

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

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*MONUMENTS, MEMORIALS AND ANNIVERSARIES

Past Presidents

*Ruel G. Weikert	'56-'72	Sam Lyke	'89-'90
*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. Varnedoe	'03-'05
*Earl Cole	'87-'89	*Art Driscoll, Jr.	'05-'07

*deceased

Honorary Members

Roger Feller Eldon Nysethter Mayor Ferdinand Unsen

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FRONT COVER

This is the new sign that will be posted near the main gate of the WWII 385th BG airfield. This photo was taken by Tim Randelman while visiting Roy Barker's home where the sign is currently being kept. Tim, a member of the 385th BGA, is the son of John Ford, one of the founding members of our Association. Tim is in the Air Force stationed in England and visited Roy Barker, and received a tour of the old field.

EDITORIAL

I trust that everyone received their copy of the December 2008 (Vol. 25 No. 3). The issue was mailed many weeks late owing to several unfortunate circumstances, and I can only apologize for the delay.

Again I request that members send me items for inclusion in the *Hardlife Herald*. The 385th Bomb Group veterans must have some item about their life while at Great Ashfield that can be told to we fellow "Three Eighty Fifters." And to you second and third generation members, what did your Dad or Granddad tell you about his life at Great Ashfield? I will be waiting to hear from you!

In August the 385th BGA will have its Reunion in Cincinnati, Ohio, again held in conjunction with the 8th Air Force Historical Society Reunion. Registration forms for the 8th AFHS Reunion and for the Millennium Hotel are included in this issue. If enough 385th BGA members register, we again will have our own Hospitality Room. The highlight of the reunion will be a tour of the *Wright Patterson/U.S. Air Force Museum*.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I have had many contacts with many of our members during my term as President of the 385th Bomb Group Association and I appreciate their help and support. I am looking forward to the Cincinnati reunion, and I would hope the current Officers and Board of Directors during 2009 and 2010 will continue to support our "President elect", Tom Gagnon. The Officers, Board members and I hope that many of our members will be able to attend the August reunion and I look forward to join with them in our activities. I will be asking the members to assist us in making the 385th BG the largest and most active of all the groups. We had one of the largest groups last year. Let us try to do better this year.

We had trouble with the Hotel reservations last year because of the limited available rooms. Please register early for the convention as it will help in obtaining a room for our business meeting and the Rendezvous Dinner, and also in obtaining our own Hospitality Room. The more attendees at the convention insures us we will obtain a private room. The business meeting and the Rendezvous Dinner will be on Friday, February 21, 2009. I would like to thank Chuck Smith for his help in setting up our Hospitality Suite, and believe he is entitled to use it for himself. Thank you Frank, for your continued work with our newsletter.

Albert E. Audette

Albert Audette, President 385th BG, 8th Air Force

RECENT CORRESPONDENCE

From: Charles W. Gregg Sr.

To: Mr. Frank X. McCawley

Dear Mr. McCawley

My dad, William C. Gregg, Jr. was a member of the 385th Bomb Group and was receiving the newsletter for as long as I can remember. He was a Captain and flew left seat I "Round-Trip-Ticket." He now has Alzheimer's and is in an Alzheimer's unit in Leesburg, FL. I have always enjoyed reading the newsletters and the articles about some of the missions remind me so much about my dad, when he could tell of them.

My wife and I recently assisted the EAA with a donation towards their B-17, the "Aluminum Overcast" which is due for some major maintenance. We did this to honor my dad as I think it is important that all future generations are able to see first-hand; the aircraft that helped win the air war in Europe, and hear the stories.

If you are not familiar with some of the work that the EAA in Oshkosh, WI has done in trying to archive the stories of the pilots and crew members, it is excellent. They have videotaped several veterans telling some of their stories of missions so that the future generations can hear first-hand, the history of the air war. These videos are posted on their website for anyone interested in watching.

I would like to join the 385th organization if at all possible. It is very difficult not to admire all that was done by the 385th and all the others in the Mighty 8th. Thank you so much!

Sincerely,

Charles W. Gregg

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL REUNION

The Millennium Hotel — Cincinnati, Ohio

August 18–23, 2009

The time is here. Start making plans to attend the 35th annual reunion. Secure your reservations early, as rooms may be limited, as well as some of the tours.

REGISTRATION INSTRUCTIONS

See choices below and complete the Registration form noting your event choices and personal information. By "WWII GROUP," we're asking for the group or unit in which you served (specific Bomb Group, Fighter Group, PRG, HQ, etc.) We use this information for tallying totals for each group, nametags, and seating arrangements. If you prefer to sit with a different group, please give us that information too. Remit by mail with check or money order payable to Armed Forces Reunions by July 16, 2009. You may also register and pay with credit card online at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs. A \$6 convenience fee will be added to online credit card reservations. Forms received after July 16 will be accepted on a space-available basis only. Hotel reservations should also be made by July 16, 2009.

ARMED FORCES REUNIONS, INC. CANCELLATION POLICY

For attendees canceling reunion activities prior to the cut-off date, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. (AFR) shall process a full refund less a \$5 per person processing fee. Attendees canceling reunion activities after the cut-off date will be refunded to the fullest extent that AFR's vendor commitments and guarantees will allow, less a \$5 processing fee. Cancellations will only be taken Monday through Friday from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Eastern Time, excluding holidays. Please call (757) 625-6041 to cancel reunion activities and obtain a cancellation code. Refunds processed 4–6 weeks after reunion. Canceling your hotel reservation doesn't cancel your reunion activities.

MEALS/EVENTS CHOICES

Choice #1 Total Package \$132

Package includes 6 hotel food functions starting with breakfast on Thursday. Tours are separate.

Choice #2 Partial Package \$122

Package includes 5 hotel food functions starting with breakfast on Friday. Tours are separate.

Breakfast menus: The continental breakfasts on Thursday, Friday, and Sunday include juice, breakfast breads, cereal, yogurt, fruit, coffee, and tea. The breakfast buffet on Saturday includes juice, assorted breakfast breads, eggs, bacon, sausage, potatoes, French toast, coffee, and tea.

Choice #3 Individual Events

Friday Rendezvous Dinner at \$39 and Saturday Banquet at \$46 can be purchased separately, but are included in both packages above.

TOUR OPTIONS

Tours and trips are described on the Reunion Highlights Pages. Prices are listed on the registration form. Driver and Guide gratuities are not included in the tour prices.

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. You may also register online and pay by credit card at www.afr-reg.com/8afhs. All registration forms and payments must be received by mail on or before July 16, 2009. 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. Returned checks will be charged a \$20 fee.

Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.
322 Madison Mews
Norfolk, VA 23510
ATTN: 8th AFHS

OFFICE USE ONLY

Check # _____ Date Received _____
 Inputted _____ Nametag Completed _____

CUT-OFF DATE IS 7/16/09

	Price Per	# of People	Total
REGISTRATION FEE			
Includes meeting expenses, Eaker Award expenses, and other reunion expenses.	\$60		
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 6 hotel meals beginning with breakfast on Thursday. Choice #2 includes 5 hotel meals beginning with breakfast on Friday.			
Choice #1	\$132		\$
Choice #2	\$122		\$
Please select your entrée choice(s) for the Banquet:			
Prime Rib of Beef		#	
Salmon		#	
SEPARATELY PRICED MEALS (if not purchasing a package)			
Friday: Rendezvous Dinner (chicken)	\$39		\$
Saturday: Banquet (please select your entrée)			
Prime Rib of Beef	\$46		\$
Salmon	\$46		\$
TOURS			
Wednesday: Lunch Cruise	\$65		\$
Thursday: US AF Museum & Dinner	\$75		\$
<i>Please choose one of the following two tours:</i>			
Friday: US AF Museum	\$45		\$
Friday: Museum Center / Newport on the Levee	\$46		\$
Saturday: City Tour	\$36		\$
Total Amount Payable to Armed Forces Reunions, Inc.			\$

MEMBER NAME (for nametag) _____ VETERAN NEXT GEN OTHER

8AFHS MEMBER # _____ WWII GROUP (for seating purposes) _____
 You must be a member of 8AFHS in order to register. If not a member, please pay your dues above.

SPOUSE/GUEST NAMES _____ NEXT GEN OTHER

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 (____) _____ - _____

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL REUNION SCHEDULE

Tuesday, August 18

2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Early Bird Registration open

Wednesday, August 19

8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Reunion Registration open
9:00 a.m. Memorabilia/Gathering Room and PX opens
10:45 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. LUNCH CRUISE (description follows)
1:00 p.m. 8AFHS Board meeting
2:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Reunion Registration open

Thursday, August 20

7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast
8:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m. Reunion Registration open
9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m. Unit Advisory and Chapter & Unit Development Meeting
12:30 p.m. – 10:30 p.m. U.S. AIR FORCE MUSEUM & DINNER (description follows)
3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Reunion Registration open

Friday, August 21

7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Reunion Registration open
8:00 a.m. – 9:30 a.m. Individual Group Meetings
9:45 a.m. – 3:45 p.m. WRIGHT PATTERSON/U.S. AIR FORCE MUSEUM (description follows)
10:15 a.m. – 3:15 p.m. MUSEUM CENTER/NEWPORT ON THE LEVEE (description follows)
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. WWII POW Round-table
3:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Reunion Registration open
4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m. Next Generation Meeting
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. 8AFHS Cash Bar Reception
7:00 p.m. – Rendezvous Dinners and 'Hangar Flying'

Saturday, August 22

7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Full Breakfast Buffet
9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m. General Membership Meeting
11:15 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. Medical Advisory Seminar: Pearls, by Dr. Brown
1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. CITY TOUR (description follows)
1:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m. Roger A. Freeman Symposium: "Courage Over Fortress Europe"
5:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m. Reunion Registration open
6:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m. 8AFHS Cash Bar Reception
7:00 p.m. – 8AFHS Gala Banquet

Sunday, August 23

7:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast
8:00 a.m. – 8:45 a.m. Worship Services
9:00 a.m. – 8AFHS Annual Board Meeting

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL REUNION HIGHLIGHTS

LUNCH CRUISE – Wednesday, August 19

Climb aboard for a two hour cruise of the Ohio River, featuring games and buffet and entertainment. Board bus at 10:45am, 2:30pm back at hotel—\$65/person includes bus, escort and lunch

U.S. AIR FORCE MUSEUM AND DINNER – Thursday, August 20

Our destination is Wright-Patterson AFB. We will tour the Presidential Hanger and Restoration Center. Then we will visit the USAF Museum, the largest military aviation museum in the world with over 200 exhibits. Platform ramps will allow viewing of a B-17, a B-24, a P47, and a P-51. A cash bar will be available before dinner. After dinner, buses will head back to the hotel with the last bus at 9pm. Wear comfortable shoes and casual clothing. A photo ID is required for tour. Non-citizens must provide a passport number and birth date. Children must be at least 12 years old. Register early as the restoration and President Hanger is limited to 300 persons. Board bus at 12:30pm, 10:30pm back at hotel—\$75/Person includes bus, dinner, escort, and facility charges.

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AFB & USAF MUSEUM – Friday, August 21

For history buffs, there is a 'no frills' tour of the Wright-Patterson AFB and the USAF Museum. Exhibits tell the story of aviation from the Wright brothers to the Space Age. Lunch is on your own. Board bus at 9:45am, 3:45 back at hotel—\$45/Person includes bus and escort.

OR

MUSEUM CENTER/NEWPORT ON THE LEVEE – Friday, August 21

Visit the Museum Center at Union Station and tour Cincinnati History Museum. An Omnimax Theater movie through special technology makes you feel of being in the picture. Film TBA. For a nominal fee, you may visit Cincinnati's Natural History Museum. Lunch on your own at several eateries or full-service restaurants at the waterfront. Board bus at 10:15 a.m., 3:15 p.m. back at hotel—\$46/Person includes bus guide and admissions.

WWII P.O.W. ROUNDTABLE – Friday, August 21

Special roundtable discussion the experiences of airmen held as POWs in Germany during WWII. Notable POW historians and researchers will be part of discussions. Do not miss this lifetime gathering. 1:00pm – 3:30pm, at the hotel – Admission is included in Registration Fee

RENDEZVOUS DINNERS – Friday, August 21

Gather in your own banquet rooms with your group for dinner featuring Chicken Piccata. Units with approximately 50 or more people will have a private room. This is your "reunion within a reunion." 6:00pm Cash Bar Receptions, 7:00pm Dinner. Cost included in meal packages, or \$39 separately.

CITY TOUR – Saturday, August 22

Take a tour and learn the history of the "City of Seven Hills." Drive by the Taft Museum, and see the architecture of Fountain Square and the Procter & Gamble Hqs. Drive through Eden Park and Mt. Adams, and by the Krohn Conservatory, a large public greenhouse. 1:00pm board bus, 4:00pm back at hotel—\$36/Person includes bus and guide.

ROGER A. FREEMAN MEMORIAL SYMPOSIUM: "COURAGE OVER FORTRESS EUROPE" COMBAT FLYING IN THE "MIGHTY EIGHTH" DURING WORLD WAR II – Saturday, August 22

The Roger A. Freeman Memorial Symposium will be a historical examination of combat flying in the 8th AF during WWII. Several veterans will share their amazing wartime experiences with the audience. It will be a memorial experience for all. 1:00pm – 3:30pm, at the hotel. Admission included in Registration Fee.

8TH AIR FORCE HISTORICAL SOCIETY ANNUAL BANQUET – Saturday, August 22

Assemble in the ballroom for Posting of the Colors and Memorial Service. Dinner will be Prime Ribs or Salmon. After dinner, we will proceed with the Awards Ceremony and the Guest Speaker. 6:00pm Cash Bar Reception, 7:00pm Banquet. Cost is included in meal packages, or \$46 separately.

B-17 COMES HOME

The B-17 Flying Fortress from the National Air and Space Museum, came to its home in Savannah. On January 8, 2009, the first of five tractor trailers with the tail, wheels, wing sections, and even some rusty bombs arrived at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum. On the following day, four engines and the rest of the wings arrived on a flat bed truck. January 14, 2009 was a proud moment in the Museum's history with the arrival of the fuselage. Determination and hard work had been paid off and the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum now has its own Flying Fortress B-17 Bomber in the Combat Gallery of the Mighty Eighth. Rebuilding began immediately by a crew from All Coast Aircraft Recovery, and within a few days the

plane began to take shape again with many Museum visitors watching its reassembly. Full restoration will take up to twelve months. The project needs active help from our 8th AF Historical Society members and others to obtain turrets, plexiglass fuselage windows, armament, and interior fixtures. The call is out for contributions for this "City of Savannah" to complete its final mission, the extensive education and the visitor programs ongoing at the Museum each day. Contributions (tax deductible) for the restoration of the Flying Fortress B-17 "City of Savannah" can be sent to: **Mighty Eighth B-17 Restoration Account, P.O. Box 1992, Savannah, GA 31402.** Donator's names will be recorded in B-17s Donor Recognition



Book at the Mighty Eighth Museum.

The plane was named "City of Savannah" in honor of 5000th B-17 originally named "City of Savannah". It left Savannah and Hunter Army Air Field, the birthplace of the 8th Army Air Force, in 1944, on December 3, 1944 with Ralph Kittle and crew. They flew the plane to England and flew bombing missions with the 388th Bomb Group at Knettishall airbase in East Anglia. The crew and plane were shot down on its thirteenth mission.

TO ALL THOSE WHO FLEW BEHIND ROUND ENGINES

We gotta get rid of those turbines, they're ruining aviation and our hearing. A turbine is too simple minded, it has no mystery. Air travels through it in a straight line and doesn't pick up any of the pungent fragrance of engine oil or pilot sweat.

Anybody can start a turbine. You just need to move a switch from "OFF" to "START", and 'then' remember to move it back to "ON" after a while. Our PCs are harder to start.

Cranking a round engine requires skill, finesse and style. You have to seduce it into starting. It's like waking up a horny mistress. On some planes, the pilots aren't even allowed to do it.

Turbines start by whining for a while, then give a lady-like poof and start whining a little louder.

Round engines give a satisfying rattle-rattle, click-click, a BANG, more rattles, another BANG, a big macho POOF or two, more clicks, a lot more smoke and finally, a serious low pitched roar. We like that! It's a GUY thing!!!

Starting a turbine is like flicking on a ceiling fan, useful, but hardly exciting. Turbines don't break or catch fire often enough. Turbines don't have enough control levers or gauges to keep a pilot's attention. There is nothing to fiddle with during long flights,

and leads to air crew boredom, complacency and inattention.

When you start a round engine, your mind is engaged and you can concentrate on the flight ahead. When you have started his round engine successfully, your Crew Chief looks up at you like he'd let you kiss his girlfriend. A round engine at speed looks and sounds like it is going to blow any minute. This helps keep the pilot, co-pilot and crew concentrated and attentive during the flight.

Turbines smell like a Boy Scout camp full of Coleman Lamps. Round engines smell like God intended machines to smell.

THE WHOLE NINE YARDS

Tom Davis, Oregon member 8th AFHS

There are a number of theories as to the origin of the phrase "Whole Nine Yards" spoken in the past and continuing to the present. We may never know for certain which one, if any, should be considered as the actual source.

Some believe in that the first it came into use in medieval times when convicts were tortured to death by means of disembowelment of the victim. Since the intestines are believed to be roughly 27 feet long, the phrase "whole nine yards" referred to this form of punishment.

Another phrase came into use during the reign of King Henry VIII when the church declared that bodies were to be buried in graves that were a minimum depth of six feet. However due to the rampant contagious diseases at that time, sometimes two family members were buried in one grave and it was required that the grave be at least 6 feet long, 6 feet wide, and 6 feet nine inches deep, which surpassed

the Church's minimum requirement by nine inches in depth. Among the grave diggers, this became known as "the whole nine yards" as they were required to remove roughly nine cubic feet of extra material, as opposed to the removal of substantially less for one coffin.

Possible origins include the maximum capacity of a West Virginia ore wagon or the entire length of a hangman's noose,

Others prefer to believe other origins, such as the amount of material for a nun's habit, or a man's three-piece suit. Other origins are the length of a maharajah's ceremonial sash, the maximum capacity of a West Virginia ore wagon, the volume of trash that a standard garbage truck can carry, the entire

length of a hangman's noose, the length of a burial shroud, the number of yards in a ship's sail, or that nine yards for a 1st down in that memorial American football game, specifically in that game that no one seems to recall.

There are many others not mentioned, and one can search to find dozens more. The most modern explanation comes from the more recent 1940's which originated from World War II military vernacular. As the explanation goes, the phrase "the whole nine yards" first gained fame among fighter pilots who employed the use of .50 caliber machine guns on board their planes. The gun belt for this weapon is said to have been exactly 27 feet long, so if a pilot was really determined to hit a specific target he might completely discharge his weapon in the enemy's direction, thus giving his enemy "The Whole Nine Yards."

A nursery school teacher was delivering a station wagon full of kids home one day when a fire truck zoomed past them. Sitting in the front seat of the fire truck was a Dalmatian dog. The children started discussing the dog's duties. "They use him to keep crowds back," said one of the children. "No," said another, "he's just for good luck." A third child brought the argument to a close. "They use the dogs," she said firmly, "to find the fire hydrant."

Diary of Delivery

From the diary of Lt. Charles Early, pilot of a B-17 in the 91st Bomb Group, describing the last days of his confinement as a POW in Stalag Luft One. Lt. Early was shot down on a mission to Solingen in the Ruhr Valley on December 1, (1943) and kept a very complete journal during his confinement. Gary Early, his son, gave permission to print Lt. Early's "Diary of Delivery", his vivid word picture, of the final couple of weeks at Stalag One.

APRIL 20, 1945: Adolph Hitler's birthday. Am told by the Germans that there has been great celebrations among the populace. Most flattering, a salute rendered by the Russians who laid down an artillery barrage from 0200 to 0800, somewhere within hearing distance of here—Stettin, most likely.

LATER IN THE WEEK: Russians have reached Berlin, and are advancing into the city in their best steamroller fashion. Hitler has been reported to be in the front lines of the city's defenses, so the fall of Berlin will probably bring an end to this war.

APRIL 25: Heavy artillery fire from the south at 2045, continuing at intervals through the night. FW190s and ME109s at the airfield at Barth—tactical aircraft, so front must not be far away. We estimate 40-50 miles, from the sound of the firing.

APRIL 29: Short air raid at 1240. Guns sound louder. Saw our first Feiseler "Storch", a reconnaissance aircraft for artillery spotting.

APRIL 30: This morning we started walking guard in the compound. I will have a squad as soon as we take over. Col. Zemke came over and started the boys digging foxholes. Himmler is reported to have his headquarters just across the

bay. Goering with him. Hitler has died in Berlin. All the planes are leaving the airfield, and demolition has commenced. German Intelligence department has left. Barth is being evacuated. Russians reported 20 to 25 miles away, driving like mad. We can see smoke from the airfield.

APRIL 30: 1600 (HOURS). The Germans are blowing up installations at the Flak School by the South Compound, also the factory west of there. The demolitions get louder and occur at more frequent intervals. It gives one a queer feeling to see Germany fall to pieces before one's eyes. Rumors are flying around so fast that I can't keep up with them. Several Russian pilots were shot down at Stralsund and were brought to this camp. They say that Joe will be here tonight. I shall not undress. All lights went out about 2300.

MAY 1: 17 months a prisoner today. Very fitting that I should be awakened this morning at 0500 by the fellows raising a hell of a racket. Looked out the window, and there are American guards in the towers. It leaves me a little numb. I just can't believe it.

Seems that the Germans stole silently away last night under cover of darkness. So, after all the talking and planning, we have finally taken over the camp. Now we wonder when the Russians will arrive. Major Blum and Col. Sluga came over about 0500 and shot the bull a bit. Everybody was excited! Wonder where the Kommandant and his staff went, and if Himmler is still on the peninsula. Know that in the future that when I read this, I shall be appalled at its coherency, but things happened so damned fast that my head is

spinning...more than somewhat.

Now that it is practically over and I look back on the whole period, I find that it has not been so terrible. Of course, the months of famine when we had no food or cigarettes were pretty grim, but usually we had enough food and with a wonderful cook like Trubia, we really ate quite well. Our bridge sessions with Col. Sluga and Major Blum have been a lot of fun, as have our crazy discussions.

I believe that I am a mature, level-headed person and more fitted to tackle life in the future. Underneath all the joy, however, lies a feeling of sadness at the thought that I may never see the fellows I've lived with and scrapped with for over a year. What a hell of a good bunch here in my room.

MAY 1: 0830 (HOURS). Listening to the British Broadcasting Corporation on the barracks speakers. How wonderful to hear English spoken instead of the old harsh German! Col. Zemke made a short talk. We're taking over the camp today. This afternoon we're passing through another low feeling...an anti-climax. All sorts of rumors have been going around. Russians are 3 kilometers away. Burgermeister commits suicide.

MAY 1: 1020 (HOURS), as you like. A damned historic moment. The Russians have really arrived!! The camp has gone mad. The main body is reported to be four or five hours away. German radio announced the death of Hitler... at long last. Listened to BBC again. They played the Star Spangled Banner. My God, what a moment! All the men came out of their rooms and stood at

attention in the hall, tears running down their faces, some of them sobbing. More important goings-on should take place tomorrow. I'm dead!!

Did I say the Russians have arrived? My God, they took over the place! In order to keep us from roaming over the peninsula, the American Senior Officers have locked up the place tighter than it ever was. A mistake, I'm afraid. The fences were torn down today on orders from a Russian who

It gives one a queer feeling to see Germany fall to pieces before one's eyes. Rumors are flying around so fast that I can't keep up with them. Several Russian pilots were shot down at Stralsund and were brought to this camp.

said he was a Colonel. He raised a hell-of-a-row about us being locked up, and brandished a pistol more than somewhat. (He was later exposed as a corporal). We all went barreling across to Barth to see what the place looked like at close range. The Russians greeted us wildly, and wine actually flowed in the streets. They have tanks drawn up in the square, have taken all automobiles, horses, etc. and there is great activity. The populace looks quite different that it did when we arrived here a year and a half ago. There are reports of looting

and rape by the Russians, but rape seems a little on the order of wasted effort, as the Frauleins are most generous. The village people seem to be glad that we're here. After seeing the Russians.

Visited the concentration camp, which will forever remain in my memory as the most horrible sight I have ever seen!! The place was surrounded by electrically-charged wire, and inside were freshly dug graves which the inmates had

Visited the concentration camp, which will forever remain in my memory as the most horrible sight I have ever seen!! The whole place hung a sickish sweet odor... an odor which I have never before smelled, but which is instinctively recognized as death.

prepared for some of the more fragrant inmates. The filth in the living quarters was indescribable. The floor and walls were covered with human offal, and over the whole place hung a sickish sweet odor... an odor which I have never before smelled, but which is instinctively recognized as death. And, indeed, the place was filled with death. We went into rooms where all the inmates were dead. Sitting up in chairs, sprawled on their bunks, or crumpled on the floor... starved to death. Not 1,000 feet away was the post hospital,

a beautiful establishment with very modern medical aid, but it was denied to these poor wretches. I talked to some of the Frenchmen who had been here for years (I found it was very difficult to speak French without lapsing into German every now and then). We brought the helpless ones out and carried them to the hospital where they were bathed and put into clean beds, and treatment begun. Many of them were too far gone, however, to save. The most shocking thing was the number of women there.

MAY 10: The Russians have rounded up the cattle of the area and have driven 150 Holstein cows into our camp. We're eating steaks!! Ah, luxury!! We still don't know when the Americans are coming for us. It's been 12 days since we were freed, and still they haven't come.

MAY 12: They've come!!! Started arriving at 2:00 PM today. My old Group, the 91st Bomb Group, was the first to arrive. Have found that I will leave tomorrow.

MAY 14: RHEIMS, FRANCE. At last, it has happened. I am out of Germany. We were marched from camp this morning, through Barth to the airdrome, and were flown here. We came over the Ruhr. I don't believe it! Huge cities like Essen, Dusseldorf, etc. can't be so completely annihilated. It's numbing!

We will go from here tomorrow to a camp, of all things, "Camp Lucky Strike", which is at St Valery en Caux, between Le Havre and Dieppe. We expect to ship from Le Havre and go straight to New York.... and then home!!!

That is all! Over and out!!!

A FLYING STORY

The dead chicken was starting to smell. After carrying it for several days, 20-year-old Bruce Carr still hadn't decided how to cook it... without the Germans catching him. As hungry as he was, he couldn't bring himself to eat it. Since no meat was better than raw chicken meat, he threw it away. And resigning himself to what appeared his unavoidable fate, he turned in the direction of a German airfield, believing that even POWs get to eat.

He was exhausted and tired of trying to find cover where there was none. He hadn't realized that Czechoslovakian forests had no underbrush. He had struggled out of his parachute at the edge of the farm field never expecting to find himself a pedestrian... far behind enemy lines during the time he had been screaming along at tree-top level in his P-51, '*Angels Playmate*'. The forests and fields had been nothing more than a green blur, Messerschmitts, Focke-Wulfs, trains and trucks that he had in his sights.

On this mission, he knew he was in trouble, serious trouble, when the antiaircraft shrapnel ripped into his engine. The coolant steam hissing through the holes in his cowling told him to ride his chute down to begin a journey back to his base. A long walking tour of Czechoslovakia with Germans around him had been not part of his mission plan when

he enlisted in the Army. All he had thought about was flying fighters.

By the time he enlisted, Bruce Carr already knew how to fly, being a private pilot since 1939. Soloing in a \$25 Piper Cub, bought by his father, he had been instructed by an Auburn, NY native named "Johnny Bruns." In 1942, after he enlisted and went to meet his instructor, the

"On my first long-range mission we kept on flying to 30,000 feet. I had gone to church as a kid and I knew that's where the angels were, and that's when I named my plane *Angels Playmate*.

door opened and out stepped the man who was to be his military flight instructor...JOHNNY BRUNS!!

Advanced training for about four hours was in an AT-6. Several of us were then told we were going to fly P-40s and we left for Tipton, GA. The lieutenant just back from North Africa show us where the levers were, made sure we knew how they worked, then said "If you can get it started.. go flying!" Being 19 years

old, knowing everything, I buzzed every cow in that part of the state.

The first group of pilots sent to England were painfully short of experience, but we learned fast enough to survive, and we were ready to move on. His group in England was to be the pioneering group that would take the P-51 Mustang into combat. Being an old P-40 pilot, I thought flying the P-51 would be no big deal. But I was wrong. I was truly impressed with the plane. It flew like an airplane. In a P-51 I was part of the plane, and it was part of me!!

"On my first long-range mission we kept on flying to 30,000 feet. I had gone to church as a kid and I knew that's where the angels were, and that's when I named my plane *Angels Playmate*. Then a group of Germans roared down through us. My leader turned for home, however I was not that smart. I was 19 years old and I was not going to let this SOB shoot at me. We went round and round. He couldn't shake me and I couldn't get on his tail to hit him. Before long, we were within a few feet of the ground, and he pulled up to go over the trees, so I pulled the trigger and kept it down. The gun barrels burned out, but one bullet, a tracer, came tumbling out made a huge arc, came down and hit him in the left wing about where the aileron is. He pulled up, off came the canopy, and he jumped out, but too low for

the chute to open and the airplane crashed. I didn't shoot him down, I scared him to death with one bullet hole in his left wing. My first victory wasn't a kill; it was more like a suicide."

The rest of his 14 victories were much more conclusive. Being a red-hot fighter pilot was of no use to him as he lay shivering in the Czech forest. If he didn't get food and shelter, he would have died.

"I knew where the German field was because I'd flown over it, so I headed in that direction to surrender. I intended to walk in the main gate, but it was late afternoon and, for some reason, I had second thoughts and decided to wait in the woods until morning.

"While was lying there, I saw a crew working on an FW-190 right at the edge of the woods. When they were done, I assumed, just like you assume in America that the thing was all finished. The cowling's on. The engine has been run. The fuel truck has been there. It's ready to go. Maybe a dumb assumption for a young fellow, but I assumed so. So I got in the plane and spent the night hunkered down in the cockpit.

"Before dawn, it got light and I started studying the cockpit. I can't read German, so I couldn't decipher dials and I couldn't find the normal switches like there were in American airplanes. I kept looking, and on the right side was a smooth panel. Under this was a compartment with something I would classify as circuit breakers. They didn't look like ours, but they weren't regular switches either.

"I began to think that the Germans were probably no different from the Americans in that they would turn off all switches when finished with the airplane. I had no earthly idea what those circuit breakers or switches did, but I reversed every one of them. If they were off, that would turn them on. When I did that, the gauges showed there was electricity on the airplane.

"I'd seen this metal T-handle on the right side of the cockpit that had a word on it that looked enough like 'starter' for me to think that's what it was. But when I pulled it, nothing happened. Nothing!! But if pulling doesn't work..you push. And when I did, an inertia starter started winding up. I let it go for a while, then pulled on the handle and the engine started!"

The sun had yet to make it over the far trees and the base was waking up, getting ready to go to war. The FW 190 was one of many dispersed through-out the woods, and the engine sound must have been heard by the Germans, but there was no alarm. The last thing they expected was to see their fighter taxiing out with a weary Mustang pilot at the controls.

However, Carr wanted to take no chances.

"The taxiway came out of the woods and turned right towards where I knew the airfield was because I'd watched them land and take off while I was in the trees.

"On the left side of the taxiway, there was a shallow ditch and a space where there had been two hangers. The slabs were there, but the hangers

were gone, and the area around them had been cleaned of all debris.

"I didn't want to go to the airfield, so I plowed down through the ditch and when the airplane started up the other side.

"When the airplane started up... I shoved the throttle forward and took off right between where the hangers had been."

At that point, Bruce Carr had no time to look around to see what effect the sight of a Focke-Wulf erupting from the trees had on the Germans. Undoubtedly, they were confused, but not concerned as it was probably a maverick pilot going against the rules. They didn't know it was OUR maverick pilot going against the rules.

Carr had more immediate problems than the confused Germans. He had just pulled off a perfect plane-jacking. However, he knew nothing about the plane, couldn't read the placards, and had to fly about 200 miles over enemy territory. Therefore, before he could head home, he had to learn how to fly the FW 190 plane.

"There were two buttons behind the throttle and three buttons behind those two. I wasn't sure what to push, so I pushed one button and nothing happened. I pushed the other and the gear started up. As soon as I felt it coming up and I cleared the fence at the edge of the German field, I took it down a little lower and headed for home.

"All I wanted to do was clear the ground by about six inches, and there was only one throttle position

for me... **full forward !!**

"As I headed home, I pushed one of the other three buttons, and the flaps came part way down. I pushed the button next to it, and they came up again. So I knew how to get the flaps down. But that was all I knew.

"I couldn't make heads or tails out of any of the instruments. None. I couldn't even figure out how to change the prop pitch. But I didn't sweat that, because props are full forward when you shut down anyway, and it was running fine."

This time it was the German cows that were being buzzed, as he streaked over the fields and trees a few feet off the ground. At something like 350 mph below tree-top level, he tried to be a difficult target as he crossed the battle front lines. But he wasn't successful enough.

"There was no doubt when I crossed the lines because every SOB and his brother who had a .50-caliber machine gun shot at me. It was all over the place and I had no idea which way to go. I didn't do much dodging because I was just as likely to fly into bullets as around them."

When he found himself over his own airfield, he pulled up hard to set up for a landing. His mind was on flying the airplane to a safe landing.

"I pitched up, pulled the throttle back and punched the buttons I knew would put the flaps and gear down. I felt the flaps come down, but the gear wasn't doing anything. I came around and pitched up again, still punching the button. Nothing was happening and I was really frustrated."

He had been so intent on the landing problems that he forgot the tempting show he was providing the ground personnel.

"As I started up the last time, I saw our air defense guys ripping the tarps off the quad .50s that ringed our airfield. I hadn't noticed the machine guns before. But I was sure noticing them right then.

"I roared around in as tight a pattern as I could fly and chopped the throttle. I slid to a halt on the runway and it was a nice belly job, if I say so myself."

"I roared around in as tight a pattern as I could fly and chopped the throttle. I slid to a halt on the runway and it was a nice belly job, if I say so myself."

His antics had drawn quite a crowd, and the plane had barely stopped sliding when the MPs up on the wings tried to drag him from the airplane, not realizing he was still strapped in.

"I started throwing some good Anglo-Saxon swear words at them, and they let loose while I tried to get the seat belt undone, but my hands wouldn't work and I couldn't do it. Then they started pulling on me again because they still weren't convinced I was an American.

"I was yelling and hollering. Then,

suddenly they let go, and a face drops down into the cockpit in front of mine. It was my Group Commander: George R. Bickel.

"Bickel said, '*Carr, where in the hell have you been, and what have you been doing now?*'"

Bruce Carr was home and entered the record books as the only pilot known to leave home on a mission flying a Mustang P-51 and return home flying a Folke-Wulf 190.

For several days after returning home, Carr had trouble eating and sleeping. But when he was rested and it became a normal routine again, he took some of his fellow pilots out to show them the airplane and how it worked. One of them pointed to a small handle under the glare shield that he hadn't noticed before. When he pulled it, the landing gear unlocked and fell out. However he had figured out the important items and had landed safely back home.

Bruce Carr finished the war with 14 aerial victories on 127 missions, including three bailouts because of ground fire. He stayed in the service, flying 51 missions in Korea in F-86s, and 286 missions in Vietnam flying F-100s, for a total of 509 combat missions. Make no mistake about it, Colonel Bruce Carr was definitely a fighter pilot.

Note: Colonel Bruce Carr passed away in April of 1998 at the age of 74.

Source: An interview by Budd Davisson, Editor, *Flight Journal* (abridged) The article was edited to fit in an allotted space.

MEMORIAL TO U.S. AIRMEN

Ceremony in Suffolk Village Church

Officers and men of the 385th Heavy Bombardment Group at the United States 8th Army Air Force stationed at Great Ashfield Aerodrome who gave their lives in air battles over Europe are commemorated by a memorial chapel in Great Ashfield Church, which was dedicated on Tuesday by the Bishop of St. Edmundsbury and Ipswich (Dr. Brook).

The Stars and Stripes flew over a bronze tablet on a granite base which was placed in Ashfield churchyard some time ago.

A large congregation attended the ceremony, including a representative contingent of the American Air Force, while several visiting clergy occupied the chancel, together with a representative of the Free Churches, the Rev. John Bishop, of Elmswell.

General Kiel, of the U.S. 8th Air Force, who read the lesson, asked the Vicar (Rev. Vincent F. P. Davies) and the parishioners of Great Ashfield to accept the beautifully-carved altar and reredos forming the memorial chapel, "In accepting it," he said, "as a permanent part of your centuries-old church you who worship God within its walls could offer no higher tribute to our dead."

The General, together with the Rural Dean (the Rev. E. S. Wontner), the Vicar, and the church wardens (Messrs. P. S. Wakelin and F. Rodwell), accompanied the Bishop to the memorial chapel for the dedica-

tion by his lordship, who afterwards returned to the high altar to dedicate a silk American flag, which will be given a permanent place in the chapel.

In his address the Bishop said the altar and reredos would be an abiding memorial to gallant men who came from far over the seas to fight for the common cause, and gave their lives in the service of righ-

**The Stars and Stripes
flew over a bronze tablet
on a granite base which
was placed in Ashfield
churchyard some time ago.**

teousness and justice The memorial was a symbol of the comradeship in the arms of our two nations, and would hold it in an honoured and cherished possession.

"I see in this American flag," continued the Bishop, "a pledge of the promise that, as we have stood together in the work of destroying an evil monster which has threatened our civilization, we shall stand and serve together in the not less arduous and critical task of building a new world on the ruins of the broken past. The fruits of victory will only be gathered if in the tasks of reconstruction we stand and work together. A generation ago we won the war and we

lost the peace. Are we going to do better this time? The problems which confront us are infinitely greater than in 1918. Those foolish people that once the war was over all our troubles would be at an end have been sadly disillusioned. Peace and prosperity do not just lie around the corner."

"Our path in the coming years will be a hard and long one. Side by side with grave and economic problems there lies an urgent problem of preserving the peace of the world and preventing another war, which with modern discoveries, would mean the destruction of the human race... The one hope for the building of the new and better world, of solving mankind's social and economic problems and of maintaining the peace of the world is that our two nations shall continue to stand and work together in the tasks of reconstruction."

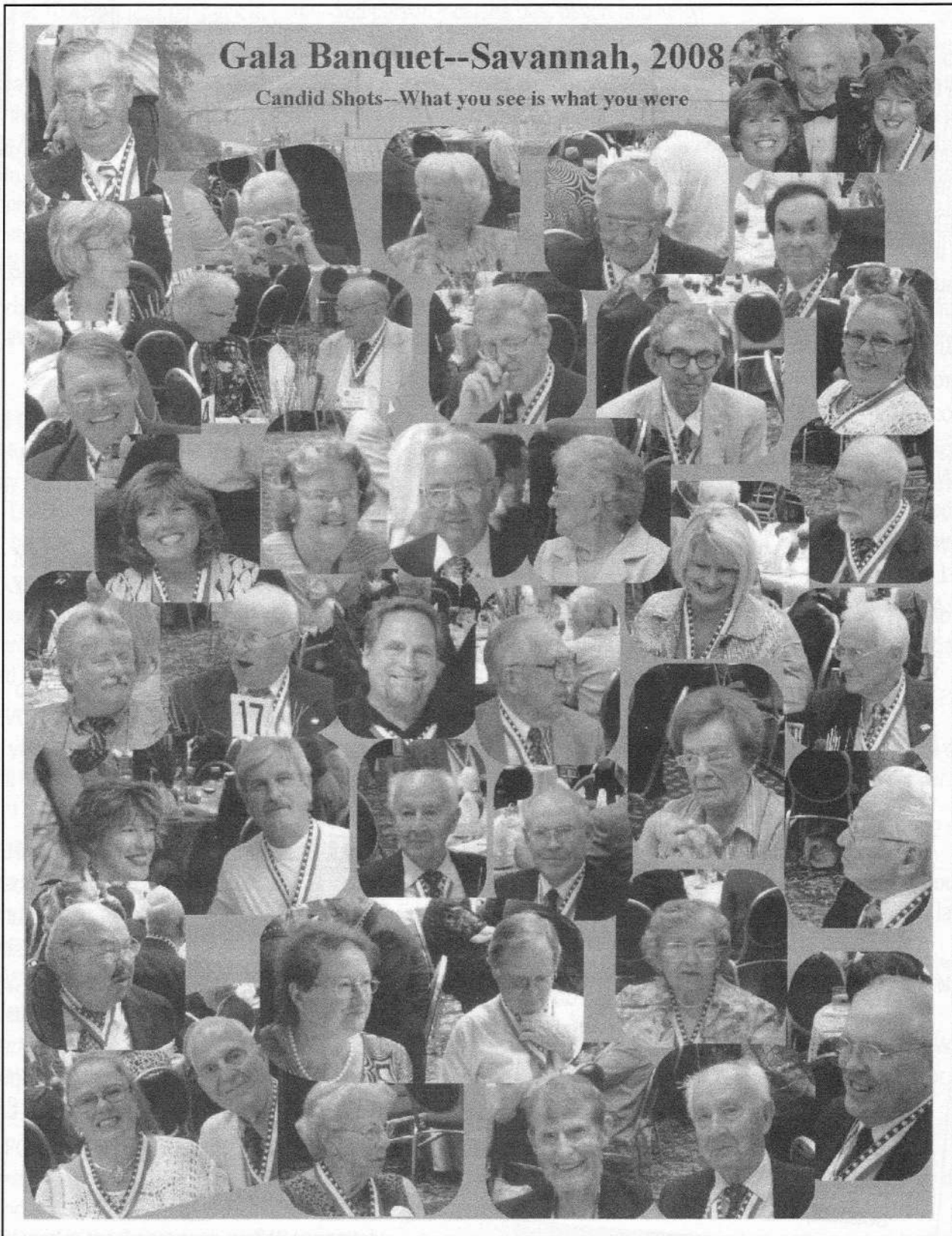
During the service, the Bishop rehallowed the 14th century font and a Jacobean altar table which have been brought back into the church. The altar table had been restored by one of the churchwardens. On it is to be placed a fine linen cloth trimmed with Bruges lace, which is given by a New Hampshire lady.

Afterwards parishioners and friends and visiting Americans took part in a social gathering in the school.

Reprinted from an article in the *East Anglian Times*, Wednesday, February 27, 1945 and in Vol. 14 No. 2, April 1987 of the HH.

THE REUNION IN SAVANNAH, GA — AUGUST, 2008

Composite of photos of some attendees caught in unguarded moments by Bill Swindell!



LETTERS/E-MAILS

Hello Bill Varnedoe,
I am trying to put a bit of unusual family history together. My Great-Grandfather, who owned the farm at one end of the Great Ashfield Aerodrome, in World War 2, was accidentally fatally wounded when a B-17, returning from a mission, crash-landed on or very close to him. This happened in either 1944 or early 1945. His surname was Ruddock. I would like to find out the exact date and some history as to what mission the crew was on and what happened to them.
All the very best,
Paul Houghton

MARCH 10, 2009

From: billvar

To: paulljhoughton

Paul,

With so much written about our (American) casualties in the air, most of the records seem to mention ground accidents rarely or only in passing. I attach some speculations given by Leo LaCasse who was the first pilot (crew) of the *Lady Ann/Yank*, serial No. 42-30250. He seems to think that *Lady Ann/Yank* was the one which struck a lorry and killed a farmer. *Yank*, was returning to Great Ashfield with the Heuser crew at the time. From his analysis, I tend to agree. I attach his reasoning and a photo of the B-17-to-lorry accident. However this was in October 1943 and you thought it was later in 1944/45. I vaguely recall hearing a story by someone at a reunion telling about a B-17 losing brakes and running off the runway into a beet field, killing someone. If I find out anything further, I'll contact you. You might also want to put an inquiry in the *Hardlife Herald*, our newsletter. To muddy the waters a bit further, although crews tended to fly mostly in one B-17, this was by no means constant. Most crews flew in several during their tours. And the reverse was also true, a given B-17 was flown by several crews during combat. I hope this may shed some light on the incident. If you want more information on the Heuser crew, please let me know.

I looked at the total record of (B-17) #42-30250 from photos and loading lists made back then: Aircraft #42-30250 did taxi into a truck and the photo shows that it was named *Yank* at that time. It had flown overseas with LaCasse in June 1943. LaCasse says it was named *Lady Ann* with no nose art at that time. It flew with the LaCasse crew on missions #2 (7/28/43) thru #18 (9/15/43); with Rummans on # 19 (9/16/43); with Klohe on missions #23 (10/2/43) thru #29 (10/18/43); and with Heuser on #30 (10/20/43), which was aborted. It no longer flew after 10/20/43, and was salvaged on 01/3/44. **Conclusions:** LaCasse says he never hit a truck ruling out all dates prior to September 15th. Since Rummans flew 43/30250 on September 16 there was no time to paint *Yank* on mission # 19, thus he did not have the taxi accident. Between the period 9/16 – 10/2, *Yank* probably was painted on the plane as it was down for maintenance. Charles H. Hill, Jr., who flew with Klohe, does not remember this taxi accident, it is likely that Heuser hit the truck on October 20th aborting mission #30.

LETTERS/E-MAILS

MARCH 10, 2009

From: pauljhoughton

To: fxmccawley@comcast.net (Frank McCawley)

Hello Frank,

I hope you can help. Following is an e-mail string where I have been in contact with Bill Varnedoe. I think the incident in the beet field is likely to be the one involving my Great-Grandfather as that is what he used to grow in the field next to the aerodrome. Do you think you can shed some more details/dates around this. I am trying to build up some family history to eventually pass on to my first child who is due to be born in May. Interestingly, I believe my Great-Grandmother subsequently got some pension from the USAF following this incident, and it was paid to her until she passed away in 1983. My grandfather is still alive (age 94) but I do not want him to recall this incident with his father. Anything you can provide I am sure would be of great interest.

Very best regards,
Paul Houghton

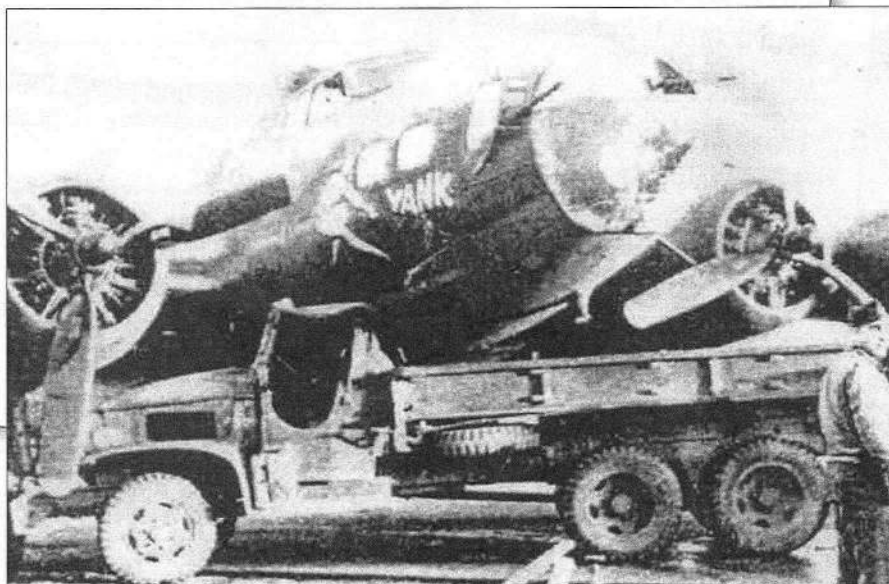
MARCH 11, 2009

From: fxmccawley

Paul,

I cannot give you any help on the accident of the B-17 and farmer. If the accident occurred in 1944/45, I was no longer with the 385th BG as I was reassigned to another unit in July of 1944. If it occurred in 1943, I have no recollection of the accident. However, I will place a request for information on the accident in the next issue of our newsletter. I appreciate your interest in obtaining information on your ancestors. I also have been doing some research on my family. I have a cousin who has researched her Dad's family back to the 1600s. It took a lot of time and work. Sorry that I have not been able to help you.

Frank McCawley



Yank after the B-17-to-lorry accident.

LETTERS/E-MAILS

MARCH 11, 2009

From: paulljhoughton

To: fxmccawley

Many thanks for your reply. I am starting to feel the accident was really in the latter part of '43 rather than '44/'45. It is very interesting talking to my Grandfather as he was in the North African campaign for nearly 3 years, fought at El Alemein and was then in the invasion of Sicily before being pulled back to England to prepare for D-Day. When he originally joined up he was split from all his friends as they were assigned to the Far East while he went to North Africa; none of his friends came back. You can watch many documentaries on WW2, but it is only when you hear about it from people who were there that you get the personal stories that bring it to life and really appreciate the sacrifices that you all made.

Very best regards,

Paul

MARCH 16, 2009

From: CaptnRichey@aol.com (John and Marillyn Richey)

To: fxmccawley@aol.com (Frank McCawley)

My name is Marillyn Richey, wife of John E. Richey, pilot of the Ohio Air Force B-17 stationed at Great Ashfield in WWII. We received the December issue today, March 16, 2009. On Page 6 there is an article by the Associated Press in reference to the record kill during the Munster raid. My question is: Is this a reprint from an article written during the war or a recent article?

John is alive and well, although he lost his sight completely as the result of a stroke 10 years ago. As a result, he does have memory problems but is physically well as he approaches his 89th birthday. We were saddened by the news from Tom Helman's widow of his death in December 2008. We hear occasionally from John's tailgunner, Jack Gesser and recently had the pleasure of a visit from Tom Hair and his lovely wife, Norma.

I read the *Hardlife Herald* to John when it arrives and regret that we are no longer able to travel to the reunions.

Sincerely,

Marillyn Richey

Life is not measured by the breaths we take,
but by the moments that take our breath.

LETTERS/E-MAILS

APRIL 3, 2009

To: CaptnRichey

From: fxmccawley

Subject: The Ohio Air Force

I am sorry that it took so long to check out the article in the December 2008 issue of the *Hardlife Herald* about the Ohio Air Force B-17 of the 385th BG. The articles listed were reprints word for word from a previous *HH* (Vol. 18 No. 2). Apparently those articles were from two Associated Press news releases. I do remember the name of the plane and hearing some talk around Great Ashfield regarding the enemy kills. I do remember a crewman by the name of Tom Hair, but I don't remember what Squadron Lt/Capt. John was in, but I think it was the 549th. Am I correct? I was in the 549th Squadron under the command of Archie Benner. I flew most of my missions with Art Ray in the *Raggedy Ann*.

Give my best to John.

Frank McCawley

APRIL 4, 2009

From: CaptnRichey

To: fxmccawley

Subject: The Ohio Air Force

Dear Frank

Thank you very much for your e-mail. John was in the 549th Squadron and his radio operator was Milton V. Lane who has passed away. Tom Hair was his left waist gunner and now lives in Cape Coral, not far from us. He and his wife visit us on occasion. Tom has had many health issues... they are a delightful couple. Tom stayed in the Air Force and retired as a Colonel. John's co-pilot, Tom Helman, also kept in close contact with us but he passed away in December 08.

John has severe memory problems and has been blind for ten years as the result of a stroke. I seem to remember more about the 385th than he does, but I continue to read the *HH* to him. Thank you for your contribution... in the war and on the paper.

I am shocked that so few school children know about WWII... and as the veterans of that war are dying in great numbers, it is a shame that the media doesn't pick up the ball and flood the papers and TV broadcasts with more information of this successful endeavor by our men.

Sincerely,

Marillyn Richey

LETTERS/E-MAILS

APRIL 7, 2009

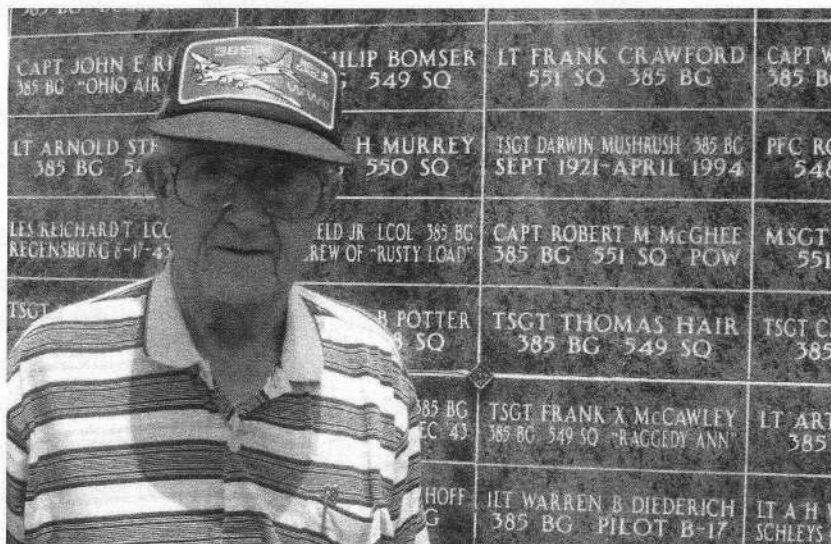
From: fxmccawley
To: CaptnRichey
Marilyn and John

Thanks for straightening me out about Milton Lane and Tom Hair. At the Savannah 8th AF Museum Memorial Wall, Tom's (T/Sgt) inscription is above mine. Two columns to the left is the inscription for John and the "Ohio Air Force."

Your e-mail stated that Tom Helman had passed away in December 2008. I have not received any information re his death.

Should you have his obituary, and any additional information about his life after his WWII service, please send it to me for the *HH*.

Frank



The Savannah 8th AF Muesum Memorial Wall

APRIL 7, 2009

From: CaptnRichey
To: fxmccawley

I will find the information Tom Helman's wife sent us about Tom's passing. I have some vision problems, but I will find it and send it to you. Tom was a good contributor to the *Hardlife Herald* when he was able. The last time we saw him was at the Savannah Reunion. John lost his sight six weeks later. We had a great time at the reunion and John had many of his crew there too. We haven't heard from Frank Gibbon for a couple of years and have wondered about him. His tail gunner, Jack Gesser, is in an assisted living home in St. Petersburg, or was there the last we knew.

Sincerely,

Marilyn Richey

APRIL 8, 2009

From: fxmccawley
To: CaptnRichey

Thanks for the information about the members of the 385th BG persons. If you cannot find the obit for Tom Helman in time for the April 2009 issue, I'll place it in the next issue.

Frank

⤵ Taps ⤵

Hector J. Garza — San Antonio, TX died January 29, 2009 at age 89 from Alzheimer's. After graduating from high school, he enlisted in the Army mounted cavalry, but then joined the Army Air Corps and graduated from pilot's school. As a pilot with the 385th BG, his plane, "Miss Almo City" was shot down over France on his final mission. However, he landed the crippled plane and both he and his crew survived. Hector spent a year as a POW before American troops freed him in 1944. After the war, he flew support missions in B-47 bombers during the Korean War. He retired in 1960 as a Senior Command Pilot with the rank of Major. Upon returning home, he started a home improvement business in San Antonio, but continued flying with his Cessna aircraft. He retired from his business in the 1980s. Surviving him are his wife, Luz Garza; two sons, Xavier and David and one daughter, Adrianna; a sister and brother, and eight grandchildren, and one great-grandson.

Willard M. Hagman — Aitkin, Minnesota died October 15, 2008 at age 85 at the Aicota Health Care Center. Graduating from high school he enlisted in the Army Air Corps and served with the 385th BG as a bombardier and flew 35 missions. Discharged in 1945, he married Lois E. Nicklander. They farmed a dairy farm in Kimberly Township until 1979. Willard drove a school bus for 18 years, served on the Kimberly Church Board, the Saron Cemetery Board, the Aitkin School Board and 27 years on the Kimberly Township Board. He was a life member of the American Legion and VFW Posts in Aitkin. Willard also served on the Mille Lacs Electric Board for 35 years and on the UPA/GRE Board for many years. He was also a member of the Minnesota Chapter of the 8th AFHS. He is survived by his wife, Lois; sons Lance and his wife, and Hinckley; daughters and sons-in-laws: Terry and Howard Sylvester, Barb and Will Byer, Debbie and Hugh Jansen, 12 grandchildren, and 15 great-grandchildren. The American Legion and VFW Posts provided Military Honors at the Funeral services on October 18, 2008 from the Lutheran Church in Aitkin.



Willard M. Hagman

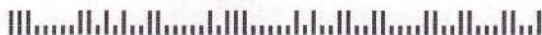
385th BGA

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Left: The 385th Bomb Group Flag that hangs in the entrance Rotunda of the 8th Air Force, the "Mighty Eighth", Museum in Savannah, GA. It proudly hangs with all Eighth Air Force Units that composed the "Mighty Eighth."
Right: The 385th Bomb Group Memorial Stone in Arlington National Cemetery