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## 306th Bombardment Group Association

### Reunion Reset Sept 17-20

### Crystal City Hotel Ready to Hold All

In finalizing plans for the 1987 reunion of the 306th Bomb Group, it became evident that a change in dates must be effected, and the reunion has been shifted one week later to September 17-20, reports Brig. Gen. William S. Rader, 1987 reunion chairman.

The hotel remains the same, the Hyatt Regency-Crystal City. This excellent facility, entirely adequate to hold those reunion attendees who want to stay in the headquarters hotel, is located in Arlington, VA, on the Jefferson Davis Highway.

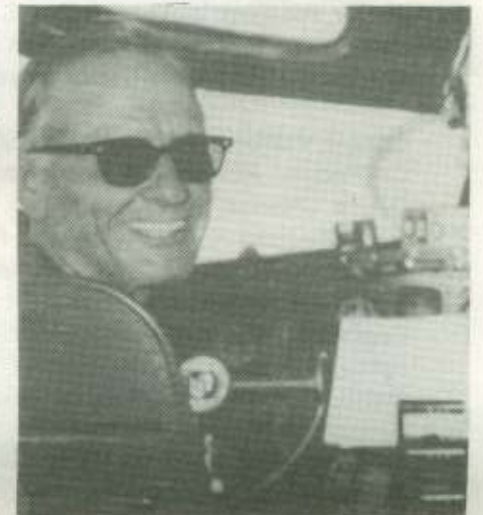
Of particular advantage is its location about one mile from the terminal at Washington's National Airport. Thus, a short and inexpensive taxi ride will take air travelers to the hotel.

To those familiar with the Crystal City area, this is the southernmost hotel in this complex of apartment buildings, hotels and office structures. On the west side of the highway are several less expensive hotels.

All rooms, whether occupied by one or two persons, will be priced at \$69 per day. A reservation form is included with this issue of Echoes, along with a preliminary registration form for the reunion itself.

"I would urge those planning to attend to make their reservations early," says President Donald R. Ross. "After visiting this facility and working with its personnel, I feel that we have selected an outstanding site for the 1987 reunion."

Needless to say, those who have never visited Washington, D.C., or who have not been there in many years, will find it a convenient center from which to visit the capital city, or Mount Vernon, or Old Town in Alexandria, or the host of tourist attractions to be found



Get in the cockpit of a 17 once again, and let Dellon Bumgardner take you around the field. See pages 4-5.

### England, Scotland Trip Ready

An interesting group is beginning to assemble for a 306th trip to England and Scotland, and any others desiring to join ought to contact Russ Strong at the earliest possible date. We would suggest calling him daytime (616) 383-6162 or evenings (616) 344-6466 so that you can receive the detailed materials and registration forms as quickly as possible.

"England Revisited" will arrive in London May 19, after most people have taken overnight flights from various departure points in the U.S.

Our tour bus will meet us at the airport, and our stops will include Luton and Woburn Abbey en route to Bedford, where we will spend the night. The next day we will go out to Thurleigh, to Cambridge, pay a visit to the 306th Strategic Wing at Mildenhall, and then return to Bedford for dinner with the British 306th enthusiasts.

From that point we will head north through Lincoln, Stamford and York, where we will overnight, to Edinburgh. We will spend three nights there while touring the city,

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Bob Seelos holds the piece of his plane, Montana Power, which was saved for him in Belgium since 1943.

## Seelos Returns to Scene of Tragedy of 5 April 1943

By Robert Seelos

The 306th "Echoes" lists me as one of the "306th original pilots," having been with the group from its inception in the spring of 1942. We trained in B-17E type aircraft at Wendover, Utah. In August 1942 the group flew to Westover Field at Chicopee Falls, Massachusetts. We were eventually supplied with new B-17F aircraft which we had to check out thoroughly and prepare

them for eventual combat duty. On September eleventh, 1942, I flew non-stop from Gander Lake, Newfoundland to Prestwick, Scotland.

By April 1943, I had completed eighteen of the required twenty-three missions over the continent and Germany. During that time, I had lost one waist gunner, one bombardier, two navigators and one co-pilot from enemy anti-aircraft flak and fighter aircraft attacks.

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Recently the USAF Museum at Wright-Patterson AFB added to its collection of aircraft a B-1 bomber, shown here on its arrival. These pictures were taken by Jack Grimm.

## Update on 306th Address Listing

- Arlidge, Richard R., 3665 Valencia Rd., Aptos, CA 95003 367.  
 Baker, William R., 3037 South Blvd., Charlotte, NC 28209 368.  
 Barnett, Eli, 41 Smith St., Marblehead, MA 01945 423.  
 Bergener, Wilford N., 1587 S. 15th St., Salt Lake City, UT 84105 367.  
 Biggs, Vernon, 1584 Edendale, Dayton, OH 45432 368.  
 Birkenmeier, Tony, 4419 Osceola, St. Louis, MO 63116 369.  
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 Butler, Richard, 2032 Sturgeon St., Springfield, OH 45506 367.  
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 Chicarelli, F. Vincent, 108 Bayswater St., East Boston, MA 02128 423.  
 Coppa, Victor J., 445 Blair Rd., Springfield, PA 19064 369.  
 Cournoyer, Armand, Box 392, Yarmouth Port, MA 02675 369.  
 Dapra, Charles, 152 Carlton Ave. #2, Los Gatos, CA 95030 367.  
 Dore, Eugene H., 100 17th Ave., N. Hopkins, MN 55343 369.  
 Dunn, James L., PO Box 201, Shamrock, OK 74068 367.  
 Edwards, James C., 57 Vivian Ct., Novato, CA 94947 367.  
 Evans, Floyd, 1005 River Oak Dr., Seguin, TX 78155 369.  
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 Goss, Marvin H., PO Box 7904, Missoula, MT 59801 368.  
 Grace, Robert L., Rt. 3, Box 205, Clinton, TN 32716 369.  
 Gudger, V. Lamar, 12 Westhaven, Asheville, NC 28804 423.  
 Haase, William J., 110 Downing Dr., Waukesha, WI 53186 369.  
 Harmston, Howard, 49 Viola Cir #51-8, Roosevelt, UT 84066 368.  
 Henley, Jack S., 1238 Pataha St., Pomroy, WA 99347 369.  
 Hoisington, Olin M., Jr., 5811 Memphis, Wichita, KS 67220 369.  
 Hopkins, Cecil, Rt. 1, Box 587, Buckeye, AZ 85326 368.  
 Inman, James W., 506 E. 7th, Sheridan, IN 46069 368.  
 Johns, Lloyd, 3077 Via Serena, Laguna Hills, CA 92653 369.  
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 Ketcham, Gailard T., 2435 Kind Ave., Dayton, OH 45420 369.  
 Kreamelmeyer, Robert R., 2850 Star Ridge Ct., Montrose, CO 81401 423.  
 Lawson, Allan, 3413 W. Burgundy Ct., Mequon, WI 53029 368.  
 Lazar, Jack, 53445 Tundra Dr., Rochester, MI 48313 369.  
 Leben, Joseph, 26429 S. Sedona Dr., Sun Lakes, AZ 85224 369.  
 Liles, Walter A., PO Box 75, Ellendale, TN 38029 369.  
 Lomar, Alfred A., 715 Hillcrest Blvd., Phillipsburg, NJ 08865 369.  
 Maddock, Gordon M., 2277 College Way, Medford, OR 97504 367.  
 Maxwell, Russell R., Rt. 1, Nox 241, Long Lake, MO 65590 423.  
 McCarthy, Daniel F., PO Box 415, Conway, NH 03818 369.

- McManus, George J., 1207 Line St., Sunbury, PA 17801 369.  
 Millette, F. Jack, Jr., 116 Arlette Dr., Lafayette, LA 70503 423.  
 Morere, H. J., 1508 E. 2nd St., Pass Christian, MS 39571 369.  
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 Peterman, William W., 2300 W. Goodhope #148, Glendale, WI 53209 423.  
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 Savino, Joseph A., 1834 N. Oak Park Ave., Chicago, IL 60635 367.  
 Schember, Joseph V., 14839 Tacuba Dr., LaMirada, CA 90638 423.  
 Simonian, Samuel, 457 Evergreen NE, Palm Bay, FL 32907 369.  
 Smith, Leslie E., PO Box 501, Hobart, OK 73651 367.  
 Snook, Donald L., 45 N. Turkey Hill Rd., Westport, CT 06880 369.  
 Spevak, Victor M., 1401 Key Parkway East C301, Frederick, MD 21701 367.  
 Steinhaus, Rev. John, 2400 S. Fremont Ave., Alhambra, CA 91803 423.  
 Thompson, Carl R., 1824 Stonegate, Denton, TX 76204 368.  
 Thompson, Dale V., 403 E. Walnut St., Argus, IN 46501 423.  
 Tinkham, Clifford P., Rt. 1, Box 526, Bath, ME 04330 369.  
 Winward, John M., 3308 Rabalo St., Ridgecrest, CA 93535 423.

## Zippos Praised By Ernie Pyle

The Zippo Manufacturing Company, of Bradford, Pennsylvania, makes Zippo cigarette lighters. In peacetime, they are nickel-plated and shiny. In wartime they are black, with a rough finish. Zippos are not available at all to civilians. In Army PXs all around the world, where a batch comes in occasionally, there are long waiting lists.

While I was in Italy, I had a letter from the president of the Zippo Company. It seems he is devoted to my column. It seems further that he'd had an idea. He had sent to our headquarters in Washington to get my signature, and then he was having the signature engraved on a special nickel-plated lighter and was going to send it to me as a gift.

Pretty soon there was another letter. The president of the Zippo Company had had another brainstorm. In addition to my superheterodyne lighter he was going to send fifty of the regular ones for me to give to friends.

I was amused at the modesty of the president's letter. He said, "You probably know nothing about the Zippo lighter."

If he only knew how the soldiers coveted them! They'll burn in the wind, and pilots say they are the only kind that will light at extreme altitudes. Why, they're so popular I had three of them stolen from me in one year.

Well, at last the lighters came. My own lighter was a beauty, with my name on one side and a little American flag on the other. I began smoking twice as much as usual just because I enjoyed lighting the thing.

The fifty others went like hot cakes. I found myself equipped with a wonderful weapon for winning friends and influencing people. All fifty-one of us were grateful to Mr. Zippo.

## More Issues of 'Echoes'

Here's my help for future issues of Echoes!

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

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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



## Color Photos of Airplanes

B-17 Flying Fortress in Color, by Steve Bird-sall. Carrollton, TX, Squadron/Signal Publications. 32 pages.

This is an interesting, small publication with a host of color pictures of principally 8th AF B-17s, with lots of nose art in color. That seems to be one area in which the 306th is especially short—color photos of airplanes and scenes around the base.

This is an interesting paperback to add to one's collection, but must rate more as a picture book than anything else.

"Piccadilly Commando" and "Meat Hound" are two of the 306th planes shown.

The 306th Bombardment Group Historical Association: Donald R. Ross, president; William F. Houllhan, vice president; Russell A. Strong, secretary, and C. Dale Briscoe, treasurer. Directors: Robert Crane, G. Kieth Jackson, Gerald Rotter, Robert Starzynski; Ralph Bordner and John L. Ryan, past presidents.

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

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The 306th Bomb Group Historical Association is a Federally tax exempt organization, and as a veterans' group is classified as 501 (c) (19).

This item was submitted by Col Warren Borges, and was found in the 27 August 46 issue of the Boston Traveler.

## 1946 Account Ranks Fortress As Superior to B-24

One of the never ending arguments of the flying war was whether the Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress or the Consolidated B-24 Liberator was the better heavy bomber.

The squabble, which got started during the war between bomber crews, is still going strong here and there.

We can now settle this one, since both the B-24 and the B-17 are obsolete and discontinued as production aircraft, most of them consigned to junk piles. Now it can be told.

### The B-17 wins.

It's official, on the basis of some inside information from the AAF Office of Flying Safety, which says, among other things:

"The B-24 compares unfavorably with the B-17," and;

"The poor safety record of the B-24 is apparently reflected in its inferior combat record;" and a lot of other uncomplimentary things hitherto unpublished.

These are conclusions developed from a test period, covering 1943 and 1944, during which detailed accident data were compiled and analyzed.

Some observations in the report:

The B-24 contributes more to AAF accident damage than any other airplane.

During 1943 and the first half of 1944, B-24 accidents resulted in 432 complete wrecks (estimated cost \$142 million) and 1672 fatalities.

In the first six months of 1944, this one model accounted for 20 percent of the total cost of AAF accidents in the United States, and for 25 percent of all fatalities.

Incomplete reports of B-24 accidents on non-combat missions overseas reveal that during the two months of May and June, 1944, a total of 73 B-24s were wrecked and 212 persons killed. These totals were considerably higher than the 49 wrecks and 182 fatalities which occurred in the U.S. Together, the accident records of the B-24 at home and abroad comprise a heavy toll.

Accidents also occur in combat, just as they do in non-combat operations. These should be added to provide a complete picture of B-24 accident losses, but obviously it is difficult to determine which losses in combat are due to enemy action and which are not.

(The number of B-24s in the AAF as of June 30, 1944, was 5,877, the largest number of any tactical model.)

The report, comparing the B-24 with the B-17, points out:

While it is recognized that the B-24 is a critical airplane, much more difficult to fly than the B-17, and therefore that its accident record is naturally poorer, the fact that they are both heavy bombers built to perform essentially the same type of missions makes comparison legitimate.

The comparison: During the first six months of 1944, the B-24:

**Flew six percent fewer hours than the B-17.**

**Had 21 percent more accidents.**

**Had 100 percent more fatal accidents.**

**Accounted for 80 percent more fatalities and 30 percent more major injuries.**

**Had 66 percent more wrecks.**



Fortress

This is a B-17 G over a target on the continent. Note the lack of paint and the staggered waist windows.

In a discussion of certain types of accidents and accident factors occurring "much more frequently in the B-24 than in the B-17," the report says the B-24, compared with the B-17, had:

**117 percent more takeoff accidents.**

**74 percent more forced landings.**

**44 percent more power plant failures.**

**28 percent more accidents involving material failures and 11 percent more pilot errors.**

Commenting on the "poor safety record" for the B-24, which "is apparently reflected in its inferior combat record," the report notes:

"Since the B-24 has a large number of accidents at home, en route overseas (2.3 percent compared to 1.6 percent for the B-17), and on non-combat missions in foreign theatres, it is to be assumed that accidents also occur frequently in combat, and that accidents reduce combat effectiveness."

Combat analysis of the B-17 and B-24 in the European and Mediterranean Theatres shows that the B-17 has brought down three enemy planes for each B-17 shot down, compared with two for the B-24, and that the B-17, when hit, has been a little over half as likely to be lost.

**It has further been determined that the B-17 has had a third longer combat life in hours, just as it has a third longer life in the U.S.**

Altogether, it has been concluded that the B-24 is about 75 percent more vulnerable to loss than the B-17, once it is exposed.

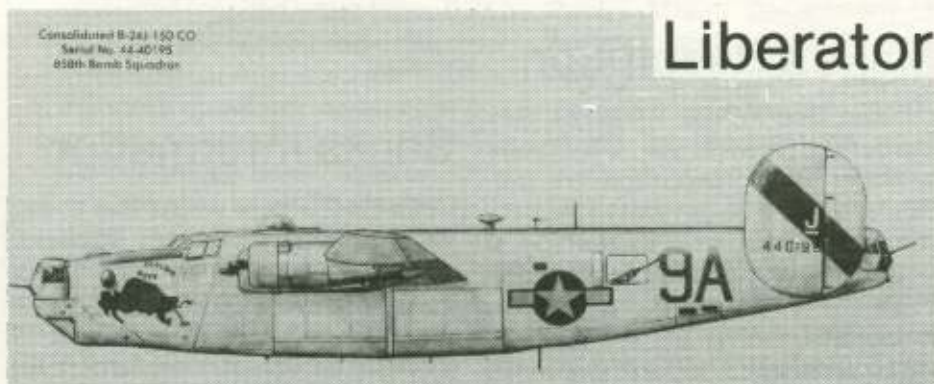
In volume VI, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, by Craven and Cate, the following statement is made on pp. 207-8:

"The B-17 and the B-24 inevitably invited comparison. Coming along four to five years after the B-17, the B-24 possessed an initial advantage. It carried a larger bomb load than the B-17 and could carry the load farther with a crew of the same size. Listed in the charts originally as having a range of 2,850 miles with a 2,500 pound bomb load, experience showed that it did have a longer reach than any other competing plane. It was this advantage that gave the B-24 the call over the B-17 for service in CBI and SWPA, where Kenney's Fifth Air Force used it for the 2,400-mile round trip attacks on Balikpapan in 1944, and where regularly if less spectacularly, it extended the coverage of overwater search. Against the German Air Force, however, combat experience showed the plane to be lacking in armament and armor. Attempts to remedy these and other shortcomings increased the weight of the plane and altered flight characteristics in such a way as to render it less stable. Lt. Gen. James H. Doolittle, commanding the Eighth Air Force, made his preference for the B-17 clear in a letter of January 1945. By that date the increased range of the B-17 some time since had robbed the B-24 of its chief advantage. Against the Luftwaffe, the capital enemy, the rugged and steady B-17 remained the natural pick."

On page 206, the official history states:

"The B-17, although the first of the country's heavy bombers, was not produced in as great quantity as was the B-24. Between January 1940 and 31 August 1945, the AAF accepted a total of 12,692 B-17's and 18,190 B-24's. The peak AAF inventory for B-17's was 4,574 in August 1944, and for B-24's, 6,043 in September 1944. The maximum number of overseas

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Liberator

Consolidated B-24-150 CO  
Serial No. 44-40195  
650th Bomb Squadron

This B-24 sketch came from the Allan Blue book, *The Fortunes of War*.



Members of the 1628th Ordnance Company at Thurleigh in April 1943. Identifications of this picture will be welcomed by the editor.

## 1628th Co. Came Early To Thurleigh

The ordnance company was an essential part of the Thurleigh operation, not quite from the beginning, but from mid-December 1942 on. Before that it was handled by a much smaller contingent and wasn't augmented until the arrival of the 1628th Ordnance S&M Company.

The 1628th had been headquartered at Westover Field, MA, where the 306th had stopped en route overseas, and where it picked up that first contingent of 35 B-17F's, having flown its training base E models to Westover to await the arrival of the newer planes.

While the 306th was out of there in early September, Captain H. B. Blumenthal and his company did not receive orders to move until about 1 December, when they left for Indiantown Gap, PA, to continue processing for overseas duty.

They left for New York and Pier 59 about 8 December, there boarding the Queen Mary, and departing later that day. There were severe storms in mid-Atlantic, and they did not arrive in England until 12 December, en route having missed a convoy bound for Africa.

It was kind of all a mistake, but the 1628th finally boarded a train for Bedford where the trucks met them and took them on to Thurleigh.

"Thurleigh provided us with the best pancakes I've ever tasted," recalls Bill Withrow, one of the 1628th contingent.

In all there were two officers and 48 enlisted men. The officers were Blumenthal, 1st Lt. J. F. McDonnell, motor officer, and 1st Sgt. George Mahoney.

## General Eaker Gets Due In New Parton Biography

*Air Force Spoken Here, General Ira Eaker and the Command of the Air*, by James Parton. Bethesda, Md., Adler and Adler, 1986. xii + 557 pp.

*Air Force Spoken Here* may be one of the stranger book titles in existence, certainly for a biography, but it captures the essence of its subject, General Ira Eaker.

James Parton, long an associate and confidant of the Eighth Air Force commander, has presented herein a warm and detailed biography of the man he idolized and assisted through WWII. Having come out of the repertorial world, Parton was an excellent observer, who could look accurately at the man before him, but who also had numerous opportunities to see Eaker in close and in a wide variety of situations.

While one might say that Parton could observe Eaker, warts and all, he found precious few warts.

The book evenly covers his pre-war exploits, his command of the 8th, his work in the Mediterranean area, and his postwar life, almost down to the present day. There is little gloss, but rather a complete picture of the airman and his efforts to push forward heavy bombardment.

There are few errors in the book that this reviewer noted, one being on the date correspondents first accompanied 8th planes on a raid to Germany, it having been January 27, 1943, rather than the February 26, quoted.

The story of Eaker's dismissal of Col. Charles Overacker as commander of the 306th was taken from *First Over Germany*.

Because Parton was a close member of the Eighth Air Force headquarters "family" from the time of inception in England, until Eaker moved to the Mediterranean, it will provide many readers with excellent background to fill in the

gaps about events of which they have intimate knowledge.

The book leaves no doubt in one's mind that Eaker was one of a very small handful of high ranking Air Force generals during WWII who earned the devotion and esteem of those for whom they labored and those whom they led.

Urge your local library to secure this book so that you can enjoy an in-depth study of Eighth Air Force history from the perspective of the commander's office. You will find it time well spent.

R.A.S.

## Return to Thurleigh

*"The Falcon" looks the same today but how the yew has grown  
"The Jackal" stands untouched by time but two score years have  
flown*

*The old church tells me one more time to Thurleigh I've come  
home.*

*Here is sturdy "Green Hedge" still thatched as I recall,  
On down the road to old main gate, which isn't there at all.  
And now I stand and read the words deep—graven in the stone,  
To honor Airmen long since passed, who England made her own.  
Now on to crumbling hardstands, Nissen huts, a few,  
Even after all these years, still waiting those who flew.  
Broad sweeping fields, her hills the same, the lonely nightbird's  
call,*

*Faint voices in the whispering wind as darkness slowly falls.  
I seem to see familiar figures, young faces I recall,  
Ghostly engines running up, I hear their rise and fall.  
Now all is still, one last salute; I must turn for home.*

*When you come back to Thurleigh, friend, you'll find you're not  
alone.*

Ed Brewer  
423rd Squadron



General Eaker at Thurleigh

## Make a Resolution

From the fertile mind of Rex Barber out in Syracuse, UT, comes a New Year's resolution we particularly liked: to get two more people to come to the 1987 reunion. If you missed making any resolutions, try this one on belatedly—make a few phone calls, write some letters, and make your own reservations!

## Seeks Information

Ex-RAF officer would like to correspond with any 369th Squadron member who flew on the mission to Cologne, 15 October 44, or has knowledge of Lt. R. A. Stalker O-772763, bombardier on Robert Ritter's crew.

## Book Traces Planes to 1st Wing, Division

*Fortresses of the Big Triangle First*, by Cliff T. Bishop. Bishops Stortford, England, East Anglia Books. 320 pages. \$36.

There is no doubt in this reviewer's mind that the Eighth Air Force of WWII is the most written about and researched American air force in history. And the search for more data goes on.

Cliff Bishop's book is subtitled, "A history of the aircraft assigned to the First Bombardment Wing and First Bombardment Division of the Eighth Air Force from August 1942 to 31st March 1944."

That in a nutshell tells you what the book is about. It is a comprehensive compilation of extensive data about the airplanes—where they came from and what happened to them, day by day, month by month.

The 306th comes in for its full share of mention, with *First Over Germany* as one of several principal works used, as cited in its selected bibliography, which includes only one other bomb group history, that of the 351st.

While there are charts and charts, there are also many, many maps, many photographs of individual airplanes, organizational charts, aircraft systems diagrams, and data compiled in many ways so that almost anyone could quickly come to grasp with the work of the Eighth. It is a prime example of the patient collection of data over a long period of time, followed by a careful study as to how to display it so that it is useful.

Which was the last of the original "flock" of B-17Fs that flew to England to serve with the 306th? It was Marlen Reber's "Eager Beaver," 41-24487. At the period this book covers, this plane was still assigned to the Group. The second longest serving plane was 41-24460, Mac McKay's original plane, which was transferred to the 482nd Bomb Group 22 Sep 43.

The short service record went to 42-29806, a Boeing-built B-17F, which arrived 19 May 43 and was MIA 21 May 43. According to Missing Aircrew Report records it was probably flown by Floyd J. Fields on a raid to Wilhelmshaven.

A bit of trivia is that two 306th aircraft are pictured in Iceland while being ferried to England. One was 42-29985, which crashed on 17 April 1943 in Iceland, came to the 369th 22 Aug 43, and was shot down 8 Oct 43 at Bremen, flown by Thomas Ledgerwood. The other was 42-29779, which ran off the taxi strip in Iceland and was mired in the mud there 1 May 43. It came to Thurleigh 4 Jun 43 and was missing in action 28 July 43, with Jack Harris as the pilot.

Bishop's book joins an ever growing list of such publications which are delineating the many bits and pieces of fact and fancy

## FROM ERNIE PYLE

### Saluting Americans Amused British; Housing Difficult in London

Two things that amused the British were the "pink" trousers our officers wear and our perpetual saluting. The American Army was very strict about saluting there. Everybody had to salute. Second lieutenants saluted other second lieutenants. Arms flailed up and down by the thousands as though everybody were crazy. People jabbed each other in the eyes saluting. On one short street much traveled by Americans they had to make sidewalk traffic one-way, presumably to prevent salute casualties.

A friend of mine, a captain back from Africa, was stopped one day by another captain just over from America who bawled the living daylights out of him for not returning his salute. My captain friend said he couldn't because his right arm had become muscle-bound from waving it too much.

They were strict about dress too. We had to wear our dress blouses and either pinks or dark-green dress trousers. Everybody looked just so and exactly like everybody else.

I thought I looked very pretty when I arrived for all my clothes were clean for the first time in months. But I hadn't reckoned with the headquarters atmosphere. I have never been stared at so much in my life as during my first three days. I had on a British battle jacket, o.d. pants, and infantry boots. They had never seen anybody dressed like that before. Nobody knew what this strange apparition was, but they all played safe and saluted it anyhow—and then turned and stared beligerently at it. I think sheer awe was all that kept the MPs from picking me up.

Finally, I dug up a trunk I had stored when I went to Africa and got out my old brown civilian cuit and a gray hat, and after that I was all right. People just thought me a bedraggled bank clerk, and it was much better.

After going the rounds I decided that if the Army failed to get ashore on D-day there would be enough American correspondents to force through a beachhead on their own.

There were gray men who covered the last war, and men from the Pacific, and there were little girls and big girls and pretty girls, and diplomatic correspondents and magazine contributors and editors and cubs and novelists. I decided that if *Dog News* didn't get a man over pretty quickly to cover the dog angle of the invasion, I personally would never buy another copy.

There were at least three hundred correspondents and the report was that transmission facilities were set up to carry a maximum of half a million words a day back to America.

While in London we correspondents could wear either uniforms or civilian clothes, as we pleased. Some of the correspondents up from Italy had no civilian clothes and couldn't get any—since British coupons were not obtainable—so they had to wear uniforms constantly.

I was a civilian again for that little interlude, thanks to the old brown suit I had left in the trunk. The only trouble was, I got cold if the weather turned chilly. The only outer coat I had was a dirty old mackinaw. I couldn't wear that with my brown suit, since it's against the rules to mix military and civilian clothing. I couldn't wear it with my uniform, for it was nonregulation for city dress, and the MPs would have picked me up. And I couldn't buy a topcoat, for I couldn't get British coupons. So I just froze, brother, froze.

We could live where we pleased, and that was a problem. It was hard to find a place to live in crowded London. Some correspondents were lucky enough to find apartments or to share apartments with Army officers they knew. Others managed to get into hotels.

Through a friend I got into one of London's finest hotels. Ordinarily, a person was allowed to stay there only a few days. But again through the influence of this very influential friend, the hotel seemed to shut its eyes and let me stay, although nothing was actually said about it—and I was afraid to bring up the subject.

For the first two days in my luxurious hotel room I had an odd feeling of guilt. I felt ashamed, coming from Italy where so many lived so miserably, to be sleeping in a beautiful soft bed in a room so tastefully decorated and deeply carpeted, with a big bathroom and constant hot water and three buttons to press to bring running either a waiter, a valet, or a maid. But I found I have strong will power when it comes to readjusting to comfortable life. After a couple of days I said, "Boy, take it while you can get it," and didn't feel the least bit ashamed any more.

Incidentally, you just can't break down English traditions. For example, I registered as Ernie Pyle and then on another line gave my full three names, as the law requires. And do you know how much my hotel bill came? It came weekly in a sealed envelope on which was typed "E. Taylor-Pyle, Esq."

Given time, if I had been a good boy, I might have had "The Honourable" put in front of my name.

that make up the illustrious history of the 8th.

## British Air Museum Sited At Hendon

"ARE WE glorifying war?" asked retired Royal Air Force Wing Commander Bill Wood, OBE. He is a former World War II bomber pilot who directs educational services for the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon in northwest London. "This (question) is always something that is thrown up at us . . . but you have you judge it for yourself.

"For myself, all we are doing is preserving history and recording our heritage and the aircraft that were part of it."

Opened in 1972, the museum is an infant on London's antiques scene. But for air warriors, current and veteran, our side or theirs, it has become a military aviation mecca with 500,000 visitors a year, an estimated ten percent of them from the United States.

One entire building is devoted to the Battle of Britain, complete with Hurricanes and Spitfires behind sandbagged revetments and facing they Messerschmitts, Junkers and Focke-Wulfs they once faced in the skies.

THERE ARE more than 100 airplanes in appropriate settings; a board from a World War II pub containing the chalked autographs of the famed fighter pilots who hoisted drinks there, sometimes their last pints; and art, documents, archeology and library departments, a wonderful glimpse of yesterday for those now-aging youngsters of the 8th and 9th Air Forces in England during World War II.

It's a new display, a B-17G Flying Fortress (relegated to forest firefighting in Northern California until donated to Hendon in 1983), fully restored in the colors of the 94th Bomb Group and frozen in time on a stand tended by a 1942 Jeep.

## McKee's Luck

The luck of the Irish still holds for John McKee, former 367th pilot who evaded capture when shot down at Romilly in December 1942, and who later returned to England as 92nd Group operations officer. On 8 January 1986, John placed a small sentimental wager on the New Jersey Lottery Number of the Day. He came away \$200 richer. The winning number? But of course, 306!—Joe Consolmagno.



## CAF Searches Out Parts for Its Fortress

When the editor reached the replacement depot on his way back to the States in late 1944, he wrote back to friends still at Thurleigh that the inspection of what you were leaving with was so casual that you could, indeed, bring home anything you could get in a bag.

Did you happen to bring back any essential parts of a B-17?

And your wife keeps saying, "When are you going to get rid of that junk?"

Dellon Bumgardner says that the Confederate Air Force B-17 needs some items, and we suspect that that is even truer for some of the other Flying Fortresses being restored here in the States and in England.

Dellon's shopping list includes:

1. We have a chin turret mounted with .50 caliber guns, but we have been unable to find the bombardier's control yoke for this, that swung out from his right side.

2. We have a top turret and guns mounted, but no understructure that the engineer stood in from the ring gear downward.

3. We have the ball turret mounted but no mast. (That's the pipe you grabbed as you made your way around the turret to or from the radio room.)

4. Tail wheel tires and tubes are scarce, 26".

5. Main gear wheels, tires and tubes are almost as scarce, 56" 22-ply.

If you have any of these, give Dellon a ring at 713/524-5840. I'll guarantee that you will at least get a ride in the Texas Raiders on some nice summer day.



Pilot Dellon Bumgardner sports a Triangle H on his a-2 jacket today.



## One Can Almost Smell Gasoline As Bumgardner Flies a '17 Again

By Dellon Bumgardner

My last mission in the ETO was on October 7, 1944, when I completed the tour as first pilot of "Begin the Beguine," 368th sqdn. This was a raid on oil installations at Ruhland, Germany. My feelings were the same as other crew members finishing their tour in that at that time we would just as soon never see a "big-assed bird" again.

However, age must mellow a fellow, and 36 years later there came the chance to get involved with B-17G "Texas Raiders," owned by the Confederate Air Force and operated by its Gulf Coast Wing in Houston. After all, the old girl did get us back in one piece in spite of some trying circumstances.

When I first started flying it again, I was struck by some strange observations. First, you feel at home in the cockpit. From somewhere (in the subconscious, I guess) details began to reappear as if it were only yesterday. Forgotten memories emerged. Then there is its remarkable stability in flight. Trim it and it stays there. It's a forgiving and docile old bird and will do what you tell it to do. Control response takes a little getting used to since you can't rush her into anything. But with properly timed input, she responds with surprising agility.

Care to join me on a typical "Raider" flight, with nobody shootin' at you? Okay, here's what we gotta' do.

Do the preflight and pull the props through 9 blades.

Start engines:

Fire guard posted, batteries on, inverters spare to main, hydraulic pump auto, hydraulic pressure up, parking brake on, cowl flaps open, flaps up, master switch on, gyros caged, bomb bay doors closed, then repeat the following for each engine: Starting No. 1 through No.

4. On board fire bottles set for left outboard, booster pump on, throttle cracked, mixture to idle cut-off, props hi rpm, magnetos off, fuel shut off valves on, circuit breakers on, fuel transfer valves and pump off, tokyo valves off, carb heat off, cabin heat off, carburetor air filters on, generators on, starter on for 20 seconds (inertia), starter engaged and booster coil on, roll engine 4 blades, ignition to both, prime, when engine fires steadily get off the starter and boost and run on prime, mixture to auto-rich, when rpm stabilizes and drops slight, get off prime, check oil pressure, stabilize throttle at 1000 rpm, turn off booster pump and check fuel pressure. Repeat for 2, 3, and 4. Warm up until oil temperature and cylinder head temperature are in the green arc. Check vacuum 3-5" hg., 1000 rpm.

Before taxi:

Chocks out, tail wheel unlocked, flight control locks off and controls exercised, parking brake off, radios on and set, transponder standby, taxi on outboards.

Run up:

Tail wheel locked, blast area

clear, parking brake on, engines at 1500 rpm, cycle props hi to low pitch 3 or 4 times, props hi rpm, each feather button depressed in sequence until rpm drops to 1100 rpm, at the same time checking each generator, feather button pulled out, rpm 1500, mag check outboard engines together, then inboards, advance throttles to field barometric pressure on manifold pressure gauges, (about 30" 2100 rpm), each ignition switch from both to left, then both, then right, then both, max drop 125 rpm with engine cowl not shaking, idle engines.

Before take-off:

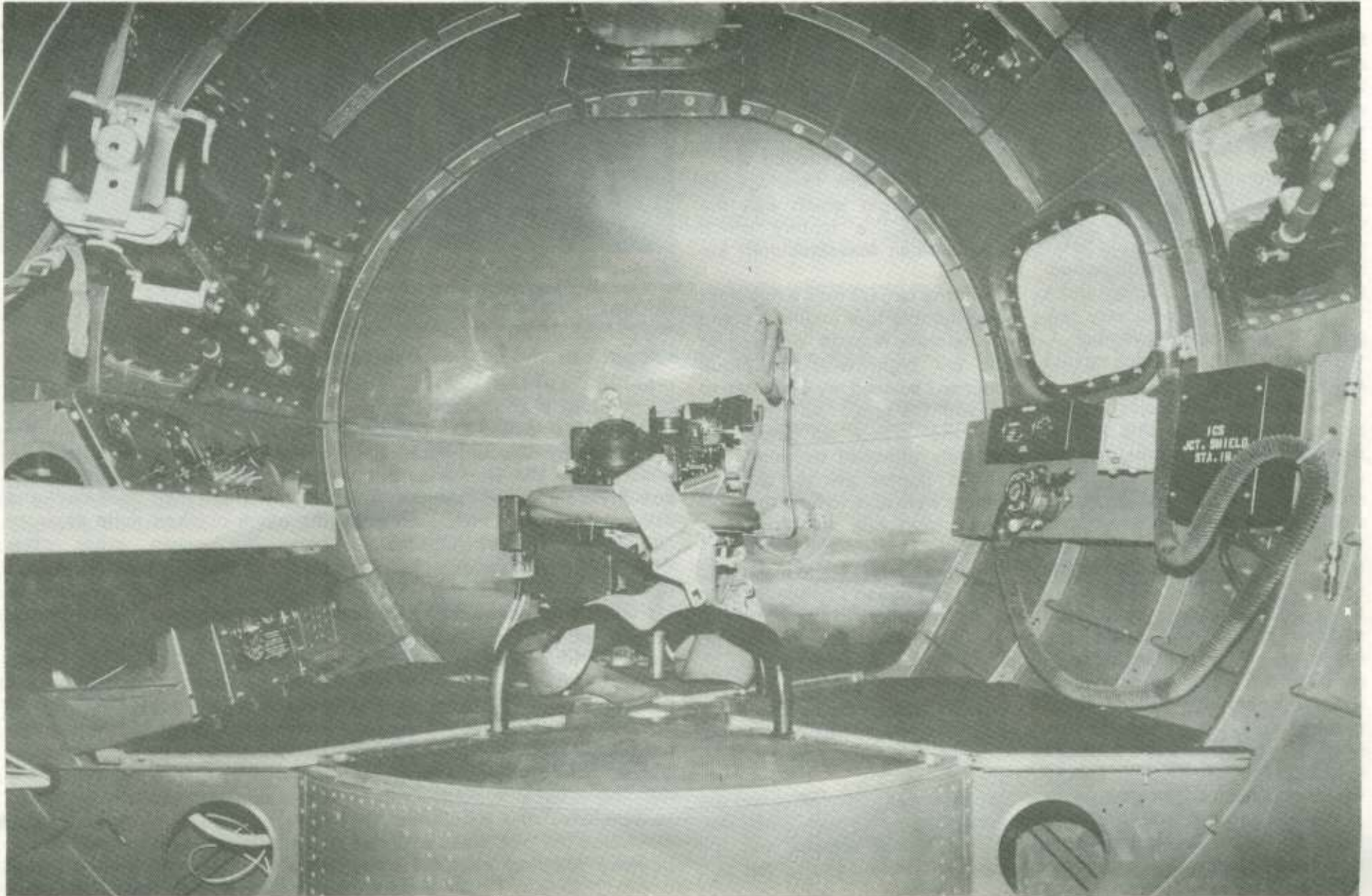
Doors, windows, hatches secure, crew secure, radio call, tail wheel unlocked, mixtures auto-rich, boost pumps on, parking brake off, exercise flight controls, line up with runway, lock tail wheel, cowl flaps trail, flaps up. Gyros uncaged and set.

Take off:

Release brakes, walk throttles up to 46", use differential throttle and rudder control when effective to maintain directional control, lift the tail wheel as soon as elevators become effective (say 40-45K), (save the tailwheel tire!), monitor engine instruments, it will want to depart *terra firma* about 80-85K, let it do so and help it a little. Gear up, check visually. Reduce power for



Pulling the props through



Inside the nose of the CAF Fortress has the appearance of a brand new aircraft just arrived for combat. Still some parts are needed for a complete restoration.



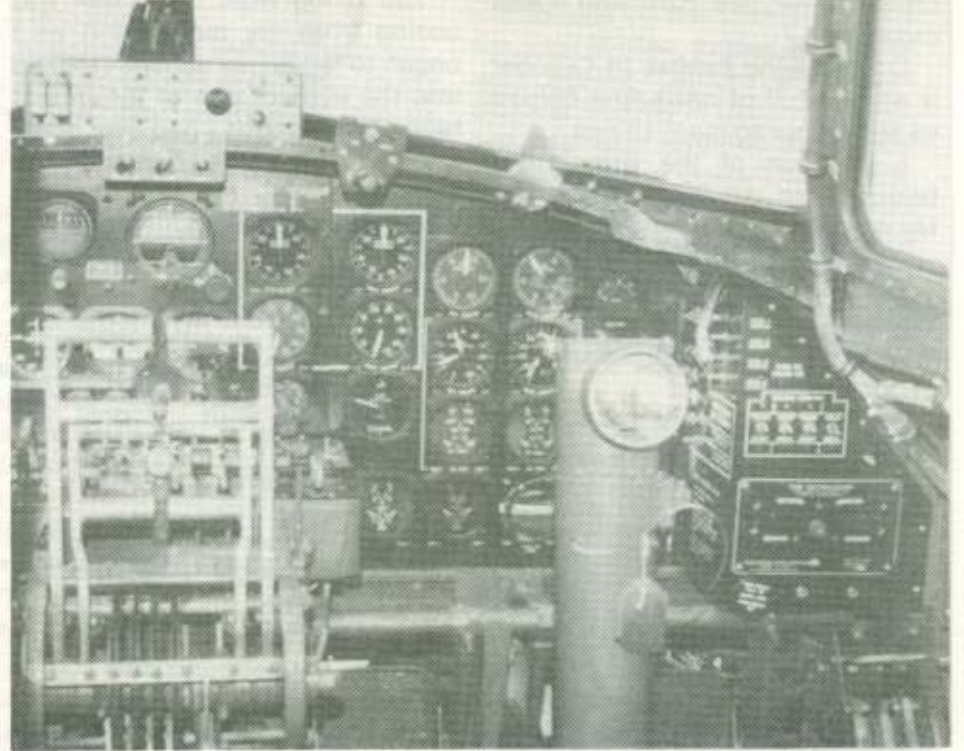
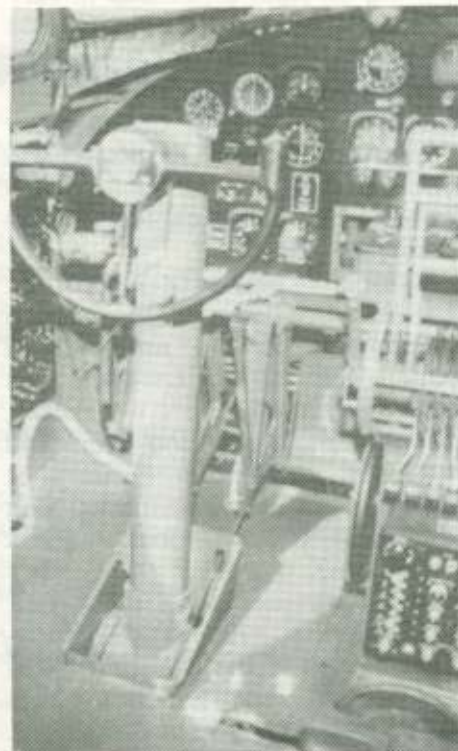
Plexiglas and two deadly '50s.

climb to 35" 2300 rpm, climb at 125K. When ready to level off, reduce power to 30", 2000 rpm, mixture to auto-lean, cowl flaps closed, boost pumps off, trim for cruise, sit back and enjoy. This will give you about 150 to 160K indicated air speed, depending on load.

When you've fooled around enough and want to land, do this: Enter traffic at about 130K, mixture auto-rich, boost pumps on. Lower gear on downwind, check visually, check hydraulic pressure, set throttles about 20; lower flaps ¼ or

⅓. Adjust descent with flaps. Hold about 120K airspeed on turn to base leg. On final approach bring power back to about 15" with ½ to ⅔ flaps and at 110-115K IAS. Come over the fence at 100K with full flaps when you know you've got it made. Also, at this point bring the props up to hi rpm in case a cow gets in front of you and you have to go around. Round out and get the power all the way back over the threshold just before touchdown. Let her settle in and squat keeping direction with rudder. Touchdown will be about 85 to 90K at a tail

down, but not 3 point attitude. Don't touch level either, but somewhere in between. If it tries to bounce tuck the nose; if it bounces too high, go around and try again. Maintain directional control with the rudder and keep the tail wheel off as long as possible after you've got it stuck on the runway. (Save the very scarce tail wheel tire!) Check the hydraulic pressure and see if you've got brakes on the roll out. Use the brakes sparingly (save the brake pads and bladders!) Raise the flaps, open the cowl flaps, unlock the tailwheel before



## Seelos

(from page 1)

turning off the runway, mixture to auto-lean, you can shutdown the inboard engines, taxi in, park, shut down, fill out the log book, secure the airplane, and let's go have a beer!

This aircraft was extensively overhauled by Gulf Coast Wing volunteer labor, restored to WWII configuration, and painted in 381st BG colors over a 32-month period. First test flight after overhaul (June 19, 1986) came off with very few bugs. It now has (November 1, 1986) about 100 hours since rebuild and is doing nicely.

I was assigned as project officer by the CAF in 1983 for this restoration and as a result, came to finally understand how it could endure so much damage and yet, in many cases, return to base. For example, when we removed the main fuel tanks, outer wings, tokyo tanks, etc., you could then see the interior construction detail—the massive bridge type spars, the heavy gauge corrugated sub-skin beneath the outer smooth skin, and the interaction of one structure to another. Then, too, there is liberal use of formers and stringers in the fuselage shaping the curved monocoque skin design making for a very strong airframe. Therefore, there exists an inter-relationship between structural members which causes less of a dependence on any single member to hold it together.

This basic design philosophy was mostly put together by Boeing's design engineer, Ed Wells, in their prototype Model 299 in 1934. The information I gained from talking with him at various times during our reconstruction was invaluable.

### Taylor's Wife Gives Thanks

To the Editor:

First of all, our congratulations to anyone who helped make the Dayton reunion such a wonderful time for everyone. How well it was organized!

On receiving *Echoes* in October it was so full of news that helped us remember so many things.

I was one of the British war brides, third left in the back row. My parents lived in Keysoe and we were married at Thurleigh church.

Bill enjoyed the article on John Wohead, as they were bunkmates. Now we will write to him as he was at our wedding.

As this was our first reunion, we are looking forward to Washington.

I am writing this for Bill, who is almost blind.

Audrey Taylor  
Tecumseh, MI

### Onetime Friend of Many

We are sending a copy of the October *Echoes* to Mrs. Olive Green (Leslie), formerly The Row, Keysoe, Beds. Any combatmen who spent

On my nineteenth mission, April 5, 1943, shortly after crossing the Belgian coast my airplane was hit in the "prop dome" of the number one engine. The feathering mechanism was destroyed and I had to let it run wild. I managed to reach the target which was the "Erla Werks," a factory which made German Messerschmitt aircraft.

Over the target I took a direct hit in the number four engine. I could not maintain enough airspeed to keep my flight with the group leader so I advised my wing men to stay with the group. As I fell back from the group we were immediately attacked by numerous German fighter planes. But my gunners were able to hold them off and at least one went down in flames.

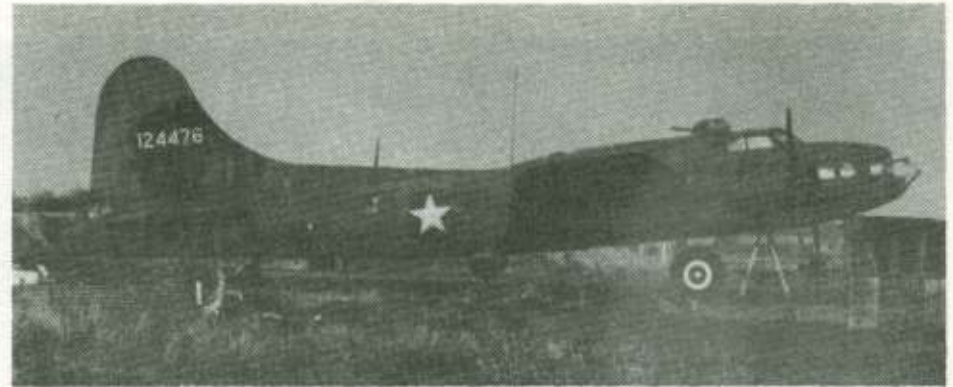
I figured that if I could make it as far as the English Channel I could "ditch" the plane in the water and take a chance on being picked up by the British Air-Sea-Rescue . . . However, about that time my right outboard burst into flames and I knew we were finished. I immediately advised my crew to "bail out."

Apparently my navigator and top turret gunner had been killed during the fighter attacks, but the other seven managed to get out, one of them having been seriously wounded. By this time I was somewhere between Antwerp and the estuary which separates Belgium and Holland.

I came down on the outskirts of a small city in Belgium called Wuustwezel. There were rows of very tall trees around each section of land, apparently planted as "wind breaks." Unfortunately for me I went through the top of a tree, partially collapsed my parachute and I hit the ground with considerable force. Just before impact I "gritted my teeth" and the force of the landing caused me to bite through my cheek. Naturally, I was knocked unconscious.

The blood from my cheek was oozing from my mouth and as I began to regain my senses I looked into the eyes of one of the cutest blue-eyed blondes I had ever seen. She had long braided hair and wore wooden shoes. My first thought was that I had been killed and had "made it to Heaven." She assumed that I had been shot as the blood was coming from my mouth and she was trying to find the wound . . . I soon managed to convince her that I was not shot . . . only hurt from the impact.

I knew the exact procedure for evenings at her home when the "going was tough" instead of going into Bedford, might like to send her a card, as she is now in her eighties, housebound and confined to a wheelchair. Her address is 149 D Queens Drive, Putnoe, Beds MK41 9JX, England.—Ms. Wm (Audrey) Taylor.



No photograph of Seelos' plane could be immediately found, but one of its sister ships, this from the 423rd squadron, is shown on its hardstand at Thurleigh. Note the old Air Corps insignia on the waist, before the star was expanded. More distinctive tail markings were also added later, as the formations became larger, to assist in identification.

making contact with the "underground" and I wanted to get up and run and hide as I was certain that my descent had been observed by the Germans. But I could hardly stand without her assistance and I could then see about a dozen German soldiers with machine guns coming directly to where we were standing.

I was in no condition to try to escape and I was in custody of the Germans immediately. They took me to the local government building and the blond girl followed closely behind me. I "eased" my escape kit from my pocket and passed it to her without any one noticing. A large crowd of civilians had gathered and apparently had distracted the soldiers. I also carried two "dog-tags" and for some unknown reason I also gave her one of them.

The following morning my family in Montana received the standard telegram from the adjutant general advising them that I was "missing in action." I was held in Belgium for some time and later taken to Dulag Luft at Frankfurt, Germany. Eventually I was taken to Stalag Luft III at Sagan, formerly a part of Poland.

On Mother's Day, May 1943, the "blond girl" sent a cablegram from Brussels, Belgium . . . addressed directly from the "dog-tag" I had given her . . . Mrs. Seelos, Philipsburg, Montana, USA . . . Dear Auntie . . . Robert was here visiting on April 5 . . . was in very good health . . . sends his love to his darling relatives. . . Signed . . . Elsa Moors. The Germans let it go through completely uncensored! Well over a month had passed and you can imagine the relief of my family when Elsa's cablegram was received.

During my stay at Stalag Luft III, I worked both as a "digger" and a "dispenser" in the tunnel from which the "Great Escape" was eventually made . . . two years, twenty-three days, nine hours and fifteen minutes after I was shot down, I was liberated from Stalag VIIA in Bavaria by General Patton's Third Army.

Now comes the incredible part of my story . . .

On April 5, 1980, exactly thirty-seven years to the day after I was shot down, I received a letter from a Mr. J. L. Verhagen of Dinteloord, Holland. He advised me that on April 5, 1943, (he was then eleven

years old), he was standing by a tree with his bicycle when he saw a crippled B-17 coming from the south. It was on fire and being attacked by German fighter planes. He saw three men "bail out" and the plane crashed quite close to him. The seven other crew members were killed. He stated that it was a helpless feeling to stand there while "friends were fighting for their lives" and helping to eventually "liberate" his country from the German occupation. He says that the people of Holland will never forget what these men did. He said he later learned that another B-17 went down on the other side of the Estuary that same day.

Mr. Verhagen is now the head of the financial and insurance department of the largest sugar conglomerate in the Netherlands. He has devoted his "leisure time" to try to "re-stage" what happened on April 5, 1943. He has obtained copies of the U.S. Air Force reports for that day, (which are no longer "classified" material), the German Air Force reports and copies of the "306th Echoes." From the above he was able to learn that I was the pilot of the other plane that went down in that area. It was interesting to learn that the German Air Force gave credit to a German fighter pilot for shooting me down. I give credit to the anti-aircraft batteries.

We have exchanged numerous letters in the interim and I have told him my complete story, in detail. He has made many trips across the Estuary to Belgium and has traced me to the city of Wuustwezel. He has found at least one person who "was there" and observed me hitting the tree and later being captured. He has sent me colored photos of the tree I hit, the spot where I hit the ground and the building where I was taken for interrogation . . . even photos of the same chair they sat me in. From German files he was able to send me photos of the "Erla Werks" which we bombed that day . . . photos as it looked before April 5, 1943 . . . and of the "rubble" that was left after our mission that day.

But most important of all, he has found Elsa Moors, the blue-eyed blond who tried to help me. He found that she became an interpreter for the British Army after the invasion and accompanied them



into Germany. (She was fluent in French, Belgian, Dutch, Flemish and English.) He says she was involved in a very bad jeep accident and her face was badly disfigured. He says the British doctors did everything possible to restore the damage, but it is still quite noticeable.

She lives in semi-seclusion in what she refers to as "her ivory tower." At first she was very reluctant to meet with Mr. Verhagen, but eventually agreed and they had a lengthy first visit. He says her memory is quite blurred but that as he related my story to her she suddenly remembered "the man who came out of the sky in the big white flower." She then stated that the past was beginning to come back to her and later she went to a closet and brought out the escape kit which I had given to her. She gave him the silk map of Europe which it contained.

Upon his return to Holland he contacted me at once and gave me Elsa's address. I wrote to her immediately and expressed my sincere thanks for what she had done for me and my family and I assured her that one day we would surely meet again. I made it clear that I was aware of her accident and that as far as I am concerned, external beauty is only short-lived and meaningless in comparison to internal beauty which is everlasting and is what she must have in abundance. I received a beautiful response from her and she refers to my first letter as a "message of youth and life and a lesson in optimism." At the date of my letter I was sixty years old and Elsa was sixty-two. We still correspond occasionally and I am certain that she has been happy to hear from me and that in a very small way I have been able to repay her for her thoughtfulness.

Mr. Verhagen continues to write to me regularly and was eventually able to contact the German pilot credited with shooting me down. He said the German holds no animosity even though it was a lifelong buddy and flying comrade that went down in flames during our air battle that fatal day. The German and I are exactly the same age and we have since corresponded. He has asked me to visit his home in West Germany.

Recently, in 1982, I have been advised by Mr. Verhagen that in 1984 there will be a big celebration in Holland and Belgium celebrating the fortieth anniversary of their liberation. He has asked for photos of me, as I looked when I was flying combat and what I look like now. He says that they want me to be an honored guest and speaker at one of the special functions. I intend to do everything possible to be there and meet him personally. I also intend to meet with Elsa Moors and also the German pilot.

This has all brought back many memories, both good and bad, and I have once again, on several occasions, awakened during the night,

reliving the experience of that "fatal last mission."

September, 1984

I finally made up my mind to make the "long planned" trip to Holland, Belgium and Germany. My wife and children had been insisting for some time that I make the trip and that I make it alone, as they felt it would be a very traumatic experience for me to go back forty years into the past.

After making all of the necessary arrangements and advising Mr. Verhagen in Holland that I would fly from Los Angeles to Amsterdam on the first of November, I purchased two Los Angeles 1984 Olympic Games blankets to take with me; one for Mr. Verhagen, and one for Elsa Moors. I believe my wife and daughters, "Tessa," age 13, and "Loli," age 21, were almost as excited about the trip as I was. Our married daughter and two married sons also kept in close touch.

Then came the most heartbreaking, tragic event in my entire life! "Loli" was crossing the street in Pasadena when she was struck by a speeding driver who had been drinking; she was killed instantly. A telephone call was made to Mr. Verhagen advising him what had happened, and that I had cancelled the trip. The impact of this tragedy was far worse for me than those of all my combat flying experiences. Without the love and affection of my wife and our children I don't think that I could have coped with it. I had heard and read of similar horrible accidents, but never once even dreamed that such a thing could happen to us.

It was my wife and children who later convinced me that I should not disappoint the people in Europe, who had been expecting me, and that making the trip would help to take my mind off our tragic loss.

When I called Mr. Verhagen and advised him that I had rescheduled my trip for November fifteenth, he was very elated and fully agreed with my family about the decision to carry out the plans. I asked him to make a hotel reservation for me as close to his home as possible. He then requested that I take, if feasible, some sort of award to present to the Belgian people and the city of Wuustwezel and also the Underground Resistance Organization. I told him that I would do my best, but that time was very limited and it might be a real problem.

Then I telephoned the USAF Public Affairs Department in Los Angeles and talked to a Major Fowler. I explained in detail what I needed and he assured me that he would do the best he could on such short notice. I called back two days later to check on the situation and was advised that Major Fowler had to go out of the state for several days. With that news I was certain that I would be leaving empty handed! To make a long story short, Major Fowler per-



Seelos' mementoes from dinner with German pilots.

sonally met me at the Los Angeles International Airport the evening I left and presented me with two beautiful walnut plaques. They were about ten inches square; the fronts were faced with steel with Air Force Blue color. At each side was a gold torch and, at the top center, was the U.S. Air Force insignia. Beneath the insignia was a beautifully engraved message from the U.S. Air Force expressing thanks and appreciation for efforts and help to American and Allied airmen during World War II. I really felt that Major Fowler had performed the impossible, and I couldn't thank him enough. He then remarked that his father had been a pilot in World War II.

With a feeling of loneliness and a very heavy heart, I took off from Los Angeles International at 7:45 p.m. We touched down in Amsterdam at 1:45 in the afternoon, Amsterdam time. Nine hours flying time . . . what a difference from the ten hours and forty-five minutes it took me to fly my B-17 Flying Fortress from Gander Lake, Newfoundland, to Prestwick, Scotland, in 1942—approximately one-third the distance!

I had advised Mr. Verhagen that I would take the train from the airport to the Roosendaal Station near his home, but he was there in Amsterdam waiting for me. We drove to Dinteloord where I met his wife Leena and their twenty-year-old identical twin daughters. I then asked that I be taken to my hotel so I could freshen up and have them join me for dinner. With that they all immediately made it quite clear that I was to be a guest in their home and that I should not even consider going to a hotel.

Fortunately they could all speak a little broken English and, although quite difficult, my sparse knowledge of German and Spanish seemed to make it possible for us to communicate quite well with the additional aid of hands, arms, etc.! They showed me to my room and, after I had a nice refreshing shower, we sat down to a wonderful dinner that Leena had prepared

with an excellent French wine; Erica and Irma had milk! We spent the evening discussing the loss of my daughter, my combat flying experiences, my prisoner of war experiences, their four years under the German occupation, and the heavy ground fighting that took place in that area after the invasion. I then went to bed expecting to fall asleep at once, but, because of the "jet lag" and my heavy heart, thoughts of home and my family, I slept very little.

Friday, November 16th:

Very little had been planned for me as my hosts assumed I would be sleeping and that I would want to rest most of the day. However, I was wide awake and up early. After lunch we went for a drive around the local area, and I was able to get a close look at the famous old dikes and windmills. At dinner that evening John (Johan) advised me that we were scheduled to be in Wuustwezel, Belgium, at nine-thirty the following morning. I was surprised to learn that it would be only a half hour to forty-five minute drive.

Saturday, November 17th:

After another very restless and mostly sleepless night, I got up early, shaved, showered and got dressed up. After breakfast I was ready for the trip to Wuustwezel—forty-one years, seven months, and thirteen days since I had parachuted into a tree in that Belgian town. The thought of going back gave me a real eerie feeling. Johan, Leena and I arrived at the home of Leopold Philipsen right on schedule. Mr. Philipsen had been very active in the "resistance" and "underground" operations during the war and the German occupation. I was given a real warm welcome and Mrs. Philipsen had prepared coffee and cheese cake for us.

Although the languages spoken in Belgium are quite different from the Holland Dutch (a sort of combination of Flemish and French), it was truly amazing how well we were able to communicate with each other. (I was in hopes that my

wife were with me as she is fluent in French, German, Italian, Spanish and English) . . . and most Europeans seem to be bilingual. Suddenly Mr. Philipsen looked at his watch and said that we must be at the Catholic church at ten-thirty.

Next to the city hall where the Germans had taken me when I was captured, the Catholic church was the largest building in town; and just a few blocks from the tree I had landed in! Mr. Philipsen directed us to a side door which led us to the front row in the center section of the church. It was then that my knees weakened and I almost collapsed; a real shocker. There were over a hundred people in the church and at the rear was a fifty piece brass band. They were having "The Mass of the Liberation" in my honor. By the end of the mass there were quite a few "damp handkerchiefs," especially mine! When the mass was over, the priest came forward and embraced me and shook hands with the others in our group. When we got outside, the band had formed a straight line in the direction of the city hall. Then came the color guard, then us and finally the whole congregation.

As the band played, we marched to the city hall. Near the entry to the city hall grounds, a large religious war memorial has been erected and they had placed three very beautiful wreaths at the base of the statue. As Mr. Philipsen and I walked up to the memorial, the buglers played "Taps" and again the handkerchiefs began to appear; mine too! All the while newspaper photographers from Antwerp and surrounding communities were taking pictures.

From there we gathered on the steps of the city hall while the band played several more numbers. Then the Bergomaster came out and welcomed us and led us to the assembly room. (The same room where the Germans had taken me forty-one years earlier.) The congregation followed until all seats were filled; also the entry hall and the steps outside. About that time a little elderly woman pushed her way through the crowd and introduced herself as "The Widow of Hasselt-Beyers." She said that she just wanted to hold my hand and that she had watched me coming down in the parachute and she just knew that I was coming to help liberate them. (She managed to stay in the front row with us during the program that followed.)

It seemed that everyone was aware of what had happened to my daughter. Even the speakers mentioned it and it was getting very difficult for me to keep my composure. The Mayor spoke first and then presented me with a plaque from the city of Wuustwezel, inscribed with the date I was shot down and the date that day and with the words "In Appreciation." Mr. Philipsen spoke next and part

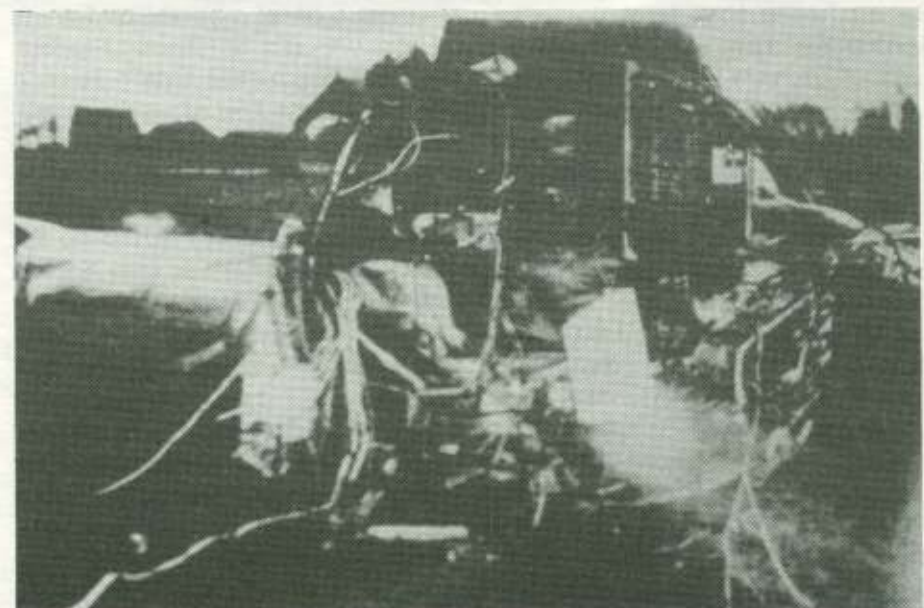
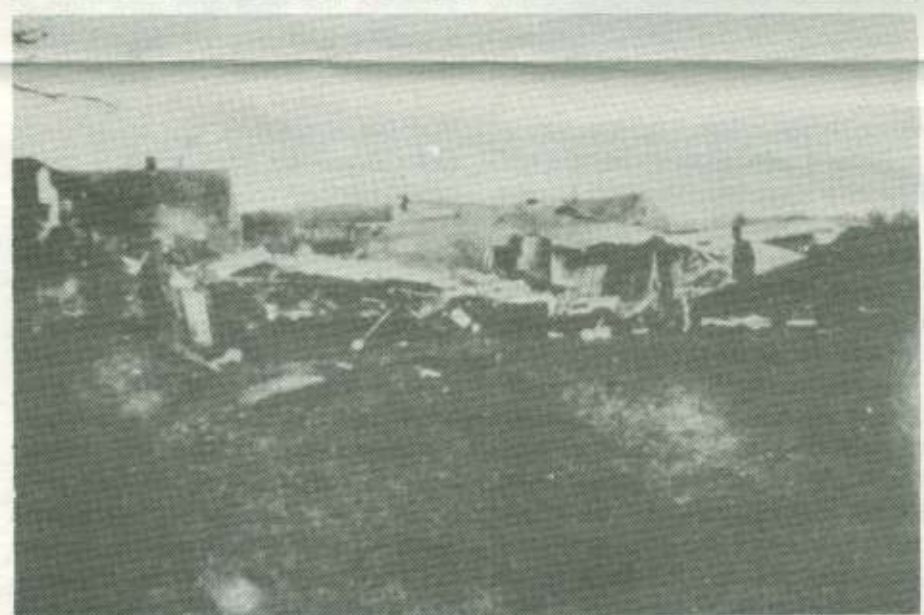
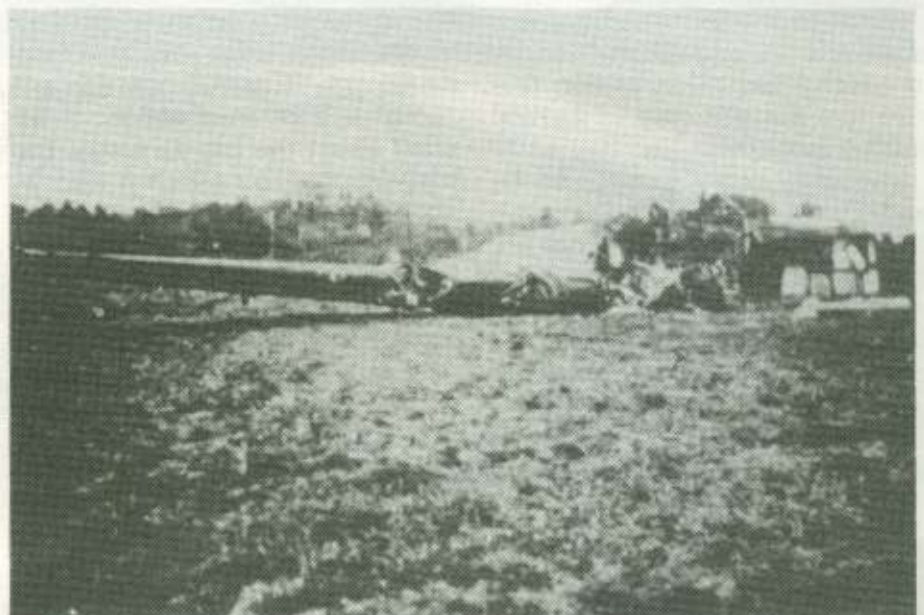
of his speech was about members of my crew who were helped to try to escape by farmers in the area, several of whom were present. Mr. Philipsen then presented me with a large gold "Freedom Medal" from the country of Belgium. Then it was my turn to speak and I started by assuring them that my trip to Wuustwezel this time was considerably more pleasant than the previous one. At the conclusion I presented one of the Air Force plaques to the Mayor and one to Mr. Philipsen.

After the program they brought out white and red wine for the whole group and I was immediately surrounded by newspaper people asking me for statements about my family, my home, my over two years as a prisoner of war, etc. . . . Unfortunately they then started asking me why the lead squadron had overshot the target the day I was shot down causing such terrible destruction and loss of life in the city of Mortsel. How could the general leading the group be awarded the Distinguished Service Cross after the mission? My only answer was that I reached the target on two engines considerably behind the lead squadron and I knew our bombs were on target and I have "before and after" photos of the destruction at the "Erla Werks-Messerschmitt Plant" to prove it. (I wanted to tell them, but I didn't, that I shall always regret that my old original squadron commander, Bill Lanford, wasn't leading the group that day. When I lost my first engine, Bill would have slowed down the group, kept it intact, and might have got us all back, even if his own navigator had been hit.) Fortunately, at that time, Mr. Philipsen stepped in and advised the newspaper people to refrain from asking such questions.

About that time, a farmer stepped up and handed me an old "Musette Bag" containing a piece of metal. He said he watched my airplane come down in three pieces and one piece fell on his farmland. He said he beat the Germans to it and salvaged the Musette and piece of the airplane and he had been saving it for over forty years and he said it was for me to take home!

Several other farmers came up and introduced themselves. Each had tried to help at least one of my crew. When I was shot down, my ball turret gunner Sgt. Magee, was hit in the face with shrapnel and lost his eye. He came down in a field and the farmer managed to get him to his barn and lay him on some straw. The Germans later took me there and asked me to identify him. The son and the daughter of that farmer were also at my reception and asked me to come to the farm to visit them before I returned to the United States. I assured them I would. (Both of their parents had passed away.) The other farmers also requested that I try to visit them too.

41-24465 became instant junk near Wuustwezel, Belgium, 5 April 1943.



At the completion of the reception, a Mr. Dillen requested that Johan, Leena and I follow him to his home on the outskirts of Ant-

werp. He said his wife was preparing dinner for us. His home was right near a small airport. This was the old German fighter base where

I was taken and held for some time before I was taken to Germany. He took down in detail everything I could remember about it; how well it was camouflaged, etc. . . .

The dinner was excellent and after a long visit and discussion over coffee and chocolate mousse, we drove back to Dinteloord. It had been one of the longest days of my life and certainly one I shall never forget.

Tuesday, November 21st:

This morning Leena and I drove to the town of Steenberg where we visited her mother and we had coffee and cakes. We then went to the crash site of a British "Mosquito Bomber"; also to the graves of the two occupants, the pilot and gunner. The two streets leading to the cemetery have been re-named with the names of the pilot and gunner in their honor.

In the afternoon Leena drove me to Willemstadt, a "quaint old town," on the "Sea Arm" (harbor). It is well fortified and "bunkers" used by the Germans are still there. The "Town Hall" is very old and beautiful. It was renovated as far back as 1623 for use as a hunting lodge by the "Princess of Orange." We then visited the new "Locks" at Willemstadt which cut the sea arm at that point. Ships are raised and lowered to pass through.

Wednesday, November 22nd:

This morning was cloudy and cold so I walked to the business district, went to the bank and purchased some more Dutch guilders, Belgian francs and some German marks. Then I went to a bakery and bought a real fancy cake to take home for Leena.

After lunch it cleared up and we drove to the city of "Bergen Op Zoom." This is a "must" old city to see. It's "Markiezenhof" is the former palace of a marquis and was built about 1500. Inside, the rooms are furnished in the style of the eighteenth century with paintings and tapestries that depict the town history. There is also St. Gertrude's Church and the 15th century town hall; the old jail; the remains of the town wall with the "Gate of Our Lady" and the battlements of Ravelijn. From the harbor you can travel inland to the "Oyster Beds of Zeeland."

Shortly after leaving Bergen Op Zoom, we stopped at two large cemeteries; one British and one Canadian, both beautifully kept with perpetual caretakers. I walked down many rows of crosses, and signed the registers. The majority of these men were killed during and shortly after the invasion and most of them were in the 19 to 22 age bracket.

We returned to Dinteloord early as I had to get dressed up for a trip to Antwerp, Belgium, that evening. The night before Johan had made a telephone call to Elsa Moors (the young lady who had tried to help me when I was shot down and later was able to notify my mother that I was still alive). Johan told her that I

was in Holland and that I would like to meet her and take her to dinner. (He had explained to me that she had a beautiful apartment, but does not keep it very orderly and is very reluctant to have visitors; in addition to being very self-conscious about the damage to her face). He was astounded when she readily accepted and said she would meet me at the Antwerp Station at seven o'clock the following evening. He also said that he doubted very much if she would keep the appointment! So, Antwerp being a very large city and not having seen Elsa for over forty years, nor she, me, I insisted that Johan accompany me. We got all dressed up and I got out the Olympic Games blanket and a redwood tray of California dried fruit I had brought for her and we drove to Roosendall and took the train to Antwerp, about a forty-five minute trip.

We arrived at the station right on schedule and much to our surprise, there was Elsa waiting for us, very smartly dressed. Her snow white hair was beautifully done and her face so well made up that I could hardly detect a trace of the scars. Johan remarked later that she must have spent the entire day at the beauty salon. She seemed to be extremely nervous so I put my arms around her and kissed her and apologized for taking forty years to come to thank her in person for what she had done for me. Then we picked out a very nice French restaurant (Elsa seemed to speak mostly French), and we spent the entire evening eating, drinking wine and talking about the past.

Elsa said she had accompanied the British Army, as an interpreter, after the invasion and in Germany while in a jeep with three other women a large truck cut in front of them and they went right under it. The three others were killed and she was badly injured. Her memory of helping me and sending a cablegram to my mother was very hazy. I gave her the blanket and fruit and she was thrilled with them.

At the end of the evening I called a cab to take her home and then Johan and I caught the last train back to Roosendall Station. It had been a very enjoyable and enlightening evening and Johan couldn't believe the extremes Elsa had gone to in order to impress me; and believe me, she did just that!

Thursday, November 23rd:

That evening I advised the Verhagen Family that I had planned to spend a few days in Germany and that I had promised my neighbor a few doors away back in Glendale, California, that I would visit his three sisters and his mother in Duisburg. We called my neighbor's nephew, Raimund, and told him that I would arrive in Duisburg at eleven-thirty on Monday, November 27th. I also told Raimund to find me a hotel as close to their residence as possible. Johan

then called Otto Stammberger, the German pilot who got credit for shooting me down, and told him how and where he would be able to reach me in Duisburg.

Saturday, November 25th:

We drove to the home of Mr. Philipsen in Wuustwezel. Mr. Philipsen went with us and we first went to the farm of Louis Metheeußen, near the small town of Loenhout. This was the farm the Germans had taken me to in order to identify my ball turret gunner (Roland Magee) who had lost his eye. Louis and his sister, Maria, were there. They must have been 10 and 12 years old when I was shot down. Maria really broke down and cried most of the time. She brought out an old picture of their now deceased parents and insisted I take it with me.

Our next stop was the farm of Mr. and Mrs. Jochems. There we met them, their daughter Maria and Mr. Jochem's brother. They had helped my co-pilot (Alex Kramarinko) and my tail gunner (William Baker), escape from Belgium. (They were both caught almost two months later trying to cross the border from France to Spain). After a nice visit they made arrangements for us to meet them at a restaurant in Wuustwezel for dinner that afternoon.

The last farm we visited was that of the "Weduwe V Hasselt-Byers," the little lady who saw me coming down in the parachute.

Monday, November 27th:

I had already purchased a round-trip ticket so I boarded the train at Breda for Viersen at eight forty-seven. At Viersen I had to change trains to go to Duisburg. The train to Duisburg left from the opposite side of the station four minutes after I arrived and I had to run to make it. When I got off the train at the Duisburg station a young man, about 30, walked up and asked, "Are you Mr. Seelos? I am Raimund Baumeier, your neighbor Joseph Volkmar's nephew." I told him, yes, I am Mr. Seelos, and the two of us took my luggage to his car and then went to a coffee shop and had some coffee and talked about his Uncle Joseph.

Otto Stammberger arrived promptly at six o'clock; white haired and very distinguished looking. He embraced me as if we had been old friends for many years. I followed

## The Crew

Robert W. Seelos, pilot	POW
Alexander Kramarinko, co-pilot	POW
William W. Saunders, navigator	POW
James E. Murray, bombardier	KIA
Stanley P. Stemkoski, engineer	KIA
Roland Magee, ball turret gunner	POW
William H. Kesky, radio operator	POW
William E. Baker, waist gunner	POW
Fred R. Hampton, waist gunner	KIA
Raymond E. Walls, tail gunner	POW

Otto to the parking lot to his yellow Mercedes sedan. We drove approximately ten minutes and he pulled into another parking lot. About that time a black Mercedes sedan drove up. It was another German pilot and buddy of Otto's. We got in that car and headed for Dusseldorf. Once again I watched the speedometer hover between ninety and one hundred and five miles per hour!

In Dusseldorf we proceeded to a military air base and to the Officer's Club. When we entered there were about a hundred people present (about one-third women who were wives of the old pilots) and everyone stood up while I was escorted to the head table. All were old German Air Force pilots, and some very famous ones; several generals and many "Aces" and post war authors. I understand there are four such organizations like this in West Germany, located in different sectors and they meet each month and have an annual meeting all together.

Once again I was interviewed and pictures were taken. They all seemed anxious to ask me questions about the B-17 aircraft I flew and they assured me it was a deadly opponent and accounted for a major number of their losses. Then their regular meeting procedure took place and later it seemed they were taking some sort of a vote. Then I was asked to stand up and they all gave the German "three cheers" and advised me that I had just been made an honorary

## Superior to B-24 (from page 3)

combat groups was thirty-three for the B-17 in September 1944 and forty-five and one-half for the B-24 in June 1944. . . ."

A listing of B-17's assigned to the 306th during the war shows 533 aircraft. The first were the 35 aircraft flown out of Westover Field, MA, in September 1942, of which 33 actually reached Thurleigh. And the last was assigned 10 May 1945.

Probably the most detailed descriptions of both aircraft to be found in a single work is a small book seldom seen in the U.S., but authored by Roger Freeman who wrote *The Mighty Eighth*.

This is *The U.S. Strategic Bomber*, which was published in 1975, but only in England, and thus is not to be found on American bookstore shelves. In it Freeman covers doctrine, war planes, operations against Germany, operations against Japan, the arms, and training.

associate member of their organization of fighter groups. They even presented me with an insignia to wear and a book about their organization.

After dinner there were more "questions and answers" and more pictures. Otto and I are exactly the same age and his first combat mission was over Lille, France; the same day that mine was (Oct. 9, 1942). Later on he spent a great deal of time in the hospital as he was taking off in a Messerschmit 109 when the engine failed and he went through the front and out the rear of a barn.

Wednesday, December 5th:

I got up early, shaved and showered and finished packing while Leena prepared breakfast. It was very difficult for me to have to say goodbye to her and thank her for all she had done for me. Then Johan and I drove to Roosendall and took the train to Amsterdam.

Johan stayed with me until I had checked my baggage and had everything in order. Then we too, had our very emotional goodbye and Johan left to return to Roosendall and the drive to his office in Breda. I had about an hour to wait, so I had a ball shopping at the "Duty Free" tremendous shopping area at Schipol, the Amsterdam In-



Meeting for the first time at the Dayton reunion since early spring of 1943, were three crew members and their wives: left to right, Harold Lightbown and Ariene, Peter Pappas and Harriet, and Jack Howard and Dorothy. Howard was the 369th pilot and Lightbown and Pappas were both gunners on that crew.

ternational Airport.

Again, with a very heavy heart and a feeling of loneliness and a genuine sadness in leaving these wonderful, loving, sincere and hospitable people. We took off at 1:45 in the afternoon and were shortly over North Ireland heading for Iceland. Almost as soon as it began to get dusk, it began to get daylight again.

We touched down in Los Angeles at 4:45 in the afternoon—only three hours on the calendar—but nine hours actual flying time. It was a beautiful blanket of snow and ice over

Iceland, Greenland, Hudson Bay, Nova Scotia, Canada, Eastern Montana, Northern Idaho and all the way to Salt Lake City. Even from over forty thousand feet, I could recognize many of the familiar landmarks.

It was an experience I shall never forget and I will certainly never lose contact with the wonderful people I had the privilege of becoming acquainted with.

### England Revisited

(From page 1)

and then spend a day visiting such places at Linlithgow, Loch Katrine, Perth and St. Andrews.

From Edinburgh we will head south and west with an evening's destination in the Lake district at Windermere. Then on to Liverpool and Chester, to be followed the next day by Coventry, Warwick Castle and Stratford-upon-Avon. The eleventh day will find us visiting Blenheim Palace, Oxford and Windsor Castle before getting to our hotel in London.

The cost from Detroit, Chicago and Los Angeles is \$1,999 per person, based on double occupancy. The single supplement is \$250. Departures from Houston, New York and Atlanta are about \$50 less.

Breakfasts and dinners are included on many days of the tour, along with a Medieval banquet the last night in London.

**Mail this Reservation Form to**  
Hyatt Regency Crystal City  
Reservations Dept.  
2799 Jefferson Davis Highway  
Arlington, VA 22202

Reservations must be received by 8/10/87  
Reservations requested beyond the cut-off date are subject to availability. Rooms may still be available after the cutoff but not necessarily at the convention rate.  
Your reservation will be held until 6 pm unless one night's deposit is received or guaranteed by credit card below. Failure to cancel 24 hours prior to arrival will result in 1 night's charges billed to your credit card.

Hold until 6 pm only.  
 Guaranteed by one of the following:  
Deposit of \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
American Express  Diner's Club   
Carte Blanche  MasterCard  Visa   
Card # \_\_\_\_\_  
Expiration Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature \_\_\_\_\_

## EARLY REUNION REGISTRATION

B/Gen William S. Rader  
1108 Key Drive  
Alexandria, VA 22302

*Sept 17-20*

Enclosed is my early registration for 2 persons for the 1987 reunion of the 306th Bomb Group. I enclose \$ \_\_\_\_\_, at the rate of \$25.00 per person.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone (w. Area Code) \_\_\_\_\_

### 306th BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION SEPTEMBER 16-20, 1987

HYATT REGENCY CRYSTAL CITY  
AT WASHINGTON NATIONAL AIRPORT  
TELEPHONE: (703) 486-1234

Type of Room	No. of Rooms	Convention Rates	*Regency Club*
Single (1 person)		\$69	\$160
Double (2 people)		\$69	\$180
Triple		\$69	---
Quad		\$69	---
1 Bed Rm. Suite		\$200-250	\$450
2 Bed Rm. Suite		---	\$550

The above rates are subject to state and local taxes.

\*Regency club accommodations include special guest room amenities and special food and beverage services.

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Telephone No. \_\_\_\_\_  
Sharing room with \_\_\_\_\_

## DEATHS

**James K. Adkins**, gunner on Al Rehn's 368th crew (late 43 to late 44), died 21 Dec 83 in Powell, TN. He was wounded in action 21 Jun 44 at Berlin.

**Wilbur S. Barks**, 423rd and a clerk at Group headquarters, died 30 May 86 when he suffered an apparent heart attack while driving alone near Jackson, MI, and was killed in the ensuing crash. He was a retired farmer and lived at Three Rivers, MI.

**Abraham Block**, 369th co-pilot, and MIA 14 Oct 43 at Schweinfurt with George Bettinger, died 10 Mar 73.

**Paul W. Christenson**, radio operator on Loy Peterson's 369th crew (late 43 to mid 44), died in October at his home in Lansing, IL. He was discharged at Thurleigh and commissioned as a second lieutenant 26 Jul 44.

**John K. Field**, co-pilot on Emmette Sutherland's 367th crew (late 44), died in a 1952 air crash after having re-entered service.

**Ralph L. Irvine**, 367th navigator (Aug 44-Mar 44), died 20 Mar 86 in Lynnfield, MA.

**Joseph Jurecki**, 423rd ordnance, died 7 May 84 at Lansing, IL.

**Aloysius N. Lambert**, engineer on Gaylord Ritland's 367th crew, has died at the Wisconsin Veterans' Home, King, WI. He was a POW, 15 May 43, at Wilhelmshaven with Ritland.

**James F. Layden**, an original member of the 368th squadron, died 3 Jun 82 at Gilbertville, PA.

**Gordon F. Lewis**, 369th radio operator and MIA 14 Oct 43 at Schweinfurt with George Bettinger, died 4 May 49.

**James F. Montana**, 369th waist gunner (David Wheeler's crew), and MIA 14 Oct 43 at Schweinfurt with George Bettinger, died 30 Oct 80. He was a Chicago advertising executive.

**Robert A. Prestidge**, 423rd ball turret gunner (Earl Kesling's crew, 21 Apr 44-11 Jan 45), died 16 Nov 86 in Coldwater, MI.

**Eulis E. Smith**, tail gunner on James M. Ferguson's original 368th crew, died in 1950. He was a POW with Otto Buddenbaum's crew, 8 Mar 43 at Rennes, France.

**Emmette B. Sutherland**, 367th pilot in late 44, died 30 Apr 86.

**Herbert R. Swiger**, 369th aircraft and engine mechanic, died at Winton, MN, 2 May 79.

**Linden K. Voight**, 369th tail gunner and MIA 14 Oct 43 at Schweinfurt with George Bettinger, died in May 54. He had already earned a Purple Heart and oak leaf cluster, and then lost a leg on his final mission.

**Earland J. Wentworth**, gunner on Dale Briscoe's crew (Apr 43 thru Feb 44), died 7 Dec 81.

**Joseph C. Wilkins**, bombardier on Otto Buddenbaum's original crew and a POW 8 Mar 43 at Rennes, France, with Buddenbaum, died 21 Sep 66.