

HARDLIFE HERALD

Newsletter of the 385th Bombardment Group
Association



548th



549th

550th



551st



1942 - 1945 Great Ashfield - Suffolk, England Station 155 - The Mighty Eighth

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385TH BGA REUNION - SAN ANTONIO, TX - OCTOBER 2012

HARDLIFE HERALD

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

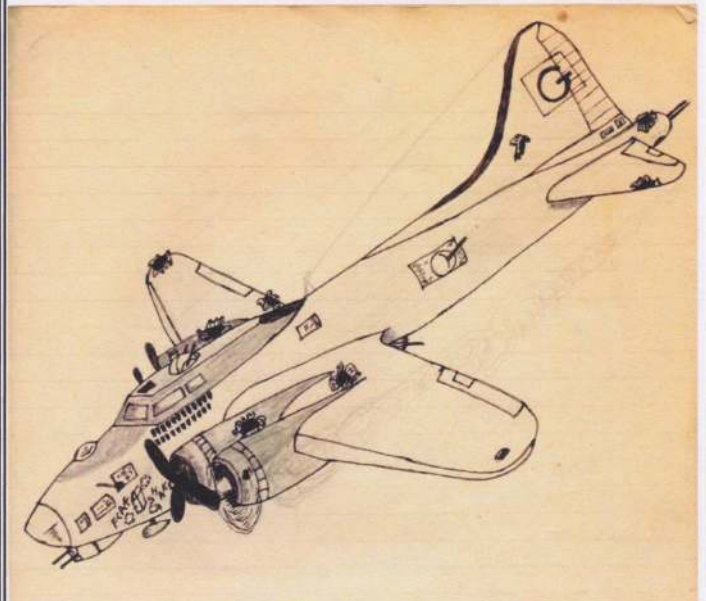
PAGE

- 02....Officers and Directors / Cover Credits
03....President's Message / Letter From the Editor
04....Heavenly Body Research - Ian McLachlan
07....September 26,1944 References
08....7he Horror Story - Charles W. Lundsberg
10.. ..1.to The Soup - Paul Rhen
12.. ..Ditching in the Channel - Albert Audette
14.. ..Pin-Up - "Stool Pidgeon"
15.. .. Calendars
16.. ..Featured Pin-Up Artist - Joyce Ballantyne
17.. .."There I was..." - Bob Stevens Cartoons
18.. ..Book Review - Gil Cohen: Aviation Artist
20.. ..The Sea Shall Not Have Them - McLachlan
24.. ..385.h BGA Taps
26.. ..Letters
27.. ..En Route to Detroit

Front Cover: "The Ditching" copyright 2000 Gil Cohen

The back cover is a tribute based on the below drawing
found in my Grandfather's POW journal.

Interesting to note the damage depcets that of Reluctant
Lady, but he chose to keep the nose art and name of his
plane.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As the San Antonio reunion approaches, I am encouraged to hear that the 385th has the highest number of registrations submitted as of mid-August. At the same time, I am a bit discouraged to note that we achieved that distinction with a total of 12 registrations. I know many wait until later to make their reservations to be more certain of their ability to attend and I am sure that we will see a last minute surge to boost our numbers further, but this raises a question that I would like to put out to the membership. Of course, with the inexorable passage of time, more and more Mighty Eighth veterans are no longer with us and many of those that are cannot easily travel to attend our reunions. Some among the 8th Air Force Historical Society leadership have pushed to schedule reunions in the summer months. This schedule is intended to facilitate attendance by second and third generation members, many of whom have children in school and job commitments that make travel and reunion attendance outside of the summer months more difficult for them. Unfortunately, summer months are often more hot and humid, presenting difficulties for older veterans to participate in reunion activities. (Remember Savannah a few years ago with 105 degree temps? It was tough for some just to walk from the air conditioned hotel to the air conditioned bus, never mind getting off the bus to tour somewhere.) Accordingly, some of us, including me, have pushed back and advocated for Fall reunions to make them more comfortable for our members. I am beginning to reconsider. If, indeed, summer reunions will encourage "Nextgen" participation (and I am not yet convinced of the case for this), perhaps we should support such a schedule. I invite all who read this to express your opinion on this question. Do you support a summer reunion schedule if it will facilitate increased "Nextgen" reunion attendance? Please let me know your thoughts on this. My contact information is listed inside the front page of this newsletter. You may email, phone or "snail mail" your opinion on this important issue.

In the meantime, I hope to see you soon in San Antonio!

Tom Gagnon

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

"So why a back to back issue?" One might ask. Well, I found myself in a pretty neat situation having several stories that all tied together.

In this issue you will find two tales of B-17s ditching in the English Channel, one of which is the story of "Heavenly Body" and the other from our very own Past President, Al Audette. You will also find detailed stories of the two planes the 385th lost on September 26, 1944 - a rarity, I think to have accounts of both instances. Again we have "Heavenly Body" and the other "Reluctant Lady." The latter is the follow-up story of my Grandfather's from the March Hardlife Herald. On Page 07 I've created a map based on reports to show where these 2 planes were last seen (both in control) and in the formation chart you can almost depict how the flak cut across the formation taking out these two aligned planes.

Please take note of the beautiful oil painting on the front cover which was commissioned by Dr. Thomas Greider, son of "Heavenly Body's" Navigator, Herb Greider to commemorate the Sept. 26th mission. Gil Cohen created this masterpiece and in this issue you will find a short interview with Mr. Cohen and a review of his book "Gil Cohen: Aviation Artist"

Sometimes things just fall into place.

It's amazing for me to think that most crews did not (on purpose) get to know other crews, yet perhaps familiar names were heard across the radio as they flew within feet of each other trusting in their comrades. So here we are today by the Grace of God getting to know about these men and their families so many years later. Better late than never! Hoping to see you at the reunion.

-Charles Lundsberg

HEAVENLY BODY RESEARCH

COMPILED BY IAN MCLACHLAN

As historians for the 385th, Bill Varnedoe and I get a steady stream of correspondence relating to the Group's history and, even though Bill has officially retired, he still makes a significant contribution. One email to Bill in March 2012 came from Paul Rhen who is the brother-in-law of 93-year-old 385th veteran Herb Greider. Paul is researching Herb's combat career and was keen to locate any RAF or other records relating to the ditching of "Heavenly Body" on 26th September, 1944. Herb's recollections appeared in the February 2003 issue but he wanted to know more about the rescue so Bill copied me with the request and I contacted a chum of mine, Sid Harvey, who has spent over 20 years researching ASR incidents in the ETO with a focus on the 5th Emergency Rescue Squadron so, thanks to a compilation from Sid, we can add further background to Gil Cohen's dramatic rendition of events that day.

"Heavenly Body" was so named by Edwin Perry's crew after the famous and very gorgeous film star Hedy Lamarr who had starred in a 1944 romantic comedy of that name. She had given the Perry crew her blessing and sent two magnificent, 8"x10" autographed pictures, one of which formed the basis for a nose-art adorning their brand new

B-17. They flew her on 11 missions then, while they were, "Living it up" in London on a 48 hour pass, "Heavenly Body" was assigned to 2/Lt Charles Lamont and crew, including Herb Greider, for a mission to Bremen. This was Lamont's 35th and final mission and, per SOP - Standard Operational Procedure - Lamont would have a new pilot flying his first operation alongside Lamont as mentor. Today, the co-pilot was 2/Lt Rudolfo Gutierrez flying his first operation on Mission 189 for the Group. En-route to the target, the B-17 was hit by flak and lost power in number four engine. After notifying the Group Leader, Lamont was advised to abort and jettison the bombs into the North Sea. A B-17 could fly on three engines and, as Herb later recalled, they'd previously returned all the way from a target in Czechoslovakia on 3 engines so the situation was uncomfortable but not alarming. The bombs were duly jettisoned and, for some miles, they were comforted by a P-51 until fuel reserves forced the, "little friend" to depart. From his navigator's station on the port side, Herb observed the continental coastline and navigation was untroubled although one worrying feature was a headwind which Herb calculated was exceeding 100 mph. The stormy conditions were evidenced

by an excited turbulence of white-capped waves on the sea far below, a distinctly uninviting prospect for anyone forced to ditch. As if on cue, matters now worsened when another of the engines lost power and Lamont immediately broadcast a "Mayday". Sid Harvey's research shows that the call was logged at 1530 hours with the stricken Fortress noted as crossing out of the enemy coast north of Calais, France on a heading north-west. Lamont reported one engine out and another windmilling, creating additional drag because feathering efforts had proved unsuccessful. ASR Control, call-sign Colgate, immediately radioed the nearest 5th ERS duo, Captain William Traupe, Teamwork 50, and his partner, Lt Preston Collins, Teamwork 51. Throttles forward, the pair raced to rendezvous with the ailing bomber and located it seventeen minutes later, descending steadily in its valiant struggle to get home.

On board the B-17, Herb had calculated that the 100 mph headwind and the loss of two engines had reduced their groundspeed to a mere 50 mph with the strain on their remaining engines increasing the risk of further malfunction. At 1605 hours, a third engine faltered and the bomber's altitude dwindled even faster. Traupe transmitted a crash call and received a prompt response from Royal Naval Lieuten-

ant Marshall, skipper of Rescue Marine Launch RML515. Pounding through heavy seas as fast as she could, RML was still about 15 minutes away.

Inside "Heavenly Body", the crew adopted their ditching stations with five men in the radio compartment, backs braced against the bulkhead and two lying on the floor, feet braced on the forward bulkhead. A problem facing both pilots was the lack of shoulder harnesses to prevent them being thrown violently forward on impact. With waves topping some 10-20 feet, a smooth ditching was impossible but both pilots positioned the bomber's attitude to absorb as much of the impact over as wide a surface area as possible. They must have known their own chances were slim but courageously sought to give their comrades the best chance of survival.

Flying alongside, the two anguished P-47 pilots could be no more than spectators in the unfolding drama as the B-17 slid remorselessly towards its watery denouement. With very little height left, it seemed the bomber's final engine failed and the P-47 pilots saw it gliding the last few feet with the pilots still maintaining a slightly nose-up attitude. Then it slammed into the waves and broke apart. Herb later recalled, "It was almost like hitting a wall. The plane broke open at the radio room. I was lying on the floor

and was immediately under water. Instead of crawling out at the overhead hatch, we walked on the wing. The plane hit so hard the pilots never had a chance".

Circling overhead, Traupe and Collins were relieved to see survivors spilling out from broken open fuselage and walking on the wing of the rapidly-sinking bomber. In 30 seconds it had vanished. Of the two five-man dinghies carried in compartments atop the fuselage, only the starboard one appeared and five of the survivors clambered aboard. Bombardier, 2/Lt Roy F Buck was unable to reach the dinghy but grasped an oxygen bottle drifting amidst the debris to help keep him afloat. Herb had been the last to leave just before the B-17 sank and was also unable to reach the dinghy and, with a Mae West only partially inflated, his chances of survival swiftly diminished. With heavy seas constantly slapping into his face, Herb was unable to breathe. Within a few minutes he had ingested so much seawater, he knew he was drowning and soon lost consciousness.

The P-47 pilots watched both Herb and Buck drifting away from the dinghy and both looked lifeless as the RML hove into view sixteen minutes after the ditching. Scanning the sea's rise and fall. Able Seaman Tompkins saw Herb, either unconscious or dead but clearly in no condition to help himself.

Disregarding his own safety, Tompkins dived overboard, swimming hard to reach Herb and keep his head above water as the RML manoeuvred for a pick up. With seaman and survivor safely on board, medics immediately started resuscitation procedures on Herb - it would be 45 minutes before he coughed and spluttered into consciousness. Meanwhile, poor Buck had drifted further away and was invisible to those on the RML but accurate smoke marking from one of the P-47s guided them to the hapless bombardier and he, too, was soon receiving treatment as the RML completed recovery of those in the dinghy: T/ Sgts Albert M Detert; Gilbert H Woerner; S/Sgts Robert R Hoyman; Richard E Rolander and Lawrence X Crilly Jr. Another vessel now appeared, RAF High Speed Launch HSL 2707, and conducted a search for the missing pilots as the HSL headed shorewards with the survivors aboard. Neither pilot was found and, given the lack of seat harness, it is unlikely they survived the initial impact.

The loss to the 385th would have been even greater had it not been for the superb airmanship of the two 5th ERS pilots and the excellent coordination within the ASR services.

3BD(A-2)23-5-Z4
amend. 385 2-6-4Z.

CONFIDENTIAL

INFOXTION SHEET

ditched

(To be filled in by Navigator from information received from crew and turned in at S-2 desk as soon as possible after landing.)

A/C No. Squadron Pilot's Name L-A VU.tVL T^C Date PC

9.44

-JMBING RESULTS:

Time of place bombed Time Bombs Away Altitude

Bombs on Target - No. Size Type

Fusing;

If no Target bombed what disposition made of bombs

What damage* if any is seen of Eject

Enemy aircraft type, altitude, direction, etc. It present

ENEMY

HO < D TYPES . UNUSUAL TACTICS

DID THEY

TIME POSITION OF I.C. OR PEAPHS

ATTACK?

ditched

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out of 97. Yarmouth.

Broke in two

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* P ^> P. <a_o~u+ta- →

OU, ' V C P V

cjp.

r

Bombardier with held on a battle.

Guided - AVCX-X, ** after floating for 1/4 hr.

Good A & < . P. 470. A.S.R. - Good ditching procedure

e/ Ms got into dinghy. P 470's dropt dye.

tVK^ ' ' O amb last out of A.O.

CLAIMS FOR ENEMY A/C - Ho. Destroyed

Ho. Damaged.

FLAK; (Enter only flak that interfered with this mission.)

LOCATION	DENSITY	ACCURATE (Yes/No)	TYPE (CF, PC, FB, PB)

SEPTEMBER 26, 1944 REFERENCES

GROUP FOR KLTICIN FLOWIN

"B"
HIGH 4"0"

4T'LOCT

u¹-*

C.A. GUILLOT

//. w. >/. *
al/rd. AJ. W////A.V H. BELL

UNDSBERG

GRUNDLER

Missing

7^J?T -7> ^s\

370

LAMONT

ANDREAS

C FLIGHT k_S.

BUCK

SWIFT

B FLIGHT

Vc^S-(/6Cj(

jY/u,v £> V'

336

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RISE 336
JENSEN
tatu xf

fOTre^

871

W.YJI <A/#74i

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THE HORROR STORY

From the POW Journal of 1st Lt. Charles W. Lundsberg

11-17 #42-107035 - SEPTEMBER 26, 1944

CHARLES W. LUNDSBERG - PILOT

J.M. ELLZEY - CO-PILOT

ROBERT E. SMALLMAN - NAVIGATOR

JOHN W. WISE - BOMBARDIER

COSMO RABASCO - ENGINEER / TOP TURRET GUNNER

JACK M. WALKER - ASS'T ENGINEER / WAIST GUNNER

FORREST O. SAMPSON - RADIO OPERATOR

WILLIAM R. SIZER - ASS'T RADIO/BALL TURRET GUNNER

EDWARD D. MORGAN - TAIL GUNNER

ALEXANDER J. BEHR - PHOTOGRAPHER

"On a certain day not so much later we went thru the same procedure and were soon on the way to the target. Our target for that sad day was a tank factory at Bremen. The weather was C.A.V.U and all was well with the crew as we had just come back from a weeks rest. "J" had a bad touch of sinus and as we were flying in No. 3 position I flew from the co-pilots seat and did all the flying. All went well until we hit the I.P. and then our troubles began. I had a funny feeling that we were not going to finish that * mission at that point. "J"s sinus trouble did not cause me to think about it at all as we were all flying that day with bad colds. As we turned on the target our bomb bay doors would not open. John tried every means he knew to get them open but they just wouldn't open. As I looked ahead I saw the familiar wall of Flak coming towards us but all of it was right at our altitude and that is what caused me to feel strange. We were bombing that day at the

highest altitude we had ever been at. About half way to the target from the IP the bomb bay doors came open and thus relieved us of another worry. As we entered the Flak area we took a direct hit in the tail. It jarred the ship pretty badly and when the tail gunner didn't answer my call I thought he had been either wounded or killed. One of the waist gunners looked back there and saw him moving around but the dust and smoke was so thick he couldn't tell how badly he was hurt. I later found out that the shell had come up between his knees, knocked half his seat away, taken both handles off his guns, cut his oxygen and interphone and tore his Flak suit to shreds but didn't scratch him. That is probably as close as Morgan will ever come to death and come out alive. While I was finding out about him "bombs went away" and we started away from the target. Things then began to happen! Before any of us had time to think we took 3 or 4 more direct

hits and each one took out an engine. We began to drop rapidly and I knew we would never get back to England. I told Bob to plot a course to Sweden and while we were going down we looked over our instruments and headed towards Sweden. We found we were in almost identical situation as the last mission. No. 2 was dead and likewise 3 and 4. No 3 engine had been hit in the gas tank and gas was pouring into the ship. We had now dropped down to about 10,000 ft and gas in the radio room was nearing the electrical units of the turbos. About this time No 1 engine decided it had had enough and ran away. We could not stop it by normal methods and so as a final resort we used the feathering button. The oil line was either damaged or frozen as it blew up when we tried this. That settled everything and I knew we were going to be detained for the duration. I circled and set up the AFCE and then gave the "Bail out" order. When they had gone "J" got up and went and I followed soon after. There is an amusing incident about my bail out but I will not put that in writing. Thus ended our last flight which threw us into a prison camp for the duration.

Fini."

NOTES

C.A.V.U. = CLEAR AND VISIBILITY UNLIMITED

I.P. = INITIAL POINT

A.F.C.E. = AUTOMATIC FLIGHT CONTROL EQUIPMENT

Folder

" " MISSING A/C REPORT

(See reverse side for A/C to be reported)

26 Sept 1944

A/C NO. 3BD (17-7-44) Squadron J 148 Group J* As Date A/C Missing 26 Sept 1944

Number of previous raids with j names and ratings of crew.

z/U

23 pHot² A. urtpS BERC ? CMw/ft H/ z/ B. Tifz^{S/SGT} H/£2A & ER,

23 CopGy J/M LLZ 18 T.T. RA R^SCOj (WW-----)

i- T> ' J

23 NavV MMI HAM ^/977 E. /?T. G. S/SGT MORGAN, £7)a/##£> A

/ Bomb^&iee. AW ri. 22 WG. S/SGT Vt^<f/c JACK AS.

Z/ RadOp^HM^ FORREST Q. JG. 1 L.W.

Observer _____ Unit _____ Base _____

Targets Assigned Zz Pt P f g/ Attacked by Group L o o 3 REME V Attacked by this A/C 1 > A/ 3 REME

A/C was lost to: (use X) Position of A/C in Group (Circle number)

Fighters Rocket _____

AA Fire X Collis. _____ Position of Group in formation:

Air Bomb _____ Other _____

Combinations _____

	1				
		2 6	5 3		2
	3				
		4			4
	6	5		6	5

A/C sustained initial damage at (co-or) Timo //yf No. of chutes £

A/C was last seen at (co-or) - 5345-0832 1619 200 Altitude M Hdg 315°

(Give a complete narrative, citing all known facts not covered in above answers, using reverse side if necessary. If weather was a contributing factor, describe and briefly. Bear in mind that a ship which "blow up" cannot continue to fly that > on explosion aboard an A/C is not necessarily a ship "blown up").

a/c was hit in #2 gas tanks by flak over target. On route out, all gas was lost from tanks and #2 engine was feathered. Pilot called on VHF and said he was going to head for land and abandon ship. a/c last seen under control, losing altitude.

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INTO THE SOUP

BY

PAUL RIEN

An Ancient Aviator once said, "Flying is not inherently dangerous, however, it is very unforgiving of inattention".

Try to imagine fifteen hundred or more large four motored airplanes taking off and flying in a group formation with each aircraft separated from its nearest neighbor by a mere fifty feet in a pea-soup fog or clouds so thick that a pilot can barely see the wing tip of aircraft beside him. He must now fly nine hundred or more miles in and out of clouds, most of it over enemy territory, bomb the target, and return without running into the aircraft near him. Remember, these aircraft were flown by boys in their late teens or early twenties. The "Old Man" of a crew may have reached the very great age of twenty Seven.

Each airplane was loaded with 2,700 gallons of highly flammable hi-octane gasoline, 6,000 pounds of high explosive bombs, and 10 living human beings. When someone's in-attention or lack of training caused two of these machines to fly together the result was a terrible explosion and twenty lives suddenly snuffed out.

How could they fly in such conditions?

The answer lay in training, electronic navigation aids (beacons called Buncher and Splasher), extreme vigilance, and luck. Many days, when not on a mission, the pilots either flew a practice flight or spent time in the Link trainer (a ground training device used to practice instrument flying condition).

Each aircraft would start its take-off roll thirty seconds after the preceding aircraft started down the runway. From the instant the wheels left the runway the pilot and co-pilot had to work together to precisely control the aircrafts speed, rate of climb, altitude, and direction while scanning the instrument panel and trying to remain

alert of another aircraft that might suddenly appear out of the mist. In fog and clouds this is a very trying thing to do. Usually the pilot did the instrument scanning and flew the aircraft while the co-pilot did the outside scanning. It is very disorienting to switch from outside to inside scan or the other way around.

The navigator had to know exactly where they were and where the Buncher beacon that they were to fly to was. Both the pilots and the navigator had a dial indicator (Radio Compass) which pointed to the beacon.

Scattered across East Anglia were some forty airbases with twenty seven to thirty bombers each. A Buncher beacon (non-directional radio beacon, or NDB), each with it's peculiar radio frequency and three letter Morse code identifier signal, was assigned to each airfield and located so that the aircraft from that field could fly to it and fly a rectangular holding pattern around it without crossing the flight path of aircraft from other fields. Hopefully the aircraft would "breakout on top" (above the clouds) before or while circling in a climb around the Buncher. This did not always happen and there were missions that required flying some of the mission in and out of the clouds. When breakout above the clouds didn't happen the mission was aborted. It became very dangerous reversing the procedure to get home, particularly if someone didn't get the abort order. Before leaving the Buncher the group would form into the Group formation. The lead aircraft would shoot flares to identify itself for the other aircraft to form on, according to their briefed positions, in the Group box.

Once the aircraft left the Buncher holding pattern on its way to the target a visual sight on the aircraft nearest to you was the only way to hold formation and both pilot and co-pilot coordination was required to keep track of the nearest wingtip and scan

the flight instruments. Your seat-of-the-pants instincts about up and down could be fatal as they very often lied to you.

After climbing to the desired altitude over their respective Buncher beacons the individual groups would assemble and go to the Wing Group lead to form into the "bomber stream" before proceeding in-rout to the target.

The group lead navigator would lead the group directly over a preselected Splasher beacons (there were four) on a precise heading which put the group on course for the mission. The rout to the target was never straight. The rout was chosen to keep the planes away from enemy territory as long as possible and the course was a zigzag chosen to avoid, as much as possible, known FLAK concentrations and to confuse the enemy trackers.

The amazing thing in all of this was the ability of America, in a little over two short years, to organize and produce, in addition to all of her other war effort, the bases, training aircraft, and thousands of bombers and to train these young men to be able to do this. Remember that, at the same time, she was doing the same thing for the thousands of medium and light bomber crews and fighter pilots. Most of these pilots and co-pilots had an average of three hundred flight hours when they were thrown into combat.

In discussions with Lt. Greider about the Buncher procedure he said that the common practice was for the aircraft follow one after the other to the Buncher and to continue to climb to twelve thousand feet where they would form into Group formation and circle the Buncher until they departed to form the Wing group.

On his missions he said that they had always broken out above the clouds before they reached twelve thousand feet.

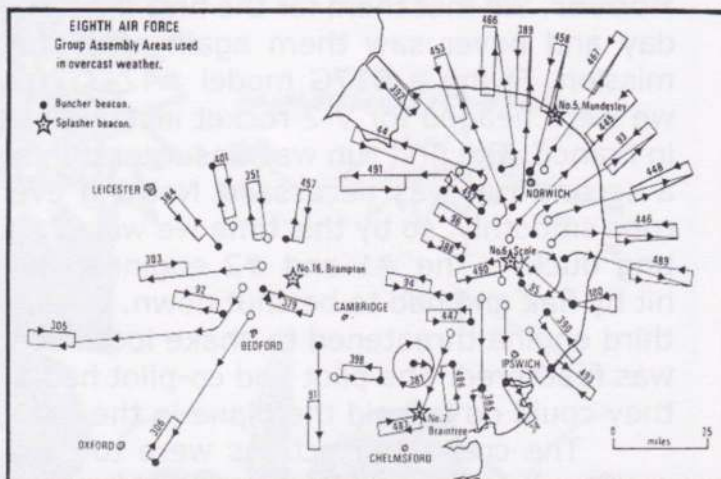
After forming the Wing Group the Wing Lead would have to fit the Wing into the Bomber Stream which may require fly-

ing an "S" pattern to slow down and fit into their proper slot. This required considerable skill on the part of the Lead Pilot and Navigator.

After departure they would climb, if they had not already reached mission altitude, over the channel in-rout to mission altitude, usually twenty five or twenty seven thousand feet, which they would reach before they crossed the Belgian or Dutch coast.

On the return to base if the area was cloud covered (socked-in) the bombers would fly, by section, peel off, and turn inbound to their Buncher beacons (with 15 second aircraft separation) and from there fly a precise heading, rate of descent, and airspeed and hopefully "break out" under the clouds with the runway in sight. The operating SOP for the group provided instructions for DAY, NIGHT, and INSTRUMENT (Buncher) landings.

Herb said that he can't remember returning to Great Ashfield from a mission during that summer of 1944 when the weather was anything but VFR (Visual Flight Rules which allowed a DAY landing procedure). Bill Varnedoe also confirmed that his aircraft never went to a Buncher upon return.



1 3as\$mgbc-jm
2 'od-ngton
3 Kimbolton
4 Cottesmore
5 Shipdham
6 Hatfield
7 Harwick
8 Haicsworth
9 Sriutenon weain
10 Kneib shall
11 F'armlingham

12 Bury St Edmunds
13 Ooxted
14 Ridgewell
15 Hnrsnam St Fais'
16 Rallesdcn
17 Debden
18 Mnutl Faim
19 Mannngtrec
20 'Jeopham Green
21 North Pckenljam
22 Sudbury

23 Hshjhm
24 Hornsby
27 Bawdsev
28 Leisinn
29 Granon Underwovd
30 Glatton
31 Old Buckenham
32 Kings Gilch
33 Harrington
35 AlHeoridgo

Paul Rhen is the brother-in-law of Lt. Herb Greider, Navigator, who flew 35 combat missions with the 548th Bomb Squadron from June to September 1944.

DITCHING IN THE CHANNEL

BY

ALBERT E. AUDETTE

February 28, 1944

To describe combat to all of you, who have many experiences of your own, seems a little pompous on my part, but let me relate my experience of "ditching in the, Channel".

Because our plane was heavily damaged during a mission and unable to fly all the way back to our base in England a choice had to be made. By parachuting, you risked the capture by German soldiers or execution by civilians so ditching the plane in the English Channel seemed to be the best bet for getting back to England. The choice was given to us by the "Skipper", as we called the pilot, **Harlan Inglis**. We chose to stay with our plane, since many crews had already been picked up by the efficient and ever alert British Air-Sea Rescue.

Here in lies the story of our ditching experience. The Skipper was breaking in a new co-pilot and a new bombardier, both on their first mission. The co-pilot was **Norman Gunn** and the bombardier was **Harry Hoover**. We met them for the first time that day and never saw them again after that mission. Flying a B17G model #42-31203, we were headed for V-2 rocket installations in France. The first run was unsuccessful, so a second run was necessary. Nothing ever runs smoothly, so by this time we were "sitting ducks". The #1 and #2 engines were hit by flak and had to be shut down. Later, a third engine threatened to shake loose so it was feathered. The pilot and co-pilot had all they could do to hold the plane in the air.

The crews instructions were to lighten the plane. So we threw everything over board that was not nailed down, including parachutes. Dumping that last item solidified our decision to go with the plane as far as we could.

Leaving the French coast at 8500 feet, we struggled back toward England. During this time the Engineer, **Robert Boever**, was

busy making sure the remaining engine was getting sufficient fuel. The navigator, **Melvin Reed**, continually feed me our flight location and, as radio operator, I forwarded this information to Air-Sea Rescue.

Our position was received so well, that the Skipper saw an Air-Sea Rescue launch already heading towards us near Dungeness. We were in the water no longer than ten minutes, it was February 28, 1944, so had it been any longer and hypothermia would have set in. We thank the Skipper for the ditching procedure that we practiced before every mission. Our best time on the ground was twelve seconds, with only the six enlisted men participating (waist gunners: **Harold Cleary** and **John Danko**, tail gunner: **Robert Pellman**, ball turret: **Peter Rizkovsky**, top turret/engineer: **Robert Boever**, and radio gunner: **Albert Audette**). In the actual ditching procedure eight men are positioned in the radio compartment. The bombardier and navigator are against the wall, while all others have their backs against each others folded knees.

The plane hit the water at 120 mph. The front of the aircraft struck first and the impact caused the tail section snapped off. Water poured into the fuselage through the bomb bay doors and the camera well. The force of the crash sent the enlisted men's weight against both the navigator and the bombardier. Being his first mission and unsure of the ditching position, the bombardier in some way had the wind knocked out of him. Almost immediately, we were knee deep in water and wasted no time in scrambling out the radio hatch.

The navigator and I lifted the bombardier out of the hatch to the others already on board the rafts that had been released from their compartment. As the last one to leave the plane, I accidentally walked off the wing into very cold, salty water and had to swim for the raft, though not far away.

By the time they lifted me into the raft the Air-Sea Rescue launch was already beside us. They lifted me to the ladder first and my hands almost froze to the rung. We were given warm clothing and something warm to drink (probably tea and rum?).

It was the roughest boat ride I had ever been on, my head hit the bulkhead several times, as the channel was extremely rough that day. We were held overnight at a British base hospital and then flown back to our base at Great Ashfield the next day.

On March 2, 1944 we were sent to the 8th Air Force Rest Home in Walhampton, Lymington, Hampshire, for approximately seven days. It turned out to be a very fortunate time for our crew, since on our return we learned that our group had been on successive missions to Berlin, with many crews lost during that time. Our crew's first mission after returning to our group was also to Berlin. We then realized what those other "missed" missions were like.

Our goal of: "Twenty five missions and then home" was shattered because at the time of our twenty third mission a complete tour was raised to a mandatory thirty missions. Therefore, we made thirty missions and then were held down until our release to the States for further assignments.



Returned from Ditching

Back Row: Boever, Danko, Pelman, Audette

Front Row: Cleary, Rizkovsky



The Rescuers of Inglis Crew during a reunion (Above) and the Launch that retrieved them. (Below)

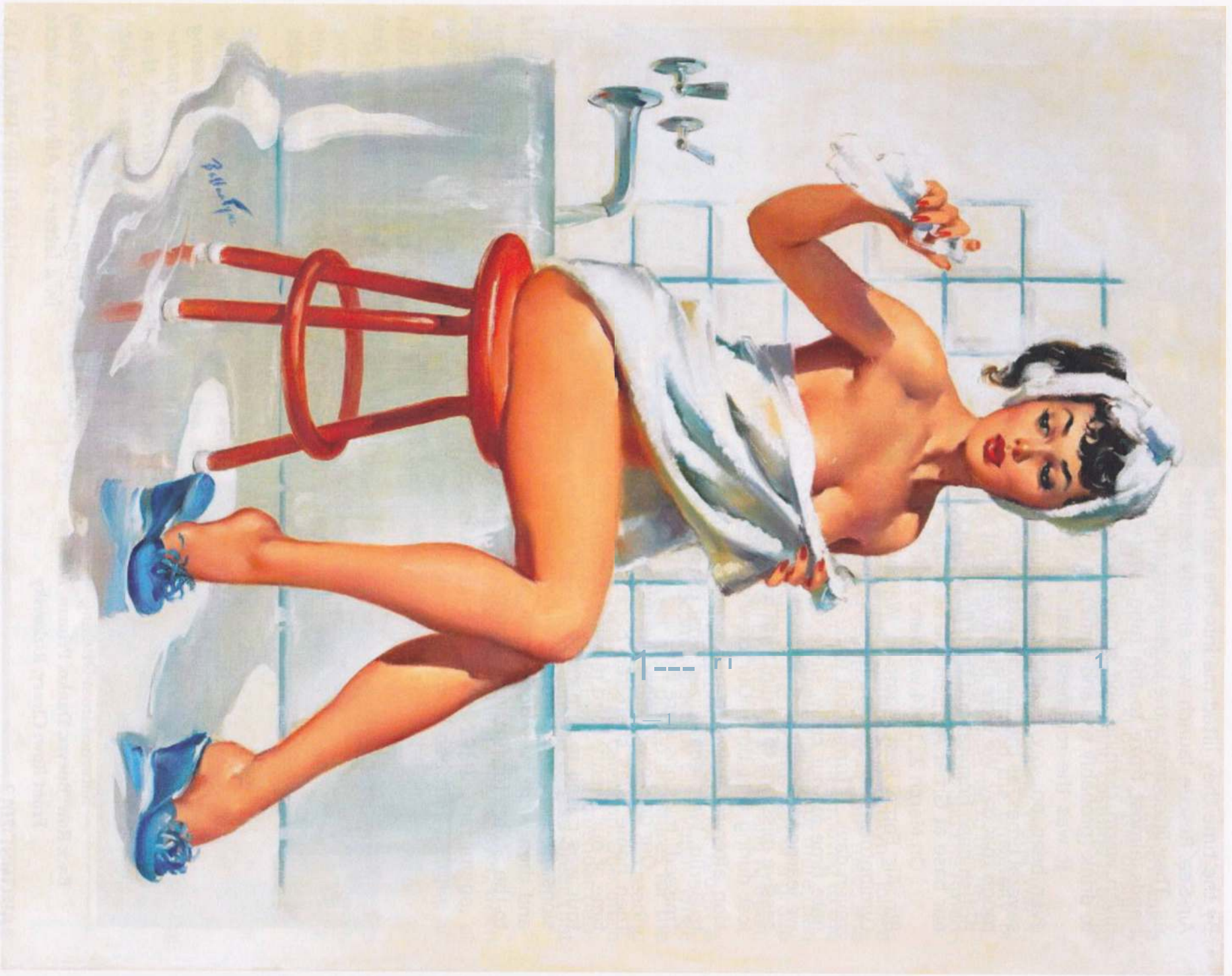


"H.S.L 2549 whilst at rendezvous position sighted aircraft losing height. At 16.20 hours H.S.L. proceeded to position. Came alongside and took aboard 10 U.S.A.A.F. airmen. H.S.L. 2549 returned to Dover Base with airmen."

R.A.F. Historical Records February 28, 1944
from R.A.F. No. 27 A.S.R.M.C.U. Base, Dover, Kent

"Paring the second World VJar I often used to say to our Air Sea Rescue Launch crews, Wouldn't it be grand if we could have arranged a vneeting and had a drink with vnany of you. I guess the war had to be got on with. I Shall never forget seeing you flying out over the sea to your operation targetj the noise of the aircraft, then seeing you returning to your bases a sight which will be with w\|e for ever."

*Rog Forbes-Morgan (R.A.F. Dover Base)
in a letter to Albert Audette*



1944, "The Girl on the Chair," Norman Rockwell, oil on canvas, 12 1/2 x 18 1/2 inches. The Girl on the Chair is a painting by Norman Rockwell, depicting a young woman sitting on a red chair in a bathroom, wrapped in a white towel. She is wearing blue high-heeled shoes and holding a small white object in her hand. The painting is signed "Rockwell 44" in the lower right corner.

FEATURED PIN-UP ARTIST



Joyce Ballantyne (April 4, 1918 - May 15, 2006) was a painter of pin-up art. She is best known as the designer of the Coppertone girl, whose swimming costume is being pulled down by a dog.

She was born in Norfolk, Nebraska during World War I, and grew up in Omaha. She attended the University of Nebraska for two years and then transferred to the Art Institute of Chicago to study commercial art and the American Academy of Art.

After two years at the Art Institute, Ballantyne joined Kling Studios, where she painted Rand McNally maps and illustrated books for Cameo Press. She then moved to the Stevens-Gross Studio, where she remained for more than a decade. While at the studio, she became part of a group of artists that included Gil Elvgren, Al Moore, and Al Buell.

In 1945 Ballantyne began painting pin-ups for Brown & Bigelow, having been recommended by Gil Elvgren. While there, she designed direct mail pin-up brochures for the company, and was eventually given the honor of creating an Artist's Sketch Pad twelve page calendar. She often

used herself as a model. In 1954, Ballantyne painted twelve pin-ups for a calendar published by Shaw-Barton. Upon the calendar's release in 1955, demand was so great that the company reprinted it many times.

Ballantyne then went on to paint one of the most famous advertising images ever, when Coppertone suntan lotion asked her to create a billboard image in 1959. That image, of a pigtailed girl with her bathing suit being tugged down by a small dog, has become an American icon. Her daughter Cheri Brand was used as the model for the girl.

Joyce Ballantyne eventually moved into the realm of portraits and fine art, painting the portraits of scores of entertainment and sports personalities as well as luminaries from the business, social, and academic worlds. Subjects included comedian Jonathan Winters, Robert Smalley of Hertz, and Major General John Leonard Hines.

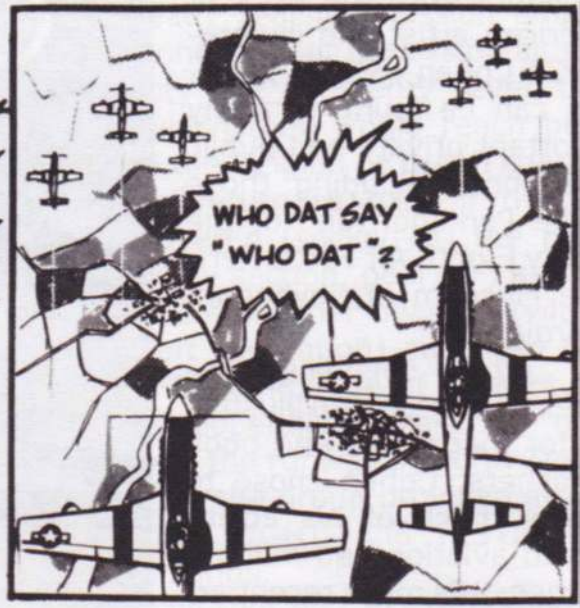
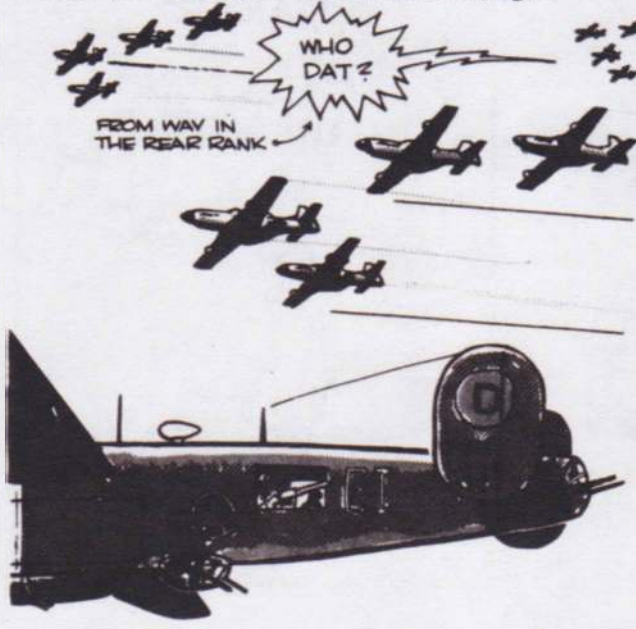
In 1974, Ballantyne moved with her husband to Ocala, Florida where she lived until her death.

Information from wikipedia.org



“There I was...”
The cartoons of Bob Stevens

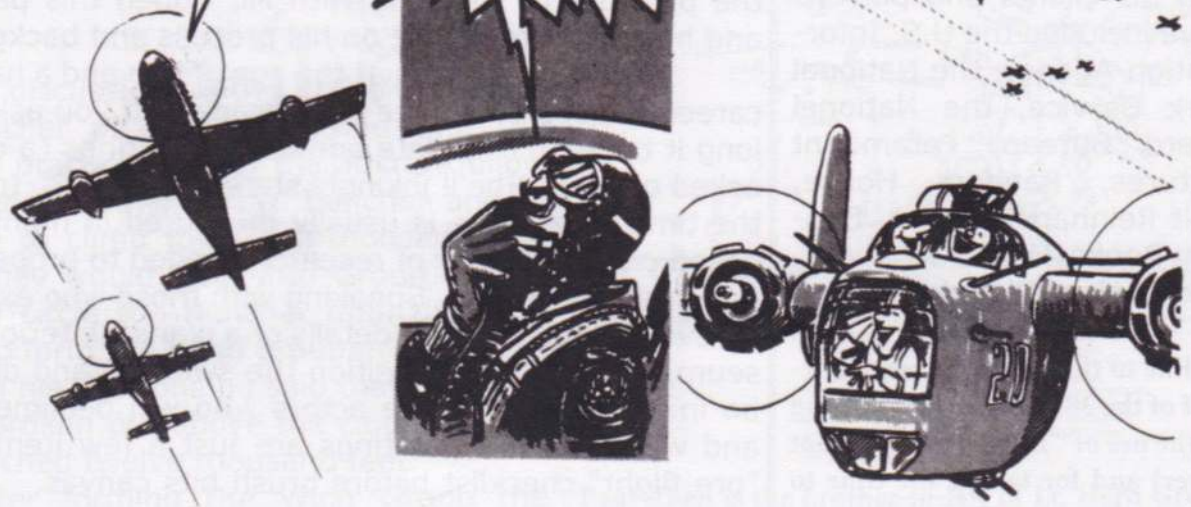
A BUNCH OF LITTLE FRIENDS ARE ESCORTING A GAGGLE OF BIG FRIENDS TOWARDS DER FÜHRER'S PLACE... THE SILENCE BECOMES OVERWHELMING—



WHO DATSAY,
 WHO DAT 5AY
 WHO DAT?,

AWI2IGHT YOU •
 CLOWNS. TUJ«
 IS THE GROUP
 COMMANDER!
 THE NEXT MAN
 WHO BREAKS
 RADIO SILENCE
 GETS COURT
 MAGT1ALLED/ 1

A6AIN, FCDM WAY IN THE REAR
 WHO DAT?



BOOK REVIEW

This remarkable collection features career highlights from the work of American artist and illustrator Gil Cohen, whose paintings can be found in many important private and public collections, including those of the Pentagon and of the Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum in Savannah, Georgia.

After spending decades as a respected illustrator for magazines and book publishers, Cohen chose to devote much of his attention to aviation and military themes. His more recent art vividly depicts the human aspects of America's various wars, showing soldiers and aviators in battle and at rest. One of Cohen's recurring observations is that some of humankind's most beautiful feats of engineering are often created for the purpose of war.

Gil Cohen's paintings are sought after worldwide, and his clients and patrons have included the U.S. Information Agency, the National Park Service, the National Guard Bureau, Paramount Pictures, Random House, Holt Reinhart Winston, Bantam Books, Harlequin Books, and Boeing-Sikorsky.

I'd like to thank Mr. Cohen on behalf of the 385th BGA for allowing us the use of "The Ditching" (front cover) and for taking the time to interview with me. -Charles

GIL COHEN

AVIATION ARTIST



ISBN 978-1-55046-512-9 • KnightsbrPress • 2009 •
144 pages • retail \$49.95

"Gil Cohen: Aviation Artist" is not only a very thorough collection of the aviation masterpieces of Mr. Cohen, but also an in depth look at his artistic background and the extensive process it takes to complete an oil painting. I had the pleasure of speaking with Mr. Cohen this past month and he elaborated more on his process and background.

Gil began drawing at the age of two and a half and his career has spanned over five decades. If you ask him how long it takes to complete one of his paintings (a commonly asked question) he'll jokingly state "81 years." In actuality the time it can take is usually measured in months and is based on the amount of research needed to properly depict a moment in history. Speaking with those who experienced an event, sketching the details of a plane's interior at a museum, learning what position the switches and dials would be in and sketching the actors who will become the men and women in his paintings are just a few items on Gil's "pre-flight" checklist before brush hits canvas. Yet for all of this research, Mr. Cohen does not consider himself a

detailist. It's more suggested, much like what one would see out of the corner of their eyes or as Gil spoke to it, the difference in details you'd see on an aircraft when you are 100 feet away versus 50. You know the details of the plane are there, but your eyes wouldn't perceive each bolt, each marking with the same clarity.

What truly separates Mr. Cohen from most aviation artists is the strong human element which can emotionally tie a viewer into the scene. You can feel the elation and relief in "Almost Home" as the white Cliffs of Dover loom on the horizon from the cockpit's point of view or the tense, cold sea-thrashing situation of "The Ditching." Cohen has been fascinated with the people who flew and maintained the aircraft of the 8th Air Force and the ironic life they lead. From long bombing missions facing death from enemy fighters and flak in the freezing skies high over Germany to frequenting village pubs or a weekend pass to London.

At 22, after graduating art school, Gil was drafted into the Army during the height of the Cold War. He spent most of his Army service with Army Intelligence in Oberursel, West Germany. His duties involved making sketches of the latest Soviet equipment based on grainy photos smuggled in from East Germany. Ironically during WWII Oberursel was the initial interrogation point for downed allied fliers including men from the 8th Air Force.

In the 1990s, Gil Cohen began his specialization with aviation. Having mainly been an illustrator from the 50's through the 80's, Mr. Cohen prefers oil painting with his recent projects. If you are an enthusiast of aircraft, those who work in and around them, or have an avid interest in what goes into creating these masterpieces (including the background stories ranging from the 40's to early 2000's) An autographed copy of "Gil Cohen: Aviation Artist" may be purchased for \$49.95 + \$10 shipping (Please make checks out to Knightsbridge Press. . To request a copy, you may contact Gil directly through e-mail at gilcoart@verizon.net or by writing to him at 62 Creek Drive - Doylestown, PA 18901. Please make checks out to Knightsbridge Press.



"Almost Home" copyright 2008 Gil Cohen

THE SEA SHALL NOT HAVE THE M

IAN MCLACHLAN ©

The Sea Shall Not Have Them is the motto for Britain's Air Sea Rescue (ASR) Services - an organisation that has saved thousands of lives since its establishment during World War Two. Many British aircrew were lost during 1939-40 when it became apparent that the means and methods for retrieving airmen, "down in the drink" were hopelessly inadequate. Following an emergency meeting in February 1941, the RAF established the Directorate of Air Sea Rescue and, over the ensuing months, the coordinated use of fighters, amphibious aircraft and fast surface vessels saw increasing numbers of personnel saved from a watery grave.

When the USAAF commenced operations from England in 1942, senior officers soon recognised the inadequacies of their own ASR resources and their British Allies immediately embraced US operations within the British ASR services. US personnel were trained by British instructors at a special ASR school but the principal resources were initially provided by the RAF and Royal Navy and many Americans soon owed their lives to the courage and efficiency of these services. However, USAAF commanders in the ETO recognised that there was still a need to develop their own capabilities but this was not seen

as a priority by Washington based bureaucracy. To exist officially, a unit needed a "Table of Organisation" (TO) and such fundamentals stemmed from Washington, swathed in red tape which hopefully unravelled into a fully-funded unit, recognised by the parental military bureaucracy. Without a TO, impatient commanders in the ETO needed to circumvent the system and the result was a Cinderella set-up, born outside the blanket, named, "Detachment B, Flight Section, HQ 65th Fighter Wing which was later sanctioned as the 5th Emergency Rescue Squadron.

Command of this hybrid was given to 23-year-old Captain Robert Gerhart, an experienced fighter controller with the tenacity to be effective. Gerhart had some 90 enlisted men detached from 16 different bases with 25 pilots and ground officers also temporarily assigned. Materials for this foundling - trucks; tyres; typewriters - everything - was scrounged from other units. Even the aircraft were cast off, a motley collection of retired P-47 Thunderbolts officially declared, "War Weary" and branded as such by "WN" suffixed in yellow on their serial numbers. These letters declared them obsolete, unwanted but, from their first sortie in May, 1944, many survivors were relieved to welcome

these elderly aircraft. Nurturing the 5th ERS during development and providing airfield facilities was the famous 56th Fighter Group. Rebert Gerhart was indebted to its CO, Colonel Hubert Zemke for advice and support and, like the 56th, the 5th ERS retained the Thunderbolt despite the longer range of the P-51 Mustang. Gerhart may have preferred the P-51 but the Mustang was in such demand that he had no choice but to adapt P-47s. His first task was to modify the collection of clunks for ASR duties. To extend their range he required drop tanks as well as the ability to externally mount and drop dinghies for survivors. Surface vessels might not see a tiny dinghy in heavy seas so smoke marker bombs were necessary. Escorting cripples or protecting rescue operations meant leaving the P-47s armed but machine guns were heavy. Configuring a worn fighter for all this was like loading a dying donkey and the first take-off was pitiful. Laden with a 108 gallon drop tank and four smoke-marker bombs beneath each wing, plus a twin dinghy pack on fuselage pylons, the poor P-47 wheezed down the runway. An apprehensive pilot pushed for more power from his exhausted nag, she responded by blowing a cylinder and a very sub-



dued aviator emerged from the crash. Investigating the reluctance to fly revealed the primary factor to be the smoke marker bombs creating a flap down effect at all speeds. Compromise was necessary and the Engineering Section eventually found a solution. The British, "M" type double dinghy pack was split, putting one under each wing and one, 150 gallon drop tank below the fuselage, with smoke markers behind it. Initially, two machine guns were removed but diminishing enemy strength eventually enabled a reduction to only four guns. Tests proved the P-47 performed satisfactorily and, endorsing their success, the 5th ERS proudly painted broad red, white and blue bands on their engine cowlings with wingtips painted bright yellow and similar bands flourished on the empennage and tail surfaces. Most aircraft carried on their cowlings a bird motif peering through a telescope to indicate their role as spotters.

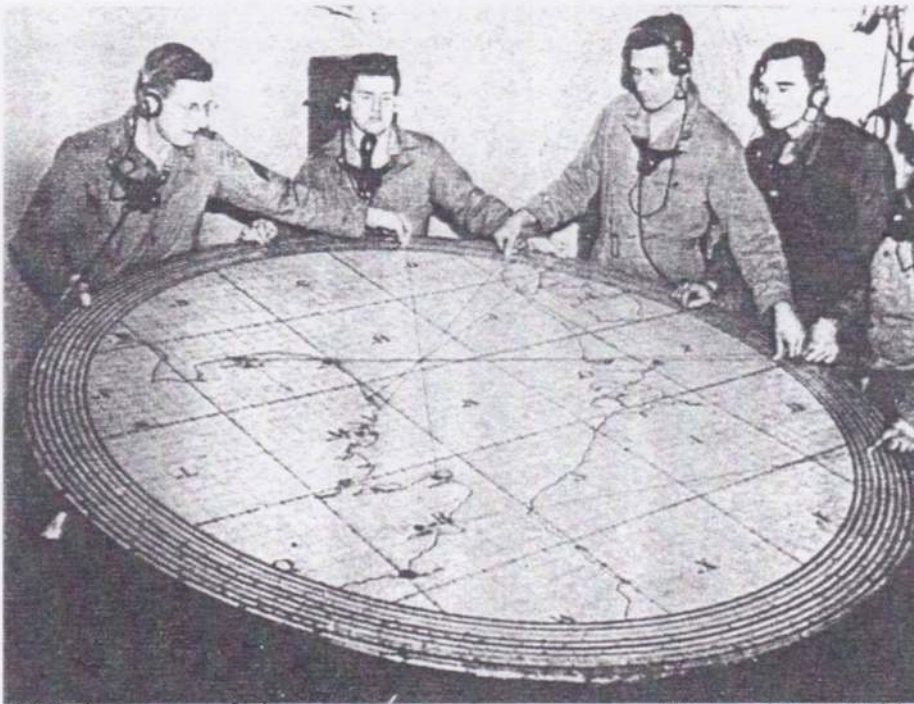
5th ERSP-47s (note the caricature of bird on cowling)

Understandably, airmen feared the sea and efficient ASR helped morale but what happened when a lonely, frightened aircrew transmitted, "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday"? The ASR distress frequency of 66.50 megacycles was constantly monitored at widely dispersed, coastal Radio Direction Finding Stations (RDFS). Indiligence on their part might mean that the words they heard were the airmen's last. Time was life, rapid response imperative. Where was the aircraft? On receipt of a signal, each

RDFS rotated its aerial to point in the direction from which the signal sounded strongest. The RDFS each took a compass bearing on the transmission and this was telephoned on a "hot line" to the Triangulation Room at the ASR Control Centre, HQ 65th Fighter Wing in Saffron Waldon. The meaning, "triangulation room" becomes clear when what happened to the incoming signal bearing is understood. Centrepiece of the room was a large, circular table, gradiated with

P-47 Cartoon by
1st Lt. Frank Fong, 5th ERS





360 degrees of the compass and superimposed on a gridded map of the Southern North Sea and coastlines. Around the table were men wearing headphones, each holding a string, one end of which was pinned at the location of the RDFS they represented. Responding to instructions from his RDFS, each man aligned his string to represent the direction of broadcast and these imaginary lines stretched out over the North Sea. Where they crossed, a triangle was formed, fixing the position of the distressed aircraft. The size of triangle indicated the quality of fix and the position was grease pencilled on the map. From receipt of the Mayday to gaining a "fix" took about 20 seconds and the controller quickly gave the ailing machine a heading to steer.

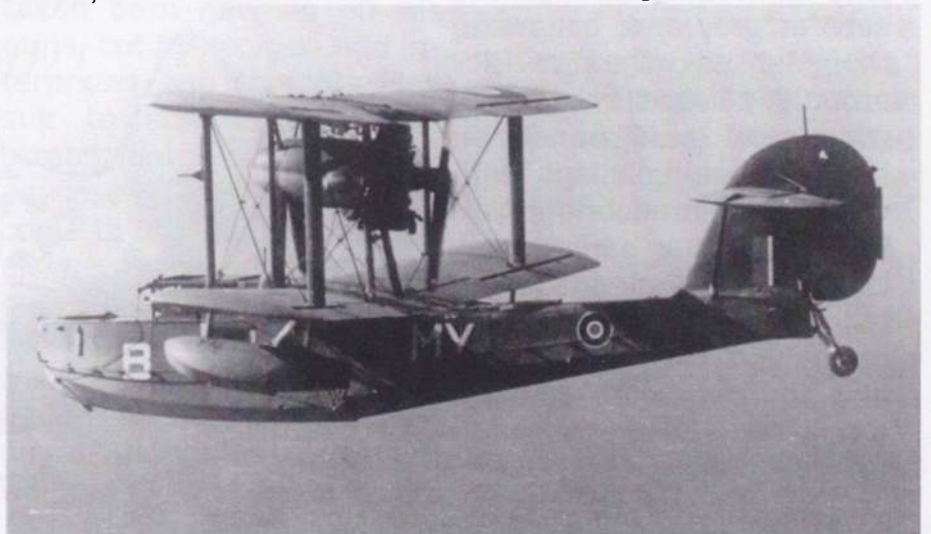
At least the distressed aircraft is now flying in the right

Triangulation Table direction and might make it or may have to ditch so the hands of ASR reached out to close the gap. Responsibility for this rested with the Duty Control (DC) Officer in an ASR Control Booth near the triangulation room but overlooking the main Operations table at HQ 65th Fighter Wing. Preceding any mission, the DC and his Liaison Sergeant checked flight times and routes, outbound and return, on the ASR Control

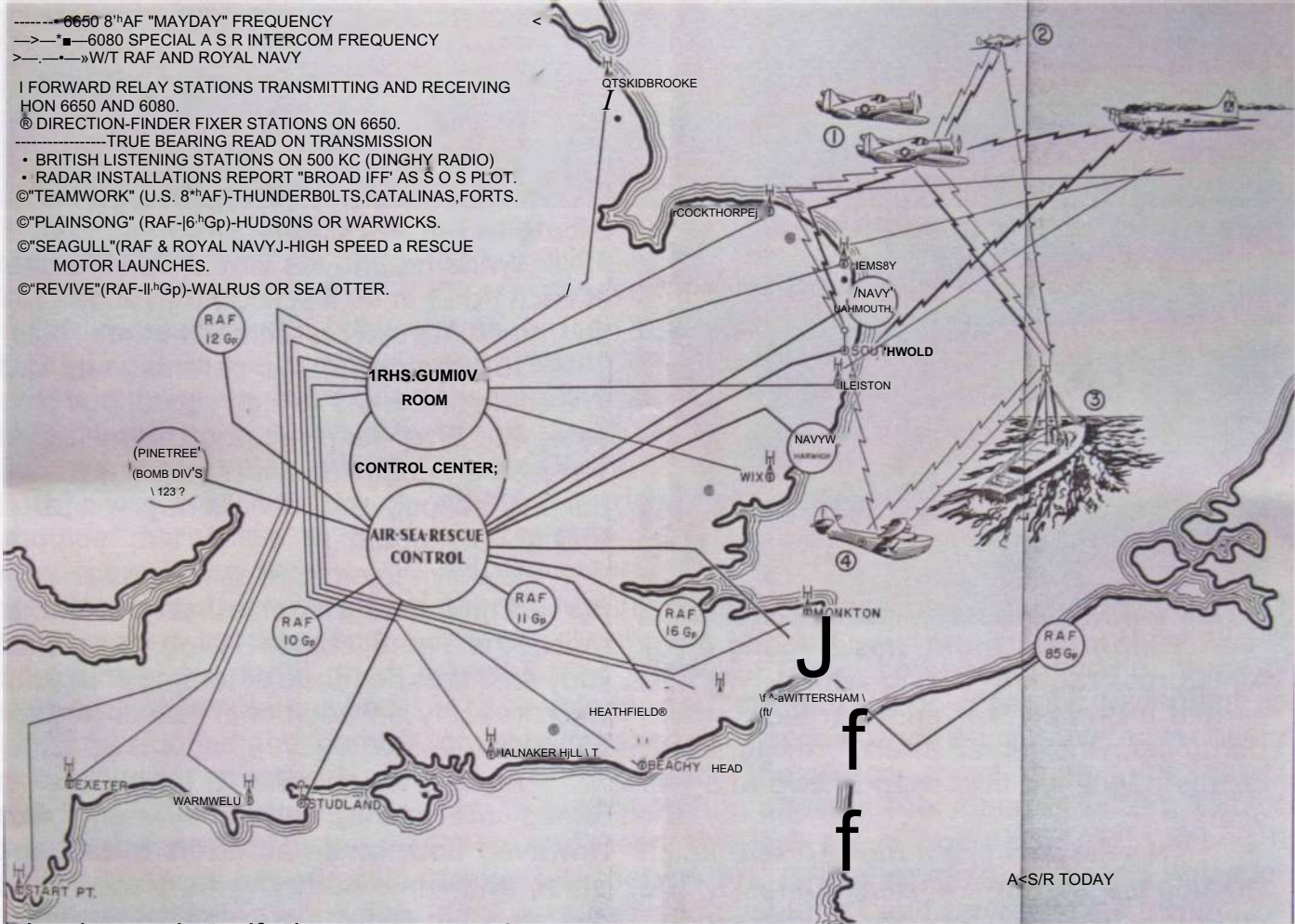
Table, a smaller representation of the Operations Table but merged with features from the triangulation room map. The DC notified Royal Navy and Royal Air Force surface vessels of required patrol areas and took similar action with the 5th ERS at Halesworth in Suffolk. Other DC duties entailed clearing ASR flights with friendly defences, alerting the DF Stations and coordinating with RAF operations. The heading broadcast to a distressed aircraft came from the DC. As soon as the plotter registered the fix on his map, the DC used a mechanical Craig Computer to calculate not only the course given to the crippled aircraft but to vector the nearest 5th ERS machines, RAF amphibians and high speed launches on an interception course.

Call signed, "Teamwork", pairs of 5th ERS P-47s patrolled mission routes until summoned to a lame duck. If he only required escort, they could shepherd

RAF - ASR Supermarine Walrus



----- 6650 8thAF "MAYDAY" FREQUENCY
 -> * 6080 SPECIAL A S R INTERCOM FREQUENCY
 > -> W/T RAF AND ROYAL NAVY
 | FORWARD RELAY STATIONS TRANSMITTING AND RECEIVING
 HON 6650 AND 6080.
 Ⓢ DIRECTION-FINDER FIXER STATIONS ON 6650.
 ----- TRUE BEARING READ ON TRANSMISSION
 • BRITISH LISTENING STATIONS ON 500 KC (DINGHY RADIO)
 • RADAR INSTALLATIONS REPORT "BROAD IFF" AS S O S PLOT.
 Ⓢ "TEAMWORK" (U.S. 8thAF)-THUNDERBOLTS, CATALINAS, FORTS.
 Ⓢ "PLAINSONG" (RAF-J6thGp)-HUDSONS OR WARWICKS.
 Ⓢ "SEAGULL" (RAF & ROYAL NAVY)-HIGH SPEED a RESCUE
 MOTOR LAUNCHES.
 Ⓢ "REVIVE" (RAF-IIthGp)-WALRUS OR SEA OTTER.

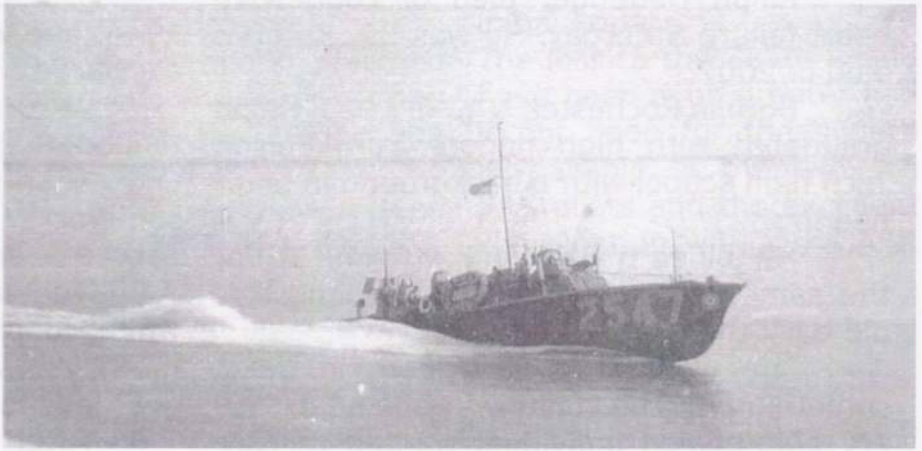


nim home but, if the crew jumped or ditched, dinghies could be dropped. On reaching a ditched aircrew, one P-47 climbed and orbited to transmit for a better fix while the other buzzed encouragingly around survivors, ready to smoke mark when help appeared in the form of a launch or seaplane.

From unsteady beginnings, the 5th ERS achievements grew. During the period December 1943 to June 1944, the rate of distress calls rose from 185 to 243 and, by early 1945 ASR was averaging 145 homings and 21 ditchings or bail outs per month. In the war's later stages, the P-47s were bolstered by OA-

-10 Catalina amphibians and B-17s converted to carry airborne lifeboats. The survival rate from those known to be down in the sea improved from 23.5% in 1943 to 45.4% in 1944. True, the casualty rates were still horrendous but many young

High Speed Launch (H.S.L.) 2547



This Air-Sea-Rescue chart displays the coordination and process among the Control Center, the Triangulation Room and Air-Sea-Rescue Control

men owed their later lives to ASR because the sea did not have them.

385TH

BGA

TAPS



Ralph Dentinger was a young Army Air Corps captain during World War II, earned a Bronze Star and married Kathryn Dentinger, who served as an Army nurse. All of this happened in a span of two and half years.

"His life was like a movie," said Ralph Dentinger's son-in-law Hank Okraski. "He and his wife's love story are so interesting."

According to Dentinger's daughter Judy Okraski and many other family members, it was the most memorable story they've heard, and it was often told.

"My mom talked plenty about their love story," Judy said of her parents' 61-year marriage. "My grandfather often told me stories about how my father and mother met as well."

Ralph Dentinger died of congestive heart failure Saturday. He was 89. Kathryn died in 2007.

Born in Rochester, N.Y., in 1923, Ralph graduated with high honors from Edison Tech high school with a background in engineering.

He joined the military when he 18 for the same reasons many other youngsters did back then.

"He wanted to participate in doing something for the country," Hank said. "Every able-bodied individual wanted to con-

tribute to the war effort."

While he and his would-be wife knew of each other in high school, they didn't take an immediate interest in each other.

Judy said that her parents were both in a circle of friends in high school but didn't date. But after Ralph joined the military in 1941 as an engineer and Kathryn attended nursing school, they frequently wrote letters to each other.

Kathryn joined the military as an Army nurse immediately after nursing school for much the same reason Ralph joined, but Judy said that her hope of uniting with Ralph was probably an additional reason Kathryn enlisted.

As fate would have it, both were stationed in England, only in different parts. However, both made an effort to see each other, and while Kathryn was placed out of danger as an Army nurse, she worried about Ralph, who often flew over bombing sites.

"Many of his buddies were killed in the war, and many times the Germans would bomb close by where he worked," Hank said. A reason, perhaps, was because Ralph was working to perfect the Norden bomb-sight, which helped perfect bombing targets for the allies. He won the Bronze Star for his work.

The couple married in Liverpool in 1944, one year before both were honorably discharged.

After leaving the military, Ralph attended Rochester Institute of Technology and began his engineering career at Gleason Works. He soon received his bachelor's degree in engineering.

The family later moved to Michigan where Ralph worked for the Chrysler Corp, for 22 years. Ralph often traveled setting up gear labs for the company.

After retiring in 1984, the family

(Ralph Dentinger cont.) moved to Beverly Hills, Fla., and later Orlando, where both Ralph and Kathryn were active members of the VFW.

In addition to Judy, Ralph Dentinger is survived by his sons Thomas Dentinger of Clearwater; Steven Dentinger of Apopka; Gerard Dentinger of Glen Ellyn, Ill.; daughter Jean Dentinger of Portland, Ore.; 10 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.



Thomas Jay Newton, 87, a resident of Dallas died at his home Thursday, July 5, 2012. Tom was born in Klamath Falls, Oregon as the only child of Rolland and Peggy Rowan Newton. His early years were spent in Ashland, Coos Bay and Coquille. He graduated from Coquille High School in 1943; he then joined the Army Air Corp. As a flight engineer, he was stationed in England during World War II and flew missions over Germany. After the war he went to Linfield College in McMinnville where he met his wife Darla. They graduated in 1950 and in 1951 moved to Dallas, Oregon to work at the Polk County Federal Savings and Loan. As the manager, he was the youngest president of the Oregon Savings and Loan League. He was

a quiet man but there was something that people saw that sent him to the top of various organizations. He said "don't list them", but daughters and granddaughters insisted. He served on the Dallas City Council for 16 years, President of the Dallas Chamber of Commerce, President of Rotary, (42 years of perfect attendance), President of Oregon Pilots and was named Pilot of the year, awarded First Citizen of Dallas, President of his National 385th WWII Bomb Group, St. Thomas Church Board member and treasurer. Tom was a member of various car organizations and President of the Studebaker Club and enjoyed the car tours. Besides Darla, tom's passions were traveling abroad and in the United States with his National WWII Bomb group and participating in

car shows. Tom's daughter Darcy was his "car" girl, daughter Tamara kept him busy with her horses and his wife Darla had him going to church, playing bridge and entertaining in their home. What a great life Tom had with friends and family!

In 1966, Tom founded the fly-in and car show for the annual Rotary Breakfast in the park—now the "Tom Newton Rotary Car Show." He did not golf!

Survivors include his wife of 64 years Darla and daughters Darcy Newton Irving and Tamara Newton Baker (Tom), four grandchildren, Shylow Landis (Kim), Adelaide Zumwalt (Jacob), Morgan Anne Baker, Grant Baker, one great granddaughter Kaitlyn Landis, two great grandsons Keith Landis and Kenith Landis.

A celebration of life will begin at 1:00 pm Friday, July 27th in the St. Thomas Episcopal Church at 1486 SW Levens in Dallas. In lieu of flowers contributions may be made to the St. Thomas Episcopal Church or Dallas Rotary for the City of Dallas Japanese Garden in the city park. The Bollman Funeral Home is handling the arrangements.

Mr. Newton served as ditor for the Hardlife Herald for XX years from blank until blank - ed.

LETTERS

From: The Masters <jayjaymasters@yahoo.com>
Subject: Re: B-17 Assignments

Bill

I will try to answer your questions as best as possible. (See last issue - ed.) When we were formed into squadrons at Geiger Field, Wa. in 1943 Those of us who were selected (from our final training at Smokie Hills AFB in Ka, to return for training of new crews of the 385th,) did have our own planes (temporarily), but the new crews flew what ever was available. It was not until we were ready for over seas that we all received our very own planes. I was lead pilot and had my own crew for the 551st when I came into the 385th, but I believe that other pilots were assigned crews at Geiger Field.

I do believe that on our flight to England every crew had their own plane which they kept as their own as far as possible. I can vividly recall "swinging" the compass on "LULU BELL" at Great Falls AFB, in Montana with Paul Schulz before the flight to Kearney.Neb. for flight to England.

Once in England and as our losses mounted and as we received replacement crews, they few whatever was available, but still I do believe that an attempt was made to keep crews together and with the same plane. The assignment of crew to plane would most likely be up to the Squadron Operations Officer, at least as Sq. Ops. for the 551st that was my duty and attempt. I believe that was at Squadron level since we were familiar with both aircraft and crews. I do not recall directive to that effect.

See you in San Antonio,
Happy Landings

Vince

From: Bill Varnedoe <billvar@comcast.net>
Subject: Re: AC Names

In answer to Charles final sentence on Page 21 in the August HH, I know that the very first crews of the 385th that came to Great Ashfield, did fly in combat a B-17 assigned to each crew and named by them in the States before flying it overseas. However, later, B-17's were flown overseas by replacement crews, before these crews were assigned to a Bomb Group. On landing in England, these B-17's were taken away to a base to be modified and brought up to current combat status. (Like adding IFF gear, a G Box, etc.) Then the B-17 was assigned to a Bomb Group based on some Bomb Group's need. In the meantime, the replacement crew that flew it overseas was sent to a personnel replacement depot and assigned to a Bomb Group. These two assignments, a/c and Crews, were completely independent!! Most crews were ignorant of this until it happened to them! One such crew named and painted what they thought was "their" B-17 *Vat 69* while back in the States. This B-17, serial No. 42-107054, got assigned to the 385th where it flew many missions. However, once, I got a letter from a crew from another Group asking about her. They were the ones who had named and painted her, but had no idea where she wound up after they landed her at Ayr, Scotland! Thus this is an example of one that was named and painted back in the States, but never flown in combat by that crew.

-Bill Varnedoe

On a flight getting ready to depart for Detroit ...

Jack was sitting on the plane when a guy took the seat beside him. The guy was an emotional wreck, pale, hands shaking, moaning in fear.

"What's the matter?" Jack asked.

"I've been transferred to Detroit, there's crazy people there. They've got lots of shootings, gangs, race riots, drugs, poor public schools, and the highest crime rate."

Jack replied, "I've lived in Detroit all my life. It's not as bad as the media says. Find a nice home, go to work, mind your own business, enroll your kids in a nice private school. It's as safe a place as anywhere in the world."

The guy relaxed and stopped shaking and said, "Oh, thank you. I've been worried to death. But if you live there and say it's OK, I'll take your word for it. What do you do for a living?"

"Me?" said Jack. "I'm a tail gunner on a Budweiser truck."



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HARDLIFE HERALD

Newsletter of the 385th Bombardment Group Association



385TH BGA REUNION - SAN ANTONIO, TX - OCTOBER 2012

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