

## PHOTOS WE HAVE COME ACROSS

This month's photos are a couple more that I have tracked down in the past few months. The first photo on the left shows a couple of 416<sup>th</sup> Squadron planes with their full late war group markings including the double fuselage stripes and the stripes on the rudder and elevators.



Mis-Behavin appears to have been a 416<sup>th</sup> BS plane judging by the cowlings and elevator stripes. The serial number of the plane has been lost, but not her art. She was cut off the plane before it was scrapped after the war and has been preserved at the CAF Museum in Midland, TX along with 33 other examples.

The above photo is from the Grady N. Allen collection. S/Sgt Allen was a radio repairman, not assigned to a specific ground crew. His son does not know why his dad had a photo of this particular plane, and had no further info about it. Does anyone else know anything about this plane?



### 99<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group Historical Society

Jerry Buckingham - Treasurer  
20 Flathead Drive  
Cherokee Village, AR 72529

*Summer - 2011*

Addressee  
Address  
City, State Zip

## 2011 Reunion Information

The 99<sup>th</sup> BGHS was not able to get a volunteer to help coordinate and host a reunion in 2011, but we still have the opportunity to get together at a reunion hosted by a fellow 15<sup>th</sup> AF group. The 98<sup>th</sup> BG is hosting a reunion to honor the Ploesti Raiders, the men who flew missions to Ploesti during WWII. Although primarily aimed at honoring the men who actually flew missions to Ploesti, the 98<sup>th</sup> has graciously extended the invitation to any member of the 99<sup>th</sup> BG who would also like to attend. Preliminary information was given in the Spring Newsletter and a number of our vet members responded saying they were planning on attending. Details of the reunion are as follows:

Dates: Monday October 17 to Friday October 21, 2011

Day 1 – 6:00 PM Cash Bar opens  
7:00 PM Welcome Dinner

Day 2 – 9:30 AM City Tour & Lunch

Day 3 – 9:30 AM Barksdale AFB Tour & Lunch

Day 4 – 9:30 AM Gathering in the Hotel Ballroom for reminiscing with the Veterans who flew to Ploesti

Day 5 – 9:00 AM Ladies Event  
6:00 PM Depart for Reunion Banquet at Barksdale

Location: Shreveport, Louisiana  
Holiday Inn Downtown  
102 Lake Street  
Shreveport, LA 71101  
(318) 222-7717

The registration form is attached, and completed forms with the fees should be returned to:

Susanne Mioduszewski  
Secretary/Treasurer 98<sup>th</sup> BGVA  
1137 Joyce Lane  
Ann Arbor, MI 48103

The \$100 registration fee includes the Monday dinner and Friday banquet. All other events are optional at additional cost as noted on the registration form. I hope the 99<sup>th</sup> will be well represented at the reunion in Shreveport!!

### Other News

#### ***99<sup>th</sup> BG Website Back Online!***

After being down for an extended period of time, our website is finally back up, running well and we are starting to get some updates done. We are hoping to expand the site to include more photos and information about the group, including making the missions information from the database that Dick Drain compiled available online. Thanks to Matt Berger, our new friend in Cincinnati who was instrumental in getting the website back online and in getting the updates going, and to Mike Upchurch who led us to Matt.

#### ***99<sup>th</sup> BG Member Last Flights***

The following former members of the 99<sup>th</sup> BG are known to have passed away in the last year or so:

Albert Henke (416)	Frank Hays (416)	Joseph Kellerman (416)	Bruce Borman (416)
John Brinser (347)	Max Davis (348)	Norris Domangue (347)	Marvin Olson (416)
Samuel Lyle (416)	Leonard Smith (346)	Morton Magee (348)	Lewellyn Boatwright (Group)
Defee Nash (348)	Allen Schroeder (346/7)	Joseph Kellerman (416)	Ellsworth Swingen (416)
John Kotowski (416)	Russell Jacobs (Group)	Bernard Wrenn (348)	Russell Levanway (348)
Clarence Cooper (348)			

### *From Hal Millett (348)*

On Monday 2/7/11, a new friend, Bill, retired IBM software engineer and private pilot, and I drove over to Lakeland, FL and took a ride on the Collings B-17G 909. Dianne, my wife, gave me the ride for my 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. I never would have paid the price of \$425.00 for the 30 minute ride as much as I wanted to ride in the old "Fort", one more time. That was my first flight in a B-17 since 1949 when I was at Wright-Patterson AFB & Muroc (Edwards AFB) in Bomber Flight Test Division.

My friend Bill and I were selected and allowed to fly immediately behind the pilots in the Engineers position. There were a total of ten paid passengers besides the three man crew. I originally wrote this to the other four remaining members of my B-17G crew; Al Mariconda (Pilot), Ken Becker (Navigator), Alex Jastrab (Toggalier) and Herman Marks (Engineer) of my B-17 crew from WWII. These are my memories and reflections of that flight.

Al, as I straddled the access to the nose between the two pilots and looked to my left toward engines one and two I could see you as a young 20 year old in our old flying gear, oxygen mask and all, concentrating on the operation of our aircraft and all of those other B-17s from the 348<sup>th</sup> Bomb Squadron and 99th Bomb Group around us. I just have a faint memory of Moffitt in the right seat as I peered toward engines 3 and 4. Those Wright Cyclones powered up for takeoff were even more noisy than I remembered them. The whine of the electric motors raising the landing gear was very familiar and I wondered if those were the original fractional horsepower motors that I safety wired on the assembly line at Delco Products in my home town of Dayton, Ohio before I was called up for the Army Air Corp Cadet Program in 1944. The safety wiring on the brush holders of the electric motor for the hydraulic pump sure looked original.

The general comment or question from the other passengers (all younger than me) was: "How did the ten of you fit and fight in this small space"? My answer boiled down to, "much training, discipline, and teamwork"!

The restoration of the Collings 909 was remarkable. She had all guns except the radio operators 50 caliber, in their proper position. The ball turret was operational but the flight was too short for them to allow me to get down into it, although I did ask! It just amazes me that that they keep the 909 flying after sixty-nine (69) years. I thought of all the repair parts necessary for normal aircraft maintenance of 25, 50, 100 hour inspections and then replacing those parts that wore out that were the exception and how some of the parts actually had to be fabricated as needed. The controls and instrumentation are original but a few modern instruments have replaced or been added to the old ones. All of the original radio equipment is still in place but of course not used, having been outdated and replaced by modern equipment. After all, how many modern radios use tubes today? The pilot and co-pilots radio equipment in the top of the cockpit is original and remains only for effect. As I looked at the instruments and controls surrounding me I was amazed at the memories that unfolded from so many years ago. Some good and some bad.

After takeoff, Bill and I went to the nose where I could just visualize a very young Ken sitting on the left at his table with maps spread out and his navigation tools on top of them to hold them open and Alex in his seat looking down at the snow covered Alps, continuously observant for other aircraft and preparing for his moment of glory, dropping the payload of bombs on today's target. I explained a few of the features of the Norden bomb sight, Bombardiers/Toggalier Aircraft autopilot, chin turret and cheek guns to Bill.

We then proceeded back up to the cockpit to allow other passengers to visit the nose and I thought of Herman up in the top turret as I passed by on my way to the catwalk in the bomb bay. Nine-zero-nine had four 500 pounders in the left inside rack and a plywood base for cargo similar to what we had for the cargo we took overseas (K-rations & blankets & our personal baggage etc.) I explained to my new friend Bill the emergency method required to get the landing gear down if the electric motors were damaged by flak and not functioning.

Al, again I thought of you as we crawled through the bomb bay and your inability to get to the cockpit in 2002 at Oshkosh. Bill stated that the crew must have been midgets and I corrected him and explained that I was the smallest and the rest of the crew was of a normal size group and also how we were "bulked up" by the massive amount of clothing we had to wear to enable us to stand the temperatures above 25,000 feet over the Alps. (minus 50 to 60 degrees was not unusual).

In the radio room I envisioned Strunk sitting at the radio desk watching out his little window and then scanning up through his gunners hatch. Believe it or not, the semaphore key was still in place and I thought about sending Morse code with those three pairs of gloves on. (My secondary position was as radioman.) I remember the rear gunner crew huddling in the radio room as we got into our box formation before crossing the Adriatic into enemy territory and again after leaving enemy territory coming down from a mission munching or rather sucking on a frozen k-ration Hershey bar so full of wax that you couldn't bite it so you just sucked on it and those who smoked took drags on their cigarettes and then a breath through their oxygen mask, huddled in that radio room, the warmest place in the entire aircraft. I had my camera with me on this flight and took many pictures, several of the ball turret (my combat position) from its stowed position.

A bunch of the passengers gathered around me asking questions about the ball turret, it's operation and it's gunner and other general B-17 questions as I was the only WWII vet available (they really made me feel like a relic) since most had a grandfather, father or uncle who were in WWII and flew B-17s these other passengers were in their fifties or younger. I can't speak for you guys but when a group like that surrounds me asking questions it's really only then that I realize my age. "old" that is!

All and all, it was really worthwhile and crew, I really did think of each of you and wish you were with me for this, my last B-17 mission. After hearing about all the fathers and uncles of the other passengers; some prisoners of war, others killed or wounded, we should each thank our lucky stars that the five of us are still around!

The flight sharpened my memory of the B-17 and the hours I flew in her. After the war when you guys returned to the States I was flying all over Europe as Engineer showing our WWII allies that we had not deserted them. When I came back to the States I flew her and other planes as Engineer at WPAFB, then on to Newark, NJ to Weather Equipment Flight Test Facilities (WEFTY) (the original hurricane hunters) and permanent TDY for a year with M.I.T. as Engineer/Crew Chief on the original Radar Research missions out in the North Atlantic in an old reliable B-17 followed by Permanent TDY with General Electric Rain and Snow-making Project from a (you said it) B-17, for a year and then in 1949 Bomber Flight Test at Wright-Patterson and Muroc Dry Lake (Edwards AFB) with B-17s, B-29s, B-50s and B-25s. In all, according to my Form 5s and 5As I have over 450 hours flight time in Fortress'. Yes, I finally got most of my military records and pictures. My first wife died in October and my daughter Jill from my first wife got most of my possessions back for me. I hadn't seen my stuff for 42 years. My Form 5's are missing for 1947 and 1948 while I was assigned to Weather Equipment Flight Test Facilities and TDY to MIT & GE.

Hal  
Harold E. Millett, SMSgt USAF, (Retired)

### ***Does Anyone Remember Ernest Wrentmore?***

The son of former 99<sup>th</sup> member Ernest Wrentmore has contacted the historical society looking for any information we might have regarding his dad's service. His father served in WWI as the youngest member of the U.S. Army in the infantry, having run away from home when he was 12 and enlisting by lying about his name and age! Despite seeing combat and being wounded, he survived and became a successful businessman and when WWII broke out, he was recalled to active duty.

The only information we have on him was that he was listed on the group roster as an officer in the 416<sup>th</sup> BS when the group received their first Presidential Unit Citation. Mr. Wrentmore stayed in the Air Force after the war and retired as a Lt. Colonel. He also wrote a book about his WWI experience called "In Spite of Hell", but the book only mentions in passing that he also served in WWII.

If anyone happens to recall Ernest Wrentmore, we and his son would appreciate hearing back from you with any information you can share.