

4450 South Park Avenue, Apt. 1408  
Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815  
October 16, 1985

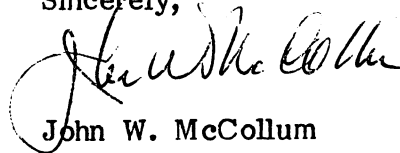
Mr. Russell Strong  
2041 Hillside Avenue  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Dear Russell:

Here is the review of Jarrell's letters. As I got into the book, I realized that the letters were mostly a poet talking to other poets. So, what I tried to do was introduce some of his poems about World War II which are of interest to 306ers without straying too far from the book at hand.

I hope you find it useful; if you want it changed, please let me know and, of course, chop the piece up in any way you wish.

Sincerely,



John W. McCollum

Enclosure

Russell, as I recall you asked for a bio sketch. Will this do:  
McCollum was the engineer on Delapoer's crew in the 423rd Sqn. Following the war he studied economics and sociology and taught for several years at the University of Chicago. He has lectured (not in poetry) at a number of universities and is now President of SERD Inc., an international social science consulting firm with headquarters in Washington, D.C. He lives in Chevy Chase, MD.



NEW LIGHT ON THE POET OF OUR AIR WAR:  
THE LETTERS OF RANDELL JARRELL

by

JOHN W. MCCOLLUM

"Shorten your tour  
with a trip to the Ruhr."

These lines were burned with a candle by some 306er into the ceiling of a hut somewhere on the base at Thurleigh.

This exacting little doggerel, which said so much in so few words about flying missions in World War II, was the kind of stuff Randall Jarrell would have used as a starter for a poem. Jarrell was, and is, the American war poet of World War II. He published more than 50 war poems, most of them about the air war and many about bombers and the fliers who flew them. Primarily (in my eyes) a poet, he was also a powerful novelist and a distinguished literary critic. As a poet, he is among the top eight or ten in this country. He had that special talent we took for granted in Ernie Pyle and Bill Mauldin of being able to say, without hysteria, exaggeration or nonsense, exactly what should be said about the war in ways that gave meaning to the day-to-day experiences of soldiers. Jarrell did it with poetry, Pyle with prose and Mauldin with cartoons. For example, the title of one of Jarrell's collections was "Little Friend,

Little Friend."<sup>1/</sup> Here, with clarity and the same flat economy of words which characterized Pyle, Mauldin and the 306th "poet" quoted above, Jarrell showed a remarkable ability to pluck out of human crises the confident dependency and empathy fliers had for one another—in this case, a bomber in distress calling in a fighter and the fighter pilot's description:

. . . Then I heard the bomber call me in:  
'Little Friend, Little Friend, I got two  
engines on fire. Can you see me, Little  
Friend'?

I said, I'm crossing right over you.  
Let's go home.<sup>2/</sup>

Jarrell washed out as a cadet in the Air Force and served from 1942 to early 1946, at second Air Force bases. Though never overseas, he was able to convey the experiences and feelings of those on the way, those who came back and those who did not come back. If you are still with that young lady who visited you during training and who followed you from base to base and finally returned home when you went "ORD," sit down with her and read "Good-bye Wendover, Good-Bye Mountain Home. . . ." Do you remember the anxieties, the joy, the fears and feelings of achievement?

Wives on day coaches traveling with a baby  
from one room outside Lowrie to a room near Kearns.  
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Going home, going somewhere from a room near Kearns  
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We now have Randall Jarrell's letters written to his wife, friends and fellow poets from 1937 to his death in 1965.<sup>4/</sup> About one-third were written during the war.

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The letters give us glimpses of how he came to produce some of his poetry and of the experiences which shaped his views of the army and the war. In his poems, he sees fliers as forever young, not well-informed, innocent, and decent fellows doing what they were supposed to do in ways as efficient as their capacities permitted. To him, they were not particularly aware of the enormity or the significance of the war:

. . . it's the way I judge. Including German prisoners and former air-crew members, pilots, navigators, etc. I've met thousands of people who've killed great quantities of other people and had great quantities of their companions killed; and there's not one out of a hundred who knows enough about it to kill a fly or be stung by a fly. Talking about a slaughter of the innocents! And those are the soldiers, not the civilians.<sup>5/</sup>

From the days of Homer, war poetry has been, by and large, about heroic—brave soldiers marching off or coming home victorious in noble causes. This poetic glorification of war finally stopped in the horrible gas-infected trenches of World War I. War was no longer the most noble and highest calling of man. The British poet, Siegfried Sassoon, a World War I infantryman, saw soldiers as dreamers and victims:

. . . when the guns began  
they think of firelit homes, clean beds and wives  
I see them in foul dugouts, gnawed by rats  
And in the ruined trenches, lashed with rain.  
Dreaming of things they did with balls and bats,  
and marked by hopeless longing to regain  
Bank holidays and picture shows, and sports,  
And going to the office in the train.<sup>6/</sup>

World War II poetry continued in this vein. James Tate, whose father was a pilot killed in action, stressed the absurdity of war. In the "Lost Pilot," Tate recalls his father not as a hero, but off somewhere in a never ending orbit with whom he can never establish contact and:

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to tell me that you are doing  
well, or that it was a mistake.<sup>7/</sup>

Jarrell, like Sassoon and Tate, did not see war or soldiers as heroic. To Jarrell, soldiers and fliers were doing their jobs: ". . . in bombers named for girls, we burned the cities we had learned about in school." In his poem, "Eighth Air Force," they played with puppies and like Sassoon's World War I soldiers dreamed of going home:

Three of them play Pitch, one sleeps and one lies  
counting missions, lies there sweating  
Til even his heart beats: One; One; One.  
O murderers! . . . Still this is how it's done.<sup>8/</sup>

And when they got home:

. . . The man  
Puts down his razor, leans to the window,  
And looks out into the pattern of the field,  
Of light and darkness. His throat tightens,  
His lips stretch into a blinded smile.  
He thinks, The times I've dreamed that I was back. . . .  
The hairs on the back of his neck stand up straight.

He only yawns, and finishes shaving.  
When the gunner asks him, 'When you leaving?'  
He says: 'I just got in. This is my field.'  
And thinks: I'm back for good. The States, the States!  
He puts out his hand to touch it—  
And the thing about it is, it's real.<sup>9/</sup>

They were unceremoniously killed in training accidents or on missions by flak and fighters. When they finished their missions they came back to the States as "permanent party" quietly thinking "this is my field." When they died, as ". . . the fighters rolled into the tracers like rabbits," their wives burned their letters.

At Chanute Field, Jarrell became a Link Trainer instructor and upon completion of training was notified that Link instructors were no longer needed. He then got into the celestial navigation program and became a CNT operator. He shipped out—meandered

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about the country—Salt Lake, Los Angeles and finally ended up at Davis-Monthan field in Tucson. The army did not get in the way of his poetry:

I had a wonderful, pleasant day yesterday. . . . They sent me to the laundry room where I might have found some laundry lists to type. There in an enormous dark room, a big coal stove in the middle, I found two privates surrounded by old newspapers: one was reading papers, the other writing home to his mother. The sargent was gone but they gave a glowing tribute to him: he never made them do a thing. There were tremendous piles of dirty sheets and pillows behind a tremendous pile of cardboard boxes: I went down there, lay down and fell asleep. When I awoke at three, the sargent had returned but hadn't waked me—apparently he was used to strangers coming in and going to sleep in the pile of sheets.<sup>10/</sup>

His wife notes that "Jarrell regularly wrote poems there."

Jarrell empathized with those who fought in the air. To him, they were harrassed by the brass and regulations. He wrote of a pilot named Northrup from the 19th Bomb Group. According to Jarrell, Northrup had:

the Distinguished Service Cross, The Silver Star, The Air Medal, The Purple Heart, several citations and something else, I forget. He said he wore them once or twice when he was first in this country but it got him into so much trouble he stopped.

The MP's at the gate used to ask Northrup for his "authorization to wear the medals." which then necessitated he go back to the squadron to get the authorization and then take it to the MPs. As a result of this, Northrup quit wearing his medals.<sup>11/</sup>

Jarrell never liked life in the army:

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. . . It is like being in an orphan asylum in a Dickens story, or in an old-fashioned inefficient jail—in some ways. I sleep in a double-deck bed with a cowboy from Texas, a nice boy who never finished the third grade, just below me; if I stretch out my left hand I can touch a small dark pleasant Italian, about five feet high; with my right hand I can touch somebody who came from I don't know where, but he's just been here two weeks while his wife had a baby boy. I have to drill, or do calisthenics, or stand in line, or go to classes at my school, or fly in the Link Trainers, or eat meals in the mess hall, all the time from 5:30 in the morning till 7 at night; in the evenings I mostly write poetry. . . .<sup>12/</sup>

In his letters he talks about being the "Chief operator of an enormous washing machine full of clanks and steam," called the 'Clipper'," of getting into an argument with an overbearing corporal, about manipulating the army system, of talking his way out of becoming a second air force historian, about being required to wear a woolen uniform on a hot day, and about the terrible army humor:

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He even wrote a poem about the dogs at Sheppard Field which has never been found. He describes the dogs:

There are seven or eight . . . who go on our longest walks and cover about twenty miles to our eight, running round and round the columns. And when we do calisthenics from the (you'll love this) 'sitting position of attention,' they often sit by us and look gravely into our faces.<sup>14/</sup>

I had hoped that Jarrell's letters contained more on what motivated him to write his war poems. Nevertheless, for several reasons, it is good to read them. First, he reminds us of things and events we may have forgotten. Often when we look back on our Army days, we look with the eyes of nostalgia for a time when what we were doing was supposed to be very important, for excitement, youth and the fact that we survived. We forget that much was pure terror, tedium or just plain nonsense; sometimes

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Second, though he says very little of why he wrote his war poems, I think it would have been more surprising had he not written them. The irony that permeates them is not without sympathy, neither is it without wonderment at man's folly. Jarrell was on one level, a realist driven by a superior intellect, but on another, a child-like innocent who sees men's lives in the simple ways we all see them as children—that is, in very concrete yes and no terms. That is evident in his letters as well as in his poetry and essays.

He was a keen observer of his environment. He was obviously sympathetic to the young men whose fates he, as an instructor, was helping to determine. He could not be divorced from their experiences. Boredom was his enemy in the military; in self defense, he had to become involved in the lives of these young men. His poetry reflects some of the despair of having people spend their lives in such idiotic ways.

Jarrell's war poetry is the best that came out of World War II, and, as I noted, much of it is about bombers. While a great deal of poetry is written for other poets and is not comprehensible to the average person, Jarrell's poems such as "Second Air Force," "Eighth Air Force," "The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner," "Siegfried," etc., do exactly what poetry should do—heighten our appreciation of the world, stir our souls, and develop levels of understanding not possible in other ways. In the case of Jarrell's war poems, they help us put into perspective what really happened to us during the war.

One more example of the imagery, picture in the mind if you will, the passions and feelings Jarrell was able to produce is found in "Losses" which is about death and dying. Death to him is (or was) routine, it first occurred as accidents on training missions then as we:



. . . turned into replacements and woke up  
One morning, over England operational.  
It wasn't different: but if we died  
It was not an accident but a mistake.

Then missions were flown. . . .  
"Till our lives wore out; our bodies lay among  
The people we had killed and never seen."<sup>15/</sup>

Shortly after he went into the army he said in one of his letters that  
". . . if I ever have the time, I can write some good, dreary poems about the army; but  
they won't be printable while I'm in the army and they won't be liked by anybody until  
the '20's' (AD 2020)—when they return."

He, of course, was wrong on both scores, but I can't help but wonder what we  
would be reading now if the Air Force had kept Clark Gable home making training  
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He might have written another good poem starting with, "Shorten your tour."

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~~MAY 9 1985~~  
SERD Inc.

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SERDINC

May 3, 1985

Mr. Russell Strong, Editor  
306th., Echoes  
2041 Hillside  
Kalamazo, MI

Dear Russell:

I am one of the "newly found 306ers" -- listed in the February edition of the Echoes. All these years I never realized that a 306 organization existed nor that a publication such as yours has been around for so long. And I am so taken with what you are doing that I am doing something that I was told never to do in the army: volunteer my services.

I have been somewhat interested in war poetry and literature over the years and wonder if you would be interested in a piece about Randall Jarrell. Are you familiar with his poetry? He (now deceased) was in the air force during world war II, in training command, I think. He is probably the most well known world war II poet. He wrote 8 or 10 poems which include; Eighth Air Force, The Death of the Ball Turret Gunner, Good by Wendover, Hello Mountain Home and others.

A new book about him has just been published ( Randall Jarrell's An Autobiographical and Literary Selection, Ed., Mary Jarrell, Houghton Mifflin).

I understand some of the material in the book contains excerpts from letters he wrote his wife during the war. What I propose to do, is not a think piece, but a description of how he reported his air force experience to his wife, what he said about the poems (noted above) he was then writing and then briefly discuss and analyze his air force poems. I think the artice would be 1,000 to 2,000 words, but could be longer or shorter. And of course, you would be under no obligation to accept the piece, in the event it did not meet your high standards.

In the event you are interested I will appreciate a letter from you asking me to review the book. This will enable me to get a review copy.

Thanks, and I enjoy your paper very much.

Sincerely,

John W. McCollum

15 June 1985

Mr. John W. McCollum, President  
SERD, Inc.  
Suite 601  
5225 Wisconsin Av, NW  
Washington, DC 20015-2063

Dear John:

Because I believe that readers of 306th Echoes would find the work of Randall Jarrell provocative and interesting, would you please arrange to review the new book, An Autobiographical and Literary Selection, Mary Jarrell (ed).

I can use something in the neighborhood of 2000 words.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong  
Editor

3 June 1985

Mr. John W. McCollum  
SERO, Inc.  
Suite 601  
5225 Wisconsin Av., NW  
Washington, DC 20015-2063

Dear John:

Thanks for your kind offer. I accept all such offers, for that means I don't have to concoct something to fill the space.

I see no reason we shouldn't run something like that. It won't appeal to everyone, but we have a pretty literate readership and I am sure that many will find it of interest.

I'll go for the 2,000 words, if you can handle it. And, we ought to have some information about you to put your credentials for creating such a piece in perspective.

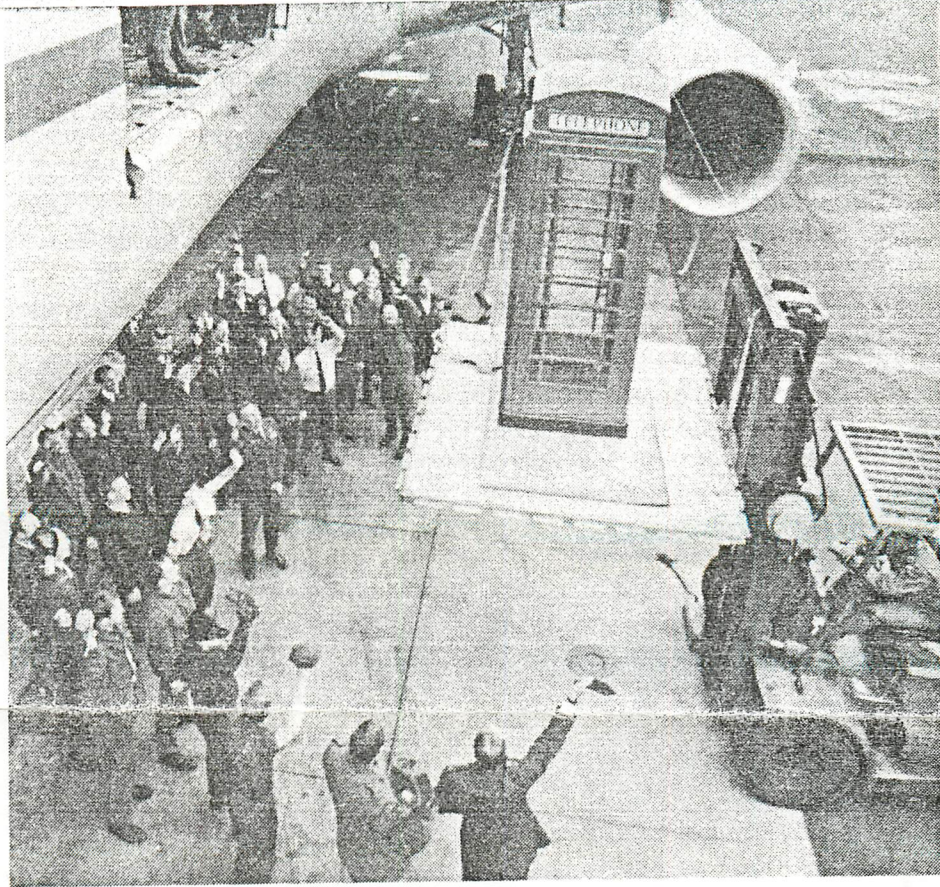
While I am acquainted to a slight degree with Randall Jarrell, my taste in poetry goes back to 19th century and before, rather than much of the modern material. I guess about as recent as I got in such things in college was a course in Robert Browning, which I enjoyed immensely and even now many years later I'll still take down a volume of Browning occasionally for some pleasurable reading.

A review of Randall Jarrell's An Autobiographical and Literary Selection would offer our readership a nice diversion, and I am sure would be welcome reading by many.

Thanks for the suggestion, and I look forward to receiving the review.

Sincerely yours,

Russell A. Strong  
Editor  
306th Echoes



## More Issues of 'Echoes'

Here's my help for future issues of Echoes!

I enclose \$ 35 to support the production and mailing of the 306th Echoes. I also want to support continuing reunion activities for those who once served.

Name JOHN W. M. COLLINS

Address #1408 - 4450 SO PARK, CHEVY CHASE

Mail to: Wm. M. Collins, Jr.  
2973 Heatherbrae Drive  
Poland, OH 44514

MD 20815

Dear Mr. Collins - Thanks ever so much for sending me a copy of the 306<sup>th</sup> ECHOES. I didn't know a 306 group existed or that a newsletter was being published!! As a result of the copy you sent I've been in touch with 2 of my former crew & will soon contact another 2 all of whom were listed in the issue you sent.

Thank you; if you can send me any back issues I'll be most grateful.

John W. Collins  
4/6/85

will gesture by  
306th Historical  
the 8th Army Air  
Fred Lamin  
presented the  
Thurleigh earlier  
wave it farewell  
on its final leg to  
As for Joe,  
time.

Now retired  
civilian employe  
and his wife is B  
Says Peggy  
think I was the o  
the end, and we  
the romance," sa

## 'ECHOES' Of Serv

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Development,  
Inc.



April 16, 1986

Dear Rus ...

Many thanks for the fine job you did on the Jarrell review. I've had several nice comments about the piece, and not all from friends. One fellow called and said he always knew our crew had class -- did he get that from your cut line (is that the term?) under the photo on page 1?

Anyway, I'm sending a check, not as a payoff, but because I think you put together a good newspaper.

I think I got the first issue about a year ago; if you have any back issues laying around, I'd love to have them.

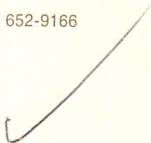
Think you might be interested in an article on WW II fiction (air war Europe stuff)?

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'John'.

John McCollum

*Would you have 6 or so copies of the Jarrell issue?*

MC COLLUM



 April 12, 1985

Bill Collum -

Here's my \$5.00 for the  
 directory. Thanks. Also, thank for  
 the back issue of the 306 Echoes.  
 you should have received by now  
 my \$35.00 check for all the trips you've  
 sent. I'm very grateful.

Here's another name for your

best

NEW

RALPH TERRELL (423)

7016 - 43rd Ave N.

Minneapolis, Minnesota 55428

Joe W. McCollum

25 April 1987

Dear John:

Everything you asked for will be shipped by Monday. The book went off Friday, so you should be receiving everything during the week of the 27th.

The attached list consists of seventeen names. While I have not seen all of these people, I have had contacts which would lead me to believe that they might well be good subjects for interviews. Also, I do not know that all of them will be at the reunion, or not. That only time will tell.

Those I have checked have already indicated that they will be there, so that may be the group you will want to concentrate on. And, the July issue of Echoes will have a much longer list of registrants.

Keep in touch and I will be of any assistance that I can.

Sincerely yours,

Names Sent:

LChasse  
Ryan  
Cheney  
Strong  
Reg Robinson  
Bill Butler  
Joe Consolmagno  
John Corcoran  
George Economos  
Thurman Shuller  
Wes Gunkel  
Doug Bowles  
Les Kearney  
Mack McKay  
Irv Mills  
Ed Pipp  
John Regan



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May 1, 1987

Mr. Russell N. Strong  
2041 Hillsdale  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Dear Russell:

Here is the long promised review of Paper Doll. Have  
you reach Those Who Fall?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'J.W. McCollum'. The signature is fluid and cursive, written over the typed name.

John W. McCollum, Ph.D.  
President

JWM/bts

Enclosure

## **PAPER DOLL: THE STORY OF A B-17 CREW IN THE 8TH AIR FORCE**

By: John W. McCollum

A good book should pick you up and set you down in another time and place. Jim Shepard's Paper Doll (Alford A. Knoph, New York, NY, \$15.95) does just that. He puts you right in the middle of an 8th Air Force B-17 crew. This is the first air war novel I know of which does that. He starts with the crew forming up in Florida, follows them to England and finally on their missions over the continent.

In introducing us to Paper Doll's crew, more correctly to five or six of them, Shepard breaks through the crust of conventional pictures of war. Crew members are not a carefree, swashbuckling lot, proudly and confidently flying off to war nor are they always pleasant and agreeable fellows. They are immature, a bit boorish; they worry about the effectiveness of their training and grumble about each other. After a take-off collision involving two of the group's bombers and loss of both crews and a series of scrubbed missions, they become hostile, depressed and quarrelsome:

Morale for those five days hit some sort of all-time low. . . . Hirsch kept to himself. . . . Bean continued to annoy them and now seemed distracted and morose. . . . Lewis seemed to want nothing to do with any of them, Piacenti wrote long letters home he then destroyed, and Snowberry sat with his journal, rereading more than writing. They flew practice missions and sat through training sessions sullenly. . . .

"You should stop riding everyone, Lewis," Bryant said. "We're doing all right." But he was depressed and wasn't sure he believed it.

"You guys," Lewis said, "got the best substitute for nerve. Stupidity." About the copilot, he said. "Know how he got ready for this? Pulling trailers around Arizona. . . ."

Shepard's crew is young and naive (they are essentially boys)—". . . you gremlins don't even shave, . . ." notes one, who points out that another crew named its bomber "Baby Train." They have a party for the children in the village and play the same games they played in the states a year or so before. They spend a great deal of time

reminiscing about life before the war—school, fishing, their parents, as if their pre-war experience is somehow relevant to or makes the war easier to bear. They are inept in dealing with the British girls who are far more sophisticated. They drink too much and are belligerent in the pubs. They engage in games among themselves, most of which end up in contentious bickering. They know little about the grand design and purpose of the war; what they do know is not helpful:

"We're fighting because of what they've done to Europe," Bryant said, a little shocked despite himself. "What they've done to everybody."

"That's good to know," Lewis said. "It doesn't help me shoot any straighter. It sure as shit hasn't helped you."

And they don't get much help from the brass:

And after a briefing, the CO said; "Good luck. . . Remember what's at stake." "What?" someone asked.

When missions are scrubbed, crew members are hostile toward each other, relieved and bored. And they do what youth have done for ages under such circumstances: they get into trouble. In aircraft recognition classes, organized while waiting for good weather, they cover up their inability to recognize German fighters by wisecracking. When the instructor flashes an Me-109 on the screen and asks, "Any ideas," the answer comes back, "Gene Tierney."

They take their frustrations out on each other and on the ground crews. Aboard the aircraft waiting for a mission to be scrubbed, a jeep drove up, ". . . and a voice . . . called out a 15 minute delay. Do you register pilot?"

"Chew my thing . . . Gabriel called from the cockpit."

They are inexperienced; on their first mission the navigator mistakes flak for clouds:

"It'll be easier over the target . . . without these little clouds."

"Little clouds, my butt," Gabriel cried. "That's flak, you idiot."

But somehow or other, in the air they click as a crew.

He spun to face front and angled the guns up to catch an echelon of four fighters coming down across and through the flight, their wings winking light even at that distance. They began taking on features instantaneously and he could see colors, insignia, letters, radio masts, yellow noses, then they flashed past—Me-109's, he understood. He turned the turret again, his gloves light on the controls, and a fighter leaped at him like an apparition, impossibly close, shocking him immobile, and was gone.

The air burst right before them, it seemed, just above Hirsch and Eddy in the nose, and he could see red fire within the black cauliflower shape and the air jarred like water in a bowl. The shrapnel rang over the plane like someone hitting it with steel pipes. . . .

Another echelon came through, and everyone fired forward, Snowberry's and Eddy's and his own tracers braiding and coiling out toward the fighters, and he raced the turret around firing as they roared past in an attempt to track them.

He swept the turret the opposite way, feeling overloaded, overwhelmed. On the interphone Cooper called out bandits reforming ahead, Piacenti tracked one for Lewis, Ball was yelling something. Snowberry said, "My parents'll kill me. I get killed now, my parents'll kill me."

The book closes with a description as authentic and gripping as you will find of the first Schweinfurt raid with all the confusion, ineptness, courage, and carnage.

Why was the aircraft called "Paper Doll?" There was a Paper Doll in the 306th Bomb Group, but in a discussion with the author, it did not appear he was aware of this, so it is not likely he had the 306th in mind. There is the slightest of hints that the name was selected because the B-17 was more a "paper doll" than a "flying fortress." We all know now that the airplane was not up to deep unescorted missions over Germany and that daylight "precision" bombing was only slightly more "precise" than RAF night-time bombing.

One small issue needs to be set aside. We all have the capacity to remember selectively and in strange ways. One's recollections of events and things are peculiar;

we may never forget the size, shape and color of a shoulder patch, for example, but may have only the vaguest recollection of how we felt and behaved after the death of a friend. Shepard's book has its share of "shoulder patch mistakes," which we should not let get in the way. He calls the British "brits" (a term much more kind than the one we used). To Shepard, a crew member who signs on to a second tour "reenlists." He has a tail gunner and a bombardier taking off on combat missions from combat positions. He gives the flight engineer an instrument panel. And he has the temerity to create a sergeant gunner more intelligent than a 2nd Lieutenant! However, these minor issues should not impede the reader's ability to relate to the war through the eyes and actions of this crew.

Where would one put this book among war novels? Among the best, I think. It is laced with the realism of such novels as Piece of Cake (which depicts the disintegration of pilots in an RAF fighter squadron) and The Naked and the Dead, which does the same for the infantry. Paper Doll's crew behave as war shapes soldiers to behave: they are not moved by noble causes, and gallantry, but by the absurdities, horrors and vulgarities of war. Most air war books with which I am familiar are based on unrealistic and fallacious views of war. They do not depict real people in real situations. To honestly and accurately describe how war shapes soldiers (even if you have a clean bed to sleep in at night), it is fear, tension, stress, and brutality that are the modes of behavior—not nobility, honesty, and daring.

Finally, this is the sort of book that should be read 20 years from now to depict a small slice of what the 8th Air Force was really like. Ask your librarian to order the book and go out now and buy a copy and it may still be around in 20 years for future generations to read, understand and relate to our war.

John A. McCallum  
apt. 1408

ADD:

4450 S. Park Ave.

423

Cherry Chase, Md.  
20815

He last his copy of the  
Chase, would like another  
one plus any recent copies  
you have.

He inquired about cost.  
I explained he could donate  
anything he wanted to.  
He wanted me to tell him how  
much to send.

I gave him a choice 5.- 10.- 50  
He said, he would send 50.00!

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June 30, 1987

Rus ...

Here's the check for the book. Thanks for sending it; I'm in the process of reading it -- very good job.

How about doing an oral history, somewhat along the lines of Studs Terkel's recent book (can't remember the name) about WW II.

The TV affair is moving along, but slowly: these TV types seem to plan a day or two ahead of their shows. I'll keep you posted.

The best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'John W. McCollum'. The signature is fluid and cursive.

John W. McCollum

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November 30, 1987

Mr. Russell A. Strong  
Editor, 306th ECHOES  
2041 Hillsdale  
Kalamazoo, MI 49007

Dear Russ:

Please forgive me the long delay in reporting on the whereabouts of the video tape you so kindly loaned me months ago.

The staff person from the local public TV station (that I was working with about putting on a 306 show) misplaced the tape and I had a great deal of difficulty getting him to focus on its whereabouts. Finally, he found it and promises I will have it in a few days. I leave today for an extended trip out of the city and will send it to you upon my return in about 10 day's time.

Both public service TV stations in the area were interested in doing a program and would still be interested. There are these problems. First, I did not have the time to really work with them to the point where an inexpensive but high quality program could be sketched out. Second, I know very little about how to put together a show. Finally, I think they would have been more responsive with a \$1,000 to \$2,000 grant.

I don't think we should consider the idea dead, but someone with more time and experience than I have should pick it up.

I send a draft transcript of a recent presentation before the Maryland Chapter of the 8th Air Force Historical Society. I am not suggesting you publicize this piece in ECHOES--I'm sure you have had enough of Jim Shepard's book by now--but you may want this copy in your files. However, please send your comments.

Meanwhile, before reading it, I lost the last issue of ECHOES and will appreciate an extra copy if one is available.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John W. McCollum".

John W. McCollum

Enclosure



**AN ADDRESS**

By

**JIM SHEPARD, Author\***

of Paper Doll

Introduced by

**Maurice F. X. Donohue**

Maryland Chapter Eighth Air Force Association  
Officers Club, Andrews Air Force Base, Maryland

October 9, 1987

**Maurice F. X. Donohue:**

We are here with a magician tonight.

How does Jim Shepard do it?

He has written a book about us, about you and me, things we could never tell to those we loved or those we admired or those whose respect we wanted, those whom we wanted to understand us; and we could not tell the truth to all these important people because we did not know it.

---

\* Jim Shepard, who teaches English at Williams College, Williamstown, Massachusetts, is the author of Paper Doll (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1986), a novel about a World War II Air Force B-17 crew and their bomber called "Paper Doll". Mr. Shepard was introduced by Maurice F. X. Donohue, a former member of the 359th Fighter Group of the Eighth Air Force.

We did not know the truth about our war, World War II, as it happened to us—the truth in the only way that counts: we had no ability to say it, to tell it with accurate and precise beauty, wholeness, honesty, and compassionate courage in facing and revealing ourselves as we really are and were in the sacred privacy of a deep-seared response to the totality of war.

Jim Shepard's book opens up all this for us. He reveals us to ourselves. He tells us our story, as we—you and I, confronting all the Significant Others in our lives, family, friends, loved ones, strangers-on-a-train, never could.

So, Paper Doll is the product of a magician. How does, how did Jim Shepard do it? We must ask him tonight, to clear up for ourselves why we were so choked and so inarticulate: literally dumb about the great public event in our lives, dumb and inarticulate and no witness-to-the-truth, though some of us talked a lot!

### The Words Were Too Strange

Perhaps that talking-a-lot was part of our trouble. When we came back we found that folks did not really want to know exactly how it was. For us there was too much to explain. For them, the gap in vocabulary was too big. The words were too strange.

Our fault, may be: we became restless and impatient as the gaps in knowledge and feelings opened up. How do you explain a smell? Yet odors, strange or familiar, known or learned, were an important part of the tale we could not tell. The smell of coke in a round-belly barracks stove, perhaps, or burnt oil, or a wet flying suit, the special odor in those strange outdoor urinals at the pubs, or that smell of stale beer or blood.

So we stylized our stories, fitting them to what the audience seemed to be able to handle, or understand, or admire and applaud. Perhaps Jim Shepard's father, a turret gunner in B-25s in the South Pacific, did that, too. Could that have helped this

young man born in another era understand our very different war at 20,000 feet in Northern Europe in that now unbelievable geometry of the "boxes" of B-17s and B-24s?

### The Boxes Will NEVER be Seen Again

Those boxes, invented by the mathematicians in the then-new science of Operational Research—the well-known Boys in the Back Room (the title of a very good book about them)—will never be seen again. Never.

The operational formations of the Eighth Air Force heavy bombers are as lost in history, to history, are as "historic" (and hence, unknown) as the fleets of sailing ships-of-the-line, ponderously tacking to get the windward advantage.

We hear of this nowadays only in the deeply insightful novels of C. S. Forester who invents a Horatio Hornblower for us to think about as a man because we cannot think about him as a tactician and warrior. His techniques are too foreign to us.

As for our stories, the tales we spun or spin, in part, are incorrect as we knew them to be incorrect the day we started telling them, because we prettied them up a little bit here, a little bit there. Maybe at first not to disappoint him or her who listened; then perhaps to make a rhetorical point come off better, a bigger boffo, a more telling punchline, a better surprise twist.

### What HAPPENED to Us Jim Shepard Reminds Us

The underlying event in our own lives, our own story as we told it to ourselves, changed. The event changed because and as our story improved it as a work of art. So soon, I think, we could not discern the real outlines of the event nor how we had really felt about it: our own story got in the way, blurred the outlines. "We came to believe our own lies," as we said of others.

But Jim Shepard refreshes us, our minds, our memories, our sense-organs.

He re-introduces us to our own lives. That is one reason why we regard with amazement, perhaps awe, but certainly gratitude, this young man, trained at an elite school—Brown University in the Ivy League—who teaches now, at another elite school—Williams College, one of the Little Three (along with Trinity and Amherst) matching the Big Three of Yale, Princeton and Harvard in prestige among the cognoscenti in such things—yet able to write the story of the ordinary people—18-year old boys and 19-year old youth and 20-year old men who made up our bomber crews and our ground crews and the whole support apparatus: the people who were us.

How can he know so much about us? About the ex-RAF stations and the villages where we spent the quiet times of our war? About those English girls so much wiser and smarter and more aware of life than we, or some of us, were or thought we ever could be.

One of the protagonists in that bomber crew, in Paper Doll, the flight engineer, tells my story: his aim in school, in life was not to excel, not to exceed, but to avoid humiliation. And in the climactic moment of the final mission, he rewards himself and us with the discovery, a glory, that in thinking to pour the fruit juice into the hydraulic system, finally, at last, he could believe that he had been adequate. For some of us, that was the kind of war we were involved in.

### The Movie Was Not About OUR War

"The Best Years of Our Lives"—that movie spoke to us because it showed us what failures we were (and, perhaps foolishly, thought we must be) at the decisive task of telling those we had left behind (in both senses) "what it had been like," and "what we had gone through, how we had changed" and all those other vitally true and laughed at cliches. The movie spoke to us and for us.

But that film was not about our war, it was about us as a consequence of war. Paper Doll is about our war.

Maybe it is about your 306 Bomb Group, J. P. Shutz you know is here tonight. His airplane was called "Paper Doll" as maybe it is about "12 O'Clock High" or "First Over Germany, Last Over Germany," and so on. The 306's is a proud story: 12 generals came out of the group, including the formidable Curtis LeMay, an intimidating man: he intimidated me 20 years later in a civilian elevator.

There is another chapter in our story that we are more likely to think of tonight: absent comrades. In the 306 the strain of those 341 missions, one for every 2.6 days in the European theatre, cost 177 aircraft lost on combat missions, with 971 aircrew killed, another thousand POWed.

### Only Literature Can Help Us

As we read Jim Shepard's book about those missions and the days between, waiting for the weather, waiting for the repairs to get done, waiting for the orders, we wonder how can he, how did he do it? What can help in such a task?

We have wondered about this before: in Tolstoy as the greatest of these missionaries to the vibrant past, the past of truth and understanding. The Count served as an artillery officer for the Czar in the long siege of Sebastopol by the British and by the French in what we call the Crimean War.

But how could that help Tolstoy recreate in his essential, compelling detail Borodino and all that came before and after in the great struggle against Napoleon 40 years before?

Before all gets lost to us in the common haze of "ancient times" let us remind ourselves that Borodino and all those Czarist struggles against the brand-new, still-revolutionary, long, deep-thrust, massed, narrow-front battalions of the French was different, very different, in climate, tactics, armies, weapons, purposes, than had been Sebastopol, in a different time, a different Czar.

### Only the Writer Owns the War

Yet that great magician, Tolstoy, has appropriated that war in those campaigns. He owns it. We can approach it only through him, by his permission, with his help, however unsure we may be of those who translate his Russian into a language we can read.

To be sure, only literature, great literature, helps us, serves us in understanding, illuminating war, and the terrible humanity of war. We are as moved by The Iliad as any campfire group listening to the blind singer. We read the austere, aristocratic, deeply-sensing, prophetic Thucydides with gasps of surprise (yet wishing sometimes he had not himself been an admiral, knowing too much trade-craft so that he does not think it necessary to tell us what we need to know).

So we see that Jim Shepard serves in great company.

We are obliged, as Americans, to mention Stephen Crane and The Red Badge of Courage. That, too, is a mystery. Like Mr. Shepard, Crane was born well after the time of his war.

### Who Can Understand Fontenoy With Rifles?

And however grim and grotesque the detail, the technical way-to-do-it prescribed by the generals in OUR war will seem to future peoples long after we are dead, surely then can be no more numbly incredulous than we are at what the Civil War generals on both sides in 1861 expected the common soldier, people like you and me, to do.

### Why Did We Accompany The Bombs to Target?

I mentioned all this because today, in an age of cruise missiles for explosive bombs (let alone intercontinental space vehicles for atomic weapons), it may seem grotesque to our children and to our grandchildren that in our war we chose to accompany the bombs to their targets. Why not simply ship them in a variant of Adolf Hitler's buzzbombs?

The timeframes are collapsed, you see, the decades blur, and what was possible, desirable, necessary in our war against the tyranny is not seen or known or felt. That is why Jim Shepard and his Paper Doll is indispensable to us.

So we can believe that only testimony like his will count to proclaim who we were and what we were told to do and how we tried to do that.

There are too few books of this calibre on the shelves. Even Len Deighton, a careful competent Englishman, who seems suitably reverent about what we did, has failed in his Goodbye, Mickey Mouse to tell the story of our fighters, at least as my own 359 Fighter Group experienced the war at Thetford.

#### Duxford: Better Than Dayton?

I must, however, add that the British, at the Imperial War Museum at the old RAF Station at Duxford, outside Cambridge, have paid a much more detailed and accurate tribute to the Eighth Air Force than anything I saw at the Air Force Museum at Wright-Patterson outside Dayton. We can think about that some time, when we visit the graves of our Eighth Air Force dead who lie in that cemetery not so far from Duxford.

So thinking of these things, we turn to Paper Doll and start in surprise at the thrill of recognition. Jim Shepard tells us, memorably, like a magician, who and what we were and what and how we did what we did. Yet he was not born then.

Mr. Shepard, how did you do that? A wonderful feat.

You are a magician.

**Jim Shepard:**

After that introduction, I am not only very much honored, but feel enormously presumptuous to be here. Maurice Donohue, you and the members of the Maryland Chapter of the Eighth Air Force are very kind and magnanimous to have me here to talk this evening.

What I hope to do tonight is give you a sense of why I would write such a book as Paper Doll, never having had the experience of being a member of the Eighth Air Force; why I believe we produce and read war literature, and what I believe literature in general can do. I'll also read a little from the novel, and I'll be happy to take questions afterward. I ask you, before I begin, to bear with the sheer chutzpah my being here at all represents.

When I was working on Paper Doll, the chairman of the English Department where I teach, at Williams College, suggested I construct a course on the literature of war, as a way of dovetailing my teaching and writing. I took his suggestion. Teaching a course of such works—poems, novels, short stories, essays—made clear to me that we cannot shake the need to recreate the experience of war for our fellow man, to attempt to make sense of it; to attempt to prevent further such experiences; to exorcise them, to expiate them. The general human impulse to make fictions—to make up stories, poems, movies based on the events of war—seem dramatically unleashed by war's immensity, uniqueness, intensity, grotesquerie. Notice, for example, how widespread rumors are among combatants during wartime: they resemble the literature of war in that their partial purpose is to make some sense out of what would otherwise seem randomly catastrophic. Notice, too, how often they begin to take the shape of some of mankind's most universal myths: initiation, the quest, the confrontation with death and rebirth. To survive in war it seems as though combatants have to tell themselves stories, narrow their horizons, try to control their sense of causality, history, meaning. Allow themselves hope of a graspable meaning. A recent example might be a film such



as Platoon, in which an interpretation—the battle between good versus evil, in the form of two sergeants for the soul of a soldier—is imposed by the filmmaker Oliver Stone over his experiences as a grunt in Vietnam.

But trying to write about war, I l faced, I think, two huge questions: first, where did I get off writing about the Second World War? How can anyone who hasn't experienced war write about it? I can never fully answer that question. I can say, though, that I was supported somewhat when I began by the realization that all works of fiction are in fundamental ways acts of imagination and that some of the greatest of the authors I was considering—Homer, Stephen Crane, Hemingway, in the case of much of his battle description—had not experienced the wars they were seeking to recreate, any more than Herman Melville had ever been personally obsessed with a great white whale. He had researched whaling—but he had had to imaginatively recreate the extremity and sweep of the relentless hunt for Moby Dick.

The second huge question faced me in the form of a paradox: in writing about war, I'm forced to create a work of art aesthetically pleasing enough to entice the reader to explore the repellent. What does it mean, in other words, that a reviewer could say of Paper Doll: "It describes the horrors of the airwar beautifully"? In some ways I was confronted with the need to make the horrors of war beautiful enough to contemplate, and the beauty of war horrible enough to see clearly. Was it possible for me to take the glamour out of war? I don't think it can be done. But it was possible for me to try to examine the sources of that glamour, and to expose the lie of it.

And the more I learned about war, from talking to all those Eighth Air Force crewmen, from talking to my father, from reading Homer, Crane, Hemingway, Jarrell, Remarque, Graves, Keegan, Paul Fussell, and an endless host of others, the more I was confronted with the fact that we want to read these texts: that there is something in the nature of war that we are deeply attracted to. "It is good that war is so terrible," Robert E. Lee once remarked, "or else we should grow too fond of it." War is one of

the most ancient, perplexing, and disturbing of human experiences. Its destructive and horrific nature is well-known. Yet, if it's so terrible, why is it so ubiquitous a phenomenon? And why would we demand that our literature, our movies, now even our TV series, recreate it for us?

Any great work dealing with war, I think--the Illiad, The Red Badge of Courage, For Whom the Bell Tolls, Goodbye to All That, All Quiet on the Western Front--needs to come to terms with that central paradox of war: its attractiveness, amidst all the ugliness and waste; its intensity, its glamour, its sensual pleasure. Many of the images of war that I was continually presented with, both in the literature and the words of the men with whom I talked, were attempts to articulate what it is that fascinates us about war, a search for a reason men--or rather, boys--would voluntarily join such an enterprise. There's a sense of excitement, adventure. A sense of change from the drab everyday: a chance, combatants are told, to participate in history. (As Patton said in a speech: those men serving with him wouldn't have to tell their grandchildren that all they did during the great World War II was shovel shit in Louisiana). There's the sense of duty. There's the sense, in the Second World War, especially, of necessity: what choice does anybody have? And doesn't the world have to be protected from Nazi Germany and Japan? There's the sense that war might be the ultimate initiation--the fulfillment of some rites of passage; the notion that men that have been in war are now more fully men. There's the notion of the nobility of sacrifice itself (the highest honors the militaries of the world bestow are often posthumous). There's the sense that this extremity allows for the highest forms of male bonding, that you could never be closer to a bunch of guys than you were to the men you served with in combat when you served with them. (It's interesting: a lot of the people I interviewed claimed that that's what made reunions so melancholy sometimes, that it was so hard to recreate that intensity of community).

There's a reciprocal process, I think, to the way art and war feed each other in the creation of the work: war provides the raw material for the work of art, and the necessities, and the form of the work of art confer shape and meaning upon the experience of war. (I have to use words, for example, when I construct Paper Doll, and I choose as well the traditional form of the novel.) And in using those forms to try and express something of the intensity and uniqueness of the experience of war, we run into all sorts of problems. Combatants seem to come to realize that those who more clearly understand the war often abandon language: words can be on the one hand inadequate, or on the other hand promise too much deception (those familiar with military language know that it can often be dangerously misleading: friendly fire and pacification from Vietnam (for example). The combatant in war begins to understand language as a debased and misused sign system attempting to come to grips with extremities of intensity, of human feeling. Combatants soon get the sense that their superiors are manipulating language, and not always to the combatants' best interests. And every day they're confronted with something that's impossible to put into words. In the face of this, how does the writer, a manipulator of language himself, react? If you're Ernest Hemingway or Erich Maria Remarque, you construct a scaled-down, stripped-to-its-essentials language, devoid of and hostile to the abstractions, the rhetoric, that you see as partially responsible for this sort of mess in the first place. If you're Michael Herr, writing a book called Dispatches, you attempt to create a new version of English, a kaleidoscopic barrage that echoes and evokes the extremely stressed interior life of the combatant under fire, and the sense of overload he feels when first encountering battle. Herr is quoted as having said "Conventional journalism ?language? could no more reveal what this war in Vietnam was like than conventional firepower could win it." With all these attempts, though, the idea, one way or the other, is to confront the reader with the unexpected in the ways of seeing and understanding the

experience in precisely the way that war itself confronts the combatant with the unexpected.

And war does: one of the reasons irony is such a large part of war literature is that huge gap between what we assume war is supposed to be and what it turns out to be—what you thought war was in basic training and what it turned out to be. The ironies arise from the fact that the nature of war is always radically different—worse—than what we imagined, and there's really, we realize, very little one can compare it to.

As a writer I faced other huge problems trying to recreate what a lot of men worked very hard to try to make me understand. In telling their stories as best I could, I continually ran into the limitations of both excessive restraint and unflinching honesty, as strategies. In the first case, one could be accused of laundering the experience; in the second case, sensationalizing it.

Nearly all the people who've been through war have powerfully mixed feelings about any artistic attempt to recreate it. Nearly all the people I interviewed had real mixed feelings about my project: and a lot of that, I think, comes from their perceptions that it's been precisely those inadequate attempts at communicating the experience of war that they were exposed to, that in the first place, helped allow war to happen all over again, and in the second place, left them so inadequately prepared for it when it did. So the people who've been there—with a lot of justification—don't want to be party to any more distortions, any more lies. There's too much at stake. On the other hand, the people who've been there are also in a position to appreciate the attempt—because if the experience had been adequately communicated, perhaps it might have been prevented, or perhaps they would have been better prepared for it.

All the books, all the movies, all the stories that lied, that misled us, that told us not only that good will win out, and that main characters (and who in their own lives doesn't feel like a main character?) won't die, and that the people who have died

died for a reason, and died in ways that were unavoidable, that told us also that the experience of war was essentially coherent, ordered, narratable, and so controllable--all of those, combatants want to argue, have to be overturned. There's a bitter lesson, I believe, that war wants us to learn and that is that it has little or no narrative and thematic coherence and when it's seen from the inside, has no neat beginning, middle, and end. We need to find and create stories about war because war itself is a story out of control--out of our control. What all works of literature about war try to do--and what I tried to do--is not provide the experience of war--to suggest that any one human being can do that is to make an enormously presumptuous and ignorant supposition. What they try to do, what I tried to do, is to be as true as one can, to just create something less inadequate.

War literature is compelling because it deals with human beings, in conditions of the greatest possible extremity. I was interested in writing about war because of my sense of the people I knew and cared about--my father, some of his good friends--who were involved in it. John Keegan, author of an excellent study of war, The Face of Battle, once said, "what battles have in common is human," a lovely phrase, I think. Let me go on to quote him: "What battles have in common is human," he says, "the behavior of men struggling to reconcile their instinct for self-preservation, their sense of honor, and the achievement of some aim over which other men are ready to kill them." All combatants seem to have had their sense of themselves in some ways radically revised--sometimes horribly--by the experience of war.

War is clearly, everybody seems to agree, an experience that radically alters consciousness. Michael Herr, speaking of his experience as a journalist in Vietnam, said, "I went to cover the war and the war covered me." Human beings in war seem to discover that the potential for self-discovery there is limitless and terrifying. Nearly all of them might ask, as Wilfred Owen, the British poet who served in the trenches

in World War I asked his mother, "Am I not a conscientious objector with a very seared conscience?"

All literature of war, and I hope Paper Doll as well, deals with the notion of heroism. Not usually in the sense of derring-do, but usually more in the sense of Hemingway's "grace under pressure." Over and over again we're confronted with images of boys facing death in a manner that is itself heroic. I should stress "boys." Notice: if war makes men, as the claim goes, then that means that they're children going in. And one of the most persistent ways the general public misunderstands war, I'm convinced, lies in the sense the public clings to that wars are fought by thirty-five year olds who have been grizzled and toughened by life and so are ready for it. The ultimate heroism, perhaps, is that boys with so little preparation face something like war--which in its ferocity and mercilessness facilitates, if not dictates, a gradual series of steps away from accepted morality--and still maintain their humanity. That boys with so little preparation face death, and maintain their humanity. Who, really, could not admire that sort of heroism?

Why would I want to write about such things? Ultimately I'll never be quite sure; the creative act, beginning something like that, is a leap of faith, like walking into a dark room before your eyes are used to the dark. But partially, I'm sure, it's because my personal concerns and obsessions seemed reflected, in extreme forms, in such situations.

There's a great deal of talk in this Irangate era of power without responsibility; I've always been fascinated with the dilemma of feeling the opposite way: feeling responsibility without power. Most of the characters populating my stories and novels feel themselves to be functioning as sentient instruments of an invisible collective will. They often find themselves--as sons, as fathers, as brothers--in the paradoxical position of crucial power and responsibility and frustrating helplessness. Their worlds tend to threaten to test their inadequacies ruthlessly. The position of an Eighth Air Force crew member seemed to me a concrete and extreme image of that position. Talking

with my father and with other gunners, I was struck by how, in the course of trying to do something like defend a B-17 against air attack, contradictory feelings of power and impotence would succeed one another so rapidly. Everything depends on me doing my job. I haven't been adequately prepared for it. And can I really make a difference anyway? What we don't know may not be taught to us in time, and can hurt us.

Why the Eighth Air Force? Partially because of what the Eighth accomplished. Partially because of what the Eighth suffered. Partially because of what the Eighth helped to demonstrate about the way war was evolving: becoming more impersonal, more technological, more distanced. In this new war, members of the Eighth were marooned up there in the sky the way combatants from older days were never marooned; utterly vulnerable, without even the infantryman's instinctive comfort of the foxhole. No place to hide, no place to run. The experience of the Eighth Air Force was quite different from the experience of a soldier from a pre-modern war: the Eighth Air Force crew member was not moving, when in combat, through an environment almost totally--and indiscriminately--hostile to man.

The Greek foot soldier in Homer's day had to worry about the man opposite him, and the occasional missile. Were the boys participating in the daylight bombing of Germany ever able to isolate the danger in such a way? What could better testify to the modern combatant's own sense of insignificance, of unimportance, than the position that somebody on a daylight bombing mission to Schweinfurt in 1943 finds himself in, abandoned in an enormous physical wilderness dominated by gigantic and impersonal forces?

At the same time, it was a new kind of war in another way--the boys in the Eighth were commuter warriors--exaggerating powerfully a theme that had run throughout war literature all the way back to the Iliad: the ironic proximity of violence and disaster--of death--to safety and to love, to everything we care about. The experience of every combatant--the sense the combatant has of having just been plopped

down in the middle of combat—is exaggerated and heightened in the experience of those men and boys who had breakfast in England and found themselves hours later in combat over Germany.

The Eighth also clearly experienced the viscerally joyous, exhilarating side of warfare: the spectacle of all those Forts, for example, assembling and heading off together to Schweinfurt, is a flamboyant and captivating aesthetic event. What boy, myself included, hasn't been stirred by the thought of flying? Hasn't been thrilled by aircraft as powerful and beautiful as the B-17?

Why try to put such experiences into fiction? Why not just try and write the history, if you're interested? What can fiction offer anyone?

Fiction, all literature, operates with advantages unavailable to non-fiction: it allows us as readers to vicariously share in the experiences which shaped the writer's vision, and, in that way, takes us out of the confining vision of our own eyes. Paper Doll as fiction does not simply assert the sufferings and achievements of the crew members of the Eighth Air Force; it attempts to allow the reader to re-experience them, and so come to understand for him- or herself a part of what went on. As someone once said, fiction presents to us the thing, in order to convey the feeling.

All literature operates by drawing broader implications from the specific. It helps us dismantle and reassemble our sense of ourselves, who we are and who we were. It doesn't so much show us what to think as it does what thinking is. It helps show us how to live. Our best fiction and poetry and drama and film are among our most profound expressions of our values and our dilemmas. They represent our passions, our attempts to celebrate what we care most about, and they help us recount, and recoup, our losses. They show us ourselves, our own humanity. You might call literature simply character articulated into language.

Part of our interest as we read is in learning how the world works; how the conflicts we share with the writer and the situation he's created and with all human



beings can be resolved, if at all. We're told our lives are unimportant; this sort of writing is a way of insisting that they are. We're continuing, always, not only to learn, but to learn how to learn.

The human element at the center of war--those individual human beings like yourselves, who've had to face it--are not only the reason war is so horrible and sad, they are also where we find the redemption, what redemption there is, in our accounts of war. Without the stories of nobility and human compassion that are always present along with everything else, we would find war literature unendurable. Throughout all great war literature we find tenderness and compassion, endurance and powers of recovery that are ennobling. Humanity itself keeps resiliently surfacing, no matter what. We're confronted, maybe, with monstrous acts, but never with monsters. Human beings in war are just that: human beings.

And what do those human beings believe in? Very rarely is it the prevailing ideology, at least too fervently. Images of home. Loved ones. Images of themselves, of who they used to be, who they are, who they might become. What we come to understand from getting to know these human beings is the ultimate difficulty of moral judgments. And what we come to understand from getting to know these human beings is the ultimate necessity of moral judgments.

I wrote what I wrote because I wanted to celebrate these boys' achievements. And I wanted to lament their losses. I wanted to give the reader a sense of what it was like, and in so doing, I wanted to work against our cultural tendency to forget.

I thank you again for allowing me to come, and I'm going now to read some sections of Paper Doll, if that's okay with you. Do you have enough stamina to hear some . . .? You have every right at this point to say, "Well, put your money where your mouth is."

Our protagonist's name is Bobby Bryant, and probably the only thing you need to know that isn't in the clips you're getting is that he was a Lindberg fanatic, Spirit of St. Louis fanatic. That will come up later.

"Bobby Bryant was talking about back home, Providence, Long Island, and Lewis and Snowberry were lethargic enough to give him their attention, and Bean was asleep, so there was no one to interrupt him. He was encouraged.

His family had owned a series of dogs, all kept outside, all high-strung and aloof from Bobby—all his father's dogs, his mother liked to say. He remembered at five or six sitting in the hot sun with one of them, Toby, a small, squat mongrel with German Shepard somewhere in his bloodlines. Somehow he'd reached for it and Toby had nipped his fingers, forearm and bicep in a frenzy of irritation, and then had almost immediately resumed a sort of placidity. He'd been terrified of the dog after that and the dog, as if to torment him, had developed a way of covertly lifting a lip in a silent snarl when only Bobby was looking. He did not risk his father's contempt by bringing it up.

They got the dogs through the mail, unflagging and omniscient hunting breeds promised from faraway kennels—and unfailingly the dogs arrived with some affliction—one eye ruined, a serious limp, odd lumps on the neck or chest—and a disposition soured by it.

They fell like Limeys at the Somme, his uncle who fancied military history liked to say. Toby was hit by a car. Corky tore off in full throat after a bird of some sort and plummeted, still baying, from a rocky outcropping. King died of an infection that made an eye swell up grotesquely. Someone poisoned Snapper, an animal of such epic nastiness that it had to be chained at all times. Neighborhood children, Bobby remembered, gathered at safe distances to watch it foam and tear with a chilling intensity at its chain and collar, in such awe of the animal's fury that they did nothing to tantalize it further, only watching day after day in hushed silence, as one might watch a volcanic eruption.

Tippy, Bobby's favorite, a smallish white and black animal with an inexplicably crushed ear, disappeared on one of his father's hunting trips and was never heard from again. The notion haunted Bobby that perhaps the dog had been hurt and left to fend for itself and was even now dragging itself around the same stretch of forest in eastern Connecticut, its eyes wide with hunger.

All the dogs had frightened his sister, Amy, terribly—Toby had even stalked her when she was alone, its head low with wolfish concentration—and she kept as a talisman against them a gingham stuffed animal resembling a porkchop that her mother had made for her. She called it Miss Eboo, introduced it only to Bobby, and lived in fear her father would find it.

'Miss Eboo,' Lewis said. It did not sound as if he was enjoying the story.

When he was a kid, Bryant went on, about seven and the depression had really hit, he remembered that it was clear to even the smallest boys in the neighborhood that there was something screwed up about the world the way they understood it and that a guy like his father or a neighbor could work hard and be good at something and still find out that nobody wanted them. He told his sister then and there he was going to be a pilot someday, flying around Texas and the ocean.

'Why don't you give it a rest for a while,' Lewis said. Bryant stopped talking. He closed his eyes to the sun and remembered St. Louis winning the World Series, cheating his Athletics. He remembered Capone going to jail, as if just having given up. He remembered his parents refusing to let him see Frankenstein, his mother herself, in fact, refusing to go, and his father taking it in one Saturday night alone without telling him, breaking his heart, and returning to pronounce it windy. He remembered his father leaning conspiratorily close and allowing, with a cruelty that still left Bryant breathless when he thought about it, that the monster was certain as ants something to see.

He remembered the world and his father shutting down possibility, and pilots, airmen, as always the vivid exception. He resolved maybe then, thinking of the monster he still hadn't seen, the monster they wouldn't put on the advertising posters, that he was going to fly. The possibility of washing out was too terrible to entertain.

The first airplane Bryant had ever seen had crashed while he was watching it. It had been an old yellow De Havilland biplane, looping and sideslipping over Narragansett Bay, perhaps for the entertainment of bathers on the surrounding beaches. Bryant had been standing knee deep in a warm and reedy part of an inlet. The water around his legs lapped and rippled quietly. The engine changed pitch and the biplane had trembled in midair, and while he watched, it folded at the center as if on delicate hinges, collapsing upon itself and twisting apologetically downward. Rowboats had labored out to the point of the splash.

Bryant had a headache around the eyes. It seemed his training every step of the way, from high school all the way to England, had been inept and incomplete. His number one goal in high school had been to avoid humiliation—not excel, not learn, not stand out, simply avoid humiliation—and he was distressed to have learned that things hadn't changed in the Army. He was more frightened of Lewis than of the Germans, and Lewis knew it and used it. Bryant knew nothing. In high school history his senior year they'd spent a week coloring in the countries of Europe—blue for France, black for Germany, crosshatching for the conquered areas—and his Germany proper had stretched from Normandy to Leningrad. His teacher had held his paper up to ridicule in front of the class. His high school English teacher had shown three weeks of sketches she had done of the Acropolis and then had tested them on Greek tragedy. He'd got a 17 as a score, on a scale of 1 to 100. At the bottom of the test he had written, 'Nice sketches.' And she on the report card that went home that fall wrote, 'Nonconstructive and childish attitude.' He'd seen her on the street a week before he left and she

congratulated him on becoming an American Eagle, and he'd said, 'Why don't you shut up,' wishing he'd had a wittier rejoinder.

He dreamed of Training, of Basic and Gunnery, and he woke and lay still, his friends quiet breathing filling the space around him. Snowberry's breathing had a slight wheeziness to it that always inspired inappropriate tenderness in him, as though he were listening to an infant son with the croup. The metal canopy of the missing roof above made random and hushed sounds in the wind. The air was close. The blanket beneath his nose had a flat, airless smell, and beyond it the darkness was chilled. Bean's socks was somewhere nearby. Outside the rain was returning, the soft rush on the aluminium light and uneven. He imagined the canvas flaps on the fuel bowsers, billowing and wet in the darkness.

He remembered field-stripping the .50 calibre Brownings day after day at Harlingen in the dreamy Texas sun. In only shorts and boots, on a square piece of olive canvas dusty and patinaed with grit. The gun was heavy and difficult to manipulate, smooth with oil. There were cocking levers and bolt assemblies, firing pins and sears, all belonging to a system of order which had to be retrieved once broken down, and Bryant had always been the slowest, the clumsiest. He mashed fingers and skinned palms repeatedly wrestling with oil buffer body spring locks. The procedures were difficult to hurry, though the stripping and reassembly were being timed. In the intense heat there was an unpleasant, dreamlike effect of having to do something rapid and intricate while being submerged in warm water. Men he knew slightly and would never know again were spread in distant rows on the canvas squares across the baking and flat earth. The impression was that of a series of desolate, individual picnics. On good days shirts were piled and tied sheiklike on heads, and the rotating, depressing, releasing, and the click and clatter of interlocking metal components coming apart proceeded with a more ordered if still-hesitant movement.

All of them but Lewis had met as a crew weeks earlier in Florida. Lewis had joined them in Britain, much later, a replacement for a boy named Fichtner who had been the original tail gunner, a pale boy from Missouri with white spindly hands who told them only that he was a musician, and cleared his throat with a quiet precision that annoyed everybody. He had seemed anything but their idea of a Southerner, and they'd all been frankly relieved to discover that he'd gone AWOL one morning soon after their arrival in Britain. There was an official notion of crew compatibility as the basis for assignments, and if they were in a group with a guy like that, Piacenti had wondered aloud one night, eyeing Bean as well, what did that say about them?

They'd imagined themselves arriving by train from all parts of the country to come together as a permanent crew, a lean and single-minded fighting force. As they got to know each other, the suspicion grew that there had been a series of unobtrusive mistakes, that the selection process had involved dice or cutting decks of cards. The immediate blood bonds that they had heard about seemed something for other crews, and they got to know each other very slowly. Other crews seemed more confident, more raunchy--their slang for anything casually masculine--more competent.

They'd flown without warning from the Floridian heat to the Newfoundland cold. Fichtner had sat on the cold and gray rocks of Gander like a seabird. They had flown from Florida to Texas to Iowa to Newfoundland and he was clearly disoriented by the changes. The crew treated him as they might have treated a strange dog in camp that was behaving erratically. They spent much of their time waiting for assignment to a bomb group, pulling chairs around the stove of their Nissen hut. The stove had thrown off heat so feebly they had nicknamed it "the icebox" and had all urinated on it together the day their orders came through.

Besides Fichtner, only Bryant and Snowberry spent any appreciable time outside. The sky was gray and roiling and close, and clouds moved aggressively offshore, flapping wind socks and causing splashed mud to splatter dismally and unpredictably. Gulls cried and sideslipped over Fichtner who spent whole half days off by himself, perched above the rocks washed black by the swells.

They had sat in small groups the night of their transatlantic flight, Bryant talking quietly with Snowberry. The water was black and vast over the rocks beyond the airstrip. Sea birds huddled near the leeward sides of the huts like pigeons, their feathers puffed against the cold. The support staffs had gone ahead by boat, and the aircrews would make the flights alone, under the cover of darkness. They felt isolated and closer, not only as a squadron but as a crew. Reticent girls in blue Red Cross uniforms at a makeshift canteen served them a sad and metallic tea while they waited. All of their gear, stowed in huge, green duffels had been piled in the nose, and they were waiting for a cold front to pass. The wind was high and the sky low and opaque and they could hear the sea. Ice glazed Paper Doll's rubber tires like donuts. Hirsch and Gabriel and Cooper worked the charts and reckonings, and rechecked agreed-upon headings by flashlight, their murmurs reassuring.

On takeoff he remembered clearly the sensation of the plane gathering speed in the darkness in its rush down the runway, and the gentle shift in his stomach as the Fortress lifted into the air, banking around to the north. He climbed into his station in the top turret for the view and saw the lights of the field behind and below them, turning slowly away, and the red lights of the Fortresses ahead of them, lifting into the cloud cover. They climbed until they broke through the clouds like something emerging from the sea, and the half moon illuminated the entire world.

Far ahead they could see the other 17's. Bryant stayed in the top turret, his weight back on the padded sling. His goggles were up on his forehead and the elastic strap bunched the crown of his soft sheepskin-lined headgear. Cooper and Gabriel threw shadows in the yellow glow of the cockpit before him, and the enormous wings extended out beyond him dark and reassuring on both sides.

The stars were brilliant and foreign and extended undiminished to the cloud line. Every so often Hirsch's head appeared in the glow of the smallish astrodome in front of the cockpit, taking a fix with his sextant. The plane tipped and rocked smoothly. His toes curled and flexed in the sheepskin lining. St. Elmo's fire shimmered and glowed furtively

around the wingtips and propellers. Hirsch intruded on the interphone in a low voice to give new headings.

Still hours from first light or landfall in Ireland, Bryant had felt completely happy in a world all those back home would never know. Below, everyone but pilots and navigators slept, deep in their sheepskin jackets with their collars up, curled around parachutes and duffels. Above, Bobby Bryant rode high in the cold dark air in his glass bubble under the stars and watched Paper Doll all around him sweeping toward Ireland, across the darkness, skimming the fluid and onrushing ceiling below, the smooth and ever-changing clouds a ghostly topography.

'We had a game,' Snowberry said, dreamily, 'a game we used to play when we were kids, Mel and I. Mel was a year older. He's in the Navy now, in the Pacific. We were just kids. There was a rope swing with a heavy wooden seat, weathered so that it was that gray color wood gets. We found out that if we lay down underneath it, it cleared our noses and faces by just a few inches. And I would lie there and Mel would swing, or Mel would lie there and I would swing, and you'd look up at the clouds and leaves and branches and hear it coming and have to look and it would be by, so fast, so close, you couldn't believe it, each time. At the top of the swing it was miles away, and then it was back over you, the grain of the wood wooshing by, and you thought, if I lift my head, imagine. And you felt the dirt scuffed floury by all those kids' feet and the ragged dry grass and the sun and the rush of air from the long swoop of that swing.

'We always went back,' Snowberry said, 'even when the ropes were frayed, even when the wood seat split.'

They waited two hours for the ceiling to lift so they might have a safer assembly and finally went off just at dawn, a vivid orange band beneath the purple one behind the darkened and backlit horizon. The plexiglass surfaces of the ships ahead of them in taxi position glowed with the colors.

They hooked up with a reassuringly large flight of olive green razorback Thunderbolts—as far as Bryant could tell, there were more escorts than bombers—and the gunners joyfully called in each P-47 flight as it slipped into place until they felt they were approaching Paris cocooned in Air Support.

The Thunderbolts positioned themselves above the formations and wove lazy-S patterns to maintain contact with the slower Fortresses. No one in Paper Doll saw enemy fighters until the formation made its wide turn out of the echeloned vees into the column of groups that formed the long train for the bombing run. The higher squadron swung in alongside Paper Doll and in the process, in a rare instance in which the purest chance crystallized like a well-laid plan, they trapped inside their newly formed defensive box a hapless lone Messerschmitt ME-110 that had magically appeared at three o'clock low outside Piacenti's window. The unhappy Messerschmitt flew level between them for a long moment. The pilot was gazing over at Bryant like someone about to get it in an old Mack Sennett short. His fuselage was dark gray with a white nose,

with what looked like a little green fanged worm on the cowling. And then all hell broke loose, Bryant and Piacenti and Snowberry together hosing the fighter with tracers as the other planes around them opened up as well, the tracer lines converging from all directions like a starburst in reverse. The 110 seemed to stop and rear in midair and pieces flew off like bits of confetti. It turned a baby blue underside to Paper Doll and then three tracer streams converged dazzingly on the same point, like a mirror catching sunlight, and the plane disintegrated and flew backward out of the formation in a rain of shapes.

Smoke from the guns of the formation all around him trailed back from the bombers in satisfying streams.

'God, that was great,' Snowberry said over the interphone.

'That's the best, that's amazing, to get them like that,' Piacenti said. Bryant was trembling and overheated. He fired his guns out into space, overwhelmed by how intense the gratification had been, the physical pleasure detached from emotion, from any thought of the absurdly forlorn Mack Sennett face in the German's canopy before they had let fly. He watched the bombs rain down over LeBourget, on Lindberg's head, and felt as though a part of him were killed off, and had no regrets. They burst yellow and white in the rapid streams of the bombing pattern and the smoke bloomed and spread like stirred-up muck in pond water. 'Bye, bye, LeBourget,' Snowberry said over the interphone, for Bryant's benefit. 'I hope the St. Louis was off at a dispersal site.'

Lewis reported a perfect bombing pattern, and added as an item of interest that somebody's bombs had torn the wings off a fighter attempting to climb beneath them. On the flight home they had maintained perfect formation, for once, the spread of the graceful Fortresses ahead and above them beautiful against the sky, and the Thunderbolts had swooped and looped around them after they had cleared the coast, celebrating with their own near-animal grace the ease and success of the day.

Lewis, in celebration, suggested a game of Gordon Pong and over Snowberry's protestations the idea was enthusiastically endorsed by the rest of the crew. Four crates were stacked two on two as a net and Snowberry was caught and dragged to one side. After some rules debate, it was decided he would not be allowed to bounce once on the receiving team's side.

He kicked and squirmed too much--it was hard to maintain a good throwing grip--so they sat on him and tied his arms and feet. The officers agreed to play for once and it was Bryant, Piacenti, Lewis and Ball against Gabriel, Cooper, Hirsch and Eddy. The gunners against the 90 day wonders, as Lewis put it. Bean refused to play.

On the first toss Snowberry shrieked, so it was decided to gag him as well. After a few more tosses the best tactics revealed themselves to be: on the receiving end, spread out and close to the body as it flew over the crate; on the throwing end, try to produce a spin which would overload one end of the opposite line and defeat attempts at a good

solid grab. After one throw from the officers it just cleared the crates—Lewis called a netball but was argued out of it—Bryant commented to the group on the sheer terror in Gordon's eyes, and recommended a blindfold, both as a mercy measure and further elimination of distractions. It was agreed to, and Bean gave up a sock to that purpose when no one was able to produce a handkerchief.

The officers were ahead three to nothing—they scored when any part of Snowberry touched the ground as the gunners caught him, tallying on two real rib-thumpers and a cheapie can of corn with a limp foot touched—when Lewis abruptly announced a refreshment break. He poured some more Scotch from an abandoned cup into his coke bottle and took a slug. He and Bryant sat beside Bean while Piacenti laboriously began to untie poor Snowberry, who was again showing signs of life. Lewis offered him his coke and Bean shrugged it off.

'I hate to see a grown man dry,' Lewis said.

Snowberry was helping them out with his feet. 'You guys,' he said with diffused menace, 'You guys.'

'What a standup bunch of personnel, huh Bean?' Lewis said. 'Even when the going gets tough, there's still time for horseplay.'

The victorious officers had left. Snowberry pouted where he lay, rubbing his hip. There were tears in Bean's eyes.

'I don't know what I'm doing here,' he said. 'What am I doing here?'

Bryant patted his shoulder. Lewis said, 'You don't have to figure it out. Like today. All you have to do is turn on the Brownings and let them figure it out.'

Piacenti had started the jeep and was waving them over. Gabriel wanted another photo. Piacenti leaned on the horn and revved the engine.

'I guess it's my buddy,' Bean said. 'I guess I haven't gotten over him.'

'He's dead and you're not,' Lewis said.

'I feel bad,' Bean said.

'Feel good,' Lewis said.

'He told me if anything happened to tell his girlfriend the real story,' Bean said. 'I think about that.'

'I think about home, take off, assembly, their fighters, our escort.' Lewis said, 'Flak.'

They helped Bean to his feet and climbed aboard the jeep. At the plane Gabriel arranged them as he had before for the photo. Snowberry said, 'Why don't you make little white marks on the fuselage over our heads so you can see how much we've grown?' For the photographer, though,



he joined with everybody else in pointing to the newly painted iron cross on the nose, and holding up one finger.' "

Thank you for bearing with me so long here. I would be happy at this point to take questions or—field glasses you want to throw at me, or anything else.

You guys have any questions about all of that blather I just gave you? Yes sir.

LISTENER: I'm very, very interested in your description, fascination with Lindberg and your description of the flight probably from Gander, (phonetic) Newfoundland (inaudible) duplicates my life almost completely.

(Laughter)

I was a five year old boy when Lindberg flew the Atlantic in 1927 and I remember running up and down the sidewalk hollering, "Lucky Lindy," when he flew and today I'm very proud to say he's still one of the true heroes that I've had in my life. One was Lindberg; the other is my good buddy, Fred Cherry, who is a Vietnam POW who has spoken to this group. I've been privileged to meet and I know as friends, several Medal of Honor winners. . . .

AUTHOR: I just hope you won't contact your lawyer about it.

(Laughter)

LISTENER: Oh, I won't. By the way, let me say right now, that's it's nothing to do with your speech but it has everything to do with what you may do in the future. Two years from now and I believe, the good Lord willing, I will be around at that time because he's been awfully good to me—two years from now the Tuskegee airmen will

be holding their national convention in Washington, D.C. We would love to see you here at that time. That's the summer of 1989.

AUTHOR: I'll put it on my calendar now.

LISTENER: And, I guarantee you you'll meet 1,400 of the wildest guys you've ever met in your life.

AUTHOR: We'll make a good combination because I'm one of the drabbest people you've ever met in your life.

LISTENER: The other thing is that in December of this year, the ladies here will be happy to hear this. In this club, it's on a Wednesday or a Thursday night, I'm not sure which, you'll have to check the date, December the 2nd or the 3rd, our Air Force association is honoring women in aviation. Astronauts, those who've been involved in weather, a marvelous medium bomber test pilot who lives right within the traffic pattern here. The lovely (inaudible) lady who flew the hottest medium bomber of all, the B-26—we're going to have them here. We're also going to have the airmen of note, Glen Miller Band, and you, I hope, will be able to keep this in mind and to join us even though I know that you're a working professor at Williams . . .

AUTHOR: (Laughs) That's a completely leisurely life of pleasure, believe me.

LISTENER: I have a cousin who is a graduate of Williams so I know Williamstown rather well and I've got to plead to a certain prejudice being a Georgetown graduate so I admire Williams but Georgetown is my first love.

AUTHOR: Okay, I'll accept that logic.

LISTENER: Good, and remember you have two invitations.

AUTHOR: I need to be on your mailing list, sir. I will make sure I get my address to you at some point or another.

LISTENER: Jim, why do people tell war stories?

AUTHOR: Why, I thought I went through all that, John. Well, I think a lot of the reasons I tried to explain. Part of the reason we tell war stories is to try and figure out why it is we want to tell war stories. What is it about it that fascinates us so much? Everyone says what a horrible experience war is, and it seems to me nobody can stop talking about it. Even though this clearly has to be one of the hardest things I can imagine trying to articulate. I was very struck by what Maurice said about the film, The Best Years of Our Lives and about the experience of coming back and thinking, where do I find the words to explain this, and if I were to find the words, who do I explain it to, exactly?

LISTENER: In your talking here you talk about speaking to Eighth Air Force people and they did not go to the reunion.

AUTHOR: (Laughs) You're going to get after them on this?

LISTENER: Well, no, we just—John and myself think and (inaudible) you were there, weren't you? We just finished having a reunion with 745 of us who were there and 350 were women.

(Laughter)

LISTENER: It seems like the stories that come out are all the good things you remember . . .

AUTHOR: Yeah.

LISTENER: . . . the bad things seem to be put in the back of your head. Occasionally they come out, but very seldom (inaudible). Remember the good time in (inaudible) or something like that.

AUTHOR: Because when you think about it that makes perfect sense. Why would you ever want to go to a reunion and utterly depress the fellow you haven't seen for 25 years?

LISTENER: We had a grand time.

AUTHOR: But again, there's that sense of the best years of our lives, that sense of intensity that we often don't acknowledge enough in the sense of the way we understand war.

LISTENER: (Inaudible) some of the best years of my life, of course, I didn't know my wife at the time, but you can understand why I feel (inaudible) the best years of my life.

AUTHOR: Could it be possible that the best years were before your wife? I don't think that's possible.

LISTENER: You haven't told us about the economics of the book. How did you support yourself for the three years? Did you get a grant from somebody? What was the printing, how many have sold? Do you have an agent? Is there any chance of a television or a movie contract?

AUTHOR: Whenever you publish almost anything—a menu, a laundry list, nearly anything, somebody named Vito calls you up from the coast and says, "What a great movie this would make," and, boy, he never read anything that would make a better movie than this. But, ultimately, I think two things destroy the possibility of Paper Doll as a movie, although a lot of people are telling me it will be. There's a great line by Mencken about Hollywood and that is that you could die of encouragement out there.

(Laughter)

AUTHOR: And, in fact, the two things that I think kill Paper Doll are first of all, the impossibility of the logistics of getting more than nine B-17's together at the same time. And the difficulty really of intercutting stop footage with real footage. I just think producers thinking about Paper Doll would say, "How in God's name are we going to film this?" Secondly, and more importantly, I think, there's a sense in Hollywood right now, as there is in the rest of America, that people aren't that interested in the Second World War. They're interested in war, but they'd rather hear about Vietnam, and the tendency is always to judge a movie project by how well the last project exactly like it did, so that if you gave a book like Paper Doll to a producer, the producer would say, "Oh, World War II airplanes, what was the last World War II airplane movie? Catch 22, didn't that lose a lot of money? Thank you, next case." And that's pretty much what happens. If I change it to spaceships, they might buy it.

LISTENER: Are you working on a project now?

AUTHOR: Yeah, I am. I'm working on an even stranger project for me than this, and that is a project about a young man who finds himself inside a totalitarian society while it's developing. A society much like Nazi Germany, and he's trying to wrap his mind around the fact that his government, which he trusts, which he has been taught to have a lot of faith in, may be getting more and more sinister. He's trying to ask himself at what point you have to break away from all the figures you've respected and say, "No, I can't agree with you anymore." And I spent the last six months in Italy and I took a lot of trips to Germany and talked to a whole lot of people who had been fascists and a number of people who denied they'd been Nazis. But again and again there was this sense of—especially in Germany—the way that to be a Nazi was to be right, in accord with your society, and the way to be not a Nazi, the way to resist the Nazis, was to be wrong, was to be an outlaw. Was to decide that everybody you respected in your entire state was wrong and you were right, and that was very difficult for a lot of people to do. Yes?

LISTENER: You go on in the book and in your talk tonight and I don't think anyone here will disagree with me about those years being the (inaudible) but I think it's (inaudible) Mansfield, is it Mansfield or Manchester?

AUTHOR: Manchester.

LISTENER: Who wrote (inaudible) slightly reorganized his war in the Pacific, land war in the Pacific.

AUTHOR: Right.

LISTENER: My question is don't you feel that this (inaudible) had to do with being an air corps. I don't think Mansfield had ten minutes of (inaudible). I can't imagine from his book and perhaps there are others anyone reminiscing about that war.

AUTHOR: I guess I would answer that in two ways. The first would be from what I know of the Pacific war in terms of the infantry, it had to have been the ugliest and most hellish theatre, the last place to be. I would think, in terms of the unremitting horror and ugliness being a footsoldier in Okinawa or Guadalcanal or Iwo Jima would have to take the cake, because there was no getting away from it, and just everything about it seems about as horrible as war can get. On the other hand, I hope I'm not implying that because the Eighth Air Force crew members have said there was something wonderful about their experience that they were saying there wasn't something completely horrible about it as well.

LISTENER: No, my question is do you think they said that because it was (inaudible)?

AUTHOR: Well I know that—I actually talked to a lot of infantrymen and, in fact, as everybody in this room probably knows, there's a great resentment that the infantrymen felt towards fly boys and that was a—you know, one guy said to me, "Here I am flat on my ass in the chiggers and I had to get up at 4:00 A.M. and hump my ass out here and these guys come flying over, do their five loops and then go back to base." And, of course, "commuter warrior," part of that term is perjorative for the infantry, right? "We're not commuter warriors, we live here and the flyboys come and go as they please." Well, what I was trying to get out—see, what I was hoping, was that the good part of being commuter warriors is obvious. But what I was trying to get

at in my talk is the bad part of being commuter warriors as well. And that is that amazing surrealism of being in combat and then pretending you're not, coming back home and having supper and pretending that the empty seat next to you isn't empty. It's a different kind of stress, but my God, I'm not going to suggest that Guadalcanal was something more hideous.

LISTENER: No, I didn't mean to imply that you were but (inaudible).

AUTHOR: I would feel like I wouldn't want to be in a room (laughs) with the two sides arguing. And I, also, boy I would hate to have to rank horror, you know?

LISTENER: On what you just brought up, in the first three years that we were there more than 50 percent ended up not coming back. They were either prisoners or wounded. That's not counting the kills. So we faced that all the time. The percentages were much worse than what were on the ground.

AUTHOR: It does seem to me as well there's a qualitative difference—go ahead.

LISTENER: Of the ones that were prisoners, they had it pretty rough and yet they had—years later talked about good parts of that even. There were and I've talked with many infantry guys, I worked with them and they talk about the good times, different good times. I even sat next to a fellow at a bar once that had his leg off and a Vietnam veteran come in and later he remarked to me, "They don't have wars as good as they used to." Now, how do you qualify that?



(Laughter)

AUTHOR: They don't make wars like they used to, do they?

LISTENER: All I can say is the next one is going to be hell.

(Laughter)

LISTENER: You know, I have to differ with you on some small point and with the lady also. We flew post ground support for the infantry and we had an intense admiration for those people who were slugging it out in the mud against tanks and everything. They, on the other hand, were very glad to see us. . . .

LISTENER: Oh boy, were they ever.

LISTENER: To divert the attention of the enemy even more a small portion of their time. We also had an immense admiration for those people who flew the bombers straight and level right into that (inaudible). We didn't consider ourselves aloof and separate from the war because we had our losses also and we felt that we were a part of a big team. We helped the bombers who delivered the loads to the enemy to destroy their (inaudible) and their capability to make war which was a relief to the people on the ground also. Of course, we made our mistakes, too, and the infantry didn't let us forget where our mistakes were. They didn't know where the lines were. However, in going back to a statement that you made about the difference in the two wars. That people would rather hear about Vietnam. I found the converse to be true.

AUTHOR: People you've talked to or. . . .

LISTENER: Yes, with various groups. I was in Vietnam and there was a strong camaraderie among smaller groups. I think the teamwork that we were involved in involved a larger teamwork with longer and stronger threads of connection which expanded 40 years. I have been in bars (inaudible) and NCO Clubs all over and I find that these young fellows didn't know how to hold a small talk conversation. That was not true with World War II. We had a deeper sense of belonging to the same team. These people were fighting in a terrible and dirty war and we have immense admiration for them.

AUTHOR: I would agree with you, sir, I think what I was saying was not--did not have to do with the combatants talking to each other. I think that I was talking about what the general public would rather hear about: it seems to be Vietnam rather than the Second World War. I'm not suggesting that once combatants get among themselves that the people that fought in Vietnam enjoyed speaking about it more than people who were in the Second World War. Also, back to your first point, I would hope it was clear that the infantry was overjoyed to see the flyboys come over because the flyboys saved them so often and provided so much air coverage. But I guess what I would argue is when I talked to the people in the infantry those two feelings were coexisting. One didn't eradicate the other. On the one hand, there was the sense of "Oh, if only the air boys would come, you know they're wonderful, they saved the day." On the other hand, there was feelings of, "They get to go home, we don't." And it just seemed to me that their gratitude was clear, and they felt, they very much felt, everybody I talked to felt, they were part of a team, definitely. And that is radically different than Vietnam where you're sort of part of this little nuclear group. But they also obviously, you know, felt an obvious resentment that you don't get rid of. Yes, sir.

LISTENER: (Inaudible). I've always had an intense interest in mathematics and still do and when I first got to England, I was a 20 year old boy and I went to a combat school in the summer of 1943, August of 1943. I mention that because that's a year prior to the invasion. I always love to ask flyers when did you fly and where did you fly? That tells me an awful lot (inaudible) a lot of conversation. You know when you fly in 1945 over the Gulf of Mexico that's a little different than being over Aurora (phonetic) Valley or Berlin in 1943 or 1944. However, I went to a grizzald combat veteran at this combat school at Chettington (phonetic) who said I'm going to make all the B-17 guys here (inaudible) because I'm probably the only man in the room who is (inaudible) or who is a B-24 flying officer and first phrase he used to greet me was this, "You poor bastard." In other words, you're not going to live.

AUTHOR: Didn't they used to say the Liberators were the crates that the Fortresses were shipped in?

LISTENER: Absolutely and many other things, too. Big ass bird and B-2 dozen and the rest—the ugliest thing on the block. You name it, it was there but be that as it may, I went to a grizzald combat vet and I asked him, "What is the loss ratio here?" He said to me, "They're going to tell you four percent," he shrugged, "maybe it is and maybe it isn't, but you're going to have to fly 25 trips, four times 25 is a hundred percent, you're not going to make it. Take your .45 and go out behind the barracks and shoot yourself." He was almost right in my case because when I finished I was the first flying officer in my squadron that finished alive in eight months.

AUTHOR: Wow.

LISTENER: Now, I've heard about the hundreds. I've heard about all the others but I'm standing here tonight and telling you very proudly but very sadly what it's like to see 24 bombers take off in the morning and seven come home at night. Seventeen go down over the target, that's 68 flying officers and 102 gunners. That's one hell of a hole in your mess hall and I would like very respectfully to tell the ladies because I tell you this very sincerely with a certain amount of sadness. When you were frostbitten at altitudes, meaning that you're so cold that your electric gloves didn't work. When you came back if you were frostbitten badly enough, the cure was amputation, amputation. I've known guys who had fingers and toes amputated. You also wore an electric flying suit, get ready for another chuckle at me. Mine burned out one day but thank God we weren't at 20,000 feet, we were at 10, so I could withstand the cold. Let me tell you what the cold was, 66 below zero centigrade on the (inaudible). For those of you who were mathematics bugs, figure it out. I still remember the formula.  $F - 32 = 1.8$  centigrade. Chunks of ice out of your oxygen mask as big as your fist and believe me, believe me I will be the first to admit that it was a lot different than being in the infantry but I'll always remember a flight officer who came to me one day in the Officers Club crying. There used to be a rank called Flight Officer, looked like a gold 2nd Lieutenant's bar only it was a notch between Master Sergeant and 2nd Lieutenant. People have forgotten it today. I even remember when there were flying Sergeants. A lot of people have forgotten that. This Flight Officer came to me and he was crying and I said, "What's the matter, Hank?" He was from Trinidad, Colorado. I won't tell you his last name but his first name was Hank. I said, "What's the matter, Hank?" He said, "Bob, the flight surgeon thinks I'm yellow." Let me tell you, to this day, and I admit this because this is bitterness and prejudice in my heart, I still remember the flight surgeon, I remember his name, he lives in Boston,

I haven't seen him since the end of World War II but when I do see him I intend to speak to him. These are some of the things that go on in your mind and I've got to be the luckiest guy in the world because if I died tonight sitting at this table, I've had a magnificent life.

AUTHOR: I don't know how I could possibly follow that.

(Laughter)

LISTENER: I'd like to say something. A friend of mine gave me the book last Christmas. I read it and said where in the hell did this guy get his information? He had everything right, right across the board, (inaudible). He came from the state of Washington, Alabama, Massachusetts, (inaudible) from Pennsylvania, just like you said, all scattered, only one thing our crew has stuck together. We do correspond and stay together. I was reading this book and I thought, "Where in the hell did this guy get all this information? He's even got it down to one Jew aboard. He mixed it up a little bit." My Jew boy was a waste (phonetic) gunner instead of the navigator. Other than that, it is one very accurate book.

AUTHOR: Another lawyer I'm going to have to deal with.

(Laughter) There are, in fact, a number of Paper Dolls in the Eighth Air Force.

LISTENER: That's true.

AUTHOR: But it seemed a perfect name to me because not only is there the Mills Brothers song that's a hit just a few . . .

LISTENER: What was on the flip side?

(Laughter)

AUTHOR: What is on the flip side?

LISTENER: I think, "I'll Walk Alone."

AUTHOR: But, also, I note the irony of having your Flying Fortress named Paper Doll, suggesting that you're not completely convinced that it's a Flying Fortress.

LISTENER: No, no. I better explain.

(Laughter)

AUTHOR: I thought that would pick you up again.

LISTENER: One of our crew members got a "Dear John" letter so he'd rather have a paper doll (inaudible).

LISTENER: Right, that answered that.

AUTHOR: Well, I knew there was another explanation. Yes, sir.

LISTENER: Another touch of humor if you're interested in how a bomber crew gets its name. We had a pilot who was a very unique guy and he wasn't our favorite. It fit your pattern of the problems in your personal relationship (inaudible) and his wife had

a pet name for him, a nickname for him, Chickee. And our bomber was going to be named Chickee except that the other three flying officers and I got together with the crew and "Colliers" magazine had a magnificent sailor, Alfred, the stupid sailor, and we named our bomber Alfred and Alfred, the stupid sailor, was on an Air Force bomber swabbing the decks and wherever we went people broke up in laughter because at one point somebody painted Staff Sergeant stripes on Alfred's sleeve and here was a swabee who was a Staff Sergeant. That's how our bomber Alfred got its name.

AUTHOR: There are a lot of great stories about how names are chosen. Maurice, you want to jump in?

LISTENER: Yes, on behalf of everyone again I want to thank you. I want to say two things. First, something that is implicit in what Jim has done that we ought to remember and that is individual terrorism and I want to tell sort of a trivial story about how one heroic pilot arrived (inaudible) after the first Swinefurt mission. I was at sea with a big convoy, we had a battleship, the (inaudible) and lots of people and we heard at sea about Swinefurt and the horrendous losses and we knew that our doctrine had collapsed. We knew that we could not survive the war this way. Now when we got to England, we discovered that people there deflying Wright Patterson field had gone ahead and invented and created and had manufactured wing (inaudible) and we flew 46,000 sorties (phonetic) before we saw they wouldn't work so that we could at least do something about taking care of the ghastliness that had been exposed at Swinefurt on the (inaudible) bombers. But while we were brooding about this and it was a very serious matter to us, a single pilot, a raft pilot of a flight in a Spitfire came out over the convoy and tried to kill himself with aerobatics. It was the most reckless display of flying I have ever seen and he had thousands and thousands and thousands of American soldiers on the ships in this convoy standing and cheering. And

the one man, the contribution of the one man, the Achilles, whoever, somehow reassured that there was enough in us and in them, in the English, to let us survive, the little areas of individual performance, individual achievement the one person could make could make it happen. Now in discussing all these losses let me tell you something that I have been told. It's a trivial story again but at one point I have from (inaudible) and I went to Eighth bomber command west of London. I guess either in Israelstown (phonetic)—but in any event, I got the bomber command to talk to the people and they had a chart with a curtain over it. Well we were used to that omission but this seemed to me to be strange and I said, "I want to see what's behind there, what is it?" And the fellow said, "Well you're from (inaudible), it doesn't hurt if you know." And he pulled the curtain and there were two lines; one was the casualty rate and the other one was the length of tour and they were adjusting the tour, increasing the tour as the losses went down, decreasing the tour as the losses went up so that there was that mathematical chance of survival. But it was a gruesome business because it meant that we were all expendable. The bright boys in the back room were seeing to it there was a way to keep morale going. But in any event, we're indebted to Jim Shepard because his story is going to be what's left after we're gone. Let me say one final thing. It's about (inaudible), the greatest historian we ever had, ever heard of. He was an Admiral in the Athenian Navy in the 27 Year War whenever it was 431 to 404 against Sparta and he was cashiered because his fleet was in the wrong place, at a place called Antripolas (phoentic) so he wrote a history of the war. And he had a kind of austere, crude vision of the collapse of the world that has been unmatched. He even felt that we might forget where Prafuel (phonetic) was, the island where the war started so he carefully described where the island was. He warned us—gave us a warning that we defy everyday when we go to Greece. He said when these cities collapse and fail, do not think that Athens was as glorious nor Sparta as mean as their ruins seem to show. He did all these things, tried to preserve the story of the heroism



for us. But things that everybody knew he did not tell us and the one thing we want to know about that war is the thing he didn't tell us and that is how were the battleships rowed. We know all about them. We've got the stone docks where they were built, we have got the records of the rich people who built them, the rich people who equipped them. We know exactly how many of each of the four kinds of crew were aboard but we don't know how the oars were set up because (inaudible) didn't think it necessary to tell us. So that part of the war is gone. What we can hope for from people like Jim Shepard and, I hope, others who will work again in this rich field is that our story will be remembered and that the actuality somehow can be sensed. Jim it has been a pleasure and a privilege.

AUTHOR: Thank you, sir.

(Applause)

LISTENER: Well I certainly want to thank Jim Shepard for a wonderful evening and I want to close the evening with a prayer, Maurice.

Oh God, as we leave this hall protect us, help us reach home safely, help us remember and cherish the associations of our comrades in the great war. Help us be beautiful in our obligation to our communities, our state and our nation. Help us be what we can be and protect us as we hope.  
In the name of God, Amen.

Amen.

LISTENER: I certainly want to thank you. It was really a pleasure having you here.

AUTHOR: Thank you.

LISTENER: Certainly enjoyed it.

AUTHOR: It was really a pleasure to be here just to get this chance.

LISTENER: Some of the things you said were exactly the way I looked at it because we often wondered how. . . .

END OF MEETING

11/24/87

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December 23, 1987

Dear Russell ....

Please forgive. I had a terrible time getting your tape back -- promises, promises and more promises. I finally had to pick it up myself.

Thanks for letting me have use of the tape; its excellent and I'm sure unique.

Sorry again for the long and irresponsible delay and a Merry Xmas.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John McCollum". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J".

John McCollum

2/12/92

Russell -

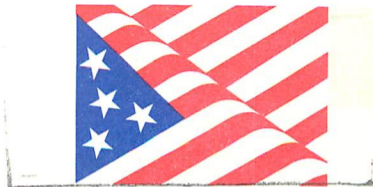
Ken Blackshaw tells  
me a current issue of ECHOES  
is out. I didn't get one: am I  
lead, deligent or both?

Ken



JOHN W. MC COLLUM  
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Marked 13 Feb 92



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**John W. McCollum**

Russell - Thank you so much



July 19, 1996

Mr. Russell A. Strong, Editor  
306<sup>th</sup> Echoes  
5323 Cheval Place  
Charlotte, NC 28205-4937

Dear Russell:

This confirms my recent telephone call. On July 18, I called you and asked your permission to publish excerpts from *First Over Germany* in the newsletter—*War Stories*—which I edit for the National Capital Area Chapter, 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force Historical Society.

We are putting the issue together at the present time and will, as I said on the telephone, have a piece on Snuffy Smith and you agreed we can excerpt from pages 103 to 111 in your book. We are, of course, crediting the publication and providing your address for those who wish to order copies.

In a few days the issue will be sent to the printer and as soon as it's available, I will send you a copy. Meanwhile, I send a copy of the most recent issue.

Thank you again for your kind agreement.

Sincerely,

John W. McCollum  
Editor, *War Stories*  
P.O. Box 5656  
Washington, D.C. 20016  
1-800-443-5903

Enclosure

# First A-bomb pilot group to dedicate peace memorial

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — When George Marquardt looks back 45 years, he focuses on a millisecond: the vibration of a steeply banking B-29 and the fireball, always the fireball, rising from Hiroshima.

"It was such a terrific blast. It was like the sun had come out of the ground and just exploded," recalls Mr. Marquardt, who was pilot of a chase plane that accompanied the bomber Enola Gay on Aug. 6, 1945.

More than half a lifetime later, Mr. Marquardt and other members of the 509th Composite Group will gather in the desert west of Salt Lake City to celebrate the peace they believe the atomic bomb brought.

The Aug. 25 dedication of a peace memorial in the town of Wendover, Nev., is expected to draw more than 200 members of the bomber group.

They will include retired Brig. Gen. Paul W. Tibbets, pilot of the

Enola Gay, and retired Maj. Gen. Charles "Chuck" Sweeney, who flew the B-29 that dropped the A-bomb on Nagasaki three days after the Hiroshima attack. Nearly 200,000 people died in the bombings, and Japan capitulated five days later, ending World War II.

Among the speakers will be Hideaki Kase, an author and adviser to two Japanese prime ministers. In a telephone interview from Tokyo, Mr. Kase said the idea of speaking to his country's former enemies was disconcerting.

"It is very hard to come up with appropriate words," he said.

"What I know is this: Japan during the war also had a program to develop a nuclear bomb, and had we succeeded I'm sure we would have used it. We have no ground to complain," Mr. Kase said.

The ceremony will dedicate a

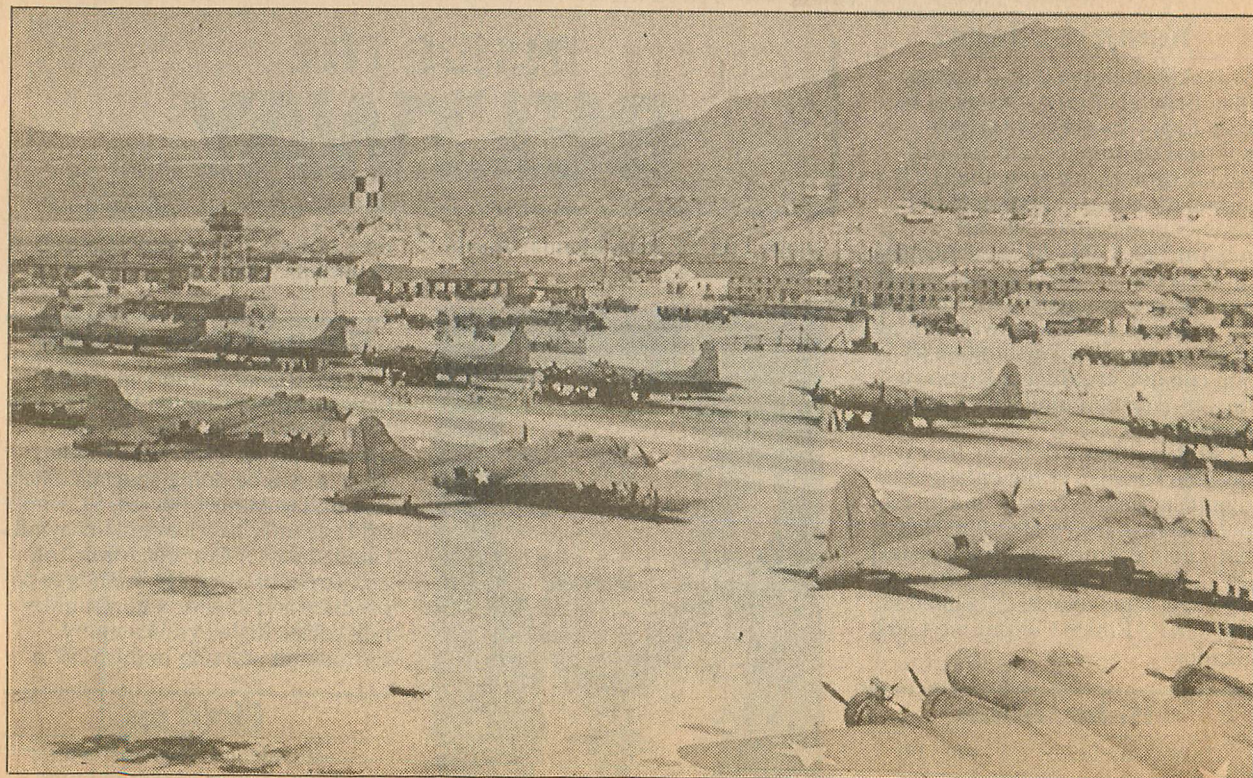
16-foot obelisk honoring the 509th, "all who contributed to bring this dreadful war to an end" and the dead of Hiroshima and Nagasaki "for their sacrifice to mankind's struggle for a more peaceful world."

Gen. Sweeney, now 70, said, "As a military man, I think . . . maybe we stopped some world wars."

The 509th, with Gen. Tibbets in command, was formed in September 1944 specifically to drop the "gadget" being developed at Los Alamos, N.M. The unit consisted of 15 modified B-29s, 220 officers and 1,500 enlisted men.

Gen. Tibbets chose Wendover Air Base for training because of its isolation.

"We never questioned what we were doing or why. . . . We were dedicated to Tibbets," said Mr. Marquardt, 71.



This now abandoned air base at Wendover, Utah, shown in a 1940s photo, will be home to a peace monument for the 200,000 Japanese who died at Hiroshima and Nagasaki. American pilots will dedicate the memorial Aug. 25.

AP



Russell:

Can you see this?

John McCollin