

☆☆☆ FORTRESS FOR FREEDOM ☆☆☆

388th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED

☆BOEING B-17F & B-17G FLYING FORTRESS☆

8th Air Force, 3rd Air Division, 45th Combat Wing

Station 136, Knettishall, England, 1943-1945

333 TOTAL MISSIONS

306 COMBAT MISSIONS, 19 APHRODITE MISSIONS, 5 CHOWHOUND MISSIONS, 1 POW MISSION, 2 REVIVAL MISSIONS

388th Bombardment Group Headquarters

Station 136 Weather Detachment, Fersfield Air Base (Aphrodite Project), 434th Headquarters Squadron, 860th Squadron, 684th Squadron, 434th Air Service Group, 1211th Quartermaster Company, 1284th Military Police Company, 273rd Medical Dispensary

1751st Ordnance Supply and Maintenance Company, 2019th Engineering and Fire Fighting Platoon, 452nd Sub Depot,

29th Station Complement, 587th Postal Unit, 877th Chemical Company, 214th Finance Detachment

560th Bombardment Squadron, 561st Bombardment Squadron, 562nd Bombardment Squadron, 563rd Bombardment Squadron

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WINTER 2003



Brian West, Ralph Boyer and Joe Tilley squeeze into a narrow B-17 waist section during a visit to the Mighty Eighth Heritage Museum as part of the Association's 54th annual reunion, held this year in Savannah, Georgia.

The 388th Bombardment Group (H) Association, Inc. is a nonprofit organization chartered in the state of Florida

NEWSLETTER
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From the President's Desk

My being your new President, I think I am supposed to write this letter. I served as President in the 1970s; Ed Huntzinger was alive then so the job was easy.

I joined the 388th in early 1944 and finished my missions August 13, 1944. After five months in the USA, I was sent to the China-Burma-India theater. I was there when the war ended.

I attended my first reunion in 1967. Before this year, I couldn't afford to stay at home and certainly couldn't travel anywhere. I have not missed a reunion since 1969. Dayton will make it 34 with none missed. We are all at the age that we are very lucky to make any of these.

I was the radio operator on D.G. "Mac" MacArthur's crew. I have said the 10 of us survived because of his cool head and flying talent.

My "lucky day" was when I landed in Canadian, Texas. Canadian is a City of about 2,000 people when everyone is home. I was a Texaco wholesale distributor for nearly 40 years.

We seem to spend a lot of time concerning the 388th after we are gone. My personal opinion is - "I don't care what happens after we are gone." If someone wants to carry it on - good - but it certainly doesn't enter into my thoughts now.

Regards from



Dates Firmed for 2004 Reunion

Arrangements have been confirmed for the Association's 55th annual reunion, to be held in Dayton, Ohio Sept. 8-11, 2004, Secretary Bit Snead reports.

Our group will be staying at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in the downtown area. Events planned include a city tour and trips to the Packard Museum, Wright Bros. Exhibit in Carillon Park, and the Wright Paterson Museum.

Details will be published in the spring 2004 newsletter.

Fall Issue Misprints Reported

Several of our members wrote or called to say that their fall newsletter was missing some pages.

In reviewing the remainder of the print batch, we found three separate types of misprints - either pages 3, 4, 13 and 14 were missing, or 5, 6, 11 and 12 were missing, or the Louis Lane color photo section (four pages total) was missing.

Please take a moment to review your fall issue and let Bit Snead or Jan Pack know if you need a replacement copy.

A Reminder To Our Members

Please send all membership applications, donations, address changes, telephone and email updates to Secretary Bit Snead.

Bits and Pieces

Donations From Our Members

The Association would like to thank the following members and associates for their donations during the fiscal July 1, 2002-June 30, 2003:

R.L. Allison	Oreste Leto, Jr.
Albert Anderson	Robert McWhite
Charlotte Barbre	David Miller
Robert Badley	Weaver Reckard
Burl Breedlove	Robert Risberg
John Burdis	Harold Rosecrans
Chester Cox	Cleo Seimer Family
Edwin Danner	Carlton Sevy
John Dixon	Maxine Smith
Al Geiger	Carole Spicher-Snyder
Russell Johnson	Patrick Tatano
Joan Lemley	Lou Tilley
Louis Leto	Thomas Wright

Donations received throughout the year are a tremendous help to our treasury as we budget for our annual reunions and quarterly newsletters.

New Forum At 388th Website

Our webmaster Wayne Bibbens has added a reader's forum to www.388thbg.org, the group's official website. This new feature allows members to exchange information and respond to questions about 388th people and events.

To sign up, go to the website and click on "Forum." After the page opens, go to the upper right, click on "Register" and follow the simple instructions. You need only provide your email address, user name and password. Your user name can be your actual name or a nickname such as or "B17Fan." You are welcome to provide additional personal information at your option. The system takes just a few minutes to process your information.

Please do not forward your registration information to info@388thbg.org; it does not connect with the forum.

We hope you'll take advantage of this new feature – you'll be amazed at how much outside interest there is in the 388th.

East Anglia Air War Project

The Association has been invited to participate in a special project which documents the relationships between British civilians and American airmen during WWII.

Details of the project along with a simple questionnaire can be found at www.acu.edu/anglia. Those without internet access can receive this information at no charge by calling 325-674-2150 or by writing to:

Dr. Vernon L. Williams, Director
East Anglia Air War Project
Department of History
ACU Box 28130
Abilene Christian University
Abilene, TX 79699-8130

Readers Provide Corrections To Published Aircraft Data

I am writing to correct the information on the color photo of *Captain Joe*.

Captain Joe's I.D. no. was Q1153. Hennessey's crew flew 13 missions in this plane. It is credited with 26. The plane was named in honor of Hennessey's brother who was lost early in the war in the Pacific.

A/C #42-3285Q was the *Mary Ellen*. Hennessey's crew was flying this aircraft Jan. 29, 1944 on a mission to Frankfurt when we were shot down.

Clyde C. Richardson
Navigator, 562nd Squadron

The *Lady Lillian* in the colored nose art enclosure (Fall 2003) is not the *Lady Lilyan* which Hal Poland and crew (including me) flew over Europe.

Our *Lady Lilyan* was delivered and turned over to the 561st Squadron and then to our crew around Sept. 20, 1943. The plane was named by Hal Poland for his wife Lilyan. We flew *Lady Lilyan* on her (and our) first mission to Rheims on Sept. 26, 1943. When the caption says the plane was delivered on Feb. 8, 1944, we had already flown 22 missions. Our crew chief's name was Dan Moorehouse.

Further, the artwork for *Lady Lilyan* was in scroll letters, but not on the diagonal – somewhat like *Miss Fury*.

Foster Rodda
Navigator, 561st Squadron

I was pleased to see *Blind Date* among the planes shown in the color photos. I would like to point out, however, that the plane was assigned to the 560th Squadron, not the 561st. George Branham was the pilot and I was the co-pilot.

While flying to the West Coast shortly after receiving the plane, we discussed names for the plane with all the crew. We decided on the name *Blind Date* as we felt the future for us was like going on a blind date.

Warren Wieland
Co-Pilot, 561st Squadron

I'd like to clarify some discrepancies in aircraft information which appeared in the Louis Lane section of the fall newsletter.

Big Red was in the 561st Sqd.

Gremlin Gus II's crew chief was Herman "Doc" Mitchell.

Holy Smoke's serial number was 43-37787.

The spelling of the *Miss Jinny* crew chief's name should read Irelan; the spelling of *The Worry Bird's* crew chief should be Nowakowski. Roger Freeman's *The B-17 Flying Fortress Story* shows this plane, #42-107062, first assigned to the 398th BG, later transferred to the 388th BG, 562nd Sqd. (Editor: "The Worry Bird" pilots Robert Sherman and Thomas Wealand both flew with the 560th Sqd.)

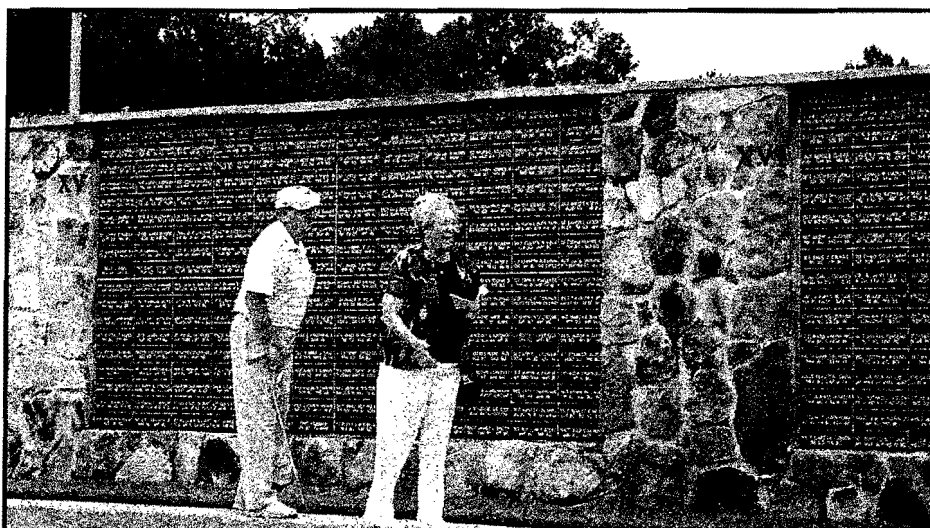
Old Ironsides was originally assigned to the 384th BG.

I believe *Little Boy Blue* was the first plane to complete 75 missions.

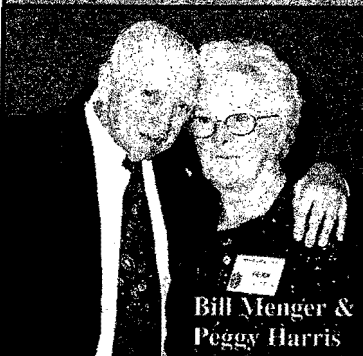
C. Ellison Beck
Mechanic, 560th Squadron

Highlights Of Our 54th Annual Reunion By Marvinna Snead

With photos by Marvinna Snead, Terry Harris, Wayne Daniels, Joe Bornstein and Chuck Finkbeiner



George and Jean Harris



Bill Menger & Peggy Harris



Joe Capraro & Roger Swihart



John Anderson



Harry Tepe



Chuck Finkbeiner, Oreste Leto, Bit Snead, Jim Cotton and Bob Ward

One hundred sixty-one people (final count) enjoyed the 388th BG (H) Association's 54th reunion in Savannah, Georgia Sept. 4-7.

The weather turned dark and rainy on Thursday afternoon (left over from hurricane Andrea), but the large, bright hotel seemed to keep away the gloom.

On Friday approximately 85 of us took off for the Low Country tour, with the added surprise of a tour of Savannah. The long-time driver/guide of our bus was also a native and very knowledgeable about the city and area.

We visited the 1737 Wormsloe Plantation, which included a museum and a very interesting demonstration of colonial tools. Luckily the weather was still sunny, as this took place outside.

Afterward we traveled along Bluff Drive to view the lovely summer homes before stopping for a delicious seafood buffet at the Johnny Harris Restaurant.

Then it was on to a tour of the Bonaventure Cemetery (with the weather changed to a dark cemetery mood).

Saturday was busy with a continental breakfast, the business meeting and a tour of the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum.

The business meeting was very well attended this year because of the 2002 change of by-laws that allows associates with 388th relatives to become voting members.

Sunday was a free day with the banquet in the evening. The Savannah River Marriott is to be commended for a wonderful banquet – beautiful setup, fast and friendly service and good food.

The after-dinner program included the raffle of a trip to Sweden, presented by our good friend and associate George Sundblad.

Thanks to a fine job by Joyce Cotton and her helpers, the raffle made \$530 for our Treasury.

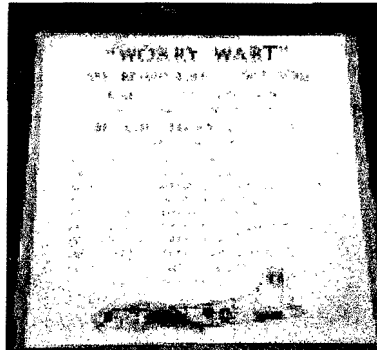
We then heard a presentation on the Aphrodite Project, ably put together by our historian Oreste Leto and featuring Bill Worthen, Ellis Kliever, Rolland Sears and Dick Timberlake.

This seemed to be a special reunion because of the many family members present.

Many positive comments were heard about the hotel and the friendliness of attendees.

Attendees at the 2003 Reunion

John Anderson	Chuck and Pat Harker	Carmen Romeo
Jim and Barbara Bell	Walt and Marg Harpold & guest	Carmen Romeo, Jr.
Cliff Bewig	Terry Harris	Eugene and Joyce Ann Rotella
Dottie Blasdell	Manuel and Ann Head & guests	Marvin and Dolores Schert
August and Thora Bolino	Lynn and Helen Hill	Ronald Schert
Joe Bornstein & guest	Joe and Doris Hild	Don and Martha Scott
Ralph Boyer & guests	Marvin and Gloria Horn	Rolland Sears
Joe and Ann Capraro	Don and Marilyn Jackson	Christine Siess & guests
James and LaVerne Comer	John and Edna Jones & guests	Maxine Smith
Jim and Joyce Cotton	Walt and Betty Kirby & guests	Bit and Marvinna Snead
Masil Coughlin & guests	George and Irene Kistner	Al and Nettie Soo & family
Wayne and Anita Daniels & guests	Ellis and Betty Kliwer	Waymon St. John
Harrison and Billie Davis & guests	Oreste and Betty Leto	Dave and Esta Stewart & family
A.B. and Michelle DeJarnett	Tom and Betty Linzee	Fred and Betty Stoker
Jack and Carolyn Dellinger	Lloyd and Janet Long	George Sundblad
Jayna DeRidder-Ashbacher & guest	Bill and Georgia Majeska	Roger and Judy Swihart
Jeff DeRidder	Neal and Bobbie McIntyre	Harold and Marj Swope
Keith and Teddi Dobson	William Menger and Peggy Harris	Harry Tepe
Chuck Finkbeiner	Charles and Marion Meyer	Rick and Cisty Thompson
J.A. Fletcher & guest	David Miller	Joe and Lois Tilley
James and Carol Ann Flynn	Wallace and Clara Mills & guests	Dick and Hildegard Timberlake & family
John and Beth Gallo	James Morrow	Cliff and Dinah Turner
W.E. Gee	Roy and Shirley Mousty	Jack and Louise Vann
Ed and Olga Gilroy	John Pakiz	Bob Ward
Jim and Beulah Godwin	Dale Payton & guest	Bill Worthen
Sid Golden	Fred and Mary Lou Price	Ray York
Claude Hampton	Bill Rohner	



Hildegarde
Timberlake



At Wormsloe



Lynn &
Helen Hill



Anita Daniels,
Nettie Soo &
Betty Curvat



George Sundblad with
Carol Ann & Jim Flynn



Bryan Vest &
grandfather
Ralph Boyer



Lunch



ey & Roy Mousty

Minutes of the 388th Bombardment Group (H) Inc.
54th Annual Business Meeting
September 6, 2003

The meeting was called to order by President Dick Timberlake at 10:05 a.m. and opened with the Pledge of Allegiance.

2002 minutes were accepted as printed in the 2002 Fall/Winter Newsletter.

2002 Treasurer's Report was distributed, discussed and approved.

August Bolino gave a report on the 388th Knettishall Memorial land, as the farm that the memorial stands on is being sold. August has been communicating with the owners about the purchase or lease of the small piece of land that is used for the Memorial. He is looking for someone with the legal expertise to help with the necessary procedures.

Financial support of the 388th Collection at Hillside Farm was discussed:

- Chuck Finkbeiner and Louis Tilley have each donated \$50.00 to the museum.
- A motion was approved to donate \$750.00 from the 388th Treasury.
- Other personal donations would be appreciated.

The Board approved the 2005 reunion being held in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Discussion then took place about future reunion dates and it was emphasized that they should be held after Labor Day and should not conflict with Jewish holidays.

As decided by the Board, Armed Forces Reunions, Inc. will no longer be used to organize the 388th reunions, as the services rendered are not equal to the added expenses. As stated in the By-Laws the Secretary will "organize and arrange" future reunions.

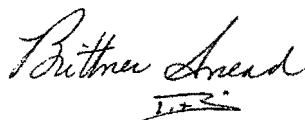
George Sundblad announced the raffle prize of the trip to Sweden that had been raffled last year, but not used because of flying safety concerns. George, with no little trouble, was able to get the tickets reinstated.

The election of officers was then held with the following results:

- 1st Vice President: Wayne Daniels
- 2nd Vice President: David Miller
- Director: Carmen Romeo

President Timberlake stated that in the future elections will be counted by written vote, as the group is getting too large for taking hand counts.

Respectfully submitted,



Bittner Snead, Secretary

At the Membership Meeting



Lloyd & Janet Long



Going In

Target Reg

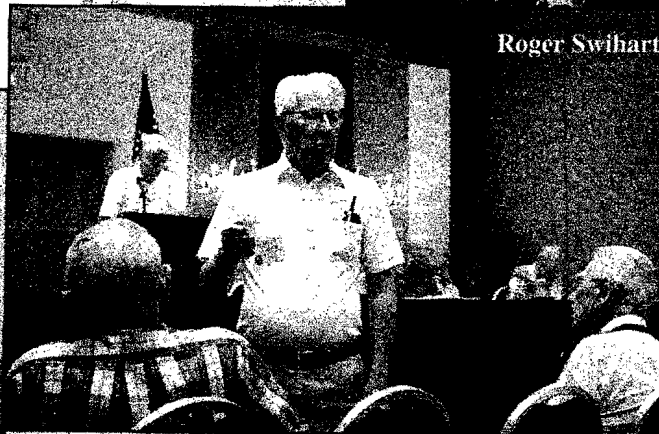


David Miller & Wayne Daniels



Roger Swihart

Fred & Betty Stoker



Chuck Finkbeiner



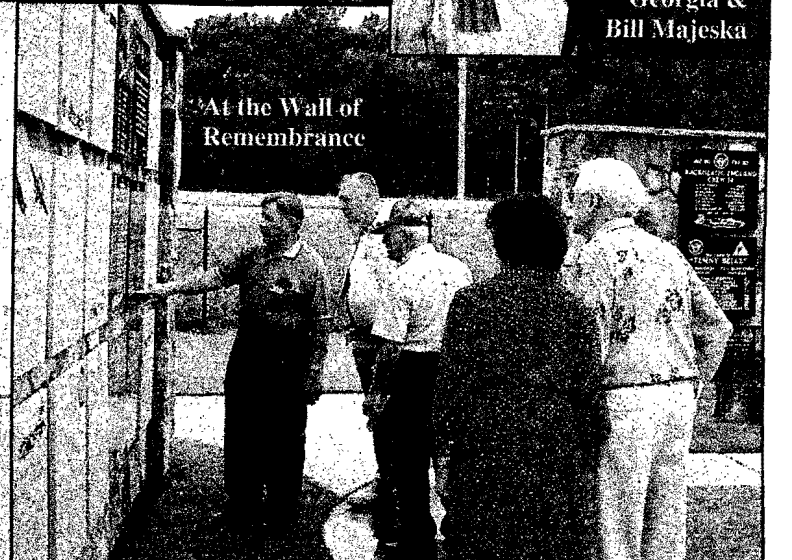
Georgia & Bill Majeska



Bill Worthen



At the Wall of Remembrance



388th Bombardment Group (H) Association, Incorporated Treasurer's Report 2002-2003

Bank balance as of July 1, 2002 \$ 8,824.96

INCOME:	Annual Dues	\$ 2,570.00
	Interest	14.28
	Donations	711.00
	Postage	87.75
	Sweat Shirts	235.80
	Caps	167.50
	Patches	6.20
	Anthologies and Brown Book sold at Boise Reunion	326.82
	Reunion: Boise, Idaho	
	Chairman: Bit Snead	16,257.00
	Raffle	524.00
	Memorial by Albert Geiger for his crew shot down and for 388th POWs	185.00

TOTAL INCOME	<u>\$21,085.35</u>	<u>\$21,085.35</u>
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EXPENSES:	Newsletters and Mailing, Janet Pack Expenses	\$ 6,027.00
	Anthologies and Brown Book, Janet Pack	326.82
	Florida Division of Corporations Filing Fee	66.25
	Memorial Wreath – George Stebbings (30 pounds)	50.00
	Reunion: Boise, Idaho	
	Chairman: Bit Snead	
	Two Bus Tours	10,488.00
	Lunch at Mountain Home AFB	1,106.00
	Double-Tree Hotel, Banquet	4,122.54
	Bar/Hospitality Room	389.79
	Refunds	528.50
	N.W. Embroidery – Caps	256.15
	Bit Snead – Expenses	365.58

TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>\$23,726.63</u>	<u>\$23,726.33</u>
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BANK and CHECK BOOK BALANCE as of 6/30/2003 \$ 6,183.68

OTHER ASSETS:

CD – Wachovia Bank - 24 Month Certificate (as of 7/14/03) \$16,707.61

Respectfully submitted,


Clarence E. Finkbeiner

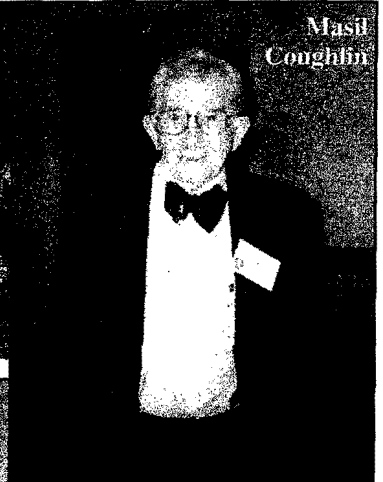
Doris &
Joe Hild



Louise & Jack Vann



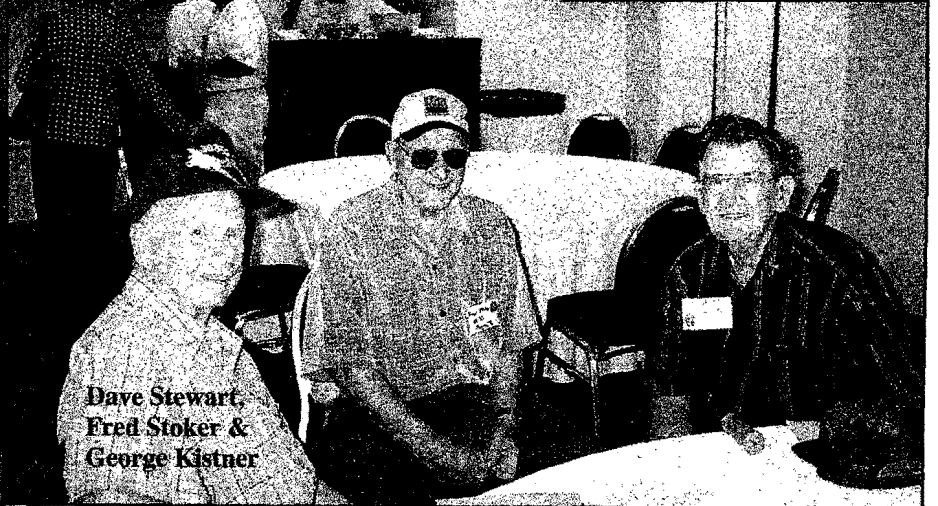
Masil
Coughlin



Betty & Tom Linzee



Dave Stewart,
Fred Stoker &
George Kistner



James
Morrow

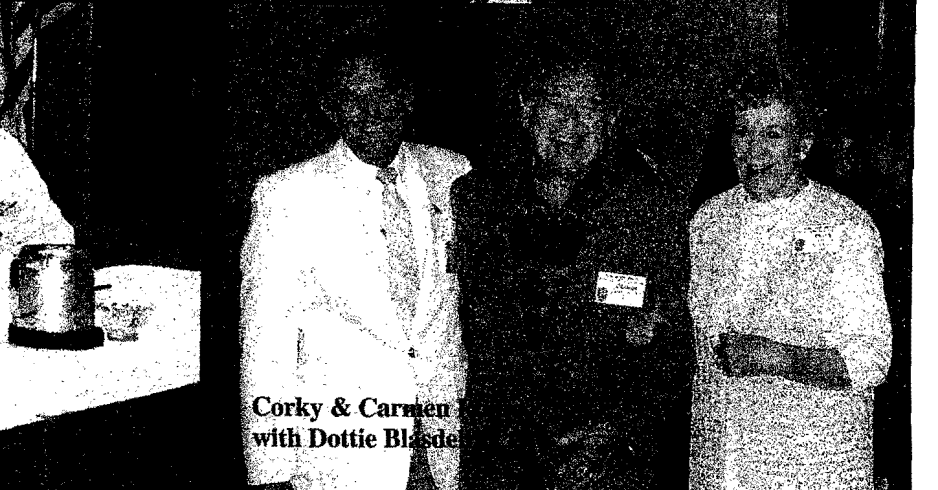


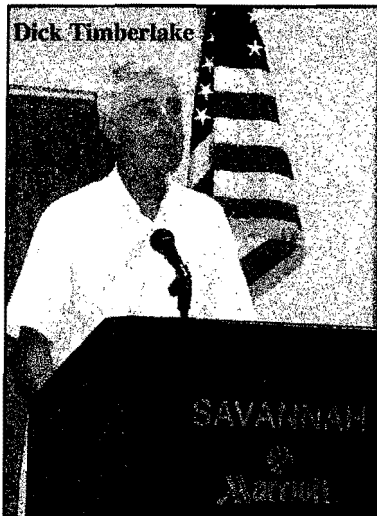
Harrison & Billie Davis & daughter Debbie



Jim Cotton & Bob Ward

Corky & Carmen
with Dottie Blaser

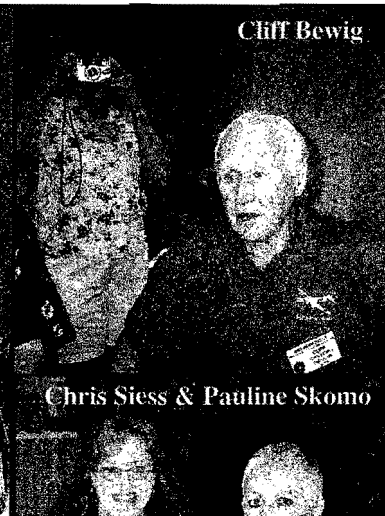




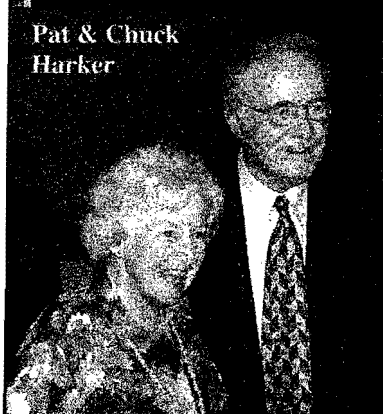
Dick Timberlake



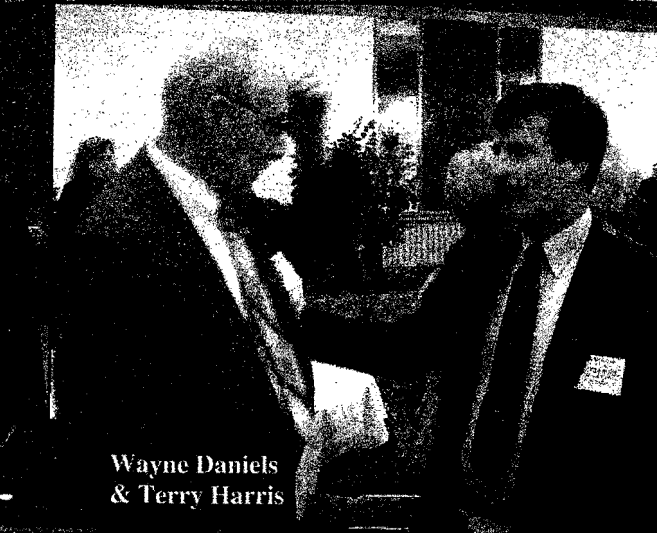
Oreste Leto with Al & Nettie Soo & granddaughter Megan



Chris Siess & Pauline Skomo



Pat & Chuck Harker



Wayne Daniels & Terry Harris



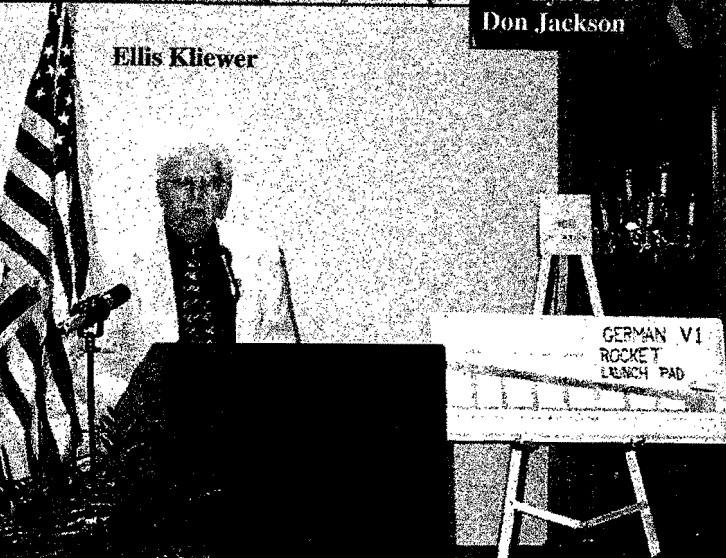
Bit & Marvinna Snead



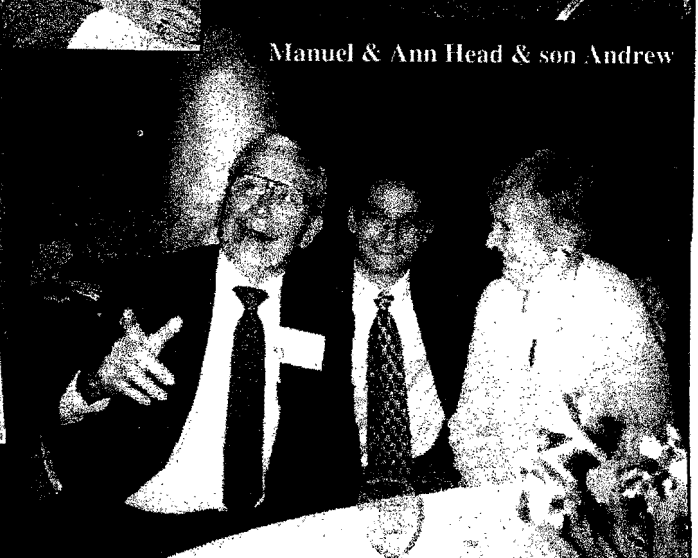
Marilyn & Don Jackson



Rolland Sears



Ellis Kliever



Manuel & Ann Head & son Andrew

388th BG Vermont Mini-Reunion 2003 Report By Joe Bornstein

On September 26 we held the 16th annual 388th Bomb Group/VT mini-reunion, again at the American Legion Post 59 in Waterbury, VT.

We had 26 in attendance, as usual including vets from other groups and air forces as well as our 388th members, spouses and second generations.

We paused to remember recently deceased members Ray Harwood, John Gross and Tony Yannelli.

Brian Lindner, aeronautical historian, has been our scholar in residence, this time reporting on six MIAs. Brian's meticulous research aims to find everything he can about the circumstances involved in the servicemen's disappearances.

Brian has been helped by overseas contacts as well as in-service sources.

Our after lunch presenter was Francis Angler, who flew 33 missions out of the 457th BG at Glatton. It was on that last mission that he became a POW.

Francis survived being blown out of the exploding plane and descent with debris.

His inspiring talk was based on his



2003 VT/mini-reunion attendees, seated L-R: Roy Davis, RAF; Noah Thompson, 388th; Les Relation, 15th; Brig. Gen. Gene Sevi, Norwich Univ.; Ted Lambert, 388th. Standing, L-R: Brian Lindner, Bill Worthen, 388th; Jim Facos, 388th; Al Sevi, 388th; Joe Bornstein, 388th; Francis Angler, 457th; Paul Lyon, 486th.

autobiographical *Ready or Not - Into the Wild Blue*.

Following his talk, Bill Worthen reported on the Aphrodite presentation at the 388th national reunion, and I gave a summary of other Savannah activities.

We all have been pleased that each year

we have been able to come up with stimulating programs. Our planning committee also includes Bill Worthen, Noah Thompson and Chuck Bigalow. We want to recognize the continuing support from Lloyd Lagrow even though his health has prevented him from attending.

A Big Thanks From The 388th Collection At Hillside Farm

How can we possibly express the extent of our gratitude to The 388th BG Assn. and its members for your outpouring of support? As we strive to improve and protect The 388th Collection at Hillside Farm, we have been truly overwhelmed by your generosity, particularly from those who have yet to be able to visit us.

At this time we'd like to acknowledge the following recent contributors:

The 388th Bombardment Group Assn.
Jill Argento - *Family of Frank Ambrose, radio operator, 563rd BS*
Robert Benfield - *Tail gunner, 561st BS*
Joe Bornstein - *Bombardier, 560th BS*
Bill Bramwell - *Pilot, 563rd BS*
Peter Brennan - *Toggelie, 561st BS*
Mildred C. Burda - *Widow of Rudolph J. Burda, bombardier, 562nd BS*
Larry Curtis - *Waist Gunner, 561st BS*
Jack Edwards - *Navigator, 563rd BS*
Clarence Finkbeiner - *Orderly, 563rd BS*
Lt. Col. Ron C. Force (USAF Ret)

- *Communications, 560th BS*
Oreste Leto - *Navigator, 560th BS*
Lt. Col. Patrick B. Lewis (USAF Ret)
- *Pilot, 562nd BS*
Roy J. Maggard - *Pilot, 561st BS*
Don Marble - *Engineer, 561st BS*
Barb McAllister - *Daughter of Roy Uhlinger, navigator, 560th BS*
Robert B. McWhite - *Pilot, 562nd BS*
Dirck A Merrill - *Navigator, 563rd BS*
Bruce Muirhead - *Pilot, 562nd BS*
Ken Reid - *Sally B crew*
John Russell - *Radio operator, 563rd BS*
Mrs. A.V. Sarson - *Widow of WWII RAF veteran*
Louis Tilley - *Co-pilot, 560th BS*

With your contributions to date, we have purchased a dehumidifier which, over a two-month period, has removed a staggering 200 gallons of moisture from the interior of the main building alone. Those among your membership who served at Knettishall between 1943 and

1945 can certainly attest to the dampness of English weather!

We have now been able to install special ultra-violet coverings for the Collection's lighting system. This will protect the fabrics, photographs and papers such as original telegrams from fading or discolouring caused by artificial lights.

We have also acquired archive-quality storage boxes. It is our hope to be able to pick up a second dehumidifier in the near future.

Throughout the years it has been our privilege and pleasure to welcome 388th veterans and their families to the 388th Collection. Please drop us a line any time, and plan to spend some time with us when coming to the Knettishall area.

Dave and Deborah Sarson
Dovedale, Church Rd., Market Weston
Diss, Norfolk, UK IP22 2NX.
011 44 1359 221 147
www.388th.freeseve.co.uk
collection@388th.freeseve.co.uk

The Crash of the *Sondra Kay*

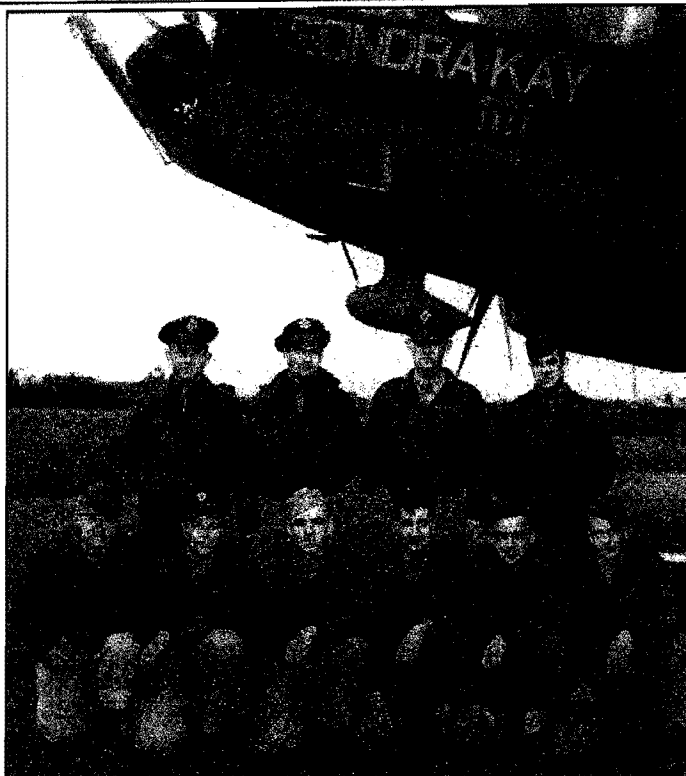
By Richard Boughton

The crash site of the *Sondra Kay* crash is clearly visible from the Newbridge-on-Wye area in the County of Radnorshire, by virtue of the fact that a large telephone mast was erected mere yards away from the spot where the aircraft eventually came to rest. It always moves me when I drive by the area as I try to imagine what it must have been like that dark, miserable evening.

I have spoken to a number of people who remember the accident in Wales, including a Mrs. Davies, wife of the farmer on whose land the *Sondra Kay* crashed that September 16, 1943 evening. The Fortress actually narrowly missed their home as it fell to earth; I prefer to think that perhaps pilot Henry Cox or co-pilot Al Rubin deliberately steered the aircraft away at the last minute.

Different witnesses have different tales to tell. One told me that the *Sondra Kay* flew twice over the town of Rhayader, apparently lost and trying to get its bearings. The general feeling is that she was trying to get to an airfield called Shobdon which is just over the border in my home county Herefordshire and was, during the war, a glider training school as well as a secret base for the Special Operations Executive, who flew clandestine missions to enemy occupied France.

The runway is certainly long enough and is still used commercially today, both by civilians and, on occasion, the military. In fact one Fortress, *Joho's Jokers*, made it to this airfield on a wing and a prayer that same night, returning from the same mission. Obviously Bob Leventhal, the *Sondra Kay*'s stand-in navigator, found this obscure airfield; but I guess that they were either too badly shot up over the target (the submarine pens at Marseilles) which was socked in; or over the secondary target at La Pallice. Perhaps they



The *Sondra Kay* crew: Henry Cox, pilot; Al Rubin, co-pilot; Frank Broach, bombardier; Willis Eddy, navigator; Herman Ball, engineer; George Martin, ball turret; Don Gromis, radio; Frank Curry, right wing; Otto Kloza, left wing; and Joshua Lewis, tailgunner. Eddy was not flying with the crew the day of the crash.

simply ran out of fuel.

Rumour has it that some of the crew were already dead at the time of the crash, but I cannot confirm that since the eyewitness, a veteran of the first World War, died some

(Continued on page 20)

Welsh Villagers Dedicate Memorial To Cox Crew By David Calcutt

On the 16th of September, 1943, as you will have read in the fall edition of the newsletter, the *Sondra Kay*, while returning from Mission 23 to bomb submarine pens at La Pallice, France, ran into bad weather over southwest

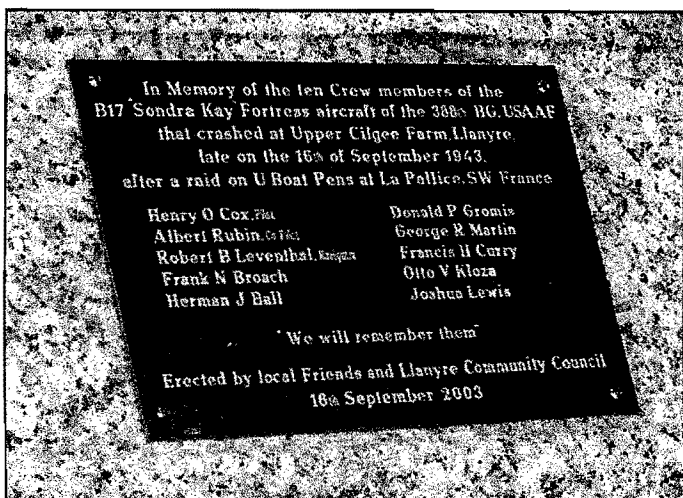
England.

While trying to make for RAF Shobdon they crashed into the hillside at Upper Cilgee Farm, near the village of Llanyre, not far from the town of Llandrindod Wells in Wales. The name of the hill is Rhiw Gwraidd and peaks at around 1,450 feet above sea level.

Dennis Cleaton was 10 years old at the time and remembers the crash. Dennis recently returned to live in the area and decided to do something in memory of the ten crew who perished on that day. That is how, on September 16, 2003, exactly 60 years after, a Memorial plaque was unveiled beside the Village War Memorial which remembers those locals who lost their lives in the two World Wars, nine from WW I and one from WWII.

From around 4 p.m. people began to gather in the village street which was closed to traffic by the police. All ages were present, some coming from a distance. More than one wore medals earned in WWII including a gentleman in his 80s who had been a Spitfire pilot. One local man told me that

(Continued on page 20)



November-December 1943

Weather, Morale Dog 388th Efforts During Winter Months

As Station 136 enters its fourth month of operation, progress and set backs do battle.

Construction at the base is now nearly complete, the buildings having increased from 212 to 250 since the Group's arrival. The last of the 51 hardstands have been built; air raid shelters on sites 3 through 5 are finished. Work continues on the concrete highway between sites 3 and 5 (which is also part of the highway between Knettishall and Coney Weston).

The Aero Club has opened; the American Red Cross and its staff of 12 British volunteers (all female) has moved into the recreation unit building. New books have been bought for the station library; new athletic equipment has also been procured. Each department section working on the line has been provided with a football.

Special Services has stepped up its efforts to bring young ladies to the station dances, and upon discovering that Thomas Paine was born in nearby Thetford, a B-17 is named after the revolutionary writer and a bronze plaque is presented to the village during a commemoration ceremony. "There is no doubt," writes Curtis LeMay to William B. David, "that this commemoration has improved Anglo-American relationships in this area."

But the Station's morale officer reports that in October the combination of air raids "and the sight and sound of two of their own Fortresses destroyed before their eyes" had sent morale to a "low standard."

He is referring to the crashes of *Hardluck* on October 14, whose crew survived; and of *Battlin' Betsy* just the day before, when witnesses watched helplessly as the trapped



Melvin Hortleroad, Bert Tino and Joseph Molinari relax and listen to music at the new Red Cross Club.

crew perished in the flames.

October has also signaled the beginning of the English winter with its characteristic fog and rain. Daily temperatures average 51 degrees Fahrenheit. They will drop to 43 degrees in November, 38 degrees in December.

A variety of technical problems demand urgent solution – some simpler than others.

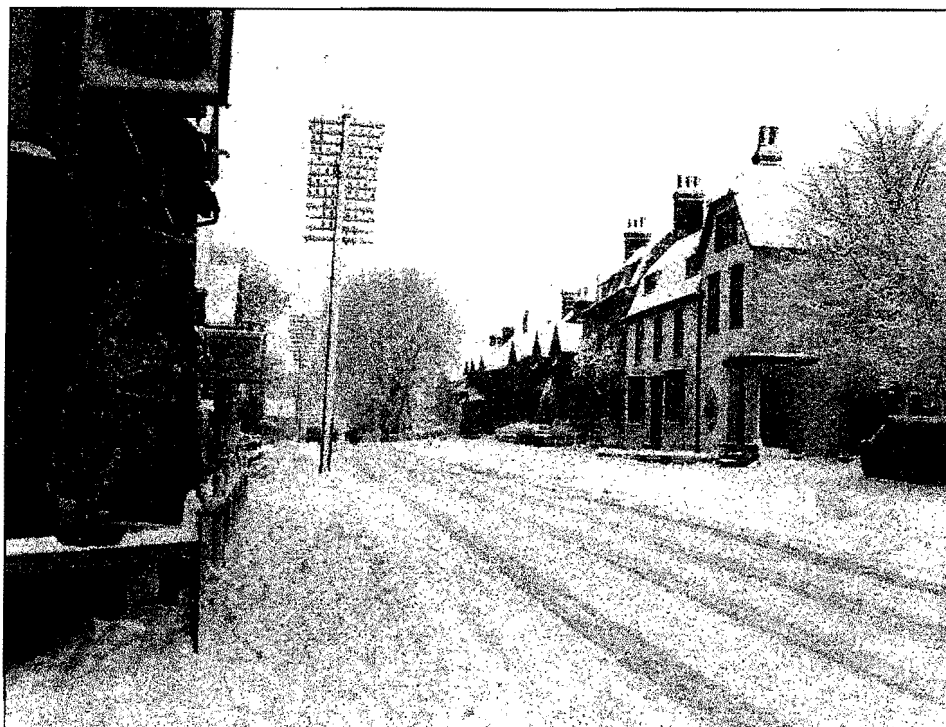
In October, for example, the large map room is converted into a drying room for electric suits, which had been remaining damp when kept in equipment tents on the line.

Incidents of frostbite increase dramatically. The American-

made electric glove is found to be deficient – it shorts easily and even when functioning properly does not keep fingers and palms warm. The superior British-made gloves are in short supply; they also don't fit the sleeves of the American electric suits. The parachute shop opens a special alterations department.

Anoxia at high altitude contributes to an inordinately high percentage of abortions. When it is found that the standard issue A-14 mask clogs quickly with the airmen's iced breath, the use of the old style A-10 mask – and there aren't many to be had – is ordered. There are also experiments to modify the A-14 by cementing a rubber patch across the oxygen intake opening.

One of the most serious mechanical problems being faced is the failure of propellers to feather. After an AAF



Winter snows blanket East Anglia (from the Gil Goodman Collection)



Ben Stone delivers mechanic Marvin Swart to a hardstand.

order to remove all insulation from the propeller feathering lines (to prevent corrosion) is carried out, the number of feathering failures skyrockets. In late December, during a test flight at 30,000 feet, Engineering Officer Max Gillaspay finds that propellers will not feather three out of four times. The problem, he finds, is that without the insulation or "lagging," the oil congeals and will not flow through the lines, literally burning out the feathering pumps. He immediately recommends to Division that the lagging be reinstalled.

Maintenance woes at year's end are attributed not to lack of skill, equipment or supplies. Rather, man-hour shortage is the problem as the harried crews struggle to return damaged aircraft to flight status. By example, in November the number of B-17s assigned to the 388th is increased by 75% while maintenance personnel is increased by only 30%.

Eight emergency operation teams composed of 230 volunteers – clerks, post utilities men and others not involved in maintenance work – chip in, polishing Plexiglas, wiping oil, dirt and frost from the wings and fuselages of designated planes, driving trucks and jitneys ... even working on fueling and bomb-loading units. No allowance for time is made and the men resume their daytime responsibilities without a sleep break.

As November opens, the Group has completed 34 missions. Thirteen days have passed since their last combat sortie. It's time now to go back to work.

November 3

Excellent P-47 coverage keeps the enemy at bay as the 388th sends 30 planes – nine forming the high squadron for the 96th BG – to Wilhelmshaven. After two aborts, the briefed route is followed and bombs are dropped as accurately as possible through the 10/10 cloud coverage. Flak is meager to moderate, with the Germans using a special type of flak designed to look like Pathfinder flares in hopes of confusing the Group. All aircraft return safely to base after just over six hours of flight.

November 5

Again lead by a Pathfinder, the Group heads to Gelsenkirchen to hit an iron foundry and marshalling yards. Five aircraft abort for mechanical or personnel reasons, leaving 23 on course. While on the bomb run, the PFF aircraft

swings abruptly to the east, and the bombs fail to hit the target.

Lt. Dale Miller, his plane hit by flak, drops behind the formation and is beset upon by nine enemy fighters. After one pass they break off their attack and Miller makes it safely home.

Lt. Bill Bramwell, flying in a/c #42-30789 *Flak Suit*, is also hit by flak and leaves the formation. On their homeward run the crew's radio operator and tail gunner are killed and a 20mm shell explodes in the flight deck. The injured pilot pulls the plane out of a severe dive long enough for the surviving crew to bail out over Belgium. Three of his men will successfully evade capture.

Flak also takes out Lt. Roy Walker's a/c #42-30142, just after bombs away. With the #2 prop feathered and the #3 engine smoking, all but the tail gunner bail out. The ball turret gunner's chute lines catch on the plane's tail section, and he goes down with the plane.

F/O Robert Bohne in a/c #42-30863, with two engines out, makes it as far as the English coast before he and his crew bail out. The unmanned plane crashes at a farm, starting a fire that will not be contained until the following day.

All but one of the returning planes have received battle damage, and there are four on-board injuries, including one in the PFF aircraft.

November 11

When the assigned PFF aircraft aborts over the English Channel on its way to Munster, the 388th tries to locate another Wing. They finally hook up with the 13th CW, only to find that their PFF has also aborted. Now much behind schedule for fighter support and facing increasing inclement weather conditions, the Wing leaders confer and decide to abort the mission.

November 14

A series of mishaps, beginning with some unusual aborts, dogs this mission to Bremen.

Lt. Bob Simons has to quickly transfer his crew to a/c #42-30213 *"Li'l" One* when his assigned plane #42-5899 blows a
(Continued on page 16)

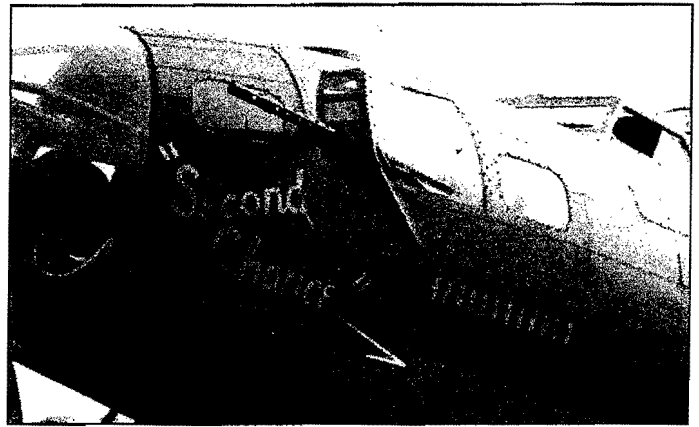


Winter Woes *continued from page 15*

fire. As he struggles to catch up with the Group, his #3 prop becomes a runaway, the vibrations ripping off the engine covering and cowling. Simons orders a bail-out as the plane nears Ipswich. Some 200 feet from the ground, a wind gust partially collapses Simon's chute, sending him into a wire-enforced hedgerow. While waiting for rescuers, the entangled pilot has to keep an angry bull at bay with his .45. The unmanned "Li'l" One, instead of continuing out to sea, swings around and travels some 30 miles inland before crashing harmlessly on a heathland.

Two hours later, Lt. Joe Gunn faces an entirely different problem. At 25,000 feet his radioman passes out from lack of oxygen. When the engineer goes to help him, the line to his portable oxygen bottle disconnects. Losing consciousness, he falls onto the ball turret and his clothing becomes hopelessly entangled in the machinery. Gunn has no choice but to turn back and drop rapidly to a lower altitude, where his men are revived.

Just minutes after Gunn's dilemma has begun, the #4 prop on Capt. Andy Chaffin's plane becomes a runaway, forcing the deputy lead to turn back. At 7,000 feet the engine catches fire; Chaffin radios an SOS and prepares to ditch. The descent extinguishes the fire; but before the crew has time to celebrate



This veteran aircraft went down with a new crew after a mid-air collision with a plane from the 401st BG.

their good fortune, lightning strikes the plane. With the radio knocked out, Chaffin continues to base and lands safely.

Meanwhile, the remaining 388th aircraft are dealing with a classic snafu. Word of the change to zero hour has not reach the 2nd AD, which was to have followed the 3rd AD. Now ahead of schedule, this Division proceeds to target, forcing the 388th and the 96th B Groups to scramble over the North Sea. They are able to catch up with the 96th's A Group just as the enemy coast is reached.

Flak has been insignificant, and 50-70 German fighters make only one pass before being driven off by Allied escorts. All 388th aircraft return safely to base.

November 16

The 45th CW, led by the 388th, takes over the lead to Rjukan, Norway after the 4th CW arrives late at Splasher #4. Their target is Norsk Hydro, a power station and electrolysis plant which produces hydrogen-infused "heavy water" for German atomic experimentation.

As the formation nears the IP, Capt. Bob Bernard is forced to drop out of his lead position when it is discovered that the plane's bombsight has frosted over. Lt. Henry Rodgers, deputy lead, had already aborted over the North Sea when his aircraft's tail iced up. By the time Lt. Arthur Pack, who has taken up Rodger's position, assumes the lead, the Group is well into the bomb run – too late to be effective. Pack orders a second run.

Though bombs are dropped at 12,500 feet, the plant is marginally damaged and at least 20 civilians are killed in town.

The 17 planes return to base with minimal flak and 20mm damage.

November 19

A second attempt to strike Gelsenkirchen falters today as the 388th leads the 45th CW, following the 13th CW. As none of the six PFF aircraft assigned by the 482nd are able to receive beamed signals from England, the 130 planes reaching the target area must search for gaps in the clouds. Bombs are scattered over a wide area with the 388th's bombs dropping near the Holland border. None of the planes receive battle damage.



Smoke billows from Norsk Hydro following an attack by 140 8th AF bombers led by the 388th.

Oxygen system failures bring about life-threatening situations aboard two of the four planes forced to abort this mission. Oxygen is lost to pilot Paul Todd, his navigator and engineer, causing them to turn back over the North Sea; pilot Wendell Hulcher actually passes out when his oxygen system fails, also over the North Sea.

November 26

On this mission to Bremen, the 388th puts up two Groups – 42 planes – for the 45th CW. After four aborts, the remaining planes follow two Pathfinders to target. Their bombs drop in the southern section of Delmenhorst, north of the assigned target.

Earlier in the morning, after receiving a last-minute order to switch from his own plane, a/c #42-30195 *Blind Date* to a/c #42-3555 *Tiger Girl*, pilot George Branham had handed his .45 to crew chief Robert Gholsten, explaining “I won’t be coming back.” Now, as the formation makes a sharp turn after bombs away, *Tiger Girl* is severed near the tail by two incendiaries dropped from a plane in the 96th BG, which is flying high Group in the formation. There are two survivors – navigator R.L. Gudgel and radioman Frank Grande.

Minutes later, an unrecognized B-17 with a triangle on its tail and “FC 2” on its right waist begins weaving around the formation. It slams into a/c #42-30317 *Second Chance*, flown by William McCown on his first mission, and shears off the tail. McCown and six of his crew are killed. The mystery plane, initially thought to be a German-captured Fortress employing ramming tactics, will later be identified as belonging to the 401st BG, flying on this, their first mission.

The remaining planes return to base at 1542 hours with Lt. Harry Cotter landing at Bury St. Edmunds.

November 29

Again the target for the day is the city center at Bremen, with the 388th assigned to fly high Group in the 45th CW, which in turn is flying 2nd Wing of the 3rd AD.

Nine of the 29 scheduled planes abort (six legally). Lt. Leland Ramsey in a/c #42-5954 *Mister Yank II* turns back some four hours into the mission when his navigator Don Davis and engineer Ray Wilbur pass out. Wilbur dies during the two-hour flight back.

Abandoning the assigned plan to rendezvous with the 96th A and B Groups after neither could be located, the 388th hooks up with aircraft from the 1st AD. This Group, now running low on fuel, about to fly out of escort range and seeing the Group ahead turn back, deems it foolhardy to continue the mission alone. The participating planes return to their respective fields with their bombs still shackled.

En route home, Lt. Robert Maupin and six of his crew are drowned after engine trouble forces them to ditch their a/c #42-3505 in the North Sea.

Sixteen of the 388th’s planes land at base – several of their crews suffering from frostbite; three others touch down at nearby fields.

November 30

The plan for the 388th A Group to lead the 3rd AD to Solingen, with its B Group flying as low Group, is smashed when adverse weather prevents both from making formation.

(Continued on page 18)



Ray Lull, Paul Todd’s navigator, with his plane. He was one of the six men killed in the crash on Dec. 5.



Along with his crewmates, Engineer Bill Riley moved his gear over to *Tiger Girl* for their Nov. 26 mission.

Winter Woes *continued from page 17*

Of the 41 planes taking off, 29 abort along with two PFF; the remaining 13 tack onto other groups. Mechanical or oxygen problems turn back three more ships, leaving ten to complete the attack on the Ruhr Valley steel center.

Bombs are dropped on the leader through the clouds. No fighters have been encountered; four fliers have been injured by flak. The aircraft return to base by 1452 hours.

December 5

Today the 388th sends up 48 planes to form the low (A) and high (B) Groups of the 45th CW formation as the 3rd AD heads for Bordeaux. Three "A" planes abort – one due to a missing gas cap – as do two "B" planes.

The formation has to make four wide circles over the Bay of Biscay near Coudre in order to correct its course.

When the target is found to be completely obscured, the Group turns to its secondary target, Cognac Airfield. Finding this target also obscured and facing a fuel shortage, the planes begin jettisoning their bomb loads. For one Fortress, this procedure is critical – a 20mm shell has ignited the incendiaries in the bomb bay.

Meager flak along the route intensifies over target. About a dozen fighters press attacks.

Down to three engines, Lt. Paul Todd takes a/c #42-30837 *Ole Bassar* out of formation and is shot down by FW 190s.

In extreme pain from a serious .30 caliber bullet wound, ball turret gunner Harvey Norton on the Norman Kempton crew insists on remaining at his guns. Only after the fighters have been driven off does he allow himself to be removed from his turret for emergency first aid. For his gallantry in action, Norton will receive the Silver Star.

Lt. Robert Moyers nurses his crippled a/c #42-30350 as far as Cornwall, where he and his crew bail out. The plane crashes into the sea. Lt. Harry Joho sets down his plane, nearly out of gas, at Bovington.

On a bright note, Donald Van Gundy, waist gunner on Paul Swift's 561st Squadron crew, becomes the first man to complete his 25 missions and conclude his tour of duty with the 388th. Though a score of men will equal his record by year's end, Van Gundy's achievement is a tremendous shot in the arm to fliers and ground echelon alike.

December 11

The 388th is called upon to furnish two Groups – 47 planes altogether – for this mission to Emden. The A Group is to lead the 45th CW, 2nd Task Force, 3rd AD; the B Group is attached to the 15th CW in the 1st Task Force, flying high Group of the 95th A Group.

Poor weather conditions prevent the A Group from forming as a unit, and all but 12 of its planes are able to tack onto other formations. The B Group forms successfully and follows the briefed course. The bomb pattern falls short of the Emden shipyards.

Lt. Clyde Hughes's a/c #42-31020 takes a direct fighter hit near Zelfug, Holland; Hughes and five of his crew survive the explosion.



Donald Van Gundy of Spokane, WA becomes the first man in the 388th to complete 25 missions.

They are the only crew not to return to Knettishall this day.

December 13

The 388th furnishes 49 planes to make up the A and B Groups of the 45th CW and a high Group of the 2nd CW. Their target is the ship building and Naval center at Kiel. After six aborts, the remaining planes follow a route that takes them south of Heligoland, the heavily-fortified island off the coast of Denmark. Two bomb runs are required as the PFF has trouble opening its bomb bay doors.

Fighter opposition is considered weak, generally; although navigator Stephen Cwiklinski on the Garrigues DeJean crew is killed by a 20mm burst in the nose. Flak is considerable, with all but six planes receiving damage.

December 16

The 45th CW returns to Bremen. The 388th, assigned to the follow the 96th's A and B Groups, takes over the lead when the 96th's PFF aborts.

Planes in the 388th A and B Groups total 43 including two PFFs; there are five aborts. Bombs are dropped on the PFF from 24,000 feet.

Fighters attack shortly after the departure of the Wing's P-51 escort of the Coast of Holland, and buzz the two 388th Groups closely enough for our gunners to claim six e/a destroyed. But the enemy's deadly focus is on the 96th BG, which loses seven planes. Flak over target is intense but inaccurate.

All 388th planes return safely, with four landing at other fields.

December 20

For the sixth time, the target is Bremen as the 388th puts up one full Group and 12 planes for the 45th CW's Composite Group. Escort is excellent and no enemy aircraft are encountered. Flak, however, is horrific – every plane suffers damage, and two crewmen are seriously injured. Lt. Ken Eccleston's a/c #42-31084 goes down in flames, killing all on board. It is the crew's 25th mission.

The remaining aircraft land by 1544 hours.

December 22

For this mission to Munster, the 388th provides an A Group (with two PFF) to lead the 45th CW, and the high and low squadrons for a 45th Composite Group, scheduled to fly as high Group on the 388th's A.

While the A Group makes formation, the Composite Group cannot find the correct Wing, and attaches instead to the 4th CW.

The four aborts of the day include Lt. John McLaughlin, who had turned back at the enemy coast when his aircraft's #4 engine began spraying oil over the wing. Back at base, mechanics will extract a .50 caliber slug which knocked out two cylinders during test-firing over the water.

The Groups bomb Munster through 8/10 clouds with a combination of 500-pounders and British incendiaries. Intense flak over target – and later near the Dutch Coast – damages 17 aircraft and injures one crew member.

Shortly after target, Lt. Webster Bull in a/c 42-37773 *Full House* begins to lag behind, his #1 engine feathered. When his wingman drops back to afford protection, Bull orders him to return to the formation. Not long after, *Full House* crashes into the Zuider Zee. Left waist gunner John Rogowski and tail gunner Tom Wesson are able to reach the sea wall; the rest of the crew perishes.

December 24

Today the Germans discover that their secret V-1 and V-2 rocket sites in the Pas de Calais area are not so secret after all as 1,500 8th AF bombers and fighters, joined by 500 British and other Allied Air Forces, head to "Military Installations in Northern France." Remarkably, not a single Allied life will be lost during what is possibly the 8th AF's most successful mission to date.

The 388th provides an A Group to lead the 45th's "B" CW formation, and a B Group flying as low Group. The route is almost entirely over water, and the Groups split up at

Dungeness and at the IP to bomb by squadron. There is limited flak at Dieppe, but none over target; neither are there enemy fighters. The Germans simply do not want to draw undue attention to the sites by putting up opposition.

The 388th lead and low squadrons bomb at 12,000 and 11,000 feet, respectively; and reform in the Group for the return home.

Only one plane receives battle damage – Lt. Montgomery Givens in a/c #42-3295 *Wailuku Maui*. With the airfield completely socked in, flares are sent up to help Givens locate the runway. Breaking through the overcast, he is not lined up with the runway. Its undercarriage collapsing during the hard landing, *Wailuku Maui* comes to rest near the control tower.

December 30

A tragic mid-air accident marks this mission to the I.G. Farbenindustrie Chemical Works at Ludwigshaven.

The 388th puts up 40 aircraft for two Groups in the 45th CW "B," which flies last Wing of the 3rd AD. Pathfinders lead the Groups.

On the bomb run, the Group hits severe prop wash caused by the Group ahead. As the formation bounces around, a/c #42-30625 *Joho's Jokers* slides in front of a/c #42-31131 *Satan's Sister*. Lt. Arthur Carlson loses control of his ship and *Satan's Sister* rolls over, breaking in half at the radio room. Carlson and five of his crew perish.

Flak is moderate with six planes receiving damage; no enemy fighters are seen. Lts. Wendell Hulcher and John Mouat are forced to abort in the target area; both crews make it safely home.

Shortly after bombs away, the windmilling #3 prop on Lt. Phil Comella's a/c #42-31149 *My Day* catches fire. A quick dive extinguishes the fire but the propeller rips away, damaging the #4 engine gouging the wing and fuselage. The plane, further crippled by fighters and flak as it struggles homeward, leaves the French Coast at 600 feet. Comella sends out an SOS and is given a course by British Air-Sea Rescue before *My Day* ditches near the Isle of Wight. Comella and five of his crew are drowned.

December 31

The target for this final mission of the year is a ball bearings factory in the Paris suburb of Ivry. The 388th puts up 24 planes in the A Group (low) and nine in the Composite (high) of the 45th CW. Bombs are salvoed at 1224 and 1227 hours, respectively, and fall within the target area. There are no enemy fighter attacks, but 19 planes receive flak damage in the Paris area. Lt. Barclay Beeby is forced to leave the formation just before target; he later crash-lands at RAF Lympen. The remaining 28 planes return to base by 1504 hours.

Tomorrow will be 1944.

Sources for this narrative included *The 388th at War* by Edward J. Huntzinger; *The Mighty Eighth War Diary* and *The B-17 Flying Fortress Story* by Roger A. Freeman; and *Eighth Air Force Bomber Stories* by Ian McLachlan and Russell J. Zorn.



Ken Eccleston and his men were shot down on over Bremen on December 20. It was their 25th mission.

Welsh Village *continued from page 13*

as a boy he had gone to the crash site and picked up .50 calibre ammunition. The next day, at school, the local police came along and confiscated it.

The parade formed up, with representatives from the Royal British Legion, the Royal Air Force Association, the Air Training Corps, the Army Cadet Force, local dignitaries and Councillors, with the USAF being represented by Lt. Col. Ben Coffey, Assistant Air Attache from the American Embassy in London. I was pleased to be able to represent the 388th BG Assn., and brought a wreath for the occasion. Also present was Mrs. Davies at whose farm the aircraft crashed.

The Stars and Stripes was placed over the Memorials before the parade and dedication, and was later unveiled by Col. Tim Van Rees, Chairman of Powys County Council; and the Rev. Neil Hook, Vicar and Chaplain to the Air Cadets. In turn, they spoke movingly of the great sacrifice by the ten brave *Sondra Kay* crew members in the defense of the UK and Europe in 1943, did Dennis Cleaton.

The plaque, mounted on unpolished granite, reads simply:

In Memory of the ten Crew members of the
B17 "Sondra Kay" Fortress aircraft of the 388th BG, USAAF
that crashed at Upper Cilgee Farm, Llanyre,
late on the 16th of September 1943,
after a raid on U Boat Pens at La Pallice, SW France.

Henry O. Cox, Pilot	Donald P. Gromis
Albert Rubin, Co-Pilot	George R. Martin
Robert B. Leventhal, Navigator	Francis H. Curry
Frank N. Broach	Otto V. Kloza
Herman J. Ball	Joshua Lewis

"We Will Remember Them"

Erected by local Friends and Llanyre Community Council,
16th September 2003

The proceedings closed with the laying of wreaths.

The next morning Dennis and his wife Audrey took me to the site of the crash at Upper Cilgee Farm. It is about two miles off the road and, when we were there, was quiet and peaceful on a beautiful sunny day – what a contrast to 60 years ago. Dennis has another plaque which will be positioned at the crash site to remind passers-by of the tragedy that befell the *Sondra Kay* all those years ago.

My Day Propeller Recovered

A propeller believed to be from the no. 1 or 4 engine of *My Day* has been found in the waters off the Isle of Wight.

The aircraft bearing the Phil Comella crew had been following a course recommended by British Air-Sea Rescue when it ditched on December 30, 1943.

The propeller, its blades bent back from impact with the water, was found entangled in fishing nets.

After restoration has been completed, it will be presented to the Isle of Wight Museum of Military History, which is located roughly a half mile from one of *My Day's* original intended landing sites.



388th BG Assn. Representative David Calcutt, right, with Dennis and Audrey Cleaton and Lt. Col. Ben Coffee at the memorial service commemorating the Henry Cox crew.

Sondra Kay *continued from page 13*

years ago. I am assured that his opinions would have been genuine.

I tracked down the first man on the scene, a sergeant in the Officer Training Corps based in Llandrindod Wells, which is not too far away from the Upper Cilgee (pronounced "kilgee") and can be clearly seen from the middle of the town. He and a platoon of training officers retrieved the bodies and took them to a temporary mortuary in the town, where they were eventually collected by the American Army for temporary internment at Brooklands Cemetery in Surrey.

After 70 years, there are bound to be conflicting memories of these types of things. One man told me that his father saw a large aircraft "on fire from end to end," fly over the factory where he was working as a night watchman and disappear behind a large hill called Dolfan Hill. Another told me that he saw the wreckage some days after the event (along with hundreds of other people), and there did not appear to be any fire damage at all.

So who do I believe? I spoke to the son of the Newbridge police sergeant who claimed that it was he who the first on the scene, and that he alone who removed the bodies of the crew from the aircraft. This story is backed up by Mrs. Davies, who was advised by her husband to stay inside the house with their infant son because the condition of the dead men was not a pretty sight.

Her recollections back up the theory about the fire, which I believe might have been caused by a flare going off inside the aircraft as the fliers were attempting to illuminate the ground below to get their bearings. Just my own theory.

As I continue my research into the fate of the *Sondra Kay* and her crew, I would like to hear from any surviving relatives or friends. I am also interested in establishing the exact final resting places of Rubin, Martin, Lewis, Ball and Gromis. If anyone has photographs pertaining to the aircraft or her crew I would be very interested in obtaining copies. Particularly scarce are pictures of the *Sondra Kay* herself. I can be reached at dickboughton@hotmail.com.

Mail Call



I want to respond to an article in the Summer 2003 issue of our newsletter by James Moore. This concerns the ground crews not getting much credit. I agree, they have not gotten the credit they deserve. Guess we pilots and flight crew members took them for granted. Far from the truth!

After getting back from a mission each crew member had to get their gear together and get to the debriefing room as quickly as possible. We were also tired from flying so long we didn't have much time to spend with the ground crews. Therefore we didn't really get to know them personally.

When I look back on this, I feel guilty for not taking the time to thank them for the marvelous job they did keeping those planes flying so we could do our jobs. If it is any consolation I wish to apologize for myself and my crew to all ground crew members for our oversight.

Please forgive us. We knew you people had a very tough time. Working long hours. Sometimes under bad conditions and short response times. But we always felt safe and sure that our planes were ready to fly each time.

I only met our ground crew chief for our plane, *Susan Kay*, a few times. His name was Kittrell and he was from Tennessee. If our plane had combat damage we would most likely fly in another plane with a different crew chief. Therefore, all ground crew members were important to our safety and the mission.

Kittrell died a few years ago. I'm sorry I did not keep in touch with him over the years, as I did with my crew members. For he was really a quasi-member of our crew.

So, again I wish to extend my sincere thanks to all ground personnel, whether flight line or administration. Much depended on everything you did to keep us flying.

Major John Peacock, Pilot *Susan Kay*
560th Bomb Squadron



William Kittrell, Crew Chief

My friend William McHallick flew as a pilot with the 562nd in 1944. I would like to know if anyone would have a picture of the nose art on his plane. The nose art was a flak burst with the name *Midge* across the flak burst. The tail number was #42-102696 with the letter J under the numbers.

I am a fanatic when it comes to the B-17; recently I had the opportunity to take a flight on a B-17. The *Nine-o-Nine* came to our airport and my friend Mr. McHallick paid for my flight – he wanted me to see what it was like to be in the aircraft while it was in flight. It was a thrill of a lifetime.

If anyone could help me out with this request I would appreciate it. I would like to have the picture enlarged and present it to him.

Ralph E. Sullenberger
SLLNBRG2@aol.com

Great Reunion! The summer issue of the newsletter was also excellent. I want to compliment the piece by Lowell Watts. Well written, great history. Please pass my thoughts on to him. Also I was pleased with the way that Manuel and Ann Head were recognized and treated at the Reunion. In my judgement Manuel was the 388th's best pilot, superb flying skills.

Jim Flynn

Holiday Greetings From England

To all 388th people in the USA:

May this Christmas be one you will remember with warmth and happiness. Happy Christmas from Across the Miles.

Thanks for the great reunion in May and hope you had a good one in Savannah. Thanks everyone for donations for "Sally B" – I want to keep her flying.

Good health, good luck and God Bless you all.

Percy and Molly Prentice and all 388th in UK

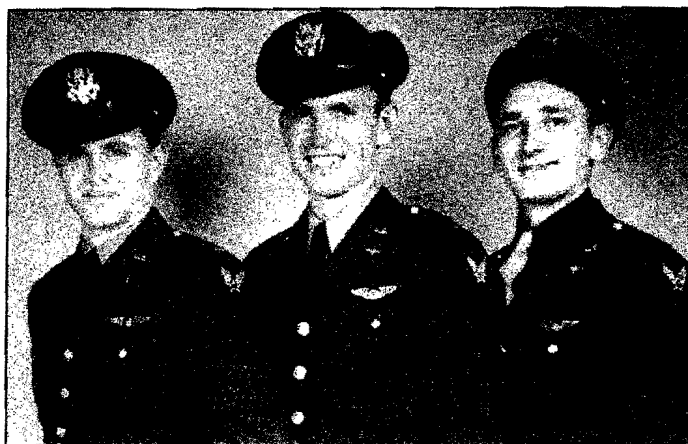
Here's a special wish that you will share with all of us "Over Here!"

A very Merry Christmas and that the New Year will be good to everyone of the 388th BG.

As ever, from your supporters,

George and Margaret Stebbings

Mail Call



Can anyone identify the men on the left and right in this photo? Wilbur Osterkamp, my mother's first husband, is pictured in the center. Wilbur and his crew were killed April 11, 1944 during the mission to Krepinki.

Terry Harris
26 Apollo Dr., Glen Carbon IL 62034
tgharris@empowering.com

Just got the latest newsletter and my, it is a beauty! Bravo Zulu, as the Navy would say. The color was outstanding and really livened it up. I know it's expensive to produce in color, but once in a while is OK too, no, it's awesome!

Big issue regarding the future of the Association, as discussed on page 3. I think we ought to consider Option 5. Yeah, I know there ain't no option 5 there, but I want to submit one for consideration. That is to re-model our Association along the lines of the "all eras" group shown at the link below. The 366th FG successfully retained their WWII heritage and roots, electronically, in paper and in person – I know, I just talked to some of them this past weekend at the Mountain Home air show, with vets from WWII, the Cold War, and Vietnam attending. What an awesome gathering!

So please take a look-see at the website and the notion of an all-eras construct – I'm very curious as to what you think.

<http://www.366fightergroupassoc.org>

Our 388th has a great heritage through all eras, something I tried to convey at the reunion in Boise last year. And the great thing is that heritage continues to develop through today, and prospective new 388th members of a new Association abound. I think we should continue the Association, open up membership to 388th veterans of all eras, and look forward to the 388th being there in the future.

Terry Popravak

My father, Guy Craig Jr., was the ball turret gunner on *Borrowed Time*. I still have his flight jacket with *Borrowed Time* written on the back. My father bailed out and was captured by American forces. He was almost shot, but one man was from Dallas and asked him what were the three

main streets in Dallas. That saved him. He was shot up pretty badly and received the Purple Heart. He would never talk about it; but every Christmas he would cry for his crew members who were killed. I have talked to Cliff Bewig, the co-pilot. Please let me know if you have any more information.

Guy Craig
ABGCRAIG@cs.com

In 1774 Tom Paine left Thetford for Philadelphia, where he would write *Common Sense*, an eloquent argument for American independence.

In September 1943 a B-17F, serial no. 42-30793, arrived at Knettishall and joined the 562nd Squadron. Named *Tom Paine*, it carried this inscription on the nose: "Tyranny, like Hell, is not easily conquered." *Tom Paine* flew many missions and was also involved as a "Mother ship" in the Aphrodite project.

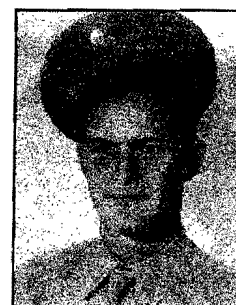
Earlier this year I was contacted by Phil McGahan, bursar at Thetford Grammar School, which has a room named after Paine. Phil was building a 1:72 scale model of the *Tom Paine* and hoped to present it to the 388th Collection at Hillside Farm to coincide with the May visit of the 388th veterans and families. Unfortunately things got delayed and this did not happen.

However, on Sept. 25, *Tom Paine* did indeed land at Knettishall once more, albeit in the luggage compartment of a light aircraft flown by Ian Clark, a Governor of Thetford Grammar School, and accompanied by Phil McGahan.

In front of the small crowd which had assembled, the *Tom Paine*, in a glass display cabinet with a jeep and two other vehicles for company, was presented by Phil to the 388th Collection, with me acting as representative. The display was then carefully delivered to the Collection to join the rest of the Market Weston "Squadron."

David Calcutt

A few months ago I asked my own father about his father who was based in Knettishall. He didn't know much about him, only his name and where he was from. Through the internet I managed to track down sons and daughters in the States; they are very pleased about finding out about my own father, they never knew about him.



Unfortunately my grandfather died in 1977. His own family in the States doesn't know much about his stay here in Knettishall. I wondered if anyone out there, maybe an old pal or anyone, knows of him.

His name was Hudnall O'Dell Fisher, he came from Richmond, VA, and he was an aircraft mechanic. Any history, memories or records would be appreciated. Please send any information to the following address.

Gavin Copeman
Ludon House, The Turnpike
Bunwell, Norwich, Norfolk NR16 1SP
United Kingdom

Taps



Edward L. Baker

Edward Lamar Baker of Nashville, TN passed away June 20. Mr. Baker was a group adjutant assigned to the 560th Sqd. He was predeceased by his wife Sue in 2002.

Warren E. Brass

Warren E. Brass passed away at age 80 on July 23. A bombardier in the 563rd Sqd., he flew 15 missions with the Franklin Little crew.

Following military service Mr. Brass joined his father in ownership of the Brass Poultry Farm in Helena, MT, which he operated for 27 years. He then joined the Dept. of Health and Environmental Sciences, retiring as administrative officer in 1989 after 18 years.

Active in civic affairs, Mr. Brass chaired the Helena Model Cities Program, Joint Neighborhood Council, North Side Council; and served on numerous other boards and committees. He also served as commander of the American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars, and was an active member of American Legion Post #2 for 47 years. An avid fan of American Legion baseball, he also chaired the American Legion Baseball Committee for 15 years.

Mr. Brass completed his college education – interrupted by WWII – in 1977, earning a B.A. in political science.

In addition to his widow Marilyn, Mr. Brass is survived by sons Michael, Paul, Eric and Matthew; daughter Leisa; stepchildren Richard Juvik, Marlie Loran, Scott and Steve Lindsday; 22 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Internment was held at Ft. Harrison Veterans Cemetery.

Warren M. Fleener

Warren M. Fleener died earlier this year in Excelsior MO, his wife Mary has reported. Mr. Fleener was the radio operator on Herb Moore's crew in the 562nd Sqd.

John T. Gothard

John T. Gothard died on September 19. The Albuquerque, NM resident was 84 years old. Mr. Gothard was the original pilot of *Skipper 'an' The Kids* in the 560th Sqd.

He is survived by his wife, Helen, five children, 11 grandchildren three great-grandchildren.

John W. Hinner

John William Hinner died February 18 in Woodstock, IL. A pilot in the 561st Sqd., Mr. Hinner volunteered for the Aphrodite Project in 1944 and made his jump safely, but had to do some fast talking after he landed in a field and looked up to see an English farmer pointing a shotgun at him.

Mr. Hinner met his wife Virginia at Purdue University, which he attended following his discharge; and they married in May 1946.

Wilbur James

Wilbur Albert James, 79, of New Eagle, PA, died April 12 while visiting relatives in Merthyr Tydfil, South Wales.

Mr. James was radio operator on the Wayne Daniels crew

in the 563rd Sqd. After their aircraft was hit by flak on the bomb run over Hamm on Nov. 26, 1944. Mr. James, wounded while parachuting down, was among five survivors interned for the remainder of the war.

He married his former military nurse, Lt. Hannah "Virginia" Jones, in 1948.

Mr. James graduated from the Robert Morris College, Pittsburgh, PA in 1954 and joined the staff of Fox Grocery Company where he became Vice President of Finance and a member of the board of directors. Retiring in 1988, he continued to serve as a consultant for many years.

Active in civic affairs in the Monongahela Valley throughout his life, Mr. James was Director Emeritus, Mon Valley Hospital Board; Chairman, Rostraver Airport Committee; Director, New Eagle School Board; President, Mon Valley United Way; and served on the boards of the New Eagle Sportsmen Club and Boy Scouts of America. He was very active at Riverview Baptist Church in New Eagle.

He received his pilot license in 1971 and enjoyed flying his plane, *The Blue Bird*. He also enjoyed reading, writing, computer projects, hunting, fishing, trail riding, camping, traveling, researching his roots in England and Wales, gardening, and WVU football.

Mr. James is survived by his wife Virginia; daughters Linda and Virginia Leigh; son Keith; three grandchildren and several nephews and cousins.

Bruce C. Janowsky

Bruce Janowsky, 82, of North Tonawanda, NY, passed away August 17. He was assistant crew chief of *Gremlin Gus*, among many other planes in the 560th Sqd.

Mr. Janowsky is survived by wife Betty, daughters Jean Lacey and Sharon Hoelscher; son Michael; brothers Warren and Russell; six grandchildren, eight great-grandchildren; and several nieces and nephews.

Milton R. Opdyke

Milton R. Opdyke of Little Creek, DE has passed away, according to a notice received from the Post Office.

Mr. Opdyke piloted *Going My Way* in the 563rd Sqd.

Stanley Shabman

Stanley H. Shabman, of Great Kills (Staten Island), NY, passed away on May 2. He was 79 years old.

Born in Queens, NY, Mr. Shabman joined the National Guard at 17 in 1941. He later joined the 388th and became a radio operator in the 562nd Sqd. Awards received include the Purple Heart.

Following the war Mr. Shabman enjoyed a varied career as a salesman, mold-maker, general contractor, taxi driver, and industrial specialist for the Dept. of Defense. He also enjoyed scuba diving, acting and painting.

He was a member of several VFW and American Legion posts, as well as the "Grande Puissance Filloux."

Predeceased by his wife Violet in 1989, he is survived by stepdaughter Adrian Gerstel, stepson Frank Bramante, sister Stella Gerstel, four grand children and two great grandchildren.

**388TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ASSOCIATION, INC.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION/MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

DATE _____ NAME _____
WIFE/HUSBAND _____ PHONE _____
STREET _____ CITY _____ STATE _____
ZIP CODE _____ EMAIL ADDRESS _____
SQUADRON _____ POSITION _____ AIRCRAFT NAME _____
PILOT _____ NO MISSIONS _____ POW (DATE) _____ STALAG LUFT _____
ANNUAL DUES (\$10.00) _____ LIFE MEMBERSHIP (\$50.00) _____ DONATION _____
ASSOCIATE ANNUAL DUES (\$10.00) _____ ASSOCIATE LIFE MEMBERSHIP (\$50.00) _____

IF APPLYING FOR ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP:

NAME OF RELATION WHO IS/WAS IN THE 388TH _____
RELATIONSHIP TO YOU _____
(Please fill in known information above, SQUADRON through POW information, for relative.)

MAIL TO: BIT SNEAD, SECRETARY
388TH BOMB GROUP ASSN.
2449 SW 328TH ST.
FEDERAL WAY, WA 98023

PHONE: 253-838-9291
EMAIL: BitSneadEsq@comcast.net

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