



Volume 2, Number 5 NEWSLETTER of the 99th Bomb Group Historical Society

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Society Officers

President - Bernice Barr
Vice-President - Michael Yarina
Secretary - Joe Kenney
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REUNION INFO * REUNION INFO * REUNION INFO * REUNION INFO * REUNION INFO

HEAR YE! HEAR YE! - Through the good work of fellow member EARL SILVIS, we will gather together at MUSKEGON, MICHIGAN, on THURSDAY, OCT. 7, through SATURDAY, OCT. 9 (not 6-8, as erroneously printed before). Our location is the HOLIDAY INN, 3450 HOYT ST., MUSKEGON HEIGHTS, MICHIGAN 49444. Telephone: 1-616-733-2601 Earl informs us there will be a hospitality room for our use, etc.

It is up to each individual to make reservations, so call the above number and ask for DAVID FAIRFIELD. (He is the Innkeeper.) If you arrive by air, just call the Holiday Inn (which is just a short distance away) and they will provide transportation. There are over 100 units in this establishment, and of this Newsletter the rates are as follows:

1 Person--One Bed--\$33.00 2 People--\$38.00
Two Beds--\$36.00 --\$41.00
King Leisure--\$39.00 --\$44.00
(Rates subject to change)--Extra person--\$4.00

For those interested, Earl has also provided an alternative place to bed down. It is called DAYS INN, 150 SEAWAY DRIVE, MUSKEGON HEIGHTS, MI. 49444. Telephone 1-616-739-9429. Earl says it is a real nice Motel--only a block away--from the Holiday Inn. Here are the rates, and again, make reservations direct.

Single--\$24.71 (including tax)
Double--\$30.81 (including tax)

(All rooms have 2 double beds!)

I would emphasize that it would be a good idea to get hopping, reservation-wise as soon as you get your clammy hands on this Newsletter. On pretty good info, you all will be pleased to know that Gen. Upthegrove, and his dear wife are planning to trailer in, which is terrific in itself. On top of that, he is bringing, for all of us to see, his famous model of El Diablo.

Allow me to offer a few words about MUSKEGON. This city lies on the EAST shore of Lake Michigan, EAST (across the Lake) of Milwaukee, 110 miles NORTHEAST of Chicago. Its location has made it a thriving industrial center. Whatever direction you are coming from, and means, your friendly Auto Club, Airline, or Shoe Repair person should have no difficulty providing Maps, and other pertinent information and pointing you in the right direction! So much for my assault on your common sense! See you all in Nepal come Oct. 7! SERIOUSLY--LET'S ALL BE THERE**OK? (MUSKEGON, I mean!) (I believe good old Joe Chance had a hand in assisting Earl in the above endeavors--I am sure Joe will fix us a drink in 'the city by the lake' for some reason, anyhow.) Many thanks, in advance, for what it's worth, fellers! * * *

Let's make welcome a new, fellow member--D. J. Sopp, 2418 E. Rahn Rd., Kettering, Ohio 45440 (346th). Drug in by Wayne Snyder, also 346th, at the Dayton, Ohio Air Show. Welcome aboard for another tour, D. J.!



PRESS RELEASE

NORTH AFRICA, July 16---Lean, sun-tanned combat crews of a Flying Fortress Group, "The Fighting Ninety-Ninth," taxied their dust-covered B-17's to rest today at the end of their 50th bombing mission and looked over their record.

Here is what they discovered:

1. Of 518 enemy fighters encountered, they shot down, probably destroyed or damaged 162 or 31.27 percent. 114 of these were destroyed, 28 probably destroyed and 20 damaged. They have destroyed or damaged 433 enemy planes in the air and on the ground.

2. Their bombs had destroyed 271 enemy aircraft on the ground.

3. They had dropped 3,089,740 pounds of bombs on enemy objects.

In winding up their 50th mission, the combat crews found they had travelled 44,886 miles to and from targets---over water, jagged mountains, and desert, and that is nearly twice around the world. It took them 292 hours or more than 12 days and nights of combat flying to pile up this mileage. The average mission lasted six hours---six hours of continuous, nerve-wracking vigilance. Watching formation flying, watching for flak batteries, watching for enemy fighters, watching for aerial bombing from above and always watching the weather.

One day this group encountered more than 100 fighters over Gerbini airdrome. When they had finished with the fighters, 38 enemy planes had been destroyed, 14 probably destroyed and one damaged. One waist gunner shot down seven that day. In their 50 missions this group shot 704,995 rounds of .50 calibre ammunition.

Naturally these Fortresses didn't always come out with whole skins. Flak damaged 107 of these mighty airplanes and enemy fighters managed to put holes in 31 of them.

This group, like many others, started operations under severe handicap. The flight echelon was separated from the ground echelon when the group first went into operations. Flight personnel did all the work connected with a bivouac area after flying all day. The colonel and the combat intelligence officer dug the first latrine on their new airdrome when they moved in.

The group was organized back in the states on September 25, 1942. Colonel Fay R. Upthegrove (O-16855), 2222 East 2nd Street, Tucson, Arizona, was given command. His deputy commander was Colonel Leroy A. Rainey (O-21610), 230 North Drive, San Antonio, Texas, who has since been given a group of his own (the 97th B.G.). The group was on paper then, but later it moved to Walla Walla and through various stages of training at Sioux City, Iowa, Salina, Kansas; De Ridder, La., Morrison Field, and then on to Africa.

Maintenance of the airplanes was a problem. Flight crews loaded bombs at night after flying all day. Dust permeated every working part of the engines, yet the airplanes kept flying. 1163 of them went over the target out of 1249 that took off. That is a good record. In all, 11 airplanes have been lost since the group left the states.

There was that memorable night on May 3 when only three airplanes reached their home base after a bombing mission to Bizerte. Weather, the implacable enemy of all flying men, scattered the group like a hawk after a flock of chickens. Men parachuted to earth; crash landings were made in the sea and in the mountains. One crew was forced to land with a full load of bombs with an engine on fire. They managed to get out of the airplane and dash about 200 yards behind a sand dune when the bombs let loose. They escaped unhurt. Seven men were lost in the sea in the anxious two days that followed. Many were the tales of dogged determination to save airplanes and crews; the bravery of these American lads as they wended their way down precipitous mountain sides on mules and camels after cracking silk in the darkness.

This display of courage has not gone unrewarded. The group has been awarded 585 air medals and oak leaf clusters; seven purple hearts with more on the way and at present there are numerous recommendations passing through military channels for Distinguished Flying Crosses, Distinguished Service Crosses, Silver Stars and Soldiers Medals.

Up to July 5 this group had lost only one plane in actual combat. Three were lost the day that Jerry ganged up with more than 100 ME 109's FW 190's and other enemy fighters. That day three planes were reported missing, but many of the crew members were seen to bail out over enemy territory and one plane was observed to make a crash landing on the beach. Many of these crew members probably are alive today, as prisoners of war. In all, 42 men are listed as missing in action and only 21 have been wounded. That makes 67 casualties for 50 missions. The toll of May 3, due to weather, was two dead, 12 wounded and 5 missing.

Six times, high command has seen fit to issue special commendations to this group and twice the group has been included in blanket commendations with other air force tactical groups. (more)→

In the present campaign, the group has been in operation every day since July 3. They have gone out in the early morning hours with the sun barely peeping over the circle of hills around their desert airdrome. They have taken pictures of their missions so that high command can put experts to work interpreting the photos and assessing the damage. More than 7,000 photographic prints have been passed on to higher headquarters.

Now these young Americans are starting on the next 50 missions. There was no celebration at the end of the first 50. The crews came in, hurried over to the Red Cross wagon where smiling, blonde "Peggy" gave them coffee and doughnuts and then "hit the sack" for a little rest before taking off again.

There are hundreds of bomber crews like these---flying, fighting and working to defeat the enemy---and they will succeed.

* * *

(Again, we are indebted to Gen. Upthegrove for this, from then Capt. Vernon Fairbanks-S-2.) To you 'neophytes'-those of us who were there, also got a copy. As I've mentioned before, it was my great pleasure to get to know Vernon when we shared the same Bldg., down on the line, in Si-ox City. A real, down-to-earth, terrific man! They didn't come any better! (fhe)

TAPS: Some final flybys---

HAYSLETT

This is to advise that Charles O. Hayslett passed away 7 Nov. 1980.

Sincerely,
Dolores Hayslett
306 W. Jackson St.
New Carlisle, OH 45344

PALATNICK

My uncle, Bernard Palatnick, has been deceased since 1969. Thank you for thinking of him.

Sincerely,
Carole Demsky
Rt. 5, Box 383
New Fairfield, CT 06810

BJARNEBY

Larry Bjarneby, member of the 99th B.G., died from leukemia in June 1979. He served as Mayor of his home town until 1975, when he retired because of ill health. He had one son. Greetings from his wife.

Mrs. L.G. Bjarneby
438 E. Center St.
Kalispell, MT 59901

ELLINGTON

Bill Ellington was my cousin. He died July 10, 1978. His wife is living with her son in Boston, Mass., but I do not have their address.

W. Clark Ellington
821 Spaulding
Wichita, KS 67203

HARKEN--

Our search for 99ers continues. We send the Newsletter to those for whom we have a recent address. We also send the Newsletter to any Next-of-Kin who respond with TAPS news, and we are preparing a suitable Sympathy Card to accompany the first issue. After several complimentary issues the recipient is invited to become an Associate Member.

We also conduct a continuing purge of the addresses and mail a Final Notice, First Class, to those who have not become Members.

And lastly, those for whom we have only an old 1942 address are given The Old Sleuth Treatment and we find a goodly percentage of them too. (GFC)

APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

1982 Membership, \$10_____

1981 Newsletters, Optional, \$5_____

NAME _____ Squadron _____ New _____

ADDRESS _____ Renewal _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

IV. 99th BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(Gerbini, Sicily mission--after matter--courtesy, Gen. Upthegrove)

HEADQUARTERS
99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ARMY AIR FORCES
Office of the Intelligence Officer

19 July, 1943

PRESS RELEASE: By Captain G.E. Hutchison

Two heavy bombardment crew members were sprawled across their cots today in a North African hospital pinching themselves to see if it was all true and that they were really alive and back in a building over which flew the Stars and Stripes. They were receiving plaudits of privates and colonels from their group alike as if they had arisen from the dead to bring back word of a fort-night's nightmarish episode in which they and members of three entire crews had been practically given up for dead after having been shot down over Sicily at the outbreak of the Allied invasion of the island at the toe of Italy's boot.

Today the boot was on the other foot for Staff Sergeant Allen B. Huckabee, at 42 believed to be the oldest gunner in the North African theater (770 North Seventh St., Temple, Texas) and flak-riddled Technical Sergeant David Fleming, 1405 South Milwaukee St., Jackson, Michigan, radio operator.

With four men already killed in their B-17 after an attack by more than 100 enemy pursuit ships during a raid over the main airdrome at Gerbini, Sicily, at noon on July 5, and their guns shot out by flak and 20mm shells, Huckabee, Fleming, and five others bailed out to be captured only a few minutes later by Italian troops.

But let them tell the story:

"We were about five minutes after the target when a swarm of Italian and German planes jumped us. They were coming at us from all directions in groups of two, three, and four. We were riding in the lead plane of the second element. At about this time the flak began popping around us like a belated Fourth of July celebration and we knew we were in for a battle. Finally our number 4 engine caught fire and we couldn't feather the prop which slowed us down to about 110 miles an hour. The entire formation slowed down to cover us but soon our second engine was shot out and we were slowed to a stalling speed. The plane on the right wing pulled in close to us but it seemed like his motors were running away.

"Just at this time our tail gunner came crawling through the fuselage. He was bleeding and we could see that he was shot in the stomach. We couldn't do a thing for him because we were all so busy. The boy stood up and helped our left waist gunner feed the shells and all of a sudden he toppled over dead.

"The ball turret gunner came crawling out his left leg below the knee gone and a deep wound in his left chest. It was only a matter of seconds and he was gone."

Huckabee told how he looked through to the front of the ship and saw the co-pilot leaning against the pilot. He said he left his guns long enough to go up and pull him away only to find him dead too, a deep ugly hole in his right chest.

Huckabee said he went back to his gun and at about that time there was a terrific explosion in the nose. A huge piece of flak had come through the bombardier's compartment and ignited the shells. Both the bombardier and navigator bailed out through the huge hole in the nose to escape the fury of the burst 50mm shells.

Huckabee said he kept firing at the seemingly endless rush of fighter planes when he looked around and saw his fellow waist gunner lying dead with a hole in his head and a deep gash on one of his shoulders.

"The noise was terrific," they said.

"The bullets and shells sounded like rice in a tin can. We were losing altitude and finally our pilot, who incidentally did the greatest job we ever saw told us to jump." About this time a 20mm shell came through the fuselage and lodged in the lower part of Huckabee's back.

"Just then there was an explosion in the bomb bay sector which knocked us down. We came to and hurriedly buckling on our parachute equipment we made for the door only to find it wedged shut. We managed to make for the windows and climbed out. We were down to about 5,000 when we took to the silk. (more) →

NEWS TO REMEMBER

Those old 1945 addresses remember, are grist for our mill here in the Membership Department. We are able to locate a fair share of them.

And thanks, Jim Bruno, for the lovely pictures.

geo.

99th BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY V.

"As we were going down all the pursuit except three seemed to disappear. These three kept circling around us all the time we were going down. We did see more parachutes in the air and we are sure they were from the ship on our right wing which was having engine trouble back early in the scrap. We later saw the plane crash land in flames on a beach.

"When we hit, some farmers ran out and came to a halt at a distance until we motioned them to come on over. Reluctantly they came over and finally they picked us up and carried us over to their farmyard. The five others who had bailed out of our plane rejoined us. The Sicilians gave us water and blankets but after about ten minutes soldiers in civilian clothing leaped over the fence and with guns drawn made us prisoners. They searched us and pretty soon an Italian Red Cross ambulance came along and took us to a Catholic hospital about five miles away and 15 miles from Ragusa. There they gave us first aid and dressed our wounds. It was now about two o'clock in the afternoon.

"The first thing they did was to put the two of us in a ward. We were the only ones injured. The five others, who didn't get a scratch, were taken to another part of the building. That was the last we saw of them but we later learned from a pilot they had been flown to a prisoner of war camp near Venice, Italy.

"Next they tried to interrogate us. We were first asked our names, rank and serial numbers. We replied we were not paratroopers and they asked us if we had been in on any of the Palermo or Messina raids. They were plenty mad about those two raids, claiming 200,000 had been killed in Palermo alone from raids by heavy bombardment groups.

"First a Colonel interrogated us. We found out later that he was the first to surrender when Ragusa was captured by the Americans. He asked us where our group was located and to the question 'how many planes are the Americans turning out every day?' we answered, '30,000'. That made him plenty mad and he called us liars. Finally he stormed, 'Don't you ignorant Americans know better than to try to conquer Italy and Germany?'

"We just laughed and snickered and he got real mad and brushed out of the room in a huff. Next a civilian interrogated us and about every other question was, 'Did you bomb Palermo?'

"They took everything away from us, even our dog tags. We were like two monkeys in a cage. Everyone tried to take a look at us. They even climbed up on the outside wall to peer through the foot-square iron-barred window. That afternoon the Colonel brought a lot of his friends down to show us off, even his little daughter.

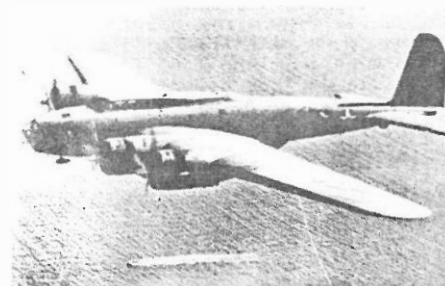
"They kept pounding us with questions. 'How many men have you in Africa? How many planes have you there? Where is your base? How many raids have you been on? These were only a few.

"We had an orderly 24 hours a day who was instructed to get us anything we wanted within reason. Two guards were at our bedside. We stayed there all that night and the next day they moved us to the International Red Cross Hospital at Ragusa (sic). Two miles from the hospital, American bombers came over and we 'sweated it out' under a cliff for an hour until the raiders were gone.

"There was a lot of red tape getting us in the hospital but once we got in they treated us royally. They took us to the operating room and dressed our wounds. Then they started asking us more questions but we feigned great pain so they laid off. We had a guard placed around us but we learned later the guard wasn't placed there to keep us from escaping. We were being guarded from fanatics who carried the grudge of the Palermo raid.

"Then came the day when the Americans took Ragusa. The city had a population of 50,000. It was all done by 17 G.I.'s, and three jeeps and you can put that down as official. The night before the invasion they told us the Americans were coming. You should have seen the two guards clear out. Then all the Italian wounded and sick came to us and asked us to have the Americans spare them. They had been told they would be slaughtered when and if the Americans came.

"The first we knew the Americans were there was shortly before daybreak when a sergeant came in swaggering with a tommy-gun. He 'took' the hospital single handedly. (more) →



"It was not long that the Italians were really glad the Yankees had come. But the next morning about 9:30 they started shelling the city and we had to run for cover. We all went down into the basement.

"Finally we worked up enough nerve to go out and steal a jeep. We drove two blocks to the post office where the American headquarters was located. Mind you, all this time we had on pajamas and had them on to this very day.

"We got some 'C' rations and laid down in a doorway. Finally some Canadians came in and we went back to the hospital. There we got an ambulance and drove to Cowiso another headquarters the United States had established. A major took us to a hotel and then a colonel came in and brought along a public relations officer and a newspaper man.

"We stayed there that night and the next day we started out with a corporal as our driver for the clearing station hospital. On the way we saw four German dive bombers come in for a landing on a field that had been taken over by the allies. The Germans didn't know this and when they were about to land the boys on the field opened up on them. Well, there wasn't much left of those four planes so we drove on.

"Reaching the clearing hospital, they dressed our wounds again. Then they decided to move us to an evacuation hospital on the beach 15 miles away. It took us four hours to make those 15 miles in a Red Cross ambulance. The driver got lost and once when we drove along a lane we were set upon by snipers. The shots seemed to come from all directions. They couldn't have mistaken the ambulance because there was a full moon and the Red Cross stood out prominently.

"We made the beach and then all of a sudden there was an air raid. Luck surely was with us for none of the sniper's (sic) bullets or frags from the bombs touched us. We finally got to the hospital and they gave us a tetanus shot.

"The next day they loaded nine of us wounded soldiers on a transport along with 400 prisoners and we took off for Tunis but we had to go by way of the Balkans to make it because of the mined waters. Thirty hours later we reached Tunis. An ambulance took us to a hospital in Tunis and after two days they loaded us on a hospital train and brought us here.

"The Red Cross at Ragusa sent word to our families we were wounded prisoners of war and the Red Cross at Tunis notified them we were safe. It was while we were at the evacuation hospital on the beach that they awarded us each the Purple Heart. It was all done without ceremony.

"The Italians told us we shot down 51 of their planes in that fight. We were given credit for 38 and we claimed 50 we heard later. We know our crew shot down 11."

That is the saga of the first two Americans to be returned to Africa after having been captured by the Italians in the Sicilian invasion.

But that saga does not near tell the anxiety and hopes which were wafted up and down with the North African winds, hopes which in time became only wishful for the 400 buddies of the three crews back at their base.

A few held out hope they would be heard from again. As many declared they would never come back, knowing too well the ferocity of the attack of flak and machine guns that day over Gerbini. Yes, it was like voices from the dead to hear those two gallant crewmen relate their harrowing experiences from their bedsides, voices which have buoyed the hopes of the 400 the same day they will hear from the other 30 who are listed as "missing in action."

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, Miss 39115

Fellow 99ers--Knowing full well our own Historical Society comes 1st-- it also behooves those of us who feel so inclined, to join in getting our own 15th off the ground! It's about time, don't you think? With all due respect to the 8th, we are the forgotten ones! Enough said! (fhe)

HEADQUARTERS

99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H) ARMY AIR FORCES
Office of the Intelligence Officer

PRESS RELEASE

NORTH AFRICA, July 23, 1943---And when this war's over
And yours don't come home,
Just silently pray
And remember this poem.

He died for his country,
The land he held dear,
And he's now blazing skyways
For that Great Overseer.

A hot, dry sirocco swept through Smitty's tent as he completed his verse. Dust covered his battered typewriter. He was tired. Tomorrow he had to fly again. He didn't know where he was going, but H hour was 4:30 A.M. So he went to bed. He hoped to see his poem printed in "Stars and Stripes," the American soldier's own newspaper.

When the Flying Fortress group came back from their mission the next day, Smitty wasn't with them. The airplane he was flying in as waist gunner was hit by cannon fire from an ME 109. First, No. 4 engine caught fire and then the plane exploded. The airplane broke in four parts and drifted down. Five parachutes cracked open as others of the group watched the blazing bits spin down to earth.

Perhaps Smitty was among those five. He may be a prisoner of war. His tent-mates found his poem and asked that it be sent in to "Stars and Stripes." Smitty would have liked that.

So here is the poem written by Staff Sergeant Arthur J. Smith, 2402 North Kilbourn Avenue, Chicago, Illinois:

The United States Air Corps
Hard fighting men
Standing their ground
Upholding their end.

Guarding our convoys
Patrolling each shore
Bombing the Axis
To even the score.

Fighting by proverb
A phrase known for truth
'An eye for an eye'
'A tooth for a tooth.'

Fighting together
Through thick and through thin
They'll never give up
They've sworn to win.

So here's to the Air Corps
Those hard fighting men
They'll conquer the sky ways
And fly home again.

And when this war's over
And yours don't come home
Just silently pray
And remember this poem.

He died for his country
The land he held dear
And he's now blazing sky ways
For the Great Overseer.

Written by:
Vernon E. Fairbanks,
Captain, Air Corps,
S-2, 99th Bomb Group
(From the records of
Gen. Upthegrove)

Col. Upthegrove--This letter from Mrs. Hunter to her son, Lt. Frank Hunter of the 346th gives an idea how the folks back home react to our press releases.
Capt. Fairbanks (S-2)

Dearest Son:

Never in my life have I been so thrilled, so proud, so humble and so thankful, as I have been last night and today after hearing of yours and your crew's heroic action, and your miraculous escape last Friday. Andy called me at nine PM to tell me the Tribune had just told her about it and I tried from then on into the wee small hours to get something on the radio, but mine wouldn't work, however, the phone began ringing at daylight, to tell me of reports that the men out at the mines had gotten on the radio in the night, and I have done nothing all day but answer the telephone, accept congratulations, and thank God that you were all saved, for it was a miracle, and nothing else. One broadcast from Northern Utah said that Bingham, Salt Lake, and Cedar City, were all claiming Frank Hunter, but they supposed Cedar City would have a priority, as you were born and raised there and your mother still resided there. Was I ever proud. Another broadcast, and they were all over the national hookup, said anyone knowing Frank Hunter, can stick their chest out today and say, "I was a neighbor of his." Maggie Carpenter heard that one and called me up and said, "I surely have mine out, I'm telling you." I didn't sleep a wink all night, and every bit of food I've eaten today has come back up, so my stomach has closed completely with the nervous reaction, and refuses to do such a common thing as take food. I'll bet I've been up in the air more hours than you ever have at one time. And bless the hearts of every one of the crew, and tell them for me that I know they had the best pilot in the world and that you had the most perfect crew, for the thing could never have been done. At last, my dear, I will concede the fact that your number hasn't been called or you would have gotten it. Grandpa Hunter heard it over the radio, and when I went over and read the paper to him, he just wept and said, "God keep the little feller safe," and left the room. Now if they will just let you come home to us for awhile, and work on this side, as I do think you have had your share of strenuous combat, and are entitled to a release. I wouldn't have wanted you to spend all your time in a safe spot, but now you have done your big bit, I hope they will release you. Walt said, "Oh God, honey, they will think he is so wonderful they'll keep him right there." And of course as you have guessed, he shed a few, also. I'll bet there isn't a Tribune left in town, as everyone was buying them to send to their kids, and especially those in the armed forces. What an envious bunch of boys there will be when they get it. Twick's mother sent him one also. Grandad was in Kanak, but I'll bet he will be over here at daylight in the morning after hearing it. Oh, Gosh, Frank, why can't I sit and hear you tell me all about it, and see the whole thing through your eyes, and why can't dad and Evan be here to share in your glory and good fortune? Morg started immediately on his edition, and I'll bet you will come out nothing less than a second Rickenbacker when he gets through. He was sure cocky about you. He said, "we'll see if Salt Lake gets him. He's made of our stuff and there ain't none better!" Well stop me before I bust up, and make a belly landing, myself, with all my wings shot, my bomb bay pierced, my controls wrecked and my instruments lost--in other words, Frank, "feather me out," and hug yourself and all the crew for your proud, thankful, old Mom.

Frank Hunter was the best--if you all read her letter--all Mom's are right! As a lot of us know, however, his number did come up. I am also inserting Mrs. Hunter's letter to 'Col.' Upthegrove in regard to her finding out that Frank was 'missing in action'--with the prefaced remarks by Gen. Upthegrove, as follows:

"Mrs. Hunter's letter to me after Frank was lost near Foggia.
 I saw his wing on fire and subsequent break up. (See next p., also.)
 He stayed with it too long!"

LOST AND FOUND

LOST-

Theodore A. Panek, 16 Livingston Ave., Livingston, NJ 07039
 Where in Florida are you, Ted?

FOUND

339 Martin S. Colbert	2w• Oslo Court, RDI	Absecon	NJ 08201	346
340 E.N. Johnson	1318 S. Ridge Ave.	Arlington H.S.	IL 60005	347
341 Samuel D. Panessiti	153 Raven Rd.	Lowell	MA 01852	346
342 Marvin Jacobi	361 S. Hollybrook Dr.	Pembroke Pines	FL 33025	347
343 Jay A. Weigler	500 East 18th St.	Jasper	AL 35501	416
344 Harvey E. Jennings	2621 Las Casas Way	Rancho Cordova	CA 95670	346
345 Joseph W. Edmonds	61 Robbins Dr.	Weth ersfield	CT 06109	416
346 Rex A. Carnes	P.O. Box 14706	Albuquerque	NM 87191	416
347 James S. Hager	1722 Newcastle Dr.	Los Altos	CA 94022	347

As I am typing this normal-size, from a reduced 'V-mail-type' letter, please bear with me, as it is not clear, and I have to use a magnifying glass. (fhe)

Aug. 24, 1943

Dear Col. Upthegrove:

On the same day that Frank was reported missing, I received your fine letter, written regarding my message to him on the Messina raid, and also complimenting my son on his work, and words cannot express how grateful I am to you.

We mothers grasp at every personal message regarding our sons, as we would at a raft were we drowning, for in spite of our brave words to them, the world looks slightly black to us, in these times of chaos. Add the fact that his Superior officer took time out to write his mother proves, not only that Frank has been doing an excellent job, but also, that there is more human interest being manifest in this war than many people imagine.

Frank's wife and I are having a hard time in this ordeal, proving ourselves to be the kind of soldiers Frank has always thought we were, and that he wants me to be; but in all his 26(?) years, he hasn't failed me yet in any important emergency, and I know if it is humanly possible, he will come through again with flying colors.

I try not to look at this tragedy in too personal a manner, but rather, see it as something that thousands of us will need to face before the struggle is over. Of course Frank being all I have left in the world to place my hopes upon, it is slightly hard to be brave, but Frank's wife and I find a bit of uplift in trying to bolster each other.

I do not remember just what I said in letter to Frank you mentioned, but I do know that every one I ever wrote him came straight from my heart, and that this particular one, pleased him very much. If it did anyone else a little good, I'm happier than ever that I sent it, and above all that he received it before this thing happened to him. I wish I knew that what was in it will sustain him if he is a prisoner or wounded, now.

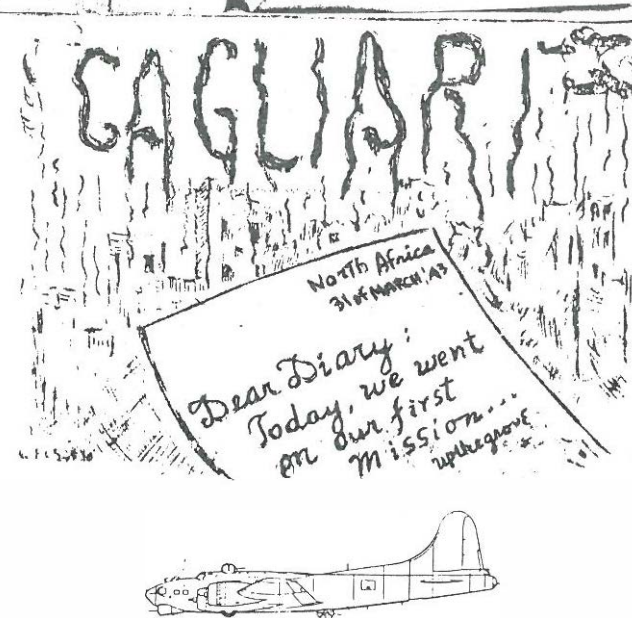
Your letter was also printed in the local paper, as a suggestion as to what is the right kind of letter to write to the boys.

I do hope that hundreds of people in Southern Utah, as well as all who knew him in Northern Utah are praying for his well-being at this time, and that is all that counts at a time like this.

Thanking you again in behalf of Frank, his wife and myself for your kind letter, I remain

Sincerely,
 Mrs. Alta Hunter

At this point I'm sure you all agree that anything further by me would be superfluous. (Our thanks once again, to Gen. Upthegrove for his many contributions, such as this!--fhe)



HEADQUARTERS
MEDITERRANEAN ALLIED AIR FORCES
Public Relations Section

April 10, 1944
For Release with Communique

Special Handout

(Note: This is one of many Memoranda, etc., courtesy of Gen. Upthegrove)

Sgt. James A. Raley, 27, Henderson, Ky., is miraculously alive today after riding to earth in the dismembered tail compartment of a B-17 Flying Fortress that collided with another Fortress 19,000 ft above the ground.

Sgt. Raley, tail gunner, was riding crouched in his usual place in the tail when he was thrown to his face on the floor and felt the awful shuddering shock of the collision. He was pinned down by overturned ammunition boxes as the plane, or segments of the plane, started gyrating to earth. He thinks the descent took at least 10 or 15 minutes. Desperate, he tried to pull himself loose and get out, without success.

His next sensation was a sharp impact, a swishing, slashing sound, possibly from hitting the tops of several trees. He opened his eyes and saw green vegetation on the side of a mountain, and realized he wasn't dead. After a struggle, he extricated himself, opened the bulkhead door leading to the fuselage of the Fortress and saw that the rest of the plane had entirely disappeared. About 12 ft of the tail was all that was left of the giant plane. His chest hurt him and he was dazed, but he could walk. The rest of the plane and his 9 crewmates have not yet been found.

Doctors found little wrong with him except a scratch on the chin. Today he is anxious to get back to his tail guns in the heavy bombardment group of the 15th AAF, of which he has been a member since last August. The accident happened on his 13th mission.

Sgt. Raley enlisted in the army in 1936 and was assigned to an armored division. He became a Master Sgt., with an expert gunner's rating. Coming overseas with the division nearly 2 years ago, he accepted a reduction to the rank of buck Sgt. in order to be transferred into the Air Forces last August.

The Sgt. was brought up on a 500 acre farm at Henderson, Ky., and graduated from high school in nearby Weaverton. He has one sister and four brothers. All of the brothers are married, according to Sgt. Raley, and none had entered the service up until the last time he had received his most recent letter from home. Sgt. Raley is 5 ft, 8 in.'s tall, has red hair, and weighs 170 lbs. Sgt. Raley is not superstitious and feels that the No. 13 had nothing to do with the accident.

Describing his adventure, the Sgt. said: We were flying along in the formation and I was at my position in the tail, watching the planes to our right and to our left. I was in a kneeling position facing the rear looking out over my guns. Just as we entered some clouds I checked my watch and noticed it was exactly 1240. Immediately afterwards there was one hell of a jolt. The plane seemed to halt--or stop. Then it shuddered and shook all over. There was a ripping, tearing sound.

My 1st thought was that we had been rammed by our No. 2 plane which was the one on our right. This was borne out by the fact that shortly after, I saw a Fortress with both wings on fire slanting down below us from right to left.

"My next thought was that this is curtains for me.

"The impact threw me toward the rear of the tail compartment and flat on my face, as I was facing to the rear. An ammunition trough broke loose and pinned down my right leg so I could not move. It was only one of many objects that held me down. At this time I could see the other plane spiraling down to the right and I knew we were falling fast as I could feel the centrifugal force.

"All this time I was trying desperately to get loose so I could parachute out of the plane. It must have been 10 or 15 minutes to make the descent.

"I learned how to pray on the way down because I thought within a few seconds I would certainly be dead. About all I could do was to think and to bat my eyes.

"Then when we hit there was a sharp impact, then a swishing, slashing sound like we were going through the tops of trees. I got the idea I was already dead. I don't know if I passed out for a short time or not. I opened my eyes and saw green vegetation on the side of a mountain and realized I wasn't yet dead. I heard a snapping sound like flames and my next thought was to get out

(note) →

ATTENTION FELLOW MEMBERS!

In regard to MUSKEGON--It came to me, as an afterthought, that some of you kind 'soles' might want to talk, or write to Earl Silvis on matters pertaining to our upcoming social event of the season--so, without further ado, let me give you his address, and phone number. (This will really put another star on my Report Card!) Anyhow, his address is--7540 Old Channel Rd., Montague, Michigan 49437--and the phone number is--1-616-894-4601.

of the wreckage as I thought the plane was on fire. There was over a hundred rounds of ammunition on my neck as well as the other junk piled all over me and I had to struggle a long time before I could work myself loose. You see I still had all my flying equipment on including my oxygen mask, nose mike and receiver, heated suit and heavy boots. Finally, I worked myself loose and tried the bulkhead door leading to the other part of the fuselage. Much to my surprise when I opened this door the rest of the plane had entirely disappeared. I noticed that the tail compartment had ripped off the rest of the plane about 6 in. forward from the bulkhead. This meant I had come down in a section of the plane 10 or 12 ft long. The left horizontal stabilizer was intact, the vertical fin was still there but the right stabilizer was half cut in two.

"The 1st thing I looked for was some candy I had brought along and my GI shoes. I knew the shoes would be handy in walking over the rocks in the mountains. The tail wheel was not there. As near as I could see we had come down in a slanting direction and cut off the tops of several small trees. I looked back at the tailpiece and saw the barrels of my guns were bent almost double. The bottom of the tail section was mashed. I believe if we had come down upside down I would have been killed immediately with all that junk flying around inside. I looked around to see where the rest of the plane was but it was nowhere in sight. I looked for awhile but my chest hurt and my breath was coming in short gasps so I started off to find some people who could help me." Comrade 99ers, don't know where Sgt. Raley is now, but hope he is still with us. I had heard this falling 'tail' story before, or one like it, and think this account is amazing, as I'm sure all the rest of you do. Just what can you add to this, I'd like to know! (Thanks, Gen. Upthegrove!)

Frank English

22 South Gateway
Toms River, New Jersey 08753

August 2, 1982

99th Bomb Group Historical Society
2908 Aliso Drive NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110

Dear Frank and George,

Just received my latest Bulletin Newsletter, thanks for including request that I make in regards to locate fellow 99ers. So far no real action in any replies but maybe I'll get some later.

As to your question whether I knew Ralph Tomek or John Hurd while I was in 17B my answer is, negative. I heard about Ralph being repatriated back to the States, in fact I'm sending along an article taken from our AX-POW Bulletin in regards to Ralph. I'll give you their present addresses - J.L. Hurd, P.O. Box 1464, Chino, California 91710
Ralph Tomek, 2545 Illinois Ave. South Gate, California 90230.

Murphy's Law seems to apply in my case. It seems that my records were SNAFU way back in 43 or at least that's what the government always keeps telling me. Even the Red Cross in Switzerland were screwed up. Enough of my troubles.

Congratulations on the great job you fellows are doing putting together the 99th BGHS, it's great.

Sorry I couldn't make the reunion in April heard you had a great time sure would have liked seeing Gen. Upthegrove, the best. He was leading the Group the day we got knocked down Oct. 6, 43.

I don't think I'll be able to make it to Muskegon.

Keep well, God Bless.

(Ralph it is Mon., Aug. 16, and your letter wraps up this Sept. 1 Newsletter--thank goodness!) (the)

Sincerely,

Ralph E. Kramer

Ralph E. Kramer

May 28 1982

31 Parkland Road
Mona Vale 2103
Sydney, Australia

Dear George:

Thanks for giving my letter such prominence in the March newsletter. After seeing how well the typed letter reproduced, I thought I would send along this list of 99th Group losses (combat, not including operational), which I feel is near to complete.

It may well be the kind of thing which will help with the Group History you're planning. I hope so. If people can remember plane names lost on a certain date, or crews and squadrons, the list could be worked up into an appropriate Honor Roll. For example, if Rambling Raider went down August 25, 1943, then she is number 42-5413. I feel the list is complete enough to make such connections. I was interested to see mention of a photo showing Rambling Raider on fire over the target, and wonder if it would be possible to briefly borrow the photo, or have a copy made, at my expense of course.

I know that you're busy so I won't linger.

Every good wish,



Steve Birdsall

PS - I was intrigued by the comic strip about Yankee Doodle, with most of the tail blown away. What almost has to be the incident involved occurred (according to a history I have) on March 18 1944 Villaorba raid. Was this the 99th's 42-29473 Yankee Doodle, which later flew with another group? (Who can answer Steve, Gang?) ←

99TH BOMB GROUP COMBAT LOSSES

July 5 1943	Gerbini A/F	42-29483 42-29486 42-29492
July 22	Foggia M/Y	42-30119
August 25	Foggia	42-5413
September 2	Bologna	42-30396
October 1	(Sec. Tgts)	42-5856* 42-30126*
October 6	Mestre M/Y	42-30474
October 10	Athens A/Fs	42-30446
November 10	Bolzano M/Y	42-5061
November 24	(France)	42-29502 <u>B.T.O.</u>
December 19	Regensburg	42-5223 42-5832
January 11 1944	Piraeus	42-5470
January 24	(Bulgaria)	42-5340
January 27	(France)	42-5746
February 22		42-31522 42-97439
February 25	Regensburg	42-31642 42-31797 42-31858 42-40055
March 18		42-5439

(See p. 13) →

April 2 (1944)	Steyr	42-32013 42-32056 42-32062
April 4	Bucharest M/Y	42-5874
April 5		42-38207
April 12		42-38210
April 16	Belgrade	42-32065
April 24		42-32035
April 30	Varese	42-32014
		----- **
May 10	W'ner N'dt	42-106988
May 18		42-106991
June 23	Floesti	42-106995
October 13	R'hammer S.	42-32033
November 7		44-6408 44-6430
November 25	(Austria)	44-8154
December 2		44-6182
December 25	Brux	42-32016
December 26		44-6663
January 20 1945		44-6268
February 8	(Austria)	42-32071 44-6691
February 27		44-6696 44-8187*
March 20		43-38418
March 22		44-6534
March 23		44-6397
April 25	Linz	44-6431

* these three B-17s to neutral Swiss territory

** second loss of day not shown; possibly 42-32015

HITLER PORTA L'OPPRESSIONE
MUSSOLINI PORTA LE ILLUSIONI



E IL POPOLO ITALIANO DÀ IL SANGUE

The Man Who Sold Hot Dogs

*There was a man who lived by the side of the road
and sold hot dogs.*

He was hard of hearing so he had no radio.

He had trouble with his eyes, so he read no newspapers.

But he sold good hot dogs.

He put up signs on the highway telling how good they were.

He stood on the side of the road and cried:

"Buy a hot dog, Mister?"

And people bought.

He increased his meat and bun orders.

He bought a bigger stove to take care of his trade.

He finally got his son home from college to help him out.

But then something happened.

His son said, "Father, haven't you been listening to the radio?"

Haven't you been reading the newspapers?

There's a big depression.

The European situation is terrible.

The domestic situation is worse."

*Whereupon the father thought, "Well, my son's been to college,
he reads the papers and he listens to the radio,
and he ought to know."*

*So the father cut down on his meat and bun orders, took down
his advertising signs, and no longer bothered to stand
out on the highway to sell his hot dogs.*

And his hot dog sales fell almost overnight.

"You're right, son," the father said to the boy.

"We certainly are in the middle of a great depression."

ELDON DAHL--Please pay attention--this is for you! You have no doubt heard
this one before--what haven't you heard? (This is because of
the untold suffering you brought on to all of us with your jokes.)

God, and the Devil were arguing over who should fix the fence (the one between,
Heaven, and Hell). God said to Satan--You fix that fence or I will take you
to Court and sue you! Satan said--How can you do that?--All the lawyers are
down here! (So there, and let that be a lesson to you!) See you in good old
Muskegon, I hope. Take care, and Best Regards to you, and yours. (the)

REUNIONS

Class 42-H	Sept. 3-5	Lubbock TX
301st B.Gp.	Sept. 9-11	Bossier City, LA
31st Fighter Gp.	Oct. 7-9	San Antonio, TX
49th Fighter Sq. (14th F.G.)	Oct. 7-10	Harlingen, TX (CAF)
463rd B. Gp. hist. Ass'n	Oct. 7-9	Dyess AFB, TX
Class 42-I	Oct. 8-10	San Antonio, TX
483rd B.Gp.	Oct. 28-31	Fort Worth, TX

BOOK REVIEWS

WWII Airplanes, Vols. 1,2--by Enzo Angelucci, and Paolo Matricardi
(Rand McNally & Co., Chicago, Ill. 3rd printing 1980.) - A compilation of WWII
fighters, and bombers by countries - these are both paperback. Accompanied with
colored pictures of each plane there is a brief outline history and pertinent
facts, text-wise. Each Vol. has 320 pp. Without a doubt they are 2 of the best,
most concise WWII aviation books for buffs such as us!

Winged Majesty: The Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress in War and Peace
Publisher: Frederick A. Johnsen for Bomber Books, Box 98231, Tacoma, WA 98499.
Pictures, and accounts from the 1st to the last (H conversions, etc.) There is
a picture of '2nd Patches' with the Diamond Y, and what appears to be our
'Queenie,' as I see what looks to be III (for our 348th Sq.) on the lower part
of the vertical fin. Higher up, is a white diamond with a smaller, darker dia-
mond inset. This I don't remember, although there was a period where a mish-
mash of stuff was either being put on, taken off, or changed.

It really is a terrific book and there are many good, individual articles by
the following:

Steve Birdsall (ta da!-good show, Steve!)
Peter M. Bowers (Peter is to the B-17 what Babe Ruth was to
baseball!)
Walter J. Boyne, Jim Farmer, Chuck Hansen, and Frederick A.
Johnsen (who edited same)

All of these fine gentlemen excel in their own individual lines of expertise.

Air Combat (Special Edition): Flying America's Famous Military Aircraft
This is a Magazine put out by Challenge Publications, Inc., 7950 Deering Ave.,
Canoga Park, CA 91304. Stories about the B-17G, P-38, Jenny, B-26 Marauder,
etc. Each article (with pictures) will keep your interest--and your eyes off
the Boob Tube, I guarantee!

The Role of the Fighter in Air Warfare, by James J. Halley
Ziff-Davis Publishing Co., 1 Park Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10016. The story in
text, and pictures of WWI fighters up to the present (152 pp.). Again, one of
the most interesting, and factual stories I have ever read!

The Air War in Europe-WWII, by Ronald H. Bailey, and the Editors of Time-
Life Books, Alexandria, VA (208 pp.). This is definitely a must! I could not
put it down. This too, covers everything you wanted to know about Air Power,
etc., in WWII, but were afraid to ask!

All but one of the above were given to me by my son, Brian, as presents. The
remaining one was also a present, but from a friend of ours. Neat, huh?

Gerbind Mission-1st DUC-Order of Battle by 99th Gp. Sqs.

346-Stephish	347-Swanlake		
	* Dptsgrove-o		Burrell-o
	313		334
Eugo-a	Bliss-b	Shields-k	Rager-p
344	312	473	430
Mehow-h	Ambergre-a-i		Covett-n
477	328		759
	Ebbers-i	Mosley-q	Bankhead-b
	3129	786	144
	Ippman-o		Stuart-a
	313		746
348-Windscreen		348-shortcut-	
	Orzech-t		
Mitchell-v	607	Yves-s	Pillott-f
809		402	770
	Thistlewood-w		Davis Ab-i
	765	Buck-o	357
Harris-u		883	Samuelson-j
413	Windrum-a		338
	472		Devande-h
			486

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