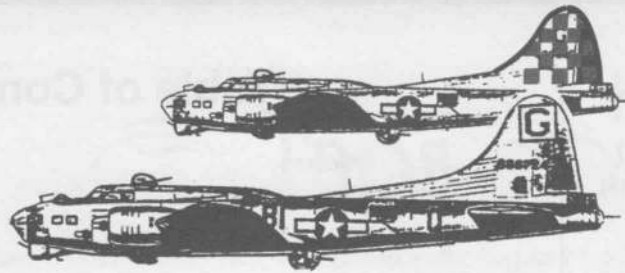


X address on p 20
for all members
of veterans
any war.



Hardlife



Herald



Newsletter of the
385th Bombardment Group Association

1942 - 1945 • Great Ashfield - Suffolk, England • Station 155

The Mighty Eighth

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385th Bombardment Group (H)

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Cover

The cover is a group photo of the members who attended the 385th Bomb Group Association meeting in Kansas City, MO. The meeting was the first group meeting held in conjunction with the Eighth Air Force Historical Society. The picture taken after the 8th Air Force Historical Gala dinner, was provided by Dr. Lewis A. Smith, a member of the 385th BGA.

Editorial

It has been a rewarding experience editing and publishing the Hardlife Herald this past year. I have attempted to provide you with interesting stories about you, the veterans of the 385th Bombardment Group, and about veterans of other "Mighty Eighth" groups. However, I am sure that many other members of our Association have stories that are just as interesting and informative as those which I presented in the past year. Send them to me, and let other members of the Association enjoy your experiences. You do not have to be a Hemingway or a Shakespeare to write your story. An outline on how to start an account of your WW II life, and especially your 385th BG experiences is provided in this issue. Use it to jog your memory and jot down those memories.

Correction

Dale Leggett, a member of the 548th Bomb Squadron and head of Tech, Supply passed away on June 12, 2004, not on July 12, 2004 as published in the August 2004 issue of the Hardlife Herald.

- From Forbes Tenbrook

PREZ SEZ

The 2004 385th Bomb Group Association (BGA) reunion has come and gone with 51 persons from our group attending the 8th Air Force Historical Society's (AFHS) functions in Kansas City, MO. Our reunion was a resounding success. I did not hear any negative comments, but heard plenty of praise for the way the 8th AFHS ran the reunion. Our Group had our own Hospitality Room, and another private room for both our business meeting and our Group dinner. We also had designated tables for our Group at the final 8th AFHS banquet. It is no surprise that the attending members voted to once again join with the 8th AFHS for our 2005 reunion.

The 2005 8th AFHS reunion will be held at the Sheraton National Hotel in Arlington, VA, September 27 - October 2, 2005. The hotel is only a few minutes away from downtown Washington, DC. Highlights of the 2005 reunion are planned for visits to the WW II Memorial on the Mall, and the new Air and Space Museum near Dulles Airport.

At the 385th BGA Membership Meeting, the members unanimously accepted the new Constitution presented in Vol. 21, No. 3 (August 2004) issue of the *Hardlife Herald (HH)*. The 385th

BGA Constitution and By-laws are now compatible.

Painful news received by the Board was the resignation of our long-time, hard-working Treasurer, Verne Philips, owing to health problems. At our Executive Board meeting, the Board elected Chuck Smith to fill the Treasurer's post.

At the Board meeting, our negative cash flow was discussed in detail. The major expense for our association is the printing and mailing of about 650 copies of the *HH* each quarter. Life members receive the *HH* without cost as designated in their membership agreement. Dues from about 240 annual paying members provide most of our income; however, this income does not cover the rising costs of printing and postage of four issues per year of the *HH*. At the current rate of operations, the Association is operating at a loss of about \$6000 per year, and this loss is eating up our reserve funds. Several suggestions were offered. One was to raise the dues to \$35.00 per year, which the Board adopted. This will help our operating fund, but not eliminate the yearly loss. Therefore, we are soliciting donations. One suggestion is for Life Members to make donations by paying the

yearly dues (or more), as if they held annual memberships. Any type donation will be accepted from any Member.

Another problem the Board discussed was the mailing roster of members. Unless each member keeps us current of changes in their address, or membership status, our roster will continue to contain costly errors. We are making a limited mailing to solicit input from those whose membership status is not clear. If we missed you, and you think your status is mislabeled on the *HH*, please let us know.

Owing to the election of Chuck Smith as Treasurer, and since the Editor is automatically a member of the Board, the 2nd and 3rd VP positions became empty, and Les Reichart was moved from 4th VP to 2nd VP. Thus the 3rd and 4th VP positions are not filled. Nominations for these, or ANY position, may be made at the next election at our annual meeting. Elections for the next group of Officers and Board of Directors will be held at our 2005 reunion. Plan on attending our 2005 reunion.

Bill Varnedoe

MEMPHIS BELLE

The B-17, Memphis Belle, is to be relocated to the U.S. Air Force Museum in Dayton, OH before the end of the year. The Belle originally on loan from the USAF, has reside in Memphis, TN for the past 58-years. After some

restoration, the Belle will become the centerpiece of the Air Force Museum's World War II aircraft collection. Charles D. Metcalf, Director of the Museum, said, "We will give it a level of care and public visibility befitting its legacy."



2ND & 3RD GENERATION

Their hair, in any left, is white or gray. Legs that once swung nimbly into the body of a B-17 now stand stiffly, some helped by canes or walkers for the National Anthem. Eyes that once scanned the skies for enemy fighters are now teary behind bifocal during memorial services. Once boys, they are now in their eighties and their stories need telling.

As a member of the 2nd or 3rd generation, it is now your

time to serve the "Mighty Eighth" and the 385th BGA. You can begin a family project to document the history of your father, cousin, grandfather or uncle. There are many resources available to help you get started. But the greatest resource is the veterans that are still living. If your relative is gone, capturing the history will keep his memory alive.

Dr. Harry Butowsky, PhD.
Who teaches WW II history at George Mason University rec-

ommends that you do some reading about the air campaigns. Search the websites listed. Capture the veteran's history by asking questions. Request an oral history project kit from the Veterans History Project at the Library of Congress. When finished with your project, send it to the Library of Congress for their archives, share it with other members of your family, and send a story to the Hardlife Herald.

SUGGESTED ORAL HISTORY GUIDE

WHAT WERE YOU DOING BEFORE THE WAR?

WHERE WERE YOU WHEN YOU HEARD ABOUT PEARL HARBOR?

WHAT WAS YOUR REACTION?

DID YOU ENLIST? WHERE?

WERE YOU DRAFTED? HOW DID YOU CHOOSE THE AIR CORPS?

WHERE DID YOU GO FOR TRAINING?

WHAT KIND OF TRAINING DID YOU HAVE?

WHEN DID YOU GO OVERSEAS?

HOW DID YOU GET THERE?

WHAT WAS THE TRIP LIKE?

WHAT BOMB GROUP WERE YOU IN?

WHICH SQUADRON?

WHERE WERE YOU STATIONED?

DESCRIBE THE BASE AND NEARBY TOWN?

HOW LONG WAS YOUR TOUR? WHAT WAS YOUR JOB?

WHAT CAMPAIGNS DID YOU PARTICIPATE IN?

WHAT WAS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE EXPERIENCE?

WHAT DID YOU DO IN YOUR TIME OFF? WHAT HELPED YOU GET THROUGH THE DAYS?

WHAT CONTACT DID YOU HAVE WITH HOME? HOW DID YOU GET BACK TO THE U.S.?

HOW DID YOU ADAPT TO BEING HOME?

Following are websites for research of veterans:

Air Force Historical Research Agency

www.afhra.af.mil

National Archives (order veteran's record)

www.archives.gov

Eighth Air Force Museum

www.mightyeighth.org

Library of Congress

www.loc.gov/folklife/vets

Editor's Note: Information obtained from "War Stories", September 2004, National Capital Area Chapter Newsletter, 8th AFHS, - Sandra O'Connell, Editor.

385th BGA EUROPEAN TOUR FOR 2005

To celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the end of World War II, the Friends of the 385th in England and Europe have invited the members of the 385th Bomb Group Association (BGA) to join with them at Great Ashfield, Suffolk, England and at Perle, Luxembourg, and at other sites of significance to the 385th BGA members. The itinerary and costs are now complete and available in a brochure, developed by Arena Travel, and will be distributed by the tour leader, Art Driscoll, 1st VP of the 385th BGA. Information in the brochure will include: a day by day itinerary, a reservation form, costs, insurance data, refund policy and other essential information. If you or any members of your family are interested in this tour and wish a brochure, contact Art Driscoll, 4500 Post Road, H-75, Nashville, TN 37205 for additional information. E-mail: artdriscoll@hotmail.com or FAX (615) 352-6995.

Three tours are available. They include a preference of tour sites, (United Kingdom only, Continental Europe only, or both) and the number of touring days. Cost will vary depending on the tour option selected. Air travel, USA to Europe, is NOT included in the prices quoted. However, Art is willing to negotiate group rates from certain international hubs.

OPTION ONE - United Kingdom only:

June 15-21, 2005: Six nights in the United Kingdom including a long weekend at Great Ashfield. First class/good grade hotels with full breakfast daily, two (2) lunches and three (3) dinners. Cost: \$1140 Twinshare Room rate per person, or \$1510 Single Room rate.

OPTION TWO - Europe only:

June 20-30, 2005: Eight nights in Europe, including weekend in Perle, Luxembourg, preceded and followed by a total of two nights in London. (Note: Overlap of one night to connect with Option Three). First class/good grade hotels with full breakfast daily, plus two (2) lunches and five (5) dinners. Cost: \$1580 Twinshare Room Rate per person, or \$2120 Single Room Rate.

OPTION THREE - Combination of United Kingdom and Europe itineraries.

June 15-30, 2005: Seven nights in England and eight nights in Europe. First class/good grade hotels with full breakfast daily, plus four (4) lunches and seven (7) dinners. Cost: \$2460 Twinshare Room Rate per person, or \$3160 Single Room Rate.

A deposit of \$250 is payable upon booking your tour package. Balance is due not less than 72 days prior to departure. Make checks payable to Arena Travel and mail with completed reservation form to Art Driscoll. Art will forward reservations and deposits to Arena Travel. Arena Travel will confirm and invoice each booking.

HELP CELEBRATE THE 60TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE END OF WWII

DIARY OF DALE G. SMELTZER

The following story is a mission by mission account of Dale G. Smeltzer, a Co-pilot on the B-17 "In Like Flynn". It is a record of combat and mercy missions flown in the European Theater of Operations while Dale was a member of the 549th Bombardment Squadron, 385th Bombardment Group, 3rd Air Division, 8th Army Air Force. The information for this story was taken from the combat diary of Dale Smeltzer, and was transcribed and submitted by Kara and Kyle Kesler, Daughter and Son-in-law of Dale Smeltzer. The transcription is as Dale Smeltzer wrote it, and contains his thoughts and words on the day he entered them in his diary. Some editorial corrections were made for clarification.

Other members of the "In Like Flynn" crew were Pilot-Clarence Fauber; Navigator- Art Schaefer; Bombardier- William Schloss; Top Turret /Engineer- Gerald Donnelly; Radio Operator- James Elder; Ball Turret- John DeMucci; Walter Hatch-Waist; and Robert (Bob) Hake- Tail Gunner.... Editor

Mission No. 1

After an indoctrination period and having weathered a forty-eight hour pass in London, those famous (?) words, "Briefing at 4:30", its 3:30 now, were finally addressed to me as I lay calmly sleeping in my sack on the morning of February 23. It was the first mission for our crew. The Bombardier was OG so couldn't accompany us. A Toggler (straggler?) flew with us in his place. Our target was to be Ansbach. On take off, our gear wouldn't retract electrically so the

engineer had to "wind them up". This occupied considerable time during which we were unable to climb, as a result we were unable to join our formation. We were to fly number 5 position in the low section. Not to be left out by having missed our group, we fell in with another group. We entered Germany through the Northwest and after dodging flak areas through central Germany we finally bombed the marshaling yard at Pfofeld near Nuremberg. Bombs were dropped from 12,500 feet. In crossing the Rhine River just above Strasbourg, we were shot at by a flak battery under visual conditions. Fortunately they missed, and we returned safely to base. Time of flight was 9:35. The first flak I saw was several thousand yards away as we passed the Leipzig Area. An interesting moment passed, as the tail gunner called over the intercom, "Now they are tracking us, as we crossed the Rhone". Our bomb load was 12 - 500# G.P.

Dry Run

On February___ we took off for mission No. two, but on assembly number two engine failed when an oil line broke. Couldn't feather the prop so we left formation and dropped our 6 - 1000# G.P. in the Channel and returned to the base.

Dry Run No. 2

A long story- Shall leave out the unpleasant details, took off and joined formation flying the number four position in the low section of the low Squadron. At the joint part of the Holland-German border number 3 engine failed due to a cracked cylinder.

We aborted, dropped our bombs and returned home escorted by 2 - P-51's (I love those boys). Bomb load was 42 - 250# G.P. and 2 - 500# M-17s. Target was to be Southeast of Dortmund.

Mission No. 2 - March 19, 1945

With Lt. Franklin Shank as pilot, our crew went to Swinemunde - near Steltin. Target was navy yard. Flak over target was slight, flew number five in lead section of lead Squadron. Saw much of Denmark and many German vessels in Baltic Sea. Not very eventful mission. Was long flight - however - total time 8:30. Bomb load was 5 - 1000# and bombing was P.F.F.

Mission No. 3 - March 20, 1945

Today we lead the 8th AF in an afternoon raid on Hamburg. We were a Chaff ship: No. 5 in a 6 ship section. The target was only partially covered by clouds. Flak wasn't too thick over target. Shortly after the R.P. bandits were reported in the area. The gunners reported seeing EA cueing up only to be routed by P-51's. On way out over enemy coast, we were potential target for considerable flak, although shell explosions shook the plane, we suffered no damage though several planes in our section did.

On ground after the mission the ball turret reported, "Boy that Ball got awfully big all of a sudden flak was bursting all around it". Time of flight 6:45. Shank was again our pilot. Saw what I presume were two German fighters at four o'clock high about 3000 yards away. Too far away to observe any detail - Still too close for comfort.

Mission No. 4 - March 21, 1945

Today we had a milk run. Target was an airfield at Zwischenahn just over the Dutch-German border and west of Bremen. The airfield was a lair for jet propelled fighters. Saw no flak and no enemy aircraft. Really plastered the target with 12 - 500# G.P.s. Flew number four in lead section of high squadron.

This made the second mission in 22 hours. We were a ground spare and replaced a crew which aborted. Time of flight was 4:03.

Mission No. 5 - March 22, 1945

Oh Boy! What a mission. Briefed for six minutes over enemy territory. Target was barracks at Ratingen just north of Dusseldorf. After dropping 6 - 1000# G.P.s on target and turning to R.P., the flak became intense and accurate. An 88 mm shell went right through the wing of our element leader. We suffered lucky. We flew number five in high section of high squadron. Between target and R.P., number four engine sprung an oil leak due to a cracked oil line. Had to feather prop and had to return home on three engines. Time of flight was 6 hours.

Mission No. 6 - March 23, 1945

Another short one. We are back together as a crew. Original target was marshal yards at Schwerte but we bombed secondary which was marshaling yards at Siegen. Flew number two in lead section of high squadron. Bomb load 12 - 500#. Time of flight - 7 hours. By evasive action we dodged flak on homeward crossing of Rhine - no flak seen on way in or at target.

Mission No. 7 - March 24, 1945

Here we go again. The Krauts had rebuilt part of the runways at Zwischenahn which we destroyed on March 21, so tomorrow they can start all over - (how discouraging). We really plastered the place with 12 - 500# semi armor piercing bombs. Still no flak and no fighters. Give me more like this!

This morning we were on again - off again. When starting engines, no. 4 cowl flap hydraulic line sprung a leak. Had it repaired but they said no dice. After leaving the ship and shedding flying clothes, they told us we could go because someone had aborted. We intercepted the formation just prior to enemy coast in and filled No. 5 low section of high squadron. Time of flight 4:15

Tomorrow after five successive missions we go on pass.

Mission No. 8 - March 28, 1945

Looks like a Rough One from the start! Target - Hanover.

Assembly over France. More clouds in the sky than we do want to do with - yet we made more - *Persistent* Contrails. Our position was to be No. 5 high section Low Squadron. However low squadron leader aborted - Deputy leader was over wrong buncher so we followed in trail of lead squadron - after vainly trying to assemble a new squadron prior to I.P. We bombed with lead squadron. Target weather was approximately 6/10 coverage. Flak was intense over area just before we got there, but when we were over target there was more. Lucky us!! On way back we let down thru clouds in formation. We moved up to No. 2 position of lead section over North Sea after original man aborted. Bomb load 12 - 500# G.P. Time approx. 7 hours.

Mission No. 9 - March 30, 1945

I flew when they were rough - Hamburg again. Trouble, more trouble - turbo governor on #3 engine failed on climb over buncher. However we persevered and flew with the formation. Our position was No. 5 of lead section, lead squadron. However on bomb run we dropped down to fly No. 7 low section, low squadron position. On bomb run a squadron crossed over from left to right with bomb doors open and some bombs falling. He, who was sweating it out, was me. Then- and then - a squadron, at our altitude, crossed thru our squadron from right to left. We had dropped our bombs so we just *Scattered*. Never did get back together. Since we had one engine practically out and No. 2 beginning to lose power due to a cracked exhaust stack, we decided to take the shortest way home. We passed too near Heligoland and they sent up some flak that showered the ship - but missed us. Over the North Sea we ran into a front and drove thru a snow storm for about 10 minutes - combat is rough.

On the ground, the ball turret operator said "I called out that flak at 9 o'clock (incidentally there was a terrific barrage out there). I knew it was too far away to hurt us, but when I see that much, I am scared!!". I didn't blame him!!

Weather over target - 7/10 coverage - just enough so those m/srgts could never put that flak in there. We were shot at but good, received no damage, however a piece hit the glass in the upper local. Bomb load 20 - 250# G.P.s. Time about 6V₂ hours. Air speed was inaccurate and flu gate was out.

Cont. on page 8...

Cont. from page 7...

Mission No. 10 - March 31, 1945

A big D.P. - Lots of weather again! Flew No. 5 in high (section) of high (squadron). Tail end Charlie - last group over target which was Brandenburg - just west of Berlin. Quite a long mission - Turbos were erratic and we were sweating them out, but we made out OK. Bomb load 38 - 108# G.P.s. Some jet fighters in target area but P-51s run them off. "I love those boys". Not much of interest. Target weather 10/10. Time - 7:30.

Mission No. 11 - April 7, 1945

A low level job!! Bombing altitude 15,000! Target - Ordnance warehouse at Gustrow (south of Rostock) Tactical support of Russians - also to impress the Reds with accuracy of 8th AF bombing. We really flushed out the Hun fighters. They were in the area about all the time we were over enemy territory - about 2V₂ hours. Jets were up. ME-109s and FW-190s. An ME-109 passed thru our formation, went under us and above low section. We were 5 in lead section of lead squadron. He was hotly pursued by 2 - P-51s. Boy, were they on his tail - he eventually went down in flames. Saw a plane blow up in front of us. What a sight!! Target weather 3/10, no flak. We really clobbered it. Hope the Russians appreciate our efforts. Time of flight - 8:30. Bomb load 8 - 500# G.P. 4 - M-17.

Mission No. 12 - April 8, 1945

Today I earn my first cluster to the Air Medal. Another low level job - 5,000 until near the Rhine. Bombing altitude 15,500. Target Hof (near Planen) Railway locomotive repair depot and marshaling yards. Non visual

weather. So we again clobbered the target. Bonified for no flak, but the Hun crossed us up. About a 6 or 8 battery, apparently a mobile artillery. The few bursts were quite accurate. Not long over enemy territory, somewhat over an hour. We S'd all over the sky to stay behind the group in front of us. Boy! Was I tired from flying formation! We were flying no. 5 in High of High Squadron. No Jerry fighters around. Saw all types of activity on the ground on both sides of the Rhine. Saw another B-17 go down in flames. At least 7 'chutes came out. Time of flight 8:20. Bomb load 6-1000# R.D.X. -G.P. Strike photo show 90% in 500' circle.

Lucky 13-April 9, 1945

We had to wait 2 hours for the fog to dissipate before take-off. Finally got off about 11 for an 8V₂ hour mission to an airfield near Munich. Nearly stalled out on way in and nearly "Had it" in prop wash at the I.P. Really sweated it out. Then had to go to secondary which was an oil storage tank and marshaling yard at Nuremberg. Not very long at altitude - thank goodness.

Bomb load 12 - 500# G.P.
Time 8:20.

Mission No. 14 - April 10, 1945

Well they didn't start me off with an early briefing - 8:30. Big D.P. about 30 miles northwest of Big "B". Target an airfield at Neurnippin. We really clobbered it. Visual weather. Evasive action got us out a small flak battery that really hit the low. Was a pretty good mission all around. Bomb load 6 - 1000# G.P. Time 5:30, Flew no. 5 in lead of high squadron. (Had a ball turret and waist gunners acting as latrine orderlies).

Mission No. 15 - April 11, 1945

On again - off again. First I wasn't going to fly - then 18 minutes before briefing time, Elmer woke me say I was going to have to fly. Was happy about that, and more so, after the mission turned out to be a milk run. No flak and no fighters!! Target - Ingelstadt marshaling yards. Visual again. Someone recently knocked it out. Bomb load: 4 - 1000# G.P.; 4 - M-17. Flight time 8:30. Same position, #5 in lead of lead.

Mission No. 16 - April 17, 1945

After resting up on (unknown word) again, I hit the blue. A big D. P. Flew at 6,000' over Belgium. Target: Ruednice, Czechoslovakia, northeast of Prague. No flak and no fighters. Time - 8:30, Flew No. 2 of group lead. Space bombing visual. We clobbered it. Bomb load 12 - 500# G.P. B.Alt. was 20,000'.

Mission No. 17 - April 18, 1945 {General Gerhard led group}

Czechoslovakia again. Kolin east of Prague. 9? hours. Assembled at 2000' and flew at 2000' until we had to pull up over hills several miles inside Germany. What fun! Saw the tank barriers of the Siegfried Line. Bombed from 20,000', visual again. Clobbered target. Bomb load 12 - 500# G.P. No flak, no fighters. No. 5 position in lead of lead. Got stuck on hard stand when taxing for T.O.

Mission No. 18 - April 19, 1945

Today I celebrate my quarter century anniversary with my second cluster to the Air Medal. Hit Aussig in Czechoslovakia - marshaling yards. 8:45 flight time. Assembled at 6,000'! Flew with Willoughby. No. 4 in low section of high. No flak, no fighters. Would

like more of these easy ones.
Bomb load 14 - 250 & 4 - M-17.

**Mercy Food Mission No. 1 -
May 5, 1945**

With the bomb bay loaded with 73 sacks of British food rations including flour & cheese, and with three "paddle fat" passengers we took off, single ships - one minute apart for an airfield near Amsterdam, Holland. We dropped the sacks from 400' while flying at 130 M.P.H. I.A.S - Buzzing legalized!! Flew over German defense installations on

the coast - pill boxes, trenches, and flak guns. Also saw some Krauts! The fields were not flooded. All looked green. Lots of cattle and horses in the fields. The City of Amsterdam looked very clean and quiet in contrast to the towns of Germany, France and Belgium. It was untouched by bombs or artillery. At last we are helping people to live instead of trying to kill them.

Dutch flags were flying everywhere in Holland for the first day since the Germans had occupied the land. The Krauts in

Holland had surrendered unconditionally the night before.

**Mercy Mission No. 2 - May 6,
1945**

Again loaded with food and passengers. We went to Holland. Same target. Those people really seem to appreciate our efforts. Waving merrily, and they had painted "Thanks" on roof tops near the airfield.

To the Men and Women of the USAAF - with Remembrance and Gratitude

I met her 30 years ago, in Nashville, TN. I was looking at a Book of Remembrances in which were inscribed the names of those who died in WW II. I became aware of her, standing by my side, staring at the pages with me.

"My little boy flew off to that war", she said. His epitaph, formed by her words, and washed by her tears, was stark and simple. "He never came back."

I was overwhelmed by her pain, and by the thought that, in giving her son for my freedom, in a sense, she became my mother, and that through her loss, I became her son. I did not know how to say that then, so I said nothing.

She left as she had come, silently and without fuss, and passed forever from my life. Surely, by now she has passed also from this sad and sorry world. By now, as I trust, through the grace of God, she is forever re-united with her little boy lost, the grief of the old order long forgotten - but I cannot get her out of my mind. A thousand times I have asked myself, "Why did I not say something, anything, even a simple 'Thank you. Mother of Mine', but I didn't, and now the chance to do so has gone forever."

What can I do with those unsaid thanks? Can I give them to you, you who remain of those valiant host who conquered and died as you flew?

I am not young as once I was young when wave after wave of Flying Fortresses, Liberators and Mustangs flew shoulder to shoulder with our own Lancasters, Spitfires and Hurricanes. You did not see me, but I saw you - and I remember. I know what you paid, and I know what you bought. With love and awe and gratitude, I salute you who flew and fought in those terrible days.

I was born in Epsom, Surry, England during the Battle of Britain, June 1940. I was shielded from harm by the hurts of others, and I will never forget. "Thank you, Mother of Mine."

Matthew Conolly

Note: Matthew Conolly is a friend of Pamela and Anthony Metcalfe, and is a physician who worked for many years in the United States, but came to visit us shortly before our departure for the Reunion in Kansas City in October 2004. When we told him that we were traveling to the USA for a WW II USAAF veteran's reunion, he sent us this note.

Pamela and Anthony

MY FIRST MISSION

by Howard T. Richardson

A Group policy was to have the Pilot and Co-pilot of new crews fly their first combat mission with an experienced combat crew. May 12th 1944, I was awakened after midnight to fly on my first combat mission as a co-pilot with another crew. Proceeding to the mess hall, we had a breakfast of powdered milk, spam, SOS, British bread and marmalade. Since we were flying a combat mission, we were served two fresh eggs. Coffee and hot tea was available. After breakfast, we went to a large metal building for the general briefing of the scheduled mission. One side of the wall was covered with a large curtain. When the Group Commander, Colonel Elliot Vandevender, arrived, we all jumped to attention, and when seated again, the curtain was pulled back. All present gave a loud groan. The map showed the route in, the route out, and the target. The target was Zwickau, deep in Germany, south of Leipzig and Dresden. Total flight time was 8:45 hours. We set our watches to Greenwich Mean Time. The weather in, out and over the target, as well as the known anti-aircraft and enemy fighter locations were briefed.

At the close of briefing, we picked up our Escape and Evasion kits, and checked our wallets and other personal material for safe-keeping. Lead crews went to special briefings, as did the Navigators, Bombardiers and Radio Operators. The gunners picked up their guns and ammunition and the rest of us proceeded to the aircraft.

Takeoff time had been briefed, and we were to taxi about 15 minutes prior to takeoff. Upon

seeing a flare indicating taxi time, the lead plane proceeded to the active runway. The remaining aircraft followed in line according to their position in the formation. At scheduled takeoff time, another flare was shot off and the lead aircraft started its takeoff roll. Other aircraft took off according to their space in the formation at 30 second intervals. The lead plane began a slow left climbing turn and the remaining planes joined in their assigned spots in the formation. After forming, the Group continued on a course to the target. The lead squadron had six aircraft, and the high and low squadrons also had six B-17s in their squadron formation. Groups were positioned 5 minutes behind us, and eventually a bomber stream of about 2000 bombers and 1000 fighters evolved. Over the Channel, the gunners cleared their guns, and at 10,000 feet, I, the co-pilot, called for an oxygen check of all crew members. Our bomb load for this mission was five-1000 pound bombs, and our fuel had been topped off before takeoff.

(The following times and number of enemy aircraft were taken from the Official Mission Report submitted by our Intelligence Officers to higher Headquarters at the completion of the mission.)

At 12:07 hours, the first wave of enemy fighters, about 20 FW-190's and ME 109's began a 10 to 2 o'clock head on attack; and they came back to attack us three times. The second wave of about 40 to 50 ME-109's and FW-190's came at us at 12:30 hours. This wave continued on to hit the Groups behind us. The third wave hit at 14:25 hours and contained

about 60 to 70 ME-109's and FW-190's. The last, or 4th wave, of 20 to 25 FW-190's attacked the group from 11 o'clock to 1 o'clock, and then they started on stragglers or bombers that could not keep up with the bomber formations because of damage to their aircraft.

When we turned on the IP (Initial Point), the beginning of the bomb run, we then began receiving anti-aircraft flak which continued until we dropped our bombs and turned off the target course. Flak would come so close that you could hear the explosion of the bursting shells. Enemy fighters did not follow us on the bomb run for obvious reasons. On the bomb run, the planes of the Group would fly close formation to endure that most bombs would fall inside the target area. Aiming on the target, the lead aircraft released their bombs and all remaining aircraft in the formation released at the same time. The bombing results were excellent with all bombs dropping within a 1000 foot circle. The Group later received a Presidential Unit Citation for these bombing results.

After turning off the target, the enemy fighters continued their attack for about two hours. The formation flew as tight as possible, since enemy fighters were less likely to attack a tight formation owing to the large amount of guns that could be brought to bear on them. On this mission, our Group claimed 11 German fighters destroyed, 6 probables and 1 damaged. Crews reported seeing one B-17 going down with 10 chutes sighted. One B-17 caught fire and fell onto another, exploded and

reportedly dragged down 4 other bombers. A B-17 from our Group shot down an enemy fighter, but the fighter rammed into the B-17 and both exploded. Only the tail gunner escaped from the plane. The crew comments after this mission indicated that the close formation flying of the Group saved the Group from greater battle damage by the enemy fighters.

The return flight was made watching for fighters and flak, and taking evasive action when necessary. As we approached the English Channel and seeing the White Cliffs of Dover, we began our descent. We flew over the field in formation and began

peeling off one plane at a time. Aircraft with wounded on board or severely damaged shot a red flare and were given priority for landing first. Fire trucks and ambulances were on hand to care for the wounded. After landing and parking the aircraft, we proceeded to the Intelligence debriefing. Details of the mission included the areas of flak, and type and estimate of enemy fighters, losses of our own aircraft and other details of the mission.

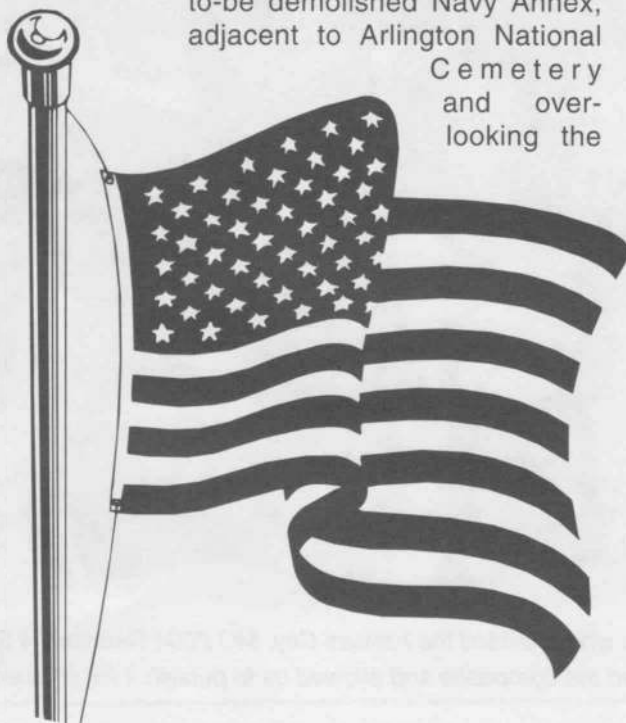
Completing the debriefing, we headed to the mess hall for dinner, and then I went to find our original crew's Co-pilot since I did not see him at debriefing. After sometime I discovered that he

was in the B-17 that shot the German fighter that in turn rammed the bomber, from which only one chute was observed. I headed back to the barracks for some much needed rest.

From this time on, our crew either checked out new Pilots or had a substitute Co-pilot for each mission. We received a new B-17G and since I was the Pilot of the crew and from Mississippi, the crew named the new plane "Mississippi Miss". Our crew went on to complete 35 missions and we were all made members of and received a certificate for the exclusive club, "The Lucky Bastard Club".

AIR FORCE MEMORIAL DEDICATION

On September 15th, ground was broken and an Arlington, VA site was dedicated for the Air Force Memorial, as active duty and retired Air Force officials, lawmakers and others gathered in the rain. The Memorial will feature three spires made of stainless steel, the tallest of which will be 270 feet high. The monument will take its place as one of the prominent highlights of the Washington scene and will be visible from the National Mall. Currently, the Air Force is the only armed service without a memorial in Washington.



The memorial will be located on the grounds of the soon-to-be demolished Navy Annex, adjacent to Arlington National Cemetery and overlooking the

Pentagon. Senator Ted Stevens (R-Alaska) initiated the legislative process of building an Air Force Memorial over 13 years ago and at the groundbreaking ceremony said, "It's been a long process, but we never doubted we'd achieve this goal."

Also speaking at the dedication, Air Force Secretary James C. Roche said, "Human beings need symbols," and "the beauty of this structure will be that of all good art: It will mean different things to different people."



Kansas City---2004



Composite photo of many of the persons who attended the Kansas City, MO 2004 Reunion. A Special Thanks goes to Bill Swindell who took these photos, compiled the composite and allowed us to publish it for all to enjoy.

-Editor

E-MAIL AND LETTERS

Subject: Visit at the (385th BGA) museum
Date: 20 October 2004
From: feller@pt.lu
To: billvar@comcast.net (Bill Varnedoe), mauricen10@hotmail.com (Maurice Nysether), Miltaub@aol.com (Milton Taubkin), artdriscoll@hotmail.com (Art Driscoll)

Dear Friends,

Today we had a visit of: Captain Dan Wickens, USMC, H. Raymond Wilburn, Director of Program Evaluation, Washington Department of Veterans Affairs, and Matt Boland, Senior Advisor, Department of Defense.

There will be a ceremony with 300 veterans of the Battle of the Bulge at Perle on 18th of December. The Friends of the 385th BG will arrange this ceremony. Honor guard, bugler and a flyby will take place at the memorial of the 385th BG. A three star general will attend this event. We will invite all our friends from Spangdahlem Air Base.

Roger

Subject: Ears will burn
Date: October 20, 2004
From: Wdaysh@aol.com (William Daysh)
To: frank.mays@gte.net (Frank Mays), shnevoegel@aol.com (Leo LaCasse), hihosilver17@earthlink.net (Robert M. Silver), true@poncacity.net (Trman J. Smith), avfain@comcast.net (Fain H. Poole), rparker12@cox.net (R0lla H. Parker)
BBC: fxmccawley@aol.com (Frank X. McCawley)

In case you didn't know...

Just to let you know to expect your 'ears to burn' fiercely on Friday evening, UK time. The historian and author Ian MacLachlan is giving an illustrated talk on the 385th BG in All Saints Church at Great Ashfield. I am led to believe that it is already almost sold out and the place will be bursting at the seams with local "385th nuts", including Lin and me.

I have suggested to Tim Meekings that perhaps we should start a local 385th "nut club" to: A) swap relevant literature, and B) to provide a small on-the-ground army of supporters and welcomers for any vet who may visit our shores.

Bill (Daysh)

Subject: Thank you all
Date: 10/9/04
From : Kyle and Elaine Kesler
To: artdriscoll@hotmail.com, billvar@comcast.net, fxmccawley@aol.com

Art, Frank and Bill,

I hope that everyone made it safely back to their homes from Kansas City. Thank you all very much for allowing Elaine and I to socialize with your illustrious group Friday night at the reunion. It was such a delight to be able to talk and hear the stories first hand from everyone. Your generation is truly great and we are proud of each of you.

Until we meet again, take care,
Kyle and Elaine Kesler
(2nd Generation, Bob Hake, 385th BG, 549th BS)
Olathe, KS

October 7, 2004

Dear 385th Bombardment Group

I am writing to inform you about my husband, Charles A. Franken - 385th Bomb Group.

He was in poor health for the past two years. In 2003 he was in and out of the hospital every month. He was on dialysis - 3 times a week - it made his condition very weak.

I had prayed that he would improve, but on May 6th, 2004 - the Lord called him home. Our Wedding Anniversary, in June 2004 - as 56 years of marriage - with a family of 6 children. We had a lot to be thankful for in our years together.

Thank You.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth Franken

E-MAIL AND LETTERS

Subject: Ian MacLachlan's talk
Dat: 23 October 2004
From: Wdaysh@aol.com
To: (see list above)

Ian MacLachlan's Talk

Somewhere between fifty and sixty people attended Ian MacLachlan's illustrated talk on the 385th BG at All Saints Church, Great Ashfield, on the evening of Friday, 22 October 2004 - all arranged by Roy and Di Barker and Stephan Miles. Unfortunately, Di Barker was unable to attend, having succumbed to the dreaded 'flu bug' earlier in the week. Ian began his talk a little later than the scheduled 7:30 kick-off, due to a blown projector bulb, but fortunately he wisely carried a spare.

Roy Barker introduced Ian and his talk, and there were no further mishaps thereafter. Ian ran through his magnificent collections of slides in a sequence that took us through a typical 385th mission day, starting with shots of the ground crews preparing the aircraft and bombing-up; the crew quarters, then the kitting up and briefing for the aircrews; the take-offs; the forming up; the bombing runs; then the run home. Ian ended the first half of the presentation with an aftermath of the mission - crippled B-17s limping back into Great Ashfield; casualties being met by the base meat wagons, and the appalling damage inflicted on some ships that still made it home.

It has to be said that Ian's commentary was lively, humorous in all the right places, and very involving.

At half time, some excellent refreshments were served and there was time to meet other members of the audience. I met, for the first time, Tim Meekings from Bury St Edmunds - with whom I had exchanged a few e-mails in the past - and met again Mark Bloomfield (an avid aircraft modeller) and Tim Evans from Elmswell, with whom I have exchanged-lent-and borrowed some 385th and Mighty Eighth books and videos, and Robert Dyball, the owner of much of the quarters area of the old base who kindly allowed me to take photos on his land for the Great Ashfield 2002 album CD. I was also pleased to make the acquaintance of Tom Eles from Great Ashfield whom I had not met before. Tom told me that he is a pilot who has occasionally landed at Great Ashfield in its most recent condition (still OK but a bit bumpy) and that he is currently extending the tail of his RAF career as a reservist.

At my request, Roy Barker introduced the second half of the talk by asking any 385th "nut" interested in exploring the possibilities of a local "friends of the 385th" club to let me have his name and details after the show. As a result of that we discovered that there were six of us. I have no idea as how useful or interesting this will be, but I intend to arrange a pub meeting to kick ideas around. Clearly, with the generous hospitality extended to all 385th vets by Stephan and Petrina Miles, Roy and Di Barker, and Roger and Sarah Oxford, there is nothing a new group of enthusiasts can usefully add to the proceedings but it will be handy to know who other geeks are, and Ian's talk seemed to be the ideal opportunity to identify them.

I then climbed half way to the pulpit in order to get good shots of the 'congregation'. Ian also took some of the memorial areas of the church, for good measure.

Ian then took us through the second half of his slide show with views of life on the base during WW2, the chapel; the mess halls; the quarters buildings; the clubs; the PX; the medical centre and the dentist's chair, and many of the unidentified characters that made it tick. We also saw shots of many B-17 crash sites and some where miraculous crew escapes had been made.

At the end of this very interesting talk we joined Roy in a hearty round of applause for Ian and Sue MacLachlan, and Ian managed to sell out of his books he brought with him for a book signing.

It was a great evening, and it was a pleasure to see the church filled with so many interesting locals. I have uploaded shots of the evening to a private area of my web site. To visit, please click here;
<http://www.daysh.com/Personal10.htm>

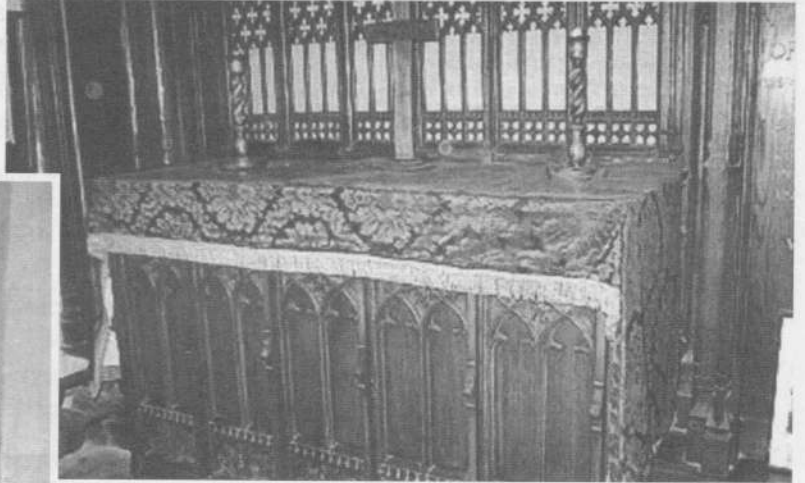
Bill

Editor's Note: Some pictures of the evening's activities are provided through the courtesy of Bill Daysh.

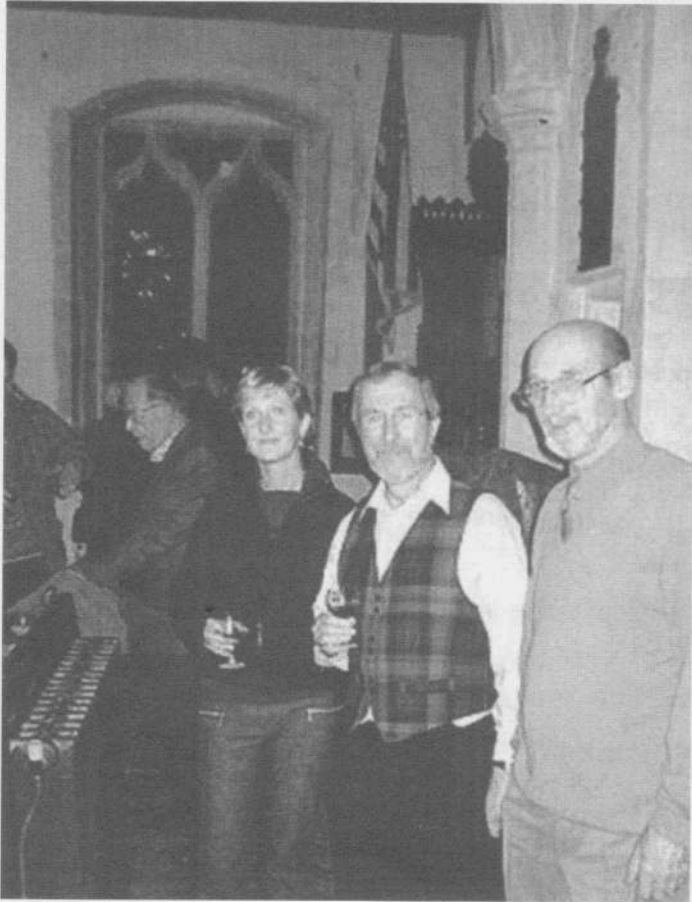
E-MAIL AND LETTERS



Bill Daysh (seated), Mark Bloomfield and Tim Meekings



The 385th Memorial Altar in All Saints Church, Great Ashfield



Sue and Ian MacLachlan, and Roy Barker

E-MAIL AND LETTERS

Frank X. McCawley
2309 Cheverly Ave.
Cheverly, MD 20785

Frank:

I recently wrote about my first combat mission with the 385th Bomb Group and have enclosed this story. There is more info other than the mission, but you can edit anything out you want to.

Hope you had a great meeting with the Eighth Air Force Historical Society this past month. This is a great organization and we have an active Mississippi 8th AF Chapter, and we meet several times a year and have had a National President and Treasurer from our MS Chapter.

Sincerely,
Howard Richardson
Colonel, USAF (Retired)

Hi Frank McCawley,

Good luck on your new job. It is a great magazine. While reading the Feb. 2004 - Vol. 21, No. 1, I became very interested in your article about 385th BG mission folders at the National Archives. I had sent some of my husband's Army clothes, medals, etc. for one of your conventions and all was returned but his little black book that he kept in his pocket with all his missions - time - place - etc. My children still talk about this. Had put a letter in the Hardlife Herald about this, to no success. My question - how would I or maybe you go about getting a folder on him - 1st Lt. Robert C Pierchotte, Navigator. My son is very interested in World War II so I try to do something special for Christmas.

Also would like to know about the books:
Hunkered Down by Sterling Rogers
The Munster Raid: Before and After by Ian L. Hawkins
Final Flight by Ian McLacklan
or any recommended by you. How do I order one and their prices? Have tried the book stores.

Sincerely,
Ethel S. Piechotte
2651 Valley Dr.
Saginaw, MI 48603

October 29, 2004

Dear Frank,

Enclosed are the pictures from KC. Am missing people. Darned if I know where they went; maybe the flash did not fire and I failed to notice. Know I should check every picture when taking them for this purpose, but just becoming careless in my old age.

Rescaled to 8 x 10 since that is standard. Also included a grayscale that might help in the publication if you so desire.
Really great getting to know so many of the active members. This is my fourth reunion. Am sorry I did not start to attend earlier.

As ever,

Bill (Swindell)

Ed. Note: Bill's composite of members is published in this issue.

E-MAIL AND LETTERS



October 19, 2004

Mr. Bill A. Varnedoe
President
385th Bomb Group Association
5000 Ketova Way
Huntsville AL 35803

Dear Mr. Varnedoe:

The future of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum lies in the hands of our devoted veterans. The museum is the fulfillment of their dream to build a home for the Eighth, a place where visitors from across our great nation can learn about the efforts of these very "ordinary" men who rose to extra-ordinary heights of courage, commitment, patriotism and valor during the dark days of World War II.

Today the museum is a strong and financially sound organization. The residents of Chatham County, Georgia voted to retire the bond debt so the museum is debt free. Eighty percent of our donors are World War II veterans. It is their generosity that supports the programs and exhibits. We need every member of the Mighty Eighth to consider how they can support the museum long into the future.

The **Mighty Eighth Foundation** was created to house the endowment for the future of the museum. The Foundation is a separate 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization. All donations to the Foundation are tax deductible. It is our goal to grow an endowment of \$25,000,000 over the next five to seven years. These gifts will come in many forms... bequests, codicils, charitable gift annuities and other planned gifts. Just as the Chapel of the Fallen Eagles was built with many gifts so will the endowment.

I am enclosing a letter from General Lewis Lyle that I would encourage you to share with your members via your regular newsletter, at meetings and reunions. The more veterans who learn of the Foundation and make a gift to the Foundation, the stronger the future of the museum will be. It is up to veterans to secure the future.

The museum is strong today because of the support from the members of the 385th Bomb Group. The **Mighty Eighth Foundation** will be strong with their continued support. Please share the attached materials. I am also available to speak at your next reunion. If I can be of any help or you have questions, please call me at 912.748.8888 ext. 123.

Sincerely,

Judy W. Walker, CFRE
Executive Director

P.O. Box 1667 ♦ Savannah, Georgia 31402 ♦ 912.748.8888 ♦ fax 912.748.0209

E-MAIL AND LETTERS



Dear Friends,

Sixty years ago, we were young men eager to serve our nation. We left our families in Arkansas, Texas, California, Ohio, New York, and all the other states that were home to us. We joined the Eighth Army Air Corps and began our service. England was our home. Cold weather, stormy skies, warm beer, and letters from home were the norm for us. We banded as brothers as we flew daylight strategic bombing missions to free Nazi-occupied Europe. Twenty-five was the magic number to get our ticket home. We still remember today those young men who made the ultimate sacrifice.

We returned home. Many of us continued in the military and served in the United States Air Force. Others of us began new careers. We married, raised our families, retired, and traveled a little bit. Then in 1991, we joined together again to build a home for the Eighth. Over the next several years, we forged ahead and in 1996, the doors opened at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum. Mission accomplished!

Today, the Museum is a successful institution. One hundred and fourteen thousand visitors toured the Museum last year. Fourteen thousand students participated in the formal Museum education programs. The bond debt has been retired. The Annual Campaign supports the daily operations and programs of the Museum to keep the doors open. We all need to do our part. I thank you for your faithful support of the Museum.

I invite you to join Betty and me on our mission today. That mission is to support the Mighty Eighth Foundation. The Foundation will support the Museum long into the future by building an endowment of \$25,000,000. The principal of the endowment will be invested so that its income can be used to support the Museum. The endowment will grow over the years and as it does, so will the earnings, thereby benefiting the Museum that we love so well.

To each of you I give my thanks, you are the ones who supported this effort over the years to build a home for the Eighth. Now to make this a permanent home, we need to leave it in good shape for the future with a strong endowment. Consider making a gift this year to the Mighty Eighth Foundation. Please read the enclosed brochure and call Judy Walker, Executive Director of the Foundation at 912.748.8888. She stands ready to help. No gift is too small. We want and *need* everyone's support.

Thank you,

Lew Lyle

M/Gen. Lewis Lyle, USAF, Ret.
Trustee, Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum

P.O. Box 1667 ♦ Savannah, Georgia 31402 ♦ 912.748.8888 ♦ fax 912.748.0209

Taps

Ben Thomas Love - Ben, 78, passed away August 21, 2004 at his home in Hermitage, TN. A native of Davidson County, he was the son of the late Shannon and Belle Satterfield Love. He is survived by three daughters, Sherrill, Debra and Tami; four grandchildren; four great grandchildren; and one sister Martha Patterson. Ben was a retired Master Sergeant having served with the 385th Bomb Group during WW II, and in Korea and Vietnam. He was an active cyclist riding his motorcycle every day. His motto was "If it's worth worrying about. Someone else is worrying about it, or someone will let me know". Services were held August 24th at McDonald Funeral Home in Centerville, TN and burial was in McClanahan Cemetery. — *From Art Driscoll*

Lanar Coverstone - Lanar died peacefully in his sleep February 2, 2002 at his home in Oswego, OR. Lanar had cancer and his kidneys stopped working. His son, Jim, reported that Lanar was a good father and was head of a great family. He was a school teacher and also worked as an investment representative. He was a member of the 385th Bomb Group during WW II, and of the Air Force during Korea. He was buried at Willamette National Cemetery in Portland OR. An Air Force Honor Guard was in attendance at his funeral. — *From his son, Jim Coverstone*

Robert M. Edsell - Robert, of Mehlville, MO, died October 26, 2004. He was a 548th Bombardier on "Satan's Mate", completing 35 missions during 1944. — *From Ken Laffoon*

John H. Wells - John passed away in March 2003.
— *From Bill Varnedoe*

Charles A Franken - Charles passed away on May 6, 2004 after a long illness. — *From his wife, Elizabeth Franken*

Joe R. Warren (Wutschinek) - Joe passed away October 2, 2004 after suffering a stroke earlier in 2004. Born in Nebraska, his family moved to Los Angeles, where he entered the Army during WW II. He was a member of the 385th BG, 551st BS, achieving the rank of 1st Lt. As pilot of the B-17, "Our Baby", he completed 35 missions. Returning home he married Dorothy Dillenberg. In 1966 he moved to Salem, OR with his family. He was an avid outdoorsman, and tinkered with astronomy, mechanics and woodworking. Being virtually deaf did not hinder his lifestyle, and he was active until his stroke in April. Joe is survived by his wife, sons Richard and Peter, and daughters Christine and Joanne, and five grandchildren. Services for Joe were held November 11, 2004. A private burial service was November 12th at the Willamette National Cemetery, Portland, OR.
— *From Tom Newton*

DECEASED

Lanar Coverstone - 385th Bomb Group - February 2002
John H. Wells - 385th Bomb Group - March 2003
Charles A. Franken - 385th Bomb Group - May 2004
Ben Thomas Love 385th Bomb Group - August 2004
Joe R. Warren - 551st Bomb Squadron - October 2004
Robert M. Edsell - 548th Bomb Squadron - October 2004

MILITARY PERSONNEL RECORDS

Veterans, or next of kin of deceased veterans, can order a copy of their military records from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) by faxing (314-801-9195), or by mailing a request to National Personnel Record Center (NARC), 9700 Page Avenue, St. Louis, MO 63132-5100. Copies can also be ordered using the NARA web site:

http://vetrecs.archives.gov/research_room/vetrecs/

Next of kin of deceased veterans can be unmarried surviving spouse, father, mother, son, daughter, brother or sister. If not a veteran or next of kin, a Standard Form 180 must be completed. A copy of SF-180 may be downloaded from the MOAA web site:

www.moaa.org/benefitsinfo/medals.asp

Most records are on file and available at the NRPC, and include millions of military personnel, health and medical records of discharged and deceased veterans of the 20th Century. Medical treatment records of retirees from all services are stored at NRPC, including documents of dependents treated at Naval Medical Facilities, and the Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty (DD Form 214).

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November 2004

385th BGA

Chuck Smith, Treasurer
P.O. Box 329
Alpharetta, GA 30009 USA

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November 2004