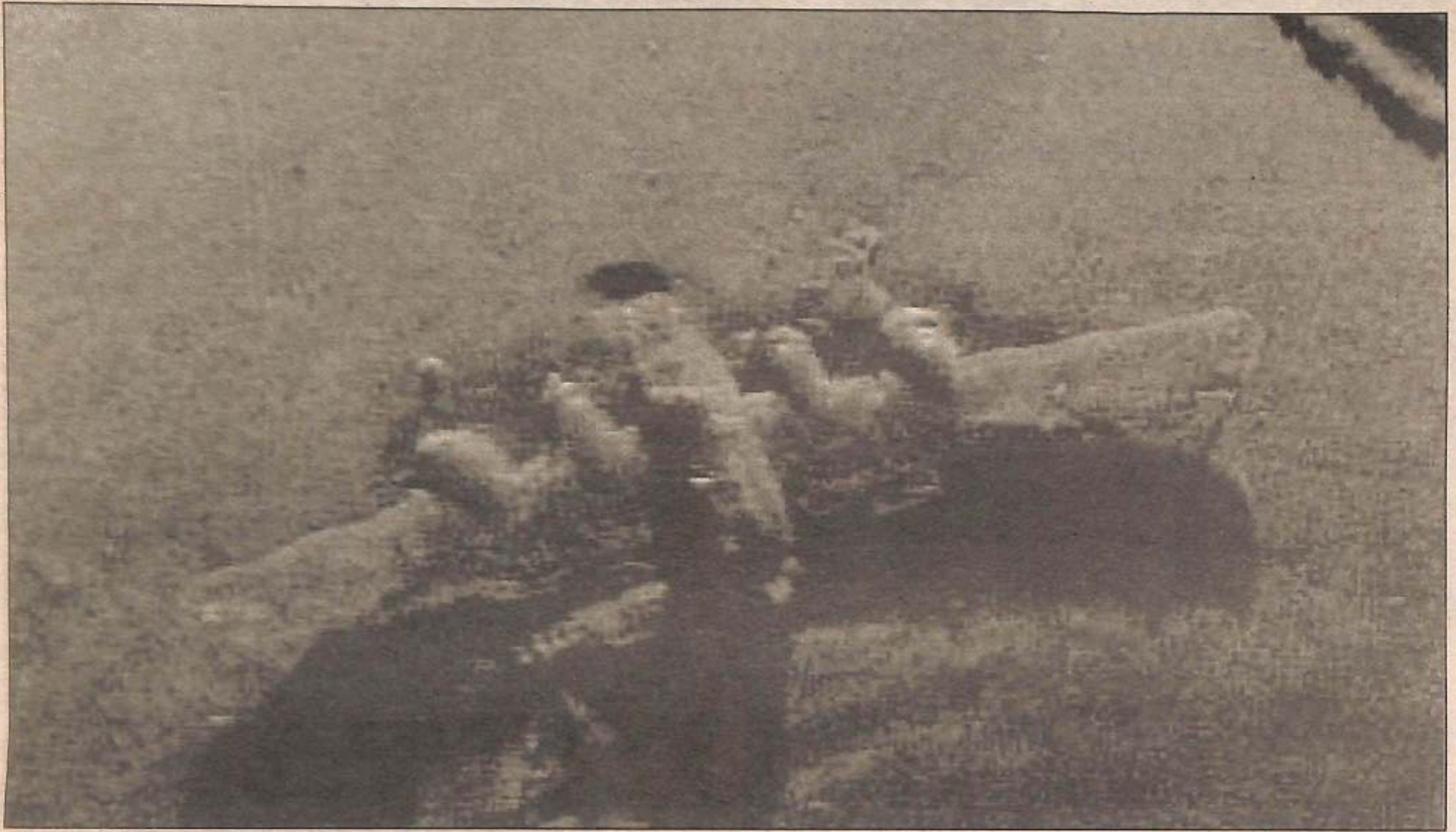


B-17 Recognizable After 57 Years



2nd Lt Lewis Matchka lost two engines over Berlin 8 May 44 and took his plane north towards Sweden and sanctuary. Ditching the plane, they coasted in to about 100 feet from shore where they were picked up by a small boat and taken ashore to be interned. All of the crew survived. The location of the plane was well known, and above is a sonar picture of the wreckage taken in 2001 by Swedish wreckage enthusiasts. The tail came off when they hit the water, but all crew members survived the experience.

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306th Echoes

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2 Tales of 306th POWs

Two new biographies of 306th men, one written by a wife and the other by a friend, both of whom had ample opportunities to interview their subjects.

The second one to appear, but by and about an original with the Group, and an admitted "character". Al LaChasse had a persona that placed him a different group from many of the rest of us. There was only one of him!

He probably was unique from the moment he appeared on the face of the earth. While the editor did not know him until many years later we would believe that he was always someone to whom people gravitated. He had an enthusiasm about life that attracted most people and repelled a few. He was the first POW of the group. He long labeled himself "First Pigeon."

He was the bombardier on Capt. John Olson's crew which went down on the Group's very first mission 9 Oct 42. There were three survivors out of that crew, LaChasse, Erwin Wissenback and Bill Gise, the navigator. Wissenback and Gise made it out of France and back to England, but Al was captured by the Germans and went to prison camp.

Some people thrive in such surroundings, equal to everything that's thrown at them. Al was one of those, and he came out unscathed. He went into sales and was a success, and he had a good career, until death silenced him forever.

The other book is about Earl Benson, who became a POW on his fifth mission, to Antwerp, when the same Clay Pigeons lost four aircraft and their crews.

He was a gunner of Charles Thelen's crew but that day was flying with Kelly Ross. He later worked for the National Bureau of Standards and still is living.

His story has been penned by his wife, V. Elaine Benson, and about life in Stalag 7A and Stalag Luft 17B for two years.

We will publish more about the two books in our next issue.

They are available now: *Out of the Turret and Into Hell*, by L. Elaine Benson, \$25.00, 1317 E Matlock St., Mesa, AZ, 85203-4324, 227pp.... *So Long Guys, Goodbye Is Forever, A Memoir of WWII*, By Jane R. Edwards, \$24.02, 1-888-7XLIBRIS or www.xlibris.com.



Y'All Come to Kentucky Y'Hear! Register Today!

It's not difficult and it's the thing you gotta do! NOW!

Yes, cut this paper apart a bit and get those registration forms, and mail them in. Take care of your hotel. Give John Hickey palpitations as he sees your name and your check go across his desk.

Then, pack your bags, aim whatever means of transportation in the proper direction, and you'll soon be going by the Blue Grass country, famous race horses and all kinds of good things will come your way.

One of the best things about Kentucky will be in your special goody bag you will get at registration for the 2002 reunion of the 306th Bomb Group Association.

It's been a long time since any of us tied on what was necessary and headed off to the flight line, the office, the mess hall, the wild blue yonder and all those things that young whipper snappers did from 1942 through 1945. We've been back and ole Thurleigh Airfield is still there, the sun glinting on the runway, the trees moving slowly in the breeze, and one can almost hear that throaty roar of our engines, and we ALMOST want to be back in those wartime days of the early '40s.

Some of us have been back recently and seen it all once again. And we want to tell you about it, we want to thank the Lord for bringing us safely home, and thankful for caring for those we left behind. We've been to Madingly and seen the crosses on our graves and the names of our men on the Wall of the Missing.

Perhaps it all seems like a bad dream today, but it was a glorious day when we sailed off into the morning sun, climbed through the never-ending clouds, found our target, downed the Hun, and

came roaring back again. Can you see that formation sweeping across Thurleigh's runways, banking to get into the landing pattern and then the planes settling down onto the concrete with tires screeching and brakes echoing across the landscape as the behemoths of the 40's throttled down to make the turn on to the taxiway and back to our own hardstands.

Those were days we can't forget, and now as we are crossing our high 70s and into our 80s we want to have one more toast to those who braved the painted skies with us. Pack your bag, mail in your reservations and plan to be in Covington's downtown Radisson Hotel for a few days of blissful memories with those you knew so well so long ago.

A trip to the USAF Museum, north across the Ohio river and up to the outskirts of Dayton, where many of our memories are institutionalized and new generations take care of our B-17, and new generations of eager young men come to marvel over what we did in the Flying Fortresses that were of our generation.

This is the time to bring your spouse or a friend, your children or grandchildren, and tell those lovers of B-17s to come be with us. The stories and pictures will be there. We've been coming together since 1975 and we want you to maintain your own personal attendance record. If it has been spasmodic, make sure that 2002 in one of those years when you elect to be there. It's not too late to register, and it is time for you to fly your own colors once again, by air, by horseback, by motor car or however you choose to make this journey.

See you in Covington 25 September, and then we'll all see you off on your return journey 29 September.

New 306th Museum Takes 17 to Bedford and London

The numbers were not great, but the enthusiasm was high for the 17 persons who embarked for England, and a tour of some of our 1943 haunts. The gathering up was to take place in the Detroit, MI airport, to leave for London's Gatwick airport via Northwest Airlines.

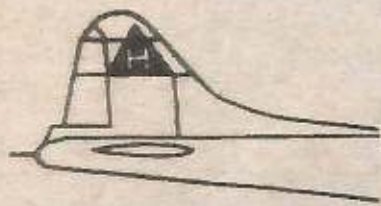
But it was a bad day for flying, serious storms across the Northern states of the U. S. closed the Minneapolis airport and seriously discombobulated schedules on almost every runway everywhere.

We began to gather at gate 40 in the Detroit Airport's brand new terminal, and it performed beyond expectations – not just another terminal. Sight lines are great and travel from one gate to another is fast and easy, either by moving sidewalks or by an overhead fast tram. We began our experience of standing in line, which followed us to other places at times.

And Wallace Boring, his wife and two daughters did not catch up with us until a day later in Gatwick. Their plane failed to get to Atlanta, and they were finally sent to Birmingham, England, and then on to Gatwick. Some of their luggage took an even slower trip arriving about a day and a half late.

Most of the antics were taken good naturedly, but they were aggravating and time consuming. Once at The Swan, we had a bit more control, and enjoyed a typical British breakfast – everyone ate well!

On Sunday morning we went off to Thurleigh an enjoyable venture on a lovely sun bright day, the first of seven such that we enjoyed in England, with no rain to dampen our enthusiasm. We quickly found the key to the new Thurleigh Museum, where we were met by Ralph and Daphne Franklin, and Kieth and June Paull, and others.



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

Ralph Franklin, British representative, National School Cottage, Keysoe, Beds., MK44 2HP, England; Telephone from U.S. 011-44-1234-708715.

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).

Items of all kinds for the Thurleigh Museum can be mailed to the address shown below:

HQ, 3rd Air Force
Historian's Office
APO 09459

The building looks trim, but as the writer told Franklin, it will be much better when our shipment of large pictures of 306th people and planes arrives, including three 30x40 prints from the christening of the "Rose of York," the ill-fated 367th craft which had been christened by the then Princess Elizabeth in July 1944.

The museum is far from completed as to exhibits, and Franklin is awaiting further gifts from America. Instructions for proper addressing are to be found on page 2 of this issue of Echoes, and boxes can be sent by priority mail, which assures early delivery to RAF Mildenhall. That makes it much cheaper than one could do otherwise.

Display cases are being built by one of Franklin's sons, manikins display various WWII period uniforms and there is even a fine wedding dress to help recall the numerous weddings that took place on the base and in the surrounding area's churches from 1942 through 1945. Also, some pictures have been made available, and if you want yours shown, send a good print to Franklin, and please identify those you can, as this will help make it all more interesting. (Also remember such details as parental names, the person officiating, time and place, etc.) And as much time has passed since those days, the Franklins would be most appreciative of your including a bit of family history and by naming descendants and other such useful information for future generations.

One we had tasted our cookies, etc., everyone was back into the coach and off to Madingley for a stop at the American cemetery there, and the identification of graves, and the reading of the Wall of the Missing. From there we drove into Cambridge, got people off the coach for a bit of walking and then lunch. By that time the coach reappeared as you cannot park on Cambridge streets. The traffic jams everywhere are horrendous.

We concluded our Sunday sightseeing with a drive to Ely and a visit to the ancient Ely Cathedral. Now some 800 or more years of age, it is in great repair at this time and a good place for American tourists to visit. We were back to the Swan Hotel in Bedford for dinner and the nights, before hitting the high Road in Stratford Upon Avon and a bit of Shakespeare. We also visited the quaint towns of the Cotswold area, ending up in Kenilworth at a hotel outside of the town.

This was another hostelry with nice rooms, good food; this stay featuring a fire alarm in the morning, which got everyone out into the parking lot until matters had been cleared up.

After two nights in the Warwick area, including several hours in Warwick Castle, its dungeons and other feature, we were treated to the several rooms which featured settings with well known figures in British history. This is all very natural to have been done this way when one realizes that the castle today is owned by the Madame Tussaud interests.

On Wednesday we headed for Windsor Castle, and while the queen and court were on hand for a major dinner party that evening, we did not glimpse any of the group in our visits to various parts of the castle. Later we headed off into London, staying at a Holiday Inn two blocks off Oxford St.

Thursday was largely spent in a lengthy tour of major British landmarks throughout the city, with more time being spent at the Tower of London, and looking at the Crown Jewels than any other feature.

Friday was a free day for everyone, and we did not catalog what each party did with their time, but the writer and his wife went to Harrod's for some shopping in the morning, grabbed a quicky bite to eat and then were off to walk to the Victoria and Albert

Museum. After spending the afternoon there we concluded that we would have preferred to have spent the entire day in these surroundings than in the commercial environment of one of the world's great stores.

Like all trips, there comes a conclusion, and Saturday morning we were bound for Gatwick once more, this time to find our plane for home. Being a tour, and one built around transportation by Northwest Airlines, we flew off to Detroit again, and then were required by our itinerary to head for Charlotte by way of Memphis, a bit out of the way and a venture that put us home a bit later in the night than we would like to make it.

Obituaries

Raymond B. Braun, 369th pilot, died 28 Jan 02 in Lake Delton, WI, where he had been a construction contractor for many years. He came to the 306th 17 Jul 44 and completed 35 missions in Dec 44. Before entering pilot training he was stationed at Pearl Harbor, HI, 7 Dec 41. He leaves his wife, Donna, 2c, 4gc.

Guy Burnett, Jr., 423rd pilot, died recently in Eules, TX. He came to the group 17 Jul 44 and completed his 29th mission and tour 30 Nov 44, departing the Group 10 Jan 45. He earned a degree at U-TX in 1958, retired USAF 1 Apr 64 as a material officer, 19th Air Div, SAC. He retired a second time in 1986 as a management engineer, Bell-Textron Helicopters. He leaves his wife, Narrine.

Robert G. Danknich, 367th bombardier (Perry Raster crew) and POW (w. Virgil Dingman), died 10 Nov 2001 in Denver, CO, after a bout with leukemia. He arrived with the Group 25 Feb 44 and went down on his 25th mission 17 Jun 44 to Noyen, France. He was later an insurance broker. He leaves his wife, Jeanne, 3c, 4gc.

Eugene C. Engberg, 368th engineer (William Nash crew) and POW (w/Rene Fix), died in Jul 01 in Portage, IN. He joined the Group 14 Mar 44 and was shot down 27 Mar 44 on a mission to LaRochelle, France. He spent time then in Stalag Luft XVIIIB. In 1950 he was recalled to active duty and assigned to a National Guard Troop Carrier Unit at O'Hare Field, Chicago. A year later he transferred to the Army, entered OCS at Ft. Benning, GA, was commissioned and became a platoon leader in the 40th Division. At discharge in Dec 53 he was a battalion maintenance officer. He leaves his wife, Mary, 2s.

Max Hrycenko, a 423rd turret specialist with the original group, died about five years ago in Citrus Heights, CA, his nephew reports.

James T. Justice, 369th gunner (Alfred Switzer crew), died 23 Feb 02 in Birmingham, AL. He joined the Group 25 Mar 44 and completed a 31-mission tour in Sep 44. For many years he was the president of the Justice Printing Co. He leaves his wife and 2c.

William S. Landrum, 367th ball turret gunner (James Roberts crew), died 28 Jun 02 in Atlanta, GA, two weeks after suffering a broken shoulder in a fall. He had been a frequent attendee at reunions. Bill retired 30 Dec 64 as a USAF chief master sergeant. During his career he was NCOIC of fire controls systems on F-86, F-100 and F-105 fighter planes.

John G. Miller, Jr., 367th radio operator

(Wesley Brinkley crew) and Swiss internee (John Stolz crew), died 20 Nov 01 in Franklin, NC. He came to the 306th 23 Oct 43 and went to Switzerland 24 Apr 44 during the ill-fated mission to Oberpfaffenhofen, Germany that cost 10 a/c. He was there for 10 months until repatriated. He retired in 1988 as a supervisor for a plant making simulators for the Army. He leaves his wife Elvira, 1d, 4gc, 4ggc.

Jacob C. Shivley, 423rd navigator (Maurice Salada crew), died 11 Feb 02 in Chambersburg, PA. He had been badly wounded 17 Nov 42 (w. Robert Williams), and was hospitalized at Diddington, near Oxford, until 23 Mar 43. There was a long, slow recovery from his wounds, but he finally made it back to civilian life where he was in the automotive business for some years, and later in land and housing development. Involved in local politics, he also served as a Franklin County, PA, commissioner for 16 years. He leaves his wife, Binca, 2c, 4gc.

Bruce J. Simpson, 367th tail gunner (Arthur Dorsey crew), died 21 Apr 02 in Geneva, IL, where he was in the securities business. He came to the Group 2 Apr 45 and flew two missions. He leaves his wife, Caroline, 4s, 2gc.

Earl F. Shoop, 369th co-pilot (Allan Lingwall crew), died 11 Sep 84, the Brown University Alumni Office has informed us. He had degrees from Brown in 1944 and 1953. He came to the group 15 Jun 44 and completed his combat in October.

James E. Smoot, 423rd tail gunner (David Steele crew), died 19 Jun 02 in Garland, TX, where he had lived much of his life. He was a victim of a recurring cancer. He came to Thurleigh 11 Dec 42 on one of the early replacement crews, was credited with one E/A and was transferred 4 Sep 43 to the 2nd Evacuation Hospital. He was credited with 22 missions.

Forrest E. Sweeney, 369th bombardier (Charles Kinsey crew), died 24 Feb 02 in Houston, Tx. He came to the 306th 31 Oct 43 and flew his 32nd and last mission 13 Aug 44. For many years he was a sales representative for several companies, retiring in 1996. He leaves his wife, Frances, 3c, 7gc.

Peter Szymanski, 367th tail gunner (Richard Somerville crew), died in May 02 in Central Falls, RI, where he lived most of his life. He flew 35 missions and after service worked for the G. A. Fuller Construction Co. He left no family.

306th Family

Virginia Merson, wife of James Merson, 368th, died 24 Jan 02 in Laurel, MD.

Elaine Valenti, wife of Jasper Valenti, 423rd navigator (Ralph Clark crew), died 23 Mar 02 in Tallahassee, AL, after suffering with a malignancy.

Red Cross

Anona Moeser, who was in charge of the Red Cross in Bedford and was on hand at the opening of the Bromham Road Club 4 Mar 43, died 1 May 02 in Sister Bay, WI. She was also present and spoke at our 40th Reunion in Bedford, and at the Memorial dedication at our old base in 1983.

A friend, older than I am, observes that Americans really need a war every 20 years to remind them of what a mess the world is in because of tribal, ethnic, religious and political differences that exist. It strikes me that the religious differences are the most troublesome, which is pretty weird, actually.

- Ed Hennessy.

One Who Got Away

By John L. Ryan

The sixth of March, 1943, dawned auspiciously. I had been given command of the 367th Bomb Squadron just the previous day and now I was leading my own squadron on a combat mission.

Jim Wilson was leading the Group, Jack Lambert the high squadron and I the low squadron. We joined up in formation at low altitude and three other B-17 groups fell in behind. With two B-24 groups that were off on a diversion that day, this was the entire Eighth Bomber Command at that time. Our target was the power plant for the submarine pens at Lorient. We had to go after support facilities at the submarine bases because we had no bombs large enough to damage the pens themselves.

Lorient on this date was defended by 114 heavy anti-aircraft guns of 88mm caliber. These opened up on the formation as soon as it turned on the bomb run on a heading of 50 degrees at 22,500 feet.

My squadron was low and on the left side of the formation. Flak was heavy all through the bomb run, which lasted from thirty to forty seconds. All aircraft in the formation dropped their bombs on the Group lead aircraft. Right after bomb release and just as the formation started a shallow turn to the left, my aircraft was hit by flak. As I was flying formation off the group lead and had plenty of forward visibility, I saw a burst of flak directly in front of me, followed immediately by another burst and still directly in front of me. I knew then that we were in for it. I never saw the third burst, but it nailed us right in the area of the supercharger of the Number 3 engine.

What happened next would be difficult to describe in any logical sequence of detail, but these things I do remember. We lost Number 3 and Number 4 engines and were unable to feather either. The crew checked in on interphone and all reported OK. Being unable to maintain speed, I wagged my wings and attempted to leave the formation, only to learn from my tail gunner the whole squadron was following me. I had to make two more attempts to shake the troops. Finally they got the message and left me to form again on one of my wingmen. While all this was going on we had been descending and were now on a southwesterly course heading out to sea. We had a fire in Number 4 engine which we were trying to put out without success. The oil pressure on Number 3 finally dropped to zero. Both Number 3 and Number 4 props were windmilling uncontrollably and creating considerable drag.

My crew was great. No one came unglued or panicked. Every man stayed in position except the ball turret gunner, whom I told to get out of his turret in case we had to ditch. Our first thought was to get out over the water and stagger home to England around the Brest Peninsula. Somewhere about ten thousand feet as we were letting down, the Number 3 engine seized up, the crankshaft sheared, the propeller flew off the engine, spun up and to the left, and cut a swath through the fuselage directly in front of the copilot. It completely shattered his windshield and instrument panel. Fragments of glass and aluminum flew into the cockpit, badly cutting copilot Jerry Simmons' face.

Engine Number 4 continued to burn and windmill; it was useless. We were fast approaching the decision point—to try to make it to England or not. The compelling factor was the fire in Number 3, which was steadily spreading. I knew if it reached the Number 4 fuel tank we'd lose the wing. I decided to abandon the old bird over land and save the crew. I gave



Capt. John Ryan

the crew the word, told them to stay at their guns until we got in over land and then to go fast when I gave the word to jump.

Just as we neared the coast a German fighter pulled up off our right wing and looked us over. I could even see the pilot's face, he was so close. I quote from a letter from Bob Hermann, my navigator for what happened next:

"I'll clarify the FW 190 that was shot down. After we were hit and had left the squadron, an FW 190 flew parallel to us off our right wing, as if to lead us to an airfield. The top turret gunner cut him in half."

This was the second enemy plane our crew shot down that day. The other fighter was reported by ships in our formation in our mission reports.

We made landfall at Guilvinec heading due north, and when we had passed Pont-l'Abbe I gave the word to bail out, and hit the bailout button. The altitude was 3,000 feet. The crew was gone immediately. Simmons and I were the last to leave. Jerry and I shook hands, and he went out the bomb bay. All the crew members landed pretty much together, near a village called St. Jean Trolimon.

I trimmed the ship as best I could, got my butt up in the air and got the seat pack over the armor plate, and started back to the bomb bay. The altitude was about 1,200 feet when I last checked. As I was starting to crawl through the top turret, the plane started a steep turn to the right. I went back to where I could reach the wheel, got the bird somewhat level, and made a mad dash for the bomb bay and out.

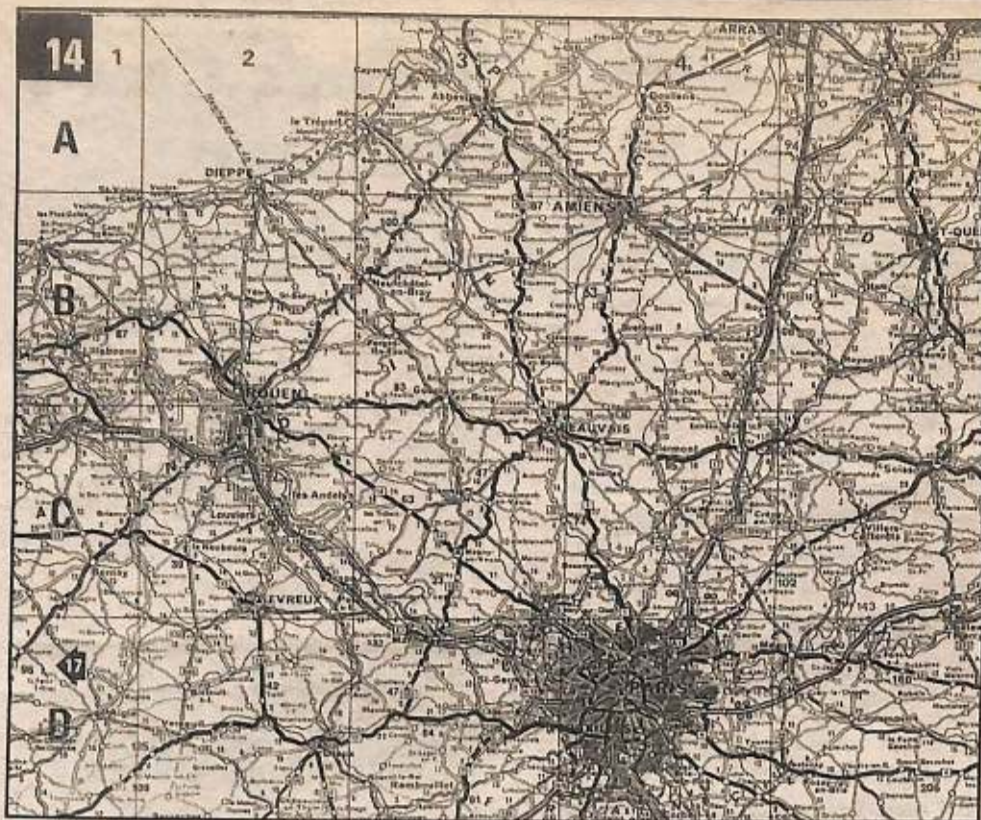
I remember getting a death grip on the rib cord handle as I jumped, followed by being tossed about violently in the slipstream. I felt a tremendous jolt and a sharp pain in my shoulder as the chute opened.

My next recollection is of lying on the ground in a field, hearing a lot of French, and some other strange language, and being surrounded by a group of women who were excitedly chattering: "Oh, le pauvre garçon! Tu crois qu'il soit mort? Es-ce qu'il est blessé? Qu'est-ce que nous pouvons faire? (Oh the poor boy! You think he's dead? Is he wounded? What can we do?)"

I tried to get out of my chute, only to realize that my left arm was useless and that I couldn't unbuckle the chute with one hand. I explained my problem to one of the ladies and she unsnapped the chute buckles for me. I somehow got to my feet. My first thought was to get rid of the chute. As I started to gather it in, one of the ladies asked if she could have it. She said all that beautiful white silk would make a lovely robe de noce (wedding gown) for one of her daughters.

I asked the women, "Où sont les Boches?" (Where are the Krauts?)

They all pointed to the south and said, "Ils sont par-là." (That way).



Through the Eye of the Needle

#7 of 10

Unlike his fellow crewman pictured in the last issue Capt. John L. Ryan did not end up in a German prison camp, but made his way skillfully and with a lot of luck out of Northern France and back to England. Ryan was the pilot of "Sweet Pea" and the day before had been named Squadron Commander of the 367th. The remaining three to be featured in succeeding issues of *Echoes* are Robert W. Seelos, Myron Sorden and James V. Vaughter. These stories are from the book titled as this story, and are used by the permission of the Stalag Luft III organization, per Gen. Albert F. Clark.

I thanked them and started off to the north.

Like most B-17 pilots, who found the heavy sheepskin lined flying clothes unsuitable for the cockpit, I was wearing my regular work uniform and leather flying jacket, and the bulky flying boots for high altitude.

It must have been three or three-fourths when I started walking. I was experiencing considerable pain in my shoulder as my left arm kept flopping against my side. I tied the two ends of my tie together and made a sling out of it for my arm. It worked like a charm.

As I left the French ladies, my only thought was to get as far away from the Germans as possible. The Escape and Evasion folks always preached the Gospel of getting inland from coastal areas and this is what I was trying to do in heading north.

I don't have many clear recollections about things that happened as I made my way. I do remember being plenty scared. I recall entering a series of hedgerows, about shoulder height and covered with brambles, which I had to climb over—not an easy task with one arm. I fell down from the top of these hedgerows a couple of times had passed out from the pain in my shoulder and chest.

I don't have many other recollections.

I found a little stream flowing generally to the north. I managed a drink of water and then I began having thoughts of Uncle Tom's Cabin and bloodhounds, and began walking in the stream bed. After slogging through the water for God knows how long, the going got terribly heavy. I looked down at my feet, and there I was still wearing those bulky flying boots. Each boot was now filled with water, and must have weighed twenty pounds. Off they came, and I hid them in the stream under a pile of rocks. I was now down to completely water-logged brown shoes, but, by comparison, they felt like bedroom slippers.

I kept going until dark, and then hid in some tall bushes in a corner of a field. How far I walked that afternoon is anyone's guess. If it was even one mile it would have been a miracle, considering the shape I was in. Since the helpful French ladies I had seen no one else. Later I learned I was never out of sight of the French Underground people.

Although I tried to rest, I was too excited—scared in a better word—and I hurt too badly to sleep. Besides that, it was bloody cold. I broke open my escape kit, got out the compass and decided to get a bit farther away from the coast.

I started walking again when it was completely dark, guided north by the

compass and the North Star. I walked most of the night. I encountered no one. The main worry I had as I prowled through the night was the local farmer's dog. Every farmer had a dog who was on sentry duty all night long. As I made my way along, I always knew where the closest farmhouse was from the barking of the dog. My concern was that all this howling might alert the Germans. Later I was told that I shouldn't worry about that because the German soldiers were all billeted in towns and at night were either in their barracks, in the local bistro, or in the local whorehouse.

I walked, staggered, and stumbled all night, and when dawn finally broke I found myself on the top of a low hill from which I could see in all directions. I spotted a farmhouse about a half mile away and decided to see if I could get something to eat. I made my way cautiously to the farmhouse and was welcomed by the sentry wagging his tail. He was noisy but friendly, for which I was grateful.

I knocked at the door, identified myself to the farmer as an American who'd been shot down yesterday, and asked for something to eat. The farmer and his wife were very kind and gave me some bread, cheese, and milk and, when I had finished wolfing down the food, politely asked me to move on and not hang around their farm, a very reasonable request under the circumstances. I thanked them and went on my way.

My second day in La Belle France was a beautiful, warm spring day. Some time late in the morning I came upon a secluded spot on the top of a sunny knoll, lay down and promptly fell asleep. I was awakened in mid afternoon by an old elf

One Who Got Away from page 3

of a man who proved to be an absolute joy. If I'd been in Ireland I'd have thought him to be one of the Little People. He had with him an old, black satchel like the kind family doctors used to carry and which was a bag of endless surprises. Every time the old gentleman reached into it, out came something new and wonderful.

When he found me I was lying flat on my back, and he told me to stay just that way because he had something for me. First out of the bag came six eggs. "Ouvre la bouche," he said, and every time I opened my mouth, he cracked open an egg and into my mouth it went.

All six of the eggs perished in this manner. Only when all the eggs had disappeared was I allowed to sit up. Thereupon, back into the bag went his hand and produced a bowl of cold stew and a great chunk of bread, all of which I was directed to eat.

During this great gastronomic enterprise, I was regaled with stories of his experiences as a *poilu* in the French Army in fifteen bayonet charges in the Battle of the Marne in 1914. Once I had finished all the victuals, out of the bag came the *piece de resistance*, a bottle containing a colorless liquid which he called *Alambic*, and which he said he had made himself. *Alambic* is normally the French word for a still, so what the old gentleman had in his jug must have been a Breton version of moonshine. Between the two of us, we did justice to the bottle and my pains were soon forgotten. After we'd killed the bottle, the old *poilu* told me to stay put and he would come get me later that night.

I did exactly as told and slept soundly until he came back after dark. We went down to his farmhouse where I was fed some more and then settled down for the night in the hayloft of his barn. I was awakened in the middle of the night by the old farmer, who had with him a stranger who was simply introduced as *quelqu'un qui peut aider* (someone who can help you).

This man and I had a long talk, and he asked me lots of questions. All were about me personally: name, rank, serial number, name of my mother and father, home town, religion. Never did he ask me what I had been flying, where I was based, anything military. He told me in the course of our conversation that he had worked in Paris for an American company called IBM. I told him that my mother's brother had worked for IBM for many years and was then the Service big wheel in the Capital District IBM Office in Albany, New York. He lit up like a Christmas tree at this bit of information and wrote my uncle's name on the back of a 100 franc note. He left, saying I would be contacted soon.

Ryan's Crew, 6 March 1943

John L. Ryan P
Gerald L. Simmons, KIA CP
Robert Hermann, POW N
James A. Laine, POW B
Charles E. Perry, POW RO
Glenn A. Blakemore, POW E
William Forrester, POW BT
James C. Green, POW WG
John R. Chapman, POW WG
Robert G. Mumaw, POW TG

'Sweet Pea' Once Before

The story of Maureen and 'Sweet Pea', with a different emphasis appears in the January 1978 issue of *Echoes*, Vol. No.1. In turn, this story was first told in a classic of early 8th stories, *Skyways to Berlin*, a book by John Redding and Harold Leyshon, two 8th AF PR men. The book came out in 1943 and has been out of print for many years.

In the morning I traded my green trousers and leather flying jacket to the old soldier for a well-worn blue work pants and an equally well-worn topcoat. My old drinking buddy carefully packaged my clothes and together we buried them out behind his barn. All the rest of Monday I hid out in a field with food provided by the old *poilu*.

In the evening I was taken back to the farmhouse and met another gentleman who suggested that I move on, as the Germans still appeared to be looking for me. He recommended that I head north slowly, and stay out of sight as much as possible. He told me not to worry and that his people would keep me under surveillance and would come and get me as soon as they could.

I bid my old *Alambic* provider goodbye, and walked until the sun was up the following morning. Tuesday around noon I was met by a small group of Breton farmers who brought me to a farm, fed me and gave me the run of the farmhouse and outbuildings, while at the same time warning me to keep out of sight as much as possible. That night I slept like a log in the stable and didn't waken until late in the morning. The farmer's wife fixed me an enormous breakfast. It seemed that no one wanted me to get hungry.

Later that day I was taken by a young farmhand to a rendezvous in the forest with several members of the local



The crew of 'Sweet Pea' surrounds Maureen, an orphan who was selected to be entertained by the combat crew for a day, just before they were shot down. Among the little girl's duties was the christening of the plane.

Resistance—elements of the French Underground who worked in conjunction with the Free French in England under General de Gaulle. These men told me they were now satisfied with my identity and had gotten radio confirmation from London that I was who I said I was. I learned much later that even before this confirmation, it had come from another source. It seems that the Frenchman who told me he was with the IBM Paris office was able to verify over company communication lines with the United States that I did indeed have an uncle in Albany's IBM office.

With my credentials established, I went underground with the Resistance for the next few weeks, got some medical attention, and spent some time in a number of locations in France, including a memorable sojourn in Paris.

And then, on a dark night in mid-April, six weeks from the day I was shot down, I found myself crouched hidden in bushes at a clandestine landing strip in a desolate countryside about 26 km east of Rouen. I was with a small group of British and French agents, waiting the last perilous moments for a Lysander aircraft to slip in from England to pick us up. The waiting was eerie and the night was cold. I never saw the aircraft until it was on the ground.

"Allez! Allez!" our Resistance escorts commanded.

I ran toward the aircraft and someone helped me up the ladder and into a compartment jumbled full of packages, mail sacks and luggage. A British agent I had met with the Resistance tumbled in on

top of me. He was RAF Flight Lieutenant Yeo-Thomas, who had parachuted into France on an assignment and was now returning, mission completed.

The canopy was slammed shut the minute he dropped in, and the aircraft started to taxi. By the time we got ourselves organized amidst the cargo in our compartment, we were airborne and had levelled off at what I estimated to be 5,000 feet.

The night was clear enough for good visual navigation, and it seemed a very short time when we came in view of the French coast, and it was a most welcome sight to see the English Channel again. But there was a rather large city ahead of us—St. Valery, I learned later—and we flew directly over it. I expected to get our butts shot off. But not a single round was fired, and then we were out over the water and the worst was behind us. The Lysander carried both German and British IFF (Identification Friend/Foe) sets.

The flight was completely uneventful. Nothing marred the stillness of the night but the drone of the big Lysander engine. And soon we were on final approach to RAF Station Tangmere.

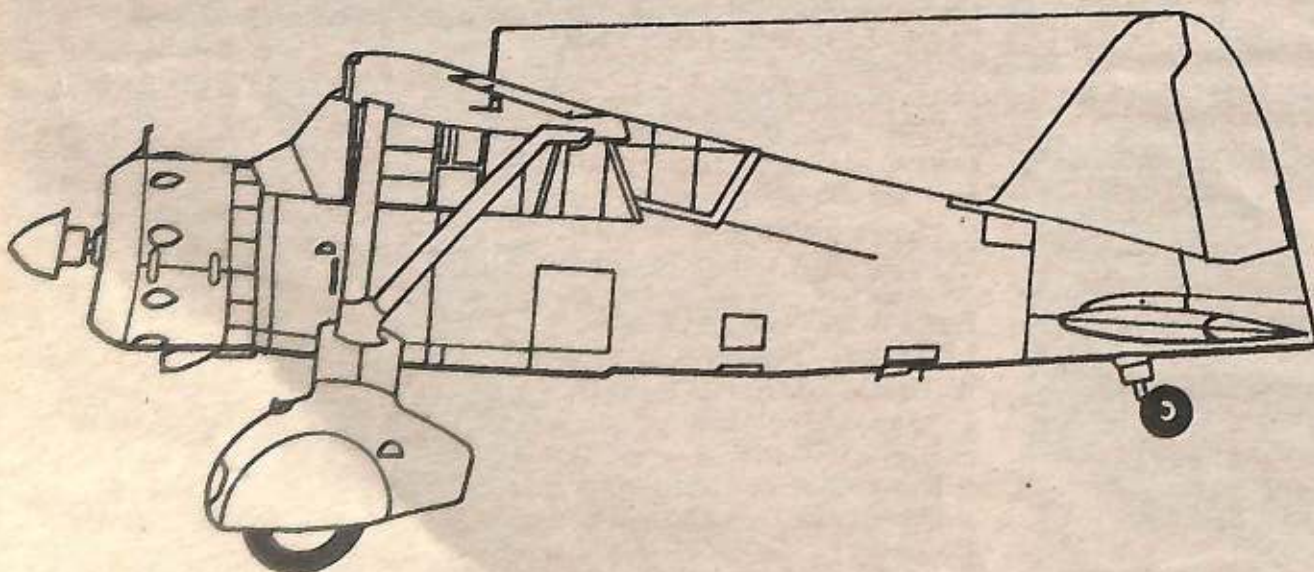
There was lots of security on the Special Operations ramp when our pilot finally parked the bird and cut off the engine. One Lysander was already unloading on the next hardstand, and while Yeo-Thomas and I were fighting our way out of our compartment, another Lysander taxied up behind us and parked. Three other Lysanders and a Hudson had made pick-ups elsewhere in France that night.

The whole ramp was alive with RAF police with white arm bands and with strangelooking civilians in trench coats. Yeo-Thomas told me to stick with him and shortly, very shortly, we were all standing at the bar in the Officers' Mess putting away the best Scotch I had ever tasted. Folks from Special operations Executive and General de Gaulle's headquarters were there and all were in great spirits, all talking French at a great clip, and the booze flowing like Niagara Falls.

There were lots of permanent party RAF officers milling around the bar and greeting returning agents. A rather burly group captain sidled up to me and asked me in French how long I'd been over there.

"Six Semaines," I answered him.

Still in French, he asked on what kind of aircraft I'd gone over to France. I replied in French, "Un B17."



A diagram of the small liaison plane used by the British, a Westland Lysander, aboard which John Ryan was flown back to England as the final step of his evading capture by the Germans in France.

Another View of Ryan's Flight

Capt. John Ryan's departure from France to England is told in a page from the book, *The White Rabbit*, by Bruce Marshall. This book, printed in 1953, is from a story told to Marshall by Wing Commander F. F. E. Yeo-Thomas, GC, MC.

"On 14th April word was sent from London to the three agents that they would be picked up on the night of the 16th by a Lysander, from a field near Lyons la-Foret. They set out at once from Gare St. Lazare, taking with them an American pilot called Ryan who had been shot down from a Flying Fortress and sheltered by a friend of Professor Pasteur Valery-Radot. Ryan had a fractured shoulder which had been reset by the Professor, and could speak no French (ed.note: Ryan did have some facility with French). He was told that if anybody spoke to him on the train his reply must be limited to an evangelical 'oui' or 'non'.

"They travelled in two groups to Pont de l'Arche: Passy, Brosselette and another agent in one compartment, and Yeo-Thomas, Ryan and Dutertre of the Lyons-la-Foret reception committee in another. During the journey nobody attempted to speak to Ryan who pretended (?) to be reading a French newspaper. In the buffet at Pont de l'Arche, fumbling for, and at first failing to find, his wallet, Yeo-Thomas committed his only indiscretion: "Where the hell's my money?" he said in English. Fortunately there were a lot of people talking noisily in the buffet and his remark was not overheard.

"From Pont de l'Arche they took a small local train to Fleury-sur-Andelle, whence they made another uncomfortable journey by bicycle to Lyons-la-foret. They reached the village after dark. Passy and Brosselette were again sheltered by the Vinets and Yeo-Thomas and Ryan in a neighboring farmhouse. All next day they remained indoors. Ryan, unaccustomed to clandestine life, kept talking loudly in his unmistakable American accent and on more than one occasion had to be silenced by the farmer's wife.

"At 10:30 p.m. Yeo-Thomas and Ryan climbed into a van drawn up in the farmyard and behind sacks of potatoes. Dutertre sat in front with the driver. After an hour's bumpy ride the van stopped and they got out. They found themselves on a deserted country road beside a road-mender's hut, into which Tommy's suitcase was pushed. Beside the road a field shimmered like a silver lake in the moon-

light. The stars twinkled brightly in the cold thrown up vault of the sky. They hurried across the magic field and lay down in a copse where they were presently joined by Passy, Brosselette, Vinet and Jacot.

"Yeo-Thomas says that he was both happy and frightened while he lay waiting for the Lysander to arrive. He was happy to have accomplished so much and frightened lest a last-minute accident should ruin everything. So much depended on so little. The district was heavily patrolled. The Lysanders might not turn up. The Germans might here the hum of the approaching aircraft. Helpless in the huge indifference of the night the three most sought after men in France lay fearful in the copse.

"Soon, however, there was a buzzing in the air. Dutertre, Jaco and Vinet rose and ran to the field, where torches had been fixed to three sticks arranged in the form of an L. Jacot flashed the recognition sign and the Lysander replied. The aircraft circled, landed, came down the longer branch of the L against the wind, turned along the shorter and came to a standstill with the wind behind it. A second Lysander hovered overhead. In less than three minutes Passy, Brosselette, Yeo-Thomas, Ryan and their suitcases were in the gunners' cockpit and the Lysanders were airborne again. An hour later they landed at Tangmere, back once more in the right sort of night.

Next evening the B.B.C. French service sent out for the first time the message:

"Le petit lapin blanc est rentre au clapier". The little white rabbit has returned to his hutch.

Report on Ailing Back

Many close to the 306th organization in the last 20 years have probably noted that Federal Circuit Judge Donald R. Ross has been handicapped with back problems.

You may not have known that his back defied treatment, although having been examined by leading medical authorities from coast to coast. To tell you just how bad his back was, it bothered his golf game.

Levity aside, the pain severely handicapped his movements in whatever he attempted to do. It was difficult for him to sit, and he suffered even as he held court through out his Midwestern circuit. The pain was with him always.

BUT, he reported to the editor very recently that he had undergone some further surgery and was now able to move about comfortably and to carry on his daily existence with much greater ease.

Judge Ross has served two terms as president of our Association, and is currently a director. He also chaired our great 1992 reunion which took 400 people to England to observe the 50th anniversary of the 306th's arrival for combat at Thurleigh. Earlier he had come to Thurleigh 16 Nov 43 with Albert Rehn's 368th crew, and flew 41 missions; during the last nine and one-half months, ending 1 Aug 45, he was the Group bombardier.

He can be reached at his summer place: Rt 5, Box 345A, Alexandria, MN 56308.



Son of 423rd Pilot Now USAF Colonel

LTC Michael L. Carlson, son of Ragnar L. Carlson, 423rd pilot, has been promoted to Colonel, USAF, and continues as chief, Logistics Division, C-17 System Program Office at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio.

He holds degrees from Willamette University and Portland State University, a master's degree from the University of Southern California in systems management and a master's from the Air War College in Strategic Studies.

He was commissioned in May 1960 out of ROTC and went on active duty at

Wright-Pat in October 1980, initially as the operations manager for the Aircraft Modification Directorate. He has had numerous technical assignments in logistics in the U. S. and has also served in Brussels, Belgium, Republic of South Korea and Saudi Arabia.

He is also a graduate of the Air Command and Staff College, Defense Systems Management College and the Air War College.

His father flew his combat tour between late Nov 1943 and mid Jun 1944. He died 21 Apr 84 in Newport, OR.

Check Your Records; Find New Homes

While working on 367th Squadron records of late I got into my binder of Squadron Orders. These were issued occasionally as events demanded by each of the squadrons, flying and others, on the base.

They are collections of some rather arcane materials that might seem to be of little importance, but are important in the larger scheme of things to show the activity of our military organizations at Thurleigh.

Among those things to be found in the combat squadron files are the orders appointing and promoting officers to flight leaders—pilots, navigators and bombardiers.

My request is that any of you who can find your 201 files take a look in them and see if you find ANY squadron orders. And this also applies to other squadrons at Thurleigh. Please send me copies of any orders that show up so that I can add them to my meager collection.

201 files seem to be one of those things that have suffered cruelly in the years since leaving service. The editor has his. But he has heard many sad stories of the disappearance of such folders in floods, fires, moving adventures, and just disappearing.

If you have yours, treasure it. If you no longer want it, send it to the 306th for safe keeping and inclusion in the 306th collection eventually at Savannah's burgeoning Mighty 8th Air Force Heritage Center. I must digress briefly as an illustration of the value that some people place on such records. I found in my collection of legal papers the abstract for the last home I owned in Michigan. It was quite a chunk of papers carrying that piece of property in Kalamazoo, Michigan, back to its original purchase from the Federal Government in the 19th Century. It was given to me because the county no longer required that they be passed from one owner to the next, or that they be updated. All of the procedural business, at least in Michigan, has gone electronic. My wife advised that I ought to throw it away, but I demurred. In a couple of days I called the Archives office at Western Michigan University and asked if they were interested for their regional history collection, the upshot being that that thick package of legalese now has a permanent home in Kalamazoo where local historians for the next couple of hundred years may find it an interesting piece of local minutiae.

One Who Got Away from page 4

"Mais c'est impossible. Vous etes francais." (But that's impossible. You're a Frenchman!)

To which I replied, "The hell I am. I'm an American."

That was when the stuff hit the fan. The group captain turned out to be the station commander; he started waving his arms and yelling. I was surrounded by RAF police, and I was under arrest as a suspected spy!

I got a chance to yell goodbye to Yeo-Thomas and within fifteen minutes I was on my way to London in the back of an RAF paddy wagon. It didn't bother me one bit. I was home. The Scotch had been great, and I slept all the way to the hoosegow.

Dues? No! Gifts? Yes!

It does take money to keep the 306th Association flying. Those who are able are asked to make an annual contribution to keep everything running smoothly. No one is dropped from the mailing list for non-payment! Your gift is tax deductible.

Please accept my gift to the 306th BG Association: \$ _____

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Engines, Men and Aircraft

To provide a better operational rate for the Group, mechanics and specialists were drawn from each squadron. The specialists were assigned to the Sub-Depot shops, i.e., propeller, communications, sheet metal. The general mechanics were formed into crews. This provided the Group a faster turn around of damaged aircraft.

Each flight line crew chief was given a form with a silhouette of the aircraft. All damage to the a/c was indicated on this form. The Group pool supervisors would then collect the forms and set the priorities to determine which a/c needed the most immediate attention.

The a/c were then placed in one of three hangars. An a/c that required a longer repair time went into the middle hangar. Those a/c requiring fewer hours went into a hangar on the end. As soon as repairs to one a/c were finished, it was moved onto the flight line and another was brought into the hangar.

A/c that required extensive repair were left until the next operation. This method gave the 306th the highest operational rate (OR) in the ETO.

There was one drawback. The system worked so well that the Group lost several engineering officers to other groups, where they then installed similar systems.

These maintenance crews became very efficient in fixed and movable surfaces along with fuel cell repair. The engine change, build-up crews—one crew per position—had two to three engines ready at all times. With engines ready for change, this reduced the down time to four hours.

The tire change/general maintenance crew maintained spare tire/wheel assemblies along with wing and tail jacks on a modified RAF bomb trailer for immediate response to blown tires on takeoffs and landings.

Tire assemblies were changed on the runway, with the a/c ready to takeoff on a mission.

The best time recorded was 18 minutes—from engine shutdown to engine start.

This system has been refined and is still used by USAF. It is now known as "Consolidated Maintenance Squadron Supporting the Flight Line Squadrons."

If my memory serves me correctly, the original engineering officers had served together at different bases prior to their assignment to the 306th at Wendover, UT.

The task of my crew in the Group Maintenance Pool was to maintain main and tail spare wheel and tail assemblies with packed bearings at all times. This included all equipment needed to make changes as fast as possible, especially on mission days.

This required some creative thinking and extra equipment.

An RAF bomb trailer was used to transport appropriated and modified, including a wood floor. This trailer was able to transport wheel/tire assemblies, wing jacks, tools and crews.

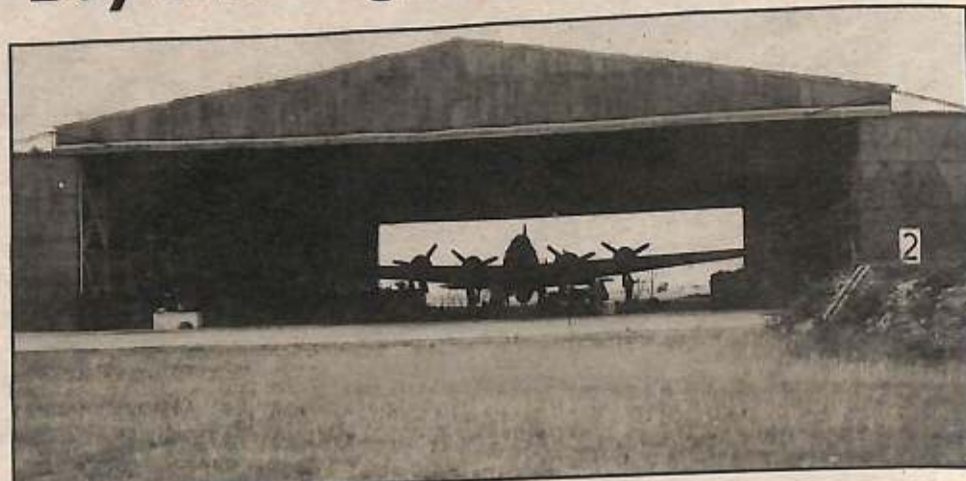
The first few tire changes were a learning experience. This wasn't like changing a tire on the family car. Not only did we have to deal with the weight of the a/c and the 56-inch tires, the a/c were often on the runway, ready for takeoff, a fact which put additional heat on everyone involved, from Operations, Engineering and crews at all levels.

As often happened, there was a technical problem to deal with—how to break the bead from the wheel. Pry bars, hammers and even 6x6 trucks were used without much success. The welding shop provided a solution by designing and fabricating a bead breaker. This and a five-ton hydraulic jack solved the problem.

Packing the wheel bearings was also a slow process. Eventually, to the delight of the crew, a pressure unit was built to make the process much quicker.

The crew also had to deal with a problem that involved a bit more muscle

Day and Night in the Hangars



work-removing a/c that had run off a taxiway and sunk in the Royal Mud. This called for some Yankee engineering.

At first we tried the winch on the towing tractors. But the tractors were not heavy enough to hold their ground when the winch was engaged. The solution wasn't very elaborate, though. Fully loaded fuel trucks were attached to the tow trucks with chains to act as anchors. That gave us enough weight to use the winch to extract the a/c.

It never hurt to have enough equipment and spare parts around, even the smallest and simplest parts had to be on the shelf.

As an example, after a few hard landings the bolts in the knuckle joints of the landing gear required inspection. This was done by removing the bolts and having their image magnified. Instead of leaving the a/c without wheels, extra bolts were always on hand to replace those being inspected.

Ed. Note: This piece was originally written by Bill Cavaness, 368th flight chief who became the NCOINC charge of the General Repair Group. He was president of our association in 1993-94, and died at the end of 1995. His widow, Dorothy, and his daughter, Jane Wirtz, have continued to attend our reunions.



(Left) Engines for our B-17s were rebuilt elsewhere, but when "new" engines arrived at Thurleigh they had to acquire engine mounts, hoses and an array of accessories before they went out of Hangar #1 to be put on the planes.



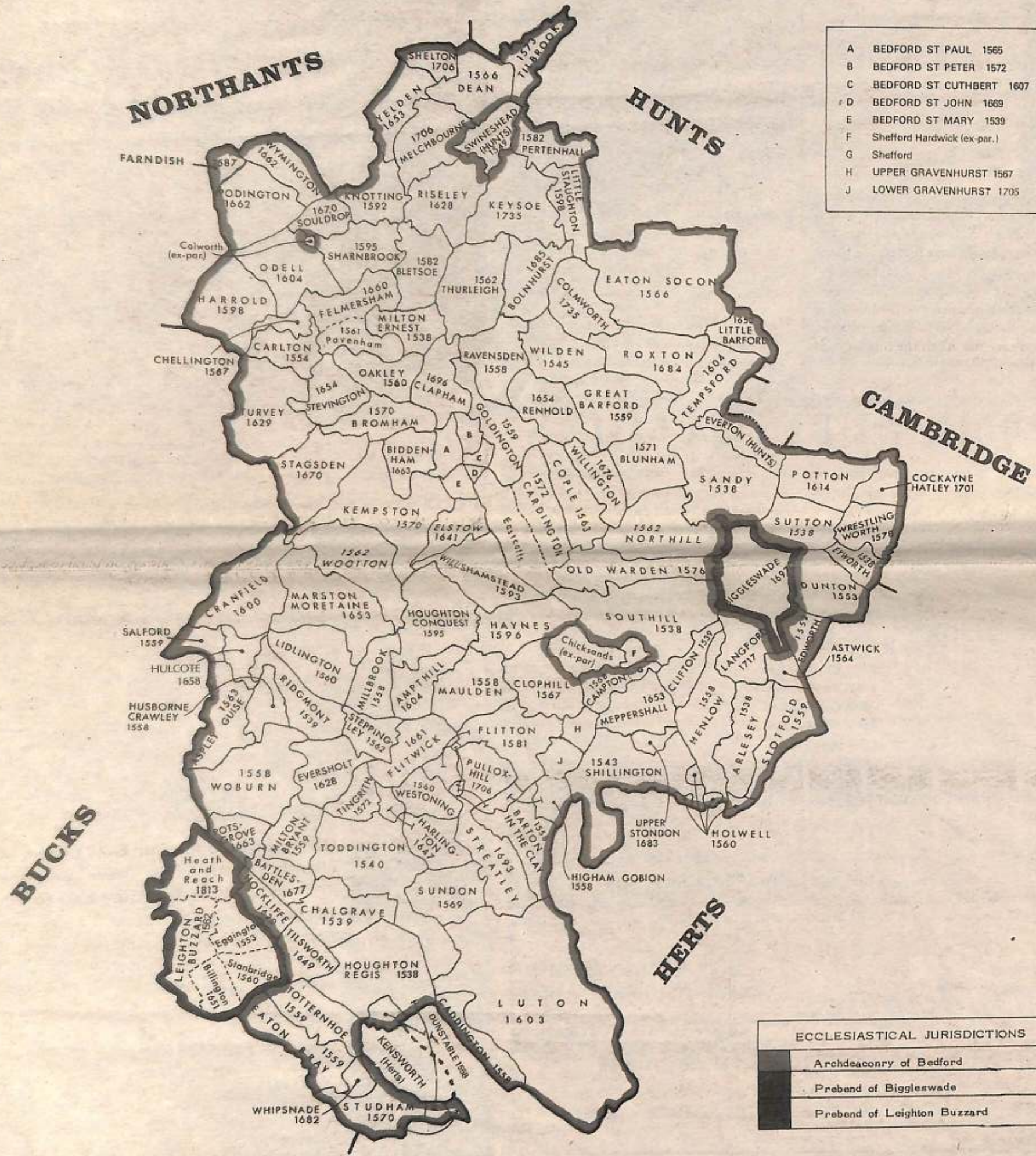
(Left) Two of the engine working chiefs: Arnold Gunderson, 369th left, and William Cavaness, 368th.



The engine buildup crew assigned to Hangar 1.

BEDFORDSHIRE

WITH DATES OF COMMENCEMENT OF REGISTERS FOR PARISHES FORMED BEFORE 1832



| | | |
|---|-----------------------------|------|
| A | BEDFORD ST PAUL | 1565 |
| B | BEDFORD ST PETER | 1572 |
| C | BEDFORD ST CUTHBERT | 1607 |
| D | BEDFORD ST JOHN | 1669 |
| E | BEDFORD ST MARY | 1539 |
| F | Shefford Hardwick (ex-par.) | |
| G | Shefford | |
| H | UPPER GRAVENHURST | 1567 |
| J | LOWER GRAVENHURST | 1705 |

| ECCLESIASTICAL JURISDICTIONS | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| [Pattern] | Archdeaconry of Bedford |
| [Pattern] | Prebend of Biggleswade |
| [Pattern] | Prebend of Leighton Buzzard |

SCALE 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 MILES

This map is published by The Institute of Heraldic and Genealogical Studies, Northgate, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1BA. For those of you who traveled all over Bedfordshire during your years at Thurleigh, and perhaps even since, it gives you some ideas of where things are, when the Parish registers came into being, in the event you are interested in retrieving some records, and the general layout of the county. If you are into family and other studies you may want to write for the Institute's Catalog as there are 13 pages of materials which might be helpful to you.

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- Bill & Ruth Houlihan, 367
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- Robert & Ruth Rockwell, 367
- George & Norma Roberts, 367
- Paul & Aileen Reiox, 423rd Theresa Reiox, 423D Michele Reiox, 423rd
- Clifford Rasmussen, 368
- Vernon Skimmel, 423rd
- Russ & June Strong, 367
- Ralph & Eva Shaw, 367

Handwritten initials: JLV, SJK

306th Bomb Group Association
2002 Northern Kentucky Reunion
25-29 September 2002
Radisson Hotel Riverfront, Covington

| | |
|--|----------------------|
| WEDNESDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER | |
| Arrival and 306th Registration | 2 x \$30 = _____ |
| THURSDAY, 26 SEPTEMBER | |
| 9:30 AM Board buses for USAF Museum | _____ x \$20 = _____ |
| 10:45 AM Arrive at Museum, Wright-Patterson AFB | |
| 10:45-2 PM IMAX Theatre, Museum Tour, Lunch on own | |
| 2:00 PM Board buses and return to Radisson | |
| 3:30 PM Arrive Radisson, Dinner on your own | |
| FRIDAY, 27 SEPTEMBER | |
| 9:00 AM Board Trolley at Radisson for guided tour of Cincinnati, Newport and Covington | _____ x \$12 = _____ |
| 10:15 AM Return to Radisson Riverfront | |
| 1:00 PM Board buses for Newport Aquarium | _____ x \$22 = _____ |
| 3:15 PM Return to Radisson Riverfront | |
| 6:00 PM Board buses for DINNER and SHOW at The Syndicate, Newport, Ky | _____ x \$47 = _____ |
| _____ Prime Rib _____ Champagne Chicken | |
| 9:00 PM Return to Radisson Riverfront | |
| SATURDAY, 28 SEPTEMBER | |
| 9:00 AM Continental Breakfast in Hotel | _____ x \$10 = _____ |
| 9:30 AM Annual Business Meeting | |
| President Lowell Burgess, Presiding | |
| 5:30 PM Cash-Bar, near Ballroom | |
| 6:30 PM Annual Banquet and Entertainment | _____ x \$39 = _____ |
| _____ Prime Rib _____ Chicken | |
| 9:30 PM Dancing and Socializing | |
| TOTAL | _____ |

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