



THE 99th Bomb Group Historical Society



VOLUME 2, NUMBER 6 * NEWSLETTER OF THE

99th BOMBARDMENT GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY--NOV. 1, 1982

PUBLISHED BI-MONTHLY * EDITOR, Frank H. English

SOCIETY OFFICERS

PRESIDENT * Bernice Barr

VICE-PRESIDENT * Michael Yarina

SECRETARY * Joe Kenney

TREASURER * George Coen

THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER** (Views from the left seat)---

Our October Reunion in Muskegon was a great success--too bad our other members, and their wives, of course, couldn't make it! The success of same was due in no small part to the work of our own EARL SILVIS, his lovely wife, JEAN, and the cooperation of personal friends, Earl says, from the Holiday Inn, and Days. Not to also mention the owner of the famous Dune Buggy rides at Silver Lake. Many thanks, and much appreciation to you, Earl, and Jean, also. I would be remiss if I didn't hand out a Kudo to Lettie Yarina for her outstanding work; signing in people, taking the money, printing name tags, etc., at our 99th table in the Lobby, along with Jean. This Reunion was well attended; hopefully we will have a List of attendees in this issue.

Once again, it was a real pleasure to welcome and visit with Maj. Gen. Fay R. Upthegrove (our original C.O. from the beginning of the 99th in Boise, until he left us in Jan. '44 to take over the 304th B. Wing-B-24's, near us at Cerignola). This time, he brought his better half, Betty, who is a real friendly, delightful person! Many of us also finally got to see Gen. Upthegrove's dandy model of El Diablo, the B-17F he flew to Africa, and quite a few missions. This plane flew 100 missions and has 14 German fighters, shot down, to the credit of its gunners; it was then turned into a transport and transferred to Gen. Upthegrove as his personal plane.

As I could not stay for the Banquet, and Pipe Band Concert on Saturday night, we had a short Board Meeting, followed by a General Meeting on Friday morning. Sorry to say, our genial Secretary, Joe Kenney, could not make it. Joe Chance was held up but made it after the meetings. (He is one of our high class Directors, you know!) Several items on the agenda were brought up and discussed by the Board, then most of same were reiterated at the General meeting. Reference will be made, in this Newsletter, to several important items, the least of which concerns our upcoming 1983 Reunion in good old Albuquerque in May, the dates are the 13th, 14th, & 15th. Added info will be forthcoming as we get cranked up--but in the meantime--start making plans, now! Don't say we didn't warn you! In closing, for now, I appreciate the attendance of all you fine folk at Muskegon and am looking forward to seeing you all in '83, in Albuquerque! A Very Merry Christmas, and Happy New Year to everyone!

With Best Regards,

Bernie Barr (President)

P.S. We had two other 'built-in' Hosts, so to speak. I could not end this without mentioning Harvey Jennings (our friendly-for free-Bartender), and the one, and only (thank the Lord), Eugene Agnew, impromptu Toastmaster, and Ladies Man! What a pair to draw to!

b.b.

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ATTENTION***ATTENTION***ATTENTION***ATTENTION***RE: CAPS!

On Page 2 of this issue, Under 'HARKEN!'--in regard to CAPS,

I had a phone call from Jack Field (OCT. 25), informing me-to tell all of you 99ers interested in buying same, that the DEADLINE is DECEMBER, 10, 1982--so get your orders in as soon as you receive this work of art! CAPISH? (fhe)

(Page 2). 99th B.Gp. H.S.---HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO ALL!

Fellow members, and friends of the 99th, I would like to add my thanks to Earl Silvia for his all-out efforts for the very successful Reunion we just enjoyed in Muskegon, Michigan. The accommodations, the hospitality room(s) with spirits for medicinal purposes only, the fabulous Dune Buggy ride, topped off with the dandy Banquet at which we were royally entertained by the Bagpipe Band, as promised by Earl. I must mention that Linda Silvia, daughter of Earl, and Jean, and a charming person, was a member. Boy, were they good! All self-taught with the help of a Piper named--would you believe--Mr. Dombrosky(?) I'm sure the spelling is incorrect, and I apologize, as I didn't have the opportunity to meet him, but he wasn't Scotch, and that's my point.

The Pipers, and Drummers dedicated a number to Gen. Upthegrove--Amazing Grace--which, I'm sure, was appreciated not only by him, but also his lovely wife, Betty. Their presence, I might add, at our Reunion really put the frosting on the cake! Those of you not present sure missed out on not seeing Gen. Upthegrove's beautiful model of El Diablo which Bernie mentioned in his remarks.

To be redundant, I too wish to thank Earl once again; also his lovely wife, Jean, Lettie Yarina, and others mentioned, and unmentioned for unsolicited yeoman service beyond the call of duty--needless to say, these thoughts are also shared by our Board, and all the rest of the members, their better halves, and guests present. (It sure was nice to see Mike Yarina walking on his own--no crutches--not even a cane!--good for you Mike, that's intestinal fortitude!)

Having received a List of Attendees from Earl, I will include them in this Newsletter. It should give one, and all the incentive to start planning now, for our upcoming May 13, 14, & 15th 1983 Reunion at the WINROCK INN in Albuquerque, NM. (Same place where we met in late April of this year--easy to get there--take 40 and get off at Louisiana--North--get in right-hand lane right away and then turn right--within a block, and you are in the WINROCK SHOPPING CENTER--stay on the road past the STANDARD service station and just follow it back until you will see the WINROCK INN.) Good old Tom Gamm, I'm told, will do the honors, again--with the able help of his wife, Bernie, George, and the other 9,000 members that live there! Well, it seems like there are that many--what's a little stretching?

HARKEN!

Remember what Bernie said in regard to working on several items that were brought up at our meetings in Muskegon? Here is one you faithful 99ers will not want to miss! Jack Field (346th), was backed into a corner by Bernie, and George and consented, on his own (he is Account Executive for a large corporation), to get us our own caps. To start with, he is ordering 72--I have ordered mine so the rest of you better get cracking! They will be light blue, and centered on the front, in a white background--will be--99th Bomb Group. (I am not sure if the printing will be all caps, or upper/lower case; no matter, I know it will be tasteful!) By the way, they will also be the adjustable type.

The 1st cap costs \$7.00, postpaid; each additional cap only \$5.00, postpaid. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

Mail check directly to JACK FIELD, 1126 WASHINGTON, GLENVIEW, ILLINOIS 60025

Thanks, Jack, in advance, for your help in this endeavor! Now all of us 99ers will have something to wear with pride! Our thanks to you, Bob Imrie, for starting this! George, and I wore the caps you gave us in Muskegon, also. Kudos to you.

LIST OF MUSKEGON ATTENDEES

(Courtesy, Earl Silvia)

George F. Coen (416th)	Erwin J. Kosharek (416th)
Earl A. Silvia (416th)	Sam Taormina (416th)
Peter P. Bezek (416th)	Mike Mazu (416th)
Bernice Barr (Hqs.)	Robert K. Braungart (416th)
Ernest L. Wrentmore (Hqs.)	Jim La Vey (347th)
Russ Manchester (348th)	Em. Baxindale (416th)
Eugene I. Agnew (346th)	Palmer Hansen (?)
Bernard C. Rogers (347th)	Charles E. Miller (346th)
Frank H. English (347th)	Arthur G. Knipp (347th)
John E. Roquemore (348)	Al M. Wertz (346th)
Henry L. Parks (347th)	Dick Stack (346th)
Mike Yarina (348)	Max L. Dunn (347th)
Harvey T. Jennings (346th)	Harlan R. Hill (348th)
Walter Klukas (416)	Joe Leach (416th)
Jack Field (346th)	Dale Shupe (347th)
Rex L. Greathouse (346th)	Joseph Chance (346th)
Norman R. (Bud) Kaufman (347th)	Harold Corbin (347th)
James C. Callihan (416th)	Joe Jett (348th)
Fay R. Upthegrove (C.O.)	Jenny Read (widow of Tom)(348th)
Ernest K. Gentit (348)	Phillip I. Wilson (?)
Lorin W. Zick (346th)	Marvin A. Smith (346th)
D. J. (Jim) Sopp (346th)	J.O. Grizzell (347th)
Donald G. Chandler (416th)	George Eadie (416th)

(Plus-3 guests--Plus-27 wives, and 1 daughter!)

HOW'S THAT FOR A GOODLY NUMBER?APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

1983 Membership, \$10

1982 Newsletters, Optional, \$5

NAME _____ Squadron _____ New _____

ADDRESS _____ Renewal _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

NOTE: That I have changed '1982 Membership' to '1983'--also, '1981 Newsletters, Optional' to '1982'. This is to reflect the upcoming new year, and need I remind all of you that 1983 dues are due, and payable, NOW! (fhe)

ABOUT MEMBERSHIP CARDS**

We send a Membership Card (dated 1981) at the time of joining the Society. In the interest of economy, we do not send another card at the time of renewal; but we do note in the upper right-hand part of your address label, your current status, by adding the year of expiration, that your renewal has been received.

George F. Coen, Treasurer

THE AIR FORCE'S WILDEST MISSION: THE DAY IT RAINED DEATH OVER SICILY

by Ed Hyde

"Bandits all around the clock!" Sgt. Ben Warmer tensed. Then his tracers swept flak-black skies with a vengeance that brought him an official title not matched by any other WW II GI -- in the air or on the ground.

The sky was alive with enemy fighters diving and turning with machine guns spitting fire. They hurtled at the flight of lumbering B-17's from all directions, like meteors, rapidly approaching the point of no return. Then the black-crossed Messerschmitts would break off suddenly, diving or climbing to get out of the range of the chattering fifty caliber machine guns aboard the four-engined bombers.

The huge gunner at the night waist gunport easily swung his heavy machine gun toward an approaching Nazi fighter. He gripped the gun handles in his hamlike fists and led the enemy plane in his sights. "Now," he said to himself and squeezed the trigger. The gun yammered; but in the grip of the giant bundled up in heavy flying gear, it hardly bucked in its mount as he blasted away at the buzzing gun chattering 109's.

"One coming in at three o'clock," the huge gunner shouted into his intercom microphone over the noisy roar of his machine gun. The top turret and belly turret gunners swung their guns starboard in the direction from which the fast moving Me-109 was zipping in. If it broke above or below the B-17, in a dive or a climb, they'd be ready to pick it up and possibly finish it off. They didn't get a chance this time.

The Messerschmitt blew apart in the air where tracer from the bomber's right waist gun port had blasted into its wing-root gas tank. "Yahoooooo!" the giant gunner shouted victoriously. "I've got one."

"Confirmed," the top turret gunner barked. "Two coming in at six o'clock high." The victorious gunner swung his machine gun as far right as it would point to pick up the enemy planes if they should sweep by his position. There were enemy fighters darting all over the sky. "God, there must be a hundred of them," he mumbled to himself.

"Ben, one coming your way," the belly gunner's high-pitched voice crackled through the earphones. The giant of a man squinted in the bright daylight looking for the plane that was coming at him. He picked it up and it grew larger in his sights.

Staff Sergeant Benjamin F. Warmer III, Army Serial Number 19084133, stood stiffly at attention, his 275 pound six foot six inch body casting a massive shadow on the sunwashed airstrip of the 99th Bomb Group's base east of Algiers. Behind Warmer stood the officers and enlisted men of his unit, the 348th Bombardment Squadron (Heavy), also lined up at attention to pay homage to the aerial geyser Lt. Gen. Carl A. "Doc" Spaatz, commander of the Northwest African Air Force, fingered the Distinguished Service Cross that he held in one hand while an aide read from General Order # 69. It was early August 1943 and Sgt. Ben Warmer squinted in the bright glare of the hot North African sun as he studied General Spaatz and visiting Major General James H. Doolittle also standing at attention.

Ben Warmer naturally was nervous. Two generals were there to honor him. His squadron was standing in formation in his honor; and there was the brass present from group and wing headquarters. They were all present to pay homage to the giant gunner for shooting down seven Nazi fighter planes on one mission.

Moreover, General Spaatz had earlier conferred on Big Ben Warmer the title of "Ace"--the only enlisted ace to come out of World War II.

"For extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy," the captain reading the orders shouted to the assembled formation. To Ben Warmer it seemed like yesterday. Two months earlier--on July 5, 1943--he rolled out of his sack in the tent area about a mile from the air strip. It was 0300 hours and the roar of cold engines being turned over by the ground crews on the air strip shattered the silence. Ben's crew was scheduled to fly a mission later that day. At the time he awoke, he had no idea where his squadron would drop its bombs. However, he knew it would be somewhere in Sicily. This Mediterranean island just south of Italy for days had been undergoing an incessant bombing from the air and from the sea in a prelude to invasion by the U.S. Army five days after Ben's own mission. Sometimes the missions to Sicily were hazardous, sometimes they were milk runs.

Ben stretched the sleep from his huge frame and yawned, roaring like a mad young bull. "Let's go, another day and another dollar," he shouted out loud for the benefit of the other members of his crew. As he walked out of the tent,

shivering against the early morning chill, he shook the sleeping figures huddled beneath olive drab blankets. "C'mon. Let's go! Let's go!"

There were no show bounds among the bomb crews. Anyway, not on the morning of a mission. After they got back, maybe. But not before. Ben, ordinarily a huge eater, nursed his steaming metal GI cup full of what passed for coffee as he sat with his crew in the mess tent. He glanced at his watch. It was 0400, time to head for the briefing. He nodded to Staff Sergeant Ed Worthy, his alter ego and the man who held down the port waist gun position just opposite his own. They walked together to the briefing.

It was like any other briefing. The officers and enlisted men mingled and sat together, each crew sitting in its own tight little knot. Colonel Fay R. Upthegrove strode onto the jerry-built stage, but nobody shouted at the men to rise to attention. The 99th was not a checked outfit. The briefing officer ran through the plot. The 347th Squadron would lead the mission this day and the 348th would follow behind.

The target: Gerbini!

There was a noticeable gasp from the men. Gerbini was a hornet's nest headquarters of Luftwaffe Air Division III, one of the top Nazi fighter commands in all of Europe. Ben Warmer mouthed an epithet. "This is going to be a rough one," he commented to no one in particular, shaking his head at the same time.

Gerbini! This complex of fighter air strips in Sicily filled with sleek Messerschmitt 109s and 110s guarded the approaches to Italy. For a while this fighter force was effective against Allied marauders from the sky. But the pressure was on. Gen Ben had to be knocked out and this was the day that the 99th was given the mission.

The B-17 Flying Fortress, a midget in size when compared to modern jet bombers, in its day lived up to its name. It was indeed a flying fort. It could fly at 30,000 feet and its guns could sweep 360 degrees on any three dimensional axis. Its 10 fifty caliber machine guns more often than not spelled death for attacking enemy fighter planes. The "Fort" was designed to provide its own protection on long bomber missions beyond the range of fighter cover. In both the European and Pacific war areas it won the grudging admiration of Nazi and Jap aces as a worthy foe.

The mission that day called for a high level bombing of the Gerbini complex. It was still cold when the 99th's officers completed their briefing and were driven to their aircraft looming ominously beneath the bright African stars. Within hours the hardstands on the air base would be cruelly hot, but now the men shivered in the sub-freezing temperature. Their warm electrically heated flying suits would remain unplugged until the engines were turning over and providing the necessary power to heat the suits.

Ben Warmer checked his side of the B-17 from the outside. Everything was clear for his field of fire. He hunched down beneath the low slung belly of the Fort, reached with his massive hands for the handles on each side of the hatch and pulled himself up and inside. The B-17 groaned from the sudden additional weight imposed on it by Warmer's 275 pounds. It was unusually quiet that morning. The men knew that Gerbini was going to be a tough target. Usually there was some levity when Warmer pulled himself aboard amidst the same old stock jokes about his huge size and bulk. "Somebody weigh down the other wing before this damn plane tips over!" one of the gunners would usually comment. "Hell," another would continue. (Continued on Page 4)

DEATH OVER SICILY

(Continued from page 3)

"what this outfit needs is a six-engine plane just to carry Warner!"

It was an undisputed fact that when Ben Warner hailed himself aboard a B-17 and made his way to his right waist gunport position, the plane would always be noticeably to starboard. But today there was silence as each of the gunners methodically checked his position and his gun or his gun turret. At his right waist gun position, Sgt. Ben Warner switched on the small overhead light and proceeded to go through his check list, mentally checking off the presence of chokes that could spell the difference between life and death for him, the crew and the bomber. His oxygen mask was working properly, radio headphones crackled when he conned them and checked in with other members of the crew over the bomber's intercom and the electric leads of his flying suit were unbent and ready to be plugged in once the plane took off.

Warner then checked his gun. He slammed the bolt back and forth a few times and its well-oiled track and easy movement was satisfying as his gun moved easily on its main check list, carefully checking off the ammo boxes and the neatly folded belts of cartridges that snuggled inside the wooden boxes. By the time the ground crew and gunners had checked out their end of the already gassed and bombed-up Fort, the officers were piling out of weapons carriers. Thirty minutes later they were aboard and the B-17 was buttoned up for the mission. The engines began to cough and then turned over. The pilot and co-pilot each went through their massive checklist while the heavily loaded bomber slowly pulled away from the handstand and rumbled along the taxi line to the strip itself. It was an hour and a half before daylight when the ground flare was fired from the control tower. The B-17s revved their engines and slowly rumbled down the field, gaining speed with each passing foot of the runway. Slowly they lifted off the metal frames of the landing strip and into the desert and were airborne. Wheels were retracted and the planes headed for an assembly point over the Mediterranean. Dawn came quickly as Warner's B-17 clawed for altitude. It climbed to the assembly point.

Like his buddies in the crew, Ben's head was aching with the strain of the past. He was a giant of a man who had never worried about his great size until he was warned by an officer that it might keep him out of combat. At UCLA Ben's size gave him an edge on the gridiron where he played varsity football. After he graduated from college in 1937, Ben was at loose ends. The world was somewhat in a turmoil in the late '30s and Ben, disdaining his father's advice to embark on a law career, instead became a Secret Service agent for the U.S. Treasury Department. His father, a Supreme Court judge in Los Angeles, helps Ben get his Treasury Department assignment: bodyguard and right hand man to Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau.

Five years later Uncle Sam was at war. Ben, in a position to receive a commission and big enough to wangle an assignment with the Corps of Military Police, instead enlisted in April 1942. He had always been interested in flying, but there were no cockpits that could hold his 275 pound bulk. Assignment officers in the then U.S. Army Air Corps marveled at his physique and ordered him to bases requiring a physical education instructor. But the Air Corps had a tiger by the tail. Ben Warner wanted to fight. "You tell me," he was told by one captain sitting behind a desk in the base personnel office. "Too heavy," replied another officer in another similar office or, yet another base. Ben was downcast. Most of his friends were in combat units and all he had to show for his time in the service was a Good Conduct Medal and letters of commendation telling him what a great physical ed instructor he was.

One day Ben found himself on the weapons range. Fledgling gunners were receiving an introduction to the 50 caliber machine gun when one of the gunnery instructors called Ben over to help. He had 65 pound weapons, "How about a chance at firing it?" Ben asked. The gunnery sergeant was obliging and nodded to the physical ed instructor. Ben swung the gun on its mount and sighted at the target. He held the handles tightly and squeezed the trigger. The powerful rifle gun rumbled noisily and tracers sizzled through the warm summer air smack into the bull's eye. Veteran gunnery instructors were suddenly envious of Big Ben Warner. They had been working under the axiom that too often "the gun fires the man rather than the man fires the gun." The fifty caliber guns were powerful weapons, and when they were fired they were hard to hold down. However, in the massive fists of Ben Warner the fifty caliber machine gun was as docile as a .22 rifle. In fact, Warner's handling of the machine gun was almost his undoing. An officer approached to break up the crowd of enlisted men standing on the rifle range. When he saw Warner's mastery of the machine gun, he commented: "You're a natural as an instructor."

"But I want to fight!" Warner replied. Another job as an instructor, even as a gunnery instructor, would be too much to take. He wanted action and he was determined to get it. He went through gunnery school hoping against hope that he'd be shipped out to a bomber unit rather than to the island strip east of the Mar. In early 1943 when Ben won a reprieve from a Stateside gunnery instructor's assignment. The battle for North Africa was in full swing at the time and Rommel's legions were battering Uncle Sam's ground forces. In the air the Luftwaffe was raising all sorts of hell with Uncle Sam's bombers. More planes and crews were rushed to the war zone. Among the reinforcements was Ben Warner. These were bitter days and there were bad moments. The Tunisian campaign was underway and Field Marshal Rommel had hunkered his vaunted Afrika Korps through the Kasserine Pass. Everything with wings was thrown against him. The multi-engine heavy bombers flew missions usually reserved for low-altitude medium bombers and the Messerschmitts occasionally had a field day. Ben Warner was just one of thousands of men thrown into the fray.

By the time the North African campaign ended with the defeat of the Wehrmacht, Ben Warner was a veteran with 12 combat missions under his belt. The 12th Air Force,

of which the 99th Bomb Group was a part, then turned its attention across the Mediterranean to what Winston Churchill once called the "soft underbelly" of Fortress Europe. The striking power built up for the North African campaign was available for bigger and better things.

He even recalled his first combat mission. "I wonder if this will be my last?" he mused shuddering inwardly. But he remembered this first mission well--the island of Pantelleria, a 32-square mile chunk of land sitting off the Italian coast. The island was an important Luftwaffe fighter base and nearly 15,000 heavily armed enemy troops. In early May 1943, the 12th and 9th Air Forces began their relentless task of reducing the island to a massive inconsequential rubble. For 10 days and nights the B-17s and A-26s, U.S. Navy dive bombers and Royal Air Force bombers, pounded the island with high explosives. But during the first four days the island's air defense force was fully capable of protecting the vital stepping stone. Nazi fighters took to the air on the approach of the bombers and began to work over the lumbering Flying Forts. Five Me109s cut Ben's plane out of the formation and proceeded to work it over.

After two passes the two B-17's finks were idly spinning and oily black smoke gushed from one of the shot-up engines. "Their pass by was really tight and they control cables to the rudder and it began flapping in the windstream. Enemy machine guns from the Messerschmitts raked the wounded bomber fore and aft. Luckily nobody was killed. But the pilot wasn't in any mood to give the enemy a chance to get any of his men. They fought off the Nazi fighters and the crippled plane made it back to North Africa. But landing it was something else." Let's bail out," he snapped into the intercom mike. "Every man jump clear as soon as he's able." Like a good captain, the pilot stayed until last. The bail out sequence was completed and he was the last enlisted man out of the bomber followed by the pilot. The pilot counted each member of the crew whose chute he saw crack open. But he actually felt Warner leave the ship. The huge gunner reacted on the bomber like a load of high explosives leaving the bomb bay. The now burning bomber, lightened after Warner stepped out into space was finally abandoned by the pilot. He switched to automatic controls and then took the plunge to safety himself.

Ben chuckled to himself as his memory flashed back to his college days and another parachute incident. It was during his membership in the Calapillar Club. It was at a county fair and Ben was sitting in the audience on a warm June day. Overhead ancient biplane cavorted in the sky and daring wing walkers drew "ohs" and frightened "ahs" from the crowd below. "But the best is yet to come." The impersario hooked up to the loud speaker shouted into the microphone he held in his hand. "We want to make somebody happy. Somebody from the audience will be given an opportunity to make a parachute jump. And we'll even throw in 25 dollars to the lucky person."

"Now where are all the volunteers. Ladies and gentlemen, please do not stampede to be first."

A roar of laughter came from the crowd. Nobody was that foolish. But the hoot of laughter abruptly stopped when a huge broadshouldered youth got up and made his way to the small stage. "I'll try it," he told

the astounded impresario. After all, there had never been any takers before for even the free flight, once the parachute jump was mentioned.

"You sure you know what you're doing?" the impresario asked. Ben nodded. "Ever jump before?" he asked again. Ben shook his head.

"Still determined?"

"Sure," Ben nodded. "There has to be a first time for everything."

The impresario told Ben that he'd have to sign a paper. "Just in case something happens so that we won't be responsible."

"Where's the pen?" the youth asked.

A few minutes later he was harnessed to a parachute and sitting in the rear cockpit of the ancient Sturman. The pilot told him how to count. But Ben was way ahead. "Let's go," he interrupted. "I read all about it in a book."

Twenty minutes later Ben was swaying beneath the white silk canopy, his heart pumping in exhilaration. This was something he wanted to do again, but it was to take a war to get him to make that second jump.

The hoarse voice reading the citation brought him back to the present, to the reason why he was being honored.

"...while on a bombing mission over Sicily, the captain intoned, "his bomber was attacked by a large number of enemy aircraft."

It was the Naples mission, May 27, 1943, and damned cold at 25,000 feet. The cold suddenly crackled with electrifying news.

"Bandits 12 o'clock high!" The warning lashed out across the intercom. Another voice warned that bandits were sighted at three o'clock and low.

"Here they come," the aircraft commander shouted nervously. Like a stream of hornets attacking an intruder, the tiny specks in the distance grew bigger. They quickly materialized into vicious needle-nosed silhouettes--Me-109 fighters. The Luftwaffe was out for blood.

"Lighten up the formation," the voice of the 99th Bomb Group's C.O. Col. Fay R. Upthegrove, thundered across the command channel to the pilots of the 348th and 349th Bomb Squadrons. From the target below Nak was hurried into the formation of B-17s.

Black puffs of smoke scarred the pale blue Mediterranean sky over Sicily and chrapnel whistled through the air, slamming into the wings and fuselage of bombers unlucky enough to be within range. Occasionally the hot jagged flak metal would rip through the leather flight suits of American airmen aboard the bombers, killing, wounding and maiming the unfortunate men who happened to be in the way.

"Bandits coming in at nine o'clock high," the top turret gunner of the pathfinder or lead bomber shouted. The B-17 shook from the rapid fire of the twin fifties in the top turret and the single 50 caliber gun in the right side waist gunport.

Ben, passing under at three o'clock low, the topside gunner shouted. The huge man

bundled up in leather and fleece grabbed the handles of his machine gun and pushed the muzzle down. A plane flashed out from beneath the B-17 and rolled into the sights of the giant gunner's machine gun. He squeezed the trigger and the mighty machine gun shook in its mount. The enemy fighter seemed to stall in the sky as if hit by a ton of bricks. Then it faltered and nosed down streaming smoke and flame.

"Yahoooooo!" the gunner shouted. "Scratch one for me!"

Sgt. Ben Warner scanned the skies for more approaching enemy fighters. They were swarming all over the formation, but those which flashed across his sights were too far out of range. From his vantage point in the waist gun port Ben Warner could reflect on life and death as a B-17 gunner. Thirty of the multi-engine bombers had taken off from the 99th's base outside of Algiers, North Africa. Twenty four were destined to return from that raid on Naples. Warner was to see two of the bombers go down in flames, swearing when parachutes didn't blossom forth in the wake of the falling aircraft.

He had friends among the other crews. "Bandit coming on at six o'clock low," the young tail gunner called out. "Breaking left in your direction, Ben." Warner waited for the next few seconds to pass. The Messerschmitt clawed his way upward, right across Warner's machine gun muzzle. He pressed the trigger. Tracers streaked after the climbing plane, etching a trail of bullet-holes that crept to the plexiglass cockpit shield, shattering it into pieces and slamming into the pilot. The Messerschmitt, out of control, slid into a final dive to the ground.

Warner gleefully shouted again. "One kills in one day." "Pretty good for a new man," he commented to himself.

The B-17s moved into the bomb run. The bombardiers took control from the pilots. As each bomber unloaded its lethal cargo on the harbor complex below, it seemed to pour 30 tons of fire and death suddenly lightened bomb bags. The formation of B-17s turned south and headed out to sea again in the direction of North Africa and home. The enemy fighters chased the bombers for 100 miles and then broke off contact when low fuel tanks required a return to the base.

"Good shooting, Ben," the pilot commented. "Keep it up and you'll make whatever passes for an ace among gunners." Ben smiled as he recollected the prediction. Here, he was an ace and his crew was off on a mission when they, too, should be standing beside him. After all, it was the other guys in the crew who had done six additional enemy planes among them? Ben felt a flush of embarrassment because his gang wasn't standing beside him. "Wonder who wrote up the citation?" he thought to himself as the captain's voice droned on.

"Although most of the attack was directed against his part of the bomber, Sergeant Warner remained by his guns and with great accuracy brought down five of the enemy aircraft."

Ben thought that nobody could write about how it really was like up there on July 5, 1943. As they approached the target the routine check-out started for the gunners. It was always the same routine.

"Pilot to crew," the aircraft commander called out. "Check your suits, oxygen and guns." Warner made another quick check, his practiced eyes making sure that the electric heating leads of his suit were plugged in with enough wire loose to give him movement. His oxygen tank pressure read

normal and he proceeded to load his machine gun.

"Starboard gun clear," Warner reported back.

"Port gun clear." Worshy followed.

"Ball turret gun clear," the gunner below sounded off.

"Tail gun clear," drawled the Texan in the rear.

"Topside guns clear," the turret gunner above checked in.

"No guns clear," the forward gunner chimed in.

"The pilot nodded to the co-pilot. The B-17 was ready for action. There was a gathering of eagles at the assembly point and the 99th's 27 operational aircraft (months earlier) the group had started out with 45 aircraft in evenly divided between three bomb squadrons) moved into a new heading toward volcanic Mount Etna and the target at its base.

There was no fighter escort on this one. It was too long a hop for the single engine P-40s and P-38s. The 99th was on its own. At Luftwaffe headquarters in Gerbini, German officers were scurrying about, radar and sensitive microphones had spotted the B-17s. Cautelous orders were barked into field telephones and on the landing strips in the nearby bays grey-uniformed officers acknowledged the orders to scramble. In pairs across the runway, German fighters took off, crossed Me-109s and Me-110s revved up and then took off, turning in the direction from which the B-17s were approaching from the south. Luftwaffe Division II was out to smash the 99th.

The clouds lay far below the bombers and the pilot spotted the glob of brown that slowly enlarged into Sicily. The small talk continued as the crew tried to forget what lay ahead. But the pilot finally broke it up with a quick "Knock it off and let's get on the ball now!" It was time to return to the up part of the war that the crew had been trying to forget, if only for a little while before going into battle.

"Test fire guns!" the pilot ordered. Sgt. Warner tilted the nose of his machine gun at the pale blue water below and pressed the trigger. The gun bawled away with its strong grip as it spat fire and tracer downward. "Starboard gun okay," he sang out. The other gunners also opened up and the sound of machine gun fire thundered above the steady rumble of the deep throated engines. One by one the gunners informed the pilot and each other that they didn't know any better.

"Now keep alert!" the pilot warned. "We can expect bandits at any time." All eyes aboard the B-17 scanned the skies in every direction. The coast of Sicily approached. Someone in the flight of bombers had spotted the enemy fighters and relayed the word to his pilot who switched to the command channel, breaking radio silence to inform the flight that bandits had been sighted. Warner's pilot relayed their formation to his crew. "We've got 'em at two o'clock high from starboard," he shouted off.

"They're coming in now," the pilot warned. "Let's keep 'em off our tail."

There was no flak yet. That would be saved for the run over the target. The enemy interceptors would first have their crack at the formation and then pull away once the bombers appeared over the target. There was no sense in being shot down by one's own flak.

"I've got a bandit coming in at three

A WORD OF APPRECIATION--(To say the least!)

My heartfelt thanks to you, Pauline Jennings (dear wife of Harvey), for the fantastic job you did in typing up the six page list of 99th B. Gp. combat missions! As I type this it is the 25th of Oct., and as you all know there is a deadline to meet. I am up to, and have pasted 14 pages, so regretfully, no room in this issue for your Masterpiece. However, it will be the Piece de Resistance for the Jan. Newsletter, not to mention how much easier it will be for me in 'throwing same together!' Needless to say, although I do type 125 words a minute (or is that a year?), by no means could I have done what you accomplished, and near the same time frame! Again, I doff my toupe to you for all your valuable help! We were all glad to see, and meet you in Muskegon, and hope you both had a good time. (I'm sure Harvey did; and by the way, your lightning speed behind the bar was admired by one, and all, Harvey.) Thanks to you, also. Take care, and we all sincerely hope to see you both in Albuquerque, next May. (fhe)

ACHTUNG!--(Or a reasonable facsimile.)---

Just heard from good old Norman (Bud) Kaufman (347th pilot), who sent me someone's three aerial mission pitchers, which were inadvertently placed in Bud's briefcase. Bud had left his briefcase in the Hospitality Room in Muskegon and it was given to him after dinner. Said photos are the official Photolab type and also, are a little worse for wear. They are creased from being folded, I might add. Anyhow, one is Brno A/C Fact., Czech., another is Bressanone RR/Brdg., Italy, and the last one is Avigliano Ammo Fact., Italy (all 346th planes). No identification of ownership on the reverse sides. To whomever they belong, just send up a flare and I'll send them back to you at no additional charge! You certainly are welcome. (fhe) P.S. Bud also said it was great seeing everyone again, and that he had a great time, etc. It was nice seeing you again, Bud, and hope to see you again, soon!

COURTESY--FRYIN McAULEY, I.C.O. B-17 COMBAT CREWMEN



I'M A LIFE MEMBER! (fhe)

"o'clock!" Warner shouted and began tracking the fast-moving fighter. The top turret and belly turret gunners swung their guns starboard in the direction from which the Me-109 was coming in. If it broke above or below the B-17 in a dive or climb they'd be ready to pick it up and possibly finish it off. They didn't get a chance this time.

Ben squeezed the trigger beneath his gloved fingers and the machine gun chattered. The Messerschmitt blew apart in the air. Tracers had blazed into the wing root gas tank. "Yahoooooo!" Warner shouted victoriously. "I've got me number three."
"Confirmed," the top turret gunner shouted.

The area was thick with criss-crossing tracers and contrail steam from the bombers' engines. The top turret guns opened up. "One coming your way, Ben!" the gunner above shouted. Big Ben Warner dropped to his knees and deflected his gun upward waiting for the plane to flash over head. But it had gone into a steep climb instead and when he heard the guns abruptly continue yammering away he knew that the enemy fighter wasn't about to pass in his direction. "I've got it," the top turret gunner shouted. "Confirmed," the co-pilot shouted back as he looked up through the plexiglass roof and watched the Me-109 stall and whip downward in a death dive to the ground.

A gaggle of 10 Me-110s suddenly appeared high and off to the right. "A bunch of 'em at two o'clock high!" Ben shouted.

"I see 'em," the top turret gunner answered. He swung his turret guns in the direction of the attacking flight that was just beginning to peck off.

One flashed in front of Warner's gun, too fast for him to even snap off a quick burst. Another bore in behind it, machine guns blinking fire. Ben sighted down his barrel and tracked it for a moment before opening up. His tracers slammed into the engine housing and the invisible propeller suddenly appeared in a slow spin. He had knocked out the engine. The enemy fighter slowed to a glide and Warner was all set to take it once over when the cockpit hatch was pulled back and the pilot called out, "I've got me number four!" Ben hollered with somewhat less enthusiasm. There was no sense in killing the pilot. Anyway, the plane was scratched.

"Ben, one coming your way," Worthy shouted from behind. Two fighters flashed overhead, one trailing smoke from Worthy's gun. Warner squeezed his trigger and stitched a pattern through the tail section that chopped the elevator and rudder into pieces. The plane quickly nosed down. "Number five," Warner shouted.

"Confirmed," the belly gunner answered. The inside of the B-17 was littered with empty shells that rolled across the floor. Warner took a deep breath. "There must be hundreds of planes out there," he said to himself. Another one charged in his direction and he felt the pounding of bullets. Instinctively he pulled back and from the corner of his eye he saw a bright contrail appearing through the jagged holes that had magically appeared beside him.

"Too close," he said to himself. It was viciously cold at 28,000 feet, but Big Ben Warner began to sweat. "Cold outside and we're in a helluva hot spot," he remarked softly.

Two planes came at him and he swung the machine gun to meet the threat. From two o'clock. The lead plane seemed to be

plunging right at him, spitting fire from the leading edge of its thin wings. The tracers reached out for him and he tensed awaiting the pounding that would hit the B-17s thin aluminum skin and braces. But the tracers fell short. The plane loomed in his sight. He squeezed the trigger and the fighter broke left and down trailing oily black smoke and fire. "I've got another," Big Ben Warner called out. Inwardly he was scared. "Too hell with counting," he said to himself.

Another fighter came at his gun port and he led it for a brief second before pressing the trigger. The pilot was gun shy. Tracers whipped from Warner's gun and the Nazi pilot broke and slid off and out of sight.

Ben's B-17 was under attack from all sides now. The voices on the intercom were blurred and confusing.

"Watch that baby at nine high!" the pilot shouted.

"Two bandits at two o'clock," the co-pilot shouted. "Watch 'em Ben."

"Got 'em," Warner replied. "Four coming in at six o'clock low," the belly gunner yelled.

"Two coming in at six o'clock straight," the pilot shouted after spotting the attacking pair in his rear view window. "Comon, what the hell's the matter with that last guy?" The accordion sleeve that joined Warner's gun to the plexiglass covering his gun port suddenly whipped away and a sub zero wind from the slip stream slashed through the gap and hit Ben's face. His goggles clouded up and he ripped them off. Behind him he heard Worthy call for help. "Something wrong with my oxygen," Warner's partner gasped. "Comon Ben," he coughed.

Warner quickly played out his own oxygen line and disconnected his electric heating lead and intercom. He tripped and fell on the floor like marbles, but made it across to Worthy. It took him just a moment to see that enemy bullets had slammed into Worthy's oxygen bottle. There was a spare nearby. He ripped it off the wall and plugged in Worthy's hose. It took just a moment for the oxygen to take effect. "What's the matter with the starboard gun?" the pilot frantically called out while Ben was taking care of his buddy. Worthy explained what happened and that Ben was hooking up again back at his starboard gun position.

The Luftwaffe had sent 100 fighters against the 99th. In a matter of minutes 22 had been knocked down or damaged. But there was still the bomb run and 10 minutes to go before the target appeared beneath the flight of bombers. Meanwhile, two of the B-17s had fallen in flames. An Me-110 came, charging in from up forward and machine gun bullets slashed into the fuselage behind the cockpit, killing the flight engineer and starting a small fire forward. The co-pilot quickly climbed out of his seat and extinguished the flames with a small CO2 tank he ripped off the wall.

Enemy fighters were circling around the light formation of B-17s like Indians in a western movie charging around a wagon train they had surrounded. The object was to break up the formation of bombers, each of whose guns protected the next B-17 in the flight. A gaggle of 10s came out of the sun and as soon as they came within sighting distance Worthy opened up. "I've got one!" he shouted, "and they're coming your way, Ben."

One by one the enemy flight passed overhead and within range of Warner's gun. He squeezed the trigger and his tracer snapped from the tail along the fuselage hammering into the cockpit of the swastika-marked fighter. It peeted over, a dead or severely wounded pilot at the controls, and dived straight down out of control. "Another one," Warner shouted again.

"Confirmed," the top turret gunner snapped before warning that more bandits were coming in from six o'clock high. Ben Warner had shot down five bandits and the bombers had not quite reached the target. But the flak zone was just ahead and the enemy fighters broke off while the bombers made the run. Flak rocked the B-17s. One burst hit the engine of the plane Warner was in and the concussion lifted it 50 feet. Shrapnel ripped through the fuselage from below but missed the crew.

"Bomb bay doors open," the navigator intoned. The bombardier was now controlling the bombs that more bandits were coming in from six o'clock high.

"Bombs away," the bombardier snapped as the plane, lightened by its deadly cargo, lifted upward. "Now let's get the hell outa here."

The citation began to sound like something out of a wartime movie, the hero grabbing a machine gun and firing it loaded to his arms. Ben's granite-like features turned crimson as the captain read on: "Wrapping a bolt of bullets around his neck and shoulders in order to feed his guns when their ammunition was exhausted, he continued his deadly fire and accounted for the enemy aircraft."

The B-17 banked sharply and headed south in the direction of home. The formation of bombers tightened up again. The fight wasn't over. Every fighter were certain to be waiting for the 99th. They were.

"Here they come," the pilot of Warner's Fort called out. "Watch it Ben," the top turret gunner warned. "Three o'clock high." The Messerschmitt bored in like lightning. The steep angle of his dive caused the Nazi pilot to under-shoot his target. The tracers from his guns dropped off beneath the belly of the Fort. The enemy pilot jerked his nose up and the tracers lifted toward the B-17 and Warner's amidships position. Ben returned fire from what seemed like point-blank range.

But before he had finished firing at the enemy plane his machine gun clicked empty for the third time that morning. He was out of ammo and the nearest box filled with belts of ammo was stacked 10 feet away. The bombers were now at 10,000 feet and Ben had no need of his oxygen mask or his heating unit. He ripped off his mask and yanked the oxygen hose coupling and the heating lead wire from their respective jugs on the fuselage wall scrambling across the loose empty shells on the floor he made it to the ammo boxes and scurried, tripping and almost losing his balance, back to his position. There was no time to clamp the ammo box in place. Instead, he jerked the ammo belt out of the box and reloaded his gun with it. Then he draped the belt across his shoulders just in time to receive a warning that more planes were boring in toward his right waist gun.

"Ben, another one coming your way," Worthy yelled. "I've got me another!" Three had come in from nine o'clock and Worthy stopped one with a big dose of gun fire that ripped off a wing. The other two shed off and passed overhead so that the

top turret gunner was able to finish off the second one. The third passed over the bomber and into Warner's sights. He opened up and his bullets struck the Messerschmitt before it passed out of range. The enemy fighter suddenly erupted into a fireball and continued its downward plunge like a fiery comet. It was number six for that day for Ben Warner.

"Coming at you, Ben," the belly gunner shouted from below. The giant figure with the ammo belt draped across his right shoulder swung the 50 caliber gun like it was a toy waiting for the enemy fighter to make an appearance in his line of fire. There it was. The Messerschmitt veered off and sailed in clear silhouette across his line of vision. He swung the machine gun along the line of flight of the Nazi plane, like a duck hunter leading his quarry. He had a bull's eye on the cockpit. A bit of

pressure on the trigger and the tracers led into the cockpit of the enemy plane. It wobbled over and fell with a dead pilot at the controls.

By this time the enemy force had lost half of its fighters. Five of the B-17s were left behind. Three of them were losing altitude.

"His aggressiveness, candor and courage under fire reflect the highest traditions of the Army Air Force," the reader of the citation concluded.

The last enemy plane shot down was number 7 on the day for Warner and victory number 13 for his crew. Forty two of the 100 enemy fighters which took to the skies to try to stop the 99th were shot down. Ben's record, which led to his DSC and later a commission, still stands unbroken as the day that General Spaatz pinned the medal on him.

"Tooty" Spaatz and "Jimmy" Doolittle both raised Sgt. Ben Warner to a place among America's eagles. Ben's name is officially on the rolls alongside the names of aces like Captain Eddie Rickenbacker, Captain Foss, Captain Bob Johnson and Major Gregory "Pappy" Boyington.

"Tell me, Sergeant, how did you do it?" General Spaatz asked the man who towered over him. Ben Warner looked down at the two generals standing in front of him. "I didn't do anything so great," he explained modestly. "They just came flying into my sight and I kept pulling on the trigger ever; time I spotted one. Any fair duck hunter could have done the same."

There were a lot of "fair" duck hunters flying in the 99th's mighty Forts that day. END

(The above gripping story about Ben Warner was sent to us, courtesy of Eddie Jackson--17 July '81, and is from a Magazine titled "Man's Illustrated" which I can only make out "July"--but not the year. The copy is Xeroxes so I had the text 'Shot' by Camera for better readability, I hope! This story was passed on to me by George C., and this was my 1st chance to 'put it to bed'--as we old printer types are wont to say--fhe.)

596 Greenwood Ave.
San Marino, CA 91108
Feb. 1, 1981 (348th, & Gp.)

Dear George:
Enclosed are my 1981 dues to the 99th Bombardment Group Historical Society.

In the Spring of 1978, my wife and I vacationed for three weeks in Italy. In Rome, we stayed in the old Majestic Hotel, just off the Via Veneto, which if my memory is good was a rest camp hotel in 1944. From Rome, we drove down past Monte Cassino to Naples. Took the hydrofoil to Capri for a delightful day on the island. Then, over the mountains to Foggia.

Spent an afternoon browsing around the area where the 99th was based. The building that served as the group officer's club is still there, back to its original use as a farm dwelling. Most of the buildings that were occupied by group headquarters have been replaced by garages and farm machinery sheds. The down near the line, where I was quartered as Group Engineering Officer is still there and looks the same. I don't think it's been painted since the war. There was no sign of the runway at all. That area was a beautiful green wheatfield. I wondered what they did with the tons and tons of caecchi that were trucked in and put under the pierced steel planks to keep them out of the mud. The small railway crossing guard's house that served as the officer's club for the 348th still stands alone amid the green fields. (Building)

Foggia is served by an autostrade (Freeway) that runs up the East Coast. From Foggia, we drove North through Pescara to San Marino, Florence, Venice, Lago de Gardo, Portofino, and Milano. Really had a wonderful trip.

Here are some more names for your roster:
Philip J. Roy, Gp. Radar Officer F. J. Reynolds, Pilot, 348th
156 Gilpin Drive, N.E.
Rochester, N.Y. 14624 Grand Rapids, Mich. 49505

And for the record: Wm. Martin, Pilot
Deceased, 2 July 1980

This is too good to keep! (Even the old, it brings out the old nostalgia! Thank, 10/82, Langdon!)

Sincerely,
Langdon
348th and Gp. Eng. Officer
Col. USAF (Ret.)

Dear Langdon,
Your entertaining, and descriptive letter pertaining to our old base at Tortorella, among other incidents, sure brought back a lot of memories, especially to those of us who came across from the good old Camp Kilmer days! It must have been an experience, for sure, seeing those old stamping grounds, once again. All in all, to me, anyhow, it sure beat our other two bases in Africa--Navarin, and Oudna.

It has been nice, talking to you on the phone, and as I said, it will be a real pleasure meeting you some day. Soon, I hope! I'm sure I knew you in the 99th, Langdon, but the old memory isn't what it used to be. You will notice that both names you kindly supplied are also members, like us. Thanks a lot! Sorry to hear we lost Wm. Martin, however. I assume he was with the 348th, also.

This epistle will now close--at least for this time. All best wishes to you, and the family. Hope to see you in New Mexico in ~~April~~ May '83!
Best regards from all of us--
Frank English

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS

May I take this opportunity to extend Holiday Greetings to the officers and enlisted men of the Ninety-Ninth Bombardment Group, and to their families, wherever they may be. I wish, also, to express my appreciation for the loyalty and cooperation shown, by all ranks, during the past three months which have given birth and maturity to this Group.

Many of you have made great personal sacrifices in order to serve your country during this critical period of its history, and, I'm confident, will continue to do so until final victory is ours. Then, and only then, will we be able to resume living our individual lives. May we continue to display the courage and resourcefulness which has characterized the people of this Nation since its conception.

Above all, let us be humble and tolerant on this Birthday of the Christ Child, 1942.

Fay R. Upthegrove,
Colonel, Air Corps

(Fellow 99ers, I have been holding on to this gem for a special occasion, to my way of thinking--what better time? Brings back a lot of memories, eh?)

Well put, Gen. Upthegrove--Many thanks! (fhe)

August 31 1982

31 Parkland Road
Mona Vale 2103
Sydney, Australia

PRESS RELEASE

By: Vernon E. Fairbanks
Major, Air Corps

FROM: 99th Bomb Gp.

30 October, 1943

Dear George:

Many thanks for your letter of July 10. Thanks too to Maurice Murphree. His mention of War Eagle intrigued me...99th Group lays claim to a B-17 of that name, with 130 missions...is it the same airplane, with service in two groups as so often happened?

If it's now better to redirect my queries to Frank English or others, feel free to do so. I'm very happy with what I have achieved regarding the 99th to this point, but it always seems that one question leads to another. Anyway, here are a couple questions...

I recently received a USAF photo of a B-17F with heavy rocket damage to the tail area, over Villaorba on March 18 1944. According to reports, the rockets were extremely accurate that day, knocking down three 2nd Group aircraft, and one from the 99th. I believe that my photo shows the 99th airplane, 42-5439. Although the tail is mangled, the gunner's chute was reported to have opened. The airplane left formation and was last seen slowly losing altitude, apparently going down an unspecified time later. My questions are (1) what was the tail gunner's name? (2) has anything ever been heard of any of the rest of the crew (3) what was the name of this airplane? ←

I'll definitely be using this photo in my book, so any background data anybody cares to volunteer will also be welcome.

I enjoyed seeing that shot of the tail of 229509 Bad Penny on the reunion info sheet - I'd like to borrow the original of this to have a copy made if that is possible.

I know you are very busy, so I won't linger - thanks again, and every good wish from here.

Sincerely,

Steve Birdsall

Steve - Feel free to write about anything! If we can't answer - I'm sure our members can! Right, gang? Frank & ...

NOTE!

PS - Jake Grimm from the 463rd Group association tells me that his group inherited old Never Satisfied, 42-5389, from the 99th, and put another 28 missions on her before she was scrapped for parts.

Steve Birdsall notes that the 'B.T.O.' (229502) went down on Nov. 24, 1943, on a raid on France. Our crew (Henderson's crew), flew her from the factory to Navarin (Algeria), and Oudna (Tunisia), and on 45 missions, and a good ship she was. Can anybody give us the details on her loss?
George F. Coen, Navigator, and PFC (twice!)

TO THOSE WHOM IT MAY CONCERN** APPLICATION 'BLURB'
In regard to the ~~dues~~, George will willingly accept 1982 dues unwittingly not paid by some members! Likewise, I think there are both 1981, and 1982 Newsletters still available at \$5 per year, from George. (fhe)

I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but as I related to those of you who were at Muskegon, and now pass on to the general membership, we lost our Red Cross lady, Margaret Richie Ridsdale, known familiarly to us as 'Bea.' Sadly, from the result of a stroke on August 22nd of this year. Those of us who go back aways will recall she served us well all through Navarin, Oudna, and Tortorella. Bea was always so genial, and had a smile for all of us, every day. This was brought to my attention, courtesy of Gen. Upthegrove. He also mentioned that Bea, and Elsa 'Flip' Frame, who was with the 97th, were very good friends. She was a lovely person and I'm just sorry we all couldn't get together before; unfortunately, it didn't work out that way. Rest in peace, Bea.

AN ADVANCED NORTH AFRICAN AIR BASE, October 30 - Out of the murky darkness of a rainy autumnal afternoon, a group of Flying Fortresses peeled off one by one today to land after their 100th mission in less than seven months - less by one day.

As the graceful Forts slithered over the muddy taxi strips to their hardstands - not so hard after the shower - they had piled up more than 650 combat hours and had flown 100,432 miles, mostly over enemy territory. That is almost four times around the world.

As Major Harry R. Burrell (O-387765) today's leader taxied to a stop, he found the Group Commander, Colonel Fay R. Upthegrove (O-16855) Rew, Ps., waiting for him. The Colonel, who just completed 50 missions and will soon go home for a rest before returning to active duty, congratulated Major Burrell. There was little out of the ordinary about the return. A celebration of the 100th mission will take place in a few days.

Among other things the group discovered upon taking a survey of the first one hundred missions:

1. They had dropped 12,956,320 pounds of bombs (6478.16 tons) over targets in Sicily, Sardinia, Pantelleria, Italy, Southern France, Greece and Germany.
2. Out of 1028 enemy aircraft encountered they shot down 259, probably destroyed 64 and damaged at least 60.
3. In addition to enemy aircraft destroyed in the air, their aerial photographs show they destroyed 466 enemy planes on the ground by bombing. The total number of airplanes destroyed in the air and on the ground reached 887 or better than eight enemy ships per mission.
4. In shooting down enemy planes, 1,531,645 rounds of ammunition were expended.

The group did not come out of their battles unscathed, although casualty rates were remarkably low. The report of Major Frederick D. Koehne, group flight surgeon, Oakland, Iowa, revealed that there were only 187 battle casualties or one for every 140 men sorties. In other words a man's chance of being a casualty were one in every 140 times he went into combat, which is .73 percent. The group flew 2539 ship sorties or 25,390 man sorties.

Other figures in Major Koehne's report showed:

- 99 missing in action or .39 percent, which is one for every 254 man-sorties.
- 69 wounded in action - .27 percent or one for every 363 man sorties.
- 19 killed in action - .7 percent or 1 for every 1340 man sorties.
- 30 casualties from all other causes - .11 percent.

The reasons for this remarkably low casualty rate are exceptional leadership, intensive training in the states and in the theater of operations, excellent maintenance of aircraft and armament on the ground, and careful planning before undertaking a mission.

Battle flights flown by this group took them over the Alps, the jagged peaks of Corsica, the leaning tower of Pisa, the perpetually erupting Mount Vesuvius in Italy, Mount Etna in Sicily, Vatican City in Rome, ancient Athens, the Riviera, the vineyards of Italy, the olive groves of Sardinia, the Roman aqueduct in North Africa and many other historic places. (Cont'd on p. 10)

Famous last words!---

There may be some truth to the reincarnation theory, judging by the way some people come back to life at quitting time!

Lean, hard, lithe airmen "sweated out" their missions; watched flak popping up around them; saw enemy fighters swarm in on them - sometimes as many as 125 in a single battle. They saw airplanes explode in midair and comrades parachuting to earth. So many officers and men eaved their lives by "cracking silk" that a ~~branch~~ branch of the famous Caterpillar club was organized within the group. It is known as the "Silk Crackers' Club." There are 59 members of the group who are known to have parachuted to earth. Some jumped from blazing airplanes over enemy territory and lived to escape and tell their stories of courage

Comrades, Good old George sent me this List of what he refers to as a: A Tentative Roster of the planes of the 99th Bomb Group. Have fun by filling in the missing blanks per your information, or memory, as the case may be. Personally, I never kept a record, nor do I remember much, anymore. I'm sure your answers would be most interesting to a lot of us. I would put an update in a Newsletter when enough info was gathered. Here goes:

Number	Name	Information
229388	Never Satisfied	Samuelson, Horowitz
	Achtung	Blackman
229393	Lucky Lady	Horowitz
229396	?	Carrabiris (plane & crew lost 2 Sept. '43, Bologna)
?	Bad Penny	Scheu (91 missions)
?	Balsanal	?
229467	?	Bombardier KIA 7 Sept. '43 (Bologna)
229482	Robert E. Lee	Goad (picture of plane on fire)
?	Bugs	Blum
229490	Axis Ass Ache	Holt, Kaufman, Haddock, Gault
229492	?	?
?	Cotton-eyed Joe	Jesse Hobbs
229494	?	Whitmore (plane lost 7 Sept. '43. Crew bailed out over field)
?	Dirty Gertie	Jesse Hobbs
229502	B.T.O. (See note in this issue?)	Henderson, Imrie, Coen, Bulkeley, Bradfute, Shelnutt, Buxton, Swanson, Litwalk
229527	Jig-Jig	?
?	Earthquake McGoon	?
229606	Rambling Raider	Norris, Dahl, Miciak (picture of plane on fire)
229790	Queenie	Elliot, Horowitz
229842	?	? Sept '43, 2 men wounded
230474	Bum's Rush (Bumb's?)	Kramer, Lee, Alderson, Menschl, Catver, Dickerson, Jones, Ritter, Cunningham, Farley
?	El Alamo	?
?	El Diablo (From Vinnie's orig. B-17)	Upthegrove (picture from English)
?	Fearless Fosdick	?
?	Flak Dodger	Yarina
232023	Flak Happy	Heller, Scheu (94 missions)
?	Glittering Gal	?
232044	?	?
?	Gravy Train	Scheu
?	Heaven Can Wait	?
?	Holey Joe	?
?	Hunter's Answer	?
?	Lady Luck	?
?	Lethal Lady (I, II, III)	Davis
?	Miss Fury	?
?	Nobody's Baby	?
?	Rabid Rabbit	?
?	Ragged but Right	?
?	Shanker Ali	Thistlewood, Mazu
?	Sortie Line	?
?	Swamp Girl	?
?	Sweater Girl	?
?	Tout Suite	?
?	VV	(picture to Steve Birdsall?)
?	Vicki	Hunter

If you don't like women drivers, stay off the sidewalk!

HELP!

Comrades of the 99th, we are in receipt of a letter from a gentleman by the name of Sam Forbes, referred to us by Ted Heller, of Anchorage, Alaska. Ted, by the way, is a retired USAF Col. and was in the 416th. Sam is trying to contact someone who knew Lt. J. Mitchel Allemand, who was his best chum through high school, in Houston. In Jan. 1946, Sam returned from the ETO and was discharged from the USAAF just before Mitchel's body was returned from overseas and reinterred in Houston. His mother and father were never able to discuss their son in any way. There is no family left now and Sam would like very much to know more about Mitchel while he was in the service.

The only clue he has is on Mitchel's grave marker, to wit: '346 AAF', and the dates of his birth, and death, 'June 4, 1922,' and 'Jan. 12, 1954.'

Sam says that Col. Heller suggested that this may refer to the 346th Sq. which was attached to the 99th Bomb Gp. If his assumption is correct, he would be very grateful for any information that could be given him. Continuing, he also says there are many retired veterans in this area, mostly from the Air Force. He often has occasion to travel through the southern part of Texas, from San Antonio, on down. If we would like, he volunteers to try and locate people, or visit same in many veterans hospitals in this area, also. Sam says he would be pleased to do so. He concludes with thanks for our consideration.

Sam's address is---SAM FORBES, P.O. BOX 761, GONZALES, TEXAS 78629

I took your letter to our Reunion in Muskegon, Michigan this past Oct. and read it to everyone there, Sam. Sorry, but no recollections! I trust this wider appeal will do the job, and thanks for your kind offer, on behalf of all us 99ers!

Those of us who attended the Albuquerque Reunion early this year were astounded by the expertise of Art Knipp (347th) and his Video camera set up, etc. Well, he out did himself with said equipment at Muskegon! Art let us give personal interviews, took pictures of our area in general, and our people therein, not to mention the Dune Buggy ride, and our Banquet, including the Pipe Band. He then showed us, on TV, several times, in his own room, and in the Banquet room, all of the film and sound he had taken, not to mention the ones at Albuquerque. Absolutely fantastic, and much enjoyed by all of us! We are trying to talk Art into making Video tapes for us to buy. More later if it comes to pass. It also needs to be said how generous Art is--he wouldn't take anything for all the film, etc. he used. Not only that, but he graciously lent us his room, which saved us an extra \$42 for one night on another Hospitality room! I have all this from Earl, who also informed me that we then came out with a total overage of \$85, which he has sent on to George to be used as part of the Albuquerque get-together next year. Thank you both, gentlemen!

5325 Jessamine Drive
Orlando, FL 32809
(305)851-7623

Dear George,

Thanks for the information on the 99th Bomb Historical Society. Afraid I can't make the Albuquerque reunion, maybe the next one. I have been with the 99th three times. I took a B-17 to Foggia at the end of '43 and flew 53 missions with the 348th Sq. before leaving in July '44. Then I got in SAC and ended up, Jan. '54, in the 348th Sq., 99th Strat Recon Wing at Fairfield AFB, Wash., flying RB-36's. After going thru B-52 ccheck out at Castle, rejoined the 99th at Westover AFB, Mass. and stayed until Jan. '59. So I had 5 1/2 years and 2,164 hours flying with the 99th. Gen. Upthegrove had left the 99th by the time I got there of course, but his great reputation lingered on. The old timers spoke highly of him. The highlights of the time I was in Italy included the bombing of Monte Cassino, support of Anzio beachhead, and the first shuttle to Russia, including a mission out of Russia on D-day. Please send a list of those you have contacted, and keep up the good work. I am enclosing what information I have on the history of the 99th.

Sincerely,
Joe
Joseph S. Upchurch
Lt. Col., USAF (Ret.)

(Cont'd on next p.)

15th AIR FORCE NOTES

As I've said before, support of our own 99th comes 1st! However, in the interest of total unity, and to those of you who don't know, there is now The 15th AF Association--dues, \$10 a year, or Life Membership, \$150. IT NEEDS TO BE POINTED OUT THAT THE 15th WILL BE HOLDING IT'S 40th ANNIVERSARY IN NOVEMBER OF NEXT YEAR (1983). Said event will be an Open House-type affair at MARCH AFB, RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA. To join, the address is as follows: Fifteenth Air Force Association, Attn: Membership Committee, P.O. Box 15, March AFB, Calif. 92518 (Some of us are Founder Members.)

Dear Joe,

I took the liberty of retyping your letter as it was a trifle light for our 'high class' type of printing, not to mention forging 'Joe'--please don't sue! You had no date on your letter, so I will tell our 99th 'viewers' that your letter had 2 Apr 1981 stamped on the envelope. It is not unusual to have a varied career in the service, as we all know, but I think you are without parallel in regard to having so much time in one outfit, namely our own 99th! Joe, I think I can safely say your letter is one of the more interesting ones I have ever come across; Gen. Upthegrove, I hope you see this as what Joe said about you sure is the truth, Amen! In putting this to 'bed'--many thanks for writing, and for the page on the 99th Group/Wing History. We are all sorry that the 99th was finally deactivated. From all of us, our best wishes go to you, Joe. See you soon, we hope!

Regards,
frank english

HISTORY OF THE 99TH BOMB GROUP/WING

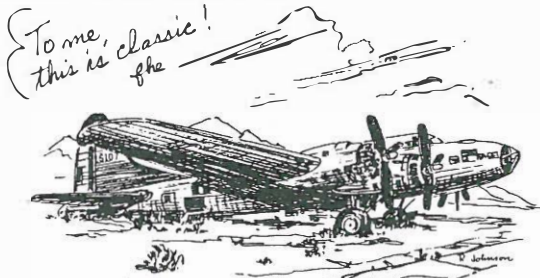
From the files of Wing Historian
Westover AFB, 1959

- 103rd Obs Sq, 1927. Federalized 1941
- 11th Bomb Wing, Date unknown
- 99th Bomb Group, Fifth Wing during WWII, Service in North Africa & Italy
 - To North African Air Forces Strat Command May 43
 - Landed at Oran, Algeria, 12 May 43
 - To 12th Air Force, XII Bomber Command May 43, 1 Nov 43
 - To 15th Air Force, 5th Wing, 1 Nov 43 to 8 Nov 45
 - 1st Combat mission, 31 Mar 43
- Participated in first shuttle mission to Russia. Hit Debreczon, Hungary on way to base at Paltava, Russia. Hit Galati Airdrome, Rumania 6 June 44 (D-Day). Hit Foscani Airdrome, Rumania, on return flight to Foggia.
- 11th Bomb Gp (L) Dec 1948
- 11th Composite Wing - 1 Nov 50
- 11th Bomb Wing (B-29s) served in Korea. Assigned to Fairchild AFB, Washington. Converted to 99th Strat Recon Wing (H) 1 Jan 53 at Fairchild - RB-36's. 15th AF.
- Delivered 1st and last of GRB-36's (Flicon model for carrying F-84)
- 91st SR Fighter Sq. 71st SR Fighter Wing, 1st Flicon Team.
- Transferred to Westover AFB, Mass, 8th AF, 8 Dec 56, equipped with B-52's as 99th Strat Bomb Wing (H).
- 347th Sq. transferred to McCoy AFB, Orlando, Fla. 1963 as part of new Wing. 347th flew missions from Guam in support of Vietnam war.

Some 99th Commanders:

Col. Fay R. Upthegrove	11 Sept 42 - 24 Nov 43
L/Col. Wayne E. Thurman	24 Nov 43 - 19 Dec 43
Col. Charles W. Lawrence	19 Dec 43 - 21 Jan 44
Col. Wayne E. Thurman	21 Jan 44 - 15 Feb 44
L/Col. Ford J. Lauer	15 Feb 44 - July 44
Col. Trenholm J. Meyer	July 44 - Aug 44
Col. Ford J. Lauer	Sept 44 - Jan 45
Col. Edward D. Edwards	1955
Col. Bryson R. Bailey	1956
Col. Selmon W. Wells	1957-58
Col. Olbert F. Lassiter	1958-59

By-Gone Birds - Sketched by Randall A. Johnson,
Spokane, WA
(Courtesy Of Bob Imrie-(416th))



Once an Eagle. B-17F 1943
Once an Eagle. B-17F 1943

OF MORE THAN PASSING INTEREST!

Fellow 99ers, and friends, note that in the accompanying article, one of our own, Ernest L. Wrentmore, formerly of Hdqtrs S-2, is a potential Medal of Honor winner, albeit, still fighting for this deserved honor! Just think, when it comes to pass, Ernest will be the only 99er to have received this decoration and which will also be tops among the many handed out during our time with the Group, from beginning to end. Here is the article, retyped from Vol. 52, No. 10, of the California Legionnaire, American Legion, Dept. of Calif., to wit:

Legionnaires in California have a splendid opportunity to correct an injustice which spans more than sixty-three years. Ernest L. Wrentmore, now a member of Post No. 130, Grass Valley, California, has an official transcript of service in which this statement is found: "...wounded September 13, 1918, gassed October 17, 1918. Received Battlefield Citation October 14, 1918 to return to United States for a tour of two years study at West Point Military Academy, appointment was issued...October 16, 1918 recommended for Distinguished Service Cross...also also October 17, 1918 the MEDAL OF HONOR." Another official paper finds that when Comrade Wrentmore was discharged February 18, 1919, he had seen his 14th birthday on the previous November 9th.

~~GMH Denied~~
Although Comrade Wrentmore has the official documents, he never received the Medal of Honor because his outfit's headquarters was blasted and his Commanding Officer's recommendation didn't make it to higher authority. During all these years, the nation's highest Military award has been denied to Ernest Wrentmore because Title 10 Section 3744 of the United States Code requires (1)the award is made within three years after the act justifying the award; and (2)a statement setting forth the distinguished service and recommending official recognition of it was made within two years after the distinguished service; plus (3)it appears from the records of the Department of the Army that the person is entitled to the award.

H.R. 4692 Introduced
Congressman Gene Chapple of California has introduced H.R. 4692 which contains these words: "...notwithstanding any provisions of Section 3744 of title 10, United States Code, the President of the United States is authorized to award in the name of Congress, the Medal of Honor to Ernest L. Wrentmore...in recognition of his great courage on October 14, 1918, when he was dispatched by his company commander to carry messages across a bullet-swept field to another unit of our troops, thus permitting his company to advance." The bill, H.R. 4692, has been referred to the House Judiciary Committee. The Chairman is the Hon. Peter W. Rodino, Jr., 2462 Rayburn Office Bldg., Washington, D.C. 20515. Any letters you can inspire to him urging expeditious action will be most helpful. In addition, I am listing California Congressmen who are members of the Judiciary Committee. These men can be very influential in pushing the Chairman to schedule the bill soon. Letters should cite the facts given above and point out that Comrade Wrentmore is in precarious health and it is hoped this long overdue award will not be made posthumously.

(This article was titled--"NECman Leo Durke Leads Campaign To Correct An Injustice" and I assume was written by the Legionnaire Editor(s)--(fhe).)

Coincidentally, as I was typing this, the mail arrived (10/25/82), and guess what? I have here a letter from good 'young' Col. 'Wren' Wrentmore! He says he had a great time in Muskegon; mentioned the fact that Gen. Upthegrove had been his instructor in Army Flying School in 1930, and as we know, had become close friends. I must have made a 'fox pass' when I said ~~that~~ as Ernest signs off with 'The Old 416th'. Could have been both though! *ER* 'Hdqt's'

We all hope your award goes through--you sure deserve it! Fellow 99ers, Wren also says that he, and his wife, Dorothy, plan on coming to Albuquerque in May (just to see me--would I lie to you?); isn't that great! We'll be waiting, Ernest, and many thanks for all the nice things you said about attending the Muskegon Reunion & Chili Cook-off! The thanks go to EARL SILVIS, by the way (not the other 'you know who' bums you mentioned). Nothing personal, fellas, just giving due to the duel (Ernest had to leave us in Africa because of illness due to his severe gassing from WWI, alluded to in the above article.) Take care, Wren!

MEMPHIS BELLE

My son tells me that in this Fall '82 issue of Warbirds (Air Progress), there is a movement afoot to raise money, etc., by those interested to help preserve the famous B-17F, Memphis Belle. From what he gathers, it is sitting in the Air National Guard area in Memphis, looking for a permanent home.

For further info you can write to:
Convention & Visitors Bureau of Memphis
12 South Main
Suite 107
Memphis, TN 38103 (1-901-526-1919)
(Memphis Belle Memorial Association)

The cast: Crew 13, Pilot 1st Lt John B Clark, son of a professor, Westport, Connecticut; Co-Pilot 1st Lt Theobaldt, an easterner of unknown specific origin; Navigator 1st Lt Frank M Drew, the handsome one, Sacramento, California; Bombardier FO No now that means Flight Officer, Donald Bouchard, Belmont, New Hampshire. This being John Clark's first mission, experienced with combat officers were sent to accompany this crew on its first mission, Theobaldt, Drew & Bouchard, replacing the regular crew Co-Pilot "Bill" Britton, Whittier, Californai and our navigator "Flip" Corcoran, Amsterdam, N. H. The balance of the crew of old Lucky "13" survivors of the Water Battle in Avon Park, Florida and the brave challengers of the monstrous Thunderhead "Please John, go around next time." First the engineer Joe Jordan, Pittston, PA. This was Joe's only mission dur to being the only surviving son status after his first mission. Hovey S. Dabney the illustrious Radio Operator from Charlottesville, Va. incidently a direct decendent of the Dabney's of Virginia. Harry W. Austin, Winston Salem, NC, the Ball turrent Gunner on that fateful first mission. This was Harry's only mission, rest his soul. John Casley of Highland Park, Michigan a waist gunner supremo. The youngest member on the crew Paul W. Capen, Mattoon, Ill, waist gunner on his first and the little fellow in the ball later. Then last but not least ole tail end charlie with his twin 50's Rex A. Carnes of Minneapolis, Minn. Basically an Eastern Crew, one Californian, and the midwesterners for support.

In October 1944 ole Lucky "13" (can you imagine being assigned that crew number) was assigned to the 416th Bomb. Sq, 99th Bom Group (H) at Foggia, Italy. Some delay was experienced by the crew in reaching their final destination. In North Africa a malady of sort struck the Pilot, Co Pilot and Engineer. Needless to sy not one of the balance of the crew were in a position to get us on to our final destination. Finally on December 18, 1944 they participated in their first and by all means longest mission. Their target for the day was the heavily defended oil refinery at Odartal, Germany. Over the target area this novice crew experienced just about everything. A 20 minute 360 over the target area at 28,000 feet. Two passes from the rear by flights of 5 FW 190's. One probable was registered by the tail gunner, Carnes. On the final target run a wall of 155MM White smoke Flak hit old 110 bad, both port engines knocked out one by flak and one by fighters. The crew proceeded to salvo bombs and everything that could be thrown out of 110 and the pilot proceeded to head for the nearest friendly lines--in this case Russian occupied Hungary. Steadily losing altitude, their B-17 made it into friendly territory near the Hungarian town of Jaszarokszallas which we called Jakabzalles, some 45 miles East of Budapest, Hungary that was under seige by the Russians. We could hear the guns day and night. However just as the crew thought they were safe. 110 was attacked once again by four friendly?? Russian Yak fighters and were forced to bail out.

The scramble in the waist section with flames fro the starboard wing lashing back. The wounded gunner, Harry Austin, barely conscious. static line to his chute and out he goes followed closely by the rest of the crew. Not realizing that the altitude was about 2,000 ft at that point Carnes delayed opening his chute momentarily. He landed quite hard and a bad sprain resulted. Dabney landed the hardest of all and sustained two broken ankles. Regrouping after the bail out, the crew was spotted by a Russian bi-plane and were soon picked up by horse and cart and transported by them to the Russian Headquarters in Jakabzalles. The russians recognizing the crew as Americans, accorded them friendly treatment. Carnes & Dabney were placed in a hospital of sorts. The rest of the crew were billeted in the town along with another B-24 Crew from Italy. After two weeks the Reds decided to release the crew to the nearest American Military Mission, located in Belgrade, Yugoslavia, some 200 miles distant.

Under the escort of a young Russian lieutenant, it took the group three days and two nights to make the journey. After an all-night trip by truck, they were loaded on a flat car which was side tracked at every town for troop trains moving up to the front. Finally completing their journey into Belgrade on an old sidewheeler river boat towing two barges loaded wall to wall with refugees down the Danube, the crew of Lucky "13" and the B-24 Crew arrived just in time to celebrate New Years Eve 1945 with a round of shows and dances. Fifteen days later they were air evacuated to their organization in Italy. The crew continued with missions having completed approximately 20 missions when the war ended in Europe.

(416th)
Rex Carnes, July 1982

LET'S COMMEMORATE THE B-17 ON A U.S. POSTAGE STAMP!
50th ANNIVERSARY B-17 - 1985



FORMER MEMBERS OF THE

451ST Bombardment Group (H) WW II, LTD.

49th Wing

15th Air Force



GROUP HEADQUARTERS 724th 725th 726th 727th Squadrons

July 12, 1982

George F. Coen
2908 Aliso Drive, N.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87110

Dear George,

Hey! It was great to hear from you, aside from your regular and excellent newsletters.

We, too, are in the process of putting the final touches to our August 6-7-8th, Colorado Springs Reunion. All is running smoothly (knock on wood) and the telephone lines between here and Colorado Springs, and the Academy, are getting hot from my constant "cranking 'em up."

A strange outcome from our planing came about when we attempted to get entertainment for our Friday night Hospitality Session. The Air Force Academy could not allocate any music groups for that night....SOooo, we went to our old comrades...THE ARMY. Fort Carson's, 4th infantry Band will join us and give us a program. This will be one time that the ARMY (infantry) will come to the support of the Air Force.

Yes, George, you certainly do have my permission to use my poem, "Final Flight" in the manner you described. I would be proud to have you list our Group and my name to same. I suppose I have a degree of vanity and your request hasn't done anything to lower it.....THANKS.

We have one of our oldest (original) members living in your city. Harry H. Fox, 3528 Parisian Way N.E. (ph. 296-8141). For all the interest Foxy has shown, in the past, regarding his old Group, we haven't heard "word uno" regarding his attending our get-together. This may be the last time that we will be in that area and have an attendance of over 500. You may be able to impart the importance of REUNIONS, since you feel, as I do, they are important.

Thanks again, keep up the good work.

Yours in comradeship,

Bob K. (Karstensen)

Robert Karstensen, President / 1032 S. State St / Maragon, IL 60152 — Peter A. Massara, Vice-President / 441 Carlsam Drive / Rochester, NY 14609

Hi Bob!

Even though your very welcome letter goes back a little, time-wise, I thought it would be nice for our fellow members to know that someone like you, and your boys care enough to let us 99ers how you fare!
I know we all share in the hope that your August Reunion was a doozy. Our 'natural disaster' in Muskegon, MI, this past Oct. was a real 'lulu'---enjoyed by a large turnout. That's what makes us all tick, right?
I know you don't know me from Adam, Bob, but as George C. is getting old, he has now dumped the Newsletter on me. (I had to open my big mouth, naturally!) Our original C.O., Maj. Gen. Fay R. Upthegrove, went from the 99th and started the 304th Bomb Wing, near us at Cerignola, in early '44, you know, and had the 454th, 5th, 6th, & 9th Gps. with which I'm sure you are familiar. Is it true that you B-24ers had Sky Hooks because the Davis wing kept falling off? I'll close for now, with all best wishes. Hope to meet you all soon, no kidding!
frank english (dishwasher)

THE 99th BOMBARDMENT GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87110

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