



# Chaplain Sez

Hello ALL!!

The prophet Isaiah says in Isaiah 40:27-31 things that I feel we need to be reminded of from time to time. Soooo I am putting these verses in my message this time to emphasize that the Lord does give us strength in this day!!

"You people of Israel, say, "God pays no attention to us! He doesn't care if we are treated unjustly."

But how can you say that? Don't you know? Haven't you heard? The Lord is the eternal God, Creator of the earth. He never gets weary or tired: His wisdom cannot be measured.

The Lord gives strength to those who are weary. Even young people get tired, then stumble and fall. But those who trust the Lord will find new strength. They will be strong like eagles soaring upward on wings; they will walk and run without getting tired."

These are not just my words but the truth is being said through the prophet and down through the ages these truths have been proven time and time again. Please think on these things and remember.

Peace!!

In Love  
Jim Vance

Dear Ed:

Mrs. Knight was at the Reunion in Savannah and let me know I didn't read her husbands name at the memorial. Please put something in the HLH with my apology. I couldn't find it in the HLH, so we both messed up!

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Richard A. Knight, 75, died in Clearwater, Florida on April 10, 1998. A memorial interment service will be held at the North Beverly Cemetery, Beverly, Massachusetts on Saturday, July 11, 1998 at 2:00 p.m.

He was born in Boston and raised in Beverly, graduating from Beverly High School in 1940. He attended M.I.T., but left for training with the U.S. Army Air Corps. He was a 1st Lieutenant with the 8th Air Force, 549th Bomb Squadron, 385th Bomb Group stationed at Great Ashfield Airdrome in Elmswell, England. While stationed there during WW II, he completed 26 missions over Germany.

Following WW II, he graduated from M.I.T. in 1947 and worked in the Boston area for: M.I.T., Dewey and Almy Chemical Company, National Research Corp. and was Co-founder of General Vacuum Corp.

He next worked in Wisconsin as Vice President for Howard Industries and Broan Manufacturing Companies.

The last ten years prior to retirement, he returned to M.I.T. where he was Secretary of the Alumni Association.

Survivors include his wife of 54 years, Joan Woodbury Knight of Clearwater; two sons, Richard Woodbury Knight of Calgary, Alberta, Canada and William Woodbury Knight of Richland, Michigan; one daughter, Joanne Woodbury Perez-Knight of Brooklyn, NY; one sister, Cynthia Knight Lawson of Tucson, Arizona; and six grandchildren, Jeremy, Jeffrey and Christel Knight of Calgary, Lindsay Knight of Richland, Gabriela and Sara Perez of Brooklyn.

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Had quite a trip in June—back to England with a son and his wife to watch a grandson row for Dartmouth in the Henley Regatta.

The five of us made it up to our old base for a very nostalgic visit one Sunday. Rode the train to Ipswich and then Stowmarket, rented a cab and had a two-hour tour of the Base.

Didn't recognize much—never did find our 3 trees, which I never knew about when we were there. Went to Great Ashfield church, which I had never visited while I was over there for 2 years, 2 months and 4 days (I did make it to Chaplain Jim's services on the Base a couple of times).

The old runway is, of course, back to farming, but we did find part of the crumbling old perimeter track and a couple of hardstands.

The big thrill of the visit was when I opened the door to one of the old maintenance sheds and there was a red painted "550th Bomb Sq" sign staring me in the face. The 548th, 549th, and 551st were there, too, but their paint wasn't near as bright as "ours".

The Elmswell train station look exactly like I remembered it from 54 years ago. A few new buildings, but all the old ones were still there. Same with Stowmarket.

One more thing—we ate an evening meal in Stowmarket and I noticed the dessert menu listed "Banana split". I ordered one—it was just like I remembered from long ago, and I ate every bit of it.

# BULLETIN BOARD

## REUNION VIDEO

Your 1999 reunion held on the week-end of April 17, 1999 for the 385th Bomb Group was a great success. Fellow veterans from all over the country came to Savannah, Georgia to meet with each other and share old memories. Thanks to the great turnout, the reunion video is filled with classic interviews and candid closeups of fellow veterans. If you were unable to attend, our camera was on throughout the entire reunion capturing all of the excitement.

The video includes a tour of the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum, highlights from the squadron meetings and ladies breakfast, and the Dinner Banquet. We interviewed nearly every veteran as they introduced themselves and told of their experiences during WW II and their lives since. To enhance the video, we've added computer graphics and favorite music from the 1940s.

This videotape is a valuable keepsake for you, and a great way to pass on the story of your WW II experience to your children and grandchildren. To receive your 2 hour reunion video immediately, send the bottom portion of this letter with a check or money order or call 1800-654-8277 and charge it to your Visa/MC. If you are not completely satisfied with your tape, we will give you a full refund.

Sincerely

Richard Raines  
Raines Video Productions  
180 Golf Club Road, Suite 157  
Pleasant Hill, CA 94523

One Video	\$29.95
P & H	2.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$31.95</b>

I would like \_\_\_\_\_ VHS Tape(s)      Ref. #96702  
Please allow 2-4 weeks for delivery

\*The videotape of the 1997 reunion in Tucson is still available. To receive this video as well, add \$20.00 to your order.\*

## PLEASE FORGIVE US

In the June President's Report, we mistakenly signed "Tom Helman" when we should have used "Tom Newton." Had lots of you send corrections! We won't tell as to which of them felt the most insulted.

## CASUALTY PERCENTAGES

8TH Air Force flight crews had a higher percentage of casualties than any other branch of the service during WW2. There were 340,000 persons in the 8th Air Force, of whom 135,000 were combat crewmen. Of this 135,000, more than 26,000 were killed and 28,000 became P.O.W.s—a loss ratio of 40%.

B-17s dropped 640,036 tons of bombs on European targets, compared to 452,508 tons dropped by B24s, and 463,544 tons dropped by all other US Aircraft. Boeing claims that 23 enemy aircraft were destroyed per 1000 sorties. 4750 B-17s were lost on combat missions, which is about 1 out of 3 that were built.

There were 33 overseas combat B-17 groups in August 1944.

These statistics were in the 457th newsletter.

## SALES TAX ON MONUMENT

**A question was raised at the Reunion as to why we were assessed Georgia Sales Tax on our monument. Georgia authorities sent us a copy of the pertinent tax regulation, and we can send a copy to anyone who wants further information.**

## NEXT REUNION

The Next Reunion – Albuquerque, April 4-8, 2001. Start Planning! President Tom Newton and host Hal Goetsch will be negotiating hotels, room rates, tours, with preliminary indication that costs will be less than at Savannah.

## 8TH AIR FORCE HISTORIAN NEEDS HELP

My name is Mark Copeland. I am the National PX Manager for the 8th Air Force Historical Society. I am seeking to find any information about a WAC by the name of Ruby Newell.

As part of a publicity campaign "Stars and Stripes" organized a contest to find the "Most Beautiful WAC in the E.T.O." The winner was Pfc. Ruby Newell of Long Beach, California. To mark this event, a B-17G from the 549th Squadron was selected to carry the markings of "Ruby's Raiders." I'm sure that it is a very familiar aircraft to most 385th lads.

Does anyone have information as to the whereabouts of Ruby Newell??? I would like to contact her and any help would be appreciated. Please contact me: Mark S. Copeland, 16264 Goodview Trail, Lakeville, MN 55044. Home-612-953-0121 or FAX 612-642-0142.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Here's a story typical of those sent home during the war to give people an idea of what was going on over Germany. This was written by S/Sgt Evon P. Wells.

### PUBLIC RELATION STORIES OF OPERATIONS

**AN EIGHTH AAF BOMBER STATION, England.** – Everything was functioning normally from take-off until we approached the target. Fairly heavy flak was thrown up at us, but we weren't hit until after we had dropped our bombs on the lead ship. I counted four hits from flak just as we were making the turn from the target. We saw no enemy aircraft at that time. I saw two ships leave formations and head for Switzerland, and I saw one ship explode before it got rid of its incendiaries. It went down in three flaming pieces with no chute visible. We suddenly started to lag behind the formation and lose altitude. I found that this was due to #3 turbo being hit by flak.

I was pretty scared at first at being left alone in Germany, especially after hearing so many stories about what happens to stragglers. We immediately started for Switzerland, but soon after reaching 5,000 feet on our way there our engine came back in again. The pilot asked for a vote of what we wanted to do – head for Switzerland or go back to England. We voted to try for England. Our formation was too far away for us to catch up, but we radioed for fighter support and shot flares. P-38's came by us but never stayed with us.

We made the journey from the Swiss border (approximately) to Calais at about 5,000 feet. We saw no enemy fighters or aircraft in the air, but we passed over four flak areas of about four burst apiece very inaccurate, and passed over four airfields. I understand the Navigator layed his course by an escape map.

Just as we reached the coast the tail gunner spotted two ME109's and called them out to us. They immediately jumped us from the tail. One came in high and down to the right. The other came in low and up to the left. The tail gunner is pretty sure he hit one, but his guns jammed on the second attack by one plane. He caught a bullet in the left arm on the second attack. (The tail gunner is Sgt. Ernest R. Mitchel, 1517 Gaylord St., Long Beach, California) On the first attack I'm sure I got a few shots in the one plane, but my guns jammed also. The turrets were firing all of the time.

The known damage consisted of #1 engine damaged, #2 engine knocked out by 20 mm and #3 on fire. No damage seemed to have been sustained by #4 engine. The fire burned the right wing up to behind #4 engine, so that you could see right through it. The fire also burned the skin off the right horizontal stabilizer and

forced the tail gunner to leave his position. By this time P-51 Mustangs were circling us so it was all right for him to leave. I know he wouldn't have left his position if the 51's had not been there even though we were preparing to bail out.

The pilot said we could bail out if we wanted to while #3 engine was still on fire. The left waist gunner, Technical Sergeant Murdock S. McNeil, 35, 1555 Brae Burn Road, Altadena, California, bailed out then, just on the coast, but no one noticed whether his chute opened or not. The tail gunner had come up to the waist position in preparing to bail out, because his escape wouldn't open. I didn't bail out right away because I had been in the ball turret for a short time and didn't have my Mae West on. Just when the tail gunner and I were ready to bail out we noticed that the fire had gone out. That is to say, there was still a little fire there, but it wasn't the terrific fire that was there before.

The pilot then gave the order to prepare for ditching. Mitchell went back in the tail and stayed until the last minute. The ball turret gunner, Sgt Joseph M. McKenna, 518 51 Street, Brooklyn, New York, and I put A3 bags and the heated blanket in the radio room for padding and threw everything movable out of the ship. The radio gun was pushed back into its compartment because we didn't have time to throw it overboard. The radio operator, S.Sgt Fred N. Howland, 2700 Lyndhurst, St. Louis, Missouri, was sending out messages the whole time. Every one but the pilot,, 2nd Lieutenant William R. Nesen, 632 Sinclair Ave., NEE Grand Rapids, Michigan and the co-pilot, 2nd Lt Bernard T. Gruble, Mt. Airy, N.C. were in prescribed ditching position by the time we hit.

We hit the water at a pretty steep angle at about 200 or more miles per hour indicated air speed. We went straight under and the sides and top collapsed on us. I suppose I was knocked out and then immediately revived by the cold water, because an instant after hitting, I was in the water all tangled in debris. I thought I was dead sure, but I finally reached the surface. I had a little trouble opening my Mae West. It kept me afloat even though I did have the two piece heated suit and shoes on. The waves were quite heavy and I had quite a job keeping my head high enough to breathe at all. Lieutenant (2nd) James G. Delo, New Salem, PA, Navigator, was about 20 feet from me and was asking for help. He must have been hurt quite bad for he couldn't open his Mae West. I swam over to him and he grabbed me. It looked as if I were being given another chance to die. I managed to open his vest so that he could float by himself. I rested for a bit and then swam over to where the tail gunner, Sgt Mitchell, was hanging on to the heated blanket. It managed to keep us both afloat very well. The big dinghy was floating some 75 to 100 feet away from the radio gunner, Fred Howland, clinging to the side. I had noticed it before, but it was too far away for me to swim. The

wind kept pushing it farther and farther away from us. I never saw Howland try to climb in, so he must have been hurt pretty badly too.

After hanging on to the blanket for some time getting a little strength back, I managed to get hold of a one man dingy. I feel certain that this is what saved us. I fussed with it for quite some time before getting it to inflate. I found the CO2 handle was too stiff for me to work until I put every last ounce of energy into one last try. Mitchell got on the dinghy and I hung on the side. By this time I was very cold and tired. 2nd Lt. Chester W. Desormeaux, 170 Rand St., Central Falls, R.I., bombardier, 25, called for help so I pushed the dinghy over to where he was, and Mitchell and I held him on the side. He was cut badly and his Mae West had been ripped.

After some time I became numb from my hips down and was very tired. I lost track of Lt. Delo and S/Sgt Howland, who drifted away. P-51's had been circling us the whole time and finally after about a hour a Walrus flying ship landed and picked the three of us up. We told them that there were two more out there, but they said they had searched and there was no one to be seen besides the three of us. It was rough to take off as we taxied back. Our ship hit about five miles off the coast of France. It was approximately 1900 hours.

We were taken to Dover hospital. Treatment was very good. There was nothing wrong with me, but a few scratches and bruises, besides being weak and stiff. A day and a half later, Lt. Desormeaux and Mitchell were transferred to another hospital, probably Winchester, and I was taken by car to the AAF Manston Field. A B-17 from my base picked me up the next day.

AN EIGHTH AAF BOMBER STATION, England. – "The Luftwaffe's fighters were so thick and so close to us today that I feel sure that if I had a 45 calibre automatic up there with me I could have picked off a Jerrie myself." These were the first words that 1st Lieutenant Richard A. Spencer, 18224 Landseer R., Cleveland, O., 28 year old pilot uttered as he stepped from his battered Eighth AAF Flying Fortress just returned from another attack on Berlin.

"Rows of ten and twelve ME109's weaved through our formation in head on, do-or-die attacks in a seemingly endless stream. And a lot of them died, my gunners alone getting 6 of them, but they took a lot of forts with them too. I've never seen the sky filled with so much confusion – exploding planes, flying debris, white and brown parachutes, bursting flak, exploding shells – it was fantastic but horribly real to us up there."

2nd Lt. Donald R. McNeeley, 436 Starr Ave., Toledo, O., the 24 year old co-pilot, stated, "the first sign that we had of

fighters was when the whole attacking force hit us at once. Sixty Messerschmitts and Focke-wulfs suddenly loomed up dead in front of us, and for a moment I sat there amazed as they seemed to come from nowhere. Glancing to the left of the ship I saw another formation of sixty Jerries heading in. I thought for a moment that I was seeing things, but when they started to blaze away at us I knew that it was not a nightmare."

As the attack started the two Ohioans at the controls began to put their Fort through violent evasive action, making themselves as difficult as possible to hit. At the same time the gunners had a hard time sighting their targets from the rocking, rolling positions, but they are claiming six destroyed.

The bombardier, 2nd Lt. Daniel F. Carl, 1735 Tyler St., Alliquippa, PA. got the first attacker, the beginning of the end for six ME 109's, in the first wave to hit the formation. "We hadn't reached the target yet and after taking one look at the mass of Jerries coming at us, I decided that I had better try to do something to stop their onslaught," said Lt. Schuerch. "I couldn't do much about them but at least I had the satisfaction of seeing one of them go down before my guns. He was one of several coming straight for the nose of our plane. I just singled him out, pressed the triggers long and hard, and watched one wing fly off and the rest of the ship explode immediately after. For a while it looked as though he were going to hit us, but fortunately he blew up in time."

The right waist gunner, Staff Sergeant Lloyd K. Jutler, 33, from Springvale, Maine, got the second fighter of the day in the second attacking wave. "His" ME 109, came underneath his ship's wings, and displaying excellent tracking and marksmanship, saw the Nazi do a fade-out and explode in a brilliant flash of crimson flames.

Claims for numbers 3 and 4 were made by Staff Sergeant Marvin D. Baird, 326 E Park St., Hutchinson, Kansas, the 20 year old ball turret gunner. The first of the double kill took no more than a few quick seconds. As Sgt Baird puts it, "I saw that ME coming from the nose of the ship and not more than ten feet below my turret. I knocked or rather I should say cut – by 50 calibre method – one wing off close to the fuselage. He fell like a rock. The second Nazi came in the same way, only not quite so close to my guns. His wing came off also, but he spun crazily toward the ground.

Technical Sergeant Gabriel V. Kushner, 30, of N. 4th St., Duquense, PA., was the next to score a kill. "My fighter came rather sudden-like," said Sgt Kushner. "The ship was bobbing and weaving terrifically in evasive action which was being beautifully executed by Lts. Spencer and McNeely. Just as the ship suddenly put its nose down a Nazi came into my sights. I was a little surprised momentarily, but I let him have a rather long burst with both my guns, and the next

thing I knew the entire ME was enveloped in flames and going straight down."

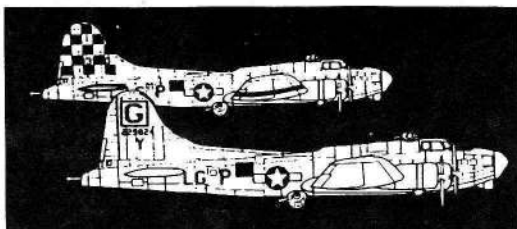
Fighter number six was claimed by the left waist gunner, Staff Sergeant Clarence L. Mossman, Jr., 21, from Brussels, ILL. He hit his off at 1500 yards out as it was flying parallel to our ship and waiting to begin another attack.

Lt. Spencer's fortress wasn't getting off lightly though. Many of the Nazi's bullets and cannon shells found their mark. Both heavy rudder cables were cut, the right wing looked like a sieve, the spark plug cables on number 3 engine were severed and although still running, it was furnishing little power. Putting the fort onto automatic pilot, Lt. Spencer was able to hold the battered ship in formation, and under its protection got out of enemy territory and over their home base in England.

While all of the other ships were landing, Lt. Spencer circled the field as Sgt. Bragdon and Sgt. Mossman spliced the rudder cables together. The two gunners, taking the wires from the charging handles of their guns, improvised the makeshift splicing as best they could, but they accomplished their purpose.

Lt. Spencer and Lt. McNeeley, now able to use the ship's rudder, took over the controls again and accomplished a perfect landing.

"We had a close call today, but it served several useful purposes," stated Lt. Spencer. "First of all we knocked out a good share of the Luftwaffe's fighter strength and destroyed a target. But more important than that, all of my boys learned that we can both dish it out and take it. We always knew that we had a top-notch crew, but today's experiences added tangible proof to it. We know just what each other can do now, and we are more closely knit together than ever. I want to add a special word of praise to my navigator, (2nd Lt. Conrad Schuerch, Jr., 25, Wren St., Boston, Mass) who collaborated with the lead ship navigator to bring us back to base right on the button. Also our radio operator (Technical Sergeant William W. Titus, 24, 24 Kinf St., Manchester, N. H.) showed us what he could do under pressure. St. Titus was in contact with the ground, getting reports on our position, sending in our reports and when he wasn't at his radio he was manning his gun in admirable fashion. Yes siree, I think we're all better men for today's experience."



## THE BOMBERS

by Sheila Hudson, Ipswich, Suffolk

Once there were thousands, now there are few,  
And gone to the scrap yards are the many that flew,  
From airfields in Anglia, all built in great haste,  
To house armies of airplanes, taking part in a race.  
Against time and an enemy, a tyrannical foe,  
The Fortresses and Liberators to battle would go.  
All services and "bombed up" by dawn's early light,  
They stood there waiting to fight a great fight.

The air crews were awakened, eaten, were briefed,  
Those young, very young men with too few hours  
sleep.

So to the hard-stands to make ready to fly,  
The great bombers that wait on the concrete  
nearby.

"M" for Memphis, "Gal Suzy", "J-Johnnie" all there,  
Those sleek silver angels would take to the air.  
If the green light blinked out, then the mission was "on",  
The control tower's signal, for the war must be won.

Speeding fast down the runway, the lift-off, airborne,  
Skimming farm yards, houses, and fields ripe with  
corn.

To meet in their hundreds other groups in the sky,  
And in tight formation to fly five miles high.  
As raids were in daylight, there was great fighter attack  
From the waiting Luftwaffe and German ack-ack.  
With the channel now passed and hostile Europe ahead,  
All guns on the aircraft, were quick or were dead.

Then came the bomb run, the target, the "bombs away" call,  
The twisting, the diving, and for some, the last all.  
Silver metal all mangled, exploding aglow,  
Figure come leaping out, to the carnage below.  
The bombers head home now, the day's work is done.  
Battle scarred, weary, and some with two engines  
gone,  
While others crippled continue to drone,  
Flying low over land and sea, trying to reach home.

Sometime the sea claimed them, sometimes they were  
saved,

"C Cutie", "Our Dixie", and all the others, so brave.

*Taken from the B-17 Flying Fortress Association Newsletter*



**AERIE**

by Maj. James E. Hughes (385th Bm. Gp.)

How could we know, in those cold days of war  
That we never would be quite the same as before  
That the clear gleam of purpose, so brilliantly bright  
Could turn gray in the moonlight of our later life

The sleep-deadened, stumbling air-crews at briefing,  
The pain-thrilling shock of the target unveiling  
Those fog-shrouded aircraft, young crew-chief beckoning  
The first engines roaring, mighty weapons, nerves  
trembling.

Green flare from the tower and throttles full forward  
Bomb-laden, fuel-heavy, wallowing onward  
Through dawn-tinted farmland, fog-tendriled, beckoning  
Lift-off at last, great wings shuddering, steadying

The long battle upward, every cylinder straining  
First squadrons, groups, wings, then divisions assembling  
Coast-out point at last, the soul-swelling Armada  
Stretching off and away toward some flak-shrouded target!

Oh, the hot flush of pride and the grim dedication  
Armed with faith in America's firm declaration!  
Festung Europe, man's nightmmare, Hitler's spasm, must  
perish  
God's endowment of Freedom would survive and be  
cherished!

We survived or we died, the slim odds on returning  
To that dear land of home, family, memories burning,  
Cruelly fair, when we thought of the stakes in the game,  
For we carried America's heart in our Bay....

How could we know in those cold days before  
This great heart could falter at history's door  
That the pure, righteous wrath against Freedom's  
transgressors  
Could be cooled by self-interest, be confused and  
uncertain!

It's our sons, now, who climb through the red skies of war  
But the heart in their bomb-bays is uncertain and sore.  
Let the faint-hearted, self-seeking doubters be dammed!  
The bald eagle of Freedom is still loose in the land!

**THE SCHWEINFURT REUNION  
JUNE 15-18, 1998**

Can these old men have been the ones  
Who crewed the seventeens?  
Who manned the turrets, who manned the guns?  
Are they? - By any means?

Are these the ones we met on high  
With rockets, cannon and guns?  
In the fighter planes that filled the sky  
Are they? - Can they be the ones?

Can these be the boys, just turned sixteen  
That manned the Ack Ack guns?  
They were so young and strong and lean  
Are they? - Can they be the ones?

Yes, all these men now gathered here  
Were called to serve and fight.  
They all were young they had no fear,  
They thought they were in the right.

Wait! They suddenly look younger now;  
I see them as they were before.  
The planes roar off, airborne somehow,  
They carry bombs and men to war.

And at the alert, men hurry out  
To man the planes and guns.  
The bombers come, they're all about  
These defenders are the ones.

The bombers return but not quite all.  
Who knows what happened there?  
Some saw comrades in their fall,  
Some saw collisions in mid-air.

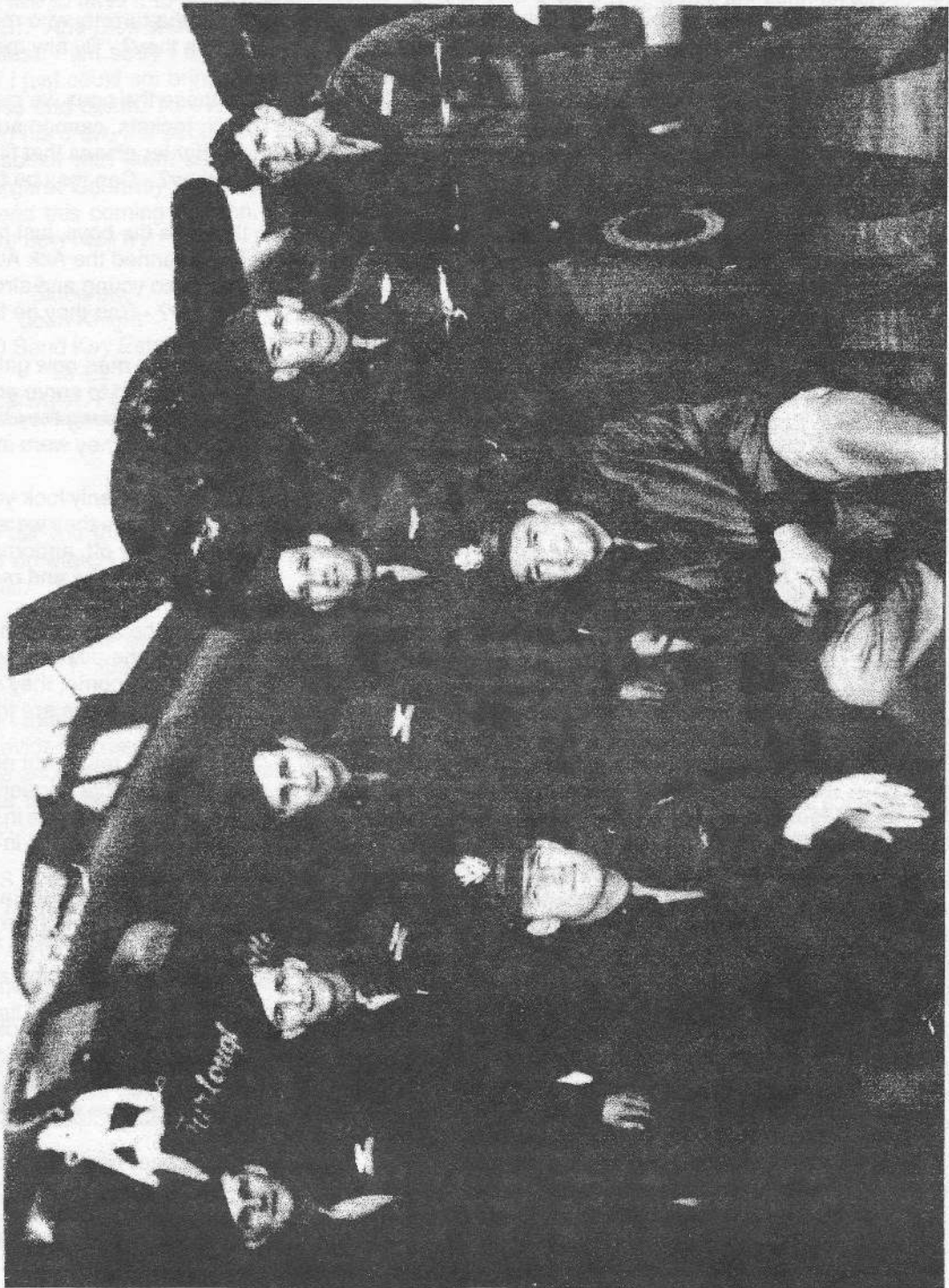
The fighters and the flakhelfers  
Relax and count the cost.  
They remember friends that were  
Who fought but now are lost.

The vision fades, I look about.  
We've gotten old again, I see.  
We were so young, we had no doubt,  
We felt that we would always be.

There's one more mission left to fly:  
No one comes back, but then  
We gather 'round and say goodbye  
And we thank God we had such men!



**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Can anyone identify this crew of "Furlough Myrtle"? Please write us!!





Page IV East Anglian Daily Times, Tuesday, April 13, 1999

# Keeping their eyes

East Anglian Daily Times, Tuesday, April 13, 1999 Page V

# firmly on the future

*Knowing the ropes is a real family affair*

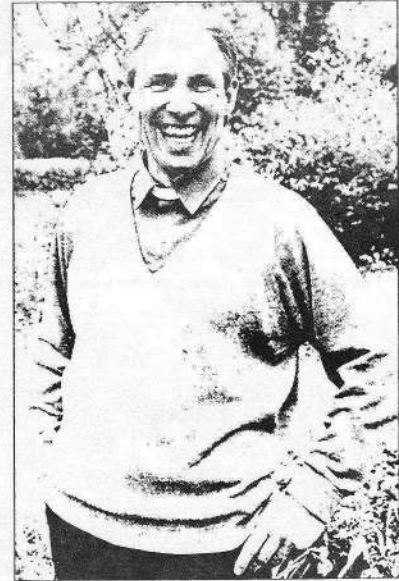
BELL RINGING has become increasingly rare in the nation's churches. But in Great Ashfield bell-ringing is a family affair and the art is still thriving. Ernie and Shirley Meekings and their son, Trevor, regularly keep the five bells at All Saints' ringing, and their daughter, Hazel, used to be involved before getting married and moving out of the village.

Mrs Meekings, who took up bell ringing after her son and husband started more than 11 years ago, said a group got together years ago and learned from a teacher in Elmswell. She said she can play rounds and call-changes but not some of the more complicated pieces, which are the domain of master bell-ringers. Mrs Meekings said her family do not ring the Great Ashfield bells every day but do assemble a team for special services and weddings.

She said people in the village are told when the bells are going to be rung to avoid any problems. And far from being a dying art the skill is still attracting newcomers. Mrs Meekings said: "We have got some beginners at Walsham who are getting on very well."



RINGING THE CHANGES: Bell ringers Ernie and Shirley Meekings and son Trevor



RECTOR: Rev Martin Clarke



ALL SAINTS: The church at Great Ashfield

**Anglia Railways - playing our part in the community.**



COMMUNITY SPIRIT: Residents of Great Ashfield gather by the village sign

Photographs: ANDY ABBOTT

## GREAT ASHFIELD

by LAURENCE CAWLEY

LEGEND tells how the famous Glenn Miller Orchestra played a concert in Great Ashfield the evening before the band leader mysteriously disappeared without trace during a plane journey to Paris in 1944.

Today the 220-strong community cherishes its long and varied past but it also keeps its eyes set firmly on the future.

And the village pulls out all the stops to ensure that its people have the upper hand in deciding how their future will unfold.

At present Great Ashfield is aiming to raise £10,000 to enable its residents to mark the Millennium in the way they wish.

One of the plans involves creating a Domesday Book for the village.

Each of the village's 120 houses will be photographed with their occupants, who can then create a personal entry about their family history.

Pride of place will be given to the Domesday Book at All Saints' Church.

Also on the Millennium wish-list are a pair of brand new solid oak doors for the church.

To raise money Great Ashfield will be unveiling its treasures for the public at a forthcoming flower festival.

Joint festival organiser Stephen Miles, of

Limes Farm, said among the village's show-pieces will be a Saxon cross found in the village hundreds of years ago.

During the English Reformation the cross was thrown down and used as a bridge before being rescued in the 1750s by Lord Thurlow.

And on June 12 and 13 the cross will be making its first public appearance in more than 200 years.

Festival visitors will also be able to see the village's rare wild meadow flowers which are officially of Special Scientific Interest (SSI).

And the villagers have shown a similar hands-on and pro-active spirit when they things had to be done in the past.

The church was awarded a £20,000 lottery grant after villagers raised £20,000 towards a new kitchen facilities and a plat-

form for the bell-ringers.

Mr Miles said: "It has taken us into the next Century and kept us modern."

As a village focal point the church is now able to offer a fitting welcome to Great Ashfield's long-travelling American guests and hold functions for residents.

Although the village lost its school - now used as the Village Hall - in 1969, there is still a diverse age range in Great Ashfield

and a strong sense of community.

Most children in the village now go to school in Badwell Ash or Elmswell, before going on to Blackbourne Middle School and Thurston Upper School.

Although the heart and soul of the village is still brimming with vitality it has lost a great deal of its trade and industry. The bakery, the butchers, the kiln, the wheel-wright and the blacksmith have all gone.

And an expanse of concrete is all that is left of the old World War Two airbase where British and 2,500 US servicemen were stationed.

It was in one of the hangars where the great Glen Miller, the wartime bandleader, apparently played before his aeroplane crashed on December 15, 1944.

The whole truth about the incident remains shrouded in fog.

But compared with one of the wilder theories, that Miller never boarded the plane at all and is still alive as a recluse with amnesia, the Great Ashfield legend is both feasible and possible.

And making the most of possibilities is a hall-mark of the Great Ashfield community, because even seemingly impossible goals tend to be reached.



MYSTERY: Amy and Edward Spreull, and Andrea and Suzanne Bishop examine the Saxon cross in the grounds of Great Ashfield House



# Tribute paid to old family

LAST week Great Ashfield paid tribute to one of its long-standing families following the death of its last surviving member aged 101. The Hollond family had lived at Great Ashfield House since 1896. Iseult Hollond died on March 1 and was the family's last surviving member. Last Wednesday villagers held a memorial service and laid a special plaque in memory of the whole family. Edward and Beatrice Hollond took up residence at Great Ashfield House more than 100 years ago and had seven children. Only one of their children, Harry, ever married. Harry Hollond went on to be professor of law at Trinity College, Cambridge. The family played a large role in village life and donated a car park to the village church.

■ DURING both World Wars Great Ashfield played an important role as an airbase.

In World War One the village had a grass-track airbase which functioned as a proper operational airbase with wooden huts and hangars. The village's airbase took on a new and much grander guise during World War Two when it hosted about 2,500 US servicemen. And the village's strong American connection has continued to thrive into the present with regular visits from US families.

■ BOTH public houses in Great Ashfield have disappeared. The Thurlow Arms was closed in 1979 and The Hovell Arms was closed down before that. Social events in the village are now focused on the Village Hall and the church. In the past Great Ashfield had a brick kiln, a baker and a butchers. There is a carpenter in the village. David Leaver has been working as a carpenter in Great Ashfield for four years and works on

various aspects of the trade including staircases, doors and window frames.

■ GREAT Ashfield's post office has been in the same family for more than 30 years. It was run by Audrey Dyke for 15 years before she passed the reins to her daughter Sylvia Hurrell, who has been running it for the last 18 years. Since the village shop closed three years ago, many villagers travel elsewhere to get their goods, but the post office is still the main calling point for collecting pensions, paying television licences and sending mail.

■ VILLAGERS in Great Ashfield are praying their milkman does not retire when he turns 65 next year. Ken Brown, who is based in Ixworth, has delivered milk to the residents of Great Ashfield for more than 40 years and has proved a life-line for many villagers after the closure of the village shop.



GETTING READY: Stephen Miles prepares displays for the Great Ashfield Past and Present weekend festival being held over the weekend of June 12 and 13



LOOKING BACK TO TIMES GONE BY: Residents of Great Ashfield gather at a hangar on the airfield for a party in 1935 to celebrate the Silver Jubilee of King George V and Queen Mary. All done up in their best clothes, it looks as though the villagers marked the occasion in fine style and the hangar was appropriately decorated with bunting

## Miniature reminders of freedom



Associated Press

Ralph LaVoie poses at his home in Rindge, N.H., with a model of a B-17 bomber like the one he was in when shot down in December 1943. LaVoie was among 4,000 prisoners at Stalag 17-B in Austria, and today's Memorial Day services, which always bring somber feelings for LaVoie, will be difficult because the man the prisoners voted to be their camp leader, Joseph Kurtenbach of Waterloo, Iowa, died last month of cancer.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Available from: Boomerang Publishers, 6164 W 83rd Way, Arvada, CO 80003  
Phone: 303-423-5706. Use check or credit card. Add \$4.95 for shipping charge, Colorado residents add 7% sales Tax.



### EIGHTH AIR FORCE

**THUNDERBOLT!**--By Robert S. Johnson. Story by one of the top Aces (56th FG) of the 8th with 28 kills. Aerial encounters with Luftwaffe. 306 pages. **\$19.95**  
**357th FIGHTER GROUP IN WWII**--By Merle Olmsted. High scoring 8th AF P-51 outfit had 42 Aces, won two DUCs. 180 photos, color. Hrb. 160 pages. **\$29.95**  
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**FIGHTERS OF THE MIGHTY EIGHTH**--Story of 8th AF Fighter Command. Details ops of all P-47, P-38, P-51 groups. 410 photos, color. Hrb. 264 pages. **\$39.95**  
**55th FIGHTER GROUP IN WWII**--New! Outstanding P-51 escort, strafing outfit with 8th. Won two DUCs. Missions, aircraft, Aces. 200 photos. Hrb. 176p. **\$34.95**

June 21, 1999

*Pat Past President Bob Smith's request on our contribution to 8<sup>th</sup> AF Museum at Savannah*

On September 30, 1994, I reported to the Hard Life and Treasurer, the disposition of 111 copies of the "Schweinfurt" lithographs as well as a statement showing a balance of \$72.39. Since that time copies were sent to the following:

	Copies	
Boeing Museum	1	
Gen. Buck Schuler	1	Heritage Museum
Gen. Leo Smith	1	SAC Museum
Ed Stern	3	
Duxford Museum	1	
Luxembourg Museum	1	
Schweinfurt Museum	1	
SAC Museum	6	Concessionaire (for sale)
Sales	<u>5</u>	@ \$125.00
Previous Balance	\$ 72.39	
Sales	625.00	
Postal Refund	<u>\$ 127.39</u>	
	\$ 824.78	
Expenses (Receipts on File)	\$ 833.65	
Lithographs on Hand	869	Sent to "Chuck" Smith

The 385th Gift of the Schweinfurt painting to the \$29 million Strategic Air Command Museum is something of which we can all be very proud.

June 22, 1999

## EXPENSES

May 6, 1998 Framing Mangelson's - Omaha	\$ 266.40
May 11, 1998 - Engraving	159.12
Mailing engraving to Omaha	5.50
Mailing to Drew Jimenz - March 17, 1997	4.89
Mailings at Mail Box, August 31, 1996	6.30
Mailing to Drew Jimenez, March 25, 1997	5.50
Mailing to Robert C. Hyden, December 7, 1997	5.50
Tubes and Tapes, May 1, 1998	11.32
Roger Feller, Luxemburg, May 1, 1998 - Mailing	11.65
Georg Schafer, Germany, May 1, 1998 - Mailing	11.65
Mark Bloomfield, England, April 16, 1998 - Mailing	16.93
Power Springs, GA, Jan 6, 1998 - Mailing	5.50
Fed Ex painting to Omaha, May 5, 1998	57.50
Telephone and miscellaneous	240.00
UPS Shipping to Chuck Smith	<u>114.99</u>
	\$ 833.65

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

May 1, 1999

Dear Ed,

Through the Hardlife Herald, Di and I would like to thank all the wonderful people we met at the Reunion in Savannah, for making us both so welcome. We had a great time with you all and were pleased to be able to bring a breath of Great Ashfield air to the event.

It was very special to be present at the dedication and unveiling of the memorial in the grounds of the Mighty Eighth Museum. We both think the committee is to be congratulated in putting together such an imposing structure, which will yet be personal to all your members. The texts used on it are particularly apt. The painting of the three trees is so different from any other memorial in the grounds and will make people wonder and question. It occurs to me that it might be appropriate to place a brass plaque next to the memorial, explaining the significance of the trees. This would certainly add interest and make people relate to the 385th and their history.

It was good to see so many of the flyers at Savannah and especially noteworthy that so many sons, daughters and grandchildren made the trip. We look forward now to your proposed visit to Great Ashfield next year.

We at Ashfield are always pleased to welcome you back but you need not wait for a reunion. Individuals and families can make their own way here. If you let us know beforehand, we will always make sure there is someone to show you around the Church and Airfield.

If anyone would like a copy of either of the 2 video tapes I took to Savannah, I can forward them on. They will cost **\$10 each** which covers producing, postage and packing. Please state which one you want:

1. 385th members on the Airfield and in the Village during the war, plus modern-day views of the Church, inside and out and the pages of the Memorial Book kept in the Church.

2. The complete TV programme, shown nation-wide in UK, of Ian McLachlan and the 'Time Team' uncovering archaeological evidence of the two 385th planes which crashed in Reedham Marshes in Norfolk.

Meanwhile, if we don't see you in Great Ashfield next year, we hope to renew acquaintances at the Albuquerque reunion in 2001!

Kind regards,

Roy & Di Barker  
Kiln Farm, School Road  
Great Ashfield  
Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk  
IP31 3HN  
Tel: 01359 241045  
Fax: 01359 241665  
E-mail: barker@agripro.co.uk

March 27, 1999

Dear Ed:

Thanks much for your quick reply to my letter of 17 March; it was nice of you to refresh my memory by mentioning you were Squadron Exec. But don't recall any "lectures" re a messy bunk area; all I have are pleasant memories, even though our quarters, showers and latrine were less than "plush", (more like flush).

Am sending the map and photos re the food drop under separate cover with a memo attached, the map is a "real creation". Feel free at any time to send another "home" of your choice.

Attached is my story re the mid-air collision and am pleased you indicated interest; don't know how you can put this long winded story in future editions but edit at your discretion. ( This story starts on page 4). This story appears in a recent book by Gerald Astor, "The Mighty Eighth". Included also is a photo which appears in the first 385th BG history book, (have another from a different angle that I will make copies of and send), my 35 mission "graduation photo" and a crew photo that I have never seen in any publication that featured crew pictures.

Included is a cover letter to Ian McLachlan that is self explanatory.

Looking forward to your comments re all the information, please stay in touch.

Sincerely,

Myron Loyet  
10254 Parkinson Avenue  
Whittier, CA 90605  
562-941-1892

Dear Mr & Mrs Gallagher

Thank you for the nice letter you sent me. It was a great honour for me and my wife to stay with you and all the other heros of WWII. Those were the greatest days in my life. I'm afraid when I see what is going on again in Europe. We are not able to live in freedom. And again the young men from the US Air Force have to do the work for us. I would like to have a better English to tell you but I'm sure you can understand me. By arriving home the people from Perle were asking how the members of the 385th BG are going and they asked what is new with the members of our Bomb Group.

Now about the fare and the other charges. Please stay in contact with us, don't forget your friends in Perle, that's all we want. You and your friends from the 385th BG did enough for us. It was already too much when you paid the hotel charge. Thank you very much.

I'm planning a ceremony for the 55th anniversary of the crash on 10 of July. You will get an invitation and a program in time. Thank you again for all and hope to see you again in Perle. Our town is always open for you and all the members of the 385th Bomb Group.

Your friend Roger and Jeanny Feller  
22 Rue de L'Ermitage  
L-8833 Wolwelange  
Luxembourg

P.S. Nice greeting to Mister Wayne Ziegler and his wife. Please send me his address. We would like to say thank you.

Dear Ed:

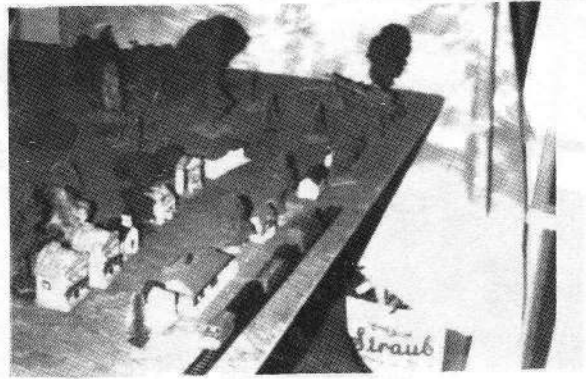
Enclosed please find photos of my collection.

I would like to find a trailer to put it all in so I can take it to the Air Show, also to the Reunions. I also have been thinking of donating my collection to a collector or to a museum.

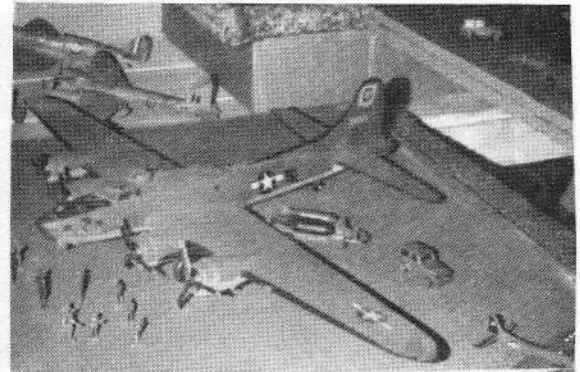
Also our local T.V. station, Channel 35 has a program called Route 35, where they visit local and near by areas that have different hobbies for their broadcast on the local T.V. Station. If I can get a copy of it I'll send it to you.

I was planning on coming to the reunion but due to a ruptured vessel and surgery it will be impossible. I am feeling much better and as long as I follow the doctors instructions, I'll do okay.

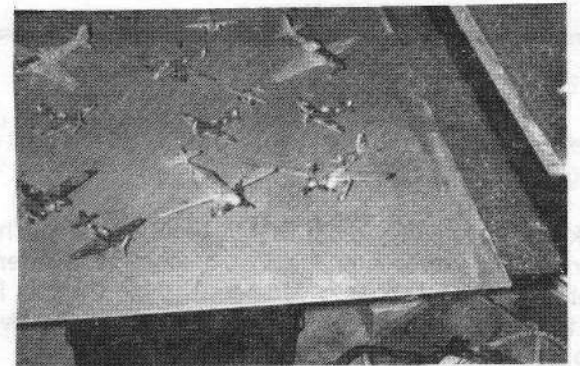
Sincerely,  
Merritt Andrews  
1117 Clifton Drive  
Erie, PA 16505



Elmswell, England: as near as I can remember



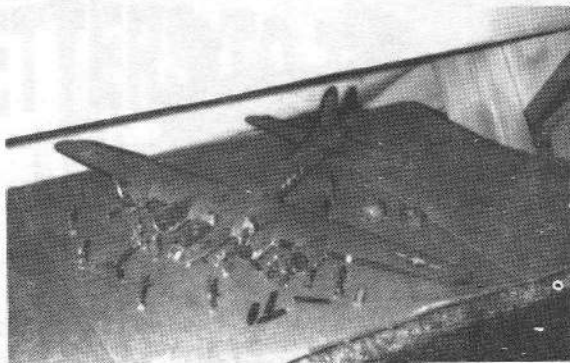
"Mr. Smith"



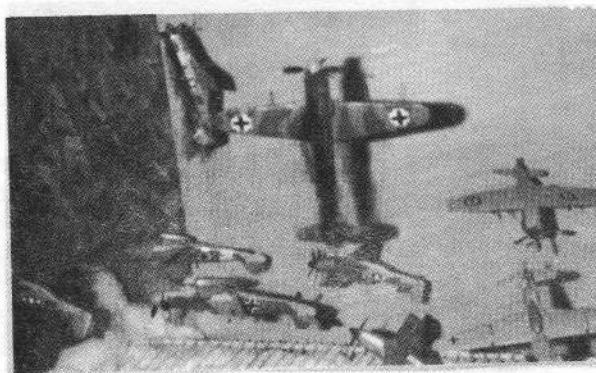
British, German & American fighters



Great Ashfield with Elmswell in background



Crashed B-17



Fighters in action

Dear Ed:

I hope you are well and wish you and yours all the best of everything throughout 1999.

Thank you for the two 385th BGMA newsletters which arrived yesterday. Extremely interesting as always. With reference to the letter to you by Mr. Bob Wills concerning Captain Hutchinsons tragic fate: Enclosed is a photograph of the two 385th Bomb Group B-17s printed by my friend Mike Bailey.

Having been very actively involved in the recovery of many relics from the crash sites on Needham Marshes in the early 1970's for the 390th BG Memorial Muesum with the rest of our small group.

Among the many 8th Air Force veterans who were there when It mattered most was the late and great John Ford of the 385th BG Association

In 1977, I requested Mike Bailey to print the enclosed picture, giving him as many details as possible. The printed picture, together with many exhibits subsequently recovered, is now on display at the 390th Bomb Group Memorial Air Museum.

I saw Jan Mac. At a recent FOTE meeting at Bury St. Edmunds and he told me that a TV program would shortly be shown on Channel 4 TV concerning the Hutchinson-Pease story.

A very fitting tribute to a few of the many thousands.

Another friend who is also actively involved with the 385th Bomb Group, Mark Bloomfield, showed me a superb scale model of the 385th Bomb Group B-17F "Ohio Air Force" which he recently completed.

Best Wishes,

I.L. Hawkins  
29 Birch Avenue  
Bacton,Stowmarket  
Suffold, IP14 4NT  
Tel: Bacton 781561





Dear Mr. Stern:

When we spoke on the phone 10 days ago, you mentioned putting an ad in the "Hardlife Herlad" regarding service information about my father-in-law Gene Ewvns. If you can do this in the next issue I would greatly appreciate it. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to find out any information on him either at the reunion or at the museum.

Thank you so much for your help! If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to call me.

Sincerely,  
Tom Poston

# WANTED!



Any information  
regarding the  
service history of

## Gene E. Evens

from  
Jeffersonville, Ind.

Gene (born September 18, 1926) was a photographer with the 385th. He was shot down over occupied France in early 1945, recovered in a hospital in England and then returned to the States. If you have any information about him (e.g., his plane, crew, missions flown) please contact me.

Fred W. Poston  
3115 Laurel Lane  
Cape Girardeau, MO 63701  
573-334-4352  
Email: fwposton@mvp.net



Dear Sir:

Research of B17-G – 42-979-40 (385th Bomb Group).

I have continued my research on the fore mentioned aircraft and have now gathered a considerable amount of information, but to date I am still short of the following details:

A) Names of the crew and what happened to them for the remainder of the war and are any still living.

B) When the aircraft was repaired with the tail end of "Dozy Doats", what was the number of "Dozy Doats", used as there were more than one aircraft called "Dozy Doats."

C) The aircraft was then called "Half and Half" but I do not know the aircraft number. Again there were more than one aircraft called by this name.

If you are able to help with this information, I will be able to continue my research and I will be most grateful.

Recently I have paid a visit to Great Ashfield and obtained some photographs, I expect you already have such photographs but just in case you have not I have enclosed some for your interest.

The bronze memorial plate was cast by a company based in Bury St. Edmunds call Robert Boby Ltd. With which I served my engineering apprenticeship.

Also I have spoken with Mr. Bernard Hughes who was present when the memorial plate was originally placed in front of the control tower at Great Ashfield in 1944.

We both would like to carry out some cleaning works on the bronze plate, do you see any reason why this should not be possible.

I await your reply in anticipation.

Yours faithfully,  
John F.G. Forster  
16 West View  
Stowmarket, Suffolk  
IP14 1SD England

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Let's try to help Bruce get information on his dad.

Dear Ed:

I am writing you hoping you will print this letter in the Hardlife Herald. My father, Robert E. Bennett 0-743165, flew with the 548th Sq. from July '43 until March '44. I am hoping that any members of the 385th BGMA reading this letter might be inclined to write to me about my father.

I would like to know about any knowledge anyone might have, from missions to weekends in London. I have all kinds of questions that need answering and would love the opportunity to correspond with any and all members who would write. My address is listed below.

Thank you for your consideration and cooperation.

Bruce Bennett  
16316 97th Ave Ct. E  
Puyallup, WA 98375  
Ph: 253-848-5784

Greetings Ian:

I read with great interest your story in the December 1998 Hardlife, especially the part of your digs on the Pease airplane and that Anne Gordon is going to recreate the nose art per "Sleepy Time Gal".

This excites me no little, as I have good reason to believe that the Pease airplane was most probably the same the Richey crew flew on our record run to Munster on 10/10/43.

We were flying aboard a spare that day as our ship 4230737 was in the shop for bandaids after being badly hammered on the mission to Marienburg the day before on the 9th. I have wrestled for years to remember the name of that airplane we flew, thinking it was something like Slo Jo or Rum Dum, only to cross of those names when I got my hands on the official load list which gave the numbers 42-5963.

When you printed the aircraft roster in Hardlife in June 1989, I scanned it for the number 42-5963 and found only one with the last three digits 963. It was the Pease airplane, only numbered 237963, hardly the one I was looking for.

It was in the February 1999 issue of Hardlife that Bill Varnedoe came up with a roster he says is "all" the 385th's B-17s. The only plane I found the numbers 963 was the Pease (spelled Peace) ship with the numbers 42-37963, and named Sleepy Time Gal.

So what do you think? I wonder if you have dug the real numbers from the "dig" yet, or will you ever? I'd like to know.

As you can readily see, I am enclosing one of the flyers that are to be stacked by a pile of my book "Letters to Hardlife" in the Gift Shop at the Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum in Savannah. Recognize the pic of Sir Richey? You should you know, it's scanned from the one you sent.

Tom Helman  
718 Sherman Street  
Medford, OR 97504  
541-772-7876

Dear Ed:

I dated a British girl in 1944 who worked at the Office of War Information in London.

Besides our pleasant association, she provided me with an album full of pictures from her files, all of which I selected myself.

This photo is among several that seem of particular interest to all who view it. Please see legend on reverse of picture.

Best regards,  
 "Chuck" Halper  
 Major USAF (Ret)  
 20508 Harvest Ave  
 Lakewood Calif 90715



#### CAPTURED BOY SOLDIERS

Those 14-year-old boys shown in German Army uniforms March 29, 1945, were captured with older German soldiers by units of the Sixth Armored Division, Third U.S. Army, as they advanced east of the Rhine River near Borstadt, 2 miles northeast of Frankfurt-on Main.

Signal Corps Photo  
 Serviced by London OWI to List B  
 Certified as passed by shaff censor

Dear Ed:

Thanks for the two copies of Hardlife.

I have had a little misfortune of late in that I went to the Kemet hospital on the 8th of May unable to breath properly. Well, on the 9th of May they fitted me with a "pace maker" and I was there for 7 days.

I am now staying with my daughter here in Grand Terrace for recovery.

My three children have forbidden me to live alone at the 5th Wheel Trailer I own at Kemet RV Park, so I have decided to go into a retirement home where I get three meals

A day and they will look after me. There I will want the Hardlife sent to the address listed below. I'll be just 3 miles from my daughter "a nurse" and 4 miles from my oldst son. Will, my middle son "a H.A. Paramedic" still will be close enough to see me more often.

I am 83 years old now and they just don't want me to live alone so far away. So I am moving in to "The Palms Retirement Place on Monday, 7 June, 99

Thanks again for your thinking of me. I remain  
 Forrest V. Poore  
 "The Palms"  
 25585 Van Leuven #279  
 Loma Linda, CA 92354

Dear Ed:

I'm writing to ask a favor, as we or should I say Peggy has not had the H.L.H. of the last 2 copies. I have made inquiries at the Post Office, they in turn passed us onto the customer relations office who have asked me to get as much information as possible, ie what date as near as possible these H.L.H. would have been sent.

I would say at this stage I don't think you are to blame for these missing books as we have had trouble with the 447th Rattlesden News Letter and a letter I should have received from Milwaukee, a vet from the 92nd BG we met at Mildred Hall 2 years ago, and who is due to be at Duxford in July, but at this stage we don't know what date, the 92nd was Paddington, 100 miles away north of Ashfield.

In case you had not heard, our "Sally B" was marooned on the Channel Islands during the winter, the fault of an engine and it was by the kindness and generosity of a lot of people all over the world including the 385th and other individuals in the States, an engine was found and paid for and "Sally B" is now able to fly again and preparations have been made for various air shows.

No one of the 385th is coming back to this country that we have heard of - have you, however we had a mini-reunion in March to Ashfield Church and runway.

Peggy and I were very pleased to have hosted three young girls, one we think is married to an Air Force guy in the States and this young lady's grandpa is John Pettenger. He and Ruth were very pleased that she had met up with us and so were we.

Coming back to the H.L.H.s, etc, I can only think that someone within the postal authorities took a fancy to the U.S. postal packages for these to be from 3 different towns in the states.

We certainly hope that their episode is not going to be end of our association with you, U.S. folks.

Best wishes to you and yours,  
Leo and Peggy

---

Ed:

I want to let you know that I obtained a copy of "And No Purple Heart" by Frank Mays. Franks' ship "War Horse" was also my home away from home starting just before D-Day, 1944, and I must say, his recollections of our missions brought back a lot of buried memories.

It is a well written book from a different viewpoint that little ball hanging out of the bottom of the airplane. I didn't think too much about it at the time, but Frank makes me realize

That the ball was not a very nice place to be.

I hope all of the roster members of the 385th will take a crack at it and recall all the emotions of terror, joy, gloom and other maybe forgotten feelings that the book will bring as you revisit WW II in the air.

We have been e-mailing back and forth for several weeks now and have almost enough anecdotes to start another book. Great fun and good job Frank.

Jim (The Duke) Skophammer  
666 Orange Street  
Daly City, CA 94014  
Sixdayjim@aol.com

I was "King in the book!"

---

Dear Ed:

James C. Dacey was the tail gunner in our original crew. He was an avid photographer and his war photographs have appeared in the *Hardlife Herald* and his artwork on calendars.

Jim attended the Savannah reunion with his son, James Jr., and by all accounts thoroughly enjoyed it. Unfortunately, the strain weakened him and he was hospital-confined on his return to Arlington and died a few days thereafter.

The handwritten enclosure with this letter was written by Jim while in the hospital. The typewritten letter is from his son, James, Jr., who reports on the pleasure his father received from attending the reunion. During his father's funeral, James, Jr. had a cousin read *High Flight* to conclude the service.

Please use your editorial judgement as to whether these enclosures should be printed in the *Hardlife Herald*.

Very truly yours,

Mike Gallagher

(Written Letter)

Dear Mike and Marion,

Please accept my apologies for not showing up at your social activity following the dinner. After a week's wonderful activities it would have been too much.

The Reunion. What can be said? We expected it to be a smash hit and it was. Seeing old friends and acquaintances, meeting many more. I finally met Hruska and Ed Stern. The memorial unveiling was dramatic and the original five of us together. And after all these years: the Lieberthals! You did a selling job.

Well, my son and I returned to Arlington, but it turned out to be more of a struggle than expected. Probably no surprise, I'm in the hospital with my breathing problems, again. I'll be home by the time you receive this.

Best regards,  
Jim Dacey, Sr.

(Typewritten letter)

Dear Mr. Gallagher:

It was a pleasure meeting you and your wife last month in Savannah. My father and I had a great time on the trip. It meant so much for him to be there with the group, and to see the museum. And he was really himself at the dinner with his old buddies.

The memorial service took place May 1 in Arlington. We kept it simple – as he would have liked, we think – and I introduced members of the family and friends of his to speak. Among the latter were Bob Beatson and Col. Harry Cruver, whom you may know from the Eighth Air Force. When everyone had spoken, I asked my cousin to read *High Flight* to conclude the service. It seemed so fitting, don't you think?

As we discussed, I am interested in having my father's name engraved on the Wall of Valor. Please contact me at your convenience on how we might accomplish this.

Enclosed is a card my father wrote to you in the hospital just before his condition worsened.

My compliments to you for organizing that wonderful reunion. I shall carry that short week in Savannah forever in my heart.

Sincerely,

Jim Dacey Jr.  
52A North Bedford St  
Arlington, VA 22201  
703-522-1695

---

Mr. James Dacey, Jr.

Dear Jim:

You can probably imagine my dismay when I called earlier today to reminisce with Jim our experiences at the Savannah Reunion...and then learned that he went into the hospital on Friday, the day after his return from Savannah! Then, to learn in our conversation that he passed away this past week was quite a shock.

I am EXTREMELY happy that you and your Dad made the reunion trip together. He and I had an opportunity for "another beer together" in the hospitality room and, believe me, it was a true joy for me to get to meet you. Your dad and

I became even closer friends these past few years and I called him on many occasions — for which I am now most grateful.

Needless to say, I was most pleased to know that Jim had a marvelous time at the reunion and that he was very glad he had attended. (For the benefit of those who are receiving copies of this letter, the following is added here: Jim's physician felt that the reunion activities did not bring on his death..that it would have happened soon in any event. Jim Jr. and I have agreed that it would have been Jim's choice to attend the reunion in spite of any possible adverse effects.)

With every Best Wish...and, once again, my admiration for your Dad and the friendship which we achieved together. We were privileged to share an incredible part of our lives

Sincerely,

Bob Silver

---

Dear Mr. Stern:

My name is Mrs. Willis A. Rosser. My husband was Lt. Willis A. Rosser, Jr., bombardier of the 85th.

He passed away last month. He did one tour in B-17 of 30 ops came home and volunteered to come back to England. I was then in the WAAF. He did another tour in B-26 in England and Germany. He had the D.F.C. , the air medal-2 clusters. I don't think there are any of his crew left as he was the youngest. He went to join up the day after Pearl Harbor, but had to wait – his birthday was Christmas Day. He was one of the youngest men on the heavy Bombers. His pilot, Ben James died about 3 years ago and his Navigator, Leo was killed soon after he came home. His co-pilot was called Foss, but we were never able to find him.

He went to school and became a very well known scientist and helped build the first big gas laser at Avco Everet Boston.

He worked his last 14 years for Hughes at White Sands, NY and built large gas lasers.

He leaves one son who is also a scientist. 1 daughter –a professor at U of A, 1 daughter who is a reporter on an Equine mag and 4 grandchildren. He was sick a long time but God was good and he just died without having to go to a nursing home.

I miss him very much after 54 years, but he is at peace now, unfortunately he suffered lots of demons.

Ivy E. Rosser  
1850 N Camino Alicante  
Tucson, AZ 85715

Dear Mr. Stern:

In talking with several of Dick's crew about the reunion in Savannah, they suggested I send Dick's obituary to you as they believe you might like to have it to include with the records of the 385th Bm Gr. And Dick should be remembered at the memorial breakfast. I am sorry I did not get it to you sooner. But in my grief I just could not bring myself to speak about Dick's long illness and death. To everyone he knew, Dick was so devoted to his crew, the 385th and his war experience. I of course spoke with them about Dick's death. And now Roy and Margaret Courtney have now convinced me I should try to attend this coming reunion. I have felt I could not – but I believe now I will try.

Sincerely,  
Joan Knight  
240 Sand Key Estates  
Dr-22  
Clearwater, FL 33767

Dear Ed,

I am sorry to have to tell you that my dear husband, Thomas has died. He died on March 3, 1999 in a convalescent center in Encinitas, Calif.

I am enclosing a copy read at his services at Ft. Rosecrans, San Diego, Calif on March 11, 1999.

Also enclosing a letter I found while going through some old *Hardlife* *Heralds*. He evidently read the article on Page 10 of the April, 1992 issue and wrote the letter to you, but didn't mail it. I never saw the letter before now. I was in between the pages in that issue.

Being a part of the U.S. Army Air Corps was the highlight of Tom's life. He never forgot his years in the Corp and the friends he made while there.

I and my family and friends will miss him so very much, as he was truly loved by all.

I think you will remember Tom as he was the one who said to you that "Valley City was the hell-hole of creation" while he was on a navigational mission out of Hondo, Texas while he was in training.

Anyway I just want to get things straightened out.

Sincerely,  
Mary Monroe

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** Valley City was my hometown.

Thomas De Witt Monroe died on Wednesday, March 3, 1999, after many years of illness associated with Parkinson's disease.

He was born in Columbia City, Indiana, on September 10, 1917. His parents were Thomas De Witt and Hazel Schinbekler Monroe. He also has one living sister, Mary Marie Monroe of Lake of the Cherokees, Oklahoma. He also leaves his wife, Mary Dorsey Monroe and his two daughters, Mrs. Kathleen Martin of Prundale, California, and Mrs. Christine McGivern of Manhattan Beach, California. He has three grandchildren: Mrs. Lisa Wilkinson of Montecito, California, Mrs. Michelle Mackin of San Jose, California, and Michael Crane of Monterey, California. Also one great grandson, Tyler Mackin.

Tom's early education took place in the public schools of Columbia City, Indiana, and resulted in him going on to Purdue University.

He came west in 1939, and worked at North American Aviation in Inglewood, until he joined the Army Air Corps in 1943. He served overseas with the 8th Air Force, 385th Bomb Group, Bomb Squadron 550, Elmswell England, as a navigator on a B-17 Flying Fortress, the *Gypsy Princess*. He flew 35 missions over Germany. He received numerous medals including the coveted "Air Medal". He was involved in the food drop over Holland, which saved the starving Dutch.

After WW II, he worked at the Southern California Gas Company and the Tappan Stove Company as a Sales Representative.

He was recalled to the Air Force as a Reserve Officer in 1950, and was sent initially to Keesler, Air Base in Biloxi, Mississippi and then on to Amarilla Air Base in Amarillo, Texas, where he was assigned as the Commanding Officer for all Foreign Air Force students.

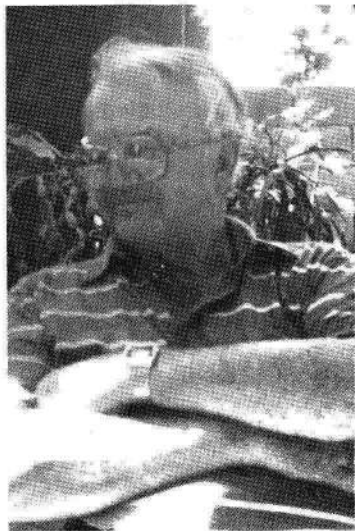
He left the Air Force as a Captain and came back to Manhattan Beach, California, with his wife and two daughters. He took a job as a Sales Representative with Gaffers and Sattler and retired from that company after 28 years. He then worked for three more years as Sales Representative with other companies.

He married Mary Forrest Dorsey on February 9, 1942 in Manhattan Beach, California, where he lived for 39 years. He lived in Woodbridge, Irvine, California for six years and in Carlsbad, California for 12 years.

He was a life member of the BPO Elks and a member of the 385th Bomb Group Association.

He and his wife traveled extensively throughout Europe.

He was a wonderful and giving husband, father and grandfather. He was always there when someone needed anything. He will be sadly missed.



Thomas D Monroe

### DON ROBERT WILLIAMS

Don Robert Williams passed away on April 6, 1999, at 12:10 pm. His ashes are interred at home in an urn under a framed, signed picture of the bombing of Schweinfurt, a ball-bearing factory in Germany during WW II.

His is missed by his family: Carol Williams, his wife; Greg Williams, his son; Hilary Heizenrader, his daughter, and her family—Tim, Courtney, and Alex; Megan Brown, his daughters, and her sons—Ian and Colin; Jean Putrino, his sister, and her children—Louise, Tommy, David, and Deirdre; and Todie Pickens, his sister-in-law, and her children—Sharon, Kerri Jo, and Wright.

Following his discharge from the Army Air Corps in 1945, he married Carol Kunze and went to college at both Oregon State and the University of Oregon on the GI Bill, getting an M.B.A. from the latter. He eventually ended up at ESCO Corporation as its Data Processing and Accounting Managers for 30 years. He built a home on the GI Bill, in which he died as was his wish. He worked in the Great Books Program, the Unitarian Church, and Junior Achievement in his life and, at the end of it, raced MG's in rallies and bought a 1978 Rolls Royce to ferry his family around in.

He talked of the war—the firebombing of Dresden, D-Day, and his flights and his crew and his bomber—Lil Audrey. He was proud to have been a B-17 pilot and was scared of its awesome responsibilities. But he remained a spiritual leader and the chief jokester for his family and friends right to the end, bringing us all home safely to a home filled with books about WW II and the European campaigns. There was not a man in that generation in our family who had not served in Europe during WW II. We in the family are proud of all of them and will remember that each military cam-

Although he is not Jewish, he supported anti-genocide legislation in Europe and he has a daughter who is Jewish, Megan. He has been given a Yahrzeit at Temple Beth Israel, where she is a member of the congregation. Gifts are not necessary. My father was our gift. He had lived for 75 years before he died, and his political values have inspired me through difficult American times.

Megan Brown

### Riverside

### Brian Thompson

Graveside services for Brian Chandler Thompson, formerly of Riverside, will be at 2:45 p.m. Monday at Riverside National Cemetery. He died of pneumonia Thursday at Vencor Hospital in Brea. He was 79.

Preston and Simons Mortuary in Riverside is handling arrangements.

Mr. Thompson, who was born in Bismarck, N. D., lived in Riverside 40 years before moving to Foothill Ranch three years ago. He served in the U. S. Air Force for 23 years before being discharged in 1965 with the rank of lieutenant colonel. He was a pilot, navigator and bombardier and received the Distinguished Flying Cross and Air Medal with three Oak Leaf Clusters. He served in the 8th and 15th Air Force flying operational bombing missions over Europe during World War II.

He graduated from Minot High School in 1936 and attended the University of North Dakota in Grand Forks, N. D.

Mr. Thompson is survived by a daughter, Nicola of Riverside; a son, Jay of Foothill Ranch; two grandchildren; and two brothers, Dr. James of Huntington Beach and Richard of Albuquerque.

The family suggests memorial contributions to Alzheimer's Association of Orange County, 2540 North Santiago Blvd., 92667.



**William H. Koon Jr.**

LAFAYETTE — Funeral services will be held at 11 a.m. Wednesday, May 19, 1999, at a Mass of Christian Flowers in the Delhomme Bertrand Chapel of the Flowers for William Henry Koon Jr., 82, who died at 11:20 p.m. Sunday, May 16, 1999, at Our Lady of Lourdes Regional Medical Center.

The Rev. Monsignor Glen Provost, pastor of the Our Lady of Fatima Catholic, will celebrate the Mass. Several musical selections will be rendered by Conrad Breaux, soloist, accompanied by Joni Hamilton, organist.

Interment will take place in Sacred Heart Cemetery in Baldwin.

A native of Brewton, Ala., Mr. Koon was a resident of Lafayette since 1945. He was the son of the late William H. Koon Sr. and the former Bama Arnold. Soon after his graduation from Brewton High School, he became employed by H.J. Heinz Company as a sales representative.

During World War II, Mr. Koon served with the 385th Bombardment Group with the U.S. Army Air Corps in England. Following the war, he returned to work with H.J. Heinz Company, later retiring with 38 years of employment. Soon after his retirement, he started working with Joe Ewell Company Inc. and worked for them nine years.

William was a member of the 385th Bomber Group Memorial Association, Lafayette Association of Traveling Salesmen (LATS), and Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church Parish. He was a loving husband, father and grand-

father and will be missed by all of them.

Mr. Koon is survived by his wife, the former Lula Breaux of Lafayette; two sons and their wives, Keith and Occi Koon of Crowley and Billy and Bonnie Koon of Little Rock, Ark.; one daughter and her husband, Maribeth and Charlie Brashares of The Woodlands, Texas; and seven grandchildren, Chris Koon, Colleen Koon, Casy Koon, Jennifer Brashares, Kelly Brashares, Christy Brashares and Teri Brashares.

Pallbearers will be Dale Landry, Randy Pate, Ronny Breaux, Charles Koon, Chris Koon and Jessie Theriot.

The family requests that any donations in Mr. Koon's memory be made to Hospice of Acadiana, 2600 Johnston St., Suite 200, Lafayette, La., 70503-3240.

Visiting hours are to be observed from 4 p.m. to 9 p.m. today and from 8 a.m. Wednesday until service time.

The funeral is under the direction of Delhomme Funeral Home, 1011 Bertrand Drive, Lafayette.

**PAYNE, Brigadier General (Ret.) Robert Albert**

Brigadier General (Ret.) Robert Albert Payne, 82, formerly of Riverview Terrace, Suffield, a retired Brigadier General Base Commander at the Strategic Air Command at Westover Air Force Base in Chicopee, MA and retired education service specialist with the Department of Education in Hartford, died on Friday (April 30, 1999) at Quabbin Valley Health Care in Athol, MA after a period of declining health. He leaves his wife of 35 years, Virginia C. (Mahan) Payne. They were married in Suffield on Jan. 17, 1964. He also leaves several nieces and nephews. He was born in Wallingford on Aug. 18, 1916 to the late Albert Charles and Minnie (McMonagle) Payne. Educated in Connecticut and Westfield, MA public schools, he was a graduate of Westfield High School. He also received his BS and BA in Personnel Management from AIC in Springfield, MA in June of 1953. He is a World War II Veteran and also a Prisoner of War from Nov. 29, 1943 - May 1, 1945 in Germany. He was a pilot with the B-17 (548th Bomb Squad and the 385th Bomb Group). He received many service campaign medals, including the Prisoner of War Medal and the Purple Heart for wounds received in November 24, 1943 in the European Theatre. He worked for 22 years in Hartford with the Department of Education, retiring in April of 1979. He was a member of many military associations, most notably the Combat Pilot's Association 548th Bomb Squad 385th Bomb Group, attending many reunions, also a member of many amateur radio repeater associations. Military Funeral Services will be on Monday, 10:15 a.m. from the Pillsbury Funeral Home, 96 South Barre Road, Barre, MA, with members of the Patriots Honor Squad from Hanscom Air Force Base. A Liturgy of Christian Burial at 11 a.m. at St. Aloysius Church in Gilbertville, MA. Burial will be private at Hillcrest Park Cemetery in Springfield, MA. Calling hours, Sunday evening, 5-8 p.m. at Pillsbury Funeral Home in Barre, MA. Memorials in lieu of flowers to the charity of the donor's choice.



**Harold Heibredor**

RANTOUL — Harold Thomas Heibredor, 75, of Rantoul died at 10:06 p.m. Friday (March 26, 1999) at his home.

Funeral Mass was to be at 9 a.m. today at St. Malachy Catholic Church, Rantoul, with Father [Name] officiating. Burial will be at Pleasant Hill Cemetery, Blissfield, Mich.

Lux Memorial Chapel is handling arrangements.

Mr. Heibredor was born March 9, 1924, in Quincy, a son of Charles August and Caroline A. Haug Heibredor. He married Jo Ann Ator on June 11, 1949, in Pittsfield. She died July 29, 1996.

Survivors include six sons, David Heibredor of Olney, James Heibredor of Champaign, William Heibredor of Marion, Stephen Heibredor of Urbana, Douglas Heibredor of Monroe, Mich., and Paul Heibredor of Furay, two daughters, Elizabeth Connell of Bloomington and Amy Stout of Marion; 18 grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by three brothers, a sister and a son.

Mr. Heibredor served in the Army Air Forces from 1943 to 1945. He flew 29 missions over Europe in a B-17 bomber. He served in the 8th AF 385th Bomb Group.

He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1947 with a bachelor's degree in advertising. He worked for WMBD radio in Peoria, then for WGEM-TV in Quincy. He was advertising director at Golden Rule Life Insurance for 14 years, and was publisher of the Blissfield Advance newspaper in Blissfield, Mich., for 15 years.

Memorial contributions may be made to Families of Spinal Muscular Atrophy, P.O. Box 196, Libertyville, IL 60048.



**LETTER FROM NORM VALENTINE TO FRED WILLIAMS**

I READ YOUR LETTER TO Truman Smith in the Feb. HLH and recalled reading something that may answer your question, if the question is still unanswered. The enclosed well written article was in the Aug. '98 issue of FLIGHT JOURNAL magazine. Although it concerns B-24s I would think the B-17 take-off form up procedure was much the same.

I was one of the original members of the 385th when it formed up under Maj. Vandevanter at Gieger Field, Spokane Washington in 1943. I was not a Crew Member, but in England I was "Ground Pilot" ( Staff Car Driver) for the 4th Combat Bomb Wing C.O., B/G Frederick Castle. The Wing had five BGs. in it's command. Castle was shot down Dec. 24th, 1944. He was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for giving his life while leading the largest ever mission of over 2000 aircraft in relief of our men in The Battle of The Bulge. I had the same duty for his replacement, B.G Robert Burns.

I witnessed many take off assemblies and believe me it was awesome to see that many large fully loaded Bombers maneuver in a steady stream to the end of the runway. They may have been "out" the day before, and they may have to go "out" again tomorrow. I can still hear the roar of the engines and the squeal of the brakes.

They took off, and landed, in all kinds of weather. I recall seeing ground crews throw ropes over the wings to pull the snow off just before take-off.

Hope this helps you our.

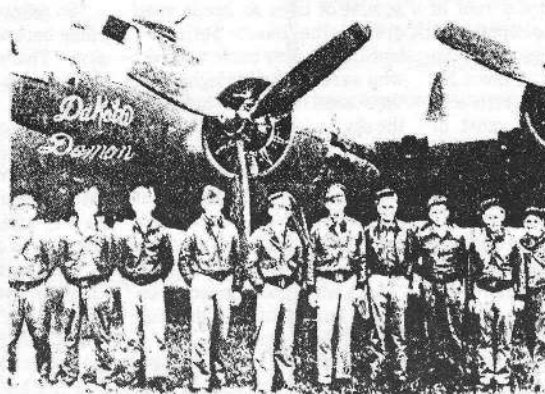
Best regards,

Norm Valentine  
721 Lawrence Lane  
Ambler, PA 19002

# England's 'Little America'



Mike Nichols

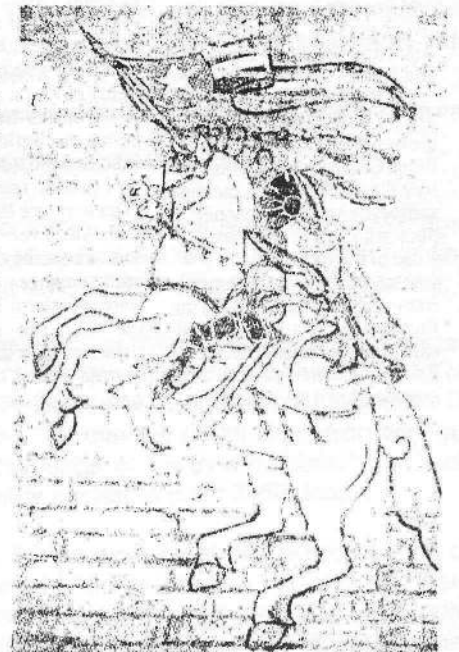


Ed Kueppers Jr./8th Air Force Historical Society

Thousands of American airmen stationed in East Anglia won the hearts of their English neighbors as they helped win WW II.

American Air Museum at Duxford has many vintage WW II aircraft, including a P-51 Mustang, left.

Perhaps inspired by the Texas state flag, airmen Americanized an English knight, on a wall in the club at Horam air base.



Mike Nichols

# Where Yanks ruled the skies

MIKE NICHOLS

Universal Press Syndicate

## EAST ANGLIA, ENGLAND —

They were bank clerks, mechanics and soda jerks — just boys, many of them — who became swashbucklers in the sky over Europe.

During World War II, 350,000 members of the Army's 8th Air Force — the largest aerial armada ever assembled — were stationed in East Anglia, England, a region of thatched cottages, stone churches and wheat fields northeast of London. In advance of an Allied ground assault on Hitler's "Fortress Europe," 60 air bases were hastily scraped out of those wheat fields in an area the size of Rhode Island. From the bases, many fewer than 10 miles apart, the 8th Air Force flew hundreds of daylight bombing missions, and this corner of England became known as Little America.

Little is left of the air bases a half-century later. They have reverted to forest and farmland or given way to industrial parks. But here and there a crumbling runway, a derelict control tower, a rusting barrack evoke a time when village girls found themselves dancing cheek to cheek with American airmen, and farmers found themselves living plow to propeller with American B-17s, B-24s, P-51s and P-47s.

Bill Eady is one of those farmers. He was 22 when Lavenham air base was built for the 487th Bomb Group, engulfing his family's Elms Farm. When the dust settled, he had 2,900 new neighbors who drove bombers instead of tractors.

"Our house was 100 yards from where the nearest Flying Fortress was parked," he recalls. "It was named Shu Shu Baby. It flew 96 raids in all. I remember that it got shot up a lot.



Mike Nichols

Interior walls of the Swan Hotel still bear signatures of airmen who served at nearby Lavenham.

The planes were very loud, but we got used to them. Life went on."

And so did death. Thirty thousand Americans were killed while serving from air bases in England.

Eady stands on the roof of Lavenham's cube-shaped control tower and gazes out at the fields as if at a ghost town. He slowly turns in a circle and points to buildings, most of which are no longer there.

"I can still see it all," he says. "That's where the bomb dump was. And over there was the shed where they ran in new aircraft engines. The barracks were over there. Back there was the PX. The main runway stretched from that stack of hay to over toward those cottages. And an anti-aircraft gun was

over there. A bloke was stationed there 24 hours a day."

As the wind sighs around the corner of the tower and swirls the wheat stubble, it is difficult not to hear the cough of B-17 engines as they cranked to life, the squeal of tires as Jeeps sped around the base's perimeter track, the jaunty banter of fliers who were invincible right up to the second they were shot out of the sky.

Eady, like most East Anglians, remembers the Americans fondly. "You couldn't want to mix with a nicer bunch of fellows. The Americans became part of us." Then he laughs. "That's why I got married when I did. I knew that if I didn't nab my girl, they would."

Lavenham is one of the better-preserved air bases in East

Anglia. Short stretches of runway and a dozen or so buildings still stand on land owned by farmers Eady and John Pawsey and Trevor Rix. Pawsey hopes to preserve the control tower as a tribute to the 487th.

"So many of the Americans come back to see the field," he says. "That's what keeps us going to keep the control tower standing."

Near the control tower is a pile of concrete rubble, remnants of the main runway. When veterans visit their old air base, Pawsey gives each a chunk of concrete as a memento.

"If not for them," he says, "we all might live in a far different world today."

On the neighboring Rix farm hunker tin-skinned Nissen huts — better known as Quonsets —

that housed the base's cinema, kitchen and mess hall. All are now filled with farming miscellanea. The officers' club is a farm workshop, the sounds of camaraderie replaced by the sounds of tractor engines. The commanding officer's quarters is overgrown with brush; his personal bomb shelter shelters a rusting yellow Morris Minor.

Ten miles northeast of Lavenham is Rattlesden air base, home of the 322nd and 447th bomb groups. John Garrod farms part of the old base. He was a schoolboy during the war and remembers the tremendous noise as planes from bases in East Anglia assembled in the sky for bombing missions.

"We once counted 900 planes in the air before we gave up. If we were in school when they took off, we had to stop our lessons until they were gone. No one could hear."

As he speaks, his voice resonates somewhere between nostalgia and dread. Rattlesden's control tower and runway are now used by a glider club. In stark contrast to the bombers, on weekends, gliders soar above the old base in silence.

Like many who lived near the bases, Garrod keeps in touch with some of his former American neighbors.

"I still get Christmas cards from them," he says. "And I see them when they come back to visit the old base."

The drive between Lavenham and Rattlesden is typical East Anglia, where milk is delivered in glass bottles to doorsteps at dawn: A narrow, winding country road passes signs announcing "duck crossing," "free-range eggs" and "stud entrance 300 yards." Cars share the road with tractors and an occasional equestrian in rid-

Please see ENGLAND, 4

# England's 'Little America'

ENGLAND, from 1

ing outfit. Homes bear signs announcing their names, such as Abbey Farm, Malting Cottage, Poplar Bungalow, Woodstock Barn. Each home, no matter how humble, has a flower garden.

All the villages of East Anglia have a High Street with a church and a pub. Churches are made of flintstone, mined here for 4,000 years, and pubs have compound names like the Hound and Hares or the Rose and Crown.

Many of the churches and pubs were already standing when Constable and Gainsborough painted here, when Thomas Paine, Nelson and Cromwell were born here, when the ancestors of Abraham Lincoln lived here.

## STOLEN HEARTS

Ten miles west of Rattlesden is the city of Bury St. Edmunds, in whose abbey English barons met in 1214 to conspire against King John. They eventually forced him to sign the Magna Carta at Runnymede.

The air base of Bury St. Edmunds lies just a few miles from the abbey. Philip Sage, from the nearby village of Rougham, was 20 years old at the start of the war. He remembers the impression that the airmen made on the local girls.

"All the teen-age girls were looking at the Americans in their uniforms," he says. "And the Americans had more money than we did to spend on chocolates, flowers and stockings. They could even finagle a silk parachute, which could be used to make underwear."

His wife, Muriel, shares a darker

memory: "I was picking onions one day when a bomber crashed nearby. But it could have been worse. Before he crashed the pilot had dropped his bombs in the Channel."

At the edge of the base is a house that served as its engineering building. Now it is the Flying Fortress pub. Among the memorabilia on its walls are photos documenting visits by Bob Hope and Capt. Clark Gable. The pub even serves a beer named Flying Fortress.

## PUB REGULARS

Remnants of the air bases are not the only reminders of Little America. The British have erected memorials at several of the bases. At Steeple Morden, home of the 355th Fighter Group, a monument featuring the propeller of a P-51 Mustang stands near three surviving Nissen huts, now used to store hay. In nearby Litlington, the village church has a stained glass window honoring the 355th.

There are other reminders. Each base was near a village, each village had its pub, and each pub had its 8th Air Force regulars. Elsie Hynard of Lavenham remembers how considerate the Yanks were.

"They would leave their combat boots out in the ditch and put on shoes to come into the pub," she says.

In the village of Lavenham, amid 15th-century buildings, airmen gathered nightly in the pub of the Swan Hotel, whose timbered beams date to 1425. Big band leader Glenn Miller, touring the East Anglian bases, had his last drink there before he and his plane disappeared on a flight to France in 1944. Today the pub is decorated in late World War II, its walls covered with memorabilia, including signatures of the airmen, photos of their planes and 8th Air Force patches and badges.

In Cambridge, amid colleges that have known the likes of Erasmus, Wordsworth and Darwin, the 300-year-old Eagle pub records lesser-known names on its ceiling. Americans from nearby bases stood on each other's shoulders and wrote their initials and the names of their squadrons and planes — J.T., Sad Sack, Bert's Boys — using candle soot.

West of Cambridge, on a green, manicured hillside, are written more names — many more names. The American Military Cemetery contains the tombstones of 3,812 of the Americans who were killed while serving at bases in England.

Ten miles south of Cambridge is Duxford, the 8th Air Force base that

cloud bank, disappearing over a place once known as Little America.

Mike Nichols, a free-lance writer and editor who lives in Texas, is the author of three books.



Mike Nichols

Bill Eady remembers the airmen who went to the cinema on the American base at Lavenham.

not only has avoided decay due to neglect, but is now thriving as a national museum of military aviation. It displays 140 airplanes, from biplanes to a Concorde. Volunteer mechanics keep several of the planes flying.

## SAD MEMORIES

Last year Duxford opened its American Air Museum — a mammoth concrete and glass hangar that contains 21 aircraft, including a B-52, a U-2 spy plane, a B-17 and a P-47.

Margaret Robinson of Bury St. Edmunds looks up at a B-17, "Mary Alice" painted on its nose, and remembers the war.

"The American airmen were very generous," she says. "They gave the local children lovely Christmas parties and played Santa for them. They had things we didn't because everything here was rationed. They gave us ice cream and peanut butter. I had never had peanut butter before."

"One night Glenn Miller's band played in the hangar at Great Ashfield airfield. I met an American flier, and we danced to all the big hits. The next week I didn't see the young man about, so I asked one of his mates. "Oh, he went off on a mission and didn't come back," he said. It was very sad."

As Mrs. Robinson talks, a restored P-47 Thunderbolt rumbles down the runway, the roar of its 2,000-horsepower engine obscuring her words. The plane lifts off, climbs steeply, then levels out. Soon it flies into a

## IF YOU GO...

East Anglia can be reached by train or bus from London or from Heathrow and Gatwick airports. But a car is the only practical way to reach the air bases, most of which are far from public transportation routes.

The region's country roads are quaint, but they are narrow and winding. Be alert for slow-moving farm vehicles, horse riders and bicyclists. Village High Streets are even narrower because drivers park at the curb on both sides. A trip of 30 miles may take 90 minutes.

Many of the air bases are on private property — farmland or industrial parks. Ask permission to enter. Some of the air bases are signposted along the road, but often only within the last few miles. Pubs and service stations are good places to ask directions.

Duxford's Imperial Air Museum is open daily all year except Christmas and presents air shows several times a year. Visitors can even fly in a 1930s passenger plane.

The East of England Tourist Board offers several brochures about 8th Air Force sites. Address: Toppesfield Hall, Hadleigh, Suffolk IP7 5DN U.K.; www.eetb.org.uk; E-mail: eastofenglandtouristboard@compuserve.com.

For more information about travel in England, contact the British Tourist Authority: 7th Floor, 551 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10176; 800-462-2748; Internet, www.visitbritain.com.

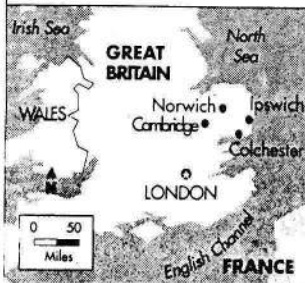
On the Internet, accommodations can be browsed and booked at Britain's Automobile Association (www.theaa.co.uk/your\_home/index.asp) and Smooth Hound Systems (www.s-h-systems.co.uk/shs.html).

Books about the 8th Air Force and the air bases in East Anglia include "The Mighty 8th" and "Airfields of the 8th Then and Now," both by Roger A. Freeman. These books are now out of print; check your local library.

Non-8th Air Force attractions in East Anglia include the queen's country retreat at Sandringham, a Neolithic flint mine near Thetford, the steam museum at Bressingham, Colchester Castle, assorted working windmills and water mills, the universities of Cambridge, Lavenham's 15th-century buildings, Constable country near Ipswich and Gainsborough's birthplace in Sudbury.

## EAST ANGLIA

Norfolk, Suffolk and parts of Cambridgeshire make up East Anglia, Northeast of London. Major towns include Norwich, Ipswich and Colchester.



KRT

