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"The Mighty Eighth Reunion Group"

385TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP REUNION ASSOCIATION

GREAT ASHFIELD — SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

STATION 155

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ARKEY HUBER

NEWSLETTER

Volume VI, No. 10 - 15 March 1977 - Editor: John Ford

THE PREZ SEZ:

385th BGRA
Members and Friends:

I wish to take this opportunity to thank all of you for making the past two years so memorable for me. It has been a wonderful experience.

So much of what has been accomplished in these past two years has been due to the effort of John Ford. We owe him a special commendation for this. Many others have also made an appreciable contribution of their time, money and effort.

The Las Vegas Reunion is taking shape very well. I encourage all of you to attend. Arkey Huber, with the help of Charles Smith, George Jumper, Rex Inglis and Merrill Klein, has arranged an outstanding event for us.

A group of us will be leaving from Atlanta April 21st. All of you who may find it convenient to join us, will be welcomed with a Pre-Reunion Reunion, as well as a reduced air fare. Advise the Escape Travel Agency of your intentions.

See you in Las Vegas!

(Signed)
VINCE MASTERS
President

THE SIXTH REUNION opens at the Aladdin Hotel in Las Vegas on 22 April and closes on Sunday, April 24th. If you have not yet registered, you are urged to do so as soon as possible. Arkey Huber has come up with a terrific surprise package for us at the Reception Desk and with plenty of ideas on how to keep busy in Playtown West. If it's money your after, he suggests the book "How to make Bread in Las Vegas". Write to Gold Metal flour for your copy before you depart home. For those who are going to Las Vegas but not registering at the Aladdin Hotel, a registration fee of \$33.00

LAS VEGAS REUNION (Cont'd)___

per person must be paid at the Registration Desk to cover meals and the reunion dance. During the course of the reunion, several items will be on sale for the benefit of our Memorial Fund. Additional copies of the Sixth Reunion Souvenir Bulletin, a small pamphlet covering all the 385th missions which can be affixed in the front of the Group history, and 8th Air Force lapel pins are among the items on sale. In addition, orders will be taken for embroidered 385th Bombardment Group (H) patches, which have been designed to include your squadron colors. Many of our Associate Members have also signed up to join us and we welcome them aboard. You are also invited to bring along friends to swell the ranks and add new supporters. For those members still straddling the fence about coming to Vegas, let me stress that a good time is almost guaranteed. If you don't want to swap war stories, see a top-notch show, wear out the felt on the Blackjack or Dice tables, join in the free booze-room hunt, or attend a church of your choice - you can join your Editor at poolside watching the lovlies cavort, and let your mind make appointments your body can't keep! But joking aside, this is the first time the 385th has returned to the West since 1943 and since it was organized in the Far West, let's make it the best the west has ever had. Many of our western members will be at their first reunion and I, for one, do look forward to seeing and being with them. Y'all come! Won'tcha?

DISTRICT PROPOSAL

A proposal will be made at the Reunion that our membership be assigned into six (6) geographical districts and a District Chairman be appointed for each new district. The idea of the divisions is to permit members of the 385th to participate in Mini-Reunions without need to travel the length and breadth of our country. The major Reunion would still be held every two years at the place chosen by members, but District Chairmen would be expected to appoint personnel to search out for-

mer members, provide information for the Newsletter, and coordinate the mini-reunions. It will permit your Board to keep closer touch with the health and welfare of our members. It is also hoped that officers of the Association may be able to attend some of the mini-reunions, thus keeping members more fully informed on what's happening around the league.

WILLOW WOOD.....

In England last September, Fred Heiser and I were standing with my wife Betty, Ian McLachlan and a luvly young lady who turned out to be Helen Baker, wife of Roy Baker, restorer of wartime vehicles. Fred asked me if I knew where our line (550th) was located. "Yes", I replied, "and I could point out the location of our aircraft if we could get a ride back to the old Operations building". That's when I discovered that Helen was the "Queen of the Jeeps". We all piled into a Jeep and headed back to the old Main Entrance. The next road beyond the road to the Ops building, we turned left. The first road on the right would have taken us down to the old Red living site, but we continued straight down the lane past where we had lived in perennial tents when we first arrived at Great Ashfield, and before the permanent living sites were ready. At the end of the lane, where the road bends to the right, there is a dirt road that leads into a beautiful old farmhouse - particularly to me. We drove into the farm road and at the end of the wall we made a sharp left turn. Dead ahead of us was a lady sitting in a chair, and a tall upright man standing beside her. We drove toward them and suddenly we heard the farmer say "It's the Yanks!" We introduced ourselves and I then explained that during WW II, I and many other maintenance men from the 550th Bomb Squadron, had permission from the then occupant, to pass along through the farmyard and the back pasture, in order to get to the flight line. I asked if we could go back through his field to where our maintenance office had been located and he granted permission. We drove part way into the pasture and Fred, Ian and myself walked

WILLOW WOOD.....

directly to the site of the maintenance office from where I was able to indicate where aircraft were maintained by Sergeants' Fol s urn, Callahan, Kirby, Peterson, Duffy, Mooney, "Pop" Baratovich, Gillingham, Tempesta, Keen, Barker, Marsura, Hallisey, Dykstra, Booth, Pruitt, Hackenberger and Malott. Fred Heiser's Crew Chief was Gerry Tempesta and one of his waist gunners was Richard "Slug" Schultheis. Slug, Lou Sorrell and A1 "Eedro" Suarez has worked with me when "Round-trip Jack" was flown by Captain Gerry Binks. For Ian's benefit, I pointed out the locations of our 100 mission aircraft: "Rum Dum", "Haybag Annie", "Stork Club"(last aircraft hit by enemy guns in the 8th AAF) and "Gypsy Princess". Ian was also interested in the mission to Hamm on 22 April 1944. Our aircraft had gone to Hamm that day and take-off was delayed time after time. It was late afternoon when they finally departed and they came back late - sometime around 2300 hours. All of us on the flight line caught sight of twin engine intruders east of our base and streaking north toward other aircraft. We all stood and watched several aircraft flame toward the ground. The following day we found out they had been B24 aircraft whose guns had been removed from the receivers as the crews prepared to land. Fred, Ian and I then returned to the pasture where we found Betty and Helen picking and eating blackberries from the same bushes many a 550th maintenance man had picked. Returning to the back of the farmhouse, we found the elderly couple waiting for us. Would we join them in tea? We explained that our coach was waiting for us and we were holding up the group. As we departed, they bid us a fond cheerio. The woman could only see a very short distance in front of her, but when we had talked, her face was animated and lite up like a star. For weeks afterward, I could not get this charming couple off my mind. I wrote to Helen Baker and asked if she could get their address so we could write to them. Shortly after, Helen and Roy wrote us and sent the information. The gentleman's name

was Stansfield King and I wrote thanking him for his hospitality to us during our short visit. Mr. King replied and his letter is printed below:

Willow Wood,
Elmswell ,
Bury St. Edmunds,
Suffolk , England

Dear Mr. & Mrs. Ford:

Very many thanks indeed for your letter and so kind words to us which we are delighted to receive.

We do indeed remember your brief visit and can still see all your smiling faces as you came round the corner several weeks back. The charming young lady who drove you in Jeep came to see us with her husband. We very much enjoyed their visit too. Also recently Rowley Miles ,came by and gave us the Newsletter to read.

So glad that you like Willow Wood It has been our much loved home for fourteen years. The Royce family, whom you knew, never called back to see us. Mr. Royce retired to the Norfolk Coast and died there not too many years ago, in fact, since we came here A Grandson of George Gibson, who owned it over sixty years ago, has been over with wife and family and brought with them a large wedding photo taken in front of house to prove his identity. I was able to show him the paper containing account of the wedding (his Aunt's). The paper was dated October 1928, much to his interest. The Tolfrey family, who lived here in the 1930's have been back several times.

My sisters, Winifred, whom you saw seated, and Ivy, who was in the house on your return from the runway, always said, as well as myself, that we hoped the Americans would call to see us, and we very much hope that you will come again soon.

Our' people have farmed in Suffolk for many generations. In fact. Mother was born nearby in Wetherden and frequently visited this house as a little girl with her Mother. She died here at 91. My Father lived to be over 100 years, one of nine children who reach a total of over 750 years before death

WILLOW WOOD.....

I am named after the village of Stansfield, where my grand parents farmed the old pre-reformation Manor of Bomonds. Great grandfather farmed the Manor at Icklingham, over 700 acres and very historical, near Bury St. Edmunds. Mother's people in the Stowmarket area over 300 years ago, so you can see we are very local.

Am enclosing little sprigs of rosemary. They are easy to strike. Plant firmly, keep moist in moderate temperature and you will soon be able to move into your garden. Very hardy when established, and so useful in kitchen. If they do not grow, will try again. With all kind thoughts from we three,

Yours sincerely,
(Signed) Stansfield King.

P.S. Do you remember the mulberry tree? Usually a very heavy crop, lovely fruit, but this year was too dry and did not nurture properly. Should much like something growing in America from Elmswel1.

Well, that's the story. A rather simple recounting of a few minutes back on the farm many of us used during WW II, when we worked "Can't to can't". (Can't see when we go to work and can't see when we return). But there is just one thing more. Thought you'd like to know that Rosemary is thriving on Easy Street in Maryland.

SAGA OF "SATAN'S MATE"

If you were asked to name a good aircraft for aerobatics, I doubt if anyone would name the B-17. That is, if he was not a crew member of "Satan's Mate". The Fort was returning from a mission to Rheine, Germany, in February 1945, after dropping it's bombs and was flying on instruments in the soup. Over Karlsruhe, one of the other ships got out of position and moved in on "Satan's Mate". As the pilot, Lt. James L. Fleisher, moved up and away from the aircraft, he was caught in the slipstream of the Fort ahead. "Satan's Mate" shot up at 90 degrees, flopped over on her back and then went

down in a screaming dive. The air-speed indicator registered 380 by the time Fleisher and his co-pilot, Lt. Paul H. Cowling were able to pull the Fortress out of her dive. During the loop and dive, two of the gunners. Sergeants Bob Cory and Trevor J. Kevan were pinned to the top of the airplane, and it wasn't until the Fort was pulled out of the dive before they fell to the floor. Flying ammo boxes and other debris bruised many of the crewmen and radio equipment blew out through the gun hatch, but no one sustained any serious injury. The Fortress limped back to England, but many of the crew members were expecting it to fall apart momentarily. When the plane landed in England, the crew jumped out to inspect the damage. Outside of the damage plexiglass radio hatch, they were amazed to find the only other damage was 74 rivets missing from the stabilizer. To this day, and as far as the crew knows, they are the only crew to loop in a Fortress over Germany and come back to tell about it. S/Sgt Fred Conner, one of the gunners on that trip, said it all when he remarked, "We called that B-17 "Satan's Mate" and in that short experience, we thought that she - and us - were just that!"



As indicated in the photo above, there are many men in the 385th who can recall fuel shortages long before 1976. And we didn't have to worry about the thermostats to maintain 55 degrees.



FRIENDS OF THE EIGHTH

Dedicated to the memory of the U.S. 8th Army Air Force

IAN HAWKINS INJURED!

Ian Hawkins of Bacton, Stowmarket, has long been an active member of FOTE. In the last issue of our Newsletter, Ian was one of the group pictured in the article by Ian McLachlan, dealing with the reclamation of WW II aircraft. He was also a guest of the 385th BGRA at the banquet last September at the Cambridge Hotel, Cambridge. Ian was seated with Clarence and Bernice Cr a - goe, among others. Late in 1976, Ian went to Saudia Arabia to work as a site agent on a tunnel construction at Jeddah. An Australian drifter, whom Ian had refused to hire, attacked him from behind with an axe inflicting serious injuries to the head, neck, shoulders and spine. For some time his condition was extremely critical, but fortunately, a slight improvement made it possible for Ian to be flown back to England for hospitalization. Although he has paralysis in his right arm and legs, he is making modest progress in his fight back to health. He is presently in the Ipswich and East Suffolk Hospital, Anglesea Road Wing, Ipswich, Suffolk, England, where I am sure he would be glad to hear from you. His wife Mary, is keeping your Editor informed of his progress. A copy of the 385th Bomb Group history has been sent to Ian as an expression of our concern for him, hoping it will help to while away the time during his recovery.

ODE TO THE 385th

The 385th's trip to England last September received extensive coverage from all forms of the media. Before Ian Hawkins left for Saudi Arabia last year, he sent me an extract from the East Anglian Daily Times that was published in late October. The column was titled "GREAT ASHFIELD REVISITED" and is quoted as follows:

"The recent sentimental journey to Suffolk by USAAF veterans of Hitler's war was a touching event for many Britons too. In fact, it inspired Mr. Norman Sinclair of Elmswell to send me the following poem:

AMERICAN AIR FORCE AT GREAT ASHFIELD

Silence by the green wayside,
With no birds singing.
 Mist grey autumn clinging
 Cold on the uplant field.

This is the land they covered
 In the chilled mornings,
 Blunt throbbing hulls returning
 Down the streamlined ways.

Where now the broken earth stretches
 (Swift runways broken)
 And red tractors shaking
 Along the smooth headlands.

Silence in quiet October
 Deep on plough and stubble
 Where war eagles thundered
 In from the steel-shot storm.

NORMAN SINCLAIR

FREEMAN FACTS

Roger Freeman, author of "The Mighty Eighth", "Mustang's at War", and now, "Flying Fortress at War", is regarded by your Editor as the foremost European and United Kingdom aerial historian. The reason is that Roger deals with nothing but hard facts. Tell him a story and he can ask questions that indicates that he has already checked out other elements of that story. In the late part of 1976, Roger wrote the script for a BBC East documentary entitled "If There Are Ghosts, They Should Be Here". It was aired on the "On Camera" program of BBC. Roger had discovered some coloured film in the Archives of the Imperial War Museum, as well as the constuction films of WW II airfields. In part he states; "Something like 500 airfields were built for the RAF and Americans during the war and the majority of them were in the Eastern Counties. It was the biggest construction programme ever undertaken in these islands. It would be the equivalent in modern day terms of 4000 miles of two lane motorway - and all in a period of three years". Roger considers himself a farmer first and an author second. He is a gifted writer and speaker, yet possesses the soul of a researcher. Yes, Roger always deals in concrete facts.

FOTE (Cont'd).....

FRIEND GALLAGHER

Many of our members and associates had the opportunity to meet and speak with Charles Gallagher. Charles was one of the co-founders of "Friends of the Eighth" (FOTE), and has been a driving, innovative force in the growth of the group. Fondly referred to as the "Benevolent Dictator"- only out of ears reach - Charles has the great ability to "look down the road" with the inbred skill of a great navigator, and when advice and guidance was needed, his ability was utilized. As a result, FOTE members have been enriched by his active participation in the associations activities. Now word reaches these shores that he is giving serious thought to retirement and a return to Ireland. To me, this means that Charles can no longer be as active in FOTE and we of the 385th will also feel the loss of your activity. To this silver-haired, silver-tongued Son of the Auld Sod, may he join me in following the advice of Johnson, who said, Quote: "Don't think of retiring from the world until the world will be sorry that you retire. I hate a fellow whom pride or cowardice or laziness drive into a corner, and who does nothing when he is there but sit and growl. Let him come out as I do, and bark". End of Quote. Yes, Charles, we want to hear you bark. Your thoughts on paper and use of the mail will let your voice be heard. And in those verdant fields of green back in your land of retirement, I would like to paraphrase the Bard of Avon for the members of the 385th and say, "May your life, exempt from public haunt, find tongues in trees, books in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything". We wish the best of everythine

DeBERG'S "LI'L AUDREY"

"Mary Pat" was his first B-17F sent into combat over Europe and it also was John DeBerg's last. That's all, because after "Mary Pat" flew many more missions, she was declared "War Weary" (WW). She had been a grand lady and had served the crew of Lt. Rue! G.

Weikert (who had named it after his wife) very well indeed. But B-17F's were being replaced with the chin turreted B-17G's and John DeBerg became the Crew Chief of serial number 43-2008, better known to 385th flying crews as "Li '1 Audrey". The day after DeBerg received her, "Li'1 Audrey" made her first mission - the 8th AF first bombing of Berlin. The date was 6 March 1944. It was the third day the 385th had led the way to Big "B", but the first time that conditions permitted bombing. From that proud start, John DeBerg and his crew of Ralph Levick and Ian Kilgour maintained and sent out "Li' 1 Audrey" on more than 100 missions - 73 in a row without an abort - and went out on an average of once every three days through March 1945. She had 18 engines, plexiglass nose change and uncountable flak and gunshot holes, but no air crew member was ever killed or wounded in her. She also flew to Berlin that 6th day of October 1944 and returned, when the 385th lost 11 B-17's. Among the flyers missing and KIA that day was Captain Edwin R. Herron, one of our finest Operations Officers. "Li '1 Audrey" was piloted that day by Henry I. Jones, Jr. and it was his 35th and probaly among his most remembered combat missions. A Captain White also finished his tour in Li'l Audrey. Many pilots talk about her including John Peterson and Earl L. Cole. Other crew members, many of them, sing her praises, and one of her Navigators, Warren L. Larson, of Donald R. Williams crew, wrote a poem about her. She was a Sky Queen among other flying ladies and many claim her as their own, but no one, and I mean no one, every gave her more tender loving care than John DeBerg and his assistants. They owned her.

THE 100 CLUB

Only three persons replied to our call for help in locating all the 385th aircraft that flew 100 or more missions. Your Editor is researching all the available records, but unfortunately, not too many maintenance records survived the original records screening before 385th deactivation.



Looking into the past, but not a Fortress to be seen, nor engines to be heard.

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