

**COMBAT UNITS**

HQ. SQUADRON  
 548th BOMB SQ.  
 549th BOMB SQ.  
 550th BOMB SQ.  
 551st BOMB SQ



# 12th Reunion 46th Anniversary 1989 FARGO, N. DAK.

**SUPPORT UNITS**

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

## *"The Mighty Eighth Reunion Group"*

385th BOMBARDMENT GROUP MEMORIAL ASSOCIATION

GREAT ASHFIELD — SUFFOLK, ENGLAND

STATION 155

**ASSOCIATION OFFICERS****PRESIDENT**

Earl L. Cole  
 Box 289  
 Barboursville, KY 40906

**VICE PRESIDENT**

Samuel E. Lyke  
 4992 SE Princeton Dr.  
 Bartlesville, OK 74003

A. L. Benefield Jr.  
 601 Choctow Ave.  
 Ozark, AL 36360

Mary Lyke  
 4992 SE Princeton Dr.  
 Bartlesville, OK 74003

**SECRETARY**

George S. Hruska  
 7442 Ontario St.  
 Omaha, NE 68124

**TREASURER**

John F. Pettenger  
 Box 117  
 Laurel, FL 33545

**EDITOR, BGMA NEWSLETTER**

Ed Stern  
 P.O. Box 2187  
 Fargo, ND 58108

**8th AF HISTORICAL UNIT CONTACT**

Gerry Donnelly  
 10770 SW 46th  
 Miami, FL 33165

**HONORARY MEMBERS**

Gen. James Doolittle  
 Gen. Curtis LeMay  
 Gen. E.P. Partridge  
 L/Gen. Ira C. Eaker  
 B/Gen. Elliott Vandevanter, Jr.  
 Col. George Y. Jumper  
 Ronald C. Nolan  
 M/Sgt. John McKay, Jr. USAF

**PAST PRESIDENTS**

Ruel G. Weikert  
 Frank B. Walls  
 Vincent W. Masters  
 John C. Ford  
 James H. Emmons  
 Paul Schulz  
 Forrest V. Poore  
 William A. Nicholls

# NEWSLETTER

VOL. XV NO. 1

SEPTEMBER 1987

Printed by Interstate Printing  
 Fargo, North Dakota

1988 Dues

Dues are still \$8 -- Life Memberships \$100.

Please send your check to Treasurer John Pettenger. You can check your Dues Status on the Newsletter address label. LM99 means you're a Life Member. A999 an Associate (family) member, F999 English Friend, R87 Dues paid, R00 Dues not paid.

The Dues pay for printing and distribution of the News Letter, funding the Arlington, Dayton, and Colorado Springs Memorials, plus our continued funding and support of the All Saints Church at Great Ashfield.

385th Reunion Group Tour of Great Britain & Ireland

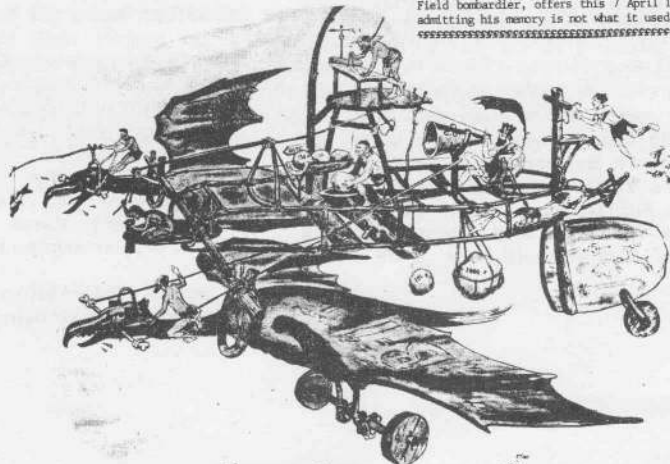
August 16 to September 6, 1988

A trip down Memory Lane, combining the fun of a reunion with old friends and the sights and sounds of England, Scotland, and Ireland. Arranged by Al Chealander through David Wade Ltd (old friends of our previous visit). The trip will include a drive through Suffolk County to Elmswell and Great Ashfield, Stowmarket, Bury St. Edmunds, Ipswich, along with all of Britain's famous areas. Cambridge, York, Edinburgh, Dublin, Limerick, Killarney, Blarney Castle, Cork. The trip will end up with the famous Farnborough Air Show and London. The price -- \$1798 (not including Air Fare to England). For complete information, write to Al Chealander, 10491 Barbara Anne St., Cypress, CA 90630.

REMEMBER BACK IN 1944 WHEN...?

## PROTOTYPE OF THE B-1

CONTRARY TO CLAIMS OF SHORTENED LEAD TIME IN DEVELOPMENT OF THE B-1, Monte C. Williamson, 1939 Hickam Field bombardier, offers this 7 April 1944 inflight sketch of the B-1 by TSgt Lloyd Ostendorf. Although admitting his memory is not what it used to be, Monte believes this test was near Abilene, Texas!



The CAVEMEN'S BOMBER, B-1  
 (THE WHAT DOES AIRBORNE?)

# War babies band together to find their American fathers

By Terry Trucco

New York Times News Service

LONDON — He was only 7 years old at the time, but Frank Hamilton vividly recalls the day his grandmother told him his father was an American serviceman, stationed in England during World War II. "I was really pleased," said Hamilton, who is now 43 and runs an office-cleaning business in a London suburb. "My stepfather was a drunk who would beat me up. I was so glad that this horrible man was not my father."

As his stepfather grew more abusive and his mother more passive, the boy decided to try to find his father.

"I would go to the American war films, and when John Wayne led a regiment, I'd look for my dad," Hamilton recalled with a chuckle. He took up his search in earnest 20 years later, but without much luck. Then, last year, he joined a search and support group in London, the Transatlantic Children's Enterprise, or Trace. He still has not found his father, but he has some new leads and believes he is on the right track.

Being part of a group has helped. "For years I felt a bit embarrassed to say I was looking for my dad, but now I know there are a lot of others like me," he said.

In the last few years hundreds of British adults, most of them fathered out of wedlock by American servicemen, have taken up the search for their fathers. Two new organizations are providing crucial assistance, although their work is hampered by a lack of access to American servicemen's records. Trace, formed in 1984, now has nearly 300 members, and War Babies, a Birmingham group, formed the same year, has close to 250. Other individuals are looking on their own. The American Embassy in London receives three to five letters a week, request help in finding unknown American fathers. The number of inquiries increases at Christmas and, after World War II remembrances, it

War Babies said it has helped about 25 members find their fathers. A founder of Trace, Pamela Winfield, said, "About a third of the members have found some news that is satisfactory to them, whether of their fathers, or of their American families." Even if a searcher suspects the father was killed in action, or has since died, most still want to know about their American relatives.

Spurring the "war babies" — who are well into their 40s, with children and, often, grandchildren of their own — is a sense of non-urgent urgency. Many redoubled their efforts after the much-publicized 40-year reunion of D-Day veterans in 1984. "It's a desperate situation," said the founder of War Babies, Shirley McGlade, 41, who located her father last year. "These men are now in their 70s and 80s"

Many searchers only recently learned that they had fathers to search for. The stigma of having a child out of wedlock in the 1940s was severe, and children were often told little about their fathers. Janet O'Regan, 42, manager of a Northampton dress shop, learned the name of her father only two and a half years ago when she found her original birth certificate. "That's when I realized he might still be alive," she said. "My mother had always told me he had been killed in the war."

The need to establish a family identity has sharpened as the war babies have aged. Watching their children grow has also strengthened the urge to locate their fathers, or at least their fathers' families.

"I have this very deep longing to find the other half of the moon," said Joan Hickey, 41, a London teacher. "I don't look like anyone in my family, and I've always felt a little strange about that. I also feel I owe it to my sons. If I don't do some-



"I would go to the American war films, and when John Wayne led a regiment, I'd look for my dad."

— Frank Hamilton

thing now, they may blame me for it later."

But it is not easy to find a father in another country after more than 40 years. Trace and War Babies dispense lists of government and military offices, newspapers and even schools that have been helpful. One woman found her father by advertising in Army Times, a civilian newspaper, popular with veterans. The two groups have also cultivated a network of people in the United States who have helped speed up searches.

Many of those searching have spent years writing to the wrong organizations, or tracing fathers to the wrong cities or states, problems often compounded by a lack of information. "If all they know is that their father's name is Chris and he came from Hackensack, they haven't a hope," said Ms. Winfield. Who is the author of *Sentimental Journey* (Constable, London), a book about British brides of American servicemen that included a chapter on illegitimate children.

It is usually necessary to know the branch of service, military unit and home state of the father. The truly lucky children know their fa-

thers' military serial numbers. But many mothers will not discuss such matters. Some have blocked out the war years; one woman had her mother hypnotized in an effort to pry out a few details.

For many the biggest stumbling blocks are the bureaucracy in the United States and, in particular, the Privacy Act of 1974, which decrees that a veteran's military records and address cannot be released without his or her permission. The policy of the Military Personnel Center in St. Louis is to forward a letter if it finds an address for the man being inquired about. But many World War II records were destroyed by a fire there in the 1970s.

Some searchers have had luck through alternative routes, such as state motor vehicle departments and the Veterans Administration, but a growing number are indignant that military records, usually the best way to trace veterans, are off limits. "If my father wants to reject me, that should be his choice, not the government's," said Ms. O'Regan, who has written to senators and government officials about the problem.

"Figure this out — you'll find an interesting story from Milt Lane.

# AIRMAN IS AVENGING NAZI-SLAIN BROTHER

Sergeant Milton V. Lane, of 1(K) E. Wayne ave., Collingswood, a radio operator on a Flying Fortress, is doing his best to make the Nazis pay for the death of his brother. Private Robert C. Lane, who died in 'the North African campaign.

His father and stepmother, Mr. and Mrs. Wilmer B. Lane, of the Collingswood address, have learned that the 21-year-old flier was one of the crew of the Fortress "Ohio Air Force" which downed 12 German planes recently in a raid on Munster.

According to a news dispatch from England, Lane, a graduate of Collingswood High School, is credited with downing one of the 12 planes.

"We were afraid we had lost another boy when we first read the news dispatch," said Lane's father. "We pray he comes home safe."

In a letter dated Sept. 27 Lane told his father he was doing a "lot of flying lately and I hope I can pay them (the Nazis) back to what

## Nazi Plane Pays For Brother's Loss

(Continued from Page One)

hour and a half battle with Nazi fighters returned from the recent raid on Munster, Germany, with all crew members uninjured and with a record bag of 12 German planes shot down. One of the Nazis was credited to Lane.

"We were afraid we had lost another boy," said Mr. and Mrs. Lane when first told of the press report. "I pray he comes home safe," the stepmother added. "We are so proud of him."

News of Sgt. Lane's latest exploit also was heard with pride by his mother, Mrs. Lillian Lane, of 310 South Fifth street, where hangs a service emblem with a gold star and two blue ones. A third son, Albion, 26, is in the Army at Fort Dix.

Mrs. Lillian Lane displayed a V letter from Milton, dated Sept. 7 and announcing his arrival in England. "Keek 'em flying Mom," he closed.

The Lanes were divorced 14 years ago, and the boys raised by their stepmother, who has a son, John Chaver, 27, a radio operator in the Air Force at Scott Field, Ill.

The press dispatch said the "Ohio Air Force," piloted by Lt John Richey, Steubenville, O., was attacked by swarms of Nazi planes, including four engined Dornier 2-1T bomber's which fired cannon shells and rockets. Once during the violent action, the heavy Fortress rolled over on its back, losing much loose material.

# B-17 Gunners Claim 12 Nazi Planed

AN EIGHTH BOMBER STATION, Jet. 12—Gunners of the B17 Ohio Air force claimed 12 enemy aircraft destroyed for a new ETO record Sunday in a 400-mile running battle to get home from Munster, the day's target in Germany. The claims have been confirmed by Bomber Command.

The total, which included a Dornier 217 bomber, was one higher than the previous mark of 11, and may be a world record for enemy airplanes destroyed by one aircraft.

High scorer of the crew was 2/Lt. Robert H. Winnerman, of Newark, N.J., who was credited with three planes. Winnerman, the bombardier, manned the center and right nose guns, and destroyed the Dornier as well as an FW190 and an Me210.

The Ohio Air Force, piloted by 2/Lt. John Richey, of Steubenville, Ohio, had just completed its bombing run over Munster and was making the turn for home when the B17 on its left was

knocked out of formation. A moment later a plane in front of and above the Ohio Air Force was hit and Richey was forced to swerve out of formation, and before he could rejoin the rest of his squadron Nazi interceptors swooped in and the plane was left to fight its way home alone.

"Just like all BIT pilots, I've always wanted to see what a B17 could do; well, I found out. Sunday," said Richey. "That plane did a slow roll, just as if it had been a fighter. And every man on the crew has bruises to prove it. That's about as evasive as evasive action can get."

(A slow roll, basic fighter maneuver, is virtually unheard of in a four-engined bomber. It involves rolling a plane completely over around its line of flight.)

With the Ohio Air Force separated from its formation, the Luftwaffe threw everything it could spare at the ship, and crewmen reported that several times twin-tail gunner, knocked down an Me JOSH engined planes fired rockets at the For

from a distance, while faster fighters' harried them from close range.

Gunners said that from the time they left Munster probably 200 fighters attacked them, with one relay picking up when another had run out of gas. Not a single man on the Ohio Air Force crew was wounded.

Everyone on the plane was credited? with at least one enemy aircraft except the pilot and co-pilot, who fired no guns; but spent the entire time in heading the pft. Fort around the air in evasive action. Co-pilot was 2/Lt. Thomas A. Helm of Medford, Ore.

Radio operators seldom get credit for an enemy plane, since their one gun has a limited traverse immediately above the ship, but T/Sgt. Milton V. Lane, of Collingswood, N. J., shot down a Ju88 during a heavy attack.

Two gunners got (two planes each); S/Sgt. Jack J. Gesser, of Bellevue, Ky., crewmen reported that several times twin-tail gunner, knocked down an Me JOSH engined planes fired rockets at the For

and an Mel 10, and S/Sgt. Thomas Hair, Jr., left waist gunner from Anderson, S. C. got credit for a pair of Me 10s.

Other gunners were credited to them, were: S/Sgt. Maurice B. Simpson, of Cameton, Mo., right waist gunner, and S/Sgt. Charles E. Schaefer, of AskifSFU, Wash., ball turret gunner, at Mel 10; T/Sgt. Mike J. Siwek, of Hamck tramck, Mich., top turret gunner, at K Me210, and 2/Lt. Frank H. McKibbin, of Los Angeles, navigator, who got an FW190 with the left nose gun.

## Collingswood Man Avenges Brother

(Continued from Page One)

his stepmother the same day March 2 letter came.

"Pretty Tired Bunch"

"We are all a pretty tired bunch. Just one more mission and then it's peace and quiet for I long as I want," he said. It been 16 days without a pass, but I'm hoping I'll soon see Ivy."

The March 2 letter said: "It sure feels swell to be all done. Everybody shook hands with us after we landed from the last raid. My only regret is that Bob couldn't have lived to see all this happen. But he must be happy wherever he is."

In previous letters, Milton often told of how he and the crew of his bomber "paid those Nazis back for what they did to Bob." In one letter he referred to the shooting down of 16 German planes over a period of several months, but his stepmother said he did not make clear whether that was the number shot down by all the crew members of his plane or himself.

Gives Pilot's Credit -

Referring to his bombing experiences in his latest letter, Lane said:

"Out of 423 crews that came over with us, there are only six or seven that we know are still o. k. I've seen planes blow up in the air and it makes you think when you see something like that. Most of the credit for our finish! goes to the pilot. When we landed, after the last raid, he grabbed me by the head and wouldn't let go he was so happy!"

Leading the score was Lt. Robert E. Winnerman, a bombardier, who knocked down three planes. Two victims each fell to Sgt. Jack T. Gesser, Bellevue, Ky.—the tall gunner, and Sgt. Thomas Hair, Jr., Anderson, S. C., a waistgunner.

Gets Credit for Plane

One plane each was credited to Lt. Frank H. McKibbin, Los Angeles, the navigator; Sgt. Lane; Sgt. Maurice B. Simpson, Cameron, Miss., a waistgunner; Sgt. Charles E. Schaeffer, Ashford, Was., ball turret gunner, and Sgt. Michael J. Siwek, Hamtramck, Mich., top turret gunner. Copilot of the plane was Lt. Thomas A. Helman, Medford, Ore.

Sergeant Lane was inducted into the Army last Oct. 16. He was a graduate of Collingswood High school. Soon after arrival in England he wrote to Mr. and Mrs. Lane:

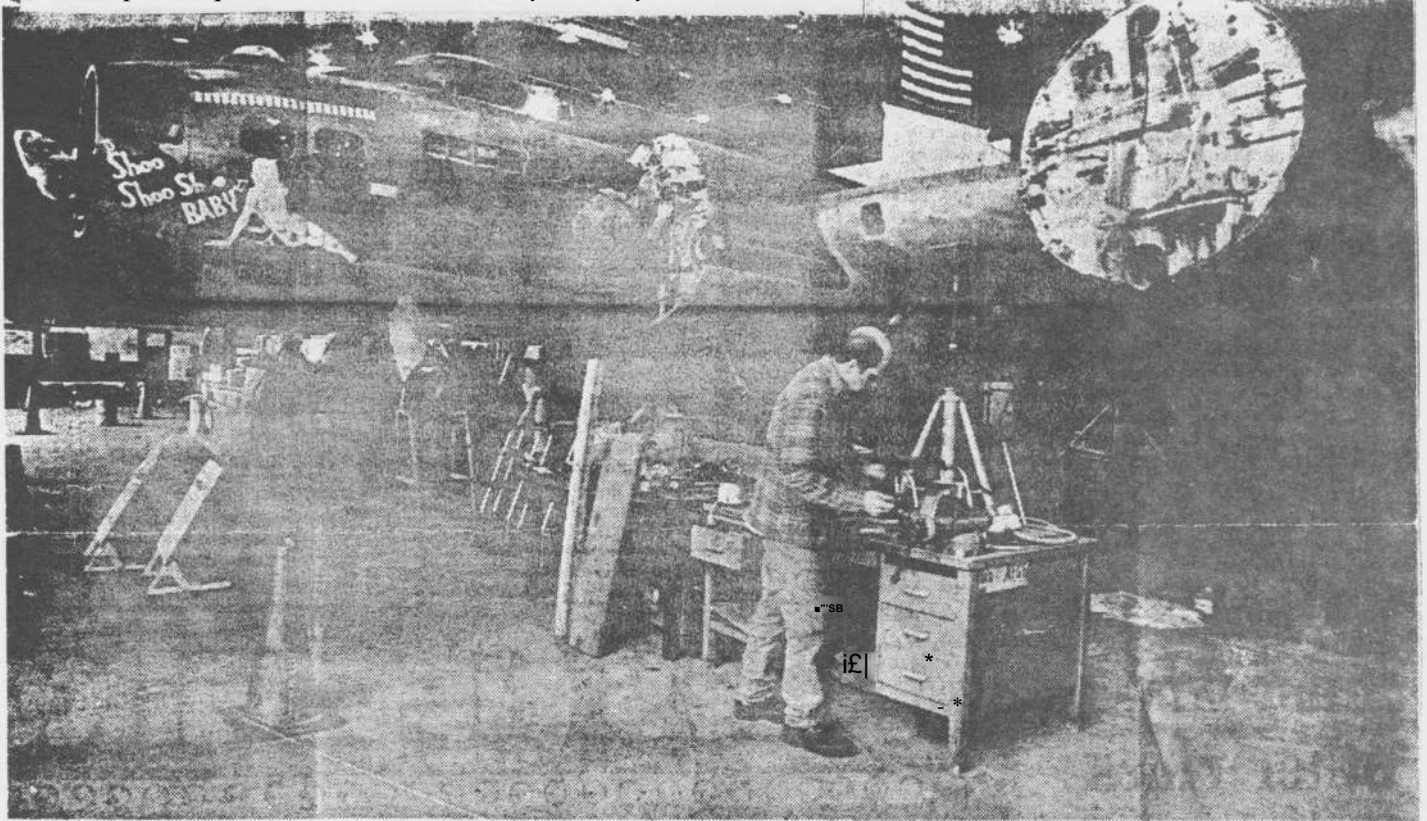
"The news has just come about Italy's surrendering and the boys are raising hell. Bob would have been a happy boy tonight had he lived to see that. But that was the way it was meant to be. I am going into town tonight. The news calls for a celebration.

"The bombers have been roaring over all day. I guess they are giving the boys in Germany something to think about. I have about a week of school left, and then I hope I get in on some of those raids. Every bomb dropped from our own plane helps pay for Bob."

In an earlier letter Sergeant Lane wrote, "I found an old Carpenden Courier here the other day and read it completely. Pop,



*SHOO SHOO BABY makes the news again! This was in the Philadelphia Inquirer last winter. Sent in by Dorothy Wheeler.*



The Philadelphia Inquirer / ED HILLE

The Shoo Shoo Baby, under restoration in a hangar at Dover Air Force Base, will be the only flyable combat veteran of its species.

# A combat platform high in the sky

## A rare B-17 takes to the sky, when it's ready

by Elizabeth Hallowell  
Philadelphia Inquirer

Edward J. Gallagher spent much of a year in the cramped rear of a B-17 bomber.

Crouched on a seat no bigger than a bicycle saddle, his legs folded beneath him, Gallagher spent hours peering out the open tail of the plane, his finger poised on the trigger of a .30-caliber Browning machine gun.

It was World War II, and Gallagher, 27, was in the rear of the bomber, and living in Northeast Philadelphia, was the tall gunner on the tail of "Shoo Shoo Baby," a B-17 bomber.

That vintage plane is now being stored at Dover Air Force Base, and when the work has been completed — sometime in April 1988 — the Shoo Shoo Baby will become the only B-17 in existence to have seen combat and still be flyable.

The bomber then will be taken on its last flight, to the Air Force Museum in Dayton, Ohio, where it

will be put on permanent display. By that time, the restoration project will have entailed 50,000 hours of volunteer labor.

Gallagher said he volunteered for flight duty in 1943 because it seemed "easier up there than walking on the ground." But his bombing missions, seven of which were aboard Shoo Shoo Baby, were anything but easy.

"You're sitting back there and you can't do anything," he recalled. "It's noisy and cold. You just watch out the window and hope against hope that everything will be all right."

Ray McCloskey, an airplane mechanic in charge of the restoration project, recently was in the hangar at Dover Air Force Base where Shoo Shoo Baby has rested, in various stages of reassembly, for eight years. "You're taking an airplane that was a basket case and hopefully restoring it to flying condition," he said. ■

An Australian aviation buff discovered the bomber in 1968 on an abandoned airstrip in France. It was iden-

tified through its serial number and the scratched-in name of Lt. Paul G. McDuffee, Gallagher's pilot.

Little remained intact. Built by Boeing in 1944, the plane's engines failed after more than 20 missions. It was converted into a passenger plane for the Swedish government, and later became a paramedic rescue plane. Finally, it was used by the French government for aerial surveys. ■

In 1961, Shoo Shoo Baby was stripped of all usable parts and left for dead on a French airstrip.

Eleven years later, a group of U.S. Air Force mechanics disassembled what remained of the plane, cutting it into seven pieces and sending it to the Ohio Air Force museum. There it sat until 1978, when officials at Dover Air Force Base decided that restoring the plane would make an excellent project for reservists.

Over the last eight years McCloskey, Dan Vasey and Victor Rosica, all civilians who work full time on the base maintaining C-5 planes, have

volunteered virtually every weekend for the project. On the occasional days and nights he is not at the base, McCloskey said he often takes a piece of Shoo Shoo Baby home with him and works in his basement.

The mechanics researched blueprints and old photographs of the plane so they could replicate every detail. They combed Air Force bases across the country for spare parts, and when certain parts could not be found, they were manufactured by the volunteers from scratch.

Even the plane's name and logo, a curvaceous, half-nude young woman peering coyly over her shoulder, was repainted by the original artist, Tony I Starcer, who died earlier this year.

McCloskey enjoys showing visitors the volunteers' handiwork. "It's

"When you finish up (a part of the restoration) you're always thinking two steps ahead," he said. "When you live a tour, you reflect on all you've just done, and you really amaze yourself."

# Memories Still Flourish on a Quiet English Farm

By PATRICK MOTT ■...<■

LAVENHAM, England—the wind is bitter and icy as it whips a spray of light rain across the weathered concrete strip that gently dips and rises over David and Beth Alston's wheat fields.

The weather turns hard here during certain seasons, with near-freezing temperatures and twilight by 3:30 in the afternoon. And standing in the middle of the long gray ribbon, watching it stretch off toward the green hills as the clouds lower and the elms swish and bend in the wind, is a lonely errand.

■X- But the Alstons remember other Cold days '43 years ago, when their farm was anything but lonely. When the damp air thrummed with the sound of dozens of huge engines, when the night was filled with the whine of winches and the shouts of young men picking their way back to their huts in the dark. They remember the strange nasal accents of the men from Alabama and Wisconsin and California and New York who sat around their fire at night and flew off the next day to try to cheat death one more time.

## Return Visits

Today those young men, now grown old, remember, too. Each year many of them return to the Alstons' farm to sit around the fire once again and to stand on the runway to which they so gratefully returned from flying terrifying bombing missions over Nazi-occupied Europe.

Beginning in the Christmas season of 1943, the farm became the headquarters of the 487th Bomb Group of the U.S. Eighth Air Force. During the course of World War II hundreds of American airmen, ground crewmen, technicians and others made the base, just outside the village of Lavenham in Suffolk county, their home. Many of them engaged in the fiercest air battles of the war. Many died in the thin air over Europe.

But many of those who survived to go home are, decades later, returning in increasing numbers to Lavenham and dozens of other East Anglia villages and towns where their memories of that turbulent time endure.

They arrive individually or as part of a tour, often arranged by veterans' organizations, to look for the tiny Nissen huts in which they lived, the pubs where they drank and the English people who befriended them.

But while the pubs and some of the houses, people often are still here, traces of most of the bases have disappeared. With the end of the war, most of the heavy bomber bases in East Anglia—as well as the smaller fighter bases—were deactivated, their buildings torn down, their runways and perimeter tracks ripped up.



Dear Mr. Stern:

Although this article is not about the 385th Bombardment Group, perhaps you may find this article from the "Los Angeles Times" of interest. Obviously there is more left at the Lavenham base than at Elmswell where we found only the runways and one building among the wheat fields when we were there in 1980. Sincerely yours,

Elvah and Dorothy Brown

David Alston gazes down the main runway on his farm, where U.S. fighter planes once landed.

## Back to Farmland

In most cases, what had once been a bustling home for dozens of B-17 Flying Fortresses or B-24 Liberator bombers reverted to farmland. Local memories faded and many of the bases were all but forgotten.

But over the more than 40 years since the young Americans took over their farm, the Alstons have not forgotten. Through careful attention and diligent caretaking, they have preserved many of the base buildings such as they were during the war years.

Throughout the 500-acre farm are weathered Nissen huts, small sheds where parachutes once were packed, officers' barracks and a stone structure that housed a Link trainer. And standing silent by the still-intact main runway is the base control tower, empty but well-preserved.

Because of the Alstons' efforts, the former home of the 487th Bomb Group is considered the best-preserved heavy bomber base in England.

"of that time," Beth said. "And we feel we have a duty to take care of it, to keep the memories alive. Perhaps duty sounds too strong, it's really a pleasure, not a hardship at all. We want the place to look civilized when the boys come back to see it. We don't want them to be ashamed of it."

The Alstons' house, they said, was one of two gathering places for many of the airmen. The other was the Swan, a pub on High Street in Lavenham. The ancient, half-timbered Swan is a Trusthouse Forte betel now, but the pub within remains, as do dozens of signatures and drawings on its wall made by base crewmen.

The most direct route to the base, remembered David Alston, was a rough-hewn path through the bracken on the base that came to be known among crewmen as the Burma Road.

"It was overgrown with thorn bushes and brambles and all that effort of thing, and it would always be littered with fallen bicycles," Alston said. "The men would say, 'I can find my way to the Swan, but (I'll be damned, if I can find my way back again.'"

The Alstons' memories for faces and airplanes have remained sharp. They smile when they recall bombers named "Mountain Time" and "Lumbering Lizzie" and an airman who returned from a trip to Scotland with a respectably authentic Scots accent.

"We started calling him MacSchwartz," David said.

## They Get Letters

Correspondence from the former crewmen, especially before a veterans' group, "We have very happy memories of the war."

And the visits to the base near Lavenham—and other base sites in various stages of preservation throughout East Anglia—may be on the increase.

"A lot of them (veterans) have dreamed about it and some of them have saved for half their lives to come here," said Ron MacKay, a member of Friends of the Eighth, a British historical organization for those with a particular interest in the U.S. Eighth Air Force of World War II.

MacKay and many of his colleagues offer returning veterans information and help in organizing visits. Often the veterans and members of Friends of the Eighth (will collaborate with the Eighth Air Force Historical Society, (P.O. Box 3556, Hollywood, Fla. 33083) in helping to organize tours or individual visits.

"We're approached pretty regularly for help," said MacKay. "We brought over 400 people in 1976. These days, more of them may be coming because I think it's a stage of their lives they're reaching.

## Still 'Our Boys'

"Many of them are retired and that gives them a chance to indulge themselves in a trip like this. Sometimes they come back to a place that isn't there anymore, but I've hardly ever seen one who isn't glad he came. It was such a (strong bond for them."

Though the airmen who return may be in their 60s or 70s, said Beth, "we still think of them as our boys. (The Alstons are in their 70s) a trip to England and the warmest, warmest feelings for them. And for them the visit can be very emotional, something that maybe they've looked forward to since they left back in the 1940s.

■ "It's marvelous for the boys to be able to come back and see us, people who can talk to them about what happened here—to just sit here in the house by the fire and talk."

# Letters to the Editor

Dear Ed:

After many years of waiting, I finally obtained a 385th Group History a short time ago. It brought back many memories - some good and some sad; but for the most part, it was nice to relive in my mind this period in our lives.

My reason for writing is that I would like to take issue with three things in the book.

First: On the memorial page the name Lewis P. Weigel appears. This is in error - it should read:

Linus P. Weigel #16127121  
He was a S/Sgt and- tail-gunner on the "Dragon Lady".  
His home was in Chicago, Ill.  
He froze to death on the mission to Tuton, Germany on February 20, 1944 - the enclosed travel orders will verify name and serial number.

Second: It was stated that we had no training for new crews - not true. I was with the 551st Bomb Squadron from late August 1943 until early April 1945. I finished my tour of missions on March 9, 1944. The last year of my stay involved with crew training. We had the following:

- 1 - Orientation lectures
- 2 - Aircraft ID
- 3 - Skeet-trap and the nose of a scrapped B-17 fitted with shotguns for navigators and bombardiers.
- 4 - Turret training
- 5 - Gun Camera - Air to air firing and evaluation
- 6 - Orientation film "How to dress for high altitude"

Third: You will find information on the enlisted men's council of Great Ashfield - there were eight of us involved. Enclosed are newspaper clippings, pictures and travel orders to verify all of the above.

I hope this can be of value to our Group Historian.

I look forward to each issue of the newsletter - thank you for such a great job.

Sincerely,

Charles F. McCarty  
512 Dutchess Turnpike, Poughkeepsie, NY 12603-1104

Dear Ed:

I received your letter of 23 April and have since been in contact with Fireman Kananowicz in New York. In our conversation he stated that he talked to his father about attending the reunion. I am sure that once in the company of his old war buddies, all will be fine.

Before I forget, there is one main reason for this letter and that is to pass along to you, so you can relay the information to your membership, the way to obtain the history of an aircraft or a particular base that they might have been stationed on. They should write to the United States Air Force Historical Research Center and specify as much information about the request as possible, ie., aircraft tail number, unit of assignment, dates, location, etc. The address should look like this:

USAFHRC  
Maxwell AFB, AL 361 12-6678

It will be a long time in coming as many-many World War II people are requesting information such as this now that most of them are in retirement.

I am glad to read that you were an Administrative Officer, that is what I am. Admin. Now if you think that we did nothing, when the USAF celebrates their 40th in September of this year, the USAF Band in Washington is presently recording an album with music all about the USAF. One of the songs will be about admin. At first I thought, "How cruel!" But then the man explained that the song will be sung to a country and western beat and the words depict how nothing gets done without admin. Well that should make both you and me feel a lot better!

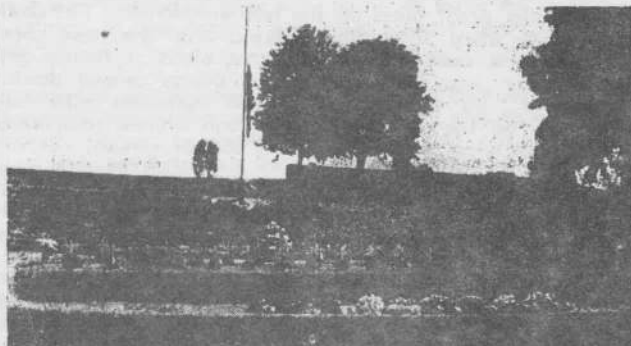
I sent in my order for a 385th book to Mr. John Pettenger, in Laurel, Florida. He wrote back and gave me the correct serial number of the Dorsal Queen but still I wrote to Mister McLachlan requesting that he trust me with the negative to the DQ. He also sent me the address of Capt. Jones, the AC of the DQ and I am glad that he is still alive, possibly Capt. Jones and Lt. K. can get together at the reunion.

I might add that in my last letter I made mention of USAF humor, well I said Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, in today's USAF, we call it "Right-Pittyful".

Sincerely,

Allen Holtman, MSgt, USAF  
308 Miracle Strip Pkwy, 32A, Ft Walton Bh, FL 32548

Y



The new American military cemetery at Münsingen, which was opened recently and a memorial tablet unveiled

## U.S. Memorial day at Münsingen

### New cemetery opened

Memorial Day, combined with a ceremony dedicating the new American military cemetery at Münsingen, was observed on May 30. In attendance were: the American Military Attaché, his Staff, a delegation of American internees and escapees, members of the Legation at Berne, the Consuls General of Zurich and Basel, Americans living in Berne and vicinity, Brigadier Cartwright, the British military Attaché, and Colonel du Pasquier of the Swiss Internment Service, accompanied by Lieut. Picot of the same Service.

After invocation by Dr. Strong, the Honorable Leland Harrison, the American Minister, addressed the gathering including in his talk Lincoln's Gettysburg address.

A memorial tablet dedicated by the internees and escapees was then unveiled by Major Strader, Senior American Air Officer in Switzerland. It is of copper and bears the same inscription as the plaques at the National Cemetery in Arlington:

•Enshrined forever in the hearts of their countrymen—  
Here lie our gallant dead.\*

General Legge then called the roll of the dead. At each name, a comrade of the dead man stepped from the ranks of the internees drawn up in formation at the outside edge of the cemetery and responded: «Died for his country.\*

This was repeated 32 times since the dead from Ragaz, Baar, and Basel had previously been transferred to the new Münsingen Cemetery.

Taps then followed and then the Stars and Stripes, which had been\* at half mast, was raised to the top.



(Letters to Editor cont.)

Dear Ed:

Got my first issue of the newsletter . . . enjoyed it . . . especially enjoyed the last photo in Ian McLachlan's letter. We left Bangor on New Year's Day '44, but, of course, left our Bird at Preswick. Started flying missions in early Feb. Finally got our own bird - a G model in April I think. She had no name. Sumner Schobel, our co-pilot, suggested we name her BIG GAS BIRD. . . run the first two words together for proper pronunciation. Before joining the Air Force, he helped his dad run the shadiest business in Cleveland by painting names on awnings they made. So he painted the letters while I designed and painted the bird.

She was not particularly lucky, we were #2 off the group (and wing) lead on the group's infamous 100th mission. . . and had 5 13mm holes after it was over. One sneaked between the main fuel cells in our port wing. Another restricted elevator travel. I bounced that landing, but no one really cared. Took a 30mm thru the nose and another that nicked the inside edge of Schumaker's gunsight (he was our bombardier). It exited just under my foot, tearing a fist size hole. I was flying right seat that day.

On the April 24 mission to Fredrickshafen, we get a chunk of flak thru her #1 oil cooler. With fighter activity at the time, I elected to keep her turning until the oil pressure started to drop. A bad decision. The engine almost came to a stop, then wound up to peg the tac as Tesla made a diving turn off target. The vibration and noise was unbelievable. It cracked the bullet proof glass on the left windscreen. The cowl flew off when the engine siezed and the nose cone melted and came off in white hot blobs. I finally got smart, or lead leveled off, and things calmed down. However, we topped out at 130 indicated with full military on the other three. . . and slipped from wing to combat wing fly just below the bomber stream.

Some of the crew wanted to head for Switzerland. . . but I was not about to sit and be bored to death for the rest of that war. Hell, little did I know I'd live to fight in two more.

We ran out of bombers near the French Coast and picked up a lone P-38 that left us at the coast. Landed at one of the emergency fields with little fuel left (10 hours 10 min. flying time). Sgt. Christy and his crew had her flying a day or so later. I am sending a crew picture.



Front row: - Myself, Schobel, Floyd Schumaker, Bob Graves, our navigator was not present. Back row - Quinn RT. Waste; Lawson, Radio Op., Dombrowski, Left waist; Moreno, Ball turret; Rogus, Tail gun; Kuznik, Top turret.



I have the Bird's left "Horn Button" . Inside is scratched "31638 (tail #) F/O W. C. King, 7 Ferring Group, Great Falls, Mont. 2-4-43. I scratched, tour completed: 3 June '44.

If you send me McLachlan's address, I will send another set of prints to him.

Karl Dittman •  
1520 W. Walnut, Elrend, OK 73036.

P.S. I believe the Big Gas Bird ended up crash landing on the continent - and was cannibalized for parts.



(Letters to Editor cont.)

Dear Editor Stern:

Mike Pappas, in the April 87 Newsletter, referred to the Top Secret mission to supply the French Underground, F.F.I., ("French Special", 25 June 1944) and said we were tracked by a B-17 "off to our right. It had a triangle marking on its tail, and was flown by a Luftwaffe crew that was just being nosey".

Since the Luftwaffe did have some captured B-17's, which occasionally "flew escort" (?), Mike's conclusions seems logical, but that was not the case in this instance.

My version:

At the time, I was copilot on Ernest G. Baumann's crew and we were flying the last slot in the High (Right) Squadron. The "Phantom" B-17 tried to join us as we departed England, cruising in from the right.

"What in the Hell?" We had been briefed that this was a Top Secret mission; each of us had been personally identified, and briefing officers included English and French. This was a first effort of its kind. Therefore, we concluded that the poor lost soul who was trying to tack onto us had to be loaded with bombs! That's what B-17's were supposed to be loaded with, except we were going to drop arms and supplies into the waiting arms of the French Maquis - and this sonovabitch was going to rain on everybody's parade. What to do?

Ernie suggested I tell Herbie Hill, our tail gunner, to signal him to not join our formation.

I told Ernie, "Even if the dumb bastard could read code, Herbie didn't know how to send it". Instead, I reported the situation to the Group Leader to solve the problem. In the meantime, I told Herbie to use the red lens on his Aldis Lamp and to keep flashing it to the intruder. It was then that he pulled out to the right of the formation and flew "escort(?)".

It was a strange sight to see three smoke bombs that marked the drop zone in the meadow-----right in the Nazi's backyard, in Grenoble, France. Just like it was supposed to be. So quiet and peaceful. A Frenchman drove a cart down the empty road. We passed overhead and made a 360 turn to the right. Coming back around for the drop, Ernie dropped us down in a show of friendship and we waved back to some ladies who were waving at us at our ; altitude from a second story window at the edge of the village. After which we climbed up and joined our Squadron (I think) at about 300 feet, to allow room for the parachutes on the cannisters to open.

What a wonder to behold! The peaceful meadow had changed to what looked like an Oklahoma Land Run! A giant Easter Egg Hunt! Where'd all those F.F.I. — Frenchmen come from? Grandmas and all the kids were swarming out of the woods to the left of the meadow. Some cars had appeared from nowhere. The cart had pulled off the road into the meadow amidst the chaos.

The first Squadron had cut loose their load of cannisters in a spectacular para-drop, except some of the chutes didn't open, or were torn loose, and the eight foot (approx.) silver cannisters, doing about 150 mph became missies, slamming into the earth amidst the multitude of gatherers. I hope my prayer that nobody get hurt was answered. I remain curious.

We left the meadow in the valley, climbing westward, then turned northward to head home when Herbie called, "Bandits Six O'clock High! Very High. . . . Six of 'em. F W's . 7 . They're coming' down!!! They're gonna take the Squadron behind us . . . Gee — Sus — Christ!"

"What happened?" I asked. "You wouldn't believe it," Herbie replied, "All six of those turkeys dove through the Squadron an' ran outa altitude. There wasn't room for 'em to pull up."

What a surprise that must have been for the Luftwaffe, catching a B-17 Grouo at low level. It was a first and last for six of Goering's bunch.

About 90 days later, after my 35 missions, I was flying radar navigation students out of Alcoubury, and took some time to visit Clarence Haiiday, a 43 I Classmate, who was stationed near Bedford in a B-17 Bomb Group (now forgotten) that had the triangle on the tail. I met his buddies and we exchanged war stories, when I mentioned the "French Special" and the phantom Seventeen a friend of his said, "That was me and proceeded with - — the rest of the story.

His version:

The standing order was, "If you can't find your Group on Assembly, join some Group, but don't bring your bombs back." So it was that he joined our Group heading out of the Channel.

"My God", he said, "I couldn't believe it. Instead of continuing to climb for bombing altitude, the Group started DOWN over France. I couldn't understand it, but I was damned if they were going to leave me alone up there in the enemy sky. So I went down with them."

He reported getting our red light, which confused him even more and pulled away to "see what was going to happen". Then he explained that two of our ships joined him to force him away from the drop zone and that they were replaced by two others, so they could then go in and drop supplies.

Quite a coincidence I thought. And now I'm wondering about the possibility of another coincidence. Is Mike Pappas the one who went to the Pasadena Playhouse? I know that Ted Stell of the 385th and I both attended the Playhouse, and that should be plenty. Then Ted and I both worked at KTTV in Hollywood.

Well, as a young man told me, "Yours was a unique generation."

Truman Smith  
5000 E Prospect, Ponca City, OK 74604

---

#### OBITUARIES

Marvin Benesh  
George J. McGarry  
Clarence Cragoe



(Letters to Editor cont.)

Dear Ed:

REMEMBRANCES OF LIBERATION AT STALAC LUFT ONE, MAY 2, 1945.

As survivors of Luft One, how many of you recall the highlights of those first days of relative freedom under Red Army control? I recorded several of those events in my diary, which was toilet paper. (We always seemed to have an abundance of that stuff, but unfortunately, not a great deal of normal use for it.) I can only refer to those exciting and emotional events which I witnessed in my own compound. North Three. What each of you might have experienced in your respective compounds will differ from mine. But no one can deny the lasting effect of those times upon the more than ten thousand skinny guys, ranging from staff sergeants to bird colonels, yelling and cheering themselves hoarse.

I will enumerate only three of those events which lent the most memorable impact. Undoubtedly, there were many more that took place beyond my limited scope, and I hope that my offering will incite a response from those of you who shared similar feelings and experiences in your own areas.

About a day after the Russians arrived, three kriegies had somehow "liberated" a horse and wagon and an upright piano from a nearby farmhouse. As they drove into our compound, two of them sat in the driver's seat, while the third sat at the piano, banging out "Alexander's Ragtime Band." Soon, hundreds of cheering men crowded around, following the wagon across the yard. Many wept openly at the nostalgic sound of that old American tune, played in fast tempo by a deliriously happy man whose eyes were flooded with tears. That incident will always remain as my most unforgettable memory of liberation.

Later that afternoon, we heard an uproar outside, and rushed out to see what else is happening. Here comes a Luftwaffe soldier — a clerk, I believe, from the Kommandant's office, pushing a wooden wheel barrow containing his personal belongings. Apparently, he hid out when his colleagues evacuated the camp the night before. No doubt he felt safer with us than face an uncertain fate should the Russians pick them up. Many joined the red-faced, grinning fellow, ribbing him good-naturedly with exaggerated "Heil Hitlers". I heard that Col. Gabreski, Senior Allied Officer of North Three, sheltered him from the Russians and disguised him in some of our clothing. That Jerry was one of the luckiest Germans alive in the Russian zone.

Then how about later in the evening. Someone had hooked up the German radio to the loud speakers on the fences, and they managed to pick up the BBC from London. The Armed Forces Radio was on the air then, and they were featuring a recording of the "Lucky Strike Hit Parade". Naturally, those new songs and their titles were unfamiliar to us, but it was America! As each number was announced and its position on the Parade, we'd scream ourselves into delirium, as if we were already home free! The pandemonium of tin cups banging on tables and thousands of feet stomping on the wooden floors, combined with shouting, laughing voices was absolutely deafening.

It's impossible to describe the scene when the announcer finally came to Number One on the Parade: "DON'T FENCE ME IN"!!

So now, you poor "Lucky Bastards," don't you wish you could have been there to share in that memorable occasion?

(On the other hand — come to think of it.....)

Sincerely, and have fun

Mike Pappas

Here are some pictures, courtesy of Wm. French, 1 447th Bomb Gp (Rattle'sden) that should be of interest to all who remember Stowmarket.



Church in Stowmarket that some may have attended.



Stowmarket RR Station in 1987 - Looks exactly like it did in 1943, inside and out.



Stowmarket in 1987. Take the cars away, and it looks about the same, a few more shops maybe.

(Letters to Editor cont.)

Dear Ed:

The Newsletter for June, '87 activated a few old brain cells and caused me to get to a printing machine and add to the confusion. On the next last page was a letter from Ian McLachlan, with pictures and questions, and hope to shed some light:

To:

That ship was called "OLD WAR HORSE", the Old is up higher. The man was the crew chief and I am enclosing another picture of him that some may recall. The crew was:

Pilot, Clarence Lamping, Vernonia, Ore.  
Co-pilot, ? Wozniak, Penn.  
Navigator, W.W. Dutt, Penn.  
KIA July/August 44  
Bombardier, ? Slaper, Buffalo, NY  
MIA Berlin 10/6/44  
Engineer, Dave Maxwell, Lake City, Florida  
Radio, Ike Blair, Detroit Michigan  
Ball Turret, Frank Mays, Lynchburg, VA  
Waist, Marvin Wolverton, Quincy, Ill  
MIA Berlin 10/6/44 - Saw him in Texas, 9/45  
Tail, Jdnior Cooper, Jamestown, Ohio

We were 549th Squadron flew our first mission 6/4/44.

Three:

I believe our crew flew BIG GAS BIRD a few times, but can't recall when; I know I had the BIG GAS BIRD insignia painted on my A-2 jacket when I came back in December of 44.

All of the above home towns (except mine) were where these fellows lived in 1944.

Enclosed find: Picture of Chaplain Jim Kincannon, Unknown crew chief, Skophammer and Wiche, and the enlisted crew. The fellow with the question mark didn't fly with us although he was in the crew for a short time.

I started TOGGALIERING (remember?) some time in the summer of 44 and remember the Maquis drops and the RED FLAK very well; also the ship that was shot down almost over the base, but thought that was shortly after D Day.

Great job on the newsletter!!!

Very truly yours;

Jim Skophammer  
666 Orange Street, Daly City, CA 94014



Chaplain Jim



Crew Chief 589th



The enlisted crew.



Jim "Duke" Skophammer & Norm Wiche

Dear Ed:

This is in response to Ian McLachlan's query about the "Big Gas Bird" pictured in the June, '87 issue of the Newsletter. I flew my first six missions as tail gunner in the "Bird". Bob Harrington was the pilot. In late July, '44, they were hit hard over Munster, but managed to reach Holland before bailing out. This happened while I was hospitalized back at the base. Since I never saw them again, I can only assume they went down in our assigned ship, the "Big Gas Bird."

She was an early "G" model and quite war-weary when we took her over in June, '44. Her coloring was the obsolete olive drab, with numerous shiny aluminum patches like band-aids over flak wounds. As tail gunner, I couldn't help noticing that so many of those patches were clustered around my position! And wouldn't you know it — on our first mission, which was to hit the German ammo and fuel dump at Le Bourget airdrome outside Paris, we took a sizeable flak shot in the rudder. The gash was thirteen inches long and about three inches wide — fourteen inches over my head! (No, I didn't measure it in flight,) but from then on, I shamelessly wore my flak jacket and helmet.

I was something of a nose artist then, and had painted our A-2 jackets with our bomber's name and several bombs indicating missions flown so far. You may remember Anne Hayward, another nose artist and Group mascot. She couldn't always remember my name, and addressed me as "Gas Bird", modestly preferring not to pronounce the full title. My fondest memories of Great Ashfield have always included that twenty year-old English lady. (Bless you, Anne, wherever you are.)

I'm sorry, Ian, that I'm not able to be of more help in your research. But good luck anyway, and I admire your efforts.

Sincerely,

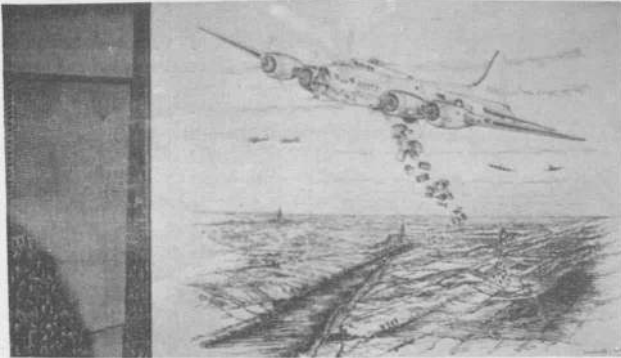
Mike Pappas

(Letters to Editor cont.)

Dear Ed Stern:

I thought it may be of interest so I am enclosing a photo which I hope you can print. It shows L. to R. ,

Reg Wright of England, Bob Valliere, and Ian McLachlan. We had met at Thetford, England and Ian came with some of his collection of photographs. Wright is also a member of the 385th BCMA and together with our wives we had an enjoyable meetina.



I had attended my 2nd annual reunion of the Manna Association (RAF) in Lincoln. This association is made up of those RAF veterans who had been invited to Holland in 1985 in celebration of the 40th anniversary of the food drop missions (see newsletter, July 1985). As a result of my being in Holland in 1985 for those festivities, I have been corresponding with several Dutch families, one of which invited me over to visit with them. So we did and had a wonderful stay in Vlaardingen, near Rotterdam, with the Assenbergs. They were there when food was dropped and although we did not drop on Vlaardingen, Herman & Truus Assenberg had a local artist make a drawing of the "Stork Club" dropping the parcels of food and presented it to me. I enclose a photo showing the sketch. A letter of gratitude was also given to me by Truus who was so thankful for the food missions. I had a meeting with the burgomaster of Vlaardingen to discuss possible 1990 reunions in Holland.



I have had as house guests, the Assenbergs, who, because of our correspondence and meeting in Holland, have come to visit the States for the first time.

The RAF Manna Association will be held again as it is each year in late April, in Lincoln, England.

Sincerely,

Bob Valliere

The 385th B.G.

Dear Sir:

I would very much appreciate your help please, into obtaining a list of 385th BC serial number, a/c names and pilots who flew the crafts.

I draw "Nose Arts", and have in my collection, over 500, but in many details, they are incomplete due to lack of serial numbers or which B.G. etc, a list from your group would help me, if you would be so kind to please forward a list, I would be most grateful.

I am also a member of the 390th BG museum at Parham, last Sunday whilst there, I spoke to a young American serviceman, whose Grandfather flew with your Group during the war, Robert Hicky 1942. I've been trying to find out for him if his grandfather's a/c had a name or "Nose Art", but as my records are not very good on the 385th at present, I was unable to help him.

Yours faithfully

Barbara Pleasance  
Ash Side, Wattisfield Road,  
Thelnetham, Diss, Norfolk, IP22 INN, England

Editors Note: If anyone can offer help, please write her.

#### HELP WANTED

"Conducting research for book concerning several 385th Bomb Groups aircraft mishaps and would like to hear from crew members and others who can describe events leading up to and including the accident. Planes are:

- 30 Nov. 1943 - B17F-42-30096  
Crashed on Assembling - Wormingford
- 13 Feb. 1944 - B17-42-39901  
Crashed landed RAF Detling
- 1 MAy 1944 - B17-42-31237  
Crashed at Mendlesham
- 15 June 1944 - B17-42-97818  
Exploded at Great Ashfield
- 15 July 1944 - B17-42-39912  
Crash landed 1 mile "E" Woodbridge
- 6 Aug. 1944 - B017-42-37528  
Crash landed - Thelnetham
- 13 Sept. 1944 - B17-42-97940  
Crash landed on T/O at Kentford
- 1 Nov. 1944 - B-17-42-31764  
Crashed - Exploded at Easton
- 21 Jan. 1945 - B17-42-102431  
Crashed-exploded at Bradwell near  
Coggles hall.

Russell J. Zorn  
1561 Meadow Drive, Alden, NY 14004



(Letters to Editor cont.)

Dear Ian:

I was very interested in your article in the January 385th Newsletter about the B-17 which blew up in the hardstand on 15 June 1944. I happened to be the co-pilot in the B-17 which you mentioned as sitting on the perimeter directly in front of hardstand 34, which was set afire when the plane blew up.

I thought you might like some more facts about that morning.

As I mentioned, I was the co-pilot in the plane directly in front of the hardstand. We were taxiing out for take-off in a long line of B-17's. I happened to glance out my right hand window, as we were stopped at the moment, and I noticed a flickering light in the cockpit of the plane in that hardstand.

I immediately realized it was flames causing that light. Wes Brashear was the pilot of my plane (and Earl Cole the bombardier). I punched Wes and pointed out the flames to him. He told me to contact the tower on a radio frequency other than the one being used by all the operational planes. When I contacted the tower, apparently I was the first one that gave the alarm. Whoever I spoke to asked which hardstand was involved. Unfortunately, we were a very new crew. This would have been my fourth mission, and we just weren't familiar with the base.

I told the tower approximately how far we were away from the take off runway, and I said there was a maintenance hanger not too far ahead of us. The tower asked if we could taxi away from that spot. Unfortunately, the planes ahead of us were not moving, and to turn off the concrete taxiway would have put us in mud up to our axles.

So they said to abandon our ship, which we did with alacrity! We headed away from the burning plane, directly out across the field.

We got at least a minute or two before the big explosion, at which time we all hit the deck. Two members of my crew fell about 6 feet apart, and a big piece of an engine fell right between them. As I mentioned, my call to the tower was not made on the operational frequency, so everybody who hadn't taken off had no idea what had occurred.

We headed back to our plane after the big blast, and the planes in front of us apparently taxied on for take off. The planes behind my aircraft couldn't go forward as our plane blocked the perimeter. So they all made a 180 on the perimeter and somehow got out to the runway and took off.

Getting back to my plane, when we got back to it, as you mentioned, smoke and fire were coming out of the stabilizers and aileron. About this time, Col. Van Devanter came screaming up in a jeep and seeing me in a flying suit, asked if I was a member of the crew. I said I was and he asked if I was one of the pilots. Again I said yes, and he told me to get into the plane and taxi it away. I looked at him and gulped a few times, since the plane was fully loaded and was on fire. As I was about to make my reluctant way into the plane, apparently someone convinced Col. Van it wouldn't do any good, and I was greatly relieved when he told me to forget it.

I thought the navigator on the other plane was hit in the back by a still turning propellor blade and broke his back, but I have no personal knowledge of the extent of his injuries.

Anyhow, I thought you might like to hear the story from the guy who turned in the alarm.

Sincerely,

Hugh Andrew

---

Dear Ian:

About the aircraft, "Alexander's Ragtime Band" in the October issue.

The plane was named after the pilot - Captain Alexander and his crew. I don't remember everyone's name but Alexander was the pilot, Joe Caruso was the Radio Operator, Woodrow Bacchetti a waist gunner, Eddie Waters the Ball Turret gunner, Arkey Huber the Tail Gunner and I believe the Top Turret and Engineer was Leo Bellevue. This was the original crew. The crew completed its 25 missions and was rotated home back to the States with the exception of Eddie Waters who was shot down while flying as Ball Turret gunner with another crew. Orville Brown was the Crew Chief and John Alcock was his assistant. Both Eddie Waters and Arkey Huber attends all of the reunions and you may have received a letter from him ... this plane was one of the 548th.

Now about the mid-air collision between Keeley's and Yannello's crews . . . they were from the 551st . . . "The Raunchy Wolf" was Yannello's plane and the Tail Gunner was John Adams^ the only survivor of that mid-air.

John Adams was from Pittsburgh and we used to travel to the 385th reunions together. John Adams always wished he had a picture of "The Raunchy Wolf" before it went down. John died in 1975 on the operating table while having heart by-pass surgery, a relatively safe operation here in Pittsburgh. . . but I guess it was just his time to go after being the lone survivor of a mid-air. Even his wife said that God gave John those added 30 years.

Sincerely,

Marty Girson.


---

PREZ SEZ:

To members of the 385th Bombardment Group Memorial Association.

Thank you very much for the confidence that you have placed in me as president of our organization. I think that this is one of the best groups of people that I have ever been associated with. I am proud of each and every one of you. I am proud to have been a member of the original 385th Bomb Groyp, to have flown and fought with you. I am just as proud to be a member of the 385th Bomb Group Association. I promise you that I will do my best to do a good job.

Sincerely yours.

  
Earl L. Cole

Hello Ed:

Enclosed is a couple more articles I forgot I had when I sent that last batch. They didn't come out to good, but am sure some of the "Group" would like to read them.

Best regards,

Marv Girson

worried me most was the way it was causing us to burn up fuel. I didn't like the idea of the wet Mediterranean, so I gave the ship to Harry and went back to see what could be done about it. One of the crew tried to lasso the raft from the waist gun window. Another tried to shoot it off. I even let them chop holes in the fuselage to get at it. But it seemed to be fused there. Had to give it up.

We were all alone, about thirty miles off the coast of Corsica. We thought that we might run into some enemy activity around there, but there wasn't any. There was nothing for it but to sit and wait for the red lights to start blinking on our panel board. It didn't take long. One engine sputtered and went dead. The gasoline situation was very black. I suppose it was only a matter of seconds before the next engine went out, though we were sweating it out for ages. Then the third died. I had everybody get into the radio compartment. Then the fourth engine quit.

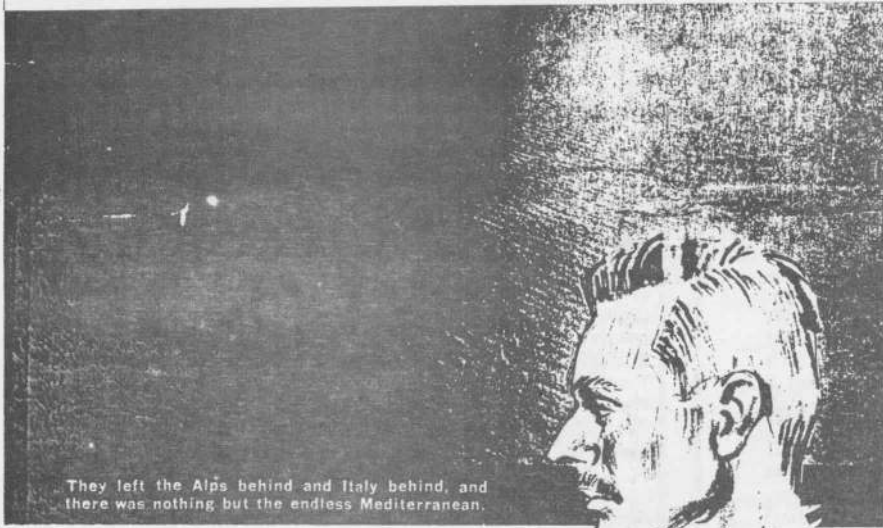
WE got down all right. The water was very smooth. We got the remaining life raft afloat and piled on everything we thought we'd need. Of course, there were ten of us and those dinghies only hold five. There wasn't much question about our having to take turns, five inside and five hanging on outside. That was all right, though, as long as we could watch our ship. For forty-five minutes we paddled around, just watching the "Portia." Noone had anything to say. She was a swell plane. We had her in the States, you know, and she'd done seven missions over here. She seemed to hate to leave us as much as we hated to leave her. I never thought I'd get sentimental that way, but I guess I did.

It got dark after the "Portia" went down. When it gets dark you get lonely. The Mediterranean got awfully cold. A dirty night it was, too. I hope I never have to spend another one like it. I don't remember just when it happened, but we all became aware at the same moment of a dark and menacing object coining for us. I think we all secretly thought that this was it. No one dared mention sharks, but it was in the back of every one's mind. You could tell it in the way a man looked over his shoulder.

Funny thing about it was that the object turned out to be somebody's flying jacket floating under the water. After we found that out there [unclear] to be n [unclear] of H\*«w'S'F»nintrnef. [unclear] so shot that I think some of us reallV hoped that something would happen. That's the mObd we were in all night. We just hung on and watched.

We all felt better when the sun came up. We even laughed a little at the way we looked. The dinghy, you see, was completely submerged and there we were—ten men apparently sitting on the water. Everything went along all right until about eISv6n o'clock, and then the little automatic transmitter went out. We all started to pray. Harry Coomes got out his rosary and we prayed.

A B-26 spotted us that afternoon. The way it flew around made us feel as though we were coming into a new life completely. The B-26 stayed right over us until one of those British Air-Sea Rescue launches came out to pick us up. Those boys are grand guys. They even took off their own clothes to get us warm after they had hauled us out of the water. We had been in the water for twenty-one hours.



They left the Alps behind and Italy behind, and there was nothing but the endless Mediterranean.

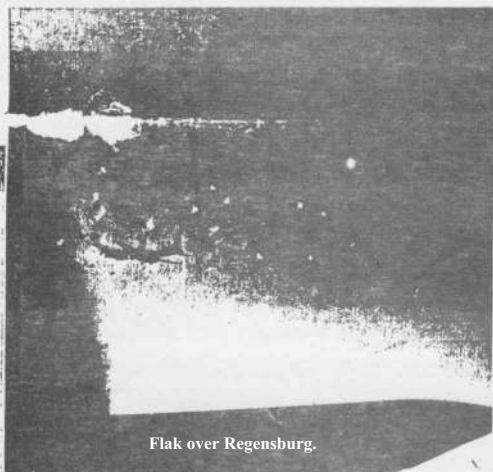


Lt. John Kealey, Jr.

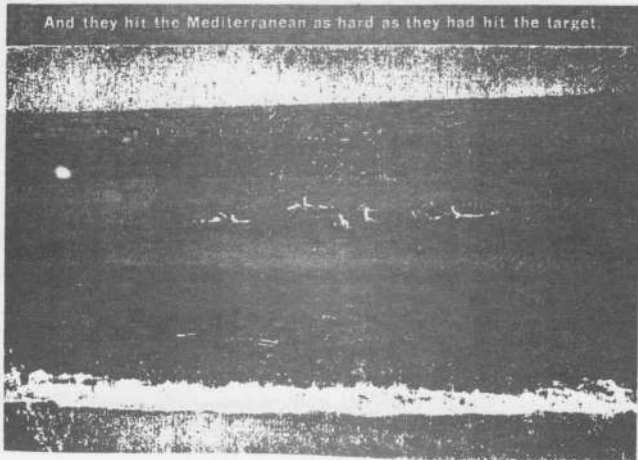
### After The Bombs Went Down

WHEN we finally got past the Alps our last bit of oxygen gave out, so I let her down to 13,000 feet. I figured we could stay at that level all right, so I turned the ship over to Harry Coomes, the co-pilot. A blasted life raft had become entangled with the vertical stabilizer, but I still thought we could get rid of it. The blasted thing had been shot from its housing and had wrapped itself around our tail surfaces. That meant a lot of trouble. We did everything we could to dislodge it, but nothing seemed to work. The ship vibrated like the devil and we had to drop out of formation. Of course, the whole German Air Force jumped us then. We shot down four of them.

The raft kept flapping around so much that I was afraid it would tear-off the whole tail, but what



Flak over Regensburg.



And they hit the Mediterranean as hard as they had hit the target.



T/Sgt. Charlton Browning, who took the pictures, got around.

385 Points Sep.



**S/Sgt. A. R. Bartholomew**  
27, Ball Turret Gunner.

Born in Quoboc and a Canadian\* citixon.  
Entered U. S. Army a yaar ago.

**Over The Target**

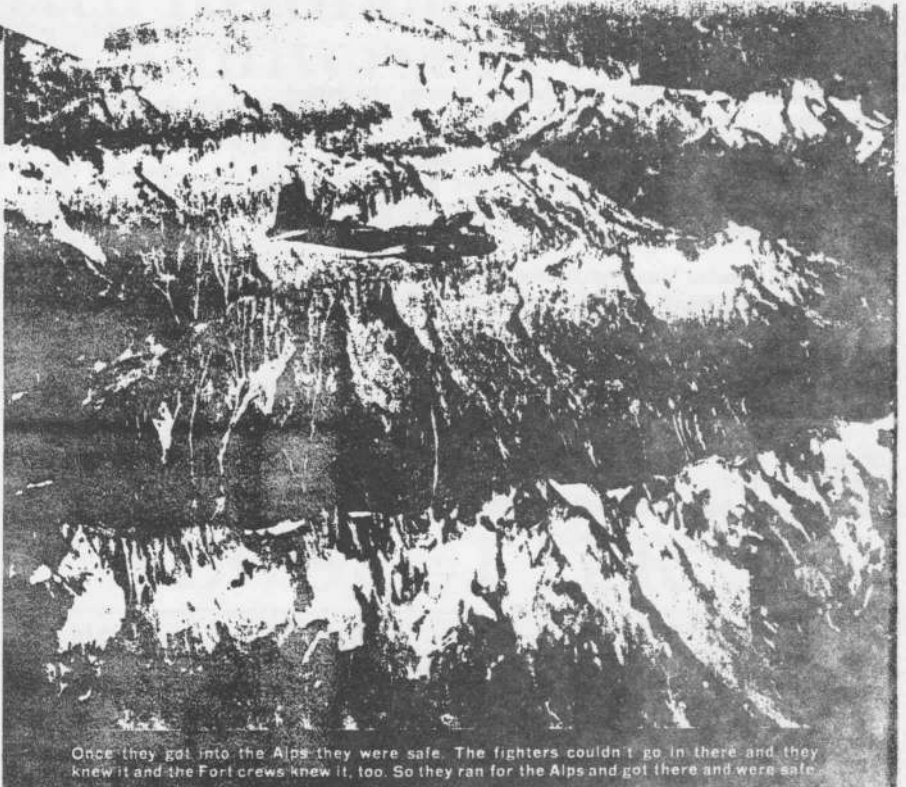
**W**HILE we were over the target the German fighters seemed to be desperate. They must have been crying mad to break up our formation, but they couldn't do it. They did everything they could think of to drive us away from that factory. They even followed us part of the way to the Alps. You can see the mountains from Regensburg. We could see them all the time we were over the target. That made it worse, in a way. The Germans couldn't follow us in there and we knew that once we got there we'd be safe. The Germans knew it, too. We had to sweat it out all the harder. >with QIwJcx.V.PfI thone beautiful. XMi uimimms. I nail it feven worse, though. I fell out the damned door.

Some of the other gunners kid me about that door. They say I must have been nudging the ship along towards the mountains by pushing against the back of my seat. That's where the door is, you know. I think every one was trying to nudge the ship. You could tell how important getting to the Alps was by listening to all the praying that was going on over the interphone. It sounded like a flying church. I fell out the door just after we dropped our bombs.

You see, I was firing at an FW that was trying to come in behind us and so I was facing the tail of the ship. It was lucky for me that I was. The back of the seat suddenly let go, just like when somebody sneaks up behind you and pushes your chair back off balance when you've been sitting on the back legs. I didn't hear any noise. I just fell backwards.

The wind smacked me hard like a board right

\*Bartholomew received his final papers just as he landed.



Once they got into the Alps they were safe. The fighters couldn't go in there and they knew it and the Fort crews knew it, too. So they ran for the Alps and got there and were safe.

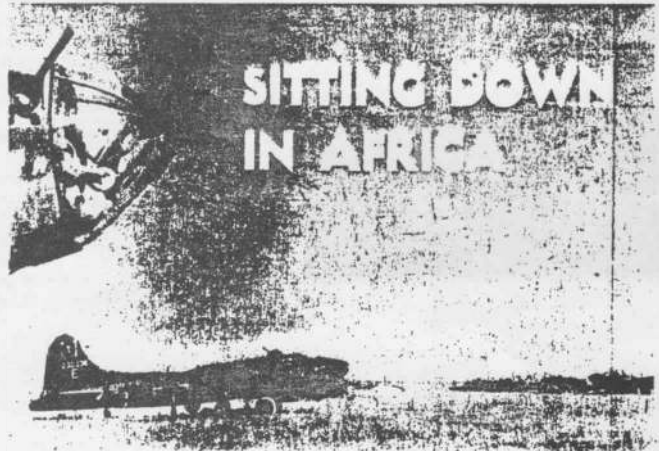
across the back, and sort of supported me while I grabbed at something to hold on to. I had to grope for a few seconds before I could catch on, and then the wind helped me pull myself back up into the turret. It sure was lucky I was facing the way I was. And the funny thing is that I didn't realize at the time that I had actually fallen out of the ship, with only my right foot holding me in. You know, in the ball turret you operate a lot of things with pedals, and I guess my foot got caught in them in some way. That was all that kept me from leaving the plane. Later on, when I remembered that I didn't have my safety belt buckled, my stomach felt a little funny. You don't wear a parachute there because there isn't room.

I GOT back into the ship> I couldn't stay in the turret any more so I thought perhaps I could help at one of the other guns. I called the pilot on the interphone and asked him if it would be all right. He said yes. I started forward through the bomb bay, but I noticed that our radio operator got up to go back in the ball turret. That's the way we usually work. He relieves me whenever I come up. I yelled at him not to go down there but he kept right on going. Then I realized that he couldn't hear me

because he had his oxygen mask on and wasn't hooked up to the interphone, either. He was just about to step down there when I grabbed his fur collar and pulled him back. He saw what I meant when I pointed down.

It's funny, but when things are happening you don't seem to thipk about them. It's after they're over that you begin to see them clearly. When I got up front I remembered everything I saw. From then on, I remember seeing a German plane explode when it went down in one of those dark forests, and how it spattered pieces of flame all over the trees. The trees seemed to catch fire. Perhaps there was a forest fire after that.

I remember the last German pilot. He wouldn't give up, even after his engine had started to smoke and he knew he couldn't get back to his base. He made four attacks on us before he started to fall. We were pretty far into the mountains by that time. He was the last fighter we saw. Somebody said he must have lived in the town square of Hamburg to want to get even with us so badly. We all watched him go down. I remember thinking the smoke sort of hung in the air, just like after that last big skyrocket in a Labor Day fireworks show. Everything grew awfully quiet after that.



In Africa they serviced their planes, dressed not quite to kill.



Dear Ed:

I just received the June newsletter. I read the letters from Allen P. Holtman with great interest.

The "Dorsal Queen" was the ship I picked up at Great Falls, Montana when our crew finished training there. I flew that ship across the Atlantic through two fronts and thunderstorms.

Benny Kananowicz was the Bombadier. I want to get in contact with him. I had been told he had been killed in an auto accident.

I hope to see you in Dayton,

Sincerely,

Donald E. Jones  
551st Squadron  
6759 SW 52nd Ave., Portland, OR 97219

Dear Ed:

Thanks for publishing my letter in the April newsletter - and thanks to all the guys who replied. I've now managed to identify the original owner of my A2 jacket thanks to Edward Metcalf from Brookline, Mass., who was ball turret gunner in the same crew.

"C. W. Pearson 11111757" was T/Sgt. Carl William Pearson Jr. from Rhode Island, and a radioman on a 550th squadron B-17 from March - June 1944. He was nicknamed "Whitey" on account of his hair. Unfortunately, it seems Carl died in 1979 at the relatively young age of 56. I'd be very interested to hear anything at all about Carl and his service career from anyone who can remember him.

Thanks again,

Paul Roberts  
Flat 2, 2 Hilton Road, Leeds LS8 4HB  
England

---

**385<sup>TH</sup> B G M A**

ED STERN, EDITOR  
P.O. Box 2187  
Fargo, ND 58108

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
Fargo, North Dakota  
Permit No. 1761

R 87  
Joseph B. Koscinski  
2514 Sunset Dr.  
Beloit, WI 53511