

1371 West Moreno Street
Pensacola, Florida
25 June 1957

PILOT TO NAVIGATOR :

SUBJECT: REPORT ON OPERATION SIOUX CITY:

NOW HEAR THIS: things are just about back to normal here on the flight deck -- at least the pilot is now fully recovered from the "combat fatigue" he so joyfully suffered as the result of the historic mission to Sioux City. The Co-Pilot will have to get on the interphone and speak for himself.

It wasn't as big a mission as could have been hoped for, but it was "cozy" by virtue of its modest size, and the quality was high. For example, just a sample of the 416ers who got credit for this mission:

RALPH GOODALE of Connecticut, who nurtured ole 502 through its 200th mission; he says one of the factory engines was still chopping air when she went to her final resting place in the blue Mediterranean. (it must have been no.3 or no.4, because the ones on my side invariably sounded bilious to me after the sortie line, even when they were functioning perfectly, which was practically always); and there was Bob Imrie, (and family), who drove 1700 miles to insist that he hasn't the slightest idea when, where, or why he happened to pick up such a nickname as "Shack". He says the name would seem to be more appropriate for a Bombardier. (maybe "Sack" would fit both of them better, at that); Carl Keith ("Nubbins") Windrum was on hand, prosperous bay window and all; and Jack "Monkey Murderer" Feigenbaum, who has proved irrevocably that opposites do indeed attract --- his wife is beautiful. I hereby nominate her for Miss Fightin' 99th forever. Very appropriately, she is a native flower of Sioux City; so it appears that Jack was doing some very accurate extracurricular navigating about town back in the winter of '42. The good Doc Beal was on hand to greet all--- not with an ordinary layman's handshake, but with the professional type which involves the firm grasping of the flesh of the upper arm to stop the quivers and make it an easy target for one of those rusty saw blades the AAF used for needles. He didn't really have his jabber with him though -- I think Anderson frisked him when he signed in; the good gray Steve Amundsen was there too, looking and deporting for all the world like an ambassador; and so was Sgt Dinan, who gets the title for the most incurably gay bird in the whole flock, and who insisted on "remembering" and reminiscing about mythical characters from the 416th of whom nobody else had any recollection -- for instance "good ole Lt. Bob Plank" -- remember him? -----

-----and others, whom you'll recognize when you receive the Reunion Roster Don Hemmingsen promised to prepare and disseminate among the faithful. Incidentally, I saved Don for now because he, and his good wife, deserve special mention. They were the co-authors of this reunion and it took a lot of hard work, just how much was evidenced by the enormous stacks of mail they had on hand for our inspection. Unfortunately the greater bulk of the mail consisted of returned notices they sent to non-current addresses. This, plus the fact that there was no master list to work from, accounts for the fact that our reunion numbered only about 40 or 45 high quality folks. There was a good sized stack -- more than I could read -- from guys saying they couldn't come, including a short note from Albert N.M.I. Orance, and a 3 or 4 page manuscript from Smiling Jack Staassberg, haberdasher. (He couldn't come because he was having his annual "going out of business" Sale.

Out of gratitude for a job well done (that's a euphemistic expression meaning to pass the buck) Don was unanimously elected President of the 99th Assoc. so he can get started on the next reunion.

As some of your more dependable correspondents may have already told you, the meeting was adjourned until June 20-ish, 1959, Chicago, Ill.-- the precise target depending on results of future recon. activities to discover which of the Windy City's hostilities will assume the risk. Which reminds me --- when I first joined the reunion assembled, one of my first questions to Don was why the affair hadn't been called for the West Hotel. Don replied that the West had burned to the ground, whereupon some guilty conscience asked "Do they know we did it?"

Don said he had made an attempt to contact fat Emma of West Hotel Fame. She had been in Sioux City recently but he lost track of her.

"Swiftly MacDonald", now a regular bird Col., had said he would come, but his plans changed at the last minute. I guess he's keeping his eyes on the manifold pressure gauges. The commander of the Sioux City Base, a Col. Moore, is a close buddy of Swifties', only he calls him Dan. Col Moore attended the functions and made a very good welcoming address at the Saturday night banquet.

What really made the Reunion click and gave it the necessary spark of enthusiasm to project it into the future was the presence and active participation of the genial General Uppie. He is the same easy going character you will remember, and he has a memory for names and assignments-- right down to KPs-- that is truly remarkable. He didn't, however, recall Dinan's mythological warriors, which is proof enough for me that they never existed in the flesh. The reunion was two days old by the time the General arrived and I gather from talking to Don that the spirit of reunion was threatening to flag somewhat when Uppie flew in and functioned, by his mere presence and bothering to be there, as a rallying point. Not that he did any pep talking -- that would have been out of character for him (Leroy Rainey would have exhorted us to "remember the Alamo" I'm sure). One of the reasons he decided to attend was to dodge the Shrimp Festival in Biloxi, Mississippi, where he would have been expected to make a speech. We ratted on him and demanded a speech on Saturday night at the banquet. He obliged, if reluctantly, and in his conversational style, said just the right things. He's a sentimental guy, but I doubt that he would admit it.

I could never have made the reunion but for this easy going general. I called him and asked for a free ride up. I think it was my call and the additional incentive of having Hugh Fleet stationed right on his base and reminding him periodically of the reunion that made him decide to go. Also, he is retiring after July and I think this has brought his sentiment to the surface.

So, I put on my reserve uniform and drove over to Gate #2 at Keesler and got the guard to call the general and tell him I was there. He insisted on ~~xxxx~~ coming to the gate to meet me; and he led me to V.I.P. Cottage No.1, no less, and told me that was to be my quarters for the night and that he would call for me at 8:30 next morning. He stayed for a three hour chat in my air conditioned quarters (T.V., all kinds of liquor, beer, twin beds, etc --). I told him that was pretty high living for a weekend soldier and that I didn't recall that he treated me so handsomely in N. Africa or Sioux City. On the return trip he insisted that I stay the night at his home, which I did

and thereby had the totally unexpected experience of being awakened on Monday morning by a fully uniformed Major General leaning over me and saying in a tone of paternal gentleness "Bill, do you feel like getting up" !! Needless to say, this startled me and I snapped to in a stiff brace in my yellow pajamas and hit the deck with such alacrity that for two days I had aches in my "revielle muscles", which had softened considerably since I last answered the awful horn at Kelly Field, a decade and 1/2 ago. Then he proceeded to another room and made the most raucous racket I ever heard, getting his own daughter out of the sack! It was at this point that I decided that he really meant what he said sometime during the reunion to the effect that somebody you got shot at with is somebody special to you and always will be. I shouldn't have needed convincing on that point, however, because from the moment he met me at Gate #2 until the moment I drove away from his home on Monday, he really treated me like somebody special -- even to the point of carrying my luggage at each embarking and debarking from plane or car -- while the Sgt carried his, and looked on the proceedings with puzzlement. I have decided that he was treating me as a symbol of all the guys who flew with him, and he was treating me as he would like to have treated them all, but for the artificial restraints imposed by the rank system and the mush touted "customs & courtesies of the service".

I have made a resolution to attend the 59 reunion, but I haven't the slightest idea how I'll do it, unless I save my cigarette money. 59 is a long way off, anyhow, and so is Chicago; but I'd like to meet the whole crew there. Maybe if we start planning now we can all make it. I'll bet Bob Imrie will be there. That boy gets around -- he even came to Pensacola a couple of years ago.

Over & out Dub

Dear George:

Sary you couldn't make it. It was really a fine affair - small enough so that the whole assemblage could gather in one place and you had your choice of conversations to get into. Of course it was also small enough that a lot of guys you wanted to see were not there. I think there will be a better turnout in '59, as more people will be spreading the word. Incidentally Shelly's notice was returned from Hapeville Ga undelivered. do you know his present address? Hope your job hunting went o.k. and you got the one you like best. (over)