

OHIO AIR FORCE GOLDEN GOOSE THUNDERBIRD WANDERING DUCHESS CURLY'S KIDS
 SKY GODDESS OL' WAR HORSE PICCADILLY QUEEN BLUE CHAMPAGNE MARY ELLEN
 SALLY B ROUNDTRIP TICKET YANK GELDING WINNIE THE POOH
 HONKY TONK SAL RAUNCHY WOLF CHOWHOUND STARS AND STRIPES DORSAL QUEEN WAR WEARY
 HESITATIN' HUSSY "HAYBAG" ANNIE MISS AMERICA PREGNANT PORTIA ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND
 BIG GAS BIRD LIBERTY BELLE HUSTLIN' HUSSY LEADING LADY HARES BREADTH
 STAR DUST ANGELS SISTER LI'L AUDREY LONESOME POLECAT MARY PAT
 SKY CHIEF SLY FOX
 MR. LUCKY PERRY'S PIRATES SLO JO TARGET FOR TONIGHT SHACK N LADY
 MADAME SHOO SHOO GIZMO SACK TIME JUNIOR OL' DOODLE BUG
 PAT PENDING POSSIBLE STRAIGHT MICKY RÔGER THE DODGER IMPATIENT VIRGIN RAGGED BUT RIGHT SWEET CHARIOT
 ROUNDTRIP JACK HOMESICK ANGEL HALF AND HALF SLEEPYTIME GAL RUBY'S RAIDERS MISSISSIPPI MISS
 SHACK BUNNY MY GAL SAL LATEST RUMOR MAIDEN AMERICA LULU BELLE
 SPIRIT OF CHICAGO BIG STINKY VIBRANT VIRGIN MISSION BELLE SLICK CHICK
 SOUTHERN BELLE RAGGEDY ANNE OL' RUM DUM FOOLISH VIRGIN

HARD LIFE



HERALD



NEWSLETTER OF THE

385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION



COMBAT UNITS

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 548th BOMB SQ.
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VOL. XVI, NO. 4

Editor: Ed Stern

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12th REUNION WRAP-UP OCTOBER 1989

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Prez Sez:

The Fargo reunion was a resounding success. Thanks to Ed Stern and his committee. Things moved very smoothly. Thanks also to all of you who made this possible by your attendance.

Dr. George Menkoff and Marie have promised us a great reunion in Tulsa for 1991. I have already checked with him and am very pleased with the activities he has planned.

My pet project is to locate lost members. Lets everyone find at least one new member and make for a super reunion in 1991.

Our thanks also to the people of the great State of North Dakota for their hospitality on this their centennial year.

Sincerely,

Sam Lyke

Editors Note: We've received 40 nice letters, plus some good pictures to run in the Hardlife Reunion wrap-up. We need pictures of ladies events, trip to Missile Silo, trip to Source of Mississippi and any comments on Bingo or Stock car races if you went. Please send at once!

REUNION PICTURES 5x7 COLORED - \$6.00

Full color pictures of the reunion are available by filling out the coupon below and mailing to Ed Stern. Show picture number you want and quantity of each. The cost is \$6.00 for one (1) picture and \$4.00 for each additional picture. Allow about 3 weeks for delivery.



Number 1 — 550th

NAME

ADDRESS

Please Mail To:

Ed Stern
Box 2187
Fargo, ND 58108

Quantity Picture #

Please send me



Number 2 — 551st



Number 3 — 548th



Number 4 — 549th

Random Thoughts after the Reunion

Some of our members don't realize what a big country this is — they think of Fargo as "Way out West". Actually, we're closer to the East Coast than the West by a few hundred miles.

Your committee did get a big kick out of hearing from some that Trollwood Park was "too jammed with people" for them on Sunday afternoon. They didn't expect "crowds" in Fargo.

Some of you enjoyed the chicken at the Friday night opening ceremonies so much that you asked for the recipe. Here it is—the catering was done by the Radisson Hotel.

BAK. 3 CHICKEN WITH FRESH HERBS

Pinch of Lavender
Pinch of Rosemary
Pinch of Sage
Pinch of Thyme
Two pinches of Savory

Pinch of Basil
Pinch of Fennel Seed
Pinch of White Pepper
Two pinches of Salt

Combine Herbs & seasonings. Sprinkle over chicken and bake at 350° for 1 1/4 hours.

If you wonder about the secret to that great corn on the cob — just have it picked the same afternoon that it's served and it'll melt in your mouth just like that did. Same with the melon —home-grown, picked that day. And, if you want to order any of the various sunflower specialties, let us know. They were raised and processed locally.

A week after the Reunion, your Editor attended a Boy Scout fund-raiser at which ex U.S. Senator Mark Andrews said a few words. Among them were "I have an important client from Duesseldorf Germany who agreed to come to Fargo rather than have me meet him there. So, he arrived Thursday afternoon, on the same flight that a bunch of Ed's B-17 Group arrived for their Reunion. My man didn't say much, but it was a Hell of a way to welcome him to North Dakota, Stern".

Your Committee made a mistake on the Program listing that caused a little dissatisfaction. Our plan was to have everyone spend 2 or 3 hours looking around Bonanzaville before sitting down to eat at 7 pm. We didn't spell it out, and too many just sat there from 6 on waiting for the food that was scheduled for 7. Sorry!

We had only one casualty (that we know of). A broken crown on a front tooth Saturday night. We were able to locate a dentist (the first one we called, incidentally), and the tooth was good as new by 10 a.m. Sunday morning.

Here are a few statistics. We had 412 register for the Reunion, served 440 for the two evening meals (guests of yours or of ours made up the difference). Did you notice there were no extra charges for anything? Even the wine Saturday night was "thrown in". The two buses to the Source of the Mississippi cost almost \$900 — the two to the Missile Silos almost as much. And those quality Nylon garment bags cost too! Your \$60 registration fee covered the works, give or take a few hundred dollars. Living isn't quite as high in the Upper Midwest!

And that poor clothing store that refunded 3 sales slips? The amount was about 10% of the total sales to our Group. Thanks for the great acceptance given to our store by all!

Just one more goof-up. We expected to have a Bus at the Holiday Inn before 1 p.m. on Sunday for last minute visits to the B-1. At 12:30, your Chairman got nervous and called the Bus Company. "You were going to let me know what time we should be there" he was told. And they were right—we had no one to blame it on, except ME. But they got there by 1:15.

You should have heard that B-1 roar out of Fargo on Monday morning! They woke up a few late sleepers, to say the least.

Judging from the garment bags given to each attendee, the 549th had the largest attendance. We had 125 of each color, and the only ones we ran out of were yellow.

In addition to the great media attention (2 good stories in the areas largest newspaper, another story in the Rapid City newspaper, coverage on all 3 Fargo TV stations, plus radio), we even got a plug when some of our members attended Catholic services on Saturday afternoon. They got us a plug from the Priest.

All of you who missed the Reunion — here are Reunion items that you can order.

1. Oxford nylon zipper garment bags with our Group insignia imprint, red, blue or green. They sell for \$8 and are guaranteed — no cracking like plastic.



HARD LIFE HERALD



2. The Reunion book — bound copies of all Hardlife Heralds for the last 2 years, \$5.00. There are a few available.
3. Photo of the oil painting raffled off at the Reunion 4x5 for \$1.00 each.

Send some of your pictures taken at the Reunion for the next Hardlife. Please identify.

NAME

ADDRESS

Quantity

Item #

Please send me

Send orders and checks to Ed Stern, Box 2187 Fargo, ND 58108.

Listed below are the people who owe an apology to the great State of North Dakota for all the mean things they have said about us over the years. In other words, they attended the 12th Reunion in Fargo. We couldn't read a few names, so excuse errors please. (Some of you guys write like Doctors.)

Don & Audrey Abens
 Harlan & Jean Aronson
 Robert Andrews & Robert Jr.
 Robert & Esther Arn
 Harold & Florence Albrecht
 John & Liz Anderson
 Albert & Priscilla Audette
 Donald Briggs
 Geraldine Bash
 Alan & Janet Boltz
 Charles D Bright
 Harry H. Bertges
 Archie & Bonnie Benner
 Joseph D. Brocker
 Harold & Eulene Bushey
 A.L. & Betty Benefield
 Bob & Evelyn Bla^kesley
 Walter & Norma Beauchamp
 Jesse & Marion Brown
 Wes & Helen Brashear
 John & Jean Bember
 James Bond
 Carol Coudyser
 Bernice Cragoe
 Earl & Ruth Cole
 Vela & Marie Cole
 Les & Dorothy Crawford
 Bill & Jeanne Csonka
 Cloyce Conway
 Mario & Odessa Colantino
 Don & Patricia Collins
 John W. Cookson
 John & Peggy Connolly
 Barney & Ila Coble
 Gordon & Natalie Cook
 Warren Cerrone
 Sid & Lee Colthorpe
 James & Helen Child
 Charles & Connie Coughlin
 Eddie Cohan
 Ted Carlson
 Burnell & Lorna Cook
 Wm & Geri Clark
 Roy & Margaret Courtney
 John & Betty Davis
 John & Dorothy DeBerg
 Joe & Sue Digiacomia
 Bob & Sue Downen
 Bob Douglas
 Wayne & Carol Detwiler
 Stanley & Cleonce Dentinger

Howard & Bea Director
 Elmer & Betty Dickason
 Jack Daniel
 Warren & Irene Diederich
 Jerry Donnelly
 Gene Dana
 D.S. Dennis
 Joseph & Doris Derer
 Reuben & Irene Eckhardt
 John Eggers
 Jim & Margie Emmons
 Lyle Fryer
 Francis & Olive Fuller
 Charles & Eunice Flynn
 Ted & Martha Findeiss
 Russell & Marjorie Followell
 David & Rose Framer
 Bill & Mitzi Fife
 Russell Fritzinger
 Wm & Vera Gunther
 Norman & Katherine Gaul
 Georgette Graham
 Joseph & Patricia Gorchack
 Ed & Mildred Grabowski
 Carl & Mary Grindler
 Charles & Marjorie Guffey
 Martin & Edith Giron
 Drue & Pam Gillis
 Jack Gesser
 George, Mary & Chris Hunter
 Tom & Arline Harrington
 Wm & Mary Hoagland
 Lyman & Frances Heard
 Don & Beverly Hunter
 Russell Hulse
 Tom Helman
 Jack & Lucy Hagman
 Cloyce Huff
 Tom Harrison
 Herman & Elizabeth Heckel
 Charles & Irene Huber
 Arkey Huber
 Jerry, Pat & Gloria Howard
 Homer & Jean Howe
 George & Geneva Hruska
 Jerome B. Harmon
 Carlyle & Mildred Hanson
 Clem & Delores Irons
 Doris Inglis
 Fred Ihlenburg
 Gary & Evelyn Java
 John A Joseph
 Henry & Martha Jones
 Ollie Mae Johnson
 Donald & Bunny Jones
 Albert & Marcella Jarosz
 Robert & Lucille Knight
 Kay Kauffman
 John & Stella Kavaliunas
 Don & Shirley Klosterman
 Louis & Effie Kivi

W.H. & Lou Koon
 Winfrid & Agnes Karls
 Bernard & Ann Kananowicz
 Richard & Joan Knight
 O.V. & Doris Lancaster
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 Bob Lyke
 Leo & Ann LaCasse
 Sam & Nita Luckie
 Ray Lapine
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 Art & Vic Linton
 Milton & Joy Lane
 Clifford & Shirley Lybeck
 John & Betty Miller
 Robert McGhee
 Frank & Peggy McCawley
 Charles & Ruth McCauley
 Frank & Kathleen Marano
 Sol & Ida Mann
 Harry & Erma Monfort
 Ernest & Helen Martin
 George & Marie Menkoff
 Milford & Lillian Martens
 Bob & Ann Milligan
 Dyton & Kathryn Mathews
 Ron & Evelyn McInnis
 John & Betty Mathews
 Linda Madsen
 Jerome & Vera Mudge
 Jon & Jerrilynn Mathisrud
 Clovis & Mildred McWilliams
 Gerald & Marilyn Miller
 Kelly & Mary Mellilo
 Wayne & Caroline Montgomery
 Edward & Beverly McElroy
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 Jack & Julie Noble
 Forrest Poore
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 George & Gladys Purkis
 Harry & Phyllis Peltzer
 Joel & Margaret PUNCHES
 John & Ruth Pettenger
 Ray & Ruth Podlski
 Fain Pool
 Russ & Vivian Pfau
 Byron & Geneva Pyle
 Vern & Lavonne Philips
 Sep & Terry Richard
 Bill & Marie Roop
 Kay Rij
 Jerry & Jane Ramaker
 Floyd & Evelyn Reinken
 Tom & Eunice Richardson
 Merle & Inis Ramsey

Paul & Jean Ryan
 Howard & Vivian Richardson
 Karl & Viola Stubenazy
 Jean & Pat Stubler
 Walter & Norma Schulte
 Jim & Ruth Staber
 George Southerland
 Ed & Jane Stern
 Elaine Schulz
 Ralph & Gladys Smith
 Frank & Joyce Sutter
 Ed & Olga Stermer
 Gene & Elaine Silberberg
 Charles & Peggy Smith
 Bob Smith
 Jack & Dorothy Surritt
 Howard & Rosemary Schwartz
 Andrew Struke
 Wm & Santos Schubert
 Jerry & Sally Steil
 Clarence Strout
 Elmer & Jean Snow
 George & Arice Salvador
 Ted & Margaret Stell
 Milton & Helen Taubkin
 Marvin & Betty Tipp
 Brian Thompson
 Roland & Ginny Tanguay
 Horace & Ida Twyman
 Harold & Marty Trousdale
 John & Peggy Taylor
 Tom & Mary Tracy
 Leslie & Mavis Thompson
 William & Doris Tulare
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 Ronald & Ann Marie Webster

Vince Wahlzberg
 John W. Wood
 Kenneth Walsh
 Wayne & Eunice Zeigler
 Steve & Mary Ann Zaputil
 Marc & Dolores Cordova
 Candace Stitt
 Gerald Miller
 Fred, Pat, Zane & Adrienne Walls



Linda Madsen after her flute recital at All Saints Church, Great Ashfield. She is pictured near the United States Air Force Memorial Altar. Linda's father, Norman (a former member of the 385th Bomb Group) was stationed at Great Ashfield during World War II. Both of Linda's parents attended the recital which was a benefit for the church. The program was recorded and cassette tapes are available from the church as a further fund-raiser for the church.

Linda played at the Saturday morning women's breakfast at the Reunion. Hear her if you get a chance.

Press release to Fargo media after the Reunion. It's as good a resume as we'll come up with — except for your pictures.

Fargo hosted a Reunion of a World War 2 B-17 Bomb Group August 24-27, with over 400 from 40 States in attendance. Of that number, probably 90% had never been to North Dakota before. Fargo residents and members of the Group, Ralph Smith, Warren Diederich, and Ed Stern with their wives served as the host committee.

When Fargo was chosen over Las Vegas and El Paso at the 1987 Reunion, several wives were overheard wondering "What will we do in Fargo North Dakota for 3 days in August?", the committee resolved to keep them more than busy.

Scheduling a golf tournament and a trip to the source of the Mississippi with a stop at Smokey Hills required adding a fourth day to the meeting. Visits to Bonanzaville, Hjemkomst Museum, Case and Classic Car factories, an Ag Tour of NDSU facilities, tour of homes, shopping and a visit to the Roger Maris Museum, along with renewing old friendships and re-fighting World War 2 kept the members going full speed from start to finish.

State dignitaries who attended various functions included Senator Quentin Burdick, Adjutant General Alex MacDonald, 3 of North Dakota's Air Force Generals, Supreme Court Justice and American Legion National Commander Sparky Ghierke, Mayor Jon Lindgren, and Convention Bureau Chief Vince Lindstrom, all with their wives.

The opening session featured a North Dakota family-style meal with "home-cooked" chicken, freshly picked corn-on-the-cob, and home grown melon with huge cookies for dessert. This was followed the next night by perfectly cooked steaks, and capped on Sunday morning with a huge Scandinavian Buffet breakfast.

Rave reviews were given to Marg Scott's "Attic Revisited" style show, the Sweet Adelines, a Barber Shop Quartet, and a night of dancing to the Big Band sounds of their era, along with all the other activities and North Dakota in general.

Great amounts of media coverage were generated by the appearance for 3 days of a B-1 Bomber and KC 135 Tanker from the Grand Forks Air Force Base. The veterans, many combat pilots, poured over and into the planes, questioned the crews, marveled at the sophistication of the planes.

They remember the 160 mile cruising speed of their B-17's as they flew through the skies over Germany, compared to the Super-Sonic speed of the B-1. While the size of the new plane is less than twice that of the B-17, it carries 8 times the bomb load with a greatly expanded range.

But there are other differences — 12, 000 B-17's were built at an average cost of \$250,000 per plane. The 100 B-1's built cost in the neighborhood of 1,000 times that much. Noting the equipment and technology of the new plane, the veteran flyers could better understand why this plane is so enthusiastically described by its young crews.

An inspection of Missile Silos and Trips into the Silos for talks with the crews completed the military aspect of the meeting.

Among the discoveries about North Dakota included our location, especially for the family from Pennsylvania who decided they should leave early, since they were going to drop in on relatives in Seattle as long as they were this close! Responding to remarks such as "We had no idea North Dakota was like this", committee members had to point out that recent rains were too late to save our crops, which suffered a second drought year.

A Boston businessman whose associates had said "You're going WHERE?" when he told them of his plans, informed the committee that he had never enjoyed better food, cleaner air, such fine facilities, or friendlier service. His last words were "Wait till I tell THEM a few things about North Dakota!"

While 44 members of the Group have died since the last meeting, the only casualty in Fargo was a broken crown, which was speedily repaired on Sunday morning by the first Dentist called.

An invitation to return to Fargo in 1991 so that members could do the things they didn't have time for, was rejected in favor of Tulsa in 1991. Possibly the "Fargo in February" slogan suggested had something to do with the rejection. Spokane, where the Group was formed in 1943, will be the site of the 50th anniversary Reunion.

Tulsa authorities expressed some concern with regard to matching Fargo's facilities, as well as the services performed by the FM Convention and Tourist Bureau, but they assured the Group of their ability to serve as host city.

On completion of the Reunion, members spread out to areas such as the Peace Garden, Medora, the Detroit Lakes area, and Winnipeg. Others visited long-lost relatives in such "remote" areas as Jamestown and Grand Forks.

Dear Ed,

Thank you for the reply to our letter to the newsletter. We have now got something special to talk to you about.

We have a friend who is a painter (artist) and he has consented to do us a painting which we intend sending to you. This will be 18" x 14" approximately and we would like it if you would get the picture framed and possibly put it on display in your shop window so that the reunion people can see it because we would like you to either auction it or what we call raffle it and what monies are had from it send to Gt. Ashfield Church Memorial Fund.

We have been advised by our artist friend to ask if you would do the honours of having the picture framed at your end as of the possible damage which could be sustained in transit to you.

Coming back to the disposing of the picture — if its auctioned possibly the more wealthier people would be able to offer more than the not so wealthy and that's why we would personally say raffle it, one buys a ticket or tickets for what price you decide and the winner is the name drawn out of the hat, this way everyone can stand a chance of winning the picture.

We would like to leave the choice to you and to what price the tickets and would say that it would only apply to 385th members.

This brings out another point. All 385th members will possibly not be at Fargo as much it would be good to see it a full house, so possibly after the reunion you could have the information printed in a newsletter so the guys at home could stand a chance of winning too.

Yes, we did notice the information of the death of Al Chealander in the newsletter - very sad but we the ones who are still here can only say we have survived the war by a lot of years and be grateful but that doesn't help the ones we leave behind.

I can't keep you in suspension any longer — the picture concerned will be of the Great Ashfield 385th Three Trees. Various people took photos of them last year and we had one of the many from Tom O. horma Hair and my artist is using this photo to help him in doing the painting, but we are going to visit the Miles farm next week to get things at first hand.



If the idea does go ahead, we would like to ask you whom you have frame the picture if you would mind sending us a photo of the finished article.

We have seen quite a few of our friends pictures and I think you will be surprised at the outcome of the Three Trees.

Thanks again for your letter and hope you all have a good time at the reunion.

Sincerely Yours,

Les and Peggy Gordon
39 Combs Lane, Stowmarket, England

P. S. As mentioned in a previous letter, if anyone wants a ride to their old base or and Parham Museum, let us know Our phone number on arriving in this country is 0449 675242.

Editors note: The raffle raised over \$ 1200, and we voted to send the entire profit (above framing costs) to Great Ashfield for the Church.

Homer & Jean Howe were the lucky winners — it was a beautiful oil-painting that anyone would have been proud to hang in their home.

FINAL FLIGHTS



Imprint: Patrick Stephens Ltd.

Publication Date: 17 July 1989

Price: £14.95 Hardback

"Here are true stories that no fiction can match."
from the foreword by Len Deighton

Within living memory men have flown and fought - and sometimes died - in the skies above Britain. They came from many nations - Britain, America, the British Commonwealth, occupied Europe - and their foes from Germany and its allies, equally determined and courageous. Sometimes when aircraft crashed or were shot down the remains would be quickly buried and forgotten in the turmoil of war. Decades later these wrecks can reveal their secrets to the expert investigator of wartime events, tactics and aerial battles and their excavation can serve as a tribute to the bravery and airmanship of the crews who flew them. Ian McLachlan's personal investigation of over 100 known crash sites has resulted in an outstanding collection of true stories behind some of the most fascinating wrecks. **FINAL FLIGHTS** makes gripping reading for young or old, enthusiast or non-expert alike.

Ian McLachlan is a lifelong aviation enthusiast who has dedicated much of his spare time to aviation archaeology. **FINAL FLIGHTS** IS HIS FIRST BOOK BUT HE HAS WRITTEN EXTENSIVELY FOR MAGAZINES AND THE PRESS. He is married with two children and lives in Norwich. He is available for interview.

Editors note: Ian's book makes great reading. It was at the Reunion in Fargo & created much interest. One Chapter was especially heart-rending — the story of Hutchinson's crash at the end of their 25th mission.

Bomber's 21st birthday was almost his last

By Kathleen Dill

STAFF WRITER

These days, most young adults celebrate their 21st birthday with friends at a favorite night spot.

Blit in 1944, O.V. Lancaster spent his 21st birthday fighting enemy pilots.

Lancaster is part of the 385th Bomb Group, 550th Squadron, from World War II that is in Fargo to celebrate their 12th reunion and 46th anniversary. The group holds a reunion every other year.

Lancaster, a McLean, Ill., native, and his bomb group were stationed in England during the war.

He was a B-17 bomber pilot who flew 76 missions, only 29 of them required. He said his aircraft returned without damage in only 10 of his missions.

"The worst one (mission) was my 21st birthday and that particular mission, of course, being my 21st birthday, would naturally be outstanding, and we suffered the most damage under fire attack for almost four hours," Lancaster said.

He said his aircraft returned with almost 387 holes of different sizes and descriptions.

"Most of the damage to the aircraft was to the wing tanks on the west wing and our oxygen tanks were hit and exploded," he said. "We lost our oxygen and had to drop out of formation and go to a lower altitude."

"Prior to that, we had been under the fire attack for such a long period of time, the electric-heated suit on my radio operator was damaged and malfunctioned, and he froze all 10 fingers to the second joint and they all had to be amputated when we got back."

He said most of their equipment was damaged beyond use and two of the four engines were lost.

"You are in constant fear because from the time you arrive over any area in enemy territory until you leave enemy territory, you are under almost a constant attack of some sort," he said. "You see airplanes adjacent to you have a direct hit and on occasion, one completely blows apart."

The mission that took place on Lancaster's birthday, started out with nine aircraft. His was the only one that returned.

"I had seen one of my good friends — who had been in training with me all the way through pilot school and we were assigned to the same squadron — his aircraft was hit by enemy fire in the number two engine," he said. "He slow-rolled over the top of my aircraft and his radio operator fell out and almost hit my aircraft. Seven members (out of 10) of that crew perished."

"Now that's a sight that would scare any 21-year-old to death," he said.

Lancaster said his friend was captured and became a prisoner of war. He never knew what happened to his friend, until after he returned home from his 16-month stay in England, and was reassigned in the states.

"After I can back and was reassigned, I brought some of my flying and experiences which led me to California," he said. "I ran across him in the control tower. I was completely surprised, it's tough to explain the feelings."

The members of the squadron share similar stories during the reunion, but also take time to enjoy the city they are in.

Ed Stern of Fargo was one of the organizers of the Fargo reunion. He served in the 550th Squadron also, but didn't experience combat firsthand.

"I was one of the permanent ground personnel in the administrative office," Stern said. "I never shot a gun. Once the Germans bombed us and I just stood there and watched like a damned fool."

He said for someone who had to be away from home and in England for 26 months like he was, it was the nicest place he could be.

Stern said he contributes not having to be in combat to luck — "150 percent."

"Most of the luck, I suppose, had to do with my eyes being too bad to be a pilot," he said. "The Navy wouldn't take me because my eyes weren't good enough. I enlisted into the Army and then got sent to the Air Force. That's luck."

Although each reunion has been special, Stern said this one is a little more so because it is in Fargo.

This year's reunion brought in 400 members and their families, representing 40 states.

The group has been visiting the various sights in the area and after a Scandinavian smorgasbord breakfast today, will decide where the next reunion will be.

Rapid City Journal 8-22-89

WWII bomber group to reunite

FARGO, N.D. (AP) — Dropping bombs on Nazi-occupied Europe in World War II was dangerous business for members of the U.S. Army Air Corps 385th Bomb Group.

Members of the group plan to reunite this week in Fargo to reminisce about the danger of those missions and rekindle old friendships forged in the heat of battle.

"They fight WWII all over again," said Ed Stern of Fargo, who is helping organize the reunion under the banner of the 385th Bombardment Group Memorial Association.

The 385th was made up of 72 bomber crews at any given time, 10 to a crew, and a support unit of about 2,500 people. There are about 1,200 in the group's association, and about 500 people are expected for

the Fargo reunion.

The group, which flew B-17s, the so-called "flying fortresses" of World War II, was based at Great Ashfield, an area in England near Cambridge, Stern said.

Stern said he served in the group as a base administrative officer for a squadron, and says he was something of "a nursemaid to 500 guys."

Though he was in his mid-20s when he served in England, the younger fliers of his squadron, many, only 19 or 20 years old, called him "Pop," he said. The group's commanding officer was only 23, Stern said.

When the bomber group was formed in July 1943, the men optimistically thought they would be home by Christmas, Stern said.

However, it was two years later before that happened, and many Americans never made it back at all.

According to bomb group statistics, more than 1,950 men completed combat tours, but more than 1,400 were lost in combat and crashes.

Many men were lost when the Germans began sending jet fighters against them. Stern said. The German jet pilots were "shooting bombers down in alarming quantities," just before the end of the war, he said.

Stern said he once flew along on a supply mission to Holland, bringing food to the Dutch after the Germans pulled out with everything, leaving them to starve.

Bomber group to reunite

By Dave Olson
STAFF WRITER

Flying fortresses will lumber from the hangars of memory this week when members of the 385th Bomb Group hold their 46th anniversary reunion in Fargo.

Those who flew the B-17 bomber during World War II and those who through various jobs helped keep the "flying fortresses" armed, fueled and in flying condition will gather Thursday through Sunday. Ed Stem of Fargo, who is helping organize the reunion, said the group will reminisce about the long-ago bombing missions over Europe, view the latest in bomber technology — the B-1 — and generally have fun.

Continued from Page A1

500 guys." Though he was in his mid-20s when he served in England, he said the younger fliers of his squadron, many only 19 or 20 years old, called him "Pop." The group's commanding officer was only 23.

An old church reportedly built before 1066 sat near the airfield, as did three tall trees which stood together in a row, Stem said. The bomber crews looked for the trees to identify their base from among the myriad airfields along the coast.

Now, Stem said, veterans who visit England often make a pilgrimage to that little church where a memorial to the American airmen is maintained.

A painting of the trees will be raffled at the reunion and the proceeds sent to the church, he said.

In addition to Stem, two other local men who were members of the bomb group, Warren Diederich and Ralph Smith, are helping organize the reunion. Diederich was a bomber pilot and Smith a gunner.

When the bomber group was initially formed in July 1943, Stem said, the men optimistically thought they would be home by Christmas.

It was two years later, however, before that happened and many Americans never made it back at all. According to bomber group statistics, more than 1,950 men completed combat tours, but more than 1,400 were lost in combat and crashes.

The initial tour of duty for a bomber crew member was 25 missions. Stem said, but as in the novel "Catch-22," that number went up to 35 missions when it appeared too many were making the milestone. "It was devastating for the morale of the fellows," Stem said.

Stem related "a story containing

Stem said that when the members of the 385th Bombardment Group Memorial Association reunite, "They fight WWII all over again." The 385th was made up of 72 bomber crews at any given time, 10 to a crew, and a support unit of about 2,500 people. There are currently about 1,200 in the group's association and about 500 people are expected for the Fargo reunion.

The group was based at Great Ashfield, an area in England near Cambridge, Stem said.

Stem said he served in the group as a base administrative officer for a squadron, and was something of "a nursemaid to

□Bomber
Back page, Column two

a cruel irony worthy of "Catch-22."

An excellent bomber pilot in his group was flying back to base upon completing his 25th and last mission. Nearly home, the pilot's plane collided with one flown by an inexperienced Allied flier and the veteran pilot was killed. Stem said.

Even though the mission number was hiked near the end of the war, Stem said runs became less and less hazardous as German defenses crumbled, and chances for completing a tour successfully improved greatly.

One dark point near the end of the war, according to Stem, was when the Germans began sending Jet fighters against them. Stem said they were "shooting bombers down in alarming quantities" just before the close of the war.

He said among the stories from his bomber group's past is the one told by a tail gunner whose B-17's aft section was completely shot away from the plane.

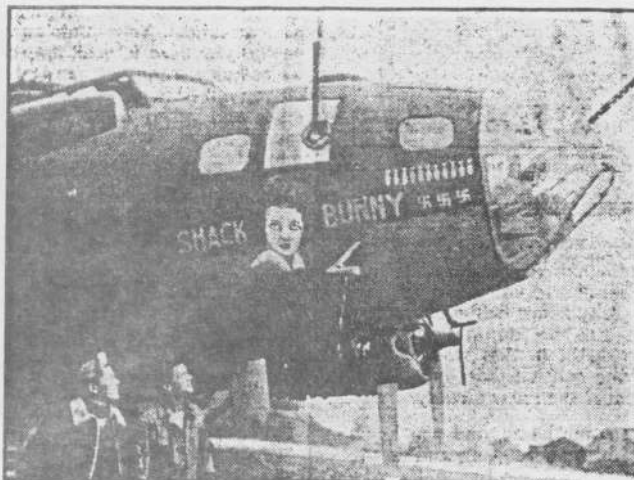
The man was still riding in the wreckage as it drifted lazily out of the sky like a leaf and landed in a swamp in Belgium, Stem said. The crewman, unhurt, sat down, took of his boots and smoked a cigarette while he waited for someone to find him.

Stem said he once flew along on a supply mission to Holland, bringing food to the Dutch after the Germans pulled out with everything, leaving them to starve.

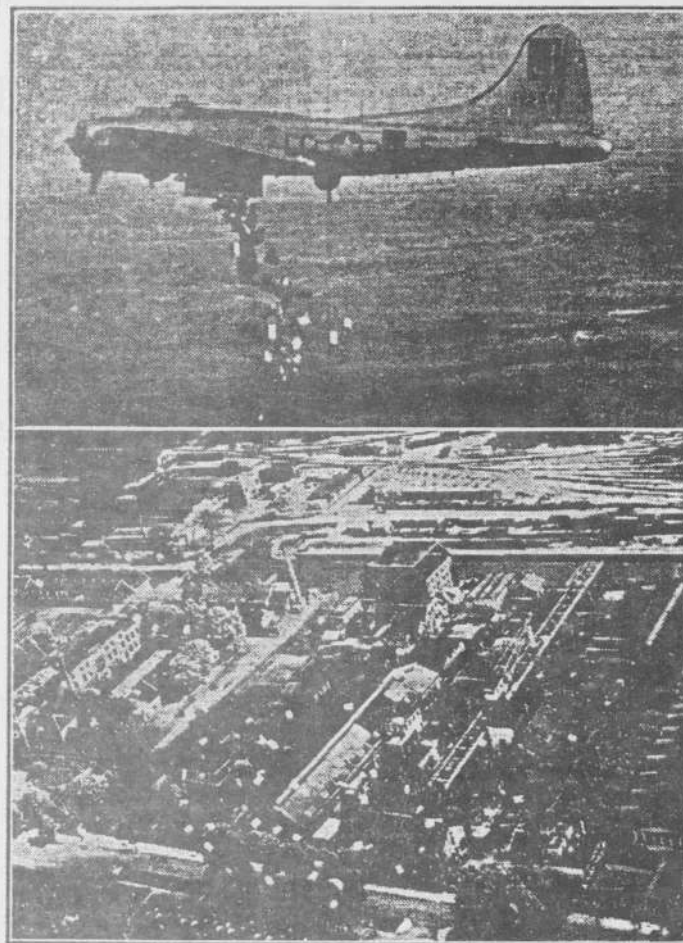
The Dutch, he said, planted tulips to form the words "thank you" which could be seen from the sky.

"So," he said, "there was a little bit of good spread by our bombers."

Stem said Fargo beat out Las Vegas and El Paso for the reunion, the group's 12th; one of the reasons is that a B-1 bomber, the nation's newest supersonic long-range bomber, will be in Fargo for the group to inspect.



Two men admire nose art on a B-17 during World War II. The number of bombs signify the number of missions flown, while swastikas indicate confirmed kills against German aircraft.



U.S. Army Air Force Photos

MANNA FROM HEAVEN FOR THE DUTCH:

Crews of the 8th Air Force, accustomed to high altitude, bombing, skimmed in low over Dutch cities to drop hundreds of cases of ten-in-one rations to the beleaguered civilian population. These pictures show a 385th Bomb Group Fort dropping its "mercy cargo." On each of the first three days of May approximately 400 B17s sent 800 tons of food down toward areas carefully marked off by the Dutch and just as carefully pin-pointed by the airmen.

Pictures & Quotes From the Fargo Reunion



On the bus to Source of the Mississippi & Smokey Hills.



Old planes & old flyers waiting for dinner.

"Such a wonderful time at the reunion "

"I can't think of one thing that would have made it better"



Cole, Hruska, Lyke, Vance & Nicholls



Part of the opening dinner crowd at the Bonanzaville Air Museum.



Treasurer John Pettenger tells it like it is while Pres. Earl checks on "What's next"

"West Minnesota is a great place"



The Ed McElroys at opening ceremonies Friday night.

Pictures & Quotes From the Fargo Reunion



Whatever was going on, it was good!

"We told all our friends that they really should see Fargo. "

"Fargo was GREAT - it showed a lot of preparation and it turned out wonderful"



Sec. Hruska, Editor Stern, President Cole, Fargo's mayor Lindgren at the Air Museum, Bonanzaville.



"I've got Six Pence" with the Barber Shop Quartet furnishing the music, Ed Stern the words.



American Legion National Commander Sparky Ghierke at our Saturday morning session.

"I had to drive 3,000 miles to get there, and had car trouble in Fargo, but it was the best ever"



U.S. Senator Burdick & Jocie, N. Dak. Adjutant General Alex MacDonald and Joan with Sam Lyke.



At Bonanzaville — we were thirsty after a busy Friday afternoon.

Pictures & Quotes From the Fargo Reunion

"A real symphony'with not a sour note"

"The accommodations were good, the food excellent, the entertainment varied and educational"



The Saturday night banquet.



Sam presiding on Sunday morning

"Everyone was so friendly, the press, the service personnel, the BI fellows, the tour of homes, the Tractor plant, Fargo is full of friendly people"



The Band at our Dinner Dance.



Saturday morning's general meeting.



Saturday's Dinner Dance. Seated l to r; Helen and Jim Child, Irene and Rubin Eckhardt. Standing; Lou and Bill Koon



Capt. Simmons of the B-1 crew on Saturday morning.

Pictures & Quotes From the Fargo Reunion



President Earl presiding.



Carl and Mary Grindler, Norma and Walt Beauchamp.



One of the breakfast shots

A class act all the way, food, accommodations, program"

"We lucked out with a last minute ride to the B-1 on our way to catching our flight out"



What a plane! And what a thrill to get inside and push all those buttons — almost all, that is.



At the Classic Car Plant



Fain Pool, Norma and Walt Beauchamp and Carl Grindler.

Pictures & Quotes From the Fargo Reunion

"A wonderful Reunion, one of the very best. We drove into Canada, stopped at the Peace Garden, saw the great beauty of everything"



The Russ Pfau's enjoying Saturday night dinner dance.



John Grindahl "Dressed for Success"

"A fabulous reunion"



500 a night at the Bonanzaville Hotel — unless you want the Bridal suite for 250 extra.



Norma and Walt Beauchamp.



John Grindahl's display of 385th memorabilia.



The Railroad display at Bonanzaville.

"The style show Saturday morning was the best"

Pictures & Quotes From the Fargo Reunion



Who is that guy in the plaid shirt talking to our Major General Schroeder?



"Our first time in North Dakota, a most pleasant experience"

We stayed on 10 days after the reunion, touring North and South Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana, then back all the way to New Hampshire"



We were thirsty after Friday's active day — Bonanzaville again.



Bonanzaville before the Friday night ceremonies.



Registration Desk with Forrest Poore, Ralph Smith, the convention bureau's secretary, and some member's butt.

Pictures & Quotes From the Fargo Reunion



Tom Helman, Milton Lane, Ivy Lacy and Jack Gesser.



Ivy Lane, Milton Lane, Tom Helman and Jack Gesser, Fargo 1989.

"You can look back on a job well done"

* ☐ ☐ ☐ LIFE MEMBERS^ ☐ ☐ ☐

- 193 — Vivian S.' Herron
- 194 — Milton V. Lane
- 195 — Gerald O. Stiehl
- 196 — Harry H. Bridges
- 197 — Dave Oakley
- 198 — Harry. Bertges
- 199 — James M. Miller
- 200 — William D. Miller
- 201 — Rachel E. Stipe



Lowell Cooper — Jan. 1989
 Ernie Traudt — April 1989
 Kent Wagonseiler — July 1989

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