

Hardlife



Herald



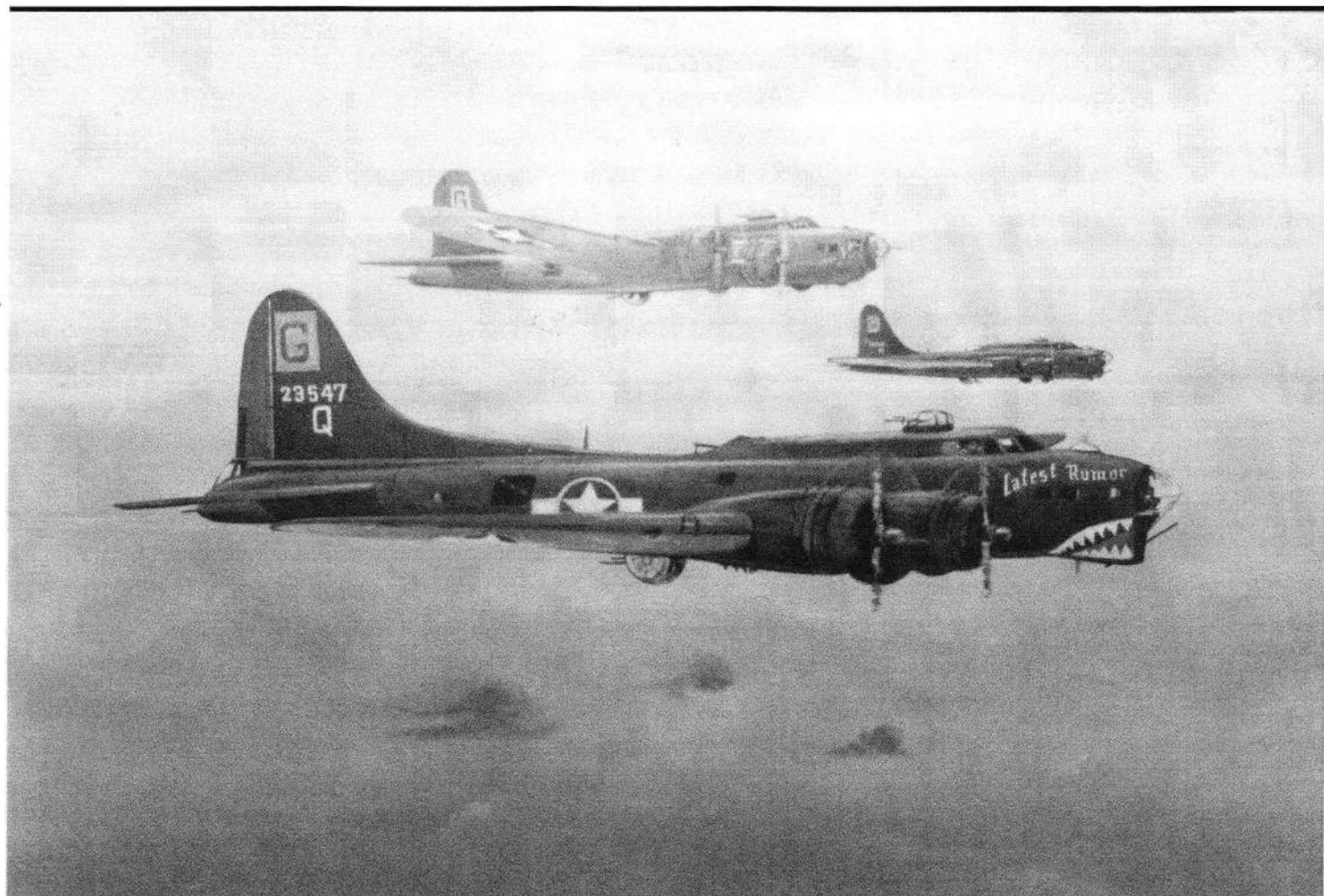
Newsletter of the
385th Bombardment Group Association

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The Mighty Eighth

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Hardlife Herald

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE

2Cover/Editorial/Officers and Board Members
3President's Message/Fear No Evil
4Operation Chowhound
6World War II History
7Mid-Air Collision
8The Blue Champagne Mystery Solved?
9A Stay in Kriegland
12Mission 285—April 7, 1945
13Letters/E-mails
18Taps
BackVE Night - Great Ashfield

FRONT COVER

Formation of 385th BG bombers.

EDITORIAL

In the last issue of the *Hardlife Herald*, I indicated that I tendered my resignation as the Editor of the 385th Bomb Group Association's newsletter to our President, and requested him to find and appoint a new editor. At the 385th BGA Reunion in St. Louis, Charles Lundsberg volunteered and was accepted by the Association as the new *Hardlife Herald* editor.

This issue of the *Hardlife Herald* is my last issue. I have enjoyed being the editor for the past many years and with sadness I am retiring from the job. During the years I have had many communications with the 385th BG veterans, their families, and friends of the 385th Bomb Group by way of letters, e-mails, and telephone conversations. They generally were providing me with the events and missions of the Group, their personal daily experiences at Great Ashfield, and the special event sustained by their aircrew during one of their missions. Bill Varnedoe and Ian MacLaughlan, our Historians, have been especially helpful in providing me information about the Group. I trust all of you will continue to provide our new editor with any information about the 385th Bomb Group and its supporting units that you may remember, or have written in your diaries. I will be waiting to read your stories in future issues of the *Hardlife Herald*.

I was unable to attend the St. Louis Reunion due to my wife's illness. I know that both Peggy and I missed the usual great times and friends that we enjoyed at previous reunions. I hope that both of us will be able, God willing, to attend the 2012 reunion in San Antonio.

Thanks to all of you for making my time as editor a great experience. Thanks again!!

—Frank X. McCawley

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Fresh from our annual 385th Bomb Group Association Reunion in St. Louis, I am glad to report another successful gathering. Held in conjunction with the 8th AFHS national reunion, we had plenty of company and a good time was had by all. Chuck Smith and Roy Anne Donnelly did their usual outstanding job of hosting our hospitality room that, in my humble opinion, was the most popular of all the hospitality rooms at the reunion.

Donna Lee and the Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. did a wonderful job of organizing the events at the reunion by offering a variety of tours of St. Louis' attractions including a Mississippi Riverboat tour with a "bird's-eye" view of St. Louis' famous Gateway Arch. (Yours truly crossed another item off his "bucket list" by taking the claustrophobic little elevator to the top of the Arch.) Sessions at the reunion included a well-received Q and A forum with several veterans answering question from the audience as well as an updated presentation by yours truly of advances in aviation technology focusing on pilotless aircraft and their increasing use in military and commercial aviation.

The 385th BGA membership meeting endorsed the following recommendations from the Board:

1. Continue for a second two-year term the current Board Members and Officers:
Tom Gagnon, President; Susy Stern Fineman, Vice President; Chuck Smith, Treasurer; and Barbara Molzhan Dangleman, Secretary; Vincent W. Masters, Verne Phillips, and Lindsey R. Weikert, Board Members.
2. Ratify Bill Varnedoe's appointment as Advisor to the Board in recognition of his continuing support and council.
3. That Secretary Dangleman coordinate with the Mighty Eighth Museum to refresh the 385th Bomb Group's Memorial in the Museum's Memorial Garden and repaint the faded lettering.
4. Proceed with a plan to identify a *Hardlife Herald* editor to succeed Frank McCawley.
5. Proceed with formal recognition of the contributions of Bill Varnedoe, past historian, and Frank McCawley, outgoing *Hardlife Herald* editor.

The 2012 Reunion of the 385th BGA is tentatively scheduled, in conjunction with the 8AFHS national reunion, in San Antonio, TX in early October. I hope to see you all there.

—Tom Gagnon

FEAR NO EVIL

"Fear No Evil" is a book about the U.S. Army Air Corps written by Charles D. Hamlin. It is an excellent book containing individual stories by the airmen of the Mighty Eighth. Each story provides a recollection of their day or episode during their time in Great Britain.

Charles Hamlin flew most of his missions as a ball turret gunner during his 35 mission tour with the 385th Bomb Group.

A copy of "Fear No Evil" can be ordered on-line at charlesdhamlin.com or by an e-mail to charlesdhamlin@gmail.com or to his address: **5500 Shadow Crest, Houston, TX 77096**. The book costs \$16.95 plus \$5.00 shipping (1st class) and \$1.40 sales tax, if applicable. He prefers that one order the book directly from him or on-line, however it will be available in major book stores, soon.

OPERATION CHOWHOUND

Abstract from an article by Raymond McCool, *The 8th Air Force News*, Vol. 11, No. 2

In 1944, the German Reichkommissar imposed a food embargo from the eastern section of the Netherlands to the western sections of the country in retaliation of Dutch resistance, and the deliberate flooding of the lowlands by the retreating German Army made the land unusable for food production.

Short supplies of food, fuel, water and the lack of sanitation during the 1944/1945 winter caused the death of many thousands of Holland's people in what became known as the "Hunger Winter."

In April 1945 the Allies and Germans in Holland agreed to a truce whereby British and American

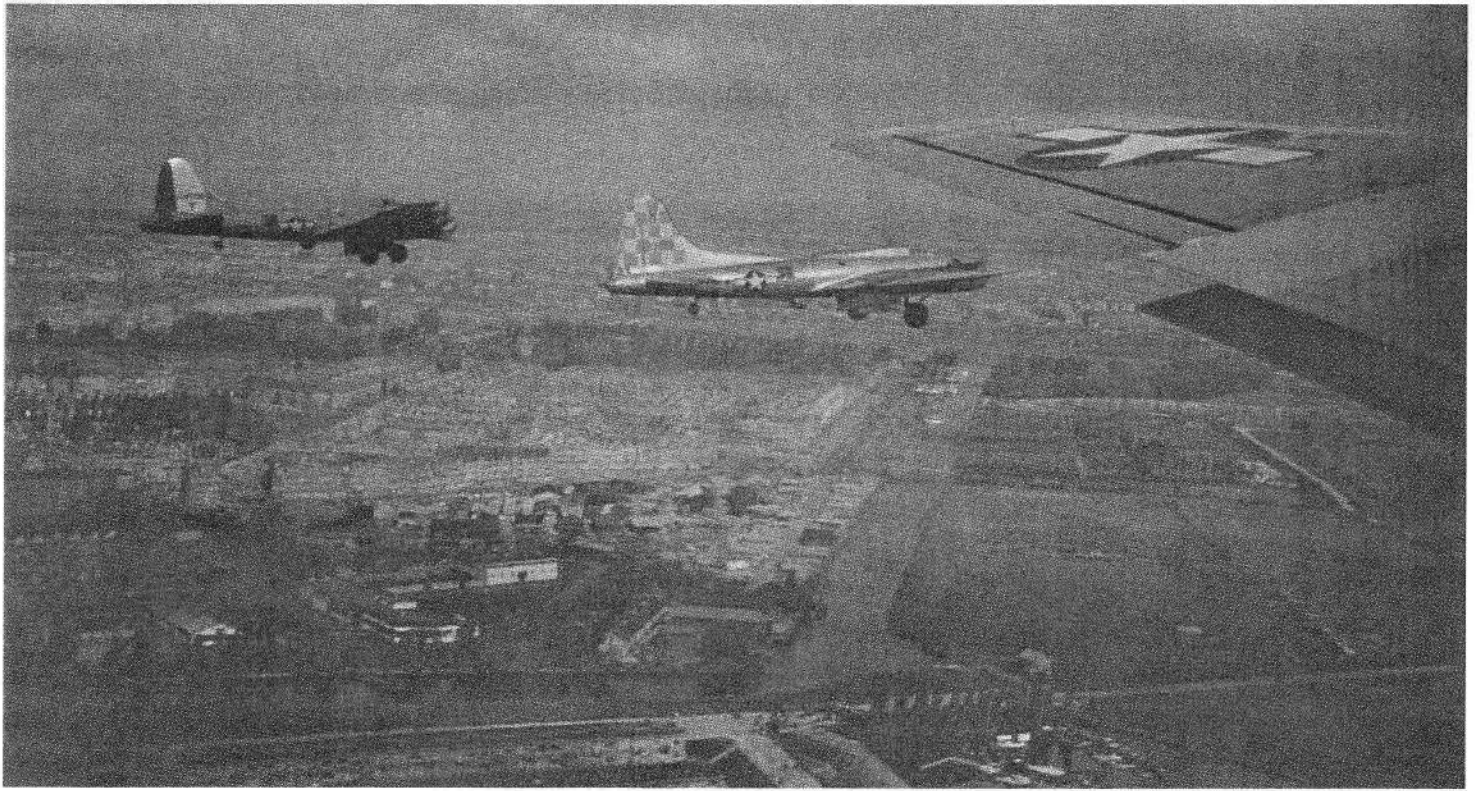
heavy bombers would drop food and other supplies to the starving people of Holland. Details of the agreement specified eleven limited corridors and drop zones and the specific times of the day for the food drops. The RAF using mainly Lancaster bombers and the 8th Air Force using B-17 bombers participated in these humanitarian missions from April 29th to May 7th, 1945. The British called their part of these missions Operation Manna and the Americans called their part of the missions Operation Chowhound. The combined operation of the two air commands became known as Operation Manna/Chowhound.

For the American participation, ten groups of the 3rd Bomb Division were assigned for these food drops, one of which was the 385th Bomb Group. To use the maximum amount of space in the aircraft the packages were stored in the bomb bays and other areas of the plane, thus with limited space the air crews were generally consisted of only four crew members. Bill Varnedoe, as a navigator on several of the missions, reported that the planes flew low over the drop zones sometimes barely above the trees on the ground when dropping their food packages. Flying slow to avoid the least amount of damage to the packages, the B-17s dropped packages that contained

Short supplies of food, fuel, water and the lack of sanitation during the 1944/1945 winter caused the death of many thousands of Holland's people in what became known as the "Hunger Winter."



385th Bomb Group Co-Pilot, 2nd Lt. Wallace McCafferty examines the damaged wing of "Stork Club" upon returning to Great Ashfield, home of the 385th Bomb Group.



With their landing gear down, flaps extended and bomb bay doors open to reduce airspeed, Fortresses of the 385th Bomb Group prepare to drop food containers near Utrecht, Holland in May of 1945.

Although there was a truce between the Allies and the Germans, some planes were fired upon by the 20mm flak guns.

such food as cheese, dehydrated meat, coffee, powdered eggs and milk, sugar, and other staples as well as military C and K rations.

Although there was a truce between the Allies and the Germans, several incidents by the German Army did occur and some planes were fired upon by the 20mm flak guns. One B-17, hit by flak, crashed into the sea with only two crew members surviving.

A 385th BG aircraft, the "Stork Club", piloted by Bob Valliere, was hit by flak over

a drop zone and sustained damage to a wing. The plane returned back to Great Ashfield safely with no injuries to the crew. According to reports, this B-17 is believed to be the last bomber to have sustained damage from the enemy in the European Theater, and Bob Valliere and the crew received credit for a combat mission.

Thousands of people died of starvation during the last few months of the war. However, Operation Manna/Chowhound saved the lives of untold numbers of Holland's people, and the people of Holland expressed their gratitude with symbols such as in the fields and on the tops of many buildings.

It's not what you gather, but what you scatter that tells what kind of life you have lived.

WORLD WAR II HISTORY

When the United States entered WW2, it was apparent that Germany, with its great military and industrial strength, posed the strongest threat of the Axis powers and should be dealt with first. Germany's defeat hinged on achieving four major objectives, for each of which effective use of Great Britain was a key factor. In the attainment of these objectives, Great Britain became a vast supply depot, military base, air base, and training and staging facility. During the war, more than 17 million tons of cargo and nearly two million military servicemen and women from the United States passed through British ports. Many military bases and training areas were established throughout the British Isles to receive the forces which later were to receive such spectacular results on the beaches of Normandy. At the same time, airfields were enlarged and additional bases were constructed for the use of the U.S. Army Air Force.

The first objective in the war against Germany was to provide the United Kingdom with the resources needed to carry on until sufficient men, materials and supplies could be assembled for a cross-channel invasion of Europe. To do so, the Atlantic sea lanes had to be made safe for the passage of Allied convoys between Great Britain and the United States. The "Battle of the

Atlantic" continued from 1939 to 1945, when the last German U-boats surrendered. This costly, but generally successful struggle, gave the Allies control of the sea lanes between the United States and Great Britain, which was essential to success of the Allied invasion of Europe.

The second objective was to aid and sustain other nations actively engaged against the Axis, particularly the USSR, which at the time was receiving the brunt of the enemy's land assaults. A second front was opened in November of 1942 to relieve the pressure against the USSR. Allied forces from bases in both Great Britain and the United States landed in North Africa and fought their way inland in the face of determined enemy resistance. Six months later, victory was achieved when all enemy forces surrendered. The operations in North Africa were followed by Allied landings in Sicily, Salerno and Anzio during 1943 and 1944. Victories in Sicily and Italy were paralleled by Soviet victories in the East, with the winning of the battle for Stalingrad in February of 1943 and the liberation of Sevastopol in May of 1944. One month later, allied forces entered Rome and the landings in Normandy commenced.

The third objective during the war against Germany was to conduct an intensive strategic

bombardment of Germany in order to destroy its military, industrial and economic systems. Achievement of this objective depended on the use of air bases within the British Isles. As the bases were constructed and expanded, the air war against Germany intensified. The first American strategic bombing against a target in Europe took place in August 1942. By the end of the war, more than one-half million sorties against targets in Western Europe were flown by British-based American aircraft.

The final objective was to invade the European continent and defeat the enemy on its historic battlefields. U.S. and British Commonwealth forces landed on the beaches in Normandy on 6 June 1944 in what was to be the greatest amphibious operation in the history of warfare. Supported by U.S and British aircraft, the Allied forces fought their way across France and crossed into Germany in September of 1944.

With the Allied victory in Europe on 8 May 1945, the struggle against the enemy in the Pacific was intensified. Confronted by overwhelming military superiority, its major cities devastated and weakened by the defeat of the Axis in Europe. Japan surrendered on 2 September 1945.

MID-AIR COLLISION

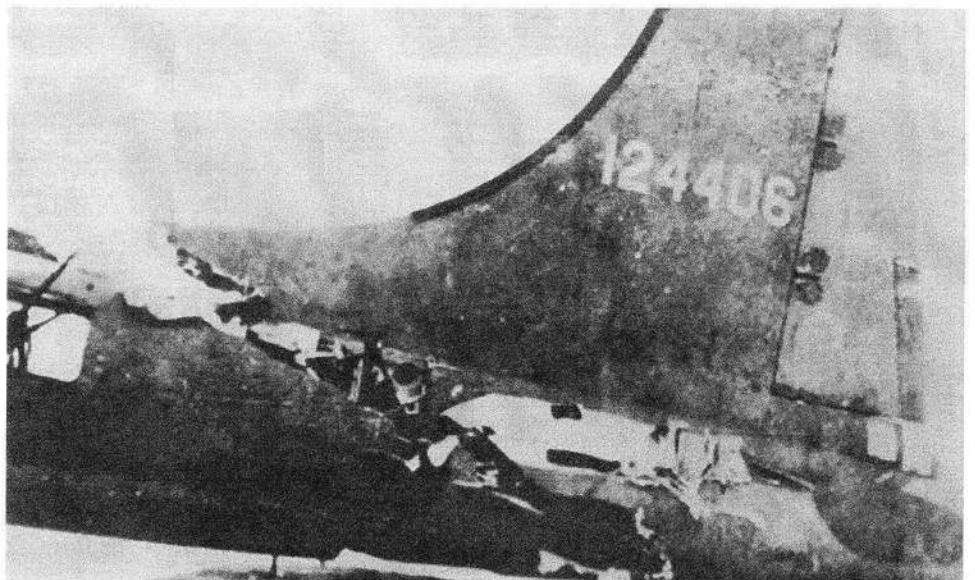
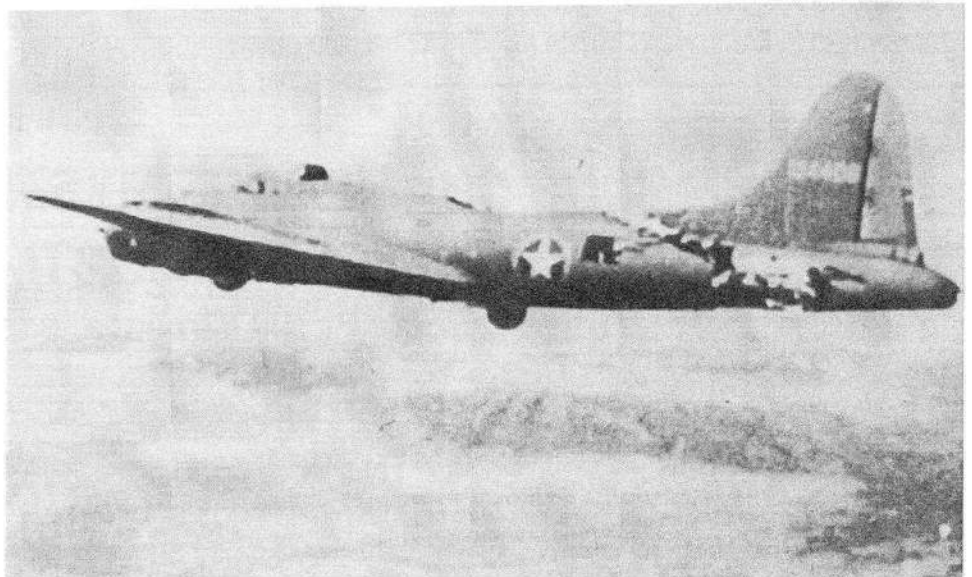
The mid-air collision between a German fighter and a B-17 was one of the most amazing stories of WWII. On February 1, 1943, a B-17, named *All American*, piloted by Lt. Kendrick R. Bragg of the 414th Bomb Squadron, 97th Bomb Group, collided with an out-of-control German fighter over the Tunis dock area. The damaged fighter struck the rear of the B-17 tearing away the left elevator and the left horizontal stabilizer, and damaging the vertical fin and rudder as well as the radio, oxygen and electrical systems. The fuselage was almost completely cut through at the rudder and only connected together with two small sections of the frame. There was also a split in the top of the fuselage that was over 16 feet long and 4 feet wide at its widest and extended from the rudder forward to the top turret. Except for one single elevator cable, all other control cables were severed as was the floor to the tail section. The German fighter broke apart after striking the bomber, but left some pieces in the B-17.

However, the *All American* continued to fly with its tail bouncing and swaying in the wind and twisting when the plane was being turned. Using parts of the German fighter and their own parachute harnesses, the tail gunner, who was trapped in the tail, and the waist gunners managed to keep the severed tail

from ripping off and the two sides of the main fuselage from splitting apart.

The crew continued to keep the plane together, and the pilot made the bomb run, and the bombardier released his bombs over the target. When the bomb bay doors were

opened, the wind was so great that one of the waist gunners was blown into the tail section. Several other crew members managed to bring him back into the main section using ropes from the parachutes, but when they attempted to retrieve the tail gunner, the tail section began



All American after collision.

flapping. The added weight of the tail gunner added stability to the tail section, and he returned to his position.

The *All American* was slowly losing altitude and speed and soon was separated from the formation. Two Me 109s attacked the lone aircraft, but despite the extensive damage to the plane, the gunners drove off the German fighters. The waist gunners stood with their heads outside the hole in the top of the fuselage to fire their guns. The tail gunner had to fire in short bursts as

the recoil caused the plane to turn.

As the *All American* crossed the Channel, intercepting P-51s radioed the base describing the condition of the plane and that the plane would not be able to land and to send out boats to rescue the crew when they bailed out. However after receiving hand signals from Lt. Bragg, the P-51s notified the base that the pilot would land the plane as five parachutes and the spare had been "used" to tie the plane together, thus five of the crew could not bail out safely.

Several hours after the collision and still over 40 miles away, Lt. Bragg made a final turn and lined up with the runway. Lt. Bragg made an emergency landing and the plane rolled to a stop on its landing gear. The *All American* waited until the crew members exited from the door in the fuselage and the tail gunner had climbed down a ladder, then its entire rear section collapsed onto the ground. The mission was completed...not one crew member was injured...*All American* and its crew had done their jobs.

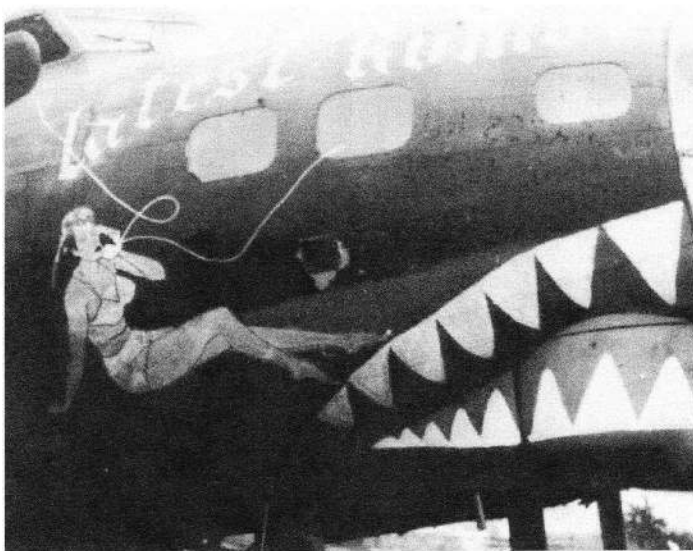
THE *BLUE CHAMPAGNE* MYSTERY SOLVED? WELL ALMOST!

By Bill Varnedoe

S. Craig Gillis' article in the May 2011 issue of the *Hardlife Herald* shed considerable light on the "*Blue Champagne* Mystery!" However, one element of the mystery remains.

The records show that the Bailey Crew (with Melvin Gillis as the Ball Turret gunner) first flew in 42-3547 on 29 January 1944. The records also indicate the Bailey crew flew 42-3547 again on 3 and 4 February 1944. On their next mission, 10 February 1944, they flew in 42-37977. From then on, the Bailey crew flew (mostly) in 42-37997.

Nose art pictures clearly show that both 42-3547 and 42-37977 were painted *Blue Champagne*, with slight differences in the lady's picture. However, other records and pictures clearly show that 42-3547 was originally named and painted *Latest Rumor*. It, 42-3547, belonged to the Vandiver crew as one of the original B-17s of the Group. Based on Mr. Gillis' account it becomes clear that when Melvin Gillis and the Bailey crew inherited *Latest Rumor* they renamed and repainted it as *Blue Champagne*. They painted out the name, *Latest Rumor*, and only slightly modified the painting of the lady on the nose. They even left the telephone and cord in her hand! The only remaining "mystery" is the exact date that *Latest Rumor* was repainted to *Blue Champagne*. It must have been between 29 January and 4 February 1944.



Note: The front cover shows 42-3547 *Latest Rumor* flying in formation.

A STAY IN KRIEGLAND

By Walter Schulte

My twelfth mission was to "Big B," Berlin, and it ended up as my last mission. We were shot down by German fighters on the bomb run into Berlin and were forced to bail out. The jump from 25,000 feet was an experience never to be forgotten. I was immediately captured upon landing and ultimately placed on a train headed to a Dulag in South Germany.

This trip was anything but pleasant. We were crowded into a rail car, and I slept (or rather rested) in the baggage rack. There was no food, the rest room was filthy, and had no toilet paper. It's interesting how a paper from a Lucky Strike cigarette can be utilized. At night, we usually

you were questioned was certainly up to the whim of the interrogator. We had been instructed to only answer questions with our names, rank, and serial number. This infuriated some interrogators, and they showed their displeasure by placing us in solitary confinement with little or no light, and no sense of time. According to the scuttle butt, some men were beaten.

I was more fortunate. Apparently the interrogator felt that a young 2nd lieutenant would have little or no pertinent information. He surprised me with his knowledge of my home address and my parent's names. He knew the events of the day we were shot down, as well as

never knew what was in store for me later.

A few days later I became part of a group of officers loaded on another train. Our destination was the POW camp. We spent several days on the train going north, and eventually arrived at a small town on the Baltic Sea named Barth. We were marched through the old-fashioned entrance to the town, past the town to a prison camp called Stalag 1. We were questioned again and I was told that I was fighting on the wrong side because of my German name. I smarted-off that, at least, I was on the winning side. The first thing upon my arrival at Stalag 1 was the issuance of a German dog tag. My picture was taken with this dog tag number, and my height and weight was entered on a reference card.

I was taken to a barracks in the South compound, the oldest area of the camp. It was a British-run compound. Each compound had a senior officer in command of the prisoners, but the entire camp was under a German commander. The South compound was the center of escape attempts. The barracks where I was assigned had a garden outside a window, and the only spot where the guards could not see from their towers. The dirt from the tunnels being dug by the prisoners was a different color than the top soil, so the garden was used to mix

The South compound [in Stalag 1] was the center of escape attempts. The barracks where I was assigned had a garden outside a window, and the only spot where the guards could not see from their towers.

parked in a busy railroad yard, which we all hoped the British did not select as their target for that night.

We finally made it to the Dulag, or interrogation center, and placed in cells waiting to be interrogated. Questioning was supposed to be of a military nature, however, the way

the fact that we took-off late because of the trouble starting number two engine. He listed our commanding officer and the group and squadron numbers. I was surprised that he did not know that we had received a new commanding officer. He didn't know that after my interrogation either. I got off rather easily, but

the two soils. Getting rid of the soil from the tunnels was a problem and it was stored everywhere, such as in the latrine and in the rafters, which ultimately gave way under the weight of the dirt. All this work and deception was to no avail because when the tunnel was finally used for an escape beyond the fence, the Germans were waiting.

The stay in the South compound was interesting because most of the men had been in Stalag 1 for a long time. I don't remember any of the men in this barracks, but I learned quickly what was expected of me. As more and more prisoners were being brought to the Stalag, a fourth compound, North 3, was being constructed. After Christmas of 1944, I was transferred to North 3.

The barracks where I was quartered was close to the border fence,

The day a British Mosquito bomber blew up the nearby tracking antenna installation was an event worth cheering.

so I and others had a good view of a bay and the tower in the town of Barth. In the North 3 compound I was issued a mattress that was a straw-filled ticking that was frozen, and my feet stayed numb for quite a while. The barracks room held 16 men bunked in double decked beds. It was furnished with a small stove, a table, and two benches in the center of the room. It became quite crowded when we were all standing around the table.

Our days were taken up by at least one roll call every day. We were all lined up on the parade ground and counted by the Germans. Because some of the guys would change ranks to screw up the guards, we were counted again and again and again. Sometimes it was quite cold out there and we were always happy to be dismissed after roll call.

Many days were boring. To pass the time away, we would walk around the camp. Arguments, but not serious, was another way to pass the time. Some of us caught flies and tied their legs together just to see if they could fly in formation. They couldn't. Sometimes, a boring day was made interesting by a special event. The day a British Mosquito bomber blew up the nearby tracking antenna installation was an event

worth cheering. Watching our bomber formations go overhead at 25,000 feet was always an encouraging event until the Goons made us stay inside the barracks during one of these events. In our room we all decided that we all cursed too much, and it was decided that if you cursed it would cost you a cigarette, or maybe two. It was hard to stop cursing, but it worked.

It generally took six or more months to receive a package from

home. When someone did receive a package, everyone watched the opening of the package and cheered or made some comment about each item. It was a fun time! I hadn't been a Krieger long enough to receive a package from home. Such was the red tape in the postal service.

Red Cross parcels kept us fed for a while, but eventually they quit coming and we were fed potatoes, horse meat, rutabagas, and sometimes other vegetables in what the Germans called stew. That was a misnomer since it was really a very watery soup. The bread was tough. Sometimes it had hunks of salt in it, and often pieces of wood. My job was to slice the bread into very thin slices so we could toast it. My knife a regular table knife with V's cut in it by a file that someone had smuggled into the barracks.

Speaking of the knife, another experience presented itself. It was cold in the barracks and we had little fuel for the stove. However, the Germans were putting up some additional barracks, and obviously they used lumber. A couple of us stole a piece of 4 x 4 lumber about 8 feet long and managed to get it into our room just before nightly lock up. We used that table knife as a saw and cut that piece of wood into sizes that would fit into our stove. We were fortunate that the Goons did not find that wood stored in a far corner under the lower bunks. Several of us did have blisters on our hands from cutting that 4 x 4 wood with a table knife, but at least could warm them by the fire in our stove.

The North 3 compound library was a godsend. It was run by a couple of fellow prisoners very much like a library back home. You could take out a book for a given time, and were honor bound to return it back on time. During my stay in the camp, I read 68 books. Two books that I really enjoyed were *Magnificent Obsession* and *The Robe*. These books were apparently donated by people back in the States and the Red Cross was able to get them to the POW camps.

In late March 1945 I began to have trouble with congestion in my lungs. I reported to sick bay and was assigned a bunk in a small hospital. I liked the hospital because the food was a little better and it was warm. I was treated for a mild case of pneumonia, and I improved.

The Red Cross parcels arrived in late March and the guys in my old barracks brought a menu to me to show what they had concocted for Easter from the food in the parcels. I did not get to enjoy this gala meal, but I still have their fancy menu. The



A

Kriegsgefangenen's Prayer

Oh Christ just a little time ago it seemed we were forgotten men doomed to spend Thy Holy Day of Resurrection without feasting, without the hope of an immediate peace

But along comes Easter and behold! Red Cross parcels come pouring in, surrounding us everywhere, and Peace seems just around the corner

Forgive us for not trusting in Thee more, but above all, thanks for all the good things Thou has bestowed upon us, among which are Life, Health, and Victory

MENU

BREAKFAST
KRIEGSGEFANGENEN EARLY MORNING DELIGHT - BARLEY - CHOCOLATE - PRUNES - CEREAL - BREAD - COFFEE WITH CREAM

DINNER

SOUPE - CREME DE PATE	ENTREE	SALAD - COLE SLAW
SCALLOPED POTATOES	BAKED SPAM - PINEAPPLE SAUCE	CANDIED SWEDES
CHOCOLATE CREAMED TART	CHEESE	BUTTERED TOAST
DEMI-TASSE	DESSERT	

SUPPER

CREAMED TUNA ON TOAST	TOASTED PEANUT BUTTER SANDWICH
COFFEE WITH CREAM,	

BUFFET SUPPER
KRIEGIES MAXIMUM EFFORT - CHOCOLATE RAISIN CAKE - FUDGE ICING

HOT CHOCOLATE

On May 1st we found that the Germans had left the camp during the night. Our senior officers took over the camp, and our own Kriegs took over the guard towers and gates, but we were still locked in our compound.

Kriegzefangenen prayer featured a special place on the menu. This menu itself showed how Kriegs could make something impressive from a Red Cross package.

On May 1st we found that the Germans had left the camp during the night. Our senior officers took over the camp, and our own Kriegs took over the guard towers and gates, but we were still locked in our compound. The previous day, the Germans had blown up the Flak school installation. It was quite a sight to see the "Ears" go up in smoke and flames.

The Russians were contacted and two of them came into the camp. We cheered! We also

received the news that Hitler was dead; apparently the shock of our liberation was too much for him.

On May 2nd additional Russians arrived in camp. We were ordered to tear down the fences. And we did a damn good job obeying that order. An order by the Russians to march out of the camp was rescinded by our Colonel Zemke. Some of us went to the Flak school and gathered souvenirs. Many of the guys went into Barth to celebrate until finally Barth was listed as "off limits."

Some Kriegs obtained cameras and film, and many pictures were taken to be sent home when we arrived back to the States. A favorite

practice of some of our guys was to build an outhouse outside the old fence line. Some even purloined fur for lining the seats.

The open view of the Bay was wonderful. I took the opportunity to walk up to forest north of our camp-ground. It was a beautiful place even with the toilet papered trees.

On May 5th we were assembled to be flown out of the area from the local airport. I remained with the hospital group and we were transported to the airport and loaded onto a B-17. Many of the group were on stretchers and were placed in the bomb bay area. We took for France with the pilots flying specific corridors, finally landing at an old airfield somewhere in Allied territory. We spent the night on the plane. The next day we landed in France and transported to an Army hospital near Rheims.

Note: A POW was a *Krieg*, thus the name of the Camp was *Kriegland*.

MISSION 285 – APRIL 7, 1945

By Joy Dunlap

This is my recollection of the ramming of the Burich plane by a German ME-109 on April 7, 1945.

I was flying in Aircraft 44-6136, "*Stork Club*," my usual aircraft, and we were flying above and forward of the Burich plane. My ball turret and tail gunner were firing at the approaching German fighter, and both were blinded by the fireball from the explosion of the two planes. A black residue from the explosion covered the lower aft section of our plane, and an engine with the prop still turning came over our port wing and fell without hitting us.

My gunners reported that the German pilot was clearly visible and it was evident that the ramming was deliberate.

Intelligence reports indicated that the German military had formed a special unit for the specific purpose of stopping Allied bombers by intentionally ramming them.

LETTERS/E-MAILS

From: Jan Springintveld (crash40-45@hetnet.nl)
To: Ian McLachlan (ianm385bg@btopenworld.com)
31 July 2011
Subject: *Lonesome Polecat*, 385 BG, 550 BS

Last year during the War and Peace show, a volunteer/member of our Crash Airwar and Resistancemuseum '40-'45 based in The Netherlands visited your stand and spoke about our work/museum and effort to record and investigate WO2 Airwar history. Our website www.crash40-45.nl will give you a small impression.

Talking about the B-17 *Lonesome Polecat* of 385 BG/550 BS, registratie 42-38160, which made an emergency landing on Lake Zug in Switzerland on March 16, 1944.

There is mutual interest in the plane and, as I understood, you are keen to find out more about this plane and how we obtained the remaining parts of this B-17.

Looking forward where we can assist you.

Jan Springintveld,
Secr. Crash Airwar and Resistancemuseum '40-'45

From: Ian
To: Jan Springintveld
1 Aug 2011
Subject: B-17 *Lonesome Polecat*

Many thanks for making contact-I'm delighted to hear from you. I'm the historian for the 385th BG and am interested in all matters relating to the Group. I do have quite a bit information on this aircraft and some pictures, one of which is attached, but I assume that you already have this and others? If not, I'll be pleased to send you copies. I was very interested to learn that items (the engine?) from this B-17 survive in your collection and would appreciate learning how they were obtained, and I'd also like some photographs of your 385th BG exhibits if this is possible?

I copied this to Frank McCawley the editor of the 385th newsletter, "*Hardlife Herald*" so he can report on our contact and broadcast your website. Meanwhile I look forward to hearing from you again.

Ian McLachlan

Note: Website for the Airwar and Resistancemuseum '40-'45—www.crash40-45.nl

Continued on next page....

LETTERS/E-MAILS

Continued from previous page....

From: Ian
To: Frank McCawley
Subject: *Lonesome Polecat*

On March 16th, 1944 – Mission 78-target Augsburg, the *Lonesome Polecat* was being flown by 1/Lt Meyer and crew as follows:

P. Robert W Meyer. 1/Lt
RO. John E Wells. T/Sgt
CP. Boyd J Henshaw. 2/Lt
BTG. Charles W Page. S/Sgt
N. Robert L Williams. 2/Lt
TG. Jarrel F Lagg. S/Sgt
B. J J Larsen. T/Sgt
WGL. Elbert E Mitchell. S/Sgt
TTG. John Miller, Jr. S/Sgt
WGR. Louis R Liening. S/Sgt

Apparently the plane was attacked by about eight German fighters. Number 2 engine was knocked out and number 4 began smoking. The pilot headed towards Switzerland, but gradually lost altitude, and was provided with an escort of Swiss fighters. Trying to reach an airport, the pilot was forced to ditch in Lake Zug, near Baar. Nine of the crew bailed out over Baar but the pilot, however, did not get out safely. The aircraft sank within five minutes. Lt. Williams' parachute failed to open in time and he died of his injuries in a hospital the same day. He was originally buried in the American Cemetery at Munsingen near Bern, but later returned to Indiana.

Lonesome Polecat was recovered in 1952.

Ian

Editor's Comment- Lt. Robert Williams was buried in the Protestant Cemetery near Baar shortly after his death on March 16, 1944. His crew acted as pallbearers with the Swiss army Honor Guard and Military Band present. Two months later Lt. Williams was reburied at the U. S. Military Cemetery at Munsingen and in 1948 he was reburied in Indianapolis, IN.



Lonesome Polecat after recovery from Lake Zug in 1952.



Funeral of Lt. Robert Williams in Baar, Switzerland on March 16, 1944.

LETTERS/E-MAILS

From: Ernie Sandoval
To: Bill Varnedoe
Subject: 385th BG Mission Assignments, Chain of Command planning

I would like to find out the Chain of Command involved in PLANNING, ASSIGNING, and COORDINATING daily Bomber Group Missions. Where was the Main Command Center located, and how were daily mission orders transmitted? What were the determining factors in deciding whether or not a Bomber Group flew a mission or stood down.

Ernie

From: Ian Mac
To: Bill Varnedoe, Ernie Sandoval, Frank McCawley
Subject: RE: 385th BG Missions and Chain of Command

A series of questions which I'll answer as best I can though it's complex and requires further research. Attached is a diagram* of the top-down structure –note the Combined Strategic Targets Committee.

A comment here in that the target priorities were changed to suit the exigencies of war. For example, many early operations were devoted to bombing submarine related targets (pens/factories, etc.) because the Allies were losing so much shipping that, unless the sub threat could be reduced, the build up for Bolero would have been too costly, quite apart from keeping us Brits in the war without being starved into submission. Unfortunately many lives were lost carrying bombs to the objective that were unsuitable -- i.e. – the bombs couldn't penetrate the concrete structure of the targets (sub pens) to get to the subs inside. Bear in mind that personnel, fuel and bombs had to be shipped over to England from America. The "Battle of the Atlantic" was one of the key battles of WW2.

The Allies also had to gain air supremacy, so operations in February '44 saw a concerted attack by the RAF/USAAF on aviation related targets to reduce Luftwaffe strength prior to D-Day. The priority to knock out communications and rail road infrastructure was also a high priority and such targets were difficult to deal with decisively because railways were rapidly repaired using POW and forced labor. Ball bearing also had a high priority because mechanized forces can't run without them and the costly Schweinfurt raids are well documented.

Although RAF and USAAF Bomber Command Leaders saw themselves as operating strategically, they were obliged to devote resources tactical targets to support D-Day and when the UK was faced with V1s and V2s, it was essential to hammer these with "No Ball" targets, and to support the armies in the field, even though this was the Tactical Air Forces. Arguably, the Achilles Heel of the Third Reich was oil and General Tooe Spaatz had it right with his oil plan, but you can see from the priorities discussed above, there were conflicting and changing priorities.

I hope this helps in answering some of the question about planning of air targets. In addition to *Masters of the Air* by Donald Miller, I'd also suggest reading Roger Freeman's trilogy – "*Mighty Eighth*", "*Mighty Eighth War Diary*", and the "*Mighty Eighth Manual*."

*The diagram covers a complete page and is difficult to read due to small print. Reducing it to one half or smaller size makes it unreadable after printing. —Editor

LETTERS/E-MAILS

From: aherndon@tampabay.rr.com (Alfred T. Herndon)
To: Ian Mac ianm385bg@btopenworld.com
Subject: Patrissi Crew

Welcome as our new historian. I have corresponded with Bill for years. What I need is a complete list of the names for one particular bomber crew. My family and the families of the pilot and co-pilot want to have a plaque made to put in the garden at the museum in Savannah. We don't know all of the crew member's names and are not sure of the spellings.

Here is what I have: 93rd Combat Bomber Wing; 385th Bomb Group; 551st Bomb Squadron; nine crew members: P: S. R. Patrissi, Co-P: E. D. McCreary, N: Gilbert Shapiro, B: Marin Iverson, RO: ???, WG: Sgt. Foster, WG: Sgt. Ramey, BTG: ???, TG: Jerikus, Crew Chief--TTG: Valvano

Main aircraft assigned to that crew was the "*Charlotte Ann*" named for Charlotte Ann McCreary who was the Co-pilot's wife. First mission-January 1944; Last mission- May 1944 for most of the men, but not all.

Please let me know if you can search the archives and get a complete list of the crew. I will gladly accept all of the information you can send me.

Alfred T. Herndon
Son-in Law of Martin "The Swede" Iverson

From: Ian Mac
To: Al
Subject: Patrissi Crew

I've checked the Loading Lists plus the aircrew spreadsheet compiled by Bill and note that Salvatore R. Patrissi flew his first two missions on 15 and 24 January as a Co-pilot. This was sometimes the case before a pilot gets his own crew so it was 3rd February before he commanded a crew and they are listed below:

P: FO Salvatore R. Patrissi, RO: S/Sgt. Fred W. Allez, CP: 2nt Lt. Eral D. McCreary, BTG: Sgt. Jack W. Guvekas, N: 2nt Lt. Gilbert Sapiro, TG: Sgt. Richard A. Rainey, B: Martin Iverson, WGL: Sgt. Eston O. Foster, TTG: S/Sgt. Eldon L. Chase, WGR: Sgt. Ralph M. Valvano.

I am always seeking to add pictures and information to the 385th BG archive and I assume you sent a crew picture to Bill? The copy that I have doesn't have the names and I'd be grateful if you can identify who's who for me. We also don't appear to have a picture of "*Charlotte Ann*"—either the aircraft or the lady— can you help us out here as well? In fact any 385th pictures or additional material is always appreciated. I'm trying to add to the electronic archive that Bill initiated and hope to scan in the data I've already gathered over the years. There just don't seem to be enough hours in the day! I hope that this info helps – let me know if there's anything else you need.

Ian

LETTERS/E-MAILS

From: lifesastitch@excite.com <Dale Scheinding
To: Bill Varnedoe
Subject: Melvin R. Cline
14 Jul 2011 2011

My name is Dale Scheinding, my uncle was Melvin R. Cline. He never spoke much about his war service as was the same with other relatives that served. That is why I am one of his few living relatives. He had no children. His wife passed away prior to his death. We do know that he served on the good ship "*Hot Chocolate*" and would like to know if any of his crew is alive. I noticed that there is a book about the 385th available. Please send me any details on obtaining a copy of this book and others we can contact for further information.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Dale and Marcia Scheiding

From: Bill
To: Dale and Marcia
Subject: 385th BG the good ship *Hot Chocolate*/Mendel R. Cline

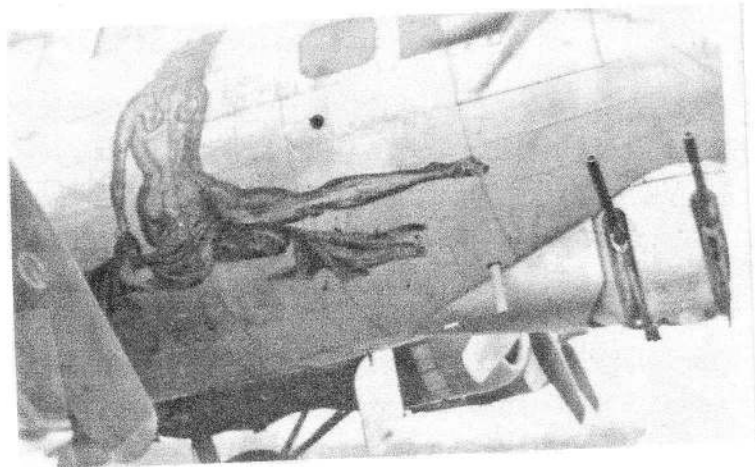
I am a 385th veteran and the former Historian of the 385th Bomb Group Association. The current Historian is Ian MacLachlan: ian385bg@btopenworld.com. The Association is an organization of veterans of the 385th, their kin, and other interested people. We hold reunions and publish a newsletter, the *Hardlife Herald* ("Hardlife" was the tower radio call at Great Ashfield). We have many 2nd and 3rd generation members as well as veterans. You would be most welcome as member(s) and receive the *Hardlife Herald*. Dues are \$35.00 per year. Send to our Treasurer, Chuck Smith, at P. O. Box 329, Alpharetta, GA 30009.

Yes, I have copies of the book, *The Story of Van's Valiants, A History of the 385th Bomb Group*. They are \$25.00 each, post paid. My address is Bill Varnedoe, 5000 Ketova Way, Huntsville, AL 35803.

Although most of the 385th Archives have been sent to Ian (see above), I still have quite a bit of information so that I have a complete record of Melvin R. Cline's combat tour. It shows that he flew in several positions, waist gunner (WG) and tail gunner (TG). Crews went by their pilot's name. The book will explain more of this and will have pictures of some of the other B-17s planes he flew in. Attached is a picture of the nose art of *Hot Chocolate*.

I hope you will join the 385th BGA. The next reunion will be in St. Louis, MO in October this year.

Bill



The nose art of *Hot Chocolate*.

Taps

John A. Immel – Peoria, IL died quietly on April 9, 2011. John, a Captain, was a pilot with the 385th BG and a veteran of 30 missions. He began his missions prior to D-Day and eventually became a lead pilot. One of John's memorable missions was when he successfully landed a plane with no hydraulics, thus with no brakes, and he ended up in a farmer's field after the plane jumped a ditch. He is survived by three children.

—by his son, *Richard Immel*

Robert E. Rummens – Died Sunday, April 20, 2008 in Fayetteville, TN at the age of 87. A pilot with the 385th BG during WWII, upon discharge he was employed by the Sears Fayetteville store where he became its manager for 20 years. Robert was actively involved in the Fayetteville community, serving in leadership roles on the Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce, Fayetteville State University, Methodist University, Salvation Army, Airport Commission, Military Affairs, and many other organizations. He is survived by his wife, Nita Rummens; daughter, Terri; a son, Tony; four grandchildren; four step-children; and six step-grandchildren. Burial was in Nashville, TN.

Thomas A. Heydon, – Montgomery, AL died at his home on March 9, 2011 at the age of 95. Tom was born in Kansas City, MO and attended schools in Kansas City and Tulsa, OK. Upon graduating from the University of Iowa in 1943 with a degree in geology, he entered the Army aviation cadet program and was commissioned as a navigator. Completing training in a B-17, he was assigned to the 549th BS, 385th BG at Great Ashfield. He flew 34 combat

missions and four food missions to Holland. In 1947, when the U. S. Air Force was established, he became a Regular AF Officer and served his entire career in SAC. In addition to flying B-17s, he also flew B-29, B-36, and B-52 bomber aircraft. As a Colonel, he commanded a Strategic Missile Squadron of nine Titan II ICBMs and completed his military duties as commander of the Civil Engineering Squadron at Pease AFB, NH. Colonel Heydon was buried with honors in Sioux Falls, SD. He is survived by his wife, Helen.

—by his wife *Helen L. Heydon*

Mendel R. Cline – St Joe, MO died on December 21, 2010. Mendel had no children, and his wife had passed away several years ago. Melvin flew both as a waist gunner and tail gunner. The majority of his missions were on "Hot Chocolate." He is survived by several nephews and nieces.

—by his nephew, *Dale Scheiding*

Thomas Gentile – Died March 19, 2011 in New Jersey. After several lengthy illnesses and hospital periods, he died peacefully in his sleep at home. Tom was a member of the 548th Bomb Squadron and the Crew Chief of "War Cry". Tom was cremated and a memorial service was held in New Jersey. He later was buried with a Military graveside service in Myrtle Beach, SC.

—by his daughter, *Janis Gentile and Marty Girson*

Note: *War Cry*, a 385th BG aircraft, was the only B-17 that ever made a complete loop. The loop was accomplished when returning from a mission.

Taps

Andy Rooney – World War II correspondent died November 5, 2011 from surgery complications at the age of 90. Andy flew a mission with the 385th Bomb Group as a waist gunner on the Cerrone crew in B-17 42-5902 named the "Lady Liz". He describes this mission in his book, *Air Gunner*, where he introduces us to several members of this crew. Andy Rooney continued his career as a well known broadcaster on TV. His comments on CBS's *60 Minutes* expressed a philosophy that we Eighth Air Force veterans relate to and endorse.



Hank and Nesta Ilger, July 8, 1944

Henry J. Ilger – Los Angeles, CA died March 26, 2010 at the age of 89. Henry was cremated and his ashes were cast upon the waters to let drift out to sea. He was preceded in death by his wife, Nesta, who passed away in 2002.

Henry was born December 28, 1921 in Union City, NJ and attended Cooper Union School.

He graduated from Harvard University with a BA in Engineering and from South Western University with an MA in Mathematics. In the Spring of 1944, Henry met his wife, Nesta Lewis, in London's Green Park while on leave from Great Ashfield, and they were

married on July 8, 1945 in St. Anne's Church in London. Hank was transferred back to the States in 1945, and Nesta Ilger, sailed from London to New York aboard the *Queen Mary* as a war bride. Aboard the *Queen Mary*, now docked in Long Beach, CA, on July 8, 1995 they celebrated their 50th anniversary hosted by their four children and three grandchildren. Henry was survived by his children, Suzan D. Ilger-Hubert, Paul Ilger, Jane Ilger and Sally Ilger-Waters, and three grandchildren.

—by his four children,
Suzan, Paul, Jane and Sally

James F. Murphey – Somerville, TN died September 28, 2011 at the age of 89 after a brief illness. James was retired from the Fayette County rural rail Carrier. He was a graduate of the Fayette County High School in Somerville and from the University of Tennessee in Knoxville. He served with the 385th BG as a top-turret gunner on the Streimer crew. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the Air Medal with four Oak Leaf Clusters. James was an active member of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars. His wife, Mary Louise Murphey preceded him in death in April of this year. James is survived by daughter, Emily Murphey Akin; son, James Farley Murphey III; sister, Mary Neil Hale; brother, Joseph C. Murphey; four grandchildren and three great grandchildren. He was interned with full military honors in the Someville City Cemetary.

—by daughter, Emily Akin

385th BGA

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