



SEASON'S Greetings

Newsletter 87-3

307th
BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HV) ASSOCIATION
"THE LONG RANGERS"

December 5, 1987

In every home, in every heart
The lights of friendship glow
And once again it's time to greet
The friends it's nice to know.

The following has been taken from a Newsletter I sent to the Membership in December of 1984. A few dates have been changed, but the words still apply.

"TIMES REMEMBERED

It's that time of year again when, as children, we expected Santa to perform marvelous miracles with his bag of wonderful gifts. Since a little of the child always remains in each of us we hope the blessings and the miracles still prevail. One cannot help but reflect on the happenings of 1987. Not only those that influenced our own personal life, but the happenings that affect the people of the world. Such a time to live. Will we ever again feel the closeness with people that was so much a part of us over 40 years ago? 1987 -- as it comes to a close we will have happy memories of reunions past, the renewal of old friendships, the anticipation of even better times in the coming years as more members attend our reunions. What is that saying that so often adorns a Christmas card? "NEVER A CHRISTMAS MORNING, NEVER THE OLD YEAR ENDS, BUT SOMEONE THINKS OF SOMEONE, OLD DAYS, OLD TIMES, OLD FRIENDS!"

To each of you from the Staff of the 307th, A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HEALTHFUL, PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.

QUOTES OF NOTE

"You never know how fortunate you are until you enter a gift shop and see how many things your friends haven't given you." - Evan Esar

"I could not at any age be content to take my place in a corner by the fireside and simply look on. Life was meant to be lived. One must never, for whatever reason turn ones back on life." - Eleanor Roosevelt

"Experience is the name everyone gives to his mistakes." - Oscar Wilde

"The more decisions that you are forced to make alone, the more you are aware of the freedom to choose." - Thornton Wilder

"Life is made up, not of little sacrifices or duties, but of little things, in which smiles and kindnesses, and small obligations, given habitually, are what win and preserve the heart and secure comfort." - Sir H. Davy

FROM THE HISTORIAN

At long last the Reunion Books have been completed and mailed out. You should already have received your copy. We hope you feel that the book is worth the wait. Now we are concerned about sending back the material borrowed from many of you. Because of the Christmas rush, we have decided to wait until after the Holidays when UPS and the Postal Service have returned to normal before trusting your albums to them.

On page 134 of the new Reunion Book is a photo of the tail end of a B-24 with no tail turret. We supposed that the turret had been removed to lighten the plane but did not write to the donor of the picture for an explanation until too late to get the answer in the book. We have the story now and here it is, straight from Bruce Swenson of the 424th.

"On May 24th, 1944, we bombed Baik from B-24J #460, encountering no enemy fighters, but were hit by flak which caused the loss of two engines, numbers one and three. We were unable to feather number three; so we flew with one engine feathered and another wind-milling (causing a great deal of drag). We assumed procedures and positions preparing to ditch. After our "last" cigarette, we decided to chop off the tail turret and further lighten #460 by throwing out guns, etc. The plane responded to these tactics by surging to about 200 feet and holding this altitude to our base at Manus (Bruce -- do you mean Manus or Los Negros?) where R.W. Hamilton, our pilot, made a successful dead stick (power off) landing. Of course, Gardenia Ten had been alerted to pick us up in the vicinity of Wuvulu Island, but we happily gave them no business!"

It seems to us that some additional comments describing just how that turret was chopped out would be very interesting. How about it, Bruce?

While you're looking at the Reunion Book, turn to page 120 to see another embarrassing oversight. On that page we hoped to show two examples of art from the 307th; a full sized Easter Card from Dick White and a V-Mail

Easter card contributed by Bill Wettengel. Somehow the "dummy page" sketch of the V-Mail that we submitted to the printer was picked up instead of the copy print of the actual V-Mail. We promise to run it again in the next book. And we promise that, next time, we will visit the printer down in Ohio to make a final proofreading of the printing negatives of the book -- even if we are running late -- again.

Back to our question in the last newsletter about S/Sgt "Cotton" Meeks who was the only survivor of a crash on Morotai in late '44 or early '45. The plane he was on at the time was a B-24 with a name something like "Who Done It". Member Bill Helms has a photo in his collection of a B-24 named "Whodunit II" with nose art showing a very pregnant young lady. Bill took the picture on Morotai but has no information as to group or squadron. We suppose there were many aircraft sporting that name, but it does place one of them at the scene of the crash in question. It could have been the B-24 that had crashed or it may have been the replacement for another of the same name previously lost. At any rate, this is still not much to go on in our search for "Cotton Meeks". (Bill -- perhaps you would send us an enlarged Xerox print of the picture that we could send to Mr. Meeks son-in-law who is trying to put together some information on the incident. Thanks.) If this all rings a bell with anyone else please let us know what you know.

Per Andy Anderson -- B24 #266, about which he wrote in the last newsletter, did have a name -- "Kia Ora" painted very inconspicuously on the nose. The rest of the story was and is true.

Russ Ratliff flew many times on old 266 and on a good many other planes as well. An excerpt from a recent letter from Russ:

"A couple of months ago I chanced upon my old Form 5s and was very surprised to see that I'd flown as engineer for Jurkens, Matheny, Macdonald, Newman, Mark, McNeese, Gregory, Kidder, Miller, Snyder, Bourgeois, Smith and Krebs and I guess whoever else asked for a volunteer -- not conducive to longevity."

Perhaps that sort of record was commonplace in the early days but it sounds remarkable to one more familiar with the later days of the Group.

A recent letter from Ben Webster brings a question that could add much to our understanding of the history of the 307th Bomb Group. Ben's comments:

"I know you are looking for items for the newsletters that are of interest to the members. Since I was in the 301st Bomb Group at Gieger Field, and was one member of the cadre from the 301st that formed the 307th, I wonder how many (and who) of our present Association members may have been in that cadre from the 301st. I realize this information may be of interest to only a few at most, but if there are others who were in the cadre, we may come up with some interesting discussions if we could get together in Nashville."

Who of you were in that original group of men sent over from the 301st to staff the original 307th? We have the names of several of the first EM to arrive from the 301st and the jobs they filled but little else. Please realize that what may be familiar and clear to you may be familiar and clear

only to you, for the records of the 307th are sketchy at best and difficult to reconstruct. We need the memories and the records that only you may have. So -- all of you who left the 301st to form the nucleus of the 307th, check in with us with your stories of the 301st and your experiences with the early 307th. And why not plan a meeting in Nashville next May as suggested by Ben Webster for a mini-reunion within the 307th reunion?

In our Historical file is a list of Morotai air raids recorded by Fred H. Hitchcock of the 79th Airdrome Squadron, a control tower operator. This material was sent to us by Mr. Ed Polk, a PT boat commander at Morotai who is a researcher of both PT boats and wartime Morotai. Hitchcock's record gives a day by day account of Morotai air raids from his arrival on the island on Sept. 27, 1944, until his departure on Jan. 15, 1945. He states that from Sept. 15, 1944 (D-day) until Jan. 15, 1945, Morotai had 235 yellow alerts, 300 red alerts and 78 actual air raids. After January 15th Hitchcock claims there were only a couple more raids, with the last Jap strike on Morotai occurring on March 22, 1945. The listing is eight pages long, far too long to include in the newsletter or Reunion Book in its present form. We'll retype it and reduce its size so that we can print it sometime in the future.

Does anyone have such a list covering the air raids the Group experienced during the early days on Guadalcanal? If so, we would appreciate a copy.

Many of the Morotai raids in the Hitchcock listing were familiar to your Historian, especially one on the night of October 10/11, 1944. Our crew

spent that night on Morotai after our wounded pilots, Tom Harris and Pat Patrick, landed our damaged ship successfully on one of the unfinished airstrips there following a flight from Balikpapan with two and a half engines, shot out rudder controls and no hydraulics. After the pilots were rushed to the hospital the rest of us were trucked off to some outfit on the island that agreed to put us up for the night. I can't remember who our benefactors were but they gave each of us a folding cot, a Navy blanket and a place to bunk in a large roofed, but sideless shed. They surely provided us with food as well but the events of the day left me too exhausted to remember. I was soon rolled up in my blanket, sound asleep. Awakened after dark by a call of nature, I found the latrine, located several score yards away across bulldozer torn jungle, only with considerable difficulty thanks to the absolute blackness of that tropical night. Sitting in the primitive two holer in pitch darkness that could almost be felt, I wondered if I was going to be able to find my way back to my cot. Suddenly three loud shots rang out in rapid succession, obviously from heavy caliber guns, immediately followed by other similar signals from all across the small tip of the island held by our forces. Still too green in the protocol of air raids to know an alert when I heard one and lulled by the continuing silence that followed, I remained where I was. Then an airplane approached, very high and far away, and for the first time I heard the distinctive sound of Japanese aircraft engines. The plane was obviously headed right for me and getting closer. Not sure yet that there was anything amiss, not knowing which way to go anyhow and blinded by the dark of the night, I decided to stay where I was. Then the anti-aircraft guns started, following the enemy plane as it approached. Now I had an idea of what was going on and at this point

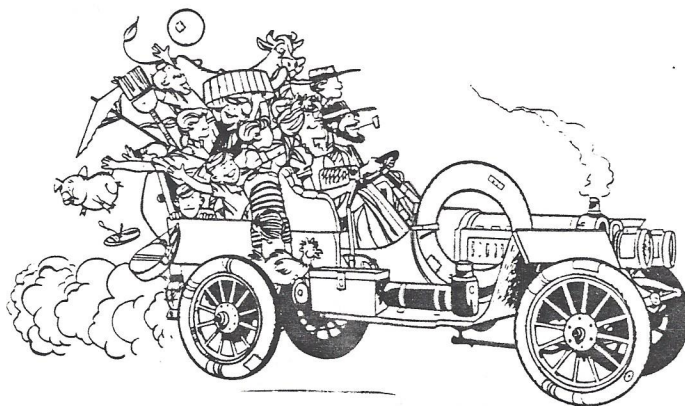
1988 ELECTION OF OFFICERS

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The following members of the 307th Bombardment Group Association have consented to serve at the Nominating Committee at the 1988 Reunion. If you have any recommendations as to who would be willing to serve on the Board of the 307th Association please contact the following:

James Perry - Chairman
1823 Glenwood Rd.
Deland, Florida 32720
(804) 734-9303

Richard Paul
2324 Quincy Avenue
Quincy, Illinois 62301
(217) 222-2946



REUNION UPDATE

Plans for the reunion are going ahead as scheduled. Reservations are coming in daily. If you haven't made your reservation yet, better get moving.

Cutoff date for getting reservations for the Friday "General Jackson Dinner Cruise" is Jan. 15, 1988. Ken Meyers must have the money into the Company by that date.

I began to worry. I remember thinking that it was still not a good idea to run blindly into the darkness. I also mentally measured the size of the hole in the seat beside me . . . a tight fit, I decided, but if worse came to worse . . .! The plane came closer and closer with the guns deafeningly following it toward me. As I considered the relative merits of the options that seemed available to me, the finicky part of me was leaning toward the darkness. However, the question was abruptly settled by the heart-stopping "swish-swish-swish" of an entire stick of bombs which sounded as though they were coming right at ME. Realizing that it was too late to try to squeeze through the little hole, I pulled my pants up around my knees, staggered six or eight feet into the darkness and fell over a large log, behind which I huddled as the ground shook with explosions somewhere in the darkness well behind the little latrine (but too close for me). After the all clear I carefully made my way back to the shed and fell into my cot. The record shows there were two similar raids that night but, exhausted, I slept through the other and can't say whether it was before or after "my" raid. The next day our crew, less those in the hospital, was flown back to our base at Noemfoor. There were many other air raids after the Group moved up to Morotai, but none lives so clearly in my memory as that first one and the two rather dubious choices I thought I had at the time. It's an embarrassingly funny story . . . now!

Best Wishes for the Christmas Season and the New Year from both of your Historians and their families to you and yours, and special thoughts for those from our own crews who, though out of sight, are never far from mind.

Jim and Dottie Kendall
Harry and June Sterkel -5-

Tentative Agenda is as follows:

Friday 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Registration
1 p.m. - 3 p.m. Reception

Friday evening open to members who plan to attend the Grand Ole Opry, General Jackson Dinner Cruise, or the Belle Carol Dinner Cruise, or just to visit with friends.

Saturday morning - Breakfast Buffet
General Jackson Breakfast Cruise
Golf
Shopping
Opryland
* Hermitage & Bell Meade Mansion tours
* Jack Daniel Distillery
* Midday Cruise General Jackson

10:00 a.m. Board Meeting (Staff)

2 p.m. - 4 p.m. plus General Business meeting

Evening - Grand Ole Opry
General Jackson Dinner Cruise
Open Time

Sunday - Morning Breakfast Buffet
Time for Church
Opryland for some

Evening - Picture taking time
Banquet and Dance

*Will depend on number who want to go maybe on Sunday.

Out of the first 50 people registered the 424th Squadron was leading with 22 persons registered.

Our next newsletter will cover the exact time of the picture taking, cocktail hour, dinner and dance.

IN MEMORIAM

It is always sad to receive news of the loss of one of the "Men of the 307th." So many names are those of men I have never met but when it is someone that has participated in our reunions and been such a pleasure to meet, the passing seems just a little sadder.

Word has recently been received from Sam Newcomer of the death of Joe Lomeo and more recently the death of John Brooks. These two members have been to many of our reunions as well as participating in the organization of the 307th. They will be greatly missed. The sympathy of the membership goes out to Jean Brooks and her family and to Antoinette Lomeo and her family.

Marty Sporn has also notified us of the death of Leonard "Smoky" Ringel, June 18, 1987 and Charles D. Briggs, Jr., Brig. Gen. Ret. The last name on the list is that of Maj. Gen. Victor R. Haugen who near the end of World War II served as deputy commander of the 307th Bomb Group. He flew B-24's in the New Guinea-Borneo-Philippines area. (11-30-87)

MISSING MEMBERS

We've lost Howen Peterson. Will any of you members who live near his last address check on his whereabouts.

Howen Peterson
4440 Glen Way
Claremont, CA 91711
(714) 624-9758
424th Squadron

LETTERS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

"Dear Cena,

Hopefully this photo and story will not be too late to be of some use should the story, "Death of a Bomber" find it's way into print in the Newsletter.

This photo was taken when "266" was quite young. The top corners were censored by Military Intelligence on Oahu because they thought that the nose turret and radar antennas were still secret. The 1st row of bombs and the ship silhouettes did not make the picture.

This is 266's original combat crew with the exception that Ulmer Newman had been replaced by Jack Ralph as pilot when Newman was made Operations Officer and our Navigator, Milford Stevens was lost somewhere and didn't make it back in time for the photo. Newman, the only Capt. Pilot at the time was moved up to Operations by Squadron Commander Ed Jurkens (natural selection) and replaced by Jack Ralph, (Lt. Col. Ret.) who was then Flayhaven's Co-Pilot, a 2nd Lt. It has always been a mystery to me why Ed Jurkens gave Jack one of the best crews (combat and ground) in the South Pacific. Be that as it may, we were able to get him home in one piece about one month after we celebrated his 21st birthday.

Left to right standing are: Eugene Marks, Co-Pilot (whereabouts unknown); Jack Ralph, Pilot; Henry Wolf, Radio Operator; Russ Ratliff, Engineer. Kneeling L to R - Alex Brent, Asst. Radio (whereabouts unknown); Silas Bell, Asst. Engineer; Joe Parker, Tail Gunner (whereabouts unknown). Sitting L to R - Jeff Newman, Bombardier (killed in Europe on 2nd tour); Francis Iddings, Nose turret.

Iddings, Newman and Stevens are known to have taken the "Last Long Flight".

Sincerely,

Russ Ratliff"



THANK YOU

The following was received by Dan Cauffiel and the 307th Bombardment Group from Eileen Panziera.

"Thank you for remembering Art with your gift to the Salinas Valley Memorial Hospital foundation.

My family and I appreciate your thoughtfulness.

Sincerely,
Eileen Panziera "

"Dear Cena,

Just a thought ... I wonder how many of our group would be seriously interested in a tour of the South Pacific, perhaps Australia and New Guinea. If there were enough interest, I'm sure a travel agency could put one together. Time is running low for some of us and I have a feeling that there are many of us who would like to revisit the "battlegrounds" with our mates and buddies. I realize that a tour could not include all the areas in which we served: i.e., Morotai and other remote areas, but there are tours to New Guinea and Australia at least.

I don't know if this has been attempted in the past or not, since I have only been a member for a year or so. But I would like for someone to initiate it; at least check and see what kind of an itinerary is available and the minimum number of reservations that must be guaranteed in order to get a group rate. Could we take a survey, perhaps in the next newsletter? Or maybe it could be discussed in Nashville in 1988.

As I said, it is just a thought .. but a dream of many of the Men of the 307th that could come true.

Sincerely,

Charles R. Lewis"

"Dear Cena,

The latest mail from the 307th included some excerpts from a letter I had written to you. You will note I mentioned a Lt. Elliott, pilot of a B-24 that was rammed by a Tojo fighter coming back from Truk and the plane ultimately crashed after all the crew bailed out except for the Tail-Gunner who fell with his turret on impact with the fighter and the pilot, Elliott who went down with the ship as he tried unsuccessfully to bailout.

Well, it seems at the last 370th Reunion, Nov. 6, 1987, a John Lutseck whom I had met at the previous reunion challenged my letter for accuracy since he was a ball-turret gunner on Elliott's crew and that he and Elliott were alive and well. You can imagine how embarrassed and puzzled I was. I was positive I was correct. Could there have been two crews with a pilot named Elliott or was I just plain wrong? The Flight Engineer's name was Smitty (Smith) and he survived. He, with four others were picked up by a sub or destroyer. "Slick" Olson was the Tail Gunner and his turret tumbled out of the plane on impact with the fighter just a short distance from Truk on his way home. Lutseck showed me pictures of the crew. There were no Smith or Olson on that crew. He does remember the incident of the flak-vests which were worn for the first time over Rabaul, but is equally puzzled over the other occurrence.

I wonder if there is some other way of finding a list of crew members of other planes and who the pilot was for Smitty and Slick Olson? If only I could find a record of the incident.

A Wayne Cooper from Hayward, California was a Tail Gunner on that mission. He was with another crew and he vividly recalls the crash, but does not remember the names of any of the crew members.

Thank you for your patience and please let me know if I may be of any assistance to you. Remember; If you and your husband are ever in this area please feel free to use our home for lodging.

Sincerely yours,

Rock J. Daigle

MANY HAPPY HOLIDAYS TO YOU AND YOURS!"