang, did you tell him?) and I would hate to tell you some of the words that I found an officer and gentleman like Col. Lewis knew.

It was just at the last Reunion that I learned for sure who burned the hay-stack on VE Day. Young, you did not go to London the day before it burned-----it had to be the day after!

Who could forget Cap. Robinson, the MP officer? After his 4th or 5th visit to our site accusing some of our men of doing things that we all know they could not possibly have done, Col. Van called me into his office and told me that if I couldn't get the 550th to join the Group, he'd damn well find someone who could. I don't think I ever got proper credit for protecting our fine, clean cut, upstanding group of young paragons of virtue from the vicious attacks that were being made on them!

Remember when we had to pick up all the officers' 45s because we had a Lt. who liked to lie on his bed and shoot holes in strategic spots of the pin-up girls pictures he had on the ceiling above his bed? The next day, what happens but a Wing Inspection (they always came to our site because it was the best). This guy found 50 or 60 pistols lying loose in our Supply Room, just waiting for some German parachutist to come in and grab them. Ammunition, too, come to think of it. How I survived that one I'll never know---they probably couldn't find anyone willing to take the demotion.

How about that 200 Mission party when one of our fine young officers tried liquor for the first time, no doubt. He staggered down the main aisle to where the dignitaries were sitting watching some British actresses display their wares, threw his arms around General Jimmy Doolittle and pulled him over backwards. Col. Van must have warned Col. Jumper, because all he said was, "Stern, only in the 550th could it have happened".

The longer ago it gets, the fonder the memories become. That's what makes those Reunions so interesting. And, in spite of some 36 years since we disbanded, it makes a civilian life seem rather prosaic, in spite of a fine family business, 5 kids, 14 grandchildren, and a rich enjoyment of life as it is lived in North Dakota.

And whenever the news-letter runs out of material, I'll wri te again.

Texas Raiders By David Framer

I never thought that my triple by-pass open heart surgery would eventually lead to my riding in a B-17 after approximately 37 years. Here is how it happened.

Before I was wheeled into the operating room last February, (1981), I was approached by representatives of Channel 4, KMOX-TV, St. Louis, for permission to photograph my surgery, part of it to be used by reporter Al Wiman for a medical series. I signed the release, and while I was still in the hospital the following week I watched the program and saw my own open heart surgery. After the program was over, I talked to Al Wiman on the phone and the next day he came to visit me.

Al belongs to a model airplane club and when he found that I had flown in B-17s, he expressed a strong interest in World War II planes, and suggested that he come to my house when I was feeling stronger and tape some of my memorabilia and do an interview about my flying in World War II.

About two months later the taping and interview were held and shown that night on TV. He also used scenes from "12 O'Clock High" to illustrate and dramatize the interview.

Around the 14th of August, Al called me and asked if I would like to see a B-17, and when I said he must be kidding, he told me that the Confederate Air Force was flying in a B-17 to a local airport. It would be followed by a B-24, a B-29, P-51, AT-6s, and other WWII planes for a weekend ground show. He said if I could be there when the B-17 arrived, he would like to do another interview for his TV program. He suggested that I wear my old flight jacket.

I was there bright and early on Tuesday morning. The B-17 "Texas Raiders" had already arrived. The crew was going to take her up so the TV camera people could take pictures in flight, and they asked if I would like to ride along with them. You know what my answer was!

It was a thrilling flight, all low level, for about half an hour. After we landed, I had another interview with Al which was shown on TV the next day. Again Al used scenes from "12 O'clock High", and also pictures of my crew (Capt. Jim Staber's crew) in front of "Round Trip Jack", taken the end of 1943 in England.

Another member of our 385th Bomb. Group, Mario Colantino, from the St. Louis area, was also at the airport and went up on the same flight with us. He too was interviewed by another TV station reporter. He said that the flight was a great thrill for him also.

The three-day exhibit of the Confederate Air Force was viewed by several hundred thousand people and caused great traffic tie-ups on the highways leading to the airport. People expressed a tremendous interest in the WWII airplanes and parents brought their youngsters to see the planes that made history.

Base Transportation Charles Smith

We have all assumed for most of our lives that we had all the transportation we needed or could use. This has been very apparent to us since the oil shortage a few years ago when we first experienced gasoline lines and shortages that kept some of us from traveling for business or pleasure. This same problem existed early in 1941 right on through World War II. Our present transportation problems are mainly in transitioning over to smaller cars with gas savings or diesel engines. American auto manufacturers are just now meeting and solving this problem.

The first assignment I was given when reporting for duty at the 549th Bomb Squadron was as Squadron Supply and Transportation Officer. I soon discovered that not only was it a problem to get routine squadron supplies but also necessary vehicles. This was my toughest problem for the rest of the war. We were fortunate enough to get our 549th Squadron jeeps and trucks immediately at Geiger Field and were surprised when Major Bunting of Group Medical said he could not get his jeeps. A signed requisition and a little persistence soon corrected this problem.

549th Squadron Supply and Transportation went fairly smooth at Geiger Field and Glasgow, Montana for the bulk of our stateside training. We were quite surprised when we arrived at the East coast departure center and the supply officers were told we had only 24 hours to re-supply our personnel with all woolen clothes. I immediately asked the question if the supply department would be open all night and was told it would not. This would have made it impossible to accomplish this feat and since the briefing officer seemed reluctant to call the base commander at home (8:30 PM) I took the initiative to do so and he agreed to keep the supply division open for the next 24 hours. I also got the impression that when stupid orders like this were given in the future, that some pre-planning would be done. As those of you who went over on the Queen Elizabeth remember, we were at Camp Kilmer for two full weeks.

Lt. Dentinger and I happened to be appointed advance loading officers for the 385th Bomb Group on the Queen Elizabeth at the New York docks. The dock workers were

dropping our crates from the army truck beds to the concrete docks. After getting the run-around from four dock workers, I used a little more persuasive argument to stop their dropping the crates. Needless to say, I was glad we were leaving the next day. Lt. Dentinger took one squadron of black troops on to the boat and after taking them down eight or ten decks, getting them settled with full details and instructions, asked them if they had any questions. One man rolled his eyes around and asked, "Lt., is we above de water line or is we below de water line?" They were below the water line as were a lot others.

The Queen Elizabeth was quite large but there were 22 of us 2nd Lts. in one small state room. We had to stand sideways in the one aisle to take off our clothes or put them on. The food was good and the white bread we had here was the last we were to have for 2 1/4 years until we loaded on the same boat to come back to the United States. We will pick up at this point in a later issue if you want to read some of the later events of group transportation.

Mail Call

George Behl;

When I left the 385th in June 1949 for a 30 day stateside R s. R, I received a typed list of my missions. In comparing this list with the published history list I note that some dates and missions don't match.

I was the tail gunner in the number 2 position following the General Wilson "Flugendeforte". On March 6, 1944 I saw the aircraft disintegrate and explode after being hit by flak and have never forgotten the four chutes and bright flash of that tragedy. We also took flak that day just before General Wilson's plane was hit. The pilot that day was George Czewinski, Julien Blackhard, flight engineer, Swarthout was waist gunner, Glen Gieson was ball turret gunner and Smith was the radio operator.

Ed. note: George, if you will send me the names and dates of the combat missions that don't match, I will try and find out the correct names and dates.

Ed Huntzinger, 388th Bomb. Gp. Assn., Sec/Treasurer;

Your Oct. 15, 1981 newsletter received yesterday and have read it all.

I see that you will be holding your 1983 reunion at the Antlers Hotel in Colorado Springs. We held our Annual Reunion at the Antlers in 1978 during August and you could not have picked a better place. When we were at the Antlers, they went all out to make our stay one to be remembered and I know they will do the same for you.

Our reunion goes from Thursday to Sunday but we always have a Reunion Special on Wednesday for the early-birds. In Colorado Springs this was a trip to Central City followed by a party at Coor's in Golden.

On Friday we had a trip to the Air Force Academy with lunch at the Officers Mess, tour of the Academy and to NORAD. On Friday evening we had a Chuck Wagon dinner at the Flying "W" Ranch.

Ed's note: Thanks for the kind words. It's great to hear about the Springs area.

Charlie DuShane;

Several years ago, mini reunions were discussed and a few were held. Since that time, interest has waned. How about generating some interest and lets get the mini reunion program off and running again. Such reunions don't have to be too large. Four or five fellows and their wives, pick a city or town in a central location. Spend a weekend away from home, have a good time. After the reunions get started in all parts of the country - you would have the nucleus for obtaining the thinking of all members, i.e; future group reunions, workers etc. I have seen these reunions with other organizations mushroom into unbelievable help to all. Crew reunions also.

Editor's note: This is a great suggestion. We need a few people to get the ball rolling. Since this is the beginning of a new year, how about it? Who will be the first to hold a mini-reunion and who will be the second? Let me know your plans.

Confessions of Don Hale's First Wife (Dallas)

June 1943 to July 1947

(385th BG, 548 BS, B-17G, "Maiden America", Waist (sometimes tail)gunner, Great Ashfield, Station 155, Suffolk, England)

Don and I met at an "after graduation" party (high school) in June 1943. He had graduated from Western Military Academy, and was waiting to be drafted (no enlistments accepted by then) while working in the family hardware store.

I had graduated from Wood River Community High School, and had applied for a Job at Western Cartridge Company, and was about to start in the Cap Department, on shift work.

When we met, we took an immediate dislike to each other (love-hate?), but that didn't last long. He and I were dating others, but that, too, didn't last long. By the end of the first week, we were dating each other.

One month later, we were officially engaged! (due to either a proposal, or a proposition, on the front steps of the Baptist Church). No definite date for the wedding was set, as we did not know when Don would be drafted, or where that would take him.

That summer, he would meet me after work, sometimes at midnight, and we would go to the local drive-in for something to eat, then park in front of my house and "talk" until the porch light went on (18 wasn't as old then as it is now), then we would say goodnight.

Don finally got his "Greetings" (as I had earlier, with a funny name like Dallas) and was to report to Camp Grant, Illinois for his physical in September. He passed, and was told that he didn't want to be in the infantry, but should try for Air Cadet. He agreed, and was sent to Amarillo, Texas for basic, and found they had an abundance of cadets, but had need of gunners, so after surviving basic (a snap for a military school graduate), he was sent to Kingman, Arizona for gunnery training.

While he was having all this fun, I was back home, living with my parents, and was by this time working in the Analytical Lab in the Powder Mill section of Western Cartridge Company (now Olin). We analyzed the powder that went into the ammunition that eventually went to war with you guys of the Eighth Air Force. For recreation I did what all of us who were left behind did, spent our time with each other, and waited for letters.

In March of 1944 Don finished gunnery school, received a two week delay in route to Plant Park, at Tampa, Florida, and came home. The first thing we decided was to get married - and we did - on the first day of spring, March 21, 1944, in the Baptist Parsonage in Jerseyville, Illinois, where my parents had been married 27 years before.

To this day, I am certain that nothing Don faced during the war, or after, terrified him half as much as that ceremony. We feared he would pass out. But he didn't, and recovered from his fright in time to enjoy our three day honeymoon in St. Louis.

When his two weeks were up he caught his train to Florida, and I went back to my Job at the defense plant for two weeks- when I took a leave of absence and followed him, never to return to my job.

That summer of 1944 in Tampa, with Don being by then at MacDill Field and coming by ferry across Tampa Bay, when he could beg, borrow, or steal a pass, to our room with kitchen privileges, plus a sleeping porch; was our time to learn to know each other, and Don's time to learn to forge the return time on his passes when he overslept. It was also my first time to cook full meals, and they were terrible! Dessert I could do, except for pie, but entrees were disasters.

Somehow, Don managed to survive my culinary efforts, and we had a wonderful time, oblivious of things to come.

In September of 1944, Don had a ten day leave, prior to going overseas. So we came home, and spent time with our relatives, and broke the news that I was "enceinte".

We were very happy, as we had planned it, but the news was less than exciting to my Mother, who wasn't ecstatic at the news her 19 year old daughter was to be a mother, and the father-to-be was on his way to war, leaving her with a \$10,000 life insurance policy (a fortune!).

When Don's leave was up, in the face of much opposition, I returned to Florida with him, for however long we would have together, perhaps for the last time.

This time together turned out to be one week! Then Don and his crew were sent to Savannah, Georgia (a little bird told me), a staging area, where the crew would pick up their new 8-17 and fly it to wherever they were going.

Still not to be denied, brave, pregnant, 19 years old, world traveler that I was, I took the fourth section of the bus to Savannah, leaving Tampa at 12:30 A.M., which traversed the back routes through Florida, and it was a local, stopping a hundred times, including when we hit the cow. We arrived in Savannah early in the morning. Now what? At the bus station, where I left my luggage, they directed me to Travelers Aid. They in turn notified the Red Cross that I was seeking my husband at Hunter Field, and found me a sleeping room. After taking the room (by now it was noon), I took a taxi back to the bus station for my luggage. When I returned, guess who was sitting on the front porch? DON! The phone inside was ringing and it was the Red Cross telling me that they could not find my husband.

He explained - they had paged him, telling where I was, and he took off, not returning their page. At any rate, to this day I am grateful to them.

During the week that followed, the crew remained at Hunter Field, and Don had maybe three passes. Then, very early one morning, a mysterious voice on the phone told me they were taking off - for somewhere - soon. At 6:00 A.M. I saw them fly over--and away.

Somehow, I can't really remember the trip, being heart-broken and nauseous. I returned by bus to East Alton, Illinois, and waited, and waited.

The mail was sporadic. I would hear nothing for a while, and then get 14 letters in one day. Don wrote twice a day, one Air Mail letter and 1 V-Mail letter, trusting that one or the other would get through. And they did, eventually. He kept \$5 each month from his pay for cigarettes, and sent the rest home. With this, and my \$50 per month allotment, I started a savings account, for when he came home. I lived some of the time with my parents, and some of the time with Don's brother and his wife. Don's Dad bought us a bedroom set, our first furniture. Somehow, I got through that bad winter of '44-'45. During this time my main project was to resist the attempts of relatives to name my baby! The most pressure was to name him (that he would be a boy was never in doubt) for a wealthy uncle, which I resisted day and night-thinking that no amount of money could pay my child for going through life with a name like that! I still believe it.

In spite of my plan that the baby be born on our first anniversary, Donald P. Hale, Jr. was born at 7:30 A.M., March 24, 1945, no less welcome because he had blown my timetable. He was a delight then, as now. It was he and I together, no matter what else befell us, not knowing that Don had flown his 31st and last mission on March 22, to Rattigen, Germany.

Son Donnie and I waited, and on May 24, Don arrived home, by way of the l'lie De France to New York, thence by train to Camp Kilmer, New Jersey, then to Fort Sheridan, Illinois by train via Canada, thence by train home to Alton, Illinois for a 30 day leave, and to see his son, and name-sake, for the first time.

We then had a ten day R S R in Miami Beach (Bless the Army Air Force!), and Don was assigned to Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama, while he accumulated the balance of his 85 points (he had 83) for discharge.

I accompanied him to Montgomery, then went home to get Don, Jr., and we returned to Alabama to stay until Don was Discharged, in September, 1945, and we returned home to Alton, where he went back to work in his family hardware store, and we lived with his Dad, who was rattling around alone in a ten room house.

So we thought it was over—but not yet!

In October Don became quite ill, with what was diagnosed as pneumonia. After 53 penicillin shots, when he had not responded, the medics looked further, and decided he had tuberculosis. Which he did.

So there we were, he was ill, we did not know how seriously, unable to work, and we had Don, Jr. This may have been our lowest point.

Don had to be immediately isolated, and put to bed, while he awaited apace in the nearby tuberculosis sanitarium. In January 1946 he was admitted to the sanitarium and was sentenced to six months flat on his back—no argument. A tough situation for a twenty year old - but he was wise enough, and courageous enough, to comply.

He survived the first six months (some didn't) and then a new doctor arrived that autumn, with a newer treatment, artificial pneumothorax, in which they artificially collapsed the affected portion of the lung with - air! They injected 500cc of air between the rib cage and lung twice a week, putting that portion at rest and allowing it to heal. The first good result was that his tests indicated that he was no longer contagious! Eventually, the lung healed. In July of 1947, one and one half years later, he was released, not cured, but arrested. He was allowed to work for a half a day only, until fully recovered.

So ends the "Confessions" of Don Hale's First Wife (he calls me that to keep me on my toes, so he says), of the period before, during, and immediately after the "War to end all wars", up to the time of the resumption, or really the beginning of our normal lives. We finally had our own home, and got to live together at last!

For anyone interested, the sequel to these "Confessions" will be forthcoming, upon request, entitled "The Rest of our Lives, So Far", and would cover the years from 1974 to 1981, the arrival of second son, Rand, and other exciting events.

To sum up, I freely "Confess" that I felt then, as now, that ours was, and is, "THE LOVE AFFAIR OF THE CENTURY".

(To be continued)

..SUNDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1981 She Atlanta Journal OP COVSTITITIO* . 25-A

Atlantan tries to save historic B-17 bomber

Yesterday's heroine almost processed into tomorrow's aluminum siding

By Joe Brown
Constitution Staff Writer

MEMPHIS, Tenn. - The Memphis Belle alts dilapidated, but cherished, in a remote section of the airport at the Tennessee dty whose name it bears.

"I love that airplane and so do thousands of ether people," declared Richard Valley, a telephone company employee in Atlanta, who spends bis spare time these days boosting the Memphis Belle Memorial Association.

"It is the only existing B-17 bomber that saw combat in World War II. And it was the first B-17 ever to complete 25 bombing missions over Nazi targets in Europe with its crew' Intact At that time, the casualty rate for combat air crewmen was actually higher percentage-wise than front-line infantry soldiers," Valley said.

Valley and other association members are trying to raise 32.5 million Jo restore the aircraft to mint condition and,bniM a raanm la Memphis to permanently boose IL

"This plane is a piece of aviation history," he said. "Twenty years from now there won't be any of these airplanes ex-

cept in museums. Toe museum is not peing built as a memorial to war, it's being built to preserve history," be said.

During its bomb runs — between Nov. 7, 1942 and May 17, 1943 — the aircraft, manufactured by Boeing and based in England, was torn repeatedly by enemy anti-aircraft, and fighter fire. At different times, over the seven months it took to complete its tour, virtually every part of the plane, except the fuselage, was shot away and replaced.

At the end of that period, the aircraft and its crew were declared heroes, and after a sendoff by the king and queen of England, were brought back to the United States for a celebrity tour to push the sale of war bonds.

But following three months as the nation's darling, the Memphis Belle was edged out of the spotlight. The B-29 Superfortress was replacing the B-17 Flying Fortress as the nation's major bomber.

So the Memphis Belle vanished from public view.

However, in 1945 a reporter for a Memphis newspaper, who was on vacation, toured the military "bone yard" for old aircraft in Altus, Okla., and stumbled across the faded, camouflage-painted

aluminum carcass ot-ihe once-famous Memphis Belle. And, vacation or not, there was no way to pass up writing an "Oh-How-Have-The-Mighty-Fallea" article about yesterday's heroine on her way to being processed into tomorrow's bouse siding.

The piece, recounting the past glories and current bard times of the plane set off patriotic rumblings in Memphis substantial enough to shake loose 5350 - the Air Force's asking price for the surplus Flying Fortress. And a team of Memphians went to Altus to make the derelict ready to fly "home."

MBMA members contend that the battle-battered, old survivor murt have sensed what was at stake because when she got up for her test flight she performed so well the crew just took a heading for Memphis and arrived without incident.

For the next 22 years, the bomber sat on a cement pedestal outside the Army National Guard facility in Memphis.

As the decades passed, and the World War II fighting veterans developed arthritis and last their clutch on the public's imagination, the Memphis Belle, seemed to mirror their plight.

Her paud peeled. Vamurfs troJe Ur windows and wrote obscenities on her wings and sides. Thieves toted off virtually every part that wasn't welded or riveted down. And birds took to nesting in her nooks and crannies.

In 1972, Memphis businessman Frank Donofrio decided the historic relic deserved a better fate than serving as a depository for birds. Initially, he couldn't get anyone else interested, so he just declared himself "the Memphis Belle Committee" and kept looking for friends.

Three years later, the Memphis Be »e Memorial Association, Inc., a non-profit corporation came into existence.

At that point it was discovered that the paper work that sold the plane to the city for 3350 had never been finalized. Ownership reverted back to the U.S. Air Force, which placed the bomber under the jurisdiction of the U.S. Air Force Museum, which in turn transferred it to the MBMA

However, three stipulations were part of the transfer The bomber must be kept in good repair it must be placed on display to the public; and, due to its historical value, it must never fly again.

It now sits at the Memphis Area Vocational Training School

MEMPHIS BELLE

MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION, INC.

1474 N. Graham-Memphis, Tennessee 38108
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Life Membership \$100

Your contribution can help enshrine World War II's most famous aircraft, the USAF B-17F "Memphis Belle." The Association is non-profit, and all contributions are tax-exempt. Thank you.

The above article was submitted by Charles Edelstein.If you can help please send your contributions to: Memphis Belle Memorial Association,Inc.1474 N. Graham-Memphis,Tenn. 38108,Post Office Box,1942.Memphis.Ten.38101.

Mail Call

Jim Young, 714 Broadway, McKees Rock, PA, 15138

Just a note to let you know I now have 5A9th, 551st and Group HQ patches. I still need the 548th and 550th insignia. I will still trade a group history reprint for a Squadron patch. Would very much like to find a copy of the 93rd Combat Wing History and the 493rd Bomb Group History. If anyoneYhas any information about these histories please let me know.

Homer L. "Moe" Jones

Demetrio A. Apodaca or Duke as we called him in the photo lab, passed away on Sept.10, 1981. Duke was a very versatile photographer. He was interested in Public Relations Photography with Earl Mazo and Goldie. He then became interested in Aerial Photography and was excellent. His antics with John "Tex" Mason added amusement to the laboratory.

He later was a Captain and instructor in the Field Artillery. He was in politics and served as Mayor of Norwalk, California. Duke was also very successful in the insurance and real estate business.

I visited him in Norwalk in March, 1981. He was suffering from leukemian and was unable to drive a car but he looked like a million dollars.

Editor's note: We wi11 all miss Duke very much.

Looking Back Paul Schulz

The accompanying article and photographs were submitted by Marty Girson. Thirty nine years ago I would have never believed that I would be writing an article such as this. The days at Great Ashfield were the days of our youth. We fought hard and enjoyed life as best we could. Today we look back, reminisce, tell a few stories and in general forget all the bad times and only relive the good times.

The first of November I received my copy of the "Afterburner", a USAF News publication for retired personnel. Buried in the middle of the bulletin was an article entitled "More VA News". In perusing the article, the following facts came to light. Quote "The average age of U.S. military veterans continues to rise as the total number of veterans increases. The largest block of veterans, the 12.4 million World War II vets, are about 60 years of age, while the 521,000 remaining WWI group average about 85 years." unquote This caused me to sit, think and ponder. How many of our fellow 385 BGMA members fall in the category of 70 plus years? Quite a few. As the accompanying article implies, we were all young, most in our twenties, some in their teens. Many of our comrades were in their late thirties and one of our gunners. Pappy Cole, was 49. What has this to do with today? Simple, most of us are senior citizens, some are very senior citizen:

The 1983 reunion in Colorado Springs may be the last time that we shall see an old friend and comrade. I urge each and every member to make plans now to attend.

The 1972 reunion stands out in my mind, not because I attended but because I did not attend. I had been ill for several weeks but had been pronounced fit by the flight surgeon and returned to duty. Prior to my illness I had made my reservations to attend the reunion. So off I went to the airport. However, just before boarding the plane, I suffered a recurrence of my illness and was rushed

to the hospital. During the course of my military career, I had seen General Vandevanter many times. This would have been the last time, but a quirk of fate said no.

See you in the Spring, WHEN IT IS SPRINGTIME IN THE ROCKIES.

Prez Sez

The response to the last newsletter and our computer billings has been just short of incredible! Several new life members have been added to our rolls and so many of our members have paid their dues that our treasurer, John Pettenger, has suddenly become un-retired. John's local postman, and mine, are beginning to complain, in a good-natured manner, that they should receive a bonus for all the additional mail that we are receiving.

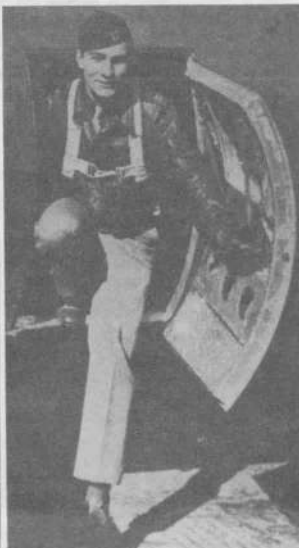
The Board wishes to thank all the members who participated. John says "Keep all those letters with CHECKS coming in."



'Kindergarten' Fliers

Somewhere in England there is a Flying Fortress base that is known as the 'Kindergarten Station.' That's because the base is manned by young men, not one of the officers being beyond the age of 30. The commanding officer is a young man of 26 and the "baby" is a lad of 20. But in the air, they are veterans; have been on many bombing missions over Europe.

YOUNG VETERANS AT THE CONTROLS. Here a formation of Fortresses from the "Kindergarten Station" roar over the English countryside on the way to bomb Europe.



BABY. Above, this is Capt. Ivan Klohe of San Francisco whose 20 years make him the youngest officer at the base. He pilots a Fortress and is a squadron leader.



BOSS OF THE BASE. Recently some of the big Allied chiefs visited the bomber base. Here you see the 26-year-old commanding officer, Lt. Col. Elliott Vandevanter (center) with General Lee (left) and General Ira Eaker (back to camera).

JUST WHEN YOU THINK YOU ARE FINALLY GOING TO MAKE ENDS MEET, SOMEBODY MOVES THE ENDS.

More '81 Reunion News

The editor must apologize for not printing the following photographs sooner. The pictures did not arrive in time for the July Issue and the October issue was too lengthy. Better late than never is how the old saying goes.



The original squadron commanders, left to right: Bill Tesla, 550th B.S.CO; Danny Riva, 551st B.S.CO; Sept. Richard, 548th B.S.CO; Archie Benner, 549th B.S.CO.

Four of a Kind



Arkey Huber in a pensive mood

Ft. Walton Beach, Florida

May 9, 1981



Dallas and Don Hale - center



Mary and Ruel Wiekert - back to camera



Bob Payne, John Ford, Or. Harold Bushey,
Earl Cole, Sept Richard



Florian Toman, Shirley and Dick Miller
Florence Poore, Paul Schulz - back to camera



John Ford - background, Charles Smith,
Glen and Erma Weisgarber - right



Mr. Lucky, Joe Jones

FT. Walton Beach, Florida, May 9, 1981



Richard's Rebels

548th BOMB SQUADRON

FT. WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA, MAY 9, 1981



Benner's Bandits

549th BOMB SQUADRON

FT. WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA, MAY 9, 1981



Tesla's Terrors

550th BOMB. SQUADRON

FT. WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA, MAY 9, 198*



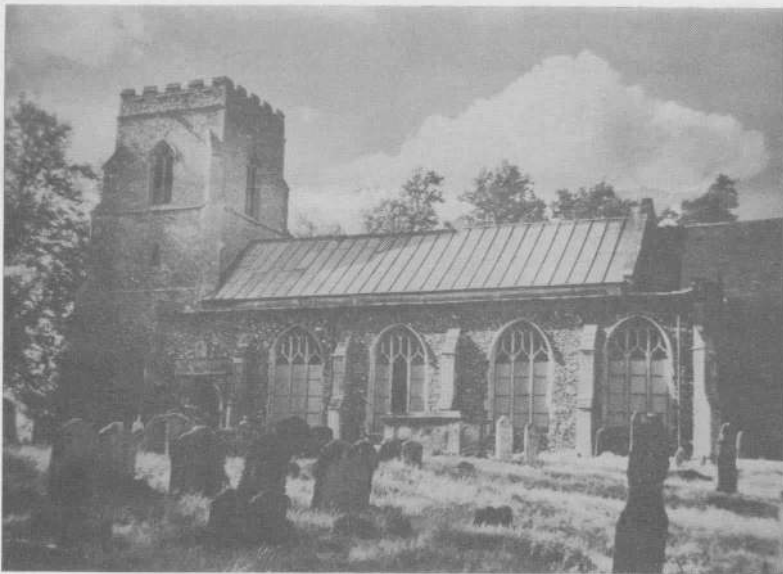
Riva's Raiders

551st BOMB. SQUADRON

FT. WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA, MAY, 9, 1981



One of the highlights of the tour of the Armament Museum, Eglin Air Force Base was this B-17. Members and their wives are photographed in the front of this bit of nostalgia.



All Saints Church, Great Ashfield

John c.Ford

When Americans drive through the lush and gently rolling countryside of East Anglia, it seems to be a sudden surprise to top a rise and see before them a picturesque village with a town green or center, sometimes thatched roof cottages and usually many council houses. Many times they stop, have tea and biscuits in a small tea house, and then wander around the area trying to find out something of its past history. But quite often, when driving off the beaten path and along the back-country winding lanes, a village is passed without so much as a second glance. And yet, if they would just take that second glance, they would discover items of interest, when linked into the chain of English history, portrays the area as very unique and well worth further exploration.

Such a spot is the ancient village of Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England. This tiny village occupies a very special place in the hearts of former members of the 385th Bombardment Group (H), 8th AAF, who carried out their mission from this area during World War II. In the 13th century All Saints Church is housed a Memorial Altar and on that Altar



The Memorial Plaque dedicated on Memorial Day, 1944, with Gen. Lemay present. The Plaque was transplanted to the churchyard in Great Ashfield for a permanent memorial to those of the Group who gave up their lives. The stone for the monument was quarried in Cornwall and brought to Great Ashfield.

are two books containing the names of comrades who paid the supreme sacrifice for Freedom's hard earned rights. In 1945, when the Group was departing England, a select committee of unit personnel decided that H. Monroe Cauley, FSA, and one of England's foremost authorities on church architecture, would be the one to design the Altar. The selection proved to have been most wise, for his creative genius has given the Memorial timeless beauty. Consisting of altar and reredos, with side panels, it is richly hand carved and traceried in oak and is located on the north side of the Church. In the church yard outside of the North wall of the chancel, it is possible to closely examine one window that may date from Saxon times.

The membership at the 1975 reunion in Atlanta voted to send \$500.00 a year to support the All Saints Church and the 385th BGMA memorial altar. Life membership dues are invested and the income is used for this purpose.

385th BGMS PX

Mail Call

Lawrence E. Oliver;

Receipt of the enclosed notice was like a voice out of the past. The last communication I had with the 385th was at briefing on the morning of March 23, 1944.

Our plane, with eight of the ten members, was among the many casualties caused by that colossal screw-up on what had otherwise become a "milk run". The target was Brunswick or Munster, I can't remember any more.

We got ours over Holland on the way back and only two of us got out. The waist gunner got away with the underground. My freedom lasted five minutes and I spent the duration at beautiful Barth on the Baltic - 50 miles from Sweden - in Stalag Luft I.

So much for war stories. Do me a favor and spell my name right, will you?

Editor's note: Lawrence, your name has been corrected. I don't understand about the newsletter as you have been sent the last two issues. Please check on your end.

Bill Tesla; Thanks for the newspaper. Plan to use some of the information in the future.

Marty Girson; Thanks for the information. I shall pursue the matter further and hope to do an article later on.

Charlie Edelstein; Thanks for the article.
(Editor)

'83 Reunion News R' E' Douglas

Thanks for presenting my offer to the group the way that I gave it to you. I also had made contact with the Antlers Hotel in the Springs as a prospective reunion site.

When you live in a town for so long you just take everything for granted. You do not notice the short comings of your town until it is thrust upon you. I will gladly abide by the decisions of the Board of Directors and will work even harder, with the cooperation of Bill Fife, to make this, the 40th Anniversary of the 385th, the best ever.

My whole intent is to make this reunion a super reunion for all the guys who live in Colorado and for the entire 385th 8GMA. I have written to every 385th member who lives in Colorado to ask for their help. Several have contacted me and have offered to help. There is much to do and their help will be appreciated.

In my judgement, the Board of Directors made a wise decision in their choice of the Antlers. It was mine, too.

Since we have established the ground rules, let's get to work, every member of the 385th BGMA contact every member you know and do everything in your power to get them to the next reunion in Colorado Springs. Plan to spend some time in our State and see how we in the west live. The vacation sites are endless. If desired, I can arrange for special tours after the reunion. If enough interest is shown. One last and most important item - bring money.

From time to time the association has received inquiries concerning the availability of specialty items such as the Group History, back copies of the newsletter, programs from past reunions, belt buckles and other items. Since the 385th BGMA has several of these items in stock we have decided to offer them to our members. Those items not in our inventory will be supplied by the vendors, at no inventory cost to us. The 385th BGMA will realize a profit on all items sold. The following are offered for sale, prices include postage and handling.

The Letter, author Frederick H. Ihlenburg. Hard cover. Novel. A story of a B-17 crew based at Great Ashfield, how they lived and fought. Fred Ihlenburg is a 548th pilot who wrote the book ten years ago while recuperating from open heart surgery. \$5.95

385th Bomb. Group History - a reprint of the Group History, an exact duplicate, hard cover. \$22.25

Sixth Reunion, paper cover. A detailed history of the All Saints Church in Great Ashfield and a short history of the 385th Bombardment Group (H). Contains several unpublished pictures. All monies collected are used to support our Memorial Altar in the All Saints Church. \$2.50

Seventh Reunion, paper cover. A complete reprint of all newsletters beginning August 1975 through February 1979- \$4.75

Pennsylvania Dutch Gourmet Cookbook - Paper cover. Author Laverne and Shirley Rohrbaugh. Laverne was a 385th member and a member of Rosener's crew. They were shot down on August 15, 1944 and ended up at Barth, Stalag Luft I. This cookbook contains 333 recipes of the Pennsylvania Dutch (German) origin. I can remember both my grandmother and mother preparing many of the recipes when I was young. If you like German cooking, this cookbook is for you. \$5.00

Belt Buckles, B-17 and 8th Air Force Insignia with 385th Bomb Group (H) identification. Hand crafted, hand cast, hand polished, solid golden bronze. \$21.00



Squadron "Tee Shirts" will be available soon. Write for prices.

Address all orders to; 385th BGMA PX
2049 Phoebe Or.
Bi 1 lings, MT 59105

Make all checks payable to 385th BGMA - PX. Allow four to six weeks for delivery.

Newsletter Publication Deadline

The 385th BGMA Newsletter is published quarterly on Jan. 15, April 15, July 15 and Oct. 15. Your Editors wish to thank all of you have submitted articles. They will be published.

Like Topsy, our newsletter has been growing! The Editors have found themselves in a position similar to large, monthly publications. To assure delivery of the bulletin to all our members by the 15th of the publication month, we must submit the proofs to the printer 45 days in advance, (i.e. Dec. 1, 1981 for Jan. 15, 1982 delivery date.) We begin assimilating our copy 30 days prior to this time (Nov 1) and are now working with a 10 week lead time.

If any of our members wish to have an article published in a specific issue, please submit it at least 10 weeks in advance of the publication date. (Nov 1, 1981 for Jan. 15, 1982 publication) Remember, we need new material to continue to make this an interesting and informative newsletter.

More about the Jones's



The editor was wrong, there are six Joneses, not five, in the organization. I have received two quotes. "After all, it's hard to be a JONES when you have to have everyone keeping up with you." The other quote is contained in the box at left.

385th BGMA NOT 8AFHS

Our secretary, treasurer and president have received quite a bit of mail recently with photo copies of checks made out to the 8th AFHS, in the mistaken belief that we are affiliated with the 8th Air Force Historical Society. WE ARE NOT. Dues or money contributed to the 8AFHS are not creditable to the

385th BGMA. We are a separate entity.

The only time that we receive any money from the 8AFHS is at their annual reunion. At this time we receive a partial refund of registration fees. Repeat, to be a member of pay your dues to John Pettenger, P.O. Box 117, Laurel, FL 33545.

fees paid by 385BGMA members the 385th BGMA, you must Treasurer, 385th BGMA,

8th Air Force Reunion

The seventh annua) reunion of the 8 Air Force Historical Society was held in St. Paul , Minnesota, Oct 15-18, 1981 Seventeen 385 BGMA members and wives attended the affair. John Ford, John Pettenger and your editor arrived one day early to attend a Symposium moderated by Roger Freeman, the subject: USAAF VS G.A.F. 1942-1945. Representing the German Air Force was General Adolph Gal land. Maj. Gen. Philip Ardery, Maj. Gen. John Huston, Colonel Cass Hough and Colonel Richard Petersen represented the USAAF. The Symposium is one that I shall always remember, not so much because of the subject matter but because I found a man whom I had not seen since August 1945. The last time that I saw him was in the hospital where he had spent 2] years recovering from some very serious wounds. This person was the best man at Elaine's and my wedding which had occurred 39 years and 6 days prior. What a wonderful time the three of us had. In addition to finding our best man, I also had the opportunity to meet and talk to John "Red" Morgan, Medal of Honor winner. Red was the formation observer and tail gunner of General Wilson's plane the day that Lou Dentoni was killed over Berlin. Another old and dear friend whom we had lost track of was found, William R. Lawley, Medal of Honor winner. Bill and I had been together for many years at various Air Force ins tailations.

Several new members were located: John Anderson, H.L. Brady, Kenneth Fernlund and George Stasny. A list of those attending, including those named above, is as follows: Harlan Aronsen, Marvin Benesh, Glen Berg, Donald Black, Ross Blake, C. R. Cragoe, Jack Cole, Ralph Engquist, John Ford, Edward Grabowski, Warren Ledy, John Pettenger and Paul Schulz.

Mama and the American PeggySmith

On a recent trip to Belgium we were guests for a few days in the home of Marcel and Lily Fissette in Bruxelles, near the site of the Battle of Waterloo. Not only did we enjoy European hospitality, we found international friendship and special appreciation of American liberation of Belgium during the two world wars.

Marcel and Lily wanted us to meet their Mothers in south Belgium; so we had a great time sightseeing and meeting relatives. We saw fields of sugar beets, tobacco and maize, city halls, churches, rivers, chalets, convents, monuments, castles, mueums, flea markets, flowers, big cookies (in Dinant), and winding roads as beautiful as anywhere else in the world. The Ardennes Mountains were particularly lovely.

Lily's Father was killed two days before the Americans liberated his village. Her Mother ("Mammie") now lives in Bearusing, Belgium. Mammie's smile and her hospitality were wonderful.

Marcel's Mother (Mama) who lives in Mesnil Saint Blaise, equally charmed us. Her huge plum pie, straight from the

oven, and coffee were delicious. Her stories (in French, but translated by Marcel) were thrilling. During World War I, German ammunition was stocked in the woods behind Mama's house. It was a depot for weapons during World War II. At the present time the location is part of a NATO base in Belgium.

During World War II an American plane was shot down near Marcel's town. The pilot parachuted, landed with a broken leg, and was immediately surrounded by pro-American townsmen--among them Marcel, then 13 years of age, Marcel's Mother and his Father, a farmer. Marcel remembers that his first reaction was to kiss the wounded American pilot. German police who occupied Mesnil Saint Blaise at that time, soon came to the injured pilot, pushed the pro-Americans away, and took him to the German police house.

(Now, in Marcel's own words.)

"We lived Just before the German police building. We did not like the Germans. German soldiers were angry because we like Americans. It was dangerous to be near or try to help an American. We worked as we could with our sympathies. The Underground tried to help the Americans against the hated Germans. It was the month of November.

"Mama would not let me go to the German police building to see the American. Besides, I was afraid to go. We did not know how long the Germans would retain the pilot, but some of the women in our town took marmalade, chocolates, wine, eggs, smokes, books, flowers or anything precious to the police house for the American.

"Mama emptied her flower garden. A German police asked her for explanation when she presented the bouquet. He was angry at Mama and threw her flowers to the ground. Mama also was angry. The police said, 'I take you with me and lock you up,' which he did. My Grandmama also was very angry. She presented herself also at the police building, and she sat between Mama and the German police so they could not harm her. They put a gun to Mama's chest, but they did not shoot her. Later, they moved the American pilot and let Mama come home. I do not know what happened to the pilot."

As Charles and I left this lovely lady, Madame Fissette looked at Charles Smith. With tears in her eyes, she hugged this man of the United States Air Force during World War II, and asked him to please tell the people in America, "Merci beaucoup pour nous avoir libers deus fois." (Thank you for liberating me two times.") A rock from Madame Fissette's garden, by our fireplace now, memorializes this unique experience.

Marcel says the "two most happiest days of my life are my wedding day and the day the Americans came to free my town. My Father had saved one bottle of his best wine for the day the Americans would free his city. Then--THEY came. My Papa split the bottle with an American Armored Corps man, a stranger who came through town in a tank. Papa got drunk. I do not know the fate of the American.

385 TM **BGMA**
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