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"The Mighty Eighth Reunion Group"

385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

GREAT ASHFIELD — SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

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NEWSLETTER

VOL. XIII NO. 3

JULY 1986

EDITOR, ED STERN

Prez Sez

June 18, 1986

Our special Memorial/Mini reunion in Arlington, Virginia is only a few months away -- hope you have made plans to attend.

Reservation forms are in this issue.

Tuesday, June 10th, the Weikerts, Coles, and Nicholls met in Dayton, Ohio to discuss the 1987 reunion. Ruel and his committee have made real progress in securing assistance from the Air Force and Air Force Museum personnel, and the Mariott staff has assured us of their utmost co-operation.

Volunteers to work with the committee would be most welcome, so if you have the time and the energy please contact Ruel.

ARLINGTON IN SEPTEMBER!

Bill

Updated membership roster, as of June 15, 1986 is in this Newsletter. Any errors can be blamed on the computer, or our very capable and careful typist. It wasn't proof read by your editor, whose salary (1 free drink at Dayton reunion) is insufficient to compensate for such a tedious proofing. If you have any corrections, please send corrections directly to Carl Schulz, 2049 Phoebe Drive, Billings, MT 59105.

ARLINGTON MEMORIAL MINI REUNION

SEPTEMBER 20, 1986

Registration and reservation information included in this Newsletter.

Dues status was inadvertently left off labels for this newsletter. They will be on again in October.

THE STARS AND STRIPES

By

BUD HUTTON

and

ANDY ROONEY

Andy Rooney of CBS's "SIXTY MINUTES" fame, collaborated with Bud Hutton in writing a book about Stars and Stripes Newspaper after WWII—a most entertaining account of the reporters who worked on Stars and Stripes. Below is the story of their visit to the 385th, we think in the fall of '43, but maybe later. We well remember Bud Hutton living in one of the raunchiest of the 550th Barracks—maybe Andy was there, too, but he perhaps lucked out in a cleaner barracks. Anyway, here's their story (We think the pilot's name was McIlveen).

There was the time that Rooney, Kiley and Hutton, who liked to be together, decided they ought to have a week's vacation. They couldn't figure out any way to manage it together until Rooney suggested casually:

"Why not all three of us make a bomber mission from the same group? We could go out to some base and lie around for a week, fly the mission, do a story, and then go back to work."

Kiley and Hutton looked at him quizzically, and Irish Kiley remarked dryly, "You wouldn't want us to go to extremes or anything for this vacation, would you?"

There was a catch: how to figure out a story which the Desk - which Hutton had left for the fun of covering the air war - would approve as worth sending three men into combat.

The three reporters finally worked out a deal, and enlisted the aid of Earl Mazo, then a public relations lieutenant for the 385th Bomb Group of the Eighth Air Force, who later transferred to The Stars and Stripes on the recommendations of Hutton, Kiley and Rooney.

"Why don't you get some new crew with a new Fortress to name their plane 'The Stars and Stripes!'" demanded the reporters. "We'd give it a good story, with pictures, and it probably would get a good play in the papers at home as well."

Mazo liked the idea, sold it to his colonel and a new crew headed by Lieutenant John McElwain. Dick Wingert, who was just in the process of developing his character, Hubert, went out to the 385th and painted a screaming eagle holding the Stars and Stripes on the fuselage of McElwain's plane. Kiley won - the others said he lost, because it was a green crew - a toss and was to fly. in The Stars and Stripes. Rooney was to go in a plane on one wing, Hutton on the other. Thus, they assured the office, even if one of them got shot down, the chances were good the others would be back with the story of the baptismal flight of The Stars and Stripes, which certainly should be well covered.

Reluctantly the Desk agreed, having been outmaneuvered by The Stars and Stripes promotion scheme, and the three reporters had a week of loafing around the bomber base, eating four meals a day and relishing the Indian summer sunshine.

Unfortunately, when the day of the christening came, Hutton's plane had engine trouble and turned back. Rooney and Kiley flew on to report the baptism under fire of The Stars and Stripes, and then stayed on the base almost another week until the next mission, when Hutton flew to Bremen with what was until then the greatest force of bombers ever sent out in daylight to Germany.

Hutton and Rooney continued flying with the bombers, and eventually Andy totaled some ten missions and Bud twenty-odd, which was more than the average gunner lived to amass. Charlie flew the thirteenth - the air crews call it the 12B-mission with The Stars and Stripes, and when the ship and crew were ready for their twenty-fifth mission he went back to make it with them.

The weather was bad. Day after day there was no flying, and this at a time when the office was shorthanded and Charlie was needed there. Finally, he decided to slip back to London over the weekend, help in putting out Sunday night's big paper and come back to the base early Monday morning.

On Sunday morning, while Charlie was in London, the weather cleared and McElwain and The Star and Stripes flew off to Germany for what was to be their last mission. They lost an engine to flak over the target, deep in northeastern Germany, and on the way out, over the Baltic Sea, Luftwaffe fighters caught the crippled plane.

Two of the crew bailed out to drown or freeze in the sea, the others apparently were caught in the plane as it hurtled off into the mist out of sight of the rest of the formation.

Charlie heard about it Sunday night, at the office.

Lt. Dick Gilder's crew, one of our original crews, the only one lost while flying overseas.



Front row: Left to right; Sgt's - Dirferding, R. Funk, D. Morrison, P. Kostial, L. Oglione.
Rear: Left to right; Lt.'s C. Morton-Bombadier, H.J. Suffront-Co-Pilot, R. Gilder-Pilot, W. Wilson-Navigator.

Paul Kostial, their Aerial Gunner was sick and did not fly over with them.' He asks if anyone knows whereabouts of the girl that Dale Morrison married in Lewiston Mont., probably in April or May of 1943. Write him at 506 Helen St., Queensburg, PA 15601.

Letters to the Editor

Dear Mr. Stern!

Mr. Ian Hawkins, sent me your April 1986 newsletter. I read with great interest the story by Joel Panches on his experiences on 21st February 1944 in the Netherlands and his return to England. At that time I was Luftwaffenhelfer at the airbase Diepholz.

Enclosed please find an article from the Diepholzer newspaper having been published in remembrance of the time 40 years ago.

I am looking for veterans who flew in those days the mission and who could give me further details on this. I should be very grateful if you would therefore please pass my inquiry on to Mr. Joel Panches. In addition I should be pleased to get information on 'fragmentation bombs' which were used at this raid. Fortunately, I did not see these bombs before and later.

Since I am actually making investigations for a memorial meeting of former Luftwaffenhelfer I would thank you very much if you could assist me with any information in this matter.

I also wrote to Mr. Clarence Cragoe in this concern, however at present I am still waiting for his replay.

I thank you in anticipation.

Yours sincerely,

Gunther Zerhusen
Lerchenweg 21
4530 Ibbenburen

72 PERSON WERE KILLED

Reminiscences of February 21,
Diepholz

1944 on the Airbase

DIEPHOLZ. The sky appears grey in grey in these days. It is snowing and raining by turns. About 40 years ago, exactly on February 21, 1944 it looked differently. The sky was clear. Fleecy clouds seemed being scaddered like ornaments at the clear blue sky. It was fresh, in other words cold. But towards noon-time a touch of the pleasant wealth of coming summer was anticipated. The air was quiet, still quiet and much too quiet in these days. As already said, it was February 21, 1944.

The evening before the air base Deipholz was filled with unusual beams of the airfield lights which had shown a german bomber group of the types Ju 88 and 188 they way into the night in direction London. To us, these german bombers were already scare guests. They were completely loaded with bombs, but nevertheless they could not carry all those grey blue colossus which were lying as being on call beside the runway. The hooting of the sirens at noon-time was missing, however calmness by such a weather, too nice to be true. Such forbidden wishes were punished immediately.

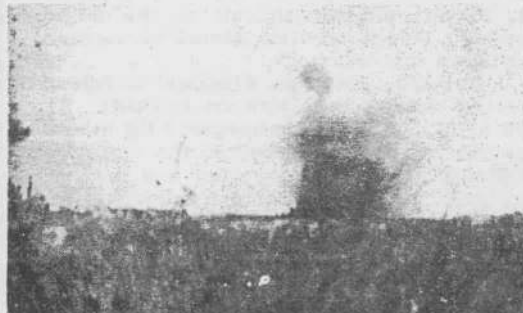
At 14 hours all clocks on the airbase stood still. Like a wave of iron and steel the disaster befall. The four-engined monsters called "Fortress" and "Liberator" approached booming in several waves. Three formations of 30 machines each ploughed up the runway and destroyed the hangars. The fourth group wanted to see about the station and the railway installations but their releases started at the "Jahnstrabe" over the "Schlobstrabe" and the "Munte" near by the outdoor swimming pool or made deep holes into the meadows of the "Diepholzer Fladder". The damage kept within limits there.

The Americans could complete their mission undisturbed, no German fighter was around, a powerless anti-aircraft gun with its 2 cm guns. It seemed like a wonder that the barracks were nearly undamaged but in such hours one tries to believe in wonders.

The airbase was at that time evacuated on raids of enemy formations. The swamp was the place to escape. Only the most important sentries, inclusive the light anti-aircraft guns, preferably served by the "Luftwaffenhelfer" remained occupied. However, this day it did not go so smoothly. Why not so, will probably never be cleared up entirely. 72 persons were killed, still many more were wounded.

Rough countings on the attacked fields later on showed craters of several thousands of heavy high-explosive and lighter fragmentation bombs. Still weeks later any air traffic was impossible. It seemed as if the shock had paralysed the initiative of the responsible people, as if their thoughts were buried under the ruins of the hangars or buried in the craters on the runway. Bomb removal units tried in wearisome work to trace the 183 blind bombs of which a greater number could still be blasted on the spot. The remaining were dugged out at the risk of life. Convicts of Bremen became their chance to get rid of their sentence during this suicide mission, when they had removed enough blind shells.

A 'black humor' prelude to the history of the airbase Diepholz, but this February 21, 1944 was a great divide. It was already the first point behind the story's first part and what followed till the bitter end was more a slow lingering illness with a stroke here and there, when American planes (Mustangs, Thunderbolts or Lightnings) battered the trains, when the 'outwork' was on its turn. A sorrowful, agonizing decease until occupation through British troops on April 6, 1945. We hope to make this experience never again.



Ten 10 hundred-weight bombs detonated at the shortly before repaired runway of the airbase several weeks after the big attack, bringing any air traffic to a standstill. A Fortress of a flying back American bomber formation had made extremely good work from 5000 m altitude. Not one bomb missed the target. Like this happened 1944. In the foreground a gun emplacement of "Luftwaffenhelfer" of whom Gunther Zerhusen had the presence of mind to catch this situation.



The "Luftwaffenhelfer", they were the only protection among a few MGs of the air base grc..p. They also remained in their position when the whole airbase was evacuated during missions. Besides they tried yet to go on to school, however this trouble was above all in summer mostly in vain because they were caught by the alarm already on their way into town. Here a photograph of a gun emplacement during an exercise.

(Letters to the Editor Cont.)

Mr. Drue Gillis
President, Shotel Inc.
2650 Pittman Drive
Silver Springs, Maryland 20910

Dear Mr. Gillis,

Many thanks for your letter of 27th December forwarded to me by George Hruska.

Your reference to the Hutchison/Pease collision was most interesting and I'm wondering if you could elaborate on what you saw. I have two accounts from the Terrace crew, who were on Hutchison's port side, and I've got several ground eyewitness accounts but any additional recollections are always welcome. The sort of thing I'm seeking are cloud conditions, visibility, height. How long did the tragedy take to occur and what can you remember happening? Can you, by any chance, recall Lt. Pease's call letter or whether his ship had a name? His aircraft was serial 42-37963 - Hutchison was flying 42-31370, call letter 'O'.

Switching now to "Blue Champagne". I notice that Curtis Ailes says you went down on 8th April but the Missing Aircrew Combat Report I have is for 11th April and reads as follows:

"Aircraft 42-37933 was apparently hit by enemy anti-aircraft fire over the target area. No. 2 engine was seen to be feathered and another engine was windmilling. The aircraft was seen to lose some altitude but was last seen under control and heading for Sweden. Two crews reported that the crew of 42-37977 bailed out of this aircraft at the Baltic coast of Germany. This information cannot be verified as other reports are contradicting".

Target on 11th April, 1944 was Krzesinki in Poland but bad weather forced the 385th on to Politz. By the way, was 42-37977, "Blue Champagne"? I'd like to have your account of what happened so the confusion on the MACR can at last be corrected and another piece of the group's history put into place.

Best wishes,
Ian McLachlan

Mr. Russel W. Fritzinger
7433 E Inverness Road
Mesa, AZ 85208

I've had a look at the Missing Aircrew Combat Report for your ship (was it called SLICK CHICK?) but all it states is the following: "Aircraft 43-37871 was hit by enemy aircraft cannon fire and went down into clouds at 18,000 feet. The aircraft was under control and men could have had time to bail out. No chutes were seen. One aircraft from our low squadron reported an aircraft, believed to be 43-37871, was last seen at 1045 hours at approx 51° 00'N - 14° 20'E, all engines going and wheels down but leaving a trail of smoke and heading for Russian lines".

You mentioned at the reunion that FW 190's came out of the sun but that's all I had time to take note of. The target that day was, you'll recall, Dresden and it was not a good day for the 385th as a check on Group records reveals.

On 2nd March, 1945, the 385th flew as A, B and C Groups putting up 12, 13 and 13 respectively. Bombing was in Group Formation with the Low Squadron bombing some distance to the rear despite holding its bombs for one minute after the Lead and High. All bombs were dropped through 10/10 using H2X. Incidentally, the 385th were leading the 3rd Air Division that day. At 1015 hours, 5130-1345, 15 aircraft attacked the Low Squadron, which had fallen to the rear, from 6 o'clock level in 2 waves of 6 FW 190's in combat front formations, and one wave of 3

Me 109's following them in. They rallied and were attacked by some p-51's. After this, attacks were made in groups of about 3, each one peeling off to attack individually from 11 O'clock to 1 o'clock, also attacks made on straggling B-17's and many of the enemy aircraft passed through the formation but, in most cases, they just made passes at the stragglers. These attacks lasted until about 1040 hours. 20mm fused ammo was used by the e/a which were reported as grey and blue in color. Near the end of the attack, one twin engined jet was seen.

The attackers appear to have hit your ship first. Next to go, at 1022, was 2/Lt Kenneth G. Tipton and crew on 44-8417 which fell back out of formation and exploded. No chutes were seen but I believe at least seven survived. One minute later, Lt. Leon E. Tripp's 43-38148 dove into the clouds, out of control and on fire - I show only two survivors. Last to fall was Lt. Eugene J. Vaadi and crew on 42-97979 which, although on fire, appeared to glide down to the cloud tops at 18,000 feet with several chutes being seen before the ship blew up. One parachute was reported as on fire but I'm happy to say my records show all nine on board as having survived.

A footnote on the disconsolate mood in the Group is reflected by a combat in your 551st Squadron Diary which relates, "After a very rough mission in which Lt. Krahn and his crew went down going to Dresden the stag party was a quieter one than it normally might have been..."

Very best wishes.
Ian McLachlan

Dear Ed,

You might like to know that I've had an invitation from Roland B. Prew, Superintendent of the American Military Cemetery, to represent the 385th BGMA/FOTE at the Memorial Day Service on June 1st. Julie and I will be proud to go, our 385th connections mean a lot.

Regards,
Ian McLachlan

Dear Ed,

I am writing in reference to the photo in the April newsletter. The crew was in the 549th squadron and we flew to England with the original 385th Bomb group the summer of 1943. Our plane was the Fickle Finger. You were right about Hamilton and Klohe being in the picture. From left to right are the names of the crew members shown.



Standing: Barney Gochnauer - Engineer
Curly Miller - Tail Gunner; Robert White - Waist
Gunner; Sam Bucceni - Ball Turnet; C. Irving
Radio; Ken Fernlund - Radio.

Squatting: Ed Grabawski - Navigator; Herle
Hamilton - Pilot; McKee - Co-Pilot; Iavan Klahe
Pilot.

Thank you,
Ken Fernlund

(Letters to the Editor Cont.)

Dear Ed,

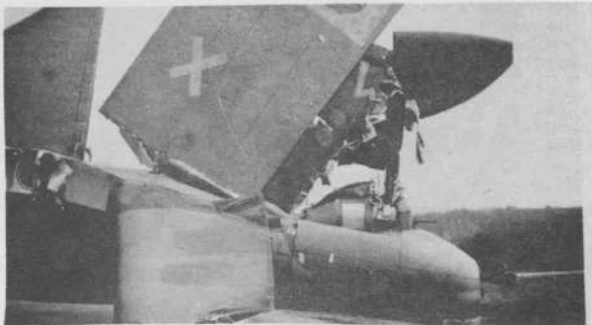
I liked the Fargo story. I missed the Fargo reunion not because of the boat but my Florida car can't stand cold weather. It will not start below 75°.

Sincerely,
John Pettenger

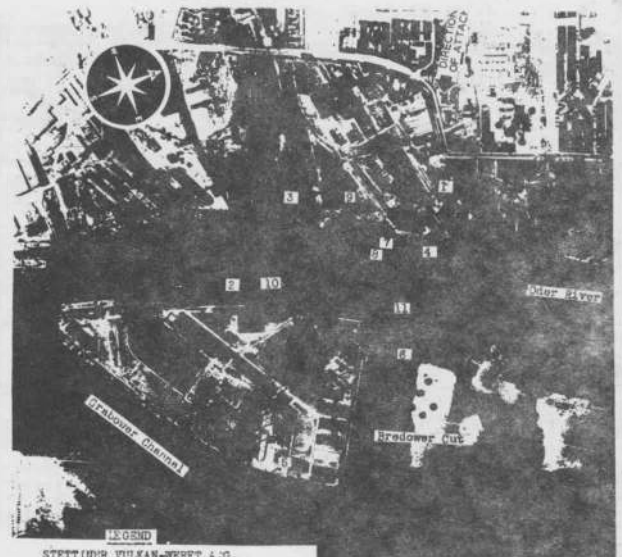
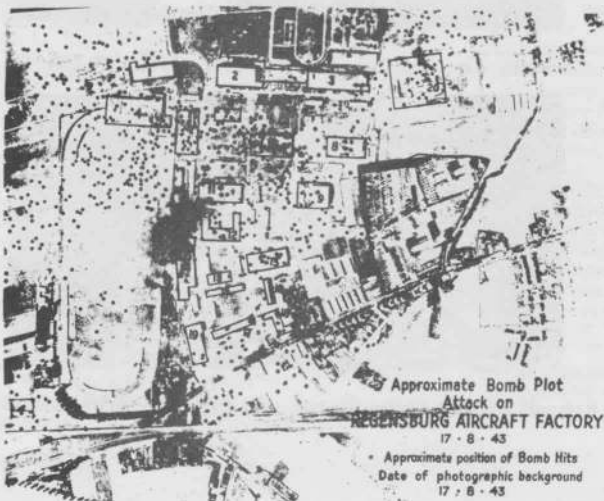
Dear Ed,

As the son of one of your members. Major Lawrence Coggiola, USAF(Ret.) I cannot tell you how proud it has made me to read your previous newsletters. Mr. William Nicholls, the 385th's President, was nice enough to send me bound copies of these letters, apparently bound for your '83 and '85 reunions. In reading these letters, I find that many of your members recollections are so vivid that I can almost feel myself in the skys over Europe! In our family's military transfers and vacations, my dad and I visited as many B-17's as we could. From the Memphis Belle to the experimental B-17(with a fifth engine in its nose) at Bradley Field in Conn., I have always been able to see a little "spark" in my dad as we would arrive at these Forts final resting places. In reading these newsletters, I can only imagine it must've been pure hell to fly these planes on their runs to bomb the enemy, (lean understand why many recall that they would sweat at the below 0° temperatures!)

Now to the point for my writing you today. A few years ago my dad gave me his military records and memorabilia. Included in this were the enclosed items that your members may find interesting. You may publish these in your newsletter if you wish (but please send these originals back as they are very important to me).



Item 1) This snap shows a B-17 that appears heavily damaged. Dad says the pilot was able to fly it back from the mission(How is the question!) Maybe you could identify the crew from the faint serial #'s on the tail, or perhaps your members may recall how it was damaged and on which mission.

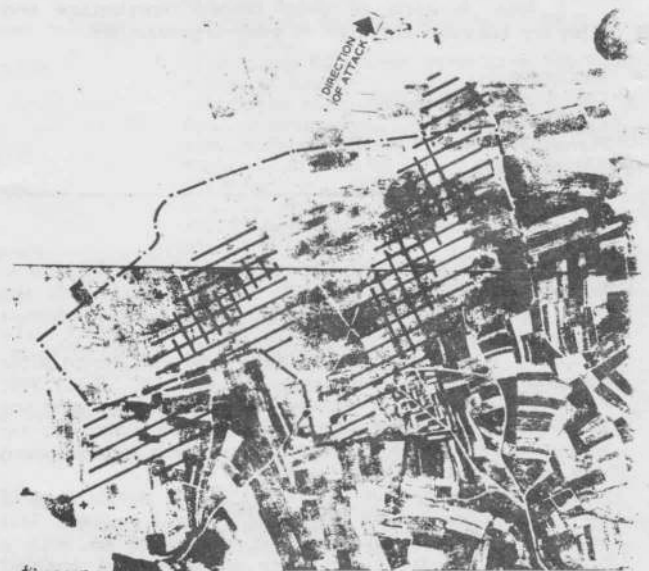


- STETTINER VULKAN-WERFT A.G.
1. S/M Slips Vulkan Yard.
 2. 740 Ton U-Boat.
 3. 500 Ton U-Boat.
 4. 150/200* Ferry in double floating dr
 5. 3 TLC's Type 1
 6. 460' Liner L37 Usararao Type.
 7. 11/V 300' Approx, fitting out.
 8. Depot Ship D10
 9. T/100 300' fitting out.
 10. 250*X40' Floating Dry Dock.? E Boats
11. Pier IX corner of Bredower .Cut.

S.A. 1537
STETTIN
11.4.44

APPROXIMATE BOMB PLOT

- position of well defined bursts.
- ◊ Area of heavy concentration.
- Admiralty Base.
- Photo Background N/832-5071
- Neg. No. 1405



S.A. 3536
UNTERSCHLAUBSBACH L/G
8 APR 1945

APPROXIMATE BOMB PLOT

- Concentration of H.E. bursts
- Area of H.E. bursts
- Single H.E. burst
- Position of aircraft
- Outline of target area

Photographic Background: DS70P/2352-4065,3065
Neg. No. PP-70551

Pictures 2.34'

Items 2 through 5) These photos are "APPROXIMATE BOMB PLOTS" for three missions. 2 - the Regensburg aircraft Factory raid of 17-8-43, 3 - a bombing run on STETTIN on 11-4-44, 4 - the mission on 8 April 1945 on UNTERSCHLAUBSBACH L/G (which I have no idea of what was bombed).

(Letters to the Editor Cont.)



And Lastly item 5) A "Secret" bomb run (apparently on Feb. 7, year unknown). I'm sure the members will be able to identify with these photos and will have many recollections of these missions.

I can assure you and the other 385th members, that this son of an Air Force Pilot is pretty darn proud of his father. I'm sure there are many others like me who can appreciate what sacrifices you gentlemen (and ladies) you have made in the past so that my generation may live in a free and safe America.*

I look forward to your future newsletters and offer my services and time to your organization.

Sincerely
David L. Coggiola
1529 Jabbet Drive
Plano, TX 75023
214-881-0776

Dear Ed,

Hope you don't mind the informal note. Wanted to let you know that I'd finally made contact with the only member of my original crew to whom I hadn't spoken since 1944.

Dory I. Altman, Jr. is alive and well, even after quintuple bypass surgery. At Rt. 7, Box 395, Florence, ALA 35630. He was a waist gunner and the best looking member of the crew, according to my wife, whose opinion I respected on such matters even way back then.

His discovery was the result of the persistence of my tail gunner Bob Andrews, who I visited last Saturday. While with Bob, he surprised me with a phone call which caught Dory at home and enabled the 3 of us to enjoy a mini-phone reunion. Dory wants to become a member of the, 385th BGMA and I hope we can convince him to attend our next meeting at Dayton in 1987.

Dory was the only member of my crew, who wasn't wounded or a POW. Who took advantage of the R S R after 25 missions, and I never saw or heard from him again after he left for the states. In fact, he's been very much of a 'mystery man'.

Anyway, it was terrific to talk to him again and I wanted to pass it along.

Incidentally, you're doing a great job with the newsletter. I read it through as soon as I receive it. I hope it gets forwarded to Maine where we spend our time from June through October. Still no luck in finding out who flew Togglier with us on 5-8-44 but I have received several letters from fellows who thought it might be them.

Best Regards,
Fred Ihlenberg

Hi Ed Stern:

Just read the latest newsletter and the President column got me looking through my pictures to see if I could find a picture of Arkey Huber in a 385th T-shirt. I had taken some pictures at the Las Vegas Gunnery School reunion last November. None of him in a 385th T-shirt but did come across several taken with some of the other 385th members attending the reunion. The other one with the 3 of us is taken at the dinner at the end of the reunion, I didn't get the persons name in the center of the picture but he jTist happened to be on duty as the maitre de of the dinner and was a navigator in the 385th in 1945 I believe. The 3rd one is four of us from the 385th attending the first reunion of the school.

I wonder if anyone remembers a gunner by the name of Fagan, he was a S/Sgt and in the 549th squadron about June 1944. Does anyone know of him or what happened to him?

I am also looking for a gunner S/Sgt Fletcher, first name not known. He was transferred out of the 385th BG about the first of August 1944 to a 9th Air Force outfit, the 397th BG. I don't know what squadron he was in, in the 385th but evidently was a spare gunner and sent to fill in, in the 9th AF.

I have tried the 8AF research service but I don't have enough information for them and they can't locate him. Would appreciate anyone knowing anything about these two people please contact me.

Sincerely,
Clarence Abrahamson
6431 Menlo St.
Santa Susana, CA 93063

Pictures taken at Las Vegas Gunnery School Reunion November, 1985.



(Wesley Krause?), Arkey Huber, Russell Byers and Clarence Abrahamson.



Clarence Abrahamson, (Maitre De?), Arkey Huber



Russell Byers, Arkey Huber and Clarence Abrahamson

Personals

Vice President Earl Cole and Ruth attended the meeting of the British Bomber Command in England on April 26, as guests of Col. and Mrs. Donald Walbrecht, the retired Vice-Commander of the 3rd Air Force, along with A.L. Benefields.

Earl reports a wonderful time and marvelous hospitality. He estimates that at least 75 people came over to shake their hands and to welcome them almost as brothers because of their 8th Air Force connection. 640 people attended the luncheon.

After the reunion, they spent a few days in London and then went to Mildenhall as guests of Col. Don Walbrecht and his wife. Col. Walbrecht piloted the 2,000 MPH Blackbird recon plane as it flew across the Pacific in 5 hours, across the US in 1 1/2 hours, across the Atlantic in 2 hours. He is retired now and is a fulltime student at Cambridge University in England.



Pictured: Col. and Mrs. Earl Cole, Col. and Mrs. Donald Walbrecht, Lt. Col. and Mrs. A.L. Bendfield at House Banquet.

Charles C. Smith, 549th, Group Transportation Officer. Went back to previous job as Mfgs Rep selling power transmission and industrial specialties. Started own company in 1964, now trying to retire while son and son-in-law do a good job of running the business. Have one daughter, one son, 2 grandchildren, enjoying traveling more than ever, and my wife says we're going to do more. Enjoyed hosting the 1975 Reunion in Atlanta.

MORE ON MADAM SHOO SHOO

More on Madam Shoo Shoo—Abe Jacobson, who was Line Chief of the 551st, identifies the Crew Chief pictured in the April Newsletter as Seymour Albert. Seymour lives somewhere in the Los Angeles area—anyone know where?

Obituaries

George Wehmeyer, Abilene, TX
October 1985



Royal Air Force Church

385 TMB G M A

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