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# 99BG NEWSLETTER

MAR

1  
Jan. 87

664 East Main Street  
Bradford Pa 16701  
9 Dec 1980

George F Coen  
2908 Aliso Dr NE  
Albuquerque NM 87110

Dear Coen:

Glad to hear from you. I retired in 1957 at Keesler AFB 31 July and lived in Gautier Miss 4 miles west of Pascagoula until May 1976 when I sold my home and moved back to Pa close to where I was born and raised before entering west Point 3 July 1923. My first wife & mother of my two daughters died of a heart attack in June 1970 and in 1974 I met a high school sweetheart who had lost her husband and we married 1 Oct 74. I tried to convert her to a southerner without success so moved back North.

I will give you the few addresses I have noted on your list.

- JP Bruno, 1460 Carriage Lane, New Berlin, Wis 53151
- Malden K Jackson, 3589 Timothy Way, Riverside, CA, 92506
- W M Hampton, 1608 Gay Dr, Orlando FL, 32803
- Wayne E Thurman, 1920 Spruce Dr, Erie, Co, 80516

Warren B Whitmore, 635 Solano Prado, Coral Gables, FL, 33156

I was able to attend the first two reunions at Sioux City and Chicago. Henderson drove over from Pensacola to and we flew to Chicago in my plane for that one, I was unable to attend the 3rd one in Chicago and interest flagged and plans for future ones dropped.

J F Bruno tried to write a book on the 99th and I supplied him with some pictures and data but I guess he could never complete it and get published. He might have some addresses for you.

Also Bob Elliot, 348th, organized a reunion of the 348th in Las Vegas. Not too many came and every thing so expensive that future ones were dropped. Everyone has been separated too long and some of the enthusiasm has worn off I guess. I think Whitmore could supply Bob Elliot's address. Whitmore wrote me about it. I couldn't go.

McDonald and Burrell died of Cancer. Saroy is also gone - heart I think. I suppose there are many more that I don't hear about. Bernich my Bombardier was killed on a training mission in Tex not long after his return back from the war. He was a Biloxi, MS boy and his name is on war Monument there. I met his mother while at Keesler.

The 99th was my favorite command and I thoroughly enjoyed training it, leading it to North Africa and leading it thru the first 50 missions. Keeping its memory alive by a Historical society is commendable and I'm proud to join and help support it.

My typing is terrible but more legible than my handwriting and I don't have those skillful secretaries I had before retiring. I hope you will excuse the mistakes.

I will be 76 Jan 28th 81, have a lot of spare parts and a right hip transplant had a wonderful wife Betty to help me along but make no promises to attend your meetings. If I can be of help I will.

With best regards and merry x'mas.

*Faye U. Upthegrove*

Dear General Upthegrove;

It is a rare treat to get your letter and to find that you are well. We are very proud that you approve of the Society, and we are proud to have you as a member. We have saved card No. 1 for you, and by action of the Board you are invited to accept a Life Membership.

Sincerely  
George

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Dear George,

Rec'd the new list of 99ers this date and here are a few more names. Speaking of L.T. Boatwright, J.H. Whitmore, Virgil M. Taylor, Phil J. Sweeney, and the writer were in Group Operations in Walla Walla and Sioux City. I'm sure he remembers Warren Whitmore, who led the Group on the first mission over Rome & others. He is located in Jax Fla.

Since leaving the service in 1945 I've been back to Rome twice. Love the place, and I'm not Italian.

Like to have been in Amarillo.

Enclosed find my application for membership-1981.

Best regards to all

Walter Fletcher

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Dear George,

I received the material in regards to the 99th Bomb Group Historical Society. Congratulations for the fine job you are doing in regards to setting up, organization and finally getting this project off the ground. I know some of the problems you are running into for I was involved in a similar deal myself getting the Ex-POWS formed here in Jersey. Well now possibly after all these years, some of the fellows will take time and enough pride in joining together once again and reactivate some old memories of the old 99th B.G. The fact still remains, we need national publicity in order to put together a viable organization.

Yes, I want to be included in the organization with all of you. Enclosed you will find my check for \$10.00, take \$5.00 for dues and the extra \$5.00 and put it to any use you may have.

George, I've done some research in regards to the old outfit and have in my possession material such as three rolls of micro-film records of the 99th and some additional information. If in the future you would care to have any of this material, let me know and I'll be glad to see that you get it.

There are a couple of questions that I have, maybe you can give me some kind of an answer; First; Do you have any idea as to the status of our old C.O. Col. Faye Upthegrove? Second; What was the insignia of the 346th Sqd?

Well George, maybe if the "good Lord's willing and the creeks don't rise," I'll see you all in April. Keep in touch.

Regards,

Thanks, Ralph,

Ralph Kramer

Dear George,

This is in answer to your letter of Aug. 2. (Prompt, aren't I?). I know you are busy, & I appreciate you taking the time to write; also the new roster update.

Before going further, I noticed two names on the update roster, both of whom were in my squadron. I called one who was our Mess and supply (PX) officer James Seacord (it is misspelled on the roster). Anyhow he has been deceased for two years. The other name was Joseph G. Celline. (He was a M?Sgt. & asst. line chief in the 347th). I wrote to him, but the letter was returned to me. I mention this for the record.

I called Sam Dunn, & D.G. Brewer. D.G. told me the story of Lt. Hunter (hit in his chute over Poggia). I did not know about this, George. Was he hit by flak or a fighter?

Now, George, about your letter. Thanks for filling me in about your squadron, code names of locations, etc. We were at La Senia, Oran for a week after we got off the ship. They got us back in shape by having us tear up the metal strips we all know so well that passed for landing strips. Those were the days.

You said you flew your 50th Sept. 18, 1943 & went to El Aouina at Bizerte, where your brother was. Not to argue the point, but El Aouina was the main field at Tunis, George. I spent many hours going back and forth between our base at Oudna, getting supplies or taking off wrecks there. As for Bizerte, I spent days in my 6 x 6 taking supplies there which were loaded on an LST on which I travelled to Taranto, Italy.

Speaking of Bizerte, I'll never forget the time our Tech Supply (Hdqtrs) Warrant Officer & another Sgt. & myself flew by B-17 one Sunday to Tunis and then went to Bizerte by truck to bring back some airplane jacks. What a hassle!

We were just dressed in khakis. The Italian POW's didn't want to help load as it was their day off, so our officers had to promise them Monday off.

It ended up where we did most of the work & got dirty as all get out! It was hot and boy, were we mad! We loaded them in the bomb bay, and you know how heavy those things were! All this in one day too!

I am looking forward to the day when we can all get together.

With best wishes. Sincerely Frank English, 347th

Dear Frank;

Your mention of La Senia brought back a memory or two. We had an engine replaced there, and my brother Jack, a member of the base personnel, went up with us to slow-time the engine. We took along a load of practice bombs for Pete Bulkeley, our Bombardier, to play with. The engine malfunctioned at once, so Henderson and Imrie feathered it. I think it was Number 3. We were told later that the rings had been installed backward. We then proceeded to bomb the practice target out on the Sebket d' Oran on three engines, making one practice run per practice bomb. By the time we reached the last bomb, Jack was a bit anxious, to put it mildly, and I must admit that the feathered prop was easily visible from the nose. However, as I remember, Henderson and Imrie greased the B.T.O. onto the metal runway without incident, except that the sub-

sequent engine change caused us to be left behind when the 99th moved up to Navarin. A little Mediterranean storm then put the runways under water, causing us to be a week late for the political discussions. So the Milo A/D raid on Apr. 5 was our first.

You asked about Hunter. I remember a pilot from Utah flying Vicki on a Foggia raid. The 99th massaged the target and turned off. Hunter had an engine afire but he nursed the plane along for about 120 miles, when the flames blossomed out and reached the main spar. Bob "Punjab" Imrie photographed the sequence of events, and various newspapers printed the photos later. Impact printed them under the title "Parachutes Pay Off". The waffletails mistook burning fuel cells for parachutes. Similarly, the tail of the aircraft was advertised as a German fighter although we were not under attack at the time. The engines on both wings kept on churning. We saw no parachutes, but somebody might have gotten out. Does anybody know?

## PARACHUTES: Here's How They

*wrong engine feathers - '3 afire*



*Lt. Hunter, Salt Lake City Vicki*

1. ENGINE SMOKING, THIS B-17 HAS BEEN HIT BY NAZI FIGHTER

2. STILL AFIRE, B-17 CONTINUES

## Pay Off When the Clutch Is On

*Tail of B-17 and two burning pieces of wreckage. Shaking nose at right*



IN FORMATION OVER FOGGIA



3. B-17 LOSES WING AND TWO MEN BAIL OUT. LEFT: ENEMY FIGHTER.

Impact  
July  
1943

Dear George;

I hope you received the picture I sent of the 347th insignia.

I don't know if you are aware of it, but there are two books which are very good that contain Histories of Squadrons and Groups.

First; Combat Squadrons of the Air Force, World War II. It gives complete histories from origin to end, with pictures of insignia. The 347th insignia was different from what I had, but the present insignia was approved 11 May 1954. This book is sold by the Government Printing Office.

Second; Air Force Combat Units of World War II. This book contains histories of all combat Groups with insignia and pictures. The publisher is Franklin Watts, Inc., 575 Lexington Ave. New York 22.

I also have a book, The Army Air Forces in World War II, Combat chronology, 1941-1945. It lists all operations from Dec. 7, 1941 to Sep. 15 1945. There is an abundance of information in all three of these books.

They proved interesting to me because when the war ended I was transferred to the 301st Group, B-17's; then to the 460th Group, B-24's; which I flew into the Z of I. I was supposed to go to B-29's but the war ended, so I ended up

in a fighter Group.

I hope to meet you at one of the meetings, maybe in April.

Sincerely

Michael J. Heffran

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Hi you all

Sure enjoyed hearing from someone from the past. Have not seen any one from the old outfit since I saw Col. Seacord 5 days before he passed away.

I am working outside the ZI most of the time but I hope to be around when they have a get-together, and be there. I have some pictures from Watertown S.D., 1943, North Africa, 1943; and Italy 1944 & 1945. Hope someone could tell me who is in them.

I have one son, 23 years old.

Best wishes

Bernard C. Rogers

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Dear George

Thank you for keeping us all updated on your activities and especially thank you for the job of organizing and searching you have undertaken.

I have some clues for you on the whereabouts of some of the old gang. You listed Fay Upthegrove in Mobile; he is a retired Major USAF and was the first Group Commander in the combat environment in North Africa. Col. Schwanbeck, the last commander in the combat environment in Italy, is now a retired Colonel USAF and lives in Arizona.

Tom Bell who was the Group Navigator late in the war at Foggia is working for the Pensacola Florida newspaper. Charley Zalotka who was a lead Bombardier/Navigator was killed in a B-35 crash sometime in the late 40's or early 50's. His home town (and mine) was Pottsville, PA. Herb Holdsombeck retired as a colonel from the Air Force about 1970 or '71. His last Duty station was Vandenberg AFB, California where he was the commander of the Space and Missile Systems Organization (SAMSO) Test Wing. He was a pilot in 348th Squadron, I think.

Sincerely yours

Bob Duffy

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Bro. Coen

Sounds like the start of a good organization. I'm enclosing \$5.00 for membership.

I see you were in the 416th too, but over the years I've forgotten and the list of names you sent was greatly appreciated.

Charles Scheu

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Dear George.

George, right after Thanksgiving I'll locate my files on the 99th Bomb Group Reunion and send you the mailing list that I have. I don't know how many are still alive but I'll cooperate with you 100%. I'll give all the info I have and we'll see what the end results will be.

sincerely  
Ed Zawila

Thanks, Ed. We all appreciate your efforts to make the Chicago Reunions the successes that they were. I attended in 1961, and that is what gave me the courage to start this Society. Thanks again.

Sincerely, George.

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Dear George:

I read with interest your last letter Describing the events of the October 18th "mini-reunion" in Amarillo.

I'm certain that after the roster of the 99th Bomb Group is expanded our future reunions will far exceed the small turnout in October.

I'm pleased and honored to be given the opportunity to become a member of the newly-formed 99th Bombardment Group Historical Society.

most sincerely  
Raymond L. Nestor

Dear Ray;

Yes, our growth rate is at present a steady 230% per month. I have set up a tour of Kirtland Field for the Group and have estimated 40 persons, but they will have a second bus ready just in case. We plan a tour of the non-metallic trestle, the solar facility, and the atomic museum on Friday a.m.

That leaves us 2 1/2 days for the rest of the festivities, which are still being organized.

See you there  
George

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Dear George:

99th mission report and roster received and appreciated; my apologies for this delayed response but other requirements kept me from my desk. I did telephone L. R. Tipton in El Cajon and tried to find a number for R. L. Nestor in San Diego. Tipton (an engineer with the original group) and I had a nostalgic 20 minute conversation but couldn't lock on to any mutual friends.

The names and addresses of 99ers I mentioned are attached. If more are located I will forward them. Meanwhile, best holiday wishes.

Warm Regards,  
Bill Holt

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Fellows, we are indebted to Bill for finding General Upthegrove's address, as well as for considerable encouragement and help. Thanks, Bill

George

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Dear George:-

Couldn't make it to Amarillo. Hope to make it to Albuquerque. Was looking over my old records and found the orders sending the original Group overseas, all 35 crews. Thought you'd like to see it. I also found my log for the trip & all of my combat missions and some pictures, mostly of the men in the 416th. Hope to bring them along with me in April.

Take care of yourself  
Sincerely Sam Dunn



Dear Sam;

Sure is good to hear from you. Thanks again for flying that mission to Benvento and putting my name down. I owe you a short beer for that one. Did I tell you that I stopped by to see Frank Was' mother in 1950 and she said that Frank was killed at Harvard in a B-29 on take-off. He was instructing and lost an engine on takeoff, and I suppose he had one of those 15-year-old pilots as student.

I didn't keep any records because I figured I wouldn't come back. Sometimes when my eleven grandchildren are passing in review I reflect on that. That's one more estimate I could have improved upon.

George

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Dear "Trig",

After repeated missives from you without even the courtesy of an acknowledgment from me, I have finally concluded that you will think me an unworthy 416er if I continue to be silent. ( I remember that little verse "There's nothing finer than a 99er; nothing keener than a 416er). I'm neither fine nor keen, but I do very much appreciate your continuing to write to me without a response.

Your December, 1980 Newsletter arrived today, and Rosemary and I both read with interest your description of how you got into the reunion business. ( And where did you get the logos?)

On October 1, 1980, I retired after 35 years with United Airlines. For the past several years I had been responsible for Personnel Administration in the Flight Operations Division, which is made up of a total of 5500 747, DC-10 DC-8 727 and 737 pilots and about 1500 ground personell-- administrative, dispatch, crew scheduling, weather services, etc. Out of the 35 years with United, all of which were most fulfilling, I found the last seven most enjoyable. To a large measure, this was because the spirit of camaraderie which exists in United's Flight Operations Division is so akin to that which prevailed in the 416th and throughout the 99th.

Since the last Christmas Greeting was about a year ago I don't believe you were aware of the surgery which I experienced on March 12, 1980. On February 14 I was given a treadmill test to determine how things were going with my ticker. Following that test, the cardiologist scheduled a Cardiac Catheterization to determine arterial blockage. It was discovered that all of my arteries were severely blocked. Surgery was scheduled for Mar. 12, and on that date I underwent an open-heart procedure which involved a quadruple bypass, performed by removing veins from the legs and grafting them around the blocked arteries in the heart. This form of open-heart surgery has been very successfully carried out in particular in the last 12-15 years. In my case, it was, thank God, very successful; I was in the hospital only nine days and returned to full-time work 5 1/2 weeks after the operation.

I had planned to retire June 1, but with the schedule interruption caused by the hospitalization, it was decided that I would remain on the job until October 1, to finish a major organization study that I was working on. It was concluded and implemented by Labor Day and the balance of September was devoted to tying loose ends. Now I am in the rocking chair, but after 47 years of full-time work (including service in the Air Corps), I don't feel the least bit guilty.

We have seven grandchildren, and between them and golf, time is well taken up with interesting experiences.

Your reunion schedule looks interesting; I will give serious planning consideration to April in Albuquerque as a minimum.

My congratulations to you for your continued dedication to the 99th and the 416th and the friendships that were formed in those magic days.

Sincerely

Andy Collins

Dear Andy

Best wishes in your retirement, and we all hope to see you in April.

Rosemary will enjoy it too.

Sincerely

George

Dear George:

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Would you please keep me informed regarding the reunion of the 99th Bomb Group in April. I was with the 346th Squadron in Foggia, Italy in 1944-45.

Also, has the Group ever written up a history, or anything like that? I would be most interested in any such material. Thanks very much.

Sincerely,

Russell M. Traunstein  
2 Stanley Terrace

Dear Russ

I know of no history, but as the letters come in I'm finding out lots of things, and we may find a historian among us. Best wishes GFC

I would like to correspond with any member of the 99th B.G. who knew Lt. Roy H. Auchterlonie, navigator on "Lucky Lady". He lost his life returning from his 45th mission in a landing crash in N. Africa August, 1943.  
Carol M. Fair, 1704 Pike Ave., Carroll, Iowa, 51401

PROGRESS REPORT

114 Members as of 14 Feb. 1981 - New roster in late February.

REUNION SCHEDULE

Albuquerque, NM April 10-12 See attached Schedule.  
Rapid City, SD July 18 at Holiday Inn, I-90 and LaCrosse.  
Contact Mike Yarina, Phone 605-255-4238, Fairburn, SD.  
Harlingen, TX Oct. Still tentative. Location may be changed.

WANT ADS

Does anybody have one of those leaflets that said "We are your friends"? Or the words to "Over the Hill"? Or a picture of the sinking of the Trieste?

BOOK REVIEWS

Flying Fortress, Ed Jablonski, 1965, Doubleday.  
A very good book. Describes how Boeing almost went back to boat building when they couldn't market the B-17 in 1939. Also, page 109 has a picture of that 97th plane cut almost half in two.  
The Hiroshima Pilot, William Bradford Huie, 1964, Cardinal.  
Plenty good. Huie back-tracked the story of Claude Eatherly to its roots and then wrote this biography.  
Mother America, Carlos Romulo. An eye-opener, especially for those who remember Carlos Romulo's visit to Boise in Sep. 1942. I recommend this one to my children after they get past the protest stage.  
Green Beach, James Leasor, 1975, Dell.  
An account of the raid on the radar station at Dispepe.

TAPS

R.M. Whyte passed away at his home in Pierre, South Dakota in November, 1980  
Arthur W. DePew died of a heart attack in November, 1979 in Indiana.

Next Newsletter May 1st.