

306th Echoes



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What is the Future of the 306th?

By Charles Neal, Chairman
Long Range Planning Committee

The heroes of the 306th BG are realistic and “long range planning” is generally not included in their personal current agendas these days; however, the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association (306th BGHA) that they formed in 1976 has the potential to continue. The Board of Directors created the Long Range Planning Committee (here after referred to as the LRPC) upon recommendation of a group of second generation members who felt there may be other options than disbanding after our heroes can no longer manage the annual meeting or attend reunions. Charles Neal was appointed chairman of the committee which is comprised of second generation association members with veteran member input. The committee will make recommendations to the Board of Directors who will decide the ultimate fate of the 306th BGHA.

VETERANS: Please provide input (see below) and show this article to your families.

Some ask, “Why continue after veterans can no longer participate in reunions?” One purpose of the association is to research and publish information concerning the history of the 306th BG during World War II. Some wish to continue this effort and many wish to honor heroes of the 306th BG and preserve their memory and lessons of their service. These goals can and, in my view, should continue with the help of family and friends long after our family veteran heroes pass on.

Here are possible options the LRPC has developed for consideration, and there may be others you can suggest:

1. The 306th BG can as General MacArthur said, “...just fade away.” In the case of the 306th a final annual meeting/reunion can be planned, materials collected and turned over to the Mighty 8th Air Force Museum Association, and the 306th BGHA disbanded.
2. The 306th BGHA can cease to plan and conduct independent annual meetings/reunions and accept an invitation to meet concurrently with the Mighty 8th Historical Association annual meetings. The Mighty 8th meetings include members of various Air Corps/Air Force components and this would relieve 306th BGHA members of the responsibility of planning and the administrative burdens of conducting a separate annual meeting/reunion. The 306th BGHA could continue to have a separate meeting during the activities of the larger Mighty 8th meeting.
3. The 306th BGHA can seek some type of joint meeting and/or relationship with the successor military components such as the 306th Bomb Wing which is currently comprised primarily of veterans of the Vietnam and Cold War eras.
4. The 306th BGHA can strive to continue as an organization with members of 306th BG veteran families and other interested persons.

All of these options, but particularly the last, require the participation of 306th BG veteran families. Over the years thousands, including many family members and friends of veterans, have attended the 306th BGHA meetings.

The LRPC seeks a carefully considered strategy for the future and requests your assistance in finding the right one. The LRPC believes the key to selecting the most viable among our options is to make a realistic assessment of veteran family members’ interest and ability to participate. This is where readers can help.

We need to identify and reach the families and friends of the 306th BG veterans in order to determine their interest. Readers can provide names of their family members and a way to reach them, such as a physical address, email address, and/or telephone number.

You or your family member(s): PLEASE CONTACT the LRPC through the chairman:

Charles Neal, Chairman Long Range Planning Committee
306th Bomb Group Historical Association
PO Box 682530
Park City, UT 84068
Email: planning@306bg.org
(310) 467-4542

PS: Expect a mailing that will include a brochure that solicits participation and proposes the idea of a “return of the heroes” trip to Thurleigh U.K airfield. Such a trip will be planned if there is interest among veterans, even if they rarely if ever attended prior annual meetings/reunions. In addition, if there is interest among those who cannot afford such a trip, we will attempt to raise funds to help them go.



Jimmy Cagney visits Thurleigh during the war. Cagney was a frequent visitor on USO tours and visits throughout the Eighth Air Force in England. His commitment to the military raised the morale of many as his shows brought a little bit of home to “merry olde England.”

Personal Remembrances of a Father and the Men of the 306th Written in Loving Memory of Major O. B. Tillery, 1920-1983

By Caroline Tillery Poythress

It was twenty-five years ago this month
You left this earthly realm in the blue of October skies.
A band of angels was your crew into that eternal flight.

How wonderful that your spirit should soar from that place
You loved most on earth...
Home in Alabama, the rolling hills of pasture and timberland.

How special that in your last years
As you cared for nature and cattle,
Often time a trainer and student pilot would fly low over that land.

You would lift your arms to them and wave in the joy of their flight!
They, in turn, would dip the wing to you, old flyer.
Climbing fast and high, they never knew the extent of the honor of that salute to you and
All the brave young men of the 306th,
Who secured our generation’s future forty years before!

We cannot begin to understand the depths of your courage and sacrifice.
We know the price you paid was great
And not without lasting pain!

We do remember as children
The battle scars upon our father’s chest.
We also remember the sorrow that you could not sometimes bear!

It was the solace of brothers,
A call to a buddy in Arkansas or Tennessee,
That brought the needed comfort
That comes with camaraderie.

We have come again to this place of reunion, brave men of the 306th.
As the second generation, heirs of your great legacy,
Words cannot express how proud we are of you!

Please know that whenever we hear the distant droning of a plane
There is a longing for you in our thankful hearts
And forever a heartfelt prayer,
That our Almighty God will keep you in His care.

Visit the 306th Website
www.306bg.org



Frances Langford, Bob Hope, and guitarist Tony Romano, Thurleigh, July 8, 1943.



Officers:

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 Judy Hermley, Vice-President
vice-president@306bg.org
 Barbara Neal, Secretary
secretary@306bg.org
 Joel LaBo, Treasurer
treasurer@306bg.org

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Past President:

John Hickey, *past-president@306bg.org*

Long-Range Planning Committee:

Charles Neal, Chairman
Long-RangePlanning@306bg.org

Secretary:

Handles all changes of address, current records, obituaries, and correspondence.
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 Website: www.306bg.co.uk

306th Echoes is published four times annually: January, April, July and October. *Echoes* is mailed free of charge to all known addresses of 306th personnel, 1942-1945. Contributions in support of this effort may be remitted to the treasurer.

2009-2010 Student Interns:

Kathryn Barnard (Judge Donald Ross Intern)
 Chase Brazell (Russell Strong Intern)
 Jami Harp (Peg Haapa Intern)
 Lynn Holliday (Michael Roskovitch Intern)
 Mackenzie North (Thurman Shuller Intern)
 Julie Eichelberger (Leland Kessler Intern)

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

Obituaries

Please send the Association details of deaths or complete obituaries if you have them. Please send obituary information to the secretary:

Barbara Neal
 P.O. Box 682530
 Park City, UT 84068-2530
secretary@306bg.org



Obituaries Received:

- **Boring, Wallace D.** "Slim," 368th Squadron navigator and bombardier, died 30 Jul 07 at his home in Maryville, TN. In Oct 1999 he was elected President of the 306th Historical Bomb Group Association. He was a retired Lt Col, Deacon, and Sunday School teacher. He left his wife of 60 years, Betty Louise, 3 c, 10 gc, 10 ggc.
- **Clements, George W.**, 367th navigator (Perry E. Raster and Virgil W. Dingman crews), died 5 Apr 09 in Conroe, TX. He joined the group in Feb 44 and flew 26 missions prior to bailing out over occupied France 17 Jun 44, and successfully evaded capture. Post-war he worked for Exxon for 28 years, retiring in 1975. His wife Martha predeceased him. He left 2 c, 1 gc.
- **Dodds, Paul**, 367th radar observer, died 2 Oct 09 at his home in West Plains, MO. He was on active duty 10 Jun 44 to 19 Apr 46. He was an active member of many community organizations; president of Dodds Truck Line; board member and/or president of several state/national trucking associations; and later in life became an antique dealer with his wife, participating in many antique shows. He left his wife of 59 years, Rosemary, 3 c, 2 gc.
- **Fisher, George P.**, 368th ball turret gunner (Reginald Robinson crew), died 1 Sep 08 in Monroeville, PA. He joined the Air Corps in 1942 and flew 25 missions from Thurleigh. Afterward he served as a gunnery instructor at Drew Air Force Base in Tampa, FL where he assisted his crew members in survival and rescue when their B-17 was hit in an air collision by a second B-17 on which all crew members perished. Post-war he resumed work for The Pittsburgh Press and Post-Gazette, retiring after 48 years there in 1988. His war memorabilia is at the Soldiers and Sailors National Military Museum and Memorial in Oakland, at Pittsburgh, PA, in a wheeled glass case made by one of his sons. He left his wife of 63 years, Magdalen, 3 c, 6 gc, 4 ggc.
- **Garrett, John Lewis "Lew,"** 423rd radio operator (Winston Wood crew), died 19 Oct 09 in Phoenix, AZ. He completed 30 missions. He was preceded in death by his wife and son, and left two (Larson) stepsons.
- **Harrington, "Dutch" Claude M.**, 306th engineer and top turret gunner, died 21 Jul 08 at his home in Missouri City, TX. He served in the Air Corps Sep 41 until Aug 43, when he was honorably discharged on medical grounds. After the war he owned and piloted several planes including a P-51 Mustang. He was active in civic, community, and church affairs, and after selling the family oilfield trucking business, he was a vocational instructor until retiring from teaching in 1983. His wife of 45 years, Christine, predeceased him in Jul 87. He left 2 c, 5 gc, 4 ggc.
- **Hoolko, Nicholas John, Sr.**, 367th ball turret gunner, died 14 Jan 10 at his home in Brick, NJ. While he served at Thurleigh, he was taken POW in Sep 44. After the war he was a self-employed general contractor owner of The Remodeling Company. His survivors include Dotty "Gypsy" who we've known from 306th Reunions, 3c, 3gc.
- **Hopkins, "Hoppy" Cecil L.**, 368th tail gunner (crew of Albert F. Rehn with Donald R. Ross), died 6 Nov 09 at his home in Buckeye, AZ. He flew 35 missions in 1943-44, including 3 on D-Day. After WWII he returned to being a cowboy in Colorado until he was recalled to service in Jan 1951. He continued in the Air Force, retiring in 1968. He then worked for Lockheed Aircraft, Luke Air Force Base, and O'Malley's Lumber Company in Buckeye before retiring in 1977. He left his wife of 56 years, Anna May, 4 c, 5 gc, several ggc.
- **Morere, H. John**, 423rd co-pilot (crew of Roy E. Trask; possibly also with 369th), died 26 Nov 09 in Pensacola, FL. He graduated from St. Stanislaus College in Bay St. Louis, MS, and earned degrees from Curtis-Wright Technical Institute (Aeronautical Engineering) and University of Alabama (Mechanical Engineering). In 1944 he left a job designing planes with Howard Hughes to become a pilot, and flew 35 missions. Post-war he worked for Mobil until his retirement in 1980. His daughter noted he was glad to be able to attend 306th Reunions in years past, and that his bonds with the 306th and especially his crew were an important part of his life to the end. He was preceded in death by his wife, Mary, and is survived by his wife, Pat, 4 c, 5 gc, 4 ggc.
- **Moxley, Charles H.**, 369th radio operator (crew of Billy W Casseday), died 9 Jul 62 (before Echoes publication began). He left his wife B. Joyce, and 2c; the family has grown now to 9 gc, 10 ggc.
- **Myers, Jerry M.**, 369th engineer (crews of Young B.C. Newsom and Lowell Burgess), died 21 May 08 in the St Louis, MO area. He and most crewmates (Newsom's crew), were POWs following the 16 Aug 44 mission to Bohlen in the Leipzig area. He left his wife Elaine, 2 c, 4 gc, 1 ggc.
- **Purnell, George W.**, (unknown 306th assignment), longtime resident of Wichita and Garden City, Kansas, died peacefully 4 May 09 in Denver, CO. He was predeceased by his wife Suzanne.
- **Silverstein, Stanley L.**, 368th bombardier, died 5 Jan 10 near Baltimore, MD. He was lead bombardier for his squadron, and was the 91st officer in the 306th to complete a tour. He began his 25 missions 23 Apr 1943. He was predeceased by his wife Maxine. He left 2 c, 2 gc, 4 ggc, 1 gggc.
- **Ukele, Clyde K.**, 369th ball turret gunner on Satan's Lady (Harlan L Laughlin crew), died 9 Apr 04 in WaKeeney, KS. While stationed in England, he met his wife, Myrtle "Jinx" Carpenter; they married in 1946 in WaKeeney. With the Kansas Wildlife and Parks Department, he served as a game warden until he retired. He left his wife of 57 years, Jinx, 3 c, 4 gc.
- **Williams, Ralph F.**, 369th engineer and top turret gunner, died 12 Nov 09 in Charlotte, NC, surrounded by his family at home. After his 35 bombing missions in the war, he was in sales for Allison-Erwin Co, and was an active member of his church, serving it in many leadership roles. He left his wife of 64 years, Violet, 2 c, 6 gc, 4 ggc.
- **Wood, Robert H.**, 369th co-pilot (George Walter crew) and pilot, died 23 Oct 09 at home in Marietta, NY. He was a dedicated educator, working as a teacher, elementary principal, and superintendent of schools. He enriched many community groups through his active involvement. He left his wife of 62 years, Carol, 2 c, 2 gc, 2 ggc.

306th Family

- **Beres, Hazel**, wife for 67 years of her surviving husband Robert D Beres (423rd bombardier, Ragnar Carlson crew) died peacefully in the Akron area at Legacy Living in Copley, OH, on 23 Jul 09. She and Bob met as young adults working for the BF Goodrich Company in Akron and later married.
- **Ukele, "Jinx" Myrtle**, the British 1946 war bride of 369th ball turret gunner Clyde K Ukele, died as his widow, 27 Sep 08 in San Francisco.

President's Corner

Greetings,



I am happy for this opportunity to discuss with you your BGA's intended program for 2009-2010. For those who don't already know, 1942 was our first year of life as the 306th BG, and it has been going as an association since 1976. We plan to continue as you know it until 2012, our 70th year. At that time, it will be largely up to you and the second generation to determine where we go from there.

Your choices are to continue under the 306th BGA name with the 8th Air Force Historical Association, continue as it is, or close it down. The present leadership has proposed an option to continue as an organization with the other bomb groups who have already faced this issue and continue to meet under our banner within the 8th AFHS umbrella at designated reunions. We have two years to discuss this and decide.

Meanwhile, we are asking all of you to recruit members of your family and our gallant widows to return to our reunions. Don't forget the many children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. As well as cousins, aunts and uncles and friends who are interested. All are most welcome.

Continue reading your Echoes for follow-up news. If you have any questions, please contact the Secretary, Barbara Neal who will answer or direct you to the member who can answer. In the meantime, think of joining us in Washington, D.C. for our next reunion (see page 7 for details). You are cordially invited.

Shel Beigel

Vernon Blucher's 16th Mission to Magdeburg

Diary Extract, 28 September 1944

By Vernon Blucher
367th Bomb Squadron

September 28, 1944, Mission #16 to Magdeburg, Germany. This was my regular crew I had trained with back in the United States, all except the engineer who was sick. At the briefing, we were always reminded that some of us would not come back alive. This day was going to be a rough one for us all. Our bomb load was 10 five hundred-pound bombs. Over the target, each plane must fly on a straight and level course or the bombs would not eject from the bomb bay properly. We all knew this from previous missions, but when we were told that in the briefing, it emphasized the danger we were heading into. Everything went well until we were on the bomb run at 30,000 feet when our plane got hit in the #1 engine. The engine had to be shut down to prevent fire. Not long after that, the #2 engine began to leak oil, so it too had to be shut down. We made it over the target, dropped our bombs, and had to drop out of formation, because with only two engines running we couldn't keep up.

When we crossed the Rhine River, which was very heavily fortified, we got hit in the #3 engine. The pilot struggled with control now that there was danger that the plane was going to slip and go into a tail spin. The pilot called on the intercom telling us we were going to crash in the next field he came to, so we were all supposed to get into the crash position in the radio room. We were all in our position when the pilot called again and told us we had better "hit the silk" because he couldn't find a field and we were losing altitude fast. The pilot told us we were in enemy territory, so we should all hide when we got on the ground. I was the second one to jump. After clearing the plane, I pulled my rip cord and my chute opened just like the instructor in flight school said it would. The third man to jump passed me like he was in a hurry to get to the ground, but his chute was not open at this time. I looked down to see where I was going to land and saw I had three choices: a thatched barn roof, high power electric wires, or trees. I didn't have much time to decide as it looked as though they were all coming up to meet me fast. I grabbed the strings of my chute directing away from the barn and the power lines. About that time, I was crashing through the trees. I kept my feet together and my hands above my head.

When the crashing stopped I was dangling about 8 feet off the ground. Now what a predicament, how do I get my parachute harness disconnected with all my weight pulling against me? That part was not in the rule book. I wiggled, squirmed, pulled, and tugged, and finally I found myself on the ground surrounded by about 50 people standing over me with axes, clubs, pitchforks, shovels, and any other thing they had. Just to make sure I was going to stay on my back on the ground until they were sure about who I was. I couldn't understand Belgium and it was clear that they couldn't understand English. I held my hands over my head as a sign of surrender, also showed my I.D. dog tag which was around my neck, but nothing seemed to please any of them and they kept me pinned to the ground with whatever weapon they had. I didn't know the Lord at this time, so I had no thoughts about praying. I think I was too scared to pray anyway. Finally, a girl about 14 years old came through the crowd. In English she asked for my dog tags, which I gladly gave her. After looking at them, she asked me in English what my name was. I told her Vernon T. Blucher and her next question was what my serial number was. I, without hesitation, told her #33558663. The next question was where did I live? I told her Baltimore, Maryland. She looked puzzled for awhile, then she asked what state was north of Baltimore. Since this was serious business, I told her Pennsylvania. She thought for a while then asked me what the capital of Maryland was and I told her Annapolis. She paused and I held my breath as I saw these pitchforks, shovels, clubs, etc. The girl spoke in Belgium, which I could not understand.

Things really did a turnabout as the weapons all disappeared and I was picked up off the ground and all kinds of joy and hurrahs broke out. I was hugged and kissed countless times. I didn't know what to expect next but soon the bottles of champagne and wine appeared. The water in Belgium is not fit to drink so it's all wine. I found out by my interpreter that just two days before, the very barn I was aiming for was used as the SS storm troopers quarters and they never took prisoners. They usually would use the parachuters for target practice while in the air. The crowd then took me to a nearby farmhouse where all kinds of food, fruit and drink was made ready. I couldn't understand why all the fanfare over me until I learned how glad they were that the Americans had arrived and had pushed the Germans out of their town after occupying it several years. The longer I stayed, the larger the crowd got and the more hugs and kisses I got. The crowd consisted of senior citizens too old to carry a gun and children too young to shoot a gun. Oh, lest I forget, just the night before the Germans had dropped troops dressed in U.S. uniforms behind the U.S. from lines which had ran them out two days before. I could hear the shells bursting in the distance, that's how close I was to enemy territory.

After the rivalry died down a bit I told them there were nine others on the plane and did anyone know where any of them were. I felt like the pied piper, everybody went with me to find them. We met a soldier in a jeep from the Belgium Secret Service who told us he found six of them and two of them were injured. He directed us to where they could be found and sure enough there was a large crowd with them. The engineer had a broken ankle when he landed on a steep hillside. The other was injured when his parachute was delayed in opening. I figure it opened less than 100 feet above the ground and when it did open he was upside down which caused him to hit head first causing him to have a crushed skull. He was unconscious lying on a sofa with people trying to awaken him by pouring wine down his throat. I told them that would kill him and he needed a hospital immediately or he would die. Some of the young children were told something in their language and immediately the room emptied of kids.

Tour Postponed Until 2011

May 30-June 7, 2011

"I'll Be Seeing You" A Tour of the Airfields of the Mighty Eighth

Dr. Vernon L. Williams and the East Anglia Air War Project announced that insufficient enrolment has caused the tour of war-time England to be moved to 2011. A minimum of 12 is needed to support the tour.

Follow in Williams' footsteps, along the back roads of England and discover the people who lived near their "Yanks" during the war and encounter the airfields that remain scattered across the landscape of rural England. There is much left of the "community" that developed between the Brits and the Yanks so long ago. Soon to be the subject of the first book to come out of Williams' decade-long research, join him in retracing the story of the 306th and many other bomb groups who flew their missions from these small villages and towns scattered across East Anglia and the Midlands.

All proceeds from the tour will benefit the East Anglia Air War Project and Williams' efforts to preserve the history of the men of the Eighth Air Force and their contribution to the victory won over the skies of Europe. The East Anglia Project is the driving force behind the preservation of the 306th archives and the work of 306th student interns at Abilene Christian University. This tour will help fund their work.

**London - Dover - Churchill's Estate - Cambridge
Airfields in the Midlands - Airfields in East Anglia
Thurleigh Memorial Museum - Bedford - Norwich**

Tour Website: www.oldsegundo.com/tour



The Joseph Couris Crew: Kneeling, left to right—Floyd Clites (E/TTG), Louis Fryer (G), Vernon Blucher (G), Harold Schrecongost (BTG), Albert Christensen (G). Standing, left to right—Robert J. McCourt (N), Clifford Stanton (B), Joseph Couris (P), and Charles Barchard (CP). Note: This crew photograph is not an original but a Xerox copy. If anyone in the 306th Bomb Group has an original we can copy, please send it to Dr. Vernon L. Williams in Abilene. He will return the original.

Visit the 306th Website
www.306bg.org

Within five to ten minutes, in came a medic from a Royal Canadian Air Force Field Hospital and both men were off for better care. The man with the injured head was Harold Schrecongost from my own crew from the States. I did not have contact with him until just a few years ago. He had recovered, although he had a steel plate in the back of his skull from the injury. After the injured were taken care of the other four and myself had to decide what to do. The Belgium people decided for us and we were each one given to a different family for a night's lodging. The next morning we all met at a designated place to head back to our base. We were only allowed forty-eight hours to return or give just cause before A.W.O.L. action was filed.



306th Bomb Group Leadership Through the Years

Compiled by Mackenzie North
Thurman Shuller Intern

2009

President- Sheldon Beigel
Vice Pres- Judy Hermley
Secretary- Barbara Neal
Treasurer- Joel Labo

2008

President- John Hickey
Vice Pres- Sheldon Beigel
Secretary- Albert McMahon
Treasurer- Joel LaBo

2007

President- John Conroy
Vice Pres- Susan O'Konski
Secretary- Albert McMahon
Treasurer- Joel LaBo

2006

President- Dr. Herman Kaye
Vice Pres- Robert Rockwell
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Royce Hopkins

2005

President- Albert McMahan
Vice Pres- Dr. Herman Kaye
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Royce Hopkins

2004

President- Royce Hopkins
Vice Pres- Albert McMahan
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Robert N. Houser

2003

President- Leland Kessler
Vice Pres- Anthony J. Conroy
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Royce Hopkins

2002

President- Leland Kessler
Vice Pres- Anthony J. Conroy
Secretary- Robert N. Houser
Treasurer- Royce Hopkins

2001

President- Lowell Burgess
Vice Pres- Leland Kessler
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Robert N. Houser

2000

President- Paul Reiox
Vice Pres- Lowell Burgess
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Robert N. Houser

1999

President- Wallace Boring
Vice Pres- Paul Reiox
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Robert N. Houser

1998

President- Joseph R. Hathaway
Vice Pres- Alfred J. Switzer
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Robert N. Houser

1997

President- Robert W. Seelos
Vice Pres- Joseph R. Hathaway
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Robert N. Houser

1996

President- James S. Cheney
Vice Pres- Robert W. Seelos
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Robert N. Houser

1995

President- James S. Cheney
Vice Pres- Robert W. Seelos
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Robert N. Houser

1994

President- C. Dale Briscoe
Vice Pres- James S. Cheney
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- Robert N. Houser

1993

President- William F. Cavaness
Vice Pres- C. Dale Briscoe
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- C. F. Jones

1992

President- Forrest J. Stewart
Vice Pres- William F. Cavaness
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- C. F. Jones

1991

President- M. E. Christianson
Vice Pres- Donald R. Ross
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- C. Dale Briscoe

1990

President- M.E. Christianson
Vice Pres- Donald R. Ross
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- C. Dale Briscoe

1989

President- M.E. Christianson
Vice Pres- Robert P. Riordan
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- C. Dale Briscoe

1988

President- Reginald R. Robinson
Vice Pres- William F. Houlihan
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- C. Dale Briscoe

1987

President- Donald R. Ross
Vice Pres- William F. Houlihan
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- C. Dale Briscoe

1986

President- Donald R. Ross
Vice Pres- William F. Houlihan
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- C. Dale Briscoe

1985

President- John Ryan
Vice Pres- Robert Starzynski
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- William M. Collins, Jr.

1984

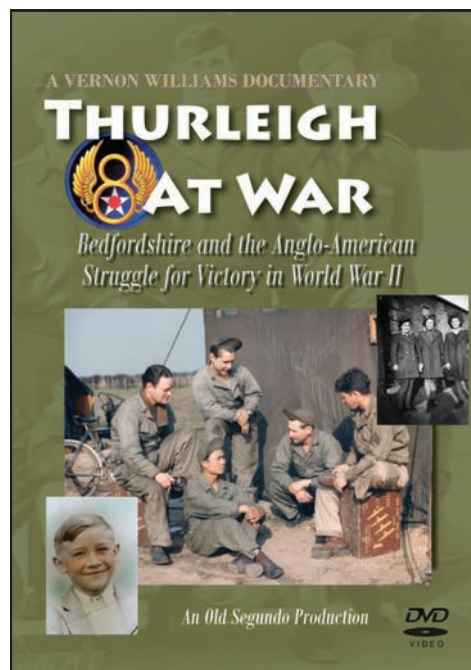
President- John Ryan
Vice Pres- Robert Starzynski
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- William M. Collins Jr.

1983

President- Robert Bordner
Vice Pres- John L. Ryan
Secretary- Russell A. Strong
Treasurer- William M. Collins Jr.

1976- 1982

The 306th was a part of the Eighth Air Force Historical Association.



The New Thurleigh Film has successful premiere

The sequel to *Thurleigh Memories* finally made its appearance recently in Abilene as the interested crowd gathered together on a rainy and cold Thursday night for a special viewing of *Thurleigh at War*. With bags of popcorn and steaming hot coffee, the story of Bedfordshire and World War II unfolded on the screen before them.

In *Thurleigh at War*, 306th veterans and British families remember Thurleigh and the area around Bedford during the war. The film includes British Land Army girls stationed at Milton Earnest and Bolnhurst near Thurleigh and young boys who lived adjacent to the Thurleigh base on nearby farms and in the surrounding villages. Together,

with 306th men who served in the air crews and in the ground element, they give voice to the human story of the war and the impact that the Americans made in the skies over Europe and in the countryside throughout Bedfordshire. Using newly discovered wartime footage and surviving photographic archives at the National Archives, both these two Thurleigh films place the story of the 306th Bomb Group in its rightful place in history.

Proceeds from the sale of both films benefit the East Anglia Air War Project and assists in the preservation of the history of the Eighth Air Force in World War II England. Either film can be ordered online at www.oldsegundo.com or by calling the order line at 325-676-1200.

Photographs, Military Records, Diaries, Letters Needed

The 306th Bomb Group Historical Collection still needs wartime materials. Many 306th families have sent in important bomb group materials in recent months. See the top three photographs on page 5 that are drawn from a number of photographs sent in from the Virginia and Theodore Czechowski.

Particularly urgent are crew pictures, many of the images in the Collection are Xerox copies or prints in poor condition. Look through your scrapbooks and personal collections and send what you can. Please include your instructions for return of originals or indicate your desire to donate the originals to the 306th BG Historical Collection. All originals to be returned will be promptly mailed back to you as soon as the digital copies are made. Contact Dr. Vernon L. Williams, ACU Box 28203, Abilene, TX 79699 ~ Telephone (325) 280-3399.



The Rainbow Corner Red Cross Club was a must stop for every GI coming to London on pass. Does anyone have memories of their visits to the Rainbow Corner? Send us some stories. We promise we won't tell your wives.

Theodore Czechowski family donates collection of 306th Bomb Group photographs and historical materials.

The three photographs below are part of the Czechowski Collection recently received from Virginia and Theodore Czechowski. The photograph at top left is Theodore shortly after his arrival at Thurleigh with his crew picture to the right.



The 306th Bomb Group makes its approach to target at Peenemünde on 18 July 1944. This photograph tells the story as the camera records the bombing run while fires burn below. Peenemünde, a frequent target for the Eighth Air Force, was the site of the German heavy water operations. Theodore Czechowski Historical Collection.



Rasmussen first mission as first pilot was his last

By Vernon L. Rasmussen
423rd Bomb Squadron

It was my thirtieth mission and my first mission as first pilot. We were assigned the oil refinery at Merseburg, altitude 30,000 feet. This was the 30th of November 1944. Merseburg was heavily protected by anti-aircraft ME 109's and FW-190's. Guy Burnett had been the crew commander up until this mission, but this time he was flying as co-pilot.

When we were close to Merseburg, we started our bomb run. There were hundreds of B-17s on this mission from several groups. When we were almost over our target, another group of planes came in from our left side, and we had to make a fast right turn to avoid a mid-air collision. About then an anti-aircraft shell burst on my left side, and as it came through the windshield, parts of the flak were lodged in my left jaw. My oxygen mask was knocked off by the impact. With my left hand I had to hold my mask on and continue to fly with my right hand. It seemed like a long time before Burnett noticed I was wounded. I looked at the instrument panel and noticed we only had one good engine and the other three engines were only pulling enough power to equal one engine. We re-joined the formation and over Leipzig's railroad, I heard the bombardier yell "Bombs away!" Burnett then noticed I was wounded and took over the plane. He called the radio operator, and he gave me a shot of morphine. Then he helped me lay down by the navigator.

Burnett asked the navigator for a fix on a friendly airport in France. I indicated to the navigator that I needed something to write with, and I wrote that he should land at our base. I could make it.

After landing, the medics took me to the base hospital in Thurleigh, England and cleaned my wounds and gave me another shot. This was the last thing I remember until I woke up at the 49th Station Hospital in Eastern England.

The flak broke my jaw and took out all of my teeth. On the left side of my jaw the doctors took out the largest piece of flak, wired my jaw closed and for the next three months I could only take liquids through a straw. All they had was powered milk and pineapple juice, which I can't stand to drink to this day. The doctors gave me penicillin shots every three hours until I had so many welts on my body, the nurse had a hard time finding a place for the next shot. But, I'm sure they were the reason I lived through the whole ordeal.

I was released from the hospital the first week in March. I had to start exercising my jaw by chewing gum because it had been immobile for so long. I couldn't eat solid foods for some time after the dentist took the wires off. I have had headaches and stomach problems ever since.

I went back to my base in Thurleigh. My face was still too sore to wear an oxygen mask, so I was sent back to the United States for plastic surgery. I went by Liberty Ship from South Hampton to New York Harbor. We arrived on May 7th, 1945, V.E. Day. I was assigned commander of a troop train from New Jersey to Fort Douglas in Salt Lake City, Utah. I had a five-day delay in Ogden. I hadn't been home to see my family for about a year. After my visit, I went to Santa Ana Air Base for the plastic surgery.

After arriving back in Utah about three months later, I reported to Hill Air Force Base where my orders went from active to inactive duty. This was August of 1945.

At Hill Field I met Marge, my future wife. She was working there as a message sender. We had one date before I left for the Service and then we lost track of each other.

We finally were married June 24th, 1946 and had three sons, one daughter, and now have seventeen grandchildren. Six of our grandchildren are married and we have six great grandchildren.

I worked for Sears in Ogden before I left for the Service. I was attending Weber State College and had my own orchestra; I played the piano. When I arrived home I started working for Sears in Salt Lake City as a building materials manager.

My father, brother, and myself built a small drive-in restaurant. I managed it for a year before I leased it. Then I started working for Arden Sunfreeze Dairy. Meadow Gold Dairies bought them out.

After seventeen years in the dairy business, I was retail sales manager, when I made the move back to work for Sears. I retired from Sears after twenty years of service. I managed several departments through the years. At my retirement, I was auto accessories manager.

During my retirement, we were able to do some traveling and had some very choice trips with our daughter and her husband. We also took an enjoyable trip with our son back to England. While in England, we had the opportunity to visit the base.

On the 30th of December 2000 I had a severe stroke. I spent two months in two different Rehabilitation Hospitals and continued outpatient therapy after I arrived home. We have lived in our present home for 46 years and are grateful for every day we have together.

I was sorry when I got word from Guy Burnett's wife, Narrine, that he had passed away last November 7th, 2001. We have kept in touch with each other through the years every Christmas season.

I admire Barney Rawlings for his leadership ability and talented singing voice that he has generously shared with others throughout his life.

One of my fondest memories is my friendship with Barney as we were able to stay together throughout our training in the United States until we both received our overseas assignments.

Thank you for this opportunity to recall some very important times in my life.

Vernon Lewis Rasmussen

The Guy Burnett, Jr. Crew: Knelling, left to right—Guy Barnett, Jr. (P), Vernon L. Rasmussen (CP), Charles F. Handler (N), George H. Blahnik (B). Standing, left to right—Eli Barnett (E/TTG), Edward L. Favours (R), R. Donald Cox (BTG), Edward R. Bell (WG), James L. Peltz (WG), John E. Buckley (TG). Peltz arrived at Thurleigh as an extra gunner and was immediately transferred to the Gates crew. Note: This crew photograph is not an original but a Xerox copy. If anyone in the 306th Bomb Group has an original we can copy, please send it to Dr. Vernon L. Williams in Abilene. He will return the origi-



Do you know anything about this photograph? Can you identify anyone in the photograph? If you can, email or write or telephone Dr. Williams with the information. Use the individual numbers to identify individuals. Contact Dr. Williams at 325-280-3399, vwilliams@acu.edu or write to him at ACU Box 28203, Abilene, TX 79699.

**DONATIONS FOR THE
306TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION**

Those who are able are asked to make an annual contribution to keep everything running smoothly in our Association. There are no dues—so your gift is needed to support the 306th operations. Your gift is tax-deductible.

Name

Street and No.

City, State & Zip

Telephone No. 306th Unit

Email Address

Send to:
Joel LaBo, Treasurer
306th Bomb Group Association
875 S. Worth
Birmingham, Michigan 48009



Date

Continued from Museum Notes, page 8:

Not having a clue as to where they were or indeed where they were going, they counted forty days on this "Hell Ship" as the temperatures dropped and dropped and they only had tropical clothing. They finally arrived at a place called Wakayama Camp where they existed for a further sixteen months. Their food consisted of a cup of warm boiled rice at 6am, cold boiled rice at midday, and warm boiled rice with a vegetable soup (always watery thin sometimes containing Daigon, sometimes seaweed but very little else) at 6pm. There were two stoves in the hut for heating but no fuel.

Work started with a two mile walk across loose sand; this itself was very tiring. At first work often consisted of moving scrap metal or firebricks at the Mitsubishi steelworks. Once they had served their apprenticeship, they were put to work in other parts of the factory. They worked two weeks of days followed by two weeks of nights, and so this miserable existence continued month after month, suffering more and more from the lack of a stable diet. A 1944 Christmas treat was a bath, in groups of six at a time. One bath was a soaper, while the other was a soaker in which soaping was not allowed. Following a number of rumors, the group was on the move again. It was April 5th, 1945. They were told to pull down the blinds, ensuring they all managed a brief look. In Eric's words, "I shall never forget the sight, Osaka was utterly and completely flat for miles around." He discovered after the war that 274 B-29s bombed Osaka on March 13th, 1945.

The final destination of this journey was Ikuno. Ikuno is on a river running between high hills, about a mile and a half away from which was a copper mine. As Eric said, "Details of life here is mercifully dim," but if he remembers correctly, it changed little from previous camps – up at 5:00 for Tenko and rice, collect their box of cold rice for midday, then a two mile march to the mine head. They were then transferred to the 17th floor where it was dry and warm and stripped to the waist; this is where they worked for the rest of their stay as guest of the Emperor.

Then it happened: the men paraded for work as usual but something was upsetting the normal procedure. They were told to return to their huts. What was happening? The answer came within an hour – at the camp gates guards had disappeared.

Days dragged by and nothing happened, although the officers were doing a brilliant job of contacting the Americans, who, since it was September 1945, were now in Tokyo. The men were told to paint PW in very large letters on one of the huts. After a while, an aircraft was heard, the first for over two years. They saw it

as it passed over and their hearts sank – they had not been seen. It returned later to shower them with leaflets saying it was all over. Days went by and nothing happened. Then an unforgettable sight occurred when a B-29 arrived overhead, flaps down, undercarriage down, and bomb doors open. Very soon colored parachutes came out of the bomb bay, the colors indicating a different type of supply, most importantly food and clothing. This was followed by other aircraft. Many of the prisoners ignored the leaflet advice and ate too much and were violently sick, Eric included. More days passed; it was now the end of September. Finally they boarded a train and spent the next 24 hours traveling to Yokohama. When they arrived they were processed by American medical personnel. They had a strongly medicated hot shower using a new flannel and towel, which together with most of their clothing was immediately burned.

They then travelled to Manila on the SS *Oconto* where they were issued more American clothing, including a pack, mess tins, underclothes, and a poncho. Their next means of transport was the aircraft carrier *HMS Implacable*; they traveled to Vancouver, a 7,000 mile trip. Without realizing it, they were soon boarding a Canadian National train for a 2,500 mile five days and five nights trip to Halifax, Nova Scotia. Eventually they found themselves in RCAF huts at Dibert where they were given items of RCAF uniforms, greatcoat, jacket, gloves etc. After about ten days they were on the Atlantic Liner *Ile de France* bound for England, arriving at Southampton on the November 1st, 1945. After enduring three years of hell, where at one time Eric's weight had fallen by over 3 stone (forty-two pounds), life could begin again.

The Girl Back Home

I did mention Mary at the beginning of my story. Whilst Eric was away, Mary was doing her bit for the war effort – she served in the Women's Land Army from 1942-1946 and was based at Milton Ernest Hostel (just a few miles from Thurleigh) as a Forewoman. We got to know both Mary and Eric very well as they have visited the Museum on a number of occasions to attend Land Girl reunions we have held there. Mary and the family had the idea that maybe we would like to have a few pieces on display in the Museum. We are delighted to accept them in his memory. They include the American M43 Combat Jacket and Mess tin and the Royal Canadian Air Force Greatcoat and Jacket. The other two tins were probably obtained from the Japanese.

Registration Form

306th Bomb Group Association Reunion
 Hyatt Regency Crystal City — Arlington, Virginia
 6-10 October 2010

Registration fee (per person)..... x \$35.00 = \$_____

Friday, 9 October

Ladies Breakfast (7:30-9am)..... x \$28.00 = \$_____

Air and Space Museum Tour (9:30 am-3 pm)..... x \$35.00 = \$_____

First Over Germany Dinner (7 pm)..... x \$45.00 = \$_____

Saturday, 10 October

World War II Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, x \$32.00 = \$_____ and Air Force Memorial Tour - (1:30am-5:00 pm)

Banquet (7 pm)..... x \$49.00 = \$_____

Everything else on the schedule is free!

Total.....\$_____

Name _____

Address w/ City, State, Zip _____

Phone # (____) _____ E-Mail _____

Squadron _____ Assigned Duty _____

*Please make checks payable to: 306th Bomb Group Association Reunion and mail to:
 Joel LaBo, 875 S. Worth, Birmingham, Michigan 48009*

Please list the names and hometown for each person registered.

Is this your first reunion? _____ Veteran? _____ Family? _____

**Please call the Hyatt Regency Crystal City direct to make reservations:
 1-888-421-1442 or 1-402-592-6464
 Ask for 306th Bomb Group reunion rates:**

\$99.00 (plus tax) Single or Double Rooms—All One Price

**Deadline for registration and hotel reservations is 15 September 2010.
 Please help your 306th Bomb Group reunion planning,
 register and make hotel reservations early. Do it today!**

**Reunion Schedule
 At Washington, D.C.**

Wednesday, 6 October

- Arrival - Pick up registration packets - Tidewater Foyer (2 - 6 pm)
- Sign up for Oral History interviews (2 - 5pm)
- Hospitality Room and Exhibits Setup Tidewater 1 and 2 (2 - 5 pm; 7 - 10 pm)
- Dinner on your own (hotel restaurants and other food venues close by)

Thursday, 7 October

- Arrival - Pick up registration packets - Tidewater Foyer (8 am – 6 pm)
- Board Meeting Arlington Room (10 am)
- Sign up for Oral History interviews (8 am-6pm)
- Hospitality Room and Exhibits Tidewater 1 and 2 (8 am - 5 pm; 7 - 10 pm)
- Thurleigh at War film (10 am)
- 306th BG Web Demonstration - What's new on the 306th BG web and how to do research from your computer - Dr. Williams (5-5:45 pm)
- Dinner on your own (hotel restaurants and other food venues close by)

Friday, 8 October

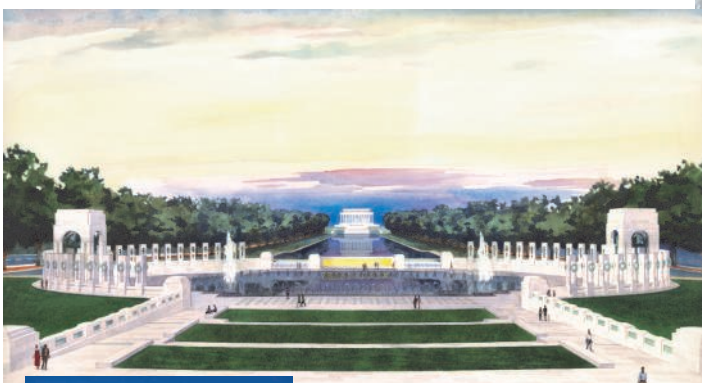
- Ladies Breakfast - Arlington Room (7:30-9am)
- Arrival - Pick up registration packets - Tidewater Foyer (8am-5pm)
- Oral History interviews (9am-5pm)
- Hospitality Room and Exhibits- Tidewater 1 and 2 (8am-5pm; 7-10 pm)
- Thurleigh at War film (10 am)
- Air & Space Museum Tour (9:30am-3pm)
- Second Generation meeting - (4 pm)
- First Over Germany Dinner, Regency AB (Cash Bar 6-7pm, Dinner 7-9pm)

Saturday, 9 October

- Arrival - Pick up registration packets - Tidewater Foyer (8am-5pm)
- Memorial Service—Tribute to the Fallen and Folded Wings Memorial, Regency AB (8:00-9:30 am)
- Business Meeting, Regency AB (10-11:45 am)
- Oral History interviews (11:30 am-5pm)
- Hospitality Room and Exhibits Tidewater 1 and 2 (1-5pm)
- World War II Memorial, Arlington National Cemetery, and Air Force Memorial Tour - (1:30 pm-5:00 pm)
- Thurleigh at War film (3 pm)
- Cash bar (6 pm – 9 pm)
- Veterans-only Group Photograph Regency AB(6:45 pm)
- Widows Group & Next Generation Photograph Regency AB(6:50 pm)
- Banquet, Regency AB (7 pm)

Sunday, 10 October

- Farewells
- Check out
- Travel Home — See you next year!



HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Hyatt Regency Crystal City
 Please call the Hyatt direct to make hotel reservations
1-888-421-1442 or 1-402-592-6464
 Ask for 306th Bomb Group reunion rates:
\$99.00 Single or Double Rooms—All One Price

Dr. Vernon L. Williams
 Reunion Chairman
 vwilliams@acu.edu
 325-280-3399

Museum Notes

Thurleigh Airfield 306th Bomb Group Museum

Eric's World War II Cruise

by Ralph Franklin

Keysoe, England

Our exhibits in the museum cover many aspects of life during World War II involving those from Bedfordshire and the surrounding area. Our inclusion of other groups, both military and civilian, has given us the opportunity to meet some very interesting people who offer their own stories of the war years. The following is one such story. The wartime life of Eric W.A. Smith does not directly involve Thurleigh Airfield.

When the BBC opened a television service in 1936, Eric was a sixteen-year-old apprentice service engineer for a company in Luton. Also working there was a lovely girl named Mary Pakes, who later became his wife.

With the possibility of war getting closer, the design of electronic devices for home and defense developed at a rapid rate. While listening to the news on the radio one evening in 1940, Eric's interest was grabbed when he heard the call for radio engineers to volunteer for service in the Royal Air Force (RAF). Once he had convinced his parents that it was the right thing for him to do, he went to the local recruiting office. Following interviews at RAF Cardington, he was sent to RAF Uxbridge; it was there that he was accepted into the RAF VR (Volunteer Reserve) as an ACI Radio Mechanic.

The next stage of becoming an airman was the process of turning one into a military man, which of course involved the dreaded square bashing and drill at RAF Bridgenorth. On leaving there, Eric was posted to Yatesbury in Wiltshire for technical training. Due to his knowledge of electronics from his civilian work, he was assigned to an intensive course on the Chain Home Low Radar, and was finally posted to RAF Happingburgh to help maintain the radar defenses along that area of the East Coast of England. In Eric's own words, "Apart from one night when we were attacked by German bombers, we had a fairly pleasant stay at this posting." Then it happened – the journey to war began with the news that he was to be sent overseas. There followed a few weeks of "soldier" type training near Selkirk in Scotland. Following this, he underwent several months of further radar training during the summer of 1941 at the Telecommunications Research Establishment, a few miles from Swanage in Dorset where they were billeted. They were trained in the use of a modified form of Air to Surface Vessel Radar (ASU) as used in the Short Sunderland Flying boats for submarine detection.

Life was quite pleasant during the summer of 1941 at Swanage, but it came to an abrupt end in November 1941 when they were posted to RAF Trevescan about a mile from Lands End in Cornwall, working on the high powered Chain Home Radar. Three weeks later, they were on the move yet again, this time to Bridlington for one night, then West Kirby and then on to Gourock and the 20,000 ton Union Castle Line ship "Warwick Castle." It was December 6th, 1941.

Once on board, with hammocks and space allocated, they started adjusting to life afloat. While they were still in Gourock, they had heard that Pearl Harbour had been attacked and the word "Jap" crept increasingly into their conversation. It was rumored that they were short, all wore glasses, and what they did to their enemies was nobody's business! They set sail the following day, letters from home ceased, and views of the Scottish coast soon faded as they headed out to sea and eventually formed up into a convoy. They had no knowledge of their destination, but soon realized they were heading somewhere out into the Atlantic and began to feel the effects of the much larger waves.

They arrived at Freetown on Christmas Day, 1941; it was very humid and "bumboys" soon gathered around the ship to dive for pennies or anything else they threw overboard. They remained in Freetown for about a week and then put to sea again heading for the Cape of Good Hope, and so the days wore on with the constant fear of attention from enemy submarines. This didn't happen and life went on until at last land was sighted. They finally docked at Cape Town a few days after New Year's Day 1942. Their brief stay soon came to an end, and with a very patriotic and wonderful farewell, they were on their way again, round the Cape and into the Indian Ocean. Could this mean they were going to Singapore? Then as the convoy ploughed on, one morning the sun moved more than usual on their zigzag course – they were changing direction. The answer came a few days later when they landed at Batavia in the Dutch East Indies as Singapore had fallen to the Japs a few days earlier on February 15th, 1942.

They had to move on. This time a much smaller ship took them to Sumatra where the whole troop set out for Palembang, partly by truck, and marching the remainder by night. Each side of the road was smothered with millions of glow worms. They reached their billet where they snatched a couple of hours sleep on a stone floor. In the morning they were taken to a local vantage point to prepare a suitable spot for the erection of their equipment as a radar observation post. Work had only just begun when Japanese bombers arrived. When parachutes could be seen dropping, they decided it was time to leave. It was a case of goodbye to Palembang and all their personal equipment and clothing. Eric retained his photographs. They were picked up by Dutch army vehicles and transported as far away from Palembang as possible, passing several burning oil wells on the way (the Dutch had set them on fire to prevent them being used by the Japs, who would arrive very soon).

Traveling became rougher and rougher. They continued into the mountains along a narrow track with very tight bends. On one side was a wall of rock standing hundreds of feet high, the other side about two feet away was a drop of several hundreds of feet, and so the one mile per hour journey continued until the road became



Top left to right: 1) Eric as a POW of the Japanese 2) Eric as a young RAF before his departure for the Dutch East Indies and the Pacific Theater of Operations 3) uniform exhibition in the 306th Bomb Group Memorial Museum at Thurleigh—Eric's dress uniform is front center, among other American and British examples 4) Mary Pakes, a forewoman for the Land Girls at Milton Ernest, not far from Thurleigh.

a little easier. They finally arrived at a little place called Manna. One of the officers Flt. Lt. Carr found a telephone and got in touch with a port about 50 miles further up the coast. They had a ship leaving for Java and would pick them up about 5 miles down the coast. As soon as they boarded, the ship journeyed about a day before finding themselves back in Batavia.

A convoy of trucks was ready for them, and soon they were away. After many hours of uncomfortable travel with only a couple of breaks, the group arrived at Poerwokerto where they transferred to what became known later as "The Train." The train started on its way, consisting of a few coaches, some closed wagons and three or four petrol wagons all hauled by a wood fired locomotive. The jungle drifted slowly by with the hours, then suddenly all hell broke loose with machine guns and grenades. Bullets ripped up through the floor and men yelled as they were hit; many were killed and injured and there was little they could do in the darkness. The engine gave its last puff as the men scrambled to the ground to see the whole train was ablaze. Those still living were rounded up. Flt. Lt. Carr had gone off in search of help. He returned much later pulling a wheeled gun at bayonet point. All the men were lined up with their hands in the air. Eric recalls thinking at that moment of having no future of any kind; it was now March 6th 1942. The now prisoners were moved from camp to camp, their condition getting progressively worse, with tropical ulcers developing. The Japs organized the men into working parties to do any odd jobs. By now it was a matter of survival, so the men grabbed anything they could if they thought they could get away with it. If anyone was caught during the irregular searches all twenty men in their working party were beaten, some so violently that their eardrums were damaged. Avoiding the patrolling guards became a constantly improving technique as failing to show them respect always resulted in a bashing with a rifle butt.

As their boots wore out they were replaced by wooden sandals made from bed boards and a short piece of webbing nailed across the front to form a strap. When in use, the heel dropped to the ground with every step, leading them to become known as "clompers." Clothing became more and more of a problem, as did recurring attacks of malaria.

About the end of November 1943 it was time to move again. Nobody knew where since keeping the prisoners in ignorance lowered their morale and made them easier to control. They finally arrived at a camp in Batavia. They did very little work apart from occupying themselves in an attempt to retain their sanity. Their next move was on a very small ship of about 5000 tons. It became very crowded, so much so that the prisoners were given the option of suffering the heat, stench and humidity below deck or remaining top side in the air, sun and rain. In these conditions they travelled the 500 miles to Singapore, then on to Changi Camp by truck. Accommodation was of course very elementary, latrines being simply a hole bored in the sand. About a month later they were moved again, but not before being segregated into two groups. One group was going to Thailand and the now infamous railway, while the other group, of which Eric was a part, made its way to Japan on a much bigger and unpleasant cargo ship.

Continued on page 6