



307th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HV) ASSOCIATION

"THE LONG RANGERS"

Newsletter 94-1

APRIL 1, 1994



QUOTES OF NOTE

"Perserverance is not a long race; it is many short races, one after another."

- Walter Elliott

"To be human should be considered a privilege, not an excuse."

- Imogene Fey

"All things come to him whose name is on the mailing list."

- Ray Michel

"To be good is noble; but to show others how to be good is nobler and no trouble."

- Mark Twain

"It is no use saying, 'We are doing our best.' You have to succeed in doing what is necessary."

- Winston Churchill

"Stress is like a violin string. It needs enough tension to make music, but not to snap."

- Dr. Donald Tubesing

"I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging the future but by the past."

- Patrick Henry

"To know what is right and not do it is the worst cowardice."

- Confucius

"Hate never builds anything; it can only destroy. Everything beautiful has been loved into being."

- M. Buxham

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NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

The time is getting close for another great reunion. The Reunion Committee Members, Bill & Ellie Gerhardt and Bob & Sara Jones have been putting in the hours it takes to make a reunion come off with as few hitches as possible. Now it is your turn to help by making sure you have your reservation in as soon as possible. People who show up at the reunion, without being registered, really put the Reunion Committee in a bind.

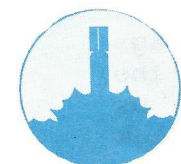
Most activities where reservations are required have a 72 hour cutoff. Someone showing up on Friday wanting to attend an event on Saturday are about two days late getting their name in the pot. So, please get your reservations in early.

Those of you who attended the Dayton Reunion and who have read the minutes as published in the 1992 Reunion Book know that the 1996 Reunion is scheduled in San Diego, CA. Mark Rifkin, Chairman has been working on logistics for the reunion. Information, plans, etc., will be presented at the General Meeting at the 1994 Reunion in St. Louis.

I want to thank those of you who have called and written to wish me a speedy recovery. We are making progress although it seems very slow at times. We hope to see you in St. Louis

Ken Meyers
President

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1998 REUNION SITE

Our 1998 Reunion Site will be a point of discussion at our General Meeting on Saturday May 28, 1994 in St. Louis. If you would like to see the reunion held in your home area and would be willing to take on the responsibility of setting up the reunion, please bring all the pertinent data with you to the General Meeting in St. Louis.

The City of Hampton, VA has approached the 307th suggesting Hampton as a possible site for our 1998 Reunion. I have been in touch with two of our members who live near there and they have tentatively agreed to check out the area. There is also the possibility of reviewing Asheville, N.C. as the 1998 site. We do need inputs and we do need individuals willing to take on the task of organizing the reunions. Your help will be appreciated.

Contact any of the 307th Officers with your inputs.

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1994 ROSTER

The 1994 Roster for the 307th Bomb Group carries quite a number of new names as well as address changes. Hopefully we have caught all the changes.

Putting together the roster has been quite a lengthy task. Many of you members did not send in your telephone number, what squadron you were with, whether you served with headquarters or with the ground crews. If this information is not listed with your address, please send it to us.

We have also dropped all 307th men who have not paid dues for the past five years from the main roster. Their names and addresses are listed in the last portion of the

roster. After trying to get responses from them, we have finally dropped them from the mailing list.

Cena & Walt

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LETTERS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

Lee Bowers writes; "On page 96 of the 50th Anniversary Reunion #9 book - Front row: Kelly, Hal Raymond, Paul Bowers, Palanovich.

P.S. Kelly picked up that nose in McKay, Australia. Quote: "I was talking when I should have been listening."

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J.D. Washburn writes; "Sad news about Chet Vaughn. I flew with Chet several times and remember him as a fine, considerate man.

The article about the B-24 was not justified. B-24's have come home on less than three engines. I remember on one of our missions we carried a full load and bombed with three engines. To me it was the most beautiful plane ever made. She carried me on 52 missions and back and I still love her."

Respectively,
J.D. Washburn

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Jack Pope writes; "I arrived, along with N.K. Bullard and others at Geiger Field the day the 307th was leaving for Ephrata. A group of us had been put in a car at Harlingen, Texas, switched from one train to another, and brought non-stop to Geiger. One of the trains was "The Portland Rose" as I recall. Took about 5 days. We were held in the street at the transient barracks with our barracks bags until we could be loaded onto the train to Ephrata. A few of us sneaked into the barracks and took showers, (first during the trip).

Then on to the Dust Bowl at Ephrata.

The rest is 307th history until I was trucked to Henderson Field from Koli airstrip, and shipped by C54 to the States, via Hickam and Hamilton Field. All my original crew were dead except me, Lippincott, and Dumas who had been transferred out of the 371st.

See you in St. Louis."

Jack Pope

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DIARY OF LT. VERNON A. MRAK

Continued from 93-3 Newsletter

18 July 1945 - Wed. Transition - We made three take offs and landings and stalls, steep turns and semi-vertical reverses. Total time 0305. 0205 QD - c.p.

19 July 1945 - Had an air raid warning this morning at 0315. Planes failed to appear. Tonight when we were at the club singing old time songs and drinking we had our second air raid warning of the day. Still no planes appeared.

21 July 1945 - Sat. Ship 396. Training flight. T.O. 1245 - Steve made first t.o. 120 QD .30 PL 125 CP. I had second - I made last t.o. and landing.

22 July 1945 - Sun. Ship 132. Total time 155 - 100 CP & 66 QD. We were playing around today. Not really doing anything in particular. Just before taking off, four Negro infantry (93rd Div.) men asked if they could go for a ride. I've never seen anyone quite so pleased with one. When I began to do steep banks and dives it made one of them sick. The other three laughed themselves silly. Then we circled over a PBY that was trying to rescue some downed fliers. After we got down they were very grateful for the ride.

They couldn't believe the beauty of the view up there. One said he had seen the World's Fair and that didn't even compare. Another said he didn't know what to think when he had to look up to see the water in one of the steep banks. (The 93rd Div. ran a sawmill cutting lumber from the mahogany trees, but their main job was to guard the perimeter to prevent Japs from coming down on our third of the island.)

23 July 1945 - Mon. 393 - Ceram Islands/BABBUM - 15/100 G.P. Rendezvous BONOM Is. Bomb altitude 14,000 ft. Minimum altitude for tertiary at Halmaheras 10,000'. Tertiary Flak positions at Lolobata Airdrome - LA'HA & Lohang Airdrome are primary and secondary targets Bomb individual squadrons. Our target is supposed to have 12 - 120 mm heavy Ack Ack guns. The most we have encountered to date. Probable enemy fighters. Playmate is the only rescue available.

Took off at 0602 on schedule. We're flying our first lead position today B-1 - Leading our second flight of the squadron. I am again flying left seat. I made take off.

0945 - We were unable to bomb primary or secondary because of complete undercast, so now we are headed back to tertiary at Lolobata. Our target is gun positions up there that have been shooting at the Navy's P.T. boats. Also there are some flak guns located there. 1030 back on oxygen again. We are going to have to bomb this target at 17,000' because of heavy flak guns. At 17,000' we encountered very severe clear ice. Called lead ship and he told us to let down to contact. We let down to 4500' before getting out of complete overcast. Came back and tried to regroup over Morotai --- 1315 We are back on our way to bomb the primary - Lolobata.

(By way of explanation, the Halmahera group of islands half-way surrounded our little island of Morotai. Japs had 30,000 stranded there and another 5,000 on the northern 2/3 of Morotai Island, with perimeter about one mile north of the airstrip. They tried every night to reinforce the troops on Morotai and our PT boats defended us. The heavy flak guns on Halmahera were a constant problem to us at low altitude when we took off and landed.) (Also, I believe that by now we were no longer using our Radar Bombardier.)

We dropped our bombs on a small Jap held island about 25 miles from our field. Total flying time - 900. PI - 100, CPI - 100, P - 330, CP 330. Practically all of today's flying was formation -- We were flying our first lead -- Box 1.

23 July 1945 - Night transition - Lepord Able 2 -- Santi Ship 935. Baldwin - The Black Radar, Mrak Heavy Bastard. Baldwin & I each shot 2 landings completing our night transition. Total time 125. 35 - QD, 40 - C.P. (Imagine an engineer who wasn't good in math! 1988 retort by Mrak; or a smart-aleck navigator!)

24 July 1945 - T Ship 393. Today Steve & I lead the squadron for three hours of formation. Practiced two squadron weather penetrations. Formed Echelon to the right. Flew over our area then went in for landing. I made three t.o. and landings. Total time 310 - P - 135, CP 135 (Math has improved!)

25 July 1945 - Wednesday - Today our Tonopah friend, Callison, was lost. He is the one who had the bulldog back at R.T.U.* Natives brought one survivor of B-24 crash back to Morotai. This one crashed in Halmahera. The rest of the crew was killed when bombs exploded. Also another crew of the 868th bailed out over Jap held French Indo

China. This has been the third crew that the 868th lost since Harder went down.

*R.T.U. probably meant "Reserve Training Unit or Replacement Training Unit.

26 July 1945 - Thursday - Ship 293 Flying Squadron lead with (A 1) Harry Coggins. Shipping search west of Southern tip of Borneo. (Changed to strike). Rescue - Playmate 61 Dog CA at Kabaladdea Island. 9/500 G.P. 3100 gas. T.O. 0606. Attack altitude 7500. Left Breakway. Primary Ta'baio A.B. Runway #2. Secondary Oelin Airdrome, #3 Tirtiary - none. Stanfu Mapangat Airdrome. Lepord Baker One. Ten Jap twin engine bombers raided the Balikpapan and Mangar areas this morning.

Actual take off 0606 - Squadron assembly at Cape Selataon. Bombs away at 1228. We hit medium sized cumulus cloud on bomb run just prior to bombs away. Three ships were unable to drop because of that. I don't believe that very many of our bombs hit in the target area.

1245 - Passing over extreme southern tip of Borneo on the way back to Morotai. 1248 - Three Jap fighters were seen below our altitude. They were climbing up to us but probably lost us in the clouds. 1315 - I don't think fighters will have much luck finding us now.

They didn't find us -- sooo -- the trip back to the base was uneventful. Total time 1305. P - 630, CP 635 (Good adding!)

(The following is the account of the rescue of Callison and 4 other crew members. I want to mention that one of my very best friends, Helms from S.C. was one of the lost.)

29 July 1945 - Don Callison, Jack Counts and three other men of Don's crew were found today after being

in the water for 48 hours. Two of the crew were floating in a one-man life raft. Took turns hanging on the outside of the raft. Six more of the crew are missing.

The five that were found were picked up about 100 miles N.W. of Majo Islands. I talked to Don and he seems to have aged 10 years.

30 July 1945 - Monday - 2313 - Had another air alert a few minutes ago. One of our ships tried to come in without his IFF being turned on. Search lights had him pin pointed all around the field. We were on alert for about 15 minutes.

3 August 1945 - Friday, Ship 645
We are flying ship from 14th Air-drome Sqdn. up to Nichols Field at Manila to bring back Air Corp supplies.

We expect to stay in Manila for 3 days. Gibson and McCarthy are riding with us on their way to The States (I almost forgot to capitalize.).

This ship we are in today is war-weary if I've ever seen one. #3 engine kept cutting out as we taxied to take-off position. If it weren't for the fact that we are going to Manila for our beans, I'd never take off in this sad excuse for an airplane.

0945 - We are now passing over Mindanao Island. Steve made take-off this morning. First one in the last nine missions. T.O. time 0740. 1145 Tuned in the commercial radio station on our radio compass. Now beating "G.I. Jive: total time 6:00 hrs. Vernon A. Mrak (Writes better than he adds!) (Mrak - 1988, Had more practice.)

5 August 1945 - Sunday. 0600 got up, had breakfast, and now am preparing to take off for Morotai. 0740 - We have been down at the plane for a couple hours. No. 3 engine will not start so now we are

trying to find a new carburetor. Looks like we'll spend one more night in Manila.

(The main thing I remember about Manila was that we ate ice cream made from Water Buffalo milk, and the bananas weren't very good. The city was a complete pile of rubble.)

6 August 1945 - Ship 1645. Took off from Nichols Field at 1315. Circle Manila once again and now are on our way to Morotai. 1325 - Passing over tip of Bataan Peninsula and Corregidor.

Following apparently is a note from Gibson to a member of his crew.

"Red, I left my identification bracelet on my shelf - also those salt & pepper shakers in my ammo box. Would you please mail them to me. My address in case you lost it: 16580 Rocemont Rd., Detroit 19, Mich. If you think that you can get to my joint on your way home, just bring them with you. Thanx. Gib"

Yesterday Steve and I were over to look at ship #396 that cracked up on take-off at Nichols a few days ago killing pilot, co-pilot & engineer. We flew that ship on a couple of missions. Thirteen men got out alive -- I can't see how anyone was saved. They told us that one man ran 75 yds. with a broken leg. Today two of our passengers are men who survived the crash. They are pretty well banged up. "I'll Be Seeing You" is coming in over the Manila radio. I saw Jack Foss, Ed Novak at Nichols just before we left. They were shot down over Canton, China on their 19th mission. It took them 23 days to walk back through Jap lines. They had been led back by the Chinese Guerilla Fighters. Ed said that he almost shot one of them when the Guerilla fighter was coming up to help. He couldn't tell what he was. Ed and Jack are on their way back to The

States. Both have aged ten years since I last saw them in Tonopah last February.

The night before we left Tonopah Jack, Bob, and I went to Leona David's house and threw a good drunk on her whiskey. Jack said that she is pissed off because I haven't written to her. (I think that all of us were ageing rather rapidly, just didn't realize it because we saw each other every day.)

Spent a couple days in Manila. I didn't know that war could be so terrible. Most of the city was in charred ruins. (And rubble). I don't think I saw one building that was not hit by bombs or shells. I talked for hours with the people who had lived there during the Jap occupation. They all hated the Japs like poison. (My outstanding recollection was that the little children begging on the street were so clean.)

1415 - We'll be over Mindoro in just a few minutes. 1505 - Passing over Southwestern tip of Panay. 1530 Passing along West Coast of Negros. 1600 - Over Northwest Coast of Mindanao. Weather is heavy from coastline inland. 1612 - We hit a bomb (I think I mean bump) that threw Steve all the way out of his seat! Luckily I was flying and holding on to the wheel. 1620 - Out in clear skies again over Illana Bay. Total time - 1240.

Tonight when we landed we found that the Jap Red Cross ship that was captured three days ago down around the Celebes was docked here at our port.

1500 - Japs who were bandaged up to resemble war casualties were led off and put in cold storage.

It is thought those Japs were going to make a surprise attack on our airfield. Sneaking up on us under protection of the Red Cross. The ship is loaded down with guns and

ammo that is crated in medical supply boxes. We can be thankful that our recon planes spotted the ship before it got in range.

8 August 1945 - Wed. #17, Plane No. 617. Radar Mission to N. E. Celebes, Amorang - Varmint Able One. 2750 Gals. 10/100 G.P. Actual t.o. 0705. Mickey (Dorman) was having trouble with his radar set. Thought we were going to have to salvo our bombs and go back to base. 0810 - Passing over NE'ern tip of Celebes. Dropped our last bomb at 1135 and now back home. Our mission today was to test one of the radar ships. We dropped single bombs, making 12 runs. Estimated hits - 60%. 1251 - Just heard the announcement of the new atomic bomb that was dropped on Japan. Came in over Manila radio. Flight time 710.

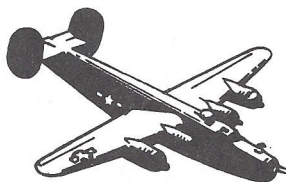
Tonight I saw Fred Taucher at a meeting. He was one of the seven men who survived when his crew had to bail out over water near NE tip of Celebes. He bailed out from nose wheel hatch. After hitting the water, he inflated one-man life raft and tied all of his equipment to it, including the parachute which he used as a sea anchor. When Fred jumped he took with him his muset bag filled with provisions. Had plenty of food and water. As nightfall came Fred prepared to try to get a little rest. Said that he had been dozing for about an hour when something hit the bottom of his raft, capsizing it. Getting back to the raft in the darkness he found that one side was completely torn away. He had his Mae West inflated and with it he managed to keep himself and the raft afloat until daybreak. By that time he realized that he had to get rid of everything but his knife, two signal mirrors (which later saved his life), and a cannister of drinking water. The next afternoon Fred and part of his crew were spotted and picked up by one

of our rescue Catalinas. Six of the crew were luckily able to get together after they hit the water while Fred was floating some distance from them by himself. By sheer luck and his ability to handle the single mirror he was also seen and picked up. The other three members of his crew perhaps went down as shark bait. (The signal mirror did require some expertise to be aimed so that it would reflect the sunlight to a plane overhead. A one-man life raft was about 2' x 3' and was hard to spot from the air.)

When Fred was taken aboard the rescue plane he was told that there was a whole school of sharks circling him, so undoubtedly it was a shark that tore and capsized his raft. Fred has 21 missions -----

Vernon Mrak's Diary will be continued in 94-2 Newsletter

Taps



THE LAST FLIGHT

The last few months have not been happy ones as far as hearing from families or friends of the 307th Men who have taken their "Last Flight."

So many Men of the 307th carved out such wonderful lives for themselves after WWII. We should all be proud to have served with such men.

The following are some words taken from obituaries I received on two of our 307th Men.

"Danville - John Wesley May, a beloved figure in Danville and the town's first mayor, died Wednesday. Often referred to as "The Father of Danville", he was the town's pre-eminent citizen who carved out a

distinguished career as a businessman and civic leader."

"Denver - John C. Hoerner, Prominent civic leader and Denver Businessman died December 22, 1993."

"Maureen Sullivan writes about her Father - Arthur E. Ringenwald.

"In loving memory of Arthur E. Ringenwald. September 24, 1992. If love could have saved you, you never would have died. - Maureen"

And so the words go on as we receive these sad notices.

Today as I was doing the final type on "The Last Flight" to be put in the Newsletter, the phone rang and it was Esther Key to let us know that Samuel Howard Key had died March 24, 1994 very unexpectedly. We will miss his wit and his poems.

Decho, Richard J.	2-11-94
Hoerner, Jack	12-22-93
Key, Samuel Howard	3-26-94
Kirstien, Walter G.	4-71
(Reported by his son on 1-13-94)	
May, John W.	2-10-94
Ringenwald, Arthur	9-24-92
Wanner, Robert B.	1-31-93
White, Richard M.	2-01-94

Our sincere sympathy to the families of these men.

Word has also been received that Robert "Bob" Mcguire, founder of the Liberator Club in honor of the epic B-24 Bombers of World War II, died March 23, 1994.

Bob's passion was the B-24 Liberator, on which he flew 50 combat missions as a U.S. Navy photographer during WWII. By forming the Liberator Club in the mid-60's Bob sought to stimulate and keep alive the prestige and mystique of the B-24 and to foster pride and camaraderie among those who flew and worked on the plane during World War II.

Bob will be missed.

FROM YOUR HISTORIANS

Microfilms of Official 307th Historical Reports

We recently completed our set of microfilms covering the monthly WWII Historical reports submitted to AAF HQ by the 307th Bomb Group and each of its four squadrons as well as another film entitled GUADALCANAL AND THE ORIGINS OF THE 13TH ARMY AIR FORCE. Three additional films cover the early post-war years of the 307th including its involvement in the Korean War. Most WWII microfilms were donated to our archives by Sam Britt and Tom Flanagan. Thanks to Sam and Tom it was necessary to purchase only two films to complete our set. The microfilms covering the Korean War period were donated by Roy MacMenigall who served in the U.S. Navy in the Pacific during WWII, then joined the Air Force and the 307th following the war. The original documents from which these microfilms were copied are stored at the Air Force Historical Research Center at Maxwell Air Force Base, Montgomery, Alabama. Though seemingly produced by the lowest possible bidder, most frames of the films are clear, readable and excellent reference material. Some, however, are of very poor quality and virtually useless.

Note that our microfilms are available for short term loan to Association members. Many members have already borrowed films to research their tour of duty with the 307th and/or one or more of the squadrons. Microfilm reader/printers are available for public use at many libraries and at some universities. Let us know if you are interested in borrowing Group or Squadron films, which Squadron(s) and time period(s).

Possible demand for the microfilms and the fact that we refer to them constantly in our own Historian's work makes it necessary to ask that the films be mailed back not more than two weeks after you receive them. No, there will be no charge for overdue films but, to keep things moving, please try to return them on time or earlier, if you finish with them earlier.

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Requests for help

Call for S/Sgt. A.J. Vick - Navy Vet H.H. Fournier's association with the 424th Bomb Squadron proves again that it is indeed a small world! During the early days of WWII Fournier was an SBD dive bomber tail gunner attached to VC38, a composite squadron (SBDs, TBFs and F4Fs) from the carrier Enterprise then land-based on Espiritu Santo. The only heavy bombers in that area of the South Pacific at the time were the B-17s of the 11th Bomb Group of the 7th Air Force based on the same island.

Later, after VC38 moved up to Guadalcanal, Fournier watched as a flight of the first B-24s in the Pacific landed at Carney Field. Two days later, with VC38 aircraft parked in Henderson Field rivetments, he and a buddy were cleaning guns and checking other equipment on their Dauntless dive bombers. Fournier paid little attention to the voices of a group of sightseers walking down the flight line looking over the Navy aircraft until the comment "Do these things really fly?" brought his head up out of the cockpit, probably ready to tangle with the unknown upstarts. Imagine his shock when one of the group was his brother, who he had not seen in two years, "in his 'Li'l Abner shoes and dirty flight togs". Jack Fournier was a member of the

Hathaway crew of the 424th.

The Fournier brothers spent the next two weeks visiting and alternating meals at each others mess halls and becoming acquainted with members of both outfits. At that stage of the war Navy land-based planes flew daylight missions while the 307th flew almost exclusively at night. Pilot Don Hathaway and co-pilot Walt Dowie got permission for the Navy Fournier to accompany their crew on a two-plane night patrol mission. Flying as waist gunner with a 50 cal. in his hands, after being accustomed to firing his dive bomber's 30 cal., was a real experience for him. He remembers that he flew in a plane named TARF (TARFU?) and that the other B-24 was named MARY LOU.

The brother's reunion ended when the dive bombers of VC38 were assigned to carrier duty on the escort carrier Monterey. Upon returning to Guadalcanal Fournier learned that the Hathaway crew had been lost on a mission to Kahili on July 6, 1943. He was told that six of eight 307th B-24s failed to return from that mission. (Our records show two 307th losses that day: Littlepage and Hathaway.) Navy Operations told Fournier that Navy PBVs in the area saw blinker light signals attributed to the Hathaway crew for the next three nights. (Our records mention only an unintelligible radio signal thought to be from Littlepage.) Attempts at rescue were not possible.

The tail gunner on the Hathaway crew, remembered by Fournier only as "Vic", missed that final mission, grounded by a serious gash on his chin. "Vic", who had not yet been reassigned to another crew, was "a real crutch at that time" writes Fournier, perhaps still unaware that he was providing



HATHAWAY CREW - GUADALCANAL, JUNE 1943 Front: Lauve, Robertson, A.E. Vick*, Barnard. Rear: Curry, Levy, Strzelecki, Hathaway, Rifkin*, Fournier. (*These men were not with the crew on the 7/6/43 mission.)

"Vic" with a similar crutch.

Luckily, we had a photo of the Hathaway with an ID for the men pictured, including D.F. Hathaway, J.A. Fournier and A.E. Vick--surely the "Vic" Mr. Fournier seeks. We saw to it that he received a copy of that picture. Another photo shows Vick as a member of the Stenarud crew, perhaps his assignment after Hathaway's loss.

Mr. Fournier asks our help in locating A.E. Vick. Did he make it home? Is anyone still in touch with him? Is it possible to contact him? Please send whatever information you have to: Mr. H.H. Fournier, P.O. Box 111, Grayland, WA 98547.

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Search for friends of the John D. Lucey flight crew - We thought this request had been run before but perhaps we're thinking about the article on the incident which was carried in Reunion Book No. 8.

On January 8, 1945, during a 307th strike on Neilson Field near Manila, a 370th B-24 was shot down with the loss of Lt. John D. Lucey and his entire crew. Sgt. Forest R. Phibbs, engineer on the ill fated plane, died just two days before the birth of his son.

That son, Forest R. Phibbs, Jr., has been working for several years to reconstruct his father's military career. He has corresponded with several members of our 307th Ass'n. and would like to locate someone who was personally acquainted with the Lucey crew in general or with his father in particular. If you can help, please write Mr. Phibbs at this address: Forest Rainey Phibbs, Jr., 111 Ole Hickory Trail N., Carrollton, GA 30117.

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Search for "OPERATIONS" personnel - Elmon Kerby, who served in 371st Operations, wrote

us shortly after the Dayton reunion to say how much he enjoyed it: "I really did enjoy the slides. I had been unable to visualize several campsites and the slide of the Munda camp brought that one back for me. I am still unable to remember many details of my daily work. I hoped to meet some of my counterparts from some of the other squadrons or Group HQ. During the banquet people from all the different departments were asked to stand. One other Operations person stood up on the opposite side of the room but I could barely see him at that distance. Just talking about it brings some of it to mind. Last week I used terms that I had not thought of for years." If some of you were involved in Operations while with the 307th, Elmon would be happy to hear from you. Write him at this address: Elmon Kerby, Box 624, Comanche, TX 76442-0624

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Secret Mission? - The story of 424th photographer Walt Benedetti's search for information about one of his 1945 missions was told in Newsletter 93-1. Briefly, the mission involved a special B-24 brought in from somewhere, private briefings, a demand of secrecy from the crew, the crew denied access to the bomb bay, civilians along on the mission and apparent confiscation of the pictures Walt took of the results of the bombing. Walt, then an impressionable 19 year old, took the secrecy warnings so much to heart that he kept no record of the mission, the crew with which he flew and not even the date. The mission did not appear on his Form 5 and we can find no mention of such a flight in our microfilms, neither those of the 307th nor the 424th. Walt thinks the mission

might have been flown on May 24th or 25th, 1945. He writes that he has had no luck in locating other 424th members who remember such a mission, but that he will keep trying to learn what it was all about. If you remember the mission, Walt would like to hear from you. Write him at this address: **A. Walter Benedetti, 201 S. Lafayette St., Denver CO 80209.**

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Search for Information about 371st Task Force Missions - Some time ago Marty Sporn (371st) told us he thought he had flown on the 10/26/44 Sulu Sea/Yamato mission though it did not appear on his Form 5. That mission was not something you would tend to forget, and we thought his memory could be verified by looking up the 371st Mission Reports. Surely Marty's name would show up on the Mission Report Load List for either the "Sulu Sea" strike or the Brunei Bay strike three weeks later when remnants of the same fleet were hit. (See Russ Doyland's story of the Brunei Bay strike in this Newsletter.) However, the 371st is the only squadron which included neither Field Reports (mission plans) nor load lists as part of the actual Mission Reports in their monthly Histories. So...we ask our membership, that's you if you were in the 371st, for help. Do you have anything in your WWII logs, diaries or records that would give the names of the crews who flew with the 371st on either the 10/26/44 or 11/16/44 shipping strikes, either by pilot's name or complete load list? If you can help, please send copies of whatever you have to: **Jim Kendall, 2350 Derby, Birmingham, MI 48009.**

* * *

Search for Painted Fragments of Jap Aircraft - We recently contacted Jim Lansdale, a WWII Pacific Air War researcher, who has asked our help. Part of his research efforts center around color and composition of paint used to camouflage and identify Japanese aircraft. He is looking for the pieces of painted aluminum often cut as souvenirs from the wrecked Jap planes strewn about our airstrips. This paint can be tested for chemical content in efforts to duplicate the original colors. This will give aircraft restorers the ability to exactly match the original colors used during WWII. **A WORD OF WARNING:** We don't know if this testing would damage or destroy your treasured souvenir. It would be best to contact Mr. Lansdale before sending anything to him to learn if and when your memorabilia would be returned and in what condition. His address: **James F. Lansdale, 1464 NE 63 Court, Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33334-5122.**

* * *

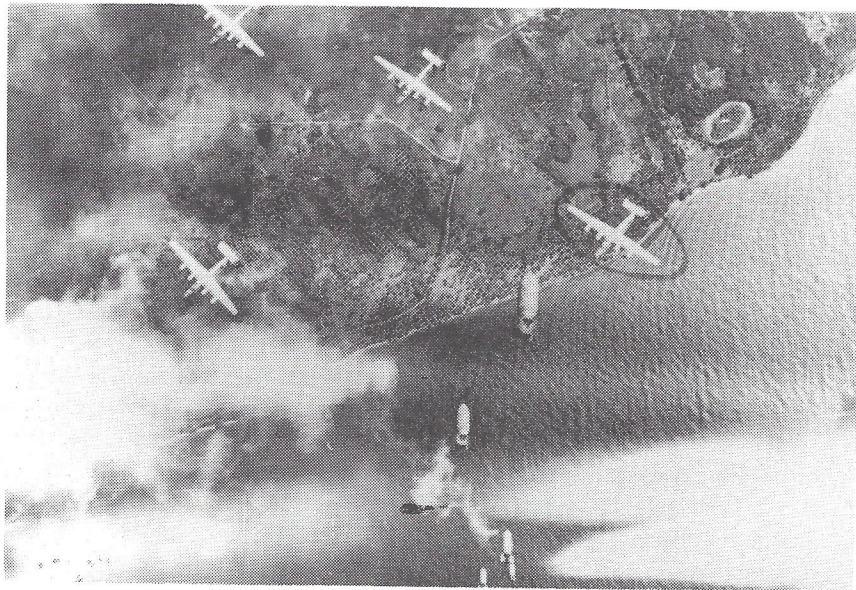
Information on Japanese Air Units in the Pacific - Several members have requested information about the various Japanese Air Units which the 307th fought over all those island targets of the Central, South and Southwest Pacific. We have been unable to provide any such information until now. Jim Lansdale, mentioned in the previous paragraph, referred us to a book which he says covers units and aircraft used by Japanese fighter units, both Army and Navy, during the entire Pacific war. We have located a copy of the book, **JAPANESE NAVAL ACES AND FIGHTER UNITS** by Hata and Izawa, in the Research Department of the Main Branch of the Detroit Public Library. When time permits we will research the book for a

Newsletter or Reunion Book article about the various Japanese units faced by the 307th. Meanwhile, interested members may be able to locate the book in their local library.

* * *

Followup on a Tragic Accident

Reunion Book No. 5, which covered the 1984 Orlando reunion, included the accompanying picture showing a 5th Bomb Group B-24 about to be hit by a 307th bomb. On page 200 of Sam Britt's outstanding diary of the life, times and operations of the Long Rangers is the story of that tragic March 9, 1945, accident over Zamboanga, Mindanao, in the Philippines. The four squadrons of the 5th were to have bombed Zamboanga at 1000, followed by the 307th at 1030. As the 307th squadrons-in-trail formation approached the target on time and about a minute before bombs away, the lead squadron saw the 5th Group formation, far ahead and off to the right, also apparently approaching the target. The 307th continued on course until, shortly before bombs away, the lead bombardier realized the other formation was not going to veer away, closed his bomb bay doors and asked his pilot to inform the other squadrons that it was a dry run. Unfortunately, the fourth 307th squadron had not seen the approaching formation, did not receive the dry run message in time and dropped its bombs as the 5th Group planes shot by only 500 feet below. One of the 1000 lb. bombs struck the B-24 flying A-3 in one of the 5th Group squadrons. That unlucky aircraft exploded and disintegrated, the pieces falling into the water about eight hundred yards offshore. Eyewitnesses reported anywhere from none to three parachutes. Britt's book



Fifth Bomb Group squadron passes directly below at end of 307th bomb run. The 5th Group plane flying A-3 (circled) was destroyed by one of the falling bombs.

reports that Leighton Johnston (424th) saw no parachutes but later, while awaiting transportation home, met the lone survivor, the bombardier, who had fallen almost to the ocean in the nose section before snapping on his chest pack and kicking free. His chute opened seconds before he hit the water and he was picked up by a Navy ship.

Of interest are two variations of this story of the surviving bombardier related to us in letters from 307th Association members over the years.

W.T. (Bill) Smith (424th) was not on the mission discussed above but flew on missions in the Jolo Island and Zamboanga areas during the same time period. Bill writes: "About July 1 when I started back to the States via Manila I got into a conversion with an Infantry Major who was with the our ground forces at Zamboanga. The Major remembered seeing the plane hit by a bomb. He said the bombardier was blown out of the plane by the explosion. He was wearing a back pack chute and somehow the chute opened. The man landed safely

behind enemy lines and was rescued by our forces. This had to be the same incident for I remember we changed from chest pack to back pack chutes sometime between January and July of 1945. When I mention 'we' I refer to our crew whose pilot was C. Lynch Christian."

Bombardier Bob DeRosa (370th) flew on the tragic mission. His comments on the tragic accident: "I cannot add much to the actual incident other than the fact that I had no idea at all that the other squadron (?) was beneath us until I saw them pass through my bomb sight at 'bombs away'. Needless to say, it was very discomfoting and, to me, unbelievable since we were apparently where we were supposed to be and at the correct time.

"The following information concerning the incident was told to me about four years later at Base Operations, Stout Field, Indianapolis, Indiana. A staff sergeant walked in one day, a C-47 crew member, I believe, and he and I became involved in a discussion of each others involvement in

WWII. When I mentioned the incident of the B-24s at Zamboanga his face lit up and he related the following. He was in the Navy then, as an enlisted crewmember (gunner?) of an amphibious aircraft on a Navy cruiser (apparently catapult type). They saw the entire B-24 incident and saw the bombardier parachuting into the water. The Japanese were firing on him from the shore. It was determined on the cruiser that a rescue attempt should be made. The plane was catapulted from the cruiser crewed by the pilot and the now staff sergeant. They landed as close as possible and taxied to the downed flier for the rescue. During the process the Japanese were firing at them from the shore, apparently damaging the aircraft so that take-off was no longer possible. Therefore, they taxied all the way back to the cruiser, were hoisted aboard and the rescue was complete. As a result of this heroism all three men (pilot, gunner and bombardier) were returned to the United States, touring the country, participating in war bond rallies and, I presume, relating their experience."

So there are three different versions of the outcome of this tragic incident. We don't know which version is closest to the truth. Suffice it to say that each provided a happy ending for one very lucky bombardier.

* * *

Hope to see you in St. Louis. At Registration you'll get a schedule of times when we'll be available as Historians to look over your 307th photos and documents. We hope this method will leave us some time for our own reunions .

Jim Kendall
Harry Sterkel
John Reeves

THE LAST TASK FORCE -THE MISSION TO BRUNEI BAY

by Russ Doyland, Bombardier

John Starr's crew, on which I was bombardier, joined the 424th Squadron, 307th Bomb Group (H), 13th Army Air Force, on Noemfoor Island on October 9, 1944, replacing the Rider crew which had been rammed by a Tojo fighter over Balikpapan, Borneo, six days earlier - one of seven 307th Bomb Group B-24s lost that day. Five days later, three of our crew flew as fill-ins for a return trip to Balikpapan. For weeks the crews sweat out the possibility of more such very long and very dangerous missions.

When told something I did not want to hear, I called it a rumor. This wasn't the birth of the rumor; it wasn't the end of them, either. There were always rumors. The latest rumor was that there would be a shipping strike tomorrow. This was not good news. We hope it will not be our turn to fly just yet but we know the squadron is short on crews because of heavy losses suffered during the previous month. Combat crews drifted to the briefing tent and its bulletin board. The mission list was there and our crew was on it. Briefing this evening and the mission tomorrow. That was all it said.

Briefings are less formal than in the movie TWELVE O'CLOCK HIGH but this one was getting just as scary. "The mission for tomorrow is Brunei Bay, N.E. Borneo, 1,000 miles from our base here on Morotai Island in the Dutch East Indies. It will take six hours to get there, mostly over water and the rest over rugged Borneo mountains and rain forest." Then the briefing officer tells us what to expect: "Shipping was spotted in Brunei

Bay yesterday. There may be an aircraft carrier. We don't know just what you will find. The AA and interception you encounter may be heavy". Three of our Group's squadrons are scheduled, six planes each from the 370th and 372nd but, strangely, only three from the 424th. For this mission our squadrons will be attached to the 5th Bomb Group, the only other heavy bomb group in our 13th Air Force. Three squadrons of the 5th are scheduled to precede the 307th in bombing whatever target is found in Brunei Bay. We are shown a map of the area. There are no photographs. "Your primary target is the largest combat vessel you spot. Bombing altitude: 9,000 feet." Not too bad for destroyers--not too good for aircraft carriers and battleships. "Special briefings follow for pilots and navigators."

Everyone's thoughts turn back to the last 307th Bomb Group encounter with a Jap task force during a mission flown just three weeks earlier from Noemfoor Island near the western end of New Guinea. The Group caught Admiral Kurita's ships as they retreated through the Sulu Sea following the Battle of Leyte Gulf. Three battleships, including the huge Yamato, five heavy and light cruisers and four destroyers...flak as thick as over any target in the world creating a terrible ordeal for aircraft bombing from only 9,000 feet. Three of our Squadron's B-24s failed to return from that 18 hour mission; two blew up over the target and the other spun into the sea an hour later with no survivors.

This is a time when some crew

members are writing letters home, "To be delivered in case..."

It is time to pack gear in my parachute bag which will have just about anything in it but a parachute which remain with the planes. What does go in are my 45, emergency rations, a sealed wallet of prewar coins which it is hoped will be more familiar and acceptable than Jap invasion currency to the Borneo natives whose help you may need to escape capture (four such wallets are carried per plane), maps, tables, charts and computers.

A myriad of rationalizations are conjured up in attempts to find logical reasons for avoiding the mission...maybe the mission will be cancelled...maybe we'll get to the flight line and the replacement navigator we need won't be there...maybe the engines won't start. I feel a little better. I try to get some sleep.

Someone you never see gets you up in the early dark hours. We dress with little or no conversation. Breakfast doesn't take long; there isn't anything you would want to linger over. Time for ten men to climb in the back of an eight man truck and bounce five miles down a dark jungle road.

A navigator from the 5th Bomb Group shows up and we put our gear in the plane. The engines all start. We are going for sure. The date is November 16, 1944 - our sixth mission.

The 5th Bomb Group Liberators take off from Morotai's twin coral



Japanese Naval Task Force - Brunei Bay, Borneo - November 16, 1944. Half the Task Force is seen here. Smoke from anti-aircraft guns and the main batteries of the battleships marks the ship's paths. Other ships are out of the picture to the left.

runways and vanish into the darkness, followed by our 372nd Squadron. Now, at 0500, it is our turn. Our pilot swings the plane around to line up with the runway...full power...a green light from the tower...release the brakes...slow at first...wobbling faster and faster...take-off! Time to see if anyone else is going in our direction. The six 370th planes will follow us off. Time for me to crawl up to the nose and get comfortable. Plenty of time to do my bombing calculations later.

After hours of nothing but ocean we see the coast of Borneo getting closer. It is time for the gunners to get in their turrets and the bombardier to get to the bomb bay and arm the five 1,000 lb. bombs; all it takes is the removal of five cotter pins. The bombs will not

fully arm until after they leave the plane. Back to the nose. The pilot gives me a level and trim aircraft at 160 mph indicated and I clutch in the vertical and horizontal gyros. I check the temperature, guess at the barometric pressure, look up the target altitude (zero), compute the true airspeed and actual height above the water. Using a book of tables, I program the bomb sight. The pilot wants the guns tested and there is the clatter of short bursts. By now we have crossed the mountainous backbone of Borneo and are approaching the South China Sea and our target - Brunei Bay. Now there is time to be looking out front.

"Oh my God, would you look at that!"

Maybe thirty miles ahead and right

at our level is one menacing display of flak. Still too far away to see where it is coming from. Definitely time to see where my chest pack is and to get the flak vest on. The flak helmet can wait until we are closer. The pilot locates only one other 307th aircraft, the 424th plane of A.J. Evans. We have beaten the rest of our Group to the target. Later we'll learn that Lt. Williams, flying the only other 424th plane scheduled for the mission, was ordered to return to Morotai when his No. 4 turbo began to torch badly.

By now we are maybe ten miles from the target. The sky is clear and what we see is a task force with all guns blazing. The explosions at our altitude are strangely beautiful. Not just black and dusty brown, but purple,

orange or white. And there is something new, a shell that explodes like a sky rocket - phosphorus. When close, the particles can be heard tinkling against the plane. Time to put on my flak helmet and get as small as possible. A couple of planes ahead are hit and dropping off to the right. Best not to circle around alone so our two 424th planes move up looking for places to fill in the 5th Bomb Group formation. We are still seven minutes from the target!

The big guns can be seen firing salvos at us from miles away. Flame jumps out of the barrels followed by enough smoke to hide half the ship until it moves on. They reload and fire rapidly.

I program my bombsight as though I were lead bombardier but clutch-in only the range mode. Only the lead bombardier uses both the range and deflection (plane steering) features of his sight. The rest of us set up for range only, programming-in a pre-set dropping angle, but stand ready to clutch-in the deflection mode should it become necessary to assume the lead. Cross winds result in the plane not going in the direction it is pointed. The lead bombardier, looking through his sighting scope, adjusts his crosshairs for this drift until the target appears to stand still. He will "aim" our entire formation.

Now we are close. We pass the task force and head for the freighters at the docks. We can see clearly what is here - five large ships, battleships or cruisers, and maybe seven destroyers. The Yamato is not among them though most were probably in the task force bombed by our Group in the earlier Sulu Sea mission. In addition to "ordinary" anti-aircraft

fire the 14 and 16 inch guns of the battleships continue firing broadsides at us as they have done with discomforting accuracy since we were twenty or twenty five miles away. The largest guns can easily fire that far. I throw a lever to open the bomb bay doors and switches to connect the sight to the bomb racks.

The large freighter gets nearer--but we were told to go for the big stuff. The drift-adjusted sighting scope tells me that our line of flight is not taking us over the freighter. Some bombs are dropped at this time...they miss the freighters. Our plane is taking hits but it is all business now and no one comments about damage. The lead plane makes a turn and we head for the middle of the combat ships. A cruiser has been chosen rather than a battleship. This is the bomb run! Right over the middle!

The cruiser has my full attention. This is a different heading and a different drift must be allowed for. We are two minutes from the target and it can be seen clearly through the scope. I set the trigger that will release the bombs when the sighting angle gets down to the pre-set dropping angle. Now it takes only small corrections until the crosshairs stop wandering off the target. Through the magnified scope I can clearly see the frantic vessel turning and firing. There is a lot of white water. A little longer...the indexes meet, the trigger clicks and the five lights trail off. Bombs away!

As our bombs leave the bomb bay, the cruiser turns sharply toward our line of flight causing an overage of bomb hits and our bombs hit in a string approximately 200 feet from the stern on the port side of the ship, causing no apparent damage. The flak ahead is relatively thin.

There is no way to look back to see what I had missed while my head was in the sight.

I never did see our scheduled P-38s but they are somewhere about for I haven't seen any Zeros either. They, together with the Jap's own anti-aircraft barrage, kept the Zeros away from us until now, but here they come, a couple of Zekes. Beautiful aircraft! The first one attacks from the front and drops a couple of phosphorus bombs which explode ahead of us. The huge white bursts with their dangling tentacles drift by harmlessly. The second Zeke also comes in from the front, rolls over on his back and dives just in front of the formation. It's hard to tell whether he tried to ram the lead plane or not.

Now we are out of the flak and the Zekes are gone. We check the plane and find damage to the right wing, left flap and horizontal stabilizer but none is really serious and no one has been hit.

My job is through for the day. I put my stuff back in the parachute bag and, using it for a pillow, lie down to think over the experience and try to take a nap though I don't think I have ever really slept in a B-24.

Six hours later, a little after 1700, we land safely back on our coral strip at Morotai. Our people there are relieved for they have had no word of us for twelve hours. As usual there is an immediate interrogation and debriefing of the returning crews. Some crewmen tell of seeing the 14 and 16 inch shells from the battleship's guns coming up through the air three and four at a time. A.J. Evans tells of seeing a B-24 explode somewhere in front of us, and also that his right landing gear was hit and the tire shredded. Thinking the brake hydraulic lines might also

have been severed, they rigged parachutes up to the waist gun mounts to serve as brakes if needed during their landing. The chutes were not needed to help stop the plane but the damaged gear tore a considerable patch out of the coral runway. We hear that of twenty-nine B-24s in the formation with which we bombed twenty-six were holed and three were shot down. We were lucky not more than three went down. The Japs must have wondered what kept us coming.

The next evening the two 424th crews that flew the mission, those of John Starr and A.J. Evans, were treated to steak dinners. Except for rest leave those were the only steaks I ever saw while with the 307th Bomb Group. Two days later Curtis Finney, Evans' bombardier, was killed as the crew flew a mission over Negros Island

in the Central Philippines.

For a couple of months "shipping strikes" continued to be scheduled but nothing ever developed. A cruiser located in Saigon moved on and that mission was cancelled. By that time our planes were almost halfway to Saigon and we spent the night at the newly liberated airstrip at Puerto Princessa, Palawan, in the Philippines. For a while in late December a shipping strike alert with loading lists that included our crew remained on the bulletin board for days. Our crew was pulled off the list to go on rest leave. Eventually that alert was in cancelled.

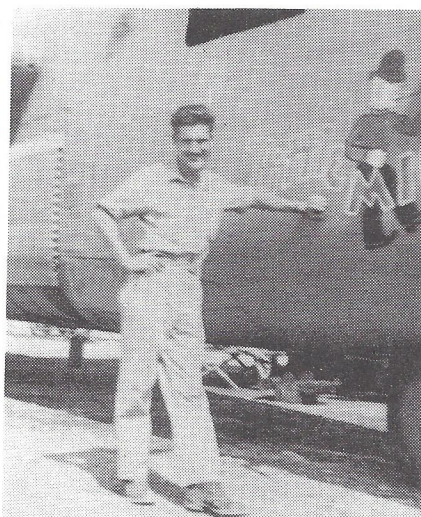
That was it. The Task Force was a thing of the past. The ships of Brunei Bay split up and went to Singapore, Japan and elsewhere to be sunk or otherwise put out of action. The huge Yamato had

already returned to Japan for refitting and was sunk during the spring of 1945 shortly after leaving Japan on a suicide attempt to reach Okinawa where the the ship was to be scuttled in shallow water and the 125 newly installed anti-aircraft guns used to drive the invading Americans into the sea.

I have been unable to find any record of any WWII Army Air Force heavy bomb group, other than the 5th and 307th of the 13th Air Force, that undertook such low altitude and slow speed formation attacks on enemy Naval Task Forces of this size and power.

The technique of bombing ships from 9,000 feet, as explained by Gen. William A. Matheny, Commanding Officer of the 13th Bomber Command, "was rugged, bloody and costly, but very effective".

DEJA VU ALL OVER AGAIN! - For use in this now and then feature, **Paul Greenen** sends two pictures. One shows him leaning against the nose of "Little Mick" at Carney Field on Guadalcanal. The other has him in Indianapolis in 1989, in a similar pose with the restored "All American". Paul says the pictures were taken "46 years and 20 pounds apart".



REUNION UPDATE

Many thanks to those of you who have already sent in your registration for the 1994 St. Louis 307th Reunion. We ask those of you who have not sent in your Registration as yet, to please do so by APRIL 25, 1994. We need to have your registration form filled out COMPLETELY if you want to participate in any of the following.

Breakfast, Ballgame, Grants Farm Tour & Lunch, Arch, Bus Fare for the day --- and your choice for the Saturday Dinner. Salmon___
Petit Fillet___Frontenac Chicken___.

Night Baseball -
Cardinals vs Phillies

We have a limited number of ball game tickets available. With only 40 guaranteed seats left any late requests for tickets will have to take "General Admission".

We neglected to add bus fare of \$5.00 per person to get to the ball game on our Registration Form. Unless you intend to drive to Busch Stadium, the bus fare must also be paid by April 25, 1994.

Registration Payment - Please make sure your check for the Registration is made out for the correct, full amount. Make your check payable to: "William Gerhardt" and mail with your Registration to:

William Gerhardt
9050 Monmouth Drive
St. Louis, MO 63117-1020

Frontenac Hilton - The Frontenac Hilton is a lovely hotel, and I am sure you will all be pleased with the accommodations. We ask all of you who have not yet made reservations to do so by May 5, 1994. Make all checks out to the 307th Bomb Group if you want to save the Missouri State tax. Please send check and reservation card to:

Frontenac Hilton Hotel
1335 South Lindbergh Blvd.
St. Louis, MO 63121
Attn: Christine Kaiser

The following rates are available:

1 night	\$ 69.81
2 nights	139.62
3 nights	209.42
4 nights	279.24

If you do not wish to pay by check but by credit card, your rate will be as follows:

1 night	\$ 73.61
2 nights	147.22
3 nights	220.83
4 nights	294.44

Ellie and I are looking forward to meeting you all at the "Tenth Reunion of the 307th Bomb Group". If you have any questions, please give us a call (314) 993-3739. We will also be your contact throughout your entire stay at the Frontenac Hilton Hotel.

Bill & Ellie Gerhardt
Site Chairman

MEMORABILIA DISPLAY

A unique model aircraft collection built by Col. Mike Geyerman will be on display in the Memorabilia room. Col. Geyerman's model collection ranges from a Wright Flyer to a B1 Bomber. The planes in the collection have taken 46 years to build.

Any memorabilia you members elect to bring for display will be secure in the Memorabilia room.

Please contact Bob Jones if you need any information or have any questions about material you might have for display.

Robert Jones
10618 Woodwind
St. Louis, MO 63131
(314) 867-4085

See you in St. Louis.

Bob & Sara Jones
Site Chairman

* * * * *

See you in St. Louis,

Ken & Velta Meyers
Sam & Helen Britt
Cena & Walt Marsh
Jim & Dottie Kendall