

Hardlife



Herald



Newsletter of the
385th Bombardment Group Association

1942 - 1945 • Great Ashfield - Suffolk, England • Station 155

The Mighty Eighth

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Hardlife Herald

385th Bombardment Group (H)

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* MONUMENTS, MEMORIALS AND ANNIVERSARIES

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*Frank Walls	'72-'75	*Sid Colthorpe	'91-'93
Vincent Masters	'75-'77	*Robert C. Smith	'93-'95
*John C. Ford	'77-'79	*Robert Valliere	'95-'97
*James H. Emmons	'79-'81	*Michael Gallagher	'97-'99
*Paul Schultz	'81-'83	Tom Newton	'99-'01
*Forrest V. Poore	'83-'85	Leo LaCasse	'01-'03
*William A. Nichols	'85-'87	W.W. Varndoe	'03-'05
*Earl Cole	'87-'89	*Art Driscoll, Jr.	'05-'07

*deceased

Honorary Members

Roger Feller Eldon Nysether Mayor Ferdinand Unsen

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FRONT COVER

May 8, 1945 – VE-Night – Great Ashfield, England. The war in the European Theatre of Operations was over and the 385th Bombardment Group (H) was celebrating this momentous event by a pyrotechnic lighting of the sky with flares from the Group's "Flying Fortresses" B-17s. In our memories, no current Fourth of July fireworks display can ever match "our" celebration. This picture was presented to the Hardlife Herald by Harry Sloven. Thanks Harry, for helping us remembering that special day.

EDITORIAL

The year 2007 saw the passing of several of our Past Presidents. However, this is a new year, and I pray that our remaining Past Presidents, and we, the 385th BG Veteran members, will be with together throughout the year 2008. I also salute the second and third generation members who are filling the gap, and continuing the legacy of our great 385th Bombardment Group Association. Already many of them are active in perpetuating our Association by being elected as Officers and Board Members. I call upon all our veteran members to recruit and urge their children and grandchildren, or other family members, to join the 385th BGA.

The 385th BGA will hold its 2008 Reunion in Savannah, GA, August 3rd thru August 8th. It will be combined with the Eighth Air Force Historical Society Reunion. Scheduling our reunion with the 8th AFHS, as we have done in the past several years, reduces the work load of our Officers and Staff. It also gives us the opportunity to enjoy many of the events scheduled by the AFHS which our Association would be unable to provide as a small group. A Registration Form is provided in this issue of the HH. If you plan to attend our reunion, complete the form and send to *Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.* by 2 July, 2008. Registration may also be made online at www.armedforcesreunions.com/8afhs.

I am planning to attend this 385th BGA Reunion, and hope to see you there!

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We begin a new year and I wish to thank all Bomb Group Association members for their support in making this past year, 2007, another successful year. I sincerely wish to make 2008 as successful for our veteran members and for our 2nd and 3rd generation members.

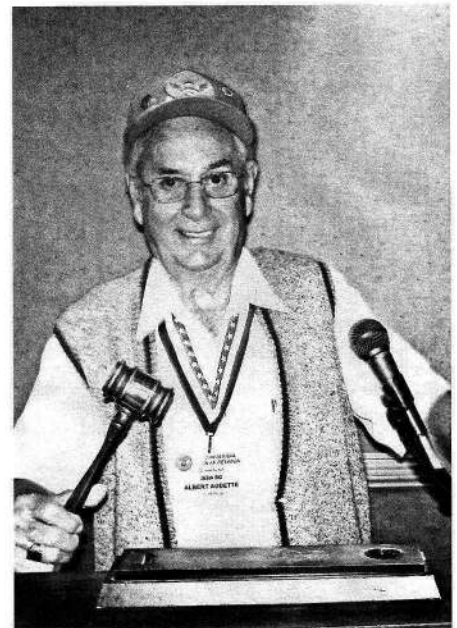
Our 385th Bomb Group Association reunion will again be held in conjunction with the 8th Air Force Historical Association reunion in Savannah, Georgia in the first week of August. Our 33rd reunion in Kalamazoo in 2007 was very successful and I hope that our 34th reunion in Savannah will be just as successful if not better. Make your plans now to attend. A 8th AFHS registration

form and a Hotel Reservation form are included in this issue.

Our 385th BGA meeting will be held on Wednesday, August 6th at 1530 (3:30PM). The place or room will be posted in our Hospitality Room. At that meeting we will remember our recently deceased members, and have a short business meeting.

A copy of the 385th BG Flag that will be hung in the Eighth Air Force Museum is shown in this issue. We all wish that it will be available and installed when we visit the museum during our reunion.

Al Audette, President
8th AFHS, 385th BGA



OPERATION CHOWHOUND

During the last weeks of the war in Europe, several Eighth Air Force Bomb Groups were selected to take part in humanitarian missions known as "Operation Chowhound." Eighth Air Force bombers were loaded with canisters of food and supplies to be dropped by parachute on low-level flights over the Netherlands, which was still occupied by German forces. These flights were welcomed by the beleaguered Dutch people, and in appreciation, many were spelling out "Thank You" in their tulip fields. To slow the aircraft down to an acceptable

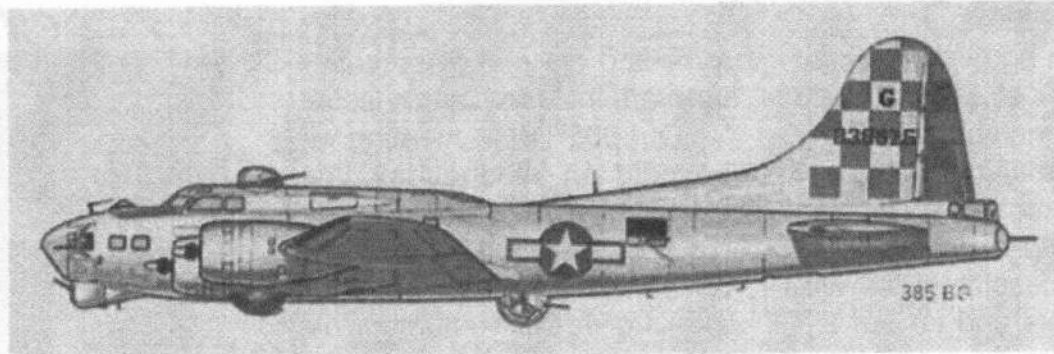
speed to accomplish their missions, the airplanes flew their "bomb" runs with their wheels and flaps down.

The 385th Bomb Group, which had been transferred to the 93rd Combat Wing in February 1945, flew several of the Chowhound missions. At that time the group had adopted the "checkerboard" tail markings, reminiscent of the famous Purina Company of food-related products, from the original square "G" markings. During the war, The American Purina Company had taken an important position in supplying food products

in the United States and in Great Britain.

German emplacements had been ordered not to fire on these airplanes, and some Germans even recovered some of the food for their own use. Their guns remained silent during those days.

The Royal Air Force also took part in those food missions, termed "Operations Manna" by RAF Headquarters. Many Veteran's Organizations, working with the appreciative citizens of Holland, commemorate those who flew these unique, mercy missions.

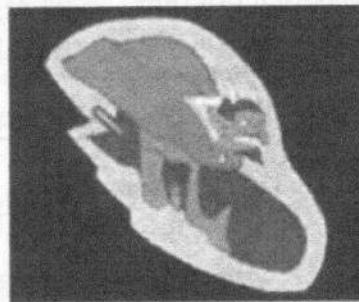


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385 TH BOMB GROUP



548 th sq



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550 th sq



551 st sq

ASSEMBLING THE MIGHTY EIGHTH

BY Leslie A. Lenox, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret.)

Of all the stories that have been written, and movies that have been shown, about the 8th Air Force, very little attention has been given to what was involved in assembling 1200 B-17's and B-24's each day, to get them in formation to carry out a strike against Germany. Certainly showing bombers under attack by fighters, or encountering heavy flak, was a reality, and are interesting to watch. Also, stories about some of the rougher missions make interesting reading. But what was going over England, many mornings, could get just as scary to the crews as the time spent over some of the targets. The planning, and coordination, that had to be accomplished during the night, by the operational planners of each Group, so that the crews could be briefed, was unbelievable. If the planners failed to do their jobs properly, there would have been a free for all among all the Bomb Groups in the skies over England.

The rendezvous points, the altitudes, and the formation times all had to be precise, and known by the crews before the Eighth Air Force could get into attacking formation. The success of the planners in accomplishing their jobs enabled the Eighth Air Force to become the most powerful armada ever assembled. How this was accomplished is one of the major untold stories of the war. I was a pilot in the 95th Bomb Group, in late 1944 and early 1945, and

what follows is a typical mission, as I remember it, from a crew member's perspective:

Early in the evening, our Squadron Operations would post the names of the crews that were scheduled to fly the following day. There were two ways we could be notified if our Group had been alerted to fly. One was by means of lights on the front of the orderly room, and the other with the raising of colored flags. If a green light was on, the Group was alerted; if a red light was on the Group was scheduled to fly; and if a white light was on, the Group would stand down. The light was monitored frequently throughout the evening to learn the Group's status and normally, we, the crews, would be notified if we were going to be flying the next day.

On the morning of a mission, the CQ (Charge of Quarters) would awaken the scheduled crews about four or five o'clock depending on takeoff time. The questions we always asked were, "What is the fuel Load?" and, "What is the bomb load?" If his answer was "full Tokyo tanks," we knew that we would be going deep into Germany.

Shortly after being awakened, "6-by" trucks would start shuttling us to the mess halls. We always had all the fresh eggs we could eat, when flying a mission. After breakfast, the trucks would carry us to the briefing room. All of the crew members would attend the main briefing, and then the Nav-

igators, Bombardiers and Radio Operators went to specialized meetings. At the main briefing, in addition to the target information, anti-aircraft locations, fighter escort, and our route in and out, we received a sheet showing our location in the Group formation, the call signs for the day, and all and any additional information we would require to assemble our Group and get into the main bomber stream.

After the briefings, we dressed into our flight gear, drew our parachutes and loaded onto the trucks for the ride to our plane. The gunners had already picked up the guns and had installed them in the mounts. We were now guided by the times on our daily briefing sheet. We started engines at a given time and watched for the airplanes, which would be flying in the same formation, to taxi past. Then we would taxi behind them following strict radio silence.

We were now parked, nose to tail, around the perimeter, on both sides of the active runway, and extremely vulnerable to a fighter strafing attack. We were lined up on the perimeter so that the 12 planes of the high squadron would take off first, followed by the lead squadron, and finally by the low squadron. At the designated takeoff time, a green flare would be fired and takeoff of the planes at thirty second intervals would begin.

Each Group had a pattern for the airplanes to fly during the

climb to assembly altitude. Some would fly a triangle, some a rectangle, and some a circle. Our Group flew a circle, using a "buncher" (a low frequency radio station) which was located on our field. The patterns for each Group fit together like a jig saw puzzle. Unfortunately, strong winds aloft would sometimes destroy the integrity of the patterns, and there would be considerable over running of each Group's patterns.

Many of the takeoffs were made before daylight during the winter of '44 and '45, when I was flying my tour, and it was not uncommon to climb through several thousand feet of cloud overcast. Also it was not uncommon to experience one or two close misses while climbing through the clouds, although, you would never see the other plane. You know you had a near miss, when suddenly the plane would shake violently when it hit the prop wash of another plane. It was a wonderful feeling to break out on top, so you could watch for other planes from running into you and each other. To add to the congestion we were creating, the Royal Air Force Lancasters, Halifaxes, and Wimpys would be returning from their night missions, and flying through our formations. Needless to say, pilots had to keep their heads on a swivel and their eyes out of the cockpit.

After takeoff, the squadron lead would fire a flare, red-green for our Group, every 30 seconds, so that we could keep him located and enable us to get into the formation. The first

thing you would see when breaking out of the clouds was a sky filled with pyrotechnics, so you had to search the sky for the Group flare, which would identify the lead airplane of your Squadron. Once you had it located, you could adjust your pattern to climb more quickly into formation with him. As each airplane pulled into his position in the formation with the lead airplane, they would also fire a flare making it much easier for the following aircraft to keep him in sight and join the formation. In the morning when the 8th Air Force was assembling, I think most crew members would probably agree that the pyrotechnic show in the skies over England was a rare sight to behold.

The order of progression for assembling the Eighth Air Force was first to assemble the Flight elements; i.e. the Squadrons, the Groups, the Combat Wings, the Divisions and, finally into the Air Force.

As soon as the four Squadron elements were formed, the high, the low, and the second elements would take up their positions on the lead element, to form a Squadron. When the three Squadrons had completed assembly, it was necessary to form in the Group position. This was accomplished by having the three Squadrons arrive over a pre-selected fix at a precise time and heading. The high and low Squadrons were separated from the lead Squadron by 1,000 feet. After forming in a Group formation, the high and low Squadrons would maintain

their positions by following the lead Squadron.

After forming into a Group formation, then it was necessary to assemble into the Combat Wing formation. We were in the 13th Combat Wing, which consisted of three Bomb Groups, the 95th, the 100th and the 390th. Whichever Group was leading the Wing that day, would arrive over a pre-selected fix at a precise time and heading. Thirty seconds later, the second Group would pass over that fixed point, followed by the third Group thirty seconds later. We were then in a Combat Wing formation. The navigators in the lead airplanes of both the Squadrons and the Groups had a tremendous responsibility to ensure that the rendezvous times were strictly followed.

There were three Divisions in the 8th AF, the 1st, 2nd and 3rd. The 1st and 3rd Divisions consisted of B-17s only, and the 2nd Division consisted of B-24s. The B-24s were faster than the B-17s, but the B-17s could fly higher, therefore, the two aircraft were not compatible flying in formation. As a result the 1st and 3rd Divisions would fly together, and the 2nd Division would fly separately.

Now that the Groups were flying in a Combat Wing formation, they would now assemble into the Divisions. This was usually accomplished at "coast out"—a city on the coast, selected as the departure point "fix." The Group leader in each Combat Wing knew his assigned position in the Division, and the precise time that he

should arrive at the “coast out” departure point, to assume that position in the Division formation. The lead Group, which had been selected to lead the Eighth Air Force on this mission, would lead the first Combat Wing over the departure fix. Thirty seconds after the last Group in the first Combat Wing passed that point, the second Combat Wing would fall in trail, and so on, until all Combat Wings were flying in trail and the Division would be formed. One minute later, the lead Group in the other B-17 Division would fly over that point, and the Combat Wings in that Division would follow the same formation procedure. When all of its Combat Wings were in trail, the Eighth Air Force strike force was formed and on its way to the target. At the same time the 2nd Division B-24s were assembling in a similar manner and also departing to their target.

Meanwhile, as the bombers were assembling for their mission, pilots from the Fighter Groups were being briefed on their day’s mission. Normally, 600 to 800 P-38’s, P-47’s and P-51’s would accompany the bombers to provide protection against enemy fighter attacks. Fighter cover was not needed by the bombers until they were penetrating enemy territory, therefore to help conserve fuel, fighter takeoffs were planned to give them enough time to quickly assemble after takeoff and climb on course up to the bomber Groups they would be covering. The combined strength of the fighters and bombers brought the total num-

ber of aircraft participating in a mission to approximately two thousand.

A major problem that presented itself on each mission was that the bomber stream was getting too stretched out. It was not uncommon for the headlines in stateside newspapers—in trying to show the strength of our Air Force—to state that the first Group of bombers were bombing Berlin, while the last Group was still over the English Channel. It made great headlines but was a very undesirable situation. It meant that the Groups were out of position, and not keeping the proper separation. Furthermore, it was almost impossible for them to get back into the desired formation. This made the bomber stream more vulnerable to fighter attacks.

Finally the planners determined the problem was due to the method of climbing to bombing altitude. When the first Group departed the coast departure fix, it would start its climb to bombing altitude. Then as each succeeding Group departed that fix, it too would begin its climb to bombing altitude. The problem with this procedure was that as soon as the first Group started its climb, its true air speed would begin to increase, and it would also encounter different wind velocities. Thus it began to pull away from the Group (s) following it, and the “stretch-out” of the bomber stream would begin. By the time the last Group reached the coast out to start its climb, the lead Group would have leveled off with a true air speed ap-

proaching 250 mph, and thus pulling away from the other Groups and the bomber stream would be “stretched-out.”

The solution to this problem that had frustrated the bomber crews was simple. The Groups would no longer begin climbing at the coast-out, but instead all Groups would begin climbing to bombing altitude at a designated time, irrespective of their position. Thus all Groups would have similar true airspeeds and would be influenced by the same winds aloft. Although this procedure corrected the stretch-out problem, it was still possible for a Group to be out of position because of poor timing.

When one considers the methods and systems our Air Traffic Control system operates today with all the facilities at their disposal to guide each aircraft through the sky safely, it is unbelievable that the Eighth Air Force was able, in a small space, to launch, with minimum radio contact and with no control from the ground, hundreds of airplanes, loaded with bombs, and do it successfully day after day with young air crews with minimum experience, is absolutely astounding.

The accomplishments of the Eighth Air Force have been and will be reviewed by the historians of World War II for many years. There will never be another air armada to compare to it. Under the conditions of those times, they will never cease to be amazed at the ability to launch hundreds of heavy bombers into a devastating strike force we now fondly refer to as “The Mighty Eighth.”

8th AFHS ACTIVITY REGISTRATION FORM

Listed below are all registration, tour, and meal costs for the reunion. Please enter how many people will be participating in each event and total the amount. Send that amount payable to ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. in the form of check or money order. Your cancelled check will serve as your confirmation. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee. You may also register online and pay by credit card at www.armedforcesreunions.com/8afhs. All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before July 2, 2008. After that date, reservations will be accepted on a space available basis. We suggest you make a copy of this form before mailing. Please do not staple or tape your payment to this form.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
PO Box 11327
Norfolk, VA 23517
ATTN: 8th AFHS

OFFICE USE ONLY

Check # _____ Date Received _____
 Inputted _____ Nametag Completed _____

CUT-OFF DATE IS 7/2/08

	Price Per	# of People	Total
REGISTRATION FEE			
Includes Thursday's Symposium expenses, Eaker Award expenses, and other reunion expenses.	\$50		
Reg. Fee for children ages 10-17 attending more than 1 function & staying at hotel	\$30		
DUES			
The principal attendee must be a member of the 8AFHS to register for this reunion. If you are not a member, please pay your yearly dues here.	\$30		\$
MEAL PACKAGES			
Choice #1 includes 7 hotel meals beginning with breakfast on Tuesday. Choice #2 includes 5 hotel meals beginning with breakfast on Wednesday.			
Choice #1	\$187		\$
Choice #2	\$136		\$
Please select your entrée choice(s) for the Banquet:			
Roasted Strip Loin		#	
Baked Tilapia (lightly breaded with a lemon cream sauce)		#	
SEPARATELY PRICED MEALS (if not purchasing a package)			
Wednesday: Rendezvous Dinner (chicken)	\$39		\$
Thursday: Banquet (please select your entrée)			
Roasted Strip Loin	\$47		\$
Baked Tilapia (lightly breaded with a lemon cream sauce)	\$47		\$
TOURS			
Monday: Low Country / Isle of Hope	\$53		\$
Monday: Old Fort Jackson	\$67		\$
Tuesday: 8 th AF Heritage Museum	\$45		\$
<i>Please choose one of the following two tours:</i>			
Wednesday: City Tour	\$43		\$
Wednesday: 8 th AF Heritage Museum	\$42		\$
Thursday: Paula Deen History Tour	\$42		\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

MEMBER NAME _____ SPOUSE NAME _____

GUEST NAMES _____

8AFHS MEMBER # _____ WWII GROUP _____

You must be a member of 8AFHS in order to register. If not a member, please pay your dues above.

PHONE # (____) _____ - _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____ @ _____

ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ ST _____ ZIP _____

DISABILITY/DIETARY RESTRICTIONS _____

MUST YOU BE LIFTED HYDRAULICALLY ONTO THE BUS WHILE SEATED IN YOUR WHEELCHAIR IN ORDER TO PARTICIPATE IN BUS TRIPS? YES NO (PLEASE NOTE THAT WE CANNOT GUARANTEE AVAILABILITY).

EMERGENCY CONTACT _____ PH. NUMBER (____) _____ - _____

SAVANNAH MARRIOTT RIVERFRONT - SAVANNAH, GA

(800) 285-0398

The Savannah Marriott Riverfront is located at 100 General McIntosh Boulevard, Savannah, GA 31401. The Marriott is located on the east end of the world famous River Street, offering guests access to over 60 unique shops and restaurants. If you are driving, please call the hotel for accurate driving directions.

The Savannah Marriott Riverfront offers 391 guest rooms. Handicapped rooms are subject to availability; please request these special accommodations when making reservations. The Marriott is a non-smoking hotel. All rooms feature hair-dryer, in-room coffee makers, iron and ironing board, high-speed Internet access for a fee, and in room movies. Guests can also enjoy access to the outdoor pool, fitness center, whirlpool, and gift shop. Check-in is at 4:00pm and check-out is at 11:00am.

There are three types of suites available. Junior Suites (\$149/night) and Executive Suites (\$179/night) can be reserved by calling the hotel directly. These suites are oversized rooms with the bed and parlor area sharing the same room. Both types of suites have a dining table and small sitting area. For Unit Hospitality purposes, please contact Donna Lee with Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. at 706-356-1905 to make a reservation. Suites for Hospitality purposes consist of a parlor (approximately 700 square feet) with wet bar, refrigerator, restroom, and sitting areas. One or two bedrooms may be attached. One bedroom hospitality suites are \$270/night. Two bedroom hospitality suites are \$395/night. All rates will have appropriate taxes added.

Blue - A Savannah Bistro & Bar serves American cuisine for breakfast, lunch, and dinner in a relaxing atmosphere.
Atrium Bar - offers guests a place to enjoy appetizers and drinks. Room service is available.

The hotel is located about 15 miles from the Savannah/Hilton Head International Airport. Gray Line of Savannah provides airport shuttle service. Currently, fees are estimated at \$17 per person one-way and \$29 per person roundtrip, estimated fees are subject to change. Please call (800) 845-5582 for information and reservations. Parking at the hotel for registered group guest is currently \$5.00 for self-parking per day. Valet parking is available at a non-discounted rate of \$15.00 per day.

For RV hookup service, call Bellaire Woods Campground at (912) 748-4000 or Savannah South KOA at (912) 756-3396. Ask for information, reservations, and directions to determine which is the most convenient for you.

Should you need to rent a wheelchair for the reunion, ScootAround rents both manual and power wheelchairs by the day and week. Please call their toll-free number at (888) 441-7575.

HOTEL RESERVATION INFORMATION

PLEASE CALL THEIR TOLL FREE RESERVATIONS LINE, 1-800-285-0398,
TO MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS FOR 8th AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY REUNION
REUNION DATES: AUGUST 3-8, 2008

Please be prepared to give the following information when making your reservations:

NAME & IF SHARING ROOM, WITH WHOM _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONENUMBER _____

ARRIVAL DAY & DATE/ DEPARTURE DATE/ CONFIRM THE # OF NIGHTS _____

OF ROOMS & THE # OF PEOPLE IN RM. _____

ADVISE IF YOU REQUIRE HANDICAP ACCESSIBLE ROOM _____

KING BED OR 2 DOUBLE BEDS? _____

RATE: \$109 + state and local taxes (currently 13%) + \$1 city occupancy fee. _____

CUTOFF DATE: 07/02/08. Reservations received after this date will be processed on space & rate availability.

CANCELLATION POLICY: Deposit is refundable if reservation is canceled 48 hours prior to date of arrival.

RESERVATION GUARANTEE: Must provide a credit card number with expiration date to reservation agent. Hotel accepts the following card types: AMEX, DINERS, VISA, MASTER CARD, CARTE BLANCHE, DISCOVER

MEMORIES

By Rex M. Cantrell

As I lay on my back after an afternoon nap, 60 years of memories came flooding back. Some days they are in sharper relief than at other days. This afternoon, as I stared at the ceiling, the roar of the engines and the excitement of the moment and the anticipation of what lay ahead filled my mind as I recalled those moments that will live sharply in my memory, as they must in the minds of thousands of others who were with me in England in 1943. After some 60 years, these memories seem to come alive.

The lights came on at 5 o'clock and we stumbled from our beds, caught the 2x4s, and were shuttled down to the mess hall. After a hearty breakfast of toast, eggs and coffee, we were shuttled down to the day's briefing. We did not know what lay ahead, and not caring too much because we had done it before. In the briefing room, there was a stage with curtains obscuring a map of Europe, and after all had assembled in the room, a hushed silence would fill the room as the curtains were drawn back. Our mission for the day was revealed in a black thread of yarn from our base, over the Zieder Zee to our target in Germany.

The briefing would reveal to us the customary placement of anti-aircraft (flak) bat-

teries, both on the route in and out, and those in the target area. After the general briefing, the navigator's, pilot's and radio operator's briefings, we were all trucked out to our assigned "hard-stand" where our ship, loaded with bombs and 50 caliber ammunition stood waiting for us. We crawled into the plane and took our assigned positions. The roar of the B-17 engines seemed to ignite in us the thrill of expectation, having only a vague idea of what lay ahead of us.

As navigator, it was pretty much a matter of following the leader, as the group lead ship headed for the main formation. Assembling the group and wing formations seemed to be the most exciting part of many missions. The sky would be filled with B-17s milling about as the groups were formed and then assembled into wing formations and proceeded to our targets. It was pretty much routine until we got over enemy territory. Generally, one or more crew members would shout over the intercom "Enemy fighters" and their position with regard to the clock.

Navigators had two 50 caliber machine guns, one on each side. Firing a bucking 50 cal. Machine gun at an attacking enemy fighter is an experience not easily forgotten. Seeing the bright lights come on the leading edge of a German fighter ME-109 really got

your attention. I marveled at the courage of these fighter pilots attacking a group formation knowing the high concentration of machine gun fire coming from a majority of the bombers. Arriving at the initial point (IP) each formation would head for the target, usually under heavy concentrations of flak. Bomb bay doors were opened, the safety pins removed from the bombs, and the bombs were dropped when we saw the lead ship dropping his bombs over the target. There were no fighter attacks over the target area as the enemy fighters did not like the flak any more than we did.

Life is full of pleasant memories, but for me and many others like me, some of the most pleasant memories were leaving the enemy coast and commencing our let down over the North Sea from above 20,000 feet, or higher, to 10-12,000 feet. Everyone was happy to discard their oxygen mask and flight jacket, and await touch down at our base.

We all have indelible memories provided to us in various stages of our lives, but for me the most indelible memory is the sight of a B-17 spinning out of control and disappearing through the clouds below. Sometimes as the plane fell from the sky out of control, our entire crew

would count the parachutes as they came out one by one. Of course many times there were planes that never gave up a parachute. Memories even today make me nervous,

and they are as if the events occurred only last week.

I, along with thousands of others who survived those eventful days, must step back occasionally and relive those

days, and Thank the Lord that we are here to remember.

Note: Rex M. Cantrell, Navigator "Shack Bunny", 385th BG, 551st BS

THE LAST MISSION OF RUM DUM

Roy Jillson**

On April 10, 1945, we flew our 15th mission once again on board "*Rum Dum*", with Lt. Muchow, pilot, and Lt. Kokus, co-pilot, who was flying his 35th and last mission. "*Rum Dum*" was one of the most famous B-17s in the Eighth Air Force, having completed 105 missions without an abort. Her ground crew and the base commander wished to continue and increase this for the 385th Bomb Group. As we took off, little did we know that this was to be "*Rum Dum's*" last mission.

Our target for the day was a jet fighter base in the vicinity of Berlin Although I was the radio operator, during the bomb run I was at the right waist gun position and Buck Krouse was at the left waist gun, both of us looking for attacking German fighters. Our formation crossed over the target, bombing at 15,000 feet rather than the usual 25,000, to observe the damage already inflicted on the airbase by the bombers ahead of us. Our bombs exploded in a hanger and on a row of brick barracks.

Fifteen minutes after bombs away, expecting no flak, Buck and I removed our flak suits. Our flak suits had no sooner hit the floor, when the guys in the front of the plane called out, "Flak at 12 o'clock level!" Flying right into the exploding shells, Buck and I saw the bursts through the windows in the waist.

Within the next minute, we heard three distinct slams against the plane and heard pieces of flak tearing through the ship. One fragment of a shell had made a two inch diameter hole on the outside of the plane and peeled back the inside armor plating making a hole about the size of a man's head. In the nose section, flak splintered wood and metal and set fire to two A-3 bags filled with clothing.

Another burst hit the #1 engine. The engine began smoking and throwing oil while it's prop wind-milled and ran away uncontrollable. By this time with shells continuing to explode around us, Lt. Muchow realizing we were badly damaged, dropped out of formation and called for fighter support.

Checking the battered plane for further damage, we found two foot holes in each of the tail's horizontal stabilizers and other flak hits around the tail gunner's position, causing excessive vibration throughout the tail section. Buck and I also noted a good-sized flak hole near where we were standing. We also noted a number of new holes on both the left and right wings.

Lt. Muchow checked to make sure we were not injured and flew down below 10,000 feet so we could remove our oxygen masks. We were still well within enemy territory. Navigator Lt. Shearman had excellent maps and plotted a course to the nearest friendly landing strip. Even before we took off, "*Rum Dum*" was a tired old veteran. Now she was a rambling wreck. However, B-17s were known to take punishment, thus we, seven guys curled up and jammed against one another on the radio room floor, decided to ride her down rather than bail out. Coming down fast, Lt. Muchow did not know how the plane would hold

up after touchdown on the runway. However, he greased us in on a British commanded Typhoon fighter bomber strip, which had been taken over from Germany just three or four weeks before.

All of us had a kindred feeling about "*Rum Dum*." She

was such a famous plane that we didn't want to lose her. For that reason, foolishly, we tried to put out the fire in #1 engine using fire extinguishers, ignoring the fact that an explosion could be imminent. Fortunately, a British fire truck arrived on the scene and doused

the fire. However, "*Rum Dum*" had flown her last mission.

Roy Jillson, 385th BG
Radio Operator of "*Rum Dum*"

** Abstracted from a letter by Roy Jillson in the 8th Air Force News, Vol. 7, No. 4, page 48.

ABOUT THE DOOLITTLE RAID

Following is from an abstract of an article by Valerie J. Nelson, the Los Angeles Times, Tuesday, October 16, 2007.

Nolan A. "Sue" Herndon, 88, a navigator-bombardier member of the Doolittle Raiders who was held captive in the then Soviet Union after participating in the April 18, 1942 bombing run on Japan that gave Americans a morale boost four months after the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, died October 7, 2007 of pneumonia at Dorn VA Medical Center in Columbia, S.C.

Historians have called the attack a key event in WW II and pushing the Japanese to make strategic errors and lifting the U.S. spirits following the Pearl Harbor attack.

Mr. Herndon's plane was the only one of the 16 B-25 bombers to stray from then-Lt. Col. James H. Doolittle's orders to fly to China after striking Tokyo and other cities. Officially, the War Department blamed a shortage of fuel for Mr. Herndon's plane landing

on a Soviet airstrip outside of Vladivostok. However, late in life Mr. Herndon, by then the sole surviving member of crew, told a different story: His plane had been on a classified mission to catalog airfields that might be used for attacks on Japan, and to test the Soviet Union's resolve as an ally by seeing if their plane would be allowed to refuel and to continue on to China. "We needed information about Russia to see what they would do," Mr. Herndon said in a 2001 story in the 'State', the daily morning newspaper in Columbia. "The whole thing was kept secret."

When the plane touched down, the Soviet Union, which was not yet at war with Japan, held the 5-man crew captive for more than 13 months. By paying an Afghan smuggler, they were taken to the British Embassy in what is now Iran.

"I think I was hooked into something I didn't know about. I would have gone anyway. But it's always been a burr in my side," Mr. Herndon, the

flight's navigator-bombardier, told the State (newspaper) in 2002. Unusual occurrences made Mr. Herndon conclude that his B-25 had a unique assignment. They included the last minute addition of his plane, the 16th, to the raid, the pilot and co-pilot later receiving high military intelligence positions, and the alteration of the plane's carburetors to burn more fuel than the others, thus providing a cover story for the Soviet landing.

According to Mr. Tom Casey, manager of the Doolittle Tokyo Raiders Organization, a curiosity, "that always bothered" Mr. Herndon, was that both pilots Edward York and Robert Emmens spoke fluent Russian after leaving the aircraft. The pilots, who died years ago, never spoke about this issue according to Carroll V. Glines, the Raider's historian. "All I know is, Nolan was there, and I wasn't, but I could never find any clues to confirm that it happened that way," Glines said, calling it "a mys-

tery." Tom Casey said that the military would never confirm or deny Mr. Herndon's story.

None of the Raiders, who had launched their B-25s from the aircraft carrier Hornet, reached the airfields in China where they were supposed to land. The other 15 planes crash-landed in China or their crews bailed out. Eighty air-

men survived the raid. Three were captured by the Japanese and executed.

Only 12 Raiders survive, and several are in their 90s. Still reunions have been scheduled through 2009, driven by an order from their one-time commander. Doolittle, who died in 1993, said that the group should continue to

meet until only two men remain. The final two will uncork a bottle of cognac from 1896, the year of Doolittle's birth, and make one last toast before disbanding. When his comrades raise their glasses at the 66th reunion in Dallas, Mr. Herndon will be included in their standard salute, "Gentlemen, to our good friends who have gone."

LETTERS/E-MAILS

From: Paul Welch
38 Ludbrook Close
Needham Market
Suffolk
IP6 8EE
England
e-mail: paul.i.welch@bt.com

Hello Frank,

I live about 10 miles from Great Ashfield, and have been trying to find out more about the 385th and the base. I have had lots of help with questions, but I have some others which I wonder if any of you kind readers might be able to answer.

- I wonder if anyone had any photographs of any of the buildings on the technical site (control tower, locker huts. Briefing huts, equipment stores – anything!)?
- I have been trying to find out which buildings the briefings were done. I believe there were separate briefings for officers and enlisted men. For instance did these take place in the same set of buildings as the lockers, or in others buildings nearby?
- I would like to find out if anyone used hardstand 7 – air or ground crew. This is the 'frying pan' style near to the control tower and is the only one that survives today. The only aircraft I have been able to track down (with Bill Varnedoe's help) that used it so far is 43-38031, *Joker/Hit Parade Jr.* I wonder if anyone flew in this, or recall if they used this hardstand?
- Would anyone who had been on the October 6, 1944 mission to Berlin be able to send any memories of his day? I would like to find out more about this mission and hear any impressions from anyone in the air or on the ground.
- Finally, I wonder if anyone has any spare copies of the *Hardlife Herald*, or would be willing to supply any photocopies? Frank kindly sent me eleven assorted issues from 2004 to 2007. It is such a great source of information that I would love to see some more. I would of course pay any costs.

Best Wishes to everyone,

Paul Welch

LETTERS/E-MAILS

From: Gary Smith
To: Shnevoegel@aol.co (Leo LaCasse)

March 2008

Hello,

My name is Gary Smith. I hope this e-mail finds you well. Back in May of 2002, you and your members of the 385th Bomb Group were kind enough to let my father, George Smith, and I tag along with you while in Luxembourg for the opening of the new Museum in Perle.

Dad was in the 381st Bomb Group and had been contacted by Roger Feller a year or so prior to the museum opening. He and his crew had bailed out of his B-17 over Luxembourg in February of 1945, not really knowing where the plane eventually crashed. At some point after that Roger had found the crash site near Perle and tracked down the crew. Because of that, Dad had donated much of his WWII gear to the museum, so Roger had invited us to the Grand Opening on Memorial Day of that year.

My question to you is if you have had any contact with Roger recently or know anything about the state of the museum? Dad is now in an assisted living facility and was curious about Roger who was always a charming fellow. I had 2 e-mail addresses for Roger, but have gotten no response from anything I have sent to him.

If you have any knowledge about him or have been in contact with anyone from the museum, I would love to report back to Dad.

Thank you for your time. Hope you are having a great season.

Gary Smith

From: Shnevoegel
To: fxmccawley@aol.com

March 25, 2008

Hi:

As you can see from the quoted message there are people interested in the 385th Museum in Perle, Lux. One thing that has puzzled me these past few years is why nothing has been quoted in the HH each month for the benefit of our members. It seems to me that you, Roger, should have had a message in the HH about the Museum plus a photo of some of the exhibits in the museum in Perle. I know that I would love to hear how the Museum is coming along and what interest has been generated through the HH to get customers to attend whenever they are in the area.

Frank:

Perhaps you could coordinate with Roger to get an article in the HH each month for the benefit of the members. This should be done for each publication of the HH. I'm sure that Roger gets a copy. Perhaps he has given it some thoughts since I was there last.

Roger:

If you have been thinking about such an approach to get publicity for the Museum now is the time to get someone in the Group to start thinking about it for the HH. And please, Roger, let's drop the silence and let us get back on speaking terms.

continues

LETTERS/E-MAILS

continued

P.S. This young man is interested in getting info about the Museum and I don't doubt that he is genuinely interested in the 385th BG since we have our own Museum, be it in Perle, Luxembourg.

Leo (LaCasse)

Note: If any members have a contact with the 385th Museum, please advise them of our member's interest in the Museum and to provide the HH with info, pictures of the Museum and/or its exhibits.

29 February 2008

Frank,

I enclose a letter I received from Jim Young. He gives reference to Art Weigand's DFC. Art may be able to track down the General Order No. 77, European Theater of Operations.

It may be useful to others on that mission, 28 July 1943, 385th BG Mission No. 5. Print his letter (see below) in the HH as an answer to Art's letter and question in the HH December 2007 issue. I sent Art's home address to Jim Young.

Bill (Varnedoe)

From: James G. Young

227 Ramsey Ave.

Bridgeville, PA 15017-1968

22 February 2008

Hi Bill,

Just received my Copy of the 385th Hardlife Herald and just finished reading through. I have been an 8th AF Historian now for over 40 years and after having finished reading the most interesting E-Mail on page 11 from Art Wiegand (shown in Article with two different spellings to his last name, Weigand and Wiegand).

Well I can tell you without a doubt that the DSC (Distinguished Service Cross) was awarded to 2nd Lt. ARTHUR H. WIEGAND for the mission of 29 July 1943 by General Order 77, Hq. European Theater of Operations 1943.

During WWII there were a total of 4,754 DSCs made during this time period. Unfortunately I do not have any further info than above and have been doing private research to Identify the Unit of those members of the AAF who are listed but with no Unit Identification. Some early awards to Airmen do I.D. the unit. I have been doing this for 20 years now.

Since no address was listed for Art I could not contact him directly. I do not have E-Mail or a computer....

Wow! seems like just yesterday that I joined the 385th Association back when John C. Ford was President, and also knew Paul Schultz and have been friends with Ed Stern up in North Dakota for many years and do hope he is in Good Health.

continues

LETTERS/E-MAILS

continued

By the way I am the only guy who has a complete set of all five of the 385th's original wartime patches. I belong to a dozen different 8th's related Associations. I joined my 1st two back in 1973, the 91st BGMA and the 2nd Air Division.

By the way I also have an extra original 551st Sq. Patch that I would be willing to swap for another 8th original...

All the Best

Jim

Note: If any other members of the 385th BG who received the DSC, please notify Jim of your unit and the reason for the award.

Roger Feller sent the following message to Bill Varndoe:

From: circus@aol.com (Kurt Spence)
To: rofeller@pt.lu (Roger Feller)
Date: April 1, 2008

Hello Roger,

My name is Kurt Spence and I am a historian and genealogist and have been working on my Spence family history. I was recently in the National Archives in College Park, MD looking for a couple of my ancestors who were POWs during World War II. I did not find my ancestors but I happened to discover hidden away in a small box, 172 small photographs of several POWs. I have been researching and trying to find out who these airmen were. I have been able to identify about 138 enlisted men and officers who were airmen of B17s and B-24s that were shot down in early 1945 over Germany and were sent to Dulag Oberusel West.

I believe I found a photo of one of the airmen who served with the 385th Bomb Group, 551st Bomb Squadron. He is 2nd Lt. Jack Maury Waller, O-926868, who was a Navigator on the Kenneth G. Tipton crew of B-17 44-8417.

Can you tell me more about the circumstances surrounding the shooting down of his aircraft and eventual capture by the Germans?

Can you help in getting these photos to these men or their relatives? I have enclosed a jpeg file of their photographs which I believe were taken within hours or days of their capture. Do you know if these airmen were finally sent to Stalag 7A, Moosburg? That seems to be the common link between all of these 173 photos.

Thank you for your help in locating these veterans of World War II.

J. Kurt Spence

370 Linden Avenue
Doylestown, PA 18901

LETTERS/E-MAILS

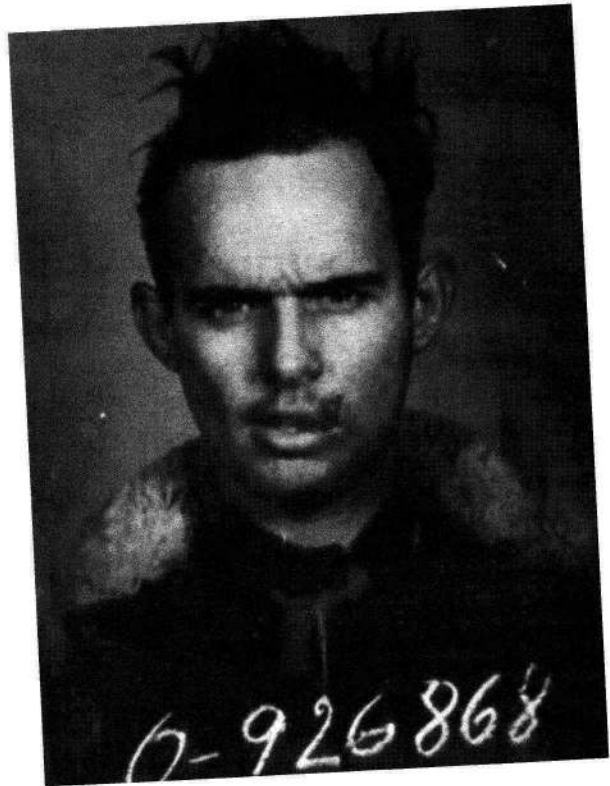
From: bilvar@comcast.net
To: rofeller@pt.lu, circus@aol.com
April 2, 2008

Roger and Kurt,

I knew Jack Weller well. The Tipton crew trained and went overseas at the same time as the Crow crew. I was the navigator on the Crow crew and Jack was the navigator on the Tipton crew. We went to London together on our first pass.

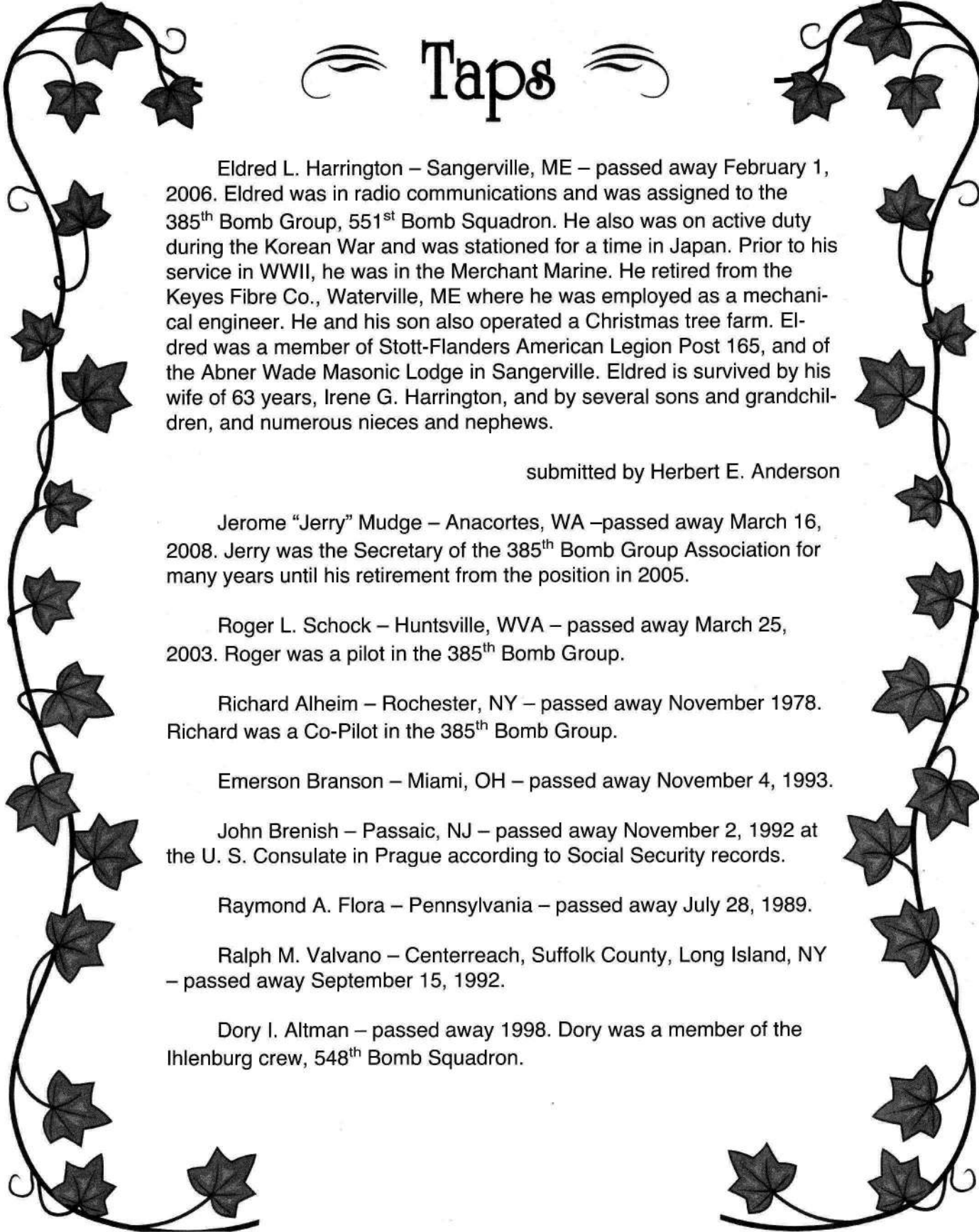
They were on my right wing on 2 March '45 when they got shot down over Oschatz on the way to bomb a rail yard on the southern outskirts of Dresden. This was his second mission, having bombed Ulm the day before. After the war, I heard that the crew had been taken by civilian policemen and paraded through the streets. Someone threw a brick at them and Jack was hit in the mouth, knocking out a tooth. I see the photo shows that wound. Thanks for the picture.

Bill Varnedoe





Taps



Eldred L. Harrington – Sangerville, ME – passed away February 1, 2006. Eldred was in radio communications and was assigned to the 385th Bomb Group, 551st Bomb Squadron. He also was on active duty during the Korean War and was stationed for a time in Japan. Prior to his service in WWII, he was in the Merchant Marine. He retired from the Keyes Fibre Co., Waterville, ME where he was employed as a mechanical engineer. He and his son also operated a Christmas tree farm. Eldred was a member of Stott-Flanders American Legion Post 165, and of the Abner Wade Masonic Lodge in Sangerville. Eldred is survived by his wife of 63 years, Irene G. Harrington, and by several sons and grandchildren, and numerous nieces and nephews.

submitted by Herbert E. Anderson

Jerome “Jerry” Mudge – Anacortes, WA – passed away March 16, 2008. Jerry was the Secretary of the 385th Bomb Group Association for many years until his retirement from the position in 2005.

Roger L. Schock – Huntsville, WVA – passed away March 25, 2003. Roger was a pilot in the 385th Bomb Group.

Richard Alheim – Rochester, NY – passed away November 1978. Richard was a Co-Pilot in the 385th Bomb Group.

Emerson Branson – Miami, OH – passed away November 4, 1993.

John Brenish – Passaic, NJ – passed away November 2, 1992 at the U. S. Consulate in Prague according to Social Security records.

Raymond A. Flora – Pennsylvania – passed away July 28, 1989.

Ralph M. Valvano – Centerreach, Suffolk County, Long Island, NY – passed away September 15, 1992.

Dory I. Altman – passed away 1998. Dory was a member of the Ihlenburg crew, 548th Bomb Squadron.

Taps

William A. Wesley – passed away January 2008. William, a member of the 385th Bomb Group, was shot down on his third mission. He spent the rest of the war as a prisoner in Luft Stalag IV.

from Jan. 14, 2008 *Baltimore Sun*

Thomas (Tom) Kelly – passed away January 27, 2008 Tom was the Navigator on the Gagnon crew. Tom Gagnon, BGA Vice President, was named after Thomas Kelly.

by Cindy Kelly Wright & Tom Gagnon

Harold Cleary – New Port Richey, FL – passed away February 5, 2008. Harold was waist gunner and flew with Al Audette. Later he completed Flight Training and flew C-135 refueling tanker aircraft. After many years of service, he retired with the rank of Colonel.

by Al Audette

Harold Peltzer – Eugene, OR – passed away 2008.

Lee Colthorpe – Wife of former President Sid Colthorpe, 1991 - 1993, passed away December 10, 2007. Lee was a great assistant to many of the organizers of the 385th BGA reunions. She was a classy lady and she will be missed by the members.

by Chuck Smith

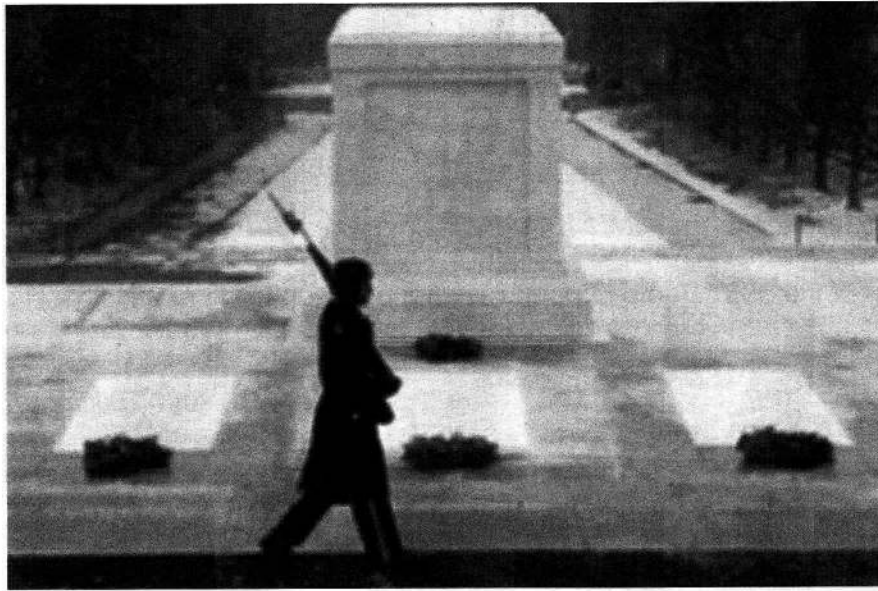
Daniel H. Dolan – Plano, TX – passed away July 18, 2007

William J. Pansier – Green Bay, WI – passed away November 16, 2007

Ray Pennington – passed away June 2004

Robert C. Reeve – Three River Falls, MN – passed away February 2008

Robert B. Smith – passed away in mid March, 2008. He was a gunner on "Maiden America." Pilot of aircraft was Capt. Arvas.



Tombs of the Unknown Soldiers at Arlington Cemetery during Christmas.

Wreaths at the Tombs, and at all plots in Arlington were donated by the Worcester Wreath Co. of Harrington, Maine. Owner, Merrill Worcester, provides the wreaths and covers the trucking expense of delivering the wreaths. He has done this since 1992.

385th BGA

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