

306th Echoes



FIRST CLASS MAIL
PRESORTED
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 626
Abilene, TX

Return Service Requested

Looking Back

368th Squadron Commander Leaves Behind a Rich Legacy of 306th History

By Vernon L. Williams
306th Bomb Group Historical Project
East Anglia Air War Archives

The 306th's longest serving squadron commander, Colonel John Regan, recently folded his wings at age 90 (see his obituary on page 2 in this issue). Russell Strong kept an extensive correspondence file on Colonel Regan during the years the two men collaborated on the history of the 306th Bomb Group. That correspondence file is now part of the 306th BG Historical Archives. It is fitting to include several of Colonel Regan's writings in this issue of Echoes. Some have been published before, either in Echoes or other periodicals. As we say goodbye to Colonel Regan, let us turn back to World War II Thurleigh and the commander's memories of those days so long ago.

From the Cockpit

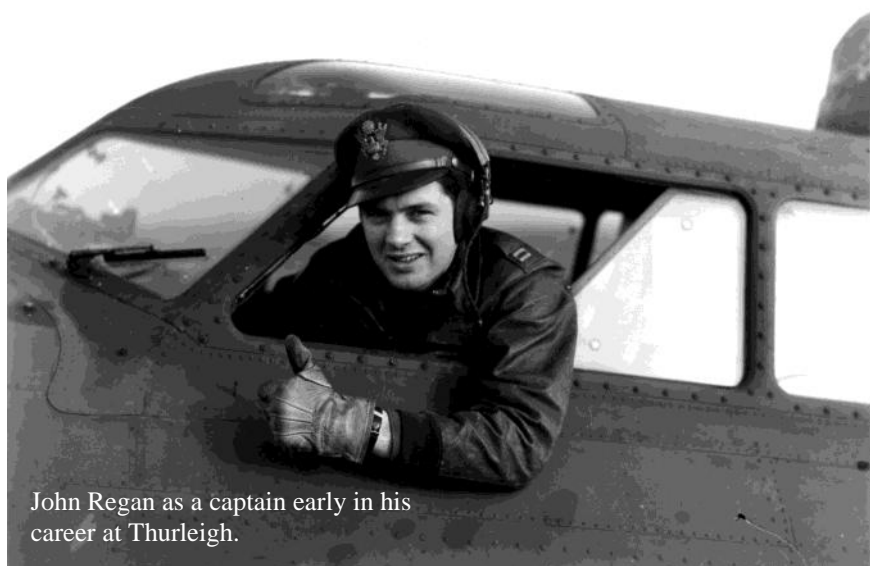
"Milk-run" my foot. This was supposed to be a relatively easy mission but, wow! it sure wasn't. The last German fighter pretty nearly rammed us head on and one of his 20mm cannon shells exploded in the nose of our B-17, hitting a can of 50 caliber ammo and blowing it up. The resulting explosion and shrapnel shattered the leg of our navigator, "Salty" Salitronik, slightly wounding me, knocked out the oxygen system in the cockpit and set part of our hydraulic system on fire. Some "milk-run."

This was my 18th mission. On all previous combat sorties I had been pilot or aircraft commander for the squadron or the group. But today our airplane was leading the 8th Air Force, and I was flying as co-pilot for Lt. Col. Jim Wilson, one of the most experienced and best pilots in our group and the 8th A.F. Our crew was experienced and sharp. Brig. Gen. Frank Armstrong, our former C.O., stood in the cockpit as an observer.

The flight had been routine until we crossed the Belgium Coast toward the target. Then all hell broke loose. This was somewhat surprising. I had thought this mission might be a little easier than most, as we would only be over enemy occupied territory a short time and not over their homeland. But, one thing I had learned from experience is that there were many ways to get clobbered flying combat – I had seen this only too often. One could never assume that a mission could be just routine. Therefore, as always I was apprehensive and this time it proved to be right.

The first waves of German fighters attacked us as we crossed the coast of Belgium and continued to press their attack until we hit the English Channel on our way back home. Since we were leading the raid our formation took the brunt of these assaults. I was so damn busy helping to fly that I only vaguely saw and absorbed what was going on around us. I do recall seeing one B-17 go down just after we crossed the coast and others later.

When we were hit I realized quickly that our oxygen system had been knocked out so I grabbed an emergency bottle to share with Gen. Armstrong (we took turns using it). Gen. Armstrong showed great courage as he went into the nose of the airplane to assure that the badly wounded "Salty" was getting oxygen and to tear open his pant leg and pour sulfa disinfectant on his wounds. With limited oxygen this took guts. On one of his many trips into the nose I glanced behind me and saw that our hydraulic lines were burning. I struggled out of my seat and with our flight engineer, John Crowther, we fought the fire with our hands until it went out. I was lucky I didn't pass out from the lack of oxygen but managed to get to my emergency source to keep me going. I got back to my seat just in time to grab Gen.



John Regan as a captain early in his career at Thurleigh.

Armstrong by his grey hair and give him some oxygen before he passed out. It was hectic.

Under these difficult circumstances we dripped our bombs and headed home. In spite of his pain and severe wounds "Salty" propped himself up and gave us headings to fly to our base.

As we left the Belgium Coast and crossed the English Channel, RAF Spitfires joined us as escort to England. Only then did the German fighters break off their attacks.

We limped back to Thurleigh. Wilson, who had done a superb job of flying, brought us down with no further serious complications. On final we had fired a red flare showing we had wounded aboard and were met by a medical crew and ambulance. "Salty," who had lost a lot of blood, was given 4 pints of plasma right on the spot before he was taken to the 8th A.F. hospital at Paddington. I was treated at the base clinic and released little worse for wear. Tired – yes, shaken – yes, and damn glad it was over.

I visited "Salty" at the hospital several times and watched his condition improve markedly. I thought he had it made. However, on my last visit with him on 15 April, I found him delirious and in great pain. I talked with the head nurse who advised me that they were going to take a cast of his damaged leg that night and treat him further. When in was removed they found that gas gangrene had set in and had spread through his body. He died on 16 April. With his passing our group had lost a great navigator, a swell guy and a natural leader. I had lost a good friend.

For a so-called "milk-run" my 18th combat sortie had been some mission.



Letter from John Regan to Russell A. Strong

3 Oct. 1978

Dear Russ,

Your letter of 29 Sept. 1978 asking questions about Don Wadley's crew that was involved in a mid-air collision over Germany on 3 Nov. 43 with total loss of aircrew. I remember the situation well.

I had many Polish people in my squadron (368th) - my own crew included - Kosikowski, bombardier – Stokowski, engineer and Jankowski Co-pilot (as I used to say – all Irish crew!) I don't know what's happened to the first two but know that Jen is deceased. Anyway – because I had so many Polish people and many spoke the language, the 8th Air Force and RAF assigned to my squadron a senior RAF Polish officer to fly one mission in a B-17. It seems the man had requested permission for one B-17 mission as he thought it was such a great airplane. He had thousands of hours flying time in many different types of aircraft – was the commander of our RAF all Polish Group, and a wonderful person. He stayed with my outfit for about 2 weeks – flew several practice missions and as he was inexperienced I sent him as a co-pilot on the 3 Nov. mission. Unfortunately the B-17 he was in collided with another one over the target with no known survivors. It was a sad situation. I well recall the members of his outfit coming to pick up his gear – They were all very sad because he was liked and respected. – Repercussions? No – Just one of the many unfortunate incidents of War.

Nice to hear from you.

Warm regards,

John Regan

John M. Regan Col USAF (Ret.)
334 W. Bellaire Ave.
San Mateo, CA 94402

"The Eager Beavers"



WWII Flyer Recalls First U.S. Bombing Strike at Nazi Germany

By Col. John M. Regan, USAF, Ret.

Nazi Germany? My co-pilot tapped me on the knee and pointed straight ahead of my B-17 Flying Fortress. I stared expectantly, and, through a haze and over a great distance of water below, I could see something that looked like land. I squinted and stared long and hard – yes, I could make it out! It was land.

My heart began to beat rapidly and my nerves jangled with excitement, as I knew that what I was looking at was the coast of Germany, and that today I was participating in a bombing mission that would be a significant part of the history of World War II.

It was the first time that United States aircraft were to drop bombs on the German homeland. At last, we were really going in – to prove to Hitler and his Nazis that their homeland was vulnerable to precision daylight bombing – in to give a much needed boost of morale to our allies and fellow Americans. Up to this time in the war there had been little to cheer about. To say that I was excited is to put it mildly. That day – Wednesday, Jan. 27, 1943 – had started out much like other days of that time for the men in the 306th Bomb Group (heavy) – my outfit,

Continued on page 5



The 449th Sub Depot displays the unit's motto, *No Supply, No Fly*. Unknown enlisted man leaves the facility at Thurleigh. Anyone recognize this man?



Officers:

Walt Rozett, President
president@306bg.org
 Donald Snook, Vice-President
vice-president@306bg.org
 Barbara Neal, Secretary
secretary@306bg.org
 Joel LaBo, Treasurer
treasurer@306bg.org

Directors: Em Christianson, Walt Lubjacky; Charles Neal; Robert Rockwell, Vernon Williams.

Past President:

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

Editor/Echoes and 306th BG Historian:

Dr. Vernon L. Williams
 ACU Box 28203
 Abilene Christian University
 Abilene, TX 79699-8203
vwilliams@acu.edu
 (325) 280-3399

Treasurer:

Send checks to:
 Joel LaBo
 875 S. Worth
 Birmingham, Michigan 48009
treasurer@306bg.org

British Representative:

Ralph Franklin
 National School Cottage, Mill Hill
 Keysoe, Beds MK44 2HP
 Telephone from U.S. 011-44-1234-708715
306museum@nscmh.fsnet.co.uk
 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.

2010-2011 Student Interns:

Chase Brazell (Russell Strong Intern)
 Ellyn Craigie (Peg Haapa Intern)
 Trenton Dietz (Thurman Shuller Intern)
 Emi Johnson (Judge Donald Ross 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 obits as soon as possible after the death, to secretary (see contact information at left on this page below).

The secretary has learned of the following deaths:

- **Carey, James R**, 369th tail gunner (Dean Allen crew when downed), of Ontario, OR, died 12 Jan 10 at 87. POW 26 Aug 44 (Gelsenkirchen mission) at Stalag 4. Soon after the war, he worked as a gun smith and contributed to the improvement of the M1 rifle. His career was as a truck driver, first for trucking companies and then as an independent. Survived by his wife, Bertha, 3c, 11gc, 18ggc.
- **Chamberlin, Donald R**, Group Pharmacist, died 27 Oct 10 in Dearborn, MI, at 90. He was predeceased in 89 by his wife of 44 years, Edith, a Bedford bride in 45 (when Bill Houlihan served as Best Man). Survived by 2s.
- **Czechowski, "Ted" Theodore J**, 369th pilot, died 30 Nov 2010 in Spokane, WA at 95. Ted flew 28 missions from Thurleigh Oct 43 to Aug 44. He later left the USAF as Major, and in 82, retired as owner of Stewart's True Value Hardware. Golf and basketball were his passion. Survived by his wife of 66 years, Virginia, 2s, 1d, 4gc.
- **Ehrhard, Herman P, Jr**, 367th tail gunner (Joseph W Pederson crew when downed), died in Kansas City, MO on 28 Jan 09 at 85. When downed 17 Jun 44 (Noyen mission) he became an evadee picked up by the French underground and returned to safety. Buried at Swan Lake Memorial Gardens in Grain Valley, MO, with his wife, Mary Frances, who died in Sep 00.
- **Fields, Robert L**, 423rd photo lab, died 26 Oct 10 in Bakersfield, CA at 88. Post-war he worked 38 years for Pacific Gas & Electric, retiring in 53. He and his wife traveled extensively. He was active in his Baptist church and for 17 years volunteered at Heritage Christian School library. Survived by wife Anna Lee, 2d, 1gd.
- **Finck, Albert J**, physician, of Needham Heights, MA, died 16 Nov 10 at 94. He was preceded in death by his wife of 60 years, Ruth, in Nov 07. Survived by 2c, 3gc. For the 306th, he is recalled as a fine, compassionate doctor who treated everyone with respect.
- **Haynes, Wyndom S**, 369th crew chief (including for James Edeler crew), who was born in OH and enlisted in VA, died in Tampa, FL 6 Oct 09 at 90. Wife Helen E, who listed him at WWII Memorial Registry, apparently died in 89. No further info.
- **Hillabrand, Richard G**, 423rd bombardier, died 27 Dec 09 in East Islip, NY, at 87. He retired as LtCol. Survived by his wife, Audrey.
- **Jones, Shedrick E**, 369th bombardier (Doyle Dugger crew; James Johnson crew when downed), of Frisco, TX, died 4 Nov 08 in Dallas, at 88. He was POW from 13 Jan 43 (Lille mission) at Stalag 3. Survived by 2c, 6gc, 9ggc.
- **Kidwell, John W**, 367th co-pilot (Carroll Q Hills crew), of IN, died 24 Jun 09 at 91. Nov 44 to Apr 45 he flew 26 missions. From the reserves he was called up for Korea. After retiring from the USAF Oct 63, he settled in New Castle, IN and gave pilot lessons until his eyesight forced him to stop in his 70s. He then bought an ultra light and flew it on his farm to within a couple months of his death. Wife Sarah predeceased him in Aug 04; no children.
- **Lapacz, Edward**, 367th medic ambulance driver, died 22 Sep 10 in Green Bay, WI, at 90. He reported to Thurleigh 8 Oct 42, and served through 45. He retired after 37 years with Procter & Gamble Paper Products. Survived by wife of 63 years, Genevieve, 1s, 2d, 2gc, 3ggc.
- **McDonnell, John F "Jack."** 1628th Ordnance Co, motor officer, of Mt Vernon, VA, died 2 Nov 2010 in Fairfax Co, VA, at 94. Jack retired as Lt Col in 64 and went on to a second career with Naval Investigative Service. He was a little league coach, a substitute teacher, a member of Mt Vernon's Board of Visitors, an active member of his Catholic church and Knights of Columbus. He was predeceased by his wife of 43 years, Emma, in 1994, and 1s in 1958. Survived by 5c, 15gc.
- **Pruner, Howard E**, 1208 QuarterMaster Co, died 15 Nov 09 in Waddington, NY at 94. He built his own house after returning from the war in Jan 46. For years he built furniture and other houses in his spare time. He retired from Alcoa after 28 years. Survived by wife of 67 years, Jean, 1d.
- **Regan, John M**, an original 368th pilot and long-time resident of the greater-San Francisco, CA area, died 21 Dec 10 at 90. He arrived 19 Mar 42, and flew quite eventful missions before becoming the 368th Squadron's longest-serving Commander 9 Apr 43 to 12 Apr 44, during which time he was promoted to Lt Col; he departed Thurleigh 13 Apr 44. Col. Regan retired after 30 years of service in USAF. He was a frequent author of Echoes articles, many of which are indexed in the volume of Echoes 1975-2000. His wife preceded him in death; survived by at least 1s.
- **Schafer, Earle W**, 423rd pilot, died 6 Dec 2010 just short of 89. He flew 35 missions (many on "Toggle Tessie") at Thurleigh 30 Dec 44 to 30 Mar 45. He was predeceased in 09 by his wife of 65 years, Wanelda. Both had been very active in the community in their longtime home in the Flathead Lake area of MT. During his 45 year career in education, he was a teacher, coach, school administrator, and superintendent, in ND, MT, ID, and OR, retiring in 01. Survived by 1d, 2s, 6gc, 3ggc.
- **Spence, Daniel M** (Gp communications; 368th cryptographer), died 27 Nov 08 in Cary, NC at 91. He retired from the Raleigh central office of State of NC Employment Security Commission, and retired as LtCol from the AF Reserves. He was a salt water fisherman, a "rock hound" (geology), an avid reader and great conversationalist with people from all walks of life. He was survived by his wife of 63 years, Rachel, 3d, 5gc, 6ggc.
- **Valenti, Jasper**, 423rd navigator (Ralph Clark's crew), died in the Chicago area 15 Jan 11 at 90. Completed his tour, 11/43-4/44. Post-war was Professor of Education at Loyola in Chicago for 32 years, and Associate Dean of Education last 10. He was very involved with the Catholic Church there, and in Tallassee, AL where he and his wife Elaine retired to her hometown in 82. They were married nearly 58 yrs when she died in Mar 02. Active with the 306th and travels, including two Thurleigh visits, one in 66 on the family's way home from two years in Thailand. Survived by 4c, 8gc, 2ggc.
- **Woning, John Edward**, 367th radio operator (Joseph W Pederson crew when downed), of Ripley County, IN, died in Osgood on 25 Jun 09 at 88. POW of Germany at an unspecified camp from 17 Jun 44 (Noyen mission). Buried at St Mark Lutheran Church Cemetery at Batesville, IN. No further info.

President's Corner



Greetings,

The days roll by and here it is 2011. I remember my father, in the late thirties, talking about World War I when he served in the U.S. Navy. It always seemed like ancient history to me then, and it was only twenty or so years earlier. Here we are almost seventy years after the start of World War II, not only talking about it, but also preserving its history.

We have not expressed enough appreciation for the efforts of Vernon Williams, Charles and Barbara Neal, Joel La Bo, Ralph Franklin and all of the interns for their efforts in recording the history of the 306th Bomb Group that is so important to those of us who were in it. On behalf of the 306th Bomb Group Association and everyone who served in the Group, I want to record our sincere gratitude for a job well done. We hope that you have gotten as much satisfaction out of doing it as you have given to those of us who were part of it and our families.

Walt Rozett
 President

Everything You Need to Survive

By Trenton Dietz
Thurman Shuller Intern

Anytime they went into action, the brave men of the 306th faced the possibility that they might not return to their base in England. They knew that the next time they set foot on solid ground, they might be dangling from a parachute instead of stepping out of a B-17. In case of such an emergency, USAAF airmen were equipped with survival kits full of items to help treat injuries, gain energy, and hopefully, escape capture.

So what items did USAAF survival kits contain to accomplish these goals? The answer to that question is not very straightforward. Research indicates that the contents of these kits could vary widely. Finding a definitive list of items in the kits is difficult, if not impossible. However, here is a list of at least some of the items that the 306th may have carried in their survival kits:

- No Doze pills
- Pills to purify water
- Prophylactics
- Cigarettes
- Aspirin
- Tweezers
- Tooth brush
- 4 oz. D-ration bar
- Box of malted milk
- Chewing gum
- Bullion powder
- Candy, various kinds
- Fish hooks and string
- .45 caliber ammunition loaded with bird shot for hunting
- Piece of silk with the expression "I am an American" in various European languages (including Russian)
- Phrase book translating from English to French, Dutch, German, and Russian
- Kite with a metallic string
- SOS key board battery
- Silk maps of Europe (approximately 30" square)
- Photos of the airman in civilian clothes
- Razor blades
- \$50 in French currency
- \$50 in German, Belgian, or Dutch currency
- Concealable mini compass
- Small hack saw blade
- Matches
- Whistle (lower photo at right)
- Signal mirror
- Sewing kit
- Sharpening stone
- Adhesive tape
- First aid kit (top photo at right)
- Survival light (middle photo at right)

Again, there could be any number of variations and combinations of these items.

During World War II, the USAAF used at least two types of survival kits: the E-17 and the E-3. The E-17 appears to have consisted of two flasks (one containing medical supplies and the other containing more general survival equipment), while the E-3 seems to have put all of the supplies together in a single plastic box. In both cases, the containers were carried in a canvas bag. Complementing this survival gear was a .45 Colt Auto strapped to the airman's chest.

While some World War II airmen seem insistent that they did not carry photographs of themselves, at least some did so in the hope that they could use it as false identification. Airmen in enemy territory were to find civilian clothes as soon as they could and try to pass as tourists. Some sources indicate that since USAAF bases only had a few civilian blazers on hand, the Germans eventually learned to recognize the blazers in the photographs.

Razor blades were important parts of American attempts to avoid capture. The Germans knew that an unshaven face was a good sign of an American airman trying to avoid capture. Thus, the downed airmen had to shave in order to be inconspicuous.

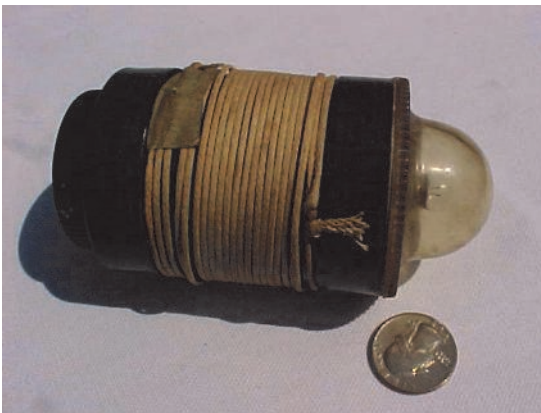
Everything in the E-17 and E-3 survival kits was there for a reason. These supplies were meant to be unobtrusive (otherwise why not include a sleeping bag and a pillow) and helpful in the airman's struggle to avoid capture and, hopefully,

Obituaries: 306th Family

- **Boring, Betty Louise**, of Maryville, TN, died 16 Sep 10 at 85. She was widow of Wallace D Boring (368th Squadron navigator & bombardier, who died 30 Jul 07). She was a member of Broadway Baptist Church, and Homemaker Club, and loved to travel. She was predeceased by 2c; 1d also died just two weeks after her. Now survived by 1d, 5gc, 8ggc.
- **Hamilton, Eleanor**, of Glade Spring, VA, died 27 Jun 10 at 84. She was widow of John T Hamilton (367th tail gunner, Henry Hanson crew; John d.16 Oct 05). She served in the Newport News School for 27 years; was the first woman to serve on the Board of Trustees of the Virginia Retirement System; was a strong advocate of community service; and served on the Board of Trustees and many committees at Byars-Cobbs United Methodist Church. No children.
- **Hess, Frances Louise**, of Washington, WV, died 27 Nov 10 at 88. She was widow of Oliver K Hess (368th tail gunner, Gordon Dobbs crew; Oliver died 15 Jul 03). She is survived by their 3c. No further info.
- **Jones, Mary E**, of Hendersonville, TN, died 4 Apr 10 at 80. She was widow of Richard L Jones (369 pilot & co-pilot; he died 23 Jun 95). No further info.
- **Kester, Doris M**, of Michigan City, IN, died 26 Dec 09 at 85. She was widow of Charles W Kester (423 tail gunner, Ragnar L Carlson crew; Charles died 1 Feb 93). She was a longtime member of St. Ann of the Dunes Catholic Church, and the American Ex-Prisoners of War, Indiana Dunes Chapter. She was predeceased by 1s and 1gs; survived by 8c; 15gc.

Obituaries Not Recent; Not Previously Published

- **Swapp, Wylie W** (368th Sq; duty unknown) died in Laie, HI 14 Jan 2007 at 88. His wife, Lois, died there 15 Apr 1996 at 75. Buried at Laie Cemetery. No further info.
- **Swift, Bernie A** (369th radio operator, crews of Klette, & Lockyear when downed) died 23 Dec 06 in Hamilton, MT at 84. He was POW from 14 Oct 43 (second Schweinfurt mission) at Stalag 3. He retired in 79 from the Forest Service in ID; served in MT House of Representative and MT Senate. Later they spent winters in AZ. He was always a strong advocate of multiple-use management of public lands. Survived by Betty, wife of 54 years, 2c, 9gc.
- **James, Paul W** (369th tail gunner, Clarence E Fischer crew) of Dundalk, MD, died 13 May 06 at 84. The crew arrived at Thurleigh 16 Feb 45. Survived by wife Pauline, 1d, 2gc.
- **Rodman, Dean C** (423rd pilot), of Colville, WA, died 12 May 06 at 83. His crew was downed 8 Oct 43 (Bremen mission) with 5 of 10 being KIA; he was POW at Stalag 7A. Wife Alice died May 07 at Spokane. No further info.
- **Hortemiller, Paul H**, 423rd engineer (Herbert Greenberg crew) died 10 Apr 06 in Batesville, IN, at 89. The crew arrived at Thurleigh in Jun 44. Wife Agnes may have survived him; no other survivor info.
- **Merson, James R** (367th radio operator, Loren Page crew when downed) died 3 Apr 06 in Laurel, MD, at 84. He was one of four crew members who survived downing 24 Feb 44 (first Schweinfurt mission) and was POW at Stalag 4. In the 50s, he was stationed at Ft Meade, MD, at 2nd Army HQ Radio Station as a radio operator and technician. Predeceased by wife Virginia; survived by 3s, 5gc, 7ggc.
- **Evenson, Jerome A** (369th radio operator, Gerald R Haywood, Jr, crew when downed) died 11 Mar 06 in Riverside, CA at 89. After flying 25 missions, he was POW from 29 Mar 44 (Brunswick mission) at Stalag 17B. Post-war he was Warehouse Supervisor at March AF Base, and retired from Civil Service. Wife Lou Ellan died Nov 06. Predeceased by 2s, and survived by 2s, 7gc, 6ggc.
- **Gates, Daniel W** (423rd pilot) died 12 Jan 06 in Spokane, WA, at 87. He arrived at Thurleigh 28 Jul 44. He was POW from 12 Sep 44 (Ruhland mission) when downed flying "Belle of the Blue" with ten missions to his credit, held at Stalag 1. Survived by wife, Margaret "Peggy."
- **Gilmont, Robert D** (369th radio operator, Alfred Johansen crew) died 8 Dec 05 in Toledo, OR, at 81. He was a long-time railroad worker. Wife Rose Marie survived to 7 Dec 09. No further info.
- **Jacobson, Kenneth Elliott** (423rd pilot and co-pilot, John Endicott crew), formerly of LaCrosse, WI, died 10 Aug 05 in Austin, TX, at 88. He arrived at Thurleigh 2 Apr 45, flew 4 combat missions, and participated in the Casey Jones mapping project. Post-war, in LaCrosse he managed his family's auto service station. He was a 33rd degree Mason for over 50 years. Wife Lucille and 1s predeceased him; survived by 1d.
- **Jewell, Fremont Henry** (369th navigator, Sidney Wolfe crew), of Minneapolis, MN, died 4 Oct 04 at 86. He arrived Thurleigh 1 Dec 4. He was POW from 5 Jan 44 (Kiel mission) held at Stalag 9C. He retired from the Army Corps of Engineers. Survived by 5c, 9gc, 2ggc.
- **Stewart, Dewey N** (449th Sub Depot) died 26 Jul 04 in Salt Lake City, UT, at 84. Post-war he worked 30 years for the US Postal Service; was active with the Boy Scouts; and served an LDS mission with his wife Cleo (married Sep 47). She worked for US Engineers; a florist; and University Club. She died 8 Mar 06; survived by 4c, 12 gc, 13ggc.
- **Jensen, Ewald** (367th bombardier, William S Kirk crew) died 19 Jun 04 in West Palm Beach, FL, at 87. His tour at Thurleigh ended May 44. He was a member of VFW, 8th AFHS, Telephone Pioneers of West Palm Beach, and Loyal Order of Moose. Wife Mary died in '93.
- **Bruce, William D**, 369th ball turret gunner (James Edeler crew), longtime resident of Los Angeles area, died 6 Jun 04 in Santa Ana, CA at 83. He completed his tour with at least 25 missions. No further info.



find resistance fighters or escape to neutral territory. The kits are a testament to the difficulties and dangers that airmen might face not only in the air but deep in enemy territory.



Rocky Rockwell Thanks His 306th BG Family

First of all, I want to thank Em Christianson who took the time, bought a card, carried it to the reunion in Washington, D.C. and got everyone to sign it. It really lifted my spirits.

Thanks to everyone who signed the card at the Banquet. I gather that all had a great time. I am gratified to know that I have such a large family.

Rocky Rockwell

PLEASE SEND IN YOUR ADDRESS AND CONTACT INFORMATION CORRECTIONS. WE NEED EMAIL ADDRESSES ON EVERYONE WHO HAS ONE.

Send corrections and additions to:
Barbara Neal, Secretary
P.O. Box 682530
Park City, UT 84068-2530
secretary@306bg.org

Memories are Made of This — Continued from Page 8

Bale Out

After what was a normal bomb run the aircraft was so badly damaged by anti-aircraft fire – they finished with only one engine running which also caught fire – there was nothing left but to bale out. Lester went out through the bomb bay and spent the remainder of the War in a prison camp.

“When the interrogations started they wanted to know if I had any relatives in Germany” he said, “as of course my name was of German descent. I denied having any relations there under the supposition they would try to bring pressure on me and my relatives in Germany. However, I am certain they knew all about me.”

After the dedication ceremony a lunch was served at the RAF Officers’ Mess which gave everyone time to relax and reflect on the morning’s activities in preparation for the highlight of the visit, the visitors return to the site of what was probably the most memorable, and often the most traumatic, period of their lives. Veterans saluted

As we entered the Bedford Establishment, led by the Chief Superintendent driving his wartime jeep, the MOD (Ministry of Defence) Police stood to attention and saluted as the convoy passed – a fitting tribute from the young men of today to those who served there so many years ago.

Our first stop was at the building known to all at Bedford as Reservoir Gate. From 1942 to 1945 this was the Red Cross Aero Club. Peg Happa was the wartime director of that club, and she was with the group on their nostalgic return. As the coach stopped Peg was quickly out; she hurried around the building attempting to identify the rooms as she remembered them.

Peg told me “I was here to organize the club, to bring a few comforts to the greatest bunch of guys there ever was. I was really pleased to be with them. We all worked hard, played hard, and some of them fought hard. At the Red Cross Canteen we had British food obtained locally. We had treacle, we had cream. It wasn’t the best, but it was a lot better than the dry scones served by the Army!”

She pointed to one particular room saying “This was the living room. I’ll never forget it because one morning when the cleaning girls were in here washing the floors one of them looked up at me and said ‘Did you know the allied forces have landed in France this morning?’ This was the news we had all been waiting for for weeks and weeks. It was a great day as we knew this would eventually bring an end to the war. It’s great so see the old place again.”

Across the road from the Red Cross Club stands the old Mess hall which brought on another story, this time from Bill Griffith, here with his wife Margaret. Bill was an original member of the 306th, having formed up at Wendover Field, Utah. He stayed the entire three years and one month at Thurleigh with the 368th Squadron.

Bill had been into town with some buddies and came back starved, like all young kids. He said “We went into the Mess Hall to get something to eat and as we entered, they were preparing Thanksgiving Dinner. There was an enormous pile of turkeys ready for the oven. We were met by the Mess Sergeant who told us, in a most charming way, to get out, saying ‘You are getting nothing, nothing, not even a crumb’. I said to my buddies ‘I’ll fix that so and so!’ As I walked past the pile of turkeys I picked one up and threw it out of the window. It landed on the cinder path. We quickly left the Mess Hall, picked up the turkey and took it back to our building at the dispersal area. I cut it up as you would a frying chicken and boiled it, and we had a bunch of the boys in to help eat it. We had a wonderful pre-Thanksgiving Party!”

On this sunny afternoon our next stop was on the now crumbling remains that used to be the dispersal area of the 369th Squadron, known as “Fitin’ Bitin’”. Here the group awaited the arrival of the RAE Dakota, the old work horse of World War II, which was to pay its tribute to the men who still held it in great esteem. The expressions on their faces as it flew over said it all, there was no need for words.

Another story came, this time from Vince Frederick, a Technical Sergeant. He required three B-17s to enable him to complete his 35 combat missions – ‘Steady Head’, ‘Flack Shack’, and ‘Satan’s Lady’. When he climbed aboard for the 34th mission, he followed his usual procedure of taking along two gun barrels, two parachutes and two oxygen masks. His pilot for the mission, Lt Harvey, asked if he really had to persist with this superstition. Vince replied that as they had proved lucky so far, he might as well take them along.

On this particular occasion they were scheduled to attack twin targets. Vince takes up the story, “The plan was that we fly on to La Pallice, drop half our bombs, turn 90 degrees right and drop the remainder of La Rochelle. The sky was overcast so my navigator was going to tell me when to drop them. We passed Mannheim, and I opened the bomb-bay doors. Lt. Dickerson, my navigator, was to hold up his right arm, and at the drop of his arm I was supposed to release half of our bomb load. I waited and waited, nothing happened. I finally looked at Lt. Dickerson, and I noticed that the small amount of skin visible between his helmet and his oxygen mask was starting to turn purple. I turned towards him, and he started to fall backwards. I immediately knew what had happened – his mask had frozen up. I quickly ripped it off, and in my efforts to get my spare mask on his face gave him a bloody nose! My spare oxygen mask had at last come into play, on my 34th mission, so Lt Dickerson is still with us.”

Buchanwald Camp

Another mission he remembered did not even count as combat, it did however, cause the crew great distress. One of the 306th tasks was the dropping of medical supplies. This particular drop was to be at the now liberated Buchanwald camp. In one area there was a high monument, similar to the Washington Monument, and a trench, possibly 600 yards long, emanating from it. “Below we could see the German prisoners of war digging up the bodies that had been buried there. The dropping height was to be 3500 ft. Once the bomb doors were opened to allow the supplies to be released, the stench from the mass graves was so bad that several of the crew were violently sick.” Such are the horrors of war.

I am of the opinion that every crew member of a heavy bomber involved in the dangerous activity of daylight bombing was a hero. This applied to many thousands of young Americans who flew from Thurleigh between 1942 and 1945.

There was also another group of unsung heroes – the ground crews who worked through the nights for three long years to ensure the aircraft were serviceable for the following day’s mission. Among that

group were the very special men, the Crew Chiefs, who were always extremely proud of their own particular aircraft.

On his return to England was one such man, Larry Foster, who had brought along his wife Jan. During his service at Thurleigh, Larry had waited many hours looking to the sky for his return of his B-17 ‘How Soon.’ By the end of November 1944, his prayers had been answered on no less than 108 occasions. Now a farmer in the States, this was a very emotional time for this likeable quiet man as he stood in the centre of what was once his airfield.

Target Bremen

On the morning of the 8th October 1943, 20 planes departed from Thurleigh. The target for the day was Bremen. On board one of the B-17s was Pat Walsh, who for this particular mission was assigned to a different crew. When they left the base that morning, Pat was not to know that it would be 46 long years before he would return.

On the way to the target the 367th Squadron plane in which Pat was flying as waist gunner was attacked by ME110s. Pat was flying as waist gunner and was attacked by the fighters firing rockets. The first two shots missed, but the third and fourth rockets exploded between No 1 and No 2 engines, and from then on it was impossible to control the aircraft. In addition, the Tokyo tank on the right wing tip was on fire.

Tail Gunner

The crew were ordered to bale out, which they did, with the exception of the tail gunner. The back of the aircraft was so badly damaged he could not get out and died in the wreckage.

Along with other members of the crew, Pat was to spend the next 19 months in Stalag 17B in Austria. He was finally marched out of the camp on 8th April 1945. By this time the Russians were already in Vienna. The Americans were made to march some 300 miles across Austria to a location outside Berchtesgaden, where they were encamped in the woods for two weeks until rescued by Patton’s 3rd Army on the 3rd of May.

After being returned to the States, Pat spent some months in a Convalescent Hospital before being released on 3rd November 1945. He later learned that the balance of his original crew, who had not flown with him on that fateful day in 1943, were all killed in December 1943.

With his wife Gilda by his side, Pat was very pleased to be here to tell his story – but still remembers his buddies who didn’t make it.

Along with a collection of World War II military vehicles, we had arranged what was to be the climax of the day’s events at the airfield – the return of one of the few remaining B-17s. Unfortunately at the last minute, due to the demands of a David Putnam film being shot at the time, the aircraft was unavailable. However, much to Gerald Wiley’s delight, a B-25 Mitchell Bomber was quickly organized to take its place. Gerry, an ex-member of the 306th Bomb Group, had returned with his wife Sylvia to take part in the reunion. Prior to his posting to Thurleigh, he had flown B-25s. As the superbly preserved plane made another pass, he looked up with sheer delight saying: “It’s incredible. It’s hard to realize it’s actually flying. I feel I am dreaming as I see it go by. I haven’t seen one in 25 years. It would be great to fly in one again.”

To close the four days of nostalgic memories I have chosen a love story that spans the years.

Jim, in his own quiet way, was without doubt a hero to many thousands of Americans based at Thurleigh. He was a member of the 527th Postal Detachment, responsible for ensuring that those homesick men always received the letter from their loved ones back home.

Christmas Lunch

The story began on Christmas Day 1943 when Jim visited Bedford with one of his buddies in search of a Christmas lunch away from the base. It soon became apparent that there was little chance of obtaining such a luxury in the town so in desperation, they approached a gentleman leaving his club to ask if he knew of a venue where they could obtain lunch. Having no idea he kindly invited the young Americans to join him and his family for the festive occasion. This wonderful gesture was to be the start of a friendship which has lasted for 46 years, as at the family gathering that day was Connie, the daughter of their generous host.

Jim and Connie became friends. Then, on May 8th 1945 it was all over – the war in Europe had ended. Jim returned to the States and did not meet Connie again for a number of years, although they never lost contact.

Classical Music

Jim married, and Connie corresponded with him and his wife. She visited their home and found she shared their love of classical music, so together they went to concerts given by the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

In the early ‘80s sadly Jim’s wife died. After some time he decided to make a nostalgic return to England. As you might expect, part of the trip involved a visit to Bedford to meet up with Connie. Their friendship blossomed and, in 1984, they were married. They now spend part of the year in America and part in England.

Meaningful Stories

Of the numerous stories told me by the men from the 306th who returned to Thurleigh for this reunion, some were sad, some were funny, some told with great emotion, but all were told with sincerity. They were so meaningful to someone who has studied the history of Station 111 for many years.

Now the visitors have returned to their homes and I feel somewhat saddened to think I may never see some of these friendly people again.

But as we said our goodbyes we parted in the knowledge that “MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS.”





A new version of the James Edeler crew (369th BS) with some of their ground crew pictured with "the good ship Verna E." Back row: Gordon Chambers (CP), Ellis Schoonover (N), William Maxwell (former B), Dillon (B), James Edeler (P), Ralph Williams (E), and Haynes (Crew Chief). Front row: Grover Ingram (WG), Arthur Evans (R), William Bruce (BT), Scales (Armour), and Hines (Ass't Crew Chief). Photograph courtesy Lee Schoonover, son of Ellis Schoonover pictured above. Anyone knowing the full names of the three ground crew (Dillon, Scales, and Hines) and what happened to them, please contact Dr. Williams at ACU (see page 2 for contact information)

Regan—Continued from page 5.....

one of the first United States bomb groups flying from England. We had been awakened at 2 o'clock in the morning and advised that breakfast would be served at 3, with a briefing for a combat mission against a German target at 4 a.m. This was somewhat routine, as we had been bombing almost daily for quite some time – routine, that is, if one could adjust to the tremendous pressures of combat and the occasional loss of close friends. Frankly, I knew of no one who could truthfully say that any combat mission was just routine.

I wish it were possible to accurately describe the tension, the emotion that was evident in our 35-man crew huts awakened for combat missions. One would have to be present to feel the electricity that filled the air.

Men's nerves were taut with expectation, as all wondered if that day they would successfully complete the mission or be listed as missing-in-action. Some men shouted to relieve tension, others laughed out loud when nothing was really funny, and others were silent with their thoughts probably fixed on coming events or on loved ones. I even knew some who would silently slip outside in the darkness to become ill – they didn't want their buddies to see them.

Everyone wanted to appear strong and tough – it is only normal, we were all so young – but we all had learned that war is hell and that the only roman or glamour associated with it is fiction.

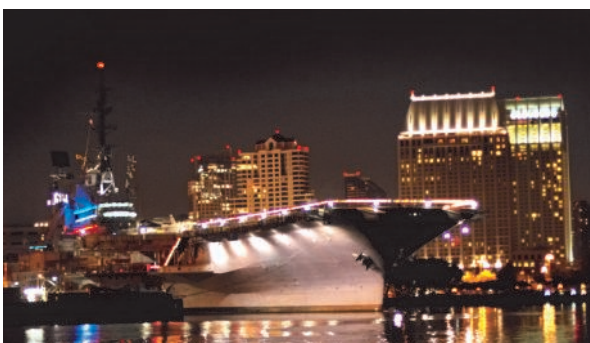
Little did we know, when we were awakened on that day in 1943, that we were going to participate in a historic mission that would drive another nail into the coffin of Adolf Hitler and Nazi Germany. The 3 o'clock breakfast was routine and all was as usual until the 4 o'clock briefing. This took place in our combat operations hut, which had become very familiar to all of us. We sat together as combat crews, and exchanged small talk while we waited anxiously to find out what our target for the day was to be. There was information displayed in this hut that gave us the formation we would fly that day, general data on enemy fighter disposition and other data that was necessary for us to prepare for combat.

A large map of England and Europe that took up most of the front of this briefing room was covered as usual with a blue cloth, so that crews would only find out what the mission of the day would be after the briefing had started.

At 4 o'clock, our commanding officer and the operations briefing officer entered the hut. We came to attention, then sat down for the briefing. After a few short opening comments, our commander paused, then said dramatically: "Gentlemen, this is it," and with that, drew back the blue cloth covering the map, so that we could see it and the telltale ribbon that would show our course to fly and the target for the day. Initially there was a stunned silence, and then the room erupted with shouts of exultation and wonderment, as the significance of the mission sank in.

Yes, we were actually going to hit the enemy near his heart. The excitement was intense. For a moment, even the fear of combat was forgotten, as exultation reigned. The historic meaning of this event sank in even further when we were told that our group had been selected to lead the mission, and I was doubly thrilled, as my squadron was to lead the total American bombing effort. The rest of the briefing was anti-climactic, as were the preparation of aircraft, the take-off, the rendezvous with other aircraft and the initial flight to target.

It was shortly after the climb to bombing altitude over the North Sea and a turn toward the coast of Europe that my co-pilot had tapped me on the knee and I had



The San Diego Reunion in October this year promises to be special. Make plans to come. See page 7 for registration and schedule details.

been able to make out the coast of Germany. On that day, 27 January 1943, 53 B-17 and B-24 aircraft of the 1st and 2nd Bomb Wings of the 8th Air Force made history by dropping bombs in daylight on the shipyards and docks of Wilhelmshaven, Germany.

The Germans had been taken by surprise, as they had not anticipated this attack and had probably felt that bombers would not dare penetrate to airspace over their homeland in daylight. There was some anti-aircraft fire over the target, but it was not accurate, and few German fighters harassed our bombers, which attested to the success of the surprise aspect of this mission. All of our aircraft returned to home base. When we landed, those who had stayed nervously behind greeted us with wild and enthusiastic acclaim. The mission had been highly successful.

This raid was the prelude to numerous daylight bomber attacks on Germany. It had proved to many skeptics that key targets in Germany could be successfully attacked by bombers in daylight without severe loss. It certainly was an ominous sign to Hitler and his Nazi leaders, as they now knew that their country could be bombed, not only in the darkness of night as the British Royal Air Force had been doing for some time, but also in the light of day.

It gave to those who took part in this momentous event a sense of accomplishment. It was a big step toward the eventual doom of Hitler and Nazi Germany. I am proud to have participated in it.



TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH

Ex-8th Air Force Pilot To Retire From Service

The "General Savages" and "Colonel Gallaghers" of World War II are shedding their wings. The exploits of these fictional heroes of the popular movie and television series "Twelve O'clock High" are based in fact on the real life aviators of the famous Eighth Air Force. Now the real life aviators who remain, approach retirement.

One of the last will join the ranks of the retired on August 31. A man who flew a B-17 on the first mission against Germany proper in 1942 will shed his wings after a distinguished career spanning 30 years.

Col. John M. Regan, executive officer for the Western Air Force Reserve Region at Hamilton Air Force Base, flew his first combat mission in October 1942. On eight occasions he brought home battle-damaged aircraft. His crew claimed the destruction of more than 20 German fighters. Colonel Regan recalls his closest brush with death:

"The plane's hydraulic system was destroyed and the oxygen system knocked out. Flak had killed my navigator and wounded me but we managed to make it home."

As a 24-year-old lieutenant, Colonel Regan served as commander of the 1st and 3rd Bomb Divisions of the Eighth Air Force on raids against German targets, having as many as 600 B-17s under his command.

For six years after World War II, Colonel Regan held various command and staff positions in the United States. In 1950-51 he was a member of a team sent to Korea by the chief of staff to evaluate air operations. While there he flew combat missions on the B-26 and B-29.

On a concurrent overseas tour, Colonel Regan joined the Military Assistance and Advisory Group in Yugoslavia. It was during this three-year tour that he met a charming French girl who was working there in the French mission. Christille and Colonel Regan were married in May 1954 and now have six children.

Returning to the states, Colonel Regan served with the Air Staff and Joint Staff, attended the Air War College and held a command position at the Armed Forces Staff College in Norfolk.

From 1961 to 1969 Colonel Regan was again overseas. He was base commander at Camp Guynemer, France, and U. S. commander at Macan Isle, Republic of the Philippines, and Udorn RTAFB, Thailand.

Colonel Regan went from the Pacific back to Europe in 1966. He was chief of the air force Liaison Office in the embassy in Paris. During this time he became deeply involved in the withdrawal of Air Force personnel from France and the negotiations on the sale of property and turning the bases over to the French government.

With the NATO withdrawal from France completed, Colonel Regan went to headquarters of the U. S. European Command in Stuttgart, Germany where he was deputy director of the Military Assistance Directorate. He came to Hamilton in 1969.

With six children, Colonel Regan has a natural interest in youth activities. He developed this interest far beyond the confines of his own family, however. He served as president of the American Youth Association in Stuttgart. This association planned and directed varied activities for 800 American children in Germany. At Hamilton, he is on the board of governors of the Hamilton Voodoos swimming team.

When Colonel Regan retires he will indeed shed his aviator's wings but perhaps he will replace them with the water variety. He's an ardent water enthusiast.

Just as the television series "Twelve O'clock High" is now on reruns, the memories of an outstanding and dedicated military career will be re-run many times in the mind of Colonel Regan.



King George VI, accompanied by Group commander Charles Overacker, visits Thurleigh early in the war. John Regan is at far right in the photograph below and is waiting to introduce his crew to the King.



423rd Veterans—The son of 423rd's William V. Harris would appreciate any veteran of the 423rd Bomb Squadron to contact him. You can reach him at: Bill Harris, 1432 Highway 1, Greenville, MS 38701. Phone: (662) 332-6593



See the April issue for more photographs of the 2010 D.C. Reunion!

- 1) Trenton Dietz (Thurman Shuller Intern from ACU) and Wayne Stellish pause for a chat at the World War II Memorial on the Mall near the Capitol. The Memorial was one of the stops on the bus tour of Washington, D.C. venues.
- 2) Capitol Wing of the Airman's Preservation Society staging a mock briefing of the mission to Schweinfurt on October 14, 1943.
- 3) Lt. Col. William R. Carlisle, Jr.
- 4) Trenton Dietz, Thurman Shuller Intern from Abilene Christian University, sits in to participate in the Schweinfurt briefing.
- 5) Left to Right: Nancy M. Huebotter, Thomas Plummer, Barbara Neal.

Photos Compliments of: Susan O'Konski, Donna, and Charlie Hammond

AROUND THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE

Special Dispatch to the 306th Echoes

*Ellyn Craigie
Reporter At-Large*

Greetings from Abilene, TX! Here is a brief update of upcoming events and items related to the Eighth Air Force that hopefully will be of interest to you.

The 303rd Bomb Group-Gary Moncur, founder of www.303rdng.com, has dedicated this web page to the brave men of the 303rd Bomb Group. The 303rd BG Association has closed down, and Mr. Moncur continues to be active in preserving and making available the history of the Hell's Angels of Molesworth. His father, Vern Moncur, was the first pilot to fly the B-17G Thunderbird of the 359th Squadron.

The Molesworth Pilot is a free electronic newsletter, published via email to the 303rd Bomb Community. There is no print edition. Gary puts out a new issue every two weeks or so. He has published 34 issues of his online newsletter since February 2009.

The website is perhaps one of the most comprehensive web archives available for the air war. It is very easy to navigate and provides an important source of 8th Air Force information for anyone doing research on the air war in East Anglia. Visit the website at www.303rdbg.com.

B-17 News-The Arizona Wing of the Commemorative Air Force has decided to start a 'Sentimental Journey' Tour. They will be featuring B-17s and B-25s and rides on both planes at all stops. Most of the stops are in Arizona and California. For more information and tour dates visit www.azcaf.org and visit the tour page.

The Collings Foundation website includes schedules and information about the **2011 WINGS OF FREEDOM TOUR**. The B-17, B-24, and P-51 started the 22nd season of the Wings of Freedom Tour on Friday, January 21st, 2011 in Florida. Visit the Foundation's website at: www.collingsfoundation.org

I'll Be Seeing You: A Tour of the Airfields of the Mighty Eighth-Dr. Vernon L. Williams announced recently that the tour for Summer 2011 has been cancelled due to low subscription. "We did not receive the minimum number tour registrations by the deadline, and the tour has been cancelled. Obviously all of us connected with the project are very disappointed."



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 _____

Registration Form
 306th Bomb Group Association Reunion
 Holiday Inn Bayside — San Diego, California
 27-30 October 2011

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

Thursday, 27 October (everything is free on this arrival day, including a Welcome Reception with a complimentary bar—5-6 pm Thursday in the hospitality room)

Friday, 28 October

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

San Diego Air and Space Museum Tour (10:00 am-3 pm)..... x \$35.00 = \$_____

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

Saturday, 9 October

USS Midway Museum Tour (1:30am-5:00 pm)..... x \$35.00 = \$_____

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

Everything else on the schedule is free!

Total.....\$_____

Name _____

Address w/ City, State, Zip _____

Phone # (____) _____ E-Mail _____

Squadron or Base Unit _____ 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 Holiday Inn Bayside direct to make reservations:
 1-800-662-8899 or 1-619-224-3621
 Ask for 306th Bomb Group reunion rates:**

\$105.00 (plus tax) Single, Double, Triple, or Quad Rooms—All One Price

**Deadline for registration and hotel reservations is 5 October 2011.
 Please help your 306th Bomb Group reunion planning,
 register and make hotel reservations early. Do it today!**

A full-sized hard copy of this form is on the 306th website: 306bg.org

Reunion Schedule At San Diego

Wednesday, 26 October

- Arrival - Pick up registration packets - Harborview Room (2 - 6 pm)
- Hospitality Room and Exhibits Setup Harborview Room (12 noon - 5 pm; 7 - 10 pm)
- Dinner on your own (hotel restaurants and other food venues close by)

Thursday, 27 October

- Arrival - Pick up registration packets - Harborview Room (8 am – 5 pm)
- Board Meeting Arlington Room (10 am)
- Sign up for Oral History interviews (8 am-5pm)
- Hospitality Room and Exhibits Harborview Room (8 am - 5 pm; 7 - 10 pm)
- Welcome Reception with complimentary bar, Harborview Room (5 pm-6 pm), compliments of the hotel
- Thurleigh at War film (10 am); Thurleigh Memories 11:15 Coronado Room
- The 306th BG Archives—From Start to Finish, a final report and presentation on the 306th Project at ACU--Dr. Williams Coronado Room (2-3 pm)
- 306th BG Veterans Roundtable, with 306th veterans telling their stories with a Q & A with the audience--moderated by Dr. Vernon Williams , Coronado Room (3:30-5:30 pm)
- Dinner on your own (hotel restaurants and other food venues close by)

Friday, 28 October

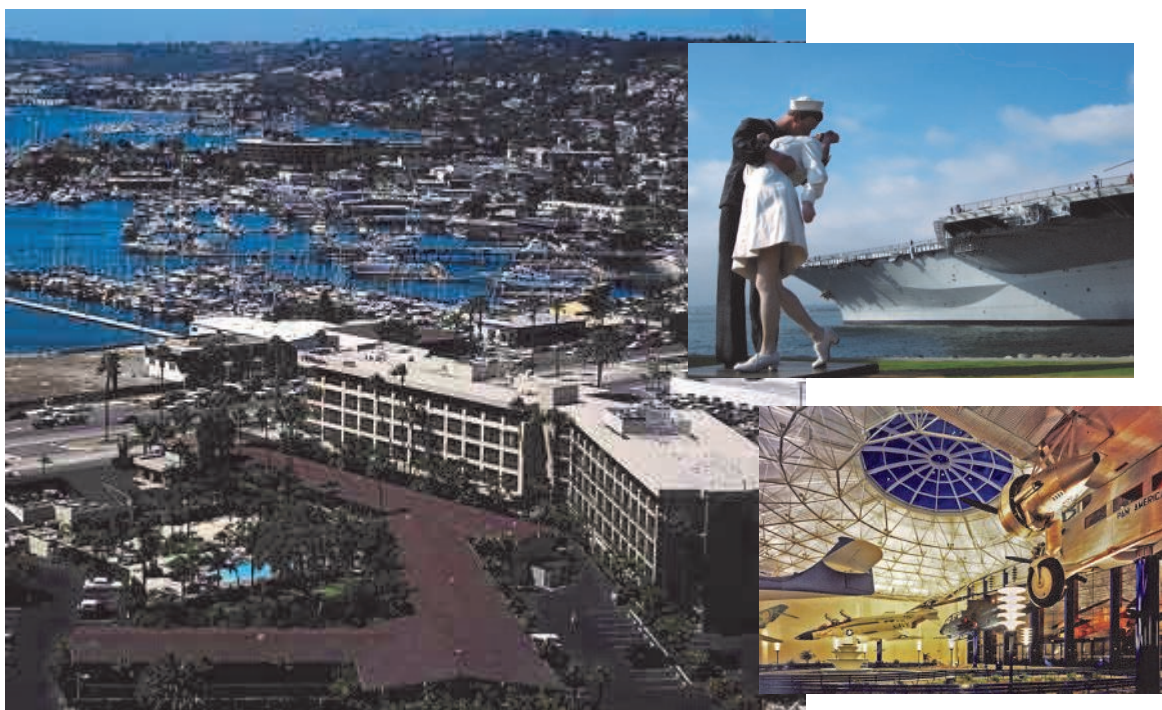
- Ladies Breakfast - Pacific Room (7:30-9am)
- Arrival - Pick up registration packets - Harborview Room (8am-5pm)
- Oral History interviews (pre-scheduled by appointment)
- Hospitality Room and Exhibits- Harborview Room (8am-5pm; 7-10 pm)
- Thurleigh at War film, Coronado Room (10 am)
- San Diego Air & Space Museum Tour (10 am-3pm)
- Second Generation meeting - Coronado Room (4 pm)
- First Over Germany Dinner, Poolside Deck (Cash Bar 6-7pm, Dinner 7-9pm) (Special Program Planned)

Saturday, 29 October

- Arrival - Pick up registration packets - Harborview Room (8am-5pm)
- Memorial Service—Tribute to the Fallen and Folded Wings Memorial, California Room (8:00-9:30 am)
- Business Meeting, California Room (10-Noon)
- Oral History interviews (pre-scheduled by appointment)
- Hospitality Room and Exhibits Harborview Room (1-5pm)
- USS Midway Museum Tour - (1:30 pm-5:00 pm)
- Thurleigh at War film (3 pm)
- Cash bar (6 pm – 9 pm)
- Veterans-only Group Photograph California Room (6:45 pm)
- Widows Group & Next Generation Photograph California Room (6:50 pm)
- Banquet, California Room (7 pm) (Special Program Planned)

Sunday, 30 October

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



HOTEL RESERVATIONS

Holiday Inn Bayside San Diego

Please call the Holiday Inn Bayside direct to make hotel reservations

1-800-662-8899 or 1-619-224-3621

Ask for 306th Bomb Group reunion rates:

\$105.00 Single, Double, Triple, or Quad Rooms—All One Price

Museum Notes

Thurleigh Airfield 306th Bomb Group Museum

Editor's Note: Ralph Franklin submitted this published article about the return of former 306th BG veterans and their families in 1989. Published in a Royal Air Force publication produced on the RAE Station located at Thurleigh early the next year, the article gives us an opportunity to revisit the tour and remember many of those who have since folded their wings. Just twenty-two years ago, much has changed in our families. Most of you have never seen this article and for all of us, it will be a good memory for us to make now well into the 21st Century. For some of our readers, you were there and remember every exciting detail of the journey. vlv

Memories are made of this

By Ralph Franklin

At a certain point in life everyone likes to look back and recall memories of the past. Some get very moved when they return to the place where the events happened, and this is especially so when the memories are of events which took place when the world was at war and you were some 3,000 miles from home.

Emotions were certainly in evidence on Monday, 14 August 1989 when a group of ex-members of the 306 Bomb Group returned to their old wartime base at Thurleigh, known then as Station 111, but now as RAE Bedford.

I was pleased to organize and conduct the day's activities for them at the Establishment. This was to be part of four days of nostalgia which we, the members of the 306 Bomb Group Historical Association, had planned for them on their return to the Bedford area.

It is about 44 years since these men prepared and flew their B-17 Flying Fortresses out of here for the last time. For three years prior to this the men of the 306 had served as part of the force of 350,000 Americans of widely differing backgrounds transported to English soil to engage in the precision daylight bombing offensive against Nazi-held Europe.

By the time the war ended the men of the 306 had flown 341 combat missions, 177 aircrafts had been lost and 1,928 men had failed to return. Of these 738 were known to have been killed, 305 were missing in action, and 885 had been taken prisoner.

Dark Days

They had returned on many occasions to Station 111 during those dark days of the 1940's – wondering if this return would be their last; the return in 1989 may well prove to be their last look at the few remains of their old airfield for many of these men.

But this was a joyous occasion; some had their wives with them who, for the first time in 44 years, could see the scenes at Thurleigh of the stories they had listened to so many times. With the stories came tears, as the young men of the 1940's, now with greying hair, walked away from the crowd to be alone with their memories.

Some of the memories were very special to them; not necessarily as you might expect of the first mission or the first hit they made on an ME 109, but as in George's case for instance, of the lady who did his washing!

I met George and his wife Elizabeth with all the other veterans at the Friday evening briefing, where we outlined the next four days. During my brief I mentioned that I lived in the village of Keysoe. The briefings over, the first person to shake my hand was George.

During the conversation which followed, he told me he had come to England in 1944 and flown 34 combat missions. He was on the missions that carried the 4,000 lb Disney bomb, the bomb that was too large to go in the bomb bay and had to be carried under the wing of the aircraft. He left England late in 1945 after taking part in Operation Casey Jones, the photographing of allied occupied Europe.

But all of this seemed insignificant to George; the most important thing to him was – did I know if the lady who used to do his washing was still alive?! She had lived in Keysoe in 1944-45, and I was pleased to tell him that she still lived in the village.

A telephone call was sufficient to arrange what was to be an emotional reunion for them on the following day. When I collected George and Elizabeth to take them on to the party we had arranged for the Saturday evening, there was plenty of drying to be done, but this time it was only handkerchiefs!

Garden Party

After spending Saturday morning as guests of the Mayor of Bedford, the afternoon was set aside for a shopping expedition followed by a Garden Party with a difference in the evening. We had lights, we had music, we had dancing, we also had fish and chips delivered to our party venue and served in newspaper direct from the van, by special arrangement with a local company.

It was my responsibility to organize the music for the occasion. I had chosen a high proportion of music of the 40's as I rather suspected it would be in great demand – I was not mistaken.

On that summer evening the nostalgic music sounded even better than usual. It took on a new meaning for the couples dancing, for them it could have been 1943 again.

It reminded some of them of their first meeting; Joe and Peg met when Joe was a Crew Chief on a B-17 named Wahoo based at Thurleigh. Peg was a Land girl working at Manor Farm, close by the airfield. They married in 1945. The evening was certainly special for them.

Next Mission

Then there was Don who was in Unit Operations at Thurleigh from mid-1943 until the end of the war. He was one of the first to know where the next day's mission would be as one of his duties was to decode the information being received on the teleprinter. His working day started at about midnight, building up until the aircraft took off at six am. He then managed to get a rest period of six to eight hours, depend-

ing on the mission that day.

Don said 'In my off-duty hours I wandered as far south as Luton where I met and married Eunice. We have been married for 45 years now and your music certainly means a lot to us at this particular time.'

I could see

Bob and Sally sitting under the apple tree at the end of the garden, lost in their own little world. My next record was to be something extra special for Bob. It was Glenn Miller's 'Moonlight Serenade'. He acknowledged the fact that I was playing it with a happy wave – and yet another story was to unfold.

Bob was aircrew, and flew his required number of missions, but more importantly he was a musician. He joined the station dance band 'The Esquires' soon after arriving at Thurleigh in 1944, playing tenor sax. When time permitted the band played in the Red Cross Club in Bedford, as well as at other places such as the Officers Club and the Aero Club on the Base.

Miller Band

The band was also allowed to go along the Corn Exchange in Bedford to the Miller Band rehearsals. The Esquires arrangements were entirely Glenn Miller. One of the trumpet players was an excellent copyist and used to go regularly to Milton Ernest Hall to copy the Miller arrangements, apparently with the great man's blessing. In fact he was given a big fat fountain pen with a notation nib on it by Glenn Miller, especially for doing his copy work (no photocopiers in those days!)

After VE Day the band were asked to put together a programme of music for the victory celebrations. They put on such a good event that they were invited to enter a UK Soldier Talent Contest. They entered – and won. Following this success they toured many bases in England, plus Nice and Gibraltar, for several months under the name of 'ETopian Revue', until the 306 left Thurleigh in December 1945.

Aircrew Edgy

The aircrew at Thurleigh had been edgy since before supper on the night of 8th October 1942, when orders had gone out restricting everyone to base – a sure sign that something was in the wind. The 9th October was to be the 306th first combat mission; after all those months of training this was IT!

Twenty-three B-17s left the base that morning, one of them was "Man o'War". On board the young co-pilot, Second Lt William Dickey, was having his first experience of war. Their real mission began on leaving the target. After attention by German fighters, they lost their No 2 engine; the two outboard engines began to over-heat and lose power – and the aircraft dropped to 1500' above the English Channel. The crew were preparing to ditch when a low flying Spitfire appeared. With all radios out on the B-17 the Spitfire pilot Flt Lt Andrews from 91 Squadron at Hawkinge signaled the crippled fortress to follow him. He took them to the coast, over some low lying hills and waggled his wings to indicate the landing spot. Ahead lay the emergency airfield of Manston – they were home. The crew later learned that their life rafts had been holed by flack and would have been useless in the Channel.

Planes Disintegrated

The mission on the 9th November was to be different. To obtain greater accuracy with their bombing the 306 were to fly in at low level. They went in, into the jaws of hell, and within seconds three planes from the group disintegrated. Among them was William Dickey's aircraft. All the crew were killed, concluding a very rough, brief tour of duty.

Marie had only been married to William a very short time when they said their farewells as he was posted to England to join the 306 at Thurleigh. She was never to see him again.

As we walked around the peaceful setting of the American Cemetery at Cambridge on Sunday 13 August 1989, it was almost forty-seven years since William Dickey had met his untimely death. I became aware of Marie standing alone sobbing. She was looking at the details of William inscribed on the wall. When I approached her, she told me that this was the first time she had seen any mention of her husband since she had received the telegram to say he was missing, and she asked if I would take a photograph of the section bearing his name. The visit had made her realize that the young men who had given their lives all those years ago are still remembered. As she said: "I thought no one in the world remembered but me."

Thurleigh Memorial

Marie laid a wreath on the 306th Memorial at Thurleigh on the following day at a ceremony to dedicate the flagpoles recently erected there. It was my privilege to act as Master of Ceremonies at the ceremony. BBC Television and Radio were there to record and describe the scene. One of the commentators summed up the feelings of the large crowd in attendance when he said: "the ceremony was so steeped in emotion it almost hurt."

The memory of uppermost in Colonel Lester Kramer's mind as he stood at the memorial was of 26th July 1943. Early that morning his aircraft, along with nineteen others, had left the runway at Thurleigh on a mission to Hanover, their target a Synthetic Rubber Plant. Arriving over the target, he recognized the factory as his Uncle's. As the colonel said: "He wasn't aware that I was about to drop a greeting card to him!"

Continued on page 4

