



## RECOMMENDED 1993-95 OFFICER NOMINATION SLATE

As is our usual practice in the 385th BGMA, your current officers have prepared a recommended officer nomination slate for the 1993-95 tenure. This is not meant to preclude any other nominations that may be made at the business meeting during the reunion. The purpose of this recommended slate is to insure the successful continuity of the 385th BGMA.

We propose the following slate, which is a unanimous selection of your current officers. All nominees have agreed to serve.

**For President** - Bob Smith, currently serving as 1st vice president and host for the Spokane Reunion.

**For 1st Vice President** - Bob Valliere. Bob has been a member of the 385th BGMA since its early inception and has always been a strong supporter.

**For 2nd Vice President** ■ Archie Benner. Archie served the longest as C.O. of the 549th and since the war has done a lot to keep the squadron members together.

**For 2nd (Ladies) Vice President** - Jean Smith, Bob's wife. This is in keeping with our past practice of making the ladies Vice President the wife of the president, which has proven to be very advantageous. After all she will do most of the - work.

In order to ensure the continuity of certain essential offices these incumbents have agreed to serve yet another turn, the incumbents are:

**Secretary** - George Hruska

**Treasurer** - John Pettenger

**Chaplain** - Jim Vance

**Editor, Hardlife Herald** - Ed Stern

Presented by

Pres. Sid Colthorpe



Louis G. Lonsway  
Charles C. Smith

April 1993  
May 1993

## CHAPLAIN JIM SEZ:

Back in 1981 Katherine Hepburn had this to say about growing older. "When you're my age, it's as if you're a car. First a tire blows, and you get it fixed. Then a headlight goes and you get that fixed. And then one day you drive into a garage and the man says, 'Sorry, Miss, they don't make this kind any more!'"

A quieter thought to think about, isn't it.

Well anyway, as they say, retired people do not buy green bananas any more. Sooooo why don't we give out some flowers now while we are still getting repair and eating green bananas.

One deserving flowers is Ed stern - Editor of our HardLife Herald. Ed called the other day when he was in Bellevue, WA and referred to himself as the "one that pestered me for my articles for HardLife Herald." I think he does an outstanding job of editing and edifying us about our 385th BGM Association and under no circumstances is he a pest. THANKS ED.

Another one deserving flowers is Geri - my wife of 50 years. Man has she put up with a lot. Being a Preachers wife is a tough life but being married to me was a double burden. Thanks Geri-I love you. I probably shouldn't say it but I hope you have to do it for 50 more years.

That's my flowers for this time. God is blessing us all (deserving or not) so why not tell someone how much you love them and appreciate what they do.

Sincerely with love,

Jim Vance

P.S. Hope to see you all in Spokane.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Thanks for the nice words Jim- and for always being prompt with your "Chaplain Sez."

□ □ □ □ **LIFE MEMBERS** □ □ □ □

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Lyle V. Fryer

## Charles C. Smith

A memorial service for Charles Cassius Smith of Roswell, a retired manufacturer's representative, will be held Friday, May 14, at Rock Spring Presbyterian Church in Atlanta, at 2:00 PM. Officiating will be Dr. Walter G. Cook of Charleston, SC and Dr. Harry Beverly, Pastor. The family will receive friends in the church parlor between 1:00 PM and 2:00 PM. Mr. Smith, 77, died of cancer, May 11, 1993 at Northside Hospital. He was founder of Smith Industrial Sales, Inc. in Atlanta. He served in England with the Eighth Air Force during World War II and retired as Lieutenant Colonel. He was President-Elect of the 385th Bombardment Group Memorial Association, and Life Member of the Military Order of World Wars and the Eighth Air Force Historical Society.

# REUNION - 385TH BGMA REGISTRATION LIST

Edward & Jane Stern  
Col. J.G. McDonald  
Ben & Dorothy Love  
Tyler C. Winton  
Charles & Beth Smith  
O.V. & Doris Lancaster  
Gene & Elaine Silberberg  
Joseph & Patricia Gorchak  
Sidney & Lena Colthorpe  
Frank & Rosie Moll  
Milton & Helen Taubkin  
Ruel & Mary Weikert  
William & Geri Clark  
John & Joanne Pickett  
A.L. & Betty Bennefield  
Ryan, Paul & Mildred  
Mike & Marian Gallagher  
Jerome & Vera Mudge  
Wilbur & Iris Sunday  
Harry & Phyllis Peltzer  
A.J. "Bud" McDevitt  
Edward & Beverly McElray  
Herman & Elizabeth Heckel  
Dr. Louis & Effie Kivi  
Craig and David Kivi  
Pat & Gloria Howard  
Leonard A. Mika  
William & Doris Nicholls  
Louis & Ruth Lonsway  
Cledith Peterson  
Jim Sr. & Marge Watzke  
Tom & Darla Newton  
Gerry Bash  
Walter & Norma Schulte  
Robert & Esther Arn  
Willis & Doris Tulare  
Earl & Ruth Cole  
Chuck & Blanche Brackett  
Henry & Dru Dworshak  
Howard & Vivian Richardson  
Wesley & Helen Brashear  
Warren & Dorothy Ledy  
Gordon & Natalie Cook  
Plato & Constance Gallan  
Charles Lubicic

William & Mary Hoagland  
John & Stella Kavaliunas  
George & Geneva Hruska  
Rev. James & Geri Vance  
Marvin & Betty Tipp \*  
Tom & Margie Conway  
Sep & Terry Richard  
John & Dorothy DeBerg  
Jerome Harmon  
Mrs. J. Roy Grimes  
Donald & Tricia Collins  
Henry & Martha Jones  
Norman & Kay Gael  
Charles & Marie Coughl i  
George & Marie Kenkofi  
Dr. Robert & Helen Kuhn  
Forrest & Beatrice Poore  
Oliver & Joyce Anderson  
Howard & Beatrice Director  
Dale Dykins  
Elmer & Jean Snow  
William & Lou Koon  
Wallace & Anna Wojtkowski  
Bob & Lucille Knight  
Leo & Anne LaCasse  
Frank & Peggy McCawley  
Burnell & Lorna Cook  
William & Vera Gunther  
Charles & Ruth McCauley  
Helen Child  
M. Drue & Pam Gillis  
Elmer & Betty Dickason  
John & Sally Stansfield  
Mike & Allene Loyet  
Buck & Ginny Rogers  
Wayne & Eunice Zeigler  
Dr. Harold & Eulene Bushey  
Rolland & Arlene Vencill  
Jerry & Jane Ramaker  
Robert S & Ann Milligan  
Mrs. Reuben Eckhardt  
Stanley & Cleone Dentinger  
W.J. "Doc" & Agnes E. Karls  
James H & Margie Emmons

Barney J & Ila Coble  
Manuel & Lydia Vai  
Donald E. & Edeltrude V. Jones  
Richard E. & Mary Jane Molzhan  
Russell H. & Sarah A. Hulse  
Fain H. & Christine Pool  
Francis "Stub" & Verde Roquette  
Richard A. & Joan W. Knight  
William J. & Ethel Pansier  
Joyce Horton  
Merrill J & Elaine Klein  
Samuel (Sam) P. & Nita Luckie  
Wm Gaylord & Jeanette Watson  
Bill & Mitzi Fife  
Hugh S. Andrew  
Virgil E. & Ann Zink  
George & Alice Salvador  
Daniel F. Riva  
Robert W. & Coralie Wilson  
Leonard R. Mika  
Robert G. & Kay Harvey  
Mildred G. Grabowski  
Gretchen Grabowski Fossum  
William E. & Mary Todd  
Walter S. & Gloria Gazda  
Elmer H & Dorothy Rasmussen  
Herbert C. & Mary Macy  
Frank P. & Kathleen Marano  
Sam & Mary Lyke  
Frank B. & Winifred Walls  
Carlyle & Mildred Hanson  
Robert L. & Marjorie A. Bailey  
Bob & Betty Hach  
Charles G. & Eunice Flynn  
Robert E. Douglas  
Arch & Bonnie Benner  
Arkey M. Huber  
Vicki L. (Huber) Haas  
Karstin (Huber) Haas  
Jim L. Farrington  
Chris M. Farrington  
Carol M. Coudyser  
Bryon & Georgia Pyle  
Fred & Marion Nestler



# BULLETIN BOARD

## ATTENTION

I would like to hear from Group members that participated on the April 11th, 1944 (Ariminswalde) and April 29th, 1944 (Berlin) missions. My purpose for collecting information on these missions is for several writing projects that I'm currently putting together. One is for an article on the "other Berlin missions" and for a book on the 8th and 15th Air Force operations during April 1944. It would be nice to include several personal experiences from the 385th. I'm an Associate of the Group and hope some of the members drop me a line. Thank you in advance.

Bob Foose  
41 Pebble Lane  
Columbus, Ohio 43220  
614-457-6658

## ATTENTION

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## 1995 REUNION PRESENTATIONS

Anyone wishing to make a presentation for hosting the 1995 Reunion, please let President Sid Colthorpe know, and be ready to make your first presentation on Saturday morning. That will give everyone a day to talk things over before voting on Sunday. Omaha, Philadelphia, and the Savannah area have been mentioned.

Bill Nicholls, Joe Jones, Forrest Poore, and Henry Jones are on the site-selection committee.

## MARVIN TIPP

*"A Lifetime in Photography"*

*Photographs from the 1930s to the present*

June 10 - July 4, 1993

**FOSTER/WHITE GALLERY  
in KIRKLAND**

126 Central Way  
Kirkland, Washington 98033

## CONFEDERATE AFFI FORCE, INC.



## NOTICE

October 9-10, 1993 -- The Confederate Air Force (CAF) will host AIRSHO 93 at Midland International Airport, Midland, Texas. The CAF will celebrate their 30th annual homecoming air show featuring the ever popular CAF World War II Airpower Demonstration, the only flying WWII Avro Lancaster, the TABASCO S2A Pitts, Less Shockley's Super Shockwave Chevy, Bobby Younkin's Beech 18, modern military demonstrations and static displays and much more! The American Airpower Heritage Museum will unveil Phase III titled "Troops, Food, Tanks and Supplies" which emphasizes the role of military transport during World War II. For ticket information call (915) 563-1000.

November 11-13, 1993 -- The American Airpower Heritage Museum and Midland College will be hosting an international symposium. "A Sleeping Giant Awakens." Topics will be related to WWII home front and battle front activities. Confirmed panelists are author Tim Wooldridge, National Air & Space Museum, Ramsey Fellow, Francis Gabreski, leading living WWII fighter pilot ace, WASP representatives, Don Sachs, Boeing aviation consultant and many others. Special Guest speakers will be announced soon. For more information contact Terese Buckley, curator of education, (915) 563-1000.

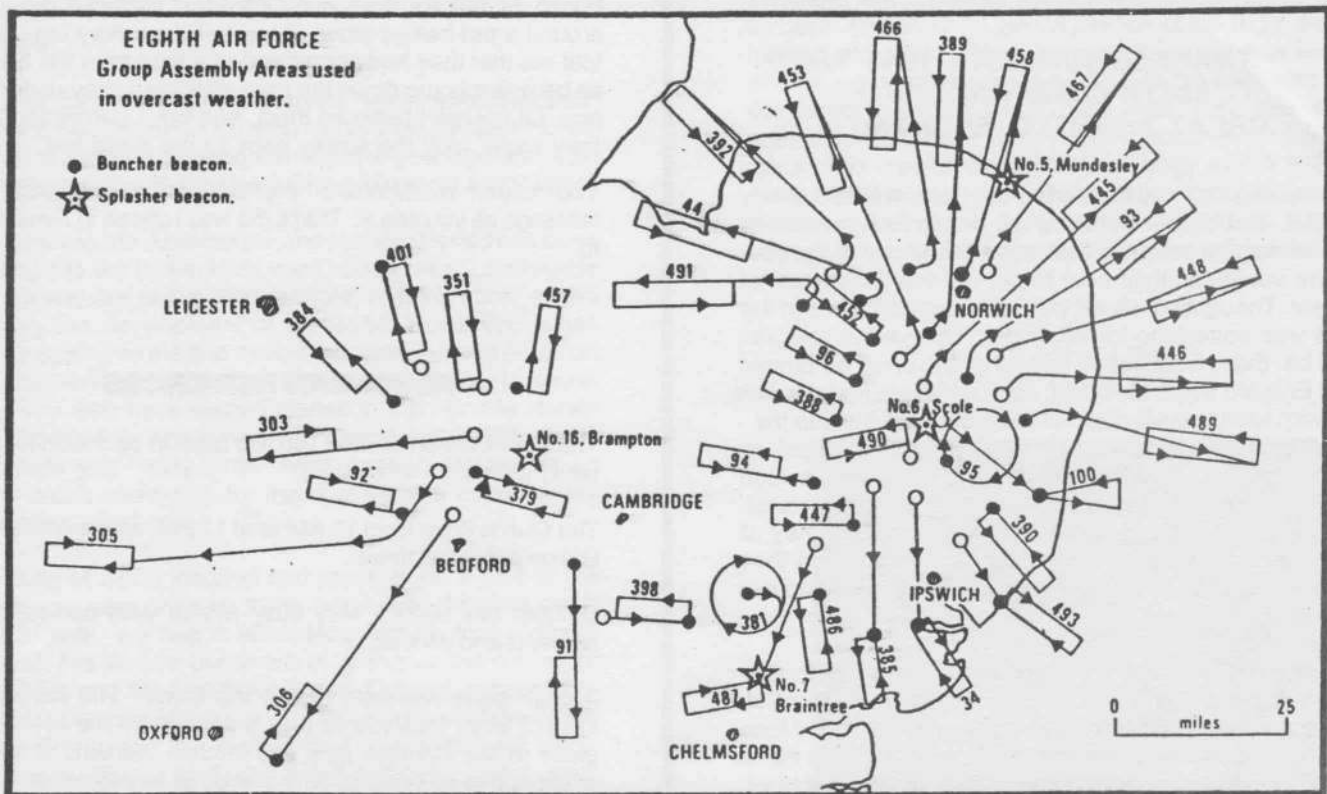
## NEXT ISSUE OF HARLIFE HERALD

We'll be waiting until pictures and stories about the Spokane Reunion are available, so the next issue will probably come in early October. So--don't hold your breath all of August! We'll plan another in December--just 5 this year instead of 6.

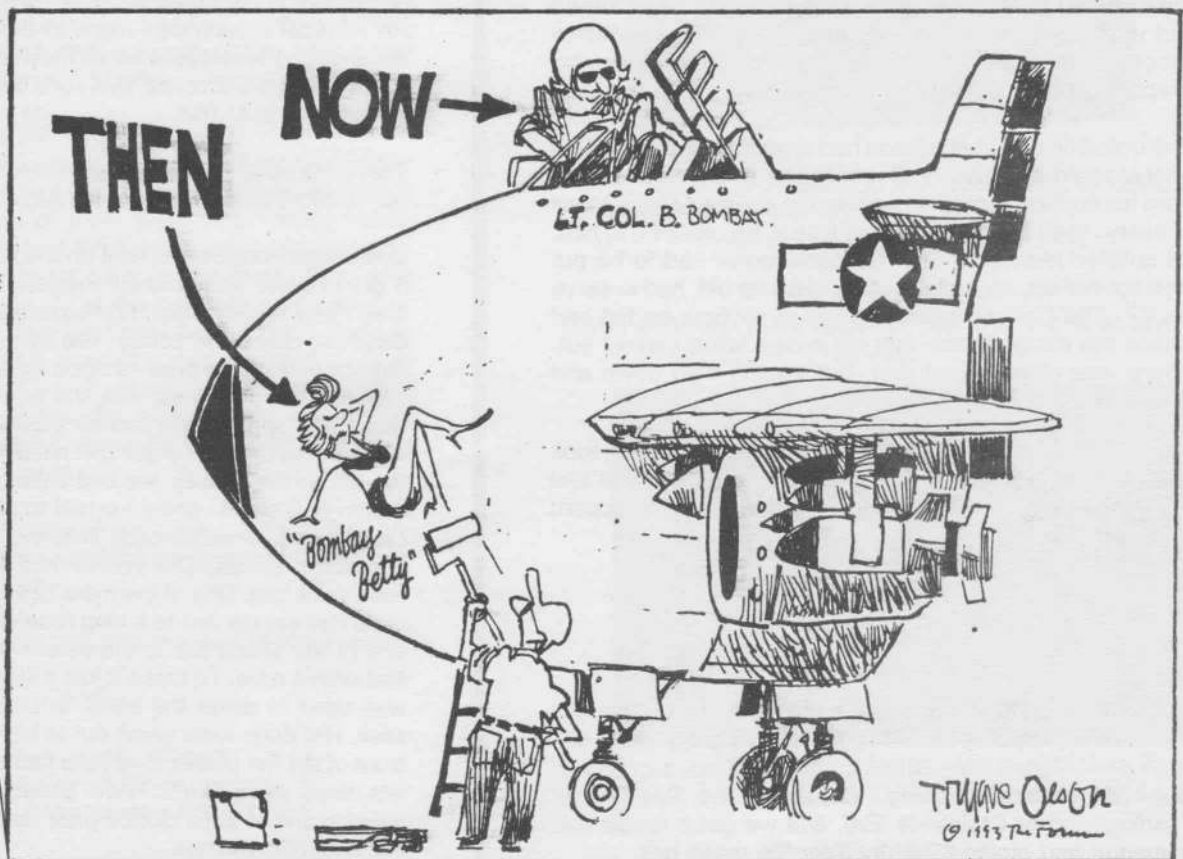


Les Reichardt  
4128 Willowbrook Dr.  
Liverpool, NY 13090

## A Maalox Moment



And It Looked So Neat, Well Organized and Feasible!



Courtesy the Forum, Fargo ND

## FROM DON KABITZKE'S SCRAPBOOK OF STORIES FROM 1943-45

### THANKSGIVING DAY, 1943 385TH BOMB GROUP GREAT ASHFIELD, ENGLAND

Thanksgiving Day, 1943 started out cold, wet and windy overcast. The only bright thing we had to look forward to was Thanksgiving dinner. That was the one day of the year that the cooks did their best to put out the finest meal of the year. Thoughts of sweet potatoes, pumpkin pie and the works was something to remember. This year it just was not to be. Everything seemed to go wrong once we arrived at the Enlisted Mens messhall. As soon as we had our trays filled with food and sat down at the tables, we cut into the turkey parts we had been given. The Air Force bragged we would all be given a minimum of a pound of turkey. As soon as the first man cut into his piece, he saw raw bloody meat. That was enough to spoil wanting to eat further. They all got up and went out to the garbage cans, dumped their messkits into them, washed them and went to their quonset huts, angry.

Someone did not take this sitting down. He went to Colonel VanDevanter and reported what happened. The Colonel, an old West Pointer was a firm believer that good food made for good morale. He was ever mindful of the mens needs and did his best to give us all he was capable of. At the messhall he gathered some cooks with forks and sharp knives and led them out to the garbage cans. He made them dig down and bring up turkey parts and slice into the meat. When he saw raw pink and bloody meat he turned red with anger. He ordered the Mess Officer and cooks to recook a new complete dinner without delay, and be prepared to serve a late supper also.

The outcome of this afternoon had repercussions. The Colonel ordered all Squadron Commanders to assign an officer from his squadron or unit to eat in the Enlisted Mens Mess at every meal. Anything unusual was to be reported to him. All enlisted men from Staff Sergeant down had to be put on a special list, regardless of the work he did, had to serve on KP. The Colonel would drop in at anytime he felt and check the roster to see that his orders were carried out. There was grumbling at first, but it soon died down and things in the messhalls improved.

I didn't mind pulling KP as we in the woodwork section took our tools along and built shelving as the Mess Officer and cooks desired. I had the same thing happen at Sheppard Field, Wichita Falls, Texas.

Don Kabitzke

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** If you say it happened, it did, Don! As Exec, of the 550th, I don't remember hearing about it.

But I do remember being "Officer of the Day" either Thanksgiving or Christmas Eve, and we got a report that someone had stolen a turkey from the mess hall.

You won't believe this-the 550th being an exemplary organization that never did anything wrong-but I found a bunch of fellows from our Ordnance barracks grouped around a pot-bellied stove trying to fry a turkey leg. They told me that they had apprehended a thug from the 549th as he was running down the road with this turkey under his arm. Of course I believed them, and they, gentlemen that they were, took the turkey back to the mess hall.

You former members of the 549th can interpret this message as you see fit. That's the way I chose to remember it!

## AMERICAN RED CROSS

The Aero Club on Station 155 has been in operation for thirteen months.

The Club is open from 11 AM until 11 PM, with an American Girl on duty at all times.

October has been a very busy month with parties, tournaments and dances.

A Staff party was held during the month. The Aero Club Council boys volunteered their time to work the evening in place of the Canteen girls and kitchen workers. One boy made coffee all evening, with one other boy to assist. Three boys washed and dried cups and plates. Four boys working on the Canteen and three boys collecting dishes all evening. Two boys as waiters to see that the members of the Staff had plenty to eat and drink. The party was a huge success. An informal speech was made at the end of the evening - thanking the employees for all they had done in the past to make the club a success. Everyone had a good time and the party ended at 11 PM.

Two ping pong tournaments were held for the month with our team walking away with the score both times.

One bridge contest was held on the 27th, and everyone had a grand time. The Council suggested a Stag Party and a Stag Party it was. Cider, homemade apples on a stick, sandwiches, cakes and coffee. The evening started with a pie eating contest - the prize - a zippo lighter. Another game that caused a lot of interest was the two large tubs filled with water and apples with money inserted in them had to be taken out of the tub by going in head first. Instead of pinning the tail on the donkey, we had a picture of a half naked girl drawn on a sheet - someone had to pin on her panties. This caused loads of excitement. Then we made up six little bags containing spices. The winner had to be able to identify each spice bag. One of the mess Sgts, won this prize. Sticky buns had strings tied to a long rope was stretched from one end of the Snack Bar to the other - the one eating the bun first won a prize. To make it just a little more difficult - syrup was used to cover the buns. Such a sticky mess I never seen. Hot dogs were given out to be roasted by the boys in front of the fire places. Everyone had a good time - all saying lets have more like it. Two ghosts roamed the Club all evening and at ten o'clock a prize was given for the G.I. that could identify the two.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Col. Jumper's report paints a pretty clear picture of how it was.

### GROUP COMMANDER'S REPORT

In the month of November the 385th Group went into its second English winter. (As I recall, the astronommers don't call November winter, but we argue about that technically. As far as we of the 385th are concerned, November in East Anglica definitely is winter.) The comparisons in living conditions and in operating conditions this winter as compared to last are rather striking. Without trying to portray the comparisons statistically and in great detail, I should like to comment generally on our improved condition.

First of all, last winter I was not a member of the 385th, but I was only about 10 miles away. Col. Vandevanter being an old friend of mine, I elected the 385th to be the organization from which I, then operations officer of the newly arrived 447th, should learn "the ropes" and the tricks of the trade. In consequence I was over here often, observing, trying to learn, hence my personal knowledge of the 385th in its winter agonies.

Just to complicate everything, November of 1943 found the 385th on a station only partially completed. The industrious employees of the ministry of works were evident at 3 PM of any day brewing tea under every unfinished roof which offered a semblance of protection. The contractors' lorries beat back and forth in groaning protest. The narrow roads built to RAF specification must have been there, undoubtedly were, but no one could tell; they were buried in the mud splashed up by the numerous vehicles which got off the concrete.

MUD: If ever any substance, any thought, will remain always in the minds of us synthetic citizens of East Anglica, that substance, that thought, will be mud. There was mud in our shoes, on our clothes, on our hands, even in our hair. There was mud in our airplanes. There was mud in our quarters. As we set down in the early hours of the morning, cold, wet, tired after all night of trying to get the airplanes ready to fly, we thought, "Lord, if only You had seen fit not to make so much mud, this war would be much easier to bear!" One word epitomized all of our troubles - the word was "mud."

This winter, although we're still in plenty of mud, mud no longer really troubles. In a year we have widened our roads. Although not completely rid of the Ministry of Works, we have a station complete. All around the station walks of cinders or of concrete slabs have replaced the slippery holes through which we tried last winter to pick a sloppy way. No, the mud really isn't so bad anymore.

Mud wasn't the only source of confusion last winter. There was another potent source of confusion. The 385th had been operational for only four months and had just become an augmented, double-strength, group. The problems still are new. The engineering and operation sections were still hoping on the fringe of the lark, trying desperately to find the explanation, the magic formula which could get the airplanes running and get the missions into the air. Everybody stayed up all night, everybody trying to help, got

in the way of everybody else. Now we know the magic formula. As I go to the line at night the quiet orderly, business-like efficiency is a revelation as I enter the operations office at night the quietly methodical precision is actually soothing. I often smile thinking of last winter's frenzied rushing around, trying to realize that then, in all the clatter and tearing of hair we were only accomplishing the same things which now are so calmly routine.

The temper of the crews, too, is different. Last winter there was a quiet, despairing sort of resignation evident in the combat men. The escort of long range fighters, a new thing, were still too few in number to cover us completely. On every mission we expected, and usually got, a terrific reaction from the fighters of the Luftwaffe. Our losses were high. This war in the air was a deadly thing. Of those who went into action few ever got back home to the United States. This winter the fighters still hit us occasionally, more often than their chances are good. Their winter psychology is better.

The war isn't over. We don't pretend to know when it will end. But most of us are sure that this will be our last winter in England, and are appreciative of the fact that is immeasurably better than the winter of 1943-1944.

G.Y. JUMPER  
Colonel Air Corps.  
Commanding

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Col. Jumper bids farewell to some of our leaders.

### GROUP COMMANDER'S REPORT

October for the 385th was a month of change. Many old timers moved on.

First, Lt. Col. James G. McDonald, long our well liked and tremendously respected air executive, moved to the 4th Combat Wing to become chief of staff. We were glad to see him move up. We wanted him to get into bigger fields, to pass his great store of knowledge of combat operation to more people than just to us. But when he left the colorful characters of the 385th Group was gone. The soul of the organization had begun subtly to change.

Then Lt. Col. Herbert O. Hamilton, who began as a lead crew pilot, became a squadron commander, then Group Operations Officer, and finally Air Executive, had to go home. For a year and a half he had worked ceaselessly, driving fighting. So hard had he worked that he was almost broken physically. He was tired. He had to go home. He, too was part of the soul and spirit of the organization. The change was accelerating.

Also among those who had just been here too long was Lt. Col. William M. Tesla. An original squadron commander of the group, Col. Tesla had finished his tour. A year and a half of honest ceaseless labor had beaten him. A man is good for only so much. Bill had had enough. With his going the change in the spirit of the organization refused to be ignored.

As the next month or two passes into history there are other changes coming. Before long most of our people in the air echelon will be new. The ground echelon, of course, is about the same and will constitute a stabilizing influence, a tie to the past and to the people who built with their hands the record of the past. But the spirit, and soul has changed. In numberless small ways the change is evident. The tempo is different. The outlook is different.

As the changes happened I looked on them first with something kind of sadness, with a nostalgic wish for the preservation of this fraternity of struggling men, just as it was when I came to it. Now, though I begin to see that the change was inevitable, that nothing can exist without change, that change is evolution, and that out of evolution comes generally something a little better than before, provided, of course, that the evolutionary forces bend the product of evolution in the right direction.

Now as this document becomes a part of the history of this group, I find myself wondering what the verdict will be in perhaps a year when all of these new people become old-timers. I think that the verdict will be good. The old-timers now leaving have built well. Our spirit may change, but never so radically as to tear us away from the foundation which those men left, and beloved legacy of the work of their hands.

G.Y. JUMPER  
Lieutenant Colonel, Air Corps,  
Commanding.

### 385th BOMB GROUP PLAQUES & MEMORIALS WE HAVE INSTALLED AROUND THE COUNTRY



Arlington



Arlington



Tree at Dayton



Dayton





385th Bomb Group Memorial Plaque dedicated June 4, 1983 at the Air Force Academy Cemetery.



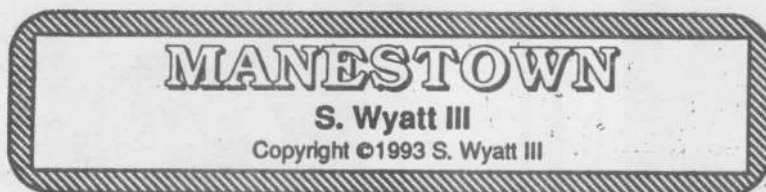
Monument in Air Force Academy Cemetery bearing World War II Bomb Group Plaques - 385th at lower left.



Church in England



EDITOR'S NOTE: A cutey received through Sam Lyke's friendship with S. Wyatt III; Marshall Mt. Wave, Box 220, Marshall, Ark. 72650.



„ We had a feller visit us last summer that is a friend of grandpa's. They used to do a lot of bird hunting and grandpa says that he is the best shot when it comes to hunting birds that you ever did see. This feller has a wooden leg but to see him get around you would never know it for he can walk behind a bird dog with the best of them. He also told us that he plays golf and dances just like fellers that have both legs and feet.

This feller said when he was about seventeen years old World War II broke out and as soon as he was old enough he joined up. He said it was pretty limited as to what he could do in the army for he did not have much schooling. He said they sent him off somewhere down in Texas for a little basic training and the first thing he knew he was on one of these big airplanes and they were flying over the waters. He said he ended up in a place called England which was a pretty good place except for the fact that the folks could not speak English so you could understand what they were talking about. He said he got along very well with these folks for they were farmers for the most part even though they did not do much farming like we do here in the states.

Anyways this feller said that his job when he got over there was to load the big bombs on the airplanes which would take off and fly over Germany and drop them on the folks there. He said this was a pretty easy job and most of the time it lasted only for an hour or two each day. Sometimes when

they got a new load of bombs in they would have to work more for they had to take these bombs off the truck and put them in the dump where they kept the bombs. This dump was quite a little ways off from the rest of the stuff and he guessed the reason was that if they exploded it would not hurt the airplanes and stuff. He said there was not much danger in this happening though for the bombs were not armed until they put them on the airplanes. The feller said they had these little four wheel dollies that held one bomb each and several of these little dollies would be hooked onto a tractor to make kind of a little train. They would pull these dollies loaded with bombs right over under the plane and when the bomb bays were opened. They would winch these bombs up into the bomb racks. Grandpa's friend said he was making it all right until we started losing a lot of planes and men on these raids. He said he had always been part of what was called the ground crew and he liked this alright. He said one day the airplane he was assigned to came back and they had really been in the thick of it and one of the waist gunners had been hurt real bad. The airplane was alright though and the ground crew worked all night for it was to be part of a really big mission the next day. He said he was working along real happy loading the bombs when the officer came along and told him to come along with him. The officer said that one of the gunners on the plane had been hurt real bad and they did not have a replacement for him and that if they could not come up with one real quick then the

plane would not be able to go on this mission. The officer said he had noticed that grandpa's friend was pretty quick and he seemed to pick up things real fast and to make a long story short he was promoting him to private first class and making him a gunner. The officer told him that not only would he be making more money as a PFC but he would also be entitled to flying and combat pay and it all figured out that he would be making nearly fifty dollars a month.

Grandpa said he found from the start that this gunnery bit was a snap for the secret was to lead what you were shooting at like you would lead a duck or a quail. You wanted to shoot where it would be, not where it had been. He said on his first five missions he had two confirmed kills and he thought he had hit at least three more. He said he really like this flying stuff for when you got back home you did not have to do anything else until you went up again. This feller said that when you had flown twenty five missions you were supposed to get to rotate back to the states but on his thirteenth trip he had been hit by what they called flak and it had blown his leg off. He said he had almost bled to death on the trip home but he had made it and he spent the rest of the war in a hospital. Grandpa said he had not known this feller had been in the war and he was real proud to be his friend. He said he also would not have known that he had just one leg unless he had told them about it. The feller said he had learned when he got married the first time that it was better to tell folks about his leg for this first wife was kind of shocked when she found out on their honeymoon that he had just one foot. Grandpa said that was a shame for most women would be proud of that.

## Letters to the Editor:

Dear Ed,

We shall go to the reunion. Leonard "Mike" Mika is responsible for nudging all of us who served on the same crew as he. In fact, he phoned me about a year ago and sold me on joining the 385th Bomb Group Memorial Association.

Since joining the Association, the Hardlife Herald has been coming into our home. I just want you to know I appreciate the job you are doing. Furthermore, reading about all the forming and development of the 385th Bomb Group has been inspiring to me and makes me even more proud than ever for having been associated with the Group, because all of you who have written stories in the Hardlife Herald help those of us who joined you later to appreciate all the hardships you "early birds" went through making life so much easier and better for those of us who followed. My hats off to all of you.

Speaking of being inspired and proud to be a part of the 385th, one rainy day over there, when even the birds dared only to walk, we had a fascinating lecture from Colonel Jumper. His lecture consisted of giving us the history of the 385th and the Eighth Air Force. Colonel Jumper concluded his lecture with this vow: "I am so proud of the 385th Bomb Group and the Eighth Air Force that I will never remove my Eighth Air Force patch without a direct order from General Arnold!"

Our illustrious crew arrived at "Hardlife" when Major Witherspoon was still Commanding Officer of the 551st Squadron; that was in October, 1944. If memory serves correctly, it wasn't more than a month or two later when Major Vernon "Moon" Mullin succeeded Major Witherspoon.

Our crew had the distinction of being the last aircrew to take off from Great Ashfield with ten additional personnel aboard as passengers. Some of them were from Group Headquarters, including Colonel Bill Hanson, who replaced Colonel Jumper for moving us back to the States (and who spelled me very graciously at the controls for an hour or two over the Atlantic). We left Great Ashfield very close to the end of June, 1945, spending two or three days at Valley, Wales. Then on July 2 we left for Terceira, Azores, continued on July 3 to Gander, and on July 4 landed at Bradley Field, Connecticut, after a beautiful flight over Nova Scotia and New Brunswick.

I don't yet know how many of our crew will be at the reunion, but some of us are working on those who have not yet made a commitment.

I look forward to seeing you and the rest of the Group.

Cheers

Gardiner "Buck" Rogers  
18 Fairhill Circle  
Radnor, Pennsylvania 19087

Dear Editor,

Enclosed are copies of some photos I took at the 385th air base. The photo of the tail section of the B-17 that was blasted and made it back to our base is just one example of what a great plane the B-17 was. In the early part of the war, several planes came back with only one engine operating. Before the 385th Bomb Group was in operation many of us medics were with the bloody 100th B.G. The 100th had it really rough - all planes were shot down in one mission and it's bomb dump was hit three times. We were sure glad to get sent to the 385th as we were only bombed once.

Jack King  
10243 Elkherd Rd.  
Yoncalla, OR 97499



Part of Medics who came to My (Jack King) wedding in Felixstowe when "war ended."

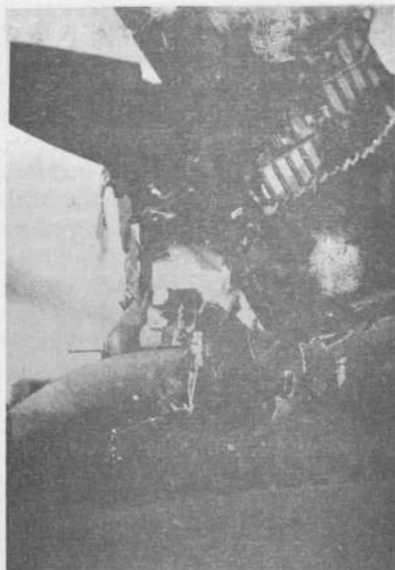
Notice the smiles wars over.

It took!  
We've been 47 years together now and she is as sweet as ever!



On air raid shelter behind hospital - left to right Jack King, Sgt. Carney & Pete Beretta. Let's hear from you guys who are still around.

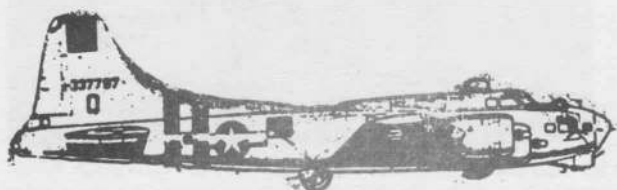
Ph: 503-849-2482



Tail gunner killed instantly



Back row: St. MacIntire, Pete Beretta  
Front row: Cpl. King, Cpl. Badsing



Dear Mr. Stern,

As an associate member of the 385th BGMA I have thoroughly enjoyed receiving the newsletter.

My brother Dawson E. Wilson served in the 385th 551st Sq and flew missions beginning October 20, 1943 until February 3, 1944 when his B-17G collided with another fortress on a return mission from Wilhelmshaven and both crews were lost in the North Sea.

On November 16, 1943 my brother flew with Lt. Frank and crew on their 25th mission to Rjuvek, Norway.

I read in the February 1993 385th newsletter article "Confidential 385th in Review" issued November 29, 1943. On page 6, 5th paragraph, right column read, "The Group's first crew to "graduate," that of Lt. Irving Frank, Savannah, GA, set a record by doing 25 missions without once turning back for any reason.

Also there was a mention of Lt. Irving Frank in the 8th AF News, May 1992, page 34 in an article by Robert S. Vandiver.

I wonder if this Lt. Frank might be the same one my brother flew with as his R/O on November 16, 1943 to Norway. If Lt. Frank still survives or some of his regular crew I would be grateful to obtain addresses so I might correspond with him or his crew members.

My brother Dawson and his original crew were lost February 3, 1944 on A/C No. 42-39952.

Please direct any replies to:

Jerry Wilson  
75131 Patomic Dr.  
Nashville, Tennessee 37221

Thanks much,

Jerry Wilson



Left to Right:

Valiere, Pettenger, Weikert & Leahy



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Another visitor to the Barkers at Great Ashfield.

Dear Ed,

My wife and I finally made it to Great Ashfield. Our pusher was a wedding invitation from one of my cousins in England.

I wrote to Ian McLachlan who gave me the name of a Roy J. Barker with whom we visited. He is very well versed on the 385th and even has some of our old books giving the history of the Group. He said he heard all about us from his grandfather.

We saw the plaque memorializing the 385th and through Roy's wife got the keys to the Church where we saw the stained glass windows. Even though we are not Christians, my wife and I felt a pang in looking at them. The artist did a very impressive job in creating the windows, especially making them non-denominational.

Roy sold us one of the glass paperweights which were made for the group, last year. There is nothing left of our old base to show that an airfield was there except the road around the perimeter and the runway. There was still a sock flying from a pole. It is all farmland.

We had lunch at the Fox Pub. Noticed that a room was added and the entrance was moved to the left. The railroad station was rebuilt.

If anyone else wants to visit the old base, I suggest you contact Roy J. Barker, Kiln Farm, Great Ashfield, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 3HN, England. I'm sure he will be glad to show you around. Tel: 0359 41045

Keep up your good work on the Hardlife Herald.

Respectfully,

Herman Siederer  
601 Benner Street  
Highland Park, N.J. 08904

Dear Sir,

Received a copy of the HardLife and it was very interesting. It's close to fifty years now since I was with the 385th 550th in England. I am a member of the group but am one of the unlucky ones that can't make the Reunions. So I keep writing and hoping to get or receive an answer. At the age of 72 my writing isn't too good. If you have a copy of the news letter February 1993. I made some copies and sending them along so you know what I'm trying to say - the Editor's Note. I was there in early part of November 1943. We never seen or heard of a Gray Intelligence introduction at that time. Maybe the officers did.

Then going to page 9 as marked, I have the air medal with I think 2 clusters. Then reading a little more on page 17 the boys with 25 missions were going home completing their tour of duty, and chances to come back.

I and the rest of the crew were all over 25 missions. Lt. Down was the pilot on our last day. This was my 27th. We were hit over Augsburg-Waist gunner and radio man hit by anti-aircraft. I know of 2 engines out and we still were trying to make it back alone. This all happened on April 13, 1944. We were told we had to make additional missions. So we ended up in Switzerland and after 6 months I and another Sgt made our way back. When I came back to base I was told I couldn't fly anymore. I had to go back to the States. Why was this I needed one more to complete my tour and the DFC, but now reading on page 17 it went back to 25 missions. The reason I couldn't fly was stamped in big bold letters and quote: P.W. Escapier can not be sent out of the U.S. unless an act of Congress. This I know because I had all the records going from Florida to Denver. I showed it to one of the boys but I can't prove it. He passed away. I was surprised to see the envelop was sealed and that was on the back. Could you find out what medals and ribbon etc. I have coming if any.

You see I'm making a frame of the family tree. Grandpa - 1st World War, Me - 2nd World War, Brother Lane - Korea and my Son in Viet Nam. I've got some of their medals and ribbons-pictures. So when I pass on my grandchildren will have something to remember me by.

I have been writing letters to St. Louis-to VFW in Kansas city. Even to Washington, but everybody too busy or they don't give a damn.

Oh yes, names of the planes I flew in "Thunderbird" and believe it if you wish. This plane made it back to the states and I seen it in Amarillo, Texas. Our name was "Pride of the Yankees." We never had a chance to put it on we flew so many different ones.

Could you find out what all I have coming and now its 50 years ago.

My name:  
S/Sgt Adam Kozio 3606658  
385th 550 Sqd  
Great Ashfield  
England



Dear Mr. Stern,

My name is Vance Pennington and I am the son of an American G.I. who served here, in England, during WW2. My father, Robert William Pennington, was with the 385th B.G. based at Great Ashfield in Suffolk.

Over the years I have been trying desperately to locate my father and with the help of supportive fellow Americans it has been established that, sadly, he died in June of 1972. I am, however, with the help of those same American "friends" trying to locate other members of my father's family.

The War Babes of the United Kingdom are able to obtain assistance, but there are G.I. Veterans wishing to trace their children but have little knowledge of how to do this here. As far as my enquiries reveal, they have no supportive group in the U.K. to reciprocate the efforts made in the U.S.A.

Without the help, kindness and support I received from the States it would have been an almost impossible task tracking my father.

To show my thanks to all those kind fold who helped me with my search I have started "RE-UNION", whereby American Veterans can contact me with details of their

children so that I can try to obtain information through government and other sources with the view of finding their children.

Although I cannot, for obvious reasons, guarantee results, I will certainly give any request I receive the best shot I can.

This is a non-profit group and it is not within my income to pay for the costs of postage, telephone calls and stationery. It will be necessary to ask Veterans to send 15 dollars (in bills) to help cover these costs. I can easily exchange Bills at my local bank which is cheaper and easier than other methods.

Hopefully, this should be enough to cover the cost of an uncomplicated search.

Naturally, I will keep a strict record of all expenditures incurred and any remaining balance will be refunded to the Veteran.

Yours, sincere,

Vance Pennington  
10 Gilpin Close  
Mitcham  
Surrey, CR4 34QR  
England

CIII 1.1) SKAKCII QUESTIONNAIRE

CHILD'S DETAILS:-

\* REGISTERED SURNAME:

\* FORENAMES:

MALE/FEMALE:

\* YEAR OF BIRTH:

\* MONTH OF BIRTH:

\* DAY OF BIRTH:

TOWN OR PLACE OF BIRTH:

WAS THE FATHER'S NAME REGISTERED ON THE BIRTH CERTIFICATE? (Y/N) \_\_\_\_\_

MOTHER'S DETAILS:-

SURNAME: \_\_\_\_\_

FORENAMES:

LAST KNOWN ADDRESS:

Town:County;

FATHER'S DETAILS:-

SURNAME: \_\_\_\_\_

FORENAMES:

PRESENT ADDRESS:

ZIP CODE: PHONE No.:

SERIAL'/SERVICE No.:

WHERE SERVED IN U.K. (BASE):

SQUADRON GROUP:

SPECIAL GROUP ATTACHMENT DETAILS:

NOTE: Please include any information which will assist search on back.  
\* THE INFORMATION SUPPLIED TO QUESTIONS MARKED '\*' IS VERY IMPORTANT.

Dear Ed,

I am enclosing a copy of an article which appeared in a British aviation magazine that I found very interesting. I have never read previously where anyone had mounted a 20 mm cannon in a B-17, let alone men from the 385th. There were times that I thought it would be great to have one located in the tail. I suspect this would have been much superior to the YB-40's.

Since our trip last May I have watched the "Hardlife Herald" for comments about our last day at the Hotel Russell. When we came down for breakfast we discovered the main entrance covered with sandbags and tape on all of the glass

just like WWII days. In addition WWII taxis and an old bus were passing on the street plus pedestrians were in WWII costumes with gas masks etc. It developed that the Russell was being used to make a movie and the entire thing brought back many memories plus showing the wives what London looked like in war time.

Sincerely,

Charles Price  
57558 M-62 East  
Cassopolis, Michigan  
49031-9752

# A Kick in the Ass

*The head-on vulnerability of the B-17F frightened aircrew. An*

*impromptu mod of 1943 was intended to hit back.*

**W**INTER, 1942/1943 saw USAAF commanders increasingly concerned about the ferocity and effectiveness of frontal attacks on the B-17F. Clearly, there was a need for improving its forward-firing weaponry. Several independent initiatives resulted and one of these was the adaptation of a 385th BG Fortress to take no-less-a-weapon than a 20mm cannon!

B-17F-30-VE 42-5897 had been christened *Roundtrip Jack* and wore an appropriate Jackass caricature with a golden tooth. This was based on the antics of a crew chief John C Ford — *Jack* to his friends — who had some knuckled dentistry and lost a tooth during a bar-room brawl en route to England.

*Roundtrip Jack* was one of the 550th BS's original ships flown by Lt Gerald D Binks and his lead crew. Commanding the 550th was Captain Bill Tesla and it was his mission-critiques with pilots and 385th armament personnel that inspired W/O Nugent *Tommie* Thompson, the 550th's Armament Officer, into action.

*Tommie* listened in awe and shared their fear as aircrew described vicious head-on assaults by enemy fighters. Hearing how the B-17F's weak forward armament failed to deter the enemy, *Tommie* conjectured that a 20mm cannon would have more dissuasive charm — but how to get one and try out his theory? USAAF red-tape would be insurmountable but then providence provided the solution when *Tommie* had the

**Ian McLachlan**



**Chief Warrant Officer Nugent Thompson.**

opportunity of liberating one by "midnight requisition" from a damaged P-38. Having obtained the weaponry, *Tommie* approached Bill Tesla who balanced the time bureaucracy would take to approve the trial installation, with the needs of his combat crews and sanctioned the work on his own initiative.

In June/July 1943, *Tommie* chose Technical Sergeant Elmer Blank and a small team of specialists to modify *Roundtrip Jack*. Installation was achieved by welding a new frame to accommodate the cannon in a cone of converging steel tubes through a modified and toughened Plexiglas pivot-hole. Heavier plate ensured attachment to the fuselage and the team created a crude cradle for their baby. Handgrips were provided, between

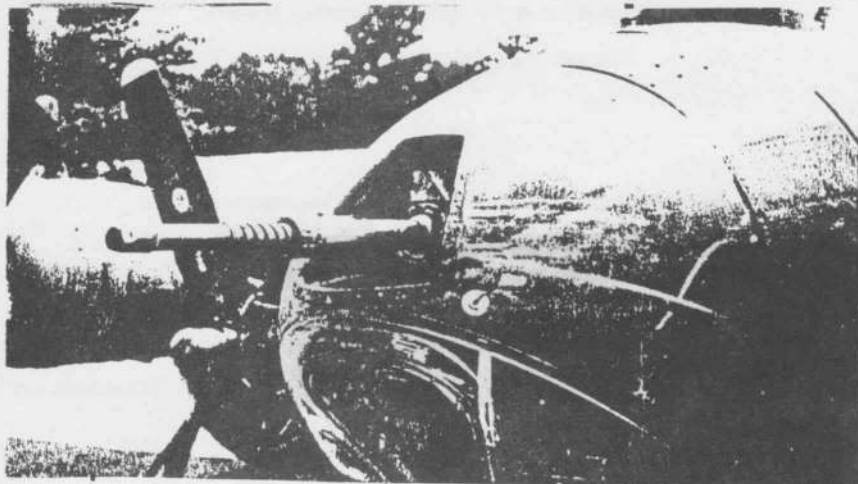
which was a hinged metal plate responding to thumb pressure to actuate a microswitch circuit for the firing solenoid below the cannon. Ammunition was fed from the right with clips and casings ejecting noisily onto the floor.

Early in August, *Roundtrip Jack* trundled to the firing butts and completed some ground-firing tests. Following modifications, a flight test was planned over the Wash for the 13th. On board the B-17 as it climbed eastwards from Great Ashfield were the men responsible with *Tommie* taking the firing honours. Releasing the cannon from stowage and moving it forward was reminiscent of preparing a man o'war with the weapon's black length extending well aft and *Tommie* bracing himself against the instrument bulkhead.

Apprehensively, he pressed the firing-plate and a short burst boomed from the B-17. The effect was startling. Recoil punched hard and ejected shell casings angrily around the nose compartment, some clattered into the rear of the instrument panel and blew its circuits. An alarming crack also appeared in the nose Plexiglas but nothing vital fell off, no serious damage resulted and the idea's feasibility was proven with the expenditure of more rounds. However, the recoil needed dampening; sighting was crude and they needed to overcome the risk of self-inflicted damage from ejected casings.

Modifications made, the cannon was pronounced ready for a mission on August 15 to Vitry en Artois. *Tommie* flew as cannoner but not one German fighter came out to play and *Roundtrip Jack* landed with a disappointed crew only to learn from the Group Armament Officer that the new B-17G with a chin turret would soon be arriving and further plans for their 20mm conversion had been scrapped.

*Tommie's* footnote in Eighth Air Force history typified its spirit. Later, he fought rheumatoid arthritis with similar determination until his death in the early 1970s. This year saw more fortunate veterans return to England — many for the last time. As a nation, we should remember how individual contributions of courage, energy and enthusiasm created a powerful force fighting for the freedom we have since enjoyed.



Dear Mr. Freeman,

Please excuse me for disturbing you, but I understand that you are a specialist on the 8th Air Force. I am doing some research on the 385th B.G. and in particular on a B-17 belonging to this group.

On 24th August 1943, A B-17, badly damaged by flack and German fighters, crashed in a wood near the village of Boulaur, situated in the canton of Saramon in the Department of the Gers.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of this event, the Aero-Club of Mirande - of which I am vice-president - would like to publicize the story of how this aeroplane came to be shot down in Gascony.

Certain members of the crew, after bailing out, were collected and hidden from the Germans by farmers. The local Resistance assisted them to evade capture and escape to Sapin. Others members of the crew were badly wounded and on capture they were taken to hospital in Auch - Capital of the department - and then to Toulouse.

Could you help me with any information concerning this "Flying Fortress" and his crew?

I have discovered that the aeroplane was part of the 385th Bomber Group which stationed at Great Ashfield - APO 634, Station 155 - Suffolk, and that it was partaking a "shuttle mission" to North Africa and return on the 16th and the 24th of August 1943.

I have an incomplete list of the Crew:

Wilmont C. Grodi	John Astyk
Jack Hughes	George Elliott
Aldelbert Knealle	Melvin L. Frazier
Robert Really	Claude Sharpless
Eugene Ganvitt	???

I would also be very grateful for any addresses you may have which would assist me in my research.

I have visited the location of the crash and have recovered small particules of the aeroplane - the surrounding woods were burnt, as a result of the crash - but have now re-grown.

IMPORTANT - I also understand that on the same mission, another B-17 trying to reach Spain, crashed in the Pyrenees. Do you have any information on this?

I would like be most grateful for any help that you may be able to give, and look forward to hearing you very soon.

Yours sincerely

Jacques Leroux  
La Sadeillane  
32300 Saint Martin  
France

Dear Editor,

I read Lester Miller's letter in the Feb. '93 edition about not receiving a Lone Wolf patch he ordered. I wrote to him telling him about my work and wondered if there were more members interested.

I hand paint (and antique) leather patches and jackets. I have been doing this for 14 years. My work is guaranteed and you don't pay until you receive (and are satisfied with) it!

The cost of most patches are \$1 7.50. Some are slightly higher due to detail.

Sincerely,

Rosemary D. Dery  
Post Office Box 155  
Flagstaff, Arizona 86002  
(602) 526-5931 Phone/FAX

P.S. My father-in-law, William A. Dery was a lead navigator with the 385th. My husband and I are proud to be able to receive your publication.

# 385BGM A

ED STERN, EDITOR  
P.O. Box 2187  
Fargo, ND 58108

ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

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