

Hardlife



Herald



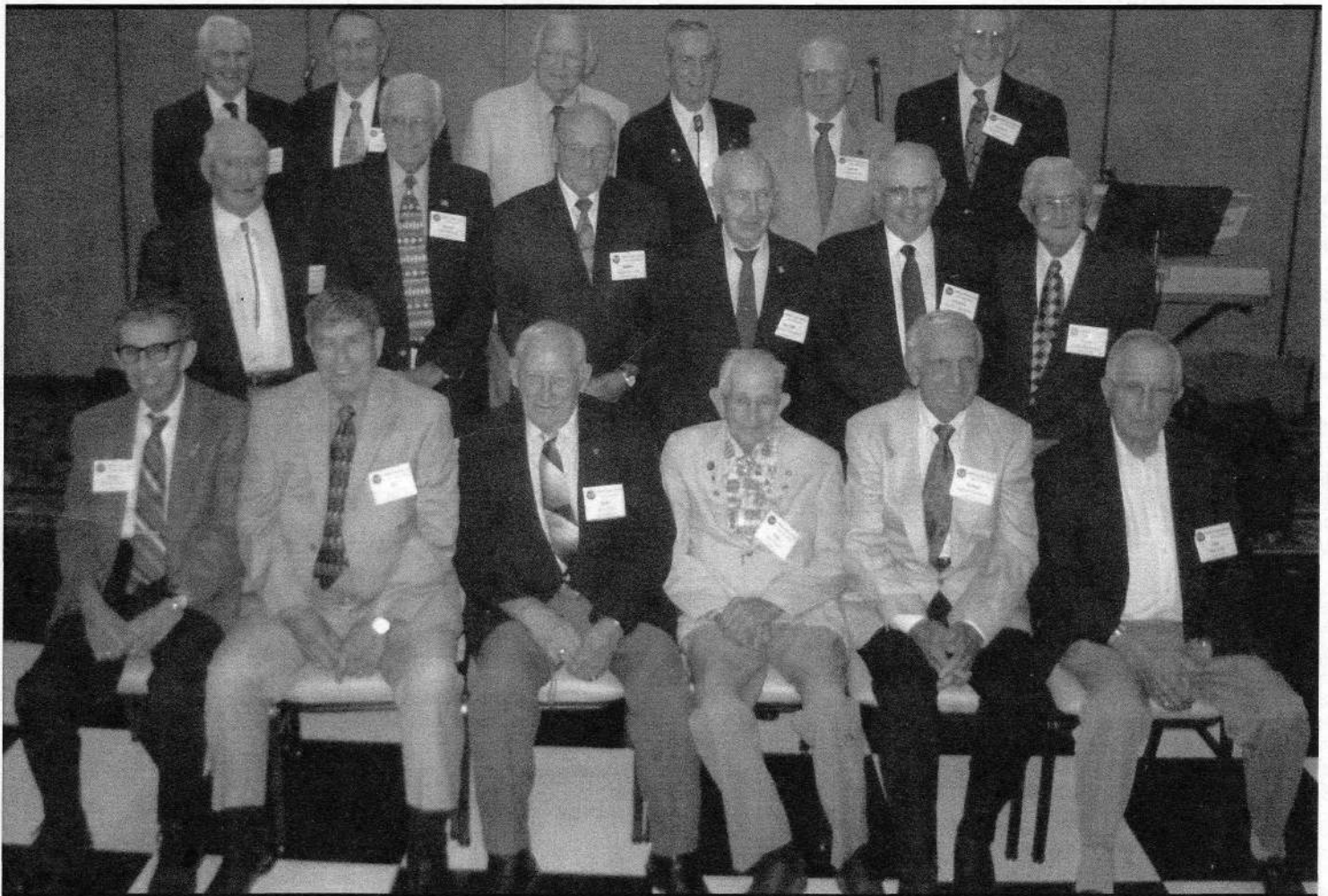
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The Mighty Eighth

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FRONT COVER

385th BGA 2010 Reunion Attendees.

EDITORIAL

In October 2010, the 385th Bomb Group Association held our Reunion in Charleston, SC rather than in Tuscon, AZ in August after many Association members indicated they would not attend the 385th BGA and the 8th Air Force Historical reunion because of the unbearable hot weather. I was one of them. A decision was made to hold our own reunion, and our president, Tom Gagnon, arranged with the 96th Bomb Group Association to combine the two group's reunions for financial and other advantages. Except for a combined formal dinner, each group conducted its own business meeting and hospitality suite. The 385th BGA had a productive meeting. One of the many tours was a visit to the Eighth Air Force Museum in Savannah where "The City of Savannah" B-17 is being restored.

I was sorry that Bill Varnedoe, a Past President, has retired as the Association's Historian and Archivist. I will miss his help in providing information to me about the personnel and the activities of the 385th Bomb Group (H) during their stay at Great Ashfield. However, the Association has been fortunate to have Ian Maclachlan step-up and accept the task of Historian and Archivist for our Association.

During the past many years I have enjoyed being the Editor of the *Hardlife Herald*. Many of you members have provided me with facts, personal experiences, and information about the missions and the life at Great Ashfield. I hope that I can continue to edit our newsletter for many years.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fresh from our Fall reunion in Charleston, I am pleased to note that we are already working on our next gathering. We will again join the 8th Air Force Historical Society at their annual reunion in 2011 but will hold our own "reunion within a reunion." The current plans call for the 8th AFHS reunion to be held in St. Louis, MO October 11-15, 2011. Please mark the dates on your calendar and plan to attend.

One of the reasons the 385th BGA chose Charleston for its 2010 reunion was the city's proximity to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in Pooler. While not exactly a hop, skip, and a jump, the morning bus ride took us from our hotel to the museum in time for some touring before lunch. A highlight of the tour was seeing, first hand, the ongoing restoration of the museum's B-17, *City of Savannah*. And a highlight of our luncheon, graciously hosted by the museum staff, was the opportunity for the 385th BGA to formally present its contribution to the restoration effort. I, as the Association President, presented to Museum President Henry Skipper a check for \$8,500 on behalf of the Association's Board of Directors, Officers and the membership. This donation was all the more meaningful having just witnessed the progress being made on the restoration. While far from completed, this restoration is well on its way and our Association is proud to be able to contribute to the effort.



Presentation of 385th BGA \$8,500 check for restoration of B-17 "City of Savannah".

I wish to extend my sincere appreciation, both personally and on behalf of the Association, to Bill Varnedoe for his valuable contributions as our Association's President, '03-'05 and as the 385th Bomb Group Association's Historian and Archivist for many years. Bill has decided that it was time for him to pass the baton to another Association member.

The Association and I welcome Ian Maclachlan as our new Historian and Archivist. A long-time member of the Friends of the Eighth (FOTE), Ian resides in England, not far from Great Ashfield and is no stranger to the "Mighty Eighth" and the 385th Bomb Group. Our thanks go to Ian for his willingness to serve the Association and for assuming the position as Historian.

Tom Gagnon, President 385th BG, 8th Air Force

SALUTE OR HAND OVER HEART?

Should I salute or place my hand over my heart? Many of us, and other U.S. citizens, do not know what we should do to render respect for the flag.

Public Law 110-181 states, "all persons present in uniform should render the military salute. Members of the Armed Forces and veterans who are present but not in uniform may render the military salute.

All others present should face the flag and stand at attention with their right hand over the heart, or if applicable, remove their headdress with the right hand and hold it at the left shoulder, the hand being over the heart.

Citizens of other countries present should stand at attention. All such conduct toward the flag in a moving column should be rendered at the moment the flag passes."

To clarify, retirees may salute or place their hand over their heart to render respect to the U.S. flag.

385TH BGA HISTORIAN

Bill Varnedoe, the 385th BGA Historian for many, many years, has passed the assignment of obtaining and preserving the history of the 385th Bomb Group to Ian Maclachlan, a United Kingdom member of the Association, and now, the Historian of the Association.

Ian began his association with the 385th BG in 1964 when he was 16 and found the wreckage of a

buried B-17 in marshland not far from where he lived. As a young aeroplane enthusiast, he found this find very exciting. However, Ian soon realized that it was not about the machine that was exciting, but about the men who flew it. Inquiring about the find, no one could tell him much other than that two aircraft had collided during the war and both crews were killed, and locally no one knew who they

were. However, Ian thought they deserved to be honored and remembered, so he began to research their story. His research showed that the men were the Hutchison and Pease crews from the 385th Bomb Group, and his investigations led him to contacts with John Ford (BGA President '77-'79) and other 385th BG veterans.

In 1972, Ian became a founding member of the FOTE (Friends Of The Eighth) which was set up to help perpetuate and pay tribute to the achievements of the "Mighty Eighth." During one of their early meetings they agreed that some members would handle information relating to specific groups, and Ian chose the 385th BG, and thus, he became the UK focal point for 385th BG history.

Ian was involved in the 1976 385th BGA tour of Great Ashfield by the members and their families of the 385th Bomb Group Association, as well as all the other returns to the airfield since then. In the 2000 tour, the 385th BG veterans and families attended the dedication of the memorial to the Hutchison and Pease crews. Over the years items found at the excavations of the crash site are displayed in many museums including the USAF Museum at Wright-Patterson Museum. Ian, pleased that the Hutchison and Pease crews had been honored and not forgotten, was inspired by



New 385th BGA Historian Ian Maclachlan

Ian Maclachlan with a B-17 engine recovered from the Hutchison crash site in 1999,

their story and wrote his first book *"Final Flights"*. He has written six books since and most have 385th BG stories that he has researched. From the archives collected over the years, he also gives slide shows on the history of the 385th BG.

Career-wise, he spent most of his career in purchasing. Forced into an early retirement in 2008, he has devoted more time to his writing and research, and has developed a series of lectures on the "Friendly Invasion" – the USAAF in East Anglia. He teaches at local colleges

and gives evening classes to adult learners interested in the wartime contribution of the USAAF to the ultimate Allied victory. Such lectures include the social and cultural impact of the over 400,000 American personnel who served in the UK from 1942 to 1945, and the continuing legacy of friendship which is evidenced by the many museums and memorials in the region.

Ian and wife Sue have four children. Sue has supported Ian in his 385th BG activities and has spent many chilly hours with him on the

windswept runways of Great Ashfield. Both Ian and Sue have always been readily available to show 385th BG veterans or the 2nd/3rd generation family members around the airfield. He has been supported by the people of Great Ashfield who have been involved in the tours, and who open-heartedly welcome our Group's veterans and family members during our visits.

The 385th Bomb Group Association is pleased to have Ian become the Historian of our Association, and will support him in his endeavors.

WASPs

How many of us remember the WASPs, the Women Airforce Service Pilots? They were an elite group of women pilots who took on non-combat roles to free up male pilots for combat missions. It is thought that they flew almost 60 million miles during their unit's existence (1942–1944) ferrying more than half of all combat aircraft. Perhaps one or more of the B-17s assigned to the 385th Bomb Group was delivered to England by a WASP.

From about 25,000 applicants, 1,102 were chosen to train at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas.

That small group paved the way for the female military pilots of today. Those chosen were required to have a minimum amount of flight training, were highly educated, and were of "good moral character." After the war, many of the women stayed in the aviation field.

In 1977 President Jimmy Carter signed a bill granting them military status. Today there is a WASP display in the Smithsonian's Air and Space Museum commemorating their service to their country. General Barton K. Yount, commanding general of Army Air Forces Training Command put it best when the

WASPs were disbanded on December 1944: "These women have given their lives in performance of arduous and exacting duties without being able to see and feel the final results of their work. They have demonstrated a courage which is sustained not by the fevers of combat, but the steady heartbeat of faith—a faith in the rightness of our cause, and a faith of the importance of their work to the men who go into combat."

Abstracted from *"On a Wing and a Prayer"* by Jeremy Bord.

Both liberty and property are insecure, unless the possessors have the sense and spirit to defend them.

THE UNITED STATES ARMY AIR FORCES IN EUROPE

As the title implies, the United States Army Air Forces (USAAF) were part of the United States Army. However it was semi-autonomous and operated as a separate and main United States air arm of WWII. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor and the United States entering WWII, the major concentration of U.S. Army Air Forces were assigned to the United Kingdom to support any invasion of occupied Europe, and to conduct the bombing of enemy industries. This organization was designated the 8th Air Force, and was given the task of forming the 12th Air Force to support landings in Africa. In December 1942, the 12th Air Force departed the UK with many of the 8th Air Force units, leaving the 8th Air Force with the task of strategic attacking the enemy's war industry using B-17 Fortress and B-24 Liberator bombers.

In the autumn of 1943, the tactical units of the 8th Air Force were formed as the 9th Air Force dedicated to the support of the ground forces. It rapidly expanded and at the time of D-Day in June 1944, the combined strength of the European USAAF was the 8th and 9th Air Forces.

The 8th Air Force

The 8th Air Force was the largest air organization ever committed to battle. On a single day it could dispatch 3000 bombers and fighters

with 20,000 men flying from the UK. For the people of the region, it was a common and dramatic sight.

The 8th Air Force began with the arrival of seven officers to the UK about two months after the entrance of the U. S. into WWII. By May 1942 the first complete units had arrived and operations began in June when American airmen flew with the RAF for experience. On Independence Day, six crews joined the RAF in an attack on an airfield in the Netherlands. In August 1942, the principal objective of heavy bomber attacks began, but the 8th Air Force did not reach its maximum strength until June 1944.

In June 1944, the 8th AF had 41 heavy bomber airfields, 15 fighter fields, and two reconnaissance fields, plus several supporting areas. Air Forces within the 8th Air Force were the 1st Division with B-17s, the 2nd Division with B-24s, and the 3rd Division with B-17s. At first the fighter units flew P-47 Thunderbolts and P-38 Lightnings but later converted to the superior P-51 Mustangs. In addition to the airfields, the 8th Air Force maintained maintenance depots, ordnance dumps, and transport facilities. At its peak inventory, there were about 250,000 women and men serving in the UK. During its nearly four year stay in the UK it is estimated that a total of 350,000 personnel came under its direction.

Almost half of the casualties of the United States Army Air Force were sustained by the 8th Air Force, and half of the Congressional Medal of Honor decorations made to the USAAF went to airmen serving with the 8th AF. These facts help make "The Mighty Eighth" the most famous air force unit ever.

The 9th Air Force

Initially the 9th Air Force was tasked to gain and hold air superiority, to disrupt enemy communications, and to destroy front line enemy forces in cooperation with ground troops. After a period of operation in the Mid-East, it was re-formed in England in October 1942 with four units of medium bombardment groups obtained from the 8th Air Force. Within a few months, seven additional bombardment groups from the United States were added to the 9th AF, three groups flying A-20 Bostons and eight flying B-26 Marauders. Their mission was to disrupt enemy defenses and communications prior to the invasion of Europe.

The bombardment groups were supplemented by three Tactical Air Commands using P-38 Lightnings, P-47 Thunderbolts, and P-51 Mustangs. Supporting the bomber and fighter groups were Tactical Reconnaissance Groups tasked to provide up-to-date information on enemy forces' disposition. Reconnaissance

versions of the P-51 and P-38 fighters were used for this task. Also supporting this task were two squadrons of P-61 Black Widow night fighters which flew night interdiction flights.

In addition, the 9th Air Force operated the largest troop-carrying force ever assembled. Fifty six squadrons in 14 troop carrier groups carried paratroopers or towing gliders on D-Day. The main aircraft for these airborne operations were

C-47 Skytrains and CG-4 Waco gliders. Prior to the end of the war some C-46 Commandos were added to the Force.

To support this action, the IX Air Force Service Command was formed with the task of provisioning, servicing, and generally making sure that the 9th Air Force functioned properly. One of its tasks was to assemble the P-51s and P-38s shipped from the US to British ports, and to assemble the over 4000

CG-4s which arrived in large packing containers. In addition the Service Command set up Tactical Air Depots where aircraft were given major overhauls.

In its five months of existence, the 9th Air Force had over 200,000 personnel in 45 combat units and additional non-combat units, flying over 1,100 bomber aircraft, 3,000 troop-carrying aircraft, and a huge number of fighters.

THE DAY THAT JAPAN BOMBED OREGON

by Norm Goyer

September 9, 1942: An I-25 class Japanese submarine, capable of carrying an aircraft, was cruising in an easterly direction raising its periscope occasionally as it neared the United States Coastline. After Pearl Harbor, the Captain of the submarine knew that Americans were watching their coast line for ships and aircraft that might attack the United States coast. Their mission was to attack the west coast of the United States with incendiary bombs in hopes of starting a devastating forest fire in Oregon. If this test run were successful, Japan had hopes of using their large submarine fleet to attack the eastern end of the Panama Canal to slow down shipping from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Pilot Chief Warrant Officer Nobuo Fujita and his crewman, Petty Officer Shoji Okuda, were making last

minute checks to their charts making sure they matched those of the submarine's navigator.

September 9, 1942: Between Gold's Beach and Brookings, Oregon, Nebraska forestry student, Keith V. Johnson, was on duty atop a forest fire lookout tower. Keith had memorized the silhouettes of Japanese long distance bombers and those of our own aircraft, and he felt confident that he could spot and identify friend or foe almost immediately. It was cold and quiet this September morning. The residents of the area were still in bed, or preparing to go to work. Lumber was a large part of the industry in Brookings, just a few miles north of the California Oregon state lines.

Aboard the submarine, the Captain's voice boomed over the PA system, "Prepare to surface, aircrew

report to your station, wait for the open hatch signal." You could hear the change of sound as the bow of the I-25 broke from the depths and nosed over for its run on the surface. A loud bell signaled the "All Clear." The crew assigned to the single engine Yokosuki E-14Y's float equipped observation and light attack aircraft sprang into action. They rolled the plane out of its hanger next to the conning tower, unfolded the wings and tail, and attached two 176-pound incendiary bombs to the hard points under the wings.

The E-14Y was a small two passenger float plane with a nine cylinder 340 hp radial engine. The Captain ordered the aircraft to be placed on the catapult. Warrant Officer Fujita started the engine, let it warm up, and checked the

magnetos and oil pressure. There was a slight breeze blowing and the seas were calm. It was a perfect day to attack the United States of America. When the gauges were on green the pilot signaled and the catapult launched the aircraft. After a short climb to altitude the pilot turned on a heading for the Oregon coast.

Johnson was sweeping the horizon but could see nothing, and he went back to his duties as a forestry agent which was searching for any signs of a forest fire. The morning moved on. Every few moments he would scan low, medium and high but nothing caught his eye. The small Japa-

The small Japanese float plane had climbed to several thousand feet of altitude to get above the coastal fog... The pilot could see the breakers flashing white as they hit the Oregon shores.

nese float plane had climbed to several thousand feet of altitude for better visibility and to get above the coastal fog. The pilot had calculated land fall in a few minutes and right on schedule he could see the breakers flashing white as they hit the Oregon shores.

Johnson was about to put his binoculars down when something flashed in the sun just above the fog bank. It was unusual because in the past all air traffic had been flying up and down the coast, not aiming into the coast.

The pilot of the aircraft checked his course and alerted his observer to be on the lookout for a fire tower which was on the edge of the wooded area where they were supposed to drop their bombs. The plane reached the shore line and the pilot made a course correction of 20 degrees to the north. The huge trees were easy to spot and certainly easy to hit with the bombs. The fog was very wispy by this time.

Johnson watched with awe as the small floatplane with a red meat ball on the wings flew overhead. The plane was not a bomber and there was no way that it could have flown across the Pacific. Johnson

could not understand what was happening. He locked onto the plane and followed it as it headed inland.

The pilot activated the release locks so that when he could pick the bombs they would release. His instructions were simple, fly at 500 feet, drop the bombs into the trees and circle once to see if they had started any fires, then head back to the submarine.

Johnson could see the two bombs under the wing of the plane and that they would be dropped. He grabbed his communication radio

and called the Forest Fire Headquarters informing them of what he was watching unfold.

The bombs tumbled from the small seaplane and impacted the forest, the pilot circled once and spotted fire around the point of impact. He executed a 180 degree turn and headed back to the submarine. There was no air activity and the skies were clear. The small plane lined up with the surfaced submarine and landed gently on the ocean, and taxied to the sub. A long boom swung out from the stern, picked up the plane and swung it up onto the deck. The plane's crew folded the wings and tail, pushed it into its hanger and secured the water tight doors. The I-25 submarine then submerged and headed back to Japan.

This event, which caused no damage, marked the only time during World War II that an enemy plane dropped bombs on the United States mainland. What the Japanese did not count on was coastal fog, mist and heavy doses of rain that made the forests so wet they simply would not catch fire.

Fifty years later the Japanese pilot, who survived the war, would return to Oregon to help dedicate a historical plaque at the exact spot where his two bombs had impacted. The elderly pilot then donated his ceremonial sword as a gesture of peace and closure of the bombing of Oregon in 1942.

Abstracted from an article by Norm Goyer.
Submitted to the HH by William Varnedoe

THE MIGHTY EIGHTH AIR FORCE MUSEUM

We, the 385th Bomb Group veterans, were part of the US Armed Forces of over 16 million Americans who fought in World War II. Of those, the "Mighty Eighth" Air Force consisted of about 350,000 guys who flew the bombers and fighters, and the ground crews that worked around the clock to keep the aircrafts flying and by patching the crippled aircraft that limped back to England to fly again.

Through the years we have often been called heroes. We don't look at it that way. We were just ordinary guys doing a job that had to be done. The real heroes are the ones who never came back. A quote that pays tribute to those real heroes can be found at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum over the Roll of Honor. It says:

"There was one people in the world which would fight for others' liberties at its own cost, to its own peril and with its own toil, not limiting its guarantees of freedom to its own neighbors, to men of the immediate vicinity, or to countries that lay close at hand, but ready to cross the sea that there might be no unjust empire anywhere and that everywhere justice, right, and law might prevail."

Those of us that are here today are now in our late 80s and early 90s. The Veteran's Administration says that almost 1200 WWII veterans die each day. Modern history

books often have little more than a few pages to chronicle WWII, and the passing of every WWII American veteran, a little bit of our history dies with us. The true value on the price of freedom begins to close, the balance sheet is finished, and some would mark them "Account Closed."

We know that those who gave so much during those war years need to be remembered, and their stories be preserved. They are the lessons and experiences that should be preserved as the legacy of the greatest generation.

When we all take our final flight, we want to know that the spirit of America will continue to be held high as a beacon of liberty and the flame of freedom will be carried safely into the future by the "Next

Gens", and the "Next Gens", and the "Next Gens"... .

How do we maintain this mission, a mission that never ends? A mission maintained by the leaders within the Museum The Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, and the staff and the volunteers who work every day to make sure that the mission is carried out with energy, determination and character. It continues as new knowledge comes available and different ways come along to present to the mission.

Every day visitors learn something unique about their patriotic heritage that they didn't know before. They leave with a brand-new respect for a parent, a relative, or a friend who served or might have not returned from the war. Maybe

IN 2010 WE HAVE SEEN THE MUSEUM GROW AS:

- The Restoration of B-17 "City of Savannah" continues.
- The 2nd Air Division "Second to None" exhibit was completed.
- The Deenethorpe Diorama was upgraded with lights and sound, visually demonstrating the story of what life on an American air base in East Anglia was like during the war.
- The Korean War monument, the 487th Bomb Group monument, and a garden bench from the 359th Fighter Group were dedicated.
- Two custom-made Chapel doors, with beautiful stained glass panels, were added in the Chapel of Eagles in honor and memory of the 379th and the 93rd Bomb Groups.
- The Museum introduced new and exciting ways to engage the next generations and help sustain the Museum for future generations by making the experiences of the "Mighty Eighth" more accessible to families and children through summer camps and "Bunking In" overnights.

for the first time they realize the human toll paid for their liberty. Visiting visitors often say, "They never told me that!" or "He never talked much about the war. I really didn't know what he did."

During the last 15 years of the Museum's history, the Roger Freeman Research Center has collected over 10,000 objects, 25,000 photographs, 10,000 documents, 1,300

personal recorded histories, and 10,000 books. It also received a major collection from the Miles Foundation.

The ranks of the Mighty Eighth Air Force's veterans becomes thinner every year. Therefore, we "old timers" must unite to honor both those ordinary guys that did what had to be done, AND the heroes who never came home. Your tax-deductible financial gift to our

Museum will help secure our legacy of freedom before the stories of the greatest generation are silenced by time. Any amount will help the Museum. Give now and make this final mission a success.***

***Abstracted from a Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum letter, November 2010

Send your donation to the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum, P.O. Box 1992, Savannah, GA 31402.

BOOK REVIEW

Night of the Intruders

by Ian Maclachlan

Night of the Intruders is a masterful account of the Mighty Eighth's Mission #311 to bomb the marshaling yards at Hamm, Germany on April 22, 1944. Meticulously researched, the author describes the details of the carefully coordinated mission plan and contrasts the precision of the plan with the inevitable problems encountered during its execution.

Skillfully weaving personal narratives with information from official after-action reports from both sides, the author carefully assembles the full story of this mission as if connecting the dots in a puzzle to reveal the larger picture.

As the bombers proceeded inexorably to their target, countless individual battles for survival erupt between the Allied attackers and the German defenders. Drawing from the author's research and recollections of the survivors, we learn who won and who lost these individual battles.

In many respects the mission to Hamm was similar to many other bombing missions to the German heartland. But Mission #311 has the distinction of suffering the greatest losses of aircraft and aircrews in England. "Weather forecasts over the target area dictated a later than normal start to the mission meaning many aircraft would not return to their East Anglia bases until after dark giving the Luftwaffe a perfect opportunity to follow the bombers home and attack the vulnerable bombers as they approached their bases. Of course, the 8th AF HQ planners were cognizant of the risk of intruder action on this mission. It was a calculated risk they were willing to accept just as they accepted the risk of losses due to flak and fighters."

"The B-17s of the First and Third Air Divisions landed safely but the Second Air Division's Liberators were infiltrated by a small but deadly flight of Me-410s. Keeping low the

Me-410s hid in the lower darkness using residual upper light for silhouetting the bombers and in some case using the bomber's own lights. The ensuing carnage was witnessed by many East Anglians and events became legendary as 'the night Jerry followed the Yanks.'"

The *Night of the Intruders* tells this story well and ensures that the legend will live on.

—Reviewed by Tom Gagnon

The author, a long time "Friend of the Eighth" and current Historian of the 385th Bomb Group Association, is no stranger to the story of the "Mighty Eighth." He has published two other books, *'Final Flights'*, the dramatic wartime incidents revealed by aviation archaeology and *'Eighth Air Force Bomber Stories'* (co-authored with Russell Zorn), eye-witness accounts of American airmen and British civilians of the perils of war.

If you wish to order a copy of *"Night of the Intruders"*, contact Pen & Sword Books, Ltd (www.pen-and-sword.co.uk).

REGENSBURG – AUGUST 17, 1943

On August 17, 1943, the 385th Bombardment Group (H), and other Eighth Army Air Corps Groups of the Fourth Combat Bomb Wing (CBW), made history by leaving their respective fields in England, bombing the ME-110 Messerschmidt factory at Regensburg, and then continuing to fly a southerly course over the Alps and the Mediterranean Sea to North Africa (under the auspices of Ye Olde Flying Fortress Shuttle-Service and Bomb-Dropping Company).

The August 17th Regensburg mission was part of a "Double Strike" to simultaneously strike two German industrial targets, Regensburg and Schweinfurt, with a total of 376 aircraft, 230 aircraft to strike the ball bearing plants around Schweinfurt and 146 planes to strike the Messerschmidt aircraft complex at Wiener-Neustadt near Regensburg. It was a costly "Double Strike" mission with the loss of 60 heavy bombers.

The B-17 crews worked hard when smashing the Messerschmidt complex at Regensburg. They had beaten off the toughest fighter opposition that most of them had ever experienced: they had penetrated the deepest defenses of Germany: they had endured the accurate and concentrated flak around the target area: and they had knocked down 140 enemy fighter planes while they did it. Despite the fighter attacks by the German Luftwaffe, and the

intense flak, the 385th Bomb Group, along with the entire Third Air Division, accurately bombed the Messerschmidt factories at Regensburg.

Completing their mission, the planes headed for Africa. Africa was a place to relax, and they relaxed hard. They collected plenty of souvenirs while in Africa. There were handmade leather billfolds and cigarette

17th. But the crews were unaware of that when they returned home. Their memories of Regensburg were memories of four hours of continuous fighter opposition in a sky filled with the smoke trails of falling planes.

For the Regensburg shuttle mission, the 385th Bombardment Group was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation. Many members



B-17 aircraft flying over Alps to Africa.

cases for the ground personnel at the home base. Many of the crew arrived home wearing fezzes and carrying Italian rifles. One crew managed to arrive at its home base with a three-foot high midget donkey. Also, included as souvenirs, were the holes in the planes that had been collected in the air over Regensburg.

Official opinion was that about 30 percent of the German day fighter production was destroyed that August

of the 385th Bomb Group Association, remember this mission as one of the many highlights of the 385th Bombardment Group (H).

The material for this article was obtained from a story by Sgt. Charles Brand as published in YANK The Army Weekly, September 12, 1943, and from an article by Mark Copeland and William Thorn (96th BG) in Volume 10 Number 3 as published

A 385TH BG B-17 MYSTERY

The mystery of the 385th Bomb Group's B-17s named *Blue Champagne* is still a puzzle. Perhaps some *Hardlife Herald* reader can enlighten us on this mystery!!!

There were two B-17s in the 385th BG named *Blue Champagne*. The B-17, Serial No. 42-3547 was one of the earliest B-17s in the Group. It flew its first mission, M-19, on September 10, 1943, and its last mission, M-66 on February 21, 1944.

According to the 385th Bomb Group Association records, aircraft, B-17G No. 42-3547, was first named *Latest Rumor*. The nose art on this plane showed the name, *Latest Rumor*, a young lady making a phone call, and shark's teeth covering the aircraft's chin turret (Fig. 1). Sometime later the plane was renamed and the nose art was

repainted to show the name *Blue Champagne*. In addition to the name change, the young lady's underwear was re-colored, and a champagne glass and bubbles were added to the nose art. It also appears the shark's teeth were removed (Fig. 2).

A second B-17G, Serial No. 42-37977, was also named *Blue Champagne*. It flew its first mission, M-56, on January 29, 1944 and its last mission, M-89, on April 11, 1944. The nose art on this plane shows a bare breasted young lady in a champagne glass, and the ship's name, in large uppercase letters, beneath the young lady and the glass and bubbles (Fig 3).

Both planes flew missions between M-56, January 29, 1944, and M-66, February 21, 1944. It is difficult to ascertain when these *Blue*

Champagne names were adopted and painted, and it is unlikely that both planes flew at the same time during that period.

It has been speculated that:

- No. 42-3547, originally named *Latest Rumor*, must have been renamed and repainted sometime prior to its last mission, M-66, February 21, 1944.
- No. 42-37977 was named *Blue Champagne* and so painted after M-66, February 21, 1944, when No. 42-3547, the first *Blue Champagne*, was salvaged.

If anyone performed maintenance on, or flew in either of these B-17s, perhaps you can provide the dates of the plane's nose art.

Mission data and pictures were provided by Bill Varnedoe from the 385th BGA Historical files.

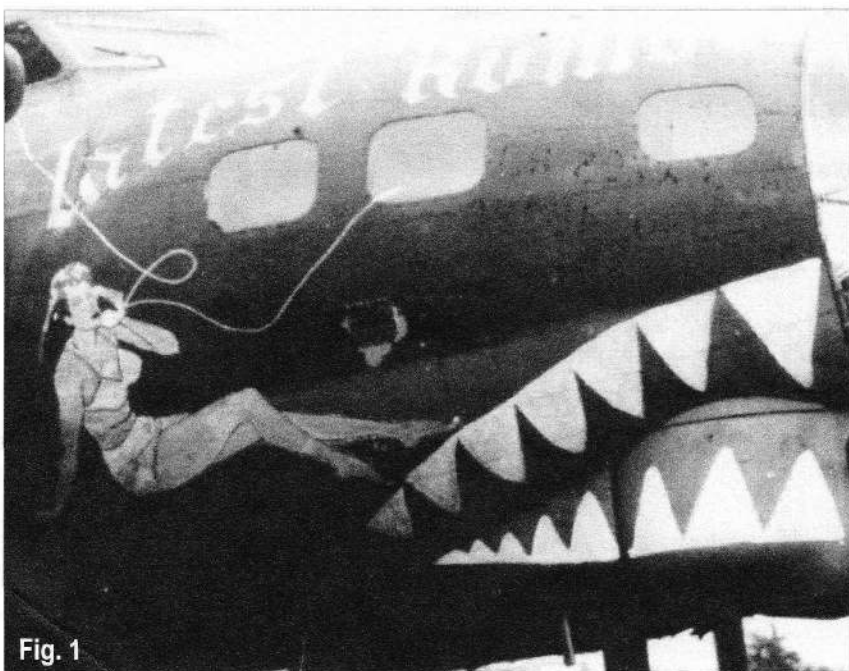


Fig. 1



Fig. 2



Fig. 3

The following is a reprint from the
**“SOUVENIR OF THE FIFTH REUNION
OF THE 385TH BOMB GROUP”**

Atlanta, GA - April, 1975

Reunions are distinguished from one another by our differing styles of life. They have existed with each of us through church, schools, college, and business groups.

However, the idea of a get-together of a bomb group has an entirely different attraction from all other reunions. The 385th was a short-lived group by comparison, less than three years, and friendships had even less to ripen. The lasting friendships are probably because they occurred during the most hectic, glamorous, and at times, most tragic and controversial era in history. The 385th was in the middle of that fast moving period of history and a part of the famous Eighth Air Force. The Eighth Air Force was undoubtedly an enviable place to be in what was to become “the greatest show on earth”.

The 385th reunion effort, which had no formal beginning, had no planned future. Its very existence could be described as most accidental. Those few fragile friendships have been given a chance of renewal through efforts, which are related here.

Until the mid 1950's, several families exchanged visit periodically, centering around the Cleveland, Ohio area. Among those visiting were

Frank Walls, John Nedjedic, Jim Cooper, Rudy Cunat, Jessie Ashlock (Hardlife), Deb Wagner, Vince Masters, Wally Alownuk, and Bob Lambert. At each visit, more names were mentioned.

In September of 1956, most of these men met. They enjoyed reminiscing so much they decided to organize a reunion so that all the 385th members could participate. There was no official list of men available. The only way to build a mailing list was by contacts through people we knew.

At that meeting, a loose organization was drawn up. Ruel Weikert was appointed president, John Nedjedic, secretary-treasurer, and Frank Walls was designated to head the host committee.

By May 1957, plans were firmed up to hold a reunion at the Webster Hall Hotel in Pittsburgh, PA. We then had 250 names on our mailing list. More than fifty members attended along with about forty wives.

At that reunion, Ruel Weikert was elected president, John Nedjedic as treasurer, and Frank Walls as secretary. It was decided that we would have another reunion next year. The Pick Congress Hotel in Chicago was selected as the site for the 1958 reunion with J. K. Hughs and others from the Midwest

handling the host job.

The 1958 gathering decided on another reunion to be held in New York City on August 5, 6, & 7, 1960. This reunion was hosted by the men of the New York area, headed by Charles Edelstein. The attendance at the second and third reunions was not as great as the first, however, sufficient interest was maintained along with a small contributions to keep the effort alive.

For some unknown reason, no firm date was established, and due to the pressure of normal living, no effort was made for a reunion during the next decade.

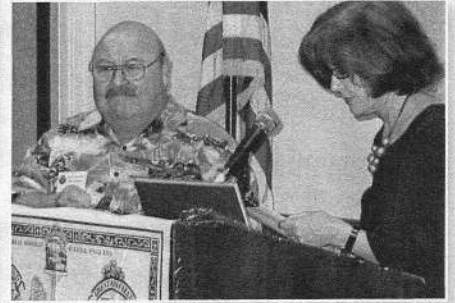
During the summer of 1970, John Pettinger and his wife, Rorry, went to visit Frank Walls and his family, and suggested that since time was marching on at a rapid pace, we should try another reunion. Since there was some money in the treasury, some arrangements were made to meet in Cleveland with the other officers the next summer (1971). We set July 22, 1972 for the 4th reunion in Cleveland, Ohio. The reunion was finally scheduled to be held in the town where the idea was originally conceived.

There were 138 members and

Continued on page 23...

385TH BGA 2010 REUNION MEMORIES





385TH BGA 2011 REUNION

The National 8th Air Force Historical Society (8AFHS) 2011 Reunion will not be held in Omaha, but will be held in St. Louis, MO October 11-15, 2011. They have hired the Armed Forces Reunion, Inc. (Donna Lee) to assist with the planning, arrangements and registration.

The 385th BGA 2011 Reunion will be held in conjunction with 8AFHS on those same dates. The Headquarters hotel for the reunion will be the Sheraton Westport Chalet Hotel, 191 Westport Plaza, St. Louis, MO 63146. Further details of our reunion will be in a future edition of the *Hardlife Herald*.

LETTERS/E-MAILS

30 Nov. 2010

Hi Frank,

It was good seeing you and being able to spend a little time with your son and daughter. I am sending you a picture of two good looking guys.

At the reunion in Cleveland in 1973, Col. Vandevanter gave a little talk. He said that everyone in the services thinks that their outfit was the best. Tonight I will tell you how good you fellows really were.

He said that of all the Bomb Groups in the Eighth Army Air Force, the 385th was third for placing the bombs on the target and of all the Bomb Groups, the 385th was next to last in losses. In other words, there was only one outfit that had less losses than us. Now you put these facts together, third in accuracy in hitting the target, and only one outfit with less losses, that made you guys pretty darn good.

Frank, I am also enclosing an article about the WASPs. I think they should have some recognition for the great job they did in WWII. They are in our age group and they never got the recognition they deserved. I would love to have them join us at one of our reunions. Hope that you can find space in the *Hardlife Herald* for this story.

Best Regards,
Marty Girson

October 24, 2010

To: Bill Varnedoe [billvar@comcast.net]

From: Wayne Spees [wspees@pd.sandiego.gov]

Hi Bill,

We corresponded a couple of years ago regarding my wife's grandfather, Melvin Curry. He was a ball turret gunner at Great Ashfield. Anyway next month my wife and I are going to London and would like to visit the location of the airfield. I was wondering if you had any recommendations while we were there. I hope you are well.

Wayne Spees

LETTERS/E-MAILS

October 25, 2010

From : Bill Varnedoe

To: Wayne Spees; Cc Ian Maclachlan [ianm385bg@btopenworld.com]

Wayne,

Attached is a list of all your wife's grandfather's missions. While in England you contact Ian Maclachlan (10 All Saints Green, Worlingham, Beccles, Suffolk NR34 7RR.) He is the current Historian of the 385th Bomb Group and should be able to give you information about Great Ashfield, and if he is free, may be able to show you around.

Only one runway and a few scattered buildings remain. The locals have put up a sign near the field, and of course, the All Saints Church with the 385th BG stained glass window, and the plaque to the 385th in the court yard are there in the area.

I noticed that you are not members of the 385th Bomb Group Association. I am a veteran of, and the past Historian of the 385th BGA. This is an organization of the 385th veterans, their kin, and other interested people. We hold yearly reunions, and publish a newsletter, the *Hardlife Herald*, ("Hardlife" was the tower radio call at Great Ashfield.) We have many 2nd and 3rd generation members as well as the veterans. You would be most welcome as Members and would receive the *Hardlife Herald*. Dues are \$35/year. Send personal info and dues to our Treasurer, Chuck Smith at P.O. Box 329, Alpharetta, GA 30009. I hope you join us. We have had several reunion trips to Great Ashfield (and may have more).

You may also be interested in my book, *The Story of Van's Valiants, A History of the 385th Bomb Group*. I have copies for \$25, post paid (checks only, please.) My address is Bill Varnedoe, 5000 Ketova Way, Huntsville, AL 35803

Bill

November 19, 2010

From: Wayne Spees

To: Ian McLachlan; Cc: Bill Varnedoe

Hi Ian,

My wife and I will be in England starting Saturday. Are you or Roy Barker available next week? We are leaving soon and I can be reached on my blackberry at e-mail wspeers@pd.sandiego.gov. I hope we can meet.

Wayne

LETTERS/E-MAILS

December 6, 2010

From: Ian Mac

To: Wayne Spees; Cc: fxmccawley@aol.com

Hi Wayne,

It was really good to meet you at Great Ashfield and I hope you enjoyed the visit. I assume you're back in San Diego's sunshine, lucky devil. It's still freezing here.

As promised, I checked the 385th microfilm and found out that Caroline's grandfather arrived at Great Ashfield on or about 26 April 1944. The Movement Order lists him as on Crew KK-97 comprising: 2nd Lt. Roger L. Shock – pilot**; 2nd Lt Luther P. Newcomer – co-pilot; S/Sgt Raymond A. Flora**; S/ Sgt William A. Wesley – top turret**; Cpl. Godfrey P. Howard; Cpl. Robert C. Anderson; Sgt Melvin H. Curry** and Sgt John M. Connolly – right waist gunner**.

As it says in the order, these men were to "participate in regular and frequent aerial flights and are entitled to flight pay". I noted later that Melvin was promoted to S/Sgt on 14 May. As you know, he was shot down on 2 June so his time with the Group was brief, and I could find no Movement Orders giving him any furlough.

Those asterisked above were on the Shock crew when it was shot down by flak on Mission 121 to Evreux/ Conches when flying B-17G 42-39918 "Stormy Angel". Also on board were F/O Richard F. Ahlheim – co-pilot; 2nd Lt. Emerson E. Branson – navigator; F/O John E. Brenish – bombardier; S/ Sgt Bernard B. Soloman – tail gunner; and S/Sgt Ralph M. Valvano – left waist gunner. All the crew parachuted safely and were listed RTD – Returned to Duty – with the exception of Caroline's grandfather who we know was an Evader.

This should add a little more to your files and I am looking forward to seeing a compilation of your efforts including the E & E report. I'd like to write your visit and Melvin's story for the 385th magazine, "Hardlife Herald". It might also be of interest for you to join the 385th Bombardment Group Association.

Ian

From: David Cash (dcashw@yahoo.com)

To: Ian Mac

Ian,

I am looking for anything you may have on my brother-in-law, Rowland P. Burch. He was a waist gunner on "Ground Hog" shot down over France on 12/30/43. Member of the 385th BG 549th BS

Thank you for any help

LETTERS/E-MAILS

From: Ian Mac

To: David Cash; Cc: Frank McCawley

Hi David,

Bill (Varnedoe) has already sent you the mission list for your brother-in-law, Roland P. Burch, and I can add a bit more by way of background to the events of the day. It was the 385th Mission 47 to attack the port area and oil installations in Ludwigshafen – the Eighth launched over 700 bombers.

The 385th Report of Operations for the mission of 30 December 1943 states that the group “took off on time at 0820... The Group assembled over Splasher number 7 and the assembly was accomplished at 0850... The formation was only fair. There was a tendency to straggle too much in the climb and ships failed to fill in quickly on abortions. The Wing assembled normally.

Bombing altitude was reached at 1100, just as the formation crossed the enemy coast at Fecomp. The flight plan was flown until the IP was reached. The formation turned on the IP after over running it by 10 minutes and the Wing was forced to make a second bomb run to avoid colliding with the second wing. The formation was south of course on the route out recrossing enemy coast at Le Havre at 1531. The first visibility at the IP was restricted due to solid undercast. This Wing which should have been first over the target was second...due to a second run. The rally after bombing was normal and the decent was normal although the group had a tendency to open up...

Twenty-one aircraft took off and assembled...A/c 42-5912 turned back before leaving the English coast. A/c 42-30249 left the formation over enemy territory and is classified as MIA...of the 19 aircraft over the target 18 dropped their bombs and a/c 42-3097 (your brother-in-law's aircraft) which is missing in action, is presumed to have bombed...a/c 42-3097 left the formation at 1512 hours. No apparent reason for leaving”

The crew of “Ground Hog” is listed as follows: Pilot: Reuben H. Eckhardt 2/Lt; CP: Charles M. Erichsen 2/Lt; Nav: Kingsley E. Summer 2/Lt; Bomb: John S. Hay 2/Lt; TTG: Arthur K. Enders S/Sgt; Radio: Leroy N. Acridge S/Sgt; BTG: Robert L. Crumine Sgt; TG; Floyd W. Montgomery Sgt; WGL: James A. Lires Sgt; RWG Roland P. Burch.

I would suggest you obtain a copy of MACR 1899 (would also welcome a copy for the 385th archives if you do). “Ground Hog” was apparently hit by fighters on the return trip and lost the number 3 prop which took off the nose or it lost the number 3 prop owing to a technical malfunction and was hit by fighters – am unclear on this. The crew bailed out and the ship came down near Fresnicourt, area of Sain-en-Gohelle, Pas de Calais, France. Erichsen was apparently hit in the head by a 20mm cannon shell and the unfortunate Hay had no parachute so went down with the ship. These two crewmen were killed. We have the Escape and Evasion Report for Arthur Enders who states that Acridge was last seen slumped in his seat as the aircraft went down but he does not show up on my 385th casualty list and is shown as POW so it looks like two killed, 6 POWs and two evaded.

I hope this helps and I'd be very grateful if you mailed me pictures of your brother-in-law with his crew or individually – any additional 385th photographs are always welcome.

Ian

LETTERS/E-MAILS

Following are responses from Ian to a request from Tony Moor:

From: Ian Mac

To: anthonyjohn@amoor4.orangehome.co.uk

Dear Tony,

Yes, I'm okay for you to use the pictures from my *"Eighth Air Force Bomber Stories"* in your forthcoming book about Detling Airfield and I wish you well with the project. Please find attached two pictures from bomber stories showing the nose art on the port side – please credit the Zorn Collection for the two of *"Stardust."*

Should you learn any more about this incident from your research, I'd appreciate feedback for the 385th archives because I've recently taken over the role of historian for the 385th Bombardment Group Association.

Best wishes,
Ian

From: Ian Mac
To: fxmccawley@aol.com

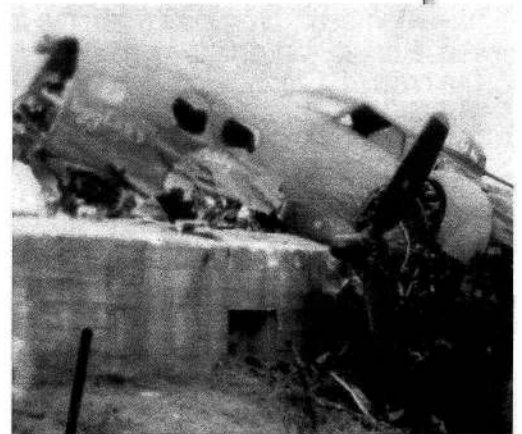
This is a copy of the e-mail sent to Tony Moor who's doing a book about RAF Detling (Airfield): On 13 February 1944, the 385th made a small contribution to the history of this aerodrome when 42-39901, *"Stardust"* made an emergency landing after being hit by flak over the target on a No-ball mission. The # 1 engine was knocked out but the prop wouldn't feather and the # 3 engine showed signs of catching fire as the temperature rose rapidly and the bomber reeked of fuel from leaking tanks.

Jettisoning their bombs and other equipment, the crew descended over the Channel. Ditching was considered but the chances for survival in the icy water would be slim so they opted to keep going and managed to reach the British fighter field at Detling. Touching down, the ship was unable to stop in time and slammed into a pill box—a concrete emplacement built for airfield defense—and broke her back.

The unfortunate Fred Berlinger had to have his leg amputated as a result of his injuries, but the others were relatively unharmed and were collected the next day by Col. Vandevanter who apparently treated the RAF to an excellent buzz job before heading home to Great Ashfield.

Ian

Standing L-R Charles Day; Gerald Hawes; Ernie Meyer; Charles Thompson;
Jack Osborne; and Jack Brutenbach. Kneeling L-R—Andrew Minkus;
"Swede" Swedlund; George Guscott and Fred Berlinger.
Photo credit: Zorn Collection



LETTERS/E-MAILS

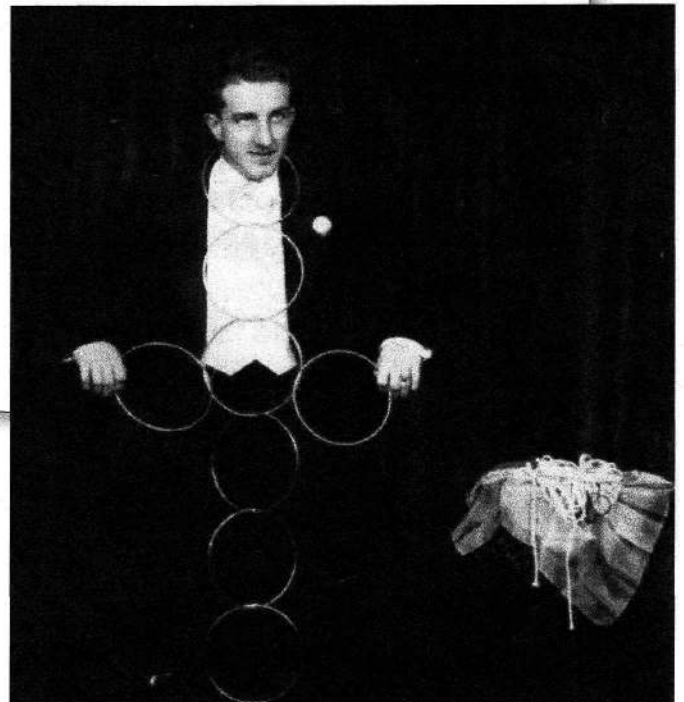
From: Ian Mac
To: fxmccawley@aol.com
Subject: S/Sgt Marion E. McGinnis

The history of the 385th can be added to in many ways. A few months ago I had a phone call from Peter Nunn who was born in 1928 in Elmswell, one of the villages nudging up against Station 155 (Great Ashfield Aerodrome). As a 17-year old boy in Culford School near Bury St Edmunds, Peter got to know some 385th BG personnel and one of them had been a pre-war professional magician. This airman was S/Sgt Marion E. McGinnis, and Peter sent me a picture (below) of Marion performing the "famous steel ring trick". This [picture] was sent to Peter after S/Sgt McGinnis was killed on 26 September 1943 when the Keeley and Yannello crews collided letting down in poor weather conditions. Keeley was flying 42-3290 and Yannello was flying 42-30264—Marion was the ball turret gunner on the Yannello crew. It seems that Yannello slipped under Keeley's aircraft then apparently pulled up and they collided. Both crashed near London, one on Tillingham Hall Farm, Bulphan, and the other in Horndon Avenue, West Hornden, Essex. The tail assembly was torn off 42-30264 but S/Sgt John J. Adams managed to bail out—he was the only survivor from the 21 men involved.

My records show that Marion's war time address was 480 South State Street, Marion, Ohio, so if we have any members in that area, maybe they can find out more about this 385th magician from local records.

Peter tells me that his family befriended a number of Americans who were given hospitality in the Nunn homestead. One airman they befriended was Warren Cerrone who took Peter and his brother up for a flight in a B-17 (Peter was in the Air Training Corps and his brother was in the Royal Observer Corps), and they got lost. Luckily Peter's brother, Bill recognized that they were over Oxford so a route home was found.

Ian



**S/Sgt Marion E. McGinnis
performs the famous steel ring trick.**

Taps

Sam Lyke – Bartlesville, OK died August 19, 2010 at age 89. He was born in his grandparents home in Bartlesville in July 1921, and as a young man learned the craftsmanship of a master carpenter from and working with his grandfather and father. On December 28, 1940, he married his young sweetheart, Mary Catherine Cooper. In August 1943, Sam entered military service and proudly served as a B-17 waist gunner with the 551st Bomb Squadron, 385th Bomb Group, and was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross. During his time in service, Mary worked at the Sunflower Ordnance plant in Lawrence, Kansas.

After their wartime service, Sam and Mary owned and operated Lyke Built Homes in Bartlesville until they retired. They were active in community volunteer work with the Boy Scouts, Little League Baseball, and the Women and Children in Crisis Center. Sam was the 10th President, 1989-1991, of the 385th Bombardment Group Association. He and Mary co-hosted the highly successful 385th BGA's Reunion in Tulsa, OK in 1990.

A memorial fund with the 385th BGA has been established in Sam's name. All donations are designated to be used for the restoration of the B-17 Flying Fortress, "City of Savannah" at the Mighty Eighth Museum.

Sam is survived by his wife, Mary, two sons, Bill of Tulsa, OK, and Richard of Jackson, MO, seven grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

—by his loving family

George P. Solomos – Catford, London, SE 6, UK died November 8, 2010 of pneumonia. George was a radio operator with the 550th Bomb Squadron on the crew of Lt. Francis Pavich. George's experiences in the Air Corps led to his interest in publishing as well as his writing and film-making after the war. He maintained his interest in the cinema and was co-founder and editor of the FIBA website on the internet.

—by Roy Thomas

Marvin Durrell Unruh – Battle Creek, MI died October 6, 2010 at age 88. Marvin was born near Pawnee Rock, KS in July 1922 and was 14 years old in 1936 when the family moved to Bedford after losing the family farm. Graduating from Battle Creek Central in 1940, Marvin enlisted and served five years in the Army Air Corps. Marvin was an original member of the 385th Bomb Group organized at Geiger Field, WA. During his tour with the Group, he was the Group armament inspector. He joined the Michigan National Guard as an aircraft mechanic and in May 1971, he retired as a Chief Master Sergeant. He gained the distinction as being one of the first members of the Battle Creek ANG group.

Marvin was a Life Member of the VFW, a member of the American Legion, the Elks Club, and the Scoutmaster of the Boys Scouts at Riverside School

He is survived by his wife, Mavis, a daughter, Lynette Owen, two sons, James and Steven, eight grandchildren and 11 great-grandchildren.

—by Ed Bice

Taps

During the October 2010 385th BGA Reunion in Charleston, SC,
the following deceased BGA members were honored by the reunion attendees:

Wesley R. Brown	Edward John McElroy
Peter J. Byrne	John McGowan
Gilbert Chandler, Jr.	George Menkoff
Harlan Cook	Leonard A. Mika
Jim Cooper	Rolland "Rollie" Miles
Dale Dykins	Jim Mulder
Hector J. Garza	Jack Popp
Willard Hagman	Joel Panches
Thomas Hair	Floyd D. Reinken
Richard W. Hartnupp	Daniel Riva
Thomas A. Helman	James "Duke" Skohtammer
George S. Hruska	Edward Stern
Thomas Kelly	Jack Surritt
Walter Kmier	Florian Tomah
Sam Lyke	Arthur Wohl
William J. "Bill" Lynch	

"Souvenir of the Fifth Reunion of The 385th Bomb Group"

Continued from page 13...

wives in attendance at the reunion. The host committee, headed by Rudy Cunat, Jim Cooper and their wives did a magnificent job of hosting a very successful and interesting reunion.

Ruel Weikert who had served so faithfully as president gave up the

job and Frank Walls was appointed to replace him. Jim Cooper remained as treasurer, and Rudy Cunat was elected secretary.

After a lively discussion as to various locations for our next reunion, they settled on Atlanta, GA for early 1975. Charles Smith and

his lovely wife were given the job of hosting the 385th's fifth reunion, thirty years after the completion of the job it was organized to do.

Reprint submitted to *Hardlife Herald* by Vince Masters

385th BGA

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Alpharetta, GA 30009 USA

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Restoration of B-17 "City of Savannah"