

# 306<sup>th</sup> Echoes



## 306th Bombardment Group Association

### Group Votes to Build Memorial

By George G. Roberts

306th members attending the Eighth Air Force Reunion at Orlando, voted to erect a memorial in honor of those who served during the war years in England. The memorial is to be located at the former site of the 40th Combat Wing Headquarters, just off Keysoe Road in Thurleigh Village.

Former group members will remember this as the main entrance to our old base during the war years. The site is still in use as an officers' mess for RAF personnel assigned to the Royal Aircraft Establishment (RAE) at Bedford. The RAE occupies the old base, which is restricted, as a test facility for the Royal Air Force.

Two of our 306th friends in the Bedford area, John Mills and Gordon Richards, were successful in obtaining a prominent corner next to a new officers' mess building which will serve as the specific memorial location. The RAE has agreed to maintain the area, which is open to the public and easily accessible by anyone visiting Bedford.

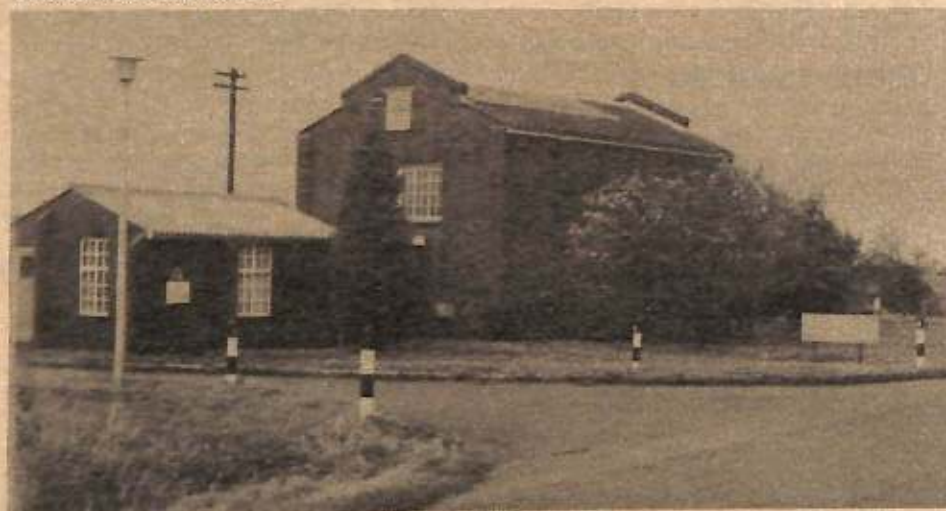
The original idea for a memorial was conceived in 1976 when 13 former group members attending the Eighth reunion in England met with Friends of the Eighth personnel in the Bedford area and inquired about the feasibility of a project. At that time it was hoped that an on-base location could be secured, but due to the base classification, few people would be able to visit the site. Accordingly, our English friends sought and obtained for us this unclassified location just outside the present gate which will be open to everyone.

As a beginning, the 13 attendees at the UK reunion made a contribution to the project. The money collected was placed on deposit in a Bedford bank. It has been used by FOTE to place a 306th wreath at the American Military Cemetery at

(turn to page 2)



Scenes from the 306th hospitality room Friday at the Orlando reunion. Note Luke Jacobs' artistry above, along the wall.



Site of the proposed 306th Bombardment Group Memorial at the Royal Aircraft Establishment

### Gudger Ends Congress Term

The Hon. Lamar Gudger, one-time 369th Squadron navigator, saw his two terms in the U.S. Congress come to an end in the November election, as the Republican landslide swept him out of office.

Gudger will return to his Asheville, N.C., law practice, having

represented the mountainous, western region of North Carolina, an area that has often been Republican in its politics.

During his tenure in Washington, Gudger had served as a member of the House Judiciary Committee.

### 300 Recall 306th Days, In Orlando

They came from all over the United States, especially from the Southeast. But Orlando furnished a new setting for the 306th Bombardment Group as it came to life again Oct. 31, Nov. 1 and Nov. 2.

Missions were flown again, memories recalled, and stories recounted endlessly in the meeting rooms, around dinner tables and in the lobbies of the Sheraton Twin Towers. A total of 186 306th members were recorded, and with spouses and other friends, the number ran closer to 300 for the Group.

It was a big crowd, and for many attending their very first reunion, it was one of the best weekends they ever spent. Men like Ken Reeher from Oregon, John Lambert from Florida, Pervis Youree from Oklahoma and numbers of others did a lot of smiling as they met old friends and made new friends among the group.

During the first day a large hospitality room off the convention lobby center provided a convenient spot for the group members to gather, to look at pictures, to pour over scrap books, and to listen to others. The room was decorated to a "T" by D. Luke Jacobs, onetime 367th pilot, and the principal man on the scene as an Orlando resident. He had painted the four squadron patches, in vivid color and about three feet across for each. These hung on one wall, and gave new life to the whole scene. Wilson Elliott was also much in evidence as another who played a major role in the gathering.

Announcements were made, the memorial at Thurleigh was organized, Russ Strong reported on the progress of his new history of the 306th, and they ate.

Next year it will be in Minneapolis, Oct. 16, 17 and 18, and it is hoped that an even larger crowd will be able to attend. Plans are underway to perhaps put the 306th

(turn to page 2)



# Memorial

(from page 1)

Madingley each Memorial Day. The balance, just over \$100.00, is being used by the FOTE to get the memorial project started.

At the 1980 reunion in Orlando former 306th members contributed \$3,766 toward the memorial, and an additional \$400.00 was received in pledges. According to the latest estimates from our project people in the U. K., we will need approximately \$7,000 to see the memorial completed. Plans call for a granite pylon of 8 to 10 feet with a bronze marker, suitable walkway and enclosure area. The inscription on the marker, as compiled from input at Orlando, will read:

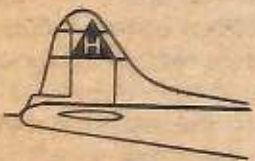
The Memorial Committee had hoped for a September 1981 completion date, to be marked by appropriate dedication ceremonies; however, the FOTE is suggesting that a target date of 1982 is more realistic due to the extensive planning and preparation required for both construction and dedication. It is hoped that former group members will be able to attend and participate in the event.

Money is deposited in a Miami, FL bank and can be withdrawn only with the signatures of both committee members, George Roberts and Bill Flanagan. As a safeguard, withdrawals can be made with the signature of one committee member and the acting president of the group, Ralph Bordner. All former 306th members are urged to contribute to the project, and have their names added to the memorial book which will be housed in the Officers' Mess at the site.

Checks should be made out to: 306th Bomb Group Memorial and mailed to: William Flanagan, 7515 S.W. 79th Court, Miami, FL 33143. All contributions are tax deductible.

As a guide, contributors have been listed as Flight Donors (\$1 to \$24), Squadron Leaders (\$25 to \$49), Group Leaders (\$50 to \$99) and Wing Leaders (\$100 and up). Funds collected in excess of memorial needs will be returned for publication of Echoes.

Periodic reports on memorial progress will be included in future issues of Echoes.



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Each issue is prepared and printed at Kalamazoo, MI, and editorial contributions are welcomed and should be sent to the editor. Mailing is from Poland, OH, and new addresses, changes and deletions should be sent to the contact man.

# Proposed plaque at Thurleigh

IN HONOR OF  
AIR, GROUND AND SUPPRT PERSONNEL OF  
STATION 111 (U.S. 8th AIR FORCE)  
FROM THIS BASE DURING THE YEARS 1942-45  
THE 306th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HEAVY)  
CARRIED OUT ITS DAYLIGHT BOMBING  
MISSIONS AGAINST FORTRESS EUROPE.  
SOME RETURNED, OTHERS DID NOT.  
ALL SERVED AND FOUGHT FOR FREEDOM.

ALWAYS FIRST—FIRST OVER GERMANY

## Contributors to Memorial

### FLIGHT DONORS

KRAJCIK, AUGUST J.  
ROTH, ROBERT H.  
SMITH, ALLEN  
VONDRACHEK, CHARLES

### SQUADRON LEADERS

BERGERON, EDWARD  
BORING, WALLACE  
BOWERS, C. GORDON  
COWLEY, LOUIS T.  
DIMTER, CHARLES  
DOLES, HARRY K.  
FLANNAGAN, CHARLES  
GABRISH, JOSEPH  
HAAS, NORMAN M.  
HARDEN, NOLAN  
HULL, WENDELL  
JAEGER, JOSEPH  
KESSLER, LEE  
KNIGHT, HENDERSON  
KUPFERMAN, S. M.  
LANICH, EDWARD  
LIGHTBOWN, HAROLD F.  
MACDONALD, DONALD  
MADSEN, WALDEMAR F.  
MARCIANO, JOSEPH  
MASHBURN, MAC  
NORTON, IRVING R.  
ODLE, ELBERT  
PECKHAM, WALLACE T.  
PERRY, WILLIAM F.  
REIOUX, PAUL J.  
RONCZY, EDWARD  
SAGE, ROBERT  
SANTINI, GODFREY F.  
SCHMIDT, JOHN M.  
SCHWAB, EARL  
SCHWOCH, EVERETT  
SERAFIN, FRANK A.  
TAYLOR, WILLIAM  
TURNER, LESLIE

### GROUP LEADERS

BLAIR, A. B.  
BORDNER, RALPH E.  
BUMGARDNER, DELLON  
CASSEY, WILLIAM P.  
CHENEY, JAMES S.  
CORCORAN, JOHN E. JR.  
CRANE, ROBERT E.  
DAMASO, LOUIS  
EVANS, CLIFFORD B.  
JACOBS, D. L.  
JANKOWSKI, THEODORE  
KOSTAL, JEROME J.  
LAMBERT, JOHN L.  
MURPHY, JOHN A.  
NORRIS, KEN  
SANDERS, GERALD  
SHULLER, THURMAN  
SMITH, MAYNARD H., JR.  
WEIHE, ARTHUR R.  
YOUREE, P. EARL

### WING LEADERS

BROUSSARD, J. W.  
CARLILE, W. R., JR.  
COLANTONI, WILLIAM  
EDWARDS, MILTON B.  
FLANAGAN, WILLIAM W.  
HEON, DUKE  
HUBBARD, JACK C.  
JONES, CHARLES F.

JORDAN, CHARLES E.  
LEARY, PATRICK J. (memorial for  
Jos. L. Brennan)  
LENAGHAN, JAMES B.  
OLSON, TRYGVE C.  
REECHER, KENNETH A.  
ROBERTS, GEORGE  
ROTH, HOWARD  
SCHRACK, DOUGLAS  
SHARKEY, DENNIS T.  
SHERIDAN, DONALD F.  
UPCHURCH, DON  
VENABLE, JAMES  
WALTON, A. P.

## In Attendance At Orlando

Among those present in Orlando were:  
367th—Richard Argo, Gen. Albert Bowley, Joseph Broussard, John Corcoran, Clifford Evans, William Griffin, John Grimm, Duke Heon, Dallas Jacobs, George Klucick, Jerome Kostal, C. Gus Lamb, John L. Lambert, James Lenaghan, Robert K. Lavery, Waldemar F. Madsen, Donald MacDonal, John McKee, Toode Motley, Wilbur Pensinger, Kenneth Reecher, Edward Ronczy, Robert Sage, Jack Schmidt, Robert Starzynski, Russell A. Strong, Leslie Turner, Charles Vondrachek and Dr. Arthur Weihe.

368th—Ralph Bordner, Wallace Boring, Dellon Bumgardner, Louis Cowley, C. J. Crowl, Joe Gabrish, Joe Hardesty, Joe Hoffman, Joseph Jaeger, Theodore Jankowski, Lee Kessler, August Krajcik, Edward Lanich, Thomas McDonnell, Joseph Marciano, Irving Norton, Louis Rodriguez, Gene Wood and George Wortham.

369th—Joseph Bollard, Joe Bowles, William Casey, Dr. William Colantoni, William M. Collins, Robert Crane, Louis Damaso, Wilson Elliott, Dr. Charles Clannagan, William Flanagan, Harry Hoser, Casey Jones, Harold Lightbown, Joe Mynatt, Richard O'Hara, Trygve Olsen, Earl Schwab, John Thach, James Venable, and Al Walton.

423rd—C. Gordon Bowers, William F. Cassedy, Gen. James S. Cheney, Warren Day, Robert Dimter, Harry Doles, Charles Jordon, Edward Jordan, Henderson Knight, Saul Kupferman, Wendell Larson, John Murphy, Kenneth Norris, William F. Perry, John Price, Frank Ramsey, Paul Reiooux, Howard Roth, Jerrill Sanders, Dr. Douglas Schrack, Charles Schwoch, Frank Serafin, Albert Smith, Maynard H. Smith, William Taylor, Howard Wilson and Pervis Youree.

Other organizations—Edward Bergeron, William Carlile, Nolan Harden, Jack Hubbard, Wendell Hull, Col. George L. Robinson, Bruno Roskoski, Robert Roth, Donald Sheridan, Dr. Thurman Shuller and Donald Upchurch.

Friends—Katherine Brennan, Judy Hermley, Nina Leary, Art Paul and Godfrey Santini.

# Orlando

(from page 1)

in another hotel where it can concentrate on its own business, recollections and imbibing. Ralph Bordner heads a committee working on that, and will likely report in the April issue of Echoes as to progress in that direction.

One of the highlights, also, of the Orlando reunion was the appearance of several members of the 306th organization in England, including, Gordon, Connie and Lloyd Richards and John Mills.

For pure emotion, the highlight came during the overly-long business meeting of the 8th Air Force Association, when representative families from France, Belgium and Holland were introduced. These people had all helped 8th Air Force personnel in their attempts to evade capture, and had been successful in this most hazardous work. They received lengthy, standing ovations from the hundreds of men who came to the business meeting.

In addition to those brought by the Escape and Evasion Society, two other evadees had also brought couples on their own to whom they felt indebted for their very lives, and these visitors were also introduced.

William M. Collins and Joseph Marciano were nominated from the floor as 306th representatives on the 8th's board of directors, but neither was elected.

The ranking veteran of the 306th attending was Maj. Gen. James S. Cheney, onetime 423rd and Group navigator, and later judge advocate general of the Air Force. Col. George L. Robinson, who served the longest term as 306th commanding officer, was there, along with Col. John Lambert, former squadron commander.

Maynard H. (Snuffy) Smith, the only Congressional Medal of Honor winner out of the 306th, was in attendance, and also took part in various honor activities.

## Overacker, 80th Birthday, 22 Feb

Col. Charles B. (Chip) Overacker, Jr., the first commanding officer of the 206th Bombardment Group, from March 1942 to January 1943, will celebrate his 80th birthday 22 Feb.

The editor interviewed Col. Overacker in Denver last October and found him to be today a very sharp and interested individual. He recalls vividly the events of those early months of combat and many of the personalities who worked with him in the firm establishment of the group.

It has been suggested that birthday cards from members of the 306th would be appropriate. His address is 421 Dexter, Denver, CO 80220.



# 'Defense in Depth' Missing in Early Planning

This is a chapter taken from a manuscript, "The Development of Long Range Fighter Escort," which was prepared for the U.S. Air Force in 1946, and was never published. Other portions of the manuscript will be published at other times in Echoes.

The United States failed to develop a properly balanced air force before the second World War. It seriously erred in failing to recognize that defense in depth for bomber formations would be necessary.

As a result, America built short-range fighter aircraft capable of interceptor defense, but useless for accompanying bombardment on deep penetrations. Under World War II conditions, limited bomb power demanded a sustained bombing effort. It therefore became mandatory for bombers to penetrate enemy territory deeply time after time.

The course of the war showed that bombers could be defended best of all by destruction of the opposing air force, rather than by shielding bomber formations with fighter aircraft on each mission, or by relying on the defensive firepower of bombers themselves. Once this was realized, the range of escort-fighter aircraft was greatly extended, which in turn led to a sustained air war. This policy of all-out destruction of enemy air power was not inaugurated in Europe until after January 1944.

The long-range escort fighter was not a product of continuous development. For many years the task of accompanying a bomber was seen only as an auxiliary role for the pursuit arm, and no clear-cut or pressing need for a specialized fighter was realized before World War II. The supporting role for pursuit was not forgotten during the inter-war period but opinion of its importance ran the gamut from acceptance to indifference, and finally in World War II to an effort to develop it to its utmost capabilities.

The Air Corps disliked the idea of an interceptor-type fighter for escort purposes because it believed that the plane would be forced to carry additional fuel in external tanks, thus making it vulnerable to

hostile aircraft. This reasonable analysis deterred large-scale development of the plane for an escort role.

The technical phase of the attempt to increase fighter range began early in the 1920's, but progressed slowly until 1939. However, the idea of range extension had been developed substantially, particularly as a means to permit long-range ferrying of aircraft. Later, when the need for combat tanks became apparent, the earlier development of ferrying tanks permitted a rapid solution of the related problem.

After 1938, faith in the supremacy of the bomber gave way to a reappraisal of the fighter's capabilities. This was strengthened by combat experience during the Spanish Civil War and in the early months of the European struggle. Though the problem remained unsolved when the United States entered the war, the Air Corps had started a searching investigation to determine whether bombers could successfully penetrate deep into enemy territory without fighter support. Since the war itself was fought on widely separated fronts, the need for fighter escort was decided independently by commanders in each theater.

In the ETO a basic plan to guide Eighth Air Force operations called for a three-fold development of the bomber offensive. The first two phases utilized short-range escort fighters only as preparation for the final phase, which was a full-scale effort by unescorted heavy bombers over Germany. This optimistic plan proved inadequate.

In the late summer of 1942 Eighth Air Force commanders decided, on the basis of a few short-range missions with escort, that they could send large bomber formations on deep penetrations without fighter support. They concluded that escort was necessary only to support bombers over the linear enemy fighter dispositions along the coasts of France and Belgium.

This belief, that once the "fighter belt" was crossed little if



Familiar scene in 1944-45 for the bomber crews, as P-47s fly escort in large groups.

any opposition would be encountered, displayed a lack of understanding of enemy capabilities. When, shortly thereafter, the Germans offered fighter opposition in depth, it became apparent that the AAF linear concept would have to be abandoned. In the spring of 1943, AAF leaders in the United Kingdom appealed for more bombers to permit a "saturation of the defenses." They had believed that approximately 300 heavy bombers could accomplish this task but by the spring of 1943 they asked for twice that figure.

Belated use of the escort fighter in Europe resulted from several factors, among which was the inability of AAF commanders to see that the problem of strategic bombing was more than simply target selection and precision bombing. Nor did the AAF immediately see how bombers would reach their targets without suffering prohibitive losses. For a time bombers simply lacked adequate protection.

The Air Force's inability to provide jettisonable tanks early in the war and poor administration of the tank program in the United

Kingdom also contributed to late entry of escort fighters into the war picture. In addition, efforts to solve the problem by using an escort bomber resulted in the fruitless YB-40 and YB-41 experiments.

The two Schweinfurt missions in August and October, 1943 led to the most serious crisis experienced by the AAF during the war. The fact was that the Eighth Air Force had for the time being lost air superiority over Germany. And it was obvious that superiority could not be regained until sufficient long-range escort became available. These two missions proved conclusively that daylight bombing could not be accomplished under existing conditions without fighter support. These debacles demonstrated that long-range fighters were needed not only as a defensive means to protect bombers and also as offensive weapons to seek out and destroy the German fighter force, and thus shattered the myth of bomber invincibility.

Operations against strategic targets from mid-February to about 1 May 1944 indicated that the Ger-

(turn to page 5)

## ECHOES, An 8-page Quarterly Seems Its Permanent Fate

306th Echoes is evidently popular, as the editor noted during the recent 8th AF reunion at Orlando, FL. Not only did 306th veterans comment on it, but a number of wives did also.

The most frequent comments were: why don't you print more often and why don't you have more pages?

The answer is simple: time.

It is a tremendous pleasure to the editor to serve the veterans of the 306th in this way. Having done such newspapers and newsletters for more than 30 years, much of it is not difficult. But, at the same time, it must be assembled, copy edited, proof read, made up and printed. After that it gets easy for the editor, who just ships it off to Bill Collins, who then must affix labels, sort as per postal regulations, and finally mail.

There really is no shortage of material. It just has to be found. And as time goes on the editor expects that more material from various 306th members will find its way into the pages. Much of this will never have been published before and will be quite revealing.

The amount of time available to work on Echoes is directly related to the writing of the new 306th history, as well. Perhaps when that is out of the way there will be more time for Echoes, but the editor seriously doubts that it will appear more often than quarterly. According to our best information we are producing it for considerably less money than are similar publications, which is a big help, and we hope to keep it that way.

As one looks down the road, it would seem that it would continue publication for at least another 10 years, and perhaps 15, but hardly beyond that.

It is a labor of love, and the editor feels from the comments of veterans, professional historians and others, that it is making a contribution to the lore of WW II, and cannot help but be an important factor in the numbers of people who appear for 306th reunions. We hope that it may motivate YOU to come to Minneapolis in 1981 or Pittsburgh in 1982.



A friendly P-47 flies close escort with a B-17.



# WEDDINGS

Perhaps living dangerously, one never knows, we are here publishing the small collection of WW II wedding pictures we have come across. As you can see, we need some more information, as most of them are unidentified. When Chaplain Adrian Poletti was asked recently how many 306th men took English brides, he offered the number of 50. Chaplain Ralph Simester did not leave any record of weddings in England, and another man when asked about it said that almost everyone got married over there. We'll stick with 50 as a good figure.

Col. George L. Robinson once explained that he and the chaplains had an agreement: they automatically denied every application for marriage. And just as automatically, they approved all second applications from the same couple.

Their operating theory was that by denying the first application they may have protected some "innocents," both male and female, and those who were really serious about marriage would apply again.

Again, for the sake of history we'd appreciate help in identifying these pictures.



Groom: Col. Henry W. Terry  
 Bride: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wedding date: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Others in picture: \_\_\_\_\_



Groom: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bride: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Groom: Capt. Paul Baillie  
 Bride: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Groom: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bride: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Groom: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bride: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_



Groom: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Bride: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date: \_\_\_\_\_





# Andy Rooney Recalls Only Mission— #1 to Germany, with Bill Casey

What impresses Andy Rooney 37 years after he ventured into the air with the 306th Bomb Group?

"At the time I visited at Thurleigh in 1943, it was the unrelenting statistic of the five per cent loss every mission," say Rooney today.

Then he was a reporter for STARS AND STRIPES, and one of about eight correspondents stationed in London who went out to the various bomber stations when 8th AF public relations tipped them off that there was "a big one" which might provide stories.

That "big one" for Rooney was the 27 January 1943 mission to Wilhelmshaven, when the 306th was "First Over Germany", his only combat mission of the war.

Rooney flew with Capt. "Wild Bill" Casey, legendary 369th pilot, who went down with 21 missions under his belt at Bremen on 17 April 1943, as the 306th lost 10 of the 16 planes the 8th left with the enemy.

Rooney is today a familiar figure on CBS Television's "60 Minutes", with his acerbic comments on something or other at the conclusion of each Sunday night's program.

After meeting Rooney in his cluttered office (the same one you see on TV), what were my impressions? He's just as he appears on the TV screen, and he expresses continuing admiration for those men of the 8th who flew many more missions than he did.

During his experience in England, he says he probably came out to

Thurleigh perhaps 20 times, and his stories often appeared in STARS AND STRIPES. Copies of many of those stories are to be found today among the treasures many 306th men have kept.

He particularly recalled Don Bevan, celebrated artist of the Group, who came a cropper over Germany, and did the rest of his drawing in prison camp. During that period also Bevan created "Stalag 17", the successful Broadway play on prison camp life, and which was the progenitor of "Hogan's Heroes".

One of the memories Rooney retains of that period is the story which Walter Cronkite wrote about the first mission to Germany, which Cronkite flew with the 305th Group. Elsewhere in this issue we include that item of memorabilia.

On each visit to Thurleigh, Rooney always checked in with Capt. Bill Van Norman, public information officer, who provided him with leads and background for many of the excellent pieces which appeared later.

Rooney several years ago told the ECHOES' editor that he had a box full of stories about the 306th. We only hope that some day, like all of us, he finds time to sort through it and share these things with us.

## Leather A-2 Jacket on Boston Street Stirs Many Memories

By John Cole

You know, if you live in Boston, the sort of day it was. They blaze in the spring, shining with clear skies, a breeze that flows as gently as a brook, and the Public Garden echoing with the bright colors of the first exploding flowers. A day when no matter the troubles in your pocket, you're pleased to be.

It was such a day when I drove along Berkeley Street, near the Marlboro Street intersection, on my way to Storrow Drive—a chip in the raft of vehicles being pushed slowly toward the Charles. Stopped in traffic, I watched a slim, young woman step across the street and onto the sidewalk. She was as fresh as the flowers, but it was her jacket that jarred me.

I knew it as soon as she entered my vision. The leather was as scuffed and tattered as a 50-year-old library chair; a brown several shades lighter than it had originally been, as if the outer hide had been worn away by the years. I could add the years, sitting there in my car, right down to the precise number. The jacket, I knew, was 38 years old; a flight jacket issued by the Army Air Corps in 1942 to pilots and all aircrew members.

As all of us had, this jacket's original owner has sewn on the insignia of his squadron or wing; I could see its outline, but I could

## Check Files for Orders; Strong Needs Copies

Who's Who?

That's often the problem in trying to figure out the orders issued at Thurleigh during the war.

At this time, in order to improve the collection of 306th and Station III orders issued during 1944 and 1945, the editor asks that anyone on the station during that period who can still locate his 201 file, please examine it.

If you have orders issued by the Group, by the Station, by any of the squadrons or other units, please send him copies. Often, those still existing in microfilm are unreadable, as they were made from poor copies.

If you want the copies returned, please indicate, and they will be put in the mail on the day after receipt.

Please send them to Russell A. Strong, 2041 Hillsdale, Kalamazoo, MI 49007.

### Leader in Casualties

The 8th Air Force suffered 40.76% of all USAAF casualties around the world. The 8th had 52.53% of the casualties of the 8th, 9th and 15th Air Forces. In Northern Europe, the 8th suffered 78.36% of the casualties of the 8th and 9th Air Forces.

not make out the details. Whatever the identification, it moved there on the jacket's upper left side like a cloud in the wind, drifting farther and farther from me.

But I was certain of the jacket. I had worn one for four years. My insignia had been painted on leather by my own hands; a screaming, fiery skull, flames around its pale dome, bombs instead of bones crossed behind it. The skull's dark sockets were the look of doom; there was no mercy in its eternal grin. And under the primitive terror, colored with poster paints, were the small replicas of bombs, 10 in each row, markers for each mission over Europe. And below them, Iron Crosses for the enemies subdued.

Were we trying to frighten ourselves, our unseen enemies, or to quiet our boyish terrors with images so violent that we would, at least, be bored with the prospect of dying? Like the burlesque feminine figures painted on the noses of our planes—a mix of love and war, sex and violence—the motives of our jacket illustrations were never fully clarified, not by us at least. We merely painted them as ritual, a mark as primitive as an Apache's sunburst chest, or a Fiji mask.

We wore them everywhere, except, ironically, in combat. That

## Defense

(from page 3)

man Air Force had passed the point where it could offer sustained maximum opposition. This favorable situation came about largely through employment of escort fighters. The presence of American bombers in the air over Germany forced enemy planes to rise to meet the challenge. This in turn permitted American fighters to destroy many enemy planes. The double threat now posed by the escorted bomber formations—their ability to bomb strategic targets and to destroy intercepting forces—led to the air victory which permitted completion of the bombing campaign in Europe. The dependence of bombers on escort fighters proved that many airmen had followed false assumptions during the pre-war period.

In the Pacific, the air war was fought initially against an enemy air force in the perimeter of Japanese-held territory and then against the production echelon as the air war moved closer to the home islands. The course of air operations in the Pacific was conditioned by the nature of the geography and the enemy, resulting in a vast difference in utilizing the escort plane.

Unlike commanders in Europe, those in the Pacific used escort fighters, when available, and turned to night operations until enough fighters with requisite range were supplied them. The final phase of the battle against Japan was largely anti-climactic. Employment of heavy bomber units in night operations without escort fighters, and the rapidly deteriorating Japanese air opposition to escort fighter sweeps and daylight operations, permitted American fighters to range over all of southern Japan looking for suitable targets. The contribution of the escort fighter plane both in Europe and the Pacific was a major factor in attaining air superiority and victory over the Axis powers.

## Loaned Pictures Need Direction for Return

At the Colorado Springs reunion in 1979, someone loaned Russell Strong a collection of pictures. He failed to put a name on the collection, but has copied them, and would very much like to return them to the person who loaned them to him, if that person will identify himself. Write to 2041 Hillsdale, Kalamazoo, MI 49007, and the pictures will be returned immediately.

was a time for flak vests and heated flying suits. The leather flight jackets went with us around the base, to the British towns and

(turn to page 6)

306th weddings:

Groom: \_\_\_\_\_

Bride: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Groom: \_\_\_\_\_

Bride: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Groom: \_\_\_\_\_

Bride: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## War Brides

Echoes would like to carry a story by an English war bride of a 306th man, and would appreciate hearing from any volunteers. We'd like several pages of copy, double spaced, relating any pertinent details, reactions of family and friends, etc.

Groom: \_\_\_\_\_

Bride: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



# Flying Fortress Was Leader in Development of Modern High Altitude Precision Bombers

The B-17, with which the VIII Bomber Command started its official operations against occupied Europe, was the first of the improved combat model bombers and was equipped with heavier armament (tail guns and power turrets), protective armor, and had a greater speed and bomb load. A newly designed dorsal fin and larger tail gave it greater stability for improved accuracy in high altitude bombing. It also incorporated the new American invention - Automatic Flight Control - which permitted the bombardier through his manipulation of the bomb sight to control the flight of the airplane during the bombing run. With these modified bombers, precision bomb sights, latest tactical and strategic theories, and a nucleus of trained combat crews, the VIII Bomber Command set about a job in the summer of 1942 which had never been successfully accomplished by either the British or the Germans - the conduct of large scale daylight bombing missions.

In view of the fair success of the RAF in small daylight raids on Europe in late 1941, which had encountered strong enemy flak and fighter opposition resulting in the loss of several B-17's, it was debatable whether mass daylight bombing was feasible. Eighth Air Force leaders intended to demonstrate that it COULD be done. Thus, during 1942 and 1943, American heavy bombers, with increasing tempo, fought their way to vital targets, hit them, and fought their way back to distant bases, constantly harassed by a confident and determined foe. Against these bombers, the German Luftwaffe and ground forces pitted their three-fold mechanism of defense (which aerial bombardment itself had helped to create): radar detection, intense and accurate anti-aircraft fire, and highly maneuverable, heavily armed fighters. Individual American bombers, straggling from large formations, were pounced upon by waiting enemy fighters and destroyed. Some bombing runs were disrupted by skilled and fanatical Nazi air combat tactics, but the Fortresses and Liberators continued to strike through to their objectives with increasing numbers and accuracy and with relatively minor losses. For the time, at least, a strategic offensive weapon had proved superior to the most effective forms of tactical defense.

In this connection, General Arnold pointed out late in 1942 that the B-17, although in some instances attacked by as many as 75 ME-109's or FW-190's, was rugged enough to limp back to its base with hydraulic system destroyed, control wires severed, gunners wounded or killed, the co-pilot knocked out, and the plane practically out of control. Despite losses American heavy bomber attrition had remained comparatively light considering the large numbers of enemy fighters shot down. Up to 7 December 1942, only 21 B-17's were lost and another 25 missing in action; yet the bombers had destroyed a total of 301 Nazi fighters - a ratio of 6 to 1.

Perhaps the most important development, arising out of this early combat experience was increased fire power, since enemy fighters were reckless and aggressive and pressed home their attacks with telling effect despite the murderous defensive power of the .50 caliber firing armor piercing and incendiary bullets at the rate of several hundred shots per minute.

Early in 1943 the Eighth Air Force asserted that the heavy bombers "were still able and shall continue to knock down better than 6-1 enemy fighters for our bombers losses . . . We can, however, reduce our losses and greatly increase enemy losses as soon as we have the front or chin turret. The Germans are now making frontal attacks almost exclusively and all our recent losses have resulted from this form of attack." Nose assaults nearly stopped American daylight bombing in early 1943, and it was only the installation of nose guns - and later chin turrets - that relieved this critical situation in time.

Increasing American bomber defensive armament was of special importance, because the long-range escorting fighter had not yet put in an appearance. Just what constituted "effective" firepower was the subject of considerable debate, study, and experimentation, and, it was conceded that the mere presence of numbers of guns or cannon, irrespective of caliber, was not indicative of true firepower. Both the B-17 and the B-24 had to be treated separately and every conceivable consideration given to the

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I enclose my check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the research, writing and publication of a new history of the 306th Bomb Group. Publication is expected during 1980. (Mail your check to Russell Strong, 2041 Hillsdale, Kalamazoo, MI 49007) Contributions of \$100 or more will receive a copy of the history without further charge.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_

The early trials of the B-17 by combat were difficult and prior to the bombing of the 8th Air Force the plane faced some very rough treatment by the British. Alan Michie in a 1943 book pleaded that American and British bombers could win the war if they bombed the same targets "at the same time."

The following material is part of Chapter 6 of USAF Historical Study #6, "The Development of the Heavy Bomber, 1918-1944."

number of weapons, their caliber and, above all, their location in the aircraft to assure maximum protection. A great deal of stress was placed on power-driven turrets for all sizes of machine guns and cannon. Such installations included locally operated, remotely controlled, and power boosted hand-held mounts. The latter were vast improvements over the original single hand-held flexible guns of early model B-17's, inasmuch as larger caliber, multiple weapons could be more accurately controlled and sighted free from the slipstream effect encountered at high speeds. The improved armament installations on the B-17E and F did much to command the respect of the Luftwaffe fighter pilots in 1942. In addition newly developed automatic computing sights forced enemy fighters to remain at a range from which their firepower was comparatively ineffective, and contributed greatly to the success of heavy bomber missions over Germany.

Advancements in bombardment aircraft armament since the outbreak of World War II had necessitated the development and construction of new testing facilities, which included indoor and outdoor firing ranges, cold rooms for test firing at extremely frigid temperatures, high altitude pressure chambers, sight and computer testing devices, and advanced electronic testing equipment. Since American heavy bombers had to fight in both arctic and desert temperatures, it became mandatory to design armament for perfect operation in all climatic and atmospheric conditions. Thus, testing temperatures have ranged from minus 65 degrees to plus 160 degree Fahrenheit, and high altitude armament operation was being continually studied in pressurized chambers. New greases and oils to allow smooth functioning of guns at extreme operating temperatures were also developed. Effects of cold and heat on the thick transparencies around windshields and turret installations required extensive study and new types were designed to offset damaging temperatures. And, exhaustive tests of fire expectancy of guns and cannon produced innovations in construction and installation methods that assured maximum efficiency at high altitude and under concentrated enemy fighter attack.

The Commandant of the Air Forces School for Applied Tactics advised the Commanding General of the Army Air Forces, that improvements in aerial gunnery were also needed. Increased muzzle velocity was advised to increase range, flatten trajectory, and improve the percentage of hits. Installation of .60 caliber guns rather than 20 mm. and 37 mm. cannon turrets was suggested since the charge of the former was about the same as the 20 mm. cannon but it had a higher muzzle velocity, flatter trajectory and longer range. The 20 mm. had too much drop and the 37 mm. too much weight for satisfactory combat results. In concluding, the Commandant warned: "We know that the engineers will say 'it can't be done' with regard to much of the above. They told you (General Arnold) that when you insisted

## A-2

(from page 5)

cities, and back to America. Wherever we traveled, each air-crew member could recognize another in an instant, so we would know we each were privy to a club of war, so we could, at least, find some justification for our prolonged anxieties in the recognition that others like us had also endured.

It was that bond I wanted to establish after 38 years when the jacket crossed Berkeley Street. But the woman was walking fast, faster than the clotted mass of traffic. If I tried pulling over, I would be cursed by truck drivers; if I called out, I would be nothing less than a masher on wheels. But if I could just escape for a moment, I could explain. Even a city woman would listen to a stranger on such a blazing day. It could have been my squadron; it could have been her father's. It might even have been mine, because as the seconds soared on the breeze, I remembered that I could not

remember what had become of my own screaming skull.

I made my decision and edged to the curb. I would learn the saga of one of my brothers. But when I looked along Berkeley Street, the women had gone, she had stepped away into the void, lost in one of the buildings that stand row on row. I would never know.

But what would I have learned? That she had found the jacket at a second-hand Army-Navy store. That she wore it as pop art, nostalgia. That she never knew the time, that she could not comprehend the war that had rumbled before she was born. How could she understand my sentimental yearning for a fraternity I was forced to join? Like all those under 50, she knows nothing of world war. She listens with innocent ears to talk of another.

If I had found her, at least I could have told her about war, even if she had been able to say nothing about her flight jacket.

John N. Cole is an editor of *Maine Times*.



on more guns and leak-proof tanks for our fighters - but they did it, and where would we be today if they hadn't been made do it?"

As a stop gap to counter the growing intensity of German fighter opposition, modified B-17's were heavily armed and armored, redesignated YB-40's, and introduced into the European theater in mid-1943 as "fighter-destroyers" to accompany and protect heavy bomber formations in deep penetration missions over Germany. Masquerading as B-17's they flew in the most vulnerable position of the combat boxes. Although they took the German fighters by surprise and achieved a tactical victory, the YB-40's were later eliminated. The very features which had rendered the escorting bomber particularly formidable - two extra .50 caliber guns, extra armor, extra ammunition, a chin turret for protection against frontal attacks - proved detrimental in actual combat since the bombers it was protecting were faster after being relieved of their bomb loads and less susceptible to straggling when an engine was damaged. Many of the new features incorporated in the YB-40, however, were later adapted to the B-17, improving its defensive armament and armor until long distance fighters were available for cover protection.

The same exhaustive research and experimentation applied to developing superior armament was also applied to the improvement of oxygen systems and interphone communications; window defrosting; de-icing equipment; electrical heated flying suits, helmets, goggles and gloves; armored vests for crew members; flak curtains and leakproof fuel tanks; turbo-superchargers; automatic flight control; dampening flame exhausts; increased engine horsepower and cylinder cooling; and many, other items that go into the final makeup of a fast, strongly armed and armored, high altitude heavy bomber and its combat crew.

After standardization and procurement of new equipment, work was continued by manufacturers in collaboration with the Materiel Command to further improve the article. Since airplane production was on an assembly line basis, however, it was impractical to expect frequent revamping of assembly lines and still continue to have an uninterrupted flow of bombers to the combat theaters. The task of modifying the airplanes logically could not rest exclusively with the manufacturer. To alleviate the constantly growing demands for changes in combat bombers, Modification Centers were established in 1942 through the cooperation of airline organizations and later the aircraft manufacturers. Since these planes were destined to go to all parts of the globe, with the heaviest need in the ETO, the Modification Centers made last-minute changes according to special combat or geographical requirements.

Shortly after the 14 October 1943 mission against the ball-bearing plant at Schweinfurt, when 66 American bombers were lost out of a force of 295, the Eighth Air Force admitted that it could no longer continue long range daylight heavy bomber operations against Germany because of the mounting heavy losses imposed by enemy fighter action. In the great air battle which raged during the approach and departure from the Schweinfurt target, the Luftwaffe had employed over 400 fighters. Over 700 attacks had been pressed from altitudes as high as 34,000 feet.

All known air tactics - and many derivations - used by the enemy to break up the formations, including lobbing rockets at a range of approximately 1000 yards, air-to-air bombing, and radio jamming to prevent communications between the bombers and short range escorting Allied fighters. The fighters later had to withdraw because of limited fuel after covering the mission for 240 miles to the Sittart area on the German border. No returning support could be given the bombers because of dense fogs at fighter bases. Unfortunate stragglers from the bomber formations were immediately attacked by swarm of German single-engine fighters and blasted out of the sky.

Air strategists immediately adopted a policy which demanded continuous and extensive fighter cover in target areas where the Luftwaffe might be able to concentrate an effective defensive force. This was a tacit admission that, despite exceptional improvements in speed, altitude, armament, and armor, even the largest heavy bomber formations would prove vulnerable to latest enemy air tactic and weapons. It seemed that the best efforts of the VIII Bomber Command had been decisively excelled by the Germans. Timely arrival of the latest long range fighter escorts saved a critical situation and permitted uninterrupted continuation of the Combined Bomber Offensive (CBO).

In searching analysis of the operational problems of the American long range heavy bomber daylight offensive against Germany the Eighth Air Force made a number of modification recommendations based on combat experience since the first bombardment mission in August 1942. Armor protection for engines was labeled of highest importance, since most bombers were lost as a result of battle damage to power plants and consequent straggling from the formation. Next in importance was the reduction of fire and explosion hazards. It was considered urgent to devise some method of protecting the engines, fuel tanks and tubing, perhaps by extinguishers attached to engine nacelles and fireproofing of tanks and feed lines. Increased armament, including improved guns, automatic computing devices and turret operation, were strongly urged, the type and location of armament based primarily on the direction and relative effectiveness of fighter attacks. For example, late in 1943 the preponderance of fighter attacks and hits on heavy bomber formations was from the tail (5, 6, and 7 o'clock). Enemy fighters, in particular, pounced upon stragglers from that vantage point, and such attacks were likely to

increase in proportion to the number of bombers equipped with nose or chin turrets. Almost equally frequent were frontal attacks (11, 12 and 1 o'clock) in which the enemy had the greatest relative advantage since hits from that direction were more likely to be lethal to the bomber and crew than from any other position. Compared to the number of passes made, hits were more often scored in that quarter. On the other hand, side attacks (2-4 and 8-10 o'clock) were fairly infrequent and the hits relatively few.

To counteract these intense and effective enemy air tactics, the Eighth Air Force recommended that the fullest long range protection be afforded to the rear quadrant, providing a tail turret with a wide area of fire. Nose turrets should be installed to increase protection from the deadly frontal attack, and the possibility of adding horizontal fire in the nose and tail quadrants of the upper ball turrets to eliminate existing dead zones should be re-explored.

The remainder of this piece on the development of the B-17 will appear in the April issue of ECHOES.





# New 306th History Progressing, Expect Publication During 1981

How's the book coming?

That's the question most frequently asked of Russ Strong by everyone—family, friends, 306th members, etc.

And the answer is—the first draft has been completed and the rewrite is now underway. First chapters have been sent off to Col. John L. Ryan, former 367th pilot and commander (for one day), who will serve as a reviewer and critic of the manuscript.

If all goes well, the manuscript should be ready for the printer in late spring.

In that regard, initial talks have been held with a publisher, but any decision as to how or by whom it will be published will have to come later.

At this point Strong feels that it will be a 1981 publication.

## Mustang Best Bomber Escort

On the basis of tests in December, 1943, and January, 1944, the Eighth Air Force concluded that the Mustang was the best fighter for escorting bombers. When the Mustang arrived in England, it was equipped to carry two external 75-gallon tanks, but had no provision for pressurization and consequently could not be used above 20,000 feet. The P-47's pressurization system was installed on the P-51 and worked out satisfactorily.

The flexibility and rate of acceleration peculiar to the P-51 were the chief reasons for concluding that it should become standard escort for VIII Fighter Command. The P-51B without wing tanks was nearly 50 miles faster than the FW-190 at altitudes up to 28,000 feet. It was 70 miles faster above 28,000 feet, and had superior speeds at all altitudes in comparison with the Me-109G, its advantage increasing from 30 miles per hour at 16,000 feet to 50 miles per hour at 30,000 feet. The P-51 outdived the FW-190 from all altitudes and could outdistance the Me-109 in a prolonged dive. In turns it could outperform the FW-109, though not to any great degree, and was superior in that respect to the Me-109. The Fock-Wulf excelled slightly in the rate of roll, whereas the Messerschmitt and the P-51B had comparable rates of roll. The obvious superiority of the Mustang made it a most sought-after fighter for escort purposes.

The Merlin-Mustang underwent many modifications after the Rolls Royce engine was incorporated into its frame. The P-51D was a modified P-51B with added armament. Another modification, the P-51F, embodied a major redesign. The weight of the plane was reduced by 1,100 pounds. Its speed was 450 miles per hour at 27,000 feet, with a rate of climb of 4,500 feet per minute. Still another modification was the P-51H, which essentially was a new design giving increased performance.

By July, 1944, the P-51 was being flown successfully in combat. The installation of two 108-gallon drop-

pable tanks had increased its combat escort and radius up to 500 or 600 miles. In February, 1945, the P-51's were equipped with two 115-gallon belly tanks. The range increase was noted in the Eighth Air Force history in the following statement:

"By the end of July [1944], the Mustang groups of fighters were able to go to any target to which the bomber formations could fly. In the words of General Fred Anderson, the problem had now completely reversed itself. It was no longer a question of getting the escort to the bomber targets, but rather one of finding ways and means to increase the size of the fuel tanks and carrying capacity of the four-engine bombers so that they would be able to take full advantage of this increased fighter range and attack some of those vital targets which lay furthest from their bases in the United Kingdom."

## Deceased

Louis Brofford, 368th gunner and POW, 7 Aug. 79 in Payne, OH.

Clarence L. Couch, 369th bombardier and POW.

Bill Davis, 2 Dec. 79 at Tustin, CA.

Eugene G. Hanes, 369th pilot, Oct. 55 in Birmingham, AL.

Emmett M. Paine, 368th, Oct. 80 in Memphis, TN.

Charles E. Tucker, Jr., 367th pilot and POW (first mission), 15 Oct. 80 in Paxton, IL.

## K-Mart Offers New Book on 'Fortress'

The next time you walk through your neighborhood K-Mart store you might detour to the book department and see if you can find a copy of "B-17 Flying Fortress."

A 1980 publication, printed especially for K-Mart, this is a British work by H. P. Willmott that is inexpensive, and brief, yet is a good study of the B-17 and the 8th Air Force.

It has some good illustrations, including a 306th picture showing Col. George L. Robinson, with the then Princess (now Queen) Elizabeth on the occasion of the christening of the Rose of York.

# Newly-Found Members

- Arnold, George M., 4115 Lupine St., Colorado Springs, CO 80907 368  
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La Violette, Homer, Rt. 4, Sturgeon Bay, WI 54235 368  
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- ## Changed Addresses
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Prentice, John, 25344 Shiawasse Circle, #109, Southfield, MI 48034 423  
Schreiter, Ralph, Box 812, Meredith, NH 03253 368  
Whitelaw, Robert, 2460 Pine Cove Dr., Tucker, GA 30084 369  
Witt, Thomas, Box 56, Cookeville, TX 75558 367  
Yass, Kenneth, 4825 Columbia Rd., Apt. 203, North Olmsted, OH 44070 423

The book also contains a considerable amount of factual data about the B-17 and the 8th. Several of the pieces of data have not real-

ly been brought together before in a single publication.

As a K-Mart publication, you will also like the price—under \$5.