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385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

GREAT ASHFIELD — SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

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NEWSLETTER

VOL. XI NO.3 JULY 1984 EDITOR, VERNE PHILIPS

Prez Sez

Robert I. Lojinger and his committee have arranged with the AIR FORCE MUSEUM for the dedication of the 385th Memorial on the 25th of August, 1984, at 11:00 a.m. The Air Force Museum is located on Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio. I understand that other activities in connection with the dedication have not been firmed up at this writing. * I hope many of you will plan to attend this important occasion.

A year has passed since we were in Colorado Springs at our last reunion. Who said time doesn't fly?? Soon it will be September '85 and our next reunion. (See article on 1985 registration elsewhere in the newsletter.) I hope many of you can afford the trip back to England this coming September with Judy Masters. Florence and I'll see you there if all goes well.

A late note - We are all saddened to learn of the death of John Ford. For the 385th BGMA I offer our condolences to his family.

* Now firmed up - see page

Sincerely
Forrest
 Forrest.

JOHN C. FORD

May 22, 1912 - June 16, 1984

JOHN C. FORD, the 550th's line chief at Great Ashfield; Air Force Chief Master Sergeant; president of the 385th BGMA; guardian of our cherished memories; husband, father, and grandfather held dear; and the great friend of us all; died on June 16, 1984 at Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland, after a long illness.

His daughter, Mary Randleman, informs us that his ashes will be taken to England and scattered over the base at Great Ashfield following a service at All Saints Church on August 4 or 5. The family has asked that any offerings for his memory be made to the 385th BGMA for the perpetual upkeep of the memorial altar at All Saints Church, Great Ashfield. They may be mailed to our treasurer, John F. Pettenger.

PER OKLAHOMA AD ASTRA

WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



Reg Hammond, of the Royal Air Force, and more recently, of Ipswich, England, by a series of coincidences, has had several contacts with the 385th Bomb Group and its memories. Enough so that he, upon the request of some of our people, wrote an account of those interesting experiences.

In the Royal Air Force, it is Per Ardua Ad Astra, Through Difficulties to the Stars. The RAF led Reg through

Oklahoma as well, and the photographs he furnished indicate that the difficulties there were not always arduous.

His story is set out below and following it are some comments about Reg and Pat Hammond from their friends, Sam and Mary Lyke, of the 385th BGMA.

By a further coincidence, Reg Hammond, in a recent note, gave us the name and address of an Austin neighbor of your editor. That neighbor, Col. Harry Witt, USAF (Ret.) was also an RAF flying student at Miami and a participant in the 1982 reunion at Miami. Reproduced below is an account of the reunion from the Tulsa World along with a photograph of Harry Witt at the Oklahoma graves of RAF flying students killed while in training.

How was it that in June, 1944, I, an Englishman, stood on a patch of tarmac at a small airfield just outside Miami, Oklahoma, and again in October, 1982 - 38 years later - I again stood in that same spot? Between those two events a series of coincidences kept me very close to the people of America.

It was like this

As soon as the famous Lease Lend Bill was passed in the early summer of 1941 all American contract pilot training schools were summoned to the British Embassy in Washington and invited to consider the establishment of Royal Air Force pilot training schools. Throughout the duration of these negotiations the leaders of Miami Chamber of Commerce were anxious to establish a school at Miami, and Captain Maxwell Balfour of the Spartan School of Aeronautics in Tulsa agreed to put such a school at Miami, from thereon known as No. 3, British Flying Training School, Miami, Oklahoma.

The day came in 1943 when I donned Air Force blue and underwent three months initial training at Scarborough, England, where we studied all the ground subjects associated with flying duties and were turned into physically fit young men - I have never been so fit in my life since! During those first few months we also spent a short time at Elementary Flying School (flying Tiger Moths) to determine our aptitude as regards being a pilot, navigator or bomb aimer. I was selected for pilot training.

RAF Men Reunited At Miami

Story and Photo By JERRY FINK Of the World Staff MIAMI, Okla. — Fifteen graves lie at attention.

Their headstones are shadowed by wreaths put there Tuesday by a group of World War II Royal Air Force pilots who came to this country to honor their dead colleagues and reminisce about an era quickly slipping into history's quicksand.

The 15 were young cadets, 18 and 19 years old, killed while training to become RAF pilots at the No. 3 British Flying Training School here, operated by the Spartan School of Aeronautics of Miami from 1941 until 1945.

More than 2,000 British pilots — the cream of the United Kingdom's crop of young men, according to Keith Leigh, — went through the six-month courses.

Sixty of them, many accompanied by their wives, returned for a week-long reunion, which began Saturday.

Leigh, 58, a retired British airline pilot, estimated more than 1,000 of the Miami-trained pilots are still alive. He's been able to contact about 300.

"They're some of the top businessmen in our country," said Leigh. "One is a bishop. Three are members of the House of Commons."

* Rep/used through the *
* courtesy of Jwty Ftnk *
* and the TUXACL WofM *

»»«««»»»**

TULSA WORLD 21 October 1982



FORMER RAF PILOT COLONEL HARRY WITT, OF AUSTIN, TEXAS, PAYS HOMAGE TO STUDENTS KILLED IN TRAINING.

Along with many other air crew trainees I was sent to the overseas dispersal camp at Heaton Park, Manchester, to await my posting abroad - would it be Canada, South Africa, Rhodesia - or the U.S.A.? The day finally came when I looked on the posting list and saw my name under the heading - No. 3, B.F.T.S., U.S.A.

In May, 1944 we left Britain from Greencock, Scotland, sailing on the R.M.S. Andes - a beautiful new passenger liner converted into a troop ship.

We landed safely at Halifax, Nova Scotia, and that was the only time in my life that I have been met by a military band in welcome - it gave one a very warm feeling.

We then enjoyed a leisurely three day train journey via Montreal, Toronto and St. Louis to Miami, Oklahoma.

At last we were in the United States of America - and we were thrilled!

I will not bore readers with details of the flying training we received except to say that after primary instruction on P.T. 19's (Cornells) and advanced instruction on A.T. 6's (Harvards) we passed out as qualified R.A. F. pilots. It was a great course and I owe much to my two instructors, Mr. Preswich on the P.T. 19's and "Doc" Samuels on the A.T. 6's.

We all loved the social side of life in the U.S.A., the people far and wide made us most welcome. The local young ladies came to the camp dances and took us to their homes to meet their folk, and many families contacted the camp to offer us hospitality.

We spent one week in Chicago with a Mr. and Mrs. Lightenberg who regularly hosted us Cadets. A weekend in Parsons, KS with a Mr. and Mrs. Ramsey and their family was enjoyed by four of us, and for Christmas, 1944, we stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Frank Creegan and their two daughters. Rose Mary and Helen at Fort Scott, Kansas.

They had earlier that year in February, suffered the sad loss of their son, Frank, an aerial photographer flying with the 385th Bomber Group, U.S. 8th Air Force, out of Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England. We all had a wonderful Christmas together, we, of course, thoroughly enjoyed what was for us our first Christmas in a foreign land, and long afterwards I learned that our company had helped that lovable Creegan family to enjoy their Christmas in the sad absence of Frank, (Junior.)

After the war I joined the British Police Force, and in 1952 was stationed at a small country town called Stowmarket,

Suffolk. There, as a result of a routine police inquiry which took me into their office, I met the Kenworthy family - who had hosted Frank Creegan and his friends from Great Ashfield airfield during the war - and who because of this also corresponded with the Creegan family in Fort Scott, U.S.A. A small world, as they say - but more is to come.

In summer, 1980, my wife, Pat, was shopping in Felixstowe, Suffolk and saw a poster in a shop window welcoming a party of wartime 385th Bomber Group airmen to Suffolk, during which time they were visiting their old airfield at Great Ashfield. Shortly afterwards she was in a china shop in the town and saw a party of American people there. She spoke to them and asked if they were the party visiting Great Ashfield. They said they were, and she then asked if any of them knew the Creegan family. The very lady she spoke to, in all that large party, Mary Lyke, said "Why yes. Rose Mary and Helen were in our house a short time ago." Mary then introduced her husband Sam, Pat telephoned me in Ipswich, I went down to Felixstowe as soon as my day's work was done, and we all spent a most enjoyable evening in the local hotel talking about our mutual friends, the Creegans, the chance of our meeting, and naturally the days long ago - 1942 - 1945.

Over many years following my war time visit to the United States, my wife and I dreamed of paying a return visit, but it naturally had to wait until the time and expense of bringing up a family to adulthood had passed. That day came and went, and in the early 1980's the dream still seemed far distant.

October, 1982, we were reading a local newspaper when we suddenly saw a letter written by a local man living just outside Ipswich, also a former flight cadet of No. 3 B.F.T.S., that efforts were being made to form a party to pay a reunion visit to Miami, Oklahoma. At first we could not believe our eyes! Immediate telephone calls and letters soon bore fruit as a result of which almost 100 of us former cadets from No. 3 B.F.T.S. Miami, Oklahoma, and many of our wives, met one Saturday, May 9, 1982, at a reception held at the Hendon Air Museum. London -

a most appropriate venue.

Days and months of travel arrangements followed, and we made use of this time to visit Great Ashfield and take some pictures of the airfield as it is today, the church, and the 385th Roll of Honour kept in the church and the memorial plaque in the churchyard. We also visited Stowmarket and renewed our friendship with the Kenworthy family. We also met for the first time, Ian Hawkins, a British member of the 385th B.G.M.A. Ian also corresponds with Rose Mary Creegan, and was one of a group of enthusiasts who recover and identify crashed wartime aircraft. He was able to send Rose Mary the camera lens used by Frank Creegan on his last mission. Ian is also a member of the "Friends of the Eighth Association" who maintain the museum at Framlingham.

On October 15, 1982, a party of about 100 of us met at Gatwick (London) Airport and boarded a British Caledonian D.C. 10 bound for St. Louis, U.S.A.

We had a wonderful flight, and the next day traveled by Greyhound coach to Miami, and as the miles of our destination grew less, and the name Miami appeared on the road signs, the hearts of us ex-cadets uncontrollably beat just a little bit faster.

The Greyhound coach drew onto the Best Western Hotel court, we got up, stretched our legs, got down the bus steps and noticed rather a lot of people standing by the hotel entrance. To our complete surprise we then saw that it was the Miami High School Band, the Mayor of Miami, and various townsfolk all set to welcome us! It was the most wonderful welcome we had ever received in our lives!

In the evenings we enjoyed socials, entertainment dances and dinners, and in the daytime we visited our old airfield where we were given an impeccable flying display in an A.T. 6, rebuilt by the pilot, George Trueman and his friend. We visited our old barrack block - now a clothing factory full of girls making jeans, and had great fun pointing out to the girls where we had slept 38 years previously. We also visited many other places of interest.

In Oklahoma, at Claremore, we had very great pleasure in meeting for the first time on American soil, Sam and Mary Lyke. J naturally had telephoned them on arriving in the USA and they had motored over from Bartlesville to meet us there.

The final event of that week was a dinner-dance at the Shangri-La hotel, part of the wonderful Shangri-La entertainment and conference complex on the Grand Lake of the Cherokees. We dined and danced to Glenn Miller music, and as our personal guests, Pat and I invited Rose Mary and Helen Creegan, whom I wrote of earlier in this account. Another highlight of the evening was meeting with "Doc" Samuels - my A.T. 6 instructor of 38 years before. He had only heard of the reunion during that week, had come down especially for the final evening.



REG HAMMOND WITH FRIENDS, ROSE MARY & HELEN CREEGAN

and I was the only one of his ex-pupils who had made it from England, so it was a worthwhile trip that both of us made to receive each other!

The next day we sadly parted from our friends in Miami, Rose Mary and Helen drove us to their home at Fort Scott, Kansas where we stayed for four nights. There we met many of their friends who we had heard of by correspondence. We were very impressed by Fort Scott Fort and Museum. From the moment I walked up the steps and onto the veranda of the Creegan family house, I felt perfectly at home - 38 years had separated visits but there was the same furniture, grand piano, family photos and wonderful affectionate welcome as I and my three friends had received in 1944.

At the end of our Fort Scott visit our good friends took us by car to Parsons, Kansas, and handed us over to Sam and Mary Lyke - what do we do without friends? From Parsons, Sam and Mary took us to their home at Bartlesville, Oklahoma, where we stayed as their guests for five days, They treated us, as we say in England, "right royally," and took us anywhere we wanted to go.

On our last day Sam and Mary took us on a long tour of the area where the four States: Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri and Arkansas meet, admiring the beauty of the Ozark country. Mary noticed that if I read something written in Ozark dialect in my native Suffolk tongue, it sounded just right!

Even that had to come to an end, and Sam and Mary drove us to the Tulsa airport from where we flew to St. Louis. I We stayed in the same hotel where we had spent our first night in USA, and met with other members of our original party, i the There was lots of chat in the bar that night!

The following day we flew back to London (Gatwick) on a British Caledonian D.C. 10, and the holiday was over ... but the memories will never fade.

All my life I will remember the series of coincidences that began in 1943 and ended in 1982 that led me into establishing such a bond with the people of the United States of America, and we can only hope that such a bond between persons can be established lastingly between nations.

Dear Verne:

Mary and I met Reg and Pat in Felixstowe during a trip with the 385th in 1980. They knew Rose Mary and Helen Creegan from Miami, Oklahoma. Reg, when training in Miami, had dinner with them several times and became good friends. These ladies' brother, Frank Creegan, was with the 385th. He was killed in a plane crash after a mission.

Reg and Pat are quite interested in our group. They plan to return to visit us and attend the 385th reunion in Los Angeles, CA. We are making plans now to go to England in September and will visit with them at that time.

I believe Reg served in the CBI theater. Pat was an "Army Brat," having lived with her family in India and other places. She also served in uniform during the war. They are a most interesting couple, very warm and friendly. They spent 5 days in our home in 1982, when they returned to Miami for a reunion. Miami, Ok. is a small town of approximately 20 to 25,000 in the northeastern corner of Oklahoma. When the fellows returned for the reunion the whole town turned out with banquets, bands, speeches, etc. A great reception for the former RAF boys.

The RAF boys had a reunion in May in London. Several instructors from here attended. A Robert Shortess from Tulsa attended. He called me after his return home. Bob said they had a great time and visited with the Hammonds in their home in Ipswich. They sent their regards to our group and are now making plans for the 385th 1985 reunion.

I have no information about the location of the field at Miami. I'm sure it must have been within a few miles of town. They have a cemetery there where the RAF cadets, who were killed during training, are buried, these cadets are remembered by the local people during Memorial Day.

Sincerely,

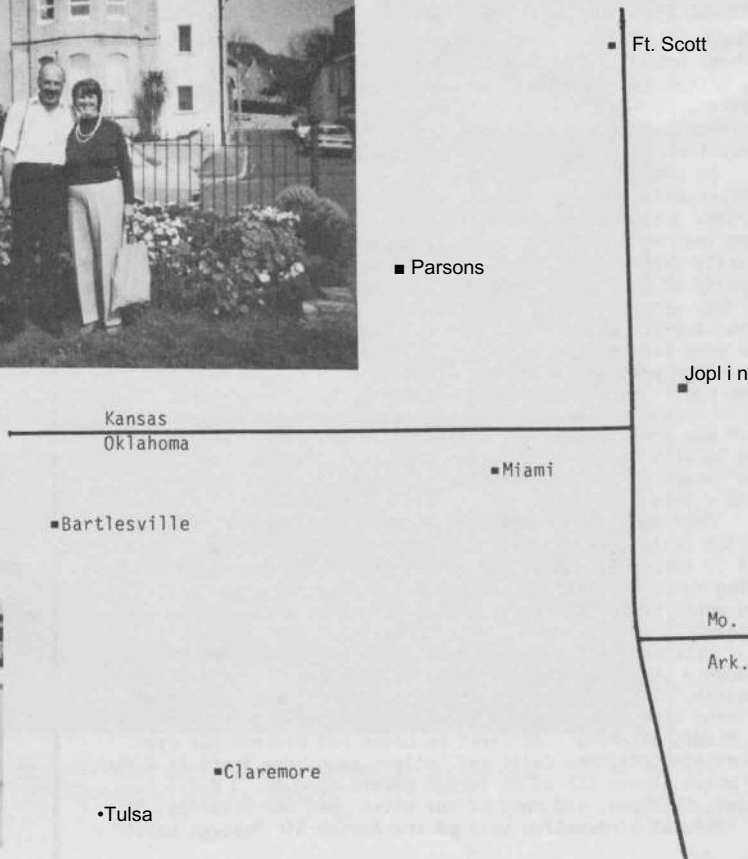
Sam Lyke

Reg Hammond
Ipswich, England
February, 1983



REG & PAT HAMMOND

SAM & MARY LYKE





REG HAMMOW IN EARLY COCKPIT POSE



THE CREEGAN FAMILY AND THE RAF OF WWII

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Anthony, Shirley, 189 Hedgehog Ln., Bradford, PA 16701
 Benner, Archie, Jr., 10316 Woodruff, El Paso, Texas 79925
 Chinn, Lewis E., P.O. Box 133, El Dorado, CA 95623-0133
 Cunat, Rudy J., Colonial Point, Apt. 222, 5201 Atlantic Blvd.,
 Jacksonville, FL 32207
 Dunlap, Edwin V., 4257 Santa Rosa Ave., Santa Rosa, CA 95407
 Hiatt, H. W., Rt. 1, Box 779, Many, LA 71449
 Inglis, Doris E., 4606 Park Granada 11, Calabasas, CA 91302
 Leach, Edward, 40 Bookhaven Dr., #1, Attleboro, RA 02703-5132
 Mercer, Mrs. Beverly, 2841 E. Beck Ln., #3, Delmar, MD
 (Returned, no new address)
 Swartwood, Joseph E., 927 S. Franklin St., Wilkes-Barre,
 PA 18702-3459
 Tasker, M.D., 1305 N. State St., Syracuse, N.Y. 13208

DECEASED

Anthony, Raymond, Sigel, PA
 Ford, John C., Camp Springs, MD.

ROSE MARY AND HELEN CREEGAN
AT HOME IN FT. SCOTT

Have you seen

AEROSPACE HISTORIAN lately?

The Air Force Historical Foundation invites you to share in:

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- reunion notices, news of current and upcoming events. . .
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- photo spreads. . .



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AEROSPACE HISTORIAN
 Department of History
 Eisenhower Hall
 Kansas State University
 Manhattan, Kansas 66506 USA



CALLING ALL PROCRASTINATORS; for the Great Ashfield venture!

Planning to return to Great Ashfield with the 385th BGMA in September? Watch out for the July 15 deadline!

In the April issue of the 385th BGMA newsletter there were details concerning the September trip to England and a coupon to use in reserving space with Masters Touch Tours.

Get out your copy to review this information or call Judy Masters as soon as possible. Perhaps she can stretch that deadline for you.

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(404) 546-1324

CLARKE COUNTY AIRPORT
ATHENS, GEORGIA, USA 30605

Persons interested in airfare may also secure tickets for space blocked with the group from several cities, or arrange independent departures. With deposit please indicate if airfare is desired,

TWA

Group air space is blocked with Trans World Airlines, Inc. departing the United States Wednesday, September 12 and returning Thursday,

September 27: roundtrip per person

Los Angeles	\$819.00
New York	\$614.00
Chicago	\$739.00

Through fares from sample cities may also be applied:

Atlanta	\$779.00
Miami	\$779.00
St. Louis	\$722.00
Phoenix	\$810.00

All prices are subject to change. Airfare may be secured with a 25% airfare deposit. Please direct to Masters Touch Tours.

Yes! I don't want to miss The 385th Bombardment Group Memorial Association Return

name(s) _____

address _____

phone (area code) homeoffice _____

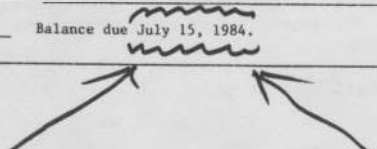
Please indicate which Excursion: Great Britain _____ Continent _____

rooming requests _____

Flight desired? City _____ Group space _____ or Independent _____

Dates desired if not using group space _____

Deposit amount enclosed \$ _____ Balance due July 15, 1984.



**BOLD AND DARING SWIFTNES. ARTISTIC PRECISION.
THE THUNDERBIRDS. SEE THEM IF YOU CAN!**

If you ever are near enough to the place where the U.S. Air Force Thunderbirds are performing, drop everything and go! You will see the most spectacular demonstration of daring and precise flying possible. You will gasp at the nerve and skill of truly great pilots.

And when you see them, realize that there is a 385th connection. Flying left wing of the diamond formation is Captain Steve Chealander, son of our Al Chealander. Al, these days, is making the arrangements for the 1985 385th Tenth Reunion in Los Angeles - and that can get pretty daring, too!

The schedule of the Thunderbirds is spectacular in itself. They will be coast to coast, up to Toronto, and out to Hawaii. Check the schedule for the rest of the year and go for a splendid demonstration of today's Air Force if they are coming your way.



JULY

- Niagara Falls, NY
- 17 Pt. Pleasant Beach, NJ
- 21-22 Dayton, OH
- 25 Sioux City, IA
- 27 Cheyenne, WY
- 28 Wurtsmith AFB, MI
- 29 Loring AFB, ME

AUGUST

- 4 Malmstrom AFB, MT
- 5 Mt. Home AFB, ID
- 11-12 Travis AFB, CA
- 18 Waikiki Beach, HI
- 19 Bellows AFS, HI
- 25 Pease AFB, NH
- 26 Rickenbacker ANGB, OH
- 31 Toronto, CN

SEPTEMBER

- 1-2 Toronto, CN
- 8 Griffiss AFB, NY
- 9 Springfield, IL
- 12 Helena, MT
- 15-16 Reno, NV
- 22-23 Broomfield, CO
- 29 Pueblo, CO
- 30 McConnell AFB, KS

OCTOBER

- 6 Kirtland AFB, NM
- 7 Houston, TX
- 13 Shaw AFB, SC
- 14 Robbins AFB, GA
- 17 Columbus AFB, MS
- 20 Homestead AFB, FL
- 21 Cherry Point MCAS, NC
- 25 Tyndall AFB, FL
- 27 Edwards AFB, CA
- 28 Castle AFB, CA

NOVEMBER

- 3 Norton AFB, CA
- 4 George AFB, CA
- 10 Nellis AFB, NV
- 12 Vandenberg AFB, CA



7 RECOLLECTIONS OF BERLIN/TEGEL

Sergeant Ned Mertz and the 6 October 1944 raid to Berlin/Tegel have been remembered. Barbara Varga's search for information about her father has brought her an ever growing stack of letters and materials about him and about the heavy losses of the 549th on that day.

Sergeant Bruce H. Ey, a fellow crewman of Sergeant Mertz that day and now Lt. Col. Bruce H. Ey, U. S. Army (Ret), has written Mrs. Varga his recollections of that afternoon. They are sharing his letter with you. It appears below.

John C. Ford, who has been ever dedicated and diligent in gathering a mass of detail about the 385th to keep keen our memories, prepared a long and detailed letter to Barbara Varga. It was one of his last efforts, as John Ford died on June 16. Much of his letter is set out in this issue.

Both Ey and Ford speak of the selflessness of Lt. Hyman Kaplan, the pilot of the aircraft on which Sgt. Mertz was killed. Apparently, he was from Oakland, California where his body was returned after the war. Perhaps someone from that area can tell us more of the story.

John Ford identifies more precisely the target of the 385th as the metal industry at Tegel, a district of Berlin, now better known perhaps for the great airport constructed there by the French in their zone of Berlin during the days of the airlift. There is a certain irony about these events at Tegel because it has had a tradition of mystery about it which led Goethe to say in *Faust*: "*Vu Teu, {etpaek, ei naddi kelnen Rege£. WxA i-ind io tefug and dennoch. ipukt's -in Tegel.*" "The devil pack follows no rule. We are so clever, and yet there are ghosts in Tegel." And recall to our minds it must, the mark of the 549th.

Barbara Varga has loaned us a clipping taken from the publication of the Stromberg-Carlson plant in Rochester, N.Y. where her father was employed before the war. It tells of his work, his military training, and his early missions, and includes a photograph.

A recent photograph of Tony and Barbara Varga, taken at their home in New Braunfels, Texas, is included in this issue of the newsletter.

John Ford's Recital of the Berlin/Tegel Mission

1 March 1984

Dear Ms. Varga:

I am a retired Chief Master Sergeant of the USAF. At the time of your father's death, I was Line Chief (Maintenance-Engineering) of the 550th Bomb Squadron. The date was 6 October 1944, the target was Berlin-Tegel and the mission's purpose was the elimination of the largest metallurgical factory in Germany.

Your father was tail gunner in B-17G, serial number 42-37548 no nickname, a plane flown and piloted by 1st Lt. Hyman Kaplan. They were flying #5 in the highest element of the high squadron. As you will note from the plan, this aircraft was flying in the "Tail End Charley" position and theoretically, would have been the first aircraft to be shot down that day. Your father, a S/Sgt. Kelso M. Poore, serial number 35100870, who was the waist gunner and the pilot, 1st Lt. Hyman Kaplan, serial number 0-761960, were all killed in action (KIA).

Meanwhile, your father, Lt. Kaplan and S/Sgt. Kelso Poore, were temporarily interred in a public cemetery in the Neun-Rathenow-Lippe area, while the other members of the crew were captured, some within minutes, and two or more, within two days. Four members of the crew; 2nd Lt. Walter B. Schulte, serial number 0-717698; 2nd Lt. James Mulder Jr., serial number 0-771958; who were Navigator and Bombardier respectively, S/Sgt. Alfred E. Flesner, Top Turret Gunner, serial number 37315823; Sgt. Harry J. Mathieu, serial number 39042699, Ball Turret Gunner; were captured on 6 October 44, between 1250 and 1330 hours. 2nd Lt. Harry W. Livingstone, the Co-pilot, serial number 0-711220, evaded captured status until 2345 hours on

7 October 1944, when he was picked up by members of the Wehrmacht (German Army) in the small town of Semi in, which is about 12 kilometers north of Rathenow. The radio operator gunner, S/Sgt. Bruce E. Ey, serial number 11094873, also evaded capture for a few days but was eventually picked up and interned.

All of the above, with the exception of Ey, were taken to Headquarters Staaken, where they were questioned, evaluated and sent on to Stalag Luft's (Prisoner-of-War camps). Mathieu was injured and sent to the Reserve Hospital, Goerden, and on 14 October 1944 was evaluated and shipped to a Stalag Luft.

All of the crews were shot down that day and it was a truly sad day for the 385th Bomb Group when the entire high element of Flight "B" did not return to base. The totals were:

Pi lot	Crew	Pow's	KIA	MIA	Aircraft No.	Sqdn.
Courcelle	T	1	2	T	43-38060	549th
Noiseau	9	2	6	1	44-6149	549th
Batty-PFF-	Lead 10 **	3	7	0	44-8143	551st
Kaplan	9	6	3	0	43-37548	549th
Tuley	9	6	3	0	43-38217	549th
Andreas	9	5	4	0	43-38430	548th
Isaacson	9	5	4	0	43-97079	548th
Leverett	9	8	1	0	42-97275	549th
Taylor	9	1	8	0	42-98010	551st
Funk	9	0	9	0	42-98016	549th
Jens	9	1	8	0	42-102465	549th

** PFF was Lead Ship equipped with H2X, a special radar ship. thus the extra man.

Two other aircraft, Lt. William R. Kelley's a/c 431 and Lt. J. A. Hibbert's a/c 871, had aborted earlier with engine troubles. Several members died in either Stalag Luft's or German hospitals. In the 385th Bomb Group (H) Reunion Group only three ex-members of those crews are members, although one's address has been lost. They are Mr. Joseph Gorchak, 246 E. 21st St., San Bernardino, CA 92404; Mr. Robert M. McGhee, 4404 Del Mabry Drive, Knoxville, TN 37914. Mr. Warren G. Story is the missing member. Since I have been working on this story since 1977, I have talked with them, but what happened, happened so fast they can only recall their own aircraft and members, since the action was so intense and fast. (Ed. '-5 Note: *Bnuee Ey -u nou*) a member. See *h-u> tetten. to Mu. VaAga.*)

In his book, "THE MIGHTY EIGHTH," written by Roger Freeman in 1972, the following paragraph is quoted from page 179:

QUOTE: "The next notable interception came on October 6th, again amounted to a saturation attack by a Gruppe. Third Air Division went to Berlin and at the IP (near Neuen) was forced to fly about 1000 feet below very high clouds. Above the clouds lurked two or three Gruppen of J.G. 4 and J. G. 300 who were vectored down at the right moment to surprise the high element of the last combat wing - just as the last squadron was somewhat separated from the rest of the formation while turning for the target. Eleven aircraft, principally from the 549th Bomb Squadron this time, were destroyed. P-51's quickly arrived to avenge the loss, but by then, the 385th Group had suffered the heaviest loss of the war." END.

The official report issued by the 8th Army Air Force Headquarters on 7 October 1944 reads as follows:

"Report of 8AAF to Bomber Commands, 7 October 44 on Mission of 6 October 1944:

Approximately 50 to 75 enemy aircraft, fighter types, attacked the high group of eleven aircraft. 35 e/a attacked the last formation of 11 aircraft of the 385th Bomb Group between the IP (Initial Point) and the target. The time was between 1207 and 1215 hours. This formation was lagging behind due to a wide turn at the IP. Attacks were from the tail, level to high, in several waves of 4 to 5 aircraft abreast. The entire squadron was wiped out." End Quote.

As indicated in the flight plan enclosed, it is believed that Lt. Kaplan's B-17 was the first aircraft shot down, that Lt. Kaplan, Sgt. Poore and your father were killed in action. Lt. Harry Livingstone pushed the 'bail out' bell, after ascertaining that all living members were out, he then bailed out. 1st Lt. Hyman Kaplan, S/Sgt. Ned H. Mertz and S/Sgt. Kelso Poore's bodies were recovered from the aircraft and, after being certified dead, (KIA) the Germans buried them in a local cemetery. Their bodies were recovered by the U. S. Army in April 1945. Later they were buried in the Ardennes Cemetery, an American Battle Monuments

Cemetery. Your father's body resides in Plot B, Row 34, Grave 21. S/Sgt. Kelso Poore's body is in Plot B, Row 21, Grave 15. Lt. Kaplan's body was returned to the USA at the request of his family.

It is also strange that the Casualty Listing from the Graves Registration Commission that was sent to Captain David Oakley in 1947 bears neither your father's name, or that of Kelso Poore. I am taking steps to have their names included in the "Books of Remembrance" that lies in the church at Great Ashfield in England.

This letter is the result of a letter from a former Air Weather Officer, Lt. Rayburn G. Pyle, Jr., who sent out various copies to former buddies in the 385th, hoping that someone would answer your call for help. I also had already seen your letter to the Editor of the Air Force Magazine and had started to extract your father's story from my notes. If I can be of further help, just write.

frivicerely yours,


JOHN C. FORD

Bruce Ey's story of his 6 October 1944

Dear Mrs. Varga:

I am writing to you in regards to your Dad, Ned Mertz, who was a fellow crew member of mine on that fateful day of October 6, 1944. I certainly would have written sooner had I known that you were trying to find out more information about him. Unfortunately, I just recently learned about the 385th Group Memorial Association and started receiving their newsletter and I read the whole story of your pursuit in the April, 1984 issue. I don't get the Air Force Magazine because after the war I was commissioned in the U.S. Army and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1971 after 28 years service and therefore get mostly Army publications.

The aircraft we flew on that day I believe was called "Hell's Bells" and again, if I recall correctly, it was almost a brand new silver aircraft B-17. You could still smell the newness of it, like a brand new car. This was the ship's third mission into enemy territory. The regular crew who manned this ship was Lt. Hyman Kaplan's crew, he was the pilot, and a Lt. "Doc" Livingston was the co-pilot. A Lt. Walter Schulte was the navigator and Lt. Jim Moulder was the bombardier. The engineer gunner was Alfred Flesner, and I was the radio gunner, Harry Matthews was the ball gunner and we had a replacement waist gunner that day named Poole, and your Dad was a replacement tail gunner. That was not unusual as all air crew members flew at least once with crews other than their own. Either for training or replacement need. Your Dad flew with us as a need. I believe he had more missions than our 11. Unfortunately, prior to that day. I had not met either your Dad or Sgt. Poole, but I certainly wish that I had had the chance to know them both better, as they were self assured, brave, outstanding men.

The mission started with an early morning breakfast, as usual, and then on to the briefing where we learned we were going to Berlin and we went to our aircraft. If I recall correctly, it was foggy and dismal, as usual, until we broke through the overcast at 5000 or 6000 feet and went into formation.

On this day, as I understood it, we were really in a difficult position because the 385th Group was to be the last group in over the target, the 549th was the last squadron of the group, and we were tail end Charlie of the squadron. In other words, we were one of two last ships.

We hit no flak or fighters until we hit the IP (Initial Approach), about 60 miles from Berlin at approximately 10 or 15 minutes to twelve noon. We were at approximately 31,000 feet. Suddenly the intercom and command channel came alive with shouts of "Bandits (the code name for enemy fighters) at approximately 8 o'clock high." They were off to our left about 7 or 8 miles. Within what seemed like split seconds, all the group's guns were trained and fired upon the enemy aircraft

off to our left when about what was estimated at 70-75 enemy fighters came down from high above out of the sun directly above and to the right of our tail. We later figured that they had predetermined targets of hitting all the tail gunners and waist gunners on the first pass. Although we did get some of their aircraft, there were just too many and they were successful in what we figured they planned to do. Then they came back and set one or two fighters off the rear of our aircrafts and blasted our ships with 20 MM cannons and as those planes were knocked out, they moved further up into the squadron and took them down as they progressed. I understand we lost all eleven ships from our group and more from other groups.

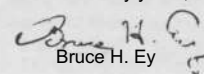
Our plane was hit in the right wing in addition to being riddled all the way up through the fuselage. The right wing was all ablaze and was sweeping through and under the aircraft. Because of this the aircraft went into a steep dive and the centrifugal force made any movement by those in it impossible - we could not even move our heads. Suddenly, the plane levelled off in a roller coaster movement still burning furiously, the bombs were jettisoned by the bombardier and we moved to the escape exits. I had to go back to the waist door to get out. Standing above the ball turret ready to go out was the ball gunner, Harry Matthews. Sgt. Poole was lying between the two waist positions and he was dead. Your Dad, unfortunately, was also. I hit the escape latch to the waist door, fell out and passed out from lack of oxygen, and wounds to the head, leg and arm. Matthews followed me, he had been severely wounded in the face when we saw him again on a litter on the ground. He was taken to a German hospital and I have never seen nor heard from him again. He was from Oakland, California. Doc Livingston, the co-pilot, survived and lives in Georgia. He was taken prisoner with the rest of us who survived, that included Shulte, Moulder, Flesner, Matthews and I. I later learned from the pilots that the pilot, Lt. Hyman Kaplan from Oakland, California, had pulled the ship out of the dive it was in so those of us who were alive could get out. He went in with the ship and was killed when it hit the ground. He didn't have time to get out. He was recommended for the Congressional Medal of Honor, but was later awarded the Silver Star for his act of heroism. I wasn't near the ship when it hit the ground but all who were taken prisoner were assembled in a little town called Damme, Germany.

I really was surprised, however, that you hadn't received more information on your Dad for this reason: When I finally got home to the states, my parents showed me letters from the parents of other crew members who joined into a little group so that if one received any information, they would pass it on to others. Someone in the Mertz family, I think it was his parents, were also in the writing group.

I wish there were something that I could tell you that would help ease your grief over your Dad. The only satisfaction I can give you is that it happened quick and there was no prolonged suffering. German intelligence later told us that we abandoned ship at 1206 that day, so it was all over in 15-20 minutes at most.

If there are any questions I haven't answered, or if I can be of any help to you whatsoever, please let me know.

Sincerely yours,


Bruce H. Ey

FLIGHT "B"

FLIGHT PLAN CHART

LEAD ELEMENT

PFF

BATTY - HERRON

143 | Call
(D)

Jens
465 | Ca11
③

Andreas
430 | Ca11
④

Noiseau

159 | Call
②

Leverett
275 | Call
Ⓜ

Issacson
079 | Ca11
⑤

HIGH ELEMENT

Tuley
717 | call
G)

"CALL" MEANS CALL SIGN

Funk
016 | Ca11
③

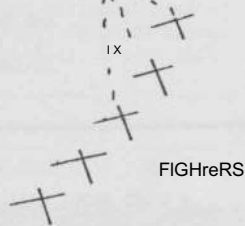
Taylor
010 | Ca11
②

Courcelle
060 | Ca11
④

⑥

Kaplan
548 | Cal 1
⑤

IL XArnPLC.



"AN EIGHTH AIR FORCE BOMBER STATION, England. An Oak Leaf Cluster to his Air Medal has been awarded S/Sgt. Ned H. Mertz, son of Mr. and Mrs. V R. Mertz, 682 Parsells Avenue, Rochester, New York, for "courage, coolness and skill" displayed while participating in several bombing attacks upon Hitler's war machine.



"He is the armorer and tail gunner of an Eighth Air Force B-17 Flying Fortress in the heavy bombardment group commanded by Col. Elliott Vandevanter, Jr., Washington, D. C.

"His wife, Mrs. Laura B. Mertz, and children, Barbara Ann, Ned Jr., Nancy C., Robert, and Linda Lee, live at 770 Blossom Road, Rochester. Prior to entering the Army Air Force in April 1943 he was a junior buyer for Stromberg-Carlson Company, 100 Carlson Road, Rochester.

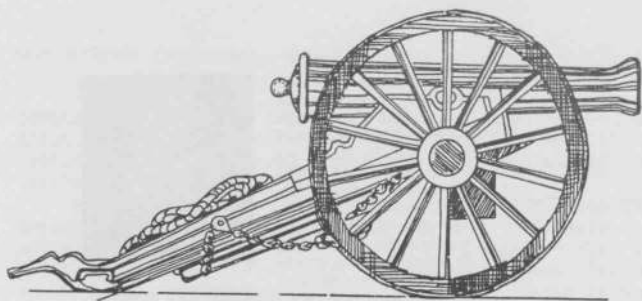
"After finishing armament school at Lowry Field, Colorado, he volunteered for aerial gunnery. He received his wings on November 30, 1943."

This item came direct from the Air Forces Public Relations Office in Europe—it's good news about our Ned, who was last heard from in a hospital in England. He froze his leg while on a mission over enemy territory. His friends here all hope for a speedy recovery.

FROM A 1943 PUBLICATION
OF THE STROMBERG-CARLSON COMPANY
ROCHESTER, N. Y.



TONY AND BARBARA UARGA,
NEW BRAUNFELS, TEXAS



^a/coma , Jfowhan/

89 Countryside Drive
Summit, N. J. 07901

To The Editor:

My name is Norman A. Franks and I was a pilot with the 551st Squadron from January, 1944 through August, 1944.

I went over as a co-pilot with the Ci: cries Byers crew and eventually flew with my own crew. Oeschle, Crew Chief; Erbach, Gunner; Pittis, Navigator; "Red" Miller, Radio.

Have never heard from anyone and I wonder if you have any kind of a listing of names, newsletter, etc. I would be most interested in news, reunions, or especially the whereabouts of my crew.

I would appreciate knowing what your organization does and any other information you might have.

Si neerely,
Horman A. Franks

(Ed. Note.: Infiofunatlon ient without delay.)

ANOTHER CHECKERBOARD: ANOTHER X"

5000 Ketova Way
Huntsville, 7 L 38503

Dear Editor:

I would like to add a piece of information to John Richardson's letter in the April issue.

The "X" on the checkered tail of the 385th Fort did indeed exist. Only it was named "Possible Straight." I know. It was my plane! I was navigator on Crow's crew of the 550th squadron, and I flew 26 missions, many in it. An old, faded and slightly out-of-focus picture is enclosed, but the "X" can plainly be seen. John Hite was the ground Crew Chief.

See y'all in LA -
W. (Bill) W. Varnedoe, Jr.



"pntible Straight"

Short Bursts

548th's 'BLIND DATE' CREW ■ COLORADO SPRINGS ONE YEAR LATER.

Looking for Engineer Olin Gilmore...

To The Editor:

I'm sending you this news story for you to use in the next 385th BGMA newsletter if you choose. We'd sure like to locate our missing crew member, Gilmore.

The crew of the B-17 "Blind Date," 385th Bomb Group, 548th Squadron, reassembled from around the country on June 7-11, 1984 at Colorado Springs for a 40th anniversary reunion.

Six of the original 10, headed by Pilot Bill Whitehead of Santa Maria, California, along with four spouses, toured the Air Force Academy, had lunch at the Officers' Club, enjoyed the recreational facilities of the area and spent hours telling stories and comparing scrapbooks.

Those present were Wes Sullivan, co-pilot, Salem, Ore.; Gene Hackney, navigator, Houston, Texas; Jack Povey, radio operator, Newton Square, Penn.; Mickey Purnell, tail gunner, Monroe, N. C.; Dave Cates, radar operator, Raleigh, N. C. George Crobaugh, ball turret gunner, Tiffin, Ohio, was sidelined by heart trouble and couldn't make the trip.

Len Edwards, assistant engineer, and Bill Butler, bombardier, are deceased. Olin Gilmore, engineer, is the only member of the crew whose address has been lost.

The Whitehead crew flew from Great Ashfield from October, 1944 to March, 1945 and was deputy lead plane of the squadron most of that time. Radio operator Povey was the only member wounded, during a Herseberg raid.

All crew members have remained married to their original spouses.

Wes Sullivan
1135 Waller Street S.E.
Salem, Ore. 97302

A WORD ABOUT BILL LEVERETT

To The Editor:

I have some information in reference to Bill Leverett, who was mentioned in John Ford's letter of 18 January 1980, published on page 10 of the April '84 newsletter.

He was my co-pilot on the B-17 for awhile. We completed our "35" and he had a few to go.

Considering my fading memory, I understand that when Bill completed his tour, he returned home and sometime thereafter had a tonsillectomy performed and did not make it, sorry to say.

Si ncerely,
Fred Sloane

**DEDICATION OF 385th MEMORIAL
SET AT AIR FORCE MUSEUM**

25 AUGUST 1984

**385th Dinner on 24 August
Wright-Patterson AFB**

LOCATION: THE MUSEUM IS LOCATED AT OLD WRIGHT FIELD,
DUE SOUTH OF WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB, DAYTON, O.

PROGRAM:FRIDAY, AUGUST 24, 1984

12:00 to 18:00 hours: Registration at Museum.
19:00 hours: 385th B.G. Dinner in Ballroom
at Wright-Patterson AFB Officers' Club. By
reservation only.

SATURDAY, AUGUST 25, 1984

Registration at Museum.
11:00 hours: Dedication of 385th Memorial
and Living Oak Tree in Memorial Area at
the Air Force Museum.
Ceremony to include Color Guard, Base Chaplain,
and Forrest V. Poore, President of 385th B.G.
Memorial Association.

3:30 hours: AF Movie in theater at Museum
14:00 hours: Meeting of 385th B.G. members
in the theater with Pres. Forrest V. Poore
presiding. Following meeting program is
completed.



UNITED STATES AIR FORCE



LI (IVING OAK MEMORIAL



*If you have never visited the Museum you will find it to be a rewarding experience. The Mini-Reunion gives you extra incentive to attend. We encourage all members to arrive in time for the 385th Dinner in the WPAFB Officers' Club Ballroom on Friday, August 24 at 19:00 hours. **WE MUST KNOW IN ADVANCE HOW MANY TO EXPECT.***

Make your plans now to attend either or both days!
Admission to Museum is free, dinner at WPAFB should cost \$12:00 to \$15.00 per person. Bring your wife. Please fill in the reservation form below and mail as promptly as possible - no later than July 27th.

ROBERT I. LOJINGER, CHAIRMAN
P.O. BOX 12236
CINCINNATI, OHIO 45212-0236



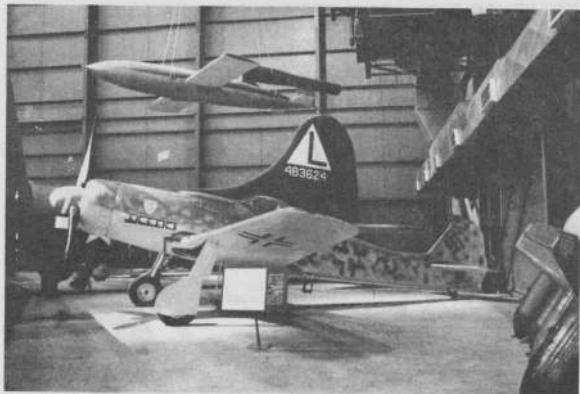
3S5Zk MEMORIAL PLAQUE

I plan to attend 385th BG Mini-Reunion and Dedication.
I will arrive on () Friday, August 24th.
I will attend dinner at WPAFB Officers' Club
() Friday at 19:00 hours.
I will arrive on () Saturday, August 25th.

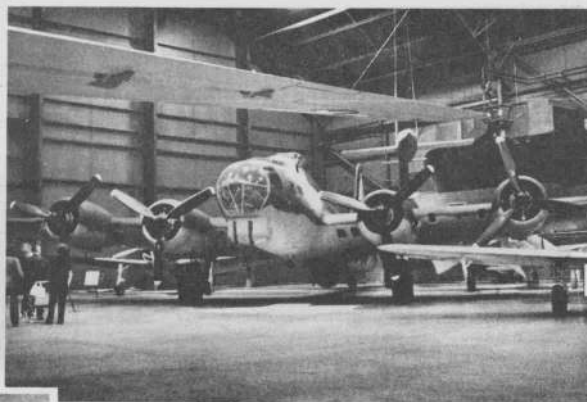
NAME _____
STREET _____
CITY STATE ZIP _____



MAIL NO LATER THAN JULY 27TH.



B-190
A FORMER FOE



B-17
AN OLD FRIEND



**1985 REUNION - LOS ANGELES
EARLY REGISTRATION URGED**

Pre-registration for the 385th Comb Group Reunion in Los Angeles during the period September 11-14, 1985, is now under way. The registration fee for the reunion is \$58 per person. The fee includes the Friday night Mexican dinner, the Saturday night dinner dance, the Sunday breakfast on the 15th, and the morning coffee for the ladies' and men's meetings on Saturday. Please mail your check to:

Sam Lyke
4992 Princeton Drive
Bartlesville, Oklahoma 74006

Sam has once again graciously agreed to handle our finances. As you might remember, Sam collected the registration fees for the 1983 Colorado Springs Reunion. We urge everyone to mail the fees in early. Sam has established an interest bearing account in which he will deposit the registration fees as he receives them. The Group will benefit from the interest earnings. The early birds will be ahead by paying well in advance as that expense will be out of the way as the travel date approaches.

Reservation cards for the lodging at the Hyatt Hotel at the Los Angeles Airport will be mailed to all members at a later date. We have negotiated an excellent room rate at the Hyatt. All rooms will be \$60 plus tax. That is a flat rate for either 1, 2, 3, or 4 persons occupying the room. There are two large queen size beds in each room. This is by far the best rate obtainable in a class hotel such as the Hyatt. Also, Hyatt furnishes free transportation to and from the Los Angeles International Airport.

Al Chealander



385TM B G M A
VERNE PHILIPS, Editor
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Austin, Texas 78763

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