



**Staff Sergeant  
Clare Kaschinska**  
Right Waist Gunner  
348th Squadron

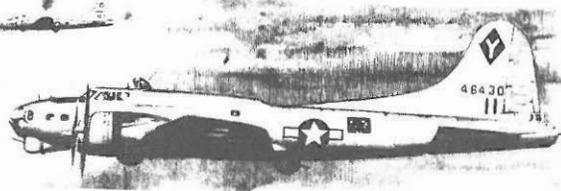


# THE 99TH BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

The Group Flew B-17 Flying Fortresses  
For A Total Of 395 Combat Missions From  
North Africa & Italy To Bomb European  
Targets During 1943, '44 & '45



**First Lieutenant  
George F. Coen**  
Navigator  
416th Squadron



Vol. 18, No. 4

NOVEMBER 1998

## SOCIETY'S LEADING FOUNDING MEMBER GEORGE F. COEN DECEASED

ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL    SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 1998

# Vet Founded Society

BY PAUL LOGAN  
Journal Staff Writer

George Coen, a World War II navigator, founded the 99th Bombardment Group Historical Society.

A longtime Albuquerque resident, Coen died Sept. 18 in Durango, Colo., from complications of prostate cancer. He was 81.

A memorial service will be held Tuesday at 10 a.m. at the Santa Fe National Cemetery.

Coen was known for taking the road less traveled when he went hiking and bird watching, said his daughter Patty Coen-Mattingly, of Durango, Colo.

"He loved to go on back roads and go down to Mexico backpacking where nobody else would go," Coen-Mattingly said. "He was an avid naturalist and had a very dry wit."

Born in Oil City, Ohio, he joined the infantry in 1938 and later was



**COEN: Group  
once had about  
800 members**

transferred to the Army Air Corps.

Coen flew B-17s out of North Africa with the 416th Bombardment Squadron, one of four squadrons in the 99th Bombardment Group, during the war. When he completed his 50-mission requirement, he was sent back to the states.

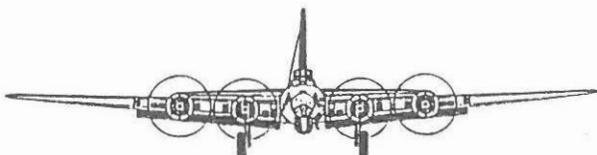
He graduated from the University of New Mexico in 1947 with a civil engineering degree and worked for a number of years in water reclamation and diversion projects, his daughter said.

Bernie Barr, an old friend, said Coen did plenty of research about the 99th Bombardment Group before establishing the historical society in 1980. Once having about 800 members, the group now is about half that size.

Coen married Martha Cantrell in Albuquerque in 1970. They moved to Durango earlier this year.

Besides his wife, other survivors include one other daughter, Bettie Coen of Montrose, Colo.; sons, Tom of Placitas, Richard of Pinon, Ariz., and George of Evergreen, Colo.; and stepchildren, Sara Tedford of Oklahoma City, Suzi Flenniken of Albuquerque and Robert Flenniken of Lubbock, Texas.

GEORGE F. COEN was interred with full military honors on Tuesday September 29, 1998 in the Santa Fe, NM National Cemetery. Family & friends, including five 99th Bomb Group Historical Society members from Albuquerque, witnessed a dignified ceremony which included religious comments, Bible passage reading, family member remarks, comments concerning his role in establishing the 99th BGHS, and comments from friends. An Honor Guard fired a 21 gun salute after which TAPS was sounded. The Honor Guard carefully folded the National Flag as the meaning of each fold was explained. The Flag, encased in a triangular holder, was presented to the Coen family. It was a sad and stirring event that paid tribute to George in a most honorable and deserving manner. . . . God Bless and May He Rest in Peace. b b

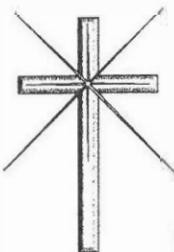


**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

With a sad note I open this message. The passing away of one of the original founders of the 99th Bomb Group Historical Society - George F. Coen. George put a lot of work into getting us started. He was editor of the newsletter, the historian, and a member of the Board of Directors. We can be very proud of having him in the Group. Sueno Bien Mi Amigo. . . . Our family reunion of the 99th in Peoria, IL was on short notice. I believe it was successful, 36 came. THANKS TO ALL WHO ATTENDED. . . . . Awhile back I phoned three members to gab a bit. Arkie Clark in Texas reported every thing around his place was drying up and dieing for lack of rain. Called Mort & Virginia Mcgee in Florida. Fire in their back yard caused them to leave their home. They were back in their home the next day and experienced no damage. I also called Lou Corey in Cambridge, OH. He couldn't get out of his home because all roads were either flooded or washed out. . . . I've heard a couple of member's wives have breast cancer. I wish them all the luck in the world & pray they get well soon!. . . Len Smith, one of the Tucson, AZ May 1999 reunion hosts, called to ask me to ask all members planning on attending to please send your and your spouse or significant other names to him before March 1999. The BGHS business luncheon will be held at Davis Monthan Air Force Base in Tucson with a tour of the Base after lunch. Base Security must have names of all planning to enter before the event. Please don't fail to send names to Len Smith if you plan on entering the Base for our Friday event. Send names to Len Smith, 14171 Desert Glen Drive, Sun City West, AZ 85375



*Robert A. Becker*



**IN MEMORIAM**



**CHESTER F. BRNRSIRK** 

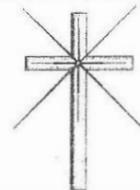
**GEORGE F. COEN** 

**CLAIRE E. "NICK" NICHOLSO**

**MERRITT MORRISON** 

Members send sincere prayers and sympathies to the families and friends.  
**MAY OUR COMRADES REST IN PEACE**

**THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER**



"One evening during the Depression, a pastor and some friends were talking about the economic problems of the time. It was a gloomy conversation. One friend said, "There sure isn't much to be thankful for!". Finally, the pastor had had enough. "Well, I, for one, am grateful for Mrs. Wendt", he said. He went on to tell how Mrs. Wendt was a schoolteacher of his, who went out of her way to introduce him to Tennyson, the great poet. "Did you ever thank her?" someone asked. The pastor had to admit he never had. But that evening, he sat down and wrote Mrs. Wendt. A few weeks later came a reply written in the uncertain scrawl of an aged woman.

"My dear Willie: I want you to know what your note meant to me. I am an old lady in my eighties, living alone in a small room, cooking my own meals, lonely and seeming like the last leaf on the tree...You will be interested to know, Willie, that I taught school for fifty years, and in all that time, yours is the first letter of appreciation I have ever received. It came on a blue, cold morning, and it cheered my lonely old heart as nothing has cheered me in many years".

Like the pastor, perhaps this time Thanksgiving can remind us of those to whom we have never said "thanks", but from whom we have received much...recognition, encouragement, help...so many things for which we have not thought to take the time of saying "thanks".

Our Pilgrim fathers "gave thanks for everything", as the Scriptures instruct us, even when their first year on these shores was a disaster and there was very little for which to be grateful. We often overlook that fact because of the scenes we remember as bounteous harvest and great feasting came on the second year in 1622. "Be thankful for everything" means "at all times and in all ways, be thankful" **THANKSGIVING**, once formed by action, repeated: becomes a habit; and habits confirmed: become a LIFESTYLE! So appropriate for us today are the words: "BE THANKFUL FOR EVERYTHING!".

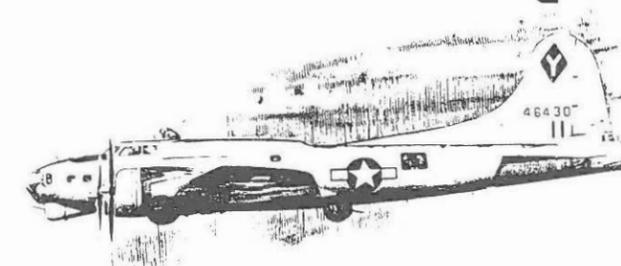
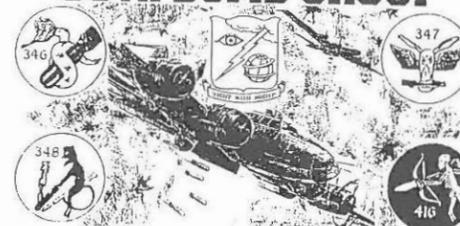
Nel and I stopped in Lindsborg, Kansas for a Swedish festival, on our way home from a western reunion. At a reception we met the Carlsons. She had overheard from another conversation that I was from San Francisco. Her immediate question came, with brightened eyes and an excited voice, to ask if I knew Bert Horberg! Of course, I knew Bert Horberg. He was kind of a hero to us younger kids growing up. He and his brother, Dick, spent time with us, interested in "younger kid things". Mrs. Carlson remembered Bert as a serviceman during the war with his visits to the Lindsborg church. I promised I would get word to him of her inquiry. I couldn't wait to I get home to find Bert and relay the message. When he came on the phone, I was surprised his voice was as I remembered it. He said "I'm 80 years old!", without equivocation, "and love the Lord!" I am sure grateful for the adventure of saying thanks and sharing Carlsons' greeting. Last summer we visited Bert and Dorothy and reminisced over the great times together, and the thanks giving we each have in our hearts for each other! Don't miss that one chance... a real opportunity to say "thanks!" to someone along the way!

See you in Tucson... Plan now not to miss the great times planned by the Planning Committee! My love and greetings to ya' all! God bless you and yours!

*John*



**99TH BOMB GROUP**



# NEWS, NOTES, LETTERS & IMPORTANT INFORMATION

ATTACK ON VIENNA/LOBAU OIL REFINERY  
20 February 1945

## I. TARGE

The neutralization of the Silesian and Polish synthetic plants and crude oil refineries by the advance of the Russian armies and the immobilization of the giant synthetic plant at BRUX, first by the Pathfinder attack of the 15th Air Force on 25 December and then by the highly successful night attack by RAF Bomber Command on the night of 16 January, left the complex of crude oil refineries at VIENNA the most important targets within range of Italy based bombers. The largest of these plants, MOOSBIERBAUM, was put out of action by two successful attacks in February, and was not expected to resume any operation at least until the latter part of the month.

Thus, the LOBAU refinery emerged as the oil target of priority. Severely damaged by successive aerial blows during the spring and summer of 1944, the usual frantic repair efforts of the Germans succeeded in rehabilitating the plant. With estimated gasoline output of 3,200 tons a month, it was turning out half of the total gasoline production of the VIENNA area. Its importance was increasing daily as it became evident that every ton of gasoline from this area would be required by the German Army to meet the rapidly developing threat from the Second and Third Ukrainian Armies massed in the Hungarian plain and ready to move following the fall of BUSAPEST.

## II. EXECUTION OF THE ATTACKS

Between 1302 and 1326 hours on 20 February, 50 B-17s of the 2nd and 99th Bombardment Groups dropped 592 x 500 lb. GP bombs (148 tons) with mixed .01 and .025 tail fuzing, on the target from altitudes varying from 23,500 to 26,00 feet. Both visual and offset methods of sighting were utilized.

The strike was not opposed by enemy aircraft. Flak was only moderate, despite the presence of over 300 heavy guns in the VIENNA area, indicating that the sustained heavy assaults on VIENNA (five major strikes in eight days) have had a serious effect on enemy defenses. A smoke screen was in operation, but not effective. There were no losses.

## III. RESULTS

The attack was outstandingly successful, resulting in severe damage to the boiler house, virtual destruction of the distillation unit pump house, the fractionating tower probably hit, and serious damage to tankage and rail sidings. The plant is inoperable and is not expected to resume production for at least two months, possibly longer.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This article was sent in by Vincent Bell, I believe.  
Thanks Vince!



# NEWS, NOTES, LETTERS & IMPORTANT INFORMATION CONTINUED

99th BGHS GET TOGETHER---7 DAY CARIBBEAN CRUISE---FALL OF 1999  
from approx \$100.00 per day, cruise only. Those interested write-call  
JULES HOROWITZ 3507 Oaks Way, Apt 911 Pompano Beach, FL 33069  
Tel 954-973-1677 E-Mail Jules11@juno.com

\*\*\*\*\*  
From MARION LARKIN-Bernie I sure enjoy the newsletter but hate to see so many in the TAPS column. We still have a lot of activity going on at Ellsworth Air Base. The 28th and 77th are both doing a lot of flying. Their young pilots look like they should still be in college. Our museum keeps expanding and our 99th space is much larger. Jean and I still want to make another reunion-keep in touch. I have just heard that my navigator Lt. CHESTER BANASIAK HAS passed away.  
\*\*\*\*\*

Dear Bernie::

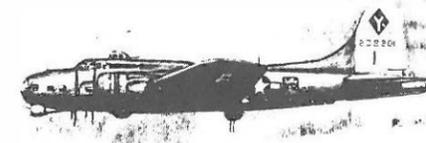
September 1, 1998

If my date is wrong, my apologies. IN Springfield, I mentioned to you that I would reach eighty years in August. I believe that you replied that you would reach that age in September. Well, turning eighty is not so bad. In fact, I didn't feel a thing. Life just goes on. So, happy birthday to you, whenever it may be.

Bernie, I will use this occasion to express my thanks to you in doing so much in getting the 99th Bomb Group organization started, and for all your efforts in keeping it going. You have been instrumental in the success. I have really enjoyed our reunions, since my first one in Dayton, 1986. Thanks for all your efforts.

Already I am looking forward to our next reunion, in Arizona. I just hope that each of us will be able to attend.

Take care of yourself.



Best wishes,

*Bill Shaw*

W. B. Shaw  
Pilot 347th



Thanks Bill for your kind words. Yes you are correct-I became an Octogenarian in Sept-no flash of lightning-no horns-just another great day with family-food-cake-feel the same. TO ALL OUR MEMBERS HAPPY BIRTHDAY! YOU BET our next reunion in TUSCON will be a big event-LEN SMITH has info in this newsletter on activities. bernie

## NEW MEMBERS

GEORGE M. COEN - 559 Old Squaw Pass, Evergreen, CO 80437 - Associate  
HOWARD M. SMITH - 1292 Route 49, Constantia, NY 13044 - 99th Hq.  
CLARA M. WRIGHT - 422 Hickory Hill Road, La Grange, KY 40031 - Assoc.

9/30/98

DEAR BERNIE ,

THE RECENT COPY OF THE NINETY NINTHS NEWSLETTER REMINDED ME THAT I HAVE TO WRITE ABOUT THE DEATH OF AN OLD FRIEND . MERRITT MORRISON WAS OUR BALL TURRET GUNNER ON " BLACK JACK " WHEN WE FLEW OUT OF SANDFLY EAST OF FOGGIA IN 1944 . MERRITT WAS A PROUD MEMBER OF THE 348 SQUADRON AND HE WAS A FIGHTER RIGHT TO THE VERY END . IN 1994 I VISITED EACH OF THE LIVING MEMBERS OF THE CREW ON THE FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR BECOMING A FULL FLEDGED COMBAT CREW AND OF COURSE , JOINING THE 99 TH BOMB GROUP IN ITALY . MERRITT DIED IN JUNE OF THIS YEAR AND HE WAS FORTUNATE TO HAVE HIS WIFE ELEANOR TO MAKE HIS TRANSITION MUCH EASIER. MERRITT HAD STRUGGLED WITH A DEBILITATING ILLNESS FOR QUITE SOME TIME AND ELEANOR TOOK CARE OF HIS EVERY WANT AND NEED IN SPITE OF THE FACT THAT SHE HERSELF WAS IN FRAIL HEALTH . WE SHALL MISS MERRITT AND HONOR HIS MEMORY .

TOMORROW LYNNE AND I LEAVE FOR THE EASTERN AIRLINES PILOTS CONVENTION IN ATLANTA . EASTERN WAS A NINETY NINTH COMPANY . THERE WERE A LOT OF MAINTENANCE FOLKS AND FLIGHT PERSONNEL WHO SERVED WITH THE NINETY NINTH . FOR A BRIEF PERIOD OF TIME I WORKED ON A TEST AND FERRY CREW THAT WAS DIRECTLY ASSOCIATED WITH DISPATCH AND MAINTENANCE . SEVERAL OF THE SUPERVISORS AT THE HANGER WERE OLD NINETY NINERS AND IT WAS AN EASY TICKET FOR ME . I CANT GIVE ENOUGH PRAISE TO THE PEOPLE WHO KEPT US FLYING . I RECALL WITH PLEASURE THE CREW AND CHIEF THAT TOOK CARE OF BLACK JACK AS WELL AS THE LINE AND MAINTENANCE CHIEFS WHO CAME UP WITH THE FIXES FOR RUNAWAY PROPS AND OTHER MECHANICAL PROBLEMS THAT THE STRAIN OF COMBAT FLYING INFLICTED ON OUR STRAINED RESOURCES . IN MY CASE I HD THE PLEASURE OF STAYING IN TOUCH WHEN I DID THE TEST FLYING AND MAINTENANCE FERRIES UNDER THEIR AUSPICES . I CAN HONESTLY SAY THERE ISN'T A PILOT ALIVE WHO HASN'T BEEN AWARE OF OUR GOOD FORTUNE TO HAVE THE POOL OF TALENT AND DEDICATION THAT ALWAYS KEPT US IN THE AIR AND BROUGHT US HOME . I HOPE THIS SERVES AS A FORM OF HEARTFELT THANKS .

LAST BUT NOT LEAST , FOR THOSE INTERESTED IN THE PRESERVATION OF OUR HISTORY , I WAS IN TOUCH WITH CAPTAIN ERROL SEVERE BEFORE LYNNE AND I BOTH GOT CAUGHT IN THE MEDICAL TREADMILL . ERROL IS A MEDICALLY RETIRED DELTA CAPTAIN WHO WITH HIS WIFE AND LIMITED RESOURCES IS TRYING TO ESTABLISH AN AVIATION CADET MUSEUM . THE AVIATION CADET CORPS HAS PRODUCED AVIATORS WHO FOUGHT IN EVERY WAR THE UNITED STATES HAS BEEN IN SINCE 1917 TO THE MID FIFTIES . ERROL HAS AUTHORED A WONDERFUL BOOK TITLED "LAST OF A BREED " . PLEASE CONTACT ERROL AT " AVIATION CADET MUSEUM " 542 CR2073 EUREKA SPRINGS ARKANSAS 72632 . PHONE 501 253 5008 . ERROL POINTS OUT THAT WE WERE ALL STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY THE AVIATION CADET PROGRAM AND WE STRONGLY INFLUENCED HISTORY . IT HAS HAD A MARKED EFFECT ON MY LIFE . THANK YOU FOR THE WONDERFUL WORK YOU ARE DOING FOR THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AND THE NEWSLETTER . GOD BLESS YOU ALL .

Bob Mark

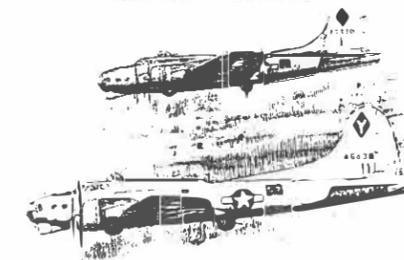


## BACKGROUND HISTORY OF THE USAF

## SEPTEMBER 1998-51st ANNIVERSARY

On 2 August 1907 the Army's Aeronautical Division was created and placed under the direction of the Chief Signal Officer (Signal Corps). Then on 18 July 1914 it became the Aviation Section. On 15 May 1918 aviation was taken away from the Signal Corps and restructured into two different departments---the Division of Military Aeronautics for Training/operations and the Bureau of Aircraft Production. On 28 August 1918, the Army blended the two into the Air Service, which was later organized into the Army Air Corps on 2 July 1926. On 20 June 1941, the Army Air Force came into being, followed by the Army Air Force(s) in late 1942 or early 1943. However, the Air Corps continued on as the dominating segment of the Army Air Force (Forces); with the Air Corps having the responsibilities for ground/flight training and related operations, to include the pertinent administration of these activities. The Air Corps/Army Air Forces came to an end on 17 September 1947 with the advent of the United States Air Force, which service came into being on 18 September 1947.

Mary Pat Heller  
11741 Rainbow Avenue  
Anchorage, Alaska 99516-1924  
(907) 345-0847

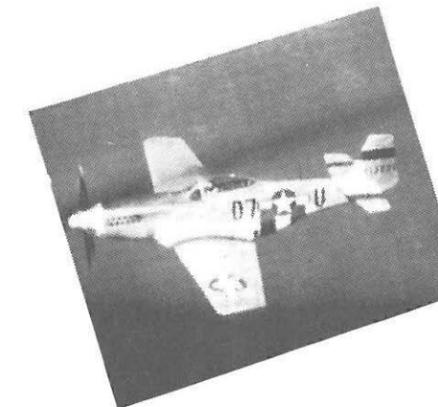
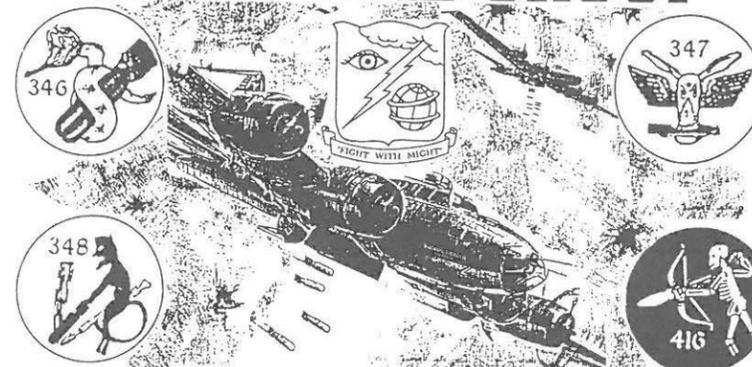


Hi Bernie-I'm the current editor of our Elmendorf AFB Wives Club Organization called EDSO! (The S is for Spouses since there are men now who are the other half of an officers marriage), Oh Well! I prepared this info for our AF anniversary perhaps you may use it

Bye s/Mary Pat

Thanks for the interesting summary. bsb

## 99TH BOMB GROUP



INTERESTING INCIDENTS AT STALAG 17

Luftwaffe Sergeant Schultz would enter our barracks yelling " roll call, everybody up and out ". Someone would say " blow it out your barracks bag ". His reply " Oh you Americans always making jokes and laughing, you should be sad to be prisoners ". We respond " Droppin Zee Dead, Schultz ". He didn't understand that we knew we had Freedom, Betty Grable and Moms apple pie to go home to while he had very little to look forward to in bombed out Nazi Germany.

During prisoner head count a Luftwaffe Major, resplendent in his blue uniform would hand salute us and say " Good Morning Sergeants ". Our American compound leader would return the salute and say " Good Morning Major ". This went on every morning until Vienna suffered an air raid and the Major's hotel was bombed. The Major only faced us once after that to give us the Nazi salute. Of course our compound leader didn't return any salute.

On occassion a Russian trustee from an adjoining camp was allowed to test the fence for any breaks. So it was not unusual to see a Russian enter our compound carrying a ladder. The guard gave the OK and the Russian put the ladder up to, then over the first fence. Checking the wire here and there, he lifted the ladder over the second fence and walked along outside. The guard in the last tower called in to ask about this. The man was brought back into camp only to discover he was a GI. Germans wanted to know how he got a Russian uniform and a ladder. No answer from the GI so one week in the cooler. The story was he bet his buddy he could get out of the camp in broad daylight. He won the bet which was a Red Cross parcel that could easily be eaten in one day.

A GI who had escaped other prison camps was brought into " escape proof " Stalag 17. While other GIs engaged the guards in conversation, this man goes out the back window and disappears. We were made to stand outside for hours while every barracks was searched and all photo IDs were checked but the man was gone. As far as I know the Germans never did find him.

A truck carrying lumber to convert a vacant barracks into a chapel, entered our compound. Suddenly the left rear wheel sank into the ground. Darn it the Germans found another of our tunnels.

I can only relate things that happened in my compound which consisted of four long barracks. I'm sure happenings occurred in other compounds because I know when a bunch of Americans get together, funny things happen. That's why I always enjoyed going to the movies with other GIs. There was always a perfect comment made at the perfect time that rocked the theater with laughter.

Robert Nori  
416 Sqdn.

Stephanie Renner  
Fontanestraße 11  
14193 Berlin  
Germany

Maj. James F. Bruno  
P.O. Box 1224  
Brookfield, WI 53005  
U.S.A.



9 July 1998

Dear Maj. Bruno,

I want to take this opportunity to thank you again for sending me a copy of your book, and the very nice pictures you enclosed. They truly mean a lot to me. Enclosed you will find a publication all about the celebration of the 50th anniversary of the Berlin Airlift, which I'm sure you have heard is going on here. This is in the three allied languages, as well as German, so I thought you might like it.

Many of the veterans of the Airlift were honored at Tempelhof recently, with the Fehrbelliner Tattoo, which is traditionally played at midnight. It has been a military honor since Frederick the Great won the battle of the same name, and all branches of the German military participate, assisted by the light from flaming torches.

During the Fourth of July Gershwin concert at the Philharmonie I met an extraordinary man. Bernard Klebeck, an ex-bomber pilot, is a veteran of the Second World War as well as the Airlift. He married a Berlin lady who dies several years ago and is still living here. He told me about bombing missions he flew over this city and of the missions he had heard about the 99th. It was uncanny to have met such an interesting American so far from home; but a very big and important piece of American history is ever intertwined in Berlin's own.

I hope you are well and that you find this material interesting. Please give Bill Cantwell my regards, as an expat "Berliner!"

Fondly,

The Joys of Aging  
I have become quite a frivolous old gal. I'm seeing five gentlemen every day. As soon as I awake, Will Power helps me out of bed. When he leaves I go see John. Then Charley Horse comes along and when he's here, he takes a lot of my attention. When he leaves Arthur Ritis shows up and stays the rest of the day. He doesn't like to stay in one place very long so he takes me from joint to joint. After such a bust day, I'm really tired and ready to go to bed with Ben Gay. What a day!

DICK PHELPS  
37 SOUTH POLLARD DRIVE  
FULTON, NEW YORK  
13069

Dear Bernie,

Sorry I missed the Springfield Reunion. I had just bought a new Jimmy and was all set to take a leisurely drive to Springfield. A week before I was to leave I was hit by a bug or virus. Could not move my body and was short of oxygen. IR for two days, IC for four days and then into the hospital for four days before being released in a wheel chair.

I got rid of the chair in a week and at present feeling almost back to normal. Surprises one just how much the old body can take.

Maybe I can do better the next time.

Reading the "Diamondback Historial Book", you must of had an active enlistment. Congratulations;

I always felt proud to have had you as the pilot on many of my missions.

Dick



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LOOKING AHEAD TO YEAR 2000 (From Fran Grantz)

The 2000 site committee, headed by Mary Ann Bannick, has found that the cost of bringing our Reunion 2000 to Seattle was beyond our organization's ability to cover. In other words, we have been unable to get hotel costs within a reasonable range for our members. Therefore, regretfully, we have canceled plans for Seattle in 2000. Our sincere 'Thanks' must go to Mary Ann and her contacts for the valiant work she has done to make it possible to return to Seattle. She has tried every possible way to get the costs of hotel and other services within an acceptable range for us without success. To Mary Ann and Seattle, our regrets and thank you! . . . GOOD NEWS! Ed Marlow is on a site search among the seaport cities in the southeastern U.S. to find a suitable site for Reunion 2000. He is reporting some success, but asked that we wait for his full report later. However, the word is he has followed interesting contacts in attractive places that are affordable for our membership. More on this later. Our thanks to Ed as he pursues Reunion 2000 plans.

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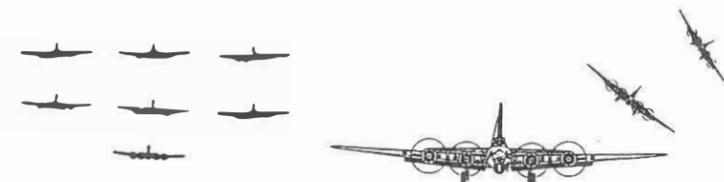
Apartado Postal #243, Guanajuato, Gto., Mexico 36000

June 11, 1998

Bernie: . . . I can't identify the crew on page 32 of the May '98 newsletter, but I can identify the plane. It's the RABID RABBIT, perhaps the oldest plane in the 416th Sq. (note the camouflage paint). I flew in her more than once, her wings flapped, and you had to use a screwdriver to open the bomb bay doors, there being no door handle. I enclose a photo of her, with myself (Radio Operator), at upper left; our Pilot, Bill Brake, (later Operations Officer of the 416th), lower left; and Dick Coke, Co-pilot, lower right. The Engineer, upper right, I can't recall his name, he was not a regular part of our crew. . . . In the same issue, I'll have to disagree with Capt. Plummer. I did not find the Germans to be without guts. He should have been with us on March 24, 1945 over Berlin when they penetrated our tight formation with ME-262s and flew in their own flak. I found them brave and formidable foes. To denigrate the enemy is to denigrate yourself.

Cheers,

John B. Nevin



Hi Roy,

Sorry I haven't followed through as I promised I would on the information as regards the pictures, but, I will do my best to make amends.

The shot of Queenie as a backdrop with her enlisted crew is as follows:

Knelling; Left to Rights

Standing; Left to Right

T/S	Mannie	R.O.	S/S	Mabantie	Left Waist
S/S	Freeland	Ball turret	S/S	Streetman	From photo lab, who flew with us when Elliot was flying lead
T/S	Schimp	Eng: & upper turret			
			S/S	Karkut	Tail gun
			S/S	Kaschinska	Right waist

Clare Kaschinska  
6720 Sauk Trail Rd.  
Cedar Grove, WI. 53013

All these men were originally ground personnel. We had all had gunnery training, except for Manie who came to the 99th as a R.O. in a replacement crew. When Elliot needed a crew, he picked the men he wanted from the line personnel. Our original R.O. was Vince Laybe, who went down over Bologna while flying with Mannie's crew, as a fill in for Mannie, who was ill. We got along well as a crew and kept in touch with our friends on the ground crews. We would exchange gossip and jokes waiting for take-off. It was nice to know both sides of the coin.

Born January 22, 1916. Drafted into the army in May 1942 in Milwaukee. Transferred to Atlantic City for basic training and school assignment; which turned out to be armament at Lowery Field, Denver. From there I was sent to flexible gunnery school in Reno, NV.

Upon completion of this school, I was transferred to Salt Lake City for crew assignment. Somewhere along the way I had picked up an eye infection, and I ended up in the base hospital for three weeks. After my release I was ordered to retake the Visual part of the qualification test. I couldn't pass the peripheral test, or line up the clothes pins, and as a result I was removed from flying and gunnery status. I requested a retake of the test, and while I was sweating out the wait, they sent me back to school for power turret and bomb sight repair at Salt Lake City. But, to tell the truth I never learned much, because these weren't schools, they were exercises in confusion, and a waste of time.

They never gave me another try on the eye examination, but instead transferred me to Walla Walla, and into the 99th, which was in the process of forming. There they placed me in armament, and I went overseas with the ground personnel.

I was placed back on gunnery and flying status by Major Elliot in late July of 43'. We flew as a crew with: Elliot, Davis and Copsey. On fill in I flew with Brandt and Horwitz. My 50th mission was on January 27th 44' against Salon de Provence A.D., France. Horwitz was the pilot, and we got hit over the target and had to drop out of the formation. We limped back to Naples all by our lonesome, bouncing all over the sky. What a way to bow out!

*Clare*

Clare, your letter and photos will bring back many memories to 99th ers, thanks much! rhw.

Page 12





348th Squadron 99th Bomb Group 12th Air Force

North Africa Baltimore, MD Reunion Photo

(Left to Right)

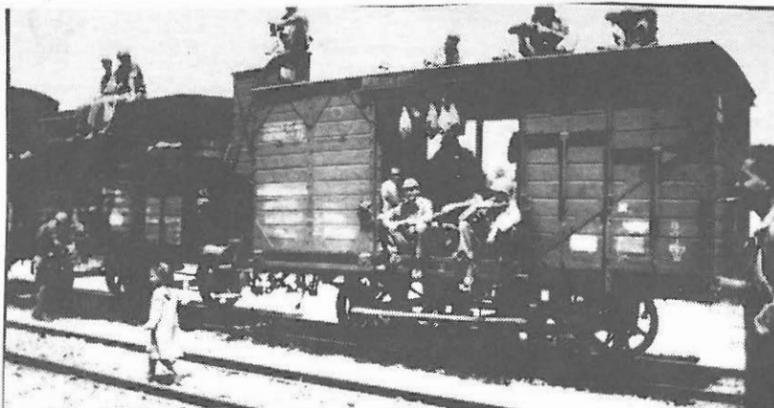
Rear Row

Chuck Donwey • Clare Kaschlinska • Warren Whitmore • Jules Horowitz • Earl Davis

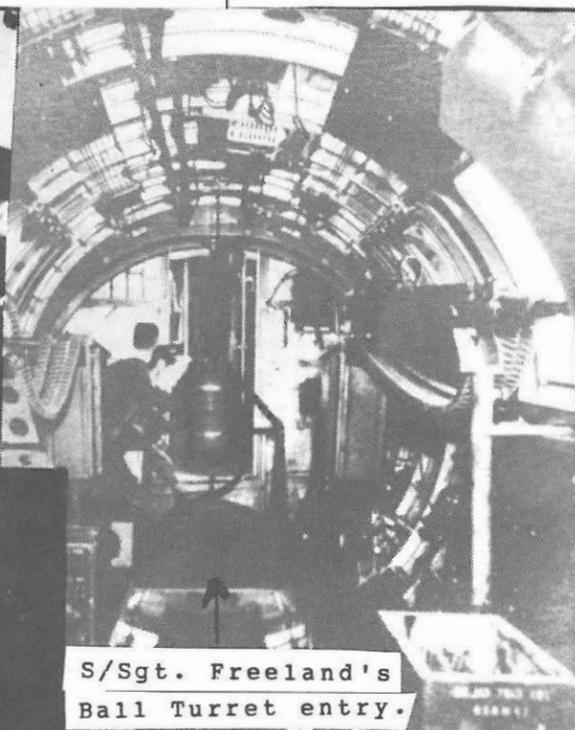
Front Row

Arkie Clark • Bob Sluten • Bud Mclaughlin • Vince Shank • Wm. C. Drabot

B-17 waste photo looking forward to Radio room & bomb bay beyond. On right side note rt. waste 50 Cal. gun with ammo. supply box below.



40 & 8 transport, North Africa, 1943



S/Sgt. Freeland's Ball Turret entry.



S/Sgt. Clare Kashinska's 23rd Mission point. '43 N. Africa.



Page 12, 13, & 14 should bring back a good many 55 year old memories!

ARMY EXCHANGE SERVICE RATION CARD NO. 232632

Z

EVERY WEEK	GOOD ANYWHERE IN NATOUSA	EVERY TWO WEEKS
Beer 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1		Candy Package 4 3 2 1
Smoking Ration 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1		Soap, Toilet 4 3 2 1
Candy bar 5c 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1		Blades, Razor 4 3 2 1
Candy Rolls 5c 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1		
Chewing Gum 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1		EVERY FOUR WEEKS
Tobacco Chew 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1	Fruit Jucies 2 1	
<del>Soap Laundry 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1</del>	<del>Paste or powder, Tooth 2 1</del>	
Soft, Drinks 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1	Cream or Soap, Shaving 2 1	
	Matches, Book or Box 2 1	
	Tablet, Writing 2 1	
	Envelopes 2 1	
	Cleaners, Pipe 2 1	

NO. 111 From Jun 21 1944 to Aug. 15 1944

Name Knipp, Arthur G. T/Sgt

Organization 347th Bomb sg. 99th Boomb Gp

Signature *Arthur G. Knipp*

Unit Co.

See pars. 1, e and 2, a, (2) AR- WD-8990 and.b., 1-c-4, AR-210-65

REVERSE SIDE  
EVERY EIGHT WEEKS

Band, Watch	Fluid, Letting	Pencil, Styptic
Belt, Money	Fluid, Lighter	Pencil, Wood
Book, Note	Glue	Pins, Common
Box, Soap	Ink, Writing	Pins, Safty
Brush, Shaving	Ink, Marking	pipe
Brush, Shoe	Kit, Sewing	Polish, Shoe
Brush, Hand	Kit, Toilet	Portfolio, Writing
Buttons	Knife, Pocket	Pouch, Tobacco
Cards, playing	Lead, Pencil	Powder, Foot
Case, Cigarette	Lighter	Powder, Antiseptic
Clip, Nail	Lotion, Shaving	Powder, Talcum
Cloth, Shoe	Lotion, Skin	Razor, safety
Cloth, Metal, Pol	Lotion, Sunburn	Scissors
Comb, Pocket	Mirror, Trench	Soap, Grit
Deodorant, Persp	Needles	Soap, Saddle
Dice	Nib, Pen	Solution, Antiseptic
File, Nail	Oil, Hair	Thread
Filter, Pipe	Pen, Foutin Pin	Tissue, Cleansing
Flints, Wicks	Pencil, Median	Tube, Toothbrush
Bruch, Tooth		Vaseline

ART KNIPP furnished us this information from a 1944 Ration Card of his. This will bring back some memories for all of us.

RHW



Bernie,

Your request for me to write about my experiences with the 99th Bomb Group might bore your readers, but I'll try not to!

FROM BOMBARDIER TO PRIEST

Went into service with the 28th Division on February 17, 1941 in a machine gun company from Monessen, PA to Indiantown Gap. Almost a year later, Pearl Harbor was bombed and I went to ~~SANTA ANA, CALIF~~ and as a cadet about a year later. Then to pilot school at Blythe, California and lasted until I soloed and so off to bombing school at Deming, New Mexico.

Graduated and kept as an instructor which was not my cup of tea - so - off to B-17's at Avon Park, Florida where I joined a great crew.

From there to Savannah, Georgia, Bangor, Maine, to the Azores, Marrakesh, Tunis, Algiers and to Foggia, Italy and was attached to the 347th Squadron.

First raid two days later to Bihac, Yugoslavia (a real milk run). Then the real action started and later flew regularly with own crew. For me, ~~POEST~~ (4 times) was rough but a couple of raids to Blec-hammer (twice) were rougher (July 7, '44 and August 7, '44).

We were blessed by the 99th Fighter Escort Group made up of tremendous Black pilots who really knew what escorting meant. As all of you know, there was a great sense of relief to see those P51 Mustangs all around us and they sure were the best and, as you also know we never lost a plane to enemy fighters when they escorted us.

Flew my 50th mission to Munich (twice there), Sept. 22, '44. Lost a couple of lead planes and I ended up as the lead. Got lucky and hit the jackpot and they honored me with a D.F.C.

To lead to why I am writing (trying to locate some of our crew) and how I ended up working for the "Big Boss"....

Our chaplain told us to visit a monastery near the spur of Italy so six of us went and we saw a monk who influenced me and planted a seed for my most important mission...The Priesthood -

His name was Padre Pio and he had the Stigmata (the marks of Christ) on his hands and feet and his side bore those marks.

After the war I went back to the steel mills where I worked before the war but that and other jobs never fulfilled me. Went to the University of Pittsburgh and graduated in 1952. Then in 1956 I

entered the Seminary at St. Francis, Loretto, PA, and was ordained as a Catholic priest on May 26, 1962. I did not go because I dropped bombs during war and probably killed people and wanted to ease my conscience. I went because my country was at war and it was my duty to do my part. We have the greatest country in the world and all kinds of privileges. But with those freedoms we have obligations to defend it. I served to the best of my ability in the greatest Air Force and was proud of all who flew with the 99th.

Bernie, you asked me to explain how my name was Orland Bucci and now it's Michael. I had a brother, deceased, and in his memory I took Michael, his name, for my religious life.

I'll never forget the B-17's and those who flew in them and I still get emotional when I look back. Visited a B-17 down in Morgantown, W.V. a year ago which someone had refurbished, along with a B-24. Was a tight squeeze getting into my old position but now I'm 50 years older and about 35 pounds heavier.

Not much of a story, Bernie, but to me it was something I'll remember until I die. It wasn't difficult going from a bombardier to a priest.

In Christ,  
Fr. Bucci

P.S.

Please, I need help trying to locate or know someone who can help me find the members of our crew. (I always think of them).

2nd Lt. Robert Coleson - Pilot - Glendale, CA  
2nd Lt. Harry Earle - Co-Pilot - Scarborough, NY  
2nd Lt. Philip Levy - Navigator  
2nd Lt. Orland Bucci - Bombardier - Monessen, PA

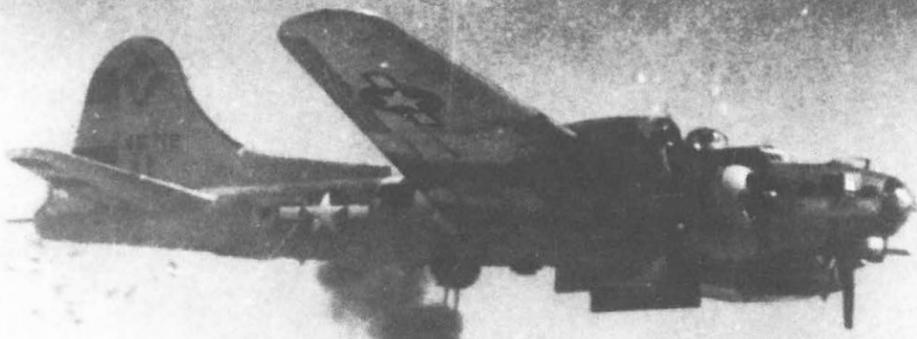
THE GREATEST  
S/SGT. William Wasyluk - New Brunswick, NJ  
S/SGT. Robert Bock - New Britain, CT  
S/SGT. Clair Bockmiller - Warsaw, NY  
S/SGT. John Badgely - South Orange, NJ  
S/SGT. George Bassett - Excelsior Spring, MO

I'm retired now and I have time to look for them or visit if you can help me locate them. THANKS!

All of you, and especially those who never came back, are in my Mass I celebrate everyday.

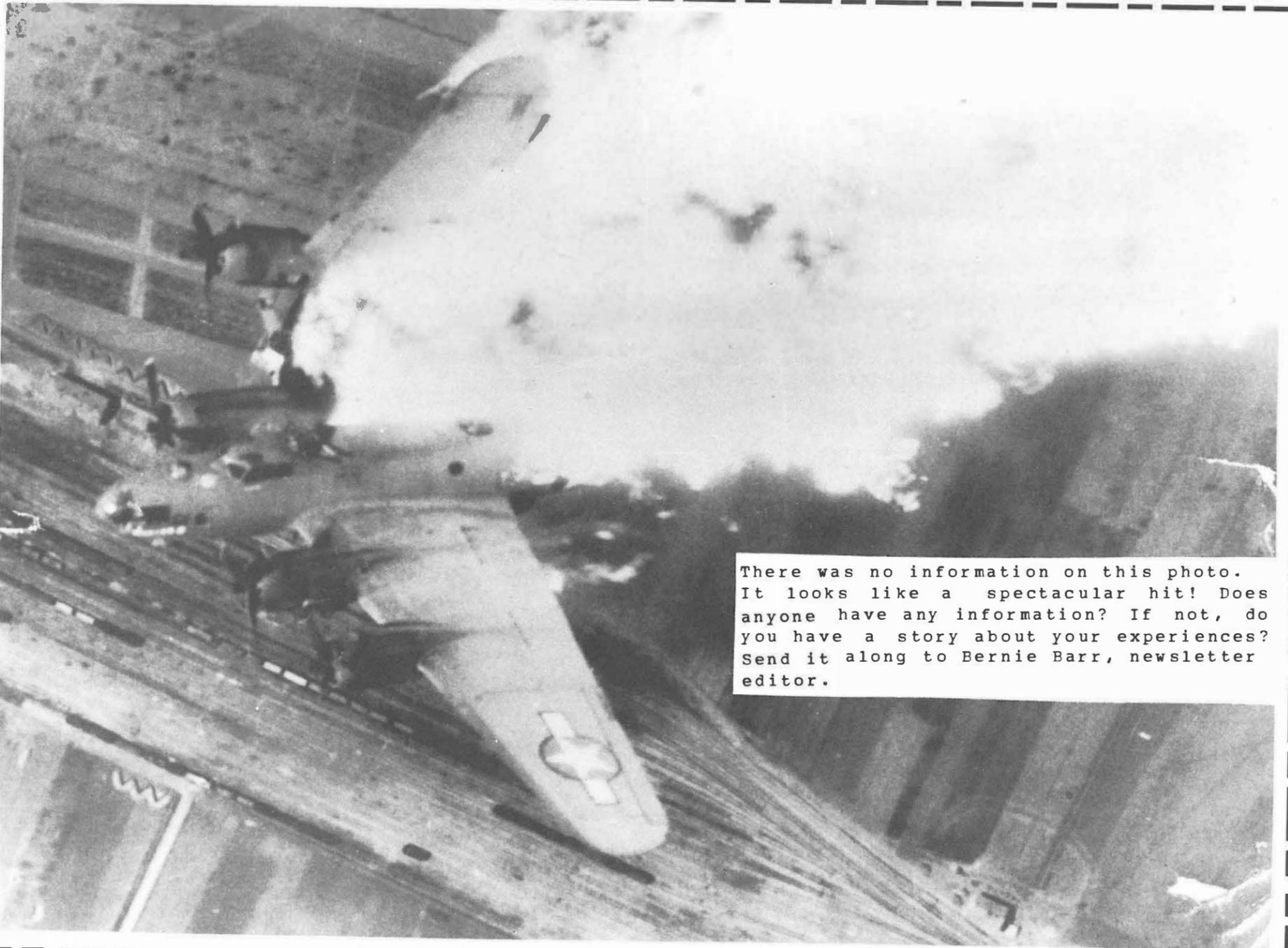
MY ADDRESS: Fr. Michael Bucci  
1319 Walnut St.  
South Connellsville, PA 15425

TELEPHONE: (724) 628-1921



Page 18

99th Bomb Group, 347th Squadron, Plane #712 over Maribor, Yugoslavia  
Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945. S/Sgt. Scotty Neader, Right Waist Gunner  
is kicking our propoganda leaflets on this combat mission encountering  
some flak. Does any current member know more about this mission and/or  
crew? Is there a story to be told?



Page 19

There was no information on this photo.  
It looks like a spectacular hit! Does  
anyone have any information? If not, do  
you have a story about your experiences?  
Send it along to Bernie Barr, newsletter  
editor.



# From Russia With Love

*by Sue Christiansen*

This short book includes some memories of a trip to Russia, May and June of 1996.

Chris and I were two of 14 'ambassadors'

with the Friendship Force of Huntsville, Al. visiting the Friendship Force Clubs of Kaliningrad and Moscow.

The emphasis in this account is on people rather than places.

## FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE

We were on our way to a new 'world' new friends, new ways, new foods, new culture--new to us and different from our ways. That's what Friendship Force is all about--sharing our lives and our traditions with friends around the world. Dateline May 24, 1996-- Huntsville, Alabama Friendship Force flies to meet Friendship Force in Kaliningrad and Moscow in the Russian Republic.

Our club was the first one that Kaliningrad had hosted so they really rolled out the Red Carpet. One of the first things we learned was that RED means beautiful.

From the Moscow airport, we traveled by bus to the 'meeting point' at Mission Control building in Kaliningrad. We met our hosts and were on our way to new vistas. REALLY new--our 'home' for the next week was on the 15th floor of an apartment complex with many thousands living close by.

There were two small elevators, but no stairway. This began to be a concern of mine in the middle of the night, the first night, but I soon decided that these thoughts should not ruin my week with this precious family who had lived here for eight years.

The family was made up of Natasha, 36 and Nickolay 36 and son Roman 9 years old and going into 4th grade. There is a school across the street from their apartment, but he goes to a special school. Shoes off at the door of this three room flat. Exercise equipment is in the front hall way (trapeze and rings and ladder). We seemed to be good friends right from the first. None of us could speak the others' language except Roman (accent on the second syllable) and he was good to have around. School was out so he was a big help and we liked each other from the beginning. I was his "babushka" (grandmother)

The apartment had a kitchen with a corner table and benches by the window with a view of the forrest not far away. The other two walls accomodated the sink, stove, counter and refrigerator. Natasha had ivy growing across the ceiling and onto the light fixtures. That looked really neat.

The living room opened onto an enclosed balcony where clothes were hung to dry and flowers were blooming. The TV, a built in wall unit for dishes and pretties, a closet section and shelves was on one side. **Two easy** chairs and a sofabed completed the furnishings in this room.



We were welcomed with no ID check or anything because several of our hosts were space specialists and worked there. We had a briefing and a tour of the building. After we ate a picnic lunch by a small lake, We visited the cosmonauts training center. The training is similar to our astronaut training and it was interesting to compare. One of our group was retired from NASA so that was good to hear his views.

Another day we visited The American School, named thus because they taught English from first grade 'up' through high school. In the front hall, they had arranged for a lady to sell merchandise from Russia and the school would get some of the profits. Sounds like good ol' American PTA project to me. The items were lovely and VERY reasonable. After 'shopping', we were guests at a demonstration of ballroom dancing given by some of the children. It was expertly performed and very enjoyable. The principal had a briefing in her office following the dance program. All children were very polite and interested in answering questions and visiting with us.

Much of the building was in bad need of repair as are most buildings in Russia.



The third room to this 'flat' was Roman's room with desk, daybed and a place to play or study. While we were their guests, all three of the family slept in Roman's room and they gave us the living room--their best.

When we visited, we sat in the kitchen and always they wanted us to eat something. They were so worried because we didn't eat. Food was different, especially the dairy products. We couldn't analyze them so we just said. " Nyet Spah-see-bah"--meaning 'no thank you'. Chris and I were fussed at by the president of the club for not eating more food. I don't know if he ever did understand or forgive us. We soon asked for just fruit and vegetables and a little cheese. We ate lots of potatoes and they were delicious. We had said fish would be fine--bad mistake--salty, smoked and not to our liking. I really think on the food score our grade was very low. Chris finally ate some instant oatmeal we had taken with us. He put some jelly on it, but no milk. You do the best you can. They'll have time to GET BACK at us in November when they come to visit us.

Some highlights of our first week included our visit to the Mission Control Building, of course.

We were taken in cars most days for our trips, but one day we all went by bus to a special town where the Russian Orthodox Church has a monastery and a beautifully magnificent church. Repairs are being made on these buildings after so many years of not being used. This town was the childhood home of Natasha so that made it even more special.

After visiting the Monastery, we went a short distance to a Children's House of Creativity. They had prepared a cold buffet for us. It was very beautiful and lovely including caviar and wine. We sat at child sized chairs and tables. After eating, we toured the facilities for inspiring children in many media of expression. Quite a nice place, but again, in a very poorly 'run down' building. It will take a long time and a better 'feel' for capitalism before the buildings show much improvement.

Another house had hand made toys and some were for sale--hand carved bears, etc. for only \$4. Very lovely toys. We needed more room to carry our treasures home.



We had had a lovely day, but there was no place to stop to take a dinner home for our hosts. Not one restaurant or fast food stop in the whole town of Kaliningrad, even with 200,000 population. Wherever people go they carry a lunch if they are to be gone during the noon hour. They also take a shopping bag from home in which to put their purchases.

In the summer the sun sets about 10:30 pm so we found ourselves eating the evening meal very late. Children played outdoors until dark. The area where we were visiting included about 10,000 people in dozens of 20 story apartment buildings. It was very quiet, mainly because so few people had cars. The garages were the shape of a Volkswagen 'bug', but big enough for the somewhat larger Russian car. The weather was very chilly so windows and doors were closed keeping outside noise from entering, also.

Not all went well the first week as Chris got an infection resulting in a high fever. Nick went in his car to get a Dr., one of the members of their Friendship Force Club. She spoke very little English so it was an interesting time with the resulting treatment being acupuncture to lower his temperature. Chris got better, but still needed antibiotics, which are a rare commodity there.

## Shot Down over Switzerland

On October 1, 1943 the American B-17 Bomber *Sugarfoot* was shot down over Bad Ragaz by Swiss Flak. This tragic event is well known and documented. Not as much is known about the crash of a second B-17 from the same formation only seven minutes later near Filisur in the canton Graubunden.

Beside the many bases of the American 8th Air Force in England the USAAF also operated from a number of airfields in Northern Tunisia. The base of the 99th Bomb Group was located at Bizerta, not far from the Tunisian capital. Missions from there were targeted mostly at Italy. This was to change in the fall of 1943. Only B-17's with Tokyo tanks were scheduled to fly the mission of October 1. The crew knew therefore on the evening before that a long mission was to be expected for the next day. In the early morning hours the crews were informed in the briefing tent that the day's mission would bring them for the first time to Germany. It was not an easy target. The Messerschmitt aircraft factory at Augsburg was heavily defended and heavy opposition both from ground and from the air had to be expected. After eight in the morning all four squadrons had left the dusty runway at Bizerta and headed for Italy. But only a part of the 31 scheduled aircraft reached the European mainland. Nine aircraft encountered technical problems. Some could not take-off, while others had to return to base after take-off.

### Experienced Crew

At this time the crews of the 8th Air Force had to fly 25 combat missions before they could return home. This was not enough for the crews in North Africa. They had to complete twice as many missions on their tour of duty. Lt. Bill Cantwell, pilot of the B-17 *Rangy Lil* had already flown 49 missions and was therefore on his last mission on this day. Before joining the Army Air Corps he flew for two years in Canada as an instructor pilot. His copilot Lt. Boydston was on his 12th mission. He transferred in North Africa from the B-26 Marauder to the B-17. *Rangy Lil*'s navigator's compartment was shared by navigator Lt. Breslin and bombardier Lt. Marks - with only 21 years the youngest of the officers on board. Both had completed 48 missions and were part of the old crew. Behind the two pilots was the position of Sgt. Rowen. He was the engineer and also operated the top turret against attacking fighters. He worked for Hoffmann La Roche in New Jersey before he joined the Air Force. Sgt. Maddox was the radio operator in the center of the plane. The main duties of the remaining four enlisted men was to defend the B-17 against enemy fighters. Sgt. Philipps and Schenkelberger operated the two heavy waist guns. While Sgt. McArdell protected the underside of the plane from the ball turret and tailgunner Sgt. Chavez defended the aircraft against attacks from behind. Only minutes before take-off the crew was joined by Sgt. Higginbotham. He was not a regular member of the crew and had the order to fly as a photographer on this mission.

### Abort the Mission

The P-38's which escorted the formation over the Mediterranean left them when they reached the northern end of Corsica. The formation was shot at from the ground and were attacked by some fighters when they entered the Italian mainland north of Florence. But neither caused any damage. The remaining route was flown at 20,000 feet between two layers of clouds. Once in a while the snow covered peaks of the Alps could be seen through breaks in the

clouds. The minimal enemy opposition allowed them to lose up the formation of B-17's somewhat. This relieved the pilots somewhat from the tiring formation flying on this eight hour mission. But they lost some of their protection this way. *Rangy Lil* was flying in the Tail End Charlie position in the rear of the formation. Not exactly the most favourable spot in the formation because many times this was the first target for attacking fighters. The B-17 *Sugarfoot* was flying to the left of them. North of the Alps they encountered a solid undercast which stretched all the way to the North. In the later years of the war Bombers were able to hit their targets also in adverse weather conditions with the help of radar. But in this time bombardiers had to have visual contact to drop their bombs on target. Therefore the mission had to be abandoned 50 kilometers short of Augsburg.

### Entering Switzerland

The open formation became even looser during the turning manoeuvre to head back. Exactly at this point 30 German Me 109 started attacking and chased the formation towards south. Norris King waist gunner of *Sugarfoot* recalls: "I had never seen a German Me 109 so close before. At times they came in close enough to make out the Swastika on their tail." Under constant fire the Americans entered Switzerland at Lake Constance. Believing they were still over German territory. Ammunition from the air battles hit the ground at several places in Switzerland. It was during these attacks when *Rangy Lil* lost its number one engine. Around noon the formation approached the area of Sargans at an altitude of about 10,000 feet. The fog had dissipated and it was a typical clear fall day. The Swiss Flak Detachment 21 stationed at Bad Ragaz was observing the approach of the formation. Orders of the Swiss Army at this time was to shoot at foreign formations of more than three aircraft. When they flew directly over the batteries the flak opened fire at the lead plane of the left squadron. Only about 150 yards to the left of *Rangy Lil*, *Sugarfoot* encountered a direct hit which separated its tail from the fuselage. The plane immediately dropped down in flames and exploded mid air. Of the ten men crew only three managed to bail out at the last moment. Sgt. Pratt the waist gunner and Sgt. Carroll the radio operator landed in a meadow near Maienfeld. Whereas Norris King landed with his chute in a tree between *Sugarfoot*'s burning debris southeast of Bad Ragaz. None of the other crew members survived the crash. The Swiss Flak also observed hits on a second B-17 - Lt. Cantwell's *Rangy Lil*. Bill Cantwell reports: "We never noticed that the Swiss Flak was shooting at us. We were much too busy with the Me 109's which seemed to be zeroed in all on us."

### Hopeless Situation on Board

After passing Bad Ragaz the formation headed towards Chur. It did not take long under the heavy German attacks until *Rangy Lil*'s engines number two and three were also knocked out. With only one remaining engine the aircraft could hardly be controlled and was going down rapidly. As good as nothing was functioning on board and there were fires on two locations of the aircraft. In this hopeless situation the pilot gave the crew the order to bail out. Seconds after Bill Cantwell had left the plane it separated in mid air. The debris were scattered over a wide mountainous area. Observers on the ground reported that the German fighters then disappeared towards Austria. Bill Cantwell recalls: "I landed with my chute above the tree line in the snow. When I landed the wind was blowing quiet hard and the chute was dragging me along the ground and I had to struggle to get out of the harness. Soon after I met Bruce Rowen. We both did get injured during the jump." Because they believed to be in



Germany or northern Italy they buried their equipment in the snow before they went downhill. After several hours they were met by a Swiss Army patrol which assured them that they were in Switzerland. Until eight in the evening also the copilot, the navigator and the bombardier could be found alive. The remaining crew members did not survive. It was found later that most of them were killed by the fighters machine gun fire.

#### Internment

The victims of *Rangy Lil* and *Sugarfoot* buried on October 5, 1943 with military honors in the cemetery at Bad Ragaz. The funeral was attended by representatives of the American and British Embassies. The eight survivors were interned at Adelboden. Only a year later half of them had already left Switzerland again. In March 1944 Bill Cantwell and five other Americans were exchanged in a secret mission against German Internees at Lisbon. Bruce Rowen, Norris King and Joseph Carroll decided to escape from internment in the fall of the same year. They managed to cross the border to France where they could get in touch with allied Troops again.

Stefan Naef

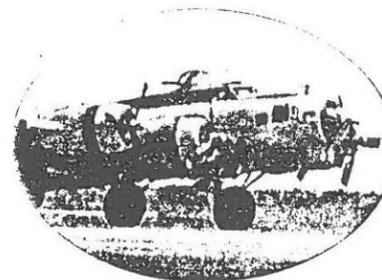
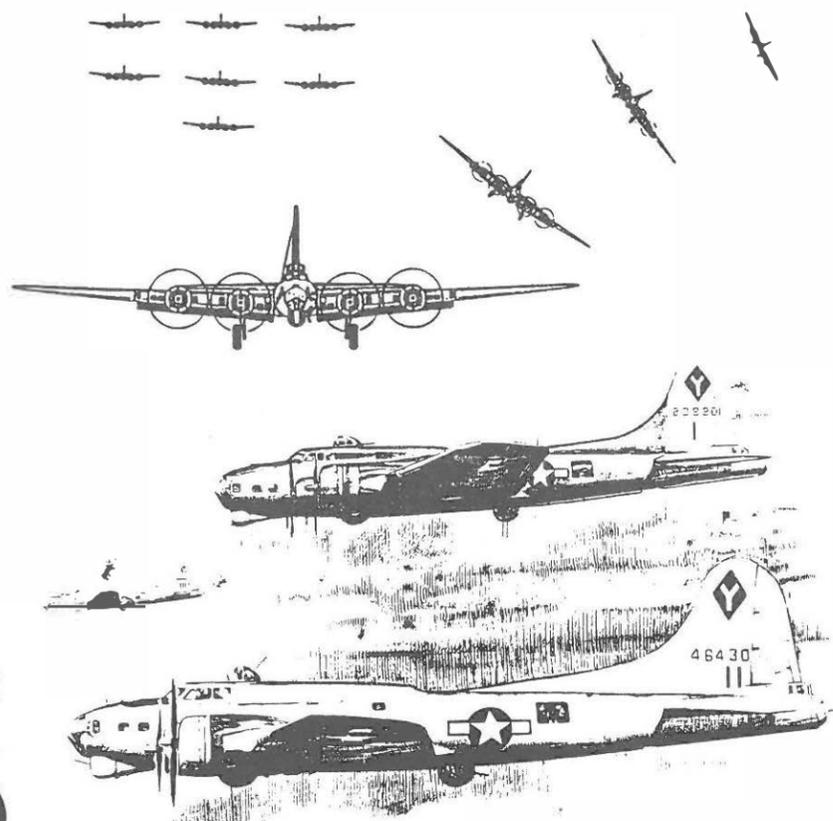
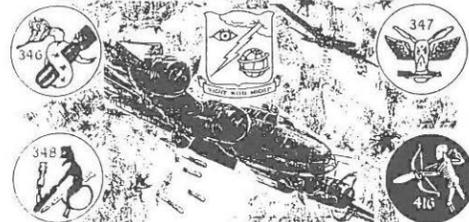
#### IT PAYS TO FOLLOW DIRECTIONS.

A priest was visiting the the home of a 92 year old church member. While she made tea, he looked around and saw a beautiful organ with a cut glass bowl sitting on top of it. The bowl was half filled with water, and a condom was floating on the surface. After tea, his curiosity got the best of him, and he asked her about it. She explained, "While in town I found a package on the sidewalk and brought it home. The directions on the back said, "Keep wet and put on your organ to prevent disease and you know, I think it works; I haven't had a cold all winter!"

### 99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)



### 99TH BOMB GROUP

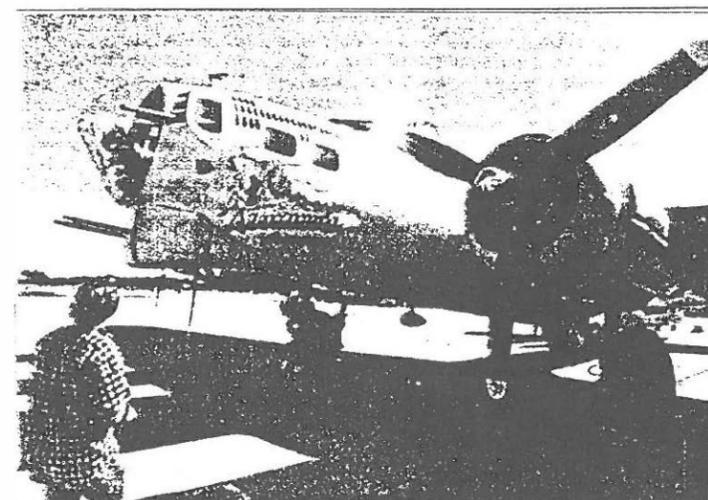


#### FLYING HIGH

B-17 FLIGHT GIVES OUR REPORTER A GLIMPSE OF HER GRANDFATHERS' PAST  
B1

# Memories soar in B-17 bomber

SANTA BARBARA NEWS-PRESS / THURSDAY, MAY 7, 1998



Joe Crockett of Santa Barbara admires the "Aluminum Overcast." Machine gun barrels can be seen protruding from the front end.

*Editor's note: News-Press Staff Writer Camilla Cohee flew in a Boeing B-17 "Flying Fortress" Wednesday, the kind of combat bomber both her grandfathers flew in during World War II. Here is an account of her impressions and her grandfathers' recollections.*

By CAMILLA COHEE  
NEWS-PRESS STAFF WRITER

Crouched inside the transparent cone at the nose of the B-17 bomber, my heart soared and dropped, and my grin never stopped.

There I was, perched 2,000 feet above the Santa Barbara coast in one of only 12 Boeing B-17 "Flying Fortresses" left operating in the world.

I put on the 54-year-old head set, gripped the machine gun triggers and closed my eyes.

My thoughts were of my two grandfathers, both who flew in bombers during World War II. My father's dad, R.L. Cohee, a bombardier in a B-24, was shot down over Germany and spent a year in a prisoner-of-war camp. My grandpa on my mother's side, William Bettridge, was a 20-year-old tail gunner in the same type of plane I flew in on Wednes-

day.

They both, thankfully for me, came home alive, and with a lifetime of stories to tell about their daring trips across the European skies.

The B-17 "Flying Fortress" was credited with turning the tide of the war when thousands of them stormed over Germany and other occupied countries in 1943, dropping the bombs that crippled Adolf Hitler's Nazi regime.

More than 12,000 of the 65,500-pound aircraft were manufactured for the U.S. Army Air Corps during the war. By the end of the conflict, in 1945, some 20,000 B-17 crew members had died. Many others, like my grandfathers, are still alive, and remember the massive, clamorous planes with nostalgia.

"The sounds of the engine, the vibrations, it was fantastic," said George McKenzie, a Santa Barbara resident who piloted a B-17 during the war. He came to the airport Wednesday to watch the plane arrive, and managed to snatch an extra seat during the 20-minute press flight.

McKenzie was thrilled to be up in the sky again, absorbing the sights and sounds of

# War stories come alive in flight aboard B-17

the plane he flew as a 19-year-old for the Army Air Corps.

"I wish he would have flown up right over State Street," said McKenzie. "This was my day."

Bruce McCurdy, a member of the Experimental Aircraft Association who is coordinating the plane's visit to Santa Barbara, said he has received 200-plus calls from people wanting to check out, or fly in, the bomber.

"The B-17 bomber is kind of romantic, kind of a symbol of America's might," he said. "During the European theater of operations, these planes were the first American planes to strike into Germany."

"They're a wonderful, ol' sturdy airplane," said Bob Davis, one of two pilots who is flying the bomber from city to city during its current West Coast tour. The plane is based in Oshkosh, Wisc.

"It's a tribute to the people who fought and died in World War II," said Davis.

B-17 missions were often long and cold, given that there was no heating system. The 10-man crews — all cramped in tight spaces — consisted of a pilot, co-pilot, navigator, bombardier, flight engineer, radioman, a tail gunner, two waist gunners and a ball-turret gunner, who curled in a transparent ball hanging below the fuselage.

During the war, the four-engine bombers most often traveled at an altitude of 25,000 feet, with a speed of 200 mph.

The gunners' job was to protect the 74-foot-long aircraft from enemy fighters.

My grandpa Bettridge said that was a frightening job.

"I was terrified," said my grandpa, who lives now in Carson City, Nev. "Three of our crew members were killed. But it was something I had to do, sort of a duty. We had a



STEVE MALONE/NEWS-PRESS

News-Press reporter Camilla Cohee views the Santa Barbara coastline from the nose gunner's seat.

job to do and that was to stop Hitler, or right now, people over here would be doing the goose step and eating fish heads."

As I crawled my way back into the tiny tail-gun compartment, I tried to imagine my grandpa Bettridge doing the same thing. The turbulence is felt most greatly in the back of the plane, he said.

"It was the worst place to be, even though you could always see where you'd been. I wore my parachute all the time. I had seen many people blown out of the plane and not have one on."

My grandpa said he finished his required 51 missions and was allowed to return home.

My other grandfather, R.L. Cohee, wasn't as lucky. His plane was shot down after being ambushed by German fighters on

April 29, 1944.

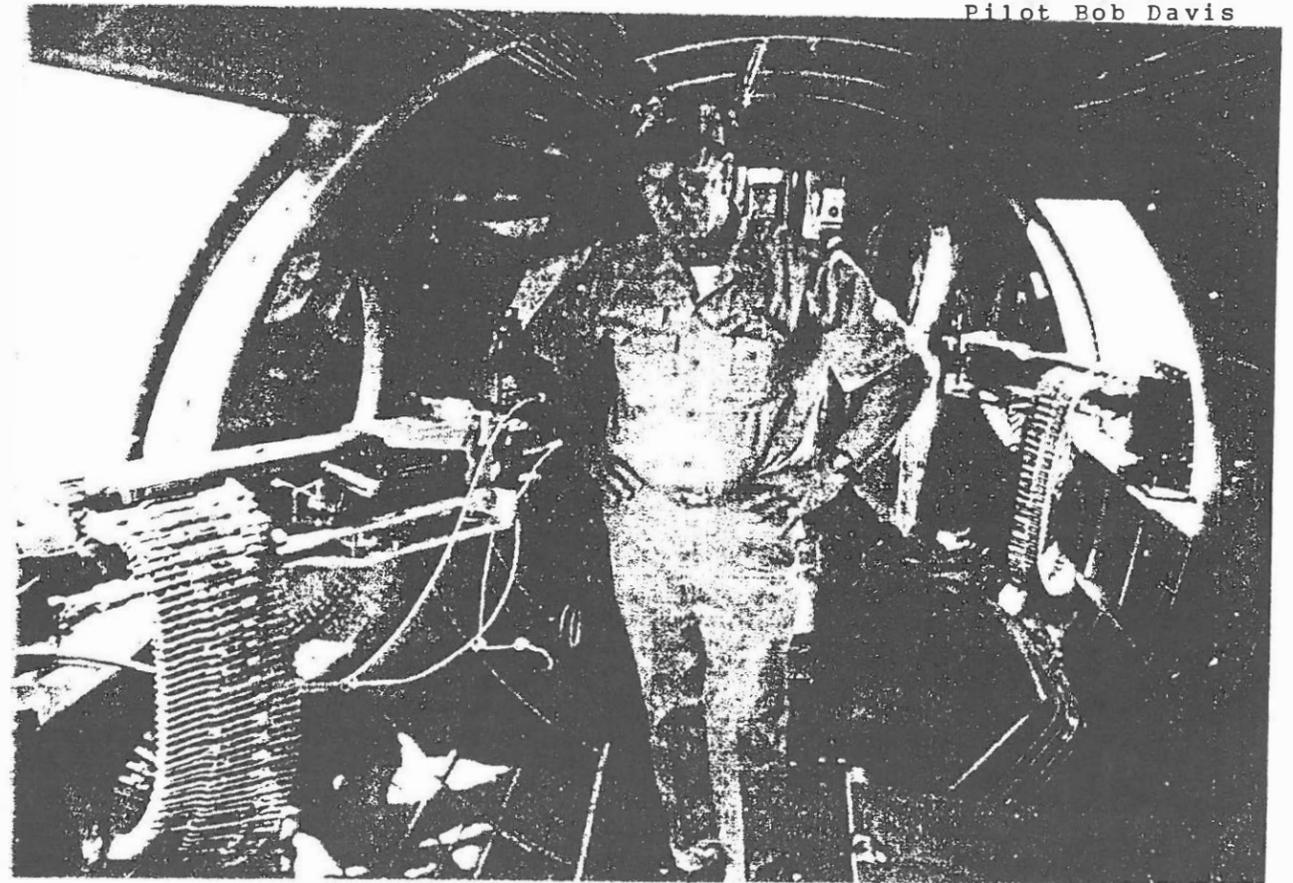
"In a bomber, you just had to sit there and let them shoot at you," said my grandfather, a Long Beach resident now. "There were terrible losses . . . That's why everybody wanted to be a fighter pilot, because you were an individual and could control your own destiny."

My grandfather Cohee remembers his time during the war as an incredible adventure.

"Take 14 guys, all about 23-years-old, give them a brand-new bomber and tell them to fly clear over to England . . . If that's not an adventure, I don't know what is," he said.

During World War II, nearly 5,000 B-17s were lost during combat missions. After the war, some B-17s were sold on the surplus market, but most fell victim to the scrapper's torch.

"It's a tribute to the people who fought and died in World War II"  
Pilot Bob Davis



Bob Davis, a member of the Experimental Aircraft Assn., stands between the two waist guns aboard a B-17.

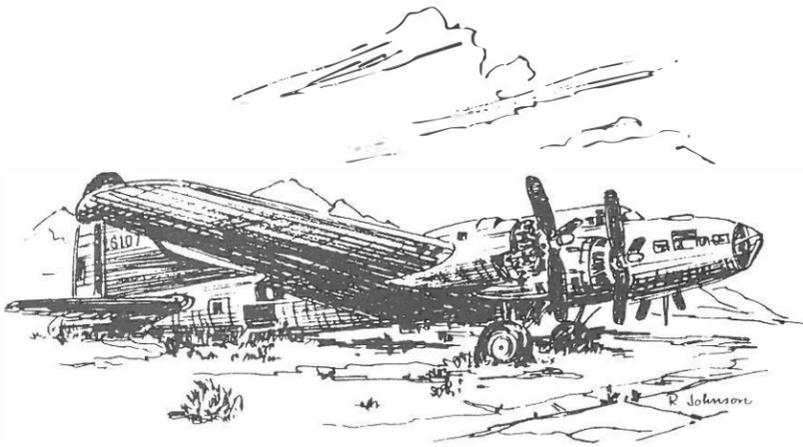
## HELL IN ITALY

I'm sitting here a thinkin' of what I left behind,  
so I'll put it down in writin' what's runnin' through my mind.  
We've dropped do many bloomin' bombs and done do many flights,  
an' froze our feet an' hands an' things while ridin' at sub  
zero heights, but there is one consolation, now listen while I tell  
when we die we'll go to heaven, cause we've done out hitch in Hell.

We've taken a million Atabrine, those dirty yellow pills, to  
fortify our systems agin' the fever an' the chills.  
We've seen a million Ack-Ack bursts around us in the sky, fear  
gripped our hearts and chilled our blood when flak began to fly.  
"Put on those lovin' flak suits" we hear our pilot yell, 'cause  
this ain't a bloomin' picnic, it's another hitch in Hell

But when TAPS has sounded, and we leave our earthly cares, We'll  
stage our best parade of all, upon the golden stairs.  
Angels will be there to meet us an' harps will softly play,  
We'll draw a million dollars an', spend it in a day.  
Old Gabriel will be there to meet us an' St Peter will proudly yell  
"Front Seats, you guys from Italy, you've done hitch in Hell."

By Lt. Harry R. Hathaway  
348th Bomb Squadron, 99th Bomb Group  
(Harry was killed in action February 22, 1945)



Once an Eagle. B-17F 1943

Hi Bernie - a note to thank you and the other men from the 99th BGHS for attending my dad's memorial. It was a pleasure meeting you. I had heard so much about you all but had not had the pleasure of meeting each of you. You'll never know how much you brightened my brother's day and mine, when the five of you showed up you made us laugh to see the very bright side of things. Thanks for being such a loyal friend to my dad. I've just seen the movie "Saving Private Ryan". You are all heroes in my book. You are the bravest men alive. Thanks again.

Via con Dios,

*Patty Coon*

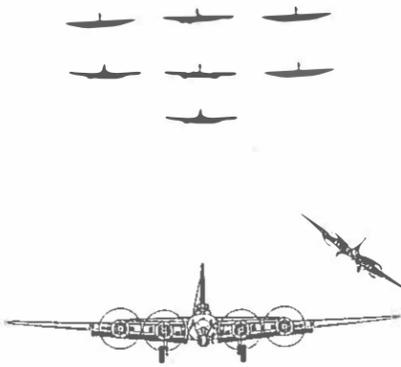
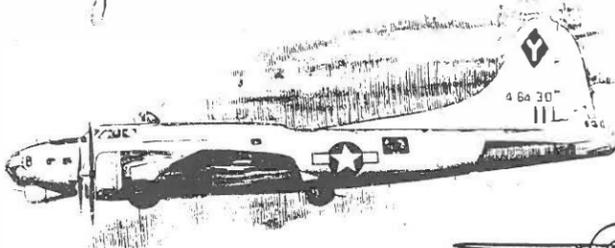
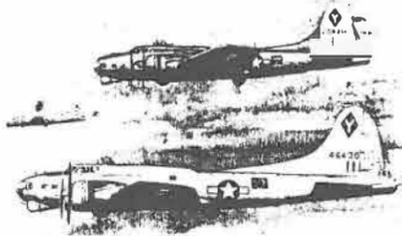
Bill Shaw Sent In This Thoughtful, Good Advice Poem By An Unknown Author

MISS ME BUT LET ME GO

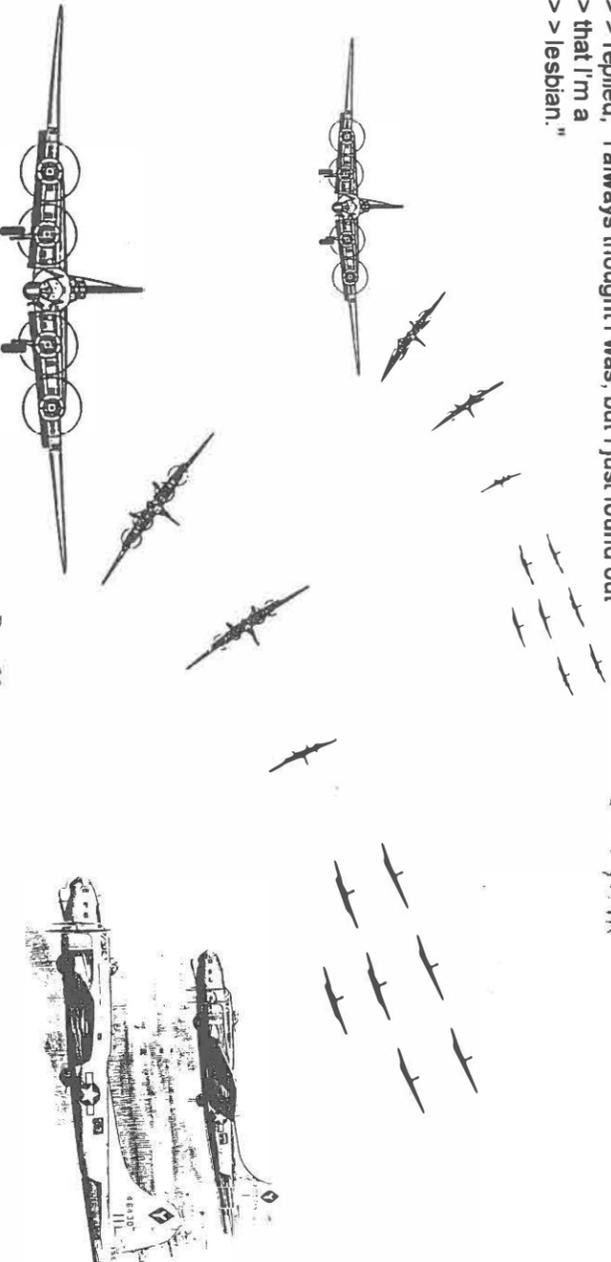
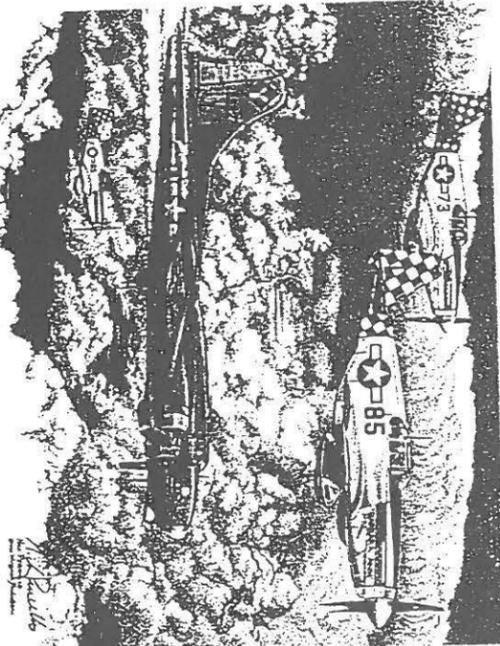
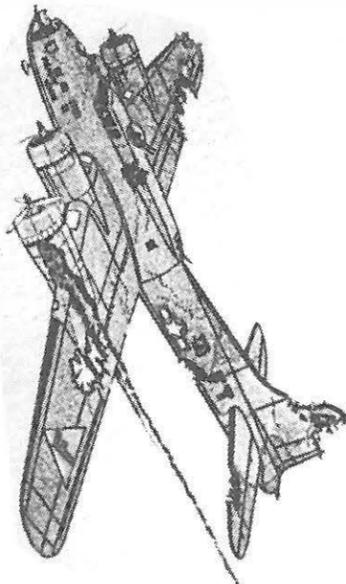
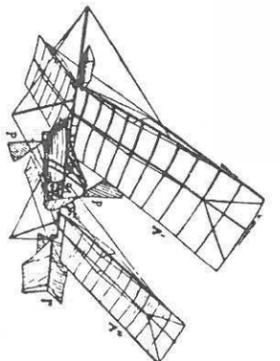
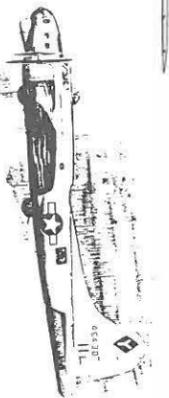
When I come to the end of the road, and the sun has set me free  
 I want no rites in a gloom-filled room.  
 Why cry for a soul set free?  
 Miss me a little but not for long, and not with your head bowed low.  
 Remember the love that we once shared.  
 Miss me but let me go, for this is a Journey that we all must take, and each must go alone.  
 It's all a part of a Master's plan, a step into the unknown.  
 When you are lonely and sick of heart go to the friends we know, and bury your sorrow in doing good deeds.  
 Miss me but let me go.



347th



- >> An old cowboy, dressed in a cowboy shirt, hat, jeans, spurs and chaps
- >> went
- >> to a bar, sat down, and ordered a drink. As he was sipping his
- >> whiskey, a young lady sat down next to him.
- >>
- >> After she ordered her drink she turned to the cowboy and asked
- >> him, "Are you a real cowboy?" To which he replied, "Well, I've spent
- >> my
- >> whole life on the ranch herding cows, breaking horses, and mending
- >> fences... so I reckon I am."
- >>
- >> After a short while, he asked her what she was. She replied, "I've
- >> never
- >> been on a ranch so I'm not a cowboy, but I am a lesbian. I spend my
- >> whole
- >> day thinking about women. As soon as I get up in the morning, I think
- >> of
- >> women. When I eat, shower, watch TV. Everything seems to make me think
- >> of
- >> women."
- >>
- >> A short while later she left and the cowboy ordered another drink. A
- >> couple
- >> sat down next to him and asked, "Are you a real cowboy?" To which he
- >> replied, "I always thought I was, but I just found out that I'm a
- >> lesbian."



99th BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

REUNION MAY 4-9, 1999

UPDATE

THANK YOU! - to all who responded to the Opinion Survey in our last Newsletter. Your committee is greatly encouraged by the enthusiastic response to our '99 reunion in Tucson and are determined to make it an exciting event.

We have been successful in upgrading the site of our reunion. We will be at the HILTON TUCSON EAST - a lovely property that meets all the needs and requirements of our group. We are confident you will be pleased. REUNION '99, with your participation, has the potential of being memorable.

MARCH 1st DEADLINE! WHY March 1st?

- #1 Our reunion is scheduled at the tail end of Tucson's "high season". Accommodations are still in high demand. Making your hotel reservations early is imperative and assures you the VERY friendly rate.
- #2 The same applies to scheduled trips. Transportation is at a premium during this time period. Your early commitments will insure our having adequate transportation so that no one will be disappointed.
- #3 Davis Monthan AFB, the location of our annual luncheon and business meeting, requires for security reasons, the full names of all planning to visit the base. For us to meet their deadline and avoid having access denied to some of our members, we ask your cooperation.

"MORE RATHER THAN LESS"

As you peruse the following schedule, you may ask "Why so many options?". Your survey responses indicated a variety of interests which we are attempting to address. The logistics have been and continue to be a challenge...another reason we ask you make your choices "sooner rather than later".

SEE YOU IN TUCSON !

REGISTRATION

99th BGHS REUNION/MAY 4-9, 1999

NAME: JAMES O. GRIZZELL PHONE: (615) 599-4307

ADDRESS: 620 WATSON BRANCH DR, FRANKLIN, TN 37064

TUESDAY, MAY 4th

Registration - hotel lobby \$20.00PP x 2 = \$ 40

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5th

#1 Desert Museum/Old Tucson Combo 9am-4pm \* ✓ \$36.00PP x 2 = \$ 72

#2 Desert Museum 9am-2pm \* \$21.00PP x     = \$    

#3 Old Tucson Studios 9am-2pm \* \$25.00PP x     = \$    

THURSDAY, MAY 6th

#1 Pima Air & Space Museum/Titan Missile Combo + stop at Mission San Xavier 9am-4pm \* ✓ \$30.00PP x 2 = \$ 60

#2 Pima Air & Space Museum 9am-1pm \* \$20.00PP x     = \$    

FRIDAY, MAY 7th

DAVIS MONTHAN AFB - memorial chapel service, lunch/business meeting & tour of base and aircraft mothball graveyard ✓ \$25.00PP x 2 = \$ 50

SATURDAY, MAY 8th

#1 Sabino Canyon/DeGrazia Gallery Combo Lunch at Hidden Valley Inn 9am-3pm ✓ \$28.00PP x 2 = \$ 56

#2 Sabino Canyon 9:30am - 12:30pm \* \$18.00PP x     = \$    

EVENING BANQUET - hotel ballroom

Entertainment/ Choice of 2 Entrees ✓ \$30.00PP x 2 = \$ 60

a. # 1 Roast NY Sirloin with Sauce Marchand de vin

b. # 1 Broiled Halibut a la Parisienne

GRAND TOTAL \$ 338<sup>00</sup>

PLEASE NOTE: ALL bus tours require a minimum of 35 per bus/ reservations on a 1st come basis.

\* Indicates lunch on your own.

Make checks payable to: 99th BGHS REUNION FUND

Mail reservations & checks to: 99th BGHS REUNION  
c/o Len Smith  
14171 Desert Glen Drive  
Sun City West, Arizona 85375



MORE OPTIONS TO CONSIDER...

Additional tours -

#1 Nogales/Tubac 9am-4pm Wednesday, May 5th or Thursday, May 6th \* \$16.00PP x \_\_\_ # \$

#2 Mt. Lemmon 9am-3pm Saturday, May 8th \* \$13.00PP x \_\_\_ = \$

Please be aware that the above tours conflict with other tours you may or may not be interested in taking.

For those who enjoy group dining in addition to visiting in our lively hospitality area, we offer the following ...

TUESDAY, MAY 4th

Cattle Drive Bar B Que Buffet/hotel patio 6:30pm / Minimum of 50 \$22.50PP x \_\_\_ = \$

WEDNESDAY, MAY 5th

Cinco de Mayo Special Buffet/ hotel Mariachi entertainment Minimum of 50 \$25.00PP x \_\_\_ = \$

REGISTRATION PACKETS will include additional information regarding close-by off-site dining from fast-food establishments to fine dining ... Charles Restaurant in the Parke-Davis mansion, Pinnacle Peak Steak House in Trail Dust Town, Hilton's elaborate Friday night seafood buffet.

Our hotel offers complimentary transportation within a 3 mile radius with advance requests.

COMMITTEE NOTE: Arrangements for Tanque Verde Ranch are pending our ability to negotiate reasonable and acceptable pricing.

REMEMBER :

You need to identify yourselves as members of the 99th BGHS when making hotel reservations to assure getting the group rate...

Most major airlines service Tucson International Airport... American Airlines is the major carrier.

- American Airlines 800-433-7300
- United Airlines 800-241-6522
- Delta Airlines 800-221-1212
- Southwest 800-435-9792

Arizona Stagecoach provides service to and from the airport. \$18.00 Roundtrip/ (520)889-1000... they are located in the airport.



Welcomes

**99TH BOMB GROUP**

May 4 - 9, 1999

Your Special Group Rate is \$69.00 (Single or Double Occupancy) - Room Only

\$79.00 (Single or Double) - Breakfast Buffet Included

Deadline For Group Reservations is March 15, 1999

To insure availability and obtain the group rate, your reservations must be received by the above date.

Call 1-800-648-7177 or return this application prior to the reservation deadline.

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Arrival Date \_\_\_\_\_ Departure Date \_\_\_\_\_

Hilton requires either a one-night deposit or credit card to guarantee your reservation. Individual cancellations may be made without penalty up to 48 hours prior to arrival.

Are you a Hilton Honors Member?  Yes  No Card Number \_\_\_\_\_

Guarantee with:  AMEX  VISA  MC  Diners  Discover

Card Number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_

Please indicate your room preference or any special needs. Please note that room types are based on availability.

King  2 Queens  Smoking  Non-Smoking Number of People \_\_\_\_\_

Special Requests: \_\_\_\_\_

# 198  
Lowest  
# 278  
# 556



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11:40 AM  
5:35 NASH 8:00

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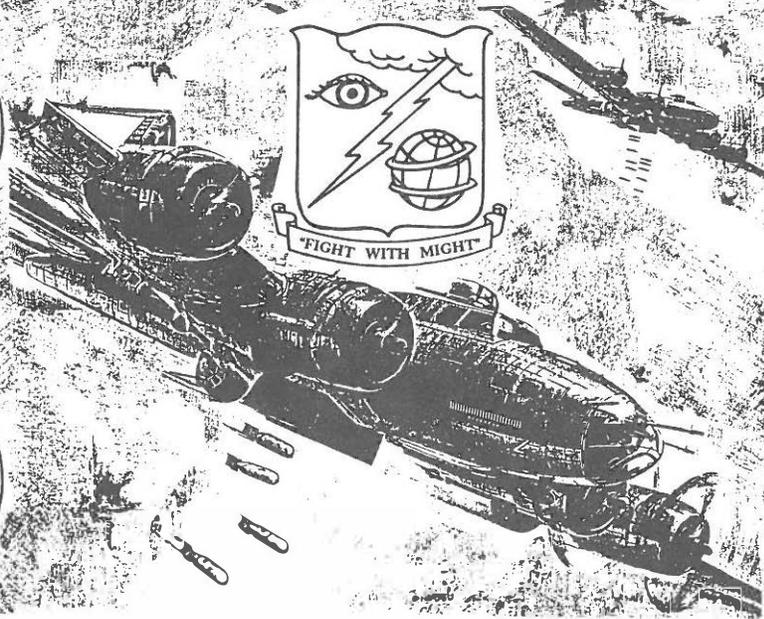
99th Bomb Group Historical Society  
Walter H. Butler, Treasurer  
8608 Bellehaven Place, N.E.  
Albuquerque, NM 87112

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James O. Grizzelli  
165 Bell Lane  
Paris, TX 38242

MXD

# 99TH BOMB GROUP



This will be the last issue you receive unless your address block shows 1999 or beyond. Dues to extend your membership are due by January 1st, 1999. Send your dues to our treasurer Walter Butler. His address is printed in the upper left corner on this page. Send your dues to Walter within the next two months so he can make only one deposit trip to the bank before 1999.



Information to be included in your quarterly newsletters issued February, May, August & November must be sent to Bernie Barr or Walter Butler no later than the first of January, April, July or October.

Member information and stories are needed regularly to keep the newsletter interesting. Everyone has a story or information that our members would enjoy reading. Keep it coming! If at all possible send type written information, the darker the better.

Walter's address is in the top left corner above. Bernie Barr's address is: 7408 Vista Del Arroyo, Albuquerque, NM 87109