

Hardlife



Herald



Newsletter of the
385th Bombardment Group Association

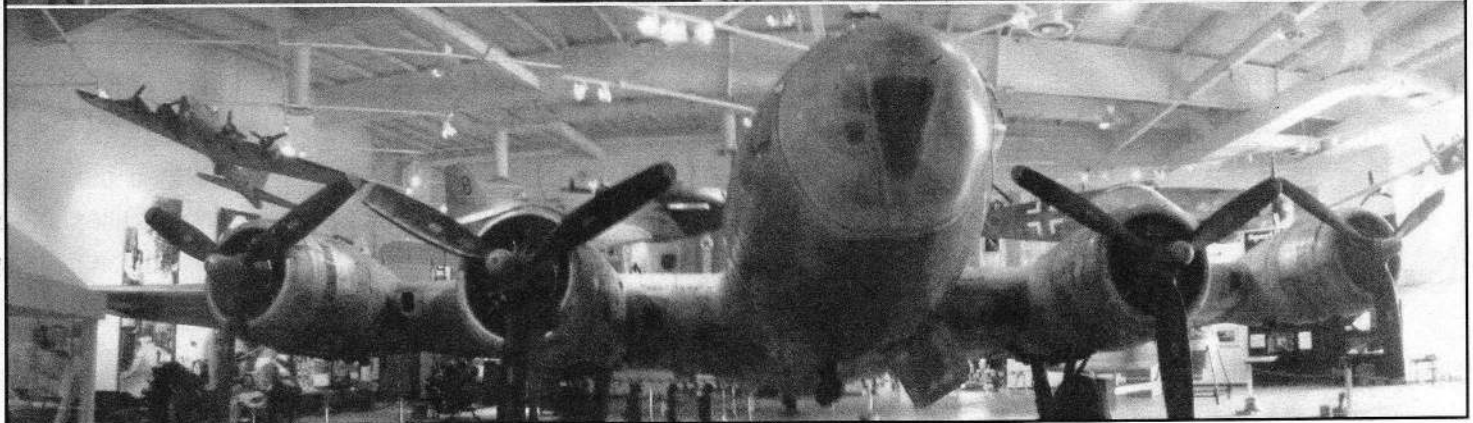
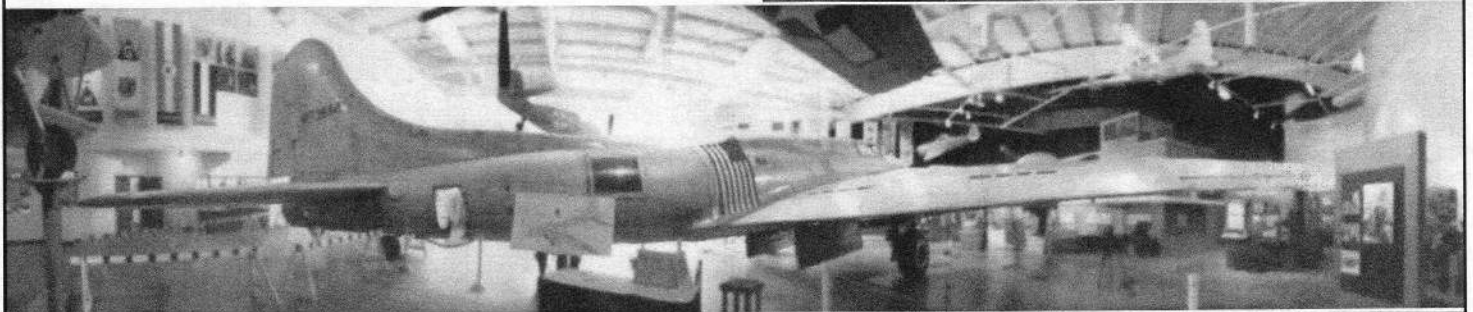
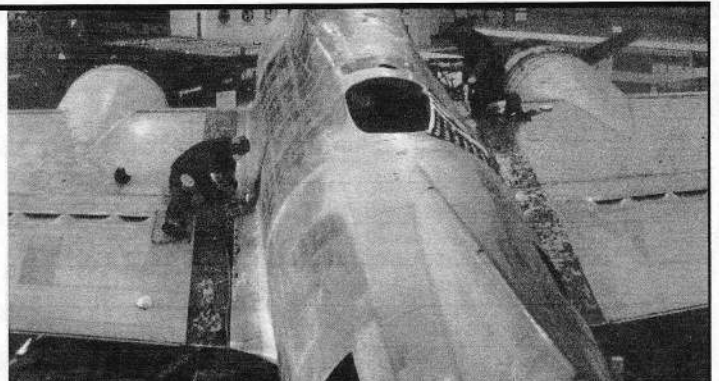
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The Mighty Eighth

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**MIGHTY
EIGHTH**
AIR FORCE MUSEUM



Hardlife Herald

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FRONT COVER

Amazing pictures of the B-17 Flying Fortress being restored at the 8th Air Force Museum in Savannah, Georgia. The restoration work on "The City of Savannah" will take about two years, or more, and will be one of the center-pieces of the Museum. The many visitors to the Museum can observe the work of restoration by the many volunteers.

EDITORIAL

In the past couple of years, every issue of the *Hardlife Herald* reports the death of one or more of the 385th Bomb Group persons, both flying and supporting personnel. In this issue of our Association Newsletter, we report the loss of two of our distinguished members, Ed Stern and Roland J. Miles.

Major Ed Stern was the Administrative Officer of the 550th Bomb Squadron, and a former Editor of the *Hardlife Herald*. It was he who named our Newsletter, the *Hardlife Herald*, in memory of, and after the call sign, "*Hardlife*", of the 385th Bomb Group's tower at Great Ashfield.

Roland Miles was the owner of the land of which the Aerodrome was constructed and then turned over to the 385th BG. After the war ended and the 385th BG left, the land was returned to Roland and farming was resumed. He was great supporter of our Association and was always an enthusiastic host of our returning visits back to 'our' field.

My request for articles for the newsletter has produced several excellent articles. I wish to thank those members who have sent me their personal stories of their activities while at Great Ashfield, and of their activities after returning to a peaceful life. I try to put their stories in some edition of the newsletter, and hope to continue to receive your memoirs.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We are requesting donations for the restoration of the B-17 at the 8th Air Force Museum in Savannah. I urge all members to contribute to this very important project. And, the 385th Bomb Group Association will equally match any member's donation. Any amount from 385th BGA member will be appreciated.

Again we are requesting annual dues paying members to pay their dues each year so that we can keep our Association active. Although Life Members are not required to pay annual dues of \$35.00, we will gladly accept such an amount as a gift from you to the Association.

For the past two years, the task of being your President has been an honor for me, and I will hold it in high regard. Thank you all for your support.

Albert E. Audette

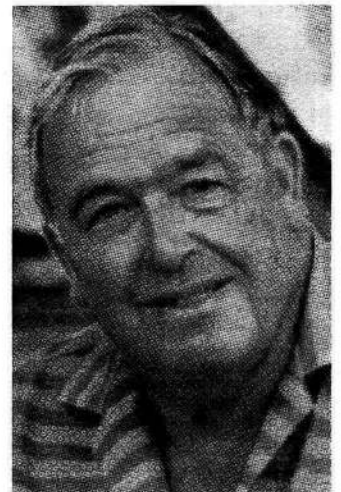
Albert Audette, President 385th BG, 8th Air Force

ROLAND (ROWLEY) MILES

Roland (Rowley) Miles – Norton Hall, Norton, Bury St. Edmonds, Suffolk died December 20, 2007. Rowley was born February 17, 1925 in Great Ashfield and was educated at the Elmswell Primary School and the Bungay Public School, Bungay, Suffolk. After graduating from school, he returned to the family farm in Great Ashfield to assist his father. He continued to farm the land, originally acquired in the early 1900s, until he and his wife, Angela, moved to Norton in 1952.

During the dark days of WWII, the Rowley's farm was requisitioned for use as an airfield for the airmen and ground crews of the 385th Bombardment Group, and it was the starting point for over 240 missions by the Group against the Nazi controlled European mainland. After the conclusion of the war, and the land was returned to the Miles family, Rowley and his son, Stephen, again farmed the land producing cereals and sugar beets, and, at one time, upwards of 500 beef cattle. Off the farm, Rowley had many other interests. Since 1975 he had been an Underwriting Member of Lloyds of London. In 1978 and again in 1979, he was the Honorary Director of the Suffolk Agricultural Shows. He was very honoured when the Queen Mother opened one of the Shows.

Many years later, Rowley's association with the 385th BG was reinstated when John Ford, a past President of the 385th BGA, contacted him for permission to visit the main runway of the airfield during a tour of England, including Great Ashfield, for a group of the original 385th BG airmen. Rowley enthusiastically entertained the visitors with real Suffolk hospitality. In recognition of his overwhelming hospitality, Rowley was nominated by John Ford to become a Kentucky Colonel. He was presented with a certificate and a car badge, of which he was extremely proud. Rowley continued his association with the 385th Bomb Group Association and several times hosted members of the Association during their return visits to the 385th Bomb Group's Great Ashfield "Home Away from Home."



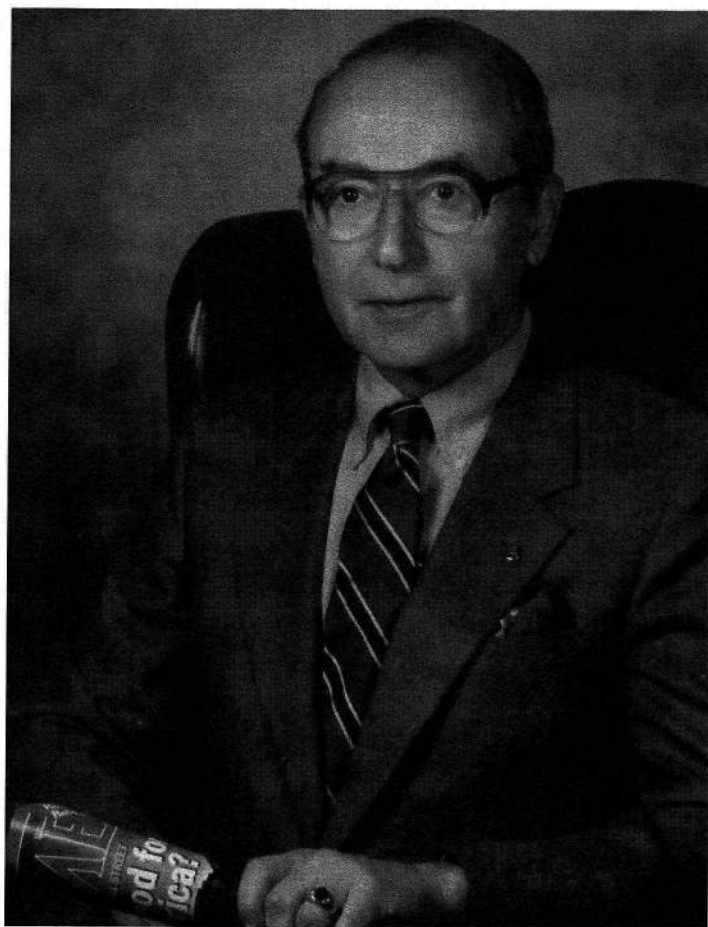
EDWARD R. STERN

Former editor of the *Hardlife Herald*

Edward (Ed) R. Stern, 94, of Fargo, ND died peacefully at his home on April 18, 2009. Born to Adeline and Herman Stern of Valley City, ND, in 1914, he graduated from Valley City HS, and in 1936 he graduated with honors from The Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania. Returning to ND he joined his father in the Straus Clothing Store, and in 1942 he married his high school sweetheart, Louise McCutcheon, and with her raised a family of five children. After Louise died in 1968, Ed married Jane Lontz Jardine, and enjoyed another 35 years of marriage.

Ed was active in civic affairs as a local, regional, and national board member, including the Fargo Chamber of Commerce, the Fargo School Board, the Blue Cross of ND, the Boy Scouts of America, the United Way, the Fargo/Moorhead Symphony Board, and many other organizations. He received the ND Governor's Award for the Arts and the Fargo/Moorhead Chamber of Commerce Legacy Award. He will be missed by the citizens of Fargo and by the 385th Bomb Group Association.

The day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Ed enlisted in the Army. After graduating from OCS in Miami Beach, in August 1942, he attended the Army Air Corps Statistical School at Harvard University, Boston, MA. Assigned to the 385th Bomb Group (BG), 550th Bomb Squadron (BS), he served as the Executive Officer of the 550th BS rising to the rank of Major. Ed was a member of the 385th Bomb Group Association (BGA), and was the Editor of the Association's newsletter for over twelve years naming the newsletter the "*Hardlife Herald*" after the call sign, "*Hardlife*," of the 385th BG's airfield's tower at Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England. At war's end in Europe, Ed returned to again join his father in operating the Straus Clothing Store. In 1989, Ed organized and was the Host of the 385th BGA's Reunion in Fargo and presented all 385th BGA attendees with a travel bag imprinted with the 385th BG patch and the name 385th Bombardment Group.



Ed Stern will be missed by the citizens of Fargo, ND, and by the 385th Bomb Group Association.

Preceded in death by his two wives, he is survived by his older brother, Richard, two daughters, Decky and Susan, three sons, John, Rick, and Jim Stern, and step daughters, Donna, Nancy and Charlotte and step-son Cliff Jardine. His family included 18 grandchildren and 13 great grandchildren.



July 17, 2009

Dear 385th Bomb Group Association Members,

As many of you know, the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum has undertaken one of the most ambitious projects in the Museum's history, the restoration of a B-17 flying fortress. The airplane is a gift from the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum and although the plane itself is in exceptional condition, it is not at a full combat ready configuration.

Bringing it to combat configuration will require the Museum to raise several hundred thousand dollars and spend countless man hours to complete. While most of the hands on work is being done by volunteers; finding and buying the numerous parts needed for the restoration will require us to raise significant funds. This is the reason I am writing. It is our hope that Eighth Air Force bomb groups, like the 385th, will help us by undertaking, with its members, a fundraising effort for the restoration of this airplane.

The B-17 is one of the most important aircraft ever built and a precious few remain today. Our restoration is one of the most important taking place anywhere in the world. Without hard work, great care, and a high degree of personal involvement these airplanes will eventually disappear. It is our job to see that does not happen.

Your 385th BGA Board of Directors wants to help the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in its fundraising efforts to restore this B-17 to full combat ready appearance by establishing a fund raising campaign involving a challenge to the 385th BGA membership. The 385th is offering to match its individual member's contributions on a dollar for dollar basis which will effectively double the amount of money that 385th members contribute individually. Please make your tax deductible contribution checks out to "385th BGA" and send them to the address below so that the 385th can match your gift and make a lump sum donation in your name as a 385th BGA member.

Send to: Chuck Smith
385th BGA Treasurer
P. O. Box 329
Alpharetta, GA 30009-0329

Please give this request your serious consideration and let me know how the Museum can assist and support you in your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry Skipper". The signature is stylized and somewhat cursive.

Henry Skipper
President and CEO

THE FATHER OF BLIND FLYING

Abstracted from an article by Mark Wolverton

In 1917 a flight instructor would tell his students to “pay no attention to them,” the instruments in the cockpit. In those days pilots flew by the “seat of their pants.” They trusted their eyes and gut feelings, but many were killed especially when vertigo set in at night or bad weather. Such loss of equilibrium was considered a rite of passage. A pilot who relied on the instruments, other than a compass and maybe an altimeter, was considered a lightweight.

William Charles Ocker, “the

At age 22 he enlisted in the Army and fought in the Spanish-American War and in the Philippines as an artilleryman. But he had a passion for flying and in 1909 he met the Wright brothers during military test at Fort Myer, VA. In 1912 he transferred to the Signal Corps’ Aviation Section as an aircraft mechanic. In 1914 he earned his wings, and three years later he earned an officer’s commission.

He was haunted by his close call with death in 1918 and the reasons

viewing hole in one end, and watching only the instrument he could tell which way he moved and how fast. He had proved that a pilot’s perceptions and the reading of his instruments conflicted, and that a pilot should trust his instruments.

He perfected his “Ocker box” by adding a compass and an artificial horizon, and pilots used the box with the Jones-Barney chair as a training device, and even the instrument-skeptical pilots were convinced after a simulated flight. Despite the evidence, the Army Air Corps held that “blind” instrument flying was dangerous and would not become part of its pilot training program. However many pilots learned it anyway under Ocker’s tutelage. Despite his superior suspiciousness of the spinning chair, Ocker persisted and took his idea to the Army Air Corps’ (AAC) main training center at Brooks Field, TX. In addition to his “box”, he invented the covered cockpit where a pilot had to rely strictly on instruments during flight training. The AAC might have disapproved, but Pan American Airlines adopted his methods in their flight school. Challenging the skeptics, Ocker made a 900 mile cross-country flight in a covered cockpit from Brooks Field to Scott Field, IL on June 24, 1930. (The year before, a young Army officer, Jimmy Doolittle, had become the first pilot to

William Charles Ocker proved that a pilot’s perceptions and the reading of his instruments conflicted, and that pilot should trust his instruments.

father of blind flying,” was an Army pilot in WWI. He had known many fliers who became disoriented and died needlessly. He himself escaped death in 1918 when testing an early turn indicator. Lost in the clouds with no visibility, the indicator showed his plane in a turn but his senses told him he was straight and level. The confusion sent him into a spiral dive. Emerging from the clouds he gained control of the plane. Despite his training and experience, his senses had failed him.

why it happened. In a routine physical exam in 1926, the flight surgeon sat him in a swiveling, spinning seat designed to measure his sense of balance and equilibrium, and challenged him to take the exam with his eyes closed. Without visual cues, he could not tell if the chair was spinning or not, and in what direction the chair was turning. The doctor had created the same disorientation he had experienced in 1918. However by rigging a turn indicator and a penlight inside a box with a

take off, fly, and land completely on instruments around the airport.)

Ocker and another pilot, Lt. Carl J. Crane conducted numerous experiments on instrument flying and pilot disorientation by tossing blindfolded pigeons out of an airplane in flight. They found that these birds exhibited the same disorientation as did pilots when confronted with cloud cover or darkness. (Most birds recovered after shedding their blindfolds).

In 1932, Ocker and Crane distilled their research into the world's first flight manual, "Blind Flying in Theory and Practice." The U.S. military was slow to acknowledge the

book's value, but the Soviet air force quickly adopted a pirated edition.

In 1938, Ocker along with Lt. George Smith, patented a hinged propeller for quieter flight. In 1941 they created a ground flight simulator, (pilot buggy), with a three axel movement cockpit complete with a .22 caliber blank firing machine gun. Ocker also invented a gyroscope-driven instrument that displayed a plane's movements with a miniature plane on a screen depicting a cloudy sky.

William Charles Ocker had some influential friends during his life, including Orville Wright. He counted Eddie Rickenbacker, Billy Mitchell, and

Jimmy Doolittle among his supporters. Charles Lindberg, Amelia Earhart, and Australian aviator Charles Kingsford-Smith learned about instrument flying from him. When he retired as a Colonel, he was the oldest serving pilot in the U. S. military.

Ocker died at Walter Reed Hospital on September 15, 1942. In 1943 military authorities made his instrument procedures standard for all pilots. No airports, aviation companies, or museums bear his name, yet he would be happy enough to know he rides with every pilot that relies on instruments to find their way home.

The Obituary Of Mr. Common Sense

Today we mourn the passing of a beloved old friend, Common Sense, who had been with us for many years. No one knows for sure how old he was, since his birth records were long ago lost in bureaucratic red tape.

He will be remembered as having cultivated such valuable lessons as:

- Knowing when to come out of the rain.
- Why the early bird gets the worm,
- Life isn't always fair,
- Maybe it was my fault.

Common Sense lived by simple, sound financial policies (don't spend more than you earn) and reliable strategies (adults, not children are in charge).

Common Sense was preceded in death by his parents, Truth and Trust, his wife, Discretion, his daughter, Responsibility, and his son, Reason.

He is survived by his three stepbrothers: I know my Rights, Someone Else is to Blame, and I'm a Victim.

Not many attended the funeral because so few realized he was gone.

—Anonymous

ANOTHER ROUTINE DAY AT THE OFFICE

Hugh Andrew

It was 1944, in England two weeks after the troops hit the beaches at Normandy on D-Day. This was our crew's third mission and being a relatively new crew at Great Ashfield, we were not familiar with the base layout. This created a problem later that day.

Before daylight, we were at our B-17 loaded with 5000 lbs. of bombs and fueled with 2700 gallons of gas. I was the co-pilot. We completed the check list, started the engines, and taxied out on the

fuel, and we couldn't move an inch.

Using a backup frequency I got on the radio and called the tower, and in an urgent voice alerted them of the situation and asked for immediate advice. They requested the location of the hardstand where the plane was parked. Being unfamiliar with the base created a problem, but I did my best to provide an approximate position and asked the tower, "What the hell should we do?" The tower replied, "Can you move your plane?" My reply was, "Not an inch!" There

back to our plane to check its condition. There were all kinds of holes throughout the plane with little flames about the surface, and there was a definite smell of gasoline fumes. It was not a pretty sight.

We were ordered to go to the spare aircraft which was fueled and loaded with bombs, take off and catch up with the group formation.

We started the engines and began to taxi out to the runway for take off. While taxiing we heard a loud bang, and discovered that we had rolled over a piece of metal from the exploded plane which had punctured and blown a tire on the main landing gear. Somebody above us must have been looking out for us, for if we had blown that tire during our take off run, it would have been a disaster for us...

We called the tower and told them that we had just messed up another plane. Pleading, we requested the tower to send us transportation to take us back to our quarters. We decided to call it a day. It was only 7 AM!! Just another routine day at the office!!!

Suddenly I realized there was a fire in the cockpit area!

taxiway, falling in line with the other planes for the mission. After the line had moved a short distance, we stopped and waited for the signal for the first plane to takeoff. While waiting, I looked out the window at a plane on a hardstand and saw a flickering light inside the plane. Suddenly I realized there was a fire in the cockpit area! No one was around the plane, all four engines were stopped, and there next to us was a B-17 loaded with bombs and

answer was, "Abandon your plane!"

I hollered to the crew to abandon ship, and we all went racing across the field in full flying gear, making excellent time. Reaching a dry culvert, we all dove in and looked back at that plane. About a minute later the plane blew up with a tremendous explosion. Although we were some distance away, parts of that plane fell down around us. Fortunately no one was injured.

In a few moments all of us went

We could certainly slow the aging process down if it had to work its way through Congress. —Will Rodgers

THE MEN AND BOYS WHO FLEW THE B-24S OVER GERMANY

A Review by Sterling Rodgers of "The Wild Blue," Stephan E. Ambrose,

(Simon and Schuster, 2001, hard cover, 299 pages.)

It is categorized as history, but "The Wild Blue" could just as easily qualify as a biography. It is an under-reported part of WW II, the B-24 Liberator aircraft of the 15th Army Air Corps. It also records the life of former Senator George McGovern as a crew member.

Reading this book sent me into doing a form of research. Each time Ambrose mentioned some-

praise for the B-24 contribution to the winning of WW II. The B-24, called the Liberator, was a big, ungainly looking flying bomber. It was described as looking like a goose as it waddled down a taxiway. It never received the praise and adulation accorded the B-17 Flying Fortress. Yet it flew faster, farther and carried a bigger bomb load.

The crews who manned the

quotes the number of sorties flown, the tonnage of bombs dropped, all of the details that are part of the official records, but does it in a manner that he is telling the story of men and boys in those flying machines. He gives credit where credit is due; and acknowledges 277 individuals who contributed to the book.

The greatest virtue of the book is its presentation of the comments of those after near-fatal events. He quotes McGovern, remembering the landing of his shot-up plane: "If I ever made that landing again, I would have made it slower." His sober evaluation of what he might have done wrong, and what he would fix if he could. The closeness of the aircrews is brought repeatedly, especially the crew commander's sense of responsibility for his men.

Ambrose is owed a debt of gratitude by those who flew B-24s and received no recognition. We who served in the B-17s must acknowledge that big hunk of flying aluminum called the Liberator did a magnificent job.

Note: We must also acknowledge the job performed by the 2nd Air Division of The Mighty Eighth who flew the Liberators.

The crews who manned the B-24s are no less astonishing than those of the B-17s. In both cases they were young—eighteen, nineteen and twenty plus year-olds.

one, who bailed out of an aircraft, sent me to my list of WW II POWS. Was that someone I knew in my prison camps? Each target that he mentioned made me check: where was I when that was hit? While his subject was the men of the B-24s in the 15th Air Force and George McGovern, I have had more than tangential contact with their work since elements of the 15th struck Nuremberg repeatedly while I was there as a POW.

I enjoyed the book. It is a belated

B-24s are no less astonishing than those of the B-17s. In both cases they were young—eighteen, nineteen and twenty plus year-olds. Ambrose recounts incident after incident where boys performed as seasoned airmen, bring back ships and crews that had been effectively destroyed, yet refused to die. While Ambrose concentrates on the experiences of McGovern, he devoted half of the book to others.

Ambrose used information from the official files of the Army. He

3RD AIR DIVISION

by Leo LaCasse, Col, USAF/Ret

Not long after Frank McCawley became the Editor of the *Hardlife Herald*, I received an e-mail from him asking me to do a story on my experience as an Operations Officer at the 3rd Air Division (AD). For several years, I felt that a story about the 3rd AD was not interesting enough to capture the reader's attention, and for them to enjoy reading about a former 385th BG person serving at the highest Headquarters of our Chain of Command. Well a promise is a promise, but first, I am inject-

Col. Jim MacDonald and Major Dan Riva, CO of the 551st Squadron. One of Jim's remarks each time we had a drink was, "Are you just smelling the cork tonight or taking the plunge with a sip?" Dan's remarks were always, "How can you be so happy on one drink?"

In December 1943 Col. Van decided to establish a Training Division as our losses were mounting, and the new crews were coming in with little or no experience in formation flying. It was his number

down an enemy plane in combat.

Leaving my crew was difficult and painful, but it meant a promotion to Captain. Since I already had six years of active duty and had decided to make the service a career, a promotion this early would enhance my chance to stay in the Army Air Corps.

The class room work went well and the new crews paid strict attention to the five so-called Heroes telling first hand stories of actual combat. When we were able to obtain two B-17s, Dan and I would take the crews for formation flying. One of us would assume the lead plane and the other would then fly off his wing alternating between the left and right wings. New crews normally would believe a tight formation was flying 15 to 20 feet off the tip of the lead aircraft. When Dan and I would tuck the wing tip of our plane almost into the window of the other aircraft waist gunner's window, it was a shocker to the new crews. However, the 385th BG was noted for its tight formations flying in combat, and Colonel Van attributed our low losses to the tight formations flown by our pilots.

On December 23, 1944 Colonel Van was replaced as Commander by Colonel Jumper, and on that date I was summoned to his office. After the normal military formalities, he said that General Curtis LeMay,

In December 1943 Col. Van decided to establish a Training Division as our losses were mounting, and the new crews were coming in with little or no experience in formation flying

ing my experiences with the 385th Bomb Group.

By December 1943 I had flown eight missions with my crew in the "Lady Anne". By this time I had been awarded the Silver Star, the DFC and one Air Medal. Whenever we had a stand down I would head to the Officer's Club and although I was a tea-totter, I was soon introduced to hard liquor. One drink made me Happy and friendly with anyone who wanted to chat. Two of those friendly chats were with Lt.

one priority to fly tight formations in combat, and Major Riva was tagged to form the Training Division. During one of the Happy nights at the club he asked me to be his assistant in forming the new unit. Also assigned to the unit were a tail gunner, a ball turret gunner and a top turret gunner. Dan covered Combat in general, I would cover German Fighter Tactics, and the gunners would discuss how to lead their shots on an incoming enemy aircraft, and discuss how each of them had shot

3rd Air Division Commander, had requested all his Group Commanders to transfer to 3rd Air Division (AD) a field grade officer pilot who had flown to England, had at least five missions remaining on his tour, and had a minimum of one year as an Operations Officer to fill an Operations Officer vacancy.

Colonel Jumper continued, "I know you still have five more missions to fly and you're not a field grade officer. However, I believe you would fit in just fine at Division and you can always return to the 385th once a month to fly a mission until you complete your tour and rotate home. If you're interested, I will ask for a Major's billet for you and volunteer your service providing you can be promoted before you leave the 385th." On December 27th, I was promoted to Major and on December 28th, I left for the 3rd Air Division.

The drive to Alveden Hall, 3rd AD Headquarters, took just over an hour in Colonel Jumper's staff car. Once off the major highway onto a secondary road, we passed through the gate house and approached a magnificent Estate complete with shrubs, trees, a running brook with swans and ducks, pheasants and peacocks. From the Gate House to 3rd AD Hq. building took about 15 minutes. Headquarters was a huge white building with marble steps at least 60 feet wide leading to a balcony, and more steps, and finally to two oak doors with bronze door handles. The inside brought to mind a Victorian Era building with beauti-

ful wood throughout the building. An MP had picked up my B-4 bag at the building entrance and escorted me to my quarters, a large room with a separate bathroom complete with a huge bath tub with ornate hot and cold fixtures. The bathroom had a towel heating rack to heat the towels for your bath. What a difference from the slate sink with a cold water pipe, and, Oh Yes, a honey bucket in an open stall for the Officers back at the 548th Squadron.

I reported to the Division Operations Staff Officer, Colonel Bill Martin. He welcomed me and escorted me to meet General LeMay. General LeMay's remarks were short and courteous. He reminded me that I did not completely meet his requirements, but since Colonel Martin had highly recommended me, he was satisfied that I would fill the billet.

Third Air Division had a complete staff with very few assistants. The Operations Staff was the largest with five Field Grade Officers and a Lt. Colonel as Officer in Charge. I was taken to the Operations Situation Room where I was advised that I would be on duty that night assisting the duty officer. The Operations Situation Room was the Command Center where all mission related information was received and disseminated to the Wings, and the duty officer was responsible for the conduct of the Day's Mission from start to finish.

The Situation room was spacious with a large table taking up most of the room. On the table was a mosaic map of England, the Eng-

lish Channel, the North Sea, and all of Europe. All of the operational units were located on the map with tiny flags with the unit designation typed clearly. The responsibility for maintaining the map was one RAF Officer, two RAF NCOs and two US Air Corps NCOs. The Duty Officer also had two Teletype Operators and one Radio Operator available for communications. There were three Red Phones for scrambling clear voice messages. Two of the Red Phones were on the 2nd level of the room where the Commanding General (CG) and the Division Operations Officer (Div. Ops. Off.) sat throughout most of a mission.

On a scheduled "Mission Alert", all communications were received from Bomber Command at Hywicombe. One copy of the mission orders was for the CG and one copy for the Div. Ops. Off. The Air Order of Battle was precise to include every aspect of the mission, i.e. Targets, Intelligence, Force Requirements (number of aircraft by Groups), Armament (types of bombs), Fuel, Route Coordinates, Pecking Order of the Groups in the Force, Time of Departure from the Coast of England, and Approximate Times for the IP, Bombs Away, and RP.

Although the crews were to maintain strict radio silence, chatter between them usually began when FLAK was heavy or when the Groups were intercepted by enemy fighters. All chatter received at the Situation Room was immediately relayed on the Red Phone to the Groups affected. At the Target

"Bombs Away" was always reported in the clear with a quick assessment of target "hit or missed." All information received in the Situation Room was always immediately given to the CG and the Div. Ops. Off. who were sitting on the second level. The Duty Officer also notified the identified Wings and Groups of critical info which was passed by chatter.

When all the mission aircraft returned to the English Channel Coast, the duty officer began to compile all pertinent information of the mission for his report which all Staff Operations Officers were required to read. Many of the missions were critiqued by the CG, but the Opera-

During my three month assignment at Alveden Hall, I never once left the area. However about three weeks after my arrival, I was introduced and told to escort Lady Alveden on an inspection of her property. The inspection lasted about an hour and when completed, Lady Alveden invited me for a cup of tea, which I graciously accepted. Upon her request I accompanied her on several inspections of her property. She was a very pleasant, intelligent woman, 95 years old, and on these tours I was delighted talking with her about the flowers, the peacocks, and other game on the Estate.

In February 1944, General LeMay and Colonel Martin were

day I was on a C-54 returning to the USA. On March 29th I reported to the Secretary's Office. It seemed that the French Ambassador had complained to the Secretary that when French Pilots were needed in Vietnam, the failure rate of the candidates had reached to 56%. The French Commander indicated that language was the problem. Since my record indicated I was fluent in French and qualified to assume command of the French National Pilot Training Program. Later that day, March 29th, I was flown directly to Waco, TX for a crash course as a flying instructor in flying T-6 training aircraft. Orders were to qualify me in two weeks, and that meant flying 8 hours a day, six days a week.

Arriving at Gunther Field, AL with four T-6 instructors temporarily assigned to me, my first order was to interview the washed out candidates. Within two weeks 28 of the 30 candidates were reinstated, and after graduation they went to Vietnam. In the next two years the drop out rate was down to 2%. When the program ended, I was awarded the French Pilot's Wings and the French Air Medal. However, I believe the Air Medal was more for the low altitude mission I was on when the 385th BG dropped Supply Canisters to the French Resistance Troops in the French Alps.

Many of the missions were critiqued by the CG, but the Operations Officers rarely attended these critiques.

tions Officers rarely attended these critiques. The attendees for these critiques were usually Wing Commanders and Commanders of Group leading the force along with their leading Navigators and Bombardiers. After filing their report, the Duty Officer for the mission retired for a much needed rest, and await his turn in four or five days to repeat his assignment as the Duty Officer for the 3rd Air Division.

replaced by General Partridge and Colonel Hunter Harris. On March 27th, I asked Colonel Harris if I could fly one mission a month to qualify for R&R, or for reassignment to B-29 training. However, he said that a message from the Chief of Staff at the Pentagon had stated that I should be returned to Washington immediately to report to the Secretary of the Air Corps for a special assignment. The very next

A penny saved is obviously the result of a government oversight.

THE BEET FIELD AND/OR A LORRY

By Bill Varnedoe

This story all started when Paul Houghton requested information, via e-mail, about his great grandfather, named Trippy Ruddock, who was fatally injured by a 385th Bomb Group's (385th BG) B-17 Fortress on his beet field near the 385th BG's Great Ashfield airfield. Paul thought that Mr. Ruddock's widow may have received a pension from this incident. Paul's e-mail request appeared in the August 2008 issue of the *Hardlife Herald*. This request by Paul generated many, many e-mail exchanges between by Paul Houghton, Bill Varnedoe, Ian MacLachlan and Ray Zorn, with inputs from Leo LaCasse and Vince Masters.

At first, Paul thought the incident took place in late 1945. But when he asked his grandfather, Mr. Ruddock's son, a 90 year old man, when the incident occurred, Paul's grandfather said that he thought it took place on a Saturday in May 1944. He did not elaborate which of the four Saturdays in May 1944, namely; the 6th, 13th, 20th, and the 27th.

Recollections and Inputs

Remembering personal experiences and stories, several persons provided inputs to this particular incident:

During a 385th Bomb Group Association's (BGA) reunion, I (Bill)

recalled a story about a B-17 hitting a lorry (truck) decapitating the driver and crash-landing in a Beet field.

Ian MacLachlan wrote, "There was a civilian killed by a B-17 – this was, I think, Mr. King who was working with a companion when (B-17 No.) 42-37966 overshot on 8 July 1944 (Pilot 2nd Lt. Anthony D. Gagnarelli – flaps failed on landing). Mr. King was apparently decapitated by the aircraft's wing and his companion was injured."

But later Ian wrote, "My notes on the civilian casualties from the crash at Great Ashfield indicate that it was on Thompson's Farm and that "Tippy" Ruddock, an elderly farmhand was the poor soul that was decapitated and Frank King was

buried in mud beneath the wing and almost suffocated. They had apparently been hoeing sugar beet-I got this in conversation with local folks after I'd done one of my slide shows to raise funds for the church."

Paul Houghton wrote, "My Great Grandfather's nick name was actually "Trippy/Trip" rather than Tippy. The farm was Thompson's Farm."

Leo LaCasse wrote, "The incident I remember most is the Lorry that was clipped at the end of the runway, and killed two Englishmen. The pilot of the A/C painted two teacups on his plane. Col. Van (Colonel Elliot Vandevanter, CO of the 385th Bomb Group) got wind of the two teacups and disciplined the pilot. I had never seen Col. Van so furious the whole



B-17 #42-37966 crash in beet field.

time he was at Great Ashfield.”

Ian MacLachlan also recalled hearing of an incident, told at a reunion by John Ford, with essentially the same story about the teacups.

George Menkoff wrote that he, personally, witnessed a B-17 hitting a lorry and killing two civilians. He wrote, “It was definitely Christmas Eve, as we were saying what a terrible Christmas present for the families of the two Englishmen in the Lorry! I was on Guard Duty, the only time I remember ever being on Guard, and the Lorry was travelling around the perimeter, and the 2 (plane and Lorry) met as the 17 was very low—almost touchdown. The 17’s landing

month of the year for a 60+ year old incident is a large request for Paul’s grandfather, a 90 year old gentleman. However, remembering the day of the week would be more likely as it would involve daily activities. In an e-mail, Paul Houghton now confirms that Mr. Ruddock’s death could have been 8 July 1944. Searching the loading lists that date, Mission No. 148, I found that the Gaguarelli crew flew B-17 serial No. 42-37966, “Swinging Door” on that date. The records also show that A/C 42-37966 was salvaged on 10 July 1944, just two days after that mission. Furthermore, Paul’s grandfather thought the accident occurred on their farm, the Thompson’s Farm,

of the flaps. During the landing, the pilot stated that he thought the engineer had manually lowered the flaps as he was asked to do by the pilot. But in fact, they were never lowered. During the landing, the plane did not touch down until halfway down the runway. The pilot attempted to ground-loop the plane, but the co-pilot was hard on the brakes making use of the rudder pedals difficult. (Brakes and rudder are on the same pedal.) The plane went off the runway, hit a ditch, and bounced onto a field. The final conclusion in the Accident Report stated that the pilot erred in not verifying that the flaps were, or were not, down before trying to land. The Accident Report makes no mention of a lorry.

Both incidents caused civilian fatalities.

The death of civilians has caused the stories of these two incidents to become entangled.

gear tore off the cab of the truck along with their heads. I don’t remember exactly, but I think the plane was landing south. Later that evening, it was about dusk, I found a bit of skull bone. The plane continues with the landing, and I don’t know if there was any damage to the plane and don’t know which plane it was, or if it was coming in from a mission, or doing touch and goes.”

[Note: 24 December 1943 was 385th BG mission No. 46, a NoBall mission to a V-2 site.]

Searching the Records

A review showed that 8 July 1944 was a Saturday. Remembering the

which was across Wetherdon Road and just NE of the 385th BG’s main NE-SW runway.

I ordered and received a copy of the Accident Report of B-17 No. 42-37966 from Maxwell AFB. This official report provided a great deal of details about what caused the accident, but gave little information about the crash itself. It did state that four of the aircrew were injured and that two civilians were also injured, one seriously, which may have led to the death of that civilian. The report outlined in detail that the B-17, “Swinging Door”, had received battle damage including the loss of electrical control

Analysis

There were at least two separate incidents:

- A collision with a lorry on 24 December 1943.
- A crash-landing on a Beet field on 8 July 1944.

Both incidents caused civilian fatalities. The names of the men killed in the lorry accident are unknown, and the aircraft involved is not known.

No mention was made of a lorry being involved in Mr. Houghton’s original e-mail or the Beet field accident report. The death of civilians has caused the stories of these two incidents to become entangled. Over the many years Because of fading memories over the many years, elements of each incident have crept

into each story during the retelling of them, particularly because both resulted in English fatalities.

Conclusion

I believe it is clear enough now to say that B-17 No. 42-37966, "Swinging Door", with the Gaguarelli crew was responsible for the death of Mr. Trippy Ruddock and the injuring of Mr. Frank King on 8 July 1944.

Acknowledgements

This report is the combined efforts and multiple e-mails between Paul Houghton, Ian MacLauchlan, Ray Zorn, Leo LaCasse, Vincent Masters, Bill Daysh, George Menkoff and Bill Varnedoe.

Postscript

During this investigation, several leads were checked and ruled out. For example, here are three:

The search began with a 385th BGA Archives picture of a 385th BG B-17, serial No. 42-30250, named "Yank" hitting a lorry.

Although it was thought that this was the incident that caused the fatality of Mr. Ruddock, the picture shows that the accident occurred on the Honington airfield which was not close to Great Ashfield. From the photograph, it appears that the incident was not serious enough to cause a fatality, and the plane and



B-17 #42-30250 crash with lorry.

lorry appear to be on a concrete area and not a Beet field. I, Bill, checked the records for A/C 42-30250 and found that it was written-off and salvaged on 13 January 1944.

It was also thought that the accident occurred on a Saturday in May 1944, as reported by Paul's grandfather, I looked up all the Saturday 385th BG missions on May 6th, 13th, 20th and 27th, 1944, and checked the salvage dates of all B-17s flown on those dates. One stood out! The B-17, serial No. 42-31554, "Charlotte Ann", flown by the Pacello crew was salvaged on 27 May 1944. Again we thought that might have been the B-17 that was responsible for the death of Paul's great grandfather. However, according to the files, this B-17 had two engines

dead and crashed and burned near Bury St. Edmonds at a place called Fornham All-Saints. However, the area was too far from and not adjacent to Great Ashfield. And it did not fit any of the scenarios.

A photograph sent by Ray Zorn showed that on 15 July 1944, "Sky Goddess", taxied into what appears a tent, pushing it on to a Jeep. But this minor accident in no way resembles any of the other incidents.

If any reader of the *Hardlife Herald* who was stationed at Great Ashfield in 1943/44, and has any information to add to these incidents, whether hear-say or factual, please send them to Bill Varnedoe and/or the *Hardlife Herald*.

A "jiffy" is a unit of time for 1/100th of a second.

MY FIRST MISSION

Howard T. Richardson

After enlisting in the Army Cadet program in 1942, I graduated as a Pilot and received my commission as a 2nd Lt. in August 1943. I requested multi-engine training and was assigned to B-17 transition. Completing B-17 training, I was assigned to Salt Lake City to pick up my crew of six Airmen and three more Officers. After completing our crew training, we were directed to Grand Island, NE to pick up a new B-17G which we flew, with several stops along the way, to Nutts Corner, Ireland. During our flight, we witnessed the beautiful Northern Lights.

Leaving our new aircraft in Ireland, we proceeded by water and rail to the 385th Bomb Group at Great Ashfield, England. We flew a few practice missions to acquaint us with the local area and to practice flying close air formation. The group policy was to have new crews co-pilot with an experienced combat crew.

Scheduled to fly on our first combat mission, we were awakened after midnight and after dressing, we proceeded to the mess hall for a breakfast of powdered eggs (2 fresh eggs if flying a mission), powdered milk, Spam, SOS, British bread and marmalade, and plenty of coffee or tea. After breakfast we proceeded to the briefing building for a general briefing. The wall was covered with a curtain and when the Group Commander, Colonel Elliott Vandevanter arrived,

the curtain was opened showing the route to and from the target. The target was Zwickhau, Germany, and all present gave a loud groan. Zwickhau was deep in Germany and south of Leipzig and Dresden. Total flight time was 8 hours and 45 minutes. We were briefed on weather conditions and known anti-aircraft positions and fighter locations. All present set our watches to Greenwich Time. Navigators, Bombardiers, radio operators and lead crews went to special briefings. The gunners picked up the guns and ammunition and we proceeded to the assigned aircraft. The aircraft was fueled and the bombs had been loaded by the armament bomb crew. The bomb load for this mission was five 1000-pound demolition bombs.

When the tower shot a flare, we all proceeded to taxi to the active runway following the lead aircraft. At the proper time, the tower shot another flare and the lead aircraft started his takeoff. Other aircraft followed in 30 second intervals and joined in their assigned spot in the formation, and the Group continued on course en route to the target after joining other bomb groups positioned 5 minutes apart.

The following times and the number of enemy fighters were taken from the Official Mission Report that was submitted by Our Intelligence Officer to higher Headquarters:

At 12:07 hrs, our first wave of

enemy fighters were 20 FW-190s and ME-109s making a head on attack, a 10 o'clock and a 2 o'clock, coming back three times. The second wave came at 12:30 hrs. with 40 to 50 ME-109s and FW-190s. This wave continued to hit the Groups behind us. The third wave hit at 14:25 hrs. and contained 60 to 70 ME-109s and FW-190s. The last or 4th wave of 20 to 25 FW-190s attacked from 11 o'clock to 1 o'clock, and started concentrating on stragglers or bombers that could not keep up with the formation because of damage to their aircraft.

When we turned on the Initial Point (IP), the beginning of the bomb run, we began receiving anti-aircraft flak, which continued until we dropped our bombs and turned off the target course.

On this mission our Group claimed 11 German Fighters destroyed, 6 probable and 1 damaged. Our crews also reported seeing a B-17 going down and 10 chutes sighted, and one B-17 which caught on fire and fell on another B-17. A German fighter shot down by our Group fell into a B-17, and they both exploded. Only the tail gunner appeared to escape with his chute. The bombing results for the Group were excellent with all bombs falling within a 1000 foot circle. The Group later received a Presidential Unit Citation for these bombing

results. Crew comments made after this mission were that the close formation flown by our aircraft on this mission saved the Group's planes from greater battle damage from the German fighter aircraft.

The return flight was made watching for fighters and flak, and taking evasive action when necessary. When we approached the English Channel and saw the White Cliffs of Dover, we started our descent and flew over our field peeling off one at a time. Aircraft that had wounded on board or severe damage were given priority and landed first.

After landing, parking the aircraft,

and debriefing the intelligence by providing the details of the mission, i.e. fighters, flak sighted, fighter attacks, etc., we proceeded to the mess hall then to our barracks for much needed rest for another mission the next day. Not seeing our crew co-pilot who flew with another crew, I discovered that he was in the B-17 that shot the German fighter that then collided with them and exploded.

After this mission, we received a new B-17G. Since I was the pilot and from Mississippi, the crew named the plane "Mississippi Miss." It survived the war and was eventually retired at the U.S. storage at Davis

Monthan AFB, Tuscon, AZ. Our crew went on to complete 35 combat missions and we all received a certificate titled, "The Lucky Bastard Club." Some of our following missions were to Hamburg, Hamm, Hanover, Wessermunde, and three missions to Berlin. We started flying combat missions on 12 May 1944 and flew our 35th mission on 11 August 1944. After completing my 35 missions, I was assigned to the 4th Bomb Wing as an Operations Officer for a period of seven months. In April 1945, I returned to the United States.

THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The original Pledge of Allegiance was written by Francis Bellamy. It was first given wide publicity through the official program of the National Public Schools Celebration of Columbus Day which was printed in the Youth's Companion of September 8, 1892. It was sent out in leaflet form to schools throughout the country. School children recited the Pledge as follows:

"I pledge allegiance to my Flag and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all."

"The flag of the United States" replaced the words "my Flag" in 1923 because some foreign-born people might have considered the

flag of the country of their birth instead of the United States flag. A year later, "of America" was added after "United States."

No form of the Pledge received official recognition by Congress until June 22, 1942, when the Pledge was formally included in the U. S. Flag Code. The official name of The Pledge of Allegiance was adopted in 1945. The last change in language came on Flag Day 1954, when Congress passed a law, which added the words "under God" after "one nation."

Thus, today the Pledge of Allegiance is as follows:

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, one

Nation, under God, indivisible, with Liberty and Justice for all.

Originally, the pledge was said with the right hand in the so-called "Bellamy Salute," with the right hand resting first on the chest, then the arm extending out from the body. Once Hitler came to power in Europe, many Americans were concerned that this position of the arm resembled the Nazi or Fascist salute. In 1942 Congress also established the current practice of rendering the pledge with the right hand over the heart.

The current Flag Code specifies that any future changes to the pledge would have to be with the consent of Congress.

MY NEXT TO THE LAST MISSION

From the Mission's Diary of Joel D. Punches

February 21, 1944 - We were bombing Hamburg, Germany, at 25,000 feet on my next to the last mission. (No. 24) Over the target we were hit by flak from the ground which knocked out two engines. We had to leave the formation and drop down and back. Ten minutes later, two German fighter planes spotted us and attacked us head on. They knocked one more engine out. We then were at 6,000 feet and going down at 1,000 feet a minute with one engine on fire.

I hit the ground, hid my parachute, opened my escape kit, got my compass and silk map out, and started walking southwest.

The German fighter planes were circling and getting ready for the kill, so we decided that if we kept flying we would never get back to England and would have to ditch in the channel, which in the winter was suicide. We all bailed out through the bomb bay. I was fairly sure we were over Holland and not Germany.

I hit the ground, hid my parachute, opened my escape kit, got

my compass and silk map out, and started walking southwest. I walked to the nearest farm house, and the lady there showed me where I was on the map. I then walked for four hours and met a Dutchman on a bicycle who I stopped, and when he finally realized who I was, put me in a ditch to hide, and came back for me at 10:00 P.M. He then took me in a town to a house where I stayed for one week. While I was there they gave me civilian clothes and a false I.D. card which indicated that I was

a druggist from Amsterdam.

I was told to go to Spain where I would be free. Following a Dutchman, I travelled by train. At night, I stayed with safe Dutch people. I had to walk across the Holland-Belgium border, and stayed in a haystack for one week. I got as far as Liege, Belgium, when the Allied Invasion started, and I was told to stay put and wait for the U. S. 1st Army to

arrive. Then I was free.

I had many interesting experiences while traveling around. At one train station I ate dinner with two German soldiers, and I never said a word. Crossing river bridges was always an experience. There were German guard houses on both sides and every 10 – 15 people were pulled in and interrogated. I finally figured it out so I timed it so I was always the first or second to go by the guard house.

I stayed in many towns in Holland. Rosemont, Venlo, Endhoven, Ermelo. In Roermond I stayed one month in a house without looking out a window for the whole time.

From Liege I rode an army truck to Paris where I was flown back to London. In London I was promoted one rank, given \$1,500 in back pay, a new uniform, and put on a boat to New York.

PS: Lapstresky, our co-pilot, was shot down February 22, 1944 over the North Sea. He is buried in Holland.

Note: On Punches last mission, he was not with his regular (Taylor) crew. He was flying as a second navigator with the Brink's Crew in a radar plane of the 482nd Bomb Group.

Maybe it's true that life begins at fifty... but everything starts to wear out,
fall out or spread out. –Phyllis Diller

HAIL TO THE CHIEF

by Ralph D. Holloman, Lt. Col. USAF (Ret)***

In the beginning of aerial warfare over the continent of Europe in WWII, the 8th Army Air Corps (AAC) was able to generate only a few aircraft. The results were less than desirable. England's Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, was of the opinion that daylight bombing by the United States would never be successful. "How wrong he was!!!"

As additional aircraft and combat crews became available, many new bases were opened in England.

Before the end of the war, the 8th

available, on call, as required.

When our flight crew reported to the aircraft, in the predawn hours before the mission, the Crew Chief had been there through the night. He saw that the aircraft was refueled and the oxygen system was topped off. He ensured that the guns were installed and the ammunition was distributed to each gun position. During the night, the engines were started and checked. Nothing was left to chance.

The Crew Chief stayed at the

anxiously waiting for the formation to appear. He would attempt to pick out his aircraft, which he called his "baby", and try to determine if it had suffered any major damage. He remained at his position until the plane had landed and taxied to its parking stand. When the pilot left the aircraft, he and the Crew Chief met under the wing to discuss the performance of the aircraft during the mission and to determine if there were any concerns (write-ups) to be addressed and corrected by the Crew Chief. They performed a walk around the aircraft checking for any visible damage to propellers, tires, and all control surfaces. Any necessary work would be done by the Crew Chief and his assistants.

Crew Chiefs had pride in their work knowing that the safety of the flight crew and the success of the mission were dependent upon them. They performed in all weather conditions and were familiar with England's fog and rain. Saturday, Sunday and holidays were not for time off. As long as the weather was good, missions were flown. Our plane flew 25 missions without an abort and the credit for this achievement goes to the Crew Chief and his assistants.

*** Ralph D. Holloman flew as a Togglier/Gunner on 25 missions.

The Crew Chiefs were the life blood of the 8th AAC. They were responsible for the day-to-day condition of the aircraft assigned to them.

AAC was able to generate a 1,000 aircraft mission. Never had such an aerial armada been formed before. In all probability, it will never happen again. The ways of fighting a war have changed.

The Crew Chiefs were the life blood of the 8th AAC. They were responsible for the day-to-day condition of the aircraft assigned to them, and they and their assistants kept it combat-ready so that it would be able to fly combat missions. They were assisted by technical specialists such as engine repairmen, instrument specialists, radio maintenance men among others who were

hardstand until the flight crew boarded the plane and closed the door. The Crew Chief would check the area to be sure nothing was in the way, and signal readiness to the pilot. The pilot would start the engines and let them warm up. Then the Crew Chief would remove the blocks blocking the wheels and the pilot would taxi the aircraft to the top of the runway. The Crew Chief would watch him take off and join the formation. Only then would he leave and go for breakfast and to catch a few hours of sleep.

When the aircraft were due to return from a mission, he would be

LETTERS/E-MAILS

APRIL 1, 2009

Chuck,

I am sending you another story (see "Another Routine Day at the Office", p.8) for the next issue of the newsletter. When I showed this article to some people, they asked if the plane directly in front of ours, and the plane directly behind were able to take off. I have no idea about their conditions, but I thought that the newsletter, if this story is published, if someone who is still around might answer that question.

Sincerely,
Hugh Andrew

Note: send any info re this incident to Hugh Andrews, 401 Russell Ave., Apt. 303,
Gaithersburg, MD 20877

MAY 13, 2009

Dear Mr. McCawley,

I have intended to write for some time about the letter-e-mail, page 15 of the Dec. issue of the *Hardlife Herald*.

My husband, Donald W. Johnson, flew on the "Slick Chick" out of Great Ashfield, England 1943-44. Don served our country from Sept. 1940 – Sept. 1973. He flew 35 missions from Great Ashfield. After he returned to the States, the "Slick Chick" crashed at Bradwell, Essex, Jan. 21, 1945. My friend Richard M. Annis sent me photos of Don and his crew, the plane and pictures of the crash site. I sent some to Mr. Varnedoe after I bought a copy of his book.

Mr. Annis lives in England and wrote to me trying to trace crew members. All have passed on except Dick Sartnep. Mr. Annis planned to write a book about the "Slick Chick."

I do enjoy the *Hardlife Herald*. I thought the enclosed might be of interest.

Sincerely,

Janyce Johnson



SELFRIDGE AFB, Mt Clemens, Mich.—M/Sgt Donald W. Johnson, 36, beams happily on hearing himself cited Tenth Air Force "Outstanding Airman of the Year," by Maj. Gen. Robert E. L. Eaton, Commander. Sgt. Johnson, who holds the DFC and five Air Medals for 35 combat missions over Europe as a "Flying Fortress" radio operator and gunner, won the title over 14 rival nominees assigned to units in Tenth's 13-state Midwest area.

LETTERS/E-MAILS

From: ionm385bg@btopenworld.com (Ion MacLauglan)

To: fxmccawley

Subject: Memorial Day 2009

Hi, Frank

We again attended Memorial Day at Madingley on 25th May this year to represent the 385th and I'm attaching some pictures for use in the HH if you can squeeze them in. The wreath, as over the past several years, was paid for by a donation from the Massari family in memory of Louis Massari who passed away in 2001.

The first photograph shows my daughter, Bethan, on the left, her partner, Tom, holding the wreath (they're getting married September 5th) and Sue. Tom had the honour of presenting the wreath this year—we are all so proud of the 385th that we squabble over the privilege—well, not really, but we do take turns. I hope that my children will continue representing the 385th at Madingley when I'm sharing the celestial company of some of the guys I never had a chance to meet and to whom I owe the freedoms given to my generation and its successors.

The second photograph captures the moment when an F-15C from RAF Lakenheath pulls up to become the "missing man" as his comrades roar overhead in salute to the fallen—as always an exhilarating yet poignant moment in the ceremony. Ms Jonna Doolittle Hoppes gave the address and spoke movingly of her grandfather who headed the Mighty Eighth. That she did so without getting soaked was a minor blessing from the British weather which has seen us drenched and frozen for the past two years but grudgingly gave us sunshine and showers for the 2009 occasion. There were 111 wreaths placed (on the graves) and the service was well attended which illustrates the continuing legacy ship and affection felt for the men who served in the UK during World War Two and the recognition of those who rest here today or remembered on the Wall of the Missing.

Take care,
Ion



LETTERS/E-MAILS

JUNE 14, 2009

Dear Folks,

Enclosed are some photos of the crew members of the "Ohio Air Force." One picture shows Lt. John Richey in front of his "war machine" which shows a clock of 12 bombing missions between 12/11/43 (Emden) and 12/22/43 (Munster #2). Clearly, it also shows 14 Nazi aircraft kills, including the 12 kills on the Munster raid. (*Hardlife Herald*, vol. 25 No. 3, Dec. 2008)

The other photo shows our crew members who attended the 385th BGA Reunion in Dayton, Ohio reunion in 1987. Back row (L- R): John Gesser (tail), Milton Lane (radio op.), Tom Hair (LW), Michael Siwek, Jr., son of Mike Siwek (TT), Charles Schaefer (ball). Front row: Frank McKibben (Nav.), John Richey (Pilot), Tom Helman (Co-Pilot), Bob Winnerman (Bomb).

Their current status is:

- Jack Gesser (TG) now lives in an assisted living home in St. Petersburg, FL.
- Milton Lane (RO) recently passed away of a stroke.
- Thomas J. (Tommy Boy) Hair (LW) retired as a Colonel after 32 years in the Air Force.
- Michael Siwek (TTG) died in a traffic accident in 1952/53.
- Charles (Chuck) Schaefer (BT) lived near Lubbock, TX at the time of his death.
- Frank McKibben (N) lives in Irvine, CA.
- John Richey (P) originally from Steubenville, OH, hence the name "Ohio Air Force" was the only flyer in recorded history who did a slow roll of a B-17. It was on the Munster mission when he accomplished that maneuver, and when he leveled off, I was hanging about six inches from the deck as the earphone hooks on my helmet had become entangled in the control cables running through the waist area. Maury Simpson (RW) came to my assistance and untangled me from the cables.
- Tom Helman (Co-P). I have no information on his death.
- Bob Winnerman (B). I am unable to locate him.
- Maury (Maurice) Simpson (RW), passed away a few days prior to the Dayton reunion and is not in the photo. (See letter next page) Maury had one short fuse, he said, "Call me Maurice once, but never twice."

I hope that I have not thoroughly confused you. We had formed our crew in Boise and went through several other areas before leaving Bangor for England and the 385th Bomb Group.

"Tommy Boy"

4007 Palm Tree Blvd. #305, Cape Coral, FL 33904



LETTERS/E-MAILS

September 28

Dear Tommy,

My name is Samantha Warren. I am Maury Simpson's daughter.

My father has living here in Fayetteville, Georgia with me since last July He was diagnosed with a cancerous malignant growth in his neck after the Fourth of July.

Daddy has spoken to me of you and I have seen your picture so many times that I feel as though I know you. A large photo Dad blew up of the two of you in a window of "Big Oaf" hangs in my living room. Both of you were so handsome and full of life.

I wish I could find an easier way to tell you this, Tommy, but Dad passed away on Sept. 13. He had been suffering terribly from the pain in his neck – and his physician told me that the chemotherapy they were going to start him on would more than likely kill him before the disease. He was that weak.

It is a blessing, in a way, that he died of heart failure here at home and didn't suffer at all. The paramedic team did all they could to save him, but he died instantly. I buried him next to mother in Montgomery, Alabama. Your "Capt. Richey" has been informed that Dad will get a write up in the Historical Society paper.

I would sincerely like to thank you for keeping up with Dad. Although he said very little and probably never wrote back to you – it meant a lot to him. He was very quiet that way. I have some pictures and memorabilia of your time with Dad and would be happy to send you something to remember him by.

I am a flight attendant at Eastern Airlines and often layover in Pensacola. It would be a real privilege to meet you. We often rent a car and drive to Ft. Walton because it is so lovely there at the beach. Did you know that our family lived in Mary Esther until my mother died in 1957.

I am so sorry to bring this news to you Tommy. But please know that Dad was loved, and surrounded by it until he passed. The men of your crew have always been my 'heroes' and you always will be.

Samantha

First you forget names, then you forget faces. Then you forget to pull up your zipper. It's even worse when you forget to pull it down.

LETTERS/E-MAILS

Dear Chuck,

Thank You for putting my story "Stalling a B-17" in our Newsletter. However you misspelled my last name at the heading of the story. It is Andrews, not Anderson.

Hugh S. Andrews

From: Saukrapids (Terry Hagman Sylvester)

To: fxmccawley

Subject: Willard Hagman obit

Hi: Mother received the *Hardlife* with the obit of Willard M. Hagman. A little disappointed with the misspellings of names etc. Maybe we would be the only ones to notice. Thanks again.

Terry Hagman Sylvester

(I regret the misspelled names, but they were taken from information I received. Correct names are: Lois E. Nickander; Lance and wife, Tracy; Barb and Will Blyer; Debbie and Hugh Janzen; Hinckley: Editor)

MAY 3, 2009

Subject: Danny Riva's Funeral

From: jayjaymasters@yahoo.com (Vince Masters)

Dear Al and all,

Just to let you know that I did attend Danny's funeral ceremony at Arlington, Was a very fitting ceremony with full honors in sight of the Air Force Memorial. Judy and I presented a very fitting wreath at grave site during the ceremony. Will send pics when developed. Danny's family hired a professional photographer for the ceremony. Kimiko, Danny's widow, will advise when and where they will be available.

Leo LaCasse's grandson was present to represent Leo as a past president. He was a wonderful young man and did Leo and the 385th proud.

Vince

APRIL 29, 2009

Subject: Les Reichardt's Resignation from 385th Board

From: Chuck Smith, Treasurer

All Board Members,

I received a donation from Les Reichardt several days ago and he enclosed a short humorous note that he is living in a senior citizen's home, and that he needed to tender his resignation as a member of the 385th board member. He wrote, "I no longer can help as a board member (not that I ever was)." His address is: Les Reichardt; 150 Old Liverpool Rd., Unit #118; Liverpool, NY.

LETTERS/E-MAILS

16 MAY 2009

From: tbonetim135 (Tim Randleman)

To: fxmccawley

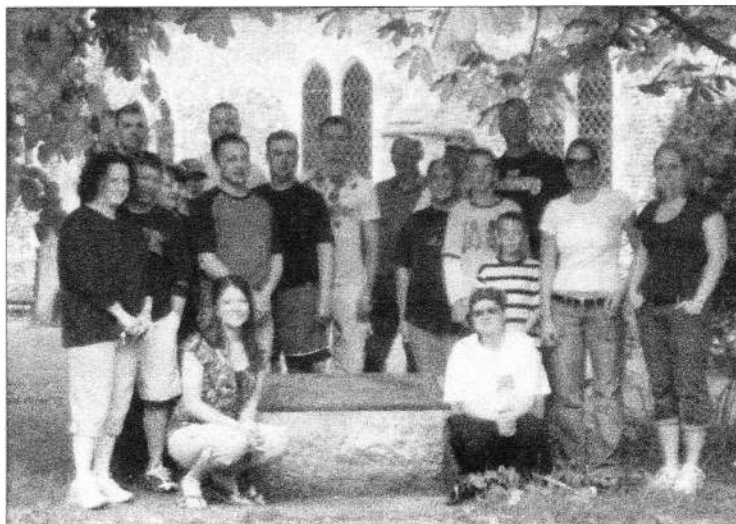
Subject: Great Ashfield Cleanup

Hi Everyone,

Today at the location for the old main gate entrance to Great Ashfield Aerodrome, volunteers from the 48th Aerospace Medicine Squadron (AMDS) at RAF Lakenheath came out to help cleanup multiple bags full of litter along with other debris that had been scattered about. I had over 20 volunteers (including several children) come out to not only clean up this area but to see and hear about the immense amount of history at Great Ashfield. Due to the larger than expected turnout, the cleanup only took about a half hour to accomplish which left plenty of time for a tour of several parts of the area. Thanks in large part to the local 385th Trustees and local landowners, Roy Barker, Robert (apologies as I can't remember his last name) and Stephen Miles we were able to give these Air Force members a hands on look at their heritage. They were able to see as well as go inside most of the intact structures of the base as well as view the stained glass window memorial inside the church. I also took a group photo of most of them in front of the memorial in the church yard with Roy Barker in the middle. I was playing the role of the camera man and juggling two other cameras as well during this time so I'm not in the picture. I should have some other nice photos in the next few weeks from some of the others who were taking pictures at that time so will try and pass along a few of those as well.

There was indescribable feeling when I was out there speaking to those members of my Squadron about the history of the 385th. It was if a dam had burst and so much of the history and stories that I had either been told or had read came flooding out. I had to put on the breaks a bit as I knew that at some point we all had to go eat lunch, yet at the same time it was very exciting to have an audience to pass these stories on to. I'm a bit tired after shuttling a crew of people in my van back and forth from the base, so I better close before my typing really starts to get out of whack. Those that I had come out with me today said they would be ready to come out again if Great Ashfield needed their help once more. Several of the younger Airmen that were out here today had no idea about the history of the 8th Air Force during WW II, and that right there made it all worth the trip. I'll try to make the most of my tour over here and with the help of the local trustees of the 385th as well as the pictures and information passed on by those of you back in the States, I hope to continue passing on the history of the 385th to anyone I can. Now I think it's time for a pint of the local brew and a nap on this lovely sunny afternoon here in England.

Cheers,
Tim Randleman



Taps

Edward R. Stern – Fargo, ND died April 18, 2009 at age 94. (See page 4)

Roland J. Miles – Norton Hall, Norton, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk, England died December 20, 2007 at age 82. (See page 3)

Edward John McElroy – Cape Coral, FL died April 16, 2009 at age 89. Edward was born in 1920 in Providence, RI. After studies at the University of Rhode Island and Brown University, he began a medical acoustics company in Rhode Island which he expanded throughout New England. In the 1950s he helped develop the first wearable all-in-one hearing aid, and served on several national boards over 25 years. He retired in 1976 after moving to Cape Coral, FL. During World War II, Ed flew 25 missions with the 385th Bomb Group, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, and several other decorations. In 1996 he was voted "Board Member of the Year" by the Community Association Institute, South Gulf Coast Chapter. He served on the Board of Directors for the Casa Ybel Resort in Sanibel for 22 years and the Sanibel Harbour Condominium Association for 15 years. Ed was a member of the Disabled American Veterans, the 8th AF Historical Society and the 385th BGA. He is survived by his wife of 60 years, Beverly Simone McElroy, two daughters, one son, and four grandchildren. He was buried with honors at Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia.

Dale Dykins – Seattle, WA died April 22, 2009 at age 91. Dale was born in Flora Illinois. Dale began studying music at age 12 and while in high school he was playing in big bands. He was a student at the College of Music of Cincinnati and graduated with Bachelor of Music Degree with a diploma in Piano and a Certificate in Organ. After serving in military service, in 1946 he returned to the College of Music earning a Masters Degree in Composition and a Post Graduate Degree in Music. From 1950 to 1983, he taught piano, music theory and composition at the University of Northern Colorado, and for 15 years he was Chairman of the Department of Theory and Composition. During a leave in 1955 and 1956, he was a composition student at Julliard. In 1983 his colleagues and students founded an annual musical scholarship in his name for students in musical composition. Retiring in 1983 to Seattle, continuing to work on various music projects including serving as an accompanist for the Arts West and Civil Light Opera. For many years he gave performances at senior and convalescent centers. Dale served as a bombardier with the 385th Bomb Group, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters, the ETO ribbon with three battle stars, and the pre-Pearl Harbor ribbon. Dale is survived by his cousin, Rebecca Bryant.

Dale Dykins



Taps

Arthur E. Wohl – Bismark, ND died January 2009.

Joel D. Punches – Santa Maria, CA died at his home April 26, 2004 at age 88. "Joe" was born in Wymore, Nebraska in 1915. He attended college in Greeley, CO, and after a couple of years of teaching, he entered the Army Air Corps (AAC). He flew 24 bombing missions as a Navigator with the 385th Bomb Group, and on his 24th mission his plane was shot down. With the help of anti-Nazi Dutch farmers, Joe evaded the Germans for nine months before being rescued. After the war Joe became a member of the Air Force Reserves (AFR). He served in the AAC and AFR for a total of 33 years.

In 1948 Joe accepted a teaching position at Santa Maria High School (SMHS) teaching math and PE. He was the SMHS track coach and also assisted in coaching basketball and wrestling until his retirement in 1975. Under his guidance the SMHS were the league champions nine out of ten seasons losing only one season to a high school team coached by his older brother. After retiring from the AFR and SMHS in 1975, Joe and his wife, Margaret, traveled in the states and abroad. He also farmed at a site called the "Puncherosa," raising avocados, tomatoes and onions.

Joe is survived by two sons, Joel, Jr. and Brian; two brothers and two grandsons.

Military honors were rendered for Major Joel D. Punches by the Vandenberg Air Force Honor Guard.

Florian A. I. Tomah – San Bernardino, CA passed away in Beaver, Utah on March 20, 2009 at age 92. He was born in Omaha, Nebraska. In 1942 he married Lyle Richardson who preceded him in death in 1963. In 1968, Lt. Colonel Tomah retired after serving for 28 years in the SUAVE, at which time he returned to work with his father and brother at Toman's Machine Shop in San Bernardino. He designed and held the patent for the mustard and ketchup dispensers used by McDonald's Hamburgers for many years.

Florian is survived by his daughters, Carol Louise (Myron) Richardson and Catherine "Kelly" Walker, two grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Per his wishes his cremated remains were buried in the Riverside National Cemetery.

John Pennington McGowen – Chula Vista, CA died on May 24, 2009 at age 89 after an eight month illness as a result a stroke and heart attack. John was a pilot with the 385th BG, was shot down, and was a POW. He was retired as a USAF Lt. Colonel. John is survived by his wife and daughter, Leatha Cooksy. He was buried at Fort Rosencrans National Cemetery, Point Loma, CA.

385th BGA

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Dodge 'n Flak – a 1947 Dodge grain truck reconfigured and redesigned by Bob “Mac” McQuality to honor his father, Robert E. McQuality, a 385th Bomb Group B-17 gunner, and a POW in Stalag 17. The running boards are propellers from a couple of WW II aircraft, one prop complete with a bullet hole. The dashboard was created from a C-45 instrument panel, and the rest of the cab is fitted with various parts from other planes, including a B-17 Flying Fortress bombardier’s seat. The nose cones on the truck’s bed are naval aviation issue adorned with fighter and bomber logos of the 8th Air Force units. The bed sides are labeled, “385th BG, Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England.” Under the bed sides are a pair of 100 lb. practice bombs. The turret on the bed houses a Browning .30-caliber machine gun. Special audio effects reproduce the sounds of a bomber’s engines being started for takeoff. A sign painted on the truck proclaims, “All gave some. Some gave all.”