



# th AF NEWS

VOLUME 96, NUMBER 4

- Voice of "The Mighty Eighth" -

NOVEMBER 1996

## *"Almost Home"*





# th AF NEWS

Magazine of

## The Eighth Air Force Historical Society

Managing Editor – James W. Hill

Please address questions concerning membership, address changes, distribution, and missing copies to the Membership Records Manager listed below. (\*)

This magazine is dedicated to Lt. Col. John H. Woolnough, founder of the Eighth Air Force Historical Society and editor of the Eighth Air Force News for 16 years.

The Eighth Air Force News (8AFN) is published four times a year (February, May, August, November). Please submit material to the editor at least 30 days before the desired issue month. We cannot acknowledge receipt of material or be responsible for its return. All unused material will be deposited in the 8th AF Archives. For advertising rates, call editor (See below). The 8AFHS does not endorse or guarantee the products of its advertisers.

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Class of 2000: William E. Shields, Richard M. Scott, James W. Hill

**Front Cover:** 390th Bomb Group B-17s from Parham return home from a mission over Framlingham Castle. The work, entitled "Almost Home," was painted and presented to Col. Joseph A. Moller by Mrs. Sue Brannen of San Antonio. Her husband, Russell F. Brannen, completed a tour with the 390th as a pilot and then served as Group Asst. Operations Officer. Walter C. Byrne provided the transparency for reproduction, and Henry H. Plume made the arrangements.

## Mission Briefing

There's something for everybody in this issue. This being the Christmas issue, we've included some traditional Christmas stories of the 8th and its personnel. There's a well-earned tribute to crew chiefs, and an explanation of the Armorers' role. Some new and old photos are shown, and a beautiful new painting by Keith Hill entitled "Molesworth in Sight." Responses to the "Youngest to Complete Combat Tour" are recorded. Primrose and Joe recall their "GI Jive" days. Make sure you check out the "Stocking Stuffers" on page 26, and of course the PX pages for larger Christmas gifts. Get your orders in early to beat the rush! Have a Happy Holiday Season everyone. (JWH)

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## President's Message

By Hubert "Chili" Childress

At the outset, allow me to thank those who had confidence that I could, and would, fairly and honestly represent the best interests of the collective membership of our revered Eighth Air Force Historical Society.

It is an honor and a privilege to again serve on the Board, particularly as president, and I assure you that I shall do my level best to reaffirm the comradeship and trust that are the honored tenets of veterans' organizations such as ours.

At the Board of Directors' meeting held in Orlando on Sunday, Oct. 6, 1996, it was agreed that the outside accounting firm that recently completed an IRS compliance examination of our accounting procedures will perform a modified audit of the Society's financial affairs covering the past two fiscal years, i.e., from August 31, 1994 through August 31, 1996.

Your Board also agreed, in connection with the mailing of annual dues notices in the next few weeks, to include a procedure whereby all Members, including Life Members, can make individual contributions to the Heritage Museum, which contributions will be matched by the Society up to a total Society commitment of \$25,000. It is hoped that this effort will quickly provide \$50,000 or more, to be applied to some specific, identifiable project extant in the Museum's plan.

In a recent conversation with Jim Hill, editor of our newsletter, we agreed that there is a degree of misunderstanding of some members of just how our Society is designed to operate under its By-Laws. In light of this, Jim will initiate a series of articles, prepared by himself or other members, as instructional guides. We hope that will clear up some of the misunderstandings that have existed.

This is your Society, so please convey your concerns to me or other Directors.

## We now have 20,950 members!

Let's go to work now through our Groups, Units, and Chapters to get out 2,000 people (10%) for our 1997 Annual Reunion. The Buncher Beacon at Milwaukee is in a good central location, so don't miss this "Maximum Effort" 8th Air Force Assembly.

## Membership Column

By Arthur E. Swanson

**Dues.** It's that time again! Please, when sending in your payment, be sure to include the Dues Notice Card. We need to refer to it when crediting your account. Carolyn and I are the only ones handling the thousands of payments. Please make our job easier by enclosing the card. Remember, too, that dues must be paid promptly to assure that you receive current issues of the 8AF News.

**Address Corrections.** The August issue was stamped with an "Address Correction Requested" to the Post Office. Result—we've spent over \$300 (\$.50 for each piece) to receive address changes, which means 600 of you failed to send your new address, the forwarding order expired, or you were temporarily away. Sixty of the "Forwarding Orders Expired" were Life Members whose names will be removed from the roster because we don't know where they are.

**Address Changes.** You've cooperated well in sending in address changes. But please—indicate if this is a permanent move or if it is seasonal. We receive address changes to Arizona and Florida, for example, but can't tell if this is a permanent move or not. **Chapter and Unit Rosters.** We've decided to set up a regular schedule for providing this information.

**Chapters:** Complete Chapter rosters will be provided as of February 28 and as of August 31 each year. These rosters are sent to the Chapter presidents on our records as of those dates. If you are handling membership for your chapter, be sure to request a copy from your president. This information is critical for you in maintaining your membership records.

**Units:** A complete Unit Roster as of August 31 each year will be forwarded to the Unit Contact whom we have listed. There will be no interim rosters as we do not have the staff or time to handle them.

**Reminder to Life Members.** Your spouse can also become a Life Member for \$25,000 less than the following applicable fees, based on YOUR present age: Under 60—\$150.00, 61-70—\$100.00, 71-80—\$75.00, 81 and over—\$50.00. Your spouse will use your membership number, and you will be shown as Life Partners. Example: 00000-0 LP John and Jane Doe.

All you need to do is forward the appropriate check and the name of your spouse to 8AFHS, 65 Beddington Lane, Strasburg, PA 17579, and we will process the application. New Life Partner cards will be sent to each of you.

In her special membership drive, Carolyn succeeded in adding almost 1,600 new members, and this was only 10% of the 16,000 who received the mailing and responded. If your unit signs up a new member, it keeps \$5.00 of the membership fee, so make some money for your unit by enrolling a new member. Even pay the first year's dues yourself, but be sure to do it through your unit.

Again, our thanks to all the membership chairpersons. Unless one is handling this job, he can't know how much detail is involved and the time your chairperson gives in order to keep your records in order. Say "Thanks" to him or her for a job well done and that you appreciate the willingness to accept this responsibility.

## From the Information Manager

By Ed Kueppers

The response to the airplane and/or crew pictures went well. Over 30 were received and were placed on display at the reunion in Orlando, along with several scrapbooks that I have personally acquired over the years.

What surprised me was the additional information members sent in; i.e., photos taken by citizens in the countries where 8th aircraft crashed, etc.

The 1-800 line continues to be quite active, with 15 to 20 hours per week spent on the phone.

25-30 letters per week are received and the success rate in furnishing answers is 80%.

Our supply of the "Mighty Eighth" poster is down under 5000. 30,000 were printed several years ago, and we have gotten a lot of mileage out of them, both in membership and education.

The 1997 Reunion will be held in Bloomington, MN. Mark Copeland of the Minnesota Chapter, who has helped with the "Mighty Eighth Theater," and I will go all out to make it a successful reunion.

## 1996 8AFHS Election Results

At the General Membership Meeting on October 5, 1996 the following 8AFHS Directors were elected: Hubert M. Childress, 7th PRG from Palm Desert, CA; N. Kenneth Nail, 457BG from Tupelo, MS; and Richard C. Baynes, 466BG from Irvine, CA.

At the Board of Directors Meeting on Sunday morning the following Society officers were elected and installed: President Hubert M. Childress, Vice President William E. "Tex" Shields, Secretary Harold C. Rutka, Treasurer Charles E. Dye.

## Confrontation at D + 50 Years



Taken at VE Day 50th Year Commemoration at Utah Beach June 6, 1994.

# Walter Cronkite Visits 8AF Heritage Museum

Veteran newsman Walter Cronkite, who covered the exploits of the Eighth Air Force during WWII, visited The Mighty Eighth Air Force Heritage Museum on July 20, 1996 and was very impressed by what he saw.

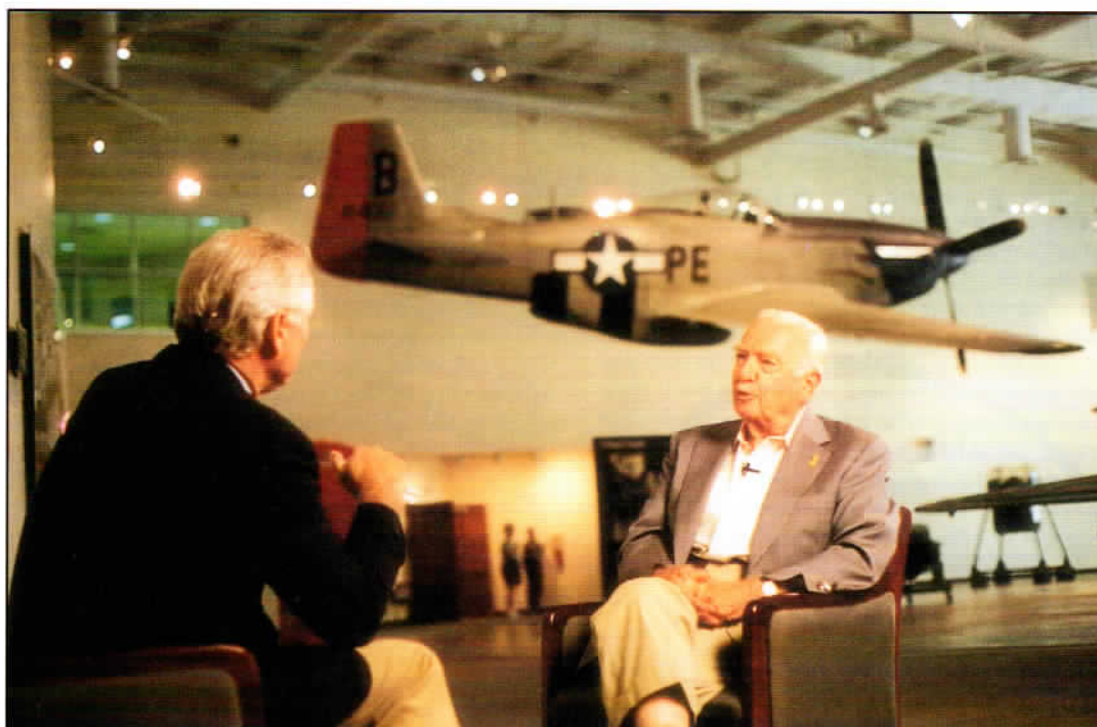
"This museum is an important history lesson," said Cronkite, "and everyone should partake. It's a history lesson that is taught in the best possible fashion with a high interest intake."

Cronkite and his wife Betsey were in Savannah to take part in the 1996 Olympic Games yachting events. They toured the museum for almost two hours, looking at exhibits, talking with other museum visitors, posing for photographs, and signing autographs.

Cronkite said the Heritage Museum stirred in him memories "...of the heroism and the devotion of the men who flew our aircraft during WWII and particularly the Eighth Air Force with the B-24s and B-17s. I had the privilege of flying with the B-17s during the war as a correspondent." Cronkite flew several times with the Eighth, including two missions with the 303rd Bomb Group, once on Feb. 26, 1943 to Wilhelmshaven, Germany and another on D-Day to Caen, France.

Cronkite especially enjoyed going through the Heritage Museum's Mission Experience Theater which recreates what it was like to fly a WWII bombing mission over Germany. "This Museum has brought back so many memories, particularly the reality of the mission experience (theater) raid. I'll tell you I almost wanted to bail out of my aircraft. It was exceedingly well done!"

He emphasized that the real importance of the Museum is in all the displays that take you to the pre-war days of Nazi aggression right on through to the defeat of the Third Reich and the Eighth Air Force's obvious major contribution to gaining the victory."



# A Bronze Star for Joe

By Ken Cassens, 379BG

(The August issue contained a picture and story about the 379th B-17 named "Screwball Express." This article is written as a tribute to its Crew Chief, and to honor all of the maintenance crews who contributed to the success of "The Mighty Eighth.")

The flight crew of Lt. Howard E. Towers was the beneficiary of two highly prized introductions on the morning of 26 March 1944. Three days earlier B-17G serial number 42-97128 was delivered to the 526th Bomb Squadron, 379th Bomb Group at Kimbolton, England, and was assigned code letter M. The first of our two introductions came about when we learned that this Flying Fortress was assigned to our crew. Several of the crew—avid softball and baseball fans—predicted that this beautiful bomber could throw the enemy a screwball pitch that would be difficult to hit. That's why our crew chose the name "Screwball Express" for this Flying Fortress.

Then we met S/Sgt Starbuck, our crew maintenance chief, more commonly called ground crew chief. He said, "Call me Joe. I'm from Pennsylvania." Joe was a super kind of guy. We marveled at the unending attention given so unselfishly by him and every member of his ground crew to this aircraft's every need, whether as part of its regular maintenance or because of its battle damage. Many times it flew three, four, even five missions on consecutive days, as was the case with a large number of B-17s of the Triangle K. From 26 March through 20 June 1944 this B-17G flew 43 combat missions. Twenty-nine of those missions were flown by our crew. Frequently it returned from missions undamaged by enemy fighters or flak. However, on 65% of our 29 missions in Screwball Express it received battle damage: light damage occurred on 38% of our missions, and medium or heavy damage on almost 28% of our missions. Regardless of the amount of maintenance and/or repair this aircraft required, Joe and his top notch ground crew always put it back together in like-new condition and in record time.

Like many other flight crews at Kimbolton, we graciously thanked and hastily said goodbye to each other when our 33-mission tour was over. Then it was back to the good old USA. Stateside service, marriage, children, a home, various jobs, and a few vacations were foremost in our pursuit of enough time to enjoy them all to the fullest. Most of us unintentionally lost track of our fellow crew members and other friends in the 379th Bomb Group. However, our flight crew was lucky. We eventually located our entire crew, even though it was 1988 before we learned the whereabouts of all ten of us. Eight of us were still living at that time, but a third member of our crew has since passed away. But what about Joe, our crew chief?

We began a search that went on and off and on again for seven years. Letters were sent to state and federal agencies and military organizations. At the 379th reunion in 1992 our copilot learned that Joe's first name was Leslie. We had been looking for the wrong Starbuck for four years. Letters were again sent to the usual agencies. We also asked for help by posting requests on bulletin boards of the Prodigy computer network.

Responses started to come in. One was from a Prodigy member with addresses of persons named Leslie Starbuck in telephone directories for a host of cities. One response came from a Prodigy member in Texas who asked a friend in Alabama to search 379th records at Maxwell AFB. A telephone response came from a lady in New York. A letter arrived from a retired member of the Missouri Highway Patrol. Information was found in a Starbuck Family History that dated from 1635. Many pieces of data were



S/Sgt Leslie C. "Joe" Starbuck, crew maintenance chief (left of first row) and eight members of his team

received and provided proof that "Joe" was really Leslie C. Starbuck from Pennsylvania, a crew maintenance chief in the 526th Squadron.

We also learned from General Order 417, Hq. 1st Bombardment Division, dated 12 October 1944, that "The BRONZE STAR MEDAL was awarded to S/Sgt Leslie C. Starbuck of Pennsylvania, for meritorious service as crew maintenance chief of heavy bombardment aircraft in connection with military operations against the enemy in the European Theater of Operations from 26 March 1944 to 3 August 1944." It was a greatly deserved honor and an especially proud moment for Joe and members of his ground crew.

Starbuck was not the only ground crew chief recognized for outstanding service by the 379th BG. The 526th Squadron History for October 1944 includes the following paragraph: "In the maintenance field several records were established by Engineering men. S/Sgt Brockman, who earlier in the year won the Bronze Star for the record of no abortions in fifty missions with "Blues in the Night," has established another record of 41 missions without an abortion on his new plane. S/Sgt Starbuck's ship "Screwball Express" with 61 missions, M/Sgt Berger's "Flak Rabbit" with 57 missions, M/Sgt Houdek's ship with 44 missions, M/Sgt Miller's ship "Wishbone" with 38 missions, M/Sgt Lebow's "Lightning" with 30 missions, and Sgt Farr's ship "Hellcat Agnes" with 27 missions, all without abortions, gave the Engineering Section an enviable record."

On the date of General Order 417, "Screwball Express" had flown 83 missions without an abort. Mission reports show that it flew 107 missions before its first abort which was on the 260th mission of the 379th on 3 January 1945. Its second and only other abort was three months later, on the Group's 315th mission. What a ground crew!!! However, those very capable, dedicated fellows did not have the opportunity to undo the damage this gallant bomber

received on 5 April 1945 when it was brought down by several bursts of flak in two of its engines on the mission to Ingolstadt, Germany. It crashed and burned near Bellheim, on its 118th mission.

This past August the search for Joe revealed that he was born in 1911, became an automobile mechanic, entered the service at age 31, became an airplane mechanic in 1942 and a B-17 mechanic in 1943. He arrived at Kimbolton two days before the 379th's official arrival date, and eleven days before the Group's first combat mission to the U-boat pens at St. Nazaire on 29 May 1943. In July 1945 he was transferred to Casablanca, French Morocco, Africa, where the 379th Group was deactivated. S/Sgt Starbuck returned to the States the following month and received an Honorable Discharge in September 1945.

We learned with great sorrow that he passed away in 1977 at age 66. Our flight crew will not have the privilege of thanking him again for his great talents and the tremendously important role he and his ground crew played in taking such dedicated care of "Screwball Express."

Those of us who were privileged to be members of flight crews have received ongoing praise for our bombing missions in the ETO. It is unfortunate and very unfair that members of the ground crews—the fellows who kept our aircraft flying—received so little thanks for such a huge accomplishment. They deserve much more praise than they have received. ■

## "V-Disc" Copies Available

(Based on an article by Richard Harrington, Washington Post Staff Writer)  
(Submitted by Dennis Wrynn, Fairfax Station, VA)

On the 50th anniversary of WWII, E. P. DiGiannantonio produced a three-cassette and two-CD package drawn from historic V-Discs recorded during WWII. The "V" stood for victory, and the discs were great morale boosters for the armed services. Many represented the only music recorded during the 1942-44 recording ban instituted by the American Federation of Musicians. The V-discs were meant to provide homesick soldiers with "music from home," mostly of the big band variety. The shellac (later vinylite) 78-rpm discs were boxed 20 at a time and sent overseas on a monthly basis, along with hand-cranked, spring-wound gramophone players and plenty of needles.

Because of the AFM strike, over 640 musicians volunteered their services to make the V-Discs. They received no royalties and over 8 million discs were made from 1943-49 as noncommercial prod-

ucts, stamped as "Property of the United States Government."

The Army Service Forces-Special Services Division got the ball rolling in 1943, and soon after, DiGiannantonio was put in charge of the Navy's V-Disc program. It was discontinued in 1949 and officials ordered the destruction of all V-Discs at home and abroad. DiGiannantonio managed to hold on to a thousand of the Navy V-Discs originally sent to them for technical assessment, and with the recent blessings of the union, the military and assorted government and licensing agencies, has now begun a re-issue program. Much of the profit will go to the AFM retirement fund.

The V-Disc collection is representative of the popular artists of WWII: Glenn Miller, Kay Kayser, Ella Fitzgerald, Connie Boswell, Artie Shaw, Guy Lombardo, Fats Waller, Jo Stafford, Louis

Armstrong, Hoagy Carmichael, Tommy and Jimmy Dorsey (able to record together for the Army though they were on competing labels), and a very young Frank Sinatra. The repertoire is heavy on dance hits and even more so on songs that expressed romantic sentiments that undoubtedly appealed to soldiers far from home: "Always," "Goodnight Sweetheart," "I'll Be Seeing You," "More than You Know," etc. V-Discs got even more exposure when they were played over the new Armed Forces Radio Service, which DiGiannantonio headed in 1948.

DiGiannantonio is now president of the V-Disc Corp., and has made for sale a number of cassettes and CDs with about 16 tunes on each. He can also custom produce songs on cassettes for \$12.95 plus \$3.00 postage and handling. Orders may be called in on 703-437-1600 or ordered by mail at POB 2367, Reston, VA 22090.





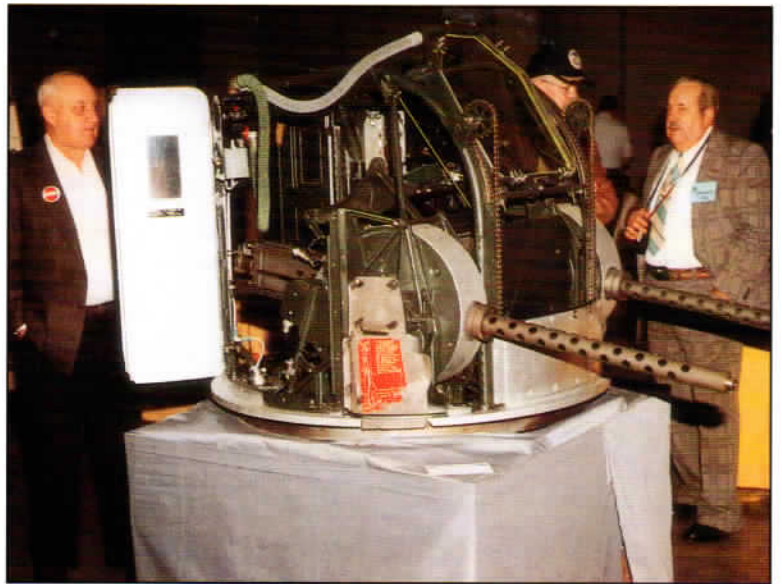
TL. Honor Guard at Maddingly Cemetery, May 1996

TR. Over 100 Wreaths Placed on Armed Forces Day 1996

CL. Editor Jim Hill presents A-2 jacket to Paul Dyzak, Librarian in charge of 8AFHS Archives at Penn State

BL. Enclosure under construction at American Air Museum in Britain. Completion is scheduled for June 1997





TL. Carolyn Swanson and friend don costumes at 1996 PA Reunion  
 TR. B-24 nose turret display at Des Moines Reunion (from Archives)  
 CR. Gordon and Connie Richards holding SAFHS wreath on 1996 Memorial Day  
 BR. Ceremony at Twinwoods Farm Airfield where tree was planted recently in memory of Glenn Miller. His last flight was from Twinwoods.



# Chapter News

by Gene Person

Several chapters are still struggling to get airborne. Please give us the addresses of your new president and officers so we can keep communicating properly. All chapters are experiencing attrition caused by the aging process. This should be offset by increasing your Associate Membership. They are younger and have more energy and can be a big help. Keep up the good work on the Wing concept. The Wings keep members active and the drive to meetings is shorter. Having Wing meetings at noon enables members to return home before dark. Move your Wing meetings around and you will pick up new members in all areas. Let your officers know that you will help out in chapter activities.

**Colorado Chapter** — The regional meeting was again held in Colorado Springs from Sept 23 through Sept 27, 1996 at the Holiday Inn Garden of the Gods. The group enjoyed the Air Force Academy, gambling casinos, and the Pikes Peak Cog Railway. Bob Van Buskirk is the Chapter president.

**Connecticut Chapter.** A general meeting was held in August. The speaker was John Kirla, who was an ace with the 357th Fighter Group. In his P-51 he downed 11.5 enemy planes. The winter luncheon is scheduled for December 7. Call Bob Valliere for information (203-488-1622).

**Illinois Chapter** — The Chapter held its Oct 16 meeting at the Maine Township Hall. The featured speaker was Steve Lodge of the Royal Air Force and a member of the Chapter. Don Ulrey was honored by the presentation of nine overdue awards at Military O'Hare on Sept 13. A Holiday Dinner is planned for Saturday, December 7 at Des Plaines.

**Iowa Chapter** — The Iowa Chapter held its annual convention at the Longbranch in Cedar Rapids on Aug 24-25. President Rudy and Millie Nelson were co-hosts with 120 in attendance. Harry Crosby, author of "A Wing and A Prayer," was the guest speaker. Chuck Taylor was elected the new chapter president. The new editor is Mark Niffenegger.

**Kentucky Chapter** — The chapter was involved in the Air Show at Hap's Airport in Indiana over Labor Day. Their quarterly meeting was held at the Springs Motel at Lexington. The program was presented by Imelda Fox on the 50th anniversary of the D-day invasion of Europe.

**Massachusetts Chapter** — The former editor of "Vapor Trails," Bob Doherty, was guest speaker at the 11th Annual Rendezvous Dinner, which was held at Hanscom Air Force Base on Oct 17. After being shot down on his 15th mission, he helped co-edit "The Barbed Wire News."

**New York Western Chapter** — Everyone enjoyed the boat ride on the "Miss Buffalo" on the Niagara River recently. They also gave President Larry Paul the "highball" sign in his patriotic shirt of stars and stripes as they boarded the boat. The B-17 "Aluminum Overcast" was on display at the nearby aviation area recently.

**North Carolina Chapter** — James Phillips has taken over as president of the North Carolina Chapter. He will try and make 1996-97 very successful and beneficial for all. They plan on a bus trip to the Air and Space Museum, Holocaust Museum, and Quantico Marine Base. Gladys Stenstrom is the news editor.

**Oregon Chapter** — Speaker at the August meeting was Ted Harris, who was shot down twice while in the 8th Air Force. He made it

back each time and went on to finish 35 missions. Just before the end of the war he was flying Mosquitoes for the RAF. Del Reed is the editor of "Flight Lines."

**Pennsylvania Chapter.** Our Chapter now has 560 paid-up members. Dues are \$10.00 a year, and of this \$1.00 per member is donated to the 8th AF Historical Society's Memorial Museum Foundation to finance 8th AF exhibits throughout the nation. Plans have been finalized for the next Annual Chapter Reunion to be held in conjunction with the Mid-Atlantic Air Museum Air Show in Reading, PA on June 6-8, 1997. All are welcome! If interested contact Arthur or Carolyn Swanson at 717-687-6257.

**Tennessee Chapter** — The Tennessee Chapter held its annual reunion in Memphis on August 2-4, 1996. John Bacon, the new president, had a very interesting article on short men in the "Tennessee Flyover." Walt Brown is vice-president and editor of the newsletter.

**Texas Central Chapter** — President Harry Witt has reinstated the Central Texas Chapter after having a bout with sickness. On August 5, 1996 he sent out a letter to his board members requesting their support.

**Texas North Chapter** — The chapter held a noon meeting at Dovies Restaurant in Addison on August 7, 1996. The speaker was Jaques Grelly, a native of France. He told some interesting stories about D-Day and the days thereafter. A total of 56 members, wives, and guests were in attendance.

## Organization Changes and Corrections

- 7th Recon Journal, Editor Raymond J. Korczyk, 1095 Roy Ave., San Jose, CA 95215
- 44th BG Veterans Assn (replaces 44th Heritage Memorial Group) President/Editor Roy W. Owen, 6304 Meadowridge Dr, Santa Rosa, CA 95409, Newsletter "8-Ball Tails"
- 91BG Bassingbourn Station Contact Peter Roberts, 33 Springfield Rd, Cambridge CB41AD, England (011.01223.356314).
- 339FG Unit Contact Jay F. Marts, 7935J Edgebrook Circle, Charleston, SC 29418
- 385BG Station Contact, Historian, Great Ashfield, Ian McLachlan, 10 All Saints Green, Worlingham, Beccles, Suffok, NR34 7RR, England.
- 389BG Editor/Contact Gene Hartley, 3950 Via Real #233, Carpinteria, CA 93013
- 390BG "Square J Bulletin" 390th Memorial Museum, 6000 E. Valencia Rd, Tucson, AZ 85706
- 390th MMF Bulletin Editor Stephen Presswood, 3637 Trinity Mills #114, Dallas, TX 75387 (214-307-0444)
- 446BG Unit Contact Marvin H. Speidel, 708 Dianne Ct, Rahway, NJ 07865
- 447BG President Murray Codman, 4341 Redwood, Marina Del Rey, CA 90291
- 459BG(15th AF) PATHFINDER Newsletter Editor John Devney #002, 90 Kimbark Rd, Rochester, NY 14610
- 460BG(15th AF) BLACK PANTHER Newsletter Editor Duane Bohnstedt, 24303 Contra Costa Lane, Punta Gorda, FL 33955
- 446BG Editor Jim Thomas, 103 Jack's Mountain Rd, Fairfield, PA 17320
- AF Escape & Evasion Soc. Editor Larry Grauerholz, POB 2501, Wichita Falls, TX 76307
- P-51 Mustang Pilots Assn President Pete Hardiman, Contact Secy Robert W. Fox, 89 Liberty St, Middletown, MA 01949
- 8AFHS Washington State Chapter President/Editor J. Warren Roundhill, 6542 46th Ave NE, Seattle, WA 98115
- Colorado Chapter Unit Contact Mike Quering; George Lewis, Cdr Salida Sqdn.
- Yankee Air Force, POB 590, Belleville, MI 48112-0590



**Customized Tail Position.** Regarding Bob Lopiano's arrangement described in 96-3 p. 9, how did he plan to fire his twin .50s if the Luftwaffe decided to attack from the 6 o'clock position? A gunner could not fire the guns with his legs stretched out. Frank J. Weiler, Yelm, WA. (OK you Tail Gunners—Sound Off!)

**May 8, 1944 Berlin Mission.** Who was the Command Pilot on this mission, and is there a mission report available? John Wilson, 305/303BG, 23 Auburn Rd, Wellsley, MA 02181-1103.

**Vintage Flying Museum.** There are two new air museums in the Fort Worth area. The Vintage Flying Museum has a B-17G Pathfinder aircraft, probably the only one in existence. John Wilson, 305/303BG.

**Bombardier's Reunion.** "Bombardiers, Inc." is now called "Bombs Away." The official mailing address is Bombs Away, Box 18201, Tucson, AZ 85710-8201 (520-298-7689). Their next reunion will be held April 30—May 3, 1997 in Tucson.

**Know Francis Wiemerslage?** Anyone remembering this ball turret gunner of the 385BG/549BS, please contact his brother, Roland Wiemerslage, 8456 Center Ave., River Grove, IL 60171 (708-456-6356).

**B-24 Design.** The B-24 was designed to fly on two engines not on the same side. George Risko, Birmingham, MI.

**Ploesti Book Reissues.** The Military Book Club has just reissued "Target Ploesti: View from a Bombsight." It will be offered to its members as the November "Battle Classics" selection, at \$17.95. Those interested should call 800-321-7323. Leroy W. Newby, Venice, FL.

**Underaged+ Veterans.** The Veterans of Underage Military Service (VUMS) would appreciate hearing of all veterans who served for any length of time under the age of 17. The organization now represents over 40 states, with ages at enlistment ranging from 12 to 16.

Please contact Billie B. Boyd, Box 263, Rte 4, Rutledge, TN 37861-9134 (423-828-4886).

**353FG at Raydon.** Author of group history wants to hear from anyone who served in the 353FG at Goxhill, Metfield, and Raydon. Need stories, information, and photos. Larry Davis, Squadron/Signal Publications, 4713 Cleveland Ave NW, Canton, OH 44709 (330-493-4122).

**FOTE/Dutch Air-War Group Combine.** For the first time in 23 years, FOTE (Friends of the Eighth) is establishing links with a European counterpart called the Dutch Air-War Group.

**Air War Documentaries.** Flashback Television, Ltd. is producing TV programs for the British equivalent of our History or Discovery Channel. Two are completed which relate to the wartime activities of the RAF and the USAAF during the period 1942-45: War, the Inside Story, Mission Berlin; and War, the Inside Story, Warbirds of Duxford. They will be shown in the U.S. on the History Channel, Wings, on the following schedule (EST): 12/15/96 9 pm Mission Berlin, 10 pm Warbirds; 12/20/96 8 pm Mission Berlin; 12/28/96 7 pm Warbirds.

**James C. Parrish Query.** Please list me as the person to be contacted regarding this gunner on "Joker's Wild." John Chopelas, 508 S. Gray St., Killeen, TX 76541-7132 (817-526-4917).

**Missing Diary.** I'm trying to locate my diary of combat missions we flew during WWII. We were with the 448th BG out of Seething, England. We were shot down on Jan. 16, 1945 south of Dresden and became POWs. If anyone knows where the diary is, please let me know. George Suchorsky, 1633 Raritan Rd, Clark, NJ 07066.

**Seeking Contact.** With B-17 crewmen (other than 100BG) who flew a mission over north Germany on April 7, 1945 and P-51 pilots of the 83rd FS who escorted the bombers that day. Also, two P-51 pilots who late that afternoon flew alongside a 100th B-17 returning to UK with the tail partially missing. Contact Henry Cervantes, 13900 Panay Way, Marina del Rey, CA 90292 (310-823-4438).

**Ploesti Display.** The Mid America Museum is building several displays of the Ploesti bombing area, including maps, group insignia, and names of participants. A Halpro display is also planned. We invite all participating groups to be part of this undertaking. Contact William Feder, 101 Rainbow Drive, # 2475, Livingston, TX 77351.

**An Impressive Record.** Wallace Boring finished his 25 mission tour with the 306th BG as a Navigator on B-17s. He then went on TDY with the 355th Fighter Group to work out a navigation system for fighter aircraft. While he was with the 355th, the group flew 22 operational missions and never missed an interception with the bomber groups, and the estimated time of arrival (ETA) was never more than two minutes off. (From the Tennessee Flyover).

**Herbert from Oregon.** In May 1943 a four-engine bomber crashed close to the Belgian

border. One aviator who was wounded in the leg was picked up and sheltered by farmers. He was Herbert, a pilot from Oregon. I was Paul, and I helped him make his way with false papers made out in the name of Joseph Bertrand. I understand he finally made his way out through Spain. Is he still alive? He would now be 75 and I am 81. Wonderful children of America, we weep while remembering. Paul Boulanger, Avenue Anciens Combattants 103-33, B-1140, Brussels, Belgium (Tel. 02.7055118)

**Lost Engine Anyone?** In early 1944 before D-Day a complete engine with prop dropped into a churchyard in Rouen. It was in excellent shape and stayed there for months on display facing the main road to the town center. Would like to hear from the crew. John C. Chatel, 3 Rue C. Duguesclin, F 14450 Grandcamp-Maisy, France (Tel. 31 51 87 71).

**Crash in Amazon.** The remains of 10 U.S. airmen who died when their bomber crashed in the Amazon jungle 51 years ago were turned over to U.S. officials recently by a Brazilian military delegation. The plane crashed during a flight from Trinidad to Belem, a WWII air-link route. U.S. forensic teams, sifting through the site, found 10,000 bone fragments along with the crews dogtags, a camera, a .45 cal. pistol, parachute buckles, and a silver dollar. The crew members' names were to be released after the bodies were identified and relatives notified. (USA Today, 7/25/95)

**POWs, Evaders.** The Joint Services Survival, Evasion, Resistance, and Escape (SERE) Agency Library is seeking to contact former POWs or vets with wartime evasion experience. We are a POW research library supporting the survival, resistance, and escape training community, and we want to include your memoirs and memorabilia in the National Archives. Write: HQ JSSA/TN, 9018 Black Road, Ste. 101, Fort Belvoir, VA 22060. E-mail: jssatn@ix.netcom.com; tel (703) 806-6417; fax: (703) 806-5262.

**Airmen and Women.** I am a mature student (30) at Anglia Univ. in Cambridge and am researching for my dissertation on "American Airmen and East Anglian Women (1942-1950): Expectations and Reality." This research is not wholly dedicated to the affairs of men and women, but their thoughts of each other and how they were given the ideas of each other (cinema, newspapers, radio, etc.). How realistic was the media portrayal? Ms. Kim Martin, 3A St. Pauls Drive, Chatteris, Cambridgeshire, PE16 3DG, England.

**Roke Manor Rest Home.** Request detailed information about this rest home operated by the ARC about two miles NW of Romsey in southern England. Charles R. Bastien, 2174 Tower Ct, Woodbury, MN 55125-1670 (612-738-6018).

**55FG, Reunion.** Scheduled May 21-24, 1997 in Albuquerque. Contact Robert Littlefields, POB 3644, Carmel, CA 939212 (408-624-5293).



- UL. 65FW pilot's briefing (from Archives)
- UR. 65FW Air/Sea Rescue plotters (from Archives)
- CL. 466BG ARC girl serves ground crews (from Archives)
- CR. Firefighters, group unknown (from Archives)
- B. 457 BG B-17 put together by ground crews. New name, "Haf & Haf"



T. Unknown American Airman with captors in St. Ingbert, Germany in 1944. If you can identify him, please contact this editor (JWH)  
 CL. John and Mary Woolnough on June 22, 1979 (from Archives)  
 CR. 431st BS "Li'l Audrey" and crew (from Archives)  
 BL. Edward R. Murrow (center) visits 386BG on 23 June 1944 (from Archives)

# As I See It



*by Editor Jim Hill*

In the photo above, my wife Marjorie (Blueberry) gets a much needed gouge in the neck from yours truly at a recent reunion.

The 1996 Annual 8AFHS Reunion will be reported fully in the February issue. Anyone who has good photos taken there is requested to submit them before Jan 1 for consideration. See page 3 for some early details.

It was very apparent at the Orlando Reunion that a number of attendees were not familiar with how the business of the Society has to be conducted according to the By-Laws. Accordingly, we are going to institute a quarterly column that we hope will inform the membership on these matters. Those who founded the Society and have supported it with their donations and service through the years according to the rules should not have their good times spoiled by being vilified and embarrassed by those who believe in mob rule. The "Mighty Eighth" learned many years ago that when one group breaks discipline, pulls out of formation, and tries to operate on its own, everybody suffers.

When you receive your 1997 dues notices soon, make sure you pay attention to the special appeal for funds for the Heritage Museum in Savannah. The Board voted unanimously to send the appeal and will match your donations up to a total of \$25,000. The funds will be used to help finance a designated project in the Heritage Museum's development plan.

The 8AFHS Archives at Penn State will be moving into expanded quarters when the new \$17 million "Paterno" Wing of the Penn State Library is completed in several years. Sparked by Penn State's Joe Paterno's fund raising drive, much money has been donated for the new wing and the Pennsylvania State Legislature allocated the balance of the money for construction last month. We are making plans for enhancing our collection and presentation space in the new facility.

## 8th Air Force Bomb Groups England - World War II

398 BG "Flak News"

BOMB GROUP	STATION	AIRCRAFT	MISSIONS	LOSSES
34th Bomb Group	Mendelsham	B-17	170 missions	34
44th Bomb Group	Shipdham	B-24	343 missions	153
91st Bomb Group	Bassingbourn	B-17	340 missions	197
92nd Bomb Group	Podington	B-17	308 missions	154
93rd Bomb Group	Hardwick	B-24	396 missions	100
94th Bomb Group	Bury St. Edmonds	B-17	324 missions	153
95th Bomb Group	Horham	B-17	320 missions	157
96th Bomb Group	Snetterton Heath	B-17	321 missions	189
100th Bomb Group	Thorpe Abbots	B-17	306 missions	177
303rd Bomb Group	Molesworth	B-17	364 missions	165
305th Bomb Group	Chelveston	B-17	337 missions	154
306th Bomb Group	Thurleigh	B-17	342 missions	171
351st Bomb Group	Polebrook	B-17	311 missions	124
379th Bomb Group	Kimbolton	B-17	330 missions	141
381st Bomb Group	Ridgewell	B-17	296 missions	131
384th Bomb Group	Grafton Underwood	B-17	314 missions	159
385th Bomb Group	Great Ashfield	B-17	296 missions	129
388th Bomb Group	Knettishall	B-17	306 missions	142
389th Bomb Group	Hethel	B-24	321 missions	116
390th Bomb Group	Framlingham	B-17	300 missions	144
392nd Bomb Group	Wendling	B-24	285 missions	127
398th Bomb Group	Nuthampstead	B-17	195 missions	58
401st Bomb Group	Deenthorpe	B-17	256 missions	95
445th Bomb Group	Tibenham	B-24	282 missions	95
446th Bomb Group	Bungay	B-24	273 missions	58
447th Bomb Group	Rattlesden	B-17	257 missions	97
448th Bomb Group	Seething	B-24	262 missions	101
452nd Bomb Group	Deopham Green	B-17	250 missions	110
453rd Bomb Group	Old Buckenham	B-24	259 missions	58
457th Bomb Group	Glatton	B-17	237 missions	83
458th Bomb Group	Horsham St. Faith	B-24	240 missions	47
466th Bomb Group	Attlebridge	B-24	232 missions	47
467th Bomb Group	Rackheath	B-24	212 missions	29
486th Bomb Group	Sudbury	B-17	188 missions	33
487th Bomb Group	Lavenham	B-17	185 missions	48
489th Bomb Group	Halesworth	B-24	106 missions	29
490th Bomb Group	Eye	B-17	158 missions	40
491st Bomb Group	Metfield	B-24	187 missions	47
492nd Bomb Group	North Pickenham	B-24	64 missions	12
493rd Bomb Group	Debach	B-17	158 missions	41

### Additional Losses Incurred By 8th In Other Than "Combat"

The above tabulation represents a record of planes lost only on "combat" missions, primarily on the continent. Not taken into account are such losses as crashes in England when returning from a raid, losses in training, ferry flights, etc.

When "all causes" are counted, the 8th Air Force aircraft losses look like this -

**B-17's - 4,754**  
**B-24's - 2,112**  
**P-47's - 1,043**  
**P-38's - 451**  
**P-51's - 2,201**

In addition to these better known aircraft, the 8th also incurred losses in a variety of light and medium bombers plus aircraft engaged in weather observation, troop carrier, radio countermeasure, training operations, etc.

A total of 12,731 B-17 Flying Fortresses were built. About 50 still exist with only a dozen or so still flying.

Including the Aluminum Overcast, owned by the EAA of Oshkosh Wisconsin, carrying the colors of the 398th Bomb Group

# Youngest To Complete Combat Tour

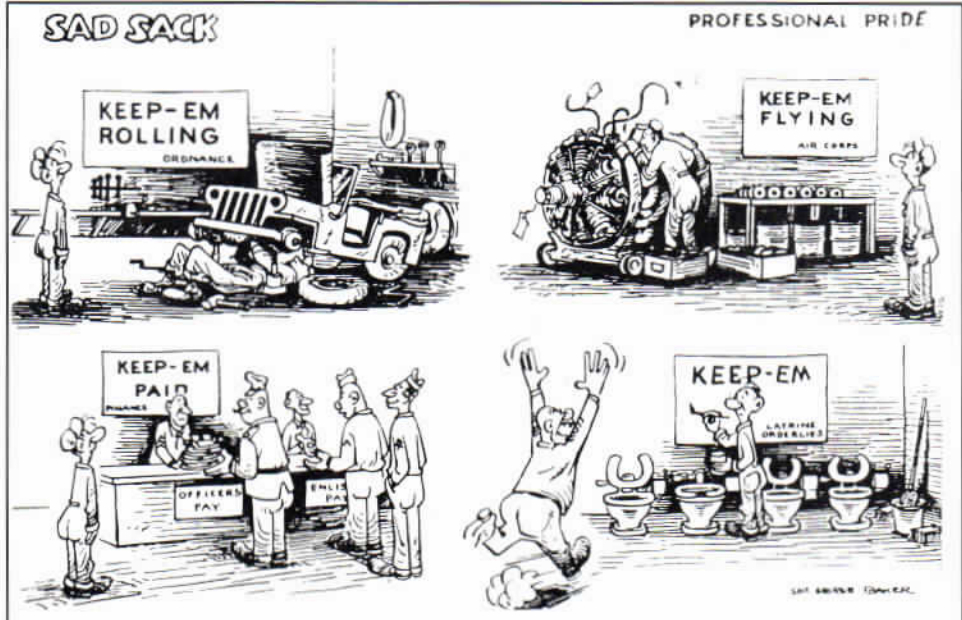
Our members' response to this query has been terrific. It is difficult, however, to decide who is the winner, since the number of missions required for a complete tour differed, first being 25, then 30, then 35, and special considerations given to some circumstances. So, ruling out several entries that don't qualify, such as less than 25 missions, 25 missions claimed in 1945, age over 20, etc., I've decided to list them chronologically, according to when the first mission was flown. This should enable you to compare them most easily with your own combat tour.

Several men (marked by asterisk \*) finished at an early age because they evidently falsified their age on entering the service. I don't consider this a disqualification, but it does introduce an extra factor into the calculations.

Name	Birth Date	Flew First Mission	No. Missions	Age at Last Mission
William W. Fleming	10/15/24 *	11/17/42	25	19y 01m 05d
George M. Meshko	03/20/25 *	12/06/42	25	18y 11m 17d
Albert T. Beavers	02/24/24	04/17/43	25	19y 07m 14d
Gerald G. McClure	01/10/24	05/13/43	25	19y 07m 28d
Robert L. Gelsleichter	03/01/25 *	05/15/43	25	18y 08m 03d
John E. Corcoran	03/10/24	07/04/43	25	19y 09m 12d
Edward J. Mulcahy	03/06/24	08/12/43	25	19y 11m 27d
George V. Broderick	02/22/27 *	12/11/43	26	17y 01m 07d
Henry A. Luck	08/19/24	??/??/??	27	19y 08m 21d
John Marchesi (March)	09/28/24	04/19/44	25	19y 07m 23d
Melvin E. Haggai	12/10/24	04/27/44	30	19y 07m 04d
Martin Garren, Jr.	04/09/25 *	05/09/44	35	19y 05m 17d
Kenneth Clarke	02/20/25	05/11/44	31	19y 04m 26d
John Sobran	08/12/25	05/23/44	31	19y 00m 12d
William C. Rawson	03/30/25	06/12/44	30	19y 09m 15d
Gerald Hickman	05/23/25	06/20/44	35	19y 05m 08d
James W. Hill	03/30/25	06/24/44	30	19y 06m 26d
George E. Ahern	05/10/25	07/06/44	35	19y 06m 09d
David G. Moore	07/11/25	07/06/44	30	19y 05m 19d
Troy A. Barton	02/13/25	07/07/44	35	19y 08m 09d
G. V. Wallace	05/20/25	07/28/44	35	19y 07m 12d
Phillip R. Dunn	06/15/25	07/29/44	35	19y 07m 02d
Jack R. Balsley	05/07/26 *	08/??/44	34	18y 10m 04d
Earl Siders	07/22/25	08/07/44	32	19y 05m 17d
William D. Turley	09/12/25	08/11/44	32	19y 04m 05d
Ralph L. Holmes	03/02/25	08/24/44	34	19y 11m 14d
George Arconte	11/03/26 *	10/??/44	35	18y 04m 09d
Douglas J. Adams	06/14/25	10/05/44	33	19y 08m 09d
Fred Holz	09/10/25	10/12/44	35	19y 06m 02d
Art Nystrom	11/06/25	10/25/44	35	19y 05m 14d
Matt M. Parker	12/07/25	11/24/44	35	19y 03m 25d
Russel R. Rolder	11/13/25	12/11/44	35	19y 05m 07d
John J. Nicastro	05/09/25	12/11/44	35	19y 10m 10d
Lannie C. Adams	07/31/25	12/12/44	35	19y 08m 09d
Milton L. Kushner	05/28/25	12/??/44	32	19y 10m 23d

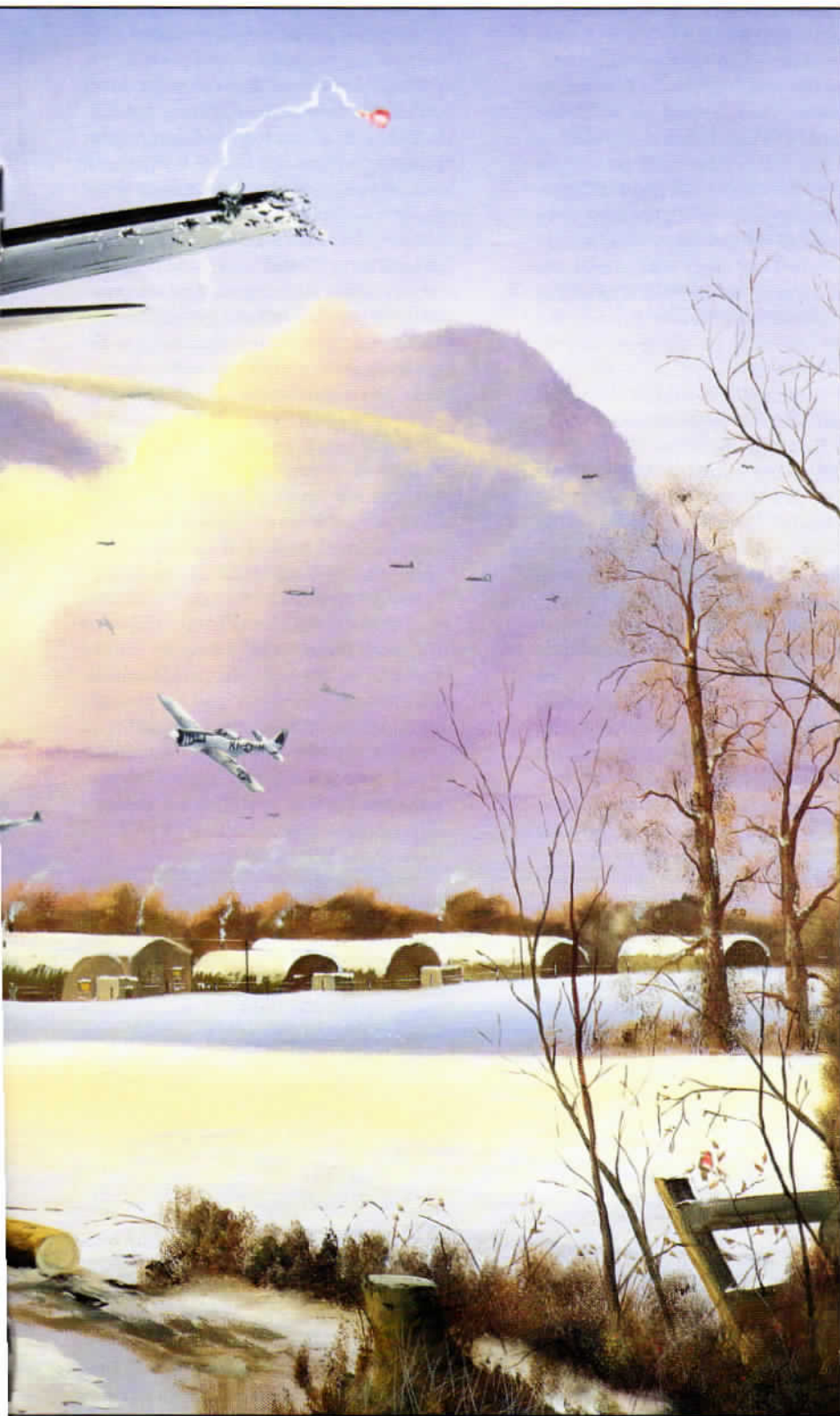
## Schedule of Past Reunions

1975	Miami Beach, FL
1976	Dayton, OH
1977	St. Louis, MO
1978	Washington, DC
1979	Phoenix, AZ
1980	Orlando, FL
1981	St. Paul, MN
1982	Cincinnati, OH
1983	Houston, TX
1984	Los Angeles, CA
1985	Wichita, KS
1986	Hollywood, FL
1987	Pittsburgh, PA
1988	Des Moines, IA
1989	Denver, CO
1990	Las Vegas, NV
1991	New Orleans, LA
1992	Louisville, KY
1993	Chicago, IL
1994	San Diego, CA
1995	St. Louis, MO
1996	Orlando, FL









## Molesworth In Sight

Our 8th Air Force Artist Keith Hill has completed another memorable painting representing one of our bomb groups. His description follows.

At the end of a crisp clear day in early 1945 a B-17 "Flying Fortress" of the 303rd Bomb Group from Molesworth returns from a mission over Nazi Germany. The mission has been long and the aircraft has received severe damage from German flak batteries. Two of the crew are wounded and a red flare has been fired to alert the medics. One engine is out and another that has been smoking begins to fade. But Molesworth is in sight and the Fortress will soon touch down on Runway 32.

In the middle distance, "Mustangs" of the 20th Fighter Group from nearby Kingscliffe will not leave the gallant lady until she is safely home.

Peeling off in the far distance are Fortresses of the 379th BG preparing to land at Kimbolton.

Below this unfolding drama lies a landscape so typical of England — snow-covered fields divided by a criss-cross of hedgerows, elm trees, and the wood cutter making his last trip of the day. No doubt his firewood will be sold to the "Yanks" at the aerodrome.

As it has done for centuries, Old Weston Church watches over the English fields as season by season and year by year they slowly change. Perhaps here, though, is a corner of an English field that will forever be America.

Please send orders for this print to Keith Hill Studios, 24 St. Peters Ave., Rushden, Northants, NN10 6XW, England, or call England 01933-50283.

A limited edition of 500 copies this painting has been printed. The reprints are 20" by 28" and are available at the cost of 50 Pounds, including Air Mail to USA. Please pay by sending your Visa or Mastercard credit card number.

## WORK OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE

by Joan O. F. Peterson  
Avon Lake, Ohio

It was early in 1944 and I was 17 years old. In Britain, everyone over the age of 16 1/2 was required to perform work of National Importance to help the war effort. I was temporarily staying in the Bedfordshire area with relatives, taking a short respite from almost four years of London bombings and endless nights in air-raid shelters, which had affected my health. The British Ministry of Labour directed me to report to a small U.S. Army facility - Melchbourne Park just north of Bedford-as the C.O. of the Armament Unit was in need of another civilian secretary in No. 2 spot. The grounds of Melchbourne held stocks of chemical weapons in case needed and three underground tanks containing mustard gas - - a fact I learned in recent years.

I pressed my one-and-only navy blue business suit and white blouse -unfortunately no stockings as the cotton wartime variety wore out fast and cost too many coupons! An Army jeep was sent to pick me up and bring me to the mansion known as Melchbourne Park, a magnificent red brick pile built in 1710, amid many acres of woods and manicured lawns. As we approached the house from the winding drive and the great house came into view, I couldn't help feeling that I was living the opening scene from a movie I had seen - David Hitchcock's "Rebecca". Fortunately I was to find Melchbourne had none of the sinister characteristics of Mandalay and no wicked housekeeper. In fact, the house and grounds were bustling with army personnel and vehicles of all descriptions.

I was ushered into one of the large paneled rooms and invited to sit down with a great tome called Army Regulations (AR's). Was I expected to study this book whilst waiting? More than an hour passed and I was beginning to feel very small and had sweaty palms and the continued wait did nothing for my lack of confidence! Eventually the Adjutant appeared - a good looking officer with a wonderfully slow southern drawl I'd only heard in movies!!! He put me at my ease, posed some questions, and had me fill out a form. Another wait, and "Yes, you may have the job subject to background check!"

I didn't know it yet, but this was to become one of the best times of my young life -- firstly to be away from war-torn London trying to cope with daily travel in-

and-out of the city from my suburban home, and secondly the knowledge that I now had a job of "utmost importance!!! There were four or five other local girls working in the "Big House" and in various Nissen huts, and we were transported daily to and from our homes in a nearby small town. As I dressed for work, the drone of B-17s could clearly be heard as the cottage was a bare three miles from the end of the Chelveston 305th BG runway. One by one we would watch them "get off" and on their way - and as has been recorded elsewhere many times, we listened for their return to base generally in late afternoon, often with pounding hearts as we could see the green and red flares descending.....

The armament unit worked on various malfunctions and improvements to the aircraft flown by the 8th -- all the problems they could handle were sent to the unit from their specialists to evaluate and hopefully fix! At the back of the house were many workshops, each with its own specialists and responsibility: bomb-sights, bomb-bay doors, turrets, ammo, welding, carpentry, photography etc. An officer was in charge of each section. The various problem areas were worked on and eventually tested out at Chelveston and Kimbolton, the nearest bases to our facility. Our office was housed in the paneled library which was at least 40 ft. long, and my desk was beside the massive ADAM fireplace. Approximately ten officers had their desks in this room.

My next-door colleague was our Office Sergeant - an older man - who took me under his wing, showed me the ropes, and gave out endless "fatherly advice!" My first morning on the job I was sent to the back lot to ask for a "left-handed screwdriver". I didn't bat an eye at this request, perhaps because I was a lefty myself and anxious to please. When I entered the shop, amid the usual wolf whistles, the entire crew howled with laughter on hearing my request! What a dumb-blonde, they must have thought -- and from London and all.

Our workday ran 8:00 - 5:00 and we were kept pretty busy typing and re-typing reports for the section heads and officers. Each morning we were required to attend a meeting presided over by the C.O. of the Unit, and the minutes were duly recorded. Of course, most of the jargon went right over our heads, and some of the accents were a problem until we became familiarized. After all these years I can clearly remember most of the 40-50 GIs in the unit and listened to tales about the families they left behind - a few of them never did cope with the homesick-

ness. They were very kind to us and quite often left fruit or candy on our desks, and now and again we would receive a package from a family member in the States, with stockings and maybe a sweater. We girls were invited to eat lunch in the Officer's Mess each day, and we found it difficult to eat the large portions, especially the meat, as our weekly ration had for years been about the size of a saucer. It was wonderful to have ice cream - it was the best we had ever tasted.

In that the work of the unit was concerned with aircraft malfunctions and improvements there were many visitors to and from London HQ and various area airfields, and our C.O. was constantly on the go, meeting with other specialists. In fact, there was a steady stream of visiting officers, pooling their expertise in various areas.

On the back lot were several aircraft hulls used for practice and one in particular was my favorite - a B-17 - called Fitch's bandwagon. I often wondered how she came to be disabled and no-one seemed to know about her origins.

In my curiosity to find out I contacted Ray Bowden of the USAAF Nose Art Research Project. He was quite excited and said he did have photographs of the ship and crew members, and the information that a pharmaceutical company in Des Moines (F.W. Fitch Co.) had 'sponsored' the crew. Fitch Co., is no longer in existence but Ray is still trying to locate any Fitch family members to appraise them of the "rest of the story."

After the invasion the Armament Unit designed and developed parachute supply drops, and personnel from the Chelveston 305th worked closely together getting it all to work. The chutes were brightly colored made of heavyweight nylon. As some inevitably became damaged, we girls were given a red and white one and in no time we had turned them into articles of clothing. To show our appreciation, a set of red pajamas was made up for the Boss!!

Wednesdays were special - Red Cross Donut Day - we were allowed half-an-hour to relax and partake of those delicious hot donuts and chat with our first-known American girls.

One day we were given short notice to "tidy ourselves and the office" in readiness for an important personage from London HQ. The important-looking high-ranking officer who blustered through with camera crew was none other than Col. Carl Spaatz. Those of us in the office were "posed" in various attitudes of work - bent over our papers, and 'yours truly' with old-fashioned telephone to ear. A GI standing on a tall ladder panned the room and it was most exciting, although we never did hear about

or see the result. Maybe it's in some dusty drawer at the Pentagon?

Once again - it was the Worst of Times - it was the Best of Times as someone once said, and I wouldn't have missed the experience for all the tea in China. My colleague and I had boyfriends at Chelveston 305th - "Hi Steve -Hi Bob" -- remember those rickety old bicycles? If they aren't preserved in some museum over there, they should be.

It was a sad day when the unit began the winding down process and I trundled home to London, and back to shortages and continued rationing until the early 1950s. I can tell you London never looked less inviting. I kept my interest in the military working post-war for the Soldiers, Sailors and Airmen's Help Society.

## ADDENDUM

I trust I have written about the general flavor of the life and work of two young ladies surrounded by fifty or so GIs!!! When it was all over, I handed round my autograph book and a Texan Captain wrote "To a chaste Susanna in a wilderness of Yanks"!!! I had to look up the work "chaste"!

The work was of a technical nature, but having previously worked three years for six British structural engineers, I soon learned the jargon. I still recall one word

which puzzled me - I'd not heard it before - it was "Nomenclature" - There are some words in the English language which have faded out in the Old Country but flourished in the New - and after 30 odd years in the USA, I still come across examples - -- perhaps I should include English Muffins!!!

Regarding social life, there were dances held in the ballroom at Melchbourne, but we attended only one or two - feeling it best to keep work/social life separate - much to the disappointment of some of the guys, but they had plenty of partners, as nearby British WAAFs and WRENS would be invited. Our special friends were Steve Dimmock and Bob Quarles, who were Interrogation personnel throughout the time we knew them. They were stationed at Chelveston in the 305BG. Of course, they couldn't get away until perhaps 9 pm and would ride those rickety old bicycles - we could hear them laughing long before they arrived! The folks I lived with made a great fuss of "the boys" as they called them, and I am sure the latter appreciated a bit of home-life - I know for a fact they kept up a long correspondence after the war. We were also friendly with Bruce Davis and his English wife, Joy, who also worked at Melchbourne. Bruce was and still is a Chiropractor in Santa Barbara. When Joy left her job and sailed for the States I took over her duties working for the Officer in

charge of the Motor Pool--it wasn't quite such an exciting place to work but by then they were winding down and one-by-one we were leaving. Whilst there, my boss taught me to drive--a jeep--lots of fun until one day, whizzing through the woods, somehow we left the narrow road and ended up almost upside down in the undergrowth! So that was the end of that!

After the war Melchbourne was returned to the titled owners, the Hon. Lawson-Johnson family, and restored to its former glory. I recall seeing a wedding photo in one of the glossy society magazines, bride and groom poised under the front portico. However, in recent years I suppose there were problems keeping up such a huge estate, so it has been converted into condominiums. They've added an outdoor pool, which joins the tennis court which was installed in my time

One more thing - my pay with the US Army was approximately five pounds per week - roughly \$20 at that time - the going rate in the UK at that time was about \$12 per week so I was definitely in the Big Time! Actually, there wasn't too much to spend money on in those days - tight clothing rationing, and the local cinema our main entertainment. Unfortunately - after the war - the Soldiers Sailors and Airmen's Help Society was not impressed with my "fancy pay" as they called it and I was back on the bottom rung of the ladder again.

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## HOW I LEARNED TO PRAY AT 20,000 FEET

by Forrest S. Clark, Kissimmee, Florida

During WWII it was said there were no atheists in foxholes. There were also no atheists in the air. God was present in many battles and saved lives through prayer.

The following is a true story that is only one of many instances of this divine truth. Even though God does not want war, the human beings in war are God's creatures.

I was in a bomber, shot up by enemy planes in WWII, heading for death in the North Sea. We had done everything we could to remain flying long enough to reach our base. However, despite all we continued to fall closer and closer to the frigid waters. We prepared to bail out in one last desperate move to save our lives and those of the rest of the crew.

At the very moment we got the signal to jump, I knelt in the waist section of the plane on the spent cartridges and prayed. I prayed for the first time in my life, a sincere and humble prayer which I did not believe I could say.

After a few minutes the plane leveled off a bit and we went into a cloud bank hidden from the enemy fighters. We struggled on for hours until finally we saw the coast of England and knew we could make it. We still had to jump but this time over land not water. After the plane crash-landed and mechanics inspected it they found two unexploded shells in the engines. If they had ignited we would have been blown into a thousand pieces and never found.

This is why I believe in prayer and the power of prayer. There must have been another presence on that plane that day that got us through and made us survive.

I learned to pray that day over the North Sea and never forgot it. God surely must have been our co-pilot.

My prayer was one of many said by airmen in B-24s and B-17s during WWII. Some were answered, some not, but all were sincere and from the heart of the airmen.

Ever since, I have believed in prayer. As a sequel to this story, a fellow crewmate of mine prayed before every take-off on a mission. He had a favorite place off to one side of the plane where he prayed. I know because he told me and I saw him praying.

When I came home after the war and in all the years since, each time I pray I think of that perilous mission over the North Sea.

Flyers have this connection with the divine and with God through their experiences in the heavens. John Gillespie Magee Jr., a young pilot officer with the Royal Canadian Air Force, expressed this feeling for all when he wrote in 1941.

"And while with silent, lifting mind I've trod

The high untrespassed sanctity of space.

Put out my hand, and touched the face of God."

# Christmas at Wendling

By Birdie Schmidt Larrick

(Extracted from her reminiscences about the ARC Aeroclub at Wendling)

On the 2nd and 8th of December 1944, the 392nd celebrated their 200th mission which occurred on November 11 when the target was the synthetic oil refinery at Bottrop. On the 2nd, the 207th mission, target Bingen, according to Bob Vickers' book "The Liberators from Wendling," "...would go down in the 392nd history as one of the roughest missions ever flown in terms of aircraft and aircrew casualties. It would be the greatest attrition the group would ever suffer through the remaining missions of WWII. It was also ironic that the evening to this date, the 200th mission party celebration for all enlisted men of the 392nd was planned." Before we knew about the losses suffered in the returning mission the celebration had begun. The Aeroclub had thrown open its doors early for an afternoon tea dance. It was crowded. However, the evening formal dance was really jammed. The club was decorated with banners, greenery, and flowers. We had inverted a parachute in the snack bar by hanging it from the ceiling and draping the shroud lines with chaff. The card room was a popular eating place lighted by candles on each table. The food was free. Our kitchen staff had baked a large cake with the words "Here's To The 200th Mission" decorating it. It disappeared as soon as it was put out. The officers served the men on this occasion. Working like beavers, they dished out ice cream, opened cokes, checked coats, etc.

We helped in hostessing lady overnight guests for the enlisted men's party on the 2nd and the officers' party on the 8th. Guests were housed in one wing of the hospital. Our matron for the occasions checked reservations and showed girls their accommodations.

We also celebrated with a Victory Dinner this December for the crew of the BIRDIE SCHMIDT - ARC. They had all finished their missions in one piece despite the fact they were really shot up, with "Eyes" (John Kamacho) wounded on the first mission after christening.

The Aeroclub was thrilled to receive a citation commending our service to the 392nd from its CO, Col. Lorin L. Johnson, upon the occasion of our first anniversary on the base. It was read at the close of our anniversary program on the 23rd of December by a member of the Aeroclub Committee, Sgt. George Bremer. The anniversary program was entitled "The March of Rhyme" and was written by PFC Lou Seguin with a musical accompaniment by Sgt. Bob Jewell.

Since there were to be three consecutive days of celebration - our anniversary, the 23rd; Christmas Eve, the 24th; and Christmas, the 25th - we thought we should keep our anniversary celebration simple. Therefore it was short and aptly capped with free ice cream and cake for all. Mrs. Bone, our first cook, baked and decorated for us two huge cakes with congratulatory messages. These were borne onto the stage at the appropriate time and lighted by candles. Helen managed to return from Shipdham for the evening's program. Freddie, of course, couldn't, for she was serving the U.S. First Army on a Clubmobile in Belgium.

On Christmas Eve a candlelight sing was featured in the club. This was literally so as the club was lighted only by candles. The Base Glee Club presented a spirit-lifting program of song concluding with carols in which everyone joined in singing.

We woke up to a white Christmas day and a heavy hoar frost covered the ground. The fog that went with it caused the mission scheduled to be cancelled. A party had been planned originally for 130 orphans and refugees from Dr. Barnado's Home for Boys in Lexham and the Holm Hale Village School children as well as those of our staff. The men on the base acted as hosts. The party was under Jane Mallory's supervision and in her report she related how it happened:

"After picking up all the children in the nearby villages they were taken down to the perimeter where they all had the opportunity of seeing the inside of a Liberator. This in itself was quite a thrill for most of them as it was their first real closeup view of an aeroplane. At this point the GIs really had their hands full in keeping order among 160 very eager kids. The children were then piled back into the trucks and brought back to the theater which is right next door to the Aeroclub. Here they were greeted by the base orchestra which rendered several appropriate numbers. Then the children put on a program of their own consisting of country dances, songs, and recitations, and this really brought the house down. They did an excellent job and to see some of the smaller children, age 5 and 6, breaking forth in song and dance, was a sight to behold. The children were then shown several movie cartoons of "Popeye" and "Mickey Mouse," which they just loved.

Throughout all this program the children were climbing all over the laps of the GIs themselves, and it tugged at my heart to

see the expressions on the faces of the GIs. Perhaps it being my first Christmas with the GIs I didn't know what to expect - but it certainly did move me greatly to see their reactions to these underprivileged children.

After the movies were over, the children were brought over to the Aeroclub and seated at long tables in the Snack Bar - which was very attractively decorated with packages of candy wrapped in red paper and holly and Christmas greens placed along the tables. For refreshments we served tea, cakes, and fruit jello. We had planned to have ice cream but at the last moment the freezing unit broke down. As it was late afternoon by this time, we drew the blackout curtains and lighted up the candles, and at the psychological moment Santa Claus came bursting into the room, much to the glee and shouts of the youngsters. One of the GIs acted as our Father Christmas and did an excellent job of it. After passing up and down the tables talking to all the children, he went up onto the stage where the Christmas tree stood with piles of presents stacked all around it. These presents were bought with money donated by the GIs, who insisted on such a donation. There was a present for each child with his or her name on it. This required a great deal of work beforehand, purchasing 130 presents for the children that had been invited. When we counted noses, however, we had 160 children present. So we scurried around and made up 30 extra presents. Santa Claus read out each name and the GI's distributed the presents. It all went very smoothly amid the excitement. With full stomachs and full of Christmas spirit the children were piled back into the trucks and taken home."

Wow! What a Christmas Day! Thanks went to Jane for chairing the affair and recounting in detail what happened, and to all of the 392nd who helped make it happen. Our staff worked very hard producing the food, fixing tables, and serving. They brought their own children, who went to the party in the afternoon. After Santa Claus had gone and the tables were cleared and hats, coats, and boots were being put on, Capt. Don McCammond, Station PR Officer, commented to one of the staff women about what a lot they had given up to help us have a Merry Christmas in the Aeroclub and now they would have so little time for their Christmas at home. Her reply was, "Oh, our Merry Christmas is over. We have to go home now." It was worth

every effort by all involved.

After a day like that, how did we follow it with a meaningful night in the Aeroclub? Jane's report continues:

"On Christmas night, with the club filled to capacity, we had expected to have a show. However, at the last minute they disappointed us. So instead we played the recording of Dickens' "Christmas Carol" by Ronald Coleman. There was also free food in the Snack Bar. Plum pudding with rum sauce, fudge, nuts, and apples were served. As I wandered around the club that night, I frequently came across small groups of GIs singing Christmas carols and appearing very happy. So many of them told me it was the best Christmas they had ever spent away from home. That in itself was very gratifying and certainly more than enough compensation for all the work we had in preparing for it."

## The Christmas Spirit

Contributed by Walter Mysliwcyk, Garfield Heights, OH  
(Partially from a 1944 publication of the 7th PRG at Mount Farm)

Retired M/Sgt Walter Mysliwcyk was stationed from 1943-45 in England during WWII. During this time, he and other Polish-American soldiers worked together to help strengthen the spirits of Polish orphan children. The following is a brief account of how the men contributed their time and effort to the children.:

In 1939, hundreds of Polish families were departed to the East, leaving behind homes, farms, personal belongings, and more. In 1942, the Polish government was able to rescue a few thousand of the children which were brought to Persia. During those three years of hardship and forced labor, many of these children, none of whom was over 14, had lost both parents. All had lost at least both father and mother. Two months ago, three hundred of these boys were brought to England via the Cape, and now they were living in an RAF station not far from Oxford. None of these children has family or personal friends in England. They are lonesome and the one thing they need is affection.

These Polish boys look much younger than they actually are, being stunted in growth as a result of extreme malnutrition suffered for years at a time when they should have been growing. This has created such a vivid impression in their young minds that to this day they will secrete pieces of bread in their mattresses, being in constant fear of suffering the fang of semi starvation again.

A group of officers and enlisted men of this station of Polish descent are attempting to bring a little Christmas spirit to these unfortunate Polish boys by entertaining them at their station on December 5, 1944. All personnel of this station will have the opportunity by contributing part or all of their rations during the week of November 28 through December 3. A ration box will be placed in the PX, and it is hoped all will respond.

## Christmas Eve Present For The Nazis

By Frank A. Kaye (Kozlowski), 389BG (Reprinted from The Bulge Bugle)

Flying missions over the Bulge was somewhat different than fighting the war hip deep in snow on the ground. Nevertheless, it was on Christmas Eve, and again on Christmas Day while flying over Ardennes that I was feeling sorry for myself, thinking of all the festivities I would normally be celebrating back home on this the most festive of all holidays.

Our Christmas present to the Nazis was delivered Christmas Eve by more than 2000 heavy bombers and 900 fighters. This, the largest force of bombers on a single mission, was designed to pound the hell out of all communication lines supplying and reinforcing the German armies in their counter-offensive. The December 24th mission started for Germany in the early morning and the first bombers were entering Germany as the tail of their large column was leaving England. During the three-day weekend of flying, the 8th Air Force knocked out 218 enemy planes while we lost 38 heavy bombers and 40 fighter planes (Stars & Stripes). Ironically, this was our crew's 24th and 25th missions on this the 24th and 25th day of December.

These missions were always outstanding in my mind but not the most memorable like the day we were told that there would be no mission scheduled for New Years Day and we would plan accordingly.

Well there was one hell of a New Years Eve party going on at the NCO Club when about 3:00 a.m. the party came to an abrupt halt. The band was silenced and the announcement came that due to the extreme conditions at the Bulge we had to immediately prepare for a special mission.

There was no time for sleep. A fast good-bye to your dancing partner, a quick change to flight gear, and a grumbling trip to the briefing room. Talk about DUI—How about FUI?

At the briefing, however, we were told that whatever target was selected, it was insignificant, but the extreme condition at the Bulge called for some moral support. When we left the briefing room for our planes, it was like a bunch of college kids returning to the second half of a close game. Gung Ho for victory! God Bless any enemy encountered this day.

In the anxiety to get going our nose gunner accidentally fired a quick burst from his twin fifty calibers across the flight line almost hitting the Engineering Officer, who was sitting in the shack a couple hundred yards away. He tried for days to find out who did it and I'll bet he's still talking about it today.

It was customary for Catholic crewmen to receive Holy Communion before leaving the briefing room, but there was no time on this day, so Father Beck, the

Catholic Chaplain from Ohio rolled from plane to plane looking for Catholics. He knew his crews real well, so when he pulled up to C-Charlie, our B-24, he shouted, "Come and get it Polock!" Being the only Catholic on the crew, I received mine under the wing. Before he drove off I asked him where he got the jeep, as I never had seen him on anything but a bicycle. He smiled and said God left it for him at the chapel, but I knew he swiped it.

Later, just before takeoff, our waist gunner Travis West, a wise-cracker from Texas, asked what that was I had for breakfast. We had loaded up with extra crates of K-rations in the event we were downed so that we could share with any ground troops. In some cases they were dumped overboard hoping they would get to the right people. It wasn't Christmas turkey, but that bouillon, cheese, candy, and cigarettes could taste pretty good when nothing else is around.

We breezed through another seven missions after that memorable day and shortly after I was back in my home town where I met Hank Altyn, one of the guys who was hip deep in snow that January. He told me of the effect of seeing thousands of American bombers overhead when things were looking so bleak.

And Hank made my war worthwhile.

# WANNA JIVE HONEY? ASKS GI JOE

Primrose relives those wartime dancing days

A NEWPORT Pagnell pensioner met up with an old dance partner – 51 years after they last jived together at the old Ambulance Hall.

Primrose Bunker, of Lakes Lane, Newport Pagnell, last saw American soldier Joe Gallotti when she jilterbugged with him as a dance-mad 17-year-old in 1943.

Dashing Italian-born Joe – himself only 19 at the time – has held a soft spot in her heart ever since.

So when she got a phone call from Joe's English penfriend Connie Richards, she agreed to meet up with her old friend when he made a nostalgic return to Britain.

"I'd been trying to track Primrose down from what Joe had told me about her," said Connie, a Glenn Miller historian from Oakley.

"But I didn't even know if she'd remember him, it was such a long time since they'd seen each other."

Joe – who visited his old base Sharnbrook on his 10 day visit with fellow soldier Danny Caggiano – was kept in the dark over the meeting with Primrose.

By CAROLYN WILSON

He thought he was meeting an old friend of Connie's. But when Primrose called him "Joey" the penny dropped.

"There's only one person who called me that!" he said.

And soon the former dancing partners were chatting over old times – and leafing through their scrapbooks of the war.

"If I live to be a thousand I shall never ever forget meeting Primrose again," Joe admitted – over the moon at seeing her after so many years.

He's promised to write to his newly-discovered friend and Primrose said she planned to keep in touch.

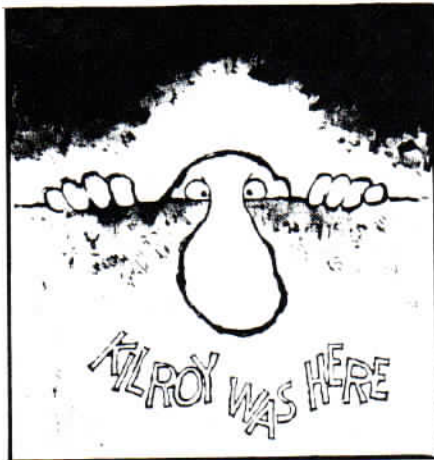
"He was a wonderful dancer.

"He had a girlfriend back in America and we were just good friends but we had some marvellous times," she reminisced.



● Primrose and Joe together again this week, and reminiscing over those dances 51 years ago. Picture: ANDY HANDLEY.

THE CITIZEN, Thursday, May 12, 1994



## 92nd Heads to Memphis from 92nd BG News





## BIG BEN'S MESSAGE

The deep tones of Big Ben are familiar all over the world.

When you hear them next let them bear to you this message

THE WESTMINSTER CHIMES



*This Doxology is suitable for each quarter of the hour*



As the Hour Chimes

LORD - thro' - this - hour	LORD - let - me - cast
Be - Thou - my - guide.	All - care - on - Thee.
Kept - by - Thy - power,	And - find - how - vast
No - step - shall - slide.	Thy - love - for - me.

IORD - may - I - bow	Bless - ed - be - God:
My - will - to - Thine,	Blest - be - His - Son:
And - share - e'en - now	Blest - Spirit, - Lord:
Thy - peace - div - ine	Till - time - be - done.

When the Hour of Twelve strikes, let it speak to you thus:

GOD-SO-LOVED-THE-WORLD-THAT-HE-GAVE  
 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8  
 HIS-ONLY-BEGOTTEN-SON  
 9 10 11 12



## “Bless ‘em All” Revisited

(Editor: The following letter was received in reply to my Chaplain's Corner message on page 39 of the May issue)

I read with interest your well written article in the Chaplain's Corner, with a touch of nostalgia in my heart and tears in my eyes.

However, there are two sides to every story. The night before I left to join the Air Force my long-time girl friend and I made a pact that we would be true to one another (I'll Walk Alone) or (I'll Get By). I faithfully served 3-1/2 years, 3 years in England.

I later found out that I was no sooner out of sight (Good night Wherever You Are) than she turned herself into the town whore. With that news, NO (We'll never Meet Again).

But as the saying goes, "All's well that ends well," because when I got back home I met a lovely girl from my home town. We are parents to 5 children and 10 grandchildren.

So (To Each His Own).

P.S. I am sure there must have been thousands of men who got the same treatment.

No Name---No Address

## ★★★★★ TAPS ★★★★★

Richard C. Banbury, 31FG Pilot, Colorado Springs, CO  
 James L. Beavers, Jr., 8th AF, Ret. Chief M/Sgt, Orlando, FL  
 Benjamin I. Breen, 96BG Flt Engr, San Jose, CA  
 Warren K. Burt, 466BG/787BS Pilot  
 Robert H. Collins, 466/787BS Navigator  
 Earl B. Crites, 466BG/787BS Copilot  
 William P. Cunningham, 322BG/450BS, Houston, TX  
 John E. Fawcett, 31 FG Pilot, Seattle, WA  
 Russell F. Fisher, 487BG B-17 Pilot, Winter Park, FL  
 Robert A. Hannum, Bombardier, POW, St. Petersburg, FL  
 Edward C. Hartnett, 379BG/526B5, Radioman on "Taletha Ann"  
 Howard Hawker, 447BG/711BS Flt Engr on "Belladonna"  
 Neil LaMont, 31 FG Pilot, Baton Rouge, LA  
 Oliver S. Larouche, 401BG, Radar Mech, Westoldtown, ME  
 Leonard H. Meldeau, 31 FG Pilot, Merrit island, FL  
 H. Cecil Miller, 303 BG, Radio/Gunner, Selma, AL  
 Charles N. Parker, 453BG/733BS B-24 Flt Engr, Orlando, FL  
 Arlie E. Peterson, 351 BG Pilot, Carson City, NV  
 Harry Rollinson, Jr., 91BG B-17 Pilot, Fern Park, FL  
 Raymond E. Schoonmaker, 31 FG Dentist, Covington, LA  
 William M. Selvidge, 389BG B-24 Pilot, Houston, TX  
 Iris W. Stalder, 384BG Radar Mech., Co-founder of Nebraska Chapter  
 Horace D. Williams, 303BG/358BS, Universal City, TX  
 Arthur Wizensniewski, 96 BG/413 BS, Tail Gunner  
 Rufus W. Youngblood, 91BG/324BS Waist Gunner on "Jack The Ripper", Savannah, GA.

## Rufus Youngblood Dies

Rufus W. Youngblood, Waist Gunner on "Jack the Ripper" died recently in Savannah, GA. He is most famous, however, for protecting Lyndon Johnson during the assassination of President Kennedy. He was assigned to protect Johnson from 1961 to 1966. When he heard the shots that killed Kennedy, he turned from the front seat and pulled Johnson to the floor, then half-sat and half-sprawled on top of the vice president. For this he received the Treasury Department's Exceptional Service Award. After that, he rose steadily in the Secret Service until he became the Service's No. 2 job, deputy director.

# “Dirty Dicks” in London

From Ron Kabitzke, Wisconsin Chapter

After the first few trips to London, we always arrived at the Liverpool railroad station as it was the end of the line from that part of England. Whenever you move by rail in England you have to go to the proper station to start from.

For quite some time we had heard rumors that there was a famous pub across from the station called “Dirty Dicks” and that you had not seen London until you dared to enter into its doors and have a drink of beer or liquor. Finally a friend of mine and I decided to take up the dare and see what it was all about. It was an eye opener when we did.

Once inside we quickly learned why it was so famous. The bare ceiling joists were covered with cobwebs, cats, skeletons, and all sorts of dust-covered items. The same held true for the walls—it was dust, dust, dust, and cobwebs all over. The only places that were cleaned were the back bar, bar, tables, and floor. When you finally got up enough courage to order a drink after the initial shock, once the drink was set on the bar you quickly covered it with your hand the way the others were doing. After sitting there for a few minutes, you learned why. Without notice, a chunk of cobweb overloaded with dust would

break off and gently float down toward your drink.

Being curious, we asked why the pub was in such filthy condition and the bartender told us the story. It seems that an owner named Dick back about two hundred years was about to be married to a beautiful young lady whom he dearly loved. On the appointed day, she mysteriously died of an unknown medical problem. This was too much for Dick, who made a vow that he would never again clean the pub. This started a trend which lasted for many decades, being tradition bound as only the English can be.

One good thing on Dick’s side was that he was smart enough to serve a variety of the finest beers and liquors in the British Empire. People from all over went there to enjoy their favorites, and the word spread throughout the world. We were not able to find this variety due to war conditions, but to enjoy what they had to offer was a challenge one will never forget. After all these years I can still see that pub in its unique condition. Knowing English tradition, my guess is that it still is in business. After all, who would upset such a crowd pleaser.

## Book Reviews

“**Over Here: The Americans in Norfolk in WWII,**” by Steve Snelling, Eastern Daily Press, Breedon Books, Derby. Hardbound, 8-1/4 X 11-1/2”, 204 pp, Over 250 nostalgic B&W photos. ISBN 1 85983 066 8. Price \$31.95 + \$6.95 S&H. Dist. in U.S. by Images of Britain, c/o ABC Service, 5761 E. La Palma Ave, Ste 142, Anaheim, CA 92807 (714-693-8410). This book is a MUST for anyone who was stationed in the Norfolk area in WWII. It contains many heretofore unpublished photos in which you might be featured. It is a tribute to the American “invaders” written from the British standpoint, and it traces the story of the Americans in Norfolk from their arrival to their departure at the end of the war. It contains many eyewitness accounts, both from “Brits” and “Yanks.” Many of its photos will evoke fond memories from anyone who served in the 8th. It has an especially good section on Jimmy Stewart.

“**Heritage of Britain,**” by A. L. Rowse, 1995 ed. Crescent Books, Distributed by Random House, Avenel, NJ. Order from bookstores. ISBN 0517 12168 9. Hardbound, 9 X 11-1/2”, 184 pp, Many full color photos. Distinguished Historian A. L. Rouse used great care in compiling this “Beauty Book” of historic and contemporary Britain which will be appreciated by anyone who travels in Britain or is interested in its history and Art.

“**Ted’s Flying Circus**” by Carroll (Cal) Stewart, 1996Sun/World Communications, Nebraska Printing Center Campus, 2145 North Cotner, POB 83289, Lincoln NE 68501.

LC-95-92540. Hardbound, 8-1/4 X 11”, 582 pp., B&W. This is the best bomb group history I’ve seen, and it is obviously written by a real professional who knows and cares. The very skillfully woven tale of the 93rd Bomb Group operations is organized chronologically and interspersed with personal recollections and photos. It contains several excellent sections on the Ploesti mission.

“**Yanks Over Europe: American Flyers in World War II,**” by Jerome Klinkowitz, University Press of Kentucky, 663 South Limestone St., Lexington, KY 40508. ISBN 0-8131-1961-8 (1996). Hardcover, 6 X 9”, 148 pp. This book examines more than a hundred narrative accounts of the air war over Europe written since 1941 by American flyers. The experience of combat inspired these men to combine exquisite descriptions with probing thoughtfulness. But the differences in their roles in the war, whether hotshot fighter pilots or beleaguered bomber crew members, affects how they tell their stories.

“**A New History of the 385th Bomb Group,**” by Lt. John J. Sweeney, Jr., Southern Heritage Press, POB 10937, St. Petersburg, FL 33733 (800-282-2823). Hardbound, 214 pp, 8-1/2 X 11”, B&W ISBN 0-941072-17-7, \$39.95 + \$3.95 S&H. The original history of the 385th was published in 1949. This edition contains all of the original but is considerably expanded with photos and text that have become available since then. It does an excellent job of recording the highlights of combat operations and depicting everyday life in the 385th BG.



# A Salute to Armament Personnel

By Bob Kuhnert, Editor, 355th Fighter Group

Armament is perhaps the most necessary and little understood specialty in the whole scheme of aircraft maintenance. Airplanes are designed for specific purposes, usually easily recognizable. Although fighter airplanes could be—and sometimes were—used in bombing missions and reconnaissance roles, the fighter airplane was, for all intents and purposes, merely a platform for carrying guns. Therefore, the effectiveness of the fighter airplane rested primarily on the skill of the pilot and the efforts of squadron armament personnel.

Armament personnel were responsible for maintaining, loading, and aiming guns in airplanes and for hanging bombs or external fuel tanks on bomb racks on the underside of wings and/or fuselage. Ordnance personnel kept the supply of ammunition, bombs, related items, and spare parts.

Both the P-47 and the P-51 were low-wing monoplanes, and each wing panel (left and right of the fuselage) housed .50 cal. machine guns pointed forward through openings along the leading edge of the wings of both airplanes. The P-47 initially carried eight guns, later reduced to six to save weight, and the P-51 carried six. In both airplanes the guns fired outside the arc of the propeller, unlike some other aircraft which had the guns fire through the propeller requiring complicated synchronization. Guns were fired by the pilot squeezing the trigger switch on his control column (joystick). The guns were based on Browning patents.

Ammunition was loaded into boxes built into the wings of P-47s, or into smaller removable boxes in the P-51. Ground-based machine guns used a canvas belt, but in airplanes a self-disintegrating metal cartridge holder was used; a T-shaped belt which held cartridges in line, yet flexible enough to permit cartridge belts to be nearly doubled over. The ammo belts fed through metal chutes, crossing over the guns.

In the P-51 the inner guns were loaded with 400 rounds each, while the outer guns had 270 rounds each. All six guns could fire 80 rounds per second. Ammunition was generally armor piercing incendiary. Explosive bullets were used on occasion. Tracer rounds gave the pilot an indication that he was nearing the end of his ammunition load. The enclosed photo is of an actual round which jammed in one of Bob Garlich's guns (in OSU, Luscious Lu).

I was a "static-chaser" in Communications and had a rather limited understanding of the demands placed on armament technicians. I've often kidded that they merely pushed a greasy rag through a gun barrel and went back to the shop to drink coffee. Not so! Installing guns in the wings of aircraft and pointing out front doesn't solve the requirement without precision aiming—bore-sighting. 357th FS Armament Inspector Charles Klein explains that it was predetermined that all six guns in our P-51s should converge in a relatively small pattern 200 yards ahead of the airplane. Guns were cleaned and oiled, then bore sighted. Each gun was installed on a front pivot, with a movable rear mount—a screw mechanism which provided up-or-down, right-or-left adjustment. Upon completion of bore sighting the movable mechanism was locked in a fixed position.

To perform the bore sight procedure the tail of the airplane was jacked up and leveled so that the airplane was in a level flying attitude. A target was placed 200 yards in front of the aircraft. A mirror was inserted down into the gun breech—periscope fashion—at a 45-degree angle so that the technician could look into the breech and see the target out through the front of the gun barrel (see sketch). Adjusting the movable rear mount permitted a relatively good aim without having to fire a bullet.

However, if one looks out the end of a .50 caliber barrel at a target 200 yards away, a fairly large area would be in view. Now we come to the skill, ingenuity, and dedication of a good armorer. T/Sgt Charles



355th FGA President Ken Robinson loads P-51 with .50 cal. ammunition.



Photo of jammed round from a gun in Bob Garlich's P-51.

W. Klein devised a method of obtaining a more accurate aim on the target without having to fire the guns. He removed a .50 cal. slug (bullet) from its casing and drilled a 1/8-inch hole through its center. He placed this modified slug in the gun barrel, reducing the target area viewed (in the mirror, out the front of the barrel). This permitted a considerably more accurate aiming of each machine gun.

When the accurate aiming (bore sighting) procedure was completed on all six guns, and the guns locked into position, another procedure was done by Klein. The airplane was left in its level flying attitude while two 4' X 8' plywood panels forming a target board were placed 50 feet ahead of the airplane on a target frame. The armorer again looked into the gun breech mirror and out the barrel to the target. A cross was placed on the target board where each gun's bullet would have passed through it. This confirmed the accuracy of the bore sight, which could be fine-tuned more if necessary.

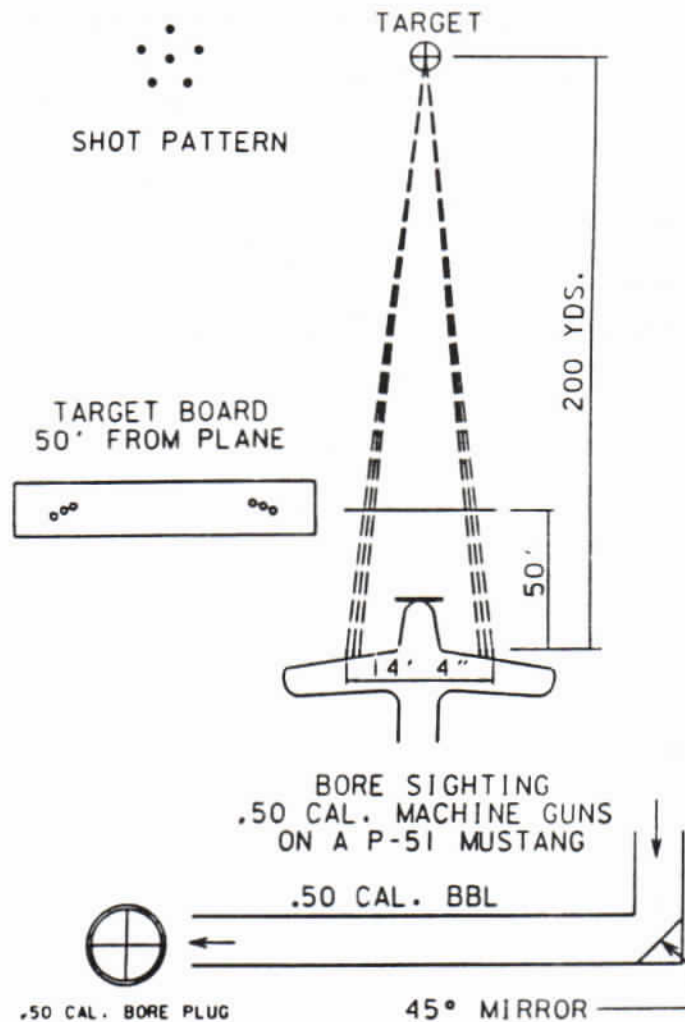
A 16mm motion picture camera was mounted in a wing, aimed straight ahead, to record the pilot's victory. No camera bore sight was required since there is no "bullet drop with a camera.

Charlie Klein's simple but ingenious refined bore-sighting procedure was forwarded to an appropriate agency in the ZI (USA) where it was recognized as having great merit. In less than two months kits were prepared in the States and sent to the field for general use. The kit contained six .50 cal. bore sighting mirrors and six barrel plugs, each containing a cross-hair (+) in a smaller hole for bore sighting. This seemingly modest invention was the result of a dedicated technician wanting to put the most accurately aimed guns in the hands of his pilots. Klein should have received an award of some kind because his creativity undoubtedly contributed significantly to fighter accuracy throughout the Air Force.

Inside the cockpit the pilot needs some means of aiming his guns (actually, he aims his airplane). The original gun sights were the simple cross-hair type, which required a lot of skill and good judgment in figuring proper deflection lead of the enemy airplane.

The ultimate sight, the K-14, was a gyroscopic instrument (maintained by the armorers). The pilot pre-set into this new "smart" sight the wingspan of airplanes to be encountered (that information was available for enemy airplanes known to be operating in the theater). Eight lighted reticle points were projected onto a glass plate in the sight (what today we call HUD-Heads up Display), with a dot in the center.

Using a rotatable knob on the throttle the pilot kept the enemy airplane within the circle of reticle points, which expanded or contracted as he rotated the control to keep the enemy centered. As G-forces mounted in tight maneuvers the reticle pattern moved across



the screen automatically to establish the proper deflection lead, removing any guesswork. This resulted in great accuracy.

The information for this article was obtained from 354FS Armorer Meyer "Mike" Simon, 357FS Armament Inspector Charles W. Klein, 355FGA Pres. Ken Robinson, Ralph Logan, and pilots Bob Garlich and Ray Shewfelt.

## PX Notes (See pages 30-31)

We have added two books to the PX list—one new one and one classic.

The new one is Roger Freeman's collection of 8th Air Force art. This unique volume belongs on every 8th AFer's bookshelf.

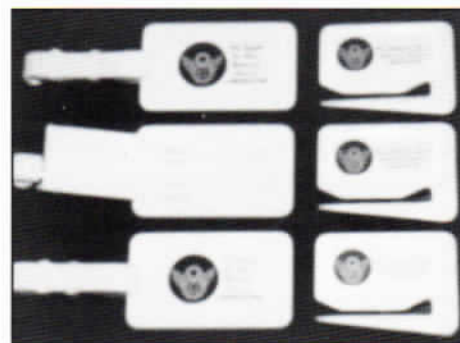
The other is one many members have been searching for — "Airfields of the Eighth — Then and Now." We have finally been able to get our hands on some, so hurry! They won't last long.

A number of our guys have been buying multiple copies of "Bloody Skies" for distribution to family members. As one former air crewman stated, "No one has ever described the air war more graphically. This is definitely 'How it was.'"

Another publication that has been setting records and is a great Christmas gift is "The Skies Were Never Still." This book of 8th Air Force poetry was put together by Bob Doherty and Jim Hill and is illustrated by Carolyn Councill. It's Great!

## Stocking Stuffers

Don't miss our Lady's Gold Air Force Bow Pins (item 33), 8th Air Force Luggage Tags (item 31), and 8th AF "Zippy" Letter Openers (item 32)(see photo). Our supply of the pins sold out fast at the Reunion, and the "Zippys" are the slickest things you've ever seen. You'll never want to be without one. We also have the 8AFHS 1997 Diary (item 34).



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