

# MENDLESHAM MEMORIES

## 34TH BOMB GROUP H

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## OBSERVATIONS

### GREETINGS!

Summer has arrived and, may I say, with a vengeance. Here in Indiana, as well as throughout the midwest, the drought is causing havoc. It's sad to drive the country roads hereabouts and see the corn, barely more than waist high, already topping out. You know there will be little, if any, usable corn produced. This in an area which is part of the U.S. corn belt.

In our community water is being rationed. Lawns are suffering badly. We are permitted to water our lawns only on odd-numbered days from 8 to 10 P.M., Sundays excluded. The trouble is that everybody is watering at the same time so the water pressure is way down and you're really not doing much good. Oh well, many of you are in the same boat. All we can do is hope and pray that the good Lord will see fit to alter the weather patterns so we can get more of that life-producing rain as needed.

Enough of that gloomy stuff. We're trying to get this issue out early in order that everyone receives it with plenty of time to at least try to attend the reunion. By the time this reaches you, your reservations should have already been sent in. If not, don't hesitate. Sit down right now and make out your registration and hotel reservation forms and mail them in immediately. I can't stress enough how eager we are to see you all there. From personal experience, having attended them all since I joined the unit, I can say you'll have an experience which will be long remembered. Reminiscing about the old days, meeting old and new friends, enjoying the associated activities, and more; all these make for an unforgettable trip. Come on! Join with us in a most enjoyable 3 or 4 day vacation.

As I mentioned in the last issue, Rose and I will be spending our winters in Orlando, Fla. Because of this we felt it necessary to sell our home and move into a town house here in our neighborhood. I just couldn't see leaving our large home vacant and uncared for while we are gone down south for four or five months. You'll see our new address on the return label of this issue.

Our plan, at present, is to publish the December issue before

we leave Crown Point. The March issue I will prepare in Florida and send it to Ray Summa who will handle getting it printed and mailed. It means a lot of extra work for Ray with that one issue, but we couldn't think of any other way to handle it short of finding some other interested person who wants the job of editor. However, we'll see how it works out this year and go on from there.

With this issue we are including the annual roster of the 34th Bomb Group which includes all the names and addresses of people we have found, whether they belong to the association or not. Whereas we have over 1,500 names on the roster, we mail out only about 1,000 newsletters, and not all of those are current on their dues. Keep in mind that each copy of each issue costs the unit almost \$1.00 to print and mail. Therefore, we have had to cut off sending to ex-members who have ignored the dues reminders.

Also, by ruling of the board of directors at our last reunion, if a newsletter is returned due to change of address, we are not to re-mail it if the party involved has not made an attempt to notify us of that change. Each returned copy costs us 30 cents postage. Please try to keep us current on your addresses. We have two mailing lists; one for the June and September issues, and one for the December and March issues. If you winter over at an address other than the one we have, let us know and we'll make the change on our winter list.

Keep those letters and pictures coming. Please understand that we may not be able to use all of the pictures if it is obvious that they won't print right. Black and white with clear definition is best but color pictures don't print too badly if they are clearly defined. Also, if any of you have an idea of something you'd like to see in Mendlesham Memories, let me know and we'll try to do it.

Well, so much for this time. We hope to see you ALL at the reunion in Virginia Beach. BE THERE!!!

Eli Baldea  
Editor



VIRGINIA BEACH  
Sept. 22nd-25th, 1988

## From the Hangar of Ray L. Summa

Hello fellow members of the 34th B.G. Assn. Time again to get my column ready for the newsletter. Seems as if it was only yesterday when I wrote the June column. We wanted to get the September issue out early to get more information to you all about the reunion. September 22nd will be here before we know it.

In May, Dale and Marge Finley of the 34th from Crothersville, IN. and Lynn Kiewitt and wife of another bomb group from Indianapolis visited. They were planning a trip to England in June and wanted to pick my brain about it. I told them all I knew about what to see around Mendlesham and the other base farther north. I also gave them names of some of our friends in Mendlesham and Ipswich. Hope this helped out. Just received a card from the Finleys from Mendlesham. I'm looking for a letter from them telling about the trip.

Hannah and I made our trip thru Virginia and No. Carolina. She had a little bad luck, falling from a curb and fracturing her right arm at the elbow. She had a cast put on and had to wear it in a sling throughout the trip. She's getting along very well now with the cast removed but still in a sling.

"Pete" Gray met us at our motel in Chester, VA. and rode with us to Junius and Ginny Cobb's Meadowbrook restaurant in Richmond to meet up with Grady and Edith Deatherage. Tom and Virginia Snelling, and Myles Hardy. Junius was my helper back in England. The party broke up after 1:00 AM and, after a 15 mile trip back to Chester, we finally got to sleep after 2:00.

After breakfast with "Pete", we set off for Atlantic Beach, NC. the next day. Bob and Modine Vaughn, who were visiting their son and family, stopped by and we had a good talk. They plan to be at the reunion in September. We enjoyed your visit immensely, Bob and Modine.

After their real estate classes one evening, George and June Ritchie stopped by and we went out to dinner. Later we visited them and their son, Mike, and found Kivett and Lucille Ivey there. We spent the afternoon and evening there and the time went by so rapidly that we soon had to go. It was good to see George, June, Kivett and Lucille. We enjoyed the visit very much. George asked me to tell you all not to forget to bring something for the auction at Virginia Beach.

In Charlotte we met with Dex and Beulah Jordan, Raymond and Mary Ruth Lester and Mary Ruth's sister, Betsy. Betsy teaches school at Charlotte and the Lesters had come to see her and to be with us for dinner. They plan to be at the reunion. Later we were joined by Al Giardini of Ft. Mills, SC.

When we arrived home we found over 100 letters waiting at the post office. Hannah usually makes out the cards and envelopes, but, because of her problem, she couldn't help this



Dusty Rhodes and Roland Beach on ground & Lou Cohen in cockpit.

time. I have finally answered them all. Now you know why your letters were answered late. I've been Chief Cook and Bottle Washer around here for awhile. Well, mostly bottle washer because Hannah can still cook left handed. Have you ever eaten a "Left Handed" meal?

The large influx of letters had to do with responses to the 350 dues reminder notices I had sent out to those in arrears which now are coming in. Due to the high cost of postage and printing, if you have not yet paid your dues for 1987, it may be the last reminder you'll receive. Remember, if you are planning to attend the reunion in September, your 1988 dues must be paid. The Reunion Committee will have a list of unpaid members so you will be told by them to send your dues to me. If you will look on the address label of the June issue, you will see the year to which your dues are paid. It takes 2 days of my time to mark these labels. Now, "MAKE MY DAY" and send in your dues. You might think of sending in your 1989 dues with the 1988. Better yet, send in for a LIFE MEMBERSHIP as others have.

SEE YOU ALL AT THE REUNION IN VIRGINIA BEACH!

Hannah and Ray Summa

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

To members and friends:

This will be my last presidential message to all of you. I was proud to serve as your president. As a reminder to all who attend the reunion; please bring your recommendations and suggestions. For those not attending, write your suggestions to Eli Baldea who will present them at the membership meeting.

As I have urged in the past, please try to have your sons and daughters become associate members with the intentions of carrying on the traditions of the 34th Bomb Group.

I am looking forward to seeing all of you at Virginia Beach. Don't forget!! All who attend this reunion will have a chance to win room, banquet, and tour for two at our next reunion in Shreveport, LA. in September, 1989. So Y'ALL COME AND ENJOY!

Sincerely,  
Ed Lawler

# A Note About The 34th Bomb Group Reunion

Bob Wright says that the registrations for the Virginia Beach, VA. reunion are arriving at his office at a much slower rate than normal. We all know that time marches on. We can cut down on the cadence a beat or two by attending this reunion and associating with friends of forty some years ago.

The reunion committtee has made all arrangements with the Holiday Inn at 39th and Ocean Front in Virginia Beach. The dates are 22 Sept. until 25 Sept., 1988. Each room overlooks the ocean; plenty of area for dining and for the general membership meeting. The board room will double up as the hospitality room, with Harold Rutka in charge.

For the history minded people, the tour of Old Williamsburg will tell it like it was. For the shopper, the Pottery will be an outing to be remembered.

Bob Wright will have his registration desk in the lobby along with the able assistance of Esther, Gen, and Wanda to expedite

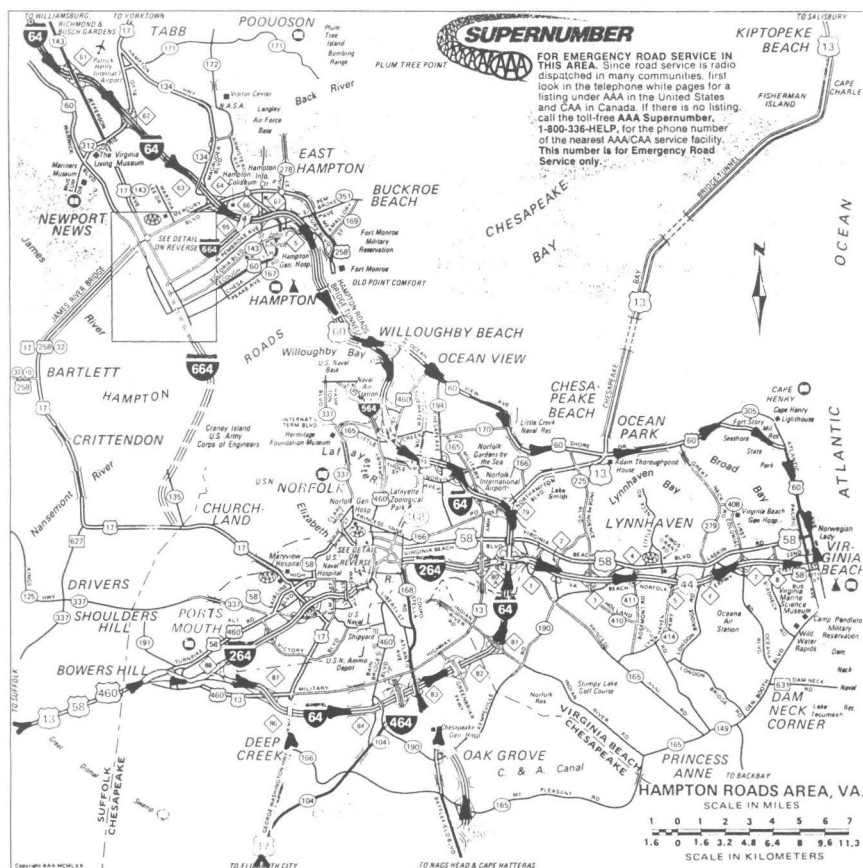
the signing in. A locator board will be handy to look up the room numbers of your old buddies. Ray and Hannah will have their P.X. in a location that will be handy for all.

Vice-president Ritchie will conduct an auction for the benefit of the group. He will sell the articles you bring from your area. This is planned for Friday evening. After the banquet on Saturday, president Ed Lawler will have a program for us that includes singers and other fitting things.

Do not forget that there is a cut-off date for reunion registration. There can be no guarantee of rates or services after this date. Get your paperwork in to Bob and to the Holiday Inn and avoid the rush.

All in all, it looks like a great time will be had by all. See you in Virginia Beach.

Gerald Pine, Harold Rutka, Bob Wright  
34th Bomb Group Reunion Committee



## DIRECTIONS TO HOLIDAY INN

### DRIVING

1. Coming from Delaware on U.S.-13, cross the Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel to US-60, then follow US-60 east to the Holiday Inn at 39th and Atlantic Avenue.
2. Coming from the north on I-64, come through the Hampton Bay Bridge Tunnel to US-60, take US-60 east until you reach the Holiday Inn.
3. Alternate to above: Continue on I-64 to the Va. Beach Norfolk Expressway (toll road No. 44), east on 44 to Atlantic Avenue, then left to the Holiday Inn.
4. Coming from the south on US-13, US-58, US-460, US-17 or SR-168, follow these to I-64, take I-64 eastbound to toll road

No. 44, then proceed as in No. 3 to Holiday Inn.  
Note: Traffic on I-64 and toll road No. 44 is extremely congested during the hours of 6:30 to 9:00 A.M. and 3:00 to 6:30 P.M.

### FLYING

There is van shuttle service at the Norfolk airport located just outside the baggage claim area. Service every hour or better. Cost is \$8.75 per person, one way, or \$14.00, round trip. This service takes you directly to the Holiday Inn.

On the day before you leave (should be Saturday) phone (804) 857-1231 for pick-up on the following day for return trip to the airport.

# REUNION REGISTRATIONS

(As of 7/15/88)

Last Name		No. Attending
AMES	VERNON & MILLIE	2
ANDERSON	KEITH ELLY VEON & AL BECKWITH	3
ANTANOVICH	ALEX & BETTY	2
ATTRIDGE	CHARLES & EVALYN	2
BALLANTYNE	ROY & MILDRED	2
BAUGHMAN	CLEO & FREDDIE	2
BAUMGARDNER	DAVID & VERA	2
BERGOLD	ROBERT & OLIVE	2
BESS	LEONARD & HELEN	2
BILLMAN	CHARLES & ISABELLE	2
BRAUKS	WALLACE & DORIS	2
BRAVEMAN	MILTON & ELAINE	2
BURNELL	BILL & LORIE	2
BUSS	PAUL & MARY	2
DAVIDSON	JEAN	1
DE HAAN	BENJAMIN & HELEN	2
DEATHERAGE	GRADY & EDITH	2
DI NENNO	ALFRED & ELSIE	2
DOMINO	JOSEPH & VICTORIA	2
FORISTER	CARROLL & SYLVIA	2
FREYSINGER	CARL & IMOGENE	2
GAVRYCK	CHESTER & JACQUELYN	2
GIBBS	CLAUDE & AUDREY	2
GRAY	WILLIAM "PETE"	1
HAMPTON	FRED & MARY LOU	2
HANRIHAN	JAMES & JOY	2
HARTWICK	ROBERT & LORRAINE	2
HINCHEE	RAYMOND & MARGARET	2
HOOD	JACK SCOTT MIDDLETON	2
HOWARD	PHILLIP & JEAN	2
HOWARTER	WAYNE & LAVERNE	2
IVEY	KIVETT & LUCILLE	2
JORDAN	DEXTER & BEULAH	2
KENNY	JIM & MARY	2
KINCAID	GERALD & EDITH	2
MARTIN	JAMES	1
McCOLL	RODERICK & KRIS	2
NENDELL	ROBERT & DOROTHY	2
NEWTON	THOMAS & MILDRED	2
PACHOLSKI	ROBERT & GINNY	2
PARENTEAU	EARL & IRENE	2
PINE	GERALD & WANDA	2
RITCHIE	GEORGE & JUNE	2
ROMERO	CLEVELAND & HENRIETTA	2
RUTKA	HAROLD & GEN	2
SAULNIER	ERNEST & FLORENCE	2
SCHERR	FREDERICK & LIBBIE	2
SHARE	JACK & MARIAN	2
SIMMONS	FRED L.	1
SIMPSON	RONALD & MARTHA	2
SMITH	JOHN & JULIE ANN	2
SMITH	NORRIS & KATHERINE	2
SNELLING	THOMAS & VIRGINIA	2
SOTHERN	BRUCE & MUGGS	2
SUMMA	RAY & HANNAH	2
UNDERWOOD	DOUG	1
WRIGHT	BOB & ESTHER	2
TOTAL		110

AUCTION  
WANTED



A very special memento  
or  
A Keepsake  
or  
A local product  
for  
AUCTION, U.S.A.

Our next "AUCTION U.S.A." will be held at our reunion in Virginia Beach. Please make the effort to select something of interest, a tid-bit from your life, "memorabilia", a super gag gift, a local product, etc.

Uniqueness and desirability are more important than the cost. Please use your imagination as well as humor and good spirits to select something unusual. Maybe even get a laugh!! If your imagination won't "fly" — send money, that's always funny. Please make all checks payable to 34th B.G. Assn.

Bring your gifts with you to Virginia Beach and hold them until the late afternoon of the auction. I will either make an announcement or have an information sign at the registration desk. (Easier for me if you'll help bring things to the auction block).

If you are not attending, please mail your gift or cash donation to: George J. Ritchie, 107 Rock Ct., Swansboro, NC. 28584. THANK YOU!!

George J. Ritchie



Lou DeSantis on clarinet, Lou Cohen on sax, and "The Snail"





**WALTER SHORE** - Jocotepec Jalisco, MX.

Must say that times are tougher down here. In that line, I just read that a Plymouth Volare made down here costs us \$17,000.00 U.S. Same car exported to the U.S. can be bought up there for \$8,000.00. What a rip-off. We still have the old 1964 Mercedes 220b. Just had to buy a master cylinder, cost \$150.00 U.S., but very little for labor. Base wage still \$3.50 U.S. per day and poor people have lost their buying power to the tune of 45% in the past 6 years.

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**WILLIAM "PETE" GRAY** - Virginia Beach, VA.

They said I have "Polymyalgia Rheumatica", sometimes known as PMR. They tell me there are 23 different kinds of it and that makes it hard to prescribe medicine. Am taking steroids now and seem to be improving - they've cut the dosage down to about 1/4 of what I was taking earlier. That stuff will cause stomach ulcers so you have to take several other pills to off-set what it does.

Anyway, think I'm doing better - a little each day - just hope I can make it to the reunion in September. Wouldn't that be something if I couldn't make it - and right here in the same town where I live.

(Editor's note: If you don't, Pete, you sure as hell will have a lot of visitors.)

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**WALLACE BRAUKS** - St. Louis, MO.

Several weeks ago (March), my sister Doris (who some of you know) had a problem. Her heart stopped several times. I took her to the hospital. They checked her out, her heart stopped again. She's had a pacemaker put in and is O.K. now.

\* \* \* \* \*

**JOHN W. LEATH** - Cathedral City, CA.

I received information from Ray Mueller on the Assn. and I'm glad to join. He and I were in the same unit, the 391st Sqdn.

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**CLAUDE R. CONKLIN** - Belle Plaine, IA.

In reading my last Legion magazine, I found the notice of the 34th BG reunion at Virginia Beach. Since I flew with the 34th during WWII I want to join and attend the reunion.

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**OTIS M. GRYDE** - Kailua, HI.

A couple of years ago everyone thought I was not long for this world. The main valve that pumps (or controls) blood around from the heart was not working at more than about 10%. The medics decided to replace the mitral valve with one from a pig. This was a new, rather unproven way of doing things, but I had nothing to lose. The M.D. in charge said "If he makes it, we all win; if not, he can't lose as he won't make it anyway." I made out O.K. and am getting better every day.



Standing-L to R: J. E. Bouldin, C.R. Attridge, C.W. Saunders, L.W. Boreen  
Kneeling-L to R: T.J. Cristman, W.H. Reynolds, J.J. Shulman, H.L. Henson, M.R. McSpadden, J.J. Datchler.

**WILLIAM E. CREER** - Las Vegas, NV.

Thought the following excerpt of a letter from Ian Hawkins might have some interest for members of the 34th. I appreciate there are a number of opinions concerning the erosion of bronze castings, i.e., they get better or worse. But, it is interesting to see that the British keep an eye out on our behalf.

"Mr. Roland Prient, Supt. of the American Military Cemetery at Cambridge recently met with Mr. Ron Blake (British Legion, Mendlesham) at the 34th Bomb Group Memorial at Mendlesham Airfield. They discussed various methods of giving the bronze plaque on the memorial a thorough cleaning and then protecting it with a coat or two of clear varnish."

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**WILLIE T. JOHNSON** - Sacramento, CA.

My wife and I visited England last summer and, among other places, we stopped in Mendlesham. Needless to say, what a change (which I expected). We're both looking forward to the reunion.

\* \* \* \* \*

**CHARLES R. SCHNIEDER** - Plano, TX.

I was Harry Perry's navigator and Tom Newton was his co-pilot. I talked with Tom in April, the first time in over 40 years. He and Mildred, his wife, seemed very interested in attending the Virginia Beach reunion in September - as am I.

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**LEE E. SACHERMAN** - Woodland Hills, CA.

Since Sidney Doppelt found me, we have been corresponding irregularly. One of these days he may visit California. Mary Ann and I will be in London this summer. We'll spend a week in and around same, but are not planning to include a visit to Ipswich.

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**ALEX ANTANOVICH** - Scenery Hill, PA.

I read in the local newspaper that the 34th BG is holding its annual reunion in September and you are looking for all former members. I was in the 34th operating out of Mendlesham. We moved as a group from Blythe, CA. to Mendlesham, England. We were shot down on our 5th mission (May 30, 1944). I believe we were the first crew that didn't return from a mission.

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Continued on page 6

# Notes From Our Friends

Continued from page 5

**JAMES A. LOISELLE** - Danburg, WI.

Our river is all open now, and full of ducks and geese, so I guess spring is here at last. I haven't heard from any of my crew since Christmas, but I guess no news is good news. I sure enjoy our 34th newsletters and read them over and over.

\* \* \* \* \*

**PAUL SUBJECT** - Grayslake, IL.

Barbara and I have recently returned from a great visit with Bill and Nell Wright in Florida. It had been forty-four years since we had seen the Wrights. Bill and I were in bombardier/navigation training together. We were also in the 34th at the same time but didn't know it. Bill learned it when they got back from Cologne after we had crashed on take-off. Somebody told him that I survived and had been shipped to a general hospital.

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**GERALD F. KINCAID** - Bellevue, WA.

I retired from Boeing on April 1st. Now I will be able to do some traveling. Plan to be in England in July (My first visit since the war). Will visit the 34th BG. site and then to Paris to visit with my daughter and her husband and two children. I also plan to attend the reunion at Virginia Beach (This will be my first one.) Later this year I plan to move back to Springfield, Ohio.

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**AL DiNENNO** - No. Ft. Myers, FL.

We haven't forgotten the 34th. Hope to see you all in Virginia. Elsie and I are having a good time here in Florida, bowling, golfing, fishing and traveling.

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**FRANK R. GRIFFITH** - Omaha, NE.

The packet of newsletters is certainly appreciated. Reading that stuff sure brings back memories. I didn't know such an organization existed until I saw it in the "VFW" magazine.

I only flew 6 missions in Tommy Thumper. I was made a lead navigator and flew with several crews for the balance of my tour. I intend to attend a reunion after I retire and try to re-acquaint myself with some of the people I worked with.

\* \* \* \* \*



Top row - L to R: Ashwood, Eggleston, Travernick, Torre. Bottom row - L to R: Harper, Edwards, Peczkowski, Borders, Henderson.



Mar. 1944 Los Angeles Trianon Ballroom. L to R: Jim Murray, Lou Cohen, Jim Humphries, Roland Beach, Jack Berrill.

**ROBERT ALVES** - N. Olmstead, OH.

So far, 1988 has been somewhat topsy-turvy for me. I had prostate surgery in January and it took four weeks for me to stop bleeding, which weakened me to a considerable degree. However, I am feeling great again and ready for the golf course.

I read your newsletters with interest. It's just hard for me to believe it's been 43 years since I pulled out of Mendlesham Green. But the memories still linger. The one thing I do remember was the night that Jerry sneaked in behind our planes as they were landing and knocked off three of our B-17's. One came right over our barracks a blazing inferno. It's a bad memory and one I hope never to see again.

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**JOHN H. GALLOWAY** - Crawfordsville, IN

Recently I learned of the 34th Bomb Group reunion through a notice in the American Legion magazine. Peculiarly enough, although I was with the 34th from 28 Sept., 1944 until 1 June, 1945, flew 30 combat missions, and was in the Reserve as a major for many years thereafter, I had never previously learned of such an association. I would appreciate a roster of association members to see if any of my former close associates are listed.

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**WESLEY E. WALLACE** - Spokane, WA.

I was an original member of the cadre from the 2nd BG. that formed the 34th in 1940 at Westover Fld., MA. After Pearl Harbor we were shipped from base to base. I was farmed out with another cadre and lost contact with members and would like to renew correspondence with them.

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**NORMA (HAROLD) PARRISH** - Carbondale, IL.

Harold has been in poor health for some time. The past couple of years have been rather difficult. The ravages of Parkinson's and Alzheimer's disease have prevented either of us from enjoying our "golden years" as much as we anticipated. It is with anguish in my heart that I must report to you that he is in a nursing home and, as you would expect, prognosis for recovery is 0%. I am so glad he had the opportunities to renew acquaintances with the 34th B.G. at the reunions. Thank you so much for organizing them.

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**ERNEST A. SAULNIER** - Rotonda West, FL.

Finally observed a reunion notice in the April issue of the Legion magazine and wish to attend. I joined the group in Blythe, CA. and in England was with the 7th Sqdn. as a power gun turret specialist with the rank of S/Sgt. I'm looking forward to seeing everyone at the reunion.

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Continued on page 7

# Notes From Our Friends

Continued from page 6

**EDWARD F. MUNK** - Scotia, NY.

Income tax season is over and the government won, as usual. It was nice to get all the information you sent. I have wondered from time to time over the years what had happened to the guys. It's been a long time. Too bad I didn't know about the King of Prussia get-together last year. That's quite close.

\* \* \* \* \*

**WINFRED L. CROSBY** - Lee, ME.

I want to tell you that I have found a buddy I was in England with. He was wounded on a mission with me. He had a head injury that required a metal plate being placed in his skull, and had memory loss for some time. I had not heard from him in years. I'm glad I found him. His name is William Escherich.

\* \* \* \* \*

**JESSIE MAE (WILEY) MOORE** - Ashville, NC.

Sorry I haven't written sooner to tell you of Wiley's passing on March 30th. We found out in Nov. '87 that he had cancer. Went into the hospital on our 49th anniversary, 12/11/87, and had his operation on his 71st birthday, 12/21/87. It's been very hard for me to write to anyone. Don, short for McDonald, was so pleased to hear of Louis West, whose name appeared in your last issue. Louis was on his plane when it went down over Holland and he had not heard from him since. Louis called the week before Don passed away and Don was thrilled to hear from him. All the boys called Don "Pappy" cause he was the oldest of the crew.

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**KEITH ANDERSON** - Ravenna, OH.

Due to low manifold pressure I'm having trouble maintaining altitude. However, I wish to thank you all for your many welcome letters and cards. I'm still fighting the old bout with cancer. Taken for granted that I can maintain proper headings and the fuel holds out, I expect to see you all (Y-all) in September at Pete Gray's stomping grounds at Virginia Beach.

\* \* \* \* \*

**MICHAEL DERENGE** - Port Charlotte, FL.

I'm now retired from Bethlehem Steel in Baltimore, MD. with 32 years of service. Previous to that I worked 10 years in coal mines in W. Va. I don't think I'll be able to attend the reunion at Virginia Beach as we are making a trip to Norfolk, VA. in June to visit our daughter who is expecting her first baby. Can't make two trips so close together. May see you all another time.



Capt. Tom Ritchie, James F. Martin & George Ritchie posing in front of a B-1 Bomber.



Living Quarters at 34th B.G. Mendlesham England Base.

**JIM KENNY** - Shoreham, NY.

I plan to visit the larger wineries out this way to see about some samples for the auction. Wine making is a new industry out here. The potato and cauliflower farms are becoming vineyards and horse farms. Last fall I visited one of the wineries to see what kind of reaction I would get in asking for a donation for the auction. I got a good reception. The manager asked that I give him something for his file to justify his giving me some samples. I suggested a copy of our Mendlesham Memories citing the reunion and the auction. He said that would be fine.

I wonder if you could send me about a half dozen extra copies of the newsletter. Let me see what I can do at the other larger outfits. The manager I spoke to liked the idea that their product could be exposed to residents of possibly fifty states. I think I will get the same response from the others.

\* \* \* \* \*

**BEATRICE (JACK) ODOM** - Palm Beach Gardens, FL.

In September we returned to North Carolina, closed the cabin, and started home. We arrived home on a Thursday, and on Sunday Jack became very sick. He slipped slowly to the floor with my arms around him. I dialed 911, then called my niece, as she lived close to me. The ambulance was there by the time I hung up and the medics agreed that Jack was in danger and a very sick man. A team of doctors agreed to operate immediately, even though his blood pressure was only 30. His gall bladder had ruptured and was in septic shock. He survived it and was in the hospital two weeks. He's doing O.K. He looks good and I hope he continues to improve. Everyone has been so good to me and helped me through this. We are very thankful for his will to live. We will be at Virginia Beach. See you there!

\* \* \* \* \*

**JOHN SLOYNE SMITH** - Tinton Falls, NJ.

Can't wait until September rolls around. I figure we should have a real nice time at Virginia Beach. I'm not doing too bad. My ticker is going along nicely since I take my pills regularly. It seems I've had a rheumatic heart since I was a kid in England. My mother didn't inform me and it wasn't until I had trouble last year that my sister and brother both confirmed that when a child I had a bum ticker. Some mistake the doctors made when they gave me my flight physical, what with x-rays, Cat-scans, and various cardiology tests I had to take. Anyway, I got my missions in. Now, my right knee is acting up again so I'll have to stop chasing the girls.

\* \* \* \* \*

Continued on page 8



# Notes From Our Friends

Continued from page 7

**CHESTER GAVRYCK** - W. Sand Lake, NY.

I belong to the local Kiwanis Club here in my village and I had a program to put on at our meeting. I decided to talk about a wartime experience of saving lives instead of taking them. So I spoke of the five food drops to the 3 million Dutch starving in Holland. I spoke of the three trips I wangled my way to go on.

After I finished a fellow Kiwanian spoke up and said he was 12 years old and lived with his parents just north of Shiphohol where we dropped most of the food. He said just before he got some of the food that we dropped, he and his family were reduced to eating boiled tulip bulbs to eke out their meals. He is now 6'-3" and eats like a horse and is a good friend of mine.

\* \* \* \* \*

**CHARLES HARMON** - Fari Haven, VT.

On page 18 of the June issue, the fellows are, from left to right, Charles Harmon, Clinton Baun, Valentine O'Brien and Joseph Lindia.

**STEPHEN NIATAS** - Plainsboro, NJ.

Why is a small part of my past life so vividly implanted in my mind and heart? The visions that I often recall are so real that, for the moment, I know I am there, but I am here. It is June, 1988, not March, 1945.

I hear the chatter over the engine roar. There goes tail end Charley; it blew up; there is nothing. It was a direct hit. Oh! At 3 o'clock another B-17 lost its whole right wing; no parachutes; they're all gone. The B-17's were not of the 34th Bomb Group. They were stragglers, tag-ons. We of the 18th Sqdn. avoided hits by evasive action.

The chatter fades now. We were safe; the engine roar is gone. The smell of death to our comrades lingers in our nostrils. Back home then in England, and home it is June '88, not March '45. We have lived in this time past that gave life today a special meaning.

\* \* \* \* \*

**FRANCIS B. YATES** - Guilford, CT.

I took a Space A hop from New Hampshire to California. Decided to take a bus trip to Tuscon via Blythe and Phoenix. Very interesting seeing the desert country again. While passing the old base at Blythe, it appeared that there is a hangar and small air strip left from the old days. I guess that it is now called the Blythe Airport. I tried to get some "wheels" in Blythe to drive out to the old site, but was unable to attain any. I talked with about ten "locals" to try to learn about what happened to the base after the war. Surprisingly, nobody even knew that an Air Base existed in Blythe during WWII. And these were people our age who were life-long residents. One waitress indicated that her father took her out there when she was a little girl - right after WWII. She said that she found a couple of items like a whiskey bottle, keys, etc. I said to these people that I was very much surprised to see articles about Camp Young and General Patton in their historical paper, but nothing about Blythe Air Base! I also said to them that inasmuch as the base was named after their town, at least they should mention it in their paper. Their response? "Like so what?"

\* \* \* \* \*

**HENRY TOBIASON** - Remer, MN.

I would like to put in my two cents worth on who shot down the "Buzz Bomb." I was on that mission and on the return trip over England, our pilot told us that a top turret gunner in the 7th Sqdn. had shot down a "Buzz Bomb." If the picture and the pilot's name, Lt. Elbert Swenson, is correct, then the top turret gunner is Sgt. Robert Gillespie. This information is from my copy of the 34th Group Roster and travel orders. Lt. Swensen was Crew 31 in the 7th Sqdn.

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Standing L to R: VanderKley Cocherell, Johnson, Hicks & Nichols.

Kneeling L to R: Springman, Conklin, McArdle, Dunn & Lotspeich.

## 34th Bomb Group History Book Progress Report

We are sorry to report that the schedules we were previously quoted have fallen by the wayside. The "blue line" prepublication (proof) copy did not reach me around the end of May as promised. As I write this we are in mid-July and I have just received about two-thirds of the "blue line" copies for review.

We are constantly after Turner Publishing Co. to follow through on their promises. At this stage of the game we are demanding that the completed books be in the hands of the buyers before our September reunion. They tell us this should be no problem, but time will tell.

Based upon what we've received so far we know they are working on it. Those of you who have ordered your books, please have a little more patience. We'll get the book eventually.

W.L. McAllister



Standing L to R: (Unknown), Harmon, O'Brien, Baun, Lindia, (Unknown).

Kneeling L to R: Cannon, Davy, Stiver, Riley, & Pignanelli.



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# NEWS FROM HERE AND THERE

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BOB WRIGHT sent in the following:

The Aviation Cadet Alumni Association is seeking former pilot cadets. Send Flight Class, primary, basic and advanced locations to Lt. Col. Harry C. Bradshaw, USAF (Ret.), RFD -1, Newmarket, NH. 03857. Purpose: help others locate former classmates. Effort is non-profit and will not be commercialized. Include stamped envelope for specific class information.

\* \* \* \* \*

WILBUR K. BOROM writes that he is involved with a group in Texas who are trying to form a limited partnership to finance the production of a motion picture based upon a book called "Taming the Neuces Strip," which is a true story of an outstanding Texas Ranger Captain, Leander H. McNelly. Also involved in this project is James Arness, the actor, and U.S. Marshal Clint Peoples. Any of our members who are looking for this type of investment which Wilbur says is an outstanding, low-risk one, get more information by writing: Wilbur K. Borom, 827 Highland Oaks, Dallas, TX. 75232.

\* \* \* \* \*

WALLY BRAUKS sends in the following:

Former prisoners of war, or their next of kin, may apply for the P.O.W. medal by writing to the military records center of the service of which they were a part during their imprisonment. A toll-free number, 1-800-873-3768, has been established to take requests for application forms and provide information about the medal. Written requests for issue of the medal or determination of eligibility should be addressed to:

Air Force Reference Branch  
National Personnel Records Center  
9700 Page Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO. 63132-5199

\* \* \* \* \*

We have a letter from a young hobbyist seeking earlier cameras such as we might have obtained back during the war years. The brand names are too numerous to mention, but if you are interested in selling an old camera, contact: Edmund Juszczak, 2421 West 46th Street, Chicago, IL. 60632.

\* \* \* \* \*

We have a letter from Mrs. Joan Barker of Mendlesham, England, stating that, since the village predates the Domesday Book of 1086, Mendlesham has a long history, and a number of people have formed a group to research that history. She has sent me a booklet titled "Mendlesham Exposed; A Photographic Historical Tour." It is filled with old photographs dated from before 1900. I found it very interesting.

Their group is looking for members of the 34th who might have photographs or stories which will help them to build a picture of what it was like for we young Americans arriving in a small English village. Also, she'd like to know if any of our members would like copies of their photographic booklet.

There have been rumors in Mendlesham regarding the possibility that the 34th plans to visit there next year. If so, Mrs. Barker plans to hold back some copies of the booklet for our arrival there.

If you'd like the booklet or have photos or stories to contribute, write to:

Mrs. Joan Barker  
"Merry Thought"  
Mendlesham CRN  
Suffolk IP145RQ  
England

FR. DOUGLAS CULVER, who was the pianist with the Jive Bombers of the 34th, writes to tell us that he has an album (or tapes) of piano music, mostly of church music, which is being sold for a good cause. It seems their church, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, needs running water and plumbing. The album (or tapes) can be ordered by sending \$10.00 to: Christ Episcopal Church, P.O. Box 816, Bayfield, WI. 54814-0816.



Lt. A. Eggleston



## ROSE'S CORNER

Now is the time for all good men (and women) to come to the aid of their reunion! We have never visited Virginia Beach and can't wait to see what it's all about. Our committee is making it sound like a musn't-miss city. Soon we will be there and caught up in the spirit of the reunion. We will probably leave with the feeling that just being with all of our friends once more is all it takes, regardless of where. It's one big happy family, all striving for the same thing; keeping the old 34th alive and well, reliving the big WWII all over again, and seeing who can tell the biggest tale and get away with it!

Dear friends, please don't forget the auction and do bring some donation so that it will be a huge success. I would love to bring one of Indiana's covered bridges, but I'll never get away with it! Ha! Don't forget any photos you might have - bring them because someone is always interested in what you've captured on film. Let's make this a real family reunion and share our love for the 34th and for each other. SEE YOU ALL THERE.

Rose

# ADDRESS CHANGES

(Changes Underlined)

ADAMS, BLUFORD L. JR., 280 Madison Ave., c/o 1404, New York, NY. 10017-0801  
 ALBERT, E.J., Box 145, Rollins, MT. 59931  
 ANDERSON, KENNETH E., P.O. Box 164, Sherrill Ford, NC. 28673  
 BABCOCK, ROY JR., 520 Coe Ridge Dr. -8, Carmel, IN. 46032  
 BALDEA, DAVID E., 7829 Shadowhill Way, Montgomery, OH. 45252  
 BALDEA, ELI, 2576 Brookwood Dr., LOFS, Crown Point, IN. 46307  
 BILLMAN, CHARLES A., P.O. Box 259, W. Henrietta, NY. 14586  
 BOULIANE, JEAN P., 4950 Woodway -504, Houston, TX. 77056  
 BROWN, NED H., 1508 S. Riverside Dr., New Smyrna Beach, FL. 32069  
 BRYANT, ARNOLD M., 22 Monroe Drive, Hookset, NH. 03103  
 CARLSON, GLENN A., 1311 White Pine Dr. N., Eau Claire, WI. 54701  
 CHOMIAK, HARRY J., 66 Lincoln Avenue, Woodridge, NJ. 07075  
 CLARK, AMY, 101 Mulberry St., Apt. 107, Springfield, MA. 01105  
 DONALDSON, JOHN E. JR., 2421 No. Tuckahoe St., Arlington, VA. 22205  
 FRAZIER, ROY G., 216 Lafayette, Lawrenceburg, TN. 38464  
 HANDY, MRS. GREGORY, 2044 - 41st Street., Long Island City, NY. 11105-1611  
 HANSEN, MILTON, 7440 North Street, Sauk City, WI. 53583  
 HOBAN, ROBERT C., 7293 Pontiac Circle, Chanhassen, MN. 55317-9454  
 HUGHES, JOSEPH E., P.O. Box 277, Carmichaels, PA. 15320  
 KAUFMAN, WILLIAM E., 10744 U.S. Hwy. 27, L-125, Ft. Wayne, IN. 48816

KINCAID, GERALD, 16150 SE. Eastgate Way -F104, Bellevue, WA. 98008  
 MANN, DONALD G., Rt. 1, Box 28, Vaughn, MT. 59481  
 MARBLE, DON, 10136 Cinnibar Avenue, Sun City, AZ. 85351  
 MERCURIS, ALISON, 2003 No. Railroad Ave., Staten Island, NY. 10306  
 MERWIN, TED, 4291 N. Wolford Rd., Tucson, AZ. 85749  
 MORRELL, EILEEN, 600 American Ave., C-511, King of Prussia, PA. 19406  
 ODOM, JACK, 2231 Canal Street, Palm Beach Gardens, FL. 33410  
 PATRICK, TOMMY, 4300 So. 8th Street, Terre Haute, IN. 47802  
 PEDIGO, WILLIAM E., 611 Viking Ct., Runaway Bay, Bridgeport, TX. 76026  
 RANKIN, EARL W., Box 805, Strassburg, PA. 17579  
 RILEY, JAMES W., 243 Locust Lane, Lake Havasu City, AZ. 86403-6820  
 RUTHERFORD, ROBERT, 89 Jefferson St., Freeport, NY. 11520  
 SALVERSON, LEON E., P.O. Box 10121, Eugene, OR. 97401  
 SANTISERIO, JOHN, Box 329, Stuart, FL. 34995  
 SKINNER, FRANCIS, 3579 San Jose, St. Ann, MO. 63074  
 STRONA, JOHN P., 4300 Holt Blvd. SP. 108, Montclair, CA. 91763  
 THUEMMEL, GRANT, 7240 SW. Chapel Court, Tigard, OR. 97223  
 VANNATER, EARL C., 204 Beverly Drive, Harrison, MI. 48625  
 WILSON, LLOYD E., Star Route, 57-4-A, Lenardtown, MD. 20650  
 WRIGHT, DODIE ("DOC"), 2654 Fisk Road, Montgomery, AL. 36311

## NEWLY FOUND

(As of 7/17/88)

AYRISS, ROBERT D, Goodsam Club 102104, Agoura, CA. 91302  
 BASSINGER, JIMMY, 121 So. Colonial Ave., Charlotte, NC. 28207  
 BISHOP, FRANCIS B., 5724 S. Roanoke, Springfield, MO. 65807  
 BROWN, JAMES H., 255 Lebanon Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA. 15228  
 CLARKSON, JOHN W., 459 Mall Blvd., Savannah, GA. 31406  
 FOGARTY, LEO, P.O. Box 17333, So. Lake Tahoe, CA. 95706  
 GLOUGA, JEROME, 19-B Winthrop Road, Jamesburg, NJ. 08831  
 GREEN, WALLACE E., 118 Beach Avenue, Watertown, CT. 06785  
 GROSS, GERALD, 2416 Ocean Crest Blvd., Far Rockaway, NY. 11691  
 HUDECEK, THOMAS J., 4103 No. 66th Street, Omaha, NE. 68104  
 MARKS, CHARLES C. JR, 7107 Honeysuckle Dr., Lakeland, FL. 33813  
 PARTSCH, CHESTER J., 3916 Gordon Street, Omaha, NE. 68105  
 PECK, FRANCIS J., 2620 S. Lamont St., Spokane, WA. 99203  
 PROTO, PASCUALE P., 26 Indian Neck Ave., Bransford, CT. 06405

QUINNELL, JOHN L., Box 4095, Skarr Rte., Sidney, MT. 59270  
 RAY, BETTIE, 2441 Lauder Drive, Maitland, FL. 32751  
 SHOVE, WILLIAM G., 3167 Madison Ave., San Diego, CA. 92116

### New Life Members

TOTAL NOW 104

(As of 7/17/88)

LAST NAME	FIRST NAME
DENTER	JOHN J.
DONLON	WILLIAM J.
DORRANCE	DR. WM. H.
HANSON	AMBERS E.
HOHENSTREITER	JOHN I.
HOLCOMB	VERBAL
KAUFMAN	WILLIAM
LOPEZ	MIGUEL
MAST	WILLIAM H.
PAXTON	KEN E.
SHARE	JACK
SMITH	JOHN S.
STOUTSENBERGER	REV. PAUL
WESTMAN	CARL B.

# TAPS

(As of 7/15/88)

BREAUX, Leonard  
16410 Brookville Drive  
Houston, TX. 77059

FRIEDENBACH, Francis  
(1976)  
Fortuna, CA.

GRAZIANO, Frank, (1981)  
Easton, Pa.

GREINMAN, Clifford,  
430 Claridon Drive  
Marion, OH. 43302

LAMAR, Horace  
8750 Dove Hill  
Olive Branch, MS. 38634

LAMBERT, Henry K.  
6828 Massaponax Ch. Rd.  
Spotsylvania, VA. 22553

McCAUL, James A.  
(Nov. 1985)  
Dallas, TX.



NEAL, William L.  
2053 Cambridge  
Springfield, IL. 62704

RALL, George E.  
349 Howarden Road  
Springfield, Pa. 19064

RYAN, Richard E.  
1900 East Tuttle  
North Madison, OH. 44057

SARGENT, James S.  
6218 Conservation Drive  
Jeffersonville, IN. 47130

STEWART, James

THERRIAN, ROMEO  
RFD 1, Box 302  
Dover, NH. 03820



Ground Crew - Lt. Eggleston's aircraft - L to R:  
Keanne, Harper, Edwards, & Gorski.

Don't Forget  
To Send  
Your Dues

Mail \$7.50 to:  
Ray Summa  
2910 Bittersweet Lane  
Anderson, IN. 46011

## A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE WAR



MAKE MINE VANILLA  
By PETE GRAY

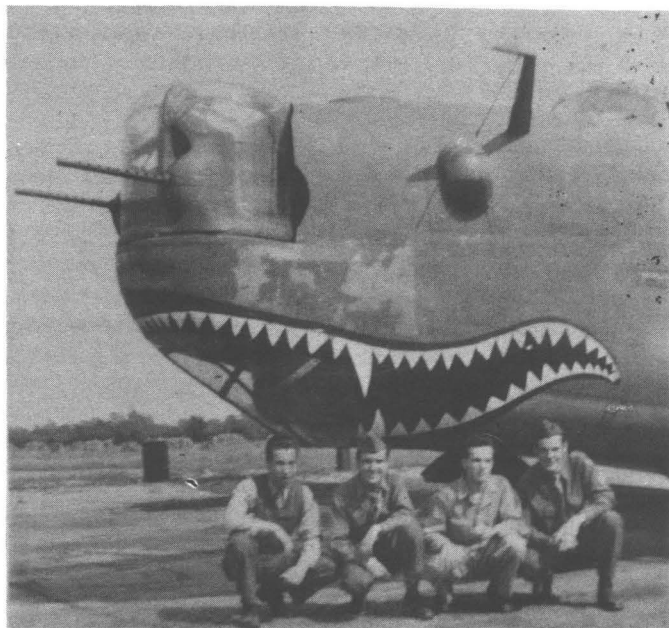
One morning in late September of 1944, when the planes from the 34th took off, one of them carried an item that was completely unessential to the mission. Back in the tail section was a one gallon hydraulic fluid can which now held 1/2 gallon of vanilla ice cream mix. The general idea was that in the sub-zero altitude encountered in the flight, the mixture would freeze.

This unusual project had been conceived some weeks earlier when several of us in the ground crew were berating the fact that we had gone through an entire summer without having so much as a taste of ice cream. Things were tough in the ETO - remember! So, I had written my family back in Virginia, asking if they could send me some type of ice cream mix that already had all the necessary ingredients in it. The best they could do, however, was to send me a mix that contained everything except milk. Unfortunately, fresh milk was one of the many items that were unavailable to us.

So we did what we thought was the next best thing - we obtained a can of condensed milk from the mess hall and diluted it with water. After the mixture was prepared, it was placed back in the tail section where the movement of the aircraft in flight would have a tendency to keep it stirred while it was being frozen. Also it was necessary to brief the flight crew concerning this particular can so as not to get it confused with the other "relief" cans scattered throughout the airplane. No bathroom facilities, remember?

Later that afternoon, when the planes returned, we were delighted to find the mixture was frozen solid. We had to cut the can apart to get it out. We broke off little pieces and tasted it. That's when we found out we had done something wrong! IT TASTED AWFUL!! We knew right then that canned milk was NOT the kind to use when making ice cream. Our theory was correct, but we just didn't have the proper ingredients necessary to do the job. We had to throw the whole mess away!

\* \* \* \* \*



The "SHARK"



# THE WAY IT WAS

(Continued)

By VINCENT J. DORAN

We were notified the night before when we were scheduled to fly a mission. Before going to bed, each man tied a towel around the rail at the foot of his bunk as a signal to the Charge of Quarters (CQ) whom to wake. He would come around three or four in the morning, wake you quietly, and tell you how many gallons of gasoline had been put in the tanks, and what the bomb load was. With that information, and after you had flown a few missions, you could pretty well guess the type of target and the probable destination. You knew what kind of day it was going to be.

There were lots of fresh eggs and powdered eggs at Mendlesham. You could have your choice. Since the powdered stuff tasted so terrible, everyone would go for the fresh every time wouldn't he? Well, there was one small catch that might influence your vote. Fresh eggs were brought out only during mission breakfasts, which were served between 3:00 and 4:00 AM. All personnel, flying or ground, who were stirring around at that ungodly hour, were welcome. But if you didn't have to be up then, nobody could pry you out of the sack for fresh eggs or anything else; not that cold winter.

Some of my fondest memories of the base were those mission breakfasts when I could order "three over easy" directly from the cook himself. I admired the way he would break and open the egg with one hand without dropping any bits of shell into the yolk; he could do one every five seconds.

So much of the time, that winter, England was covered by haze, fog, and low stratus clouds. If you were flying cross-country, it was difficult to keep track of where you were. Flying low, you were in restricted visibility, over unfamiliar terrain with few prominent landmarks, and were constantly so distracted by looking out for other planes or high radio towers which you knew were in the soup somewhere, too, that it was hard to focus your attention on navigation. The daylight seemed rather dim under the stratus, and all the colors and terrain features blended together. It was not easy to sort out good navigation points.

In the States, many fences and secondary roads follow surveyed section lines, and they run in true directions; north, south, east or west. This system is a great navigation aid which didn't exist in the British Isles. Roads, railroads, fences, etc. extend in every direction and cannot be used for navigation.

The English installed radio beacons, fairly close together, all over the country; they were called Bunchers. You could tune to the Buncher you wanted and follow the needle to it. This was an excellent system, especially when flying above the stratus.

They had another radio navigation aid that was most unusual, but most useful. It was called the DARKY SYSTEM. Installed in your plane was a low powered Darky transmitter on a particular frequency. On the ground all over England was a network of Darky receivers. When you wanted help in identifying your location, you would call, "DARKY, DARKY, WHERE AM I?"

A couple of times during the tactical support of the Ardennes Salient, we had to fly in weather so bad there was a good chance we would not be able to get back to England, and might have to find a field in France. The CQ relayed the order to take a couple of blankets; "C" rations had been loaded in the plane. Everybody groaned at the prospect. However, we always came back. Once in a great while the mission would be cancelled because of bad weather, while you were sleeping. It was an absolute requirement that the CQ had to wake you anyway, and

tell you the mission had been scrubbed. With that knowledge, you would sink back in the most delightful sleep. No more nightmares nor restless thrashing around for the remainder of the night.

There were two Eighth Air Forces; one in England, and the other in prison camps. We could see planes getting shot down every time we went out, so we knew 8AF in Germany was getting larger every day.

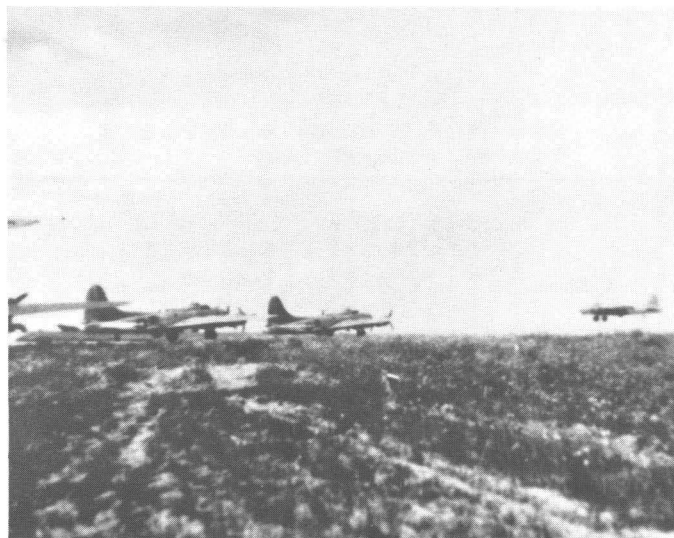
I figured their barracks would be even colder than ours were that winter. I prepared for prison camp as well as I could when dressing at my bunk for a mission; long underwear, wool pants, and wool shirt. At the drying room where we kept our flying clothes, I took off my leather GI shoes and put on heated felt slippers and sheep's pelt boots, like everyone else. But I tied the shoes to a ring so that I could snap them to my parachute harness. If I had to jump there was a good chance the boots would fly off at the sudden deceleration of the chute opening. The Air Corps had modified them by adding a strap across the instep, but I didn't trust it. If I were lucky, I would still have my leather shoes when I hit the ground. If the Germans would let me keep my flying clothes, I'd be in pretty good shape to winter in the Fatherland.

Each mission, every airman was issued an escape kit. It was often incorrectly called prisoner-of-war kit. It was a clear plastic box the size of a paper-backed book and about an inch and a quarter thick. I can't remember all the items, but there were things in the box like compasses, silk maps (silk would not deteriorate like paper), benzedrine tablets, concentrated foot tablets, toilet paper, razor and blades, wire saw, and a small knife. When all the items were removed, the box made a good drinking water bottle. It was wrapped in thin olive drab canvas. Fifty pounds of English money were there, between the cover and the plastic box.

Now you wouldn't think that an American airman trying to evade capture in Germany would be able to spend that money, would you? Well, he couldn't. But he could spend it in France if he had parachuted there, or at least he could until the Allied armies overran France on their way to Germany.

The French had a strong underground resistance movement going during the period that German troops occupied their country. If you could contact people in the underground, they would try to help get you back to England. It helped keep things moving in that direction if you could pay them. But, the Intelligence people told us, the French would accept only British

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B17's taking off on a mission 1944.





Roy Tavasti's plane after crash landing, May, 1944.

## THE WAY IT WAS

Continued from page 12

money. Apparently they figured that after the war, the only paper currency that would have value would be the English pound.

We wore a harness when flying rather than the whole parachute because the chute was too bulky for moving around in the plane. It was stored nearby where it could be grabbed in a hurry and snapped onto the harness. One time I needed to go back to the radio room. We were at 15,000 feet, and, of course, on oxygen. I couldn't find a walk-around bottle, but I figured I could hold my breath long enough to get back there. At the most I might need one breath which shouldn't cause me to lose consciousness at that altitude.

I unbuckled, unsnapped, and disconnected everything except my oxygen mask. I took one last deep breath of oxygen, held it, and started moving fast under the upper local turret and on into the bomb bay. Half way across the catwalk, my harness snagged on a projection on one of the bomb racks. I had to take a couple of breaths and say a few words before I could wiggle loose. By that time I was getting weak and seeing through a yellow haze. I stumbled and staggered into the radio room, and to an oxygen station. I got connected and started breathing oxygen again just as I was sliding into unconsciousness. From then on I kept a three-minute walk-around bottle stored with the chute under my seat.

I was a skinny rat in those days. My face was so lean the molded rubber oxygen mask didn't fit right. It leaked air around the sides where it was supposed to fit snugly around the cheeks. By holding my mouth open, the rubber stretched and pulled up to the skin. Even then it leaked some, so I usually turned the controls to 100% oxygen, figuring that I was getting about the right mix of air and oxygen. After holding my mouth open for six hours, it didn't seem to want to stay shut for awhile after removing the mask. With my jaw hanging down, I must have looked like a congenital idiot at debriefing after the missions.

There were no sanitary facilities built into the B-17. You might think that was a pretty heartless omission, particularly when our missions to Germany lasted from six to ten hours. But, since they had also left space heat out of the plane, a system would have frozen and busted anyway. At the altitudes we flew, it was always at least 50 degrees below zero. So we had to come up with our own solution to the problem. It was not

practical to dehydrate yourself; you would become weak. We settled for empty hydraulic fluid gallon cans. Urination was the concern.

It became the engineer's added duty to hand the can to the pilots on request. This did not appeal to him at all; he said it was "DOWNRIGHT HUMILIATING AND BENEATH MY DIGNITY." We agreed with him and sympathized, but he had a longer oxygen hose than we had, which gave him more mobility. He grumbled but we couldn't think of any other way. It was embarrassing for us, too, to have to be exposed like that. Besides, we were the ones likely to get frostbite, or stuck to the neck of the can. War has many hazards.

The ability of the human mind to adjust to unusual, even perilous situations never ceases to amaze me. The men in our crew could be considered a cross section of unsophisticated American youth; aging from 19 to 24. Suddenly we were drawn into a strange, exciting new world that had us half-bewildered most of the time. Uniforms, group living, living away from home, regimentation, rigorous training and discipline, learning warriors' skills, flying in bombers or any planes for that matter, combat in foreign lands or anywhere; these were all new to us. Americans have no long military history or tradition. We have no families that had had their men fighting glorious battles in the same regiment for ten generations, which is not unusual in Europe.

We have certainly been involved in terrible wars, but we think of ourselves as a generally peaceful people. We were green citizen-soldiers, temporarily displaced civilians. Everything about a world at war was new to us. But we adjusted to the strange activities around us that we had become a part of, and this turmoil became a new, normal way of life for us.

Yet, having said this, there were two activities that went on in our plane and, I suppose, in others, that absolutely confounded me. First, some of the crewmen would turn up their heated suits, settle down into comfortable positions, and go sound asleep in the middle of Germany. You had to wake them up for the bomb run. Secondly, for excitement, while over Germany, they would carry comic books and read the wild adventures of Superman and other heroes vanquishing evil enemies. THIS WAS CARRYING ADJUSTMENT TOO FAR!

During the winter of 1944-45, the London newspapers carried stories of tremendous explosions in the city, each great enough to level an entire block, and kill or injure most of the

Continued on page 14



Does anybody know this man?

# THE WAY IT WAS

Continued from page 13

people within it. Authorities said the cause was exploding gas mains. They occurred every day or two or oftener over a period of several weeks; so often that Londoners became suspicious, it seemed that there just couldn't be that many gas mains. They began asking questions. The authorities reluctantly had to admit to the real cause. Hitler had developed another terrible secret weapon as he had promised. It was the V-2, the self-launching rocket bomb, the first of its kind anywhere. It was fired from small launching sites on the ground in Belgium and Holland. It flew vertically 200 miles and horizontally 200 miles toward London; always London. The launching sites were so small they couldn't be found. The rockets flew so fast, faster than the speed of sound, that radar couldn't detect them. There was no warning, and no defense. It announced itself with the explosion. All of us at Mendlesham who went to London on pass during that time remember them vividly, each of us probably experiencing them more than once; the gigantic explosion, the lighting up of the sky at night, the jolting of the city. If it hit close, it scared the spit out of you.

The war had been going on in England for almost six years and the people were sick to death of it. They had endured bombings, fires, deaths, injuries, family separations, food shortages, privations, endless hard labor, and cold working and living conditions, but this new secret weapon was almost too much to bear. Authorities had withheld announcing it, hoping they could quickly find and attack the launching sites, but they were too small and easily camouflaged. Was this another of the new German wonder weapons that might possibly turn defeat into victory at the last minute? The German people fervently hoped so; they were ecstatic at the news. But it turned to be too little too late for them. The Allies soon pushed the German armies east beyond the range of the V-2, and this terror was over.

The British officer has a well-deserved worldwide reputation for displaying proper military bearing at all times. The particular English major I had occasion to observe for a couple of days was so ramrod stiff in his every movement, he stood out in a roomful of a hundred fellow officers. He never walked, he marched, even indoors. He had a fierce oversized handle-bar mustachio. Obviously he was aware that everyone noticed him.

At mess he sat at attention on the edge of his chair as though poised to respond instantly to an expected bugle call to arms. He even ate at attention, if that were possible. At the ball in the evening, he held his lady in his arms at attention, and waltzed with her at attention. I was so fascinated, I could not keep my eyes off him. I could visualize him sleeping at attention.

Later I found out that is exactly what he did. He had to. His back had been broken, and the doctors had fused some of his vertebrae together. He couldn't bend. In the American army he would have been mustered out of service. The British could not be so wasteful of valuable manpower. They needed that trained officer despite his limited physical ability. They were desperately fighting for their very existence as a nation.

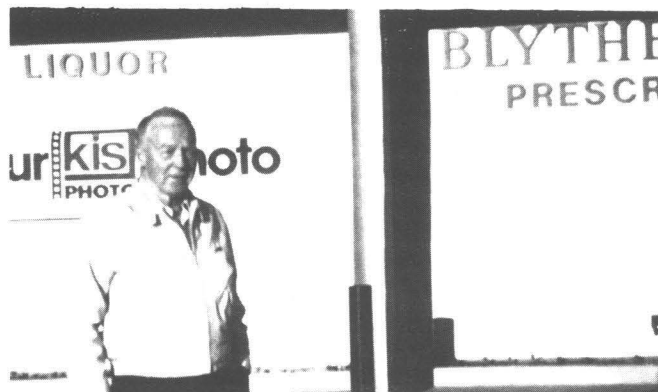
TO BE CONTINUED



**SEE YOU IN  
VIRGINIA BEACH  
SEPT. 22-25**

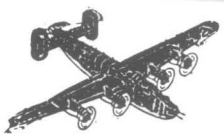


## Below are Scenes of Blythe, California in 1988 By Francis B. Yates



Francis B. Yates





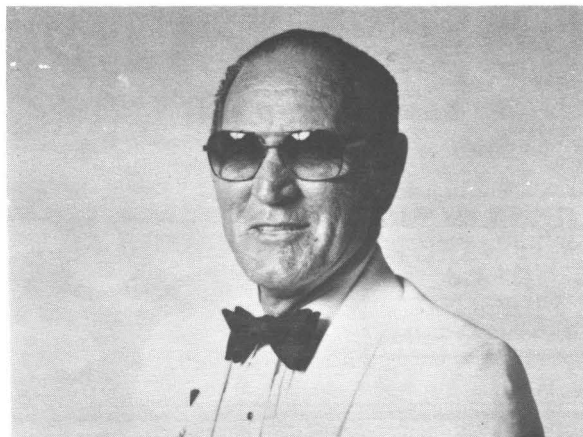
# *Then and Now*



## **John W. Leath**



**1944**

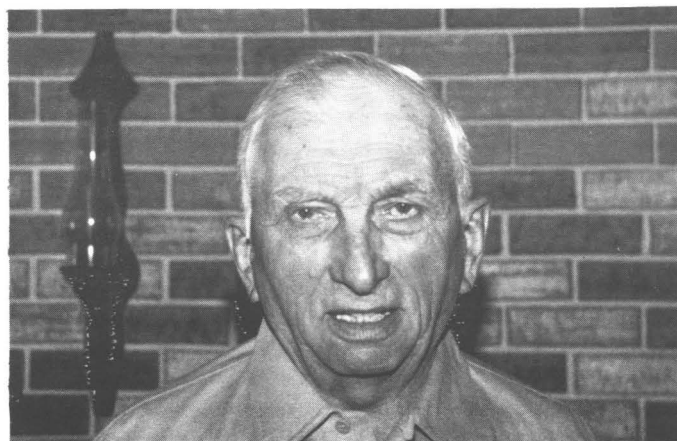


**1988**

## **Henry Tobiason**



**1944**

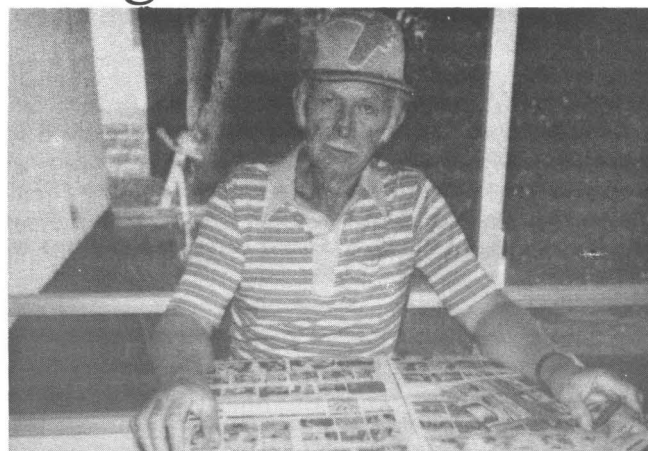


**1988**

## **Michael Derenge**



**1944**



**1988**



From the collection of:

Al Israelsen

Pilot, First Crew No. 1, 4th Sq. Feb - Nov 1944

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## Memories

**DARRELL BULIS** - Early, Texas

Articles by Bob Springer and Pete Gray sure brought back memories of the Chinese guy who used to come to the hardstand in a jeep when we were returning from a mission. He'd ask, "Any holes, sir?" and fix them right then and there. I also learned to sing "Pistol Packin' Mama" in Chinese. We caught his act at the club and he had quite a group of us to teach. Forty years is a long time so I can't remember the words.

I do recall that about the New Year I ran into him and said, "Gung hay fat choy," but he would not let me get away with that and told me that Chinese New Years was not for us round eyes. I do not recall hearing his name at the time and am glad at last to learn it was Wong.

\* \* \* \* \*

**WILLIAM "PETE" GRAY** - Virginia Beach, VA.  
(A note to Randy Martin)

Concerning the "snow-storm" mission. Now most of us down on the flight line usually had no idea of what day of the week it was. In fact, most of us weren't even sure of what month it was - so I can't even begin to put a date on the mission on which you fellows took off in a blinding snow storm. Think it was sometime after Christmas of 1944 - probably January or February of 1945.

I remember when you left the hardstand and turned onto the taxi-strip, you hadn't gone too far before I lost sight of you as it had started to snow again. But since I knew what runway you would be using, I made my way down to the end of it. We had an accumulation of about 6 or 8 inches of snow, but it had been pushed aside on most of the runways and taxi-strips. Still, taking off or landing was going to be a problem as what snow was left on the concrete was frozen as hard as a rock. The temperature was so low the mercury wasn't even visible in the thermometer!

I managed to get to the end of the runway just in time to see a plane coming down for a take-off. It was halfway down the runway before I even saw it - the snow was still coming down. It was going so slow that at first I thought it was a plane that had

just landed, but it just kept on coming. Just before it ran out of runway, it slowly - very slowly - lifted off right in front of me. As it flashed by I could see the name "Ol' Buddy" on its nose.

But you hadn't got more than 100 feet off the ground before you disappeared into the swirling snow. You were still gaining altitude when I last saw you so I figured you must have made it OK. I kept waiting and waiting for the next plane to come down the runway - but none did! I waited a good 20 minutes in that freezing cold, but no other plane showed up.

Finally, I made my way back to the Engineering Office where I was told that the mission had been scrubbed - conditions were too bad for a take-off or landing, they said. I tried to convince them that you fellows HAD taken off but nobody wanted to believe me. Even the sight of the empty hardstand just across the way didn't appear to make them change their minds. As I look back on it now, I think they let you fellows take off just so they could see if it was safe enough to do it, or not. But, even though you all made it OK, they decided to scrub the rest of the mission - which is why you were the only plane from the 34th that flew that mission.

When you returned later on that afternoon, the snow storm had diminished somewhat so you had no trouble landing. I remember asking you if you had flown by yourself, or what. You said you had tacked onto another group and had bombed the target with them. I don't recall any flak damage or mechanical trouble, either. But I was real proud of you fellows after that! AND THE AIRPLANE, TOO!



**SEE YOU IN  
VIRGINIA BEACH  
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