

306th Echo

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When a bunch of airman moved into San Diego in September they found themselves in a Navy paradise. So what better place to visit than the seemingly endless deck of an aircraft carrier in port? It was a great tour, except for the countless steps to be climbed.

'01, '02 Reunion Sites Set

At the meeting of the officers and directors of the 306th Association, following the annual business meeting 9 Sept in San Diego, Minneapolis/St Paul was selected as the site for the 2001 reunion of 306th veterans.

5-9 September, 2001

**Thunderbird Hotel
and Conference Center
Bloomington, MN**

After taking this action, the leaders of the Association also voted to have the 2002 reunion once again in Savannah, probably in a facility closer to the Mighty 8th AF Heritage Museum than was possible at the 1998 reunion held there.

As time has passed, the Museum has increased its exhibits and in its new status as a tourist attraction has seen the rise of several hotels and motels close to the museum, along with a significant increase in a variety of restaurants near by, which will serve our group well.

Medals for Combat Duty Confusing

By E. J. Hennessy

I read your interesting "Medals" story and have to say that I tend to agree with Mack McKay about the souvenir aspect. I have always thought our Services' medals and emblems were a very fuzzy area.

Presidential Unit Citations confused me. The statistics clearly show that the original Group personnel sustained the heaviest losses but kept going (78+ or-). Yet, later on, these PUC emblems appeared on the chests of those who seemed to be flying mostly cross-country while the early birds got their butts kicked nearly every time out.

One adventure—17 April 43—comes to mind. Ninety minutes of fighter attacks! No escorts! Henry W. Terry, 369th CO, took his squadron planes to over 26,000 feet where the fighters could only get in one pass each—the only time my B-17 felt really mushy in that thin

air—and 10 guns were frozen. However, the 369th's six B-17s completed the round trip on a bad day. (Ed. note: One of the three worst days in 306th history: 367th lost 3, 368th-5 and 423rd-2).

The point: This day was memorable but hardly unique. Nevertheless, there was never a unit citation during my time. I finished on 29 May 43. In retrospect, it seems as if the old group should have gotten a citation for showing up for work!

My feeling has always been that the surest way to get a major medal was to screw up so badly that only an heroic effort would extricate you. If a person with field grade rank screwed up they would relieve him, send him to Bomber Command and soon he'd be two ranks higher, befitting a man with combat experience!

Do not look for bitterness in any of this—it's pretty amusing in retrospect and just highlights the peculiar thinking of the time. Hardly anybody saw the big picture during the excitement and the ones who

Strong Receives Plaque from Donald Ross at Reunion



In recognition and gratitude for 25 years of faithful service to the 306th Bomb Group Association, as Founder, Historian, Secretary and Editor. He is the one man most responsible for the growth and vitality of our Association.

Presented at San Diego, California, September 9, 2000

figured it out the best were military historians 20-30 years younger than us who really dug into the archives and came up with some interesting facts, mostly overlooked here-to-fore. Computer analysis, I'm sure.

Like: the Air Corps had the lowest percentage of people drawing combat duty—the air crews—but conventional historians calculated losses when only 10% was at risk! A couple of the younger historians declared that the 8th Bomber Command, in reality, had the worst losses of all the branches of U. S. Armed Services by about tenfold. Of course. Ask any of us!

It doesn't really make any difference to the world in general, but it does explain why there were so many mental breakdowns, desertions and reassignments. Going against heavy odds for a whole tour changes your outlook, blood pressure and digestive processes. Fibrillation of the anus was rampant—and we did not even know what that meant!

A Great Time Had by 300 at San Diego

In a time when our membership is slowly shrinking, and when holding a reunion at an extreme edge of the country brings questions, attendance for the reunion banquet at San Diego in September jumped back up over that of 1999 in St. Louis.

By the editor's count of the attendance roster, it appears that we had 309 persons in the Marriott Harbor Island Hotel for our annual Saturday night bash, closing out four days of fun, food, levity, and exploration of some of the important facets of the San Diego area.

There were those who went to the famed San Diego Zoo and/or Wild Animal Farm, or wore their legs to a frazzle climbing inside and outside the giant aircraft carrier moored just across the harbor from us, or tramped through Old Town San Diego, and a myriad of other attractions that had been arranged by Chairman John Endicott and his very able committee.

It was a fun time, with glorious weather, and just lots of 306th people, their families, friends of the 306th Association, and others who find WWII veterans a constant source of stories about events of between 55 and 60 years ago.

A copy of "First Over Germany" was presented by Jerome Hinman of the reunion committee to the commander, VFW Post 3788, San Diego, for their service as the color guard for our banquet.

Now, for those who missed it, we plan to go through a lot of these things again in the fall of 2001 but in a mid-American venue at Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Keep close to your mail box in January, get the facts, fill out and mail the two registration forms (one for us and one for the hotel), and get ready for another four days of good times with good friends.

For some 25 years of going to these 306th bashes has convinced the editor and other regulars that though you may not know any of us who attend these reunions, but you spent your time at Thurligh or thereabouts with a bunch of B-17s for pictorial and noise making background, we will guarantee you will go home from Minnesota with a whole host of new friends that you will wish you had met years ago.

Now, don't be stubborn about it. Make your plans, grab the wife and kids, or a wide eyed grandchild, and be there. We want to meet you.

And perhaps we can persuade some of those Scandinavians whose ancestors settled in the cold north that was a lot like their European homeland to teach you to talk with the broad inflections they scatter through their speech.

People registered for their hotel rooms at the Harbor Island hotel in the main lobby, but this time we chased everyone to the 10th floor to check in with the 306th, pick up your tickets, get your name tags, and then take a look out at the near and distant scenery. San Diego sits at that far southwestern corner of the U. S., and I am sure that some of our people wandered across the border to Tijuana, but there was plenty going on north of the border for most of us.

We came from all over the U.S. -Maine to Florida, west to Seattle, and from the Canadian border to the Mexican border and the Gulf of Mexico. Ralph and Daphne Franklin came along to mix in a little British talk for us, too.

Obituaries

Robert M. Bayless, chief armorer for the 367th Squadron, died 19 Jun 00 in Mansfield, WA, where he had lived since leaving service 11 Sep 45. He leaves his wife, Christine, 6c, 9gc, 7ggc.

James C. Bigham, 368th pilot, died 20 Sep 00 of Lou Gehrig's Disease in Kansas City, MO. He joined the Group 2 Apr 45 and flew eight missions, leaving the Group in Jun 46. He was a businessman and realtor, survived by his wife, Georgeann, 2d, 3gc.

Frank S. Bisignano, 369th gunner (Max Williams crew), died 2 Sep 00 in Rogers, AR. He was a retired postal clerk, and leaves his wife, Beth.

Richard L. Bohland, 368th waist gunner (Marlen Reber crew), died 15 Oct 98 in Toledo, OH. He was the 19th EM to complete a combat tour, finishing 22 Jun 43. He leaves his wife, Shirley.

Vincent F. Bowen, 367th bombardier, died 2 Aug 00 in South Yarmouth, MA. He came late without a crew and flew half a dozen missions before the end of the war. He leaves his wife, Alice, 3c, 7gc.

Phillip Brouman, 423rd radio operator (Ragnar Carlson crew) and POW 22 Mar 44 on a Berlin mission, died 24 Apr 00 in Pittsburgh, PA. His peacetime occupation was in retail merchandising. He leaves his wife, Judith, 6c, 3gc.

David Farrell, 367th copilot (Clarence Fischer crew) and POW 17 Apr 43 at Bremen (w. Ray Fortin), died 22 Feb 00 in Newport Beach, CA. He spent the duration in Stalag Luft III. He leaves his wife, Betty Jane, 6c, 19gc, 2ggc.

Fred D. Gillogly, 368th copilot (Robert W. Smith crew) and POW 17 Apr 43 on the Bremen raid, died 22 Dec 98 in Buffalo, NY. He was preceded in death by his wife Roseanne, by two months. He was in the original Group and became a first pilot 24 Jan 43. He also flew on the Group's first raid 9 Oct 42. He was the owner of a very successful Chevrolet agency from 1954 until his death. Fred leaves 5c, 8gc.

Col. Victor Lisec, 369th navigator (Loren Hubbell crew), died 28 May 00 at the Travis AFB hospital in California. He had been a resident of Fairfield, CA, for the past 30 years, having retired in Oct 73 as assistant deputy chief for operations of the 22nd AF. He flew 24 missions with the 306th and also flew in the Casey Jones Project. He leaves his wife, Constance, 5s, 7gc.

Sidney S. Miller, 367th navigator and POW (Charles Thelen crew), died 22 Feb 99 in Auburn, CA. He came to the Group 21 Mar 43 and was MIA 5 Apr 43 on a mission to Antwerp, Belgium (w. Kelly Ross).

Charles E. Nagel, 369th engineer (Max Williams crew), died 6 Apr 94 in Covington, KY, after suffering a massive heart attack. He arrived with the Group 21 Apr 44, and completed his combat tour in Sept 44, after which he became a gunnery instructor at Avon Park, FL. He had been a bank operations manager in Cincinnati, OH, before retirement.

John Paul Noack, 369th copilot (Ralph Peters crew) and pilot, died 5 Jun 99 in Pueblo, CO. He arrived with the Group 8 Aug 43 and was MIA 11 Dec 43 on an Emden raid. He leaves his wife.

William E. O'Brien, 368th pilot, came to the 306th 18 Mar 42, and was soon transferred to the new 43rd BG. He flew 48 missions out of New Guinea, most of them to Rabaul. After combat he finished his engineering degree at Marquette University. O'Brien died six years ago in Sun City, CA, and left his wife, Helen, 6c.

Theodore M. Pochily, 367th navigator (Walter Bolte crew) and POW (William J. Cunningham crew), died 30 May 90 in the VA Hospital, Albany, NY. He came to the Group 15 Jul 43 and was MIA 12 Aug 43 on a mission to Gelsenkirchen, in the Ruhr Valley.

Robert C. Ruddock, 367th propeller specialist, died 8 Feb 99 in Fremont, OH. He leaves his wife, Rita, 2s, 4gc, 2ggc.

LTC Albert E. Schulstad, 369th navigator, died 10 Aug 00 in Minneapolis, MN. He joined the 306th 16 Jan 43 without a crew, and became the 22nd officer to complete a combat tour 7 Jul 43. He later completed USAAF pilot training in Jul 44, and eventually became a Lt col in the USAF Reserve. He retired in Mar 72 as acting director of the Minneapolis Municipal Employee Retirement Fund. Then for some years was a professional engineer. He leaves his wife, Eleanor, and a son, Brig Gen Dennis W. Schulstad (USAFR).

John R. Steinhaus, 423rd navigator (Curtis Oakes' crew), died 30 Aug 00 in Hollywood, CA. He served for three decades as president and CEO of California Lutheran Homes. He was also an adjunct professor in the USC School of Health Services Administration.

Joseph J. Zariello, 368th radio operator (Paul Paulsen crew), died 31 Aug 99 in Las Vegas, NV. He leaves his wife, Dolores, 4c, 12gc.

306th Family

Alice R. Burgess, wife of Col. Lowell W. Burgess, a longtime victim of MS, died 28 Jun 00 in Lebanon, IN. Although she had been ill since 1965, she had missed only one reunion since 1983, and was one of our very early wheelchair participants.

Mrs. Harry Hoser, wife of Harry Hoser, 369th tail gunner, died 18 Jun 2000 in Philadelphia, PA. She leaves 6c, 12gc.



This picture came to the 306th Association from Andreas Charvatt of Rastatt, Germany, which is a few miles south of Karlsruhe. Clarence Crowl, copilot for Charles Bayless' 369th crew on 25 Feb 44, is shown striding through a crowd of German citizens after his bailout. This was on a mission to Augsburg, Germany, near the close of the "Big Week" assault by the 8th AF on German aviation targets. All but one of Bayless' crew survived, only Raymond Manski being KIA. Crowl ended up in Stalag Luft I at Barth. Positive identification was made by Crowl after he received a copy of the picture from the editor.

More Color in Echoes?

The last issue of Echoes came to you in full color, and we received a very favorable response, with people always stating their approval with a remark such as "Why don't you do that every issue?"

The editor and the printer think it is a lot more fun to produce an interesting issue in color, but there is only one hitch: COST!

Color runs up the printing bill an extra \$1,000, and the treasurer, Mr. Houser, says we can stand that only occasionally, usually about once every two years. At the time we mailed the last issue, which was perhaps the prettiest of all we have produced in color, we already had in hand two colorful features, both of which had some timely qualities in them.

We hope still to run this color again, but it will probably be 2002 before you will see them.

If someone wants to step up with a \$1000 contribution annually to assure a color issue at least a quarter of the time, we will be happy to work on the idea.

306th PUBLICATIONS

Published materials now available from the Group will help you follow the 306th through the combat period, 1942-5:

Combat Diaries of the 306th Squadrons

Day-by-day diaries kept by intelligence officers, of the Squadrons' combat activities. More than 150 pages, also including plane and personnel rosters. Plastic bound.

306th Echoes, on microfiche

Now available from 1976-1994, with a 41-page index covering those years. Can be viewed at any library.

Men of the 306th, on microfilm

A role of 16mm film duplicates the 306th card file of nearly 9,000 men, including data extracted from various 306th records, and personal data on some of the men. 1995 edition.

Mission Reports

Copies of official reports on each mission you flew, including intelligence summaries, track charts, formations and crew interrogation reports. Data for some missions may be missing from the files. Three missions for \$5.

ORDER FORM

367th Combat Diary	\$17.00
368th Combat Diary	\$17.00
369th Combat Diary	\$17.00
423rd Combat Diary	\$17.00
306th ECHOES' Microfiche: 1975-1994	\$15.00
1992-1994	\$ 5.00
Men of The 306th	\$20.00
Casey Jones Project	\$10.00

Make check payable to 306th Bomb Group Association (prices quoted include postage and packaging charge)

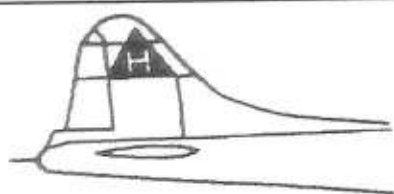
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Faye McVicar, widow of Herbert L. McVicar, 367th communications chief, died 3 Aug 00 in Sacramento, CA. He had died 19 Jul 91. She leaves 4c, 3gc.

Helen I. Vickers, wife of Robert L. Vickers, 367th navigator, died 15 Jul 00 in Columbia, MO. She leaves 2c, 5gc. Helen had operated The Country Peddler, an antique shop in Clarence, MO, and was a frequent reunion participant.



Paul Reiox, president; Lowell Burgess, vice president; Russell A. Strong, secretary; Robert N. Houser, treasurer; Frederick Hudson, Leland Kessler, Donald R. Ross, Frederick P. Sherman, directors; Wallace Boring, past president.

Ralph Franklin, British representative, National School Cottage, Keysoe, Beds., MK44 2HP, England; Telephone from U.S. 011-441234-708715.

306th Echoes is published four times annually: January, April, July and October, and is mailed free of charge to all known addresses of 306th personnel, 1942-45. Contributions in support of this effort may be remitted to the treasurer.

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The 306th Bomb Group Historical Association is a Federally tax-exempt organization and as a veteran's group is classified as 501(c)(19)

People Seen in San Diego



Les & Evelyn Berry, 368th; Daryl & Helen Phillips, 369th



Jane Cavaness Wirtz & Dorothy (Wm.) Cavaness, 368th



Peg Pernande Haapa, ARC



Norman and Lorie Armbrust, rt, and children: David & Marjorie Ellen, Greg & Lillian Armbrust, and Gary Armbrust, 423rd



Herman Kaye, 423rd & Em Christianson, 368W



Robert & Miriam Riordan, 369th



Jule & Harry Brown, 367th, first reunion



Bob Seelos, 368th



John C. Endicott, Gaynelle & John Endicott, LeeAnn Endicott Landt & Tom Landt 369th



Harry Alleman, 423rd



Fred Sherman, Hugh Phelan 367th, Dale Briscoe & John Hickey. Briscoe, Sherman and Hickey flew on the same 369th crew.



Sailboats almost surrounded our San Diego Hotel, the two pictures above showing views from both sides of the hotel.



Betty & Wallace Boring, 368th



Michelle Reieux and her father, Paul Reieux, 423rd



Clements & Virginia Amundsen & Fritz Mullen, 367th



Karl & Edith Madsen, 368th



George DeVack & Reginald Thayer, 368th



Jo & Ed Roncey & John Corcoran, 367th



Curt & Skip Oakes and F.M. & Dorothy Brunemeier, 423rd



Ralph & Nell Bordner, 368th, and Ralph and Daphne Franklin, British

Our Museum, Your Story, Both Needed

More contributions from the British are being accumulated at the moment for the 306th Museum at Thurleigh than from Americans. If you haven't moved in years now is the time to get through that box, or trunk, or footlocker that came back from England and remains to be looked at.

It may surprise your wife to have you rummaging through it, but it ought to furnish great conversation with your children and grandchildren as you explain all you did and saw during your service abroad.

Remember, if you don't tell them about it no one else will, because no one knows the unique experience you had there. It is for you alone to give your children a look behind what the history books may tell them. It is a distinct part of your family history.

I hate getting letters from widows that ask the question, "What did my Charley, (or whatever you were known by) do in England? He never told me!"

Now, how do I answer them? You're the only one who can. Tell them the truth because today the fact that you served with a combat unit is important and you know that your assignment was important to the war effort. You may think your ground job was unimportant, but you saw the planes come and go. You saw the red-red flares on occasion. You may have seen a wheels-up landing. You may have heard tales that haven't been voiced by anyone else that need to be told. It is these little bits of WWII lore that are important today.

They are most important of all to your families. They are important to grandsons who need a glimpse of history from someone who was there. A great-grandchild sees only his old grandfather, but a few stories from you will change his whole outlook on history—because you were a part of it.

Your children and grandchildren need to hear your stories. You are their hero. What you tell them can add so much to a history project, so much to an offhand conversation about life "way back when!"

If you want to get technical, remember that the heavy bombardment experience as done in WWII was unique to that war. It wasn't done before and it hasn't been done again since. The large formations were a WWII phenomenon. Again, the fact that you participated is important to your family.

Get out your pictures, show your medals, tell them your story.

Many from Thurleigh are still around who received Distinguished Service Crosses, Silver Stars, Distinguished Flying Crosses, Air Medals, Bronze Stars, Legion of Merit, Soldier's Medals, and the like. Usually in the box with your medal was a small replica which will go in a coat lapel. A year ago I began wearing mine. No one has commented on it. But I feel proud of having received it. It may not mean a thing to others, but it means a great deal to me in these years that are winding down.

We are still looking for crew pictures. If yours has not run as yet, and you know one was taken, why don't you go searching among your treasures to see if you can find one.

We are down to one picture in this issue, and we would still like to run more in the future. It's up to you!



423rd, 1 to r, front: Creston O. Cooke bt, John Maupin e, William Covington ro, Bruce L. Jones CP, Joe Kasmiersky wg; back row: Carroll Reimann tg, Gorman W. Siler B, William C. McKee P and Robert D. Smith wg.

Andrew Yeran furnished picture

'What If?' Skews View of History, Good Reading

What If? The World's Foremost Military Historians Imagine What Might Have Been, Edited by Robert Cowley. 1999, G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York. 395pp.

In discussions about WWII, the Civil War, or some of the Napoleonic ventures haven't you or friends sometimes asked "What if?" about a military situation.

Twenty writers have accepted the challenge to tell the story of major incidents in combats ranging from 701 B.C. to the present day. Needless to say, Stephen Ambrose has authored the piece on WWII.

Because these men are specialists on the periods they write about, I venture that you will learn quite a bit of history that never appeared in the more generalized courses that most of us took in high school or college. This is an enlightening experience to read rather deeply into situations that we may know about, and then have the writer alter the facts perhaps only slightly so that the winner is changed, and to see how easily this might have happened.

It also has connections to our own time as evidenced in the initial chapter, which pictures Jerusalem in 701 B.C. and the chapter is subtitled "The Plague That Saved Jerusalem." The writer on our Civil War shows how a number of times how the outcome hung by a slender thread, which if broken, would have thrown the victory into the opposite camp.

Covering our own lifetimes, the chapters include "How Hitler Could Have Won the War," "Our Midway Disaster," and Ambrose's chapter, "D Day Fails, Atomic Alternatives in Europe," and closes with "Funeral in Berlin: The Cold War Turns Hot."

Ambrose concludes his chapter, "That the consequences of failure on D Day would have been catastrophic is obvious; what they would have been is anyone's guess; what stands out for me is that one of the consequences would not have been a Nazi victory. Almost surely, however, one of the consequences would have been a Communist victory in Europe. A Communist Germany, France, Low Countries, and Italy would have meant no NATO and a possibility of a Communist Great Britain.

Relations with the Soviet Union would have been impossibly difficult and dangerous. That is a terrible prospect—but it might have happened if the Germans had beaten us on the beaches of Normandy."

Directory

The last two copies of the previous directory were sold in the lobby as people were leaving the San Diego hotel Sunday morning following the reunion.

There is now available a 20 September edition of the **306th Directory** reflecting all of the changes that have been made in the interim, the previous issue having seen the light of day in July 2000.

Get your copy now by ordering from the Secretary's Office for \$10. Your order is usually posted the morning following receipt of your check and order. You don't need an order form, just write "Directory" on your check and that will be sufficient for the secretary to get it off to you.

Make out your check to the 306th BG Assn, and it will be forwarded to the treasurer.

A New Look at Combat in Our War

"A War to Be Won, Fighting the Second World War," by Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millet. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2000. 656pp. \$35.00.

This is an interesting, compelling work that faces squarely many of the problems that were so much a part of WWII.

As the book moves on through the years, these authors point fingers at those who were in positions to lead, but then failed to do what they had been charged to do. They point squarely at Omar Bradley and do not bow and scrape at the mention of Douglas MacArthur.

They appear squarely on the side of Dwight Eisenhower and George S. Patton, and point out others who led brilliantly in combat.

There is little about diplomacy or the home front. This is the book which many war scholars have been waiting for in try-

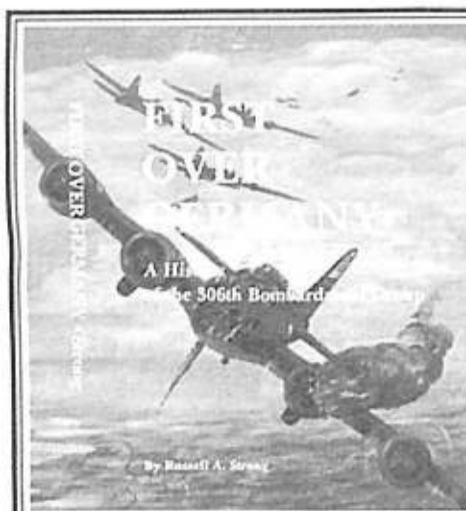
ing to bring together the combat actions on world fronts, to show their relationships, and because of this broad sweep must spend a considerable amount of time in various parts of the world that most fighting men did not get to.

This reviewer thinks that those European veterans will find much of interest in the review of the Pacific battles, and Pacific veterans will learn much about what transpired halfway around the world. Rather in the middle of all of this were the U. S. Army, the U. S. Navy, the Army Air Forces, the Marines and the many other segments of the U. S. effort. Each has its story, which has been told in numerous books, but here is the major attempt to place them all in relationship to each other.

It was not an easy task, but they have done it well, and if you continue to have a major interest in how the West won this war, then deserve to secure your copy of this book and spend two or three weeks working through the war once again, more than fifty years later.

In a chapter devoted to the Combined Bomber Offensive, featuring the RAF and the U. S. Eighth Air Force, the authors in their summation of this aspect of the war begin their section on "The Air War in Retrospect," begin by stating: "In the air war over Europe, virtually nothing happened the way prewar champions had predicted."

Concluding this chapter on the Combined Bomber Offensive, Murray and Millet write: "Strategic bombing was crucial to the Allied victory. Unfortunately, by claiming too much for air power, airmen created false perceptions. The CBO contributed to history because it supported, and was supported by, the efforts of Allied ground and naval forces. The cost was high, and with hindsight one can argue that strategic bombing was often waged unimaginatively, that air forces failed to adapt to the real conditions of war, and that airmen often restricted the potential of air power. But are these not misconceptions and failures of imagination the conditions under which all wars are fought? In the end, what is certain is that the CBO was essential to the defeat of Nazi Germany. It was not elegant, it was not humane, but it was effective."



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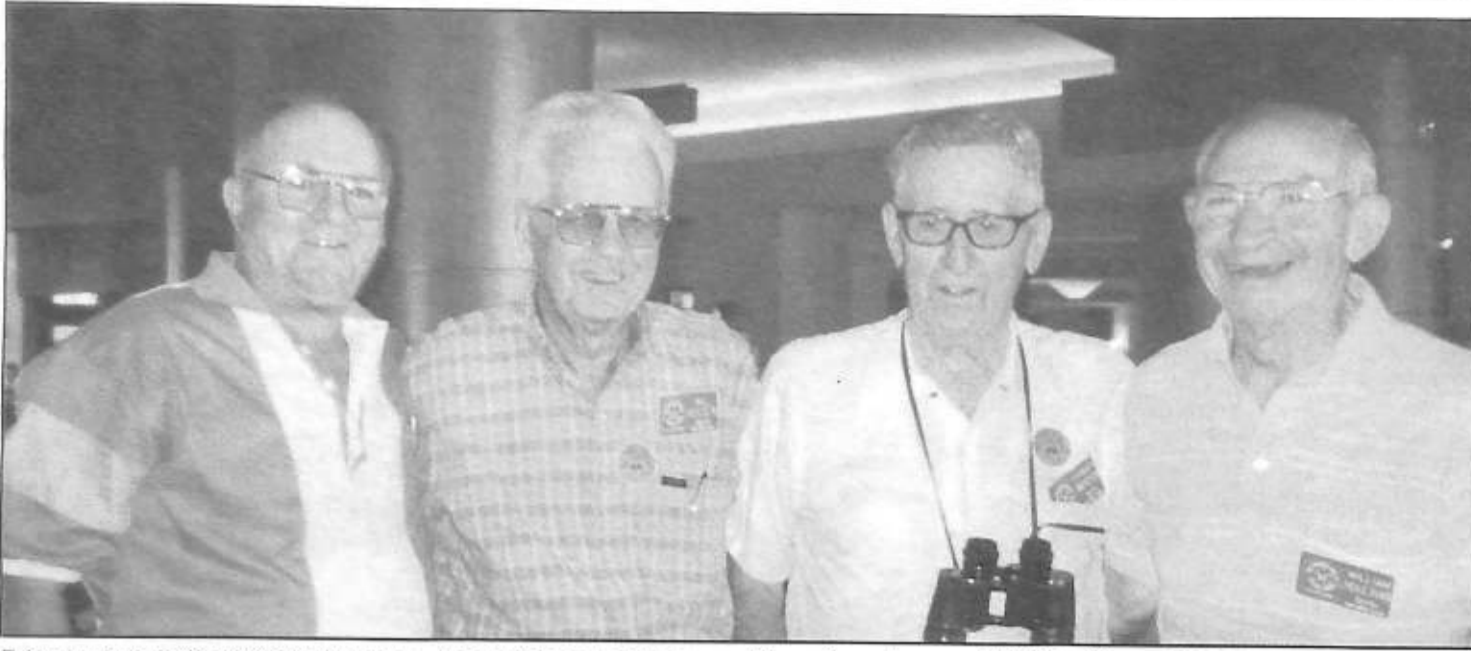
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Friends since 1942 at Wendover, UT -- Adolph Visconti, Bill Feeser, Clem Amundsen and Bill Houlihan. All 367th.



Warren Wilson, 368th.



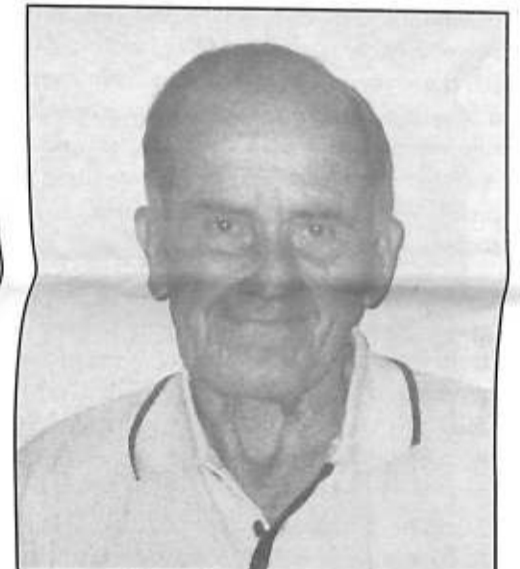
Color guard by VFW post 3788, San Diego.



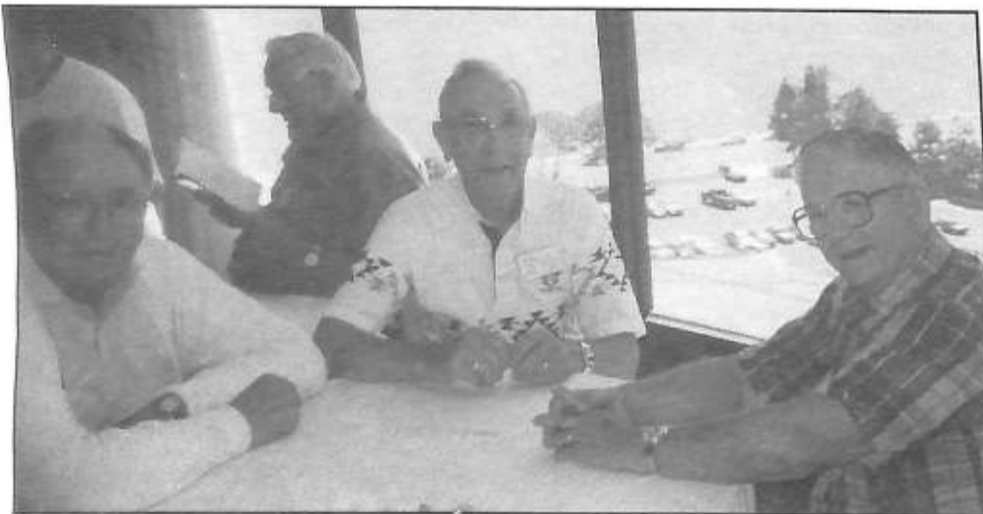
A happy group of 423rd couples.



Bob Carleton, 369th radio operator.



First time reunioner, Vernon DeLair, 423rd.



George Kellogg, Lee Kessler, Harry Alleman.



A lunch stop on Wednesday's coastal tour.



Em Christianson, Bob & Ruth Rockwell & Robert Dodge



Robbie Lanyon & Hoot Houghton



Francoise & Jerry Hinman

Through the Eye of the Needle

A Series by 10 306th Men

In 1992 an interesting book, "Through the Eye of the Needle," was published by the Stalag Luft III Former Prisoners of War.

It was edited by Joe Consolmagno, a 367th navigator until he entered Stalag Luft III. He is one of nine 306th members who have written pieces for this book, and also included among the authors is Col. John L. Ryan, 367th Squadron commander, for a day, as he became an evadee the following day.

Others among the authors are Keith Conley, James Crouch, Leland Dowden, Don Eldredge, Robert Hermann, Robert Seelos, Myron Sorden and James Vaughtner.

306th Echoes has received permission from Gen. Albert P. Clark to reprint in upcoming issues their stories, which will appear in alpha order. Clark, a fighter pilot, was one of the very first American pilots to fall into German hands, and continues to maintain a great interest in the activities of the Stalag Luft III membership.

Good Help at San Diego

Each reunion has a character of its own, and most of our chairmen have had a group standing at their elbows who have helped in many ways to make sure that 306th men and their guests have a good time in a well-organized setting. It was true at San Diego as Robert Dodge, Robert Vaughn and his wife, Lee, Danny Houghton, Leeann Landt, Jerome Hinman and Michelle Reiox helped in many ways to make John Endicott's chairmanship a success.

Writing for all who attended, for the officers and directors of our Association, for the Secretary's office, and many who came just to be with us, we extend our heartiest thanks and congratulations to John and all the rest.

Keith Conley Tells of His Experience after Bailout over Germany

By Keith Conley 369th Pilot
29 July 1943, Kiel, Germany
Deceased

Our bombs had been dropped and we were heading west toward England with that happy feeling of having another mission under the belt, when we received a particularly vicious fighter attack. An ME-109 appeared from nowhere and flew straight through the formation with all guns firing.

After he completed his pass, our B-17 was a mass of flames and the left wing was practically shot away. So there was no choice but to bail out. I was last to leave and made it just before the plane exploded. I pulled my ripcord almost immediately and hardly felt the opening shock and the bitter cold as I sadly watched the Fortress formation disappear into the west.

Stalag Luft III

Prisoners of Stalag Luft III, Sagan, Poland, which includes a number of 306th men on its roster, will hold its final reunion, reports Bob Weinberg, who serves as president.

The gathering is planned for 8-13 May 2001 in the Adams Mark Hotel in Houston, TX, and it is hoped that a large number of its onetime occupants will be able to attend.

A quick count of records shows we had at least 84 men, almost all officers, in Stalag Luft III, beginning with Al LaChasse, and continuing through much of the war. LaChasse was MIA on the group's first mission, 9 Oct 42. He was a 367th bombardier on John Olson's crew.

All of the foreign stamps and some U.S. stamps coming on 306th mail are contributed periodically to Stamps for the Wounded, which is a program supported by Lions International Stamp club. John M. Hotchner, Falls Church, VA, SFTW vice president, writes: "Thanks for your kind support of our program."

My thoughts were mixed: I was happy to have escaped from the burning airplane, but angry and apprehensive at the prospect of capture. I thought about evasion: hide in the woods until dark, travel at night, keep a course south toward Switzerland, eat off the land and eventually escape. I was beginning to actually feel optimistic about my chances, until I heard the sound of an approaching airplane. It was a German fighter, coming much like the head-on attacks I had experienced often in my previous 22 missions.

The stories of airmen shot in their parachutes flashed through my mind. I tried desperately to think of an idea to escape this new danger. Before I could react the fighter was circling me, and much to my surprise lowered his landing gear and flaps to slow down. He waved a friendly salute and then flew away, letting down and out of sight.

As I hit the ground, I was met by an elderly man with a swastika armband, a Luger pistol, and a determined air. After assuring himself that I was not armed, he nervously escorted me about a mile through wooded country to a local tavern that seemed to be a collecting place for captured airmen. The survivors of my crew had all been caught immediately and had been brought there.

The tavern was a civilian place and many local people, excited and inquisitive, peered through the windows, but the military took charge; stripped us of possessions and then forced to stand against the wall at attention while what valuables we had were distributed amid cheering and laughter. We were then taken by truck to a nearby military camp where we received our first taste of German dark bread and potato soup.

The next morning we received a preliminary interrogation in an atmosphere almost the exact replica of Hollywood's Nazi pictures. Up to then I thought the movie versions of Germany were grossly exaggerated. Now I was subjected to a view of heel clicking, pushing, kicking, guttural commands and general military behavior that could have been lifted from a Warner Brothers melodrama. It was all extremely tiring and depressing, and it helped convince me that the fighter pilot's friendly salute of the previous day had been a hallucination.

The interrogation lasted about three hours. After it was over we were loaded into a truck and taken a short distance to a railway station in a small town near Hamburg. Here we were handed over to five guards and told that they would accompany us to Frankfurt, in southwestern Germany. We were warned of the futility of escape and threatened with what would happen if we tried.

The railway station was a typical European shelter for travelers, concrete, high ceilinged and dark. Its gray coldness and our dishevelled appearance perhaps contributed somewhat to the events that followed. We were a nondescript, rough looking group, not having been able to wash or shave or clean up at all since our capture. We had no hats and our clothing ranged from the familiar pale blue heated flying suit to leather jacket and olive dark trousers; our shoes varied from the copilot's high combat boots to the waist gunner's bare feet. He had lost his shoes when his parachute opened. We looked the living proof of the Nazi propaganda description of the American air gangster.

The station was filled with civilians, many wearing conspicuous white bandages. Most of them seem to be carrying all their earthly possessions. There were

also some military men and quite a few uniformed youngsters from the Hitler Youth Organization.

Most of the crowd consisted of ordinary middle aged and older people, many with babes in arms. They were refugees from fire-bombed Hamburg. They had lived through the nightmare of three days and nights of merciless bombing and now they were homeless, frightened, -- vengeful.

Our appearance among these air war victims was a red flag to a bull. With the first cry "Americanische Luftgangster" we could actually feel the rising emotion. The crowd had no leaders. None were needed. They all seemed intent on personal revenge for the misery our bombing had caused them. They wanted blood. Our guards were naturally averse to using their guns on their own people, and they themselves were badly frightened. I felt they were ready to desert us at any moment.

The guards' fright was nothing compared to mine. It is impossible to describe the fear of that moment. I had known fear in combat, but that was a fear that could be partially dispelled by the physical action of battle. This was a paralyzing fear, the kind that cannot be dispelled. This was lynch mob that was beyond reason. Any overt action toward us by any person there would have been the final signal for a lynching. There was no way out, and our only prospect was to sell our lives as dearly as possible.

But the action never came. At that moment, a most magnificent figure appeared between us and the crowd, a captain of the Luftwaffe—tall, beribboned and superbly uniformed.

He acted swiftly and with such authority that no one seemed to doubt his right to issue orders or dared to disobey them. He quickly formed the guards into a protective circle around us, with bayonets bared. He ordered the military men from the crowd, including the usually rabid Hitler Youth, and formed them into a further protective element. Within this circle he moved us quickly through a door into the street and then into a small building. The whole action took place so quickly that no one had time to stop it. I doubt that the civilian refugees really knew what was happening, or where we had gone.

The captain dismissed the extra uniformed men and issued our guards further orders. He then turned to me and in a pleasant, relaxed manner, with American-accented English asked what he could do to help us further.

I was still unnerved from the events in the station and hardly prepared for this friendly gesture. I was so wary of the motives of any German that it took a moment or two before I could do more than grunt an unresponsive answer. But in the light of the Luftwaffe pilot's action the previous day and our close call this day, I soon warmed to this German. We talked of air combat and flying. We even discussed the Milwaukee area and the ten years he said he had lived there. I never learned the man's name in the rush and intensity of events.

I told him of the incident of the fighter pilot while I was in my parachute on the previous day. He seemed quite affected. As he started to leave, I thanked him once more for our rescue.

At the door he paused and said, "I feel as though I owed it to you. You are fliers and so am I."

"But there is another reason," he said, just before he disappeared from our lives forever.

"I am the pilot who shot you down."

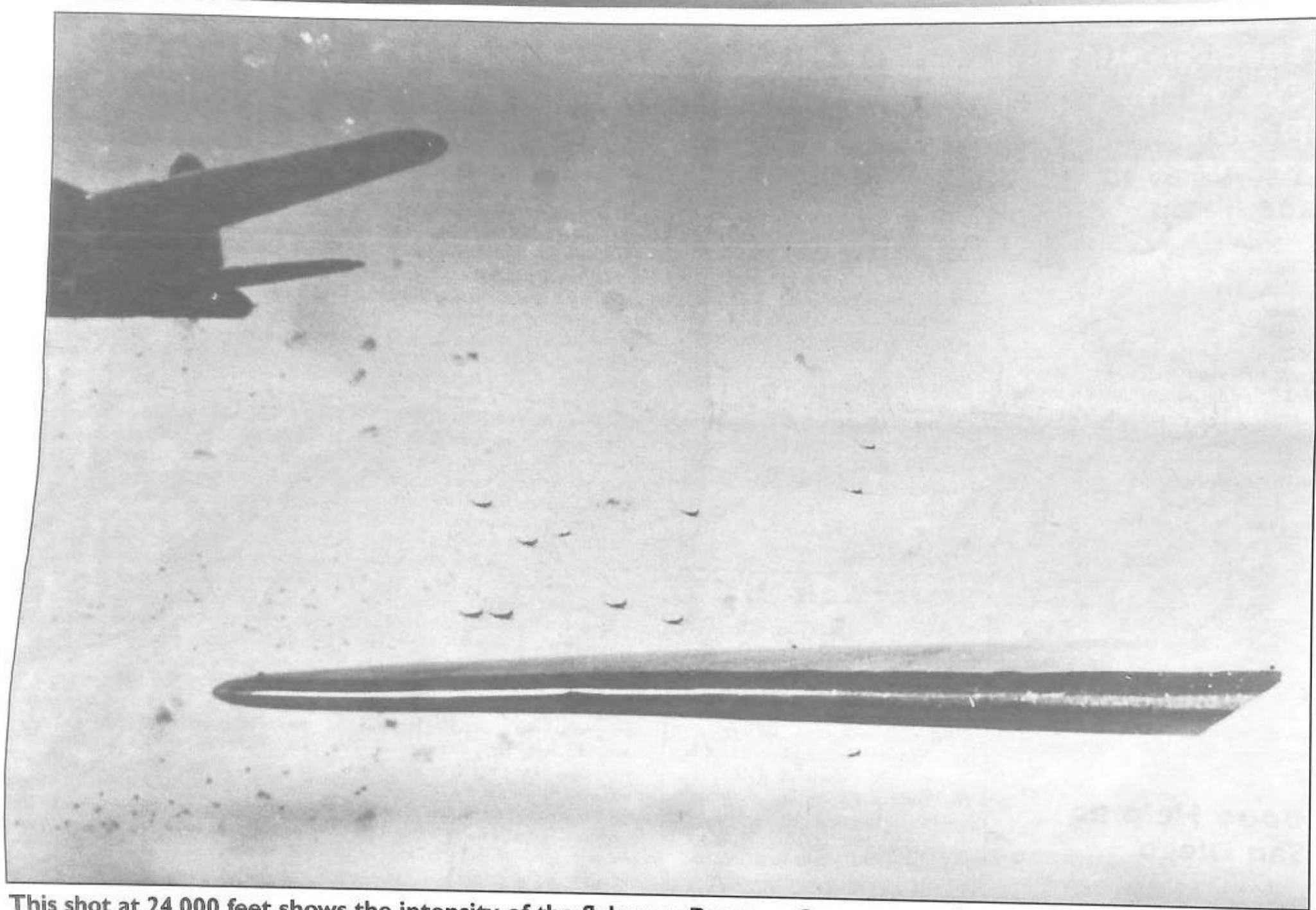
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This shot at 24,000 feet shows the intensity of the flak over Bremen, Germany, on the mission of 13 Jun 43. William Marcotte's 423rd plane was MIA.



This view is outstanding for showing the sweeping turn of the bombers above a heavy cloud layer. USAAF photo.