

99th BG

B-17 FLYING FORTRESS

THE

99th Bomb Group Historical Society

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SOCIETY OFFICERS, 1988-1989

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THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

SEASONS GREETINGS!

GOOD NEWS from Jim Sopp telling that the walks to and around the 99th Bomb Group Memorial at Wright/Patterson Air Force Base are now in place. The problem occurred due to a change in Command at the crucial time when our Memorial was being placed. Prior to the installation of our Memorial the Air Force Museum had taken care of this part. Our able Committee had done their job correctly insofar as they had been instructed. This was not an oversight by our fine Committee headed up by our own Jim Sopp.

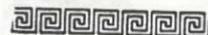
An interesting report came this month from our "burned out" Yellowstone Park. In one of the back areas where the fire was quite intense the Park Service discovered a crashed B-17 that had disappeared sometime in 1943 and had not been seen due to the heavy timbered area that it was in. I'd like very much to know more of the particulars about this plane and it's crew and will attempt to gain more information.

More fine articles this past month and what a fine report from George Frame. Along with all of the other most interesting information it is great to see these articles by people such as Walt Beckham with his view of us from a fighter pilot's perspective. All that and humor too! Each of us has stories to relate and we certainly look to each of you for these. George Frame recalled some instances that occurred when I was flying my missions and these were things long forgotten by myself and certainly refreshing to remember again.

Our Reunion at McAllen, Texas is just a short time away now and we encourage those of us who haven't made those reservations to do so now and take advantage of the 10% discount by getting these in before January 15th. We look forward to seeing you all there!

The Holiday Seasons are about through and we hope each of you had a Merry Christmas and we'll hope each of us has a Happy and Prosperous New Year!

Sincerely;



RECOLLECTIONS



416th BOMB SQUADRON
99TH BOMB GROUP, HEAVY

Granted after forty three or four years my memory has dimmed a little so i have allowed myself some literary license. However, most of the stories are true and happened just about as told.

John McWethy
5194 Rahlves Drive
Dastro Valley, CA 94546

COUNTRY LIVING ITALIAN STYLE

One dark night in September 1944, our ten-man B-17 crew arrived at a small airfield outside of Foggia, Italy. We were fed and assigned a sleeping area for the night; we would be given our own tent the next day. The crew that we spent the night with had somehow been given, or had scrounged, a second tent that they were planning to make into comfortable living quarters. The second tent was up and kind of made a spare bedroom; so they had no choice, when asked by the squadron's first sergeant, but to accept us as guests for the night. Then as the book title reads, we entered laughing. Soon we had met our host crew and received the admonition--laugh now--"Because when you fly, it's serious business and there would be nothing more to kid about." This was a seasoned combat crew and must know what they were talking about! Well, not really; we found that [they] were veterans all right, if five missions makes one a veteran. The way the Air Corps was counting then, five missions could've been only three flights, because crossing a certain latitude counted as two missions. The one statement they made that was correct was, combat flying is serious business. It certainly is, and when not flying, we had a good time laughing, joking and teasing.

The next morning, we saw what we had missed the night before -- a bunch of tents at various angles. After breakfast, we were given, as the military would say, "one tent, pyramidal six man." The only instructions were, "Here's a good place."

The next thing was to see what had been done with the other tents in the area. Some were just sitting on the ground, some were stretched out to make more room inside, and one in particular was lowered inside by about four feet and had concrete walls. Now this latter idea seemed good, but why not combine both ideas, go down several feet and also out, to give us a larger room? We got a pick and shovel and took one whack at the ground. Hard, just like concrete, but we'd do it. About an hour or two later, we had made very little progress when one of the Italian laborers the Army hires asked if we would like to make a deal. Would we?! So for a pair of shoes, some cigarettes, and K-rations, we made a deal and had a hole in the ground and a tent over it.

Thank goodness the weather was still warm. If it had been cold, then we would have been in real trouble. Of course we weren't there for a "Robinson Crusoe" kind of experience! Between flights, we developed plans for heating the tent. We knew the Army did not furnish stoves, but in answer to our queries, the sheetmetal shop on the flight line would cut and weld a fifty gallon drum if one could be found. They also would roll fifty caliber machine gun ammunition cans into stove pipes. The first troops to occupy the area were the British Air Corps. The British located a fuel dump across the runways and another 1000 yards farther away from their squadron areas. Now is the time for fate to to intervene. This fuel dump was between our squadron area and our flightline, and contained a number of fifty gallon drums. Originally, it was probably used to fuel aircraft and was no doubt a busy place, but by the time we arrived it was just there. Even though we were admonished by the Army to stay out and told not to take any drums, nothing was done about it. The second or third drum we kicked was empty and we rolled it down to the flightline for cutting and welding.

Meanwhile, back at the ranch, what to fuel this stove with!! Gasoline was hard to come by, so why not wood? Well, hens' teeth turned out to be more plentiful than wood. Our squadron had one fire, thank goodness not a serious one, caused by the volatility of automobile fuel and they didn't want any more. The Army set up a rack with 15 or 20 auxiliary fuel tanks which would provide fuel for the squadron stoves.

We needed a valve to control the gasoline flow, and of course the logical place was our flightline. No luck there, but the mechanics did suggest trying the British. One inquiry was enough. A nice guy, but either he or we spoke a foreign language. We thought at the time it was a Yorkshire accent; now, I think it was probably Cockney. We wanted a valve and to the British airman, a valve was a radio tube, but what we really wanted was a petcock. Sorry, it seemed neither American nor British supply stocked them. The final answer was an unused bailout bottle. The bailout bottle was made to hold oxygen under pressure for use in bailing out of the airplane. If it was hit by a shell or something, it could explode and cause more damage than it was worth; in short, no one carried them.

About the fifth revision of the fire box worked like a charm, but it was exciting -- either the 3rd or 4th revision exploded every half hour. No harm but lots of noise. Ingenuity is helpful but a complete understanding of "Moonlight Requisitioning" is a necessity.

THE FOGGIA HILTON AND RESORT-CA 1944

Even "Don Quixote" won a battle once in a while and it seemed we had won one when we made the deal to have the hole dug for our tent. We were just about set except for a couple of things. We had to do something about the dirt in the tent and the only answer was to plaster the sides and lay some kind of flooring. We found the bricks and with the help of our Italian workman, soon had the walls plastered and a brick floor. The next project was a real front door (a home-made one anyway). The posts were sunk in the ground about three feet and concreted. It's hard to believe even though the dollar went farther then, but all this for a couple of packs of cigarettes or "K-rations." The "K-rations" are individually packed breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Each crew member was given a case and a half in case we had to crash-land in the arctic on the way overseas. Needless to day, we didn't. Cigarettes were rationed, one carton per man per week; we were evenly divided, smoking and nonsmoking, the nonsmokers gave theirs to the smokers as long as they were available for bartering; i.e., eggs or work.

If we couldn't be home at least we deserved to be comfortable, and we were. The tent was sealed off with dirt piled around the outside, and the stove kept it dry and warm. However, unlike the "Hilton's" of today, we didn't have an attached bath, but we did have a basin for washing (a metal GI helmet and water heated on the stove). The Army furnished their "Standard Four Holer" about 100 yards away, and at night, when it was really cold, that 100 yards seemed like an eternity. 200 yards the other direction from our tent was the shower building--a dressing room and shower room big enough for six or eight. We had been told by all the doom sayers to get our minds set for cold water showers; you can imagine how our spirits soared when we found out that here we had hot water. Without a great deal of plumbing fixtures, such as, pipe and faucets, but a tremendous amount of American ingenuity, a hot water shower was devised. A tower slightly higher than the shower building was erected and a large tank was placed on top. A pipe connecting the tank and shower heads ran down through a large gasoline-fired stove and gravity did the rest. The original organizers always meant to add a cold water tank for mixing, but being typical Americans, never quite got "'round to it." I must have convinced myself that scalding water was fun, or was it penance? At any rate, I seemed to always have to hold the wash cloth under the water, then let it cool and then wash! When the rainy season started, we thought it would be nice to have "shower boots" so we wouldn't get our shoes muddy going back and forth. What better than the fleece-lined boots we flew in? Remember, members of the military don't steal; they may borrow or requisition, but never steal! So, we got two of the largest boots we could find in the supply bins, figuring one size fits all. On arrival back at our tent, we found we had two right boots. Back to the drawing board we had to go!

Every quality hotel has at least one dining room and ours was no exception--conveniently located about 50 yards from our tent. The building was sort of a "U"; however, one leg was shorter than the other--the longer one was the enlisted mens' club. Connected to this was the mess hall, then at the other end the kitchen and forming the short leg the officers' club. We sent money back to the States for metal mess hall trays but for some reason we didn't receive them and had to continue to use our mess kits. The road from the flight line ran through the middle of the squadron, bisecting it; the ground crews on one side and flight crews on the other. The mess hall was on our side and the shower and wash tubs for the mess kits on the other. With that unique wisdom that upper echelons seem to use, a system was devised that had every one in the squadron crossing that road. Now that winter was approaching, the Army Engineers decided it was time to repair the road, scrape it to remove the chuck holes and re-do the surface so the water would run off. To do this, clay was brought in and packed down hard, just like smooth concrete when it was dry, and greased glass when it was wet. During the rainy season, every one, regardless of rank, sat down in the middle of the road very unceremoniously, and one didn't dare laugh. That was surely inviting your next spill.

This being a true resort, we had a flexible schedule. When we flew, we got up at three or four in the morning and generally took off about day-break. On the days we weren't flying, our time was our own and we had all these "K-rations." Why not have breakfast at home, and forget the mess hall? We saved our bread and butter from the mess hall and purchased eggs from the laundry man--two eggs for one pack of cigarettes--that was five cents then, and got some bacon grease from the kitchen. Later, we found a source for canned cheese. We now had almost all the comforts of home.

Unlike bases in the States, we did not have a PX store. Our PX was a shed with a counter outdoors open once a week for cigarettes, candy, toothpaste, and shaving supplies. I think we received a beer ration once in the nine months I was there.

We really should have complained to the management because this resort was missing the usual amenities; i.e., swimming pool, tennis courts, and gym with sauna.

LOCAL TOUR--MEALS NOT INCLUDED

It took almost a day to get to Bari from Foggia and who knows how long to get back. Of course, everything depended on how many different rides we needed. After we had been flying for about two months, we were given a three day pass. The idea of getting away seemed like just what the doctor ordered and it had only one slight flaw--where to go? Just who decided we should go to Bari I don't know, but it was a good idea. Bari is a fairly large seaport on the Adriatic Sea in southern Italy. There were no buses but we didn't see any problem. The easiest way to get from the field to Foggia was to hitchhike, and just because we were planning to go further shouldn't make that much difference.

One ride dropped us at an intersection in the middle of a farm town; the truck was going one way and we the other. The day was sunny and warm. There were plenty of trucks, a few cars, and several horse-drawn carts. The pavement was rough; similar to cobble stones, and curvy, the wrong combination for speeding GI trucks. Walking along we heard "ka chunk, ka chunk." It sounded like a machine of some type, but at the moment we couldn't place its location. Then, up ahead on the right, was a stone wall and the noise seemed to be coming from there. My curiosity would soon be satisfied because the gate was open. Inside, in a large sandy yard, were racks of spaghetti drying. Each rack held several bamboo poles from which hung spaghetti. Across the yard, we could hear the "ka chunk" more distinctly. We went through a doorway into a large room and there at one end was our machine. It was a spaghetti press! There were two men working this operation. One would stuff the press full of dough and the other would catch it as the spaghetti came out. The man under the press had on a purple sweater that looked like it had been worn every day for a year. He would catch the spaghetti over a sweated arm and move to a bamboo pole, and with one swipe spread it evenly over the pole. When the rack was full, he wheeled it out in the yard with the others and with the flies, gasoline fumes, and dust. It was funny that all the time we were in there watching, neither worker spoke to the other, or to us. Maybe this was one of the original self-guided tours?

When we finally reached Bari, it came as a shocking bit of knowledge that we couldn't eat in the Army Mess Hall because we didn't have official orders to travel there. We managed to find the Red Cross. We wouldn't starve. We thought we could survive on cookies, doughnuts, and coffee for a few days, but it was easier said than done. We began asking questions about where we could find some solid food, and almost immediately were told about a couple who regularly sold meals to GIs--as I recall, a man who was either an attorney or an architect, who made extra money by feeding GIs. By doing this, his family could make money and maintain some semblance of their normal life.

The trip ended with one wild ride in the back of a British Army lorry, driven by Yugoslavian partisans.

Coming soon--"The Wild Ride."

AND PRESENTS UNDER THE TREE?

The engines droned on and the airplane flew in large circles over the Adriatic Sea. This sounds like the beginning of a romantic novel, but nothing could be farther from the truth. I was sitting on the floor of the radio room, the only one with a chair and a window was the radio operator, and he couldn't see very much through the haze and fog. We knew by instinct what was happening--we were taking part in forming the air force--this is how it's supposed to work. You take off and as soon as possible assume your position in your squadron, seven planes; the squadron then joins the group, four squadrons; and finally our position in the air force. For one's peace of mind, it's best not to dwell on the facts--your plane and all the others have full gas tanks and about five thousand pounds of bombs--of course, everyone is at a different altitude.

Also, by this time, you feel as if half the day has gone by. Reveille was sounded at four a.m. Breakfast and then down to the flight line before six, our only job there is to pull the propellers through, one complete revolution to clear out any oil or condensation that might be in the lower cylinders, and wait for our officers and radio operator to finish briefing. The length of time from reveille to lift-off--up to four hours. To while away the time, and also to get warm on the dark, cold nights, we would fill a 50 caliber ammo can about half full of 100 octane gasoline and throw a match into it. Surprisingly, it often took several matches to get it started. Now, as they say on TV, "Don't try this at home!" Now we're finally airborne. Before continuing, let me quote my diary entry for that day:

Dec. 25, 1944 - Christmas Day - Some present for the "jerrys" anyway. Our target was the Brux Oil Refineries. We hit Brux with ten 500 pounders, which was a good present for the Germans - Brux is their key oil supply and a high priority target. The mission was really a milk run, very little flak, but the temperature was -50 degrees centigrade and I flew the tail position with my heated suit turned up high and really froze."

When the manufacturer enclosed the waist gunners' positions they put heat ducts above the window but it did not help very much in that extreme cold. Dressing in layers did help however. We started with normal cotton underwear, wool "longjohns," wool shirt and trousers, wool sweater, rayon socks and finally wool socks. On board, our shoes were tied to the parachute harness and two more layers were added; a pair of heated coveralls and jacket and then an alpaca-lined jacket and pants. On our feet, heated flannel slippers, another pair of wool socks and fleece-lined boots. Our hands had three pairs of gloves, rayon, wool, and leather-heated gauntlets.

The idea of flying on Christmas day didn't demoralize us, but it didn't make us a really happy lot. The normal big meal in the Army is at noon and we knew we weren't going to be back by noon. The weather wasn't that bad, we'd just have to set our minds on leftovers or at least held over dinner! To add to our misery, the mission took almost nine hours, the longest we had flown to date.

The normal procedure at the end of a mission is to clean guns, fuel the plane, and turn in our flying gear to supply. By this time, the German Airforce was practically nonexistent, so the guns weren't used and didn't need to be cleaned then anyway. Arriving home after dark, knowing everyone had eaten, we were in no hurry to get at the tedious job

of refueling. All of a sudden, there were horns honking, people yelling, "Hurry up, hurry up." Our answer was, "Why? Everyone's eaten." "Noo we haven't, not until everybody is there, so PLEASE hurry."

An Army Chow line is much like a buffet. First the hot food, vegetables, meat, and potatoes, gravy, salad and dessert. An Army Mess tray is like a "Swanson's" TV dinner plate. The mess tray has one large compartment and three smaller ones, if only we had had one, but we didn't. A mess kit has three compartments, one the size of a small frying pan and one the same size as the first but split in half. Now go back to the first sentence of this paragraph and start filling the mess kit with generous helpings of turkey, dressing, potatoes, gravy, vegetables, and salad. Now top the whole thing off with mince pie, pumpkin pie, ice cream, and bread. The logical question is why take everything at once? Why not go back a second time? It was rare that the whole squadron ate at the same time, so hurry again entered the picture. It was interesting once, and because of the precarious balancing act necessary to get everything to a table, I'm glad that I only had to carry that much food once.

We are all hasty to condemn "they" for one ruling or another, and just when things seem blackest, we find out just how much compassion "they" really has, as in the above situation. Christmas Dinner for all, not just some!

WAR IS HELL?

In the military, when you report for new duty as a group, the first words you hear are, "Go back, you'll be sorry." Of course, you can't go back so the next thing is to ask one of the two most important questions on your mind. "When do we eat, I haven't for hours?" and "When do we get leave?" There is no official order to the questions, but generally, food comes first and no matter what the situation actually is, you tell the person in charge that it has been soooo long since you've eaten that food is just a vague memory. Food was not a problem when we arrived at Foggia. We were taken directly to the mess hall and fed. OK then, when can we expect to get out of here? We found out we had to fly a specific number of missions which would take three to four months.

To further inflate our ego, I think we were too important a crew to give leave to too early. As a result, we didn't go until March, 1945. It was a typical March morning, clear sunny skies, with a hint of a slight chill breeze, when we boarded the transport for the short trip to Naples. The transport was a regular B-17 that had been decommissioned so to speak. The armor plate and gun turrets were removed, thus reducing the weight of the aircraft considerably. As always, we receive the "Official" advice before leaving. "Naples is dangerous, the runways too short, better quit while there's still time." Who ever flew that particular flight new what he was doing. The runway **was** short and it **did** take skill to land safely, and also be able to take off again. There were several planes sitting on the edges of the field that had been flown by pilots that had underestimated the length of the runway and had blown all tires on stopping.

During that period in history, the military was made up of not only different ranks but also Officers and Men. The difference was when overseas, Officers were given or allowed to purchase a "Liquor Ration" and Men were not, so when we left our squadron area, our officers gave us a quart of liquor to take with us on R&R. Now, I'm beginning to feel just like the tourists--off the plane onto a bus and wait. Soon we're seeing a large Italian city for the first time. The usual truck traffic, horse and wagon, a few cars and lots of pedestrians. We sheltered Americans--that's probably the wrong word--maybe underexposed to the hardships of war is better--are not used to seeing dog meat in the butcher shop, but I guess the situation became desperate and meat was meat. The Italians were experts at deception and it was necessary for us to stop and think that we were in the midst of hardship and poverty.

Before boarding the boat to Capri, we stopped for lunch and what do you know--we were served at the table. This must be vacation. I remember only one menu item--a piece of meat that had been dipped in a batter and again, according to my memory, it tasted something like ham. "Of course it does, that's Spam," I was told. In our squadron, we had

Vienna Sausage all the time but never Spam. We may have had it again on Capri, but other than that, Naples was the only time I can remember. Hurry up, on the bus, off the bus, on the boat, here comes Capri and a week of unregimented days.

About mid afternoon, we docked at the Marina Grande and again boarded buses for our hotel; all the luxury hotels on the island were taken over by the military. Our room assignment was not in the hotel itself, but in the annex; a very pleasant, sunny one-story home. We had a room large enough for all six and a real bathroom. Nice to return to the comforts of home. All meals were served at the hotel and one evening, before dinner, a couple [of] us went into the bar for a beer before eating. The bottle was huge, probably a liter and not the 3.1% alcohol we were used to. I have no idea what the percentage was, but it was stronger and you could tell the difference in the style of a luxury hotel. The dining room faced the water. We had a chance to compare our accommodations with those in the hotel itself and I think we had the better deal. We weren't rowdy types, so the privacy was appreciated.

Capri is a small island and it's possible to walk from one end to the other in a day; but no sense in that when you have a week to do it. At the south end of the island is Mount Tiberio and the north end is Ana Capri; in the middle, or saddle, is the Piazza, town square. In 1945, all the hotels were on or close to the piazza. Even though we are on an island, it doesn't make any difference. Everything begins and ends at the piazza. Want to go to the Marina Grande? The Funiculare, cable railway to the harbor, starts here; also the path or trail to the Marina Piccola. The swimming beach, it was all boulders then, probably to dissuade invaders from the sea. To view the wonders of Mount Tiberio you walk south along the western shore until you reach the trail leading to the top. Tiberius was Roman Emperor from 14 to 37 A.D. During his reign [he] built a villa on top of the mountain. The ruins of the baths were about all you could make out then, and now, 43 years later, who knows? The ceilings of the baths were still partially visible. The thought that these stones had been there about 1900 years and still formed at least part of a structure--I can see the lure of archaeology.

On a bright March day, the view from Mt Tiberio was breath-taking. Mediterranean blue sea and sky, the piazza and Ana Capri to the north.

We've explored the middle and southern end of the island; now how about the north end? Ana Capri is on a high plateau with a steep narrow road leading up from the piazza. One could either walk or hire a horse and buggy, which we did. On the way up, we watched the local boys riding down the hill on the skate board of the time, a piece of board and one skate; we all agreed, under no circumstances would we try it. Then, Ana Capri was a sleepy little village; time just stood still. The one memorable landmark was the small chapel. Even though the tiny little building had dusty streets all around, the door was wide open, the white building and tile were immaculate. On the floor, in mosaic, was the tree of life, beginning, of course, with Adam and Eve. We were told that one of the famous writers of animal stories lived in Ana Capri. Maybe true or maybe just adds to the glamour.

Several British movie stars had villas on Capri and one allowed hers to be used as a USO, or what ever it's called in the British Army. This was not an exclusive US rest camp. We still had one of the famous sights to see--one that is always listed in the travel brochures--the Blue Grotto. You take the funicolare from the piazza to the Marina Grande and then find a guide to row you around the island to the entrance and then hope that the sea is not too high so you will be allowed to enter, one boat at a time. Our guide had a line over the side and we were curious about what he was fishing for. Before the trip ended, our curiosity was satisfied--Squid. Squid, eh, how could anyone eat that slimy thing? That was then, now I probably would beg the fisherman for some of his hard-earned catch. It seemed like a blink of an eyelash and the week had come to an end. The last evening we had a few drinks at the Cantina and went to the USO villa for the dancing and as the dance was breaking up, a GI came in and said, "I know where you can buy a steak sandwich."

We hadn't had a steak sandwich since we left the States, so out through the dark alleys and passages we went. Sure enough, they were selling steak sandwiches. Here's hindsight again, the room was dimly lit but we were overlooking the water so enough light came in. The sandwiches were a little expensive for the time, about a dollar or a dollar

and a half. I remember the taste was good but the meat was string and a might tough; probably horse meat. On our way back to our room, the walkway was blocked by another GI and our lead person said, "If this 'Limey' would only move out of the way." All of a sudden, this giant or at least in the dark seemed like one, towered over us, "Don't you ever, ever call me that again. I'm an Australian." On our last night, we didn't need a fight. The air became full off "I'm sorry, we didn't mean it, if we'd only known!" It became, thank goodness, a friendly, happy ending to the evening and the week.

NEWS, DUES & VIEWS

Our Secretary, Dick Dempsey, suffered a serious heart attack about November 1st. He returned home November 10th. We called him at home phone No. 617/344-4019 on Dec 7th, and Dick reported that he was doing well.

Dick, it was good to hear your voice. george

This office has been unable to reproduce the microfilmed photographs in the files from Maxwell AFB. We have had to give up entirely on this source. The loss is all the more bitter because Pete Bezek's double-deck tent was to have been our first feature story. We have received requests from the Society of Professional Architects of Mechtat Oulad Hamdu, just south west of Navarin, for photos and plans, but we simply cannot comply. This all the more unfortunate because the Villa a la Bezek would probably have become all the rage from Gibraltar to the Bosphorus. War is heck!
geo

BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE 99BGHS, 1988 - 1989
Fort Lauderdale, FL, June 1988
All terms four years

ELECTED 1985

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Joe Kenney	950 McDougall	Lander WY 82520
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Julius Horowitz	3507 Oaks Way, #911	Pompano Beach FL 33069
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Hi, Walter;

Good news. I have a friend that works over at the Wright-Patterson AFB Historical Society and I told him about the walkway to our memorial. He contacted me the other day and said the walkway to the 99th memorial has been poured.

We are making plans to get to the reunion at McAllen in Feb. Hope to see you there.

— Lloyd Averill

Thank you, Lloyd for the update. Once again the 99th proves that it is still organized.

george

Your editor recently found himself in the hobby department of a local Ben Franklin Store where there was a display of Squadron/Signal Aircraft books. We have already recommended the S/S book about B-17s. On impulse we selected Book No. 45, P-51 MUSTANG IN ACTION, mostly to see if Chet Sluder's Dayton Museum plane was pictured therein. To our surprise, on page 33 we found the familiar Diamondback of 238201, PATCHES SECOND, enroute to the USSR with a P-51 escort.

We quote from page 35:

More P-51Ds would be built than all other Mustang variants combined, a total of 9603. They would equip 45 squadrons in the 8th Air Force alone. With the exception of a few P-47 units, and even fewer P-40 units, Mustangs would equip almost the entire USAAF Fighter force in 1945. The P-51D had met and defeated the best that the Germans and Japanese could send against it. The world was once again safe for free people to inhabit - or was it? Five years later, on a cold desolate peninsula in Asia, an aggressor would again try to impose its will upon an unwilling people. The P-51D would fight again and do very well in this, the first jet war. Still later in 1956, they would fight over the deserts of the Middle East. Israel would use the best of three World War II air forces to protect themselves: Spitfires, Messerschmitts and P-51Ds. There was no question that the Israelis considered the Mustang far and away the best of the three. It would be the last major air action for the Mustang.

We are preparing to publish a book of 99th BG planes along about 1990. Nick Waters of Squadron/Signal suggests that the format be the same as that of STRANGERS IN A STRANGE LAND, and we are starting right now to work out the details. Our faithful readers will recall that we have been sending the pictures which you send us to S/S for reproduction and return. We in turn will be pleased to then return your pictures to you if you so desire. Otherwise they repose in the files until needed.

I recall that in 1981 I said that the 99BGHS would have no assets. Bernie Barr took issue with me, saying that we would have priceless files in our possession. Bernie's estimate stands!

SPLASHER SIX

The 100th Bomb Group

of
World War II

NEWSLETTER

SPRING 1988

A BOOK ABOUT THE 95th

Courage - Honor - Victory: A History of the 95th Bombardment Group (H) and Operational Record for 332 Missions, (2 vols.) by Ian Hawkins and Paul Andres. This work may as its announcement claims be "the most ambitious WWII history of an air combat organization to date." One volume, mammoth, in hard-cover, has 93 chapters with over 200 letters, stories, and anecdotes. The author and anthology committee gave assignments to over 100 former members of the Group and they covered its history, its early days

including a disaster when the cadre first arrived in Alconbury, its major missions, including "The Charge of the Light Brigade" (the Munster Mission), stories of individual crews, escape and evasion, life of mess hall cooks, Kregielife, flight formations, the whole story of life and war at Horham. Ian rewrote and edited the multitude of chapters and came up with an interesting, informative, very readable text, a superb job.

In the second volume, in paper back, military historian Paul Andrews has prepared a mind-boggling compendium which lists every B-17 assigned to the group and what happened to it, the formations and crews on all 321 missions, what happened to all but 7 of the men in the 156 B-17s lost in combat, and much more.

The books will be of special interest to the 100th because much of it was done by Ellis Scripture, the 95th Group Navigator who became the 3rd Air Division Staff Navigator for Curtis LeMay. Ellis was a classmate of Cal Lefevre, Jim Brown, Howard Bassett, Manny Cassimatis, and Harry Crosby at Mather Field.

For \$28.00 plus two dollars for shipping, the books can be obtained from David Dorsey, 95th Bomb Group Association, 125 Clark Street, Clarks Green, PA 18411.

Los Angeles Times

Wednesday, June 26, 1985

Collector Keeps Air Force Songs Flying

By PAUL DEAN, Times Staff Writer

HILLSBOROUGH, Calif.—“Off we go into the wild blue yonder . . . Climbing, uh, into the, um . . . Dum-dee-dum, diddle-dee dum dum dum . . .”

That—plus two verses of “Bless ‘em All” and maybe some grubby words to the tune of “Sweet Betsy From Pike”—is about the limit of most anyone’s knowledge of songs the Air Force sings. It might even be the full extent of public curiosity for the topic.

Unless you’re Bill Getz, ex-bomber pilot, former financial executive and total sentimentalist for most things military and airborne . . . including raucous ballads of the air that, by collation, he has raised to a subtle culture.

Getz, 61, has spent four decades saying that whatever pilots, bombardiers, mechanics or navigators sang over beer while *over there* is nothing less than a heritage of our nation’s profession of arms. The attitudes and mores of men at war, he believes, are built into their

music. His idea of Americana is Arlo Guthrie, Norman Rockwell and folk singer Oscar Brand warbling “Itazuke Tower.”

And Getz has gathered close to 1,000 songs of air force folk, mostly American, their laments, parodies, blues and hymns telling of their fears, sneers, phobias and foibles.

Introduction by Doolittle

He has self-published close to 700 in “Wild Blue Yonder” (Redwood Press) and, says its introduction by Gen. Jimmy Doolittle, friend of Getz and fellow World War II airman: “The songs tell . . . of courage and dedication from the skies over Belleau Wood to the skies over Thud Ridge.”

Another 300 songs are only weeks away from becoming Volume II. “This will be the Stag Bar edition, all X-rated songs,” Getz said. “I made it a separate book because I don’t think he (Doolittle) would want to endorse a bunch of dirty songs.”

Dirty or clean, sentimental or irreverent, martial or madcap, beautiful or bawdy, Getz said, military music likely has been around since Cro-Magnon man discovered that rhythmic grunts helped his hunting parties amble in step.

Romans and Egyptians marched to drumbeats. Galley masters used mallets. Fiddlers atop capstans gave way to sea chanteys; when the nation was forming there was the impish “Yankee Doodle Dandy” and when the same country was divided came the somber “Battle Hymn of the Republic.”

And as the Army and Navy had their songs, so the coming of the airplane and the creation of air forces produced new compositions from and for the junior branch of the services. Even if many were snatched from other services, Tin Pan Alley and previous wars.

“Of the 1,000 I have collected, probably 99% are parodies of existing songs and less than 5% have

Please see SONGS, Page 8



SUSAN GILE
ame man, pipe and jacket, but 43 years between portrait
ose of ex-bomber pilot Bill Getz, who collects Air Force songs



OVER 600 SONGS SUNG BY AIRMEN?
I DIDN'T KNOW WE HAD THAT MANY!

The Redwood Press

division of Syntax Associates

That was the surprised reaction of retired Air Force General Robin Olds when he was told about a new book, **THE WILD BLUE YONDER: Songs of the Air Force**. In his introduction, Congressional Medal of Honor winner, and aviation pioneer, Lt. General James H. “Jimmy” Doolittle says, *The history of the Air Force is captured in melody in this unique collection of songs sung by airmen. The songs tell the story of courage and dedication from the skies over Belleau-Woods (WW-I) to the skies over Thud Ridge (Viet Nam) -- spanning over 50 years of Air Force history.*

Recapturing the songs of the Flyboys . . .
San Francisco Examiner

Wild Blue Yonder isn't the only
Air Force song
San Antonio Express-News

Most complete ever published
The Daily Commercial Recorder

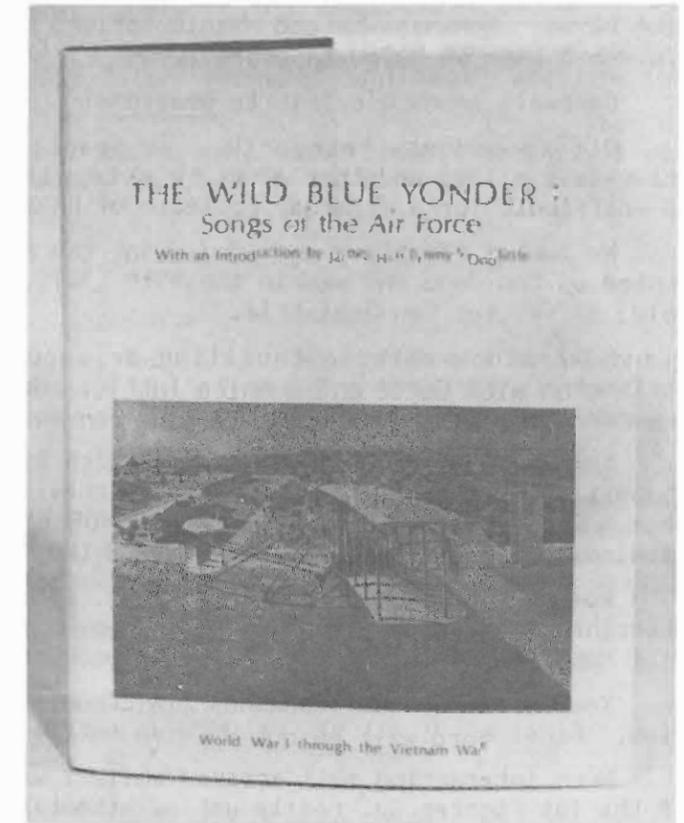
The book tells what fliers had to
sing about
Medical Patriot Newspaper

A unique new book for the military
history buff
Afterburner (official USAF newsletter)

There are 661 songs in Volume I. All the old favorites plus 33 songs from the Viet Nam era composed by Lt. Col. Dick Jonas. Included are 36 WW-I songs of the air never published before in this country.

This attractive, hardbound, 8 1/2 X 11 first edition, contains 312 pages, encased in a full-color jacket with two paintings by the renowned aviation artist, Keith Ferris. There are over 80, 3-view silhouettes of WW-II aircraft in the book, originally printed by The Coca-Cola Company in 1943 for aircraft recognition training, and donated by them for use in the book. The book was printed in the USA by BookCrafters, Inc.

The price is \$15.95 retail, plus \$2.00 mailing and handling charge (Calif. residents add \$1.04 tax). There are **volume discounts** to the trade and military and veterans organizations. VISA/MASTERCARD accepted. Author autographed copies available. Author available at no fee for autograph sessions and for an interesting and musically illustrated presentation on the history of Air Force melodies.



P.O. Box 3323

San Mateo, CA 94403

(415) 342-4411

Aug 7, in the
Year of our Lord,
1988

Dear "Trigger,"

It is most difficult to get Blanche to take a DAY off--but this time I talked her into a week. Oh, what a week it was!

Having just 'digested' the meeting in Vancouver we were ready to "bite off" another chunk. First stop--Spokane and an evening with Don and Virginia Gregory. We dined at the Sea Galley as well as looking over places to hold our next "Mini-Reunion."

About 10 p.m. Blanche and I checked into the Red Lion and being half-dead were soon fast asleep. Before closing my eyes I phoned Bill Cantwell and arranged for us to meet at the R.L. for breakfast. Up early I went down for an "early coffee" and decided to call Mike Burke. Bonanza--he and Maggie arrived to join us and a 1 hr. breakfast turned into 3 hrs.--and then we hated to break it up.

Cantwell sends his best to everyone!

Off to Bonners Ferry, ID. We spent the remaining day with old friends (he WAS a spray-dust pilot) and took them to a terrific pizza house that they knew the location of--difficult for a stranger to learn of OR find.

We had difficulty, again, leaving the next day but off to COULEE DAM we went. Here I hunted up Don Hope who was in the 99th (347) until Jul 43 when he became (so I have been told) driver for Gen Doolittle.

Next stop--after a thrilling drive over the Scenic North Cascades Highway, was at Burlington with Clyde and Juanita Tuttle. Here again we were treated like Royalty and had a wonderful meal and most interesting conversation.

The last stop on our trip was with Bill and Jean Cantwell at their lovely home near Coupeville, WA. On a high point on Whidbey Island it overlooks that section of Puget Sound that was protected by Forts CASEY, WORDEN and FLAGLER. It also overlooks the ferry terminal at Keystone (where we boarded the ferry for Port Townsend).

Wonderful people, wonderful food, wonderful weather all the way. It is difficult to describe the scenery along the N.C. Loop--but if YOU ever get there I am certain that we will have trouble getting you away--a backpacker's paradise!!!!

Yes--it is now decided--our Mini-Reunion will be in Spokane, May 19-20, and at the Red Lion. Final word will be out WHEN we settle on room prices.

Much interesting mail arrived while I was away--a letter from a former Squadron Leader of the 1st Fighter Gp. really got my attention for it is POSSIBLE that he was one of the 2 that "helped" me get home on my 50th.--more later!

By letter AND word of mouth I am encouraging as many as I can to make the trip to McAllen. Quite a few have promised to join with us and I am making a reservation--double. Last night I phoned Lou Coury (former WG) and he stated that he OR a member of his group would share a room with me (Blanche does NOT retire until end of June).

Much water will flow over the dam in the next 6 mos. so I may find news for another letter--before McAllen--but until then--BEST WISHES and may your every day be C.A.V.U.

Note: Some citizens of Chickasha, OK have asked if I would help put on a Reunion of the B&W Flying School (my PRIMARY) in 1989 but I feel that this is too large an order to handle in such a short time--with all the other events I have already scheduled for 89.

C.D. Boggs

Letter From Grateful B-17 Pilot

We welcome the opportunity to reprint excerpts from a letter that reached Cecil Quesseth earlier this year. The letter was from a former B-17 pilot who has been attempting to locate two benefactors who happened to be at the right place at the right time many years ago and also happened to be driving two P-38s. Here is his excerpted letter:

On April 23, 1944 while on my 50th mission, we had a problem. As we were turning off target there was a flak burst directly in front and the nose of the plane was blown in. One engine was "put out" and the bombardier received a fatal shot directly in the heart--passing through his flak jacket.

Of course we could not keep up but dropped back to group after group as they passed--even to B-24s. Finally alone, we proceeded for a time BUT, finally a couple of jerries found us.

These two made one ineffectual pass and were starting on their second when two beautiful P-38s, with yellow spinners, showed up "from nowhere" and took care the the situation.

I made it back and have thought of those two 38s so many, many times. Recently I was told they were probably from the 1st Fighter Group.

Charles D. Boggs
250 Woodland Dr.
Shelton, WA 98584

Ed Note:

If these were 1st Fighter Group planes they would have been from the 94th Fighter Squadron because of the yellow identifying markings.

If anyone out there from the 94th remembers the April 23, 1944 encounter, I'm sure Boggs would be delighted to hear from you.

Mr. George C. Coen
99th Bomb Group Historical Society
2908 Aliso Drive NE
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87101

1943 Spyglass Circle
Vista, California

September 9, 1988

Dear George,

I have been reading the newsletter for 4 or 5 years and want to thank you for your tremendous effort to keep us informed on the past which we all shared.

My name is Emmett M. Oehlert and I was with the 346th Squadron, 99th Bomb Group from July 1943 to the end of February, 1944 and finished my 50th mission December 28, 1943. Also, I spent over 30 years as a pilot for United Air Lines, retiring in 1975.

I take exception to George Brandt's (Col. Ret.) statement in the last newsletter, re: new 2nd Lt. Nav.--it was I, 2nd Lt 1st pilot with over 30 missions who made the statement that the mission planned could not allow us to return. Col. Up[the]grove's answer was "our crews and p]lanes are expendable--we can be replaced with surplus crews and planes from the States." Luckily, weather prevented us from completing our mission and our secondary target was the Brenner Pass. Mr. Brandt must have been the only one "gung ho" for that mission!

I too believed the 99th was the greatest, but every day was not a bed of roses.

Sincerely,
Emmett M. Oehlert

Mrs. Maxine K. Covert
514 Burnside
San Antonio, Texas 78209

14

19, Oct. 88
3424 Old Grantham Road
Goldsboro, N.C. 27530

Dear Mrs. Covert:

The saga of cotton eyed joe continues. Your letter (Sept. 88 Newsletter) provides important clues.

1. Confirms existence of two aircraft. (I knew of only one Cotton Eyed Joe)
2. The second aircraft, cotton eyed joe II, was named when James Hagen got his own crew.

The list of planes, May 1, 88 newsletter, provides this information.
Page 6, 25765 wd 5, 18 May 25 June 347th Covert
Page 7, 229480 2- 2- 43 orders wd 14 April 4 May Charles B. Covert crew
July 88 newsletter, page 36, loading list for 5, July 43. B-17F 29480 Hager J.S. pilot, B-17F 5769 Covert C.B. pilot.
Conclusion, with speculation, 229480 Cotton Eyed Joe, 25765 Cotton Eyed Joe II.

One of the aircraft, (ser.no. unknown) was assigned to Robert C. Norton and crew, from mid'Nov. 43 until Feb. 44, when it was replaced with a B-17G.

P Robert C. Norton	347th sq.	R James E. Harrington
CP John W. Mulheron		BT Harold R. Griese
N Francis T. Farrell		WG Vance W. Howell
B John S. Collins		WG Jesse N. Hobbs
T John A. Hourihan		TG Thomas T. Brown

During a rapid exchange of aircraft between the 99th, 2nd, and 483rd Cotton Eyed Joe disappeared. One day in late March or early April, I saw the beloved aircraft parked on our base. The upper and lower turrets had been removed.

Jesse N. Hobbs

Sincerely

A Memorial Day Recollection



Reunion Of The 99th Bomb Group

By J.W. Smallwood

99th Reunion in Dallas

It was a thursday in late April, 1987, and I was on a Delta Airlines flight headed for Dallas, with an intermediate stop in Atlanta. This was to be my first time at an annual reunion of our World War II outfit, a heavy bombardment group, part of the 15th U.S. Air Force. Our unit, the 99th Bomb Group had been stationed in North Africa and Italy during the war. The present organization, the 99th Bomb Group Historical Society, had been founded back in 1980, by George Coen, with just seven members. I had only learned about it last year, by which time membership had soared to over seven hundred. In making my hotel reservation for a bedroom, a convention representative told me over the phone they were expecting about two hundred fifty of us, some with their wives, to attend this year's affair.

Once I joined the Society, there arrived in the mail a membership list. Search as I might, no one else from our crew showed up on that list. True, our pilot was dead, killed in action on the last raid we were to fly; and then the navigator had died about ten years ago, victim of a cerebral hemorrhage. But I couldn't believe, of the eight remaining men of our original crew, I was the only one who would have learned of this organization. Anyhow, I had decided it was high time to attend a reunion, and to get reacquainted with the old outfit. Hopefully, I would spot men with whom, long ago, some anxious moments had been spent.

15

Actually, there was a high degree of anticipation, of uncertainty about it all; because I didn't even know whether anybody from my squadron would show up. When we landed in Atlanta, to change planes for the final leg of the trip, I followed a couple down the aisle. They were talking about a reunion and my ears perked up. Then, I noticed the cap the man was wearing. It read "99th Bomb Group." Now I knew I was heading in the right direction. As soon as we deplaned and started down the corridor toward another gate I introduced myself. It turned out that this fellow was not in my squadron, the 346th, but in the 347th. He had been a waist gunner on a B-17 and now lived in Georgia. He and his wife were traveling with another couple and we shook hands all around. The other man kept looking at me. I thought perhaps he had known me from an earlier time, but it turned out he had not been a flyer. Finally, he said "Smallwood, you look too young to be in on this, you must have been the water boy!" We all laughed at that.

Waiting for the Dallas flight to be called, I chatted with the gunner. He had joined the U.S. Air Force in the early stages of the war, and had completed his tour of combat flying out of North Africa. As a gunner, he had flown 50 missions, mostly from an air base in Tunisia. With such a large number of missions to his credit, he had earned a high amount of points, sufficient to make him eligible to return to the States. Back home, he became a gunnery instructor, and then was mustered out when the War ended.

Once our plane arrived at the Dallas-Ft. Worth Airport, I deplaned and headed for the loading zone out front. A courtesy van was supposed to meet us, but it didn't show. I noticed a pleasant-looking lady standing alone, with a suitcase. She glanced at me, asking if I was going to the 99th Reunion. When I said I was, we agreed to find a cab and share it. On the way to the hotel, about a twenty-minute ride along freeways, I learned the lady's husband, a full colonel, had passed away two years ago. But, she continued to make the reunions, which was pretty darn good, I thought. She explained that her husband, Ernest Wrentmore, had been in three wars: World War I; World War II, and Korea. The, Dorothy pulled a clipping out of her purse, showing me an article about a book Ernest had written. While I was reading, she told me Ernest had been only twelve-years-old when he first joined the service. "That's awfully young," I exclaimed. "Yes," she said, "but he was big for his age, and his father signed a paper to let him do it." Soon we arrived at a new-looking hotel, long and low. It had dun-colored walls and lots of glass. There was a circular drive in front and bell hops were scurrying between cars and cabs.

Inside, a bunch of men were lounging in the lobby, sprawled out, sporting 99th caps, blue and white, with the bills jutting out. Under the lettering was the silhouette of a B-17 Flying Fortress, with that big tail sticking up. In the War, it had gotten the nickname "The Big-Ass Bird." We always spoke that name lovingly. Another group of our men was located up on the mezzanine, beyond the round staircase. They were gathered around Wilbur Dixon at the Reunion registration desk. He was seeing to the paper-work of signing up. Getting your cap, and tickets for the various affairs. Every once in a while, both upstairs and down, you could hear a voice break out, carrying a surprised, pleased lilt to it. It meant some guy had spotted an old buddy walking in, somebody he hadn't seen in a year, or maybe a lot of years--like forty-three, to be exact.

Because this was my first time, I didn't bother right then to go up to my room. With the key in my pocket, I walked with my small suitcase directly down the corridor to the hospitality suite. I didn't want to miss any of this affair, and had been told there were cold drinks for the asking.

A good fifty people must have occupied the hospitality suite, and not one familiar face. Fortunately, each registrant had been provided with a name tag, one colored according to our squadron number. The 346th had yellow tags. And it wasn't long before I saw a bunch of guys off to one side with the same yellow name cards. Introductions were made, and I started to feel more at home, especially as one fellow, a former navigator, said he had been in Foggia, Italy--the location of our air base--around the same time as me. Time went fast at that gathering and soon it was getting dark. We decided to move out, through the sliding glass doors to the pool area. I carried a glass of white wine, while the navigator, Charlie, had a can of beer. Some young people were still in the pool, but they were pretty quiet.

Charlie and I stood near the pool house, close to where two crew chiefs from the 346th were sitting with their wives. One of them, Harold, had given me a warm welcome earlier when I told him that the B-17 we flew most often was "Able Mabel." I took care of it," he exclaimed, "but I don't remember all you flyers." There was a lull in the conversation now, and I asked Charlie if he had flown the mission to Regensburg, on February 25, 1944. "Sure," he said, "'that was a rough one." Then a funny thing happened. To each subsequent question I put to him there followed a "yes" answer from Charlie. It was amazing. Rex and Harold drew closer, standing now. Another fellow joined us, Joe, a former radio operator, also in 346. Finally, I said to Charlie, "well, we got shot down on that raid, a Messerschmitt fighter attacked from the nose, 12 o'clock level, and another one from six o'clock high. We were in the number three position of the lead element and those enemy fighters knocked out two of our engines. They also wounded me and the pilot." Charlie came right back, "Bill, we were in the number six position, right behind you. When your plane went down we took your place." The three other guys were hanging on to every word now. "What happened to you?" I wanted to know. "We went down a couple minutes after you," Charlie said. "Wow" somebody said. "Did everybody get out?" I asked. "No" said Charlie, "Not everybody." "We all got out," I told him, and our pilot parachuted O.K., but then he died soon after. I think a 20mm shell hit him in the shoulder, one from that ME-109 that attached us from above and behind."

The gathering was larger now as more guys realized we two were going over something it had taken forty-three years to try to get straight. "Where did you land, Bill," he asked. I told him I didn't really know. It was snowing and I was coming down near a little country town with a church steeple. I figured it was near the border of Germany and Austria. Then, my chute got stuck in the top of a big tree--the nylon cloth got hung up, and I ended up dangling about four feet off the ground." Charlie, too, had landed in a tree. I told him two old-timers from the home guard had trudged up through the snow and had pulled me down. There was also a young, eager-beaver soldier with them. He made me nervous, the way he looked at the 45 automatic I still had strapped to my side. Finally, I saw that he was going to reach for it. I knew the gun was loaded, so I twisted my arm around the parachute cords and drew out the 45, removing the clip to avoid any accident. Then, I handed it to the young soldier. One of the older men took the clip. Charlie asked "Where did you go next?" "Oh," I said, "I ended up in a Kraut hospital. They spent almost a month digging shell fragments out of me." "How about you?" I asked. "I was sent directly to Frankfort," he said, "to Dulag Luft." (A "dulag" is a temporary jail, a place where the Germans do interrogation before assigning P.O.s to a permanent prison camp.) "But where did you finally end up?" asked Charlie. "Stalag Luft 1," I told him. "So did I!" Charlie exclaimed. And there it ended. The guys standing next to us just looked at the two of us, shaking their heads. Later, I thought that this episode was really part of what these reunions should be about--to get everyone to describe what happened. Charlie and I hadn't really known each other in Italy, nor were we aware, after being shot down on the same mission, that we had been living in the same prison camp in northern Germany. But now, after the passage of so much time, I had an idea we were going to become good friends.

The following morning, over breakfast, one of the guys announced there was a B-17 parked at an airport only a couple of miles away from our hotel. He wanted to know how many of us would be interested in paying a visit to a "Fort." I said I'd go. So did some others. So, around ten o'clock, a courtesy van hauled a number of us to an old airport north of Dallas, one used now primarily by corporate jets.

Seated next to me in the van was Roy Baker, a pleasant fellow who had mentioned at the hospitality suite that he had been on the Anzio raid in February, 1944, same as me. He was in Squadron 347, but our crews had been handed the same assignments--to drop anti-personnel bombs, or frag bombs, on German troops threatening to dislodge American and British infantry stuck on the beach at Anzio, about forty miles south of Rome, on the Tyrrhenian Sea.

Because the Allied landing was in such jeopardy, our top brass had decided to use all means to provide relief, including heavy bombers. We in the 99th had not been trained for this--what you would call tactical work, or support work, and our squadron commander was concerned that the plan could backfire; that bombs intended for German lines, inadvertently could end up landing on our own men. At any rate, the situation apparently was so desperate that we were under orders to do this job.

I took this opportunity for follow-up with Roy, asking whether anything special had happened to him on that raid. "Yeah," he came back, "We got shot down!" "Oh boy," I remarked. "Yeah," he said again. "Flak got us and we had to ditch our 'Fort' in the sea." "But," he added, "we got lucky, because an air-sea rescue boat got to us and all ten of us were pulled out of the drink the same day." "Then what happened?" I asked. "We made it back to the base in Foggia the next day. I remember Captain Schroeder was happy to see us--we had been reported missing in action." "You were lucky," I said. "Not as lucky as I was a month later," he responded. "How was that?" I asked. "On the Udine raid, to northern Italy, when we bombed a Kraut airfield, a B-17 in our squadron, one above us, had some of its bombs hang up. They wouldn't drop. So, after the bomb run, when we always tighten up the formation, some guy must have gone into the bomb bays and then tripped the stuck bombs out by hand. Anyhow, they landed right on our tail, cut the damn thing right off!" I was fascinated. "What did you do?" I asked him. "Bailed out," he said, "what else?" He added "I got lucky again. I landed up in some hills and the Italian peasants took me and hid me, finally helped me to get back to our lines. I traveled only at night." "Boy," I said, "the luck of the Irish." "You should have seen our C.O. that time," he said. "Me walking in, all dirty and beat!" Schroeder looked up and he said 'you again! back again! How do you do it?'" Roy smiled, "The C.O. gave me a whole week of R and R on the Isle of Capri after that."

The ride to the small airport took longer than expected. We finally turned in a side road, passed several hangers, and came to a hard stand. There, all by itself, stood a B-17. What a sight. We didn't mind at all the mottled look the aluminum fuselage now gave off, nor the fact that all the 50 calibre machine guns had been removed. It was still "The Big Ass Bird" to us, and beautiful. Pools of dirty oil lay beneath each of the four engines, indicating that the plane was being used. The Wright Cyclone engines powering a B-17, though good, always gave off lots of oil.

I noticed when each man climbed out of the van, he seemed to head for a specific part of the bomber, probably the spot that had been his province on missions. A B-17 has a tailwheel, and so, as it rests on the ground, it stands high up front, tapering off toward the rear. One of the men walked directly to the tail gunner's compartment; a few others chose to stand by the waist windows, where the waist gunners, right and left, did their shooting. Guys standing directly under the cockpit were pilots, I figured, and a couple of us were directly under the now, one a navigator, and me a bombardier.

Everybody was so quiet, almost reverent, about it, I thought. You had to wonder what was going through their minds; some incident, maybe, something that had left an indelible imprint--a bad mission perhaps, with the loss of a buddy.

Two crew chiefs, Rex and Harold, both from our Squadron 346, stood to one side. I overheard them saying something about this particular model, a B-17 G, equipped with a "chin turret." It was designed to deal with head-on attacks by Luftwaffe fighters. I missed the end of their conversation. All too quickly, the van reappeared and stood parked, waiting for a bunch of men, now in the sixties; men reluctant to leave this old "Fort." I whispered a quiet goodbye to it and climbed back in the van.

Saturday night's banquet found all of us with sport coats or suits, plus neckties--a sharp contrast to casual wear. Several of us wore dark-blue ties with miniature B-17s on them. The ladies present wore dresses and some had corsages. Several hundred of us filled the hotel's main ballroom. A light, festive mood prevailed. The Association's officers and board members sat at the head table. Also present was our most prestigious member, Major General Fay Upthegrove and Mrs. Upthegrove. Now 85-years-old, and walking with the aid of a cane, the General appeared sharp, talking animatedly with several others. I was told he personally led some thirty bombing missions for the 99th. (In all, our Group flew 395 separate missions against Axis targets.) On hand as well, was the mayor of _____, a suburb of Dallas.

During dinner, our President, Lew Boatwright, spoke about Group housekeeping matters, including announcement that next year's get-together would take place in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Then, several prizes were handed out, including a can of Vermont maple syrup to the member who had traveled farthest to make the reunion--someone from the Seattle area won. Then, a prize was awarded to the crew which had the highest number of its men in attendance--the crew with six members on hand won that. The evening ended with entertainment supplied by an attractive group of twenty or so young men and women who performed a series of singing and dancing routines. For their final number, they provided a medley of military songs. With the strains of "Off we go into the wild blue yonder..." all hands got to their feet and sang along in lusty fashion. So ended the evening, and a time of fellowship to be treasured.

Italy, 1944 -- 'A Milk Run'

Walter E. Schildt

Everyone that morning was in a gay mood -- smiling, laughing and talking. I could remember well other days and other combat missions when our faces were serious and unsmiling, but on this particular day we had just left a pre-dawn briefing on a bombing mission to the docks in the harbor of Athens, Greece and it was to be so easy, a milk run -- almost like a stateside practice mission. The weather would be perfect, very few enemy fighter planes were expected to be in the area, very light flak (anti-aircraft fire) was anticipated from the ground, and we'd be over land in the target area only several minutes. At its conclusion, everyone would be one combat mission closer to rotating back home to the good old U.S.A. How sweet it was to be that day for all the men on the mission -- and it was, for every crew but mine.

We were flying a new B-17 bomber delivered new from the factory. At the pre-flight inspection, everything checked out perfectly at all crew positions. I was flight engineer. At the dawn take-off our plane assumed its assigned position, "tail-end Charlie" at the rear of the usual tight formation. As all 30 bombers gathered we made the last climbing circle above our airfield and headed for our first checkpoint. The pilot called the bombardier on the plane's interphone and asked him to look through his bomb sight and let him know exactly when we left the coast of Italy. Soon came the answer -- "now." The pilot checked his watch and said, "We're 20 seconds early." My only thought was, "My God, how close can you get." That's precision flying.

On we flew as carefree hours over the water put us near the target. Everything the briefing officer had told us was true -- it was a beautiful flight without the slightest sign of any enemy opposition. Soon the bombardier announced on the interphone as we sighted land, "The next turn will be the I.P." (initial point) for the bomb run. By now a very few scattered bursts of flak could be seen far off the mark. Almost nothing to be alarmed about, though. The next message from up front was "bomb bay doors coming open."

In a matter of a few short seconds I would wonder, how could a picture of pure perfection turn into so many problems so fast. Another announcement came from the pilot, "Our number two engine is hit, losing oil, feather number 2." Now the bombs were dropping, but there was a most surprising and dangerous situation in our bomb bay. The bottom bomb had not released due to a malfunction and all the bombs suspended above it were hitting the hung-up one on its shackle with a loud thud as they fell. Horrible thoughts raced through my mind as I counted the 500-pound bombs dropping; each hit the lower bomb so hard it shook the airplane. I felt like I was in the hands of God, and could only wonder if the lower bomb was partly released, perhaps hanging by one lug on the shackle, and whether the arming wire was still in the bomb fuse which would make it safe. I thought, "Isn't this some way to go out -- in a flash."

After all but the one bomb had dropped, the bomb bay doors wouldn't close electrically, which caused more air drag and further reduction of our air speed after the loss of the engine. By now all the other planes in the mission were rapidly pulling away from us and leaving us behind all alone. We would be out of their sight in a short time. That was the breaks of the game. They had to stay on schedule.

The pilot called me to hand-crank the bomb doors closed so he could pick up some speed. That was easy for me since I could open the door to the bomb bay from my position, insert a hand crank and have the doors closed in a few minutes. However, I made certain to stay on the interphone so I could be called in an emergency, and sure enough, before I could start cranking, a voice called "enemy fighter behind us."

The pilot immediately ordered me back to my top turret twin 50-calibre machine guns. By now we were on our own. The other bombers were gone. Soon I saw the enemy fighter pull along side of us just out of effective range of my guns. I called on the interphone, "Bandit at eight o'clock level." It looked like a one-on-one proposition -- an enemy fighter against one crippled B-17. As the fighter dipped his right wing to make a pass at us, all the guns we could get on him opened fire. I thought, he might come in shooting but he'll have to make it through a steady stream of bullets himself. The enemy pilot quickly changed his mind and straightened out. After a minute to think it over, he again dipped his wing to turn in on us, and again we all opened fire, until he withdrew a second time. Soon, with apparently no heart to fight, he broke away and was gone, leaving us alone.

By now we were well out over the sea and major dangers were behind us. But there was still the maverick bomb to deal with. The pilot decided to drop down to 10,000 feet and have me mechanically free the hung-up bomb. As the flight engineer, it was my job to do it.

With my chest-type parachute snapped on and a screw driver in my hand I made my way into the open bomb bay. Unbelievably, that last bomb was hanging there exactly as it had been placed by the ground crew, its arming wire still in position. I didn't feel too comfortable looking at the big ocean far below as I stepped over the open bomb bay, the doors still wide open, to reach a foot rest where I would be in a better position to quickly release the bomb.

I put the screw driver in the slot of the bomb release, turned it and away dropped the bomb. The plane rose a bit at the release. As I watched, the bomb hit the water and exploded like a July 4th firecracker.

The rest of the mission was routine. We returned home alone on three engines. It really had been an easy "milk run" -- for every plane and crew except ours.

NOTE ON THE STORY: I believe the bomb shackle was put on backwards, the electrical current had to pass through it. Also in a manual release the arming wire should drop with the bomb safe, but from the sound I think it went off.

Bomber Men Moaned, They Didn't Like What They Saw

By Walter Schildt
Special to Scene

It was to be a long flight from Tunis in North Africa to somewhere in Europe. That everyone knew for sure. Early in November 1943 all combat flight crews for our B-17 Flying Fortress Bombers were to attend a meeting at Group Operations.

There we got the word at an unusual briefing, the ten man flight crews that would be going on a special mission in two days. The next morning at 10:30 a truck would come by our tents to pick up our mess gear, bed rolls and shelter halves which would be loaded aboard a C-47 transport plane to be taken to where our flight of bombers would end.

The flight was to be so long that there definitely would not be enough fuel to return home, we would have to stop on the way back for gas.

Also we were told to go to bed as early as possible next evening as we would be awakened at 3 in the morning to go as usual to the mess hall for breakfast first, then to the final briefing and on to our ready planes.

Early next morning 300 of us for our group of 30 planes flying this mission sat waiting for the Officer from Intelligence to walk on stage, roll up the cover on the map; with pointer in hand to tell us about the target, what to expect from the enemy, the weather enroute, the route to take which of course would be less than direct, time of take-off, time to be over the target and much more related information. Finally in he walked to uncover the map which had a crooked red line leading to southern Austria. Out of the hushed silence could be heard many groans indicating to me they didn't like what they saw. Part of the message the briefing officer had for us went something along these lines. "Gentlemen the mission for today will be an aircraft factory at Wiener Neustadt in

Austria. The weather enroute will be good with some broken cloud coverage along the way, but it will be clear over the target area. You can expect some scattered ground fire along the way from anti-aircraft guns.

"In the target area expect heavy, intense and accurate flak from 88's and 155's. Located in southern Austria are many enemy fighter planes, keep your eyes open. This is a maximum effort mission of the 15th Air Force with all groups participating. Our group, the 99th will be next to the last going over the target. Keep in mind that if you get into trouble and can not bring your plane home, you can fly it into neutral Switzerland to be held until the war is over. If you must bail out deep over enemy territory forget about using your 45 cal. pistol as you can not win the war alone but could very well make matters worse for yourself." And finally after more talk of how to escape time came to set all the watches together. "You can hack your watches with mine, in 30 seconds it will be coming up on 04:20. Any questions? Good luck to all of you. These were the high points of the briefing. As we left there would be no laughing or happy faces, everyone seemed in a quiet, serious mood.

Next it was climb aboard trucks for the third time in the early morning darkness to be taken now to our planes where several of the ground crews for each plane would have on external power and stand by while the flight crew members checked over their guns and the equipment at their stations. Everything for us was in good working order and it wasn't too

long until our pilot would start engines, run them up for a preflight check, and then taxi out for take-off. In the early predawn hours some 30 planes would slowly move out at the right second to await in line for take-off some few seconds apart. The group leader would be off first, circle the field some 3 times giving the rest of the birds time to get off and climb up to a predetermined spot in the formation. Then we would head north. But before this day would end I would see more aggressive German fighter planes than in all my other 80 missions, more parachutes in the air at one time than in all other combined missions, and see a group of our B-24 bombers close behind us shot up so badly that they just seemed to fall apart for a short time -- the only time I'd see a solid group of our bombers sort of come unglued with each plane seeming to strike out on its own.

In a short time we had crossed the sea and were over the continent. As we reached various check points there would be minor changes of direction to either the right or left to stay on a predetermined flight course. From time to time the heavy guns on the ground would shoot up some scattered flak and little balls of black smoke would uncurl as each shell exploded. Those on the ground had their eyes on us but as yet could not know for certain our target. We had been in the air for what seemed like ages when in mid-afternoon we were nearing our destination. On the interphone it was reported fighter planes could be seen taking off of an airfield some distance ahead of us. As I swung my top turret around for a quick look, sure enough I could see the dust trail of a plane moving down a dirt runway far below.

Soon the bombardier said, "We'll be turning on the I.P. (initial point for the bomb run) in about ten minutes." In the meantime a group of about 30 B-24's which were slightly faster than the B-17 because of its Davis wing design, had overtaken us and moved in directly behind us. Our three squadrons of ten planes each had formed a straight line or company front for the bomb drop and our planes were in such tight formation it seemed as if you could step from one plane to the other. Soon words that were music to our ears came "Bomb bay doors coming open, it will be eight minutes to the target, hold it straight and level." Already we were flying through a thick black cloud of smoke, you could smell the powder from the bursting flak, hear the bark of close bursting shells and see flashes of red in the core of those nearby.

Now things would happen terribly swiftly as the action picked up, too much packed into a few fleeting minutes, more than enough excitement to last a lifetime. Our excited tail gunner became rattled and stammered on the interphone, "They're coming in at the tail, they're coming in at the tail." The bombardier tried to calm him down saying "Take it easy Al, take it easy Al." Being in the top turret I had a 360 degree commanding view of everything and I most definitely did not like what I saw. A group of German fighter planes had just arrived barely within range of our 50 cal. guns but were devoting their full attention on the group of B-24's close behind us starting their bomb run, forced to fly straight and level. These attacking fighter planes were by far the most aggressive I would ever see in my eighty missions. Normally enemy planes would not attack during the ten to twenty minutes while the bombers were flying through a thick cloud of heavy, intense and accurate flak. But these fighter pilots must have been mad as hornets, nothing slowed them down, and they were cutting in and out of that formation of bombers like bees in and out of a hive. They pressed home a very savage, brutal attack for about twenty minutes. On our interphone all you could hear was "There goes a B-24 down, there goes another, another and another B-24." Parachutes were blossoming out in great numbers.

Our pilot said, "Count the chutes." But soon that would be impossible as more B-24's in trouble were falling out of formation. Several with feathered engines perhaps would be lucky enough to limp off to safety. One thing was clear, the crippled bombers would fall behind and be on their own as the healthy planes never even slowed down but stayed on their schedule. Now the air was crowded with parachutes slowly floating down, a rough estimate would be somewhere between 75 and 100, fine young American boys. Soon the bombs were dropped and what was left of the B-24's, about half it seemed, appeared to break formation as each plane on its own seemed to apply maximum power to run for protective cover. Within a very few minutes all remaining B-24's were tightly grouped up as close under our B-17's as they could safely fly, they were desperate for immediate help. Our crew had been a replacement crew for those lost or finished with their tour and this was only our second combat mission.

There would have to be 48 more to reach the magic number of 50 before totaling home. Impossible I thought, at that moment my only thought was, "If I can live just one hour more

perhaps I can live a week or a month." The enemy fighters now for some reason, perhaps they were getting short of ammunition, backed off as quickly as they had come. It had been a mad, mad 20 minutes or so and we had been just far enough away not to be of any great value. Oh we fired quite a lot but at a longer than desired range. Soon the B-24's would strike out on their own again and being faster would leave us behind. Two things might have some bearing on this attack, the fighters did not like to hit tight flying formations of bombers and often passed them up for others flying more loosely. And also at that time the B-24 had a blind spot up front that the B-17 did not have. Some few days later our pilot told us that the group of B-24's was grounded from combat for 30 days to fly practice missions to train all the new replacement crews.

It was late in the evening, it had been a long day as we approached the island of Corsica for a landing very low on gas. Our plane was one of the first in our group to land on a rather short dirt runway. We were all happy to be down and anxious to get out quickly as possible to plant our feet on firm ground. Many B-17's were yet to land, all seemed in a great hurry to get down. They were coming in much too close as some were landing while the plane ahead would only be halfway down the short runway. It looked like a real rat race, everyone wanted down quickly as if the fuel tanks were dry. Then it had to happen, they were just too damn close, one plane almost ready to touch down at reduced airspeed had to pull up and go around. For an instant there was a real question as it almost faltered, could he possibly make it OK???? My pilot was standing beside me on the ground as we watched, but his heart and soul was inside that other plane helping that pilot to fly -- there he stood hands out in front of him, gripping the controls with both hands and pulling back on the controls again and again to help gain just a little altitude for the troubled plane. That night we slept as best we could, some inside the plane and some on the ground under the wings.

After breakfast the next morning our planes serviced, we took off for our home base in Africa. By now I had had some time to think the situation over alone, as I talked to no one else about it. Could I continue flying combat, should I quit like some others before me had, it would be nearly impossible to fly 48 more missions like the last one, would our group be the one to get hit that hard some day, these and other thoughts came to mind. That night while the others slept I would lie awake a few hours to give it much more consideration. I decided to give my crew a complete run down starting at the front and going down to the tail. First was the Bombardier Lt. Perkins from Kansas, a nice fellow with two years college. Next was the navigator, Lt. Bishkin from Texas, a fine fellow and a college graduate. There was the pilot Lt. Thomas Highfill from California, as great a fellow as you'd ever want to meet who's wife just had their first baby before we left the states. The co-pilot Lt. Taylor a recent addition to our crew who had a wife and three small children back home.

Next came me, Walter E. Schildt from Maryland, mechanic and top turret gunner but no claim to fame. There was the radio operator Sgt. Ginns, a likeable Jewish lad from New York. Sgt. Hooey our ball turret gunner, was a nice kid from Iowa. The left waist gunner Sgt. Hilbun from Soso, Miss., a swell southern boy with a lot on the ball. The right waist gunner Sgt. Hamilton from Philadelphia, Penn., sort of a nice cocky kid. And last there was Al our tail gunner from Brooklyn who had a beautiful wedding right before we went overseas. I seriously thought it over, surely most of them had far more to lose than I did. So I reached the all important decision. I said to myself, "By God if they can all continue flying combat then I too would always be ready to climb aboard the plane to go right along with them." And I made up my mind to one more thing, "If I ever got scared when the going got tough, no one else would ever know it when I was required to speak over the interphone. I would be a calm, cool voice of steel." Later I found that I could talk to the others during the action as if we were all sitting in my living room at home. So I was to finish flying those 50 combat missions first from Africa then Italy, return to the states and volunteer for 30 more missions to be flown from England this time. I like to think of this one flight to Austria as the one I remember best perhaps because it gave me a great respect for those good German fighter pilots. Walter Schildt

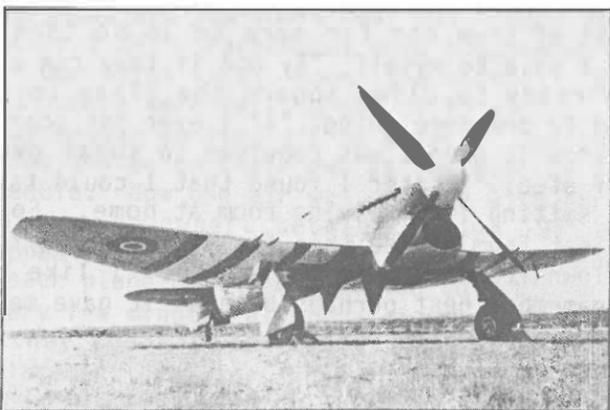
Thank you, Walter, for putting it on paper. Do you remember how wonderful it was upon awakening in the morning, for just a half-second to relax, until the memory came back of where you were, in the middle of a war. It was a poor way to earn a living. Thanks again, Walter, for all of us.
your comrade,
george

By Ian L. Hawkins



F/Lt. S. B. Feldman just after receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross from King George VI, July, 1944.

Amigos- Buck Feldman of Albuquerque is the 99th B.G. Bagpiper



A No. 3 Squadron Tempest V in 1944 at RAF Newchurch. Engine is 2300 hp Napier Sabre.

About five years ago I wrote to the R.A.F. Association's magazine "Air Mail" requesting information concerning my late uncle, Squadron Leader Ronald Hawkins, who was shot down by flak while dive-bombing the oil refineries at Ghent, Belgium, on 5 October 1943. He was flying from Manston, Kent, where No. 3 Squadron, equipped with rocket-firing Typhoons, were based.

"Air Mail" kindly published my request. One of the replies came from an unexpected source, the result of which led to a truly incredible chain of coincidences through my research into one of the 390th's missions on 10 October 1943.

Seymour "Buck" Feldman, an American now living in Albuquerque, New Mexico, responded to my request. He had volunteered for flying duties with the R.A.F. in 1941, before the United States had entered the war. "Buck", a former Typhoon pilot with No. 3 Squadron, wrote that he remembered, exactly, the day that my uncle had been lost. Another pilot, Flying Officer La Rocque, a Canadian, had also been shot down over Ghent during the same mission.

In the meantime, Alfred Price, the renowned aviation author, had kindly put me in touch with Gerd Weigand, a former Luftwaffe Fw pilot who in October 1943 had been based at Lille Nord airfield, in Belgium, with Jagdgeschwader (JG) 26. During the great air battle over Munster on 10 October 1943 (the 13th Combat Bomb Wing, which comprised the 95th, 100th, and 390th Bomb Groups, lost 25 B-17s in 25 minutes) Gerd Weigand had shot down a 95th B.G. Fortress named "Brown's Mule".

Among his several highly informative and very graphic letters Gerd mentioned that his previous air victory had been on 5 October 1943 when he'd shot down an R.A.F. Typhoon in the Courtrai area of Belgium while it was strafing a canal barge.

"Buck" Feldman recalls the dramatic happenings of that fateful day: "I had been briefed on the morning of 5 October, with Flying Officer Jimmy Foster. Our mission was a 'Rhubarb', to sneak into occupied Belgium at tree-top height and hit Courtrai Airfield, a Luftwaffe base. Our orders also included targets of opportunity. These included trains, motor vehicles, aircraft and anything else that moved.

"Near Courtrai we were jumped by two Fw 190s. I saw the mottled greens behind us. I reported this to Foster who was preparing to attack a canal barge. He acknowledged and said 'I'll meet you above the clouds.' I immediately climbed through the undercast. I never saw Foster again."

Gerd Weigand, piloting the leading German fighter continues the story: "We both opened fire at the same time . . . he at the barge and me at him. The Typhoon crashed near the village of Mennin. The whole action, from the first radio warning from Ground Control to the bitter ending, had lasted for less than sixty seconds . . ."

"Buck" Feldman flew with the R.A.F. for the remainder of the war, turning down an offer to join the USAAF, although he flew escort missions for the daylight bombers of the 8th and 9th American Air Forces occasionally. He wanted to remain with his R.A.F. buddies. On one such escort mission he discovered that one of the crewmen in a B-26 Marauder was an old school friend of his.

Among "Buck's" accomplishments was the shooting down of no less than eleven of the dreaded V1 flying-bombs

("Buzz-Bombs" or "Doodle-bugs") during the summer of 1944. But one very pleasant memory that he will always cherish was the July day in 1944 when he was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross personally by King George VI.

"Buck" finally left the R.A.F. in 1948 and eventually joined the Federal Aviation Administration for whom he worked for many years as an Air Traffic Control Specialist.

During the war Gerd Weigand was not so fortunate. In June 1944 his Fw 190 was involved in a mid-air collision with a P-38 Lightning of the American 8th Air Force during another of his many air battles. The incident occurred over Compeigne, in northwestern France. His resultant injuries were so severe that he never flew in combat again.

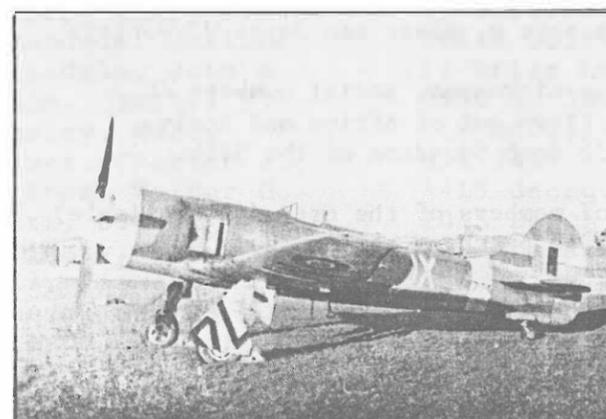
After the war, Gerd Weigand formed his own architectural business in Munich. One of the firm's major contracts was the design of the Munich Olympic Games Village in 1972.

After being put in touch with Gerd Weigand in 1980, "Buck" Feldman traveled to Munich in June 1981 to visit relatives. While there he contacted Gerd who invited him to dinner. After comparing wartime logbooks, it was confirmed that the two veteran pilots had indeed met in aerial combat over Belgium on 5 October 1943.

"Buck" describes the reunion: "We talked at length about the causes, problems, horrors and heartbreaks of war. We had both always aimed at destroying the enemy aircraft, not its pilot, and we decided he had to do what he had to do for his country, just as I did.

"After dinner we went out onto the balcony. As we looked at maps, logbooks and photographs, wartime memories became strong. We toasted absent friends and each other with champagne. Tears were shed unashamedly and we let bygones be bygones . . . we had both lost many close friends during the war.

"Before I left I gave Gerd an 'Oje de Dios', a good luck charm made by the Huichol Indians of Old Mexico. In return he gave me a book about the Fw 190 in which he wrote, 'First time we meet as enemies. Second time, thirty-eight years later, we meet as friends. Never again we want to meet as first time. To my new old friend Buck.'" ●



In 1945, a Tempest II of No. 54 Squadron at RAF Chilbolton. Power is Bristol Centaurus, 2500 hp.



S. B. Feldman's RAF museum display in honor of Battle of Britain week.

WE CALLED THEM MARAUDERS

By S. "Buck" Feldman
(ex-RAC, F/Lt, DFC) 1941-1948

As a former RAF fighter pilot who provided escort for the 9th Air Force B-26 bombers, I should like to express my personal admiration for a job well done during World War II. While flying the Hawker Typhoon with No. 3 Fighter Squadron which was based at RAF Station Manston during 1943-1944, I had the pleasure of escorting Marauder squadrons on several missions.

After rendezvous with the formations of aircraft, accurate navigation brought all concerned to the target area, and it was the precise bombing carried out that impressed me to no end. The fast cruising speed of the B-26 made escort missions a piece of cake for the Typhoon pilot, and we found it no task to practically fly off the bombers' wing tips when providing close escort.

A few dates and targets that I have extracted from my own log book are:

- Nov. 26, 1943 — Pas de Calais (V-1 Launch Sites)
- Feb. 21, 1944 — Coxyde Airfield
- Feb. 25, 1944 — Venlo Airfield
- Mar. 2, 1944 — Tergneir Marshalling Yards

The mission to Venlo is a memorable occasion since during the last year I have been contracted by a former bombardier-navigator, Bob Paukert, of the 55th Squadron, 387th Bomb Group, who graciously provided details. Bob was based at Chipping Ongar, not too far from Chelmsford, and was in the last box of 6 to bomb Venlo Airfield. After leaving the target area, upon reaching the North Sea on the return leg, the formation was jumped by the famous yellow-nose FW 190s from Abbeyville, and four B-26 aircraft were shot down into the sea in short order. Bob advises that the fighters which were to have provided withdrawal cover back to England were not sighted.

The above is one of the many incidents that made life ever so interesting during those dark hectic days.

Editor's Note: See "Buck" Feldman's letter on page 19.



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November 30, 1988

Mr. George F. Coen
 99th Bomb Group Historical Society
 2908 Aliso Drive, N.E.
 Albuquerque, New Mexico 87110

Dear Mr. Coen:

Some time ago I wrote to you regarding information about the loss of my brother's craft piloted by Lt. Walter K. Higgins and since then I have obtained much information when the crew departed on April 24, 1944 from Tortorella, Foggia, Italy to Ridgewell in England and assigned to the 381st Bomb Group 535th Bomb Squadron. I now have a photo of "SPAMCAN," craft in which they went down, crew photos, and have obtained information from the German Archives and have information on the German pilot who apparently downed the craft near Eberswalde, just north east of Berlin.

Through your great 99th newsletters I have discovered that there is a living survivor, Lt. James A. Beck, navigator who lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Prior to the crew being assigned to Ridgewell the following crew members were in Tortorella, Foggia, Italy who arrived there on February 11, 1944 from Africa. Most of the crew apparently remained together and were among the early arrivals in Africa. Those who were in Italy were: Pilot, 2nd Lt. Walter K. Higgins; Crew, Herbert W. Burns, Jr., Orlan D. Carmichael, James A. Beck, S/Sgt. Eddie Delgado, Sgts. Franklin R. Collister, Robert H. Thomson, Jr., Robert R. Blair and Joyce W. Worley.

I am backtracking hoping to determine nicknames, serial numbers of aircraft which Lt. Higgins may have flown out of Africa and Italy. Higgins' crew was assigned to the 356 Bomb Squadron of the 99th.

I am also interested in any photos of members of the crew (if available) and a 346th patch which I am willing to purchase, of course.

When I have compiled all this material I intend to donate it to the New Mexico State Records and Archives for preservation.

Enclosed please find my 1989 Associate Member Dues.

Sincerely,

Ed Delgado



Membership Roster
 99th Bomb Group Historical Society

Membership directory has been removed for privacy.

(217) 854-3471

"PANAMA HATTIE" AT FLAGELLA"

"It's cancelled," "It's on," "It's broken up into a variety show;"-- such were the changing and conflicting rumors on the Flagella's current big time show. As of Saturday afternoon, here's the latest dope: "Panama Hattie" will play Sunday afternoon and night, Monday night, and Tuesday afternoon and night. In case this announcement changes, check with the Special Service Office or the Flagella Theater a few hours before scheduled performance.

"Panama Hattie" is a streamlined version of the Broadway musical hit of a few seasons back. It features thirteen specially written Col Porter numbers, including "I've Got You Under My Skin," "Easy to Love," and "Anything Goes."

Heading the star-studded cast is Diana Del Rio whose name has blazed the Broadway lights for several years. Addison Randall, of the movies, plays the male lead; the Diamond Brothers, of Vaudeville fame, are the funny men; and, for looks, music, or otherwise, ten lovely ladies are also included in the cast.

ATTENTION COMBAT MEN: Nazis Have Neat Way of Making You Talk.

Western Front (CNS)--Here's a new wrinkle in German methods of extracting info from captured Americans. They first strip their captives of all identification, then they set up an opening for an escape. When the American takes advantage of the opening, he is recaptured and threatened to be shot as a spy unless he "comes thru."

"FORTRESS FUNTIME DEBUT"

Thursday night, at 8:30, the Fifth Wing Special Services will present "Fortress Funtime." This new radio show, coming to you over the Foggia AEF Station, should be of special interest to the men of the 99th, for it is partly their show. "BIO Jackson," a ten-minute comedy sketch written and acted by men of the 99th, is an important part of this half hour of variety entertainment, which will include music by one of Foggia's better orchestras, news from home, interviews of medal winners, and happenings around the various bomb groups.

The material for the comedy skit is based on events taking place in the 99th, a group that is overflowing with BIOs. Be sure to listen in Thursday, 8:30 for your name may be mentioned in connection with the latest signorina you were seen with, the last mission you flew, or your girl friend winning a beauty contest back home.

ONE GI OUT OF 8 PLANS OWN BUSINESS

Washington (CNS)--One enlisted man out of 8 plans to operate a business or farm of his own after he is discharged from the services, a recent survey conducted by the Information and Education Division, ASF, indicates.

Among enterprises listed by servicemen who plan to work for themselves are manufacturing and wholesaling; construction or contracting; retailing food, automotive parts, including repair services, restaurants, etc.; transportation, communication, utilities.

FRAGS**346th**

Another big week has passed in the famous 346th and we do mean a big week, for isn't everyone in the air force envious of us? Aren't we the ones? Yep, we sure had da swell time down in our enlisted men's club last Monday. The attraction was D'artoga's girls, and what an attraction! The officers feel a bit neglected, as did the rest of the squadrons, but worry not boys, we saw to it that the girls were well taken care of. Orchids to Chicken Brows the cook, who prepared the steak, pie and ice cream--yum, yum. Mickey Siva met a gal from his home town, but he says she is too young. Heh, heh, that's the first time that we've heard anything like that from Mickey. . . .Au revoir, bon voyage and pip

Membership directory has been removed for privacy.

pip to Grodzicki, Carroll, Carter, Reinberger, and Butz; they're headed for foreign service in the U.S. -- We wish them all the luck in the world and may the festive fluid flow hot and heavy when they hit home grounds. . . .We saw "Donald Duck" Cook at the ballgame Mon. night and he was quacking about our team as any loyal rooter should. Louie Levenson even tried to throw a few baskets--Poor Lou, he'll never admit that he's an old man. They call him Pappy now. This stuff is being hashed out by O'Toole who is pinchhitting while Corky gets stinko.

347th

Arrivedici [sic], chow, bon voyage, etc. to I/Sgt Carson, S/Sgts Varkta, Wymer; Sgt Gentile, and Cpls Dohl, Haralson, and Johnson on your forthcoming trips to the States. Cpl Imperata was also scheduled to go but love conquers all--so-0-0 here he stays. he'll be celebrating his nuptials to that bella signorina next month.. . .Our potential _isters (W/O jg) took their final exam this week; Whitley for administration; Miller and Laddox for communication technicians. Good luck fellows. . . .Here we go in the new ping pong tournament. Two games and two wins to capture first place--Whooooo!!!!

Hq

'S too bad we can't have someone go home every day. Then we'd have an excuse for throwing a party like we had for Freiwald, Larson, and Russell. From the amount of wine drunk, the singing and laughing, I'd say it was a very successful affair. Corta_____, Karchnyak, and Dent deserve a hand for fixing the club up like that. Quite a few boys, Simon of weather, in particular, were ungrateful, for they had no compunctions about taking their payroll in a crap game.

348th

Where did all the money come from this month? The payroll was just about average, but P.T.A. hit a new high and Soldier's Deposits jumped to more than twice the previous record. Maybe the bright lights of Foggia are losing the attraction they once had. Anyway, we're glad to see the money come in, for it will do a lot more good back home than over here. . . .If you want to know how to feather a prop that isn't there, see Lt Bullock. A piece of Kraut flack took one of his props clean off on a recent mission, but he managed to make it back on what was left. . . .Harry Cunny is a versatile man. Besides being our No. 1 energizer man, he's also without a doubt, the No. 1 PX hound. We hear (pure rumor of course) that he sleeps in front of the PX on Sunday nights. . . .Pride and joy of the 348th is the new barber shop. Drop in some time and see the barber chair, the red walls, and the running hot water. All this and a G.I. barber too, our ex-CQ, Cpl Hannon. . . .Don't overlook the Bingo games on Thursday nights at eight. Plenty and beaucoup fun. The more players there are, the better the prizes. Seeing all youse guys there Thursday at eight, in the enlisted men's mess hall. Let's be there, one and all.

416th

M/Sgts Black, Scheu, and Henry are really getting in their physical training, what with walking through that crowded mess line at least three times for the supper meal. Beware the spotters. . . .Sugar House has his worries as his girl has been grabbed by the long arm of the law and now languishes in the Bari can. How he misses her companionship. . . .Noisy Bramlett, our ultra-affable mess attendant is very shy on words. He fears that rationing may hit this part of the world and doesn't want to get caught short if wordage is among the rationed items. . . .Correction column--Blind tom Bonder was highly incensed at my quoting his winnings at \$980. He demands a retraction and says he won, to be exact, \$1100.00. O.K. Bud, you get it and that's the important thing. . . .That scheduled bout between M/Sgt Pierce and M/Sgt Kirby failed to come off last week. It is the writer's humble opinion that little Bobby is now living on borrowed time. . . .The serious Side: The local radio broadcasts on the GI Bill of Rights are indeed enlightening. Material benefit can be gained from listening to the broadcast and absorbing the contents. It will certainly relieve you of a lot of headaches in the future when you get that lovely "Honorable Discharge."

CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

Bill Stidger tells this story: In Rome there used to be a small colony of budding artists fathered and provided for by a rich old man who had wanted to become an artists but had spent all his life making money. His proteges worked hard and they played hard too. At every opportunity, they had what is called a "celebration." At such parties, they did many things they would not have done at home in America.

One young man, well-liked and respected for his good nature and kindness, refused to ;join in the frequent revelries and debaucheries. he was not ostrasized because of this, but the curiosity of the old man was piqued and he determined to find out why this young man held to his ideals in Rome when it might have been so easy to do otherwise, when it was almost expected of him.

The opportunity came one night, as he and the youth watched the sunset from a villa overlooking the Eternal City during a party which occupied all the other members of the Bohemian colony. After several minutes of silence as they drank in the beauty of the scene, the old man asked, "John, I have been watching you for two years and I cannot help noticing that you never get into the parties the boys and girls have so frequently. There must be a reason, what is it?"

The young man looked into the old man's face, and then pointing to the glowing sunset, said, "do you see that sunset? Well, out beyond it lies America, and in a little village there is home, and in that home lives the girl I love. I'm keeping myself clean for her."

It is a simple story and a true one. How often we make the mistake of trading a party for permanency, bartering an inheritance of years of happiness for a mess of pottage, giving up a life-time of love for an hour of nothing.

Let's keep ourselves clean for the women we love, for the children we expect or already have, for the homes we shall one day make, for the careers we want to work out, for the influence we hope to exert in our communities. Let's keep ourselves clean for the emergencies of life that may come upon us. Let's do it for the sake of our families and friends; for those who love us, trust us, idealize us and believe in us; for those who sacrificed that we might be what we are and are boasting about us now; for those who may look to us for leadership.

INQUIRING REPORTER

"IN WHAT WAY WILL YOUR ARMY EXPERIENCE HELP YOU IN CIVILIAN LIFE?"

SGT FLOYD B. WISEMAN: I've learned to get along with a lot of @#%\$# guys I never would have tolerated before.

CPL W.B. BARONE: After almost two years of studying radio in the army, it takes me only five minutes to tune in Jack Benny.

I/SGT HENDRICKSON: I've learned to be a politician and a chisler.

PFC BRITT: I've learned all their [sic] is to know about first aid. Now if a girl passes out on me I know what to do.

I.SGT LINKLATER: I've learned to play the snoot-flute and that should help me immeasurably in civilian life.

SGT GRADY LAKEFORD: Not a damn thing!

MOVIE SCHEDULE

MONDAY 19 FEBRUARY

"STRANGE AFFAIR" with
EVELYN KEYES, ALLAN JOSLYN
1800 - 3246th, 348th, & Ord.
1930 - 347th, 416th, & Hq.

WEDNESDAY 21 FEBRUARY

"CONFLICT" with
HUMPHREY BOGART, ALEXIS SMITH
1800 - 347th, 416th, & Hq.
1930 - 346th, 348th, & Ord.

SATURDAY 24 FEBRUARY

"BRAZIL" with

VIRGINIA BRUCE, TITO GUIEAR

1800 - 346th, 348th, & Ord.

1930 - 347th, 416th, & Hq.

THURSDAY 22 FEBRUARY

"GI MOVIES" also "WHY WE FIGHT"

"THE NAZIS STRIKE" second in the series.

1800 - One showing only

WISE GUY

Hornell N.Y.--A local gentleman applied for a marriage license here. When informed that the license cost \$2, he changed his mind. "'Taint worth it," he replied.

SPORTS FOR SPORTS

Basketball: The 346th Rattlers played the Costa Quintet last Monday for the championship of the area. Although our team put up a great fight, they were outplayed by one of the smoothest teams in Italy. Losing to a team that has won thirteen in a row is nothing to be ashamed of, and our boys deserve a pat on the back for capturing first place in the National League. The score was 61-42, but to use an old Brooklyn phrase, "Wait 'till next year." Murder!

The 346th-416th Diamondbacks, after weeks of inactivity, are getting back into the fight again with a few practice games. Smith, Kodday, Rynearson, Malauslatus, and Cabellere, with a few weeks of practice under their belts, should burn up the courts again.

Pin Pong: The second week of the new ping pong tournament provided beaucoup excitement for the players and spectators. The 348th lost to the 346th, 5 to 2, in a match that was highlighted by the Pitlick-Austin set. The 347th handed Ord. a 7 to 0 shellacking that they will long remember. Seems to me that the Ord. bunch were positive they would cop this tournament. We must admit, however, that Richenveldt takes first prize for hard luck, losing games 27 to 25 week after week. The 416th surprised one and all by beating Hq. 4 to 3 in a match that wasn't decided until the last minute of play. Rubinton and Michelson of Hq. took the first two games but Condit, Weiman and Cranford came back to take the next three. Reese and Lynn lost the next doubles game and the match was tied. With the score standing at one game each, 18 to 18, Condit and Cranford put on a last minute spurt to cop the final game and win the set and match. Standings given below.

	W	L	PERC		W	L	PERC
347	2	0	1000	416	7	1	500
346	1	1	500	Hq.	1	1	500
348	1	2	500	Ord.	0	2	000

Sidelights: At last we've discovered someone who can compete with the 346th Mo Goldman. During the 416-Hq ping pong match last Friday, Joe Mortarano displayed a set of lungs that make Mo look like a baby. We are looking forward to the 346-416 game when these two rabid fans get together to cheer on their teams. What a night that should be! We'd advise those with tender eardrums to have some cotton on hand.

NEWS FROM HOME

Omaha, Neb.: When Arthur Peable, a vacuum cleaner salesman, knocked on the door of a vine-covered cottage here, the lady of the house dropped a geranium pot on his head from the upstairs window. "Sorry," she explained later, "I thought you were my husband."

Buffalo, N.Y.: George Hassard, 92-year-old inmate of an old-folks home, walked 18 miles to visit his girl friend, a 70-year-old Buffalo waitress, and discovered that she had ditched him. "I'm off women for life," he said sadly. "I'm getting too old."

M'Alister, Okla.: Mail service was gummed up here when the postal authorities opened a mailbag and molasses came pouring out. Someone in Missouri had mailed a package of the gooey stuff to a local resident, but the lid came off.

St. Louis: Seeking a divorce, a local man said his wife left home 8 years ago to take his pants to the cleaners. He has not seen wife or pants since.

Los Angeles: Because all his passengers were crowded to the front of the street car, the motorman yelled, "All right folks, there's a cigarette machine in the rear." Three persons got smashed toes in the stampede to the rear.

St. Petersburg, Fla.: Three days after someone had swiped Charley Granderson's extra suit, he moved to a new apartment. Hanging in the closet he found his suit, left there by the vacating tenant.

Tulsa, Okla.: Red hot jive warmed up to such a pitch in a local juke joint that the Fire Department was called. The juke box had burst into flames, cracking all the platters.

San Francisco: Arrested on a charge of running a bookie establishment in her home, a local lady had but one request to make of the judge. "Please don't take my phone away," she pleaded.

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"FORTRESS FOLLIES OF 1945" PRESENTED

Last thursday night, in their mess, the men of the 346th presented "Fortress Follies of 1945." A fast moving and highly entertaining show made up from talent right in the squadron. In the orchestra, songs, gags, and other specialty acts, most unusual talent was revealed. Everyone connected with the show deserves a lot of credit for their work, and the squadron as a whole is worthy of the highest commendation for the leadership it has assumed in activities recreational.

Plans are underway to play "Fortress Follies of 1945" either within other squadrons or in the Group Theater. The 346th has proved that Soldier Shows can be produced successfully. It is reasonable to assume that each other squadron has an equal amount of talent. If your squadron doesn't have dayroom entertainment frequently, don't blame your entertainment director. You simply didn't cooperate in the recent plan for Soldier Shows. There is much fun and pleasure in working them up. Why not start now and follow the example of the men in the 346th. **It can be done!**

QUARTET CONTEST DATE ANNOUNCED

Fifth Wing competition for the Barber Shop Quartet Contest will take place at Wing Hq., 10 March 1945.

Entrants in our own Group must be submitted to the Special Service Officer by 8 March. You bar room crooners bring your talents out in the open. Who knows, you might be touring the Theater soon with some lovely USO girls.

SWISS INTERNEES RETURN

Thursday afternoon, two oldtimers in the Group were seen at Headquarters after somewhat lengthy sojourns in Switzerland. They were Lt Morton L. Marks, a former Group Bombardier, and Lt Walter Breslin, a Navigator. Both went down on the mission to Augsburg, Germany, October 1, 1943, when the group was jumped by from 25 to 30 fighters. More about their prolonged interment cannot be printed; but it was swell seeing them back for short time on their way home.

CREW SWEATS ENTANGLING JAMMED BOMBS

One 348th crew really did some sweating on Wednesday when a heavy flak burst tangled and jammed six 500 pounders in the bomb bay of their aircraft--#413. For an hour and a half, two crew members, Cpl S.C. Mallardi, Radio Operator from the Bronx, N.Y., wounded; and Cpl L.R. Swithers, Waist Gunner from Philadelphia, worked with a barrel from one of the waist guns until they finally dislodged the bombs.

The flak burst really tore up the insides of the plane and made the work even more difficult than it would have been ordinarily. To quote 2nd Lt C.V. Walker, Navigator, "You talk about 'sweating.' Well, Brother, that's what we did a lot of for an hour and a half. Then Mallardi and Swithers dislodged those 500 pounders and things looked brighter."

Other members of the "Sweatin' Crew" were 2nd Lt R.J. Hartnett, Pilot; 1st Lt K.D. Woodwin, Co-pilot; 2nd Lt R.R. Stenzel, Bombardier; Cpl H.V. Miles, Engineer; Cpl C.H. Heath, Ball Turret Operator; Cpl P.E. Seaverns, Tail Gunner; and S/Sgt J.M. Burris, Waist Gunner.

STAR-STUDED VISITORS AT 99TH

When the 99th men see stars at night, it only signifies that it isn't too cloudy in the heavens, but when stars are seen in the daytime, that is news. The stars seen on Tuesday were insignia worn by Lt Generals Jimmy Doolittle, CG of the 8th AAF, and Carl Spants, CG of the Strategic Air Force, ETO. Added to these were the two stars of Major General Nathan F. Twining of the 15th AAF, as well as those worn by 15th AAF Deputy

Commander, Brigadier General Charles Born; and our own 5th Wing chief, Brig. Gen. Charles R. Lawrence. The Generals stopped at Hq. while on a tour of the groups in this area and talked with our CO, Lt Col Sehwareck at the Officers Club.

NO BOTTLES NO COKES, SO THERE

The plant which provides us cokes has lost 25,000 bottles since it started operations. Its capacity is about _____ or 20 per man per week. Return bottles and get one _____.

FRAGS

346th

To VIRGIL SEARLES goes the distinct honor of being the first member of the first three graders to break in the new spring model comfort station down on the line. V.X. claims the Squadron carpenter outdid himself while constructing such a masterpiece. There was one sad sack, however, when they burned the winter model. Art Reed gazed upon the conflagration with tear-filled eyes. Not only did Art recall many a relieving moment spent within the confines of old reliable, but he also felt that he had lost many small friends in the blaze. . . .GEORGE YENCHO, according to Chuck Miller, has the largest bucket in the 15th Air Force. Chuck is quite an expert on such matters, not being on the svelte side himself. . . .Just about this time next week, there will be, at the very least, 135 hospital cases in the outfit. Reason for such a dire prediction is that we are going to begin an inter-section basketball tournament. The section that stands to lose the most is the outfit headed by "SHORTY COWART." Yes, we look for many, many aches and bruises ere this week goes down in history. Reports of the mass murder of the 346ers will appear in next week's Here 'Tis.

347th

Well, seven of the boys finally went home on ID. Here's hoping they don't rejoin us here. It would be much better if we joined up with them--in the good old USA. I hope, I hope, I hope. . . .Kinda tough on the boys going up to Rome now. They'll have to do their romancin' in the afternoons since this new order came out making it mandatory for them to sleep at the rest camp. I wonder if VD is less virulent during the early hours. . . .Our three candidates for P.O Jg. passed all their exams and are now sweating out their appointments. Congratulations to M/SGT SHERMAN MILLER and S/SGTS HERMAN MADDOX and RAY WHITLEY. . . .Our bar is finally nearing completion and should be open in the very near future. Here's luck, skoal, salud, etc. . . .With two wins under our belt, in the second half of the tournament, and undisputed possession of the first place, we are all set to breeze along to the ping pong championship of the 99th.

348th

Safety NCO ALLEN almost had to investigate himself last week. A couple of wayward sparks lit on the roof of his tent and by the time they were discovered, the tent had two beautiful skylights in it. Thanks to the fast work by "FLASH" MASON (the Aspirin Kid) most of the roof was saved. . . .Things are really getting tough when GEORGE RHODES runs out of rumors. We saw George the other day and he didn't have even a little one to spread. Come on George, when are we going home?. . . .A recent visitor to the squadron was Capt White who left us about a year ago to set up the San Spirito rest camp. He's stationed in Foggia for a while after spending some months in Naples with the BTOs. . . .416th take notice. Our combat man of our squadron heard that damn H-hour siren and thought it was a gas alarm. he jumped out of bed and hunted frantically for his gas mask but couldn't find it. Just as he was resigning himself to a horrible death by asphyxiation, one of his tentmates took pity on him and told him to go back to bed. . . .Eight good men and true marched out of the squadron last week bound for parts unknown. First stop--the Service Group, then--Infantry? How the boys are getting gray wondering if more will travel the same road.

416th

This transfer of personnel to the Infantry has a few of the boys in a cold sweat. Cpl Bonos is about to discard his pots and pans for a tommy gun and do his part on a voluntary basis. . . .The squadron morale as a whole is on the uptrend. The sight of seeing some of

our buddies make the grade and head for home has the boys all aflutter. The IDY deal is a note of encouragement to those who remain and is a real morale builder. Who knows but that you may be next?. . . .PFC WILLIAM PANZARTELLA has developed into a large-scale Providence, R.I. realtor. He has invested a substantial portion of his recent winnings in solid down to earth real estate back in his home baliwick. . . .To M/SGT CHARLIE TRESSLER goes the nom-de-plume of the top notch rumor monger in the squadron. However, he was nonplussed t'other day when one of his stellar forecasts made the rounds and then reverted back to him. He nearly believed it after all the modifications had been made. . . .

Headquarters

Bingo! Zingo! Ringo! Frank Freer yelled bingo Thursday night and collected something that has a lot of sing and ring to it--one bottle of GEN-U-INE American whiskey!! Funny how many bosom pals he has all of a sudden. But Major Scarborough really hit the grand prize--a ticket back to the States. 'S too bad we can't hand them out for bingo prizes. There's horses racing Sunday night at the club--see you there. Will also be seeing you every morning at 1030 hours for volleyball. . . .Welcome to Capt McCormick our new PRO man. He had a big job--keeping Wiggin on the ball.

Sports for Sports

Ping Pong: In this sporting world, there's a large group that consider ping pong a "sissy game." I'm sure that if they could have seen the matches last night they'd change their minds. Playing at Hq., Church, Hunsberger, Berger, Kaye, and Katz of the 347th lost a tough one, 5 to 2. Though a large crowd was on hand to cheer the 416th on, the absence of their number one rooter, Joe Mortarano, discouraged the team and they dropped the match with the 346th, 6 to 1. The 348th team of Popelka, McKeenan, Kodar, Suska, and Rzodkiewics showed that they were not going to end up in the cellar this tournament. They beat Ord. 6 to 1 in a match that saw every set go to three games. We now have the predicament of having four teams tied for first place, but next week's matches should take care of that. Right now, its anybody's guess as to who'll be the winner of this tournament.

	W	L	PERC		W	L	PERC
347	2	1	666	Hq.	2	1	666
346	2	1	666	416	1	2	333
348	2	1	666	Ord.	0	3	000

Sidelights: With good weather setting in, more and more outdoor athletic facilities are being made available for you. Each squadron is preparing baseball, volleyball, horseshoe, and badminton courts and every man is encouraged to get out of his sack and take off that extra weight. We hope that there will be a baseball and volleyball team in each squadron so tournaments can be started. Remember, it won't be too long (we hope) before we head back to the States and we all want to be in good condition for that first month of strenuous activity we plan on. Let's get out there and throw the old ball around. In that way, we'll be able to drink and love for one solid month without collapsing.

Life with a Wife

RUNNEMEDE, N.J.: Suing for the return of his engagement ring, William Witmor testified that he and his fiance had a falling out over beds. "I wanted one," he said. "She wanted 2--one for us and one for her mother."

NASHVILLE, TENN.: Grounds for divorce: A backwoods lady is seeking freedom from her mate because he wears his shoes in bed "even in the summertime."

PITTSBURGH, PA: Mrs Pearl Hurst didn't mind it when her husband toted bottles of whiskey to bed with him every night, she testified in a divorce petition in this city. But she did start to complain after he began whamming her over the head with the empty jugs.

LOS ANGELES, CAL: Bill Jones, a screen writer, has been sued for divorce by his wife, who claims he tried out all of his ideas for melodrama on her first. "He broke up the house 3 or 4 times, hit me with the furniture and dragged me around by the hair," she testified. "He said it made good material for his plots."

LOS ANGELES, CAL: Mrs Arthur DeGalyorse, seeking a divorce, testified that her husband threw a plate of marmalade and 3 duck eggs at her. "What did you do?" the judge asked. "Nothing except hit him with a little fruit salad."

TEMPE, ARIZ: Ed Woodruff and Clara Cusing were married in a local barber shop. It was the only place where they could find a minister.

CHAPEL CHIMES

Lewis Carrol, author of Alice in Wonderland, somewhere has a little story of a person meeting an animated lock. It was an ordinary padlock, with a pair of spidery, thin legs on which it scurried around frantically. It acted in a very distracted and nervous manner so that the person was quite moved with sympathy and asked, "Whatever is the matter?"

The little lock replied, "I'm looking for a key to unlock me."

In a very sober sense, aren't we all? Is that not what we need at times--something to unlock us? There is more capacity in most people than gets out. Some situation, some strong motive, some demand releases energies of which we were before unaware.

Sometimes it is a high purpose that calls forth the best in us, often it is our deep faith in God. Religion has always been the greatest unlocker of human personality. In faith and religious service, we find the end of living. Jesus threw down a bunch of keys to us--a new sense of our personal value as individuals, a cause to lose ourselves in achieving, a sympathetic attitude towards others and a deathless hope.

All of us are locked up in some way, there is more in us than has ever gotten out. Give the Great Lock-Smith a chance with your life! Go to church.

CHURCH SCHEDULE

Catholic: Sunday Mass
0800, 1800, 1830

Wed. & Friday--1830

Protestant: Sunday

0800-347th; 0845-Ord.;
0930-348th; 1015-416;
1830-Hq.

INQUIRING REPORTER

"What was the best "Soldier Town" you were stationed in?"

S/SGT JOHN RABAUT: St. Louis. There was beaucoup women, beaucoup liquor, beaucoup women, beaucoup food and beaucoup women.

SGT HINTON SMITH: Mitchell, S.D. You won't find more hospitable people anywhere. And of course, there's the Majestic Bar!

CAPT GEORGE TRENT: Coon Creek, Kent. All the boys are off to war and all the girls are eager.

CPL JOE CORCORAN: The hick town at Camp Kilmer because it was only an hour's ride to heaven--Brooklyn.

S/SGT MILTON STOUT: Sioux City. My wife was there.

MOVIE SCHEDULE

MONDAY 26 FEBRUARY

"ANIMAL KINGDOM" with
ANNE SHERIDAN & DENNIS MORGAN
1800-347th, 416th, & Hq.
1930-346th, 348th, & Ord.

WEDNESDAY 28 FEBRUARY

"BARBARY COAST GENT" with
WALLACE BERRY & BINNIE BARNES
1800-346th, 348th, & Ord.
1930-347th, 416th, & Hq.

SATURDAY 3 MARCH

"MR. SKIFFINGTON" with
BETTE DAVIS & CLAUDE RAINS
1800-347th, 416th, & Hq.
2000-346th, 348th, & Ord.

THURSDAY 1 MARCH

"G.I. MOVIES" "WHY WE FIGHT" No. 2
"THE NAZIS STRIKE"
1800-One showing only

SAD SACK

GRAND ISLAND, NEB: The saddest sack at this base is the GI who returned to his barracks late one night, found the fire out and made 2 trips to the coal pile to refresh the stove. En route, he stumbled, barked his shins. Then he tripped over a foot locker and banged his head against a bed post in the dark. The fire was going at last when he climbed into bed, only to find another guy sleeping there already. He realized then that he was in the wrong barracks.

SEVEN ARMIES OVERSEAS

WASHINGTON, DC: Here's how 9 US armies are distributed in a world at war, according to the TDs: 1st Army, France; 2nd Army, Texas; 5th Army, Italy; 6th Army, Philippines; 7th Army, France; 8th Army, Philippines; 9th Army, France.

HERE 'TIS

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GUEST SPEAKERS TO BE PRESENTED TUESDAY NIGHT

Capt Lee W. Zane, Commanding Officer of a Heavy Weapons Company with the 5th Army, now a guest of our Group, will discuss Infantry Life on the Italian Front with the men of the 347th Tuesday evening. The time is 1830 hours in the EM Mess. Other squadrons are invited. Capt Zane can probably answer all your questions about the Infantry except that certain one: "Will they take me?"

On the same evening, at 1900 hours, the men of the 546th will entertain a speaker from the British Army Education Corps who will discuss "World Organization for Peace." It is a timely subject and one on which we should do much thinking. Other squadrons invited.

CLERK TYPISTS TO BE TRAINED IN THE GROUP

Anyone who would like to be trained as a Clerk Typist, any clerk now who would like to improve his work, or any section chief who would like to have his clerks become more proficient may have them trained here. There is in each squadron and headquarters an instructor who will give individual instruction in "Fundamentals of Typewriting" and "Military Correspondence." Those interested contact the following men on or before Thursday, 15 March: 346th-Sgt Billmaier; 347th-S/Sgt Whitley; 348th-S/Sgt Gill; 416th-Cpl Cranford; and Hq.-Capt Trent.

\$12,000.00 DOWN \$13,000.00 TO GO

Our Group has almost reached the halfway mark in its \$25,000.00 quota for the air Force Easter War Bond Drive. The drive will extend thru payday this month. Keep that in mind and let's go "over the top" in each sales.

NO FLAK, NO FIGHTERS, BUT PLENTY OF SW@T

The mission to Bruk, Austria, on the 9th may have been a milk run for many, but it was strictly a sweat job for Lt. Fant and his crew of the 348th. Without enemy opposition, Lt Fant had to feather two engines, jettison his bombs, and throw out flak suits and other materiel in the effort to come home on "two wings and a prayer." He dood it!

CONCERNING CRUEL CREEL, THE KRAUT CRUSHER AND HIS COMBAT COCK:

"Cruel Creel the Kraut Crusher and his Combat Cock" - watch for it at your favorite theater. For this great saga of World war II is now being recorded for posterity by the Hollywood moguls right here in the 99th. The fame of 348th's Lt. Creel and his flying rooster has spread, and when the newsreel men reached Italy recently, looking for stories of mascots, the name of Creel was on everyone's tongue.

"Cruel Creel" is the proud possessor of a mascot that is on duty in the air and on the ground. The rooster has already won the Air Medal for five operational missions and is at present up for a Purple Heart for a wound in his left leg. A devout student of flying, he attended all ground school classes with the Lieutenant last month. Not to be outdone by his mascot, Lt Creel last week set a shining example for the entire squadron by serving as Duty Officer seven consecutive days and appearing in Class A uniform daily. During duty hours, he and the rooster make their headquarters in the Operations Office.

Both the Lieutenant and the rooster are pleased with the publicity which they have bestowed upon the already famous 348th, but now that their week of worldwide fame has terminated, they are looking forward to returning to combat. Such is the penalty of fame! (Maj. Robert L. McMillan)

WAR BOND OFFICER WINS WAR BOND:

Like the postman who took a walk on his day off, Capt Trent, in charge of War Bond sales in the Group, took a chance on the 500 smacker War Bond that was to be the prize in Friday night's drawing at the enlisted men's club. With only one winning number out of 100, and everyone looking on in suspense, Cpl Philips, Hq cook, mixed up the numbers in a large envelope and Major John A. Sarosy, Executive Officer, plunged his hand into the envelope and it came out bearing the lucky number - "61". "That's me," said Capt Trent excitedly, "and that's the first time I've ever won anything in my life."

Asked what he planned to do with the War Bond money, he said: "It'll help a lot toward that little picket fence with the chickens behind it."

"FRAGS"

346

Erv Sobelowski and Mo Goldman are both looking for someone to chew their food after a visit to the dentist. Mo was aching so that he couldn't even--talk! To Mo, that is a major catastrophe, to the squadron it is a blessing and a relief. . . . This ID business has just about everybody knocking heads against the walls. Abe Lyman, the well known man about town, was heard to say that he wouldn't dare to go home unless his bosom pal, Mo, went with him. Bert Partlow, who will not give permission to use his name in the columns of Here 'Tis, threatens to boycott ye scribbler iffen he doesn't refrain from using the well-known name of Partlow in the Group weekly. Now Bertie, is dat nice? . . . Thursday night at the club, we were entertained by the Group orchestra, the Diamondbacks. Everyone agreed the boys put on a swell show. To the Diamondbacks, one great big "Thank You!"

Hq

Johnny Mihavic, cook at Hq kitchen, is still wondering what kind of cow produces such fine pork chops as they had the other night for supper. Someone should tell him about those things. . . . Bingo on Thursday night found mess sergeant Jessy Spry as a three-time winner including the last prize of the evening. Part of the last game's reward was a bar book and Jessy partook freely of the resulting capitulation of same in toasting his luck with his friends. "I wasn't so lucky in the crap game that followed," he said bitterly. "They sure cleaned me out--again." . . . Supply Sergeant Max Shapiro has taken size orders for the new battle jackets. . . guess what rumors followed the announcement. . . . The new baseball field at Hq should be a very good one for grading of the area beyond the hospital has made a fairly smooth surface. Daily workouts by various members of Hq may produce a pretty good team. Merely information and no apple polishing intended, but you should see Lt Col Schwanbeck handle the ball and bat. . . he's strictly no rookie.

348

Thanks to the obliging engineer of the Foggia Express, the boys on the line don't worry about catching the line bus. All they have to do is go over to the railroad track and wait. The train provides fast, if not frequent service direct from the mess hall to the line. Bubbles Barnhart dropped into the Orderly Room the other day with a bit of a buzz on. Ordinarily Barney is a rather quiet guy, but when he gets happy he really unbends. Sorry we can't print what he said! . . . Kaplan's Kut-rate Klothiers had another non-op day recently when the Flying Tailor hopped down to Bari to close a big deal. Sure wish I was a B.I.C. . . . Congratulations to Pfc Agee. That stripe was a long time in coming and you really deserved it. Hope the next one gets here in better time. Though our ping pong team lost to Hq 7 to 0, they put up a damn good fight and deserve a pat on the back for trying.

FORMER MEMBERS OF THE
451ST Bombardment Group (H) WW II, LTD.

49th Wing

15th Air Force



GROUP HEADQUARTERS 724th 725th 726th 727th Squadrons

18 January 1988

Dear George,

Good to hear from you. Thanks for the goodies about the B-24 based (now!) at Liberal.

I had the good fortune to see it when it came into Liberal for the first time in 1978. Unlike the Fortress, there aren't many of the old birds around.

The enclosed clipping about the B-17 parallels what is being done for a B-24 in the same place. Seems that Stow Mass., and the Collings Foundation, are real active in getting some of the old aircraft back on line. In our upcoming AD-LIB I've got a story on this subject.

Also in putting together our published history, in serial form, I noted that Capt Bill Finley (our weatherman) ended up in your outfit. I was wondering if you ever ran across his name in your search? I didn't see him listed in your Vol. 8 - No. 1 roster. To those that remember him, it would be interesting to know if he's alive or dead; and if alive, what his condition is?

Thanks, George, for the mailing. I hope all goes well with you. Don't be concerned about the TEMPERATURES. The nose sections of the B-17, as well as the air-conditioned B-24, were much cooler than the +6 that you have in Albuquerque. - To date our coldest has been -17.

Take care,

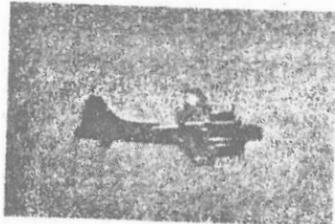
Bob K.

Robert Karstensen, President / 1032 S. State St. / Marengo, IL 60152 — Phone (815) 568-7766

Personnel activities included the following: Four key officers were promoted to captain on the first of the month, they were: Captain Henry Richardson, Group Statistical Officer; Captain Wilbert Jacobs, 725th Squadron S-2; Captain J.W. Ramsey, 725th Engineering Officer; and, Captain William McGuire, Group Gunnery Officer. Major Herschel Mahon, 727th Operations Officer, finished up his missions and being "war-weary" went to recuperate in the States on the 2nd of the month, Lt. William Finley, Group Weather Officer, left for the 99th Bomb Group on the 4th and Lt. Williams who joined us last month took over his duties. Lt. Finley had long been one of the most remarkable characters in this organization.

OCTOBER
TRANSFER

Do you HAVE FINLEY?
— OR KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT HIM?



Volunteers lovingly rebuild B17

WEST MAYFIELD, Pa. (AP)—A vintage B17 bomber that crashed on landing at an airshow is being rebuilt with the help of 90 volunteers seeking glory.

"I love it. We want to get it back in the air," said Horace Pendleton, 73, a retired airplane mechanic from the Pittsburgh suburb of Crafton. "This is what we call glory work—for the glory of aviation."

Pendleton's attitude is typical of the volunteers who responded after the World War II-era Flying Fortress bomber overshot the runway and tumbled down an embankment Aug. 23 at the Beaver County Airport, 30 miles northwest of Pittsburgh.

Nine people were injured in the crash, blamed on a gust of wind.

The plane is one of the few surviving from the 12,700 built in the late 1930s and 1940s. It is owned by the Collings Trust of Stow, Mass., and is valued at \$1 million.

The B17s of the English-based 8th Air Force were the United States' main strategic daylight bombing force in Europe during the war.

"The volunteers look at the plane like it's a national memorial," said Dan Donatella, airport director. "There's a lot of sentimental feeling, especially among ex-servicemen who have flown in one."

About 30 volunteers are off-duty USAir mechanics and the rest are "ordinary people of all ages who just want to help in some way," he said. Contributions of nearly \$5,000 have come to the "Save the B17" trust fund.

A hobby shop owner said he would sell B17 caps, jerseys and T-shirts without profit to help finance the work. Machinists have offered to make parts, and one company offered hard-to-find rivets.

Volunteers have been coming since repairs began Sept. 4, and have been working 12-hour days seven days a week.

Thanks for the clipping, Bob. We have had no comments at all on our previous mention of Lt. Finley, but somebody who knows him will eventually wrap the garbage with this item uppermost. See you in Vegas.

geo

Courtesy of Al Schroeder

14 January 1945

On 14 January 1943, thirty-one B-17 airplanes took off from Biskra, Algeria to inaugurate operations of the Fifth Wing. Having completed two years of continued and sustained operations, it seems fitting to detail a brief history of the Wing and to tell a story in picture of some of the activities and accomplishments of the six B-17 Groups of the 15th Air Force.

It is not the purpose of this history to reiterate statistics, they are available elsewhere and need no detailing here. The true significance of the event is found in the unwritten records and those records are found in the unceasing, uncomplaining labor of the ground personnel of the Wing in the sand and dust of North Africa, and on the muddy flooded bases of Italy. It has been a record of teamwork, of wholehearted cooperation by every man on the ground, who, in many cases, is forced to stay on the ground against his wishes.

It has been a record of heroic effort, sometimes under seemingly impossible conditions. Examples have been many, including the stubborn, relentless, costly yet highly successful campaign against Ploesti; and those missions where the entire Wing and each Group of the Wing, on occasion, have found themselves alone and without escort, yet unflinchingly have gone on and pressed home the attack regardless of opposition or loss.

To the men who have given their lives in order to make this record possible is dedicated this brief history of the Fifth Wing. As new men join, it is my sincere belief that they will carry on the traditions established in these two years of operations--established through the sweat and blood of those hundreds of men who have gone on before them in order to preserve the American way of life.

C.W. LAWRENCE,
Brigadier General, U.S.A.
Commanding.

The Nazi Connection, by F.W. Winterbotham \$8.95 Harper & Row Hardcopy

(General Ralph Weminger) was given the usual careful conducted tours arranged by the (British) Air Ministry. He was shown our Staff College and our training facilities, but there were three things which he was never allowed to learn anything about: our progress in radar; our brilliant system of control of the whole of our fighter air force from Fighter Command, which included our system of enabling our fighters to home in on approaching enemy formations; and our production of the Spitfire. This aircraft was later to catch the Germans completely by surprise.

p. 106

HISTORY

FIFTH BOMBARDMENT WING (US)

The Fifth Wing was activated by General Order No. 30 of the Eighth Air Force on 10 July 1942, but it wasn't until the end of August that the unit approached full strength at its base at Westover Field, Mass. In early September, Col. John W. Monahan assumed command of the Wing with headquarters in the Munitions Building, Washington, D.C., while the Headquarters Squadron remained at Westover.

On 24 Oct. 1942, seven officers and seven enlisted men sailed from Hampton Roads, Va., in Convoy "D"--with 80 ships--supposed to have been the largest convoy in history at that time. While this group was still on the high seas, another contingent of seven officers and 57 EM left Staten Island in Convoy "D-5". The first party landed at Fedala Beach behind the 3rd Division on 9 October and after four days of unloading ships and living in a sardine factory, moved to Casablanca. On 19-20 November the men in Convoy D-5 came ashore at Casablanca and set up housekeeping in a metal warehouse. During the next three weeks Wing Personnel unloaded organizational equipment and recovered lost or stolen goods, and on 8 December moved by rail to Oujda. At Camp Kilmer, N.J., meanwhile, the last contingent of 34 officers and 52 EM embarked on 12 December and reached Casablanca on Christmas Eve, spending a cold night in the metal warehouse. This party moved to Oujda on 28 December.

Brig. Gen. Joseph H. Atkinson, former commander of the 97th Bomb Group, assumed command of the Wing on 5 Jan. 1943 per General Order No. 1 of the Wing. Colonel Monahan went to the 12th Bomber Command. Six days later the unit moved by rail and road to Biskra, a community of some 10,000 population on the edge of the desert. EM were quartered in vacated French barracks. Officers occupied the Garden of Allah, tourist showplace owned by Count Landon. Headquarters was set up in the Casino, with A-2 operating off the gambling tables. The Wing was established on an operational basis at noon, 12 January, and on 14 January the two groups composing the Wing, the 97th and 301st, pulled the first Wing mission. The 301st put 26 B-17s over docks and shipping at Sfax, scored hits and suffered no losses while knocking down an ME 109 and damaging an FW 190. The 97th sent 16 B-17s over docks and shipping at Sousse, starting fires and suffering no losses. Both attacks were escorted by P-38s of the 12th Fighter Group.

Heavy bombing was a novelty in the early days. Correspondent Ernie Pyle frequented the Wing and Margaret Bourke-White flew a mission and snapped pictures for a spread in LIFE. Martha Raye, Carole Landis, Mitzi Mayfair and Kay Francis, the original overseas entertainers, played Biskra on 23 January. Two days later General Arnold paid a surprise visit, congratulated the Wing on current operations and stressed patience in waiting for supplies. While the planes were pounding Tripoli, Gabes, Tunis, Bizerte, Ferryville and other North African targets, some of the highlights of life at Biskra were the landing and capture of Axis saboteurs, a horse show by the French Spahis Regiment, the devaluing of the franc from 75 per \$1.00 to 50 (on which some men cleaned up) and a big party with the Lafayette Escadrille.

During 1-5 March the Wing moved to Chateaudun du Rhumel, a small Algerian town west of Constantine, with the two groups based nearby. The unit had begun to turn its attention to targets in Sicily and Sardinia when the 99th Bomb Group joined and flew its first mission in late March. The 2nd was the next arrival, beginning operations in late April. After the close of the Tunisian campaign in May the Wing with its mounting strength began to stretch out, flying as far as La Spezia and Leghorn in Italy. On 1 June Prime Minister Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden and General George Marshall visited the 97th. Shortly afterward there began the all-out assault on Pantelleria, followed by the first attack on Rome and the softening of Sicily for invasion. Toward the end of July there was a lull in operations while the allies issued ultimatums to the Badoglio government. When Italy failed to respond the Wing opened up again on Naples, Foggia and other Italian targets.

On 5 August 1943 the Wing moved from Chateaudun to Depienne, 30 miles southwest of Tunis, while the groups clustered nearby. From here the Fortresses ranged far and wide, reaching into southern France, the Brenner Pass, Greece and finally Germany itself. In November the Wing was transferred from the 12th to the 15th Air Force. As 1943 waned it became apparent that the prime targets for heavy bombing were beyond the range of the North

African bases. To accomplish the earlier long pulls into far northern Italy and Germany it had been necessary to stop at intermediate points in Sicily and southern Italy for gasoline. Now a move seemed imminent and in early December the entire Wing packed up and travelled to Italy, basing in and around newly-liberated Foggia. At that time the rumble of guns could be heard at the front, some 60 miles distant, and night air raid alerts were common. Personnel had a chance to examine at first hand the devastation they had heaped on Foggia from North Africa.

In January, 1944, Brig. Gen. Charles W. Lawrence (then Colonel) came from CO of the 99th to succeed General Atkinson as Wing Commander. With the fast-growing 15th AF General Lawrence sent his Fortresses in an ever-widening arc through every Balkan country, Austria, Germany and France. Great air battles raged until the Luftwaffe declined. Late in march the 463rd Group joined and flew its first mission, and in early April the 483rd Group followed suit. With six groups the Wing became the largest in the 15th, and was forced to relinquish command of fighter groups which had been with it off and on for more than a year. The Ploesti campaign began in April and in June the Wing flew the first shuttle to Russia. In late August it evacuated more than 1,000 airmen from Rumania, and in October launched the first single-sortie Mickey missions by day and night. Meanwhile, the campaign against axis oil points had carried it deep into Germany, Czechoslovakia and Poland. At the two-year mark the Wing could point to these statistics:

MISSIONS-----450
 SORTIES-----45,362
 TONNAGE-----104,694
 E/A DESTROYED-----1,525
 LOSSES-----474



from American Caesar -

George Marshall, feeling euphoric, held an extraordinary secret press briefing for seven Washington correspondents on November 15 (1941).

War was imminent, he told them, but the American situation in the Philippines was excellent. Tanks and guns were arriving there hourly, and, most important, MacArthur had been given "the greatest concentration of heavy bomber strength anywhere in the world." Not only could he defend the islands; he was prepared to launch stunning raids on the Japanese homeland, setting the "paper" cities of Japan afire. One newsman pointed out that B-17s lacked the range to bomb Tokyo and return to Clark Field. That was no problem, Marshall replied. Revealing a total misunderstanding of Stalin's mind, the Chief of Staff replied that the Russians would gladly permit American airmen to use Vladivostok as a base.

p. 219

Brett predicted that Kenney would have trouble with the chief of staff - "the General's Rasputin"- and sure enough, a few days later the new air chief discovered that Brett's nemesis was usurping his successor's prerogatives by scheduling bombing missions and assigning targets. Furious, Kenney strode into Sutherland's office, perched on his desk, picked up a pencil, and drew a tiny black dot in the center of a blank sheet of paper. "That," he said grittily, pointing at the dot, "is what you know about air power. The rest of the sheet is what I know about it." When Sutherland blustered, Kenney said coldly, "Let's go into the next room, see General MacArthur, and get this thing straight. I want to find out who is supposed to run this air force."

p. 348

THE ULTRA SECRET

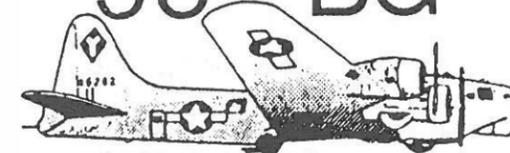
(In 1942) Kesselring had his own troubles now in the form of an Allied invasion launched on November the eighth, of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia at the other end of North Africa, and to add to Rommel's despair, on November the seventh Hitler sent him a signal warning him to expect a landing of Allied troops between Tobruk and Benghazi. This was the result of a deception plan by the 'boys' in Alexandria where the story had been put about of an Allied landing to cut off the Afrika Korps. They had even gone so far as to start loading troops on ships together with their equipment. We knew that Hitler had a nest of informers in Egypt, and the deception plan had duly got back to him.

p. 118

QUOTES



99th BG



99th Bomb Group Historical Society



Fifteenth Annual Reunion - McAllen, Texas
 February 16, 17, 18, 19, 1989

Headquarters Hotel - Sheraton Fairway Resort Inn

ROOM RESERVATION REQUEST

ARRIVAL DATE: _____ SINGLE \$45 _____ DOUBLE \$45 _____
 ARRIVAL TIME: _____ DEPARTURE DATE: _____

Reservations must be made 14 days in advance. If arrival is later than 6 p.m. one night's room rate in advance or a credit card number with expiration date must accompany reservation.

LATE ARRIVAL (After 6:00 p.m.) GUARANTEED BY: American Express _____ Visa _____ MasterCard _____
 Card No: _____ Exp. Date: _____

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE NUMBER: (Area Code) _____

***** REGISTRATION *****

MEMBER'S NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____ CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

PHONE NUMBER: (Area Code) _____

NAME OF SPOUSE OR GUEST: _____

MEMBER REGISTRATION FEE:	\$10.00	\$10.00	\$10.00
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SPOUSE OR GUEST:	\$10.00	\$10.00	_____
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10% Discount on Reservations - (Activities Below) (received by Jan. 15th)

after	before
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WEDNESDAY, FEB. 15		
Border Buttermilk Greeting McAllen Chamber	No Charge	no charge

THURSDAY, FEB. 16 (optional)		
Golf, McAllen Country Club	Green Fee _____	
	Cart _____	
11:30 a.m. Ladies Style Show and Luncheon	GABII'S of Reynosa \$10.00	\$9.00
01:00 p.m. Bus and shopping tour of Reynosa by Sanborn's	\$14.00	\$12.60

FRIDAY, Feb. 17 (optional)		
12:00 p.m. Lunch Meeting	\$11.00	\$9.90
06:00 p.m. No Host Bar		
07:00 p.m. Banquet	\$14.00	\$12.60

SATURDAY, Feb. 18 (optional)		
10:00 a.m. Bus Ride to Confederate Air Force Show and Museum	\$8.00	\$7.20
Admission to CAF and Museum	\$6.00	\$5.40

SUNDAY, Feb. 19 (optional)		
7:30 to 9:30 Breakfast Buffet	\$8.25	\$7.43

TOTAL AMOUNT: _____

PLEASE MAIL ENTIRE FORM TO: McAllen Convention & Visitors Bureau
 P.O. Box 790 McAllen, TX 78502



MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO: 99th BG - McAllen Reunion
 Ph: 512-682-2871

GEORGE F COEN: 8 NOVEMBER 88,

SO I HAVE HAD ONE MORE THOUGHT THAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL TO BOMBER YOUNGSTERS--LIKE THE 99 BGRS, WHO WILL RUSH DOWN AND VOLUNTEER FOR WW III. I WILL STAY AT HOME AND WATCH YOU ALL ON TV--BUT PULL FOR YOU. AS YOU FLY STEALTH BOMBERS.

I KNOW THAT CHARACTERS SUCH AS YOU HAD SOME MINOR PROBLEMS WITH FLAK. I DID, ALSO. EASY TO SOLVE. HERE IS WHAT TO DO. IT WORKED FOR ME (ONCE). FLYING BACK TOWARD ENGLAND FROM WEST FRANCE, I NOTICED THE GUERNSEY ISLANDS UNDER MY NOSE. EVEN OUR INTELLIGENCE KNEW THAT THEY WERE HEAVILY LOADED WITH FLAK GUNS. BAD. MY GAS GUAGES SAID--DON'T GO OUT OF THE WAY.

BUT THEY DO ALL FIRE AT ONCE--FOR CLEAR REASONS. I WATCHED. THE ISLANDS LIT UP. BANK QUITE STEEPLY. THEN, TURN ABOUT 90 DEGREES. THEN ROLL OUT AFTER ABOUT 30 SECONDS ONTO YOUR DESIRED COURSE TO HOME BASE. WE ALL KNOW THAT FLAK THAT GOES TO A MAXIMUM HEIGHT OF 25,000 FEET WILL TAKE ABOUT 40 SECONDS TO GET THERE. EASY. THEY HAVE TO PREDICT WHERE YOU WILL BE. DON'T BE THERE.

I WATCHED THE BLACK, FLUFFY, SOFT PUFF BALLS OF FLACK. AS BEST I COULD TELL, THEY WERE JUST WHERE I WOULD HAVE BEEN. I HAD A DRINK IN THE BAR THAT NIGHT.

NOW THAT I HAVE SOLVED THIS FLACK PROBLEM FOR BOMBER CREWS, ALL THAT YOU HAVE TO DO IS FIGURE OUT HOW A BOMBER FORMATION OF 60 OR 120 B 17S CAN BANK AT A STEEP ANGLE--AND KEEP A TIGHT FORMATION FOR ABOUT A NINETY DEGREE TURN. THE 99TH CAN DO IT. IF ANYONE CAN.

GERMAN FLACK IS WHAT CONVERTED ME FROM A FRISKY FIGHTER PILOT INTO A TIRED, HUNGRY, COLD GERMAN P.O.W. I HAVE JUST LATELY GOTTEN WARM.

I WILL WATCH YOU ALL ON TV. IN WW III. AND PULL FOR YOU. ON MY COUCH IN ALBUQUERQUE.

WALTER *Walt* BECKHAM
ASS MEMBER OF THE 99TH

Walter, Ole Buddy;

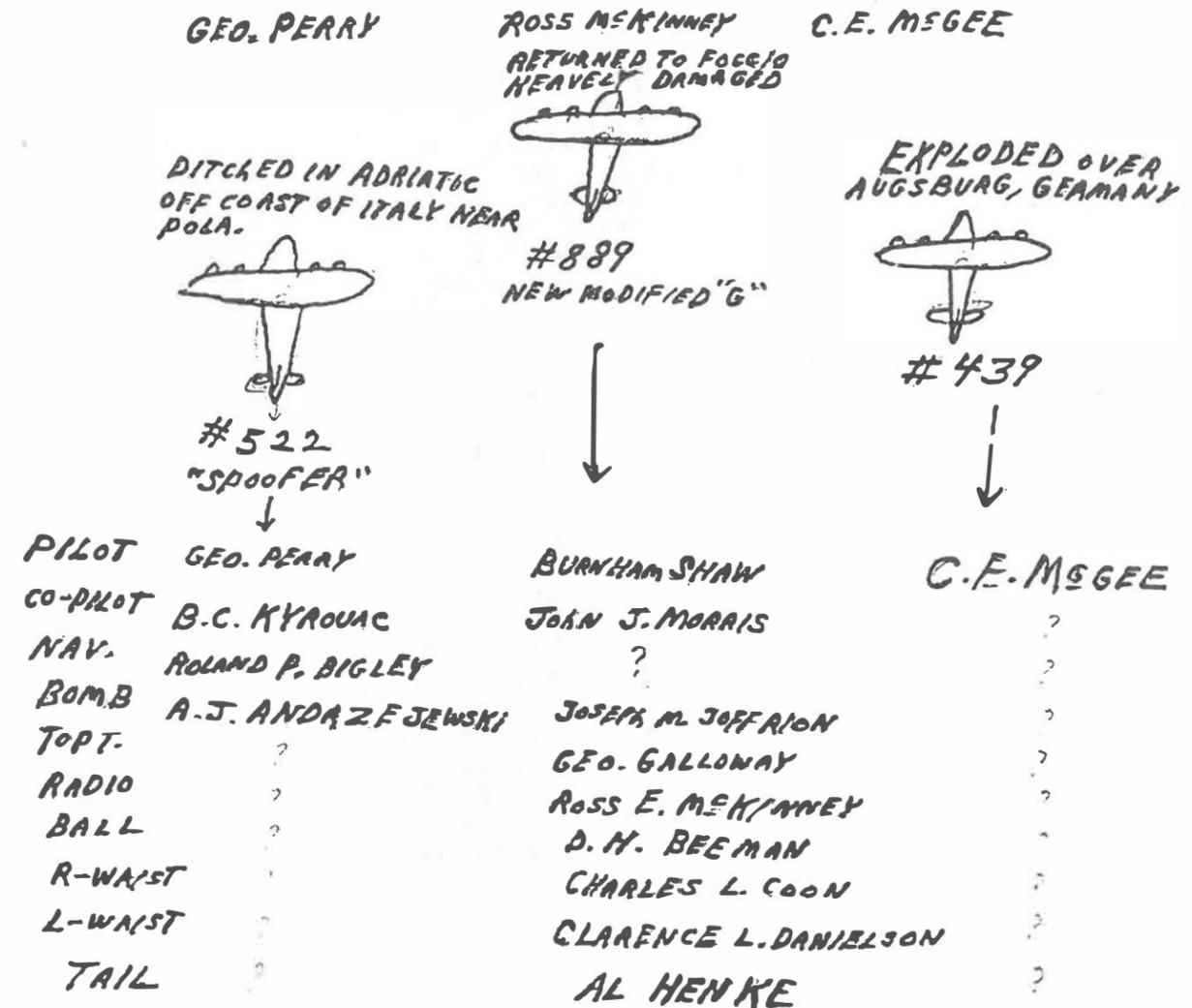
If you had carefully continued straight and level, you would have noted that the time for the flak to reach 27,000 feet was only 28 seconds. I assume that the need for accurate calculations is why we went straight and level at such times.

Walter, it cuts me to the quick when the very gents who tried to divert us and spoil our aim now tax us with having flung a few bombs into cemeteries, orphanages, and German Officers' warehouses. Perhaps we can come up with an Albuquerque Convention which will supercede the Geneva Conventions.

See you at lunch!

george

REGENSBURG, GERMANY FEB. 22, 1944 - "THE BIG WEEK"
ONLY THREE PLANES FROM 4/6 TH MADE IT TO THE TARGET THAT DAY - ONE RETURNED.



GEO.
MAYBE SOME OF OUR MEMBERS CAN REPLACE THE ABOVE
QUESTION MARKS WITH THE PROPER NAMES. AL HENKE

THE CAMP OF THE SAINTS by RASPAIL

We could search together for a new style of life which would make possible the subsistence of the eight thousand million human beings that are estimated to people the planet by the year 2000. Otherwise no quantity of atomic bombs could stem the tide of billions of human beings who someday will leave the poor southern part of the world to erupt into the relatively accessible spaces of the rich northern hemisphere looking for survival.

Quoted from an interview given in 1974 by President Boumedienne of Algeria.



Whether asentry would shoot or not on detection was entirely a matter for conjecture; probably he would. His orders were to shoot; this had been explicitly pointed out to us by the Camp Commandant at his memorable parade on our arrival (at Colditz). He had delivered a long harangue, and on the subject of escaping had said, "It is useless to try to escape. Look around you at the impregnable barriers, the formidable array of machine-guns and rifles. To escape is impossible. Anyone attempting it will be shot." He spoke English well and he spat out the word 'shot' with a malicious stacatto that was no doubt intended to put escaping out of our minds for ever. "These are my strict orders to the guards, who will carry out the command to the letter." Awed silence was followed by roars of laughter as he added with Teutonic seriousness, "If you escape a second time you will be sent to a specialcamp." p. 17

I studied the guitar for a year and a half (in Colditz Stalag) and became fairly proficient. . . The cornet provided me with a means of letting off steam when I had nothing better to do. My colleagues limited the use of it to the washroom, with the door closed, in fine weather, at hours when they were normally out in the courtyard. p. 70

The midday meal at Colditz was sounded at 12.30 pm and consisted of thick barley gruel. Occasionally pieces of hog's hide were cut up and put into the soup, which gave it a delicious odor of pork and that was about all. On such days the German menu on the blackboard outside the kitchen triumphantly announced 'Speck'- in other words, Bacon. It deceived nobody but the far-away 'Protecting Powers' who read the menus, sent by the German Kommandantur in answer to questionnaires. Nor did it deceive the 'Protecting Power' for long either; the latter was quickly disillusioned on its representatives' first visit to the camp. The 'Protecting Power' is a neutral government which represents the interests of one belligerent Power in the territories of the other. In the case of the UK the Government was Switzerland's, and unstinted praise is due for its good work on behalf of British prisoners throughout the war. p. 73

AMERICAN CAESAR,

After MacArthur took Talasea, halfway between Cape Gloucester and Rabaul, Hirohito's 100,000 infantrymen in Rabaul began digging fresh trenches and donning their thousand-stitch belts, vowing that they would fight to the last man when the Americans came.

The Americans never came. They never came. Month after month the embattled garrison awaited a blow in vain. Word reached its men of tremendous battles elsewhere - . . . but no ships were sighted off Rabaul. The emperor's infantrymen soured, embittered by their unrequited hostility.

. . . the fact remains that he (MacArthur) transformed the bypass manauver into the war's most momentous strategic concept. Here the most impressive testimony comes from the Japanese. After the war Colonel Matsuichi Juio, a senior intelligence officer who had been charged with deciphering the General's intentions, told an interrogator that MacArthur's swooping envelopment of Nipponese bastions was "the type of strategy we hated most." The General, he said, repeatedly, "with minimum losses, attacked and seized a relatively weak area, constructed airfields and then proceeded to cut the supply lines to (our) troops in that area. . . . Our strongpoints were gradually starved out. The Japanese Army preferred direct (frontal) assault, after the German fashion, but the Americans came into our weaker points and submerged us, just as water seeks the weakest entry to sink a ship." p. 391

Today, on the rebuilt Women's Prison, according to Princess Caradja, there is a memorial tablet to Elena Sarbu, saying that she was "treacherously murdered". This perversion ignores the fact that she died in the crash of a Liberator crippled by a Romanian pilot who disobeyed orders not to fight over the city (of Ploesti). The ten Americans in the plane were as helpless as the women in the jail. The plane was a prison too. p. 230

All these months ten Tidal Wave men were in Bulgarian custody - the survivors of THE WITCH, PRINCE CHARMING and LET 'ER RIP - under lieutenant Darlington. At first they were treated humanely. Then, in November 1943, U.S. bombers from the new bases in Italy, warming up for the all-out offensive on Ploesti, raided Sofia twice. The Bulgarians reacted primitively by abusing their captives. They force-marched Darlington's men to a mountain camp along with parachuted fliers from the Sofia raids. The stockade had no running water and no medical attention for the newly wounded. p. 258

The Romano-American band went into the night to round up Germans. Lasco felt a knock on the head. He had walked into the boot of a German soldier hanged by the neck from a lamppost.

Toward morning they understood what was happening in Bucharest. "Roth said, "There was a tight Romanian ring around the city. The Germans could not get through it. Outside the Romanians the Germans were milling around, trapped by the third ring - a powerful Russian encirclement with big tanks." p. 282

A flight of Fortresses went to Bucharest with a liaison party, including medical officers, to round up the men and prepare history's first large-scale air evacuation from a point 550 miles inside enemy lines. At Foggia, ground crews fitted fifty Fortresses with bomb-bay seats and litters in the fuselage to accommodate twenty men to each ship. Many of the mechanics had sat out long nights waiting for men who did not return; now they cried and cursed with joy and fatigue as they rigged the bombers for deliverance instead of death. p. 287

In Italy, the Fifteenth Air Force was now ready for the risky airlift of the POW's from Romania. It would be a 1,100-mile round trip by Fortresses virtually stripped of arms to make room for men. About 1,500 airmen, including the B-17 crews, would be in the air - a tempting target for German fighters, of which quite a few were still operating. The rescue force, therefore, could not broadcast any formal order to the POW's that might be intercepted by the enemy. A courier went to Bucharest and started the news by word of mouth among the POW's. Collins was approached in the street by an American he had never seen before who muttered, "Tomorrow morning. Nine o'clock at the airport. We're all getting out of this sonofabitching country."

Next morning at Popestii airport the liberated men stood around the perimeter in groups of twenty to board the planes quickly during the short turnaround. The British Vanishers arrived promptly at the rendezvous of their last escape. They, who had marveled at American military costume when they first saw it a year before, now described it in the bloom of victory. The airmen were attired in rags and grimy bandages, wearing German helmets and Russian caps and sagging under the weight of wine bottles, captured dress swords, riding crops, balalaikas and cabinet photos of Romanian beauties. Some had sewn upon their tatters the large resplendent insignia of the Royal Romanian Air Force and Parachute Corps. The better-dressed element sported army pants newly distributed by the Red Cross. All the trousers in the shipment were size 40, and not one of the emaciated men could fill such a waistband. They had gathered them in at the waist in pleats reaching the knee, and, to mock the current "zoot-suit" style of boys at home, had draped their identity necklaces across the belly like the watch chains the zoots wore there. p. 290

Jim Posey died last month here in Albuquerque. (About 1985)

From The 319TH Flyer:

CATERPILLAR ASSOCIATION

Roy Rogers

Three years ago, LtCol Johnny Brown, USAF (Ret.), decided a solid association of those entitled to wear the caterpillar badge by virtue of having to use a parachute to save their lives should be formed. He has done quite well as all of the parachute manufacturers have turned over their records to him, and he has received a charter from the Department of Defense.

I know that there are a lot of potential members roaming around. From the first bail-out, on October 20, 1922 by a Lt. Harris, several thousands have become eligible.

We will have a mid-winter gathering in the Ramada Inn, Ft. Myers, Florida, on February 22 - 23, 1986. For further details, write Jimmy Brown, Caterpillar Association of the U.S., P.O. Box 1321, Kenosha, WI 53141, or Roy W. Rogers, Jr., 515 Niagra Drive, Port Richey, FL, 33568.

THUNDERBOLT

Robert S. Johnson
with Martin Caidin 1959

Nothing makes a man more aware of his capabilities and of his intrinsic limitations than those moments when he must push aside all the familiar defenses of ego and vanity, and accept reality by staring, with the fear that is normal to a man in combat, into the face of Death. p. 21

Bill had a hairy time of it. He parachuted into Belgium, and friendly natives hid him from the searching German troops. For nearly a week a woman kept him secreted within a cave beneath a barn. With the search called off the underground shipped him to Brussels, where he and a bomber pilot huddled in an old woman's apartment. Only, the bomber crewman was a nitwit; he just had to visit a friend on the other side of town. German troops picked them up and threw them into prison; they also found the old woman.

For several weeks they tortured her, trying to force from her the location of other American fliers secreted within Brussels. She never revealed any information, but the underground reported that the Germans left her in hideous condition. p. 169

. . .the Messerschmitt splattered along the ground for several hundred yards in a shower of flame.

Mike throttled back and circled the burning fighter; he wanted to be sure that the pilot was dead. Had that German survived the crash and run from his plane, Mike was prepared to cut him down with his propeller or wing-tip...his gun switch was broken. p. 184

the Focke-Wulfs scattering their formations and turning to hunt down the strays and cripples, to pick off each bomber sagging away from the thick defensive formations. They had other targets as well; the helpless man descending within his parachute straps, jerking frantically on shroud lines, trying to lift himself up or to slide down faster through space. Staring in horror as the German fighters clawed around, turned head-on, the wings and nose sparkling. p. 190

The Focke-Wulf snapped over in a steep turn and ran for the coastline.

I didn't want this boy to reach home. The canopy leaped into the air as the pilot jerked the release; I pulled around tight to get my bullets into him before he could get out of the airplane. He had one leg outside the cockpit when the slugs smashed him back inside. That's one man who would never sight again on our planes; if I hadn't gotten him, then he certainly would have shot down several of our fighters or bombers. He was as good as I'd ever met.

Number Twenty-three!

p. 204

INTREPID

Some trace of civilized German behavior, Bohr had always argued, might be maintained if one conducted oneself as though other human beings were rational in their behavior. He had been proven wrong. p. 476

Baker Street decided against sub-chasers slipping through the long northern nights, missing German interception by inches. It seemed too risky a method of extracting the Dane. Would Bohr ride in the bomb bay of an unarmed Moon aircraft of a Special Duties Squadron?

The flight at great altitude was dangerous. So were the alternatives. Bohr asked only one question: What kind of aircraft?

Great secrecy surrounded these Moon flights. It still does. The planes used neutral fields with the help of government officials whose action had no formal sanction. Countries like Sweden were on a tight-rope. The smallest sign of favoring the Allies would invite Nazi reprisal.

Professor Bohr's question about the type of plane could be answered only by taking him to an apparently abandoned airstrip near Stockholm. There he saw what was known as the "Termite's Delight" or the "Wooden Wonder", a plywood aircraft, brutish engines still grumbling from the long, frightening flight from Britain, piloted by an anonymous black-suited figure from a Moon squadron. p. 478

And so, kiddies, that is how "Mr. Baker" came to New Mexico. geo.

"The first incredible play of chance was Hitler's decision to launch the rockets against London," Stephenson recalled. "He named them Vengeance weapons. The concerted attacks took place after the D-day invasion of France. He should have aimed his rockets at the English Channel ports, to stop reinforcements from relieving Allied armies establishing a foothold in Normandy. Instead, he vented his spleen against civilian targets." p. 487

A request was radioed to the Polish secret army and instructions were sent by courier for interfering with the radio guidance system of some German rockets. Shortly afterward, a V-1 swerved off course from Peenemunde and fell in the marshes beside the River Bug in Poland. Local farmers hid the stubby wings in mud. German search parties failed to spot the buried weapon.

The Polish partisans informed London that the rocket was being dismantled. . . These operations were taking place under the most brutal Nazi occupation forces in Europe. Despite this the entire V-1, warhead and all, was reassembled, and an aircraft was sent to pick it up. p. 489

"During the month of August, only one in six V-1s got through the new defenses. By September 7, London was told the danger had passed. Then the big V-2s began to fall. . ."

The secret army's risks, taken to save London, were closely held secrets. An anonymous Polish partisan experimented with signal equipment to check the report that some rockets could be diverted off course by radio signals on an assigned wave length. He confirmed that they could by doing it, landing the V-1 in the River Bug. He worked in an attic above a Luftwaffe billet. p. 490

The situation was familiar. The time before, we tried to smuggle suicide L-pills to our comrades in the interrogation cells as a favor to them. I thought, well, if L-pills were regarded as a favor then, why not bombs now? There were three-dozen secret-army leaders in the Shell attic. I thought I knew how each must regard the prospect of further torture. They would do what their predecessors would do, appeal for death. p. 497

PIERCING THE REICH Persico 1979

One R and A officer could estimate bomb damage to railways in the south of France by monitoring the price of oranges on the Paris produce market. When orange prices dropped, it was time to start bombing these lines again.

In five years of war, Hitler had never really squeezed the home front. Losses of men in the field had been heavy, 3.5 million. But Hitler had insisted on continued production of consumer goods to maintain high civilian morale. The number of German families able to keep servants had remained constant throughout the war. Despite incessant day and night pounding by Allied bombers, German industry sustained a remarkable output and actually reached its zenith when the Allies had approached the German border in the fall of 1944. p. 12

The British writer Malcolm Muggeridge archly signalled the American service's maturation: "Ah, those first OSS arrivals in London! How well I remember them, arriving like jeunes filles en fleur straight from a finishing school, all fresh and innocent, to start work in our frowsty old intelligence brothel, . . . all too soon they were ravished and corrupted, becoming indistinguishable from seasoned pros who had been in the game for a quarter century more." p. 21

George Pratt refused a commission because the European labor leaders with whom he would be dealing were historically mistrustful of the military. He need not have concerned himself. To Europeans, the American military looked like civilians in uniform anyway. p. 27

When Goldberg and Pratt came to Algiers, Van Arkel described the talents of some of his recruits. He had instructed four German trainees to go from Algiers to Oran on a practice exercise in which they were to seek information on activities in the Allied-controlled port. The group spoke little English, and their sole resource was a modest sum of money.

They headed first to a supply center, where they bought American uniforms. The oldest of the group fixed his epaulettes with the stars of a general. They used OSS facilities to forge orders enabling them to fly from Algiers to Oran. In Oran, they checked into a hotel reserved for American military personnel. The group's radio operator had himself assigned a room on the top floor. The bogus general then took the agents to the port, where officers and enlisted men accorded his party smart salutes. They counted every ship and shipment in sight, then returned to the hotel and radioed back to Algiers a comprehensive report on activities in the Port of Oran. p. 27

Tofte and Thompson perfected a system for supplying the Yugoslavs by daring boat runs rather than the air drops employed earlier. They delivered 6,000 tons of water-borne supplies to the partisans, compared to 125 tons dropped earlier by air. Thompson and Tofte later were awarded Yugoslavia's highest military decoration for their Adriatic gun-running. p. 46

REUNIONS

- 15 Feb 1989 99th Bomb Group, McAllen TX
Jeff Waguespack, 1423 Tulip Ave., McAllen TX 78504
- 1 May 1989 Bombardiers, Inc., Dayton OH
E.C.Humphries, Star Rt. 1, Box 254, Eagle Harbor MI
- 19 May 1989 NW Chapter, 99BGHS, Spokane WA
Charles, D. Bogs, E.250 Woodland Dr. Shelton WA 98584
Ph. (206) 426-4371
- 13 Aug 1989 15AFA, Las Vegas NV
P.O. BOX 6325, March Air Force Base, CA 92518
- Spring 1990 99th Bomb Group, Huntsville AL
H.E.Christiansen, 4520 Panorama Dr., Huntsville, AL 35801

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* * * * *



TAPS



THOMAS GAMM Our friend and comrade Tom Gamm passed away on or about August 30th. Services were held here in Albuquerque on September 2nd, and were attended by the family and close friends, which included his comrades of the 99th.

JAMES H. BRADFORD. I am saddened to inform you that my husband, James H. (Brad) Bradford passed away March 23, 1988. He had a heart attack while fishing only about fifty yards from our pier here on the Tennessee River. He died suddenly. We had attended the Dayton and Dallas reunions and he was looking forward to the one in Fort Lauderdale. We so much enjoyed meeting the members and wives of the 99th and especially General "Uppie" and Betty.

Brad and Chris Christianson from Huntsville had begun making plans for the reunion to be in Huntsville some day, and I was overjoyed when I read in the November 1 issue that you will be coming to our area in the Spring of 1990. I hope that I may be able to attend.

LYLE BEUCHLER Another sad passing: Lyle Beuchler, 1635 S. Sandia, West Covina Cal. 91790 in October, 1988 of cancer. He was the co-pilot on the same B-17 that Brad served as radio operator. (347th Squadron). . . . I hope to be at (Huntsville) in 1990.

Corinne H. Bradford

Rt. 1, Box 199C Sheffield AL 35061

LEON LOWRY

Mrs. Arlene Lowry advises that her husband, Leon L., passed away fourteen years ago after suffering a severe heart attack. Leon joined the 99th at Boise, Idaho and was commander of the 346th Squadron in North Africa. After completing fifty combat missions, he returned to the ZI in the fall of 1943. Lew Boatwright

The Association of Former Prisoners Of War In Romania has sent us their August, 1988 Roster, from which we have extracted the following notes of deaths. No details are given.

JAMES C. BORLAND	High Point NC.
GERALD A. BRIGGS	Coos Bay, CA
GEORGE CARMIGNANI	
JULIAN E. CURRIE	Jackson MS
LEROY M. HAUF	Round Lake Heights IL
MARTIN HAUMANN	San Francisco CA
EDWARD J. HEIN	Chicago IL
BARRY D. HENDERSON	(Betty) 10910 Woodstock Road, Roswell GA
HARLAN H. JOHANNADER	Warrenton MO
JOHN J. MC TIERNAN	Milford MA
WALTER PETERS	Houlton ME
RICHARD D. RUNYAN	Mason City NE
CHARLES L. SNYDER	Pittsford NY

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64

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