



THE 99th Bomb Group Historical Society



NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 3, NUMBER 2, MARCH 1, 1983

PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY-Editor, F.H. English

SOCIETY OFFICERS: Bernice Barr, PRESIDENT; Michael Yarina, VICE-PRESIDENT;
Joe Kenney, SECRETARY; George Coen, TREASURER

PRESIDENT'S CORNER---

I hope that each of you had a happy holiday season and are now well on your way to a healthy, meaningful, and exciting 1983. There is one way that can add to the excitement this year--come to the 99th BGHS ANNUAL REUNION in Albuquerque, New Mexico, May 13-15.

REX CARNES is the Registration Contact for this event--look for, and respond to his information on Registration which is included in this Newsletter. The Albuquerque gang in concert(?) well, with some effort, has come up with some ideas for a program that includes:

May 13--Arrive--Sign in--Beverages, and snacks in Hospitality Room.

May 14--Breakfast--As you like--Annual Business Meeting of Membership--Board of Directors Meeting--Lunch for Members.

(Ladies may plan on a morning shopping, sightseeing, luncheon tour of "Old Town" Albuquerque--Sign up on arrival.)

Afternoon tour of Atomic Museum at Kirtland AFB--(Sign up on arrival), or you may sightsee on your own; ride the tram to the top of 10,000-ft Sandia crest, etc.

Saturday night special will be a "coat & tie" dinner--no host bar--music--dance if you desire.

May 15--Attend church, and light breakfast, as you like--coffee in Hospitality Room--11:30 Champagne Brunch will end scheduled events!

Now don't rush home because New Mexico is filled with many places you may want to visit. When you sign in on Friday afternoon, Rex Carnes has arranged for an Albuquerque Chamber of Commerce person to be present to answer questions and provide info on points of interest. (Yes, Pete, you may bring your golf clubs since we do have golf courses here, also!)

This is to be a FUN event, so come join together with friends who have undergone experiences, and whose backgrounds are so much in common. Tom Gamm has agreed to keep beverages available, and Harvey (Wallbanger) Jennings (not from Alb.), has volunteered to keep your cups filled--so come and join in on the fun, and make some for yourself--Hope to see you in May!! Rex tells me that there will be a prize for the crew that has the most crew members attending.

As an item of interest, Frank English informs me of the upcoming 15th AF Assoc. 40th Anniversary open house at March AFB, Nov. 10-13. These are the corrected dates to allow the performance of the Thunderbirds, and other celebrities. Contact is Ben Franklin, Exec. Dir. (Lt. Col., Ret.), 15th AF Association, P.O. Box 15, March AFB, CA 92518. This should be a great event.

Your Friend,
Bernie Barr

(SEE P. 2 FOR
REUNION INFO!)

FOUND!

- 358-R.F. Bannick, 7819 E. 10th, Medina WA 98039-347th
- 359-Charles E. Jones, Rt. 3, Box 423, Toccoa, GA 30577-347th
- 360-Harold R. Caldwell, 3815 Green Garden Rd., Aliquippa, PA 15001-416th
- 361-Emerson Baxendale, 38640 Golfview East, Mt. Clemens, MI 48044-416th
- 362-James D. Kirkpatrick, 3156 Marta St. SW, Massillon, OH 44646-416th
- 363-John Casley, 16460 Levan, Livonia, MI 48154-416th
- 364-William C. Calvin, 819 W. Adams, Clinton, IL 61727-347th
- 365-Erwin J. Kosharek, 121 E. Fairmount, Milwaukee, WI 53217-416th
- 366-Wm. S. Haddock, Jr., 7581 Acacia Ave., Mentor, OH 44060
- 367-John H. Henry, 12025 Apache Ave. NE, Albuquerque, NM 87112-348th
- 368-Mrs. Paul J. Stahle, 160 Oak Manor Dr., York, PA 17402-NOK
- 369-Fred C. Eaton, 8 Heritage Court, Hilton Head Island, SC 29928-19th B.G.
- 370-Arthur G. Knipp, Rt. 2, Box 51, Tipton, MO 65081-347th
- 371-John A. Lewis, 6225 Judson St., Lincoln, NE 68507-346th
- 372-Louis E. Walker, 387 Wash. St., Boston, MA 02108-346th
- 373-D.T. Hemmingsen, Rt. 1, Algona, IA 50511-416th

(Note that quite a few of these names are in the latest Roster!)

Our sincere thanks to the many members who sent donations in addition to their 1983 dues. There were too many to simply acknowledge individually. We are ordering Squadron history microfilms for a starter, and we are planning to prepare a Squadron and Group historical reprint for the near future. So now you know!---george ---

TAPS

- BJORNEBY, Larry G.**--Died of Leukemia in June 1979. He served as Mayor of his home town until 1975, when he retired because of ill health. He had one son. (Mrs. L.G. Bjerneby, 438 E. Center St., Kalispell, MT 59901)
- PALATNICK, Bernard**--Died in 1969.
- FLEMING, David**--Died about 1974.
- KARCHNYAK, Charles J.**--Passed away 13 years ago. (Mrs. Charles (Johanna) Karchnyak, 32 Maple St., West Orange, NJ 07052)

(From George Coen)--(Some of the above names have been in preceding issues, but some newcomers might have known these buddies--fhe)

Amigos, we are publishing plane lists, mission lists, and similar goodies in the full knowledge of their errors, and omissions. We are hoping that you will take crayon in hand and correct us and them. In this effort, your personal photograph album may well contain plane No.'s, and names, as well as names of ground, and flying crews. We now are compiling information in a form convenient for historical research, so send in your comments. (gfc)

One of the delightful fringe benefits of being here in Operations is that of meeting both old and new friends as they pass through our Fair City. To wit: Edith and Rex Greathouse were snowbound in Albuquerque over New Year's Day, which resulted in our planning a trip to Bandelier National Monument on Monday, May 16th, the day following our Spring Reunion. This will be an all-day trip, details to be furnished at the Reunion, but we issue this warning so that you may make reservations for the extra day if you are interested. The trip will at least pass through Los Alamos, and Santa Fe, and will take us into the lovely Jemez Mountains and to the Frijoles Canyon Cliff Dwellings. You will have an experienced guide; just ask for El Borracho. (aka--gfc!)

In answer to my query regarding the 3 aerial photo's in our last Newsletter, the mystery is over. Had a real nice note from Eugene Agnew and among other nice things said he brought the mission pictures to Muskegon to give to our 99th for the Historical Files. They were sent on to me by Norman (Bud) Kaufman. I will bring them with me to Albuquerque and turn them over to the big wheels. Thanks again. to you, Gene, and to Bud! (gfc)

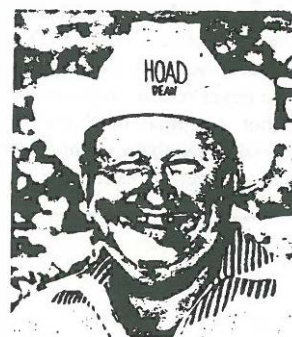
Special Section: Wintertime In The Rockies

FRONTIER

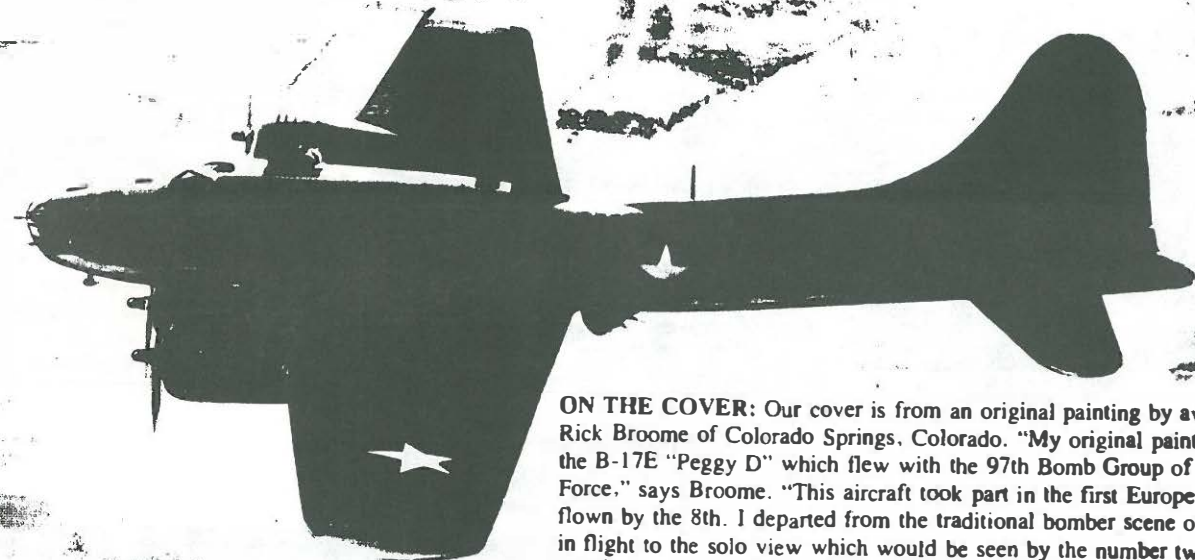
The Oak Ridge Boys

August 1982

FREE
Take-Home Copy



FOR YOUR INFORMATION
FROM HOADLEY DEAN



ON THE COVER: Our cover is from an original painting by aviation artist Rick Broome of Colorado Springs, Colorado. "My original painting depicts the B-17E "Peggy D" which flew with the 97th Bomb Group of the 8th Air Force," says Broome. "This aircraft took part in the first European mission flown by the 8th. I departed from the traditional bomber scene of formations in flight to the solo view which would be seen by the number two aircraft of a three-plane formation. With the sun low on the horizon "Peggy D" is gracefully shown, her artistic lines suspended in a time and place long ago past."

Rick Broome is a full time aviation artist whose works have graced the cover of Frontier Magazine many times. His studio is located at 2809 Old Broadmoor Road, Colorado Springs, Colorado 80906.

THE QUEEN OF THE AIR

The following article is reprinted Through the courtesy of the author, Hoadley Dean of the 97th, and of Frontier Airlines. We thank them both, and we also thank Mike Yarina for talking Hoad into the deal. Mike is a neighbor of Hoad's. Thanks also to George M. Coen for calling the article to our attention. Apparently none of the 99th saw the original publication.

The "Queen" — that's what they called the B-17 Flying Fortress during those years of that massive conflict called World War II. But sitting there on the ground, it was difficult indeed to understand where she got the name. In fact, in many ways she looked like a wounded duck with her nose sticking up in the air and her shapely tail planted firmly on the ground. But once in the air, it was an entirely different story. With her bulky landing gear retracted, she suddenly took on an air of aerodynamic beauty.

And, in the opinion of many military historians, this aircraft was the plane that won the war for the Allies. It was used in every theater of operations. At the beginning of the war the Forts (as they were called) first went into action in the Philippines. Later, Pacific operations were carried out by the 19th Bomb Group at Clark Field and B-

17s were credited with the destruction of over 600 Japanese aircraft.

In Europe, B-17s dropped over 650,000 tons of bombs which was more than were dropped by all other Allied bombers and fighters combined. And the bomber was also tough against enemy fighters.

Not only was the B-17 a tough offensive threat, she could also really take the punishment. And many times, severely crippled Forts brought their crews back in what appeared to be impossible returns.

From the day of her inception on the Boeing drawing boards, the main criteria was to keep the Fortress flying. She didn't have the sophisticated back-up systems common to today's aircraft; there were handcranks to lower the landing gear and flaps in the event the hydraulics were shot away. They proved invaluable many times.

There was plenty of *muscle* in the Fort's

four powerplants. And even with two engines out, the bird could still stay in the air and return to base. It happened hundreds of times. And there were even some cases when Forts touched down in England with only one of the giant props spinning!

And no matter how badly shot up some of the B-17s were, if the basic airframe was still intact and control could be maintained, the bird could be coaxed, cajoled and cussed back over the Channel.

13,000 Manufactured

In all, there were almost 13,000 Flying Fortresses produced by Boeing and under license agreement by Douglas and Lockheed. Almost half of those aircraft would never return. Many more came back so shot up that they ended up being cannibalized with the eventual end being the boneyard. But for every one that was lost,



Air Power Magazine photo

THE "QUEEN"

By Hoadley Dean

The first Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress raid on Europe took place 40 years ago on August 16, 1942. Twelve B-17s of the 97th Bomb Group, led by Colonel Frank Armstrong, bombed the Marshaling Yard at Roven, France. Retired Frontier Captain Jim Carney was a member of the 97th Bomb Group after it was transferred to North Africa. He flew 50 B-17 missions. When you finish reading this article you will realize that Boeing builds tough airplanes.

there would be another Fort come back so badly damaged that the crew chiefs could only sadly shake their heads.

Many times, Fortresses were lost to other than enemy combat. The form-up procedure of a thousand planes over England was a nightmare in the soup with constant fear of a mid-air collision.

One of the more bizarre hazards faced by the B-17 was low flying squadrons being bombed by higher flying squadrons. The Germans also tried a little bombing of their own, using captured B-17s to accomplish the job. The technique, however, did not prove too effective and was later dropped by the Germans.

Unbelievable Punishment

Getting back to the punishment that the Fort could endure, it oft times boggled the imagination. One B-17, for example came

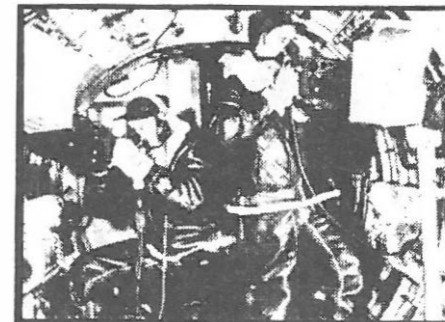
(Photo left) B-17, "5 Grand" (the 5,000th Flying Fortress built by Boeing) gets final inspection at Boeing. The aircraft is covered with signatures of people who worked on her. Because of the hundreds of pounds of paint from the thousands of signatures on her, she was 15 mph slower than the rest of the planes in the squadron. To keep up, her pilot had to overboost the superchargers. "5 Grand" never aborted a mission and even flew food missions to the starving people of Holland.

home with one engine out, two others missing badly and six direct hits from 20mm cannons. There were more than 200 holes in the bird! Another 17 made it home completely shot up with all aboard being wounded. The pilot brought her in on her belly at a vacant airfield and crashed into a tree clipping off a wing and just missing the cockpit. Only ten gallons of fuel remained in her tanks and she had acquired some 800 holes in her low-level return over Germany.

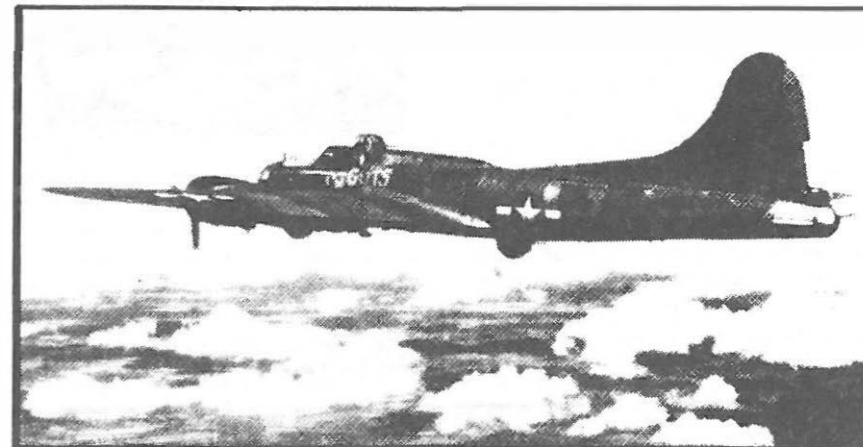
Another 8th Air Force Fort had a wild experience in another low-level return to base. In order to avoid fighters, the crippled bomber actually clipped off the tops of trees in its race for the Channel. When its ground crew inspected the ship on its return, it found branches sprouting from the engine cowlings.

And then there was the story of the B-17 called the MAIDEN. On a mission over Europe, this particular Flying Fortress sustained battle damage and became a straggler behind the main force. That usually meant a decree of the end as enemy fighters just loved to move in for the kill. And those fighters sure tried *hard* to put the final touch to the MAIDEN.

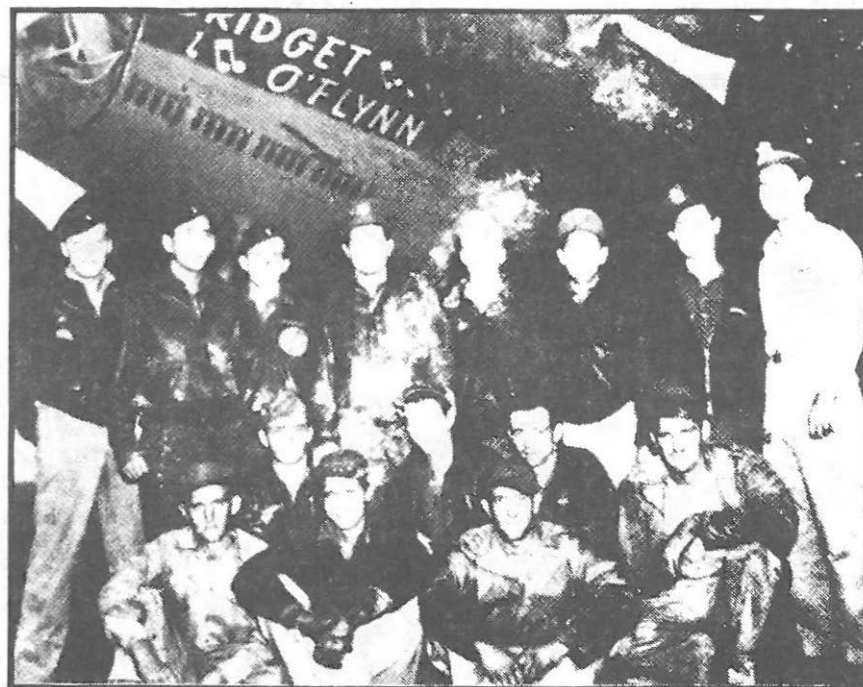
But this Fort just didn't want to go down and endured an unbelievable plastering. And, as the Fort started a long, slow dive for terra firma, the fighters pulled off figuring that she was finished. But the pilot nursed



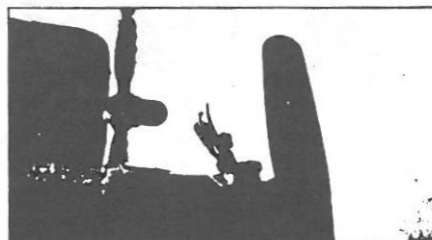
(Photo left) Waist gunner positions. The reason the B-17 was named the Flying Fortress was because the gun positions were designed to protect the bomber from enemy aircraft that approached at any angle.



(Photo below) Flying Fort over Germany (Air Force Museum photo)



Retired Frontier Captain Jim Carney (second from the right, standing) and his flight and ground crew with Flying Fortress, "Bridget O'Flynn." Captain Carney flew 50 missions in this Fort.



Frontier Captain Ike Isaacs took this photo from the cockpit window of his Flying Fort, showing a cylinder sticking up through the No. 2 engine cowling and the engine shut down. Damage was caused by flak. Ike flew 35 missions.

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her home, barely able to keep the shuddering plane in the air.

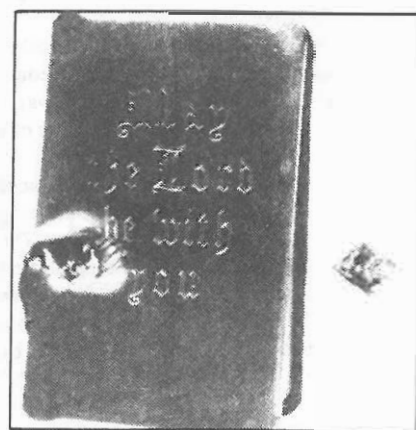
Surveying the damage later, the pilot counted eight gaping holes from 20mm hits, over five hundred machine gun holes, plus numerous gashes in its skin. The radio compartment was scorched from a fire, one entire horizontal stabilizer was missing and the hydraulics had been shot away. But, it had gotten them home.

That was the stuff the plane called the B-17 Flying Fortress was made of!!!

And the Boeing Company has continued to make safe airplanes for civilian use. That's one reason why Frontier has 47 ruggedly built Boeing 737s in its fleet, along with McDonnell Douglas DC-9 Super 80s. ☺

Hoadley Dean is a World War II veteran and is currently a national director of the 165,000 member Air Force Association. Since 1960, he has been a member of the Frontier Airlines Board of Directors. He is a rancher and a businessman at Rapid City, South Dakota, and has contributed several articles for the Frontier Magazine over the past years.

An aircraft commander in George Meshko's 96th bomb group always carried a Bible in his flight jacket. It saved his life by stopping a piece of flak that would have pierced his heart.



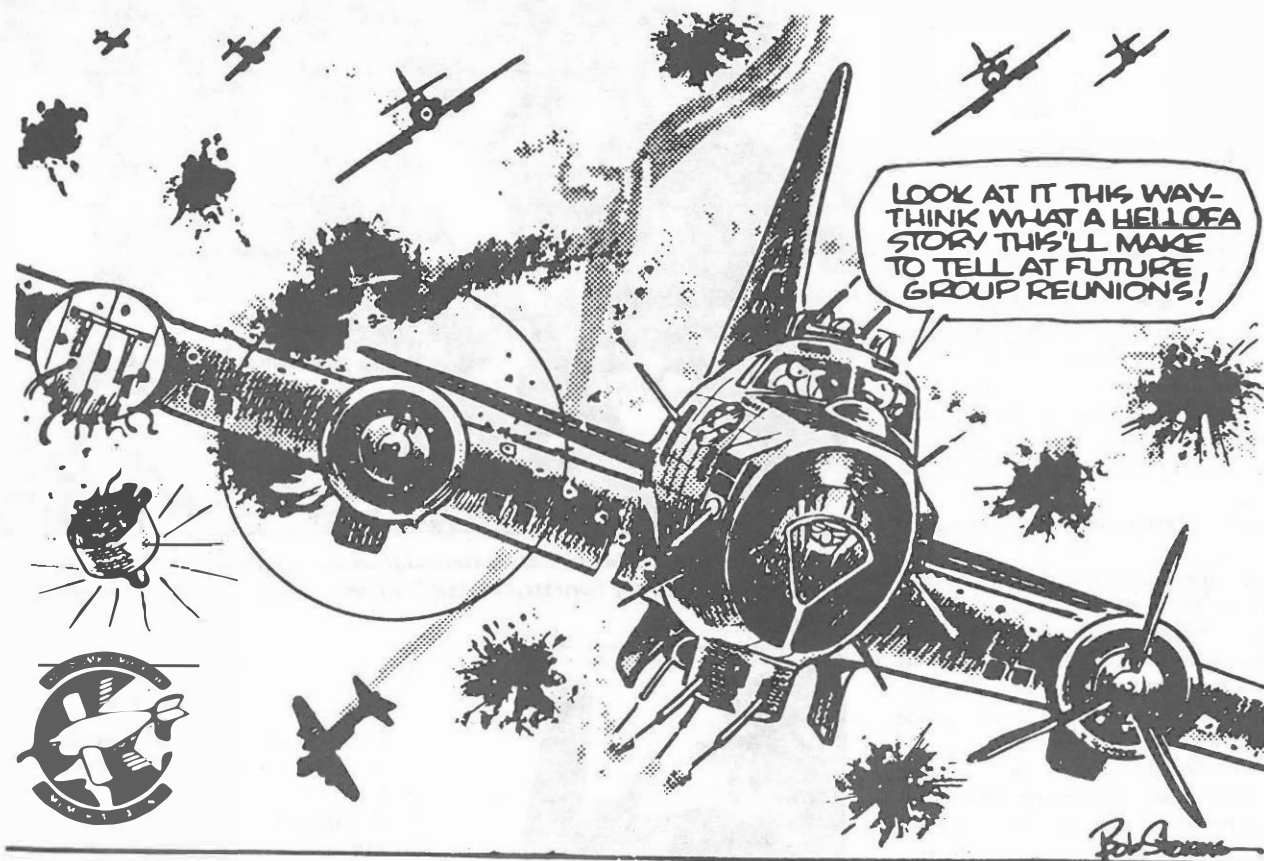
Frontier Captain George Meshko after completing 25 missions over Germany as a ball-turret gunner on a B-17 Flying Fortress. George was 18 years old when he completed 25 missions and was retained in England as an instructor. George enlisted in the Air Corps when he just turned 17. How many 17 year old boys today would fight to keep our country free? And without the use of drugs. The average life of a B-17 crew was 15 missions, so George knew he was living on borrowed time during his last ten missions. Talk about pressure on young kids. George returned to Colorado after the war and learned to fly. He was hired as a Frontier co-pilot in the early '50s. He is now a Senior Captain.

World War II Humor

This cartoon is by Bob Stevens, who is recognized as one of the top aviation cartoonists in the country. Mr. Stevens was a WW II fighter pilot and in 1950 set a

world's speed record in an F-86A "Saber" jet (711.75mph). He retired from the Air Force as a Colonel. After his retirement he became a cartoonist for the Copley News Service where his work was syndicated in over 300 papers world-wide. He has been

presented with four Lincoln Day Awards and five National Freedom Foundation Honor Medals. Bob Stevens can see the humor in any situation and has a genius for recording it. Bob makes his home in Fallbrook, California.



FELLOW 99ers, AND FRIENDS:

As of this March 1, 1983, Newsletter, I am stepping down as Editor. I'm involved in other endeavors, and was so before becoming associated with the 99th. My state of health is quite a factor, also. My thanks to all of you for your contributions, and the kind words. Sorry I was unable to put more of your items in here, but as you know, that's impossible! I would appreciate it, by the way, if from now on you would send any, and all correspondence to Albuquerque. Thank you! By the way, Bernie would like to know if any of you have talent in this area? Editor, I mean!

Your sincere friend, frank english

Re the new ROSTER and my "fox pass" strikeout of one THOMAS GARSIDE, whom I inadvertently marked "KIA"--I heard about this from George Ceen--I still thought I was correct, but fortunately, I was wrong! So, deepest apologies to you, Tom! I got Tom's phone No. thru his address in the Roster and we had a nice chat. (Our 1st anything since he left us in Oudna, went into the Hospital there, and was sent home (Nev. '43), after flying 42 missions as a gunner (waist). I 1st met Tom in Sioux City, then we went to Navarin together.

Remember our 1st crew bailout, and crash landing (347th-Cotton Eyed Joe)? Well, Tom was one of the boys who bailed out. They had to go out the main door as the bomb bay doors had been hit, and mangled by flak. I think I was torn off. The pilots came in on 1 wheel, no flaps, etc.; the hydraulics were shot. Nobody hurt, as I remember, as I watched. I was down on the line in Gp. Tech Supply, then. Tom, and his crew(s) went thru a lot of hell. Just to show you how the ball bounces, and how I got balled up, on the day Tom's ship came back (I wasn't on our base at the time); when I did get back, someone told me Tom had been killed. Tom told me today that what happened was that Tom Shannon (who resembled Tom G.) wanted to change places with Tom as he was ordinarily in the Radio room and didn't get much chance to fire his 50. Would you believe a fragment of flak, no larger than the tip of an ordinary index finger came thru the large waist gun (right-side) window, hit Tom Shannon in the jugular vein. I know; I had to come and see so I could go get another window! Do you call this Fate, or just say--There but for the Grace of God, go I? It was good talking to you Tom! Sorry, again! Take care, and see you at one of our Reunions soon, I hope!

Dear Readers: "True patriotism is more than getting a lump in your throat when the flag passes by. It involves determination on your part to see that America remains free. It involves your willingness to put the best interest of the nation ahead of your own self-interest.

"Single interests may be important, but the art of democracy is the ability to recognize the common good. The ability to give, not just take. Two hundred and thirty-one million people can pull our nation apart or pull it together.

"Which way did you pull today?"

(The above message was written by Harry J. Gray, chairman and chief executive officer of United Technologies, Hartford, Conn. Beautiful? From the Los Angeles Times "Dear Abby" column-1/20/83.)

TO: Bob Karstensen, Pres of the 451st Bomb Group (B-23&7/8ths)--

Dear Bob, George sent me your lovely Nov. 13, 1982 rag, laughingly called a Newsletter (I suppose!) by your deranged bunch. It was almost a pleasure to read it. (Seriously, Bob, it was a darb, as usual.) As you noticed, some things I blurbed in our last Epistle. I want to keep in touch with you, personally, like it or not, OK! Thanks for your terrific poems! They remind me of Spam! (frank e.)

ADDENDUM--you name it!--(To Bernie's PRESIDENT'S CORNER)--My apologies, Bernie, for not continuing on with the following 'P.S.' bit. I got carried away in order to retype, and paste down your remarks re your opening remarks, down to 'Your Friend, Bernie Barr, plus Rex Carnes' Reunion Message'--so leave us now corntinue with the rest of your very interesting story, to wit: (and I quote!); P.S.--I like to read and do a lot, bunch--well, I read, and George Coen knows this. He has brought me some of his books to read--one of them is so great (I don't say this about many books) that I want you to know it too. It's the atory of a dear friend of ours--The B-17. From the beginning in the 1930's through the fighting in WWII--the real war story of the plane--"The Queen of the Air." I know it's true because it tells the story in a few sentences of my first combat mission out of Java in Jan. 1942. I was copilot. I'm sure that mission helped me lose my hair, and turn what's left, grey. His account, Pg. 215--"Most of the time, however, the fighters mangled the Fortress formations. Unless the Zero pilots exploited the weakness of the new B-17E, the crew found they were immeasurably better equipped with their bomber to hold off the enemy than they had been with the older models. Fifteen Zeros attacked two B-17E's over Menado Bay and confidently came in with stern attacks. In the running battle of more than one hour, the Fortresses claimed six fighters; Japanese records showed the claim authentic. "But the Japanese never let up. Both bombers were refueling at Kendari when five Zeros swept low for strafing attacks. One B-17 got away after a running fight, starting on its take off roll. The other was burned on the ground." MY ACCOUNT: We arrived at Malang, Java, late on the afternoon of Jan. 14, 1942. The next day the crew serviced the plane and loaded a full load of bombs. On the 16th we flew into Kendari, an advanced, sod covered field, to be in position to attack Menado, Celebes, at sunup the following day. On Jan. 17th, two B-17E's in formation, dropped their (our) bombs successfully on target at sunup. As the bomb bay doors closed the tail gunner reported enemy Zero fighters attacking from six o'clock, low. For the next hour we were attacked from all directions, high, low, and level by fifteen Zero fighters. Our gunners shot down six. We were hit many times, and fortunately, only one of our crew members was wounded; the tail gunner on my plane. The two B-17's did land back at Kendari for treatment of the wounded gunner, and to refuel the planes. Fuel was pumped into the planes by hand operated hand pumps from fifty-five gallon drums. As I helped the Dutch docter put a splint on the gunner's knee, the others pumped gasoline. The wound was bound, and the plane half refueled when the air raid siren sounded. This was one heck of a spot to be in! The pilot ordered the crew to button up the plane for immediate take off--we started without warmup or check of the engines--no time for warmup--the pilot began the take off roll across the grass field. As I raised the landing gear, after having set the superchargers during the take off roll, five Zero fighters attacked us from the tail. The plane was riddled with bullets from tail to nose. The ceckpit was filled with crashing, exploding bullets which were creasing the pilot's, and my hair. Over half of the instruments were knocked out and removed over half of the windshield in front of the pilot. The good ole plane stayed in the air. After several more damaging attacks from the Zeros we were able to escape into a nearby thunderstorm. The enemy fighters returned to the airstrip and destroyed the other B-17 on the ground. Even with the extensive damage to our plane we were able to make the six hour flight back to Java. The plane was repaired and flew many more missions in Java, Australia, New Guinea, etc. This book is a very vivid history of the B-17. I'm sure you can find an account of some of your activities as the author gives details of missions out of Africa, England, and Italy. I have remembered many of those that I flew out of Italy, and you will too. OH! The Book: "Flying Forts", by Martin Caidin--published by Ballantine Books, New York.

Bernie

Bernie, now you know why I got carried away, as previously mentioned! That account was terrific, as I'm sure the rest of our 99ers will agree! Thanks. (For my money, Martin Caidin is tops! Have any of you ever read "Black Thursday?" Believe me, it is one of the must!--about Schweinfurt, Germany raids by the 8th AF where they lost 60 planes on the 1st mission, and 60 on the 2nd!)

fhe

Steve, I thought I would give you some material to work with in this, my last issue as Editor. I know you have had some replies to your queries, but try and glean something out of this mess (collectively), I mean! OK!
Kindest Regards, June 14 1982 31 Parkland Road
Frank English (former ED.,
now just one of the common people.)
Say Hi to Paul Hogan for me--I
think he is really funny!

Mona Vale 2103

Sydney, Australia

Dear George:

Your very welcome letter of May 28 would have crossed one of mine to you, so I'll speed this on its way and hope it catches up.

Thanks for enclosing the B-17 list...I think that's the way to put it together....number, nickname, regular crew, what happened to the plane. Other information such as squadron or crew chief and so on can always be included of course.

Since I last wrote, Charles Scheu has confirmed that Flak Happy was 232023. He also crewed 229509, "Bad Penny".

"Bad Penny" carried a painting on the tail of Uncle Sam thumbing his nose, and that's another interesting little sidelight of 99th history. Several of the airplanes had paintings on the tail, which was unusual - there was Whizzer, Sweater Girl and no doubt others. From the look of it, these paintings were done before the group started carrying squadron identification numerals on the tail.

Charles Scheu also sent along an interesting clipping about 13 of the 99th's original B-17s having 1241 combat missions between them - an average of 95 each. "Bad Penny" had 94, and others were Bugs, Sweater Girl, Yankee Doodle, Never Satisfied, El Diablo and Miss Fury.

I was interested to note that the 99th took some of the 483rd Group's new B-17Gs in exchange for B-17Fs in spring 1944. This explains a very dramatic photo of World War II - it appears on page 237 of Ed Jablonski's "Flying Fortress" book, and in other books. It shows a B-17 trailing a sheet of flame and with the right wing breaking away. The only 483rd loss on this mission, April 15 1944 to Nis, Yugoslavia, was a B-17F, number 25786. As this B-17F would have gone overseas nearly a year before the 483rd Group did, I was a little confused. Now it would seem that this was in fact previously a 99th Group aircraft, and would probably have had many missions with the 99th. Wonder if anyone remembers her?

Anyway, thanks again. Glad you liked the B-17 book - rest assured that the next one will tell a lot more about the 99th, and 5th Wing.

Very best wishes,

Steve Birdsall

P.S. I have read a lot of your works, Steve, and really enjoyed same! Keep up the good work. Thanks for mentioning the 99th! (fhe)

October 18, 1982

The 99th Bomb Grp. Historical Society
2908 Aliso Drive
Albuquerque, NM 87110

Dear George,

This letter has reference to Steve Birdsall's May 28th, 1982 letter expressing an interest in the names of the B-17s of the 99th Bomb Group.

At the fall reunion in Michigan several of us from the 346th Squadron tried to recall the names of the B-17s that were on the flight line during the Spring and Summer of 1944.

Here is our list:

El Diablo	Mighty Mike
Battlin Bobby	Shady Lady
Weary Willie	Our Gal Sal
Bugs Buddy	Bum's Rush
Bugs Bunny	Vicious Vixen
2nd Patches	Hubba Hubba
Roger the Lodger	War Eagle
"064" (No name)	Heaven Can Wait
Leapin Lena	Ding A Ling
Going My Way	

The group consisted of Rex Greathouse, Al Wertz, Pete Bezek, Lorin Zick, Dick Stack and me. Rex was not real certain about Ding A Ling.

Hope this information is of value to Steve. -Best Regards, Jim Sopp

Dear George,

19 Nov. 1982

Enclosed is my '83 membership dues. I apologize for not thanking you sooner for the picture from the April reunion.

Just received the Nov. Newsletter. Wish I could have attended the Muskegon reunion as I noticed there were quite a few 416ther's there.

I see that you sent Frank a tentative roster of 99th aircraft. How about checking your files? I sent you a complete roster of the aircraft and crews that made the flight from Florida to Africa. I note that Steve Birdsall asked for a copy of the picture of the tail of the Bad Penny (42-29509). I said I'd send him one, but upon checking, I discovered I don't have one available. Will check my negatives, just did, and have the negative. Will have a copy made and send him one.

Another item. In a previous Newsletter, you mentioned the 3rd of May raid on Bizerte, and Tunis. The Bad Penny was one, and the last of the three planes to return to Navarin. To the best of my knowledge, we were the only one to make all three passes at the target and return to base. I sure would like to know who arranged to have all the vehicles lined up beside the runway for our landing (with their headlights illuminating the runway)? I sure want to thank them and also "Big Fencé" for directing us home.

Hope to get to next May's reunion.

Regards,
Mitch (Carl D. Mitchell)

P.S.--My middle initial is "D", not "E", as you have on my address!

Hi Mitch!--this is Frank. Thanks for your welcome letter, and the info to to Steve. I assume, naturally, he has said photo. In regard to the vehicles, I was talking to Gen. Upthegrove about that, or vice versa; he knows! As for the "D", Carl, I note it is still "E" in our latest Roster(?) Tell gfc! (fhe)

October 18, 1982

The 99th Bomb. Grp. Historical Society
2908 Aliso Drive, NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110

(Earl sure did, and I'm sure Rex will do the same, in May!)
See you too, Jim, OK?

Dear Frank & George,

I just wanted to tell you how much I enjoyed being at the 99th B.G. reunion in Muskegon. I thought Earl Silvis did an excellent job as host and I enjoyed the extra activities but I was equally interested in just having the time to renew old friendships.

This reunion served as the catalyst for getting the officers of the Marvin A. Smiths combat crew of the 346th together for the first time since 1944. We had many memories and moments to re-live and we promised ourselves not to go another thirty eight years before another reunion.

Of equal importance was the experience of becoming reacquainted with a man whose face I have looked at hundreds of times in a photograph of our crew at Tortorella. The unknown face was Al Wertz, who took care of "Battlin' Bobby". As you know Al was at the reunion.

Lastly, I believe both of you have done an outstanding job in starting this Historical Society, which has come from a modest beginning to a viable organization. It takes a lot of time and a great deal of effort.

I salute both of you.

Sincerely,

Jim Sopp
Jim Sopp

Dear Jim,

I am printing your letter (1) as general interest, and (2), to remark about the last two paragraphs, in particular!

- a. All credit goes to George Coen, in regard to being the man in back of our 'Hysterical Society'! Granted, there are good, former 99ers, living in Albuquerque, who are 'left-hand' men, without whom, George would be the first to admit, are 'Honcho's'--each in his own way! They are all a great bunch, no doubt about it!
- b. I have only been involved a short time, and as you now know, am stepping down. By no stretch of the imagination would I have the audacity to say 'I was there' when I wasn't! I just tried. Many thanks for the lift, anyhow. Sincerest Regards, frank english

Fellow 99ers, other former 12th, and 15th AF Members, and Friends, let me once again take up the cudgel in behalf of joining together, once again, our born-again 15th Air Force Association! For the paltry sum of \$10 a year, those of you not now enrolled can help swell our ranks (of which we now have over 1300 Members), to a greater degree. Just write to: Fifteenth Air Force Association, P.O. Box 15, March Air Force Base, CA 92518, giving them your name, address, what Gp. & Sq. you were in, etc., and you won't regret it. A dandy Newsletter comes periodically, also. It's our 40th Anniversary, to be celebrated at March in Nov.-10-13, 1983!

September 28, 1982

Dear George:

This letter is concerning a letter to you from Steve Birdsall dated May 28, 1982 and published in the September 1, 1982 newsletter.

Reference is made to a plane numbered 42-31522 lost February 22, 1944. I was the navigator on a replacement crew assigned to the 416th. with pilot Henry Schmaltz, co-pilot Gerald Briggs and bombardier Marvin Lorber. For our first few missions with the 416th. we were split up and I was flying as navigator on 42-31522 on February 22, 1944 with a pilot whose name I cannot remember, but the co-pilot was B. C. Kyrouac of 14604 Harvey Avenue, Harvey, Illinois and the bombardier was A. J. Andrzejewski, 118 Antelope St., Dunkir, New York. (These addresses are 1944 addresses.) Our primary target was Regensburg, but it was clouded over and we didn't drop our bombs on that target, but were jumped by fighters and during the attack our two left engines and gas tanks, plus the electrical system needed to transfer the gasoline to the right side were shot out. Our radio man was wounded during the attack. We crossed the Alps on two engines trying to make it back to Foggia, but ran out of gasoline and had to ditch in the Adriatic just off the peninsula where Pola, Italy is situated. We were picked up by the Germans and held captive in Italy for about a week and then moved to Frankfurt, Germany to an interrogation center at which time the enlisted men were separated from us and sent to another camp, while we four officers were sent to Barth, Germany, Stalag Luft I, where we remained until the war ended, being liberated by the Russians. I never saw the enlisted men again and do not remember their names. Kyrouac, Andrzejewski and I were in the same barracks for the duration in Germany and came back to the States together on the same ship, but I never saw the pilot again. I have talked to Kyrouac once on the phone, but he is the only one I have been in touch with.

I heard from other POW's who were from the 99th. Bomb Group, 416th. Sqdn. that regular crew that I had gone overseas with was shot up over Bulgaria or Rumania and the navigator and one gunner killed, plus the co-pilot Briggs being shot up severely, so I guess I was lucky in a left-handed kind of way.

I have just recently retired from the U.S. Postal Service, so haven't had time until now to make reunions, etc., but maybe I can, now.

I thought this information might be of interest to you, so am passing it on.

Please note my new address.

Sincerely,

Roland P. Bigley
Roland P. Bigley
P.O. Box 1103
Ingram, TX 78025



HEAR YE! HEAR YE!--Gen. Upthegrove kindly sent me this picture of our 99th Hdqtrs. area, etc., at Tortorella, Italy. Can anyone, especially Hdqtrs. people, please identify our pertinent Bldgs.? If not mistaken, I believe the one-story, flat top structure in the almost immediate foreground was our Movie Theatre, and Debriefing Emperium, right? This is for you, Jim Sepp, and as it does not show the whole area, this view has me disoriented, from this aerial angle. In case anyone is wondering why Gen. Upthegrove didn't fill me in, he only spent a few hours here, before being 'hailed off' to take over the 304th Bomb Wing (B-24's), outside of Cerignola. (circa Jan. '44)--I had the original photo reduced to fit here.--(fhe)

PROGRESS REPORT: I'm sure all of you good people realize that in the last Newsletter regarding General Upthegrove, he was out of the Hospital, & home before the Holidays. He informs me that all goes well. Gogetter that he is, he's a hard man to keep down. Gen. Upthegrove says he can't operate the snow blower himself, but at least starts it for Betty. The Doctor says he can't do anything strenuous for awhile, which is only natural after an operation like that. However, the main thing is that all goes well and Gen. Upthegrove is in training to take on all comers for 15 rounds, come summer! Our best wishes go to you, and Betty, Gen.; we sure would like to see you both in Albuquerque this coming May! How about it? Take care!

MEMO: Don't delay! Fill out, and send in now, your Albuquerque Reunion Reservation Form (on Page 2). Don't forget to include an extra \$100, because I'm a heavy drinker! Bring the Old Battleaxe along, remember!

THE 99th BOMBARDMENT GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY
2908 ALISO DRIVE NE
ALBUQUERQUE, N. M. 87110

J. O. Grizzell
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