339th FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION
STATION F378 — FOWLMERE, ENGLAND

NEWSLETTER

VOLUME 15, NO. 1 MARCH 1995 EDITOR: JIM STARNES

For a change, there is almost TOO MUCH material available for this issue. We shall live dangerously and cram as much into it as possible. After all, it may be the last issue some will receive. Since the December issue was distributed, word has been received of the loss of eight more veterans in our association. It will soon be too late for other members to shape up. I do not enjoy sending 339th sympathy cards to families of members who have "gone WEST."

Take a hard look at the photo above which was sent by a French air researcher. This was taken at Merville Airfield in France during January 1945. It shows what appears to be a 490th Bomb Group B-24 discussing its problems with 5Q R from the 504th Fighter Squadron. My guess is that it was taken at the base salvage yard where both planes had been towed. Forget about the B-24. Does anyone know who left 5Q R at Merville airfield? The mission summary reports for the 504th shed no light on this loss. A number of pilots by name are shown as landing at Merville, but no record is made of any aircraft left behind as unrepairable. Please let me know so I can respond to the French researcher.

From the sad fate of 5Q R we go to some good news. A surviving 339th P-51 has been located. Remember the story of Lt. Franklin Talcott (503) who had a coolant leak near Hamburg on 6 Aug 44 and flew to Sweden? Talcott was later killed in another P-51 crash in Sweden. However, his P-51, D7 L, 44-13917, "Y'VE HAD IT!" was sold to Sweden after the war where it served for over ten years in the Swedish Air Force. Then it was sold to a Canadian buyer who later sold it to an American buyer -- who stored it. His widow later passed it along to another owner who recently sold it to Jim Ricketts of Stockton, CA. Ricketts phoned me during Feb 95 for any details we have on its service with us. I gave him what I knew, including a photo of the plane in a Swedish Air Historical Society publication. Hopefully, it will some day sport its original

339th markings in air shows around the country.

For almost a year Rich Helsing, one of our homing station operators at Fowlmere, has promised to send an article on the activities of his specialized communications men during the war. Fortunately for all of us, he came through in January with the article below. To pilots of the 339th, these men helped us find the base in bad weather, and even in good weather on many occasions, by providing a heading to base from anywhere we might be within radio contact distance. The homing station operators were unsung heroes to all of us, and they deserve all the recognition we can give them now.

U.S. ARMY MILITARY OCCUPATION SPECIALTY # 759 CONTROL NET SYSTEM By Rich (504) Helsing

The Control Net System was first used in England during the Battle of Britain. It consisted of three direction finder stations and radar. Radar would pick up the enemy and the Direction Finder Stations would pinpoint where their friendly aircraft were by voice transmissions. Three D.F. stations would give the bearings to the control center. There their location would be plotted on a grid and then the fighters were steered toward the enemy. That was the system in a nutshell.

RICH HELSING (504)

Personnel operating D.F stations were given the M.O.S.# 759. Tha majority of the 759s in the 339th Fighter Group had spent twelve weeks at Truax Field, WI in radio school. Then the class would be split between radar at Boca Raton, FL or C.N.S. training at Tomah, WI. We spent five weeks at Tomah learning and operating the system and then were sent where needed.

In January 1944 there were 24 of us at Bradley Field near Hartford, CT. Orders were received for us to ship out to Tampa, FL. We were put on a pullman car and on arrival were given updated shots and equipment. One week later another pullman car with our own porter, and we were on our way west. Our first stop was New Orleans at four P.M. and we had until midnight to see a bit of the city. So it was Canal Street and famous Bourbon Steet on a Saturday night. We all made it back. Then it was off to San Antonio for a quick layover and then on to El Paso, TX by 8:00 A.M. Monday. We were told our pullman car would not leave until midnight. We were given use of the YMCA where we went skinny-dipping, then dispersed around town. They had four theaters but only one was English movies. We were not permitted to go into Mexico. Upon our departure at midnight the MPs checked the train for bottles -- anything liquid was confiscated. The next morning we stopped just outside Belen, NM. The conductor said we would be there two hours in case we wished to mail anything. Ten of us went into town, I was addressing a letter when I dropped my new Parker Fountain pen(given to me at Christmas by my wife) and it stuck in the wood floor. It wasn't too great after that. I recall one of the group said the train certainly was not the Santa Fe Chief the way we stopped so frequently. It must have been the Santa Fe Scout! We finally arrived in Needles, CA, and were taken by truck to Rice.

There we were divided up by squadrons. John Wasser and Primo Zambardo went to the 503rd. Ed Epp, Paul Fleer, Stan Gordon, Al Grandy and I went to the 504th. Stanley Page went to the 505th. Also added to our 759 group were William Raines 505, William Porter 504 and Stoutenberg 503. There were perhaps another dozen whose names are unknown at this time. After a short introduction to the desert, we were off again to Camp Shanks and then via the Sterling Castle to England.

At Fowlmere our three responsibilities were the homing station, the base transmitter on a hilltop outside Royston and monitoring and recording control tower and aircraft transmissions. The homing station would sometimes be helping a dozen aircraft at once.

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Most of us recall 503rd pilot Frank Stillwell's fine newsletter article several years ago (also in 339th history book) of his mid-air collision during an instrument climb-out on 5 Aug 44. While we were in England last April at Fowlmere, Frank discussed the low altitude bailout with John Harris, who belongs to the "Warplane Wreck Investigation Group." John wrote Frank for information on the crash site, but Frank had no idea of where his plane crashed. John Harris obtained accident reports on this one from USAF Safety Office, including photos of the wreckage. John also wrote to Frank in Nov 94 that he was able to interview a witness to Frank's crash 50 years ago. John wrote "Mr Dale recalls riding his bike from Safron Walden to Ashdon when the P-51 came into view. He said the engine coughed and sputtered, and the aircraft seemed to flick on its side as the pilot was thrown out. Mr. Dale pedaled like mad away from the area as it crashed. Being a young kid at the time, he went back to the site to see if he could find any souvenirs, but the aircraft was on fire and bullets were exploding everywhere. Very little could be seen on the surface. Soon he was told to leave by some Amercians who arrived by jeep." Mr. Dale showed John Harris the field where it had crashed, and with the landowner's permission, John then was able to locate the buried wreckage.

Frank Stillwell's P-51 crash site 50 years later

Frank wrote to me in part "With that information John used a metal detector to pin down the exact spot. With the aid of a backhoe and landowner's permission he dug up the remains of the P-51. About the middle of Dec 94 I received a small box from John Harris containing part of the propeller, a piece of supercharger, a section of nose cowling and five .50 caliber bullets. If you look closely at the photo above, it shows in the lower left corner pieces of nose section with red and white paint still on them. I still have the pilot chute that pulls out the main parachute. John asked me to take a photo showing me holding the pilot chute." What a remarkable follow-up to Frank's original article!!

In addition to the saga of Frank Stillwell's close encounter with death on 5 Aug 44, we are fortunate to have another article from him on his second Mustang. This one has a surprise 1994 update just like the preceding material -- at Bloomfield High School, NJ, where D7 D "THE BENGAL LANCER" was the theme of their Veterans Day program. The article was inspired by the efforts of Pete Wilson, retired vice principal of that school and World War II member of the 354th Fighter Group of 9th Air Force.

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The Story of the P-51 Mustang Named
"THE BENGAL LANCER" By Frank Stillwell (503)

During the World War II years from 1942 to 1945, the students at Bloomfield Schools in New Jersey sold War Bonds to help finance the cost of military equipment. It is hard to believe, but the record shows that the students in Bloomfield sold enough bonds to pay for six P-51 Mustangs, a B-17 bomber, a dozen jeeps, 25 field ambulances and three evacuation hospitals.

Capt Bill Behrend and Capt Frank Stillwell

In early Oct 44 a brand new P-51 was flown from the North American Aviation Co. plant in CA to Newark Army Air Base, NJ, This particular P-51 was readied for overseas shipment to the Eighth Air Force in England. The photo at right below shows some of the faculty and students of Bloomfield Schools presenting the airplane to Major A.T. Lonegan, Information Officer of the Atlantic Overseas Command. A plaque was attached to the engine cowling, and it reflected the participation of Bloomfield students in purchase of this plane by selling bonds.

This P-51D #44-15134 ended up at Fowlmere assigned to the 503rd Fighter Squadron. Capt. Frank M. Stillwell was from NJ, so the commanding officer assigned it to him. Capt. Eldred Carow, 503rd Intelligence Officer, was also from NJ, and he mentioned to Stillwell that Bloomfield High School called their athletic teams "Bengals." Frank Stillwell remembered a movie entitled "The Lives of the Bengal Lancers, so he thought it would be appropriate to call his new P-51 "The Bengal Lancer." A photo of his new aircraft is shown at right.

Frank Stillwell flew his first combat mission with the Bengal Lancer on 18 Nov 44 and was credited with probably shooting down a ME-109. Eight days later he was credited with destroying a FW-190. Of his 65 combat missions, 30 were flown in The Bengal Lancer.

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Frank Stillwell finished his combat tour and left for home on 23 Feb 45. On 4 Mar 45 hardly a week after he left, Lt. Dennis Rawls flew the Bengal Lancer on an escort mission to Nurnburg, Germany. As he touched down on return Lt Rawls discovered that the brakes were locked. The Bengal Lancer flipped over and was damaged beyond repair. Fortunately, Dennis Rawls was not injured.

This would seem to finish the story of the Bengal Lancer. However, there is one more chapter to be told.

Switching now to the first person mode, I received a letter from Peter Wilson on 12 Jul 94. Pete is a retired Vice Principal of Bloomfield High School. Purely by chance Pete was leafing through a book "Aces and Wingmen II" by Danny Morris, which had been loaned to him by a friend. He happened to notice the picture of The Bengal Lancer, and the caption mentioned Bloomfield High School's war bond program. This really aroused his interest, because he had never heard about the bond program at Bloomfield High during his tenure there. Pete wanted to know more about the story, so he started researching the school files and the town's weekly newspaper of that period. He then wrote the editor of "Aces and Wingmen II", who gave him the address of Jim Starnes. Jim gave Pete Wilson my address, and he promptly wrote to me, requesting a meeting. I called Pete and we met at my house. He was an armament specialist in the 354th "Pioneer Mustang Group"during World War II. We spent four hours talking about our respective fighter groups and The Bengal Lancer. Pete wanted to put together a program that could be presented to the faculty and students at Bloomfield High School in observance of Veterans Day.

Pete took some notes and borrowed some photos I had saved. He then met with Dr. John Szabo, principal of Bloomfield High, and Mr.Robert Blomquist, head of the History Department. Both thought it would make a great assembly program. Pete and I met one more time, and he asked me to attend their Veterans Day program. Making speeches is not my cup of tea, But I knew Pete and Bob had put a lot of effort into this one. I agreed to attend and give a short speech. It turned out to be one of the great days of my life. Pete and Bob presented the major part of the Lancer story. Then Pete called me to the platform to deliver my short speech. The faculty and students gave me a standing ovation before and after my speech. Needless to say, I really felt honored. It also gave me the opportunity to ask the students to express my own thanks to their family members for the remarkable effort they put into selling war bonds. If you look again at the middle photo on the preceding page, the third young girl from the right is Carol Lochhead. She attended the program, and I was privileged to meet her. She is such a fine lady.

After the two assembly meetings, I was interviewed by Art MacFarland from ABC evening news. He taped the interview and it was shown that evening on TV.

Unfortunately, my wife Doris had agreed to help prepare the annual Election Night Supper at our church and was unable to attend. However, Bob Blomquist sent us a VCR tape, and Doris saw part of the program.

After fifty years I now feel that the last chapter is finally complete on the story of The Bengal Lancer.

Editor's Note: Not so fast, Frank. He also enclosed a 14 Dec 44 letter to his father from the Superintendent of Bloomfield Schools concerning this P-51. Frank was much too modest in covering his participation in the program. Here is an extract from a letter he received from the Chairman of Social Studies Department: "Nov. 14, 1994 It's been a week since you graciously consented to be our honored guest at Bloomfield High School. Ironically, I didn't have any idea what was going to happen to me as a result of your visit. First, I have been constantly thanked and praised for the program. My colleagues have written notes to me. They have stopped me in the halls to tell me just how wonderful they thought the program was. If you think about it, I wasn't the one being praised, you were!!!! It was YOU and YOUR STORY that evoked the lump in their throats and the tears in their eyes (believe me, they had them both). Your story of quiet courage, wrapped up in a gentle and "classy" personality, has

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touched the hearts of all who saw the program. Secondly, I want you to know that I was personally touched by you. As you know I teach history and one of the reasons I do is because I want students to "experience" phenomenon without all the negatives. I want my students to experience the horrible nature of war without having to fight one. I want them to know about sacrifice and courage even though they may be too young to do either. Textbook stories help them "experience" but they don't come close to a real-life personality with a story to share or tell. The same could be said of yours truly. Being with you for just that short time left both an "impression" and an "experience" that will help me both as a teacher and a person. . . (signed) Bob Blomquist."

November 17, 1994

Dear Frank,

On behalf of the entire Bloomfield High School community, I thank you for visiting our school and sharing with us your experiences in the BENGAL LANCER. I know that our students were deeply moved by your bravery and sacrifice during the war years. In addition, you are a tangible part of history to which they have a direct connection because of Bloomfield High School. Although you may be a Jamesburg graduate, you will always be a Bengal in Bloomfield!

Sincerely,

John J. Szabo
Principal

One more item is the following letter to Pete Wilson from Carol Lochhead, mentioned in Frank's article as the young lady third from right in the group photo with the P-51. Carol wrote: " Nov 8, 1994 Dear Pete, I want to thank you once again for including me in your presentation this morning. The students' reaction, particularly at the first assembly, was truly moving. We all had tears in our eyes -- as did Frank. What a fine and gentle man he is! Pete,you are to be commended for your endeavor in researching this small bit of history, highlighting the enthusiasm of a small American community which came together in such a patriotic effort. Again, my gratitude. . . Am proud to have had the honor of meeting Frank Stillwell. Sincerely (signed) Carol Lochhead."

After receiving the above article and materials from Frank Stillwell, I wrote to Dennis Rawls (503) who was flying The Bengal Lancer after Frank returned to the U.S. As noted in our group history book, Dennis had the misfortune to be involved in two Mustang accidents in less than two weeks during March 1945. Although this is not exactly his favorite subject, he came through with a nice article explaining just what happened along with accompanying photos. Most of us pilots realize this could just as easily have happened to us as to Dennis. He had completed a combat tour in heavy bombers before joining the 339th in Dec 44. We are grateful to him for this "hard luck story."

MUSTANG MISHAPS By Dennis Rawls (503)

Your letter of 12 Jan 95 sought information on the incidents that I was unfortunately involved in. You do have the correct dates, and the landing accident in The Bengal Lancer occurred on 4 Mar 45. The one on which I lost a wing tank on takeoff occurred on 15 Mar 45. Your remark about the first one was very interesting to me -- "Crash landing with brakes LOCKED." This was my contention at the interrogation of this accident and is still my contention. At one point they were going to charge me with "Dereliction of Duty", which I vehemently protested. That charge was later dropped.

Dennis Rawls

From the records I have the Nurnburg mission of 4 Mar 45 was routine. I do recall that there had been a rather heavy snowfall, and we had to use the perimeter taxiway to runway 29 for takeoff. With our high octane fuel we taxied at a rather high RPM to keep from fouling the plugs. There was a considerable distance to taxi, requiring excessive brake use to keep slowed. After takeoff I depressed the brake pedals to stop vibration of the wheels. I feel at this time the brakes were overheated and locked. Upon return from the mission while over England enroute to Fowlmere, our flight executed some formation acrobatics. I was feeling great as we broke for landing. Having flown as wingman to the flight leader, I was second landing and touched down on the left side of the runway. With a left crosswind my left wing was slightly low. When Bengal Lancer's left gear touched the ground, the plane lurched to the left and the right wheel touched the ground as the plane went up on its nose. I don't know how far I slid, but I was turning off switches, pulling back on the stick and praying for divine guidance. As the plane was slowing I tried to eject the canopy to no avail. Then the spinner dug into the turf and the plane flipped over with canopy still in place. Completely trapped, I lay on the back of my head as fear of fire ran through my mind. I soon heard vehicles approaching and voices as help arrived. They quickly analyzed my predicament and decided to extricate me by digging a hole under the canopy to let me egress through the broken canopy. Whoever the heroic individual was digging me out, he tried to keep my spirits up by singing "Nearer My God to Thee." I was feeling very close to God, but I wasn't sure why he was humming that particular hymn. When the hole was completed, they told me to disconnect my oxygen and head set. When I released my seat belt and had started tumbling out, my hips suddenly jerked upward as my G-suit hose connection held me. Someone quickly cut it with a knife. My gratitude and respect for those men who came to my assistance at a time that could have been life threatening to them, remains uppermost in my mind. The Bengal Lancer was demolished, but fortunately only my pride was hurt.

Upper right photo shows how they dug out under the canopy to release me. The lower photo shows a crane preparing to hoist the Bengal Lancer off the landing field. Everyone else had to land at Duxford while this rescue was in progress.

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I don't remember much about the mission on 15 Mar 45. We were using British 108 gallon external tanks which were elongated and cigar shaped. I think we were taking off to the northeast, and the runway had many washouts along its bed. I was wingman to the flight leader and flying Bill Bryan's D7 J "BIG NOISE", 44-15074. My leader gave the head motion to advance throttles and we moved down the runway. Shortly after the tail came up, we came to the undulating portion of the runway. The P-51 would bounce off the ground without flying speed and then return to the ground. Prior to takeoff speed my right wing started to rise. My first thought was prop wash from the preceding element. I tried to control the wing down to no avail. By this time I was turning into my element leader. I had no choice but to pull back on the stick and try to go over him. Adding full power I was able to pass over him left wing low and was slicing back to the ground. Needless to say I was exerting all my strength to level the wings. When I touched down my left wingtip hit the ground, but my wheels maintained integrity to keep rolling. I looked out and the left wingtip was bent up about 45° and I knew I couldn't possibly get airborne. Ahead to my left was a line of P-51s, a blister hangar to the right and a big stack of crated wing tanks straight ahead. I elected to continue into the stack of tanks, chopped the power and cut off all switches. I struck those crated tanks with tail still in the air. Upon emerging from the tanks with my landing gear sheared off, I ended up just off the perimeter track. Again, the ground personnel were at my side and trying to remove me from the cockpit. Their concern for my safety was above their normal call for duty, and I am deeply indebted for it. Again, by the grace of God, I was spared injury.

"BIG NOISE" minus its landing gear

Tail of "BIG NOISE" is in top center

Wingtip curled by contact with ground

Two months later the war was over. I had lost a dear friend, George Bill Porter, in a mid-air collision while on a training mission. Since I had sufficient points accrued, I requested permission to return home. After college, I joined Eastern Airlines and spent 28½ years accident free as a pilot and captain. It is a rather sad commentary to have the 339th Fighter Group history reflect that I destroyed two aircraft, ONLY TO BE RECORDED AS OUR OWN P-51s!! My pride has suffered to have those credits. I do feel that God had a tender hand in the manipulation of those aircraft, and I am thankful to be able to write you of those not so heroic events.

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Earlier this year I received from Enoch Stephenson (503) a book. Its reduced cover is shown at right. As you might suspect, he is one of the contributors quoted in the book, which came out in 1995. The Middle Tennessee WW II Fighter Pilots Association was formed in 1992 with three requirements for membership: only fighter pilots with actual World War II combat experience, from the Middle Tennessee area. There is no price marked, and I suspect it is not to be found in book stores. There are 28 different story contributors in the book, and I found them most interesting. Thanks, Steve, for a fine addition to my small library.

505th pilots Bert Conner and Harry Howard held their own special minireunion in Texas last fall to talk about their experiences at Fowlmere and in prison camp hospitals during the war. Bert and Harry are among our most loyal supporters, and both received disability retirements as a result of their war injuries. We hope to see them in Buffalo 14-18 Jun 95 for our next reunion.

With regard to that reunion, treasurer Bill Guyton says he has been receiving a lot of early reservation forms. The outlook for a good turnout is optimistic. The 504th respresentative, Dutch Eisenhart, has requested that the following notice be printed in this issue: THE 504th SQUADRON GET TOGETHER IN BUFFALO WILL BE SATURDAY EVENING JUNE 17 AT 6:30 P.M. AT JIM KELLY'S SPORT CITY GRILL. LOCATION IS CHURCH & MAIN STS. TWO BLOCKS FROM THE BUFFALO HILTON. CHOICE OF ENTREES: (1) RIB & CHICKEN COMBO (2) FRESH GRILLED SWORDFISH. COST OF EITHER IS $16 INCLUDES TAX & GRATUITY. PLEASE NOTIFY DUTCH EISENHART NLT 10 JUN 95 AND INDICATE ENTREE CHOICE. ADDRESS R.R.1, BOX 501, LAKE ARIEL, PA 18436. PHONE 717-689-4090. PREPAYMENT ENCOURAGED.

The following letter was received from Fowlmere dated 23 Jan 95: I am in the third year of a history degree at Reading University. As part of my course I have to do a history project on something in my home village, Fowlmere. I have chosen to research the history of Fowlmere Airfield and have managed to find a great deal of useful information, including several copies of your newsletter which were kindly lent to me by Mr. Sheldrick and Fowlmere School. I enjoy them and would be very interested to find out what the men of the 339th remember of the living conditions at the airfield, the village and the villagers, and any events that were arranged, such as Christmas parties for the village children. It would be a great help to me if anyone could spare the time to write. I would be very grateful if you could pass this request along to your readers. Thank you very much. Yours Sincerely, (signed) Miss K. Ayre 54 Chapel Lane, Fowlmere, Royston, Herts. SG8 7SD England.
Please help this young lady with her project!

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IN MEMORIAM

Since the last issue we have been informed of eight additional members who have passed along to their heavenly reward. Pilot Roy W. Amerman (503) had a distinguished career in the Air Force until retirement in 1974. He died 23 Aug 94. Orderly room clerk Charles Blackford (504) died 5 Feb 95, two days after quadruple bypass heart surgery. He was looking forward to attending his first reunion in Buffalo. Pilot Charles S. Coe (503) also died last summer, according to a note from his neighbor. We lost pilot Robert C. Croker (504) on 9 Dec 94 after a long illness. Bob had been one of our most loyal reunion attendees until his health failed. The December issue of our newsletter to Gerald Emert (HQ) came back marked "deceased". No details are known. John Murray phoned me of the loss of 505th armament clerk Louis P. Fernberg during early February 95. Shirley Fernberg wrote "Lou often thought he would join you at a reunion, but fate intervened. I am indebted to John Murray for being a true friend to Lou." A recent issue of the Retired Officer Magazine listed pilot Frederick C. Haslam (504) as deceased. No details known. Armorer Robert Johnson (504) also passed away early this year. These names are consolidated into the new deceased roster which follows.

339th FIGHTER GROUP ROSTER OF PERSONNEL DECEASED SINCE WORLD WAR II

Abbey, Richard H.	404	Corbin, L. Leon	504	Griffith, Walter B.	504
Abeel, Myron C	505	Craven, E. Tom	504	Grove, Irving A.	504
Amerman, Roy W.	503	Crecilius, Morris	504	Guelker, Raymond J.	HQ
Ammon, Robert H.	503	Croker, Robert C.	504	Hamilton, George	HQ
Balbeck, Walter	503	Crowley, Thomas N.	HQ	Hanlon, Arthur A.	ORD
Ball, Melville R.	504	Culverwell, John A.	504	Harnack, Kenneth G.	503
Ballard, Jerome J.	504	Daniell, J.S.	505	Hathorn, Vernon B.	HQ
Ballard, Roy	HQ	Daniel, Sidney F.	505	Haugh, Herbert	505
Barto, Vernon R.	504	Dardel, S.P.	505	Haslam, Frederick C.	504
Bates, Arthur	504	Davies, J. Clarence	HQ	Hauss, Howard J.	HQ
Bears, Alfred L.	HQ	Davies, Edwin	504	Hayden, James J.	504
Behner, Norman J.	ORD	Dearey, Ralph H.	503	Harte, Alan S. Jr.	503
Behrend, William H.	503	Deleon, George	HQ	Heaphy, Russell	505
Beishl, Frank	503	De Palma, Al	504	Healy, James	504
Bennett, Samuel L	505	Dobrenz, Ottobert	504	Heinbaugh, Donald	503
Bewley, Jesse E.	504	Dodge, Don	504	Hild, Jack	ORD
Blackford, Charles S.	504	Dodson, Trancey C.	505	Hilton, Frank F.	503
Brundage, Harvey	504	Doherty, Harry	HQ	Hines, Elwood	505
Bush, Jerry P.	503	Duck, Alvin K.	503	Hoar, Robert P.	504
Byrd, Jesse C.	505	Duncan, William G.	ORD	Hodgens, Ralph	504
Caldwell Ben M.	504	Durrett, Earl J. Jr.	505	Hoermann, LeRoy F.	HQ
Camarda, Louis	503	Edens, Malcolm B.	503	Hoffman, Woodrow	504
Carlson, Robert L.	505	Emert, Gerald F.	HQ	Horton, Al	ORD
Carr, Clarence M.	505	Everett, Harold M.	505	Howard, William	505
Carter, Lyle M.	504	Fernberg, Louis P.	505	Huddleston, Ralph L.	503
Chetneky, Steve J.	503	Filley, Everett R.	HQ	Hunerwadel, Hugh P.	504
Clark, Neil C	503	Fiorito, Leonard J.	503	Huppert, Leonard	505
Clark, William C.	HQ	Fogel, Robert.	503	Hunt, Harlan	504
Clements, Floyd	505	Fountain, Albert	504	Hurley, William T.	504
Cobb, J.C.	504	Freeman, Hartwell	505	Hutchinson, Sylvester	503
Cobb, Noble E.	503	Fulton, Bain E.	HQ	Hutsell, William L.	504
Coe, Charles S.	503	Gelpke, Robert E.	505	Hrico, George	505
Coffin, Ed	505	Generoso, Evie F.	ORD	Jaaskelainen, William	505
Colburn, Raymond I.	HQ	Genshimer, Tad R.	503	Jackson, John D.	505
Collins, Thomas	505	Gleason, Hope Bootie	504	Janosik, Joe	504
Conklin, Richard Jr.	503	Gokey, John	503	Jennings, Carroll	505
Cook, George M.	505	Goldenburg, Carl T.	HQ	Johnson, Robert	504
Crabtree, Garland	HQ	Golin, Al J.	503	Jolly, Thomas	503
Craiger, Edgar D.	503	Gravette, E. Bruce	504	Johns, Gaylord	504
Craigo, Cecil E. Jr.	504	Greer, Nile C.	504	Jones, George D.	505

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Johnson, Evan M. 5th	505
Johnson, William C.	503
Jones. W.A.	504
Jozefczyk, Rudolph	504
Kappner, Omar	HQ
Keim, Paul T.	504
Keller, James F.	505
Kelly, George P.	503
Kernan, William	505
Kiesz, Reuben	504
Kimsey, Arnold	504
King, John B.	503
Klein, Homer	503
Kloupnik, Max	HQ
Kollar, Earl W.	505
Kosmella, Robert	503
Koval, Robert J.	505
Lambert, Cecil	505
Lancia, James	503
Langois, Ed	505
Langtry, Charles	505
Lingle, Woodrow A.	505
Linsley, Robert F.	505
Lockwood, Donald B.	ORD
Long,Robert D.	HQ
Lubert, Walter M.	505
Lukehart, Forrest	505
Mammoser, George	503
Marshall, Hugh S.	503
Martin, Woodrow W.	ORD
Marvel, Thomas W.	505
Mason, Clair M.	504
McCarthy, William D.	504
McGowan, Hubert	504
Maksymik, Metro	504
McGillivray, John R.	504
McHugh, Chap. George	HQ
McLachlen, Thomas P	HQ
McKinney, James P.	505
McLure, James M.	504
Menart, Rudolph	HQ
Messina, Mario	503
Metzlaar, Charles P.	503
McNamara, James H.	HQ
Milla, Joseph A.	505
Mintline, Claire D.	ORD
Modjeska, Henry	503
Mondl, Evan	504
Moots, William P.	505
Muchisco, Mike	503
Mroz, Leon	504
Mudge, William P.	505
Muir, William E.	504
Muller, James B.	505
Murray, John F.	505
Muto, Alphonse	503
Myers, Roy A.	505
Nay, Martin N.	505
Nessler Fred A.	505
Nethaway, CharlesD	505
Ojanen, Kaino	505
Opperman, Chap. Henry	HQ
Opitz, William R.	505
Page, Don	503
Parks, Steve C.	HQ
Parodi, Henry	504
Per, Joe	505
Peters, Glenn	503
Petrino, William G.	505
Pinkerton, Sproul	504
Pinkos, Frank	504
Pirosa, Al	505
Plant, Robert O.	505
Potts, Edwin W.	ORD
Powell, Charles	503
Propst, John R.	HQ
Regan, Kenneth	HQ
Rice, John J.	505
Robinson, Clayton B	505
Rodenbach, Paul R.	505
Roth, John	504
Rountree, James O.	505
Routt, Bill C.	504
Sahl, Herman J.	503
Sanford, Issac	505
Savu, August	504
Schlortt, Quinn	505
Scruggs, Amos Lee	503
Segar, John	HQ
Senger, Frank	505
Schmeichel, William	HQ
Shake, Charles E.	503
Shoker, Fred S.	504
Signet, Wilfred	503
Sims, Hal	505
Smelzer, Homer	505
Snowden William L.	ORD
Staszek, Joseph C.	503
Steen, Warren	505
Stevens, James M.	503
Stewart, Carl R.	505
Stuhlman, Byron C.	503
Sulima, Ted M.	505
Suter, Joe	503
Szech, Edward M.	ORD
Taylor, James W.	503
Tews, Norman A.	505
Thury, Joseph L.	505
Tomascik, Steve	504
Tomlinson, Hubert	503
Tower, Archie A.	505
Trester, John R.	504
Tucker, Harry St. G.	HQ
Van Auken, Lansing	505
Vaughan, William T.	505
Wagner, Paul M.	HQ
Waite, William	505
Ward, Herbert C.	505
Warren, Bill	503
Watley, James	503
Watson, Clyde	ORD
Watt, Marvel	504
Waymire, Harvey R.	504
Webster, George W. Jr.	505
Wells, Arlen W.	504
Whisman, Norman R.	503
Whiteing, Richard F.	505
Whitney, Olan	505
Wyatt, Valdee	503
Young, Jack S.	505
Yousko, John	505
Zido, Charles	503

The photo below was sent in by Hervey Stockman showing the Mudge boys and their mother on the occasion of Ricky Mudge's retirement from the Navy last fall after 24 years service.

Please report any errors or omissions.

Ricky Mudge Marion M. Stevens Randy & Billy Mudge

339th FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION

STATION
F378
FOWLMERE
ENGLAND

1994 TREASURER'S REPORT

William R. Guyton
1272 Lakeside Woods Dr.
Venice, FL 34292
March 1995

General Fund Revenues		
Balance on Hand 1 Jan 1994		$22169
Dues and Contributions	$ 1240	
Sale of shirts, caps, decals, books, etc.	7055	
Interest	979	
Total General Fund Receipts during 1994		9274
Total General Fund Revenues		31443
Expenses		
Corporate Filing Fee	$ 61	
Purchase of decals, shirts, caps, Jackets, etc.	5925	
Printing	3742	
Postage	477	
Loss from England reunion	439	
Total General Fund Expenses		10644
General Fund Balance 31 December 1994		$20799
Memorial Fund		
Balance on Hand 1 January 1994		$13790
Contributions		10
Total Memorial Fund Revenues		13800
Expenses		
Air Force Museum Memorial Fund	$ 200	
Fowlmere School Contribution	2000	
Total Memorial Fund Expenses		2200
Memorial Fund Balance 31 December 1994		$11600

Notes:

1. At year's end we had on hand about 75 history books and almost $1600 worth of inventory of shirts, caps, decals and jackets. These assets are not shown in the above figures.

2. Printing costs were boosted by purchase of reprints of Slick Penrose's fine article in EAA Warbirds Magazine. The second part of that article is being distributed with the March newsletter.

3. The listed loss from England reunion consisted of the painting, Mustang plate, book and banquet expenses for guests.

4. Because of the fine financial condition of our association, the Board of Directors has voted to suspend payment of dues for 1995. Therefore, no dues form is enclosed.

© 339th FGA

Shown at right are two more prints made from Jim Robinson's fine kodachrome slides. The first one is 505th flight surgeon Fred Scroggin in front of his ambulance on the flight line. The lower photo has in the foreground Bob Irion's P-51 Silver Streak 6N N. Behind it is 6N O whose pilot is not known.

Below those two photos is a very poor quality print sent in by Vernon Carr (505). Vern was upset in seeing the famous photo of four 505th P-51s used in the Penrose article in EAA Warbirds Magazine. He says he has an eight by ten print like that from the war, and he recalls the circumstances under which it was taken. He says he flew his 6N Q on Joe Thury's wing for that photo mission, and Bill Booth flew his own 6N B. Vern is not sure who was flying Herbert Caywood's "6N Y "MISS E.T.O." Most of that photo is also found on the dust cover of our group history. Vernon Carr says 6N Q was about the last P-51B to be combat ready late in the war. He flew his last 15 missions in it. John Franz has identified the two crewmen with Vern as (L-R) armorer Russell Heaphy and crew chief Dave Register. It takes a good eye and even better memory to identify someone on that photo. Vernon says the camera used was an old Voitlander he bought from a British soldier in London.

Dr. Fred R. Scroggin 505

Bob Irion's 6N N "Silver Streak"

Russell Heaphy, David Register and Vernon Carr

© 339th FGA

Last year a request was received from French air researcher Alain Durier for information concerning the loss of 505th pilot Peter J. McMahon. Mr Durier had determined from German records that Peter was shot down by antiaircraft fire while strafing a railroad marshalling yard in northern France on 11 Jul 44. I provided what little we knew about the loss and a copy of the photo shown at right -- the only surviving photo of Peter McMahon. This was the first we knew of the circumstances surrounding his loss. Here is what the statement attached to the Missing Aircrew Report says about the loss: On 11 Jul 44 Lt P. J. McMahon was scheduled to take off in P-51B #42-106842. He taxied to takeoff position and then found that the electrical system was not operating correctly. He then taxied this plane out of the way of the other planes and returned by jeep to the area. A P-51C #42-103559 was ready, so he was given that plane. He was the last to takeoff and had to climb through a 3000' overcast to join the rest of the group. However, he evidently did not join any of the squadrons, and nothing has been heard from him since takeoff time. (signed) Joseph L. Thury, Major, USAC, Operations Officer 13 July 1944"

Peter was an unusually aggressive fighter pilot. At the time of his loss he had 3½ aerial kills and strafed numerous locomotives. He and Bill Mudge were the only 339th pilots to score aerial kills on D-Day, 6 Jun 44. They became separated from the rest of the 505th after takeoff in bad weather and joined some 355th Ftr Gp P-51s on a fighter sweep over France. After strafing some trains, they saw some 357th Ftr Gp P-51s attacking a formation of JU-87 Stukas. Peter and Bill joined the mele and downed three JU-87s, two by Peter McMahon. His aggressiveness in flying a combat patrol alone over northern France after a late takeoff apparently cost him his life. The rest of the group escorted bombers to Munich on that mission. We salute another of our fallen heroes, Lt. Peter J. McMahon.

Armorer Ken Willard (504) sent the following letter and photo: "Thought you might be interested in a photo of the 1911 Velie which I will be crewing in the 1995 Great North American Race. We intended to race the car last year but could not complete the restoration in time. Our showing in the 1994 race was 12th in our standby 1929 Dodge Roadster. The Velie has a powerful 334 cubic inch four cylinder engine with dual ignition -- two plugs per cylinder. One set of plugs is fired by a magneto and the other by a distributor. In order to stop the vehicle we had to install hydraulic brakes, and for speed a Ford overdrive was installed. Also a 12 volt electrical system was installed for lights, ignition, horn and an electrical starter. For the first time, the race will be run north to south. It starts in Ottawa, Canada

Ken Willard in 1911 Velie Racer

© 339th FGA

and ending in Mexico City, Mexico. The race will go through Buffalo shortly after our reunion. We'll be running with 339th decals on both sides of the car. Hopefully some of our lost veterans will see them and join our group."

Aviation Historian Ian McLachlan has written to Martin Sheldrick and to me concerning fighter stories for a new book. His letter is quoted in part: "Following the success of"Eighth Air Force Bomber Stories" I've been asked to do a companion book on fortunes and misfortunes of American fighter operations in the ETO during World War II. I seek additional stories with photographs and hope you can help by publishing this appeal in your newsletter. I would welcome training experiences, combat accounts, bailout and ditching incidents, POW stories, girlfriend memories, ground crew recollections and unusual anecdotes that tell how it was to be a fighter pilot or one of those who kept them airborne in World War II. " You are encouraged to send him stories at this address: Ian McLachlan, 10 All Saints Green, Worthingham, Beccles, Suffolk, England NR34 7RR.

March 1995 ADDENDUM TO 339th FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION PERSONNEL ROSTER DATED Sep 1993

Change Claire Griffith to 4920 Myrtle Oak Dr, Bldg 21, Unit 2, New Port Richey, FL 34652
Change Bill Guyton to 1272 Lakeside Woods Dr., Venice, FL 34292
Change Bill Jaaskelainen to 11712 Brookwood Rd., Austin, TX 78750
Change Ralph Knighton to 15309 Harbor Dr., Madeira Beach, FL 33708
Add David C. Levin HQ 5000 Graceland Blvd. #250, Racine, WI 53406
Change Darrell Linger to 422 State St., Fairmont, WV 26554
Change David MacKenzie to P.O. Box 474, Hartland, VT 05048
Add Donald J. Olander brother of 505 pilot 1223 N. 6th St.,Sheboygan, WI 53081
Change George Rosen to 7484 Deep Run, Apt. 912, Bloomfield Hills, MI 48301
Change Ralph Rostad to 3420 Shawnee Dr. #111, Modesto, CA 95350
Add Richard G. Wells 503 pilot 11399 Piping Plover Rd., Lake Worth, FL 33467

SHORT BURSTS. . . We welcome pilot Richard "RED" Wells (503) who arrived at Fowlmere in mid-April 45 just as hostilities were ending. Red says he left on furlough in June 45 with instructions to report to MacDill Field, FL, from which we would fight the Japanese as our next assignment. When the war ended he went to Biggs Field, TX and then was separated from the service. We also welcome David Levin (HQ) who was in the 687th Air Materiel Squadron of the 437th Air Service Group. His job was in the Rail Transportation office with limited knowledge of the personnel in the group. He recognized only two names on our roster; Marshall Cole and Irv Shiner who gave him my address. We also welcome Donald Olander, brother of 505th pilot Richard B. Olander, who was killed in action during the war. . . Former association president Bob Irion had a scare in early Dec 94 and underwent bypass surgery to his heart. Bob is recovering nicely and will join us in Buffalo. Original pilot Andy Sirochman (505) had a couple severe strokes in Jan 95 and is making a slow but steady recovery. Tom Brown, HQ photographer, also had quadruple bypass surgery late last year and is doing nicely in recovery. . . Bob Kuhlman (504) was one of several who reported the loss of Bob Croker. He also wrote that his children gave him as a Christmas present a 30 minute flight in an AT-6 this summer through North American Top-Gun, Inc. Bob wrote that his last AT-6 flight was at Fowlmere when he acted as observer for pilots being tested for instrument flying competence. . . I just received a letter and short article from Luther Francis (503). He enclosed an obit column on Charles Coe, which reflects his death as occurring on 26 Jul 94. That article will be in the June newsletter, and it concerns his buddy Charles Coe. Luther will see us at the Buffalo reunion. . . Also just received is an article from pilot Tom Rich (505) which will also be printed in the next issue. Please keep those articles coming if we are to have a worthwhile newsletter. . . Although Bill Guyton has a new address in Venice, he has retained the condominium which was his former address, so reunion reservations sent to 1040 Cockrill St. will still be received. Bill expects to show us a new bride in Buffalo as he plans an April marriage to a lovely lady he and Eileen had known for over forty years. Congratulations, Bill. . . We hope the Smithsonian "Enola Gay History Doctors" do not review the 339th history. Otherwise we may get painted as murders of innocent German women and children. Herv Stockman says we need to keep the 339th record clean and accurate for posterity to review. Agree!!

© 339th FGA

505th crew chief Al Hermanson sent in this fine photo which might be called "Beautiful Downtown Fowlmere" during the war. That is the local milk delivery wagon in the foreground. Thatch roof homes were a common sight at the time.

339th FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION, INC.
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Captain Robert M. Kuhlman
504 FS

WHAT A YEAR

by Richard C. Penrose

PART II

26 OCTOBER 1994

March 1945 was a good month for air combat (28 destroyed) and for strafing (35 destroyed). German jet activity increased and in the final third of March the 339th knocked down five Me-262s. On 20 March 1/Lts. Robert E. Irion, 505th, and Vernon N. Barto, 504th, each destroyed one. The next day the 504th's 1/Lts. Nile C. Greer and Bill E. Langohr shared in the destruction of another. On 30 March Captain Robert F. Sargent and 1/Lt. Carroll Bennett, both 504th, each shot one down. Sargent caught German Lieutenant Erich Schulte, I Gruppe, JG-7, taking off and shot up his Me-262, causing the German to parachute from too low an altitude.

On 28 March 1945 the 504th's Captain Arlen W. Wells finished his combat tour without ever seeing an airborne German aircraft.

April, the final month of combat for the 339th, came up with 17 more aerial victories and three big strafing days which tallied over 200 destroyed on the ground.

The 339th's best day against the German Me-262 jet was 4 April 1945 when they shot down four. The 504th bounced three as the jets climbed up through a hole in the cloud deck and shot them all down including the commander of III Gruppe, JG-7, Major Rudolf Sinner. His attackers were Captain Kirke B. Everson and 1/Lt. Robert C. Croker. Captain Nile C. Greer and 2/Lt. Robert C. Havighurst destroyed the other two. The 505th's Captain Harry R. Corey shot down a fourth jet elsewhere.

As the Allies in the West and the Russians in the East reduced the area under German control, the remaining Luftwaffe aircraft had fewer locations for dispersal. There were many parked German aircraft at some locations. Some of the parking sites appeared to be poorly defended or, perhaps, undefended. Some Eighth Air Force Fighter Groups, including the 339th, had field days strafing these dispersal areas.

On 10 April the 339th strafed parked aircraft near Neuruppin, northwest of Berlin, claiming 105 destroyed—later reduced to 87. On the 16th the 503rd and 504th Squadrons strafed in western Czechoslovakia, the 505th southeast of Munich, claiming 118 destroyed—revised down to 96. The next day, 17 April, the 339th hit the same general areas of the previous day for claims of 67—reduced to 61.

Also on 17 April the last Me-262 to be destroyed by the 339th went down under the guns of 1/Lt. John C. Campbell, 503rd Squadron. However, the last jet destroyed was an Arado-234

Captain William T. Hurley, 504FS, and his assigned P-51.

shot down by L/Col. Dale E. Shafer, 503rd Squadron CO, on 18 April 1945. This was also the last German aircraft destroyed by the 339th.

The last 339th combat casualties occurred on 17 April. The 503rd's Captain Raymond F. Reuter and 1/Lt. William R. Preddy were shot down while strafing the German airfield at Plane, near Ceske Budejovice, in Czechoslovakia. Reuter was killed and Preddy died of injuries as a Prisoner of War on 10 May 1945. Preddy's brother, George, was a famous Ace in the 352nd Fighter Group and was killed by "friendly" ground fire on 25 December 1944.

The war was over. The Group had done well but there was a price for this achievement. Over 25 percent of the combat pilots were casualties. The number of original pilots—those assigned when the 339th started operations—was 87. As pilots were lost and others completed their combat tours, replacement pilots were assigned—261 of them by the end of the War. Thus, 348 total pilots flew combat missions with the 339th Fighter Group. Sixty of these pilots were Killed in Action and 33 were Prisoners of War; 93 combat casualties. An additional nine pilots were killed under noncombat conditions.

504Fighter Squadron P-51s over East Anglia in England.

(Above) 504FS P-51 assigned to L/Col William C. Clark.

(Right) L/Col William C. Clark, late War CO of the 504FS and the 339FG. He destroyed one in the air and eight on the ground.

NOTE: An excellent portrayal and history of the 339th Fighter Group was published by Turner Publishing in 1992. The photos printed with this article were chosen from over 600 black and white and color photos that appear in the book. Copies are available for $45.00, including postage. Order from the 339th Fighter Group Association, c/o William R. Guyton, Treasurer, 1040 Cockrill St, Venice, FL 34285.

FIGHTER GROUP AVERAGE VICTORIES PER DAY ON DAYS WHEN COMBAT OPERATIONS WERE FLOWN

FIGHTER GROUP	TOTAL DAYS	DESTROYED AIR TOTAL	DESTROYED AIR AVG/DAY	DESTROYED AIR RANK	DESTROYED GROUND TOTAL	DESTROYED GROUND AVG/DAY	DESTROYED GROUND RANK	COMBINED AIR/GROUND TOTAL	COMBINED AIR/GROUND AVG/DAY	COMBINED AIR/GROUND RANK
78th	400	332	0.830	10	358.5	0.896	6	690.5	1.726	11
4th	391*	537*	1.373	4	469.0	1.119	5	1006.0*	2.573	3
56th	391	665	1.700	2	311.0	0.795	10	976.0	2.496	5
353rd	365	332.5	0.911	9	414.0	1.134	4	746.5	2.045	8
352nd	329	504.0	1.531	3	287.0	0.872	7	791.0	2.404	6
355th	319	339.0	1.063	5	502.5	1.575	2	841.5	2.638	2
356th	315	201.0	0.638	15	75.5	0.239	15	276.5	0.877	15
55th	312	303.5	0.972	8	268.5	0.861	8	572.0	1.833	9
359th	290	240.0	0.828	11	98.0	0.338	14	338.0	1.166	13
361st	285	221.0	0.775	12	105.0	0.368	13	326.0	1.144	14
20th	282	209.5	0.742	13	237.0	0.840	9	446.5	1.583	12
357th	275	595.5	2.165	1	106.5	0.387	12	702.0	2.553	4
364th	256	263.0	1.027	6	193.0	0.754	11	456.0	1.781	10
339th	237	233.5	0.985	7	423.5	1.787	1	657.0	2.772	1
479th	210	154.0	0.733	14	279.0	1.329	3	433.0	2.062	7

* 113 days and 12 air victories were deducted from 4th Group for its Spitfire operations as they were not comparable to the deep escort and penetration operations of the other fourteen Fighter Groups.

28 OCTOBER 1994