

99TH BOMB GROUP



B-17 FLYING FORTRESS

1943 • • AFRICA/EUROPE • • 1945

395 COMBAT MISSIONS

THE 99th BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Vol. 13, No. 1

January 1, 1993

SOCIETY OFFICERS FOR 1992-1993

President - Roy H. Worthington
Vice President - Jim Smith
Secretary - Chris Christiansen
Treasurer - Walter Butler

Historian - George F. Coen
Editor - George F. Coen
Co-Editor - Bernie Barr
Chaplain - Joe Kenney

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

I hope one and all had a pleasant holiday season and that 1993 treats you with much kindness.

As a reminder I point out that your 99th Bomb Group Historical Society organization is governed by an elected Board of Directors plus an advisory committee of past presidents of the the association. Past presidents are Bernie Barr, Joe Chance, Joe Kenney, Bill Smallwood, Lew Boatwright, Harvey Jennings (deceased), and Len Hopen. The elected Directors for 1992/93 are myself, Jim Smith, Chris Christiansen, Walter Butler, Denzel Clark, Julius Horowitz, Len Smith, John Waguespack, Bob Bacher, and George Coen.

Before we left Rapid City Joe Kenney accepted my invitation to continue as our organization chaplain for which I'm very pleased. Further, I asked Len Smith to chair the Site Selection Committee for 1995. He will be assisted by Bob Bacher and Francis Grantz. Please feel free to contact any of these gentlemen if you have any ideas. This newsletter issue contains their current addresses. I asked Bob Bacher to continue to chair the Hospitality Committee to be assisted by Director Denzel Clark and long time hospitality room expert Rex Carnes. I asked Julius Horowitz to chair the Nominating Committee assisted by Joe Chance. Please contact either of these gentlemen if you are interested in being considered for election to the Board of Directors. We need volunteers to consider at our 1993 reunion in Ontario, CA.

I want to again thank the team of Larkin and Yarina along with their lovely wives for the super job they did in planning and hosting our 1992 reunion at Rapid City and Ellsworth Air Force Base, SD. It will be difficult to match their performance.

I look forward to seeing you all at our 1993 reunion at Ontario, CA. I'm sure Bernie Barr and associates will have a well organized, varied, and interesting program. Please join us!

Don't fail to put this issue of our newsletter in a safe place as it contains the names and addresses of all members who have paid dues through 1992. This list will not be published again until 1995. By checking your bi-monthly newsletters you can keep this list up to date by noting changes listed in each newsletter. A new member, Howard F. Krayenbuhl, is included in this listing...Welcome Howard ! Changes of address are included in this list so you will not find a change or address or "found" listing in this issue.

I must note here with a heavy heart the passing of Alvin M. Suemnicht , Flight Engineer and Top Turret Gunner for a 346th Squadron crew. I had the honor and good fortune to serve with 'Al' on the same crew. He leaves behind his widow, Esther. Her address is included in the addresses listed in this issue.

Roy H. Worthington

THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

GREETINGS:

This morning, as we get this ready to mail in for this month's Corner, here in Lander we have had the season's first major snow storm. We received 15" of good, wet snow but this is most welcome because the whole region has been so unusually dry. The Wind River Mountains just above us were pretty bare but are now under more than two feet of this recent snow, very good for a beginning on the winter's snow pack. It has cleared and right at this moment the outside air temperature is 9° below zero! So from this very crisp and white background, HAPPY NEW YEAR!

One of the privileges each of us has is in the reading of the many books written by men who fought during WWII and sharing their experiences in a manner in which we all can identify. A book I read recently entitled "Hitler's Last Great Offensive," literally what we knew as "the Belgian Bulge" covered all aspects very well and gives an inside on just how very well our own American soldiers performed when they were really against the blitz. Another book entitled "Stalingrad" was written first in 1943 by Heinz Schröter who was a German 6th Army Correspondent. This describes in detail how Hitler totally consigned the German 6th Army into oblivion at Stalingrad. Of the 364,000 men of that great army, only 5,008 soldiers ever returned to Germany, an awesome casualty rate of 98.7%.

Early on in their Russian offensive the German Army Headquarters was set ~~was~~ set up "in the shadow of the Column of Peace in Red Square" of the City of Poltava. Many of us visited Poltava and have that certain identity with it.

Bill Smallwood, well known to most of us in the 99th, has written a book which has now been just released. I look forward to receiving my copy of this book entitled "Tomlin's Crew." I have a personal interest in this since their radio operator was a friend, we'd joined the 346th Squadron together. His name is David Gratt.

As we contemplate the horrible things brought about by Hitler, his utter ruthlessness toward those he conquered, to those soldiers under his command, an absolute Tyrant, our own identity comes through the fact that we faced these same terrible forces. We know of Stalin's ruthless ways, and most recently the power displayed by Saddam Hussein under the same ruthless format. This Nation simply has to remain strong to maintain the freedoms we fought for so long ago.

From the Book of Ecclesiastes Chapter 3 we have to repeat; "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven; A time to be born and a time to die; A time to love and a time to hate; a time of war and a time of peace." Let's all hope and Pray that our time of "Peace" will last forever.

Joe C. Kerney, Chaplain

Membership directory has been removed for privacy.



COL. Thomas N. Hunt
USAF (Ret.)
8975 Lawrence Welk Dr. 273
Escorido, CA 92026

Dear Bernie:

October 27, 1992

Just a quick note to congratulate you on the new look of the 99th Newsletter. I'm sure it's due to your efforts as Co-Editor.

Sorry we couldn't make the Rapid City get-together. Will try to be at Ontario next year, though I hope we're living in the State of Washington by then.

Best regards,

Hi TOM ! Thanks for noticing and I'm sure that our other members noticed also. No, I can not take the credit for the new look. That belongs to Roy Worthington and his A-1 Lithographers in Lompoc, CA. After receiving a proposal from Roy we here in Albuquerque liked what we heard and decided to give him a chance. So far the decision looks like a good one. We were expecting you in Rapid City . . . sorry you did not make it. We do want you to join us in ONTARIO in October even if you move to Washington.

As Ever,

A Note from Fred Hueglin

Dear Bernie:

Just to set the record straight. The artist who did the etching which was reproduced on page 11 of the current newsletter is "Heub" Fischer of Laguna Beach, CA. He was a ground pounder (artillery I believe) but he must have been inflated with our way of life. After the war he became one of the leading engravers for the postal service, designing many of the postage stamps in use today. I bought the "17" at an art show in Laguna Beach last August. The full title is: Nostalgia X - "You Ought to see the Other Guy". My copy is number 393 of 400. He also displayed action type etchings of P-51's, P-38's, P-47's and others.

Now that credit is given where credit is due, I'll close, wishing you and Mrs. Barr happiness all through the Holiday Season and well on into next year when we will all met again in Ontario.

Sincerely,

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NOTES AND LETTERS

Could you please put a 'want ad' in the next edition of the newsletter for some pictures of: 1). Formation flying taken during the fall of '44 and winter of '45. Especially an official photo of the entire group in flight taken from a B-25 flown by Col. Shroder during Jan. or Feb.,'45. Capt. Murphy was the group photo officer at that time. 2). Any photos of Group Headquarters or the area of the 347th Squadron. I need these photos to complete my personal WW 2 history. Guaranteed return. Send to John A. Plummer, RD #1, Box 187A, Sidman, PA 15955. (347th Ops. Officer, Group Lead Pilot - winter '44/'45.)

Can anyone help John Plummer?

BILL SMALLWOOD'S book "TOMLIN'S CREW" is now off the press. You can order your copy from the Sunflower University Press, Box 1009, Manhattan, Kansas 66502 or call (913) 539-1888. See your September newsletter for more details. I (Bernie) did read the book and found it to be very good reading. I'm pleased to know so fine a writer.

May I take this opportunity to thank all of you who assisted me, and whoever called the "911" number when I took a tumble at the poolside the first evening of the Rapid City reunion. My heartfelt and special thanks go to Mrs. Joe (Margaret) Cepparulo who isn't even a member of my squadron. She unselfishly and graciously left her husband and friends to accompany me to the hospital. She stayed with my wife throughout the ordeal and then drove both of us back to the motel. Kind deeds and people like her are hard to find.

Sincerely,

Charles C. Chapman, 348th Squadron
66 Sequoia Drive
Huntington, West Virginia 25705

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Harry J. Slesnick, D. D. S.

20254 PIERCE RD.
SARATOGA, CA 95070

TELEPHONE (408) 867-0623

November 4, 1992

Chaplain Joe Kenney
C/O 99th Bomb Group Historical Society
8608 Bellehaven Place, N.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87112

Dear Joe:

While I did attend the 99th BG reunion at Albuquerque, I was unable to attend at Rapid City, so I was not with Marle Smith, our ball turret gunner, and Walt Harbeson, our copilot.

As stated by Marle, the ten men of our original crew were all shot down on four different flights. This would lead one to believe that there safer professions. In response to your suggestion I am adding my bit of experience to that of our crew.

The remaining original seven of us, along with three replacement crewmen, were downed on the infamous December 29th, 1944 Innsbruk mission. On that mission we were leading the 346th squadron. As we approached the target area I notified Mac McClanahan, our 1st pilot, that we were being led off course, and were heading over a concentration of guns. We then sustained two hits, starting fires in the bomb bay and in the left wing. Mac notified the formation, and we pulled out. I gave a new heading to Switzerland, and efforts were made to extinguish the fires. It was soon evident that we could not stay airborne, the alarm was sounded, and we bailed out.

Upon reaching the ground, I was immediately taken captive by SS ski troops. The SS group was assembled in the dining hall of their headquarters, and I was brought in. The CO of the group repeatedly asked me where we were based. Each time, when I did not respond, I received a blow. After this had gone on for a period of time, the CO screamed that they were going to shoot me. They removed my flight jacket, and led me outside to the back of the headquarters with a gun in my back. This was the Alps in the winter, and it was freezing cold. I was certain that my time was up. I was kept outside for about an hour, waiting for the shot.

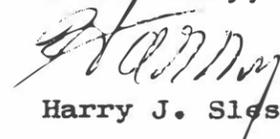
I was then led back into the building. I now assumed that this had been a scare tactic, and that the questioning would resume. Instead, I was thrown into the basement. There was no repeat interrogation at this location. I was subsequently turned over to the Luftwaffe, where I joined others of my crew.

From that point on my experiences were much the same as Harvey Jennings. At Dulag Luft, located at Oberursel, Germany, I was in solitary confinement for five days, interrogated daily, and gave no information. The interrogator then got out a large portfolio on the 99th BG. He then told me a great amount of information about me personally, as well as a considerable amount of very detailed information about the 99th. He knew far more than I did.

If any former 99th BG POWs who read this may wonder how the Luftwaffe could have such complete information on our aircrews, I would refer them to the book "The Interrogator" by Raymond Tolliver. In this book are pictures of the man who interrogated me, Leutnant Haussmann; he was in charge of bomber crew interrogation.

The lesson for me, derived from my experiences on the 29th of December, 1944 is this. For a survivor, each day thereafter is a precious bonus

Yours truly,



Harry J. Slesnick

Nov. 5, 1992

Dear Walter:

Our crew, "RYANS RASCALS", had their sixth crew reunion in Storm Lake, Iowa September 11, 12, & 13. Six crew members of the original ten were there. A note of sadness, our co-pilot, Charlie Kinkead passed away (70 years old) just before Christmas 1991. It was good to see his wife TERI who joined us. I'm the youngest at 67, our engineer the oldest at 80. Great time. Hope we have many more.

S/James C. Berger

Dec. 5, 1992

Dear Walter:

Enclosed are several items of concern. The principle one being my check in the amount of \$15.00 to renew my membership for 1993. I read with interest Marle Smith's and Harvey Jennings's account concerning Homer McClanahan's crew. Being Squadron navigator of the 346th I well knew the officers of McClanahan's crew. . . It indeed was a loss when their losses occurred. I also remember that when the Partisans ferreted Mac out, he returned to the squadron very briefly to gather his belongings and was rushed home so as to safeguard the means of his rescue from enemy hands. . . .

(Paragraphs not pertaining to this subject left out by editor.)

Best Wishes to all. Bombs away!

s/Jim O'Donnelly

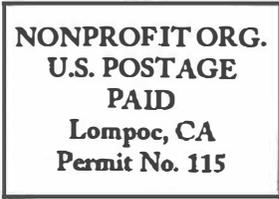
TAPS • TAPS • TAPS • TAPS • TAPS

HERB HOLDSAMBECK, 70, of 3000 Dupree Drive, died at a local hospital in Huntsville, AL. Services were held at the Trinity United Methodist Church. He was buried on the Maple Hill Cemetery.

ALVIN M. SUEMNICHT of 603 South 19th Street, Belleville, IL 62223 passed away just before our Rapid City reunion from cancer.

99TH BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**Walter H. Butler, Treasurer
8608 Bellehaven Place, N.E.
Albuquerque, New Mexico 87112**



1992 *** 347
J.O. Grizzell
Rt.4 Box 270 A
Paris, TN 38242**

January 1993

YOUR 1993 MEMBERSHIP DUES OF \$15.00 ARE NOW DUE

NAME _____ SQUADRON _____ ASSOC _____
ADDRESS _____ NEW _____ RENEWAL _____
CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

Make check payable to 99BGHS. Mail to Walter Butler at address shown above. Please pay promptly so we can continue to send your copy of the bi-monthly newsletter and you can attend our REUNIONS !

REUNIONS

1993

99th Bomb Group Historical Society Mini Reunion at Dayton, OH. - April 28 • Host is Jim Smith. 9801 Richmond Drive, Kansas City, MO 64134 • Phone (816) 761-0588 • Please bring a recipe for the 99th BG COOK BOOK.

19th Bomb Group, at Warner Robins Air Force Base, GA - April 1-3, '93 • Host is James A. Kiracofs, 274 Quinn Road, West Alexandria, OH 45381 • Phone (513) 839-4441

99th BOMB GROUP at ONTARIO, CA - OCTOBER 26, '93 • Host is Bernie Barr, 7408 Vista Del Arroyo Ave., NE, Albuquerque, NM 87109 • Phone (505) 884-7970

15th Air Force at March Air Force Base, CA - October 30, '93

1994

99th Bomb Group at Hampton, VA • Hosts Bob Bacher and Len Smith