



THE 380TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION 5th AF - RAAF

AFFECTIONATELY KNOWN AS

The Flying Circus

NEWSLETTER #31

July 2007

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NEWSLETTERS - WEBPAGES - FINANCIAL

Barbara J. Gotham
Email: bjgotham@gmail.com
URL: <http://380th.org/>

380th MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

As a request from our members, and in order to save room for more articles, the membership form will not be included in each issue. BUT please continue to send in your yearly renewals! You can get the form from an old newsletter, or on-line from our website.

Or you can also send a letter with the following information:

Name
Squadron / 380th Duty
Renewal or New
Regular Member (original member of 380th Bomb Group or 380th Bomb Wing)
Associate Member (if associate, please include the name of the 380th veteran and your relationship to him)
Your address (street address, city, state, zip)
Your phone number
Your email address
Your spouse's name (if applicable) (if deceased, name and date of death would also be appreciated)

Annual payment of \$20 payable to 380TH BOMB GROUP ASSOCIATION will help defray costs of mailings throughout the year. Mail to: Barbara Gotham, 130 Colony Road, W Lafayette IN 47906-1209 USA

Thanks to all who've sent in their dues!

BUDGET REPORT

<u>INCOME</u>	<u>AMOUNT</u>	<u>NOTES</u>
Initial Deposit	\$ 10.00	
Reunion funds	\$2,004.73	Carry-over from 2006 Reunion, less one refund paid
Membership funds	\$5,368.87	Includes carry-over from Carnevale & Associates of \$523.87
Memorial funds	\$ 100.00	
Jackets/patches	\$ 108.00	
TOTAL INCOME	<u>\$7591.60</u>	
 EXPENSES		
Postage	\$ 487.16	
Bank fee	\$ 21.75	New checks fee
Newsletter fees	\$3,539.56	Printing and mailing
Envelopes	\$ 255.09	
Jackets	\$ 187.11	
Web fees	\$ 115.00	Domain name (\$15) and 1-year web hosting (\$100)
Reunion deposit	\$1,143.00	
TOTAL EXPENSES	<u>\$5,748.67</u>	
 BALANCE	 <u>\$1,842.93</u>	

380th WEBPAGES

There's a new website address (URL) for the 380th: <http://380th.org/> All the old pages have been moved to this address, and automatically forwards if you put in the old address. Please bookmark this new URL for future use of our website! (I thought it was in our best interests to remove our pages from the Purdue University web server and get an independent address.)

Because of this changeover, no changes have been made to the 380th website since earlier this year. My next task after completion of this newsletter is to get all the changes, additions, etc., posted to the new webpages. -- Barb
I also have a new email address that I'd like to use for 380th business: bjgotham@gmail.com

2007 REUNION

Please note that the location of the Dayton Reunion has been changed - we are now at the Doubletree Dayton, in downtown Dayton, Ohio.

Dates remain the same: September 6-9, 2007.

Lodging: Doubletree Dayton Downtown. Please make your own reservations by calling 1-800-222-TREE (8733), ask for code BGR ("bomb group reunion")
Rate is \$80/night plus 13% tax. Valet parking is \$9.00
Due to credit card security issues, we ask you to make your own reservations.

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS (subject to change, final agenda will be provided at registration)

Thursday

1:00 - 5:00 PM Registration in hospitality room
Sightseeing and dinner on own
Hospitality room open in afternoon and evening

Friday

7:00 AM Meet in hotel lobby to board buses
8:00 - 9:00 AM Special tour of B-24 at AF Museum* (transportation provided from hotel)
9:30 - 10:30 AM Memorial Service at WPAFB Chapel
(depart from AF Museum, transportation provided)
11:30 AM Buffet Luncheon at Twin Base Civilian Golf Course
(depart from Chapel, transportation provided)
1:00 - 5:00 PM AF Museum (transportation provided from luncheon)
Return to hotel (transportation provided from both luncheon & museum)
Hospitality room open in afternoon and in evening
Dinner on own

Saturday

9:30 - 10:30 AM Member meeting (all attendees are welcome)
Afternoon Sightseeing on own; hospitality room open until 4:00 PM
5:00 PM Cocktails (cash bar)
6:30 - 8:00 PM Dinner
8:00 - 11:00 PM Music and dancing

Sunday

Departure

*A professional photographer will be available at the Museum at 7:45 AM Friday to take member and family photos (for a fee).

The event registration form follows on the next page.

John Carroll's (RAAF) grandson, Ethan Krok, will be attending the reunion (with John and other family members). Ethan is working on a video documentary based on John's book of memoirs during the war, and would like to videotape attending veterans to hear their stories.

Changes and other information will be kept updated on our website: <http://380th.org/REUNION/2007Reunion/Reunion.html>

Patches, jackets, and caps will be available for sale at the Reunion (from Barb Gotham)

Questions? Please call Barb Gotham (765-463-5390) or send email (bjgotham@gmail.com)

MAIL CALL

From: George Gerards [mailto:cgger24@bellsouth.net]
Sent: Thursday, May 24, 2007 12:11 AM
To: Gotham, Barbara J.
Subject: Honor Flight

Barb: A friend sent me an email about "Honor Flight Network." Do you have any knowledge of this organization? It is an interesting project that they try to update some Veterans—especially those from WWII. For a one day free visit I would probably be interested in for a one-day trip. TAKE CARE and THANKS -- George Gerards

From: Gotham, Barbara J.
Sent: Thu 5/24/2007 2:52 PM
To: 'George Gerards'

George
This is the first I've heard about it. I looked at their website, <http://www.honorflight.org/index.htm>, sounds interesting. If you go, let me know, take pictures, and we can put it in an upcoming newsletter!
Stay in touch!

From: Bertha [bfstrouse@comcast.net]
Sent: Tue 5/29/2007 7:43 AM
To: Gotham, Barbara J.
Subject: MID-ATLANTIC AIR MUSEUM'S WORLD WAR II WEEKEND June 1-3, 2007

Hi Barbara, Thought this might be of interest to you also. Was sent by my son. My husband Fred and I were on a bus trip to Washington, DC Sat May 19th. Enjoyed the trip very much. A church youth group sponsored the trip at no charge to veterans and a guest. We are sending them a check as a "Thank you" as we know how hard these kids have to work to earn their money. Earl and I worked with the youth group at one time.
Bertha (Quigg) Strouse

— Original Message —
Sent: Monday, May 28, 2007 7:24 PM
Subject: MID-ATLANTIC AIR MUSEUM'S WORLD WAR II WEEKEND June 1-3, 2007

<http://www.maam.org/maamwwii.html>

Just thought you might be interested.

From: EdAndBarbaraW@aol.com [EdAndBarbaraW@aol.com]
Sent: Thu 7/12/2007 5:55 PM

Dear Barb,
Thanks for the reunion news but regretfully my wife and I will have to decline. We are having an AF Academy reunion here in the Springs on your identical dates.
Ed and Barbara Walford

From: jack schofield [mailto:jjslws@verizon.net]
Sent: Saturday, May 12, 2007 9:34 PM
Subject: Battle Stars

Jack,
Barb has asked me to reply to your inquiry concerning Battle Stars on the Asiatic - Pacific Campaign Medal for the 380th Bomb Group. My analysis indicates the following:
1) Northern Solomons, Feb 22, 1943 - Nov 21, 1944
2) Bismarck Archipelago, Dec 15, 1943 - Nov 17, 1944
3) Western Pacific, Apr 17, 1944 - Sep 2 1945
4) New Guinea, Jan 24, 1943 - Dec 31, 1944
5) Leyte, PI, Oct 17, 1944 - July 1, 1945
6) Luzon, PI, Dec 15, 1944 - July 4, 1945
7) Southern Philippines, Feb 27, 1944 - July 4, 1945
8) China Offensive, May 5, 1945 - July 4, 1945
9) Ryukus, March 26, 1945 - Sept 2, 1945
10) Air Offensive Japan, April 17, 1942 - Sept 2, 1945
Best wishes, Ted Williams

From: Russ Wilsey [russ@purityinc.com]
Sent: Fri 4/27/2007 2:35 PM
To: Gotham, Barbara J.
Subject: From B24-D manual.



"COCKY" PITT

Pilot Pitt sure does his bit
We must say that about him,
And when he makes a large sized claim
There is no cause to doubt him.

In spite of this we must complain
About this fightin', flyin' fool.
He didn't always use his brain
When going thru his flying school.

Tho' he flies and fights like mad,
His flight technique is often bad.
He can correct it if he'll look
And PAY ATTENTION TO THIS BOOK.

MAIL CALL

From: Ted Williams [tjwil@ecn.purdue.edu] _____
Sent: Mon 6/4/2007 11:42 AM
To: Ann Bishop _____
Cc: Gotham, Barbara J. _____
Subject: Re: 380th Bomb Group info

Ann,

Thank you for your information, as noted we have listed only the name of the first pilot to which each plane was assigned. Many other pilots, like your father did for NET RESULTS, would have flown them later. Our crew flew 16 different planes in our 36 missions. We only flew 16 in our assigned airplane, SAD SACK. The double use of 16 is a correct coincidence. Our information is the same as yours, that NET RESULTS was returned to the States and consigned to the Arizona Desert. These have been steadily reduced in number so we have no information as to whether it is still there. There are no lists kept of these. Best wishes.

Ted Williams

Ann Bishop wrote:

My name is Ann Netter Bishop and my father Lt. John C. Netter was with the 380th Bomb Group in WWII 528th Squadron. I was so happy to find your web site and the awesome project you are doing preserving this wonderful history. If my father were alive today, he would love this. His World War II service was truly part of who he was - a good honorable man. After the war he continued his service to our country and became an FBI agent. He died in 1984. I did want to give you a piece of information. My father's plane is not listed with his name. He was the pilot of "Net Results". I hope you can update your data sheets. I know this because he told me and I have photos of him with his plane..

I am particularly interested to know if Net Results is still in existence and if it is somewhere in the U.S. My son in-law is trying to find out if it might be at one of the airplane graveyards in Arizona or California. I would be very grateful if you let me know any information you have on where it might be.

Thank you again for this work you are doing.

Ann Bishop

From: Gotham, Barbara J. _____
Sent: Thu 5/10/2007 7:19 PM
To: Robin _____

Robin

Thanks for your email about your mother and her memories of the B-24 raids. And thanks for your kind comments about the 380th! I'll look forward to hearing more about your online biography - please let me know when it is completed, so I can inform our association members about it.

Best regards,

Barb Gotham for the 380th Bomb Group Association

From: Robin [mailto:robin@steelandpipe.com]
Sent: Tue 5/1/2007 2:06 PM

Dear 380th,

My mother Margie Samethini was a little Dutch girl living in Japanese occupied Surabaya, Java. She remembers the B-24 raids even though she was only 3 years old. Thanks for giving Tojo's boys a hard time in the Dutch East Indies. The Japanese inflicted many cruelties on my mother's family.

I will mention the activities of the 380th Bomb Group in my grandfather's online biography (a work in progress). He was a POW on the Burma Railway but his home was in Surabaya:

<http://hansamethini.blogspot.com>

Thank you, and God bless you!

Mr. Robin Kalhorn
Houston, TX

MAIL CALL



Letter from Roger Caputo, April 27, 2007

Dear Barbara:

For some time I've planned to advise you of some history of the various artistic symbols used to identify each of the four Squadrons and the Group. How these artistic symbols came into being and adopted is an interesting bit of history.

Ralph Finch, a member of the Group S-2, was a commercial artist from Massachusetts who did art work for the now obsolete match book cover industry and we were close friends.

While the Group was forming and training in the States, the Squadron and Group Commanders wanted some kind of pictorial identity symbols to paint on the aircraft and they turned to Finch to devise several pictorial options, which he did. After a time, final choices were made and they are the ones shown on the front of the Newsletters.

Finch deserves the credit!

In the 1950s, while on a business trip to Chicago, I had a great opportunity to visit with Finch, but that was the only time we were able to make contact post WWII! Finch was then back in the commercial art industry in Chicago.

Finch never attended any Reunion and I'm sorry to state I have no information concerning Finch after the mid 1950s.

Sincerely,

Roger Caputo

From: Steve Birdsall [stevepb@tpg.com.au]

Sent: Sun 5/27/2007 3:06 AM

To: tjwil@ecn.purdue.edu

Dear Mr Williams -

I'm writing to share some background on a 380th Group member, Herman J. Dias, killed on January 19, 1944 when the 529th Squadron's 42-73187 was shot down.

Before joining the 380th, Dias flew at least 25 missions with the 43rd Bomb Group, and was aboard the B-17F Black Jack when it ditched off New Guinea on the way home from Rabaul. That was on July 11, 1943. The crew all survived the ditching, made it ashore with the help of native villagers and were picked up soon after.

I have Dias' Army serial number as 0729959, taken from a 5th Air Force Air Medal citation, while you have him as 0729954, but there's no doubt it's the same man.

I've attached a photo of the Black Jack crew on their return to Port Moresby. Herman Dias is second from the left as you look at the photo, wearing a leather jacket and holding a bundle under his arm. The fellow in the sarong (made from a parachute) is the pilot, Lt Ralph K. De Loach. The photo was probably taken by Joe Moore, the co-pilot on the Black Jack crew (my deduction, because he was there but does not appear in the photo.) Ralph De Loach provided his original print to me, and it's not an AAF official photo.

Hope this is of some interest.

Regards -

Steve Birdsall



MAIL CALL

From: Jim Cernick [BARKINPIG@aol.com] _____
Sent: Tue 5/8/2007 1:07 PM
To: Gotham, Barbara J.
Subject: TAPS Ebbeson

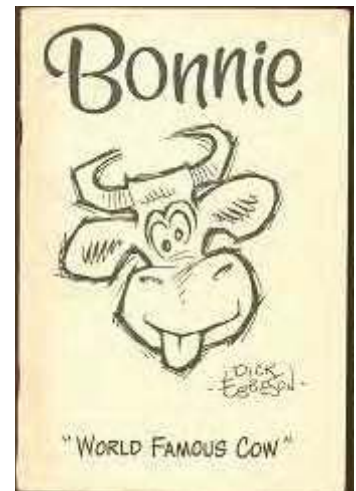
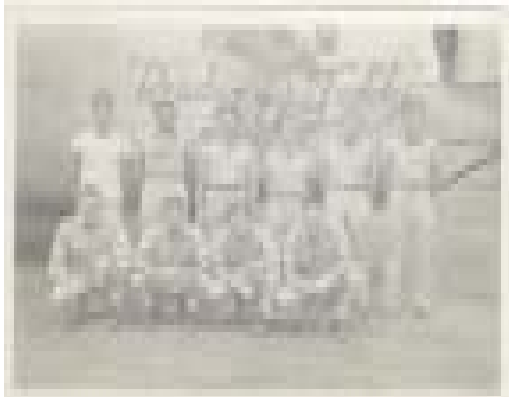
Hi Barb,

Here is 528th Artist Dick Ebbeson's SSN death notice. I've been looking for his info for awhile. I tried to buy a painting of his from the Fifties, a nude, but lost the bid unfortunately, it clued me in to his whereabouts though. He died 15 Oct 2001 in Pembroke, Washington County, Maine.

The 380th Roster listing for Dick: **Ebbeson, Richard A. / 528 / 31146645** | - | Ground Staff, Armament, Aircraft Armorer; Squadron Artist

TAPS notice: **RICHARD A EBBESON**, born 29 Apr 1912, died 15 Oct 2001, Pembroke, Washington, ME

Jim Cernick sent the photos here of Guy B. Smith, Assistant Flight Engineer, Goudelock Crew (29) and Mitchell Crew (34), and a crew in front of READY TEDDY. Guy is the 3rd or 4th from the left standing. If anyone knows which crew this is and the crew's names, please let me (Barb) or Jim know.



In a separate email dated June 14th, Jim sent the picture here of Dick Ebbeson's "Bonnie the World famous cow" - it was done by Dick Ebbeson to show his style to a client is marked 1955.

From: Ted Williams [tjwil@ecn.purdue.edu] Sent: Sat 7/7/2007 1:28 PM To: Vanessa Henwood Cc: Gotham, Barbara J. Subject: Re: 133rd website

Vanessa ,

Thanks for calling my attention to your additions and changes to your Website honoring the 133rd Heavy Anti Aircraft Artillery Battery which protected the 380th Heavy Bomb Group at Fenton and Long Strips in Northern Territory during WWII . You had a very nice Website before . The changes and additions make it even better . I'm sure the veterans of the 133rd are most grateful to you for your honoring of their service there . I will call it to the attention of our 380th people at our Reunion this coming September 6 - 9th in Dayton , Ohio . Keep up the good work and all Best Wishes .

Ted Williams

- > Hi Ted,
- >
- > I have changed the website! It should be easier to navigate the pages and I have also added more pages and information.
- >
- > The home page has an introduction to the website.
- > Lest We Forget page, is dedicated to Bernie Petre.
- > Medals page, has all the medals and badges issued to the 133rd.
- > Update page, has the latest updates listed and a site map.
- > Picture Gallery, has pics on the last reunion.
- >
- > Regards, Vanessa Henwood

<http://www.133.com.au>

380TH MEDALS AND DECORATIONS

In response to an inquiry on June 6th from Kaye Bonato asking about information on her father's (James Bryce Ohern of the Bilotti crew) service with the 380th, I asked Ted Williams about the medals of the 380th. I thought I'd pass along his reply, in case there are others of you also interested in the 380th decorations and medals:

In answer to your question there are two classes of things that one can pin on. These are Decorations and Medals. Decorations are for valor or service, generally in war against an enemy, where one was in danger of injury or death. Medals are given for service only, such as being in a war theatre or at specific battles.

Available decorations in descending order of importance were:

- (1) Medal of Honor (none of our people got this);
- (2) Distinguished Service Cross (I believe several of the initial pilots got this);
- (3) Distinguished Service Medal (non combat service, generally to Generals and Colonels as they change assignments, occasionally to lower ranks for particularly outstanding non-combat service);
- (4) Silver Star, again for outstanding combat service, there were several in the 380th. Gorman Smith's crew all got them as I recall as well as many others;
- (5) Distinguished Flying Cross, for outstanding valor in aerial flight; all of the initial flight crews received this on finishing their missions. This was stopped once they were gone, and only a few were given to later fliers;
- (6) Air Medal, for distinguished service in aerial flight, all air crew got these for combat hours or missions flown. In Europe they got them for each five missions flown, we got one for each 100 hours of flight time on missions. With 365 combat hours I have three (the medal plus 2 oak leaf clusters symbolizing additional awards);
- (7) Bronze Star, subsidiary to the Silver Star as the Air Medal is to the Distinguished Flying Cross;
- (8) Purple Heart, generally given for wounds received from enemy action (in today's Army the Purple Heart ranks above the Bronze Star);
- (9) Good Conduct, given for at least one year of honorable service as an enlisted man. Officers who have had that much service as an enlisted man can also wear this.

There were three different Service Medals for WWII, one each for the American Theatre (for any service in the Western Hemisphere); the European, African and Middle Eastern Theatre, for service there; and the Asiatic, Pacific Theatre which was our area. Within each Theatre there was a series of succeeding campaigns, each of which served to mark the succeeding battles which took place there. The 380th was entitled overall to several of these for our area. Service during any battle period entitled you to a small star on this ribbon. Our crew had five such stars. A ground person in the 380th could get as many as 13 because of the long time they were overseas.

FEATURED CREW PHOTO



John Koller provided this photo of his 531st Crew

Back row (left to right)
Pilot -- 1st Lt. John G. Koller
Co-Pilot -- F/O George A. Brown
Navigator -- F/O Richard C. Franklin
Bombardier -- F/O Stanley N. Rever

Front row (left to right)
Lower Ball Gunner -- Cpl Horace P. Eisenhard
Nose Gunner -- Cpl Vernon E. Carlson
Upper Turret Gunner -- Cpl Carl E. Felts
Radio Operator -- Cpl Joseph T. Peterson, Jr.
Tail Gunner -- Cpl Carl J. Matthew
Engineer -- Cpl Samuel N. Leiner

MAIL CALL

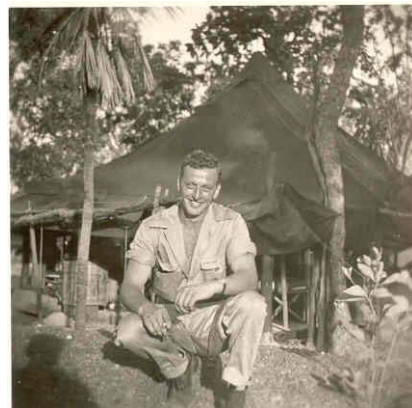
On June 23rd I received email from Don Holmes enclosing some 380th aircraft photos that he found among his father's things (standard aircraft photos). The only Holmes listed in our Roster are

Holmes, A. H. /| GP /|* 9026 (RAAF) | - | Ground Staff, Engineering, Maintenance, Engine Mechanic |
Holmes, Ralph W., Jr. /| 528 /|* O-568666 | - | Ground Staff |

Upon further questioning, he told me that his father was Cecil F. Holmes, that he knew that his father arrived in Australia in February or March 1942 and was an engine mechanic. He said he talked about repairing planes and of laying revetment when it rained in order to get the planes to the runway, so he surmised he was some type of ground crew at Fenton-Batchelor. There was a photo of his father with his head out a side window of SNAFU which appeared to be a crashed plane and the examiner stamp on the back stated NOT TO BE MAILED. From the many photos, a lot of revetment laying equipment and booms were evident. Don wonders if it possible that there was a permanent ground crew that stayed through out the war?

Ted Williams says our roster is complete, "so Cecil F. Holmes was never attached formally to the 380th. He could of course have been a visitor or with us on temporary duty. The 380th was briefly at Batchelor while Fenton was being completed when we first arrived. Maybe that is the connection, and he was attached to another Group there."

Some of the names listed on the back of Cecil's photos are:
Loudermilk, Jenkins, Jones, Red Davis, Flaherty, Fararr, Courtney, Jacksic, Hicks, Adams, Aycock, Cummings, Montaque, Schroeder, Biern, Weedman, Pauley, Triplett, Camez, Wright, Ingham, Kireaji, Oldroyd, Kenicly, Lt. Pressfield, Rowse, Thorton, Rimes, Grace, Rogan, Stafford, Lybarger, McCraw, Findley, Hudson, Galion, Saxon, Romano, Sabatini



If anyone remembers Cecil Holmes, and has any information for his son, please contact him by email at dwh5815@comcast.net

I can send the pictures on to anyone who is interested in seeing them in either email or regular USPS mail.

From: Karen Boris [karenboris@mindspring.com]_____ Sent: Mon 7/2/2007 9:32 PM
To: Gotham, Barbara J. _____
Subject: 5th Air Force, 380 Bomber Group ,530 Squad inquiry

Ms. Gotham:

You have no idea how great finding your site is!! I've been looking and looking for several years and have finally found you. Your site is a great service !!

Maybe you can help with two final details of my search as follows:

An old friend gave me a flight jacket and a munitions box. The munitions box had **JESS C. SORSOLI** printed on it but the jacket had its name tag torn off. I was told both belonged to Jess. Thanks to you, the jacket's shoulder patch I now know is **5th Air Force**. The breast patch is **530th** squad of the **380th** group. However, I can't find his name in any of your rosters. Any chance you can help me with finding out more about Jess, his service, stationing, and anything else??

I've restored the jacket to its former glory with new lining, etc. etc. but I can't find a breast patch that would present itself better than the original, which is torn, badly faded, and barely readable. Any suggestions?

Thanks ever so much for your efforts on this site.

Best wishes for the 4th,

Boris Loobkoff

1275 La Canada Road

Hillsborough CA 94010

karenboris@mindspring.com

If anyone can answer Boris' question, please send him a letter or email.
Thanks!

NEWS ARTICLE FROM 1943

Thanks to Dexter Baker for sending in this article from the Daily Mirror, Sydney, June 17, 1943. This was the first time a war correspondent was approved to fly on a B-24 combat mission.

Sydney, Australia

The Daily Mirror, Thursday, June 17, 1943. Jim Smyth, war correspondent somewhere in Australia.

MIRROR MAN FLIES ON DARING RAID

First Time Out

The mission marked the first occasion on which Australian war correspondents have been allowed to accompany Allied fliers on combat missions. The briefing for this mission took nearly an hour. It included weather, assigned altitude, the target, and where the ack-ack and zeros could be expected. Our target is a big Japanese air supply base on the east coast of the Celebes. It will take us more than twelve hours and we will be over enemy occupied territory and enemy patrolled seas for most of this time. We used all the available runway for take off. There are 12 of us aboard this liberator which bears the name "Golden Goose". The skipper is 23 years old, Lt. Dexter Baker of Salt Lake City, Utah. These Liberators are massive ships and one of the biggest heavy bombers in the world. The ship bristles with guns.

Testing Guns

There are some more Liberators on our right and behind us. A sound like a hammer blows up in front and disturbs me and the smell of powder follows swiftly. The waist gunners have swung their guns out the waist windows. Could there be Zeros about? Each fires a short burst downwards and the tail gunner and top turret join in, and the whole ship shakes and vibrates. Now it's all quiet aboard and I'm wishing that the target wasn't so far away. I'm not scared, just anxious. We're going in over the target singly and at intervals. We've still got a long way to go yet. I came aboard the Golden Goose with a parachute, Mae West and flying jacket. Lights are out in the cabin, but the moon is shining in through the windows. A great bomber's moon. The gunners are standing ready for action at their guns. The tension is terrific as we wait for first sight of the target.

Over on our left we see flares dropped by our formation leader and almost immediately there are bursts of ack-ack and search lights. We're banking to the left now and going in over target. Another flare shows up ahead. The second bomber is over the target. His bombs burst just like a string of fire-crackers. My pulse is quickening faster. Up forward the bombardier is at work on his bomb sight. It shouldn't be long now. The bombardier, Lieut. Barney Apfel, has taken over. "Left," calls the Bombardier to the Captain, and then again, "Left." We're nearly over the target. My mouth is dry and I take a long drink from my water bottle.

Open Bomb Doors

The order open bomb doors comes through. The ship is flying steadily now and we're not a mile off the target.

Bombs Away

After what seems an hour the Bombardier shouts bombs away. We dropped 9 – thousand pound bombs in a few seconds.

Fires Burning

Then out goes a flare to light up the target for the following B-24. The "Golden Goose" has laid its eggs. We look back to assess our bomb damage. Several fires are observed and searchlights are frantically criss-crossing the sky. Japanese radio chatter indicates they are trying to get their "Zeros" in the air. There is no relaxation in the watch for Zeros until we fly into heavy blinding rain and sleet. Despite the weather the Golden Goose is riding as smooth as a Rolls Royce.

DREAM TIME - A WAR STORY

by Roger W. Caputo
Installment #4

This is a story of one person's experience in World War II and the title grows out of the time served on the Continent of Australia (the term "Dream Time" is borrowed from the Australian Aborigine use of the term to describe the distant past of mankind.). The writing was done because of the urgings of one family member and was completed in 1995. No claim is made that the story is one of a kind or especially unique, no more than each of us is some different from the other. Reproduced here by permission of the author.

Because of the length of the manuscript, we will tell Roger's story in various installments, in succeeding issues of THE FLYING CIRCUS Quarterly, as page space permits.

Roger Caputo was an NCO who was assigned to Group Headquarters, Administrative Section, in Intelligence.

At dawn on May 21, 1943, the Mt Vernon slowly nosed its way into the harbor of Sydney, Australia. The harbor is huge, somewhat like the one at San Francisco and at a narrow point there is a big beautiful structural steel bridge, single span, across the narrows. All Australians are proud of that bridge. They always ask, "Did you see The Bridge?" and one is obligated to smile sweetly and comment on how magnificent it was. It was and still is an item of national pride. The Australians are known as Aussies for short and they are a fine people with a frontier mentality. Their country is as big as the United States and very sparsely populated and then mostly on only the Southern and Eastern coasts. They were still part of the British Empire in WWII, but far enough from England (1/2 way around the world!) that they were fiercely independent, more so than Canada. However, the Aussies were loyal to England and applied a lot of their blood in the North African campaign, "The Rats of Tobruk."

It took a couple of hours for the ship to make its way through the harbor and to its final berth. During that time, we lined the rails and rank in the sights. Many apartment houses lined the water's edge and there was someone waving to us from many of the windows on this bright fall day (remember, the seasons are reversed in the Southern Hemisphere).

By high noon we were unloading onto the dock and there waiting for us were scores of those double deck green buses which are so common to London. The buses transported us to a point about 20 miles from downtown Sydney. Our camp, again tents, but only with dirt floors, was located at The Warrick Race Track. The Aussies are big on horse races, but the track was shut down to provide space to accommodate troops. We had no purpose in being where we were other than to simply wait for another ship to take us on the final leg of our journey. Security was tight and we didn't have the vaguest notion where or what was to come next. We were at the Warrick Race Track for two weeks.

If there was not much of anything to do in El Paso or Denver, the "nothing to do" syndrome reached perfection in the two weeks at the race track camp. The only activity which saved our sanity was the almost daily trips to Sydney. About 1/2 mile from our camp was an unsheltered stop of an electric tram which made repeated trips to Sydney's "Town Hall station." It's a pity that there isn't some way to capture the particular Aussie brogue with spelling. The word "hall," when the Aussies pronounce it, comes out, 'all, but the particular twang put on the word "town" has no counterpart by adjusting the spelling. The conductor on the tram would call out the stations along the way and the last call being, "Town 'all Station," will live forever in our memories!

Sydney, being the largest city in Australia, was very cosmopolitan, in particular during the war. The soldiers made the most of it. So many young Australian men were out of the country, fighting in North Africa and New Guinea, that there was a tragic imbalance between males and females. The Yankee aircrews, with their flashy uniforms and pockets full of money, overwhelmed the Aussie girls. The Aussie military men, home on leave, would take exception to the invading Yanks and fights would ensue. Actually, my sympathies lay with the Aussies and I and my buddies gave the acrimonious situation a wide berth. Other recreational activity in Sydney was in short supply. There were movies, a few USO dances, and last, but not least, the pubs (bars). The pubs were fashioned after those in England, and they were a social forum as well as a place to drink. The average American soldier never quite caught the vision of the social forum, but the drinking idea he could understand! One interesting aspect of managing the pubs had to do with the practice of limiting the hours of operation. There was a late afternoon curfew, about 6:00 PM, and then they would reopen at 8:00 PM and curfew again at about 10:00 PM. I thought it might have been a war-time conservation practice, but I have since learned the practice still persists, so I have concluded that the practice must have grown out of experience, and was designed to enhance social order. The practice was a partially effective way of clearing out the drunks in the war years! The curfew would be announced verbally by the

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DREAM TIME (continued)

pub manager. He would walk about and in a loud voice say, "Time, gentlemen, time," and repeat it several times over. The bartenders would not accept orders after the announcement. The Yanks learned to anticipate the announcement and were able to circumvent the curfew by ordering as many beers as wanted prior to the curfew. It was not uncommon to see a Yank standing at the bar with a half dozen or more full glasses of beer lined up in front of him. Thus he was able to drink merrily along, curfew or not! Ingenuity born of desperation!

The most attractive part of the visits to Sydney was the ability to buy quality meals at the excellent restaurants. They were to be our last for a long, long time! Australian beer is unlike any found in the United States. The beer was potent, containing 12% alcohol, and so in theory about half as much would produce the same effect as the U.S. beer. It had a great flavor, but it was a bit too warm for the Yank's taste. Later on, while we were in the "outback" where it was hot and no refrigeration, Yankee ingenuity came to the rescue. One 55-gallon drum of aviation gasoline, filled with bottles of Aussie beer, and with an air hose inserted in the barrel causing the gasoline to evaporate rapidly, produced an excellent cooling effect!

On a given day we were directed to pack our gear; we climbed aboard some canvas-covered Aussie lorries (trucks), and were driven back to the harbor to board a ship. It was the Stienmetz, a Liberty cargo ship pressed into service as a troop transporter. It was to take us on the final leg of our journey to Darwin, the Northernmost town in Australia. It was a long journey of 16 days because of stops and delays. In the spring of 1945, while in The Philippines, and when security for past events was no longer a factor, I wrote a detailed narrative of the trip on the Stienmetz and sent it home to Virginia and my folks. Miraculously, one copy, yellow with age, has survived for over 50 years!

The members of our outfit aboard the Stienmetz consisted of the ground personnel only as the aircrews and airplanes had already proceeded to our operational base in the Northern Territory and were carrying out bombing missions. Our ship's course lay parallel to the coast of Australia as we proceed northward. At no time did we get out of sight of land although at times a person had to look twice to determine that the low dark shadow to the west was Australia. Our destination was not disclosed until we were several days at sea, at which time we were informed that Darwin would be the next spot at which we would step ashore. The trip as far north as Brisbane was uneventful. We proceeded alone to Brisbane except for two escorting Australian corvettes that wheeled and spun around us and across our course all the while, keeping a weather-eye peeled for Japanese submarines. The merchant marine felt the presence of escorting corvettes provided an additional safeguard since several Allied ships had been sunk in these shipping lanes. Their feelings were shared by all of us aboard! When three other ships (one of them a tanker) joined our convoy at the mouth of the Brisbane River, our escorts were doubled, since tankers were a prime sub target.

The Stienmetz was never designed to transport troops and so all the accommodations for the troops' sanitation and meal preparation and eating were on a makeshift basis. Our kitchen consisted of two temporary wooden shacks, erected on deck, one to each side using military field equipment. At meal time, two chow lines formed and filed by to get their mess kits loaded with that delicious Ration Type "C." The dining room was very large; all of the open deck that was present ... just plop yourself and mess kit down at any point of your choosing and dig in. When the sea was running high, and it frequently did, the ship would pitch and roll and it was no mean feat to juggle a brim full canteen cup (noted for its collapsible handle collapsing without notice!) of hot coffee in one hand and the mess kit full of food in the other as the soldier wended his way through the mass of sprawling humanity at dinner. We were no respecter of the weather and in spite of its changing moods, we always ate on deck. "What's for dinner today, rain or hot sun?" We had no choices! The exposure was limited in a very clever way – we only ate two meals a day. The resulting problem was we were always hungry, the result of all the fresh sea air we breathed. Some of the troops announced their intentions of letting the war go to hell and die of starvation. None of them did, of course! We supplemented our diet by midnight forages into the food stores – we did what hungry men have done since the beginning of time: we turned into thieves to relieve our hunger pangs!



We were blessed with showers 24 hours a day, something that was missing on the Pacific crossing. There was an unlimited supply of water, in fact, an entire ocean full. The salt water was pumped into the shower system and salt water soap was available. In spite of the generous use of Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty_ship

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DREAM TIME (continued)

soap, there was no lather to be observed. To this day, the mention of salt water soap is synonymous with fraud!

Clothing did get dirty and sweat stained and would become very uncomfortable because we never disrobed! The orders were to sleep with our clothes on except for shoes. The idea was to be prepared to abandon ship and no time for packing. Several soldiers tried dangling their clothing over the after railing where the ship's propeller wash was intense, but the severe action of the water tore the clothing to shred! Eventually the idea of washing in the sea was abandoned.

After several more days the ship put into the Townsville harbor and dropped anchor; no reasons given, but later we were to learn a part of the "stop and go" business was to confuse the enemy as to our intentions and schedule. Soon after dropping anchor a launch pulled along side to take a party ashore to purchase fresh fruit and produce. The next morning we resumed the trip, this time alone except for the Aussie corvettes. Our course still lay northward and parallel to the coast, always in sight of land. Time wore on.

It took several days to pass through the Great Barrier Reef, and at times the channel lay close into shore providing a bit of scenery. The entire passage was spotted with rock outcrops over which waves were breaking and the sea color would change from dark blue to various shades of green indicating the shallows. A special pilot was taken aboard at Townsville to provide the expertise required to safely navigate the twisted channel. At night, with no moonlight, it was a never-ending wonder how the pilot could steer the ship through the treacherous waters. In some reaches the course was marked with red navigation lights located on rock outcrops. The pilot possessed special skills and experience!

The ship anchored near Thursday Island in the Torres Strait just off the Cape of York for three days. When we departed this anchorage and proceeded to cross the open water of the Gulf of Carpentaria, the weather suddenly turned very cold and the winds were very strong, whipping up waves, the highest we had ever seen. The ship pitched and rolled in a severe manner; no place for a person unless the sea legs were in good order. During the rough weather, it was my unfortunate lot to draw a tour of duty as Sergeant of the Guard at night. The duties involved posting the guards and follow inspections of them. The duties required patrolling the wet slippery and pitching deck in the inky blackness. It was so dark it was impossible to see your hand before your face. It was a burlesque duty – the guards were stationed at the entrances to the ship's regular crew quarters and mess to prevent the hungry soldiers from raids on the food stores. The regular ship cooks baked their bread on the night watch and they welcome an occasional visitor. The Sergeant of the Guard soon learned to time his visits to the bakery and hot fresh bread, butter, and jam never tasted so good! The word got around quickly, though, and soon a good thing was ruined as the small mess became overcrowded and the Navy was being eaten out of house and home. I looked into the mess at suitable intervals on the pretext of looking for violators of the no entrance rule. These duty checks provided an opportunity to sample the baker's wares and to tell him what a great guy he was!

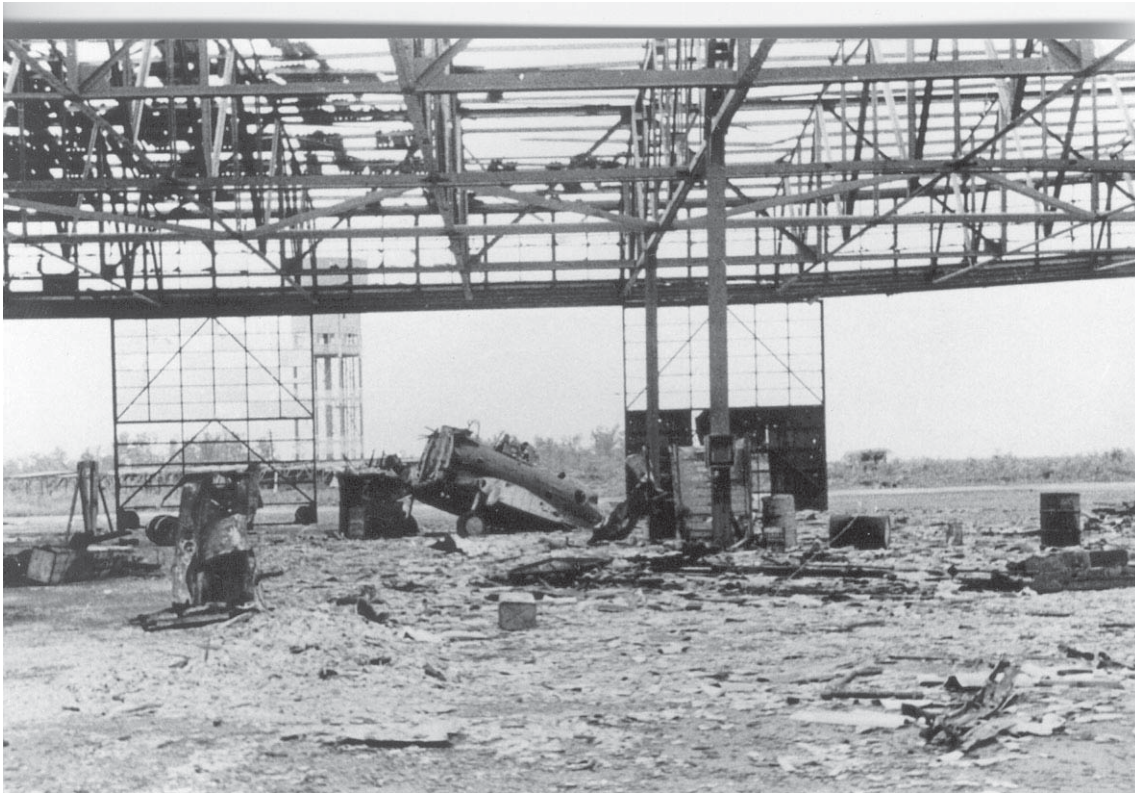
As the voyage dragged on, boredom became the principal enemy and Major Fain, my section officer (then only a Lieutenant), who was a journalist by trade, put together a shipboard radio show for entertainment. The entire ship was rigged with loud speakers and a small room was set aside as a broadcasting studio. A record player was rigged to play late night dance music and quiz show contestants were chosen from the Group. The script was complete with mythical commercial sponsors, one being some manufacturer of an obscure brand of Aussie toilet tissue (of itself deserving of crude GI humor). There were also musical breaks while the quiz contestants gathered their wits. Each contestant had his fair share of backers and another group provided the background applause. The show was complete in every sense and it sounded as realistic and professional as the radio shows back home. The program ran three consecutive nights and a lot of rivalry grew up between groups who were backing their boy to win the quiz contest. The entire stunt passed the time and furnished a lot of laughs.

In a few more days we sighted a low lying swampy coast, so typical of Northern Australia. The seas grew calmer and at last we steamed into Darwin harbor late in the afternoon, only 16 days out of Sydney. The appearance of the harbor, the makeshift wooden jetty extending a half mile out into the shallow water, along which we berthed, plus the bomb damaged buildings and tropical dwellings, were muted evidence we had arrived in the combat zone. We were advised later that the Japanese had mounted the most severe bombing raid to date just 3 days before our arrival – the three days we spent anchored was obviously designed to throw the Japanese intelligence a curve and we fortunately missed their welcome by a good margin. The Aussie lorries were waiting for us and we debarked and climbed aboard them on the double!

More to come...stay tuned!

RAAF PHOTOS

Dave Sieber, 531st Squadron, RAAF, provided these photos:



12th Squadron RAAF Hangar - A24 in hangar



General view of 23 Squadron RAAF Reunion held in B-24 Hangar, Victoria, April 29, 2007

TAPS

Day is done, gone the sun, from the lake, from the hill,
from the sky. All is well, safely rest, God is nigh.

Thanks and praise for our days 'neath the sun, 'neath
the stars, 'neath the sky. As we go, this we know
God is nigh.



LEST WE FORGET

528th Campf, Jerry J., Radar Mechanic, Navigation, DOD 12/15/1993, Baltimore, MD, reported by his son, Laurence Campf

528th Ebbeson, Richard A., Aircraft Armorer and Squadron Artist, DOD 10/15/2001, Pembroke, ME, reported by Jim Cernick

528th Graham, Austin T., Radio Operator, Henry/Adams Crew (12), DOD 06/13/2001, Crosby, MN, reported by Jim Cernick

528th Gross, Richard I., Radio Operator, Dunseth Crew (10), DOD 04/25/1996, Tucson, AZ, reported by his son, Dirk Gross

528th Olson, David H., Navigator, Tate Crew (9), DOD 05/21/2007, Portland, OR, reported by Bill Fortenberry

528th Vance, William F., Aircraft Commander, Vance Crew (2), DOD 07/23/2007, Webster City, Iowa, reported by his daughter, Peggy Baker



529th Ohern, James Bryce, Gunner, Bilotti Crew (34), DOD 10/04/1994, San Antonio, TX, reported by his daughter, Kaye Bonato

529th Shaver, Charles H., Navigator, Van Wormer Crew (45), DOD 03/08/1997, Chesterfield, VA, reported by Steve Birdsall

529th Smith, Guy B., Assistant Flight Engineer/Gunner, Goude-lock Crew (29) and Mitchell Crew (34), DOD 08/25/1991, Waterstown, MA, reported by Jim Cernick

530th Gronkowski, Jean, Wife of Leonard Gronkowski, DOD 11/06/2006, reported by her husband

530th Kenyon, Leslie O., Ground Staff, DOD 06/22/1985, Rome, NY, reported by his son, Kevin Kenyon

530th Roberts, Laurence (Larry) E., Gunner, Cullen Crew (54), DOD 05/14/2007, Dausman, reported by Carl Borgstrom