



306th Echoes

Educating and Communicating



B-17 Flying Fortress

So Cal Reunion Hailed as Huge Success!



The 2018 Reunion of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association (BGHA) and Second Schweinfurt Association (SSMA), hosted by Past President and Reunion Chairperson Steve Snyder, in Santa Ana, California, was hugely successful, bringing together 115 friends of the 306th, including 38 first time attendees, to honor the 6 veterans in the group.

Those who arrived at the reunion site on Wednesday were treated to a personalized tour of the *USS Iowa* by retired US Navy Officer and 306th BGHA Historian, Clifford Deets. From bow to stern, the group toured the iconic vessel that is credited with an illustrious career, which included service during World War II, the Korean War, and the Cold War, in defense of the United States. Originally commissioned in 1943, the *Iowa* earned 11 battle stars and hosted three US Presidents (Franklin D. Roosevelt, Ronald Reagan, and George H. W. Bush). For President Roosevelt, the *Iowa* was outfitted with a bathtub for his convenience.

Visitors to the *Iowa* were guided to areas of the battleship that showcased its hidden workings as well as myriad exhibits and facilities that

exemplified life aboard ship for thousands of sailors during her years of commissioned service.

Thursday's excursion took the reunion group to Long Beach and the *Queen Mary*. There they traveled back in time for a one-hour World War II tour of the "Grey Ghost," which she became known as due to her great speed and the grey paint applied to the ship's superstructure, hull, and funnels, all as a deterrent to detection by enemy warships. The luxury liner, converted as a troop ship, often carried as many as 16,000 men at 30 knots in a single voyage to join Allied forces in Europe.

For Walt Olmsted, a visit to the *Queen Mary* was akin to visiting an old friend. Olmsted, initially enlisted in the Army in October 1942, but shortly after reporting to Fort Dix, New Jersey, was selected to be in the Army Air Corps. Arriving in England in November 1943, Olmsted became part of a 10-man B-17 crew. In April 1944, while flying his 26th mission over Castle, Germany, he was wounded in his right hip, an injury that required 14 stitches.

(continued on page 3)

EDITION HIGHLIGHTS

2018 Reunion Report.....	1
President's Column	2
306 th Represented at <i>Memphis Belle</i> Roll-Out.....	12
WWII Hero Visits Whiteman Air Force Base	13
From the Editor	14
Secretary's Column	15
Your Dollars Sustain the 306 th BGHA Mission.....	16
The Lacey Lady.....	17
Erratum: IDPFs.....	18
<i>Hard to Get</i> Family Recreates the Journey.....	19
Webmaster's Column	26
368 th TRS Replaces Largest AETC Detachment	27
"Some of Us Have Got to Die"	29
Classified Recipe Revealed	34
Dog Tags: A Life Saving Device	35
Word Search Answers	36
In Memorial	37
From the Archives: Bill Carlile Muses	38
Membership Registration Form.....	39
2019 Reunion: Save the Date	40

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306th Bomb Group Historical Association

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of the www.306bg.us home page

306th Museum Thurleigh
Unavailable until further notice.

The 306th Bomb Group Historical Association was determined by the IRS to be a tax-exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) as a public charity, effective 24 July 2015.



**A Message from 306th
BGHA 2017-2019
President Bill Feeser**

**306TH and SSMA 2018
Reunion Did Not Disappoint!**

From the hotel to the Honey Whiskey Trio, this year's reunion was over the top – informative, informational, and just plain fun. It was a delight to renew our friendships with 306th and SSMA veterans and their friends and families. Our visits to the Queen Mary, known to the troops affectionately as the "Grey Ghost," and to the Lyons Air Museum, where wonderful docents led us on guided tours of amazing aircraft and ground vehicles of the WWII era was an exciting adventure. We express our sincere thanks to Immediate Past President, Steve Snyder, for making all the complicated arrangements that gave us all such wonderful experiences.

On a personal note, I had the extreme privilege of meeting Clif Yaussi. Clif is the son of 1st Lieutenant Frank D. Yaussi, Bombardier on Col. Frank Armstrong's plane on 27 January 1943. Armstrong's plane, AC 42-5378, led the first bombing mission over German soil that day. It was the plane my own father, SSGT William H. Feeser, served as assistant Ground Crew Chief that day. Clif is the first descendant of that crew I have met. These are the thrills make the 306th & SSMA Reunions very special. Clif also brought with him a very unique gift for all attendees: a beautiful, and quite large print entitled "First Over Germany," a lithograph by Kirk Harris depicting Col. Armstrong's plane leading that first raid.

It was wonderful to connect with and hear stories from our veterans again this year. In attendance were Bill Carlile, Jr., Clayton Nattier, Walt Olmsted, Jr., Vince Stokosa, Robert Vickers, and first time attendee Dwain Espere.

During our 2018 reunion gathering in Santa Ana, both the 306th Board of Directors and the general membership met to discuss the location for the 2020 306th & SSMA reunion. It has been our recent practice to make this determination two years in advance. As part of the discussion, one option considered was the possibility of holding our reunion in conjunction with the 8th Air Force Historical Society reunion in 2020. It should be

noted that prior to 1983, the 306th met with the 8th Air Force Historical Society members at their annual reunion. However, in 1983 our attendance had grown to the point where the membership preferred their own reunion for the 306th, separating from the 8th AFHS.

Today, many bomb group reunions meet in conjunction with the Mighty 8th. Your input is critical for the Board to make an informed decision. Once we have received sufficient feedback from the membership and the details are clear, your Board of Directors will determine if such a move is advantageous to our group.

I wish for all a wonderful Christmas and New Year season!

Your President,
Bill Feeser

Reunion (continued from page 1)



Granted a 30-day leave to return home based on the completion of 26 missions and the need to recover from his injury, Olmsted was determined to rejoin the effort. While preparing to return to Europe, Allied forces launched the D-Day invasion. It was just a short time later that Olmsted boarded the *Queen Mary*, destined to return to Europe to fulfill the second tour of duty he had signed up for just prior to being wounded. Once the *Queen* had delivered him back to England, Olmsted went on to complete 17 more missions for a combined total of 43 missions.

The traditional Folded Wings Ceremony memorialized 42 veterans who have passed away. Following a presentation of the colors by a Color Guard from the California State Military Reserve, Southern Command, Board Member Deborah Conant eulogized our 306th BGHA heroes, demonstrating her ability to capture the solemnity of the moment.

The Veterans Round Table featured Clayton Nattier, Robert Vickers, Walt Olmsted, Bill Carlile, and Dwain Esper, all of whom shared both poignant and light-hearted memories of their Army-Air Corps service. It should be noted that Mr. Esper, a 306th veteran attending his first reunion, arrived from Burbank, California with the intent of only participating in the Veterans Round Table. However, when he learned an oral history video crew was on site, he elected to extend his stay, participate in more of the reunion activities, and take advantage of the opportunity to share his story and ensure it had been recorded for posterity.

Author Steve Snyder made an outstanding presentation based on the research he conducted and the content of his award-winning book, *Shot Down*, the story of his father, Pilot Howard Snyder, and the crew of the *Susan Ruth*.

Aided by PowerPoint slides, Steve's lecture focused on his father's story, the air war in Europe, and the procedures he undertook to write the book. The project, which took 4 ½ years of dedicated research to complete, included using declassified World War II documentation, reviewing personal letters penned by Lt. Snyder to his wife as well as other personal papers, reading a multitude of books on the subject, and visiting the various sites that are connected to this unique and compelling story. The exacting research Steve conducted leading up to the writing and publishing of the book gave him a good foundation for developing the story. During the process, Steve met the German pilot who was responsible for Lt. Snyder being shot down. In addition, Steve has formed a special bond with crew descendants and those who assisted the evadees.

Sharing his journey and the content of the story gripped the attention of the audience and reinforced a tenet of the 306th BGHA: "It is our duty to never forget."

Webmaster Charles Neal appealed to 306th BGHA volunteers to assist with indexing projects, while applauding the efforts of those who have donated hundreds of hours completing the indexing of thousands of records. While acquainting his audience with the website's contents and recent additions, Charles made an appeal for donations of documents relative to 306th Bomb Group veterans to be scanned and added to the website collection.

Friday night's dinner guests were captivated by the tunes of the *Honey Whiskey Trio*. Sharing their repertoire of World War II era songs, the women's

performance was a perfect tribute to the 306th BGHA. This award-winning acapella trio used their vocal harmonies and vintage songs to tell stories of the period. Trio member Ann Louise Jeffries Thaiss is the granddaughter of the late Virgil Jeffries, who was a captain in the 306th Bomb Group and a survivor of both Schweinfurt missions.

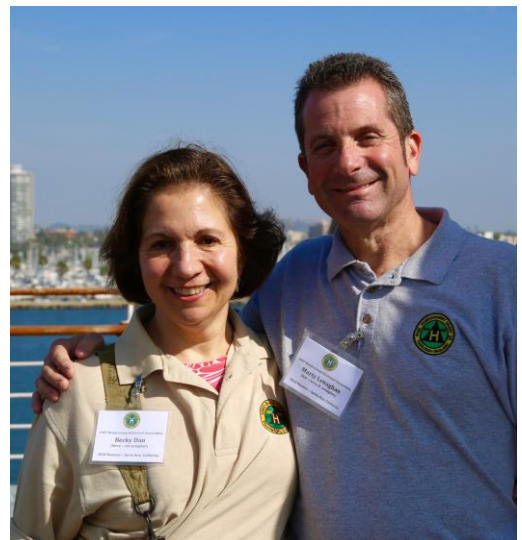
On Saturday, the reunion group was once again transported back in time when they visited the Lyon Museum, home to military aircraft, rare automobiles, military vehicles and motorcycles, and related memorabilia with emphasis on World War II artifacts. The Flying Fortress *Fuddy Duddy*, which was used as a VIP transport in the Pacific at the end of World War II to carry dignitaries, including General Dwight D. Eisenhower, and featured in such films as *The War Lover* and *Tora! Tora! Tora!*, gave visitors an opportunity for an up-close examination of one of the war's most quintessential historic warbirds.

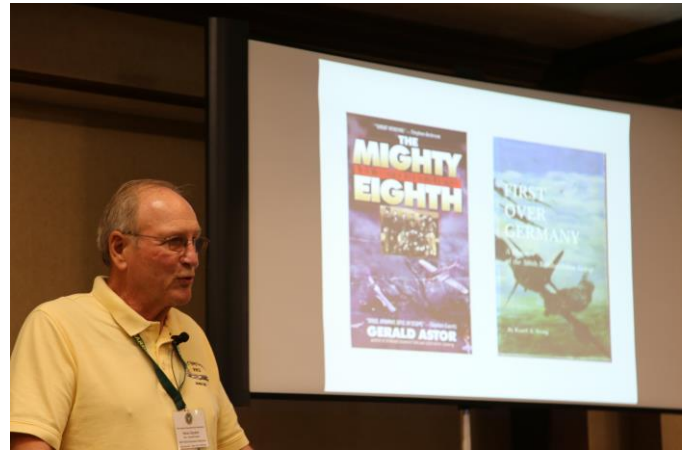
Traveling just a short distance down the road, the next stop was Santa Ana's Heroes Hall, a place for the public to gather, learn, and celebrate veterans. The museum is housed in a renovated Santa Ana Army Air Base barracks. During the World War II era, the site garrisoned the Army Air Forces Training Command, and was an induction center for new recruits entering the Army Air Corps with no military experience. Although the air base had no planes, hangers, or runways, it was used as a basic training center where many 306th personnel destined to be future pilots, navigators, or bombardiers received initial introduction to classification and preflight instruction prior to assignment to airfields in the Western United States.

Of particular interest was the featured display, "Bravemind: Using Virtual Reality to Combat PTSD." Visitors were able to experience first-hand and learn about how this immersive tool has become a valuable resource for helping military veterans.

The Saturday night banquet was the culmination of three days of comradeship, becoming acquainted with first-time reunion attendees, renewing old friendships, and increasing knowledge of the heritage shared by members of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association. The times together were all-too-brief, but with some tearful good-byes, there were promises to meet again next year as the group plans to rendezvous in Savannah, Georgia. ■















Walt Lubojacky, Barbara and Charles Neal



Deborah and Kevin Conant, Carol Hopper Brill



Suzanne Feeser-Smith, Jackie and Bill Feeser



Front - Robert Vickers, Clayton Nattier. Back - Robert and Rita Vickers, Debbie and Dennis Williams, Thom and Jenny Mindala



*Front (left to right) - Bill Carlile, Robert Vickers, Clayton Nattier, Walter Olmsted, Vince Stokosa
Back (left to right) - Em Christianson, Pat Moulis, Doris Jenks, Elizabeth Huebotter*



Left to right – Jim and Angel Simon, Pat Perline, Marlene Carlan, and Rich Perline



Front (left to right) - Bill Carlile, Robert Vickers, Clayton Nattier, Walt Olmsted, Vince Stokosa



306th Board of Directors: (left to right) Bruce Chase, Director, Membership; Deborah Conant, Director, 2019 Reunion Chairperson; Barbara Neal, Secretary; Bill Feeser, President; Kevin Conant, Vice President; Jennifer Mindala, Treasurer; Nancy Huebotter, Echoes Editor, Wayne Tolmachoff, Director; Steve Snyder, Past President and 2018 Reunion Chairman. Not pictured: Gailard "Red" Ketcham, Veterans Representative; Cliff Deets, Historian; Sue Moyer, Director, Facebook



2018 Reunion Attendees

306th Represented at *Memphis Belle* Roll-Out

Despite the inclement weather, the fervor surrounding the roll-out of the iconic B-17F *Memphis Belle* could not be dampened. The crowd had waited 9 years or approximately 55,000 man-hours for the restoration to be complete, and now one of the most recognizable symbols of World War II was going on permanent display at the National Museum of the US Air Force. The new exhibit shows the plane in mid-flight.



306th BGHA members Robert Hermann, Sue Moyer, Steve Snyder, and Bill Feeser at the National Museum of the US Air Force where the *Memphis Belle* is now on display.

Members of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association (BGHA) made their pilgrimage to Dayton, Ohio, for the 17 May 2018 unveiling of the *Memphis Belle* and her affiliated artifacts. That date coincided with the 75th anniversary of the bomber's last bombing run in World War II. When the crew of the *Memphis Belle* took off from Basingbourn, England, on the morning of 17 May 1943, they were headed for the Nazi submarine pens at Lorent, France. They knew they were tempting the odds of surviving their 25th mission. But when they returned to base that afternoon, unscathed, there was cause for celebration. They had become the first bomber crew of the war to survive that requisite number when most crews were lucky to survive half that number.

Although, in reality, one other bomber out of England held the distinction of being the first to endure the rigors of war, it was the *Memphis Belle* that was graced with fame. Thanks to newspaper

reporters who seized upon the account of the warbird defying fate, a documentary using real-life combat footage ensued and a public relations barnstorming tour commenced when the crew and the *Memphis Belle* returned to the United States. With her famously decorated nose art of a scantily clad leggy Esquire magazine pinup girl, the *Memphis Belle* quickly became the centerpiece for opportunities to sell war bonds and raise morale. The 10-man crew, along with a black Scotty named Stuka, achieved celebrity status. The plane, named for chief pilot Lt. Robert Morgan's fiancé, Margaret Polk, occurred when Morgan was assigned his own B-17 Flying Fortress in 1942, then to show his love for Miss Polk, named the plane in her honor. Miss Polk became a steadfast supporter of the *Memphis Belle*. However, with the crew's extensive tour schedule and long separations, the relationship cooled and the romance faltered. In later years, Miss Polk's dedication to the *Memphis Belle* saw her as a driving force behind raising funds to preserve the plane. Sadly, Miss Polk died of cancer in 1990 at the age of 67, never seeing the preservation of the plane come to fruition. In that same year, Hollywood released a fictionalized account of the bomber's final mission, thereby retelling the story by focusing on a new generation that needed to be aware of the plane's place in history.

Retired from active duty in 1946, the plane was relegated to a graveyard for B-17s in Altus, Oklahoma, and scheduled to soon be chopped up for scrap. Thanks to the proactiveness of a reporter who notified the mayor of Memphis, Tennessee, of the eminent demise of the once-famed aircraft, Memphis mayor Walter Chandler bought the B-17F for the salvage price of \$350. Originally costing \$314,000, the *Memphis Belle* was destined to be a way of honoring the city she would now call home.

However, local groups failed to raise the funds necessary to restore the aircraft. For six decades, she sat outside, suffering the ravages of weather and vandals. In 2004, the Air Force announced plans to relocate the plane to their national museum and commence restoring it.

Restoration was meticulous. Staffers and volunteers lovingly rehabilitated the plane to its wartime glory. Where items were damaged beyond repair or missing altogether, expert artisans

fabricated the parts. Other parts have been replaced by those available from the museum's warehouse.

There are some items that just cannot be replicated. Instead, until those parts can be found, substitutes have been employed. For example, the restoration staff would particularly like to recover the instrument panel with the manufacturer's data plate affixed to it, which is specific to the *Memphis Belle*.



The 306th BGHA members who attended the 3-day event, were just part of the crowd of 42,000 from around the country and overseas who made their way to Dayton and the National Museum of the US Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base to see what some said, “appeared to be an authentically war ready” aircraft.



Gailard “Red” Ketcham (right) at the *Memphis Belle* Roll-Out.

The 306th BGHA's own Gailard “Red” Ketcham, 92, and a Dayton, Ohio, resident, had been following the progress of the restoration since the *Memphis Belle* arrived at Wright-Patterson. Characterizing the time and talent necessary to restore this legendary historic bomber as “incredible” and “breathhtaking” seems to be understating what was a “once-in-a-lifetime” opportunity. ■

WWII Hero Visits Whiteman Air Force Base

Sees ‘completely different’ type of bomber

By Brye Steeves, 509th Bomb Wing Public Affairs

[Editors Note: This article is reprinted by permission from Whiteman Air Force Base Public Affairs Office]



After spending most of his life on military bomber airplanes, 96-year-old Walter Olmsted Jr. recently got his first up-close look at the Air Force's

youngest bomber: the B-2 Spirit.

Olmsted traveled from his Arizona home to Whiteman Air Force Base to visit family. His trip left him awestruck, and also feeling nostalgic about his time in various bombers.

In his 25-year military career, Olmsted logged more than 200 combat hours in World War II as a tail gunner of the B-17 Flying Fortress. He has also flown in the B-26, B-29 and B-50, among others, and was later part of the B-52's maintenance crew.

The B-2, however, is not like the other bombers, Olmsted said. During his visit to Whiteman AFB, Olmsted was able to see the B-2 on display as well as talk with some of the Airmen who maintain it. He also met Brig. Gen. John Nichols, commander of the 509th Bomb Wing, and Chief Master Sgt. James Lyda, the command chief of the 509th Bomb Wing, who thanked him for his service and commended his experience with military bomber planes.

Aside from its unique batwing shape and its two pilots' close quarters – “I couldn't get over how small the cockpit is” – Olmsted was most awed by the B-2's electrical system. “The whole inside is covered with instruments,” he said. “It's completely different” from the bombers of his Air Force career.

It's a career that was nearly cut short by war, but, as luck would have it, ultimately included many bomber assignments and ended with a long list of military honors.

“I had a good life in the service,” the veteran said.

Olmsted was born in upstate New York on September 22, 1922, and grew up on a dairy farm. He graduated high school just before Imperial Japan attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941 and the U.S. entered the war. He was 19.

“I enlisted to avoid being drafted,” he said.

Olmsted was sent to Fort Dix, New Jersey, and put on kitchen duty, until one day, scrubbing out trash cans in the mess hall, “this little guy, a little lieutenant, ran in shouting, ‘Olmsted, Olmsted! You’re in the Army Air Corps!’

After being shuffled around various bases for training, the newly-minted Airman was stationed in England as part of a 10-person B-17 crew. He was “the eyes and ears” tracking the aircraft behind theirs, Olmsted Jr. said.

He flew more than 40 missions over Europe from 1943-45. His plane – named Dearly Beloved – came under fire during one of those missions. Olmsted Jr. was sitting in his “office,” as he referred to his spot in the airplane’s tail, when Dearly Beloved was hit and he was struck in his hip by a bullet.

Olmsted Jr. recovered with 14 stitches and still has part of the bullet that was removed.

“I was lucky on that deal,” he said. “It never flew again after that, it had so many holes in it.”

After a brief military hiatus, Olmsted Jr. reenlisted in 1948 and was part of bomber flying missions during the Cold War. He eventually transitioned to maintenance for B-52s until he retired as a chief master sergeant in 1970.

Olmsted Jr. was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, a Purple Heart, and numerous air medals and accolades, including the Meritorious Service Medal at his retirement.

Olmsted knows, as evidenced by an aircraft like the B-2 Spirit when compared to the Dearly Beloved B-17, that the Air Force today is different from the Air Force he knew.

Still, he couldn’t be more proud of his family’s tradition of service, he said. His brother also served in the military, as did his son, Walter Olmstead III, who accompanied him on his recent visit to Whiteman AFB along with two of his three daughters.

Walter served in the Air Force for 26 years. His oldest daughter is an Air Force major and the other two are civilian employees at Air Force bases – including Lorena Olmsted, who is part of Team Whiteman.

It’s a family legacy that lives on.

“I was in the Air Force for 25 years and I wouldn’t change it for the world.” ■

From the Editor

Have an interesting story? Let me hear from you!

by Nancy Huebotter

(Editor’s contact information on page 2)



When I accepted the position as *Echoes* Editor, nine issues ago, I vowed I wanted to ensure the publication met the expectations of you, the readers. I also requested anyone who had a story to tell or a suggestion for an article to contact me. Together we can create an article for *Echoes*. You do not need to refrain from submitting an article by using such excuses as, “I am not a writer.” Your stories are more important than the actual development, organization, sentence structure, grammar, and punctuation. As editor, it is my job to help you share your information.

However, there are two minor stipulations regarding the submission of an article:

1. Only submit WORD files (.doc or docx). Do not use .pdf or any other format for providing the document. Files should be attached to an eMail addressed to me at nmhuebotter306@gmail.com.
2. Save all images (photos or other graphics) as .jpg or .png files and attach them to the submission eMail. Images cannot be imbedded in the text. Use descriptive terms when naming file images. Include notations in the WORD submission draft where the image should be placed.

There are no word limitations, but due to possible space availability based on other articles included in an issue, editing of the original submission may take place, or the article may be held for a future issue.

If copyrighted materials are included, ensure permission for use has been obtained. Be sure to pass that information along when submitting the article.

Articles relative to World War II, the 306th Bomb Group, and individual veterans are acceptable subjects. The focus should be on raising awareness and enhancing the education of second, third, fourth generations and beyond.

I am very interested in your stories, your story suggestions, as well as any other thoughts regarding *Echoes*. Please, let me hear from you! ■



Secretary's Column

by Barbara Neal
(Secretary's contact information
on page 2)

Arlington National Cemetery: Burial of dear vet Albert McMahan will be Friday 22 March 2019 at 3pm. He and Bill Houlihan were responsible for the election of Charles and me to the 306th Board 9+ years ago.

Ralph Franklin and 306th Thurleigh Museum: As of 1 November, Ralph Franklin, now 86, is in a care home in the Bedford area, receiving good care. While his physical health has improved slightly, his mental health has not to any noticeable degree. He has been formally diagnosed with "Unspecified Dementia" and remains on calming medication. Both his condition and his medications often make it difficult to have coherent conversations with him. The family continues to keep me advised of any developments. Regarding the 306th Museum at Thurleigh, which has not been open in more than a year: Since Ralph's diagnosis, the family has begun conversations about the museum with a view toward getting it re-opened and maintained for future generations. The talks are ongoing with the understanding that the museum is about the memory of all the people that were there during WWII, and indeed beyond. It is not about the monetary value of the exhibits. Those talking include various interested people, including Palmer Autosport (who owns and donates use of the building). They, as well as the family, naturally have had inquiries about the situation. The family will keep me updated in due course; they are fully aware that many 306th veterans and their family members will be keen to ensure the museum remains, and with it access to the memorial to the 306th Bomb Group. Be assured, our Board will be kept up to date from England, and you will be updated as more develops – at our website's Museum tab and in *Echoes* when that is appropriate, as well as in my group-emails to our registered members.

Oral Histories: At our reunion, a film crew joined us to record oral history interviews of our WWII vets attending, for B-17 Archaeology (b17archaeology.com). I encourage you to read the

blog at their website. Its first entry recaps how the founder and Executive Producer, Greg Stathatos, became determined to record the stories of the B-17s and WWII veterans who flew with them; and how Shannon Muchow, the producer who works in the Hollywood world and whose grandfather was a B-17 pilot, became involved passionately in the project. In talking with them to get a better understanding of their work, I was assured that the 306th will get copies of the oral histories they recorded with us.

I'm grateful for ALL who invest in the 306th in various ways: donating essential volunteer work to keep the association running smoothly; indexing historic records to benefit all researching them; traveling to reunions; sharing vets' stories and material; and doing a (free) membership registration each calendar year.

Our Membership Director, Bruce Chase, reported at our reunion that at the end of September we had only 268 fully current members who registered or renewed for 2018. At the end of 2017, we had 349 registered members, 214 of whom did not renew for 2018 (58 of those were vets). By the end of September only 133 new members had registered in 2018 (3 of them vets). Every year, please be sure to do your annual, free member registration. If you prefer having help to do that, call the Secretary's cell phone and leave a message.

Our Treasurer, Jennifer Mindala, gave us a breakdown regarding the total donations received so far in 2018 – acknowledging how many of the great people who donate monetarily show their "investment" in our mission, have donated funds via various ways (online; with membership registrations; with reunion registrations; by mail otherwise; etc.). Please look for her updated donor information in this issue. A donation coupon is available for those of you who prefer to use one.

I hope that each of you will please realize that it is extremely disheartening to your invested Secretary to learn – often years after the fact – of deaths, both of our WWII generation AND of members of my own generation who have long received issues of *Echoes*. Please provide notification of deaths by using the Secretary contact information on page 2. ■

Donation Update:

Your Dollars Sustain the 306th BGHA Mission

The 306th BGHA does not charge membership dues. Because of this, your tax deductible donations are needed to support the continuing education mission of our organization. Donations may be made online at 306bg.us or by mailing to the Treasurer using the address on the form below. Many thanks to those of you who have submitted donations thus far in 2018. As of Veterans Day, a total of \$5950 has been received from 75 different donors in the following categories:

Mailed directly to the Treasurer	\$1360 from 19 donors
Received from the Membership Director (when accompanying membership registrations)	\$1350 from 20 donors
PayPal donations via the 306 th BGHA website	\$1134 from 16 donors
AmazonSmile	\$16 from an unknown number of donors
Reunion Registration Donations	\$1790 from 18 donors
Donations Received at the Reunion	\$300 from 2 donors

All donations are extremely important to the continuing education mission of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association and are greatly appreciated!

**DONATION FOR THE
306TH BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION**

Make checks payable to:
306th Bomb Group Historical Association
Send to:
Jennifer Mindala, Treasurer
3244 S. Lamar St.
Denver, CO 80227-5426

Name

Address

Telephone Number: _____ **Email:** _____

If you would like to register as a member of the 306th BGHA or renew your membership with this current information, please initial here. _____

Date

(Editor's Note: The following article originally appeared in Hemmings Motor News, June 2018 and is reprinted by permission)

The Lacey Lady B-17

A warbird turned tourist attraction will soon fly again.

by Jim O'Clair



A World War II-vintage Boeing B-17G, perched for decades atop a business near Portland, Oregon, is being prepped for takeoff once again by the dedicated volunteers who make up the B-17 Alliance.

The ambitious restoration of this 102-foot-wide, 75-foot-long "Flying Fortress," is expected to cost in the neighborhood of \$6 million - a portion of which is being funded by admission fees to the group's museum at the Salem Municipal Airport in Salem, Oregon. The museum has also served as command central for the project.

A full restoration of the nose section has already been completed as well as the Sperry under-belly machine-gun turret, which was repaired primarily by local volunteers with the help of a specialist from Massachusetts, who aided the workers mostly by telephone. The B-17G's four Wright Cyclone radial piston engines were also removed for rebuilding, and it was discovered that three could still be returned to working condition. When new, the 1,820-cu.in. power plants - manufactured during the war by Studebaker - produced about 1,100 horsepower each and could lift the 65,000-pound plane, as well as up to 10,000 pounds of bombs and a crew of up to 10 airmen. In addition to the Sperry machine-gun turret, the plane was also equipped with a dozen so-caliber machine guns throughout the fuselage. Once the B-17 - dubbed *Lacey Lady* in honor of Art Lacey, the man who turned the plane

into an awning - was transported to the museum, the first step was to disassemble the air frame, and clean and repair any damage.

While aviation buffs are eager to see the Flying Fortress soar again, its absence has been felt by visitors to the Milwaukie, Oregon, establishment where the plane rested for the last six decades. Most recently, the business that thrived in the shadow of the B-17 was Lacey's Bomber Restaurant (now The Bomber Restaurant), but when the plane was first perched there, it was Art Lacey's Bomber Gas Station.

As the story goes, Lacey bet a friend \$5 that he could purchase a WWII-surplus plane, fly it to Oregon, and display it at his establishment. After the bet was sealed with a handshake, Lacey secured a \$15,000 loan from a friend and traveled to Altus Airfield in Oklahoma in 1947 and purchased a war-salvage B-17. Having some experience piloting small aircraft, he talked the commander of the base into selling him the plane for \$13,000. The plane was sold with the stipulation that Lacey could prove to the base commander that he knew how to fly it safely away. The personnel at the base told him that flying the plane was at least a two-man job, and because he had traveled there alone, he fibbed and told them that he had a copilot. He then placed a dressmaker's dummy in the copilot's window to satisfy the requirement, and took off on his test flight. He flew with one hand on the controls while holding the flight manual in the other.

The plane had seen hard service during the war and was not in the best of shape. Lacey wrestled the plane through its take-off and several turns and flyovers as he gained confidence, but he had an issue with the landing gear, and eventually ended up crashing the Flying Fortress on its belly on the runway, and then slid it into another B-17 that was parked on the tarmac. He was slightly injured, but was more concerned that he had just ruined a \$13,000 investment. When he approached the base commander and explained he did not have enough money to purchase another plane, the commander asked his secretary if she had finished the purchase paperwork. When she said she had not, the base commander sold Lacey a second plane for \$1,500 and wrote off the totaled first plane as wind-damaged.

Lacey sent word to his family to fly down two of his friends to help him on the return flight. They could not even afford fuel to fly the plane home, so they bribed a local fire department with a pumper truck to siphon fuel out of two other decommissioned planes, which yielded enough fuel to fly them to Palm Springs, California. Once Lacey landed there, he wrote a bad check (which he later made good on) for enough fuel to return to Troutdale Airport in Portland, Oregon.

Once on the ground, the plane was disassembled and loaded onto trucks for transport. The plane was too heavy, too high, and too wide to be safely transported down two-lane streets and Lacey was unable to secure the proper permits. Already in the hole for \$15,000, he realized if he just moved the plane late at night, he might be able to get away with it before the local police caught on. He hired two motorcyclists to lead the way and told them if the police saw the caravan, to ride away quickly as possible. They drove the disassembled plane to its final resting place under cover of night, and when the city realized what he had done, he was fined for transporting an oversized load without having the correct permits - and paid the fine of \$10.



The plane was then reassembled and mounted above the 48 gas pumps at his business, which included a 15-room motel and Lacey's Bomber Restaurant. The Lacey family continued to operate the restaurant and motel business after the gasoline station closed in 1991. The plane remained there, drawing interested patrons while it continued to deteriorate, falling victim to Oregon's frequent rain, vandalism, and bird droppings. The Laceys began efforts to preserve the plane in 1996, funding the project on their own for a time. Art Lacey died in 2000, but the family remained committed to rebuilding the *Lacey Lady*. The nose cone was removed for restoration in 2012, which led to even

more deterioration to the rest of the plane. The rest of the *Lacey Lady* was removed from its lofty perch in August of 2014 to begin a complete restoration.

Today, the B-17 Alliance Museum not only houses the *Lacey Lady*, but contains a large collection of World War II memorabilia and more than 3,000 books about the war and the people of the Greatest Generation, as well as its military artifacts. The foundation has interviewed more than 50 WWII veterans to preserve their stories for generations to come.

The museum is located at 3278 25th Street SE in Salem, in Hangar C of the McNary Field (Salem Municipal Airport), and is open three days a week from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. For more information about the museum and how to make a tax-deductible donation to the project, visit www.b17alliance.com. ■

Erratum

Individual Deceased Personnel Files

In the Winter/Spring 2018 issue of *Echoes*, credit for information contained in an article entitled "Individual Deceased Personnel Files: Key Research Tools for Those Killed in World War II" was mistakenly attributed to Jennifer Holik. In correspondence received from Geoff Gentilini, a Lead Researcher at Golden Arrow Military Research, who is a specialist in working with military records at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., brought the error to my attention, alerting me that he is the author of the article referenced in *Echoes*. Additionally, Mr. Gentilini offered assistance at a discounted rate to members of the 306th BGHA who are seeking IPDFs. Instead of the normal minimum fee of \$75, he will charge a \$50 flat fee to those who reference this offer in correspondence with him. He is able to access records for men whose last names begin with **A** thru **M**; for men whose last names begin with **N** thru **Z**, he believes he will be granted access within the next 6 to 8 months (which is a lengthy time to wait, but compared to the estimated 2 years when seeking information directly from the Army, this is a relatively short duration). Mr. Gentilini will answer any questions may have by contacting him at geoff.gentilini@goldenarrowresearch.com. For more information about his research services, go to his website: www.goldenarrowresearch.com.

Hard to Get Crew Family Recreates the Journey

On 26 August 1944, the crew of the *Hard to Get* was on a mission to Gelsenkirchen, Germany, but visibility over the target area was hampered by thick black smoke from an oil fire, strong haze, and meager breaks in the cloud pattern. Only the high group was able to bomb the area while the lead and the low group turned toward the second target in the Netherlands.

Just after making the turn, the *Hard to Get* was hit by anti-aircraft fire, the first knocking off the left wing, the second hitting in the bomb bay, severing the fuel lines and starting a fire. The third burst caught just behind the tail wheel. Control lines to the vertical and horizontal stabilizers were mangled and destroyed. The fourth explosion hit the right wing between the two engines, knocking out the numbers three and four.

Pilot Dean Allen gave the order to bail out. Navigator Charles Evans, Bombardier Michael Vlahos, Engineer Harvey Purkey, and Allen left from the forward part of the plane while Radioman Robert Newsbigle, Ball Turret Gunner Eugene Leveque, Waist Gunner Richard Huebotter, and Tail Gunner James Carey departed from the aft section of the aircraft. Co-Pilot Charles Rapp remained at the controls, expecting to jump once all the other crew members were clear of the plane, but numerous circumstances prevented his escape. Later his body was found on the flight deck when the nose section of the plane was located in a meadow near some houses.

In addition to Lt. Rapp's death, Lt. Vlahos, Sgt. Leveque, and Sgt. Newsbigle did not survive the hardships encountered by high altitude bail-out and anti-aircraft artillery.

Flak Alley had claimed more victims.

What happened to the crew after bailing out of their demolished craft captured the interest of German historical researcher, Dr. Susanne Meinl. Initially interested in the events surrounding the

murder of allied fliers, Dr. Meinl's research soon focused on the crew of the *Hard to Get* and more particularly the deaths of Lt. Charles Evans and Sgt. Harvey Purkey.

The five downed airmen were soon captured by German military forces and imprisoned overnight, one man per cell. The following morning, two German army personnel escorted the five prisoners to the train station where they boarded a train headed for the interrogation center at Oberursel. The journey, a two-day trip, had an overnight stop in Cologne and Krefeld. It was then that Purkey and Evans decided that if the opportunity presented itself, they were going to escape, make their way across the Rhine River, and head toward France where they were sure they would be able to encounter Allied troops or get assistance from the French Resistance.

Late at night, when the train departed the station, the five prisoners and the two guards were in a traincar. Comfortable in their accommodations, the guards dozed off. As the train slowed coming into a small railway station, Purkey and Evans decided the timing was perfect for them to change their status from "prisoners" to "evadees." Their fellow crewmates provided them with a bit of bread and sausage, and Purkey grabbed a flight jacket, the one belonging to Huebotter with his name "Dick" painted on the front left side.



As the two prisoners jumped from the slow-moving train, the car door banged shut, awakening the guards. After alerting the train's conductor, the guards determined they and the remaining prisoners

would return to the station, the scene of the escape, and hunt for the two airmen.

After a concerted effort, Purkey and Evans were recaptured. They had not travelled very far after their escape at Wiesbaden, but were found approximately 10 miles southeast in Trebur. In custody once again, they were then transported to Gross-Gerau.



For the citizens of Gross-Gerau, August 26 had been a devastating day. Ignited by a day of bombing by the British RAF the previous night that left the town ravaged and 28 men, women, children, and infants dead, the residents vented their anger on the captured crewmen. Assuming these men had taken part in the bombing of their city, the crowd grew larger and became more enraged. The district administrator ordered the young men handed over to the crowd for lynching. For over an hour, approximately 50 frenzied citizens beat the two Americans with iron bars, wooden slats, belts, and fists. Finally, the injured airmen were dragged into the courtyard of the city's townhouse where Gross-Gerau Police Chief Nikolaus Fachinger and Luftwaffe members Georg Sturm and Heinrich Flauaus assassinated Evans and Purkey.

Seventy-four years after these events, eleven descendants of the crew retraced the paths that lead to the downing of the *Hard to Get* and the capturing of the aviators. The tour, organized by Dr. Meinel

and Doug Rapp, grandson of *the Hard to Get* co-pilot, also included Courtney Allen, son of Pilot Dean Allen; Elizabeth and Nancy Huebotter, wife and daughter of Waist Gunner Richard Huebotter; Lynette Jay and husband Jonathan Jay, niece of Engineer Harvey Purkey; brother and sister Ron and Gayle Leveque, nephew and niece of Ball Turret Gunner Eugene Leveque; Keith Lindauer, grandson of Tail Gunner James Carey; and Thelma Sherrett with her sons, Craig and Todd Sherrett, and niece, Christine Williams, sister, nephew, and niece of Navigator Charles Evans.



The journey of discovery commenced at the Interrogation Center in Oberursel, the site of a full week of questioning for Allen, Carey, and Huebotter prior to being transported to prisoner of war camps.





On a drizzly August 25, the group visited the American Cemeteries of Margaraten, the burial site of Charles Evans, and Ardennes, the burial sites of Leveque, Newsbigle, Rapp, and Vlahos. Flowers were placed in memory of each crewman.



Accompanied by Henri Hannon, a special friend of the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association and the families of the *Hard to Get*, who takes pride in honoring those fallen soldiers he never met, is among a corps of grateful Belgians who faithfully attend to the graves of American veterans. Each year, for Memorial Day, Henri ensures flowers are placed at the graves of Rapp, Newsbigle, Leveque, and Vlahos.



The following day was an emotionally packed day when the group met with Mr. Hermann Ettwig, who was an 11-year-old boy on the day the *Hard to Get* was shot down. Dismissed from school due to the imminent air raids, young Ettwig took shelter in a doorway and watched as the plane was demolished. He remembers watching the wing fall away from the craft and counting the parachutes as the men bailed out.



Hard to Get Family (left to right): Courtney Allen, Susanne Meinl, Todd Sherrett, Doug Rapp, Thelma Sherrett, Keith Lindauer, Lynnette Jay, Elizabeth Huebotter, Ron Leveque, Gayle Leveque, Nancy Huebotter, Christine Williams, Richard Lucke stand in the hotel doorway in which Mr. Ettwig stood, as a young boy, watching the plane descend.

Flak Battalion Headquarters was next on the agenda, where the tour group examined the remnants of the site of the anti-aircraft gun emplacement and used a metal detector, searching for possible artifacts.



Remains of Flak Headquarters

Traveling along the Rhine River, the entourage next stopped at what had been determined to be the site where Richard Huebotter plummeted into the

river, hitting the water so hard “it was like hitting a brick wall,” injuring his back, knees, and breaking some ribs.



Nancy and Elizabeth Huebotter, Susanne Meinl, and Thelma Sherrett at the site where Richard Huebotter landed in the Rhine River.

An elderly man and a young boy in a rowboat grabbed Huebotter’s parachute cords at his chest chute, dragging him to shore. Once on land, a soldier from the anti-aircraft artillery site took charge of the prisoner, thus saving Huebotter from the vigilante hands of the German citizenry.



Trebur Townhall

The tour included visits to the location on the Rhine where it was believed Purkey and Evans planned to cross the Rhine and the Trebur townhall where the two were imprisoned following their capture. In addition, there were stops at the original burial locations of Rapp, Newsbigle, Leveque, and Vlahos, as well as crash sites of various airplane parts. At one site, the crew descendants spoke with residents of a home that had been damaged when an engine from the airship fell through the roof, coming to rest in the home's basement.



Mr. Etwig describes descent path of the *Hard to Get*

Allen, the details of his father's rescue was something of which he previously had known

nothing about. Like many of those returning from the ordeals of war, Allen did not share the anguish of his experiences.



A visit to Rheinberg and the home of Heinrich and Brigitte Werth, son-in-law and daughter of Franz

Baaken, resulted in another dimension to reports addressing the *Hard to Get* and the circumstances surrounding the status of the crew. These contemporary witnesses to the events welcomed the visitors and graciously shared what they knew of the story.



Baaken Sisters describing destruction of plane.

When Pilot Dean Allen landed, he fractured an ankle. Thanks to a compassionate 40-year old farmer, Franz Baaken, Allen was under his protection, which undoubtedly saved his life. A visit with Herr Baaken's now elderly three daughters, who shared with the group what they knew of the episode, revealed the humanitarian efforts of their father to ensure Allen received medical attention. For Courtney Allen, son of Dean



Stepping outside the residence and moving to the side of the house, Herr Werth pointed out scars that remained in the brick structure, the result of a shelling from an American tank commander that had arrived at the site during the later months of the war.



As a sidebar to this narrative, the home of Herr Werth is also the home of daughter Isabell Werth, granddaughter of Franz Baaken, and the most successful Olympic equestrian athlete. As a dressage rider, Ms. Werth has won ten Olympic medals,

seven World Championship titles, as well as European and German championship titles. She set up her own dressage stable at the estate where she follows her passion by training young horses and riders. A visit to the training arena and a stroll through the stables introduced the group to some impressive horses. Although Isabell was busy preparing for the World Dressage Championships, she took a break from her busy training schedule to share time with her American visitors.



Gross-Gerau Townhall where Evans and Purkey were murdered.

On 28 and 29 August, the days focused on the events that occurred in the enclosed courtyard of the Gross-Gerau townhall. It was a solemn visit to the location where the dreadful activities occurred. Followed closely by Hessian television, the group ensured the message to be conveyed to the German people was one of a better understanding of the circumstances under which they had existed, acknowledging similar emotions for the plight of our own country and both its military and non-military population. A culture of remembrance and a gentle process of forgetting overwhelmed the attention of the *Hard to Get* crew descendants.





dignitaries, including representatives from the United States Air Force, the US Embassy, and Gross-Gerau city and German government officials. The exhibit features artifacts and pictures from each crew member. Posters lining the walls chronicles the fate of the *Hard to Get* and the events that transpired after the B-17G went down.



Dr. Susanne Meinel

A plaque to be installed on the outside wall of the former Gross-Gerau townhall, was unveiled at the reception. The plaque, which commemorates the murders of Evans and Purkey, deliberately shows portraits of the young men, which was important to the organizers of the event. It was essential the victims be given a face.

For the museum exhibit itself, the description of the project reads, “The exhibit is designed to tell the story, while at the same time ensuring there is a healing and an element of forgiveness between the crew members, descendants, and the German people. Underlying this sentiment, for both countries, is a vow to never forget what happened.”■



On the evening of 29 August, an exhibition entitled “Leave Them to the Crowd” opened at the StadtMuseum in Gross-Gerau, coinciding with the 74th anniversary of the murder of the two crewmen. The exhibition was curated by Dr. Susanne Meinel in close cooperation with the *Hard to Get* families and was Attended by both American and German



Website News You Can Use

by Charles Neal

The big news at www.306bg.us: We have indexed 80% of the Mission Reports. I wish to thank each and every one of the following who have been able to participate thus far in indexing documents (in order of number of Mission Report entries indexed): Cliff Deets, Dennis Walden, Wayne Tolmachoff, Walt Lubojacky, Joey Freund, Chris Thaiss, Bill Feeser, Bruce and Marsha Chase, Judy Hurdle, Barbara Wood, and Eleanor Marshall. These volunteers have contributed over 1,000 hours creating index files that make our documents findable on our website.

Other Indexing and additions:

<u>NEW Crew Photos:</u>	11% complete
<u>Missing Air Crew Reports:</u>	79% complete
<u>Russell Strong index card file:</u>	100%
<u>Additions to index card file:</u>	over 400 vets
<u>Correspondence files:</u> (correspondent name only)	100%
<u>Histories:</u> (author's name only)	6%
<u>Special Orders:</u>	13%
<u>Obituaries:</u>	600 of an unknown number
<u>Alternate name file:</u>	found 350 vets with name spelled more than one way in WWII records

Why it is the big news: The younger generations expect to find things on the web. To reach them and fulfill our desire to honor our veterans and educate all regarding the lessons of WWII, our valuable collections of documents need to be findable and accessible. Our website is how the actions and voices of our veterans continue to be heard.

You can help: Please consider sending documents for scanning (and return if you wish) that you or your veteran have that can add to our collections. We continue to accept various documents, audio/video recordings, photos, and individual histories containing interesting stories. Occasionally other related documents are included in the collection. If you have a copy of Russell Strong's *First Over Germany*, we would love for you to donate it to us. See contact information on

page 2. We can add it to our reunion auction items helping interested 306th members and raising money for the association. Also, consider becoming an indexer. There are tutorials on our website.

What's new: Many more original WWII documents have been indexed (as detailed above)

At www.306bg.us "Search Options" have links to documents and the "search only" option has been added to categories of material:

- Russell Strong index card file (plus additions found in indexing project)
- search mission reports based on date
- search mission reports based on name, aircraft number, duty or unit
- search obituaries based on name
- search audio-visual files based on name
- search special orders based on name
- search correspondence files based on name of correspondent
- search missing air crew reports based on name
- search crew photos based on name

The "Search All" is enhanced to include all categories of documents.

A new instructional video for indexing crew photos has also been added.

FEEDBACK: We know we have received many new member registrations from people who found us on the web. We have received good feedback from families and researchers around the world, including last year's reunion speaker Dr. Suzanne Meisl. Here is a quote from one of her emails:

"Thank you very much for all the work you and the volunteers have done for the web page. I wish other Bomb Groups had done this! It was very helpful to have the group combat records and the mission reports available, so I can add the German side of it."

Our education mission is enhanced by the site, which helps family members of our 306th veterans and other researchers around the world. ■



Editor's Note: Recent correspondence from Lt. Col. Josh Aldred alerted the 306th Bomb Group Historical Association of the reactivation of the 368th Squadron. In an eMail, Lt. Col. Aldred wrote, "[I am] the new squadron for the 368th Training Squadron at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri. We provide initial skills training for civil engineering and logistics Airmen and provide the Air Force with 1,400 new Airmen every year. Last week, we reactivated the 368th after 55 years of inactivation and we're very interested in carrying on the history of the 368th. More importantly, we have a unique opportunity to share the stories of our 368th Bomb Squadron forefathers with the Air Force's newest Airmen coming through our school houses. We've also reached out the Museum of the 8th Air Force and our Wing Historian at Sheppard AFB and hope to collect enough history to have a small museum in our HQ building.

Secondly, on a personal note, I'm trying to learn more history about a patch I purchased and hopefully connect it to a 368th BS crew member. The patch was sold about 10 years ago and the gentleman at the military memorabilia store mentioned that the son of the crew member brought the patch in along with an A2 jacket. He couldn't part with the jacket because it belonged to his Dad, but he did part with the patch (picture attached). I'm not sure if you have a roster of folks that lived in the St. Louis area in late 2000s, early 2010s, but I would love to reach out and connect more history to the patch if possible."

If anyone can assist Lt. Col. Aldred with his quest, please contact 306th BGHA Historian Cliff Deets at cldeets@att.net.

Permission to reprint the following article granted by the HQ AETC Public Affairs Office.



368th TRS Replaces Largest AETC Detachment at Ceremony

by John Ingle, 82nd Training Wing Public Affairs

SHEPPARD AIR FORCE BASE – In a world that is constantly changing, the need for modernization, flexibility and autonomy can play significant roles in determining an organization's relevance, especially in an Air Force that continues to see increased demands around the globe.

Detachment 1 of Sheppard AFB's 364th Training Squadron is no stranger to increased responsibility as it has been the largest training detachment in Air Education and Training Command for some time now – large enough to be considered a squadron based on the number of personnel assigned to the unit and the roughly 1,400 Airmen it trains annually. The detachment based at Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, removed all consideration Oct. 17, 2018, when it was deactivated and officially reactivated as the 368th Training Squadron during a ceremony there.



U.S. Air Force Lt. Col. Thomas Wegner, left, 364th Training Squadron commander, and Lt. Col. Josh Aldred prepare to cover the guidon of the 364th Detachment 1 to mark the deactivation of the detachment during a ceremony on Fort Leonard Wood, Mo., Oct. 17, 2018. The 368th TRS, formerly a bombardment squadron during World War II, was later reactivated and Aldred took command during the ceremony. The detachment-turned-training squadron produces about 1,400 mission-ready Airmen in four different civil engineering career fields. (U.S. Army photo by Stephen Standifird)

Lt. Col. Josh Aldred, who has served as detachment commander since June, also assumed command of the 368th during the ceremony. He told those in attendance that the transition from a

detachment to a squadron was historic for the unit as well as its personnel and the Airmen they train.

“We are standing up new courses, modernizing our training, bringing additional resources online, and preparing our Airmen to be ready to fight tonight,” he said. “The road to success has many hurdles, but you have my solemn vow that I will continue to be aggressive and fight for you every day.”

The colonel said his goal every day is to make the squadron better and, in the long term, successful. The way to do that, he said, is through the continued partnership with the Army at its Maneuver Support Center of Excellence.

He said he has three priorities for the new squadron moving forward: Invest in its people; modernize its facilities, equipment and training areas; and provide Airmen with world-class and relevant civil engineering training.

“America’s families have entrusted us with their sons and daughters and our Air Force has entrusted us to ensure they’re ready when our nation needs them,” he said. “Every day, you have an impact on the future of our nation and I thank you for your willingness to serve.”

Squadron Superintendent Chief Master Sgt. David Cheney, who has served as detachment superintendent for 1 ½ years, said the idea of converting to a squadron had been talked about for some time, but discussions heated up in December 2017 and January 2018. Despite great support from the 364th TRS, 782nd Training Group and 82nd Training Wing, the geographically separated unit still faced some challenges inherent to not being at Sheppard or on another Air Force base.

The ability to make timely changes to training curriculum was also challenging, he said, because while the subject matter experts were located at Fort Leonard Wood, where the training was taking place, the training managers were at Sheppard. By becoming a squadron, the 368th will have all specialties in one place to make operations run even smoother. It also means more staff to support the squadron’s training efforts.

Another benefit to the autonomous nature the transition brings to the training unit comes with leadership having eyes on instructors and staff performing the duties of the squadron daily. While 364th TRS leadership provided long-distance

support as best as possible, having local approval authority for reviews and awards will provide a swifter process.

Cheney said depending on the lens from which a person is viewing the transition, there might not be much of a change. He said the curriculum, instructors and structure of the training will be the same as before the transition.

“We’re trying to make a lot of change here, and that’s definitely a heavy workload, not on just the leadership team, but on the staff as well,” he said. “I think we’re finally breaking through to see the light at the end of the tunnel, and it’s very motivating. It’s very motivating to know that our Air Force is willing to make changes to modernize and stay relevant and keep our training relevant.”

Sheppard’s presence at Fort Leonard Wood began in the 1970s when an Interservice Training Review Organization decision collocated some civil engineering courses within the Defense Department at the Missouri post. That included Sheppard’s pavement and equipment apprentice course, which was the only Air Force technical training program at the installation before 1992.

In subsequent years, the Air Force moved emergency management, engineer assistant and ground transportation programs to Fort Leonard Wood.

The 368th TRS’s lineage dates back to World War II and the 368th Bombardment Squadron, which served in the European Theater as part of the 306th Bombardment Group. During the war, 177 aircraft from the 306th were lost in combat along with 738 crewmen killed and another 885 taken prisoner. Forty-four men evaded capture.

As a result of the unit’s valiant service during engagements, one Congressional Medal of Honor was awarded as well as two Distinguished Unit Commendations; five Soldier’s Medals; seven Distinguished Service Crosses; 39 Silver Stars; 447 Purple Hearts and 1,511 Distinguished Flying Crosses.

The 368th Bombardment Squadron was deactivated in 1963 and remained that way until the ceremony at Fort Leonard Wood. ■

[Editors Note: The following article, which first appeared in the October/November 2018 issue of *Air & Space Magazine* is reprinted with permission from the author, John Fleischman; photos are made available through the efforts of Roger Mola of *Air & Space Magazine*.]

“Some of Us Have Got to Die”

by John Fleischman

I am not old enough to have seen *Twelve O’Clock High* in its initial public theatrical release in 1950. The first time I saw this classic end to end was probably in the 1980s, on a scratchy cassette via my tape-eating VHS recorder. It wasn’t what I had expected. I’ve seen it five or six times since—remastered for DVD, through online streaming, and on the old-movie cable channel. It still isn’t what I expect.



It throws me because I grew up in the cinematic backwash of World War II, a period that produced dozens upon dozens of unmemorable war movies. But *Twelve O’Clock High* is different, even from the others that have endured on artistic merit. It isn’t a rousing

patriotic adventure like *Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo* or a thoughtful examination of the return to civilian life like *The Best Years of Our Lives*. It isn’t a satire on the absurdity of war like the Vietnam-era release *Catch-22*. It’s about an Eighth Air Force B-17 bomb group based in England, but the viewer doesn’t go along on a raid until the last 25 minutes of the picture. There’s aerial combat (including actual footage from American and German gun cameras), but *Twelve O’Clock High* does not focus on tactics or strategy. Its subject is the brutal psychological cost of warfare.

The story is set during the early days of the American strategic bombing campaign in 1942 and ’43. Without long-range escort fighters and with little combat experience, U.S. Army Air Forces heavy bombers were suffering appalling losses. Based on the wartime experiences of Beirne Lay Jr., a former Eighth Air Force staff officer and bomb group commander, *Twelve O’Clock High* portrays the crushing weight of command in dire straits.

Most of the drama is on the ground, inside command offices, officers’ quarters, and briefing halls. The climax of the picture takes place in a desk chair, not a cockpit. It was shot in black and white with shadows so stark that it often resembles the noir detective films of the period more than it does other war movies. You can almost smell the tobacco smoke. The film has lived on in part because of Gregory Peck’s riveting performance as Frank Savage, the pitiless general sent to whip a demoralized Eighth Air Force bomb group into shape. Peck is best remembered today for his role as Atticus Finch, the heroic lawyer (and single parent) of 1965’s *To Kill a Mockingbird*. When *Twelve O’Clock High* was in production 16 years earlier, he was just emerging as a major star, but you can see the flinty core of Atticus in General Savage.



The \$2 million movie was a success in its day but not a blockbuster, grossing \$3.2 million in its first release. It won two Academy Awards, although few would remember *Twelve O’Clock High* today for winning “Best Sound Recording” of 1950. Where it was a real hit was with the Air Force, which used it for years as a training film in leadership courses. (One of the few objections the Air Force raised with the screenplay was that there was too much drinking. 20th Century Fox agreed to sober it up. So when a shaken character needs

steadying, his buddies offer him a smoke, not a brandy.)

At the time of the movie's release, the newly independent Air Force was dominated by the "bomber generals" of Strategic Air Command—men like Carl Spaatz and Curtis LeMay, themselves commanders in the Mighty Eighth. The SAC top brass admired the film's endorsement of hard-nosed leadership, which would be essential to Air Force commanders in waging future nuclear warfare, according to John Correll, writing in a 2011 issue of *Air Force* magazine. As technology and strategies changed along with Air Force command doctrine, Correll wrote, the movie fell out of official use. Still, he declared, *Twelve O'Clock High* might be "the best movie ever made about the Air Force."



It is something more than that. *Twelve O'Clock High* is a memory film that creates a sense of place and time so strong that viewers might believe that they'd been there before through the flashback memories of Harvey Stovall, a supporting character played by Dean Jagger, whose performance won the film's second Oscar.

That feeling of *deja vu* haunted me in 2006, when I went to England in search of the Mighty Eighth. The Army Air Forces positioned most of its U.K. bomber bases in rural East Anglia, the dead flat, eastern bulge of England that sticks out into the North Sea like a cannon's mouth aimed at Nazi Europe. My search for the Eighth Air Force had led me to Thorpe Abbots, the wartime base of the 100th Bomb Group (Heavy). The airfield had been hastily built for the group's B-17s on prime agricultural land near the town of Diss. Soon after the war ended, the runways, hard stands, and nearly all traces of its military past went back under the plow, but decades later, the local people got permission from the land owner and cooperation from the 100th

Bomb Group Veterans Association to restore the still-standing 1942 control tower as a small museum. I'd arranged to meet the volunteer museum keepers there.

Arriving early, I waited at the padlocked gate, admiring the restored tower. Three stories of concrete with a flat roof, steel pipe railings, and a glass box on



top for the control room, the tower had recently been repainted an authentic drab Army green.

Author Beirne Lay had been here, flying 10 missions from Thorpe Abbots with the 100th as an observer for Eighth Air Force commanding

officer Major General Ira Eaker. One of those missions was the August 17, 1943, raid on Regensburg. The 100th sent 21 B-17s. Lay flew on *Piccadilly Lily*, one of only 12 to make it home. (The 100th was one of 16 bomb groups that flew to Regensburg that day; 60 bombers were lost.) More than 50 years later, looking through the gate at the repainted Thorpe Abbots control tower, I felt as though I'd been here before, not in person but with Jagger's character, Harvey Stovall. Though the memories that inspired *Twelve O'Clock High* belong to Beirne Lay, the movie begins and ends with Jagger, who plays a middle-age ground adjutant in Lay's barely fictional 918th Bomb Group. The story opens in post-war London, where Stovall, now a civilian, is on business for his Columbus, Ohio law firm. In the window of an antique shop, he spots a Toby jug, a large ceramic mug in the shape of a face. The jug's face is Robin Hood with a wicked smile and a black eye mask, and it throws Stovall into a swirl of memory. Turning the Robin Hood jug face-out on the mantelpiece in the officers' club had been the silent signal that the 918th had a mission the following morning.



The Robin Hood jug, a steam train, and a wobbly bicycle take Stovall back to his East Anglia airfield, the base now swallowed up in tall grass. Stovall wanders through the weeds until, in a masterful bit of filmmaking that uses only a swelling music track, a wind machine, and the start-up cough of a B-17 Wright Cyclone engine, he is transported back to 1942. A blast of prop wash flattens the grass around him. A squadron of B-17s, returning from a mission, swoops low, firing flares to summon ambulances for the wounded. A crippled B-17 slides in for a belly landing right in front of the camera, skidding through tents and plowing to a stop in a cloud of dust.

Back in uniform and back in time, Major Stovall goes roaring after it with the rescue party.



I have to remind myself that Jagger was never in the Eighth Air Force or in early-1940s East Anglia. He shot his scenes four years after the war ended, filming on deserted airfields in Alabama and Florida and on sound stages in Hollywood. He's an actor. Performing on a set. It's illusion. It's a movie.

I am not the first to conflate drama and history. Yet *Twelve O'Clock High* fascinates me precisely because it looks back at a World War II past that

was scarcely past when the film was made. The strategic world of the Eighth Air Force that the movie recreates massive formations of heavy bombers fighting their way to targets was obsolete by 1949, but the filmmakers arrived in time to achieve authenticity on a budget. The Air Force put a dozen battered but still-flying B-17s (with U.S. Air Force crews) at the disposal of 20th Century Fox. The service also supplied World War II surplus flight gear (including many sought-after A-2 leather flying jackets later reported "lost" by the actors), a technical advisor at no fee, and several hundred airmen as volunteer extras. The studio acquired a surplus B-17 for the crash scene, paying stunt pilot Paul Mantz \$2,500—about \$26,000 in today's money—to execute a wheels-up emergency landing for the cameras.

Today, we have computer-generated imagery that can crash realistic-looking B-17s (or spaceships or fire-breathing dragons) for films and video games. In *Twelve O'Clock High*, as in most war films of the era, those are real B-17s. (A few of them were slightly radioactive, having been used as drones in open-air A-bomb tests.) The filmmakers may be play-acting World War II, but the B-17s in the film are a last operational ghost squadron, a glimpse of a dying age, like a harbor filled with square-rigged sailing ships or a herd of wild buffalo.

Anyone involved in *Twelve O'Clock High's* production would likely have been embarrassed by any sissy talk of Art with a capital "A." Director Henry King is a prime example. Movie historian William Everson says that's one reason traditional Hollywood studio directors like King have been overlooked by film buffs. "For directors of the past to be rediscovered by contemporary critics, they usually have to have been off-beat, ahead of their time, or even abysmally bad but, at the same time, interesting in a bizarre way," Everson says. "But King fits into none of these categories. Far from being ahead of his time, he was exactly of his time."

And this man of his time had little time for Art. "Tome," King told an interviewer in 1979, "motion pictures are less about art than about storytelling." He'd caught the showbiz bug from theatrical companies barnstorming through rural Virginia at the turn of the 20th century. In 1906, he ran off with the Jolly American Tramp Show to play nine shows

a week (six evenings and three matinees) while chugging from small town to small city via milk train.

In 1915, King landed in Los Angeles as a contract actor for the Lublin Manufacturing Company, one of dozens of Hollywood studios in those early frenzied days cranking out silent “three-reelers.” King the film actor soon volunteered to become King the film director even though directors weren’t highly valued. In 1916, King was paid \$75 a week for acting and \$25 a week for directing.

Henry King never looked back, eventually directing 108 features in a nearly 50-year career that went from “silents to Cinema Scope,” as Everson put it. From silent films, King graduated to directing “talkies” at 20th Century Fox, where he became a fixture, knocking out feature after feature for studio chief Darryl F. Zanuck. (Zanuck had a controversial wartime tenure as a colonel in the U.S. Army Signal Corps, covering the U.S. invasion of North Africa before resigning his commission in 1944.)

In early 1949, Zanuck called in King to tell him he had been saving a sensational story just for King. If King didn’t like it, Zanuck said, he’d junk the whole thing. Well, maybe.

According to *The [sic] O’Clock High Logbook*, a labor of love and a work of determined scholarship by Allan T. Duffin and Paul Matheis, Zanuck had already been working with another director on project but had just fired him. Duffin and Matheis, who seem to have studied every script draft, every studio memo, and every Air force directive about the project, said that Zanuck’s interest was genuine. He’d paid \$100,000 for screen rights even before Beirne Lay and co-author Sy Bartlett had published *Twelve O’Clock High*, their novel, in 1948. That was big money then. With Zanuck breathing down their necks, Lay and Bartlett had been writing and rewriting as a screenplay for nearly a year before King agreed to direct.

Whether or not King had been Zanuck’s first choice, he was the perfect choice. Known as the “flying director,” King, who’d earned his private pilot’s license in 1918 (and kept it current until a few months before his death at age 91 in 1982), was a tireless advocate of the airplane as an industrial

tool for the movie business. For *Twelve O’Clock High*, King scouted locations in his own Beech Bonanza, moved the cast and crew from location to location in a chartered Douglas DC-4, and gave the ground operations scenes a no-nonsense authenticity.

But it was still a Darryl F. Zanuck production. To get the B-17s and other resources he needed, the hard-charging mogul went straight to Air Force Chief of Staff Hoyt Vandenberg. When at the last minute Eglin Air Force Base refused to hand over a B-17 for the crash-landing scene, Zanuck phoned Vandenberg, who ordered the staff at Eglin to work something out. They delivered a B-17 for crashing but with an agreement that 20th Century Fox would return every scrap of wreckage and pay all transport costs.



Zanuck shaped the story too. The novel had featured an all-too-predictable romance between Savage and a beautiful Royal Air Force flight lieutenant. Zanuck insisted that the romance and anything else that didn’t ratchet up the tension had to go.

When the film was released in 1950, the Fox publicity department promoted it as “A story of twelve men as their women never knew them.” It was no wonder. There was only one female speaking part – a nurse. Lay and Bartlett had boiled down their novel into a screenplay so tightly focused on the internal struggles of the 918th Bomb Group that women and the Luftwaffe itself seem almost irrelevant to the narrative.

Peck, the leading man, was Zanuck’s choice. Though he dominates the film, it’s the character actors around him who give the 918th life. Jagger made a huge sacrifice to get the part of the steel-spectacled Major Stovall. Zanuck badgered him into appearing in the film without his toupee- a first

in his career. The supporting cast is filled out with half-familiar Hollywood faces and half-forgotten Hollywood names like Gary Merrill, who is terrific as a stressed-out group commander, and Millard Mitchell, who stands in for the historical Ira Eaker—the lonely Old Man at the Top, ordering young men to fiery deaths.

Despite the caliber of its creators and cast, *Twelve O'Clock High* till might have been a dud. Good people make bad movies all the time.

The reason this one came together was Beirne Lay. Drawing on his own wartime experiences, he also took inspiration from historical Army Air Forces figures from General Eaker down to the real-life “stowaway” company clerk who became a crack aerial gunner. His model for General Savage was Colonel Frank A. Armstrong Jr., who in early 1943 was sent by Eaker to shake up the floundering 306th Bomb Group. (The fictional 918th is the real 306th times three.)

Lay had joined the Army Air Corps back in 1932, a year after graduating in English from Yale. In those lean Depression years, Lieutenant Lay was assigned to the Air Corps' fledgling bomber command, which was flying obsolete two-engine biplanes like the Keystone B-6 and Curtiss B-2. The lieutenant soon took to his typewriter to champion the Air Corps in the press. Aviation editors clamored for Lay's knowledgeable articles, and Air Corps brass took note of his byline. After finishing his Air Corps active-duty requirement in 1935, he left to edit *The Sportsman Pilot*. In 1937, his first novel, an account of his Air Corps training called *I Wanted Wings*, was optioned for the movies by Paramount Pictures, but mangled beyond recognition into a 1941 release starring Ray Milland.

By then, Lay was back in the Army Air Corps as a captain seeking a combat assignment. Instead, he was snagged by Eaker, who had closely followed Lay's writing career. Eaker carried him off to England in early 1942 as the Eighth Air Force communications officer.

Lay was torn. As a key member of Eaker's inner circle, he had a ringside seat on the bombing war. But as a pilot, his desk taunted him. He begged for a transfer and was finally allowed to “familiarize” himself with the B-17s flown by the 100th Bomb Group at Thorpe Abbots.

Now a major, Lay arrived in time for the raid on Regensburg. It was murder. More than 550 crewmen were listed as missing after the raid, most of them killed. Many of the bombers that made it back were damaged beyond repair. By the fall of 1943, the Mighty Eighth was close to collapse. Yet after reporting back to Eighth Air Force headquarters, Lay still itched for a combat command.

In 1944, Lay—now a lieutenant colonel—was sent back to the States to stand up a new B-24 bomber group, the 487th Bomb Group (Heavy). He found the job of group commander almost crushing: green pilots, under-trained crews, malfunctioning aircraft. Somehow he moved the group across the Atlantic and prepared them for combat from their base in East Anglia. The responsibility weighed on him. In his quarters at night, Lay stared at the ceiling, unable to forget that many of the young men under his command would soon be either dead or imprisoned across enemy lines. “For a few seconds, I lay there luxuriating in the feel of clean sheets staring at those cryptic letters above my bedroom door: C.O.'s Bedroom,” he wrote. “There were nearly 40 of these rooms on 40 American bomber stations in England and each room harbored a man who carried a heavy load. Many of them must have wondered as I did, if the human mechanism was designed to stand up long under such an ordeal.” That bedroom ceiling and that question would both feature prominently in *Twelve O'Clock High*.

Lay's combat career was short. Determined to lead from the front, Lay was shot down in May 1944, on his fourth mission against French targets in preparation for D-Day. Five of his crew died in the crash. Another five bailed out, including Lay who managed to evade capture, take shelter with the French Resistance, and walk into the advancing American lines three months later.

Lay recounted this adventure in his 1945 book, *I've Had It*. (Republished in 1980 under the title *Presumed Dead*, it's a great read no matter what you call it.) But by the time he got back to England, the 487th Bomb Group had a new, highly competent commander. Moreover, Lay now knew too much about the French underground for the Air Force to risk the possibility of his being shot down again. He was finished as a combat commander. “I knew that I was swallowing the bitterest

disappointment of my life and I would never get over it," he wrote.

By 1946, Lay was trying his hand again as a civilian screenwriter in Los Angeles when a figure from the recent past, Sy Bartlett, popped up.

Hollywood had been good to Bartlett. Before the war, he had racked up credits, thrown lavish barbecues, and played on Zanuck's polo team. Once the war began, Bartlett pulled strings to join an Army documentary unit and then more strings to get to England.

One of those strings led him to Beirne Lay. They clicked. Lay introduced Bartlett to Eighth Air Force commander Major General Carl "Tooy" Spaatz, Eaker's boss at the time. Spaatz took Bartlett on as his personal intelligence assistant. From that lofty perch, Bartlett toured RAF and MF bases at will, rode along on bombing missions, and nearly got himself court-martialed for calling a press conference at Claridge's Hotel in London to describe his personal role in an RAF night raid on Berlin.

After the war, Bartlett found Lay in Hollywood, convinced that collaboration on an Eighth Air Force story would make for a dynamite novel and an even more lucrative screenplay.

Lay resisted. Bartlett persisted. Finally Lay retired to the basement of his overcrowded apartment building and, with a portable typewriter parked on an orange crate and a naked light bulb overhead, started writing. Bartlett would do his part, shaping the plot and honing the dialog, but the spine of *Twelve O'Clock High* sprang from Lay's vivid recall of the weight of command.

That's most clearly dramatized in the film when General Savage gives his first speech to the flight crews of the 918th assembled in the briefing hall. To a man, they hate his guts. He's just pushed aside their old commander. He lands on them like a ton of bricks, dressing them down as slackers and whiners. "We've got to fight. And some of us have got to die," he tells them. "Consider yourselves already dead. After that, it won't be so tough."

This is not an inspirational pep talk. It's not chest beating. It's not poetry. It isn't pretty. But it's what faced the Eighth Air Force in East Anglia in summer 1943. If you weren't there, you don't know. But watching *Twelve O'Clock High*, you can be, all over again.■

Classified Recipe Revealed

This recipe comes from the official top secret records of the Food Providing Ministry in 1941 Berlin.

Black Bread Broad

50% bruised rye grain

20% sliced sugar beets

20% tree flour (saw dust)

10% minced leaves and straw

Cooking directions were not included. No oven temperatures, no cooking time, no instructions on mixing the "dough" and letting it rise. You are assumed to know. One might "assume" the grain was sufficiently "rotten" to provide gases that would allow the bread to rise and the pieces of sugar beets would provide "sugar" to "feed" the yeasty rye.

The pieces of sugar beets were most likely pressed remnants of beet, not real slices. More than likely whoever was preparing the bread for baking just dumped out the dough, slapped it around and created loaves. It should be told that the closer to the end of the war the greater the proportion of leaves and straw in the mix. A loaf weighed 3 1/2 to 4 pounds and had to be seasoned at least three days before it was at all edible. It is said that the stench rising from the bread robbed many a POW of his appetite.■

[Information found on World War II – Prisoner of War website: www.merkki.com.]

Attention Journalist and Non-Journalists:

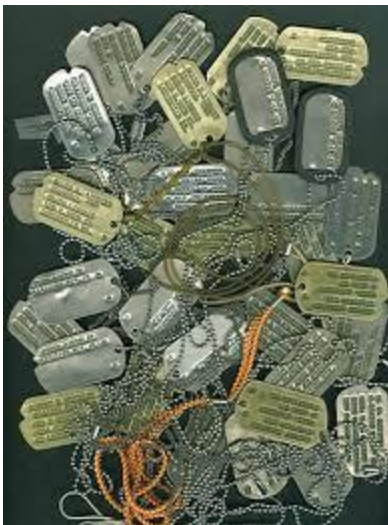
Do you have an article you would like to submit to *Echoes*? Please refer to the editor's column on page 14 of this issue regarding submissions. Send your articles to

nmhuebotter306@gmail.com.

Echoes Article Due Date for Winter/Spring Issue

19 April 2019

Dog Tags: A Life-Saving Device



It is just a small piece of metal, but to those in the military, it means everything. It signifies commitment to country, cause, and comrades. It is a highly personal item during a time when individuality is not the norm in a huge, almost faceless organization. The identification tag, more commonly known as a dog tag, hanging under a service member's shirt and close to his heart, becomes a part of him. It brings comfort to that fear of every soldier facing death: "I do not want to be forgotten; I will not become an unknown."

References to identification tags for soldiers dates back to Sparta when soldiers wrote their names on sticks tied to their left wrist. Other accounts describe stories of Spartan soldiers who carried a shield, which they were to come home with or be brought home on it.

It was during the American Civil War when soldiers began feeling the need to ensure their identification was accurate should an unfortunate fate befall them; they would not be a nameless casualty. Soldiers worried that if they were killed their families would never know what happened to them, other than they were missing in action. Instead, taking their own initiative, some soldiers pinned paper notes with their name and home address to their coats. Others stenciled

identification on their knapsacks or scratched it on the soft lead backing of their belt buckle.

Enterprising manufacturers of identification badges recognized there was a market for personal identification badges, so they began advertising in periodicals.

In May 1862, a New Yorker by the name of John Kennedy, wrote to the Army and offered to pay for all Union soldiers to have a disk with name, unit, and place of birth inscribed on it. For unknown reasons, this proposal was rejected.

But the need to identify unfortunate victims of war was not lost. It was in December 1906 when the Army officially authorized an identification tag as part of the uniform to be kept in the possession of the soldier when not in uniform. The regulations read:

"An aluminum identification tag, the size of a silver dollar and of suitable thickness, stamped with the name, rank, company, regiment, or corps of the wearer, will be worn by each officer and enlisted man of the Army whenever the field kit is worn, the tag to be suspended from the neck, underneath the clothing, by a cord or thong passed through a small hole in the tab. It is prescribed as part of the uniform and when not worn as directed herein, will be habitually kept in the possession of the owner."

It was a series of "lessons learned" that, during World War I, prompted the War Department and the Graves Registration Service to commit to proper identification.

In July 1916, the use of a second identification tag (a full pair) was introduced. Then, in February 1918, to combat misidentification of the dead and wounded, the War Department began issuing unique serial numbers to each soldier, which was to be included on the tag. This practice came into being to avoid failure to properly identify the corpse based on duplication of names.

Identification tags became officially part of the uniform in December 1928, and were directed to be worn at all times.

Up until World War II, identification tags basically remained the same. However, as America entered the war, the services instituted various shapes and contents to be inscribed on the identification tag. For the Army and the Air Corps,

their ID tags had five lines, which were designated for the name of the wearer, serial number, tetanus immunizations, blood type, name of person to be notified, address of notification, and religion. With military and medical information included on the identification tag, it was now a life saving device should the need arise.

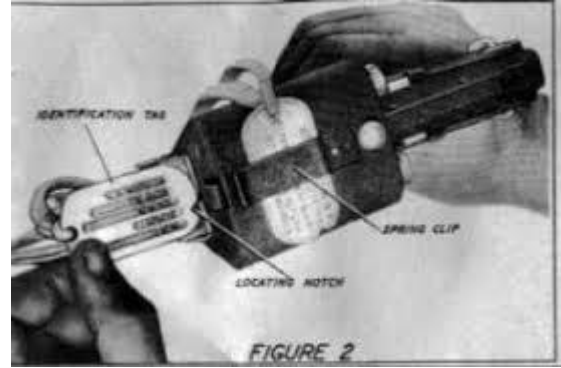


It was during this time that the ID tags became more commonly known as “dog tags.” Many servicemen wore their identification tags with metal chains rather than the standard issue cloth cord around their necks. This lent itself to be more like dog collars with the tag on them. Never officially referred to as a “dog tag,” the term arose because of their resemblance to the animal registration tags.



For years a recurring myth existed regarding the notch situated at one end of the dog tag issued to the United States Military personnel during World War II. It was rumored that the notch’s purpose was that, if a soldier found one of his comrades mortally wounded, he was to remove one tag for notification purposes, delivering it to the commanding officer. The second tag was to remain with the corpse,

sticking it between the teeth of the deceased to ensure the tag would remain with the body.



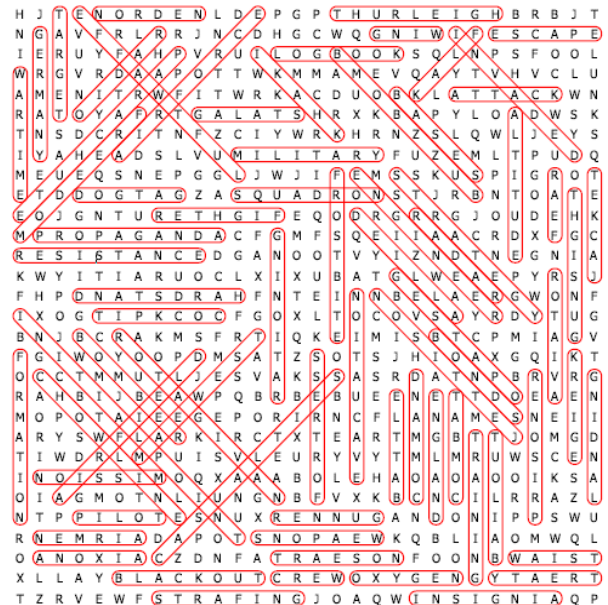
In reality, the notch was a functional element of the manufacturing process. The Model 70 Addressograph Hand Identification Imprinting Machine was used in which characters were debossed onto the metal plates. To force proper orientation of the tags, the tags were produced with a notch. A locator tab inside the Model 70 prevented the printer from operating if the tag was inserted erroneously or misaligned.

The military is dedicated to positively identify every casualty and eradicate discrepancies, removing doubts families may hold concerning the death of their loved one. The simple information contained on the small tag speaks for those who cannot speak for themselves. It ensures fallen military personnel are not “known only to God.” ■



306th Bomb Group Word Search

Here are the answers to last issue’s Word Search. How did you do?



In Memorial

Obituaries – Veteran death information should be submitted to the Secretary. Contact info is on p.2.

Atwood, Richard G, gunner (368th, Joe Marsh crew), of Eugene, OR, passed away 17 May, 2018 at age 96. He graduated from Oregon State University in business and, as a member of the ROTC unit there, was recalled to active duty during the Korean War. Richard was then employed as an industrial appraiser with Lane County, OR, for 24 years. He was married to wife, Hendrina, and they had three daughters, and five grandchildren.

Bischof, Joseph A, navigator (368th, Elton Rabe crew), died 24 January 2018, in Cincinnati, OH, at 94. He worked for the City of Cincinnati for 35 years, retiring as the City Engineer. He is survived by wife, Rita, five children, twelve grandchildren, and twelve great grandchildren.

Blahnik, George H, bombardier (423rd, Guy Burnett crew), passed away 29 July 2013 in Torrance, CA, at age 89 years.

George retired as a captain in the Torrance Fire Department after 35 years of service. At the time of his death, he was survived by four daughters, twelve grandchildren, and thirteen great grandchildren.

Cheney, Donald C, pilot, (423rd) passed away 11 November, 2010, in Lebanon, NH, at age 90. He had a BS degree from Wheaton College and after the war took courses in meteorology at UCLA, then continued his career with the Air Force as a meteorologist, also becoming a command pilot and retiring as a Major in 1965. He had a second career working for IBM. At the time of his passing he was survived by wife Barbara, a son, four daughters, fourteen grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Consolmagno, Joseph E, navigator (367th, James Stewart crew), POW, died June 11, 2018, in Venice, FL, at 100 years old. He was shot down and became a POW at Stalag III on a mission to bomb Antwerp on 5 April 1943. After the war, he was a reporter and authored the book “Through the Eye of the Needle,” which was a compendium of stories by numerous POWs including ten 306th Veterans. In the early 1950s, he helped create the Public Relations Department for Chrysler Corporation. Surviving are daughter Susan and sons Edwin and Guy, three grandchildren and two great grandchildren.

Courson, Donald S, gunner (368th, Charles Smith crew) internee, age 95, of Ashland, MS, died 24 January 2018. His plane was hit and made a crash landing in Sweden with the crew of Charles Smith on 6 March 1944 and was interned for the remainder of the war. After the war, he retired as farm manager with the Mississippi State Experiment Station. He is survived by four nephews and two nieces.

Dusenberry, Francis C, gunner (368th, Charles Witcomb crew), died 17 December 2016, Hampton, VA. He was 91. He retired from the Air Force after 30 years of service, and worked for Harrison & Lear Real Estate and volunteered at Virginia Tech University, Agricultural Extension. He was a master gardener. At the time of his passing, surviving were daughter Gayle, son John, two grandchildren and a great granddaughter.

Greer, Paul H, pilot (368th, Benjamin Olsen crew), of Phoenix, AZ, passed away 2 September 2017, age 92. He continued service with the Air Force Reserve for another 20 years

after the war, attended the California Institute of Technology and completed his degree at the Missouri School of Mines and Metallurgy. He then had a 39-year career with Motorola, working in the semiconductor and Government Electronics divisions. Surviving are daughters Linda, Susan, and Lisa, son David, six grandchildren and twenty great grandchildren.

Hammer, Joseph K, gunner (367th, Frederick Mitchell crew) of Waikoloa, HI, died 7 February 2018. He was 96. He piloted crop duster aircraft after the war and was a member of the Quiet Birdmen, Shriners, Air America Association and the American Legion. He is survived by wife, Carol, two daughters, three step-daughters and a step-son.

Jefferies, Bennie L, gunner (368th, Philip Field crew), of Belle Plaine, KS, died 4 June 2018, age 95. He farmed after the war, was an auto salvage owner, and was a member of the VFW and WWII Historical Society. He is survived by sons Lawrence and James, five grandchildren and seventeen great grandchildren.

Johnson, Alvin C, tail gunner (368th, George Paris crew), POW, Burlington, CO, passed away 3 November 2015. His plane was shot down on 17 April 1943 on a mission to bomb Bremen, was taken as a POW and was awarded the Purple Heart. As a farmer, he raised a wide variety of domestic and exotic animals including hogs, cattle, antelope, bears, yaks, and a variety of bird species. At the time of his passing he was survived by his wife, Reba, three children, five grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren.

Loes, Melvin J, ball turret gunner (369th, Harvey Ryder crew) age 95, of Dubuque, IA, passed away 25 July 2018. He was a truck driver and milkman for numerous dairies after the war, as well as driving school buses. He also attained the rank of Assistant Fire Chief with the Key West Fire Department. He is survived by three children, Ken Sue, and Mona, twelve grandchildren, and twenty-five great grandchildren.

Kudlak, Emil L, personnel clerk (1628th Ordnance Company), of Clifton, NJ, died at 102 years of age on 7 June 2018. After the war, he owned and operated Admar Plastic Company in Clifton, retiring after 50 years. Survivors include son, Leonard, daughter Lynn, two grandchildren and six great grandchildren.

Love, Cornelius L, radio operator (423rd, Wilmer Shultz crew), passed away in Oceanside, CA, 4 May 2014. He was awarded the purple for wounds received in action after bailing out of a damaged aircraft. In his last years, he was assisted by his neighbor and caregiver, Edward Schrandt.

MacDonald, Will A, pilot (423rd, David McNaught crew), age 95, of Rome, GA, died 12 November 2017. Continuing his Air Force career, he served in the Korean War and retired in the rank of major. After his retirement, he was employed as a civil engineer. At the time of his passing, he was survived by daughter Julie and son Bruce, four grandchildren and four great grandchildren.

Maxwell, Robert L, gunner (367th, Henry Hanson crew), of Danville, VA, passed away 2 January 2016. Surviving at the time of his passing was his wife, Grace, and daughter, Rosalee Maxwell Lyons.

Moreland, Herbert S, tail gunner (423rd, Francis Leigh crew), died 27 April 2018, in Crossville, TN, age 92. He had a 37-year career at Combined Insurance Company of America,

becoming vice president of claims. Surviving are daughters Michelle and Victoria, and two granddaughters.

Parker, Howard W, navigator (367th, Shelby Scott crew), of Austin, TX, passed away 21 May 2016. After the war, he went into the oil business, co-founding Parker & Parsley, serving as chief executive officer. After that firm was sold, he served with numerous other companies in the oil and gas industries of Texas. He was a graduate of the University of Texas. At the time of his passing he was survived by wife, Jane, daughter Frances, sons Richard and Howard, and numerous grandchildren and great grandchildren.

Schuberg, Robert E, gunner (368th, Joseph Rethy crew) passed away in Portland, OR, on 20 May 2018. Bob earned a BS degree from the University of Illinois, and a Masters of Education from the University of Oregon. He worked for Portland Public Schools for 34 years, and became a principal. Surviving are son John and daughter Jill, two grandchildren and two great grandsons.

Steele, Paul E, tail gunner (367th, Hubert Verdick crew), of Mechanicsburg, VA, died 19 December 2017 at 92. He flew a number of combat missions at the very end of the war and also flew with the Casey Jones Project. Post war he was a service manager for a Richmond, VA, area Chevrolet dealer, retiring in 1990. He is survived by his daughter Susan, sons Paul and Bruce, eight grandchildren and thirteen great grandchildren.

Wilson, Lowell R, clerk, (368th), of Lugoff, SC, died 10 August 2018, at age 97. After the war, he worked for E. I. du Pont de Nemours Company, retiring in 1985, and was a member of American Legion Post 144. Surviving are his wife, Annie Joan, daughters Jo Ann, Jeanette, and Joyce, three grandchildren, two great grandchildren, and one great great grandchild.

306th Family:

Hermley, Bernard F. "Bernie" Jr. of Jay/Milton, FL, husband of long time active 306th BGHA member Judy Hermley, father of long time active 306th BGHA member Carolyn Couey, passed away May 7, 2018 in Florida. He was a Vietnam War veteran with the Air Force.

Roberts, Norma, wife of surviving Veteran George Roberts (367th radio operator), of Gulfport, MS, passed away August 9, 2018.

Rose, Ann Marie, wife of Victor L. Rose (369th gunner, Dale Briscoe crew) of Vestal, NY, passed away 1 March 2018 at age 94. Surviving are her son and two daughters.

25 Years Ago. . .

From the Echoes Archives

Bill Carlile Muses



After VE day, the main function of a Flying Control Officer basically came to an end – we were no longer called upon to help the “shot ups” come in for safe landing, nor were we needed to make sure the field was in top shape to get those overloaded B-17s off the

ground safely and into what forever seemed like the bad UK weather. The sudden stop in activity was, to say the least, quite a change from the daily rat races.

Let me share with you what happened to me on VE+1 when I was the night duty officer in the tower. That evening was one of the most beautiful I have ever seen and felt. You could literally feel the beauty of the time. The late evening sunset seemed to linger on and on. The shadows quietly crossed over our base. Across the field from our tower were a couple of new shiny B-17s and the late sun shining through the woods reflected an orange glow on them. I was thankful that something as beautiful as a Fortress would no longer be used for war. Silence was all around – no radio noise, no engines being tested, no trucks rumbling by, just quiet. I remember seeing some birds playing in front of the tower. In all my days there, I never saw them. God seemed to be saying, “thanks that you mortals have finally stopped killing one another,” and I think He was.

Was I alone in these thoughts? No! I finally realized my radio operator was also standing and watching and not a word passed between us – it wasn't necessary. ■





306th Bomb Group Historical Association Membership Registration Form 2019 Calendar Year

Print all information.

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Address: _____

Telephone: _____ Email: _____

I am the Veteran: 306th Unit: _____ Duty/Job Title: _____

Additional Information: _____

If you have an interest in a particular WWII 306th veteran, please complete the following:

Your relationship to a 306th Veteran: _____

Veteran's Name: _____ 306th Unit: _____

Duty/Job Title or Additional Information: _____

Are you?

- World War II History Buff Author/Writer Researcher Other

Additional Information: _____

IF YOU ARE NOT of the WWII generation AND you want US-MAIL copies of *Echoes*, we request you please consider a donation of a minimum of \$10/calendar year to cover cost of *Echoes* printing and mailing.

- Check: Payable to 306th Bomb Group Historical Association. If not mailing with this form, mail check to:

Jennifer Mindala, Treasurer
3244 S. Lamar Street
Denver, CO 80227-5426

- PayPal Donations can be made on-line at www.306bg.us using the yellow "Donate" button

PLEASE DO NOT SEND CASH

Membership Registration forms should be mailed (with or without a donation), to:

306th Bomb Group Historical Association
c/o Mr. Bruce Chase, Director of Membership
2324 Hatch Hill Road
New Albany, PA 18833-8887

Each member will be placed on our membership list for the current calendar year only. We ask that you renew (free) each calendar year to confirm your continued interest in the 306th BGHA, and your current contact information for email/mail.

A free electronic version of the 306th *Echoes*, or official publication, is available via www.306bg.us



Save the Date

**The 306th Bomb Group Historical Association
and
Second Schweinfurt Memorial Association
Embassy Suites Savannah Airport
145 W. Mulberry Blvd.
Savannah, GA**

**We are pleased to announce the 2019 Reunion scheduled for
Thursday afternoon, November 7 to Sunday morning, 10 November in Savannah, Georgia.**

**Starting Thursday, our first exploration of the
Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum will occur beginning mid-day.
Dinner will be on your own.**

**Friday, we will return to the museum for a tour, lunch,
and Folded Wings Ceremony in the Memorial Garden and Chapel.
Friday night we will enjoy our First Over Germany Buffer Dinner.**

**Saturday will provide time for our General Business Meeting,
informative presentations, and our ever-popular Veterans roundtable.
A banquet honoring our Veterans will follow.**

**You will not want to miss this exciting reunion in Savannah where the
Mighty Eighth Air Force Museum
will reveal sights, sounds, and information that should not be forgotten.
Come show your appreciation for our Veterans!**

Watch for more details in the Secretary's monthly eMails and the next issue of *Echoes*.