



# THE 99th Bomb Group Historical Society



<sup>3</sup>  
VOLUME #, NUMBER 6, NOVEMBER 1, 1983

## SOCIETY OFFICERS:

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EDITOR PRO-TEM: George F. Coen

## THE PRESIDENT'S CORNER\*\*

Here we go again with our November Newsletter. I'm sure it seems that it was just a few days ago that you received the September issue. Now for info on pending items---At our meeting last May Jim Flex agreed to HOST our next year's meeting in Houston, Texas with a tentative date of 11-13 May. Of course we did not check out holidays, etc. Women are more conscious of these things and I received a letter from one of our fairer sex telling me that the tentative dates included Mother's Day. Muriel Jacobs way out in California, was on the ball and let me know that the date might interfere with many normally established family plans. I've talked to Jim Flex, and he has now established a firm date for next year's annual business meeting. Please mark your calendar for the meeting and be there (please) May 4-5-6, 1984 at the NASSAU BAY RESORT MOTOR INN (Across from the Manned Space Center) 1600 NASA BOULEVARD, HOUSTON, TEXAS 77058.

In our January newsletter Jim will include reservation request forms so we can make our reservations directly with the Motor Inn. He will also include registration forms to be mailed to him with our registration fee. There are so many things to do in Houston that he will list proposed events and activities so we can decide in advance, pay the fee, receive firm reservations, and enjoy ourselves. You may contact Jim Flex at P.O. Box 1185, Dickinson, Texas 77539.

In our last letter both George Coen and I mentioned the book "Target: Daimler-Benz." Col. (Ret.) Ray Schwanbeck, the Commanding Officer of the 99th at the time, led the Group on the missions, and these are his comments as he remembers.....

Aug. 24 83

Dear Bernie;

Thanks for the loan of the book, and I am sorry about being such a slow reader, but I did read it and most of it twice. I found the book to be quite readable and interesting with a lot of fact but even more fiction, which is understandable and probably necessary as I am sure the book was written to be sold to the public and not for the archives as a matter of Air Force history.

The author, Cortesi, should be commended for the time and effort expended to obtain all the data, statistics and names of personnel of the 15th Air Force during the period concerned in his book, which as far as I can recollect is pretty accurate. If he did as well with our counterparts, the Jerrys and the Luftwaffe, he should be doubly commended. I think that the depiction of what might have been said at the briefings and in conversation between key personnel regarding the subject of the book is excellent.

I do have a couple of minor criticisms and one is that the role of Col. Benjamin Davis is somewhat overstated. I may be wrong, but to my knowledge he had been returned to the States sometime around the first of the year (1945) to take care of some disturbance that had occurred at the Air Force School at Tallahassee Florida and was not in the MTO at the time of the Daimler-Benz raid. Secondly, I was dissappointed that the author did not mention the second raid on Ruhland by the 5th Wing on March 23rd. The refinery at Ruhland was hit on the 22nd and the 23rd of March by the 5th Wing. On the 23rd the 99th was the lead Group. As I remember it was a quiet routine mission with little or no opposition. Light to moderate Ack-Ack encountered between the IP and the target and only one enemy fighter observed and it did not attack. The weather was clear, and since there was no opposition all bombs were dropped in the target area. And to my knowledge, no Wing aircraft were lost on this day, and as noted on my Form 5 (Pilot's Flying Record) the time for the mission was 8 hours and 40 minutes.

Hope to see you in Houston in April or May.

Sincerely

Ray Schwanbeck

Thanks, Ray, for your comments and I'm sure that they will bring back memories to others who were on these missions and on other missions no matter the target- If so, we would like to pass your comments on to our members.

You may not know it but George and I start working on this newsletter a month in advance of the mailing date. Now as we prepare this material for the typist and printer it is a beautiful time in Albuquerque. We are also being swamped with thousands of people from all over the world and hundreds of hot air balloons to participate in the 12th Annual International Balloon Fiesta. It is a terrific sight to see the mass ascension of about 500 balloons simultaneously, which is done on the first and last days of the Fiesta. I'm including a couple of pictures from the New Mexico Magazine October, 1983 issue. These might not come out too well in the printing but they give you some feel for the beauty of the event. Also along the way I've picked up a bit that could be called the Balloonist's Prayer.

"May the winds welcome you with softness,  
 May the sun bless you with his warm hands,  
 May you fly so high and so well that God joins you in laughter,  
 And sets you gently back into the loving arms of mother earth."  
 (Source unknown).

The Fiesta is an annual event in Albuquerque during the first of October. Even if you are not a balloon enthusiast it is a great event to watch. Come on and see for yourself.

Well, so long for now-see you in Houston in May 1984.  
 Your friend.

Bernie Barr

DUES, NEWS, AND VIEWS

Gentle Readers, your dues status is indicated by the year printed in the upper right corner of the address label of your newsletter. If that year is less than 1984 we would appreciate a contribution. Thanks. George.

At this writing the November Newsletter is planned to be included in the envelope in which our 300-Mission Newspaper is sent to you. This has necessitated a change in our usual schedule for the Newsletter; we will be early in mailing.

Our thanks to all for the dues and donations which have made this printing possible.

Next project will be an attempt to document the fate of each aircraft and the crew within it.

60 Robin Circle  
 Stoughton MA 02072  
 Jan. 20, 1983

Dear George;

Received the 99th Newsletter dated Jan. 1, 1983 and was very surprised to find that my name was not listed in the recent current addresses of members. .... Give my regards to all the Ex-347th Squadron members. I was in the Control Tower at Foggia with Bernie Oppenheim and Dick McGarry.

Best regards to all

Dick Dempsey

\* \* \* \* \*  
 Apologies, Dick. Will do better in the future. george  
 \* \* \* \* \*

Author Lawrence Cortesi is writing a book about events just preceding the surrender of Cape Bon and would like to hear any stories of interest. Write Lawrence Cortesi, 79 Boght Road, Watervliet NY 12189, or send your account to us. We are making your pictures available to Mr. Cortesi. His interest is mainly in the Milo A/D raid, the massage of the ships at La Maddelena, and the raid on the Boca di Falco A/D at Palermo.

Best wishes, george

CHANGES OF ADDRESS

Wayne E. Thurman 7532 E. Dulciana Circle Mesa AZ 85208

LOST

Albert J. Popalis Shenandoah PA  
 Lawrence B. Sills New Hebron MS  
 Lowell H. Stauffer Wadsworth OH  
 Bertel N. Vaugen Carpio ND  
 Henry F. West Hodges AL  
 Ewart Williams Blairsville PA  
 Emmett R. Worthey Ridon MO  
 John B. Withrow Grand Junction CO  
 James Cellars Bend OR  
 John C. Chapin Elgin OH  
 William T. Craton Dallas GA

Some of these men are listed simply because we do not have telephone directories for their towns. If you are a neighbor, please check them.

Thanks,  
 George

FOUND

414 Charles Bickner	1114 22nd St. W.	Bradenton	FL 33505	
415 C.K.Jankousky	702 Sheridan Dr.	Benton	IL 62812	
416 A.J.Dagostino	7612 Fleming Hill	Dr.SW, Huntsville	AL 35802	347
417 Marvin A. Smith	5 Willowbrook Ct.	Champaign	IL 61820	346
418 Russell F. Hiles	2915 Rio Rita Ave.	Louisville	NY 40220	
419 Gerald G. Guimond	4226 Alvin St.	Saginaw	MI 48603	348
420 Albert C. Henke	5103 Mansfield Lane	Shawnee	KS 66203	416
421 Charles W. Schuh	5154 21st Ave. N.	St. Petersburg	FL 33710	EQ
422 C.W.Beringhaus	2954 Saddleback	Cincinnati	OH 45214	416
423 James D. Murray	30 Normandy Ave., #307	Cambridge	MA 02138	347
424 Carl R. Bloss	232 Lakeside Dr.	Aiken	SC 29801	
425 E.E.Maseeh	6491 Santa Aurelia	Tucson	AZ 85715	
426 Jack W. Kress	3729 Vigilance Dr.	Rancho Palos Verdes	CA 90274	348
427 William W. Henderson Jr.	1735 E. Anderson St.	Pensacola	FL 32503	416

The Deadly Skies, by Lawrence Cortesi  
Zebra Books, 1982, \$3.25, paperback.

This book is an account of the series of raids upon the Balikpapan refinery complex by B-24s of the 13AF. Cortesi continues his habit of careful research and suspenseful writing after choosing a landmark raid, which, like some of our own missions is almost unknown to the public. This book reads like a mystery, and I found it impossible to put down until I had finished reading it. Highly recommended.

Bernie Barr read the book and says that he has very vivid memories of that section of the world and his involvement in the early days of WWII. If you read the Jan. 1st '82 news letter you may remember his account of flying into Kendari for an attack on Manado, Celebes and the return to Kendari, after an hour battle with 15 Zero's. He also still quakes with the thought that after not completing the refueling of his B-17 an airraid siren went off and his aircraft flew into the air as it was being shot up by five Zero's. The escape into a thunderstorm and a slow return to Java while the other B-17 was being destroyed on the ground at Kendari. These two bases that he visited were turned into strong defensive bases by the Japanese and from them they launched attacks against the B-24s enroute to and from the B-24 target of Balikpapan. This oil refinery was a target of the 7th Bomb Group and the 19th Bomb Group during the early days of 1942 before their escape from Java. Bernie joined the 19th in Australia and the 7th was in name transferred to India.

gfc

Dear Rex (Greathouse)

4-14-83

I was very glad to receive your note on Mar. 30th, reminding me that I had not sent in my reservation for the reunion.

Unfortunately I won't be with you this year due to plans made several months ago; however, I certainly plan to attend in 1984.

I was a member of the 348th from Aug. 13, 1944 until Feb. 1st, 1945. My first mission was to Pardubice, Czechoslovakia on Aug. 25, 1944. My 51st & last was to Brod, Yugoslavia on Jan. 18, 1945.

You might add to your casualty list the name of S/Sgt. William E. Studebaker from Indianapolis, Ind. who was the tail gunner on our crew. He was lost along with the full crew he was flying with on a single-plane night mission on Jan. 17, 1945.

I note that many of the single-plane missions are not on the official mission list. These missions were, as I'm sure you already know, flown to keep our promise to bomb the enemy day in and day out regardless of the terrible rainy weather in Jan. of 1945.

I was a gunner on Lt. Robert Mack's crew. I am now trying to contact other members of our crew with the hope that we can all be at the 1984 reunion.

Best wishes for a slam-bang reunion. Sincerely Ted Brewer

P.S. As a matter of interest - The mud, rain, dust or cherry brandy in Foggia didn't discourage me - I spent the next 25 years in the Air Force and retired Jul. 31, 1969 as a chief Master Sergeant.

\* - \* \* \* - \* \* \*

Dear Ted;

Welcome to the formation. We look forward to seeing you at one of our reunions.

Now Ted, I for one know nothing about these single-plane raids, and they sound like a real good story. Charlie Miller has been telling me about carpet-bagging after finishing 50 missions, but your story seems to be about bombing. We would like to hear more of the story. Of course we send copies of the Newsletter to the Air Force Museum, where they are available to historians. This should enable our kids to make a new set of mistakes instead of repeating this country's WWII blunders.

George F. Coen

Jack B. Abrams  
4660 Tippecanoe Trail  
Sarasota, FL 33583

Sep. 18, 1981

Dear George:

Rummaging through my wartime files, I came across the enclosed. I don't remember the source of either the news release or the history.

I was transferred from the 64th Troop Carrier Group to the 347th Squadron right after the tragic "weather mission" of May 3rd and assigned to the tent of one of the missing crews.

The first mission I flew was to La Spezia Harbor. We dropped 2,000-pound bombs on three Italian battleships. Or rather we dropped them at the battleships. We didn't hit any of them but they never left the harbor so we must have buckled the hulls with near misses.

On the Gerbini mission the fighters were like a swarm of bees. As the release says, "One waist gunner shot down seven that day." (July 5) There were 38 destroyed, 14 probables and 1 damaged. I still like to believe that I got a piece of one of them with the 50 caliber over my navigator's table.

Three days after the date of the release we bombed the Rome marshalling yards, after dropping leaflets telling that we were going to do so. I have a newspaper clipping that says that the "bombing run was at a 165 north-south angle to avoid religious and cultural objects."

The press release makes no mention of the Sicilian invasion the night of July 9, perhaps because only three B-17s from the 99th were involved. Our crew from the Sirocco was one of the "volunteers"; Pilot, Captain Burrell, Co-pilot, Lt. Duker, and Bombardier Lt. Hansen. I wrote a short story about that night, but it was rejected by Reader's Digest. We had "black boxes" on board which jammed enemy radar, and we led the paratroops and gliders into Cape Passero.

Best regards

Jack Abrams

Dear Jack;

Thank you for the enclosures, some of which have been printed in issues of the Newsletter previous to this one.

General Dolittle flew the mission to La Spezia in the BTO. In the September, 1983 issue we reported the details of the bombing and the fact that one bomb went through a battleship and out the bottom without exploding. But yes, the ship was laid up until Aug. 17, 1943 when it came out of port to assist the Allied efforts.

At the last reunion we established that the story of the preparation for the Sicilian invasion is known to only a few; that HQ did not have the story, and that only the crews involved are aware of it at all. And so we are broadcasting a call for all who were there to write their stories of that night. P.G. Bulkeley flew as bombardier on one of the crews, but I never have asked him for his account. I did not feel that I knew him well enough to ask, since we had flown only about 48 missions together. Or maybe, with a name like mine, I was especially careful not to carry any extra information over the German lines.

Later in the day our crew massaged Catania marshalling yards, using 1000-pound bombs. An acquaintance here who was at the time on the Augusta offshore has told me that the aforesaid yards contained railway guns which were becoming troublesome. The Royal Navy was offshore at the time and seemed to be playing with live ammunition.

I have been unable to get a copy of those leaflets which said "We Are Your Friends." I used to calculate the rate of fall, and using Metro would come out with a dropping point about 80 miles upwind of the target. They were supposed to land in about two hours with their urgent friendly message. Yes, Virginia, Metro is good for something.

Jack, we would sure like to get a look at your story and might even publish it without a two-year delay. Thanks George

Here is Erwin Kosharek's story. The Kosharek's were at the Muskegon union, and Bernie heard part of the story then and has been needing Erwin ever since to write for our paper. So here is the best-written account we have ever received. Thank you, Erv, for sharing it with us. gfc

### Ervin Kosharek's Story

It started out like all the other mornings. Nothing told me it would be engraved on my memory forever. I was 23, but "Pop" to my crew mates because I was the oldest. As we suited up, Molnar asked me to trade places with him; something about wanting to take pictures from the tail. For no particular reason I said "not today". I probably figured I could get forty winks more, flying my regular position as tail gunner.

It was February 8, 1945, Foggia, Italy, with the 15th Air Force, 99th Bomb Group, 416th Squadron. Our target for the day would be Vienna. This was our 42nd mission and dreams of R and R in Cairo filled my thoughts. Co-Pilot Major Sumrall was a new man on our crew. It was his first mission with us.

By 12:25 p.m., our formation had run into bad weather with heavy cloud coverage and heavy flak so we turned to fly on to Alternate Target No. 1, which would be Graz, Austria. Our B-17, "Nine Wolves and a Poppa", was in the lead position. As the plane banked for the turn, Right Wing Plane failed to bank with us and we collided at 28,544 feet (5 1/2 miles).

I heard the loud noise of motors just above us. I turned to look behind me toward the waist part of the plane. A horribly loud noise and large flash of fire swept through the sky. Everything exploded. The other plane's left wing blew off. Debris hit my head, left shoulder, and back as the tail section broke off and flew upward, throwing me against the armor plate, injuring my face and loosening my teeth. My flak jacket protected me but my helmet split in two, leaving me with a 2" gash on the left side of my head and blood spurting from the wound.

I knew then that I was plunging earthward, still in the tail section. I reached for my chute but it was gone from my side. I could see that there was just me and part of the tail falling together.

I held on to the armor plate with one hand, still frantically searching for the chute and found it where it had become caught on one of the Machine guns. I was unable to reach it and still hang on at the same time. My fingertips just touched it.

Corny as it sounds, my whole life did flash before my eyes in the short time it took to fall. I saw and heard my father, who had died four years before. I thought I heard him say, "I'll take care of you. You'll be all right."

As I gave a last attempt to reach the chute, the tail section hit the ground, folding about me but not crushing me. There was just room enough to crawl out.

I had remained conscious throughout the crash and fall, and was stunned that I could get up and walk away. I looked around me. I found that I was in a large clearing on a mountainside. A small village was below. I knew I had to get away. Still bleeding from the head wound and barely seeing from my left eye and with the other eye swollen shut, I backed out of the wreckage and started away. Remembering my G.I. shoes, I went back inside and retrieved them. I started across the clearing through deep snow and headed for the surrounding woods. I reached a small bush as dizziness overtook me. I fell and slid down the mountainside.

As I slid to a stop and laid there, too weak to rise, two women appeared. They had been digging potatoes. I hoped that I was in friendly hands. The women called to some men to come and give me first aid - as I kept motioning to my kit.

As a crowd gathered I kept asking if someone spoke English. A man stepped forward and demanded my 45 pistol, saying he was a German officer. As I reached for my gun he suddenly pointed a double-barreled shotgun at me. When I heard the click of the Hammer of his gun I let him reach in and remove mine. He looked at it, pointing it at his own face, but my hope that he might kill himself went unfulfilled.

A couple of men in the crowd bandaged my head. Then I was led off to the first man's home where he questioned me and stripped me of my clothing and maps. I gave only my name, rank and serial number, and had my clothing returned. An hour later they brought in two fliers who had bailed out of the other plane. They were Sgts. Brown and Rowell.

There was talk of taking the three of us to Graz, about 30 to 40 miles away, for questioning, and of taking me to a hospital there. Instead, Brown and Rowell were kept at the village and I was taken to a camp outside the airport at Graz where I was put behind bars.

My dog tags had disappeared during the crash and the Germans were convinced I was a spy. Later, after dark, another man was put in the room with me. My first thought was that he was a phony, pretending to be American just to get information from me. It turned out that he was Lt. Ling, who I didn't know, who had also parachuted out of the other plane. Sgt. Brown and Sgt. Rowell were placed in the same room with us the next day and had assured me that Lt. Ling was one of their crew.

A German doctor had looked at my head wound when I arrived at Graz. He had said one word, "Kaput". My face was badly swollen by now and I found it difficult to turn my head or use my left arm.

The following day I was surprised and overjoyed to have our bombardier, Lt. Frank Smith, join our little group. He told us how lucky he was as his parachute had been hooked on one hook of his parachute harness as he was blown clear of the plane. He had sustained a badly sprained hip. We were the sole survivors, Lt. Smith and me from our plane, and the two Sgts. and Lt. Ling from the other plane.

I was ordered to shovel some 4' deep snow but as my arm and head were too sore and stiff to move, I refused. As a result I was put into solitary confinement for a while.

Some Russians who were imprisoned there were on latrine duty. They would slip me cigarettes and sausage and wanted to know how soon the war would be over.

My clothing was taken from me each evening and returned to me the following morning. There was no heat in the room and I slept on a straw mat with a thin ragged blanket for a cover. Our food consisted of bread (40% sawdust) and a tasteless water soup which contained dead insects.

I was next taken by train to Weil, Austria, where I was put into a 4 x 15' cell with six other Americans. There was one wooden bed in that cell. Here I was informed that I was to be shot as a Polish spy (my name is Polish) as my dog tags had been missing since my fall. Early that evening there was a strafing raid by American fighter planes. The Germans hurriedly moved us during the night to Wurzburg, Germany, and my execution was forgotten in the excitement.

At Wurzburg I was separated from the others. I was taken to a barrack that had one large room with a stove, a clean bed and clean bedsheets. The guard asked me if I wanted to shower before retiring. I hadn't had a bath in all that time and was glad to wash. My guard had lit a fire in the stove and then asked what time I wanted to waken in the morning. I told him seven a.m. At six a.m. he was putting more coals on the fire. He returned at seven to wake me and asked what I would like for breakfast. I didn't know what their intentions were, but took advantage of his offer and asked for eggs, steak, toast and coffee. To my surprise he brought them. I hadn't had decent food in days and savored each bite.

I knew something was 'fishy' about all this when the guard reappeared after I had finished eating and told me that "an old friend of mine" wanted to see me. My suspicions were confirmed.

The 'friend' turned out to be a Captain in the Luftwaffe whom I had never seen before. He claimed he knew me from 'back home in New York'. I had never been in New York. My home was in Milwaukee. (Had he said Milwaukee it would have made more sense as the city is predominately German.)

All I would tell him was my name, rank, and serial number. He had with him a large book from which he read to me about all the missions I had been on. He said he had been a fighter pilot, but after being wounded he was transferred to an interrogation section.

I was sent back to the barracks for one last good meal and a clean bed to sleep in. Next morning I was placed in another compound with hundreds of other American POWs. About 75 of us were packed into a 40x8 boxcar and transferred to Frankfurt-on-Main, Germany. Enroute the train was strafed by American fighters. The train stopped in a rail yard where we were let out of the car. We were still being fired upon as there were no markings to indicate that this was a train filled with POW's. Several lost their lives and many were injured. Again I had miraculously survived. I was beginning to feel like a cat with nine lives.

At this point four of us broke away, but after five days of hiding and wandering we were recaptured by SS troops, turned over to the Luftwaffe and taken on to Frankfurt. There I was put into solitary confinement and questioned. Later I joined other Americans in barracks. This Stalag at Frankfurt was the only place where I received three meals a day. Red Cross packages augmented the prison fare and were eaten in a Mess Hall.

Moved again in a 40x8 to Nuremberg. Here we slept on floors of large barracks. After several weeks the Germans began moving the camp on a death march. We were to walk to the mines in Northern Italy. We were given raw horse meat to eat, slept in the woods on the ground and stole what food we could from the farms we passed. We stayed overnight at one farm and in the morning the farmer was angered to find several chickens and two large barrels of sour kraut were missing. At another farmhouse I tried to barter a stolen bar of soap for some bread. I should have said "seife" for soap, but my Milwaukee German failed me and I said "schishen." My guard laughed as the hausfrau slammed the door in my face. He translated my mistake and told me I was trying to trade s--t for bread.

On the march we once again were shot at and were bombed by American fighter Planes. I was getting it from both sides.

As May approached we had marched into a camp at Moosburg, Germany. Some Red Cross packages were distributed, but one package was shared among twenty prisoners.

We were at Moosburg just a few days when Gen. Patton's 3rd Army arrived and liberated us. As the 3rd Army approached, the Germans lined up the whole camp and machine-gunned as many as they could. I broke away and took a running dive into a ditch. Again I had foiled Fate. I was one of the lucky ones.

We managed to get into the village of Moosburg. There I ate Limburger cheese with beer. Tasted wonderful as I was so hungry - even though I hate Limburger cheese and have never eaten it since.

A few days later the Army began flying us to camps near Rheims, France. I was at Camp Lucky Strike and Camp Chesterfield, sent on to La Havre and convoyed home to Boston. I was separated at Boston and sent to Ft. Sheridan, Illinois for medical treatment, then home for a few weeks.

My family had received the telegram in February saying I was 'Missing in action.' In a B-17 that meant I was 'dead' to them. When I walked in the door my mother was so flabbergasted that her first words to me were, "You've grown a mustache."

I spent that summer of '45 in Miami Beach hotels which had been used as hospitals. In October I was finally discharged and sent home.

Dear Erwin;  
Many thanks for your story. It was well worth the wait, and we are grateful to you for sharing it with us.

Sincerely

*George*

Crew of B-17 Bomber No. H42-32071 on Feb. 8, 1945	
Pilot: Ist Lt. Harold E. Schuld	0760917
Co-Pilot: Maj. Thomas M. Sumrall	0424421
Navigator: 2nd Lt. Herbert Hagins	02001395
Bombardier: Lt. Frank Smith	
Engineer: T/Sgt. Samuel Agronow	7070691
Radio Operator: T/Sgt. Calvin P. Kulberg	36572868
Photo Operator: S/Sgt. John H. Conley, Jr.	13158315
Waist Gunner: S/Sgt. Junior P. Goodwin	3577579
Ball Turret: S/Sgt. Thaddeus Wrona	31260263
Waist Gunner: S/Sgt. Michael Molnar	36689656
Tail Gunner: S/Sgt. Erwin J. Kosharek	36832400

MESS HALL MEMORIES

(by Bob Karstensen)

The old line chief before me, as we passed down through the line,  
peered into his mess kit, then whistled low and fine.  
He turned to me in disbelief, his eyes were truly plexed,  
"I've done a mite of soldier'n, son, and I'll share what comes up next,  
but what IS this they've handed me? Could it be my evening chow?  
Could somewhere's under that applesauce, be hiding a piece of cow?  
Does the gravy on my cobbler mean I've lead a sheltered life?  
Where do I see it written that my world be full of strife?"  
"Don't touch those peas," he cautioned me, "I know they're bullet hard,  
and if I'm not mistaken, lad, them 'spuds' were boiled in lard."  
"That marmalade they pass around, and it goes for the butter, too,  
were made, they say, the very day, that Custer fought the Souix.  
Back home I served as Deacon, in my little country church.  
I've ate at lots of picnics, from a blanket 'neath the Birch.  
My Daddy often told me, and I guess it holds true now,  
'Be pleased at what's been given, and give thanks in prayer and vow.'  
But I feel the Lord's grip weakening, as my stomach starts to shrink,  
for what I've just been offered is . . . . .  
TOO THIN TO PLOW, TOO THICK TO DRINK."

A belated reply to Tomas Polak of FRENSTAT p.R., Czechoslovakia

Dear Herr Polak;  
Thank you for your letter which we have printed in our Group News-  
letter of Sep. 1st. I am sending you a copy of a highly sensationalized  
account of the 99th which appeared in "Man's Illustrated" during World War  
Two. We are also sending you a copy of the Newsletter.  
We do not know of any list of 99th kills but as far as we now know  
nobody has a higher score than the 99th's Ben Warmer. Of course events  
moved so swiftly during aerial battles that none of us really know what  
occurred, least of all our Army Air Force.  
We have been unable to locate Ben Warmer. This account was furnis-  
ed by Edward J. Jackson of 2107 Perry Ave. North, Minneapolis, Minnesota,  
55422, at our 1981 Reunion. We will try to assemble a list of Squadron  
Commanders and will furnish you a copy when we have it.  
Sincerely  
Ing. George F. Coen,  
99BGHS Treasurer



2331 Hardesty Ct.,  
Columbus, Ohio 43204

26 July 1983

Dear George:

Since today is my birthday I thought I would take this occasion to write and send you some information about one of the 346th aircraft that landed in Switzerland.

In your Newsletter, Volume 3, Number 4, July 1, 1983 an aircraft from the 346th was listed as follows:

B-17 G-55-VE  
Serial Number: 44-8187  
Nickname: Unknown  
Landing: 27th Feb 1945 at Dubendorf airfield, Switzerland.  
Crew: Unknown.

I am glad to report to you that the crew is not unknown (as far as the Officers are concerned). The crew was on 99th BG Mission #350, M/Y Augsburg, Germany. John B. Morat (346th) was Co-Pilot on that mission as he was being checked out for Squadron lead. Following is a list of the known crew members:

Crew: Pilot Leonard Smith; CO-Pilot John B. Morat; Bombardier Walter A. Mucek; Mickey operator Paul Shank.

There was another Navigator on board but Morat did not remember his name nor the names of the EM on the crew as he was flying with Smith's crew.

I had this mission in my diary and also verified it from the mission list in a previous Newsletter. Also, I called Morat and he verified the information and told me to write you as I did a better job of writing that he could.

Really enjoyed the reunion in Albuquerque and we are looking forward to seeing you and the rest of the 99th in Houston in 1984. ON TO HOUSTON.

Enjoy the Newsletter - keep up the excellent work.

Sincerely

*Gene Ognew*

*P.S. Excuse the typing. I'm not as good as I use to be.  
Who is?*

BOOK REVIEWS

The Fall of Fortresses, by Elmer Bendiner  
Pan Books, Ltd., Cavage Place, London SW 10 9PG  
1.75 Pounds. Not for sale in Canada. 1982

Our copy of this book was acquired at the Royal Air Force Museum at Hendon, where the 99th is well known.

As our good friend Bill Baird of the 17BG says, one may write of strategy and the Big Campaign, or one may write on the personal level of the fear, boredom, and personal events. To write of either one, Bill says, is to miss the other. This author, a 379 BG navigator, has nevertheless managed to combine moving accounts on both levels.

The 379th followed the 99th into Sioux City in January 1943 and proceeded thence to England.

On one raid author Bendiner's aircraft took eleven 20mm shells in the gas tanks. "The armorers who opened the shells had found no explosive charge. They were as clean as a whistle and as harmless. Empty? Not quite, said the Captain .... One was not empty. It contained a carefully rolled piece of paper. On it was a scrawl in Czech. The intelligence captain had scoured Kimbolton for a man who could read Czech. .... Translated the note read 'This is all we can do for you now.' "

This book is the best one we have read for explaining the whole war to a son or a daughter.

Further: " It is possible that the survivors of Hamburg and other devastated German cities considered all Allied flyers monsters. If, decades after the war, one looks back at Hamburg and Schweinfurt, a terrible equation threatens to arise from the rains. Were we and our enemies really one and the same?

My own answer is an emphatic No. The equation is false and a phantom. True, soldiers on all sides are much alike, but Nazis cannot take cover in a soldier's uniform. Hamburg and Schweinfurt may be equated with London and Liverpool, but none of these with Dachau. Hitler was not a military phenomenon.

It is smug to say that their cause was damned and ours was blessed. Yet what other words will do to chop the truth to digestible size? Thirty-five years after the event that truth is still incontrovertible.

I am willing to admit to the soldierly fraternity of well-intentioned killers all swastika-bearing Germans of my generation who were certifiably unable to hear what Hitler was saying or to read what he was writing or to feel the absence of their neighbors who had disappeared. I do not know where to find such living dead." gfc

We are informed that there are pitfalls in doing business with folks who import books from the U.K. They have been known to refuse refunds even though they cannot deliver the books which they advertise. We are therefore getting our copies from:

Books By Mail  
1833 Central Ave. NW  
Albuquerque, NM 87104

This bookstore got me my present library of out-of-print war books, and is highly recommended.  
george

B-17 Flying Fortress. Text by Roger Freeman. Illustrations by Rikyu Watanabe. Wing and Anchor Press, 5-1-6 Ripponyi, Minato-Ku, Tokyo 1061, or 123 East 54th St., New York 10022. 6.95 Pounds in the U.K.

This large hard-bound book of 56 pages is the definitive book on the B-17/Fortress. It is a well-researched volume with superb pictures of the aircraft in flight. There are two pictures of 99th planes, one of the formation bombing Lechfield on 12 Sep 44 and one color fold-out of the 348th's Number 46868.

This book has detailed drawings and photographs of bomb-bays, nose, cockpit instruments, controls and landing gear. The book traces plane in detail through the modifications from prototype to B-17 H with historical accuracy. Recommended, gfc

Gentle Readers;

One of the high points of our reunions occurs when Mike Yarina gives the General lessons in the fine points of jeep-stealing. Comes now Pete Brommel with a lesson in Big-Time Larceny.



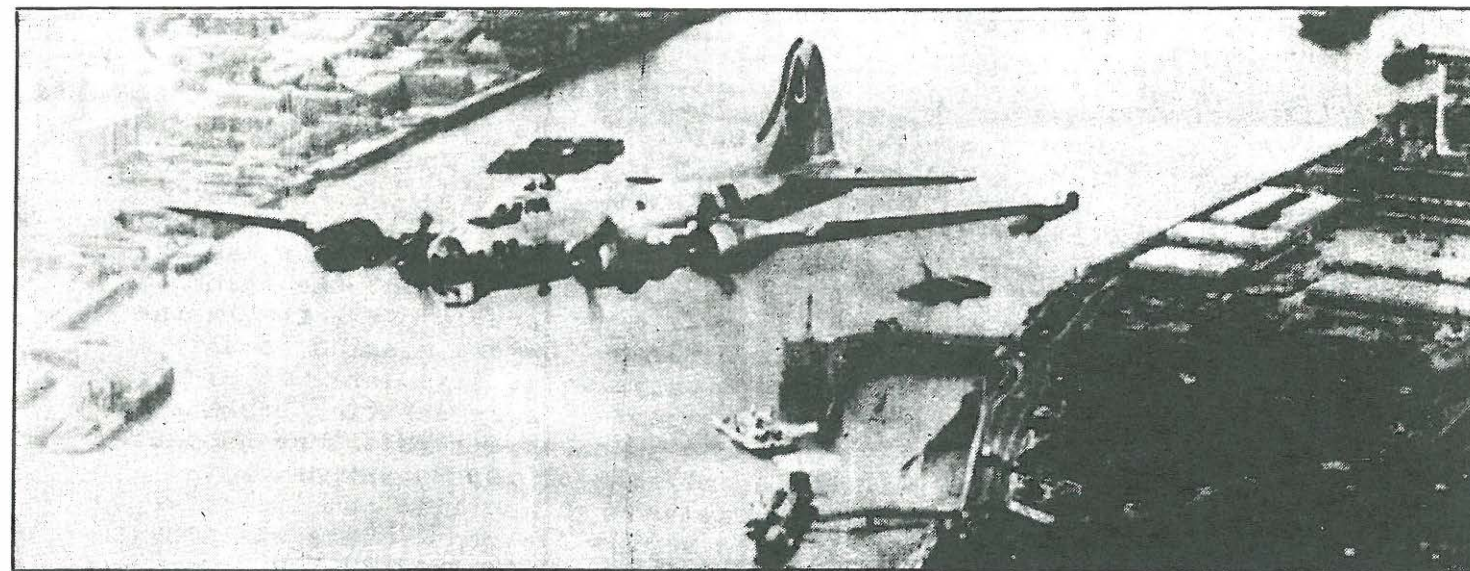
This B-17 was "stolen" from the 99th in the summer of 1945. It had four new engines but was not very stable and was therefore unfit for combat. One of the pilots of the 99BG, Squadron unknown, said that at a certain time of the day this B-17 would be on the line at 99BG Fog gia airfield with four engines running. At precisely 1300 hours this a/c, on the line with engines turning over was picked up by a former pilot of the original cadre (99 BG) and flown to 15th AF Headquarters, Bari, Italy.

There it was stripped of turrets, armor, etc. This B-17 was named WEFT. During Briefing as aircraft were flashed on a screen pilots and crews were supposed to identify the aircraft from the quick flash, as we all jokingly yelled "Wrong Every F-- Time".

In 1946 this B-17 was scrapped at Bari, Italy.

Pete Brommel

Next month we will have a short lesson in how to make snowshoe bindings from the A-4 Navigation Case. I'd bring mine to the Houston reunion except that we ate them during the Year Of The Two Winters. geo.



AP Laserphoto

## Boeing, Boeing, But Not Gone

A World War II Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress flies over the River Thames at Woolwich on a nostalgic flight up the river. Thursday's flight was the first time since 1945 that a B-17 has been over London. The aircraft — the only airworthy B-17 in Britain — had special dispensation to fly at 1,500 feet, along a route which took it over Regents Park, Marble Arch, Hyde Park Corner and Tower Bridge en route to a display at a World War II airfield in Kent.

Albuquerque Journal  
Sep '83

Jack;

The 99th BG hats are a real winner. At the last reunion they were real helpful in distinguishing the 99th from confidence men, race-track touts, and house detectives.

yr. obt. svt.

George

To Jack Field, 1126 Washington,  
Glenview, Illinois 60025

Dear Jack;

Please send me 99th BG Caps.

I enclose \$8.00 for the first cap and \$6.00 for each remaining cap, to be sent post-paid to the address below.

I would also be interested in ordering a flight jacket with the 99th BG insignia if there is enough interest to warrant a run at an approximate price of \$24.00

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

99TH BOMB GROUP (H)

The 99th Bomb Group (H)-(B-17 aircraft) was the third heavy bomb group to go into action in the North African Theater of Operations. After approximately one month spent at Oran, Algeria, readying its planes for combat and further perfecting training, it flew its first combat mission against an airdrome in Sardinia on March 31, 1943. This was the first time that 100 heavy bombers were airborne against the enemy in the North African Theater and received considerable publicity in the U.S. Two days later it participated in the longest mission to date in that theater, an attack on Naples, Italy. Three days later it electrified the Army Air Forces with a near perfect fragmentation bombing on Milo-Trapani airdrome in Sicily. Some 86 enemy aircraft were estimated destroyed on the ground. By the excellence of its formation flying and efficiency of its bombing, the group brought new life and incentive to the other war-weary groups. For two months the crews operated without its ground echelon which did not arrive until the end of May, 1943. The crews loaded their own bombs, cleaned their own guns and accomplished their own housekeeping. About 100 borrowed mechanics and one service squadron assisted.

The 99th continued to set a high standard of performance throughout its combat life. By employing a "company front" defense against fighter attack it had an unusually low loss rate coupled with an amazing record of enemy fighters destroyed. At Gerbini, Sicily, on July 5, 1943, 26 bombers, unescorted or supported, shot down 51 enemy fighters in a 20 minute fight and destroyed 20 planes on the ground, virtually breaking the pre-invasion fighter resistance in Sicily. Sergeant Ben Warner, a waist gunner, was credited with 7 planes that day and received the DSC from General Carl "Tooney" Spaatz. The group excelled in frag bombing of airdromes and destroyed many times its own numbers in that fashion. Its greatest single mission loss was 4 planes on February 25, 1944, mission to Regensburg, Germany, and the second greatest loss was three planes on July 25, 1943, at Gerbini. The group flew a total of over 390 missions altogether against targets from So. France, eastward to Ploesti, Romania, and northward to Berlin, Germany. It earned two Presidential Unit Citations and contributed immeasurably to the defeat of Italy, and Germany. A review of the records will establish this group as one of the most effective of the war.

(One of the original 4 groups comprising a final total of 6 in the 5th Bomb Wing. Also, one of the veteran groups which came out of the 12th to form the 15th AF in Tunisia, Nov. 1, 1943. The 99th was based at Navarin, Algeria; Oudna, Tunisia; and Tortorella, Italy, during WW II.)

(Courtesy Maj. Gen. Fay R. Upthegrove, USAF (Retired))--original 99th C.O.

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

MAILING ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_  
Number/Street City/State Zip Code

I AM A  FORMER  CURRENT MEMBER OF FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE

UNIT \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK ENCLOSED (\$10), PAYABLE TO FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE ASSOCIATION

LIFE MEMBERSHIP (\$150) CHECK ENCLOSED

Mail check and application to: 15AF Association, P.O. Box 15, March AFB Calif. 92518

Every Member Part of Grass Roots Search

There are thousands of potential Association members who have not yet heard of the Fifteenth Air Force Association's inception. They belong, or belonged, to bomber, missile and support units of the Fifteenth Air Force. If every member who still keeps contact with former crew or staff members, passes the word; if every member who knows of former 15AF members in his own community and makes contact, that grass roots effort will vector new members into the pattern in large numbers. The membership application form in this issue of the NEWS can be cut out, duplicated and used for your own "find 'em and sign 'em" effort. Your effort can only help strengthen our Association. Good luck!

- \* \* \* REUNIONS \* \* \*
- 15AFA - 40th Anniv. Ben Franklin, 15AF Assoc., P.O.Box 15, MAFB, CA 9215  
Nov. 10-13, 1983
- 99B G Houston, TX Jim Flex, P.O.Box 1185, Dickinson TX 77539  
May 4-6, 1984
- 449BG Tucson AZ J. Kruckmeyer, 600 E. Naranja Dr., Tucson AZ 85704  
Nov. 4-6, 1983

PROGRESS REPORT

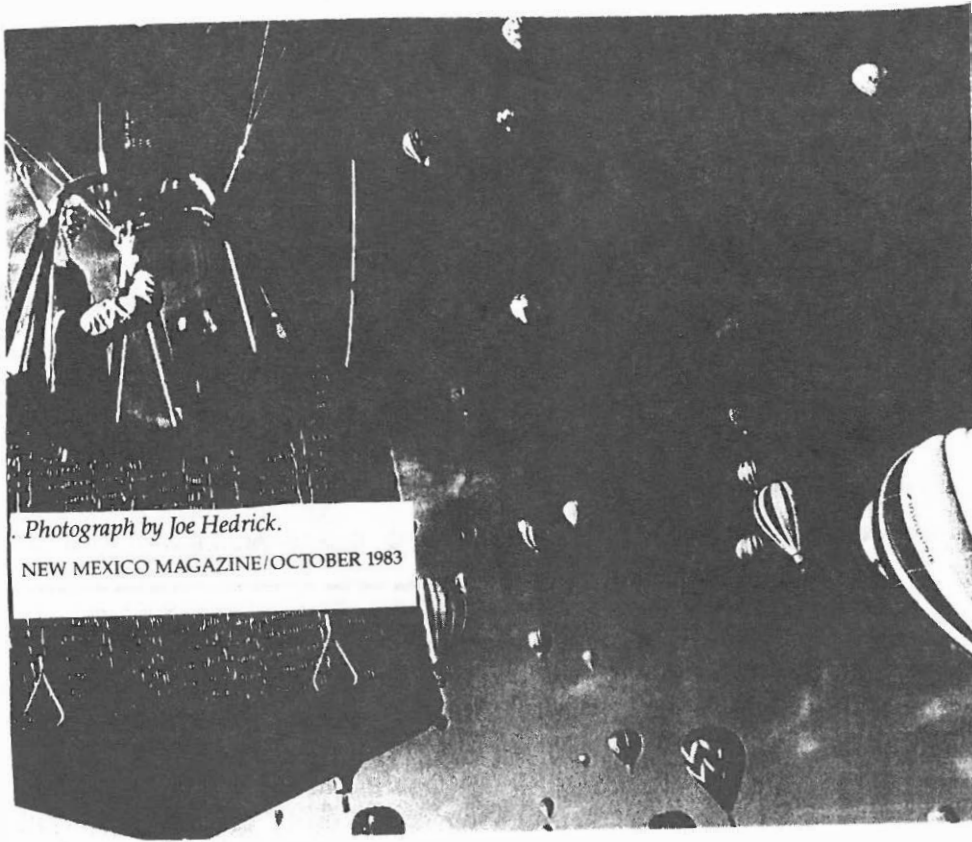
Membership	Finances
423 Members	Balance 30 Apr. 83 2727.49
45 Prospects	Office Expense 431.63
	May Newsletter 446.62
	July Newsletter 398.80
	Dues & Donations 520.00
	Balance 31 July 83 1970.44

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APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP- 99BGHS- 1984 Membership, \$10  
Old Newsletters, '81, '82, '83  
\$5 per year

99th BOMB GP. HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
2908 Aliso Drive, N.E.  
Albuquerque, N. Mex. 87110

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ SQUADRON \_\_\_\_\_ NEW \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ RENEWAL \_\_\_\_\_  
CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_





Photograph by Joe Hedrick.  
NEW MEXICO MAGAZINE/OCTOBER 1983

THE 99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
2908 ALISO DRIVE NE  
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO, 87110

Nov. 1983