



VOLUME 2, NO 2 of the NEWSLETTER OF THE 99TH BCWS BRANCH HISTORICAL SOCIETY
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Published bi-monthly, Editors, Frank English and George F. Coen

SOCIETY OFFICERS

President George F. Coen
Vice-president Michael Yarina
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REUNION NOTES

99th BG April 24-25 Albuquerque, NM
Contact Thomas J. Gamma, 12225 Victoria Falls NE
Albuquerque, NM 87112; Phone 505-296-7075

99th BG Contact Muskegon, MI
Earl Silvia, 7540 Old Channel Trail
Montague MI 49437; Phone 616-894-4601

WWII Bombardiers Ocean City MD
Contact William Burzeski, 485 E. Lincoln Ave.
Mt. Vernon, NY 10552

451BG Aug. 7 Colorado Springs, CO
Contact Robert Karstenen, 1032 S. State St.
Marengo IL 60152

Ex-POW's July Colorado Springs CO
Contact P.O.Box 517, Fountain CO 80817

2BG Sep. 17,82 Hampton VA
Contact Phil Glassman, 1209 Helmen Dr.
South Bend IN 46615

Big 1985 Seattle WA
Boeing 50th Anniversary
Bash of the B-17

973 G Sep 16,82 St. Louis MO
Contact David J. Stumpf, 2900 E. Chandler Ave.
Evansville IN 47714

PROGRESS REPORT

Membership, Feb. 3
Members, 291
Prospects 161

Finances
Balance 5 Dec. 594.40
Misc. Supplies -163.67
Newsletter -199.02
Dues & Donations 564.00
Balance 1 Feb. 785.80

Thanks to the 152 members who have sent in their \$10.00 dues for 1982. Receipt will be acknowledged by the number 1932 in the upper right hand corner of your address label.

Special thanks to Wood, Goodale, Moore, Collins, Bradley, Neffran, Murphy, Sam Dunn, Leudemann, Capone, McCLOW, Shupe, Trapuzzano, Yarina, Carlock, Snyder, Willis, States, and Kaufman for donations in addition to dues.

NEWS

Mike Yarina underwent further hip surgery on Feb. 10th at Rapid City. At this writing he is starting a 3-week wait to determine the efficacy of the operation. He and Lettie thank the friends who have called during Mike's lengthy convalescence. Mike is flat on his back again; they've taken away his cane.

January 14 1982

31 Parkland Road
Mona Vale 2103
Sydney, Australia

26 Nov

Dear George-

I'm rather slow in answering your nice letter and I enjoyed your telling about your early days in old Mejiço the backpacking and cold camps. I'm a little old for backpacking but I made two hunts in Alaska where I got a fine Dahl Ram and three different hunts in Wyoming for antelope and mule and one for elk when I got a near record head in the Big Horn Mts west of Sheridan. Those Mts are too steep for me to climb any more. During my tour in Wiesbaden Ger '48 to '51 I guess I walked over most of the hills between Heidelberg and Kassel hunting Boar, Ger elk and Reh buck deer.

Did you ever contact Jim Flex, navigator on the crew of Dean Shields, as flown across the Atlantic from Palm Beach? He wrote me recently - lives in Dickenson Tx, owns Flex Enterprises there and made a lot of money selling Tennis Elbow and Aloe Vera cremes made from processed Aloe Vera from the Aloe plants. He is 62, in good health, BF112/72, has 6 children, 13 grandchildren and made 13 trips to Italy to visit his many relatives there. I told him to write you if he hadn't heard of the Historical Society as I didn't see his name on any of the lists. He, Burrell and George Boyle were on their way home at Oudna when I encountered them as I was returning to Italy after R&R in the States and they volunteered to join me for further stay. Of course I was glad to get them and they came back and joined me in the new 304th wing that was newly formed and based around Ceringnola. They were an immense help in getting the 4 groups of B-24's that began arriving the next day after my return. 454, 455, 456, and 459th.

I just rec'd a Thanksgiving card from Col Wayne E Thurmen who transferred from Elliot Roosevelt's photo outfit and joined us at Navarin and I checked him off on the Marseille raid as a leader. He had served with me in the 99th Squadron at Mitchell and I knew him well. He is vacationing in Hawaii and said he would try to make the next Reunion. He lives in Erie CO. Also I will try to make it too as my wife is pining for a trip and if our old Pug dog (16) makes it thru the winter, we may try to trailer to Albuquerque if the weather is ok and we can make ready to travel. Betty has a sister in Tulsa, 2 Nieces and a Nephew there and my old hunting Buddy in Ger, SMSGT Wacherle lives in Albuquerque and I know others in Amarillo etc.

*I'd better stop for this is the wrong key
4 record no of Encke.*

Take Care,

Dear General Uthegrov;

We are all overjoyed that you are going to try to come to the reunion. Al Wackerle called one night last week, and I invited him to the shindig and sent him a newsletter and promised him another.

Tom Gamm is doing an enormous amount of very effective work on this reunion, and it promises to be a real good one. We are considering one evening; with the local SAPI's chapter, (a banquet with them,) and then another 99th dinner too. Anyhow, it will be a memorable get-together. We are all quite excited at the idea of getting to see you again.

Yes, I wrote Jim Flex at once, and he responded with some lovely historical material which has gotten us involved in searching out data for posterity and for Steve Birdsall. So if we are able to print a little 99th history some day, it will be largely because of Jim's efforts.

sincerely

George

Well, fellows, it looks like a real big reunion. See you there.

Dear George:

Many thanks for your letter of December 26, and the interesting enclosures. My thanks to Mike Yarina too - considering the circumstances it was more than thoughtful of him to pass my request along. I hope he's on the mend.

I'm getting right back to you in case you can find space for my requests in your March newsletter. If so, I'd like you to forget my previous letter and publish some or all of the highlighted passage below...I'll keep it as brief as possible.

I'd like to hear from anyone who recalls the March 1944 "swap" of the 2nd Bomb Group's B-17Fs for 99th Group B-17Gs...one of the airplanes the 99th received was Road Hog, with 84 missions on her. Does anyone recall the reason for the trade?

Sometime in 1943 a gun-laying device known as APG-5 was tested on some MTO B-17Fs. Do any gunners recall this in the 99th?

Did Flak Happy carry the serial number 23023, and what was her total number of missions?

Does anyone recall the name of B-17G 232044?

That covers my general requests quite well, and thanks, in anticipation.

I'll be looking forward very much to the information on Ben Warner...I'm interested in the full story, and of course date, his pilot, and the airplane name or number if you have it. (If not, I can eventually find it in official files if I have the date and the pilot's name.)

I enjoyed the newsletter items very much, particularly the item from Frank English. That's quite a story. I'll follow that story up through the official files.

I have added the B.T.O to my listing of B-17s, and will look forward to any of this kind of material (names and tail numbers) which you can come up with, either organized in a list or simply scattered items. On a separate sheet I'll list the 99th B-17s I have listed.

I also have a microfilmed list of all World War II combat losses, and will pull the 99th items for you if you feel it would be useful. No plane names mentioned, or crews - it's just date and tail number, and whether aircraft MIA or salvaged for battle damage or other reasons. It's a great research tool for me, but might be of limited use to you without the personal aspects. Let me know, I'll be happy to do this if it will help.

Thanks again for your help - I'll try to justify it by my treatment of the 99th's story in the book.

Best wishes,



Steve Birdsall

Dear Steve;

Thank you for your interest in the 99th. Since your list of planes is more comprehensive than my own, I am publishing your list. Meanwhile I will make an effort to obtain additional information from letters and pictures in our files and from letters from members. I promise to keep you informed regularly, and the list will appear in the newsletter from time to time.

Sincerely

George

So, fellows, here we go with an aircraft list which will consist of name, number, and information on crew members. We have some information in our letters, and will get it onto the list when the rush is over. This list will be the beginnings of our Group History. I will be pleased to forward your info to Steve in Australia.

George

Steve Birdsall's List

99th GROUP B-17S

42-3189
 42-5061 - lost November 10 1943
 42-5389 - Never Satisfied, 348th Squadron
 42-5419 - Whizzer
 42-5856 - to Switzerland October 1 1943
 42-29469
 42-29472 - Sweater Girl (121 missions I believe)
 42-29473 - Yankee Doodle
 42-29494
 42-29502 - B.T.O.
 42-29513 - El Diablo
 42-29526 - Bugs
 42-30126 - to Switzerland October 1 1943
 42-30705
 42-31877 - transferred to 2nd Group
 42-31889 - transferred to 2nd
 42-32023 - Flak Happy
 42-32028 - lost July 31 1944
 42-32033 - lost October 13 1944
 42-32035 - lost April 24 1944
 42-32041 - lost July 2 1944
 42-32044
 42-32065 - lost April 16 1944
 42-32092
 42-38084 - Sweet Pea - transferred to 2nd Group
 44-6268
 44-6385
 44-6397
 44-6408
 44-6430
 44-8164
 44-8187

5520 Lido St.
 Orlando, Fla.
 Dec. 21, 1980

99BWS List

Achtung
 Axis Ass Ache
 BTC
 Bad Penny
 Balsanal
 Bugs Bunny
 Cotton-eyed Joe
 Dirty Gerty
 Earthquake McGoon
 El Alamo
 Fearless Fosdick
 Flak Dodger
 Flak Happy
 Glittering Gal
 Gravy Train
 Heaven Can Wait
 Hunter's Answer
 Jig-Jig
 Lady Luck
 Lethal Lady
 Miss Fury
 Never Satisfied
 Nobody's Baby
 Queenie
 Ragged But Right
 Robert E. Lee
 Shanker Ali
 Sortie Line
 Swamp Girl
 Sweater Girl
 Tout Suite
 VV
 Weary Willie
 Wonder Bird I&II
 Yankee Doodle

(346th)
 32807

Dear George,
 Happy to get your newletter. I'm glad someone took the Bull by the Horns and got a move started for a reunion. After hearing from you, I got a bunch of stuff out of the closet & remembered a lot of things about our days in 'Foggia #2.' Darlin Brewer (shot down on April 5th) was my drinking buddy. I made 58, & came home--stayed 60 days & went back. Here is my check--please keep me informed.

Holiday cheer--God Bless
 Herbert G. Peacock

Dear Herb,
 As I might mention to one, and all, before proceeding, your note, written on the inside of one of the prettiest Xmas cards I've seen, including the 1981 five dollar dues; for the year 1980, was too good to pass up.

It is my firm belief, as I've told George, that all letters, regardless of 'age,' should be answered, and yours is no exception. Sorry I couldn't get to it sooner, but I'm sure you understand!

You hit it right on the head about George, and the Bull. That can be taken two ways, but I'll go along with your version, Herb. ain't it the truth, as they say! You sure put in your time, and more, I see. You are also keeping informed, via the newsletters, and I will also add, a lot of remember good old Tortorella, not to mention Algeria, and Tunisia! Old Man Brewer, and I, have written each other; also talked on the phone, and one day, we'll get together. He is a card--what a sense of humor, as I'm sure you well know!

By the way, in closing Herb, I will mention the fact that on your 1981 Application, etc., there is a notation (in your writing, it looks like), 'March thru Sept. '44.' Did that mean your let tour, or the total? Anyhow, hope you, and yours had a good 'bird' day, and let me, on behalf of George, and the rest of us 99 'kids,' wish you, and yours, one of the best X-mases ever.

Sincerely---
 Frank English

99th Bomb Group Three-Hundred-Mission Log; - November 1941
 History - Still in the Making
 Life with the 99th at home and abroad
 Courtesy of Rex L. Greathouse, 346BS

On the first day of June, 1942, at Orlando, Florida, part of the equipment was located for a group which still had no personnel. The orders for the activation of the 97th Bombardment Group (I) were cut and later the equipment was transferred to MacMill Field, Florida, to Barksdale, La., and to Pendleton, Ore.

It was on the 25th of September 1942 that orders were cut at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho, activating the personnel from the 29th Bombardment Group of the 2nd Air Force to form about a 20 percent strength of the new group from the 6th, 43rd, 52nd, and 111th squadrons. These squadrons formed the nucleus of the 346th, 347th, 348th and 116th Squadrons in that order.

Colonel Fay H. Upthegrove was designated as the Group Commander, and Lt. Col. Leroy A. Rainey as Deputy Group Commander.

Departing from Gowen Field on the 26th of September for Walla Walla, Washington, the advance detail and part of the equipment arrived and the real work of the Group began with the arrival of the rest of the cadre by the end of the month. Additional ground personnel arrived from the Salt Lake City Army Air Base Replacement Center in Utah.

In the month of October, the Group received 12 flight leaders and their crews. Flying one plane per squadron, with the Squadron Commander and a model crew flying each, the minimum number was increased during the month to 10 aircraft for the Group.

On November 10th four Operations Officers were assigned to the Group from Gowen Field.

So, because of the poor weather, the Group moved from Walla Walla to Sioux City, Iowa, to complete its second phase of training at the base where it was already scheduled to take third phase training. The movement took place in the middle of November. Adding more aircraft and crews, as well as acquiring about 75 percent of the ground crew's total strength, the Group, by the 18th of the month, really became a working organization.

The Group lost its first crew and aircraft during an accident in training on November 30th when No. 286 crashed 3 miles from the field.

All the equipment was packed and ready to go between December 31 and January 4, and the ground echelon entrained amidst a driving snowstorm of blizzard proportions for satellite fields at Mitchell and Watertown in South Dakota. The 348th, 416th, and Hq. Squadrons went to the former, and the 346th and 347th headed further North to the latter base.

Meanwhile the air crews went to Salina, Kansas, arriving on the 5th of January, 1943, for the final stage of air training. From the 7th to the 13th, the combat crews were on leave while the ground crews "hip, two, three, foured" and got in some sack time at the satellite bases with "no planes, no work, no nothing."

The flight echelon flew to DeRidder, La., after returning from the leaves. Despite some little engine trouble and what-not coming overseas, the trip via Morrison Field, Fla.; Borinquen, Puerto Rico; Atkinson Field, Georgetown British Guiana; Belem, Brazil, (where a couple of the 348th ships collided and were held up for repairs) to Yundum Field, Bathurst, Gambia; and finally across the Atlantic Ocean to Marrakech, Morocco. (Editor's Note: This is what the man says). Three of the Squadrons proceeded to Oran and the 347th followed later.

At the La Senia AAB, Algeria, the crews got final briefing and with the various lectures felt themselves ready for combat by March and two squadrons each proceeded to the 301st and 97th bases. After the work was completed on the group's own field at Navarin, (not far from Constantine) the crews and aircraft moved in.

Meanwhile the ground crews still in South Dakota until the latter part of February, sweated out the rumored furloughs and after much ado received a six-day "furlough" without travelling time to be taken either at the time of changing stations from South Dakota to Winker Field AAB, Oklahoma City, Okla., or from the latter base upon arrival.

In March the Group's ground men were considered "processed" and proceeded to Camp Kilmer, New Brunswick, New Jersey, arriving March 19, 1943.

Measles seemed to be the order of the days at Kilmer and some of the barracks were continually quarantined with that disease. Hikes, drill, lectures guard duty, obstacle courses, calisthenics, games, K.P., etc., etc., were supplemented by passes to New York City and nearby cities and towns. Finally all was in readiness and after many restricted periods, the ground men were packed up and entrained for Weehawken, N.J. on the morning of the 28th of April, 1943. Detraining there, the Group was ferried to Staten Island where the men and equipment were unloaded and craned aboard the USS Edmund B. Alexander, staying overnight in the docks and pulling out early in the morning, the 29th of April, 1943, (about 99 months ago) and the ground echelon began to draw its overseas pay.

Limping across the Atlantic Ocean with faulty engines, the Alexander and its very precious cargo dropped far behind the rest of the convoy and were escorted by two Navy destroyers which provided ample protection from the lurking U-boats. A safe landing was made at Oran, Algeria, at 1930 hours May 12, 1943, and the men were moved to a bivouac area at La Senia.

At the La Senia base, ground men were visited by members of the air echelon and learned about the operations out of Mavarin. On May 24th the two echelons joined forces again after a long separation. The reunion was made possible only after a never-to-be-forgotten 40 and 8 ride in the super modern, deluxe, streamlined luxury jobs that the French run on their North African tracks.

The ground crew also learned about the first 21 missions from members of the air echelon and a small part of the dope is this.... The first mission of the 99th was flown to Villacidro A/D in Sardinia on March 31, 1943, with Colonel Upthegrove leading, and the largest number of B-17s to be used in the war to that date, 94, was employed with the 99th and two other groups sallying forth. The men had loaded the bombs, kept up the snips, flew 'em and started all over again in the cycle until the rumored coming of the ground men became a reality. Great celebrations took place as friends got together again and the 99th was once more intact so the war wouldn't, it couldn't, last long.

The 25th mission was flown on the last day of May when our Group bombed the Foggia A/D in Italy for the longest mission to date, and the bombs destroyed many enemy aircraft on the ground.

Missions, vino excursions, and the war, all continued during the month of June. Reports of an expected Arab uprising had all the men carrying arms at all times for a few days, but it proved to be a dry run and was soon forgotten.

On our 36th mission to Messina, Sicily, on June 25th, the roughest opposition in flak and fighters to that date was encountered, and though the target was well covered, the enemy had taken its toll of 99th men with two killed and eight wounded.

The next day was a rough one also, although it was a non-operational day, as an explosion of 500 pound bombs which occurred as they were being unloaded from trucks, caused the deaths of 16 men and critical injuries to four more. The men were all from the Ordnance Company and the Service Squadron men who were driving the trucks.

Colonel Rainey left the Group on the 29th of June and Colonel Richard Smith took over the post of Deputy Group Commander. Another old-timer in the Group, Major Frank Dunnington, S-2 Officer, was also transferred out on this date.

Dust storms and heavy concentration of dust particles on every object in the area proved to be one of the greatest nuisances of the period. Fireworks on the Fourth of July were limited to another explosion at the ordnance dump and a large fire in the wheat fields nearby. Luckily, this time there were no casualties, although a great deal of hard work was necessary to quench the fire.

More fireworks and great disaster occurred on the 5th of July as the 99th attacked airfields at Gerbini, Sicily. Led by Col. Upthegrove, this mission number 41, was successful in the amount of damage done to the enemy target but it also was heavy in casualty losses to our own Group as one complete element was shot down. Later on, several of the men on the crews returned and reported on the whereabouts of others hitherto unreported. Staff Sergeant Benjamin F. Warmer, III, was credited with shooting down seven enemy aircraft from his waist gun position in the 348th ship. The Group later received a Presidential Citation for this mission.

On the night of July 9th a special invasion mission was pulled to Sicily and the invasion was made early in the morning with one more step taken toward the end of the war. Missions to Sicilian targets came thick and fast about this time and on the 14th of July the Group flew its 50th mission to Messina, in Sicily.

The first Allied attack on Rome, on July 19-- Mission No. 54 was flown with the 99th dropping 103 tons of 500-pounders on the marshalling yards and railroad buildings in the area. Great care was taken by the crews which had been briefed not to drop any stray bombs in the area of Vatican City and other non-military targets and the mission was highly successful. Two movie photographers and three internationally known newsmen made the flight with the 99th. The newsmen were Raymond Clapper of the Scripps-Howard newspapers, later killed in a crash over the Marshall Islands in February, 1944, Richard Greerashis in the International News Service, and Herbert Matthews of the New York Times.

Romania marshalling yards were the targets for our 56th mission on July 25, and the Group encountered severe opposition and lost a crew and a plane as well as receiving damage to several other aircraft.

Another dove was in the wind in the last week of July 1943, and as we prepared to move to Tunisia, reports came through that Mussolini had resigned as leader of the Italians and we had high hopes of a quick victory.

By August 6th our new quarters were well under way and the field at Oudna, near Mohamedia, a few miles from Tunis was ours.

From Oudna, our first mission was to Messina, Sicily, and was number 61, and we hit the target well. We brought back three wounded men though, so we didn't escape unscathed.

The big event of August 14th was the Bob Hope show at the 301st BG field across the way and many of our venturesome souls went over the hills to see his troupe (of course Frances Langford might have drawn a few of e wolves---could be).

The 99th's first mission to France took place on the 17th of August when the LePauze A/D at Marseilles was smashed and many enemy aircraft were caught on the ground with their flaps down. Other damage was done that day to hangars and ack-ack batteries.

Axis mentors decided to give us a taste of bitter medicine and almost got close enough to us to give us a scare as their aircraft attacked Bizerte, lighting up the skies, and the ground crews were made to realize a little that there actually was a war going on.

Foggia again was a target for the 99th on the 25th of August on No. 66 as we destroyed 41 enemy aircraft on the ground and 28 others were hit by the Fortresses. We lost one crew of the 416th however, and one man in the 348th was killed and three others wounded, a 11 because of flak from enemy guns.

Lt. Gen. Spaatz and Maj. Gen. Doolittle were present at the 99th field to present the Distinguished Service Cross to Staff Sergeant Benjamin Warmer for his record in bagging seven enemy aircraft on the July 5th mission.

The 348th lost a crew and ship over Bologna on September 2nd. The seventh of the month will be remembered by the same squadron, for it lost a bombardier on that attack.

The same day, the Commanding Officer of the Squadron, Major Warren Whitmore, and his crew were on their 50th mission as was the veteran aircraft No. 494. While over the target, Major Whitmore's ship was hit badly and he couldn't land it at the base, so as the ground crews sweated out the slowly dropping crew members "chuting" to earth one by one, the Major kept circling the field in 494 and then bailed out himself with the ship crashing a few miles away. All 11 men on the crew were OK with minor injuries received on landing.

The day of the 72nd mission (to the Frascati A/D near Rome) proved to be a historical one in the course of the war, for Italy was at the same time invaded and the country capitulated on paper.

Mission number 88 was the 99th's first mission to Germany and a WE factory near Augsburg was to have been the recipient of the bombs but an undercast caused the Group to turn back. Lt. Francke, a 416th bombardier, was credited with 4 enemy aircraft, and Staff Sergeant Warmer got credit for the 10th of his career. We lost two crews and aircraft, and others were wounded and damaged.

Greece was first hit by our bombers on the 9th of October as Salonika and Larissa had targets for our bomb loads.

There was little operational activity from the 11th to the 23rd of the month when ground members took transports for bases in Italy and Sicily and the remaining ones began to wonder what was in the wind. The crews with two days rations and supplies followed the ground men. The mission, to Wiener Neustadt was a washout and the planes and men returned on the 25th. The men told marvelous tales of the improved conditions in Italy compared with our dusthole in Africa.

Mission number 100 proved to be an operational flop as far as bombing goes due to a complete overcast over Turin, but credit was given for the mission and the century mark was reached on the 30th of October 1943.

Generals Spaatz and Doolittle were present for our celebration of the 100th mission, and though rain hampered the festivities it didn't stop the barbecue and beer party.

Another overnight deal was on for the 2nd of November and with Sicily as the refueling spot, and Wiener Neustadt again as the target, the detail was SNAPUED.

On the 11th the Group reached the latter target and did a good job on the aircraft factory there. Enroute we destroyed eight enemy fighters and lost none.

We had a man wounded and one killed from the 346th squadron on the 16th of November, and on the 18th, Staff Sergeant Streetman, an aerial photographer of the 348th (originally of the 416th), saved a ship and crew by freeing a lodged frag bomb that would most certainly have destroyed both ship and crew. With about 30 seconds to go before explosion time, he pried the bomb loose with a machine gun barrel and sent it earthward.

On the 19th the B-25s of the 310th BG left our field and some Wellingtons or Whimpys of the RAF dropped in on us.

On the 25th of November came Thanksgiving Day, and proved to be the biggest and best eating day we had overseas.

We also said goodbye to Col. Uptuegrove as he left our Group for the USA on DS and Lt. Col. Thurman took over the reins as Acting Commanding Officer.

Plans were made during the last week for a move to Italy. Payday brought gold seal greenbacks as the medium of exchange and the francs of North Africa were converted to a reasonably accurate facsimile of our US cash.

The first contingent of men left for Sizerte on the 3rd of December. Mission No. 112 to Grizzano was flown and both ships and crews stayed overnight at our new base in Italy. It was the site of many wrecked enemy aircraft, and at the time, the base was occupied by South African units.

The big guns could be heard when the rest of the 99th arrived at the new base, for the front lines weren't so many miles away, and the nights were at first a little ominous. Trips to the marshalling yards and vicinity were taken and it afforded the crews an opportunity to see at close range what damage they had wrought upon at least one of their erstwhile targets. Air raid dry runs became frequent and as the field really began to take shape and tents were erected and offices set up, the 99th again prepared to operate from a permanent base. The first mission pulled from the new A/D was made on December 14, to Athens, Greece.

On December 19th Colonel Charles W. Lawrence succeeded Col. Uptuegrove as our Commanding Officer with Lt. Col. Thurman as his Deputy.

The same day the crews had a rough mission to Augsburg, Germany, which cost the lives of two men, wounds to four, and 20 were listed as MIA, as well as the loss of two of our aircraft. Jerry paid in the loss of at least eight fighters.

On Christmas Day of 1943, the Christmas parcels to the Axis from the 99th Bomb Group were to have been a nice load of bombs delivered by air, but since the weather prevented the crews from seeing the targets, the presents were returned to the base for future delivery. A super-duper Christmas dinner was cooked for all hands and a large shipment of mail and packages came in to boost the morale of the men no end. Another happy occurrence on Christmas Day was the return of one of the crews that was lost on the 19th.

All sweated out the explosions on the 29th as a landing Wimpie crashed into a parked one and fires and explosions followed thick and fast.

Another turkey dinner with fixin's topped off the first day of the new Year and everyone wondered just what 1944 would offer.

January found many improvements in living quarters, if not in weather although a fine month was made operationally with 24 missions completed.

On the 19th and 20th of the month the Group participated in a softening-up attack on Airdromes in and around Rome and our targets for the day were respectively, Ciampino and Contocelle.

These attacks were not without reason however and on the 22nd of January the Allies landed south of Rome and the invasion was number one topic for discussion.

On the 26th of January Lt. Col. Thurman again took over command of the Group when Col. Lawrence became Commander of the 5th Wing.

January 27th proved a bad day for the 99th as a Wellington crashed in the Squadron area hurting several men and killing the first sergeant of that unit, Sgt. Peter Hurey, (later the enlisted men's mess hall was named Hurey Hall in his honor and memory). For their work in the dangerous surroundings during the accident, eight men received Soldier's Medals.

February ushered in a new month and a new contingent of WACs to town. Few of the men were in a position to make any time with them however as the lads stationed in town took over pretty quickly. Not much doing operationally but there were some good movies during the month to brighten up the recreational side of the picture.

On February 15th Col. Ford J. Lauer assumed command of the Group, relieving Lt. Col. Thurman.

February 25th provided us with a fine target for the day. Regensburg, Germany, number 156, and the target was destroyed with the loss of four aircraft. We had destroyed 21, probably destroyed two, and damaged one of the enemy aircraft in the severe running battle with 150 Nazi planes that occurred that day.

March found a lot of work being done on the A/C as the insignia of the yellow diamond which had earned us the title of "Diamondbacks" was outlawed and we had this replaced by a "Y" insignia.

Our own 99th Bomb Group stage performances were given here and at other units in the vicinity.

On the 15th Cassino was attacked, a stronghold for the Germans, and our mission number 161 was highly successful.

We were not too happy at the exchange deal that sent our nice new Gs to the 2nd Bomb Group in exchange for some pretty well beat up Fs and P-51s flew thick and fast as to the whys and the wherefores of the exchange.

Membership directory has been removed for privacy.

Membership directory has been removed for privacy.

Members of the 483rd Bomb Group arrived with new aircraft (Gs) and were attached to us for a time awaiting the arrival of their ground crews. Later on we got their Gs and they got the Fs that we had. Our first mission in the silver jobs was to Steyr, Austria.

Easter Sunday church services found nearly everyone in attendance at one time or another during the day. A nice, lazy non-op day was observed on this Sunday holiday.

On the 16th of April, Lt. Col. Headrick, our Deputy Commander, was lost in a raid over Belgrade, Yugoslavia, as the Group met intense flak.

Cokes put in an appearance on the 17th, and the one-per-man was very welcome after nearly a year sans cokes.

On April 23rd our Group, led by Colonel Lauer, went to an aircraft factory at Wiener Neustadt, Austria, and tossed lethal "monkey wrenches" into the works, hampering production of Herr Hitler's Luftwaffe replacements. Encountering no little opposition from Nazi ack-ack and fighters, the Group received another Presidential Citation later on for this mission.

During April we also got another order on insignia, and a "Y" on a diamond background became our designation and mark of recognition.

The Group almost completely destroyed the Varese A/C factory on the 30th of April on Mission No. 184 and we suffered the loss of two A/Cs and crews and had six wounded men on the aircraft that returned.

May 12th provided a day for another two missions, as one was pulled in the morning to the Tarquinia A/D north of Rome, and in the afternoon, the target most vital at the time was the headquarters of the German High Command in the same area, and the surroundings received a heavy pounding from our missiles.

Toward the latter part of the month there spread many rumors about another "something big cooking". The rumors became fact, as on the morning of June 2nd a mission got under way and the crews with new uniforms, complete with all insignia and stripes, identification, etc., bombed the Debrecen M/Y in Hungary and continued on to a base at Poltava, Russia. While the men rested, worked, and spread international goodwill among the Russians, those left behind sweated them out, got sack time, swimming etc., and waited for their return. They pulled a mission from Russia and returned to the Stalin base. Coming back to our base on the 11th, the crews told tales of Russian hospitality, of wine, women and song, entertainment, sightseeing trips and, in case we forgot to mention it, they told about the women of Russia.

July was another theatrically bog month as Irving Berlin and his "This is The Army" show played in the Foggia area for a few days. It was also a good month operationally as we flew 21 missions.

On the 14th of July, Colonel T.J. Meyer assumed command of the Group relieving Col. Lauer who went home on DS. Colonel Meyer became ill and after his transfer to the hospital, Lt. Col. James A. Barnett became the Commanding Officer, taking over on the 1st of August.

On August 12, 13, and 14 the Group bombed gun installations on the northern Mediterranean Coast and it began to look as though something big was in the offing....and it was. On the night of August 14th a pre-midnight briefing revealed the invasion of southern France early the next morning. For the first time in history our heavy bombers took off in darkness and arrived at the target just before the first waves of invasion troops swarmed ashore.

August gave us a total of 22 missions and several men returned to the base after enforced vacations in POW camps in Rumania. They were released when that country capitulated to the Allies.

Hitler's navy received a bad blow on the 4th of September as we bombed Genoa Harbor and sub pens and destroyed at least four of the subs therein.

Major General Nathan Twining, Commanding General of the 15AAF, was on the field on the 27th of September to present the Group with the streamer of the Presidential Citation for its work on the Gerbini Airdrome on July 5, 1943.

He commended not only the men who flew the mission but also those on the ground whose work made it possible.

On September 22, Colonel Lauer returned from the States and once again assumed command of the Group, relieving Lt. Col. Barnett.

Also in the month of September our Executive Officer, Lt. Col. Wm. Hampton, a member of the Group since "way back when", departed for the USA, as did Lt. Col. Lawrence Semans, our Operations Officer. Their places were filled by Major John A. Sarosy, former Group Adjutant, and Lt. Col. Bernice S. Barr. Capt. H.M. Scarborough came up from the 347th Squadron to become the Adjutant.

October found the 99th with a total of 16 missions flown, with a couple of days being "double days", with "Red" and "Blue" forces going for different targets. The seventh provided targets in Vienna, Austria, and Nove Zamky, Hungary, respectively. On the 13th, Blechhammer South O/R at Germany, and the Florisdorf O/R at Vienna were attacked in the drive to cut off Hitler's oil production and keep his machines inactive.

On the 12th of October, anniversary of the day when Italy's Chris Columbus is reputed to have discovered America, the Group flew mission No. 275 and in direct support of ground troops dropped a part of the heaviest bomb tonnage ever to be released in a tactical operation.

A day-and night combination of a double mission day also took place when, on the 28th of October, the Klagenfurt, Austria, aircraft factory and the marshalling yards at Munich were hit.

In November we were again visited by Major General Twining who presented the second streamer to the unit's colors as recognition by the President of work done on April 23, 1944 at Wiener Neustadt, Austria. He also presented Captain Warren Christianson of the 347th with a DSC at the ceremonies.

Our Group's 300th mission occurred on the 20th of the month of November, as targets at Brno, Czechoslovakia were hit. Thus we start upon another leg of a journey toward the end of the war and start another page in the Group History.

* * * * *

Thanks, Rex.

* *

1. For inclusion in future accounts, we would like to hear from each of the planes which flew on May 3rd, 1943.

Where did you put down? Was the plane repairable?

For those who missed that one, it was a gruesome feeling to see the field fog over as we formed up over it.

2. How about those Germans captured on the field? Sure would like an account of that for our files.

3. We would like to get accounts from everybody who flew on July 5th, 43 the Gerbini raid. Any escapees? (besides Huckabee)

4. The April 23, 1944 mission to Wiener Neustadt resulted in a second Presidential Citation for the Group. How about some accounts of that on for posterity? Any escapees?

5. What happened after the 300th mission? Who won?

Remember, we expect to detail the career of each ship before we are done, and there is a limited number of witnesses. Write now.

LETTERS

To: Donald M. Blankenship, 8605-46th Ave. S.W., Seattle, WA 98136 (347th)

Dear Don,

With your indulgence, I have 2 letters in front of me, from you, that I will make a question and answer period out of. The 1st letter is dated Dec. 15, 1980, whereby you enclosed your application and dues for 1981. Now you know why I'm not retyping same, but will give our Membership some pertinent facts about you, etc.

Your 2nd letter of March 13, 1981, will be torn apart, also, so sue me!

Ladies, and (You know what you are), let me say that Don flew out of Foggia in 1944 as a flight engineer. (Am I correct, Don?) Going by the 1st letter, Don's pilot was John Plummer, now retired from the Air Force, and one of our distinguished members. Others mentioned were Edward Fitzpatrick, Louis S. Setek, and Norrie Domangue, Jr. (I know Norrie is a member--on the 23rd of August, 1944, by the way, we bailed out of #282 over the mountains of Yugoslavia and were picked up by Tito's Partisans.) He was lead navigator on a mission with our own Bernie Barr, and suffered a wounded foot. As you know Don, Norris lives in Paoli, PA; the old address was wrong.

Don retired from the Internal Revenue Service after 30 years, and is now in private practice as a CPA. Also, in Don's own words--"It just happens that this day, 36 years ago, I left Naples to return home on a hospital ship. Finally got up to being sent home after the 3rd hit on me at Breslau in later August 1944." (Where was the 'Charm', here?) That's the gist of #1.

This part of the novel relates to the 2nd letter, dated March 13, 1981.

Mention was made by Don, in letter #1, regarding the upcoming reunion that we had in Albuquerque, this year. In this regard, Don commended George for all his work in getting said reunion together. Wasn't that the truth!

Don, remember when you and I talked on the phone? I thought you were a pilot I knew, but had the surname mixed up. In your letter you said you would arrive on the 10th, which you did. I had arrived on the 9th and I must say it was a real pleasure, meeting, and talking to you. (Don't believe I talked to your wife, as I remember.) Hope you, and the wife were able to vacation on the way back, as you wished.

You also mentioned the Rapid City reunion, Don. Did you make it? I know you also said you spent some time there before going to Africa, and then on to Italy. Your remark about coming into the group late didn't mean a thing, Don, as note the variety of times we belonged, going by the members present.

Did you, and your wife get to Italy, like you said, and 'Detour' to the Foggia area? I thought it quite a coincidence that one of your associates' nephew headed the police department in Foggia.

This about wraps it up, for now. Don't know about you, Don--but I can hardly wait to oil my skateboard and be on my way to our next get together in New Mexico! What with all the people on our Roster, and more signing up, we will have to use Kirtland AFB as our stamping ground. I am an optometrist you know!

In signing off, I trust I have covered all the salient points in both letters, Don. Until we meet again, the best of everything to you, and yours.

Best regards, and all stuff like that there---
Your friend---fhe



The Raving

(With apologies to E. Allan Poe's 'The Raven')

Once upon a mission dreary
When of combat I'd grown weary
I had flown a thousand hours
And was sure to fly some more.
When suddenly there came a knocking
Sounded like some ack ack popping,
Popping like the very devil
Just beneath my bomb bay door.

'Tis some Jerry thought I
Wishing to improve his score
I will use evasive tactics
Even if he does get sore.
Turning then I saw before me
Blacker now than e'er before
Ack Ack bursting close and heavy
Guess I'd better turn some more.

Opening wide I swung my bomb doors
And to my surprise and horror
Flashing fast and bright below me
Were some ninety guns or more
And above the sharpnel's screeching
I remembered then the briefing
When they told us with much speaking
That there were only three or four.

Leveling then I made a bomb run
Which was not a very long one,
For the varsity was on duty
And I'd seen their work before
Then an engine coughed and clattered
And the glass around me shattered,
And I knew they had my number
Just my number, nothing more.

Then at last the bombs were toggled
And alone away I hobbled,
With some fifty-seven inches
And a feathered number four.
While outside like ducks migrating

Was a drove of M. E.'s waiting
Waiting all with itching fingers
Just to finish up the score

I had lost my upper turret
And alone, defenseless, worried,
I was the saddest creature
Mortal woman ever bore.
And each bright tracer
Coming nearer, ever nearer
Made my spirit sink within me,
Just my spirit, nothing more.

Then at last to my elation
I caught up with my formation
And the M. E.'s turned and left me
By the tens and by the score.
But my wings were torn and tattered
And nerves completely shattered
And as far as I'm concerned
The war is o'er.

Now my sinus starts to seeping
Every time they mention briefing
And for this they will change my brass
To double bars.
And I have my fun and frolic
And a case of combat cholic
Where in Cairo with the Cossacks
Among the eagles and the stars.

Now I find the joy of living
And my secret I am giving
To the rest of those among you
Who might care to live some more
For my sinus starts to seeping
Every time they mention briefing
No more flying, No more missions
No more combat, Never more!!

Lts. Robinson, Jobe and Behr.



8

Man With Wings - Edward Jablonski - 1980

A first-rate pictorial history of flight from Icarus to Enterprise, with excellent commentary.

From page 157, The First Warbirds (1917)

Edward Mannock led the British aces roll with a score of seventy-three. Although he was regarded as too old (twenty-seven) to make a fighter pilot, Mannock somehow managed to sign up with the Royal Flying Corps. In addition, he had one bad eye, which should also have kept him out, but Mannock managed to bluff his way through an eye test as well. A careful tactician, he was a good instructor to young pilots. A realist, he had no interest in a knightly war. He refused to join in toasts to fallen German fliers and was once heard to say of one, "I hope he roasted all the way down." Mannock fell in flames himself after being struck by ground fire.

So much for the goldenage of chivalric combat.

FLYING FORTS Martin Caidin

From p. 155

Major General Dale O. Smith, USAF (Ret.), a close friend of the writer, flew many missions as a Fortress pilot in Europe during World War II (as commander of the 2nd Bomb Group and later the 384th Bomb Group). General Smith felt the airplane through each model "got stronger and more rugged. Forts would take an incredible amount of battle damage and fly home."

"Once, while enroute to Berlin in a B-17G, a flak shell went through my wing inboard of the Number Two engine and burst above us. Except for a slight wing heaviness nothing seemed wrong so I continued with the mission. Upon arriving home we were embarrassed to find England soaked in solidly, so I led my Group out over the Wash for a letdown over water. There, luckily, I found a small hole in the overcast through which I led my boys single file in a dive, pulling up just above the waves. Then we hedge-hopped home to Graf-ton-Underwood.

"Upon examining my ship the Engineering Officer discovered that the main wing spar had been sheared by the flak shell. Only the thin skin held the wing together during the 7-hour mission to Berlin and back, and in the dive through that hole in the clouds."

gfc

BIG WEEK - Glenn Infield - 1974

An excellent account of the air battles of the fourth week of February, 1944 by a pilot of the 95BG. Infield, who died in 1981, wrote a good book. Included, on page 186 is the story of the mad gunner of the 95th who was regularly shooting men in his own formation. Also included is the 15AF share of the Big Week.

gfc

TWELFTH AIR FORCE STORY

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE STORY Both by Kenn C. Rust, 1975

These two well-illustrated books are included in the Historical Aviation Album and include a wealth of detail on markings of individual aircraft. The account of missions is also quite comprehensive. They are available for \$7.50 each from Historical Aviation Album, P.O.Box 33, Temple City, CA 91780. We expect to have a few of each at the reunion as we did at Rapid City.

gfc

THE FIRST AND THE LAST - Adolf Galland - 1954

This is the story of the German Fighter Forces, told by the General in charge. Galland was a guest at the 8AFHS Meeting in Minneapolis in October 1981. The book is an excellent account of the in-fighting within the Nazi ranks. And on page 178 the General says "Even though numerically the British raids against Germany (in 1943) were still stronger than the American and were undoubtedly a great trial for the civilian population, the American precision raids were of greater consequence to the war industry."

so now you know

gfc

ULTRA GOES TO WAR - Ronald Lewin - 1978

Still another book on the intelligence system that guided the Allies in target selection. Describes our failures as well as the successes. Mention is made of the Cape Bon Massacre as resulting from foreknowledge through Ultra that the Me 323s would be coming into Tunisia. And I always thought it was just an accident that the formation had ammunition left when they overtook the Germans. Well, well, well.

gfc

Hi George F. Coen:

I was wondering if this was the same 99th Bomb Gp. that was stationed in Africa, and Foggia, Italy, during WWII.

I was in the 346th Sq. maintenance department. If so, please send me more information as to time, place, etc.

P.S. I saw this in the American Legion Magazine.

Yours truly
Verlyn P. Graff

Dear Verlyn,

You get 'A' for effort on all counts, in regard to your letter, especially as we see you are a member in good standing of our Hysterical Society. It will be good to see you in April, in Albuquerque, we hope! You will note there are quite a few 346ers in our bunch, both on the ground, and in the air, so I'm sure you would find a common ground. We appreciate your writing, and joining. Hope to see you soon.

With all best wishes--
Frank English

Harold Greise
Pine River Drive (347th)
Red Granite, Wis. 54970
May 5, 1981

Dear Harold,

All I found in the letter George sent me was your application form for 1982. I saw, of course, that you were a member, as of the Sept. 1, 1981, Roster, so for all intents, and purposes, you are a 347th member, in good standing! As regards the date above, I used that from the cancellation mark on the envelope in which you sent in your application; I assume, George, and yourself, know more about the details of the '2' being changed in your application I'm referring to. (No offense intended.)

At any rate, we are glad to have you aboard also, Harold. Hope you will write soon, and fill us in a little further.

Kindest regards
Frank English

4210 Deepwooda Dr.
Austin, Texas 78731
March 7, 1981

Dear George,

We won't be able to come to the reunion this year because of previous commitments, but enclosed is \$5.00 to help cover mailing costs.

Hope the reunion is a big success, and I hope you will keep us informed.

Sincerely
Jesse P. Wheeler

Dear Jesse,

It was good to hear from you. Sorry you couldn't make the 1st April, Albuquerque get together, as we had a fine time. As I've said before, I could not make the Rapid City one--hope you did--if not, there is always 1982! In your above note, no Sq. was mentioned, so I got to checking the Newsletters, and lo, and behold, there was your name. We are glad you belong!

You will note in the Newsletter, to which I refer, Nov. 1, there was your name again, among others, in the letter from J.O. Grizzell, so I will assume you were in the 347th, as was yours truly.

In said letter, I made reference to Doc Newman. He called me the next day, in answer to my call, and we had a delightful, if not brief, conversation, as he is so busy in his practice. Suffice to say, he mentioned that he is still in touch with Larry Stuaaser, who was the 347th Adjutant, I believe, and who Dr. Newman tells me, lives in Calabasas. I tried to contact Larry, but to no avail, as the telephone operator had no listing. I'll not give up, however, and will contact Irving Newman again, as regards Larry.

Anyhow, Jesse, thanks for the 'donation,' and of course, for joining, also. So long for this time--but hope to see you, and all the rest of the troops, real soon.

Yours, in Comradeship
Frank English

1982 Reunion

99th Bomb Group
Historical Society Reunion
Tom Gamm
12225 Victoria Falls N.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87111

Dear Former 99th Bomb Group Member:

Here are the related details for accommodations in Albuquerque on the April 24th and 25th reunion of our group. 1982

We have a block of rooms reserved at the Winrock Inn (Best Western chain) for Friday and Saturday, April 23 and 24, at these rates:

Single Occupancy \$35.00 plus 7% tax (\$2.45)
Double Occupancy \$43.00 plus 7% tax (\$3.01)
(2 beds, 2 persons)
Each additional person in a room one night \$8.00 plus tax

There is a one night deposit due by March 23, 1982, for each sleeping room, including tax, to confirm the rooms. A credit card number or check will guarantee the reservation. Please send this direct to the Winrock Inn and not to me. See the enclosed card for address and your accommodation needs. I have circled the location of the Winrock Inn on the location guide of the National Atomic Museum flyer, for the people driving to Albuquerque. Those arriving by plane can ask the sky caps about the courtesy limousine service to the Inn.

We will have a hospitality room open from about 16:00 Friday, April 23 to greet and refresh the group members and their guests. We will also have this room open after the meeting Saturday.

There are tentative plans to join an 8th Air Force reunion group for a banquet on Saturday evening. George Coen is working on the details of this event. He will also include the planned agenda in his newsletter.

On Sunday, there will be a Mexican buffet at the Winrock Inn at 12:30 for a real taste of New Mexican cuisine. The cost of this is \$10.65 including tax and tip per person.

We are asking each member to prepay a \$10.00 registration fee to cover costs of the refreshments in the hospitality room and other incidental costs of the reunion. If you will send a check for the amount to me:

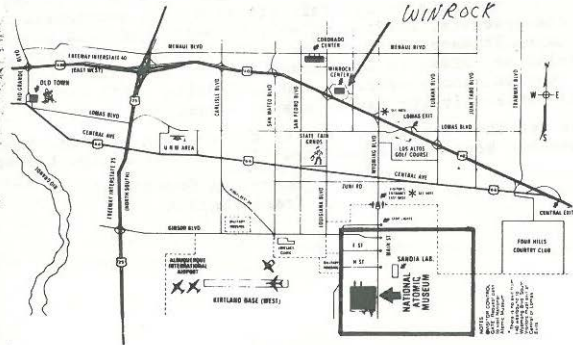
Thomas J. Gamm
12225 Victoria Falls N.E.
Albuquerque, NM 87111

Please send this check plus \$10.65 for each person planning to attend the buffet by 10 April so I can finalize the arrangements with the Inn.

Be seeing you,

Tom Gamm

LOCATION GUIDE
NATIONAL ATOMIC MUSEUM
ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO



PARTIAL MAP OF ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO
The National Atomic Museum is located on Kirtland Air Force Base, East. The base is located south of Central Ave. (US Rte 66). From Central, turn at Wyoming and proceed 1.7 miles to the museum building. Museum is open seven days a week: 9 AM to 5 PM. Closed New Years, Easter, Thanksgiving & Christmas. Library is open weekdays - 8 AM to 4 PM. For full information call 505 264-4223. Admission free.

Application for membership 1982 Membership \$10
Back copies of Newsletter, \$5 extra New Renewal

Name _____ Squadron _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____

KINDLY

reserve the following accommodations:
 single double
for _____ people. I plan to arrive at approximately _____ A.M./P.M. on _____ (Day - Date) and will occupy accommodations for _____ (number) nights.
Name _____
Firm or Organization _____
Address _____
City _____ State _____ Zip _____



18 Winrock Center, N.E.
P.O. Drawer 3220, Station D
Albuquerque, New Mexico 8719C

LOST AND FOUND

- LOST Ben Warmer San Francisco CA
FOUND
282 Harry Gipson
283 James C. Phillips
284 Richard J. McGee
285 T.C. Papermaster
286 Albert Richter
287 Carol M. Fair
289 Jansen R. Davenport
290 Adrian P. Wilson
291 Alphy F. Sitman
292 H.J. Clanton
293 George Vaitkus
294 Harvey A. Leudeman
295 Pete Brommel
296 Philip J. Roy
297 Mike McCloy
298 Fred H. Henry
299 John P. Trapuzzano
300 C.L. Roarty
301 Glenn H. Saalfeld
302 John D. Garlock
303 J. Verstraete

- IL 61953 347
PA 15108
MT 59401 346
MN 55416 347
TX 76640 348
IA 51401 AM
FL 32780 346
TN 38119 416
LA 70441 347
TX 75227 346
PA 15801 346
MI 48043 Hq.
IL 60510 348
NY 14624 348
NM 87110 416
OH 44022 347
NJ 08402 348
CO 80215
CA 95691 347
GA 30736 347
MI 49508

TAPS

Claude Seila, Navigator of the Rambling Raider, shot down Aug 25, 1943. After being freed from POW Camp Claude became an attorney, residing in Lenoir, NC until his death from leukemia on December 21, 1964. The Seilas had three sons. from Claude's mother, Annie, of 411 Boulevard, Westfield, NJ 07090

George Beukema died Feb. 19, 1963 of a heart attack at the home in Chicago, leaving a wife, one son, and a daughter. George was a mortician and had attended the 1961 reunion. from George's sister, Jeanette Beukema 9716 S. Karlov Ave., Oak Lawn, Ill. 60453

O.C. "Ozzie" Wetzel

Sat. 29 January 1982
This is to inform you of the demise of my husband, Lt. Col. Oswald "Ozzie" Wetzel; 15 Air Force, 99th Bomb Group, on Jan. 2, 1982. He was dedicated to his family, USAF, and to his country.

sincerely
Mrs. Wetzel

THE 99TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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ALBUQUERQUE, NM 87110

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