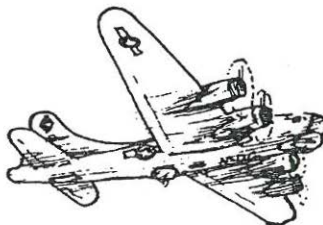




ROBERT J. NORI
416th Bomb Sq

THE 99TH BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

The Group Flew B-17 Flying Fortresses
For A Total Of 395 Combat Missions From
North Africa & Italy To Bomb European
Targets During 1943, '44 & '45



CHARLES F. DOWNEY
348th Bomb Sq

Vol.21 No. 2

Published Quarterly by the 99th BGHS

August 2001

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We had a great time in San Antonio with some good side trips and fine food. Thanks to Betty and Arkie Clark for all the work they did to make our reunion enjoyable.

Walt Montgomery has lined up a first class hotel for us in Nashville Tennessee. We will be staying at the Maxwell House from April 16-20 2002. Room rates are normally much higher but he was able to negotiate \$79 a night or \$82 with a full breakfast buffet. Walt is still working on some interesting side trips.

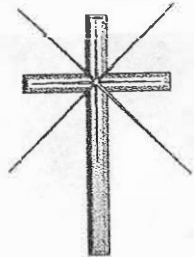
Bob and Edith Johnson have agreed to co-host the reunion and you will be sending your reservations to them. More details will be in the next Newsletter.

We are all getting older and we will need to have some help with the chores from our Associate members. Accordingly at our last Board meeting in San Antonio we voted to give the Associate members the same rights and privileges as the regular members. This would mean they could become Board Members and Officers. Our by laws provide that we will need to vote on this change at our next business meeting in Nashville.

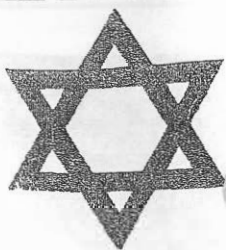
We also provided individuals to back up some of the key jobs in the organization. More work will need to be done to complete this effort.

Bob Bacher and I would welcome any suggestions or volunteers for our reunion in 2003.

Best wishes
Don Lawhorn



IN MEMORIAM



TAPS

Joseph L. Warmezk
Louis H. Kundert
William T. Donahue
Robert Mack

PRAYER OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI
Lord make me an instrument of
thy grace.
Where there is hatred, let
me show love.
Where there is injury, pardon.
Where there is doubt, faith.
Where there is despair, hope.
Where there is darkness, light.
Where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master, grant that
I may not so much need
to be consoled as to console;
to be understood as to
understand, to be loved as
to love; for it is in giving
that we receive. It is in
pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are
born to eternal life.

Members send sincere prayers and sympathies to the families and friends
MAY OUR COMRADES REST IN PEACE

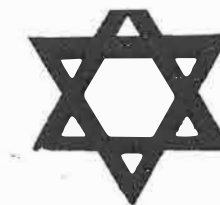
Miss Me - But Let Me Go

*When I come to end of the road
And the sun has set for me,
I want no rites in a gloom filled room,
Why cry for a soul set free?
Miss me a little - but not too long,
And not with your head bowed low,
Remember the love that we once shared,
Miss me, but let me go.
For this is a journey that we all must take,
And each must go alone,
It's all a part of the Master's plan,
A step on the road to home,
When you are lonely and sick at heart,
Go to the friends we know,
And bury your sorrows in doing good deeds,
Miss me, but let me go.*

Author Unknown



THE CHAPLAIN'S CORNER



THIS IS DEDICATED TO THE FORGOTTEN MINORITY. . . .

MAN BELONGS TO THE EARTH

In 1854, the Great White Chief in Washington made an offer for a large area of Indian land and promised a "Reservation" for the Indian people. Chief Seattle's reply, published here in full, has been described as the most beautiful and profound statement on the environment ever made).

How can you buy or sell the sky, the warmth of the land? The idea is strange to us.

If we do not own the freshness of the air and the sparkle of the water, how can you buy them?

Every part of this earth is sacred to my people. Every shining pine needle, every sandy shore, every mist in the dark woods, every humming insect is holy in the memory and experience of my people. The sap which courses through the trees carries the memories of the red man.

The white man's dead forget the country of their birth when they go to walk among the stars. Our dead never forget this beautiful earth, for it is the mother of the red man. We are part of the earth and it is a part of us. The perfumed flowers are our sisters; the deer, the horse, the great eagle, these are our brothers. The rocky crests, the juices in the meadows, the body heat of the pony, and man - all belong to the same family.

So, when the Great Chief in Washington sends word that he wishes to buy our land, he asks much of us. The Great Chief sends word he will reserve us a place so that we can live comfortably to ourselves. He will be our father and we will be his children. So we will consider your offer to buy our land. But it will not be easy. For this land is sacred to us.

This shining water that moves in the streams and rivers is not just water but the blood of our ancestors. If we sell you land, you must remember that it is sacred and you must teach your children that it is sacred and that each ghostly reflection in the clear water of the lakes tells of events and memories in the life of my people. The water's murmur is the voice of my father's father.

The rivers are our brothers; they quench our thirst. The rivers carry our canoes, and feed our children. If we sell you our land, you must remember, and teach your children that the rivers are our brothers, and yours, and you must henceforth give the rivers the kindness you would give any brother.

We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. He leaves his fathers' graves behind, and he does not care. He kidnaps the earth from his children, and he does not care.

His father's grave, and his children's birthright are forgotten. He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His

appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

I do not know. Our ways are different from your ways. The sight of your cities pains the eyes of the red man. But perhaps it is because the red man is a savage and does not understand.

There is no quiet place in the white man's cities. No place to hear the unfurling of leaves in spring, or the rustle of an insect's wings. But perhaps it is because I am a savage and do not understand. The clatter only seems to insult the ears. And what is there to life if a man cannot hear the lonely cry of the whippoorwill or the arguments of the frogs around a pond at night? I am a red man and do not understand. The Indian prefers the soft sound of the wind darting over the face of a pond, and the smell of the wind itself, cleansed by a mid-day rain, or scented with pine.

The air is precious to the red man, for all things share the same breath - the beast, the tree, the man - they all share the same breath. The white man does not seem to notice the air he breathes. Like a man dying for many days, he is numb to the stench. But if we sell you our land, you must remember that the air is precious to us, that the air shares its spirit with all the life it supports. The wind that gave our grandfather his first breath also receives his last sigh. And if we sell you our land, you must keep it sacred as a place where even the white man can go to taste the wind that is sweetened by the meadow's flowers.

So we will consider your offer to buy our land. If we decide to accept I will make one condition: the white man must treat the beasts of this land as his brothers. I am a savage and do not understand any other way.

I have seen a thousand rotting buffalo on the prairie, left by the white man who shot them from a passing train. I am a savage and do not understand how the smoking iron horse can be more important than the buffalo that we kill only to stay alive.

What is man without the beasts? If all the beasts were gone, man would die from a great loneliness of spirit. For whatever happens to the beasts soon happens to man. All things are connected.

You must teach your children that the ground beneath their feet is the ashes of our grandfathers. So that they will respect the land, tell your children that the earth is rich with the lives of our kin. Teach your children what we have taught our children. -that the earth is our mother. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. If men spit upon the ground, they spit upon themselves.

This we know: the earth does not belong to man; man belongs to the earth. This we know: all things are connected like the blood which unites one family. All things are connected.

Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life; he is merely a strand in it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself.

Even the white man whose God walks and talks with him as a friend to friend cannot be exempt

from the common destiny. We may be brothers after all. One thing we know - which the white man may one day discover - our God is the same God. You may think now that you own Him as you wish to own our land; but you cannot. He is the God of man, and His compassion is equal for the red man and the white. This earth is precious to Him and to harm the earth is to heap contempt on its Creator. The whites too shall pass, perhaps sooner than all other tribes. Contaminate your bed and you will one night suffocate in your own waste.

But in your perishing you will shine brightly, fired by the strength of the God who brought you to this land and for some special purpose gave you dominion over this land and over the red man. That destiny is a mystery to us for we do not understand when the buffalo are all slaughtered, the wild horses are tamed, the secret corners of the forest heavy with the scent of many men and the view of the ripe hills blotted by talking wires. Where is the thicket? Gone. Where is the eagle? Gone. The end of living and the beginning of survival.

Father 'Mike' Bucci

May 30, 2001

Dear Bernie,

Received the enclosed letter from Ricardo M. Bernadet, 25 de Agosto 655, San Carlos C.P.20400, Uruguay, South America. His letter indicates a sincere interest in the 99th and his admiration and respect for veterans of the U.S. Air Force who served in World War II.

As noted in his letter, he is anxious for further information. Therefore, there might be some of our members who would like to communicate with him via notes and/or photos. I have personally replied to his letter and sent a photo or two.

If you concur that our membership would enjoy reading the letter, you might want to print it in our next newsletter.

Thanks.

Ian Smith

SAN CARLOS, MAY 2001.-

THE 99TH BOMB GROUP
14171 DESERT DRIVE
SUN CITY WEST, ARIZ. 85375
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

DEAR FRIENDS:

LET ME CALL YOU SO, BECAUSE
I CONSIDER THAT ALL THE ALLIED VETS. OF THE WWII
ARE MY FRIENDS AND IT IS A GREAT HONOUR FOR ME TO
WRITE TO THE VETS. OF THE CREWS OF B-17E.

I WANT YOU KNOW THAT IN THIS PART OF
THE WORLD, SOMEONE REMEMBERS, ADMIRES AND THANKS YOU
FOR ALL THE SACRIFICE, COURAGE AND ABNEGATION SHOWED
DURING THE WAA, UNTIL THE VICTORY'S DAY.

FOR ALL THIS, I FEEL SOMETHING IS
MISSING IN THE HONOUR PLACE AT HOME, WHERE ARE THE
PHOTOS OF VETS. AND CREWS AMERICAN, BRITISH, AUSTRALIAN
AND ANOTHER NATIONALITIES ONES - WHICH ARE MY PEN
PALS AND WHO HAVE BECOME GOOD FRIENDS OF MINE, BECAUSE
I THINK THAT THE FRIENDSHIP AS THE HONOUR ARE FOR EVER.
... AND THE THING MISSING AT HOME IS A PHOTO OF A
B-17E WITH ITS COMBAT CREW.

I THANK YOU TO SAY ME THE PRICE OF A
PHOTO IN ORDER TO SEND YOU THE NECESSARY MONEY.

ALSO, I WISH TO KNOW IF YOUR ASSN.
HAS SOME KIND OF PUBLICATION OR MAGAZINE IN ORDER TO
SUBSCRIBE.

SINCERELY


Ricardo M. Bormadet
25 de Agosto 655
San Carlos C.P.20400
URUGUAY (South America)

99TH BOMB GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY
HOWARD JOHNSON MOTEL
SAN ABTONIO TX
WEDNESDAY 18 APRIL 2001

ATTENDEEES:

OFFICERS::

DON LAWHORN-PRESIDENT
VINCENT BELL-VICE PRESIDENT
WALTER BUTLER-TREASURER
H.E. "CHRIS" CHRISTIANSEN-SECRETARY

DIRECTORS:

VINCENT BELL, ARKIE CLARK, VIC FABINIAK, ART KNIPP, FRED
LEIBY, JIM LaVEY, LEN SMITH, and FRED TROY

PAST PRESIDENTS:

BOB BACHER, JOE CHANCE, LEW BOATWRIGHT and JULES
HOROWITZ

CHAPLAIN

FATHER MICHAEL J. BUCCI

ASSOCIATES:

JERRY BUCKINGHAM and MIKE HAYMAN

NOT IN ATTENDANCE:

BERNIE BARR, WARREN BURNS, ED MARLOW, DICK DRAIN,
JAMES SMITH, LEONARD HOPEN, BILL SMALLWOOD and ROY
WORTHINGTON

Each attendee had been given a copy of the order of business for this session upon entering the meeting.

1. Call to Order

President Don Lawhorn called the attendees to order at 2:30.P.M.

Chaplain Michael Bucci opened our session with prayer,

2. Minutes of the 2000 reunion

Members had been mailed copies of the minutes of our last reunion board meeting that was held in Jacksonville FL. A copy had also been published in the November 2000 newsletter. Jules Horowitz moved that we dispense with the reading of the minutes. Seconded by Bob Bacher. All approved

3. Treasurer's Report

The treasurer's report had been given to board members previously. Jim La Vey moved that we accept the Treasurer's report which was seconded by Arkie Clark. All approved

4. Nominating Committee

Jim La Vey advised that the terms of three of our board members- Vincent Bell, Chris Christiansen and Jim LaVey were expiring.. However all three had indicated a willingness to serve another term. Jim also presented the names of three former presidents-Lew Boatwright, Joe Chance and Jules Horowitz who had indicated a willingness to become board members. The names of these six nominees would be presented for approval to the general membership at the business meeting on Friday.

5. Site Committee

The site committee report was presented by Fred Leiby. Fred stated that he and Roy Worthington had visited facilities in Palm Springs California and their findings revealed that it would be too expensive for our members. Another bottleneck was the need to use shuttle service. Fred Leiby recommended that we not pursue this avenue.

6. Old Business

The next order of business was the changes to the Constitution and By-Laws. In particular as the result of our proposed Constitutional changes Bernie Barr had proposed in his letter of 24 October 2000 that the following changes be voted upon:

Delete Paragraph one ARTICLE VII of our Constitution 'BOARD OF DIRECTORS' which reads "At least one director elected be a resident of the state of New Mexico and a citizen of the United states."

Delete from the current By Laws of the 99th BGHS Paragraph F, Section 2 which reads "A past President has all the rights and privileges of a Director at the BOD meetings which he attends"

President Don Lawhorn had polled the board members by mail in accordance with ARTICLE VII of our Constitution entitled "BOARD OF DIRECTORS" pertaining to the above changes. As a result, 10 of the 18 members and 2 of the past presidents concurred.

There was a short discussion of the two proposed changes. There was some difference of opinion on the two issues. Vincent Bell thought we should discuss these. Len Smith questioned why we should be making changes after all these years. Arkie Clark proposed that we approve the two changes proposed without changing anything else in the By Laws. Len Smith made a second. All approved except for one abstention.

President Don stated that the issue would be brought to the members attending the business meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

President Don had stated in his handout that we are getting older and that it would be desirable for us to have backup support to the Secretary, Treasurer and Newsletter editor and publisher.

President Don stated that Walter Butler had been ill and was having his sister help him. Jerry Buckingham was to be a back up for Walter.

With respect to the newsletter, Jules said he would approach Bill Summers as back up.

Vincent Bell was to assist Chris.

OTHER BUSINESS

President Don asked Bob Bacher to report on his findings for a future reunion site. Bob gave us a run down on Omaha Nebraska.

Other discussion from the floor suggested New Orleans or even Colorado Springs.

New Orleans was being seriously considered. President Don thought that since Arkie had had professional assistance for this reunion, that Arkie should contact his professional source to assist in the New Orleans site.

Arkie Clark moved and Vic Fabiniak seconded that Bob Bacher and his site committee be tasked to expand their efforts for New Orleans. All agreed.

Then there was a suggestion given to meeting in D.C. when the WWII memorial would be dedicated.

Fred Leiby asked about getting copies of crew members and their missions. It was suggested that he contact Dick Drain.

Vincent Bell said he had a concern about our not having publicity on upcoming reunions. He cited the Air Force Times as an excellent source. Some pointed out that we did have some publicity in VFW and gunnery publications.

The morning session was nearing completion. Jules moved that we close, seconded by Joe chance.

BUSINESS MEETING FRIDAY NOON 20 April 2001

President Don Lawhorn announced that lunch was not quite ready so took the opportunity to conduct our business meeting prior to eating in lieu of following the luncheon.

Jim LaVey presented a slate of proposed directors to serve us for the next four years. These were the same as those presented at our Wednesday board meeting. Three current members tours were expiring-Vincent Bell, Chris Christiansen and Jim LaVey. There were also three past presidents that agreed to serve, if approved-Joe Chance, Jules Horowitz and Lew Boatwright.

There were no additions to the suggested candidates from those present. It was moved and seconded that the members accept the proposed candidates. All approved.

President Don advised the group that they had in front of them the proposed changes to the By-Laws. There was no discussion. It was moved and seconded that we accept the changes. All approved.

Following the voting, Father Bucci came forward to add some spice to our meeting in his likeable manner. Following this, he gave thanks.

After our meal Mike Hayman and Jerry Buckingham were called to the podium and were presented gifts of helmet liners---the same as those the 99thers were familiar with.

Frank English asked to be recognized and asked if there was some way we could have a 99th logo for the windshield of our vehicles. We had purchased bumper stickers in the past but these were more for trucks rather than autos. Frank was told that we would discuss the matter in the afternoon session.

There was no further business so were free to go.

**AFTERNOON SESSION
FRIDAY 20 APRIL 2001**

The afternoon session opened with President Don Lawhorn requesting Jim LaVey to proceed with election of officers.

Bob Bacher . nominated Don Lawhorn to serve as president. Art Knipp seconded the nomination. No other persons were placed in nomination. All approved.

Arkie Clark nominated Vincent Bell to serve as vice president. Vic Fabiniak seconded the nomination. No other persons were placed in nomination. All approved.

Bob bacher nominated Walter Butler to serve as treasurer. Arkie Clark seconded the nomination. No other persons were placed in nomination. All approved.

Arkie clark nominated Chris Christiansen to serve as secretary. Bob Bacher seconded the nomination. . No other persons were placed in nomination. All approved.

Our next discussion was the site for the 2002 reunion. Bob Bacher has been pursuing the possibility of Omaha. New Orleans and Colorado Springs were suggested during the afternoon session. Len Smith suggested the possibility of Las Vegas. The key factor in any location was the price of rooms. A cap of \$80-\$85 before taxes was suggested. Bob Bacher a site chairman was tasked to pursue the locations.

The backup of our treasurer, secretary and newsletter editor was again discussed. Jules Horowitz is to contact Bill Somers as a back up to Bernie and the publishing of the newsletter. Jerry Buckingham will backup Walter and his sister as treasurer. Vincent Bell will be back up for secretary.

Lew Boatwright stated that our group needs to have a positive membership drive to increase our reunion attendance by using an active recruiting program. A beginning would be to search for past members .We would also need to activate associate members. Bob Bacher thought that we also needed to publish a dues due reminder forms in the January newsletter as

we lose members who get busy and forget about paying their dues.. It was also suggested that membership application forms should be included in the newsletters.

Arkie Clark felt that associates should become active members. Mike Hayman, one of our associate members, said that the 8th AF is open to associate members and that they have more members than they can accommodate.

Arkie moved that Associate members be given the rights and privileges of regular members Art Knipp seconded the motion. Motion carried. A change to the By Laws would be necessary.

A discussion of widows to become members and receive the newsletter for \$5.00 was discussed. Arkie moved and Len Smith seconded the motion.

Arkie asked that a letter from the 99th to the hotel be written to express our thanks for their cooperation and assistance to our reunion. President Don said he had already planned to do so.

Bob Bacher suggested that we call our business meetings membership meetings in lieu of business meetings as some people did not think the a business meeting applied to them.

Vic Fabiniak and Art Knipp are to follow up on the possibility of making a 99th decal that was discussed at the noon luncheon.

There was no other business to be discussed. Arkie moved that we adjourn. Bob Bacher seconded the motion.

SPECIAL CEREMONY

Vic Fabiniak had related to the board that Nick Lykos, a bombardier on Len Smith's crew--346th squadron, was Killed In Action on 26 December 1944. Prior to the mission, Nick had attended Christmas eve mass in Rome where he received a rosary. The morning of 26 December Nick gave Vic the rosary when they were flying a mission to Bleckhammer. Vic had kept the rosary all these years.

THOMAS P. O'REILLY
Colonel (Ret) USAF
2147 Lords Landing
Virginia Beach, VA 23454

February 8, 2001

Attending our reunion in San Antonio were the nieces and nephews of Nick Lykos. Family members included Nickolas II, Linda and son Nickolas III; The Honorable Patrick Lykos and William "Bill" Allen all from Houston.

Vic "Fab" Fabiniak had planned on presenting the rosary to Nickolas Lykos III at our banquet on Saturday night 21 April, but the family needed to return to Houston. On Friday afternoon, 20 April those in the hospitality room were witnesses to the emotional presentation of the rosary to Nickolas Lykos III that Vic had received from Nick Lykos on that eventful day of 26 December 1944.

Respectfully,



H.E. "Chris" Christiansen

Email Hchrist425@aol.com Phone 256 519 6501

Postscript—During our Saturday night banquet President Don announced that the latest word on the 2002 reunion was that Nashville will be the site.

Dear Bernie,

It is with much pride that I remember the days (and nights) spent with the 99th Bomb Group in Italy during the big war. I was the navigator on Lt Merlyn (Mike) Corley's crew which reported to the 346th Bomb Squadron on January 7, 1944 after a 3 week trip from Kearney, Nebraska via South America and Africa in the first B-17G assigned to the 99th (Strait To Hell). Mike was killed on April 16th, 1944 while flying in El Diablo, on a raid over Belgrade. Eight crew members of El Diablo were killed that day, including Lt Col Headrick, deputy commander of the 99th and Fred Korth, the squadron navigator, who was on his 50th mission.

On April 16th, I was appointed Squadron Navigator of the 346th and as such flew 34 missions as Wing(2), Group(16) and 34 as Squadron leader with Major Al Schroeder as pilot on all but two of them.

One of my most memorable missions was against the Avezzano marshalling yards on May 22, 1944 when we encountered 100% cloud cover over the target and eventually had to use my stop-watch to finish off the bomb run. The IP was visible on our first attempt, but visibility deteriorated as ^{we} went down the bomb run. The city and target area were blanketed with clouds so the run was aborted. Major Schroeder asked for a heading back to the Adriatic and home. It was at this time that I told Major Schroeder that I had spotted a building that I could positively identify on my target chart, that was about 3 miles short of our target, pretty much on line with our original target. I told him that we could put the bombs in the target area by making a delayed drop, by using the stop-watch. He said OK so back to the IP the 99th headed. We made the run, using the stop-watch for the last 55 seconds. This was the first and last stop-watch bomb run I was ever involved with. It was some 3 weeks later that Major Schroeder and our Intelligence officer asked me to come over and visit with them, where I learned, that the mission was a complete success, and I was awarded The Distinguished Flying Cross.

It's a little known fact that on the first shuttle run to Russia, June 2, 1944, that it was Major Schroeder and his crew that led the 99th into Poltava. We took over the lead at the request of Colonel Lauer, after dropping the bombs at Debrecen. We were deputy lead at the time.

I left Italy in July 1944, the same way as I arrived, in a B-17G. Major Schroeder was kind enough to fly me across the Mediterranean Sea to ORAN where I was able to board one of the Matson Lines luxury ships, The Mariposa. Eight days after leaving Foggia, we sailed into Boston.

Best Regards
Tom

FOR INFORMATION AND/ACTION

COLD WAR RECOGNITION CERTIFICATE: Congress has enacted a recognition certificate for those faithfully serving the United States during the period of 2 Sept 1945 to 26 Dec 1991. This certificate recognizes the service and sacrifices made by personnel during that period. In order to obtain the certificate, you must request an application form:

Cold War Recognition
4035 Ridge Top Road Suite 400
Fairfax, VA 22030

Fill in the application and submit with documentation (normally a DD214) verifying service during the period cited. Submit copies of the documentation as originals will not be returned. The e-mail address for this operation is coldwar@fairfax-emhl.army.mil. Fax number is 703-275-6749. Telephone 703-275-6279. (RAO Hill AFB Newsletter 99).

FRENCH HONOR WORLD WAR II VETERANS (Consulate-Anchorage, AK 907-244-6827).

The French Government will present certificates to World War II veterans, thanking them for their participation in the liberation of France. To be eligible, a veteran must have served on French territory, in French territorial waters or in French airspace between June 6, 1944 and May 8, 1945. The certificate will not be issued posthumously.

Presentation of certificates is expected to begin later this year. Ten Consuls of France in the United States will work with state veterans' affairs offices, veterans' service organizations and other veterans groups to identify eligible people. During the mid-90s, the French government recognized American veterans who served in France during World War 1.

Application forms will be available from veterans' service organizations and on a French Internet site: <http://www.info-france-usa.org/news/statmnts/ww2/index.htm>

WHAT TO DO WHEN A PERSON RECEIVING SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS DIES: A family member or person responsible for the estate should do the following:

- (1) Notify Social Security Administration by calling 1-800-772-1213.
- (2) If benefits were paid by direct deposit, notify the bank, and request the payment made for the month of date be returned immediately.
- (3) If benefits are paid by check, do not cash the last one. Return it to SSA a one-time payment of \$255.00 is payable to the surviving spouse, or to children if there is no spouse. Also, monthly survivor benefits can be paid to certain family members, including the widow(er), dependent children of dependent parents. More information is available at Social Security's web site: <http://www.ssa.gov>.

AWARDS AND DECORATIONS - Ordinarily retired members will have all authorized awards and decorations prior to retirement. If, for any reason, awards are not furnished before, or at time of retirement, or if replacements of items previously issued were lost or destroyed through no fault of the concerned individual, they may be obtained by application to the service from which retired. Medals that were awarded while in active service will be issued upon individual request to the appropriate service: ARMY - Commander, U.S. Army Reserve Personnel Center, ATTN: DARP-VSE-A. 9700 Page Blvd., St Louis, MO 63132-5200

All requests for medals pertaining to service in the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard should be sent to the : National Personnel Records Center
ATTN: Navy Liaison Office (N324)
9700 Page Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63132-5199

For the Air Force, same address, except ATTN: Air Force Reference Branch (NCPMF-C).

When requesting awards and decorations, please include your military service number and/or your Social Security number.

VA HEADSTONES: The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has established a single nationwide toll-free number to make it easier for veterans and their dependents to inquire about the Veterans Headstone & Grave Marker Program. The phone number is 1-800-697-6947, which connects you directly to the VA's National Cemetery System's office in Washington, D.C. Hours of Operation: 0800-1630 (EST), Monday through Friday.

Dear Bernie ~

Would any of these items
be of interest for the news
letter?

Regards,

Mary Pat (HELLER)

Thanks, Mary Pat these items should be of interest to most of us.

Robert L. Wood 6005 North 5th Road-Arlington, Virginia 22203- wants to know if anyone flew more trips as a combat crew member to PLOESTI THAN HIS SEVEN (7). If you did let us know.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

MORTON G. MAGEE 2801 N Halifax Ave. Apt 155 Daytona Beach FL 32118-3179

THOMAS M. OSBORN 503 Shadowcreek Ln. Williamstown, NJ 08094-7518

**Embassy of France
"Thank-You-America Certificate"**

**Recommendation
For the Certificate to Recognize the Allied Soldiers Who Took Part to
The Normandy Landing and Contributed to the Liberation of France
1944-1945**

Last Name:		First Name:		Middle Initial:
Date of Birth:		Birthplace:		Country of Birth:
Street Address:				
Town:	State:	Zip:	Telephone:	
Major Combat Unit (Army, Division, Naval ship, Coast Guard vessel, Numbered Air Force) :				
World War II Serial Number:				
Duration of armed services on French territory, airspace or waters during World War II and dates (year, month end day, please attach a copy of military records):				
Dates of Service-From: _____ Until: _____				
Where did you serve in France? :				

If this form is prepared by a third person, please indicate your name, address and phone number below:

To be completed by the veteran:

I, _____, the undersigned, declare on my honor that the information contained on this form and on the attached copies is exact.

Done at _____ on _____, 2000/2001.

Signature of the veteran: _____

April 30, 2001

To: Walter H. Butler, Treasurer
99th. B.G. Historical Society

The 99th. Bomb Group Historical Society has a new book " FORTRESS FIGHTERS". The author, our own William F. Somers. My autographed copy reached me at Cape Canaveral, Florida in January, 2001. In the 10 man crew, the engineer/gunner knew more about the B-17 than any other crew member. William of the 348th. squadron was one of them.

This great book begins where my book, "Beyond Fighter Escort" left off. I completed my 50 missions in October, 31, 1943. Bill's first mission took place in November of 1944. He was to receive certificates of commendation from Gen. Hap Arnold and B.G. Yantis Taylor relative to his knowledge of the B-17.

Bill and I met at the Ontario, California reunion in the fall of 1983. I mentioned the book I was writing with much history of the 99th. being provided me by then Maj. Gen. Fay R. Upthegrove. We did exchange chapters over the years and he wrote to me of other bomb group members also writing their memoirs. He has done a great job working in stories of some eleven distinguished members. I am familiar with these six writers:

Robert Duffy, commander of the 99th. ordinance company. They loaded our bombs while the crews slept.
Les Hansen, a 347th. navigator.
John Plummer, a very skilful pilot in the 347th.
Julius Horowitz, pilot, 416th.
Homer (Mac) McClanahan, pilot 346th.
and myself, jim Bruno, pilot 347th.

The other five men credited with interesting stories of missions many other crews did not experience. I was very lucky to be at Randolph, Ellington and Fort Worth when I read Bill's list of missions. Vienna, Linz, Regensburg, Augsburg, Prague with many of these returned to several more times. To me this sounds more like the 8th. Air Force targets out of England.

Bill's first title was to be "My War". When I heard Andy Rooney of the 60 minute TV program say he wrote a book with that title, I wrote Bill to change his title which he did. Bill took his time and gathered much historical information that few writers have done. I learned more about Hitler and WWII from this great book. Well written!

Chapter 12 begins with some secrets about my love of flying and girls. I didn't know that. Girl problems began in Primay. When graduation day drew near we were asked if we had found a dancing partner. Over 40 of us dumb dodos had not.

The yellow school bus arrived from the nearby Junior College. As the lovely young ladies stepped off the bus and cadets names were called my hopes were that my name would soon be called. My name was the last to one called. When my date stepped off the bus the overload springs let out a sigh of relief. I resolved that come Basic training I was not having someone pick my date. The blond at the root beer stand in town became my choice. But she had also promised another cadet. Upon confronting her, my buddy, Bob Imes won out. She lined me up with a lovely brunette. Her family treated me to dinner and I was on cloud nine. At one of our reunions I accused classmate Bob Imrie of the one who stole my girl at Basic. Bob could not remember stealing her and fretted over it for one year. At the next reunion he stopped me and told me if I had not confused him with Bob Imes?. He was right, it was Bob Imes. I apologized to Bob Imrie. For Advanced flying school graduation at Roswell, New Mexico, I took no chances. I told my fiance' Irene Schilling to be there. I proposed marriage even though we had agreed to wait until after the war was over. I had fallen in love with Irene at "first sight" in June of 1939. I also took my first flying lesson in December, 1939.

On page 186 of Bill's book he has the photo of my first air plane purchased in Feb. 1940. I paid \$175.00 and flew it for two years accumulating 45 hours and a private licence before I left for Ryan School of Aeronautics near San Bernardino, CA. I am sending the picture of this crate in case the editors see fit to find room. There I am in Farmer overalls guiding the right wing for a pilot I trusted to fly it.

I would be remiss if I failed to mention other 99th. members who have had good books published.

Bill Smallwood wrote "Tomlin's Crew" a very interesting book about his prisoner of war experience. I have other books that also were written by those who had the misfortune of bailing out in enemy territory. George F. Perry also has a good book. "For You Der Var Iss Offer" Bill was treated quite well when he answered a needle puncture with German complaint. That caused him to get better treatment. Then he was caught digging himself out of that camp. Bill, they liked you!

Members in the State of Washington and Georgia are purchasing my book "Beyond Fighter Escort" by the dozen. They say they make good gifts. For sixteen dollars and two dollars mailing your family and friends will enjoy it. Bill Imrie has already purchased a dozen. He is ahead of Amazon. Com in Seattle. In Peachtree City Georgia where Bankhead is on the golf course if there is no rainstorm, and the family of Dean Shields in nearby Atlanta together, they too can say they have the other dozen. No more war books for me. Romance sells better. I'm working on it. My dear wife. Merlyn is all for it.

James Bruno, 347th
16645 Cherry Hill Dr.
Brookfield, WI 53005-2716

COW AT TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH

The air crew of Lts. Joe Moffitt and Vern Baldwin completed their flight training at Avon Park, Fl. and flew a brand new B17G to Trinidad. The next morning, it was on to Belem, Brazil. With the knowledge that our next hop would be to Natal, these two Pilots decided to engage in a once in a lifetime buzz job. The Pampas of Brazil, world famous cattle grazing lands, would be the recipient of this special buzz job. A short time into the flight and a call on the intercom, Navigator to Pilot, " Hey Joe you better pull up, there's a COW AT TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH ". When we landed, there was a visible green stain halfway up the prop blades, from the grass of the Pampas. These two Pilots could handle a B17 as though it was a fighter, which served us well, when they were forced to execute a perfect no injury crash landing. But that's another story.

On our flight from Natal, Brazil to Dakar, Africa, we were all given a box lunch (sandwiches and an orange) for the trip. A parachute had accidentally opened in the space between the Pilots. As Lt. Moffitt peeled his orange, he casually threw the skins into the chute. Laughing, he remarked to Lt. Baldwin " Vern you'd be in a bad position if we had to bail out and your chute is here, all spread out ". Vern responds " Joe I have my chute here with me, so that must be yours on the deck ". Now Joe says " well if we have to bail out, I'll hold on to you and we'll go down together in your chute ". Vern replies, " no good Joe, you better figure another way ".

A short time later, Lt. Moffitt felt the need to relieve himself and since there wasn't any commode type can aboard, he utilized the cardboard box that his lunch came in. Placing the box in the bomb bay, he ordered the door cracked open so he could slip the box out. He didn't realize that Sgt. Malone was still in the ball turret and luckily the turret wasn't facing the front of the plane. When the box came flying out, only the rear of the turret suffered the contamination. When we landed the Lt. says " Malone clean up that mess ". Malone replied " no sir, you dirtied it, you clean it ". Finally one of the ground crew washed it down with a hose. Snickering, he found much humor in the situation, but Malone didn't.

Then on to Casablanca and Algiers. The non-coms of the crew decided to visit the Casbah. We heard it was a nasty place but we all carried '45 automatics in shoulder holsters and figured nothing could harm us (foolish thinking of the young). It was dark when we arrived at the Casbah, that was illuminated by what seemed to be a 25 watt bulb at the top of the street. Gathering our courage, we were about to enter the street, when suddenly two MPs step out of the doorway to our left and two more from the right. They informed us (to our relief) that the Casbah was off limits, so we trekked back to the base. I often think we would have been in trouble, if we had been allowed to proceed.

Robert J. Nori
416 Sqdn.

This is the third hour of a three hour telephone interview that I had with Dr. WILLIAM EDMONDS of Florida State University. To volunteer to record your story in this manner write to Reichelt Program for Oral History-Florida State University-Tallahassee, Florida 32806-2200

Bernie Barr

Edmonds: This is Bill Edmonds. It's the 5th of October, 1999. I'm interviewing Colonel Bernie Barr who is at his home in Albuquerque, New Mexico. Colonel Barr, we finished last time right where you were describing your, as you called it, your first shuttle mission. Can you just remind us where you were flying out of and what the date was?

Barr: On June 2, 1944, was my first combat mission in Europe. I flew as copilot to the squadron commander of the 416th squadron, a Major John Morris. I was a major at the same time. We flew as four or five B-17 groups from Foggia, Italy to Poltava, Russia. In route, we bombed a marshaling yard in Debrecen. The total flying time that day was seven hours.

Edmonds: Where is Debrecen?

Barr: Oh my God. It's in Romania, I think. I've forgotten. That's a long time ago.

Edmonds: We'll find it. That's okay.

Barr: What amazed me was that in the South Pacific, I had flown single aircraft over targets and dropped bombs, but this one was a formation of over 150 B-17s congregating together. It was with a great deal of apprehension that you get ready to get in an airplane and fly to an enemy target knowing that you are going to be shot at with live ammunition and be possibly attacked by fighters. We had an escort that joined us in route to Poltava of P-51s from the 325th fighter group. So we landed in Poltava after seven hours of flying.

Edmonds: Where did the P-51s come out of?

Barr: The P-51s were stationed in Italy and since they were so much faster than we were - we

flew at a slower air speed - the fighters took off from Italy say an hour after we had and joined us in route and escorted us over the target at Debrecen and on into Russia. We landed at Poltava and the fighters landed at another base in Russia.

Edmonds: On the bombing mission, was it successful?

Barr: Oh my gosh, yes. With five bomb groups dropping. . . about thirty-six airplanes per group would drop a lot of bombs. We, I'm sure, destroyed the marshaling yard.

Edmonds: Well, if you have 150 B-17s, each one is dropping what, eight bombs?

Barr: Each one is dropping about 5,000 pounds of bombs. Probably 500 pounds in each bomb, which would give at least eight bombs per airplane.

Edmonds: Maybe as many as ten, so you're talking about. . .

Barr: Possibly, possibly.

Edmonds: You're talking about a lot of bombs. Maybe a thousand bombs or more coming down.

Barr: Well, to continue, we stayed in Russia living in tents going through a mess line outside a community bath building with showers and toilets that had been constructed. Russian women were doling out and putting food into our mess kits and tin cups full of hot coffee, which was. . . it was good, I suppose. We stayed there and then on the 6th of June, '44, all groups took off and left Russia and bombed a target at Galati Air Field in Rumania. Debrecen is in Hungary instead of Romania. We bombed the target and returned to Poltava after dropping bombs on the target. Our total flying time then was about six hours and thirty minutes, to the target, drop the bombs, and return.

Edmonds: Did you . . . at the airfield, did you catch much anti-aircraft fire?

Barr: Oh, the anti-aircraft fire was very heavy. We suffered no airplane loss.

Edmonds: Did they send up any fighters?

Barr: They did, but the escort P-51s from the 325th bomb group fought them off before they were able to get into the bomb group, the stream of B-17s.

Edmonds: Now, when you are at this Russian base, did you have Russian commanders or American commanders?

Barr: Oh no. The . . . General Spaatz was the commander of the Mediterranean force and he made the coordination with the Russians on which targets we should hit. From an article I read later, the Russians were not very cooperative with us. The article written by Spaatz was published in one of our newsletters I'd say a year or so ago. He discussed his operation and discussions with the Russian commanders, including Stalin. When we returned from the mission on the 6th of June, the Russians were quite jubilant. We were then informed about D-Day in France from England - the invasion. We joined in the celebration and were quite happy.

Edmonds: How did that celebration go?

Barr: Well, it wasn't really, you know, hip-hip-hooray, throwing things. It was just internal pleasure and happiness, I would presume.

Edmonds: Had you had any inclination D-Day was coming?

Barr: Well, we knew sooner or later it would happen, but we were not quite sure when. It did happen at the same time our 99th bomb group was in Russia and had flown a combat mission.

Edmonds: Well, this western front had been a goal of the Russians for a long, long time, hadn't it?

Barr: Oh they had wanted relief from being attacked by the Germans on their western front of Russia.

Edmonds: I imagine they were very excited about it?

Barr: Oh, they were very pleased.

Edmonds: Did you have . . . did many of the Russians speak English?

Barr: We had an interpreter that stayed with . . . they had many interpreters. If a group decided during their time they weren't on a combat mission, which was quite often, we had a person with our group. We went into the local market in Poltava. They had fresh produce for sale from the farmers and the interpreter did any discussion. I bought some fresh strawberries for my own eating. I ate them without guilt. They were quite good. But all the buildings in Poltava were bombed out, but the streets were cleaned up, the debris had been removed, the streets were nice and clear. Looked as if they had been swept.

Edmonds: Did you have a camera?

Barr: No, we were not permitted to take cameras. There was an official photographer for the group and he was responsible for all photographs. No personnel photographs were permitted.

Edmonds: Did you ever see any of those photographs he took?

Barr: Oh yes. We have published some in our newsletters which you have. In our last mission, there are three or four of them. In some of the previous issues, we had occasionally published

some of those photographs.

Edmonds: How did the people in the Russian town feel about Americans, the military being there?

Barr: Oh, they were quite friendly and congenial. Of course, we couldn't speak their language and they could not speak ours, except through interpreters. In the evening when they would have a local show put on by Russian performers doing their dancing and singing their choruses and army songs, they were all in the Army - they were Army troops performing - we had. . .on each side was a picture of Lenin and on the opposite side of the stage was a picture of Stalin. Those were displayed quite prominently. We all put on our summer khaki uniforms and go to hell, caps on our heads and went down and watched the performances. Something to do. Then go back and sleep in the folding canvas cots that had been provided by the United States.

Edmonds: This was June. Was it cold there?

Barr: It was chilly. It was not really cold, but it was chilly.

Edmonds: I have a map here of Russia. . .

Barr: Poltava is south of Moscow and Kiev.

Edmonds: Okay. I've got Kiev.

Barr: Then Poltava is south of that. To continue, we. . .

Edmonds: Oh I see. Poltava right.

Barr: We were, during the day, going to the town market or walk down by the stream and occupy ourselves in as relaxing a manner as possible. Then on the 10th of June, we were informed

we would be departing the next morning, the 11th, which we did. Each group took off separately, formed together in a wing formation of the five groups and dropped bombs on Foscani, Rumania Airport in route back to Italy. Our airplane was really shot up. The oxygen was shot out. We were the lead plane in the 416th squadron flying behind the group lead of Colonel Lauer, who was the group commander. We then had available walk-around high pressure bottles that each one of us put to our face mask and were able to survive the rest of the route.

Edmonds: What was the bombing that you did? Where?

Barr: We dropped bombs on Foscani, Rumania Airdrome.

Edmonds: Was that also in Hungary?

Barr: Foscani, at the moment, I've forgotten what country it was in. But anyway, we bombed it and the flak was quite severe.

Edmonds: Were there. . .did y'all lose any airplanes?

Barr: There was one airplane from another group that was shot down, but none from our group.

Edmonds: You say yours was pretty badly shot up. What happened?

Barr: Well, the flak hit the airplane and hit the oxygen. . .with flak, you know, the shell explodes when it hits the target or at a pre-set altitude from their .88 millimeter guns on the ground. That shell hit our airplane and bounced it around and it hit the oxygen line. When it hits the line, the oxygen escapes and we put on the walk-around bottles.

Edmonds: Was there any. . .

Barr: No personal injuries.

Edmonds: Any damage to the operations of the plane?

Barr: No, we were able to fly it back, but of course that hole had to be patched up before the next mission.

Edmonds: When it knocks out an oxygen line, oxygen itself is pretty dangerous.

Barr: See, we were at about 23,000 feet where the availability of oxygen is very small, but we had no fire from the oxygen.

Edmonds: Okay. Before we proceed, I want to find out exactly where it was you were stationed in Russia for those couple of days in June.

Barr: Well, we were there from June. . .late afternoon of June 2. . .

Edmonds: Until June 11, right?

Barr: Until June 11, when we left Russia, yes. So we were there for nine days.

Edmonds: Can you spell it?

Barr: P-o-l-t-a-v-a.

Edmonds: Okay.

Barr: Then after we returned, the intelligence personnel consisted of officers and enlisted men who debriefed each combat crew separately to determine what they saw, what they observed. All

of those reports are then consolidated by the squadron intelligence officer, and then those are consolidated by the group intelligence officer and sent to the immediate headquarters. From the immediate. . .which was the 5th wing that we were operating under and it was in Foggia, Italy. On June 13, I led the 416th squadron and became squadron commander of the 416th squadron on June 11 of '44 because Major Morris had completed his missions and was in route home, so I became the commander of this squadron.

Edmonds: So how did your duties change?

Barr: Well, I then was responsible for all of the operations within that squadron, the administration, engineering, communications, ammunition, and the other activities, and the conduct of the personnel within the squadron. I had a squadron operations tent in which the operations were conducted. The administration of this squadron was in a separate tent. As squadron commander, I had a tent of my own in which I lived. Each crew had two tents, one tent for the four officers within the crew and another tent for the six enlisted personnel within that crew. The crew pilot was responsible for the conduct of his own crew and for their being available for any mission they were scheduled for. That schedule was prepared by the wing, sent down to the group, and then the group distributed further orders to the squadron and the squadron then assigned the number of crews and the airplanes that were in commission to those crews. It was quite a responsibility to be a squadron commander.

Edmonds: It sure sounds like it. Did you get any sleep at night?

Barr: Oh sure. Thank God we had white sheets and GI blankets to sleep on the folding cot.

Edmonds: I mean the pressure and responsibility didn't keep you up?

Barr: You have to become adjusted to any responsibility, whether it's in the operation of the squadron on the ground or in the combat missions in the air. At the age of twenty-four or twenty-

five - I think I was twenty-five at the time - was quite adjustable. You know, the physical condition of a person that age is very flexible. Shall I continue with my mission?

Edmonds: Yeah. Let me ask you one question, though.

Barr: Surely.

Edmonds: Foggia, Italy is pretty far south. It's actually about where Naples is. Was that a good base?

Barr: It's to the east of Naples and not very far from the Adriatic Sea.

Edmonds: Right. Was that a good base to fly out of? I'm surprised you weren't based farther north.

Barr: All five groups of the 5th wing were at different bases around the town of Foggia. Each base had one pierced-plank runway that was set in the prevailing direction of the wind. The taxi strips were of pierced-steel plank that had been laid over compacted dirt.

Edmonds: You call it pierced-plank?

Barr: Well, pierced-plank is a strip of metal that had holes in it that would link together and connect to each other so that when it was laid, it would be a long strip of about 6,000 feet of landing strip that you could land and take off from. Wide enough to take care of one airplane.

Edmonds: How did that work?

Barr: It worked fine, except occasionally you would get a hole in it and water would collect when it would rain. Collect in that hole as happened to me one day and I'll explain it now or

later.

Edmonds: Yeah, go ahead.

Barr: On one of the missions that I was to lead the group, I had been promoted to lieutenant colonel at the time, on arriving at my airplane, it was found to be out of commission. I was directed to go to another airplane with my crew and I took it. This airplane had a radar in it and I had a radar navigator, which could look at his radar screen and determine the target and the flight direction that the navigator was taking. On take-off, I was the first one to take off, and just at flying speed, I hit one of those potholes in the pierced-steel planking of the runway and the water was splashed backward from the wheel of the airplane into the radar dome and the radar dome was blown off and broken.

Edmonds: Oh wow.

Barr: So I could not bomb with that condition. My action was to call the Sandfly Tower, it was the control name, and tell them what happened and to prepare another airplane for my crew. I asked them to stop the take-off formation so that I could land. I did land with a full bomb load and a fuel load of 2,100 gallons. We landed safely. We proceeded to another airplane. In the meantime, the other airplanes had taken off and formed into formation under the leadership of one of the lead crews of a three airplane element. I took off for the second time and gently flew into the lead position and took over the lead of the airplanes. Conditions like that happened occasionally.

Edmonds: Was that the first plane that you had flown with radar?

Barr: No, each airplane that I had ever flown in had a radar navigator that had navigation, radar navigation, equipment aboard. He could identify areas of cities and targets and railroads, rivers, and things like that.

Edmonds: What did the pilots think of radar?

Barr: Well, we used it many times to release bombs during overcast and foul weather conditions below where you could not see the target, but the radar operator, through his proficiency, could interpret where the release point was and we would drop our bombs on the target, through the overcast or the clouds to hit the target. I had a radar operator on each of the aircraft that I ever flew out of Italy. I flew fifty combat missions there.

Edmonds: So by this time, radar was no longer a top secret? The Germans knew you had it?

Barr: Oh, the Germans had radar also. In our . . . in my airplane or the lead airplane, whoever was leading the group, had an individual listening on the German frequencies and we could . . . the Germans would identify the position our formations were in and the altitude we were flying and would notify or direct their fighter aircraft to our location and give the instructions when to attack. So we knew what was going on on the ground of the Germans through the ability of that interpreter to pick up the German language.

Edmonds: So you knew when and where to expect to meet the fighters?

Barr: Yes. Say in route to the target Vienna oil refinery, which . . . or the Vienna marshaling yard, they could identify us being over say Lake Balentine and the altitude we were flying.

Edmonds: Did you make adjustments for this when you heard it?

Barr: We had no ability to change anything. We would continue to fly to our pre-assigned altitude and hit the target from the initial point that was selected and then we would begin the bomb run into the target and release it because the Germans on the ground, even though they knew our exact position, were not able to determine whether we were going to hit an oil refinery or the marshaling yard. We would continue as pre-scheduled.

Edmonds: That must have been sort of unnerving to know that in forty-five minutes you were going to be attacked by fighters.

Barr: Well, you would accept that as a responsibility that you had to do because you were, say, a combat pilot or a combat crew member and the crew members trusted their lives to the capability of the aircraft pilot and his ability to fly the airplane. The pilot trusted the capability of his crew members to proficiently perform their duties as gunners or as engineer or as radio operators, bombardier, or navigator. You had mutual trust in each individual. Even though I did not have a crew that I flew with each time, I selected my navigator knowing of his ability to navigate and I would select the bombardier that I wanted to lead to drop the bombs on the right target. Any other crew members that flew with me, were selected by the squadron operations officer. I always flew with the 416th bomb squadron, even though in August I became group operations officer and a Major Wayne Seward took over as squadron commander. I became group operations officer.

Edmonds: So even though you were promoted, you didn't stay on a desk, you kept flying?

Barr: I kept flying and the group commander would fly his missions. At the end of June, around say the first of July, the group commander, Colonel Ford Lauer, called me up and said, "Bernie, I would like to talk to you." "Yes sir." So I drove up about a mile in my jeep from the 416th squadron to his office at group headquarters. He said, "Bernie, how many missions did you fly last month?" - meaning June - I said, "Twelve." He said, "That is too many. You have to slow down because you're not going home until I do." I then started . . . of course, I had been leading the group all this . . . since the, oh I'd say, the 14th of June, I was a group leader. Then I would take my turn with the group commander, the deputy commander, and the 4th squadron commanders, not knowing what target was coming up the following day until we received orders from the wing. Then as group operations and my staff would break out those orders and send them down to the squadron telling them how many airplanes to get ready for the following day's mission, how much bombs and what type of bombs to put in the airplanes and how much fuel load

to carry. We normally carried a full load of 2,100 gallons. So the group operations officer had quite a responsibility of getting those orders. Then the following morning, he would, and his staff, have prepared the briefing materials, and the operations officer, myself, would brief the combat crews on the general mission and then the bombardier would brief on the bomb aiming point and what specific area to aim for and look for in releasing their bombs. The navigator would give the route out and the navigation assemble points for the group to be at at a certain time. We would rendezvous as a group over one point and then fly to another point and join the wave of other bomb groups as we proceeded to the designated target.

Edmonds: This mission, this shuttle mission that you mentioned earlier, you said you had about 150 B-17s in the air. Did you fly many missions with that many planes?

Barr: Oh, we flew missions. . .that was probably the least number of airplanes that we would fly with to a group, with a few exceptions.

Edmonds: Really?

Barr: On the mission of July 7 to Blackhammer Artificial Gasoline manufacturing plant, refining natural resources into gasoline at Blackhammer in Czechoslovakia. I led the whole 15th Air Force. My B-17 99th bomb group was the lead group for a group of 500 bombers that were proceeding to bomb Blackhammer, a synthetic oil refinery. We were. . .my interpreter intercepted the German radio and heard that we were going to be attacked head-on by the fighters, which they did, but after the head-on attack, they then left our group and went to another group that had a looser formation that weren't flying as close together and giving so much defensive firepower against the fighters.

Edmonds: How many planes would have been on that mission?

Barr: About 500.

Edmonds: This sounds. . .

Barr: Which would include the B-17s. . .one wing of B-17s and two wings of B-24s that were stationed in other big cities around Italy.

Edmonds: This may sound like a silly question from someone who isn't a pilot, but how did you keep from like just running over each other?

Barr: Well, we were disciplined to fly at a certain altitude and at a certain route or magnetic heading and a certain rendezvous point at a certain time, and the other groups would have a time, say, one minute or two minutes after that for their assembly. You could visually see the group in front of you and you would adjust your flying speed to retain and maintain your position in that wave of bomb groups going to the target. It just took some normal flying skills and having done it before you could do it again.

Edmonds: It took a lot of coordination, it sounds, and a lot of cooperation with each other.

Barr: Oh yes. Right. And the 15th Air Force would determine what target the B-24s would hit and it might be different from the target the B-17s would aim for. But, say, when we were going to a big target like a synthetic oil refinery, you would want to be sure to cover it, so the whole Air Force would hit it. When you were going to a Vienna marshaling yard and Vienna was the most heavily defended target with anti-aircraft guns anywhere I think I bombed against. You could see former groups having gone through, you could see the black puffs of. . .gray puffs of exploding anti-aircraft shells in front of you. As you hit the initial point, you would say to yourself, "What in the hell am I doing up here?" But you would continue on the pre-determined heading to hit the target, say, the Vienna marshaling yard or the railroad marshaling yard or the oil refinery. Like the Ploesti oil refinery we bombed on August 18 of '44. We flew for eight hours and ten minutes to get to and return from the Ploesti oil refinery and then bomb it through their anti-aircraft fire, which was extensive.

Edmonds: When you have a mission of 500 bombers, you're laying down just an awesome amount of destruction down there.

Barr: I'm sure that's the reason that at the end of the war, people viewing it, the whole city had been. . . whole big cities of Germany had been destroyed.

Edmonds: What was the impression from. . . where were you dropping your bombs, from 25,000?

Barr: No, we would drop anywhere from 21,500 to 24,500.

Edmonds: So what was the impression from the sky?

Barr: You had no feeling whatsoever that you were bombing humans. You had an assigned task to perform and you did that assigned task. Each crew member within its own individual cell of each individual airplane knew that they had to stay on the wing of another airplane, and they stayed there no matter what the flak was. And going over the target, you could see the flak bursting in front of you and all around you and if it hit your tire, say, of the airplane, which has happened to me, you could feel the airplane jump and bump and bounce around.

Edmonds: That must have been unnerving?

Barr: Well, it was kind of unnerving, but you had your assigned function to do so you continued doing it. You had the feeling of 'I will survive.'

Edmonds: Were you often or where you ever the lead airplane?

Barr: Oh, I was the lead in all the missions that I flew. Either the lead of the squadron or the lead of the group.

Edmonds: I spoke with another aviator who was never stationed in the lead and was always glad that his plane was further back because he said that the lead airplane suffered the most.

Barr: Well, every anti-aircraft gun on the ground aimed at the lead formation and if they hit it, well and good. They would knock out the leader and then they could, you know. . . and if they missed him, they could hit at other airplanes in the formation. We knew that we were the target, but we individually thought that, heck, we'll get through this. And we did fortunately.

Edmonds: As the lead bomber, everyone else keyed off of where you dropped your bombs, correct?

Barr: Everybody, when the lead airplane would drop his, the wing planes would see the bombs coming out of the bomb bay and drop simultaneously with him. Then the other squadrons would see the lead squadron drop and they would drop their airplane bombs.

Edmonds: Everybody was timed out so that the bombs are landing in a prescribed pattern, correct?

Barr: Within the pattern that was being flown by the airplanes in the air. The bombs would hit the ground in that formation.

Edmonds: Now when you have like a giant formation, 500 planes, you know, some of these bombs are dropping well ahead of the others, correct?

Barr: No, each group would pick out his own aiming point and the lead bombardier of that group would drop his bombs individually within that group. Then the succeeding group bombardier would pick out his aiming point and drop within it. If they couldn't drop it visually, then the radar operator within that lead ship of that group would drop his bombs by radar.

Edmonds: Now, when you say they couldn't drop it visually, weather obviously would be a factor, but would the previous bombing be a factor? For example, if you dropped a bomb on a refinery and actually hit something, you're going to throw up a tremendous amount of smoke.

Barr: Well, the 15th Air Force would determine through reconnaissance missions flown the day following the bombing of that target. . .they would send out reconnaissance planes to take visual photographs of what had been accomplished the day before during that mission and they could determine if return missions were necessary or not.

Edmonds: Was it ever a problem for the later bombing on the same mission. . .say the first group drops air bombs and three groups back, were they just dropping their bombs into a fog of smoke?

Barr: Sometimes they were, but usually they could see a visual aiming point and if not, they would use radar to do it because the radar could see through any mess or any smoke from an oil refinery.

Edmonds: Did. . .

End of Tape Two

Begin Tape Three

Edmonds: This is Bill Edmonds. I'm interviewing Bernie Barr. It's October 5, 1999. You were talking about bombing missions and I was trying to get an idea as to when you're the lead plane, as you often were or always were on your flights, when you dropped your bombs, did you get a sense of whether the mission was successful or did you have to wait until the next day for reconnaissance to find out?

Barr: No, you could visually. . .if someone were in a position, say the turret operator beneath

the airplane, could see where the bombs hit and he would further report his sighting. Navigators and bombardiers in following squadrons could pick out and visually see where your bombs hit. We were. . .in several of the airplanes within the group was a photographer that used a twelve inch or twenty-four inch lens and he would take photographs of the bombs as they hit the target. Those photographs would be developed by the group when we returned home and an immediate assessment of that photograph would be made and sent to the higher headquarters giving the results. With the interrogation of each crew as they returned would be made, so you would have a visual assessment and a photographic assessment of what damage had been done.

Edmonds: What was the quality of the intelligence that you received before your missions?

Barr: We would give. . .the intelligence officer would give a briefing on what opposition might be expected, whether it was anti-aircraft fire or fighter interceptions and they would always give it. As a part of the briefing, the weather officer would give his briefing on what weather conditions to expect. I remember on one mission, we went to the briefing room and I gave the briefing of what the target was and the rain was pouring outside of our briefing room and the weather officer got up and made the comment, "If you think the weather is bad here, wait until you get to the target." So that mission was canceled, thank goodness.

Edmonds: What were the capacity for the plane to fly loaded with fuel and bombs to fly in bad weather?

Barr: It depended on the skill of the airplane pilot. The airplane itself was built to fly in those conditions. The pilot had been trained to fly on instruments. So the lead airplane, if the visibility was sufficient to see from your airplane to the lead airplane, he could fly visually on the wing of the lead airplane. The lead airplane pilot would be flying on instruments to determine, you know, needle-ball and airspeed. We were able to fly formation if the visibility was enough to see the aircraft you were flying with or on, which was most of the time.

Edmonds: As the war went on, how did the quality of the U.S. pilots hold up? Did the quality improve?

Barr: Oh, they were terrific. They were well-trained and were able to hold their formations. We determined by the results that were inflicted on the German targets, the skills and ability of the pilots to stay together was terrific.

Edmonds: So the training, U.S. training, improved during the war, do you think?

Barr: Well, it was good before the war because I graduated from flying school in June of 1940. I was a qualified pilot at that point having the skill to fly an aircraft on instruments, on single engine airplane, an AT6, an Advanced Trainer, which was called a Texan. I had learned to do that before June of 1940. Then when I was assigned to the 7th Bomb Group, I learned to fly the B-18, which is a twin engine bomber and the B-17, which was the four engine Boeing flying fortress. So we were taught all during . . . I learned in 1941 and succeeding pilots learned in the combat flying training program at various bases. I was a squadron commander for training replacement combat crews at Dalhart, Texas in our previous discussion.

Edmonds: When in the war did you get a sense, from the air, of German weakness?

Barr: We never did because they always had the ability during the time I was there to shoot anti-aircraft guns at us and the flak would explode all around us. I can give one example in bombing the airdrome at Munich, Germany when on October 4, we bombed the Munich Oberhoffen Pafen Airport. We entered the initial bombing run and my airplane was hit by a shell from the anti-aircraft gun and the shell penetrated the wing and went through the fuel cell immediately behind the number three engine. It did not explode, fortunately, but the fuel started evaporating or discharging from the tank and flowing behind me. The wing aircraft thought my aircraft was going to explode because of the condition, but I immediately feathered the number three engine and flew the airplane on the three engines and continued to lead the group to the target and bomb

the airport. That was on June 13, '44 where we bombed Munich. That was a seven hour mission.

Edmonds: Did you personally ever lose a plane?

Barr: No, I was fortunate. I never had to parachute or exit an airplane until we landed back at the airdrome from which we departed.

Edmonds: What was the closest call?

Barr: That one was a close call. Another close call was done during October of that year, of '44. In October, the weather over Europe becomes very rainy and cloudy, so the 15th Air Force thought it would be good to bomb through the overcast where the aircraft could not be seen from the ground but would be . . . could observe the target from the radar unit. I, on October 26, received . . . flew such a mission to Innsbruck. I left Foggia, flew out in the cloud bank, and flew on instruments to the target. Fifteen minutes before the target, the cloud cleared up and I bombed the target alone through clearer sunlight. We received quite a bit of flak. Six enemy fighters came up to intercept, but they did not attack. By the time we had dropped the bombs visually and reported hitting the target, then fifteen minutes later went back into the clouds and flew back on instruments to Foggia.

Edmonds: When you're flying at 20,000 or 21,000 or 24,000 and you're spotted and say the German planes are on the ground, how much time do you have before those fighters could get to you?

Barr: Well, except on this mission, they did not attack. On other missions, the enemy radar had picked us up and knew that we were coming. They might have known on this mission and that was the reason the airplanes were in the air. I do not know.

Edmonds: Any clue why they didn't attack you?

Barr: No. Have no idea, but other airplanes were scheduled to bomb ten minutes apart. Twelve airplanes had been sent out to bomb Innsbruck marshaling yard through use of radar. Out of the twelve, seven bombed the target and five saw the clearer sunlight and returned. All seven that bombed the target reported the six enemy fighters being in the air. My group commander, Colonel Lauer, completed his bomb missions, his fifty, on December 27. I completed my fifty missions on December 28, by bombing Regensburg. I think it was the aircraft factory at Regensburg. So when returning on the 28th, I had completed all my fifty missions and was very pleased that I had done so without injury to myself.

Edmonds: So was that your last mission?

Barr: That was my last mission. I flew the fiftieth on December 28, 1944.

Edmonds: So what did you do when you got back from Regensburg?

Barr: Pardon?

Edmonds: What did you do?

Barr: I acted normally, but I was just internally happy that I had completed my fifty missions.

Edmonds: How long did you stay in Foggia after that Regensburg mission? How long before they sent you home?

Barr: Well, my actions was the following day I flew to headquarters at Bari, Italy, where the 15th Air Force was and requested my orders to return to the States. They typed them out while I was there. The orders were to depart Foggia Tortorella Air Base on January 2, 1945, which I did.

Edmonds: Did they fly you out or did you have to take a boat, or what?

Barr: No. I flew to Naples on January 2, '45. I stayed there waiting for an aircraft to depart. My group leader, Colonel Ford Lauer, came to Naples on January 5. On January 6, I departed in a C-47 to fly to Africa, Tunis or some other place. I was a passenger. As a passenger, I noted the number two. . .the right wing engine was vibrating and reported it to the pilot. Then the pilot landed at, oh, I think Corsica or somewhere at one of the islands. We stayed at a British camp until the engine was repaired and then flew to Casablanca. In Casablanca. . .I flew from Casablanca in a C-54 to Bermuda and then from Bermuda to Washington, D.C. I called my wife Doris who was in San Antonio, Texas, and reported that I had gotten back from Italy safely and was well. . .the weather was quite bad in D.C. and the availability of aircraft was bad, so I departed Washington. . .well, I took a train from Washington, D.C. to St. Louis and from St. Louis a train to San Antonio, Texas, where my wife met me at the train. So I think that about ends up our discussion of my combat experience.

Edmonds: Sure. Let me just ask you what was it like to be home?

Barr: Oh, I was quite elated. I was given orders to go to Miami for rest and recreation and was given oil, fuel, rations to make the trip. I had a '42 Packard at the time, so we drove from San Antonio to Mississippi to visit my family and we dropped our son off at Mississippi and then Doris and I drove to Miami, Florida, where I was physically checked over. Eye checks, physical exam. Found to be in good shape. Enjoyed about three weeks rest in Miami.

Edmonds: Not bad.

Barr: No, it wasn't bad.

Edmonds: How did you finish out the rest of the war?

Barr: Oh, that's a long story. I can continue now or later.

Edmonds: Well, why don't you just tell me briefly. . .

Barr: Okay, I left Miami, Florida and was assigned to the B-29 in Kansas. I became a proficient pilot in the B-29 and continued as deputy base commander at Pratt, Kansas until the end of the war. At the end of the war, I was assigned to command and staff school at Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas. From Ft. Leavenworth, Kansas, I was sent to Grand Island, Nebraska and from Grand Island, Nebraska, to Clovis, New Mexico where I became deputy base commander at Clovis. My wife, daughter, and son was with me at Clovis. Joined me at Clovis, New Mexico, where I stayed until I went to. . . was assigned as a lieutenant colonel to go to school to complete undergraduate degree. I was assigned to go to Kansas University at Lawrence, Kansas, where I completed my degree in eighteen months, I finished my two years for my degree and received my B.A. in history. After Lawrence, Kansas, I was assigned to Omaha, Nebraska, the 10th Air Force headquarters where I became Director of Procurement of Future Officers. I had crews that would interview college students to go to flying school. These crews would make themselves available at different colleges to interview students who filled out applications to go to different universities. From there, in '49, I went to an indoctrination course at Gunther Air Force Base in Selma, Alabama to become indoctrinated to become a professor of air science and tactics at a university. In September of '49, I was assigned to open up a reserve officer's training program at Florida State University. I became the first visual sign that the males had been assigned to a coeducational institution, even though Florida State had become coeducational a year earlier. From Florida State, I stayed as professor of air science and tactics for a period -- 1949 until 1953.
[pause in tape]

Edmonds: You ended up in Japan at one time, didn't you?

Barr: Pardon?

Edmonds: Did you end up in Japan?

Barr: To continue my career. . . may I?

Edmonds: Sure.

Barr: From Florida State, I was assigned to the Army staff college at Norfolk, Virginia for three months. From Norfolk, Virginia completed command school staff college and was assigned to go to Korea. So I dropped my family off in San Antonio, Texas and I went to Korea and was vice-commander of the 67th Tactical Reconnaissance Wing for a year. From Japan. . . from Korea, I was assigned to the Pentagon as the Director of Procurement for Training Devices for the Air Force, which included flight simulators, the mobile training units and other training devices used by the Air Force in their training program on the ground and in the air. I remained in the Pentagon as Director of Procurement for Training Devices until 1960, from '55, so that was five years. At 1960, I was assigned to the industrial college at Ft. McNair, Virginia where I received a one year training program for the industrial college. From the industrial college, I was assigned as base commander at Kirkland Air Force Base in Albuquerque, New Mexico. I served as base commander at Kirkland from September of 1961 until February 1966. From 1966, I was assigned as the vice-commander of the 6100th Support Wing, which gave support to all of the elements in Tokyo. We had nine bases under our command, including Iwo Jima. Iwo Jima. . . we had a squadron commander there that commanded the activities of Iwo Jima operations, which had an airfield and rest facilities for incoming and outgoing Army and Navy and Air Force people as their duties required. I was the overseer for their operations, plus the other nine bases around Japan. We would have responsibility for the coordination with the Japanese mayors in the Tokyo area and with the governor of Tokyo. We had nice associations with the Japanese. During that time, I was able to form the coordination and operation and get together all the mayors of Tokyo, little cities around Tokyo, at a conference. Each two or three months we would have a get together at Tachikawa. I then coordinated a visit to Iwo Jima by the civilian element and government of Tokyo and Japan that wanted to reassume the responsibility of the transfer of the island of Iwo

Jima from American back to the Japanese. So I flew to Iwo Jima and was present when the Japanese airlines brought a host of Japanese dignitaries to Iwo Jima where they searched out their ancestral burial grounds and looked over the island in general, visiting the Iwo Jima monument at Mt. Suribachi. They visited that and the memorial burial ground of the American and Japanese troops. So it was quite a ceremony. Then in February of '69, I received orders to return to the States. My wife and I rode in the President Cruise Line from Yokohama back to San Francisco. Then I was assigned to Kirkland. . . was assigned as the executive officer for the Air Force Special Weapons Center at Kirkland Air Force Base. I retired on February 1 of 1970 as a full Colonel and had been a full Colonel since Tallahassee, Florida in 1951, a period of nineteen years. So if you are going to stagnate, maybe that's not a bad grade to do it in.

Edmonds: Yeah, no kidding. Look, Colonel Barr, it's been a fascinating conversation. I really appreciate you granting us the interview.

Barr: Well, I appreciate your having asked me to do so. I hope that the younger generations in reviewing this receive some beneficial knowledge of what happened during World War II.

Edmonds: Before I close, I'm just going to repeat once again that you are. . . ask you if you were aware that I was taping this conversation and was that acceptable to you?

Barr: I voluntarily agreed to do this conversation for the future generations so that they may learn what happened to one individual.

End of Interview

99th Bombardment Group Historical Society

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The 99th BGHS is making a special attempt to get new members to join our Group and fill positions of responsibility in our organization to replace members who are unable to continue their duties for which they volunteered.