



Keysoe Church

Keysoe Church an Important Landmark for Errant Flyers

by Edward J. Hennessy, 369th

This classic English country church was fortuitously located about one and one-third miles from the main runway at Thurleigh, the WWII base of our 306th Bomb Group. In 1942 and 1943, because of shortages, this base had no foul weather landing system in place. Thus, the Keysoe Church became the marker for Thurleigh, and recognition of this church became essential in the typically dismal weather conditions in the winter and early spring. With hundreds of country churches dotting the English countryside, we had to recognize Keysoe on sight.

On 6 March 1943 the 306th bombed the German U-Boat pens at Lorient, France, losing two bombers to flak in the process. Because of deteriorating weather, the Group could not return to Thurleigh and was forced to overnight at a small RAF base near Exeter that was still barely visible.

The following morning a total of 16 B-17s took off for Thurleigh. None of them refueled since the RAF small bases were in short supply and unaccustomed to four-engines. Unfortunately, the weather closed in after we were airborne and we had to determine our position by dead reckoning. We were also over solid cloud cover that topped at 2,000 feet. No alternatives were open within our remaining fuel range. More good news: The ceiling over Thurleigh varied from 400 to 500 feet, with one-third mile visibility in mist - the bare minimum for flight operations even if there had been a landing system.

Our creative leader, Col. Claude Putnam, asked Thurleigh control via radio to ring up the WAAF Barrage Balloon School at Cardington, near Bedford, to inquire if they might possibly run up one of their dirigible-shaped balloons on a tether to the top of the overcast. They could and they promptly did, as we toiled around in circles and anxiously awaited the appearance of the balloon. What a splendid sight it was nestling in the cloud tops that stretched to every horizon.

At 30 second intervals each B-17 began an instrument let down, using the balloon as an outer marker on a course due north to Thurleigh. With wheels down, flaps at one third, indicated air

speed 130 mph, rate of descent 425 feet per minute, we knew it should take three minutes and 42 seconds to reach Thurleigh, eight miles distant, give or take a couple of hundred yards and a few seconds for the balloon drifting on its tether. Even a WWII style bomber base made a comfortable target for such down, being about 1 1/2 miles in diameter - easier to find than that little country church on a single acre of wooded landscape.

We broke out on a north heading at about 400 feet over the field and turned quickly to 70 degrees, which was calculated to reveal the Keysoe Church 36 seconds after crossing the northern perimeter of the field. If we missed we would have to climb out straight ahead to the top of the overcast and go back to the balloon for another try. But, there it was! Our guardian angel in the mist. A tight bank to the left around the church while letting down to a heading of 240 degrees - that of the runway - now with full flaps and 110 mph air-speed, we got our first view of the runway from about 150 feet up and about 10 seconds out. We were a little to the right so we made quick correction left and then right again to align, power off and we were on the ground safely and reasonably softly.

Everyone made it on their first attempt. Since all aircraft averaged about 15 minutes remaining fuel supply, we were highly motivated to make it on the first go.

A footnote to history, one might say, was the singular authorization that followed from the British Air Ministry to install a red light on the Keysoe steeple as a navigational aid to the 306th on occasions such as this - which were all too numerous to mention.

KEYSOE CHURCH came into being in the 12th century, or perhaps a little earlier, during the reign of Edward the Confessor. The chancel area was built in the Middle Ages, and the tower was built in the 15th century. In 1759, one William Dickens fell 130 feet off the tower and survived. Today the church comes under the guidance of the Bishop of St Albans and of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. Attendance at Sunday services runs 50-60 persons.

New Video Ready: Thurleigh Memories

A new video documentary is to be released by 15 February and is entitled "Thurleigh Memories". It has been prepared by Old Segundo Productions and is basically the work of Dr. Vernon Williams, a historian at Abilene State University and began as a project of Williams' students and for use at the Thurleigh Museum, which is headed by Ralph Franklin.

It was announced at our Oklahoma City reunion last fall, and bits and pieces were shown there. But it is now a finished production, and is ready for you to make a purchase which you can run on your own DVD player connected to your TV.

Through the East Anglia Air War Project this 60-minute production was put together, and with significant contributions of East Anglia residents. It is in both color and black and white.

"Both the people living around the 306th base at Thurleigh and the veterans and their families in the 306th have contributed greatly," says Professor Williams. "I expect the 306th's history will figure prominently in the book that I will soon begin to write." Williams adds, "I am pleased that my newest film on WWII is a new documentary on the

306th Bomb Group. I anticipate that it will be an important addition to classrooms all across the nation as teachers take advantage of the lesson plans and teaching units on the internet that Old Segundo Productions is producing along with the video."

You can order a copy of the video, *Thurleigh Memories*, The 306th Bomb Group(H), in World War II, by contacting Old Segundo Productions on the internet, by mail or email, or use their toll-free number.

Thurleigh Memories: The 306th Bomb Group(H), 60 minutes, color and black and white VHS tape or DVD, \$24.95, plus \$3.5 shipping by priority mail. (Please specify VHS tape or DVD on your order).

Texas residents add 8.25% sales tax. Early orders will ship no later than **February 15, 2005.**

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San Antonio in October 2005

The *La Boudic Hotel* in San Antonio, TX, will be the place of gathering for all 306th members, families and friends in this year, according to President Albert McMahan.

"We are planning to meet there October 19 thru 22nd which should be a good weather date," says Al, who chaired the '04 reunion in Oklahoma City. Also working closely with Al at present are Dale Briscoe, chairman of our 1990 reunion there, and Treasurer Royce Hopkins.

This hotel is located on Interstate 410 on the northside of San Antonio and a mile from the San Antonio Airport, so it will be convenient for both drivers and fliers.

The officers are now working out details that will be of importance to all who are planning to attend. Registration materials and more information about this San Antonio program will appear in the April, July and September issues of *Echoes*.

Tour Open for Dedication Honoring 369th Plane, Crew

A tour group is being gathered to spend eight days in the Czech Republic, centering around the dedication 8 May 2005 of a memorial to the 369th crew and plane of Capt. Boylston B. Lewis. The plane crashed after the crew had bailed out at the small village of Hridelec, near Lazne Belohrad. This is in the very north, near the Czech/Polish border.

Speed in planning to participate is of the essence at this time. Upon reading this you should immediately contact Barbara or Charles Meal 995.556.0887 at Pleasanton, CA or by cell phone 310.629.9811.

Barbara Neal is the niece of Alfred S. Lubojacky, ball turret gunner on the plane and was the only crew member

who died in the incident. Crew members who are still living are H. Field McChesney of Bowling Green, KY, radio operator, and Leon Nahmias, Flushing, NY, tail gunner.

Others on Lewis' crew were: Robert S. Whitelaw copilot, Lester A. Harrison, Navigator, Joseph R. Sicard bombardier, James F. Standlee engineer, Frank L. McDonough waist gunner.

The trip will include nine nights abroad, with four nights in Prague, the capitol city, and four nights in Zlin, a southern Moravian community. The tour will depart from Houston, nonstop to Paris, and then on to Prague. Their last night before coming home will be in Vienna, Austria, to Paris and then Houston.

!pleH ruoY deen eW

It becomes increasingly difficult to maintain our mailing list and you can help.

Send me a note. Call me up. Get in touch. I can give you a list of people in your area with mailing addresses, phone numbers, etc.

From that data you can spread your wings as far as you can, reaching out and trying to verify the current status of individuals. A phone call to those within

easy reach could elicit new addresses (sometimes our address needs to be tweaked only a tiny bit to do a better job). Your phone book may furnish better data.

We want YOU to help with a phone call, with letters to others, and we hope you can get this helpful information to the editor, who also wrestles with the mailing list.

Remember Where They Were?

The U.S. Army Air Forces' 15 Strategic Locations



Obituaries

Dudley W. Burton, 367th pilot (Verlin Higginbotham crew), died 12 Oct 2004 in Rancho Mirage, CA. He joined the 306th in Jan 45, flew during combat and served with the Casey Jones project until returning to the U.S. 22 Feb 46. He was a banker for 32 years. Burton leaves his wife, Dolores, 4c, a stepson, 6 gc,

5 ggc.

Burl V. Clement, 423rd tail gunner (John Coyne crew), died 27 Jul 2004 in Kent, WA, where he had lived most of his life. He joined the 306th 29 Aug 44 and flew 35 missions, departing 20 Aug 45. His wife had died 29 Aug 89. Burl had been a landscaper, and there were no children.

Leon R. Goetz, joined the 423rd 5 Jul 43 as a tail gunner and completed his combat tour 31 Jul 44. He lived in Danbury, CT.

Roger M. Hodson, a radar shop technician, died 19 Aug 43 in Walnut, CA, having suffered with Parkinson's Disease. He leaves his wife, Patricia, 4c, 13gc, 2ggc.

Gene B. Howe, co-pilot on Clarence Halliday's crew, died 11 Dec 2004 in Mt. Pulaski, IL, where he had lived most of his life. He arrived with the Group 8 Aug 44 and completed his 35 missions in mid Apr 45. He leaves his wife Laurine, 5gc, 2ggc.

David W. Howell, a weather observer at Thurleigh, died 11 Dec 04 in Dallas, TX. He leaves his wife, Isabel.

Joseph M. Levy, 367th-368th navigator, arrived at Thurleigh 4 Apr 43 with the Alphonse Maresh crew. He was the 42nd officer to complete a 25 mission tour 5 Sep 43. A later graduate of Texas A & M, he

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Name New Detroit VA Cemetery

It will be located in Oakland County, 45 miles northwest of Detroit. Currently, the closest open VA National Cemetery is at Fort Custer National Cemetery in South Central Michigan, between Battle Creek and Kalamazoo, and close to I-94.

Veterans with a discharge other than dishonorable, their spouses and eligible

dependent children can be buried in a national cemetery. Other burial benefits include a burial flag, Presidential Memorial Certificate and a government headstone or marker, even if they are not buried in a national cemetery. Information on VA burial benefits can be obtained by calling VA regional offices, 1-800-827-1000.

Canadian Evaders Winners!

It seems that the Canadian government treats evaders better than the U.S. In the frozen northland evaders are treated the same as POWs and receive a pension based on the length of evasion, beginning at 30 days. No need to prove any ailments.

306th PUBLICATIONS

Published materials now available from the Group will help you follow the 306th through the combat period 1942-45:

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.

Men of the 306th, on microfilm

A roll 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.

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367th Combat Diary	\$20.00
368th Combat Diary	\$20.00
369th Combat Diary	\$20.00
423rd Combat Diary	\$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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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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Handles all changes of address, editorial contributions and records. Book orders should also be placed with him.
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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).



Merle Brown prepares for the jump

Merle Brown, 368th Pilot, Waits 'til 87 for 2nd Jump

Merle Brown waited a long time to make his second parachute jump. He first had jumped in 1943 when both engines had quit during a nighttime training flight in Oklahoma. Then followed joining the 306th in England and flying combat.

He came as co-pilot for Charles W. Smith, and they were interned in Sweden, after seeking refuge on the Swedish Island of Gotland where they landed while on a Berlin mission of 6 March 44. Brown stayed a few months and then took one of the evening flights back to England and resumed flying, eventually completing 30 missions.

Now 87 years of age, Merle decided this past summer to try jumping once again. He spent intervening years flying for the corporate world and on 10 Jul 04 he climbed into a Cessna 210 at the Waseca County airport in Minnesota.

This time he got 15 minutes of instruction, and the plane departed, climbing to 10,000 feet. Departing the plane, he had 4000 feet of free fall before pulling the ripcord and enjoying the view. He reports he made a three-point landing on the runway of the airport he had departed from, "two feet and my butt". Merle says he may try it again next summer!

Thoughts by Hood On How We Faced WWII Combat

by Theodore Hood

A journalist interested in the Mighty Eighth read our article on "French view of U.S. air combat" (Echoes, July 2004) and asked me, "How did you and the other airmen stay calm and able to function?" I thought back to those days and answered, "I really think the courage displayed by our service men and women was more a reflection of the times than of the individual. It became a way of life."

"High school students knew more about the world situation than most college students do today. We watched the Nazi movement's rise and spread across Europe. We watched the devastation of England by German bombs. We watched the Battle of the Atlantic. We watched the rape of Asia by the imperial government of the Land of the Rising Sun.

When we were attacked 7 Dec 41 we

had leaders who could make decisions and lead. They did not study the situation for a year, then turn it over to a committee. We were put on war footing, and war was declared in 24 hours. Only one member of Congress voted against it. This was cast by a member who thought it was wrong to go to war; she was not currying favor with voters at home. She also had voted against entering World War I.

When we went on a war footing and ration controls were placed on us, we did not have nay-sayers yapping about our rights. When security was tightened, there were no cries for the peoples' right to know. We knew these things were for our survival.

All of this had an effect on our military. They knew they were fighting for their survival of the U.S.A.

After I enlisted at age 20, my training was very intense for a year before I was assigned to a Bomb Group in England."

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became a chemical plant manager for Rohm & Haas Co. He died in Houston, TX, 2 Oct 2004. Levy left his second wife, Louise, 3c, 2gc. His first wife, had died much earlier.

Edward M. Murphy, 369th co-pilot (Robert Porter crew) and pilot, died 3 Nov 2004 in Albuquerque, NM, where he had been a longtime resident. He was the 96th officer to complete a 25-mission tour. Ed had entered service as a mechanic, and completed it as a B-29 instructor pilot. He had retired in 1979 as a benefit administrator for the State of New Mexico.

Vernon L. Rasmussen, 423rd copilot (Guy Bumett crew) and pilot, died 23 Sep 2004 in Ogden, UT, and was wounded 30 Nov 44 (his 30th mission), when an 88mm shell burst in front of the pilot's window with fragments hitting him in the jaw. He spent three months in the 49th Station Hospital before returning to the U.S. 7 May 45. He was retail sales manager for Meadow Gold dairies, and later retiring after 20 years with Sears as auto accessories manager. He leaves his wife, Marge, 4c, 17gc, 11ggc.

Armando Taliani, 1628th Ordnance Co., died 21 Nov 2003 in Riverside, CA. He was with the original group as a parts record clerk, and later auto supply sergeant. He owned the San Hi Lanes and Del Rosa Lanes in San Bernardino, CA, for 40 years, retiring in 1997. He leaves his wife, Rose Mary, 2c, 1gd.

Reginald H. Thayer, 368th bombardier, died 8 Nov 2004 in Palisades, NY, shortly after returning from our 2004 reunion. Reg flew 50 missions with the 97th Bomb Group, 15th Air Force in Italy, and then in some way getting a transfer to the 306th where he flew another 29 missions. He was a vice-president of Marsh and McLennon Insurance. Thayer was recalled during Korea and served as an instructor 1952-53. He was a graduate of Columbia Univ. and leaves his wife, Dorothy, 2c, 2gc.

Clifford P. Tinkham, 369th pilot, died 10 Mar 2004 in Bath, ME. He joined the Group 26 Dec 44 and completed his full tour 15 Apr 45. He graduated UMaine '47, ME '52, and retired as superintendent of schools at Bath, ME, in Jun 78. He leaves his wife, Audrey, 2c, 3gc.

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.

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EIGHTH AIR FORCE

TWO NEW WORLD WAR II DOCUMENTARIES

*DEOPHAM GREEN: THE SAGA OF THE 452nd BOMB GROUP (H)
*THURLEIGH MEMORIES: THE 306th BOMB GROUP (H) IN WWII

TWO NEW WWII DOCUMENTARIES

DEOPHAM GREEN VHS/DVD 60 minutes - Grades 9-12, College, Adult - Produced and directed by Vernon L. Williams - Teaching web site available for teachers - December 2004 - \$24.95 VHS or DVD (Please specify)

Traces the dramatic story of the men of the 452nd Bomb Group and the British families who lived on or near their base at Deopham Green in World War II England. The video contains eye witness accounts from both American servicemen and British family members as they remember the air war over occupied territory and the stories of sacrifice and courage that played out every day at Deopham Green and over the skies of WWII Europe. This documentary provides an exciting look into the human side of war as nearby British families suffered the threat of German air attacks and wartime sacrifices while ground crews labored to keep the B-17s flying and the air crews struggled to beat the odds over Nazi Europe.

THURLEIGH MEMORIES VHS/DVD 60 minutes - Grades 9-12, College, Adult - Produced and directed by Vernon L. Williams - Teaching web site available for teachers - December 2004 - \$24.95 VHS or DVD (Please specify)

In the early days of the air war against Germany, the 306th Bomb Group delivered the first bomb loads into the heart of the German homeland. Faced with terrible losses and limited resources, the 306th helped prove the viability of high altitude daylight precision bombing. This documentary explores the bomb group's early training history in the United States and includes a dramatic look at the combat work performed by the aircrews in the air over occupied Europe and the extraordinary support provided by the base ground crews around the clock. Today the 306th Museum on the old base keeps the spirit of the wartime drama at Thurligh alive.

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This is the "undecorated" airplane that the 306th flew to England. All that is there is the plane number and the star on the fuselage.

Diarist Hermann Flies Atlantic to Combat

Chapter 2:

Robert Hermann, 367th navigator, continues his recounting of the early days of the 306th, taking us from Westover, MA, across The Pond, landing first in Scotland ultimately at Thurleigh, which became the home of the 306th until early January 1946. A third chapter may appear in a future issue of Echoes.

On September 4, 1942, Bob and the 306th Bomb Group took off for Gander, Newfoundland and arrived after flying up the Bay of Fundy at 1700 hours. It was a bleak place, but had a very nice Officers' Club. Their food was terrible, and we knew such things were going to get worse in the food department.

"Except for a relatively small number of replacement aircraft delivered by Air Transport Command crews late in 1942, the planes were flown by their own combat crews, the men who were destined to fly them later in combat over Europe or in Africa. By all existing standards, their passage across the North Atlantic represented a tremendous achievement, one for which any one of the pilots very recently could have anticipated a parade up Broadway and a complimentary speech by the Mayor of New York City." (The Army Air Forces in World War II).

(Editor's Note: The 306th flew 35 planes out of Westover, Mass. One of them crashed off Greenland, and a second ended up on the bottom of a bay in Ireland, and may be salvaged in the next year or so, pending the contribution of requisite funds to do the job.)

Our brand new B-17Fs left for England at 2000 hours to fly as single planes to Prestwick, Scotland. The flight plan was for 9,000 feet and all dead reckoning (compass) unless celestial (stars) could be used. Bob was scared but did not let any of the crew know about it. He had bought a full box of Baby Ruth candy bars for the trip, and ate them all during the 10-plus hours of flying. It is to be pointed out at this time that Bob was no dummy- taking no clothes in his luggage, but used his allotted weight with two cases of 100 proof Old Grand Dad Bourbon. Man, what a smart decision!

At 9,000 feet true attitude, our B-17F was in pea soup fog all night and at one time Maj. Harry Holt was flying four degrees off course and I told him to get back on course unless he wanted to land in France. I didn't know to whom I was talking, but Maj. Holt said, "Yes, Sir," and did.

This was a tiring trip for me, but I was

determined to reach destination and I stood up all the 10 1/2 hours that it took to get to Prestwick. Came dawn and I was able to shoot the sun and get a position for a landfall on Dernycross (a beacon in Ireland) to go across the Irish Sea to Prestwick. When I brought the plane over Dernycross one of the pilots asked for a new heading. I said "fly in a circle". After a one circle turn I had the new heading to go across the Irish Sea. On the other side of Prestwick, I said "Let your landing gear down, we are here!". The crew near beat me to death after they landed for a successful trip under bad conditions. Some guys were lost that night but Bob and crew had made the trip.

Landed and ate at Prestwick at about 8:20 a.m. our time on Sept. 6 and went directly to bed, staying there until the next day. Tried to eat at the air base, but I couldn't understand the Scottish lass who was saying green tomatoes and porridge.

One big day of leave, everyone went to Glasgow. The main thing I remember about being there was that the dance floor was on springs and as you traversed in a circle the floor bounced up and down. A few months later I became acquainted with my best war-time and

all time buddy- Joe. Joe said while in Glasgow this Scottish lass said, "I'll give you one more kiss Yank and then ye'll be on your way."

The next day the 306th took off for Thurleigh, Bedfordshire, which was to become their permanent home in the British Isles. One thing that disturbed me was that the RAF furnished Limey navigators to lead us to Thurleigh. If I had been Tooley Spaatz I would have said ----- and you know what. But the 306th could not land at Thurleigh because the runways were under repair, so had to land at Grafton-Underwood, north of us a dozen miles.

A NEW CHAPTER OF LIFE

"The tiny island of Great Britain would become, with the hoped for arrival of the 8th Air Force, one great, crowded mass of airdromes. Onto it would assemble the mightiest air armadas in history with the purpose of bringing to the Germans, leaders as well as the led, the terrible and furious meaning of modern war, which they themselves had unleashed".

Obviously, it would be a while before Gen. Ira Eaker's 8th Bomber Command would be ready to test its long held doctrines of strategic bombardment. The bitter English winter suddenly turned into spring, to be quickly followed by the hot summer, and it seemed that the only visible accomplishment was a pile of papers, in triplicate. Then, on July 1, 1942, a B-17E and a B-24 arrived on English soil- and the legend of the heavy bombers began.

And in early September that first group of 24 B-17Fs nosed on to the runway at Thurleigh, and a month later men and planes of the 306th flew their first raid. Thurleigh was about six miles from Bedford, a county town, but not a city in English parlance. It had churches, but no cathedral. And it did have a noticeable statue of John Bunyan, and perhaps a few of the visitors from America checked on Bunyan's impact upon the local literary world, and some

had probably read *A Pilgrim's Progress*. This decision to locate our group at Thurleigh, near Bedford was exactly right for Hermann, and in the process of settling in, he checked his luggage, removed two fifths of Old Grand Dad and carefully toted them into Bedford. Those two bottles went right to the gen-darmery, and for the future he had free transportation night or day between the base and Bedford.

At each stage in Bob's Army life the living conditions got worse- the flying officers' barracks at Thurleigh were Quonset huts (a parabola of corrugated steel over a slab of concrete), there was no inside toilet, and a pot belly stove in the center with no fuel! Bob and Jimmy Gise took to stealing coal from a nearby construction site with drawn and loaded .45s in case they were apprehended. The men in the ground crews were much smarter - they used tanks of 100 octane gasoline to drip on rocks in an improvised stove, which kept their tent warm as they stayed up all night to service their B-17s.

There was a lot of camaraderie between ground crews and the flying crews. It was a sad day for the ground crews when their plane and buddies didn't come back. Bob's 367th Squadron lost 68 aircraft and their crews in the course of the war.

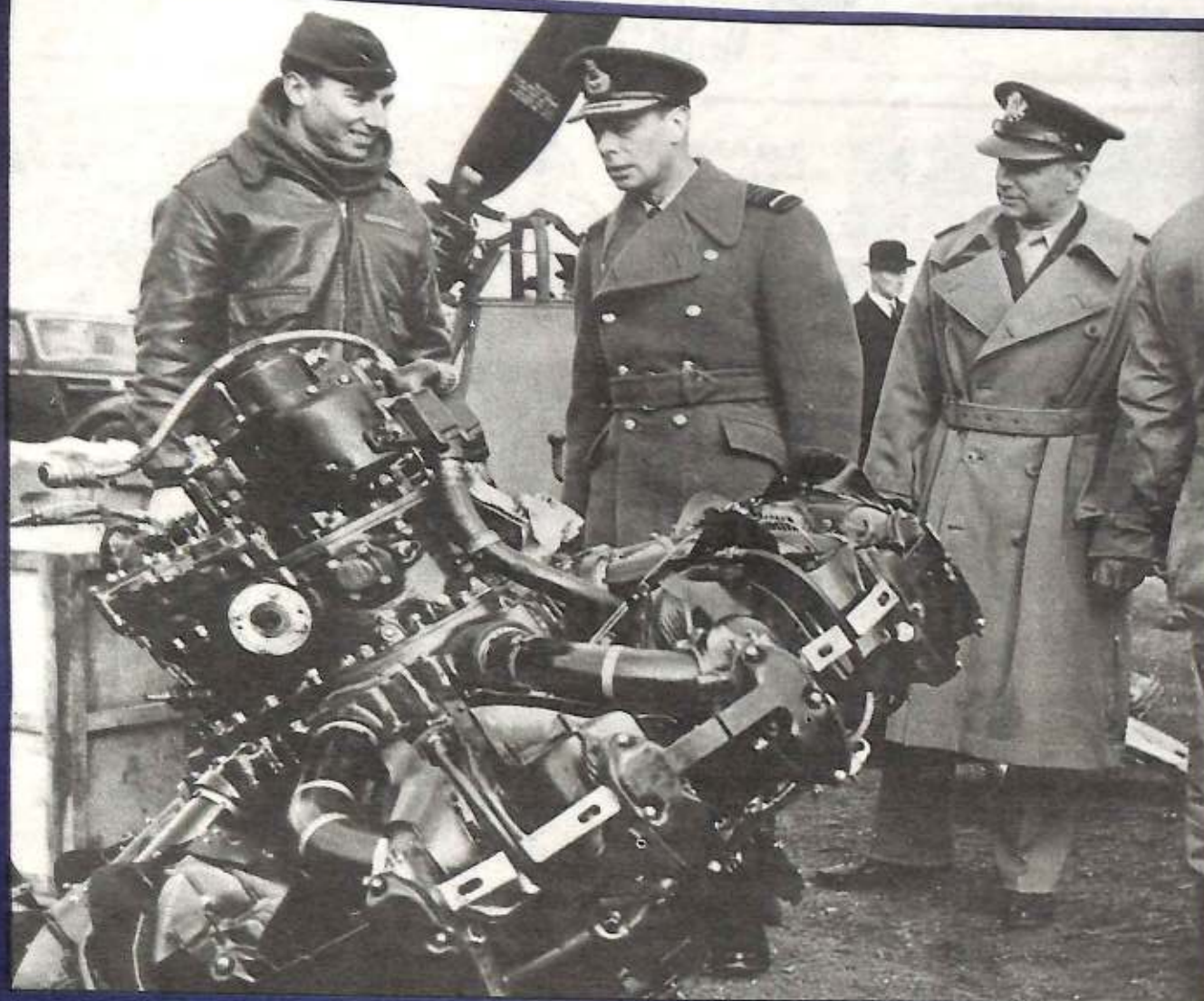
We had one truck at Thurleigh in early September, and, no names please, a 2nd Lt. stole the damn thing at Ft. Dix, NJ, and put it aboard the Queen Elizabeth to go to England. Funny, can't remember his name! "War is Hell" as that other guy from Ohio once said, but in retrospect there were many moments of joy and almost happiness.

As I told you, the toilet facilities were poor, being about 50 feet from the Quonset hut. One bleak afternoon, Ralph Gaston went outside to relieve himself and was standing there when Gen. Eaker and the King of England came by. Ralph shouted, "the _____ King of England is here." Bob and all rushed to the door and, sure enough, in the muddy, dreary base at Thurleigh was

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King George VI chats with Henry Terry, with Col. 'Chip' Overacker smiling behind him.



Robert Riordan, 369th pilot, discusses a new engine that will go on Riordan's heavily damaged plane, with King George VI. B/Gen Newton Longfellow, 1st Combat Wing Commander, listens in at the right.

'The Reich Wreckers' Looks at the Work of the 306th from Different Angles

The Reich Wreckers was the original name for the 306th Group but someone (perhaps the enemy) did not like this tag and it was removed from the lexicon, only to reappear as the title of a new and scholarly work by Charles J. Westgate III.

It is 82 pages and is packed with statistical data which Westgate studied while stationed at Maxwell Air Force Base at Montgomery, AL. His spare time was spent in combing the data col-

lection there, and with his mathematical/statistical mind he has given a new side to the history of the 306th, making it quite a different book than the historical narrative of *First Over Germany* by Russell A. Strong.

Together these books walk hand in hand through the pages of history, and when combined with the Squadron Diaries, *306th Echoes* and the *Combat Crew* book provide a detailed spread of material unequalled by any of the other

bomb groups serving in the 8th during WWII.

This book is available. Just write Russ Strong with your request, and enclose \$4.00 for priority mail and a copy will soon be yours. This is made possible through the generosity of Westgate who is the son-in-law of Grover C. Ingram, a 369th tail gunner, whose obituary appeared in October 2004 issue of *Echoes*.

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the King of England and all the big brass of the 8th Air Force. They pretended not to hear Ralph and no repercussions came forth.

(Editor's Note: The first visit of royalty to the 306th came on 13 November 1942, and Bob places it at the time when Thurleigh became the first base turned over to American control. This occurred in front of group headquarters on 9 December, with appropriate military honors and the raising of the Stars and Stripes. This apparently gave the U.S. full control of defense of the land and responsibility for everything that went on there.)

Everything was hectic and haphazard in those days and the colonels and generals knew only slightly more than the latrine orderly on getting the 8th AF together. But come hell or high water the gutsy Americans will do it. The 306th started doing formation flying to get ready to go straight to Berlin on the first trip, if necessary, but the Limeys talked the brass out of that - none would have come back.

On one of those formation training missions of the 367th with Major Harry Holt commanding, Lt. William Ely, a wing plane of Capt. John Ryan, lost his oxygen at 27,000 feet, then dove his airplane past the redline (top air speed for safety) and a wing came off the plane. Bob was the first to see this, and the mission was scrubbed and everyone returned to base. Bill Ely, Edwin

Patterson, William Kuhlman and Ralph Cameron were killed. Bob's ball turret gunner, Bill Kellum was on the plane but escaped, and then joined Ryan's crew on future missions.

"At dusk the same day, a tragic and gruesome accident occurred on a practice mission over The Wash at 24,000 feet. A waist gunner had trouble with his oxygen supply and passed out. To gain denser air quickly, the pilot dived the aircraft some 9000 feet. The pull out was apparently too violent, for control cables snapped, and a part of the wing with the starboard engine broke away and the aircraft caught fire. For the unit concerned, this time the 367th Bomb Squadron of the 306th Group, it was an early incident in a bitter history of losses."

(Editor's Note: This is the only time the editor has ever seen such an event mentioned. Copies of the group diary no longer exist, and most of the records concern combat activities. If this really did happen to a 367th plane, please contact the editor.)

In early September, Bob, Jimmy Gise and Bill Eubank got a two-day pass to London, which was about 60 miles away. No one knows who had the idea, probably Gise, but they rented a cab for a day of sightseeing: Tower of London, Hyde Park, Big Ben, Houses of Parliament, St. Paul's Cathedral, Picadilly Circus, Leicester Square, Wellington Monument, you name it. For all day the cab bill was \$6.00, and these typical Americans gave

him \$12. This is the kind of generosity that didn't endear the Americans to their British counterparts, but the Picadilly Commandoes loved it!

The hotel accommodations in London were great, but I generally stayed at the Jermyn Street Officer's Club, which was just a block from Picadilly. We stayed in these GI type quarters because there was food. You could eat in the swankest English restaurants in those days for five shillings (but the portions of food were small). You then had to hurry to find some place else to eat because you were still hungry.

The main purpose of the 8th in September 1942 was to get organized for combat, and we did. We flew the battle of the North Sea and The Wash every day and the formations kept getting tighter and tighter. After the first FW 190s went through the formation, the planes were about three feet apart. The formations were beautiful and I really regret I had no film in those days to remember the dedication and discipline of a bunch of college kids getting ready. You flew first as squadrons and then as a tightly knit group for maximum fire power and concentrated bombing. Some jerk said that a B-17 had ten .50 caliber machine guns on each plane, but he must have never seen one. There were three in the nose, two in the top turret, two in the ball turret, one in the radio room, and one in the waist and two in the tail, which totaled twelve. The noise was deafening when most of the guns were firing simultaneously.

Book Specializes In Military Trivia

Military History's Top 10 Lists, by M. Evan Brooks-2003, Gramercy Press, New York.

So you've always wondered how some military leaders ranked? Here's the book that will tell you with reasons for selection and will give you a chance to shine among friends who have their own opinions on such trivial matters.

A few glimpses may suffice:

Commanding Officers: 1 Alexander the Great, 2 Gustavus Adolphus, 3 Edward the Black Prince, 4 Joan of Arc, 6 Marquis de Lafayette, 8 Napoleon.

Disabled Commanders: Douglas Bader, 2 Peter the Great.

Mercenaries: 2 Claire Chennault, 7 John Paul Jones.

Overrated Commanders: 1 Erwin Rommel, 2 Stonewall Jackson, 3 Vo Nguyen Giap, 4 Douglas MacArthur.

Incompetent Commanders: 1 Braxton Bragg, 3 Douglas Haig, 6 Horatio Gates, 9 Leonidas Polk.

And the list goes on and on!

Views of Combat

Rumsfeld was right: In any war you make due with whatever at the start. The press reaction was typical of their unrealistic viewpoints. Its apparent they will never acknowledge our Iraq survival rate is over 99%. Their KIA rate is inflated by the inclusion of accidental deaths, which they insist on labeling combat deaths. Blatant dishonesty! EJJ

On one of the training missions to The Wash to drop practice bombs, 100 lb. black smoke. Bob's bombardier got off at the control tower to take care of a problem and did not get back on the plane, or at least did not get to his nose position. On the bomb run from the North Sea to the practice target, John Ryan called down for the bombardier to set the PDI (pilot direction indicator). Bob called back to say the aimer wasn't in the nose and thought he was goofing off in the radio room, but no - he couldn't be found. Ryan told Bob that since he had studied enough bombardiering to set up the Norden bomb sight, and they would give it a go. Bob set in all the figures such as temperature, wind drift, altitude and intervelometer setting, and proceeded on target. When the first bomb released, Bob was so excited that he rushed back to the drift meter to follow the bomb down to target, he forgot! They were not on a combat mission and four of the five practice bombs fell on England. No one reported a house or farm was hit, so in several more days Bob was able to breathe again.

Some dumb jerk at Bomber Command decided to discipline the flying officers by doing close order drills each morning for one hour. Imagine all this training to be combat crewmen and you were out marching around in the mud like a bunch of raw recruits. When Tooy Spaatz learned of this he must have cut the joker's heart out, because drill ended abruptly.

FCO Carlile Recalls The 'Panic Room'

Bill Carlile washed out pilot training, but made it through British Flying Control school because he could master "The Panic Room". This description of the experience lets you know that this exercise really tested him as to how he had absorbed his experience at Watchfield, near Salisbury, one of two British FCO training schools.

For the practical end of the flying control course, our school had a mock-up control tower. Inside were all the things you would find in a real tower; radios, telephones, lighting panels, etc. This was the time they found out who would stay and who would be shipped out.

It was bugged in such a way our instructors could hear even our most trivial conversations. As all of the students had to take part, somebody was flying control officer, another radio operator, etc. Our total class was broken down into smaller groups and led like sheep into this pressure cooker. I had the dubious honor of being the first FCO in our little group.

When we first entered this tower we were expected to go through all of the preliminary actions as taught in class, that is, check with operations, weather, intelligence, just to get the shift up and running. Then the fun began.

It started slowly with an aircraft calling for landing instructions. The A/C landed and went directly to dispersal, no problem. About that time I began to smell a rat; the RAF didn't put us in that study just to tell an a/c the proper runway to use. Was I right? Just then all hell broke loose.

A major air raid on our airfield began to take place, with complete sound effects. You could hear machine gun fire, bombs bursting, ack ack guns, the whole works. Of course, there were no diversion stations available, and all aircraft calling in were very short of fuel or damaged by enemy action, with all requiring immediate landing. All action was greatly speeded up. That would normally take 10 or 15 minutes such as changing to another runway, putting down an immediate flare path, you might be two minutes.

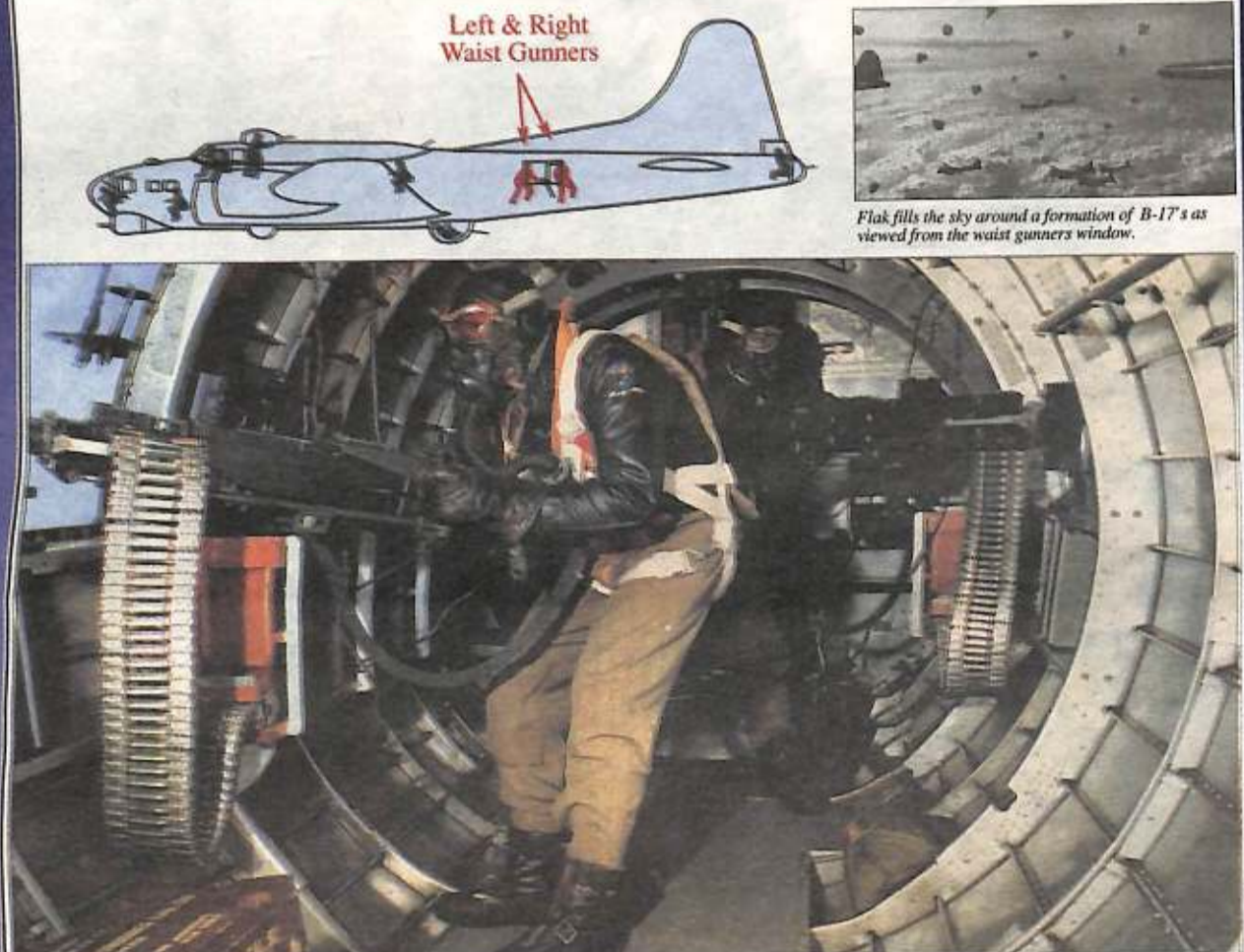
As fast as you took corrective action the enemy would bomb whatever you did. This was a no-win situation for the students, and it was planned that way. The instructors were more interested in your actions and reactions than in letting you come to a happy solution.

All of this action was not without a bit of comedy. I remember the sergeant out in the caravan calling in and wanting to go to the NAFFI (RAF Red Cross Club) for a cup of tea. That request was denied. Farmer Jones called informing us that he had captured a German pilot and would we please come and get him because it was milking time. A phone call to the Air Police solved this problem.

We were really worked over in this mock up tower. Finally, when they knew we were getting 'beat', a huge explosion and crash was heard. Then, silence. Three RAF officers appeared, told us we had suffered a direct hit and were all dead. Then followed a thirty minute critique on how we had handled all of the situations, right or wrong.

We lived through Panic Room and then it was back to classrooms as they

Waist Gunners



Flak fills the sky around a formation of B-17's as viewed from the waist gunners window.

Waist gunners protected the lateral areas of the Fortress and were least protected standing at their weapons.

The waist windows of the Fortress provided excellent defense stations; however, great skill or good luck was required to obtain strikes on an enemy fighter hurtling past. The waist guns were an important defensive feature of the B-17 formations, combining the open lateral areas with a gauntlet of massed firepower.

The waist gunners had flak helmets, flak suits and an armor plate contoured to the curve of the fuselage below the windows as their only protection from the flak and bullets. Standing at their guns, their bodies filled a larger target area than was the case for the rest of the crew, who were sitting or kneeling. B-17's carried two waist gunners; each

protected his respective side of the aircraft. Waist gunners incurred the largest



An early fortress without the plexiglas covering the waist windows, behind which the gunners stood.

number of casualties of all the Fortress crew positions. Early waist gunner positions were directly across from each other, often causing the gunners to bump into one another and getting entangled in each other's oxygen lines. Later, the positions were staggered, giving the gunners greater mobility. On early B-17's, waist window coverings were on slide rails and had to be opened before combat so the guns could be swung out from their stowed positions. Improvements introduced on the B-17G mounted the guns to the inner frame of the windows and were enclosed with a permanent plexiglas covering, which meant the gunners didn't have to stand in the freezing slipstream, as in earlier models.

tried to teach aerial navigation, and classroom work in Weather. There followed an oral review before two RAF and one USAAF officers.

Once school was over and I moved into the Tower at Thurleigh, I found it interesting to work with pilots and navi-

gators, hopefully, assisting everyone to have safer take off and landing experiences.

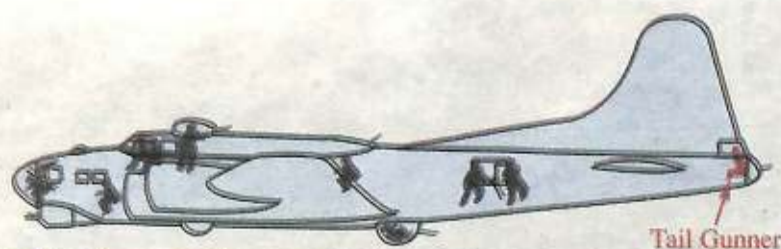
Bill Carlile joined the 306th in early 1944 and having been prepared as a flight control officer by the RAF he took up his duties there. Our tower was

manned around the clock, so it took a sizeable staff to handle this part of our combat venture. He left the 306th in Oct 45. Bill retired as a financial analyst for The Baltimore and Ohio RR in Aug 1980 and since that time has made his home in Baltimore.

Thurleigh's control tower



Tail Gunner



Tail Gunner



The last B-17 in the formation, known as "Tail End Charlie", as viewed by the tail gunner, was often the first aircraft to be attacked by enemy fighters.



Tail gunners inflicted the most severe damage on an attacker closing from behind.

The tail guns of the Fortress were the most important defensive weapons of the bomber. These gunners inflicted severe damage on attacking fighters from the rear. The tail gunner was well aware that the first objective of the attacking pilot was to eliminate him and his weapon.

The tail guns on the Fortress made their first appearance on the B-17E. Early Fortress models had no defensive armament in this area and enemy fighter pilots found the aircraft to be very vulnerable. Later, on the B-17G, the tail gun area was modified to what became known as the "Cheyenne" turret, which had a better angle of fire and increased visibility.

The gunners in the rear of the airplane would assemble in the radio room for take-off and once the aircraft was airborne, they would take their combat positions. The tail gunner would take his parachute and crawl around the tail wheel. Once seated, he would plug in his heated flying suit, oxygen and intercom. The gunner took a kneeling position with his knees resting on padded supports and his legs doubled back.

The original gun emplacements were aimed by hand through a ring and bead sight outside, in front of the gunner's window, and linked directly to the movement of the guns. The "Cheyenne" turret on the B-17G's provided a wider angle of fire and was equipped with an improved reflector sight. An emergency escape door just below the horizontal stabilizer could be used by the tail gunner if he needed to bail out of his disabled Fortress.



Tail guns on a B-17F.

George Will's Report On Aerial Targeting

In 2003 George Will's Newsweek column was headed "The Hour of Air Power", and presented some historical comments on an activity in which we exhibited some expertise, and like everyone else in the 1942-45 era also had some horrible errors.

In 1911 the Italians began to experiment with bombing, to little avail. An August 1941 British report commented "of those aircraft attacking their targets, only one in three got within five miles. Over the French ports the proportion was two in three; over Germany as a whole...one in four; over the Ruhr (Britain's principal target area) it was only one in 10."

Under the best conditions- daylight, only anti-aircraft fire (no fighter planes attacking bombers), bombers equipped with the Norden bombsight- only 70 out of 500 landed within 1,000 feet of the target. And 500 bombs might mean 100 B-17s each carrying five 500-pound bombs. Under bad conditions, one of 500 bombs would get within 1,000 feet. Today, if you want to make a real study of 306th bombing results, you will want to start with a copy of Charles Westgate's study, *The Reich Wreckers*, which is mentioned on page 5.

Westgate has an extensive chart showing all of our missions, with pertinent details, and in this next to last column he cites "Bomb Results", rating them from poor to excellent. The first "good" rating goes to the 18 Nov 42 raid to La Pallice, France, in which 13 A/C reached the target. We lost one plane and claimed two enemy A/C. Our first "Excellent" appeared when 25 planes bombed V-weapons in Northeast France.

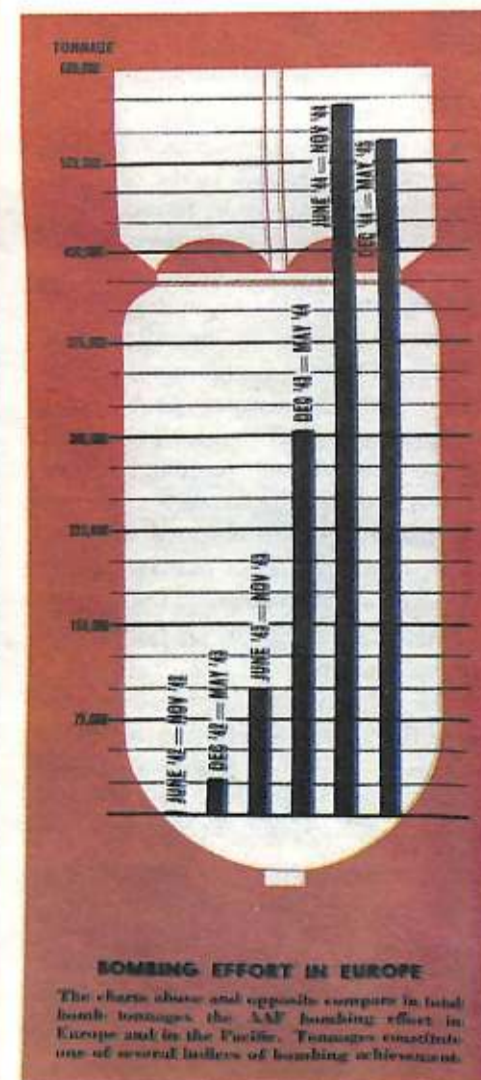
As time went on, and we flew more missions, fighter opposition lessened, and with electronic/radar bombing methods, the "Excellent" rating increased, but there is a notable decrease in ratings for bombing due in large part to bad weather that precluded photography of the targets.

We did improve and we did get more bombs on target. We just wanted more!

Table 4: 306th Bomb Group Monthly Summary

	# of Missions	% Not Effective	# A/C Not Eff	% Effective Sorties	# A/C Eff	Ave # Claims per Mission	# E/A Claims per Month	% Losses	# Loss	# A/C Damage
Oct-42	1	0.17	4	0.83	20	10.00	10	5.00	1	19
Nov-42	11	0.40	67	0.60	102	4.36	48	9.80	10	13
Dec-42	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0.00	0	0
Jan-43	4	0.12	8	0.88	59	0.50	2	6.78	4	1
Feb-43	6	0.41	45	0.59	64	1.50	9	3.13	2	0
Mar-43	9	0.24	43	0.76	134	2.22	20	2.99	4	1
Apr-43	4	0.15	14	0.85	82	5.75	23	17.07	14	0
May-43	8	0.11	20	0.89	165	8.00	64	4.85	8	1
Jun-43	7	0.33	36	0.67	74	3.00	21	4.05	3	0
Jul-43	8	0.31	58	0.69	130	4.88	39	6.92	9	17
Aug-43	8	0.20	32	0.80	132	2.25	18	0.76	1	35
Sep-43	8	0.07	10	0.93	131	0.50	4	1.53	2	31
Oct-43	7	0.15	19	0.85	105	3.71	26	13.33	14	20
Nov-43	5	0.12	12	0.88	91	0.00	0	6.59	6	0
Dec-43	10	0.16	36	0.84	189	0.70	7	2.65	5	29
Jan-44	8	0.20	51	0.80	209	3.13	25	3.35	7	12
Feb-44	12	0.30	100	0.70	233	1.00	12	7.73	18	95
Mar-44	16	0.27	112	0.73	309	0.19	3	1.94	6	52
Apr-44	14	0.14	43	0.86	260	0.14	2	5.00	13	46
May-44	20	0.24	113	0.76	355	0.10	2	2.25	8	17
Jun-44	21	0.22	177	0.78	630	0.05	1	0.79	5	64
Jul-44	19	0.12	72	0.88	531	0.00	0	0.75	4	18
Aug-44	17	0.10	64	0.90	563	0.00	0	0.71	4	10
Sep-44	14	0.04	18	0.96	446	0.07	1	2.47	11	0
Oct-44	14	0.05	23	0.95	455	0.00	0	0.88	4	35
Nov-44	11	0.08	36	0.92	401	0.00	0	0.50	2	19
Dec-44	12	0.04	18	0.96	447	0.00	0	1.57	7	33
Jan-45	15	0.07	38	0.93	524	0.00	0	0.38	2	90
Feb-45	16	0.03	18	0.97	579	0.06	1	0.86	5	68
Mar-45	21	0.00	0	1.00	774	0.05	1	0.00	0	78
Apr-45	15	0.01	6	0.99	561	0.00	0	0.18	1	22
TOTALS	341	0.13	1293	0.87	8755	0.99	339	2.06	180	826

Source: Monthly War Diary, GP-306-HI, in USAF Collection, AFHRA, Oct 42-Apr 45



The chart above and opposite compares in total bomb tonnage theAAF bombing effort in Europe and in the Pacific. Tonnage constitutes one of several indices of bombing achievement.



The windsock flowing in the breeze is on the property of Hugh Phelan on his Donaldson, AR home. If someone tries to make a landing there to check things out we hope no cows will be obstructing the "runway". The cows belong to a nearby farmer who leases it for grazing.

Mardis on Slow Trip to Combat

A 306 Hometown Story

When S/Sgt Paul Mardis, a ball turret gunner from St. Louis, MO, extends his thumb for a ride, he points up instead of forward. Ace among aerial hitchhikers, the sergeant found need of his *unusual persuasive powers*.

Leaving the States with his crew (Toy Husband, pilot) in their Fortress, he got as far as the second stop at Natal, Brazil. Here Sgt. Mardis contracted a sore throat and was immediately hospitalized. The plane had to leave without him, and so he was instructed to catch up with his crew as best he could.

Nine days later he was hanging around the operations room at the nearest Pan American Airways station. He finally jumped on a C-47 and got as far as Dakar. It took him two days to find a ride to Marrakesh, French Morocco.

His orders read that his crew was finally destined for Oran. A ride was leaving for Oran the next morning, so he arranged to go along, and started off for an evening's sightseeing. When the time came to get back to the base, no transportation was to be found. His frantic questions to the natives resulted in delighted giggles or blank stares. Sign language didn't help, so, in desperation, he started walking. Walking all the way, he arrived to find the plane with all his clothes, parachute, orders, paybook and equipment had left an hour previously. In the midst of this exceedingly embarrassing situation, he found that his crew had had their orders changed, and were headed for England. A few days later he managed a ride to England and Thurleigh on a B-17 where he joyfully rejoined his crew.

The only ones who resented his unofficial flights were the Luftwaffe. In 10 missions Mardis had one destroyed and one probable.

The sergeant's thumbs no longer point upward. Now they point forwards, as do the twin fifties in his ball turret.

(Editor's note: 306th records show that Toy Husband's crew checked in at Thurleigh 23 Apr 1943, and that Mardis arrived 30 Apr.)



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