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"The Mighty Eighth Reunion Group"

385TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP REUNION ASSOCIATION

GREAT ASHFIELD - SUFFOLK, ENGLAND
STATION 155



SUPPORT UNITS

424th AIR SVS. GP.
877th CHEM. CO. (AO)
DET. 155, 18th AWS

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NEWSLETTER

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Editor: John C. Ford

THE STORY OF "LIBERTY BELLE"



By Robert C. Smith

Thirty-five years ago, B-17 Model F aircraft - Serial Number 42-30096 had the call sign Walpole V for Victory. A proud crew picked her up in Great Falls, Montana, where she had been delivered brand new from the Boeing factory in Seattle. We flew her to our Squadron's (the 549th) staging base in Glasgow, Montana, and then on to join the 385th Bombardment Group at our combat base, Great Ashfield, in England. I had a magnificent crew:

PAUL F. LINDSAY - Co-pilot. Paul was a perfect executive officer. He handled the paperwork on the ground and controlled the intercom in combat. He was also an excellent pilot, so we were able to share the demanding combat formation flying. I remember specifically the night of 16 September 1943 when, on the return from a raid on Bordeaux, I was unable to see properly from my position. Paul did a super job. (We learned later that Paul was suffering from TB at the time, which made his performance all the more admirable.) I am pleased to report that Paul and his family live in Denver and that he has been very successful in the teaching profession.

NATHAN UNGAR - Navigator. I remember how heroic Ungar was on the 14 October 1943 Schweinfurt mission when our "Liberty Belle" was seriously damaged by anti-aircraft and enemy fighters. We had the superchargers of two engines knocked out, two gunners seriously wounded and the oxygen system destroyed. Although we were still under attack by fighters, Ungar shuttled oxygen bottles to the wounded gunners, keeping them alive until we got back to the Channel and a lower altitude where I ordered him to his post to navigate us

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"LIBERTY BELLE"... (Cont'd)

to Great Ashfield by the shortest route. Nathan was killed in action on 30 November 1943.

CHARLES A. STEVENS - Bombardier. Steve was the young happy boy of the crew. His skill as a bombardier had a great deal to do with our being selected as Group Lead Crew. He was killed in action on 30 November 1943.

GEORGE L. LILBURN - Engineer Gunner. George was the father of the crew and I used him as our 1st Sgt. In combat he preferred the waist gunner position. On the Schweinfurt raid, when things got real tough, he suggested it might be time to bail out. I told him and the crew to hang in there, man their positions, make the enemy fighters think we were still in action and I would get them home. George and I had a great mutual respect. He became a prominent banker in New York, had a lovely family, and we kept in close contact until his recent death.

EDWIN F. RANDIG - Radio Operator. Sgt. Randig was an outstanding radio operator and gunner. On the Schweinfurt raid an enemy machine gun bullet lodged in his leather jacket but only bruised his body. Unfortunately, we have not been in touch with him since we left England.

TROY M. ROBERTS - Ball Turret Gunner. He was an extremely effective "gunner. No one in the Group expended his ammunition more efficiently or effectively. We have not been able to locate Sergeant Roberts.

SAMUEL S. LITT - Top Turret Gunner and Engineer. He was calm, cool and efficient. On the Schweinfurt raid we suffered a severe leak in the Number 3 main gasoline tank. He skillfully transferred the remaining fuel to other tanks so that we could complete the mission. Without his expeditious action, it is doubtful that we would have made it back.

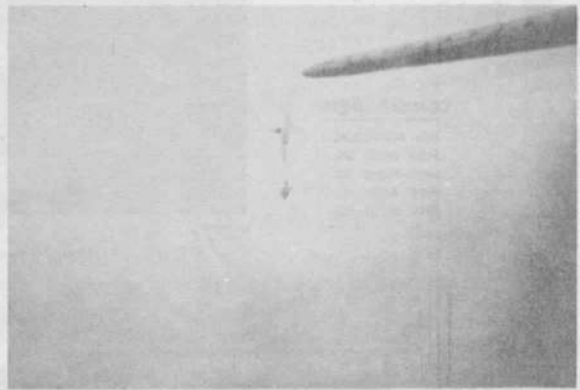
JAMES D. McKEE - Co-pilot. Lt. McKee was killed in action 30 November 1943 on the only mission he ever flew on our crew. He was a fine young officer.

HENRY C. LOHFF - Waist Gunner and Armament Expert. On at least three occasions we experienced malfunction of our bomb release system. This involved 500 pound bombs, incendiaries, and 2000 pound bombs. In each case, over enemy territory at elevations near 25,000 feet, Sergeant Lohff would lean out from the bomb bay catwalk and cause the release device to function. It was a very dangerous thing to do, working on live, fused bombs that could explode - and t-o be subjected to near -50 degree temperature over an open bomb bay without a parachute. Henry and his wife live in Denver, CO.

LOUIS G. LONSWAY - Tail Gunner. Here is a fellow who typified the Fighting Yank Airman of WWII. He played hard and worked harder. The 14 October Schweinfurt raid proved what he could do in the air. I have already described the damage we sustained as all hell broke loose about the time we took up the homeward heading. Lonie was in his kneeling position facing the rear and firing his twin 50 calibers trying to ward off the fierce fighter attack when we took a 30mm cannon burst that left a hole the size of your head in the rear fuselage section. The blast caught Lonie in the left buttock. At this point Paul asked me to come on the interphone and Lonie told me that he "had been hit in the ass", displaying his ever-present sense of humor even in adversity, and that there had been a small fire which he had put out with his hands. He said he was alright, then added, "Here they come a gain" and started firing. I don't remember how many enemy fighters Lonie got credit for, but it was several. Despite his very serious and painful wound, he stayed in his position until we were out of fighter range.

About the time we took the hit that wounded Lonie, I assessed the situation and knew that we could not make it back in our particular position in the forma-

tion; therefore, I left the High Squadron and tucked the "Liberty Belle" under the Lead Squadron, using their cover as we nursed our aircraft home.



Harrowing sites such as this burn into the mind and memories of many men.

When we reached the English Channel, I left the formation after having Sergeant Litt fire a red flare to indicate wounded aboard, and made a rapid descent through a heavy cloud formation to get Lonie to the hospital as soon as possible. Sergeant Lonsway was awarded a Distinguished Service Cross, our nation's second highest award, and the highest award ever received by a member of the 385th Bombardment Group. I'm sorry that it wasn't the Medal of Honor. Lonnie retired as a Senior Master Sergeant after over 20 years of active duty. He presently is a USAF civilian employee at Tinker AFB, Oklahoma, where he and his family reside.

As I reflect on those years, I recall some of the people who supported our mission. People like Dr. Robert Kuhn, our Flight Surgeon, and Dr. Milton Taubkin who removed two impacted wisdom teeth that gave me a lot of trouble. Then there was my Crew Chief Sergeant Kurth, along with his mechanics who were so dedicated to the "Belle", and Ruel Weikert and Frank Wall, friends through flying school, B-17 transition, and the whole bit. General Vandevanter was the boldest leader I ever flew with in the Air Force. We corresponded and when he was at McDill AFB he tried to have me assigned in his wing to head up his Avonics shop. We met at Keesler and had dinner, but I wound up at ADC Headquarters instead. I had great respect for Jim McDonald and Archie Benner, who did a hell of a job in a very quiet manner. Colonel Lewis was a favorite of mine and rode with me on a mission to bomb Bonn. I respected him for going on the mission and was flattered that he would want to ride with the "Liberty Belle" crew

We experienced many tragedies. I recall the Great Ashfield disaster of 3 September 1943. As we prepared to start engines for an early morning combat mission, I looked to my right and could see flames shooting out of Lt. Gregg's cockpit ("Roundtrip Ticket") on a hardstand about 50 yards away. I called on the intercom for Sergeant Lohff to come to the cockpit and asked him what he thought. He said, "Sir the heat of your hand on an armed fuse will set off one of those 500 pounders." That was enough for me - we evacuated the airplane and started running. We hadn't gone 50 yards when there was one hell of an explosion. A lesson not to be forgotten.

Further, I recall our fourth mission on 28 July 1943, led by General Vandevanter. He was forced to abort early on the mission, whereupon he returned to base, took off in another bird and regained the lead. There was never any doubt in my mind from that moment on as to what kind of a guy General Vandevanter was. We were to circumnavigate the coast over the North Sea, make a diversionary run to the coast as a faint, then do a 180 so as to draw the enemy fighters away from the coast while another wing attacked from another angle. The mission was a great success insofar as drawing the fighters away from the coast was con-

(Cont'd page 3)

"LIBERTY BELLE"...

(Cont'd)

cerned. We lost four B-17's and the B-17's were lost by a direct first aerial bombs to be dropped forces.The "Liberty Belle" was the lead element of the Low Squadron. The bomb hit the lead of the second element of the Lead Squadron and the explosion took his two wing men along with him. It was a horrible sight. I had to take violent evasive action to avoid all kinds of debris, particularly a propeller which whirled out in front of us. We had a ringside seat, and realizing that this and seeing our friends go down placed a severe strain on our confidence. great plane was destructible

I worked so feverishly that I began to hyperventilate, but I kept telling myself to "slow down". And I asked God to give me strength. Paul . . . my co-pilot was near hysterics so I asked him to fly the plane to take his mind off what he had just seen. In our last two missions we had lost seven B-17's and crews out of an 18-ship formation. That's rough.

On 30 November 1943, the "Liberty Belle's" 19th mission, I was tasked as the lead of the Low Squadron. We climbed through a thick cloud layer and broke out on top at about 19,000 feet. There were several aircraft in the area so I directed Sergeant Litt to fire a red flare as a signal for them to form up on me. A few moments later I heard an explosion in the air-plane; and as I turned to the right to look back, a flare hit me right between the eyes. The flare bounced off me and ricocheted around the cockpit. I was dazed and probably in shock at the moment, but I did realize that the entire top turret area was in flames. I began to make split-second decisions, remembering the Great Ashfield disaster, the North Sea fiasco, and all the rest. I knew without doubt that there was no way that we could put this fire out, and with a load of fused 500 pounders and bundles of fire bombs, the airplane could blow at any minute. I engaged the auto pilot on an easterly heading (I knew by the beacon we were near Colchester and the coast) and was reaching to switch the radio to interphone when Mac, my co-pilot, pulled back the throttles. I took the throttles away from him and leveled off, but precious seconds were ticking away. My vision was blurred from the burns around my eyes and face, and my right hand was badly burned. I reached the bail-out bell and held it for a long time. The alarm was heard by my crew and they knew what it meant, because we had discussed it many times. I yelled at Mac to go and pointed toward the hatch, but he wouldn't budge. I couldn't lift him and decided to lead the way and get him to follow. (I learned later that Mac had a phobia about parachuting from an airplane, which may explain his failure to respond.) By this time flames filled the cockpit. I rolled out the escape hatch and passed out.

I don't know when I landed very hard and like a breaking board. hand and with a broken leg, I had trouble collapsing the chute, and the wind dragged me for some distance before I got untangled. By the time I got out of the parachute harness, I was definitely in shock. Doc Kuhn had given me two morphine syrettes and I was squeezing one of these into my arm when an English farmer reached me. I heard him say, "Oh my God!", and that is the last I remembered until I was put aboard an ambulance with a doctor who found the other syrette and gave it to me.

I was hospitalized for six months and convalesced for another year. In addition to the burns and broken leg, I had suffered a compression fracture of three vertebrae. Eye witnesses reported that "Liberty Belle" blew up, one wing folded, and she crashed in an open field near Chapell, England. We were unable to determine the cause of the in-aircraft explosion and subsequent fire.

The extensive training we had received in a compressed time frame provided miraculous results. I am forever appreciative for this training. I feel that our crew reached a plateau of excellence when we bombed Schweinfurt on 14 October 1943.

My wife and I have raised three children - 29, 31

and 33. I retired from the Air Force as a regular officer on 1 September 1968. My oldest son, Hal, is a 1968 Air Force Academy Grad - he presently is at Eglin AFB, Florida, flying F-4's. Our daughter married an Air Force officer who is in Seattle and presently is a construction manager. Earl, the youngest son, is a Marine flying officer presently in a Reserve Unit at Dobbins AFB, Georgia.

REUNION NEWS

As announced in the last Newsletter, the Seventh Reunion of the 385th Bombardment Group (H) will be held at the Hilton Plaza Inn, 45th and Main Street, Kansas City, Missouri, during the period from 4 to 6 May 1979.

At the time of this writing, reservations have been received for more than 80 persons, which, considering the fact it is more than seven months in advance, it is a great indicator that we will have a record-breaking crowd in Kansas City. Number One on the reservation list was John D. Hite, Wyalusing, PA. John, a member of the 550th BS, also included his check in full payment of registration fees and motel accomadations. Next in line was Joe and Pat Gorchak, from San Bernardino, CA. One from the East and two from the West were heading for Midway USA as early as August 1978. Joe and Pat are also the first to indicate they will arrive one day early to greet the group. They also sent payment in full.

Two items concerning the reservation form requires clarification. Where the term "Single Room" is used, it indicates a room for a single person. The term "Double Room" indicates a room for two persons. Five reservations have been received indicating two persons attending but with a "Single Room" requested. Also, the last two lines on the reverse side of the form states "Full payment is due not later than 1 April 1979, although it's welcome at anytime." This sentence is amended to read "Full payment for registration fee is due not later than 1 April 1979, although it's welcome anytime." This amendment is necessary because rooms at the motel can be booked only when full payment is made with the booking. The same applies to the coach trips.

The last booking for rooms through the 385th BGRA (this office) is 15 January 1979. After that date, individuals will be responsible for their own bookings direct to the Hilton Plaza Inn. Be sure to notify them you are attending the 385th Reunion. Advanced booking through this office was intended to assure individuals that they will be assigned rooms adjacent to the persons they request.

PLEASE NOTE: THOSE PERSONS WISHING TO BOOK ROOMS OR COACH TRIPS THROUGH THIS OFFICE, MUST MAIL THE FULL AMOUNT DUE NOT LATER THAN 15 JANUARY 1979. CHECKS SHOULD BE MADE PAYABLE TO THE "385TH BGRA" AND ANNOTATED "PLAZA INN AND/OR COACH TRIP".

For those persons living in the Kansas City area and not requiring rooms at the Plaza Inn, only the registration fee of \$35.00 per person is required.

We are having a prize for the greatest attendance by an aircrew and ground crew that flew and maintained the same aircraft. This marks the first time we have combined the air and support crews. In Atlanta at the Fifth Reunion, the Wayne Montgomery aircrew from the 549th had the most attendees. In Las Vegas at the Sixth Reunion in 1977, another 549th crew took the honors when eight members of Robert Milligan's aircrew and the crew chief of their aircraft "Homesick Angel" attended the reunion. This year, among the first members to sign up for the '79 event are Clarence Strout, Edward Stermer, and Harold Trousdale. Frances Strout and Olga Stermer are once more in the vanguard of wives that are always at the reunions. Let's go, you other crews. Find your lost members and get them out to Kansas City.

Our Past President, Dr. Vincent W. Masters and his wife Judy will be there. Vince has accepted the Chairmanship of the Nominating Committee for the next term's officers of the BGRA. As the presiding President, I will not be a candidate for any office due to medical reasons, but I will continue with the Newsletter until someone will volunteer to take over

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REUNION... (Cont'd)

this task. It is an important task for it is the sole catalyst for the group's togetherness. Two positions that are extremely important for continuity are those of Secretary and Treasurer. They require persons who have time to expend on the work of the 385th BGRA.

Dr. Masters has requested that members submit names for the various offices to him as soon as possible, accompanied by a short resume of why you believe the person should be nominated. If you nominate one or more persons for office, please ask the persons if they are willing to serve if elected. We need real go-getter's, persons with desire to serve. Address your nominations to Dr. Vincent W. Masters, 389 Westview Drive, Athens, GA, 30601.

The sage of St. Joseph, Missouri, Clovis M. McWilliams, has accepted my request that he be the Master of Ceremony for the Reunion. If the manner of talking his way into the home and hearts of the Barker family in Great Ashfield can be used as a criterion - and it should - Clovis should keep us spellbound. For those with short memories, Clovis took over as head of the S-2 (Intelligence) Section from Jim Lewis, and he did an outstanding job. Not only responsible for the collection and dissemination of all information about the enemy, he was also charged with the responsibilities of the Photo Laboratory and Public Relation. If the morale of the troops was part of his job, then the work of the last two mentioned sections have to be rated as "Tops in Excellence". Ray Fordyce's Photo Lab makes it possible for the Newsletter to reprint all those photo-captured moments of yesteryear both on the ground and in the air. His combat photographers were second to none. And the work of the Public relations Office under the guidance of Earl Mazo, Rally Dennis and Bill Mcknight certainly played a great part in the morale factor. Through their efforts, news about individuals always reached "back home" and added spark to the war effort in the USA. Clovis McWilliams has a broad span of memories upon which to draw.

The music for the Banquet Dinner Dance will be provided by the Bob Simes Group. Bob Simes has been at the piano for Les Elgart, Buddy Morrow, Bob Crosby, Jimmy Dorsey and for the Elvis Presley Show of 1972. Since then, Bob's group has become widely known for their Blues, Rock, and Mix It Up Music, guarenteeing nostalgic and popular music to keep the toes tapping and the feet moving. There will also be piano during the cocktail hour preceding the Dinner.

music

RESERVATIONS ON HAND

NAME	NQ	NAME	NO.
Bember, John K.	2	Masters, Dr. Vince W.	2
Benefield, A. L.	2	McGuire, Robert Q.	2
Bommersbach, L. L.	2	McWilliams, Clovis M.	2
Cavan, Charles H.	2	Neal, Gerald	2
Cole, Earl L.	2	Pettenger, John F.	2
Corriveau, Al J.	2	Relyea, Merle M.	2
Cunat, Rudy	2	Rembert, H.T.	2
Dillon, James O.	2	Richardson, Howard	2
Ford, Emory N.	2	Rivard, Raymond	2
Ford, John C.	2	Russel 1, Larry	2
Gorchak, Joseph	2	Smith, Charles	2
Grabowski, Edward	F. 2	Stermer, Edward	2
Hale, Don	2	Stern, Edward	2
Heard, Lyman R.	2	Strout, Clarence	2
Hess, James A.	2	Trousdale, Harold	1
Hite, John D.	1	Varady, Bert	2
James, Ben E.	2	Walls, Frank	2
Jameson, Russel 1	2	Weikert, Ruel G.	2
Keen, Pauline	1	Wilson, Robert W.	2
Lancaster, O.V. *	2	Wi 1 son, William J.	2

(*) O. V. Lancaster fl ew two tours in the ETO. His first tour was in B-17's in the 550th Bomb Squadron and his second tour was as a fighter pilot in P-38's.

In each Newsletter, there will be a published list to you of attendees. Get after your old buddies and try to break a record for attendance. There will be plenty to do for the wives, since one of Kansas City's largest shopping centers is adjacent to the Inn.



Earl Cole, Betty Ford, John & Ruth Pettenger, Ian Mc-Laehan, John Etti, Jatte McLaehan and Ruth Cote.

JOHN ELLIS' TO REUNION

Through a special arrangement, John and Lucy Ellis will be special guests at the 385th BGRA's Reunion in Kansas City, Missouri. John Ellis is a Churchwarden at All Saints Church in Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England, where our 385th Memorial is located. The trip has been made possible through the combined efforts of Charles and Peggy Smith; Earl and Ruth Cole and John and Betty Ford. They will depart early in April 1979, from Gatwick Airport, London, and fly via Delta Airlines to Atlanta, Georgia, where they will be guests at the Smith's. From there they will travel to Barbourville, Kentucky, where the Cole's will entertain them. They will accompany the Cole's to Kansas City for the Reunion, where they will be guests of the 385th BGRA. We are attempting to expand the scope of their travel in the USA and anyone wishing to join in this venture can get details by writing to John C. Ford, at 7204 Easy Street, Camp Springs, MD 20031. The .El 1 i s ' _ 1 a s t stop will be with the Ford's in Washington, D.C.

During WWII, John worked in MI5 (Intelligence) and prior to that he was a newspaperman in the Far East. His wife Lucy was a school teacher. They are a wonderful English couple who have done much for members of the 385th who have visited Great Ashfield, and are well known by those who visited England on the special trip in 1976. It was during that visit that one of the Daily Mirror reporters noted the marked resemblance between John and the late Field Marshall Viscount Montgomery and their photographs were published side by side in the London Daily Mirror. They are looking forward to this great adventure.

ADDRESSES AND DUES!

In the last issue, a handwritten note stated that "Dues! Early or Late. Welcome!". Perhaps it is a sign of the times but quite a few letters came to this office asking how much the dues were! Happily they are still \$5.00 a year. This has been achieved by cutting back the Newsletter to four issues (quarterly) per year, which closes the gap between the printing and postal increases, as well as incidental stationery costs. In the area of cutting costs, each of you can play a roll. Here's how. Under Non-Profit Postal Service regulations, delivery is strictly controlled. If a mistake is made in your address, whether it be a name, street or number, or the ZIP code, your mailman is not permitted to deliver bulk mailing to you. Thus, if you make a change of address and it is registered at the Post Office, he is not authorized to redirect the bulk mail (Newsletter) to your new address. You are required to send a change of address to the Newsletter office if you want the Newsletter continued. If you notice a mistake in your name, number, street, or ZIP code, please advise this office. The cost of a redirected Newsletter (ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED) is \$10.91. Bulk Mail Cost (2.71), Address Correction Requested (25), a new Newsletter (18.91), re-mailing this letter (15), for a total cost of \$0,805. Please cooperate by sending a change of address when you move. **AND PAY DUES!**

THE DIGGERS

By Ian McLachlan

The souvenir booklet of the 5th reunion held in Atlanta during April 1975, carried an article about the historic parachute recovered from the wreckage of Captain Hutchinson's B-17 lost after a mid-air collision with Lt. Pease on 21 February 1944.

Much of the wreckage was retrieved at the time, but during the years from 1964-1978, sporadic digs have taken place yielding numerous items of interest including the parachute now on display at the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio, and the lens from the 16mm camera used by photographer Frank "Bud" Creegan on that tragic last mission. It hadn't been possible to get a mechanical digger to the site and all our work has been done by hand. But in July this year, FOTE member Kim Collinson noticed that the River Authority were dyke clearing not far from Mill Dyke. Seizing the opportunity, Kim asked if we could borrow their dragline and was not a little surprized to be given the okay.

On 2 July, our weather lived up to its reputation and gave a soggy Sunday performance but it takes more than rain to dampen our enthusiasm. Pete Snowling, Julie and I took full advantage of his Jeep's dexterity taking it across the marshes to within 200 yards of the Hutchinson site. The digger's driver had volunteered to operate his machine at no charge other than the fuel used, while a local farmer lent us a tractor and trailer for removing any large items, if found. To reach the site, he had to fill a section of the dyke, lay sleepers, and drive over them. But, again on his own time, this had been done beforehand, leaving the machine prepared for an early start.

Growling into action, the digger shuffled forward and thrust its powerful arm into the crater, deeper already than my fourteen years of scratching. Easily it swept the first load of mud and debris clear to where we stood and we began sifting fragments of that 34 year old tragedy: clumps of chaff, perspex scraps, torn pieces of fuel tanks and shreds of aluminium. As load upon load appeared, our hopes waned. Perhaps the original recovery crew had been thorough and left nothing. By now we had worked the length of the crater and obviously needed to go deeper. We asked the driver to probe further, in the centre of the hole. One could sense the anxiety as we watched the great steel limb sliding unhesitatingly to maximum extension and then, bending its hydraulic elbow, draw towards us. Nothing...no, just a minute, the smoothness of its motion was interrupted. Fourteen feet under, the bucket dragged on something large enough to resist, causing the machine to lurch momentarily. As the arm drew high out of the water, everyone crowded to see our find - a large brass oil cooler lay securely caught. Nothing to the normal man, but pure joy to the dedicated diggers whose fading hopes were now rejuvenated. This indicate an engine and the driver reported that he'd snagged something bigger but was un-



Debris scattered around after digger made first sweep..



Kdi Collinson examines the oil cooler after. ifid.

able to grip it. Our next try extracted a carburetor in excellent condition despite more than three decades under the Reedham Marshes. It was decided to extend as far as possible beyond where the carb had lain and draw towards the edge, hopefully ensnaring the engine that was so elusive. Cautiously, the digger driver drew as close as safety permitted thus gaining a few more inches reach. All was set. The arm bent and retracted, then stopped against something large. More power. Prising this out called for cunning and skill and the driver jiggled the arm back and forth, loosening the suction and dispensing some of the mud retarding its withdrawal. Roaring into action again, the machine tussled violently causing the entire marsh for yards to undulate. We knew we had won when the drag drew remorselessly inwards nestling its prey against the crater bank. Water and mud sloshed away as it broke the surface, revealing the cylinder banks of a Wright Cyclone engine whose powerful song had



Kim with the # 4 engdne. Despite its muddy appeanane, the genenad condition was good.

had sent sounds of freedom reverbrating over Occupied Europe those many years ago. Silent now, but still in remarkable shape, this would make a valuable addition to our museum, and more was to come. Delving in again, we pulled out its propeller, the twisted blades symbolizing the anguish of those final moments. A scar ran from the boss to the blades indicating how Hutch's ship had torn into the Pease B-17. Further searching revealed nothing and the dig was concluded in .the knowledge that nothing significant remained.

A few days later, Kim supervised the removal of a propeller boss and blade from the Pease site a few hundred yards away. This had been located in April 1976, but the mechanical digger got into difficulties and had to abandon recovery operations and itself be winched out.

Most of the articles found will go on display in the restored control tower at Framlingham (Parham). This tower has recently been the scene of much activ-

The Diggers., (cont'd)

ity. Through the great kindness of Mr. Percy Kindred of Parham, this site has been made available to some very active "diggers" and under the leadership of Ron Buxton and Colin Durrant, it is gradually being rebuilt to its original configuration. It will become a museum containing items recovered from many wreck sites in England. It already contains items from the Joseph Kennedy aircraft, the Hutchison-Pease B-17's, and many others. It is planned to open the collection to the public in 1979. The propeller from the



Julie McLachlan examines the #4 propeller from Hutchinsos B-17 after its recovery.

6/20/01

Hutchinson aircraft has been transported over 150 miles to the McLachlan home in Windsor and adorns the front lawn as my own tribute to the men of the Eighth Air Force and my association with the 385th BGR. It is a satisfying memento of fourteen years research to ensure those men who died that day will not be forgotten.



The cutting scars as they appear on the #4 propeller.



At the end of the day's digging.
(Photo's by McLachlan's)

By Jtui/ Payne

ROYSTON, England - Call it a sentimental journey, but a group of the boys (boys?) from the 91st Bombardment Group from World War II got together recently--along with more than 5,000 Britishers -- at the old B-17 base at Bassingbourne, a short hop north of London.

It was a reunion that included some of the girls they left behind. It was also a nostalgic replay of one of the last concerts Glenn Miller gave.

The reunion dance took place in the English countryside. The park rolls in soft waves of wheat broken by dark green hedges full of fat blueberries and blackberries.

It was over this same gentle countryside 35 years ago that the sky was filled with Spitfires and the steady drone of B-17s, roaring off to fortress Europe.

Best of War Years

And it was here, too, that Glenn Miller and his orchestra became the toast of the armed forces--a band still remembered as the best of the war years.

The concert took place in the same hangar. No. 3, the one Glenn Miller knew so well. Some 5,000 Englishmen joined the few Americans--for one more dance. It was something for sentimentalists. June Allyson, the movie wife of Glenn Miller, laughed and waved to the crowd. She reminded everyone of the girl they'd always wanted to go home to.

And there was English singer Anne Shelton, doing "Over the Rainbow", "All the Things You Are" and "The White Cliffs of Dover." Those and other songs she sang when she was 16 years old with the original armed forces Glenn Miller band.

As the night wore on, a handsome English lady was seen holding hands with a gray-haired American with a shy Gary Cooper sort of smile. Later she told me, "He knocked on my door today and asked if I was Penelope. I was and I knew before he said it that he was Pete. Yes, we knew each other well during the war...."

"He introduced me to his wife and soon we compared pictures of our grandchildren. Later, my husband and Pete and his wife and I went to the dance. It could have been the same dance that Pete and I attended 35 years before. Toward the end of the evening Anne Shelton sang "I'll Be Seeing You."

Corny, Yes, I guess. But it conjured memories of those long-ago war years. Then moments later that huge hangar with its blue and cream walls was as quiet as tears as Anne sang, "Till We Meet Again."

But if that was a night to remember, there was a day equally moving--a final salute for the returning Americans who were joined by thousands of friends from all over England. They'd come to wave once more as a B-17 bomber did a final fly-by.

No one had to tell anyone that this was the plane that helped to save England. Today, though, Bassingbourne is no longer an air base. It's a British infantry base now and Field Marshal Montgomery's personal tank glares moodily away at the gates.

A few yards away, in a place of honor, is a mounted propeller from a B-17. It was dedicated recently as a permanent memorial to the men of the 91st. On hand were the returning Americans led by their original C.O., Maj. Gen. Stanley Wray.

Out on the parade grounds thousands waited on the grass. They sat in camp chairs and bleachers and one and all craned their necks to keep track of disappearing children, balloons floating by, paratroopers dropping out of the sky, bands and motorcycle drill teams and the spectacular Red Arrows, a snappy jet team streaking across the fields, disappearing quickly into the heavens.

Yes, but all that was entertainment, window dressing for the remembered moment. The audience

(Cont'd Page 7)

B-17 Flies... (Cont'd)

settled into their seats for the memorable performance that was to follow. They were waiting for another look at a B-17.

The B-17 was first seen coming in over the crest of oakridged hills; it moved in slow motion compared to the jets that had screamed past only minutes before. The "17" was alone - yet every watcher recalled those ghost planes of World War II with names such as "Yankee Doodle"... "General Ike"...and the "Memphis Bel 1 e",

Elegant and serene, the 17" got bigger.
- Once-in-a-Lifetime Look -

Those who were there on this lovely summer day were stirred. Fathers held small children on their shoulders for a once-in-a-lifetime look. People cheered and waved and many cried.

On across the meadows the "17" of World War II came lower. There were more cheers! Now there she was, over the field, flying close to the ground. Then in final farewell, the plane flew close and the crew waved back. She dipped her wide wings, disappearing over distant hills.

The crowd was suddenly as quiet as Penelope's tears. Everyone began moving away in small groups. Perhaps a fearless farmer in a rumpled blue suit said it best: "When that proud old plane did its fly-by," he said, "it carried a load of memories for most of us here - and for all of England."

He turned. Bending he picked a white daisy. Then he looked up at the silent, empty sky and walked slowly across the blowing wheat fields that led to his farm.

The above, itorty appealed Zn the. Auguit 27. 1 978 edZ-tion of, the Loi Angeiei Timet. It it neprtinted here with the exprieti pertmition of, itt authon, Jertrty Payne of Laguna Beach, CA. Jenny wat a fighten pitot in the Pacific darting WW II and it now a trtavet wrtitert. The antiete wai tent to the editor by Totton Andernton.

Group History..

Several inquiries have beeffr made to about the feasibility of another reprint history. One FOTE member, Cliff Bishop, operator in Bishop's Stortford, England, he would take 25 copies. In the past six months, at least thirty others have written about copies.

The price for the book has increased, just as has every other item, but it is still possible to get 100 copies at a price within the \$20.00 range. This means little or no profit to the organization, but our first objective is to pursue the wishes of the members in all matters.

If anyone is interested in sending their money in advance, we will go to press when at least 85 copies are ordered. We must have the money on hand first.

Send your checks to our Treasurer, John F. Pettenger, 121 Home Park Road, Venice, Florida, 33595. Make the check payable to the 385th BGRA and annotate it "Group History". The money will be kept in a special fund and you will be informed in the next Newsletter on the response to this notice.

94th BGMA MEMORIAL...

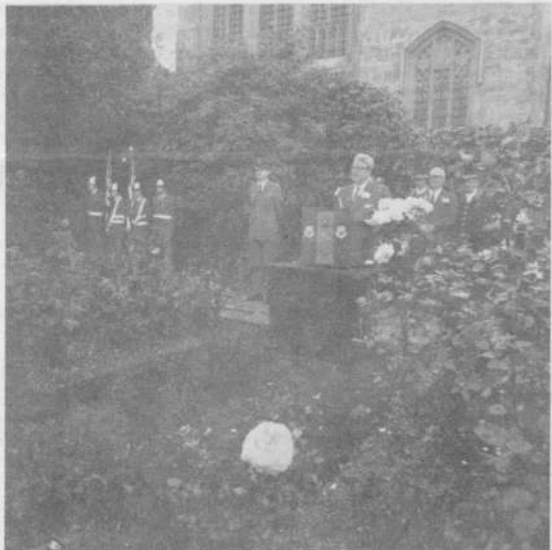
The Appleby Rose Garden is a cloistered area in the main garden of the old Abbey of St. Edmundsbury, located in the Borough of St. Edmundsbury, Suffolk, England. It is named in honor of T/Sgt John T. Appleby, who had been assigned to the 487th Bombardment Group (H), at Lavenham RAF Station, during the period from March 1945 to November 1945. His home was Arkansas and at 38 years of age, he had been malassigned to the 8th Air Force as a Celestial Navigation Training Technician. Celestial navigation was only a talked-about technique at that time in the Eighth.

The war was winding down and John found himself with time on his hands, but in his short time in England, John Appleby came to know and love Suffolk as only few Americans had done. He and his old bicycle came to be known everywhere in Suffolk as he pedaled to the many parishes of Suffolk in rain, sleet and

fog, to pursue a new found hobby of making brass rubbings of the most famous brass burial plates in numerous churches in Suffolk. Bury St. Edmunds and the Angel Hotel became a home away from home to him, who, unlike many of his countrymen, spent a great amount of time with British servicemen, in their homes and service clubs. Many were the hours he sat in the quiet of the rose garden now named for him. The rose garden became a focal point of his book, "Suffolk Summer", in which he poured out his thoughts about times and people he came to know. The book was first published in May 1948 and John Appleby dedicated the royalties from the book to the maintenance fund for the Rose Garden. The book has been reprinted several times.

In response to his generosity, the people of Bury St. Edmunds re-named the Old English Rose Garden the "Appleby Rose Garden".and dedicated it to all the American servicepersons who had served in that area during World War II. John T. Appleby died in 1975, but his memory lingers on in England.

It is in this beautiful site that the 94th BGMA had erected and dedicated a Memorial Stone to their fallen comrades who had served with valor. The stone was unveiled amid the pomp and ceremony of the Mayor and Councillors of the Borough of St. Edmundsbury, and the Commanding General of the Third Air Force in England, Major General William Norris and his staff. The color guard from the 48th Tactical Fighter Wing at Lakenheath RAF Station, added a classical USAF touch to the proceedings. Overhead, at 1600 hours on 5 October 1978, a light airplane released rose petals for each of the dead members. Invocation was delivered by Chaplain (Col.) Roberts, of the 48th TFW and the dedication speech was made by the 94th's Paul



Paat King dedicates the Memortiai Stone. To his rear is Cliff Hatcher III, 94th BGMA President.

King. The acceptance speech was made by is Worship the Mayor of St. Edmundsbury, Councillor Robert W. Elliott. Benediction was given by The Right Reverend David R. Maddock, M.A., Provost of St Edmundsbury Cathedral and Chaplain to the Mayor. Wreaths were laid at the base of the memorial by Cliff Hatcher III, for the 94th BGMA, Cliff Hall, for Friends of the 94th, John Ford and John Ellis for 385th BGRA Eastern members, Earl Cole and Ian McLachlan, for 385th Central members, and John Pettenger, for 385th Western members. The Western wreath was a gift of Al Chealander, who was not present.

A more appropriate site could not be found in all England. In the cloistered garden is an aluminum bench, cast from the wreckage of B-17 aircraft. A small plaque reads " Presented to the City of Bury St. Edmunds by the United Stated Army Air Forces." For several days after the ceremony, many people were observed sitting on this bench absorbing the quiet and solitude of the garden. School children, under the guidance of their teacher, came to pay respects.

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this office of our* bookstore has stated

Acting Chaplain's Corner

THE STATUE....

Hugh Andrews, of the 551st Bomb Squadron, was about to go off to fight for his country back in the 1940's when a young relative gave him a small statue of the Blessed Virgin. Throughout his training as a pilot and on into combat, the statue was always in the cockpit of his B-17 aircraft. During combat, Earl Cole was with Andy as a bombardier on most of his missions on "Li'l Audrey", and when Andy finished his missions ahead of Earl, he persuaded Earl, a non-catholic, to keep the statue with him for his next five or ten missions, which Earl required to finish his tour. Earl accepted the offer and he finished his missions, always accompanied by the statue.

On the day Earl finished his missions, a young West Pointer, now best remembered by his nickname of "Chip", was waiting for Earl after debriefing. He wanted to borrow the statue because he still had many missions to complete his tour. Earl explained to Chip that he had promised Andy that he would mail the statue to Andy's younger brother, who was in the U.S. Navy training program as a pilot and who was due for combat in the Far East. But Chip persisted, telling Earl he knew about the history of the statue, and in his mind, he knew he had to carry that statue of the Blessed Virgin with him, in order to complete his tour. Earl was so torn between his promise to Andy and the absolute sincerity of the young navigator, that he tossed and turned all night trying to sleep. In the morning, he sought out Chip, gave him the statue and Andy's brother's address. He told Chip that it was against his better judgement to do so since the statue did not belong to him, but he also told Chip that he thought Andy would approve his action.

When Earl arrived at Bovington RAF Station to process for return to the United States, Andy was still there. The ol' Kentucky Kid used his best southern persuasive powers to convince Andy he had done the best thing. To his great relief, his friend and pilot told him he would have done the same thing.

When Chip finished his tour, he immediately sent the statue to Andy's younger brother who was just completing his operational training, but before he could be sent overseas, the war with Japan came to a close. (He stayed on active duty for some time and then transferred to the Naval Reserve, from which he will soon retire as a Rear Admiral). When he came off active duty, he returned the statue to Andy.

In 1950, when the Korean conflict began, Andy had an 18 year old cousin in the 1st Marine Division who was being shipped overseas immediately. Andy sent him the statue. When the 1st Marine Division was trapped at the Chosan Reservoir, Andy's cousin was one of the last to escape the trap and he finished out his tour in Korea and returned safely home.

The question in mind is, did these five men have Mary looking over their shoulder, or were they just lucky? Youn can't convince them they are lucky, so what is your guess?

By the way. I almost forgot to give you the punch line. That eighteen year old cousin in the 1st Marine Division was the young relative that had given Hugh Andrews the statue back in the 1940's!

I CONFESS...

He arrived at Station 126 at a time when the odds for a combat crew to finish its tour stood at about 1 in 11. They were rough times and the stories he was told by combat-tested gunners were not intended to boost his morale. First he was sent to the Wash for combat gunnery where he qualified. It was now time for his first mission.

During the greater part of the day before his first mission, he went over his equipment with great care. Meanwhile, his Catholic background and training kept his conscience a bit over-active and in the recesses of his mind he was reviewing all his mortal and venial sins. That afternoon he sought out the Chaplain and went to confession, after which he returned to the barracks for a little sack time. Suddenly he sat bolt upright thinking about some sins he had forgotten to confess. He rushed back to the Chapel where he found others waiting in line for confession.

When he entered the confessional, he blessed himself and started by saying "Bless me, Father, for I have sinned. It's twenty minutes since my last confession." From the other side of the screen came a loud "What?" There was a moment of silence. Then from the other side of the screen, the priest continued, " Son, you are being a bit overzealous. When I gave you absolution after your last confession, all the sins of your life were blotted out - even those you had forgotten to tell. And I am sorry that I reacted so loudly when you mentioned the twenty minutes since your last confession, but your the third returnee today!"

TWO MEN OF THE CLOTH...

Christmas time is memory time. Put thirty or more years into the Air Force and one is bound to have met many Chaplains. Some are outstanding and unforgettable; some are very good and also are remembered. There are also a few, who but for the Grace of God, seemed to think they were God, but time erases these type from your thoughts. The men of God represented most of the major faiths and denominations.

In this story, you will read about two Chaplains who not only understood life from the standpoint of living it, but also from the sometimes violent end of it. One was young, handsome and well met. The other was middle-aged, portly and a good Joe. As a matter of fact, his name was Joe; Father Joseph Scherer. He was a Captain and came to the USAAF from the mid-west where he had been a Catholic parish priest. The younger man was Chaplain (Capt.) James Kincannon, a Baptist minister from Arkansas. They were the only two Chaplains ever assigned to the 385th Bombardment Group, and our Jewish members were served by roving Rabbi's. Chaplain Jim was assigned to the 385th almost from its inception, while Father Joe did not join us until 5 September 1943, at a time when morale was at a low ebb. In fourteen missions, we had lost nine crews- many who would never return.



Chaptatn Jai Ktncannon, ritght, tatkiisu)ttth Lt. Horr and crewman en.

When Colonel Vandevanter found himself with a morale problem, he reached out to his Chaplain's and put their psychological and theological training to work. They tackled many problems and solved them. It seemed to me that our two Chaplains were everywhere. The personal problems of the aircrews had top priority and every member of the 385th knew that was correct. The personal problems of ground personnel were not overlooked, but there were times when these could be put on the back burner. It's easier to sweat out personal problems with your feet on terra firma. Hospital visits, Commanders conferences, combat fatigue consultations, Sunday and Holyday services, "Dear John's" from back home, and so on and on.

Chaplain Jim struck up a fast friendship with Major Ed Stern and other Jewish lads and agreed that Ed Stern "was good enough to be a Baptist"! However, he also agreed to hold services for the Jewish personnel on a monthly basis, since visiting Jewish Chaplains were few and far between. They secured the nec-

(Cont'd Page 9)

TWO MEN.... (Cont'd)

essary prayer books and Chaplain Jim started on his new activity. In the beginning, Chaplain Jim would get carried away with his sermons and start speaking on the wonderful merits of Jesus Christ. He would look at his Jewish congregation; suddenly realize what had been taking place, and would get back on track with their services.

But the services that made them more memorable to me were those connected with the combat missions. Out of bed with the combat crews, they were at the combat mess for prayers, personal conferences, confessions, or communion. They were at the briefing room before and after the briefings for the same reasons. When the trucks carried the crews to the hardstands where the aircraft were parked and ready to go, these two men of God had little cards with special notations to see someone before take-off - not from just one crew. You could see them in their Jeeps as they hurried here and there around the perimeter to see the promised ones. If your hardstand and aircraft was on list, you were a spectator at a pageant you would never forget. More Protestant lads than Episcopalians and Lutherans participated at communion and more than one so-called atheist or agnostic knelt for a final blessing. One agnostic, queried about his participation, stated "Man, I don't pass up any chances when I'm on a mission." It was at scenes such as this that many men were exposed for the first time to the beliefs and practices of others - and they respected each mans belief and opinion, even if they did not agree. Chaplain Jin went one way and Father Joe the other. They covered as many hardstands as possible - and then some. They were a 385th team.

It is my belief that the ecumenical movement began back during World War II during those early mornings on the hardstands when the sky was the great open cathedral. The scenes were repeated in rain, smog, fog and sleet. Not only at our base but at bases and camps and front lines all over the world.

As a tribute to those two men of the cloth, I can think of none finer than what occurred on my hardstand during the war. A young Jewish pilot whose own aircraft was badly shot up the day before was scheduled to fly mine. He assembled his crew and the ground crew and stated: "Our aircrew is a mixed bag when it comes to religious beliefs. Some are Protestants, Catholics, atheists and agnostic - or so they claim. I don't know about you ground crewmen, but if Chaplain Jim or Father Joe come to this hardstand to give a blessing or communion, I want you to bare your head, kneel down and stay there until a final blessing is given. And further, if a Rabbi should come to this hardstand, I want you to all follow my example - just faint!"

Chaplain James Kincannon died of a heart attack at the young age of 44, while I have not been able to find out what happened to Father Joe, but the beautiful sketch by Anne Hayward that was made in 1948 from a memorable chapel scene she recalled during a Christmas at Great Ashfield, certainly will recall thoughts of our two men of the cloth.

94th MEMORIAL... (cont'd)

Following the dedication, invited members of the Dedication Party were hosted at a Tea by the Mayor and Councillors of the Borough of St. Edmundsbury. The tea was held in the Athenaeum Building in Angel Hill Square. In the evening, 124 guests assemble in the Angel Hotel Banquet Hall for a Memorial Dinner. Toasts were exchanged and Paul King was Master of Ceremony. Cliff and Wendy Hall, FOTE liaison with the 94th BGMA, were responsible for the dedication and dinner and were given a gift by Cliff Hatcher for their fine performance in both areas. Major General William Norris welcomed the members to England with a fine talk and Roger Freeman was the featured speaker. John Ford delivered messages from Lt. General Ira C. Eaker and Senator Edward Kennedy. Following the dinner, there were slide presentations by Cliff Hall and Roger Freeman. At intermission, John Ford bestowed commissions as Kentucky Colonels on Ian McLachlan, Rowley Miles and John Ellis, an event that was well covered in the East Anglia Times. Guests at the dedication and dinner were Rowley and Angela Miles, John and Lucy Ellis

and Ian and Julie McLachlan. The 385th was represented by John and Betty Ford, Earl and Ruth Cole, and John and Ruth Pettinger. The full story of our trip to England will be written and illustrated in the Seventh Reunion Booklet. The treatment given all of us by our friends at Great Ashfield was almost beyond description. It was a good journey.



The 94th BG Memositat Stone



The coistered Appleby Rote Garden uithh. the St. James Cathedrat tn the background.

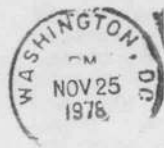
MUSEUM GIFT OF MOVIE

Your President and Editor donated his copy of the 385th BGRA film, "Wings From The Past" to the Museum Control Tower at Framlingham (Parham) in Suffolk, England. The film will be a lasting and constant reminder of the 385th's contribution during World War II. It was presented in honor of Rowley and Angela Miles, John and Lucy Ellis, Ian and Julie McLachlan, Roger Freeman, Ron Buxton, Stewart Evans, Cliff Hall and the other original "Diggers". It was also in honor of Percy and Mrs. Kindred for their contribution of the tower and property. Contributions toward a 16mm movie projector will be most welcome.



The Officers and Directors of the 385th. BGRA extend their wishes for a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. to all our members and families. . May the best of health, wealth and happiness be yours in the coming year. It is a pleasure to serve your interests.

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED