339th FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION
STATION F378 — FOWLMERE, ENGLAND

NEWSLETTER

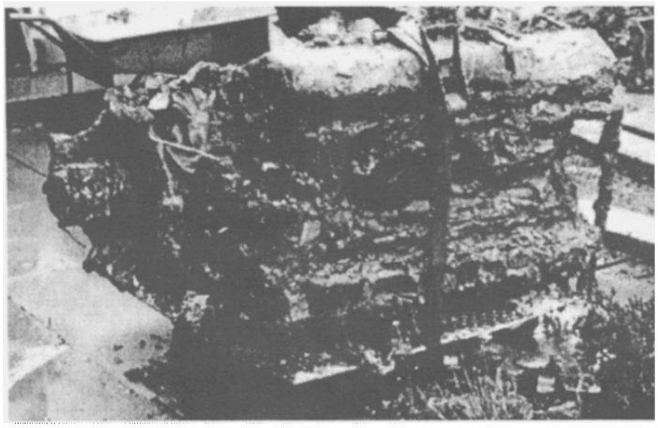
VOLUME 19, NO. 2 JUNE 1999 EDITOR: JIM STARNES

Perhaps you recall the article in the Deec 94 issue concerning British historian Geoff Rayner's search for information on the bailout of John Gokey (503) on the coast at Frinton-On-Sea on 11 Dec 44. Pilot Bernie Allen (503) escorted Gokey back across the North Sea due to a rough engine, and his P-51 caught fire approaching the coast. John Gokey remained in the burning aircraft until over land and bailed out, landing in the backyard of a home. The P-51 also crashed in a backyard not far away, barely missing a house being used is a billet for British troops. The story was written up in a book by Geoff Rayner, a copy of which he sent to Bernie Allen for his assistance, as mentioned in the Mar 97 newsletter. Last year permission was received to dig up the remains of the P-51, and the engine is now on display in the East Essex Museum. Geoff requested a photo of John Gokey, which is being sent to him for use by the museum.

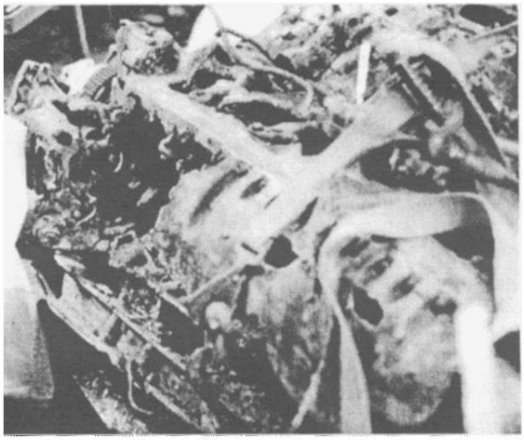
John W. Gokey

Of interest in the digging was the way the wreck was salvaged during the war. Apparently the crew removed all the above ground wreckage, then lay the prop blades over the engine (which had buried itself) and covered up the hole. Geoff sent several photos of the engine after it was dug up. Two of them are reproduced on the next page. Here is his description of the photos: "Two show the engine lying on its left side immediately after recovery - still covered with mud and a great deal of rain water! A large hole in the sump is clearly visible in one, and in both you can see how the prop boss has been unbolted and the blades removed. Another photo shows the front half of the prop boss after a quick hose-down. The 'caution' writing is clearly visible. Now the mud has been removed from the sump area, and it is clear to see that the rear two (of the six) big-end bearing assemblies have been thrown out of the sump leaving a gaping hole. Next to the hole but on the right side of the crank case block, the remains of one connecting rod sticks through the sidewall. He certainly had engine problems!"

Lt. John W. Gokey later made captain before completing his combat tour. He died of a heart attack a few years before our 339th association was organized. We are grateful to Bernie Allen



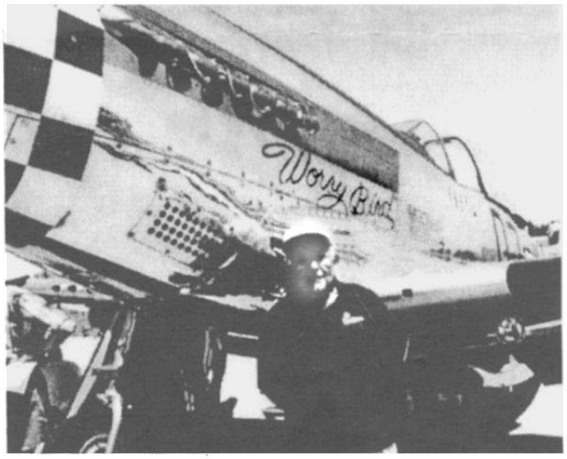
Muddy Merlin engine dug up in Dec 98.



Hole in engine sump is clearly visible.

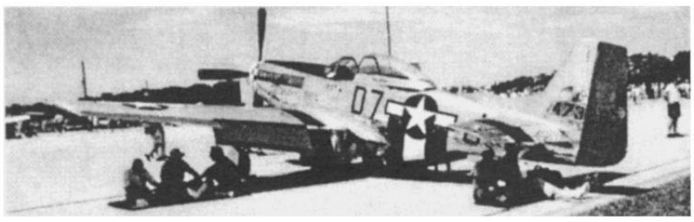
and especially Geoff Rayner for his follow-up story of John Gokey's crashed Mustang 55 years ago. The engine and John Gokey's photo will be on display in the East Essex Aviation Museum.

339th personnel were well represented at the gathering of Mustangs in Kissimmee, FL, on 10 Apr 99, including Steve Ananian, Bob Burns, Eddie Epp, Steve Fletcher, Luther Francis, Jeff French, Jim Mankie and Richard Wells. Eddie Epp and Steve Fletcher send a large number of photos, two of which are reproduced below. Mike George and his D7 J "Worry Bird" were obvious favorites of the photographers. We are adding Mike George to our mailing list. His P-51 appears at many air shows every year with authentic 503rd Fighter Squadron markings.



Steve Ananian

Luther Francis



There were few places to hide from the blazing sun in Central Florida during April. Many of these aircraft continued over to Lakeland, FL, for the Sun 'N' Fun fly-in the following week.

Larry Powell sent in an excellent article on our 100th mission during which the 505th scored enough kills to assure bagging 100 German aircraft in our first 100 missions. It was quite fateful in several ways as you will see in his account.

The Costly 100th Combat Mission Of The 505th By Larry Powell (505)

I don't know whenI first heard about Major Don Larson's ambition to have his squadron destroy 100 enemy planes in its first 100 combat missions, which as I understood it, no other squadron in military history had done. No 505th people seem to recall when this idea was formulated. Since nothing much happened on missions 90 through 99, the 100th would have to be one hell of a good mission.

As we prepared for takeoff on 4 Aug 44, the score was 89, meaning that we would have to destroy 11 planes – no small feat. The target was the industrial city of Hamburg. If the Germans chose to protect it, the goal was possible.

The early part of the mission was uneventful from takeoff to rendezvous with the Big Friends. Major Larson was leading. When I joined the group on 11 Jun 44, I was assigned to D flight, led by 2nd Lt John Holloway with 2nd Lt Owen Farmer as his assistant. I usually flew Farmer's wing, which meant flying Green 4 or Tail End Charlie – the last plane in the formation. Today was no different.

The sky was blue with small, puffy white clouds below at about 10,000 feet. We were at 25,000 feet and the warm sun felt good. I was flying my old P-51B named "Happy", which had the old hatch-type canopy, four guns and a fixed 70 mil gunsight. I had to keep kicking the tail around to cover the sky behind us. The new P-51Ds, with bubble canopies, had much better visibility to the rear. They also had six machine guns and more ammunition than the B model.

Arnold Kimsey and Jim Keller

We were covering three boxes of B-17s on the right side of the bomber train. Things got a little more tense as we approached Hamburg, but it seemed the Germans were not coming up today. Our bombers dropped their bombs and turned for home.

I guess at that point Major Larson could wait no longer. He waggled his wings and made a diving right turn away from the bombers. Naturally, the whole squadron followed him down. I had no trouble keeping up, but at 450 mph in a steep diving turn, covering our tails was not easy. With positive Gs being pulled, I could not keep my head up or my oxygen mask on. I tightened the straps on the mask while keeping everyone in sight.

I had no idea where we were going. Then I saw it: Larson had his eyes on a large German airfield, which I could see through the top of my canopy in the steep dive. It looked like a good target. There was one problem – we were too high for a good strafing run. Seeing this, Major Larson made a left turn away from the field to bleed off the excessive altitude. Then he made a steep right turn back to the airfield. The problem with this is that it cost us some of our valuable element of surprise. When inbound the squadron spread out almost line abreast,

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all sixteen airplanes. We were really screaming. I took a quick look at my airspeed indicator– it read almost 500 mph. I was on the very left side of the formation. Being tail-end Charlie, I certainly had the most unenviable position – I would be the last one over the field.

When we were about two miles out, the field lit up with red and white signal flares. They were arching all over the place. I could see that this attack was going to be no surprise. I would be lucky to come away from this field in one piece. Keeping an eye out for the P-51 on my right, I dove for the treetops. I had been told that most German airfield defense guns were placed at treetop level for a clear field of fire. I hoped that my airspeed would make it difficult for the gunners to get a good bead on me. Needless to say, I had on full power and RPMs. I could see only two other P-51s on my right.

As I ran out of trees, a bright orange stream of 20 mm tracers laced across my cowling. I dove for the deck. The tracers followed me down. Those "golf balls" were between me and the propeller and about two feet up. As I went lower, the golf balls also went lower. I finally could go no lower for fear the prop tips would chew up the grass. I could not turn because I would have to rise up into those tracers to have wing tip clearance to the ground. So I just sat there and hoped Happy would get me out of there. The German gunner was good. He was really tracking me but could not depress his gun barrel enough to get slugs into me. After what seemed like forever, the golf balls stopped. He must have run out of ammo, as I was still in the middle of the field. I made a skidding 90 degree right turn and made for the trees on the north side of the field, crossing behind the rest of the squadron as they continued their strafing runs. I don't think I even looked for a target because I did not even fire my guns. I just wanted to get the hell out of there.

When I came to the trees I looked around for other planes. I did not see any 505th planes but what I did see made my heart really jump. Right in front of me, crossing left to right was a ME-109. I called out this bandit to no one in particular and turned right to get on his tail. He made no effort to evade, so getting a lead on him was no problem. I missed with my first burst but the second one hit him in the engine area. He then made a right turn and I squeezed off another short burst which got his aft fuselage. He turned left but his engine must have quit, as he slowed down, leveled his wings and went into the trees, my first aerial victory.

I looked around and saw a P-51 on my left and joined up. It was Major Larson, who turned north, and I stayed with him in spread formation. We flew in this direction for a couple minutes before we noticed that we were overtaking a slow moving FW-190. Larson acknowledged my call that it was clear behind him. He pulled up behind the 190 and put a long burst into it. The canopy came off and the pilot bailed out. His legs and arms were askew and we were at 500 feet. When his chute opened, it made one swing and hit the ground. He stood up so we knew he was alive. His 190 had nosed over and dove into the ground. That was the first time I had seen an aircraft crash – it was not a pretty sight.

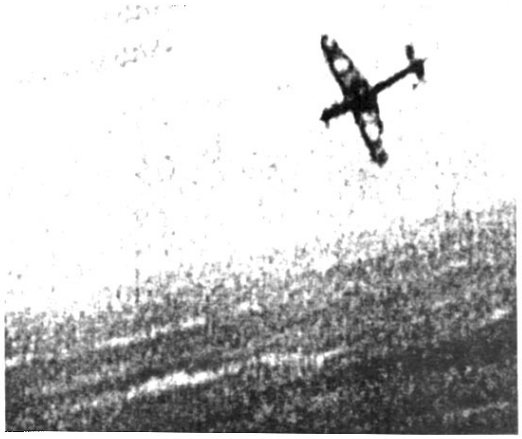
The rest of the squadron soon caught up with us, and I assumed my Green 4 position. We continued on a northerly heading looking for more targets and soon came upon a long freight train which came to a halt when the engineer saw us. A left hand traffic pattern was set up with Major Larson going for the engine. Things were pretty well shot up when it came my turn, but I put a few bullets into a freight car. The results were unimpressive.

I pulled up to pattern altitude and followed the plane in front of me. As I started my left bank for the next strafing run, someone called out "Hey, there's a 109 in our traffic pattern." Being in a left bank, I easily cleared my tail to my left rear. I looked ahead just in time to see two P-51s come together. It all took place so fast for me to tell what really happened. Both were in

a climbing left turn and it appeared that the propeller of one chopped the other in half right at the fuselage tank. In a great flash of flame the first, minus its tail, did a flip and a half end over end and hit the ground with a great ball of fire. The other pulled further up vertically with fire and steam coming from its engine. The canopy came off and the pilot bailed out at about 1000 feet.

Since I was at the rear of the formation, I figured that the crash had to be between Major Larson and someone – who I did not know. I had no idea who had bailed out and who went in, and I had no time to reflect on it. I turned forward to see where the ME-109 was. To my amazement, that rascal had flown in front of me and was lining up on Lt. Roland Strong, who was in a slight left climbing turn. I called for Strong to break left and down, but he just continued on. I was at full throttle and RPM, trying to get into firing position and calling all the while for Roland Strong to break. It was to no avail. He just continued flying along, unaware of the danger. I could see the 109 was firing and getting hits.

At this point the 109 pilot may have seen me coming, for he broke hard to the left away from Strong. To get lead on him I had to really steepen my turn. I must have been pulling 3 or 4 G's. I gave him a 3 radii lead and squeezed off a burst. The 109 disappeared under my nose so I had to roll level to see if I had any hits. My tracers went just behind his tail. The 109 was coming up fast, as I had too much speed. I chopped the throttle, dumped some flaps, stood old Happy on his left wing, pulled back hard on the stick (probably 5 or 6 G's) and got about a 6 or 7 radii lead and fired a long burst. The tracers immediately disappeared under my nose. I rolled level to see the results. To my amazement, this time the tracers went directly into the cockpit area with many API (armor-piercing incendary) flashes. I could hardly believe I could hit him pulling that many G's. Since the gun camera was in the left wing it did not catch any of this, but it took a beautiful plan view of the 109 during camera three second overrun. At about 200 feet the 109 nosed over and headed for the ground. The canopy came off at 100 feet and the pilot bailed out. He had no chance. The pilot and the 109 hit the ground about the same time. The plane exploded on impact, whereas the pilot bounced a couple times and lay still. I took no photo of this scene.



Now I looked around to see where everyone was. Only Roland Strong was in sight, climbing slowly between clouds heading for home. I could hear Jack Holloway taking command of the remaining airplanes. There were not many still around. I called Holloway to tell him I would stay with Strong, since his aircraft was shot up. I don't recall getting an answer. I also called Strong and got no response from him either.

I flew high and down sun from Strong but did not like the course he was taking. He was leading us right over Wilhelmshaven , and we were only at 9,000 feet. Just as I was flying up to him, trying to get him to change his course, his canopy came off and he bailed out. There was no signal of any kind, and I doubt if he ever knew I was with him. I watched his chute open, and it looked like he was going to land right in the middle of Wilhelmshaven. This jolted me to realize that I was in a very precarious position at only 9,000 feet. Again, Happy goes balls-to-the=wall again, full throttle and RPM. I turned right and headed straight out the bay toward the North Sea. I knew what was coming and it did not take long. WHOMP!

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WHOMP! My plane was rocked hard. It does not take long at 9,000 feet from antiaircraft gun firing to projectile explosion. I could not let them get a bead on me. I climbed, dived, twisted and turned to keep the gunners guessing. After what seemed like forever, the firing stopped. I was at the mouth of the bay, and looking back I could see the exact route I had taken. The trail of flak bursts looked like a black snake. Some of those had been so close that I could smell the smoke as well as feel the concussion.

I worked my way up to 21,000 feet and felt somewhat safe. Wrong! Suddenly there was a loud crack. The sky around me turned black again and old Happy was thrown on his back. I looked down through the top of the canopy and saw i was over Helgoland, that nasty little island in the North Sea just off the coast – supposedly the German flak gunners school. So now it was another twisting and turning time again. Since they did not get me on the first burst at this altitude, they did not stand much of a chance of scoring. It sure scared the hell out of me just the same. It gets mighty scary up there all by yourself.

I now headed for Fowlmere and home. I did my obligatory two victory rolls when I peeled up for landing. This was for my excellent ground crew – Jim Keller, Bud Martin and Lou Oreggia. I had really put Happy to the test that day and he responded to every call. When I parked the P-51 and shut down, I was met by a bery somber and concerned group. I was told that Major Don Larson, Lt Bob Burns and Lt Roland Strong were missing. Until I arrived they thought I was missing, too. I landed 30 minutes after the others. All I could tell them was that someone bailed out from that mid-air collision but now who, and I was with Strong when he bailed out.

The answer to that question came six months later. As I walked through the main gate of the Nuremberg prisoner of war camp, having become a POW myself on 14 Jan 45, the first face that I recognized was that of Bob Burns. It was then I realized Major Donald A. Larson had fulfilled his dream. His 505th Fighter Squadron became the first combat fighter squadron to destroy 100 enemy planes in its first 100 combat missions. The final tally on that 4 Aug 44 mission for us was 14 enemy airplanes destroyed – three more than needed. The 505th activities made the front page of the Stars & Stripes newspaper the next day.

> **In 1954 Moses Lake Air Force Base, WA, was renamed Larson Air Force Base in his honor. His home had been nearby Yakima, WA. Larson AFB was deactivated in the 1970's.**

In the past few months several members have responded to my comments in the March issue concerning my poor eyesight. It seems I am by no means alone with that problem. Dr. Fred Scroggin says macular degeneration had taken much vision from one eye, and he doubts that he will be able to renew his drivers license when it expires. Ila Dearey has a similar problem in one eye. Of course we have previously mentioned that Hervey Stockman has major vision trouble from macular degeneration in both eyes. Earlier this year I sent Herv and a dozen other 339ers a copy of John Lambert's new book, "Low Level Attack: The Mediterranean and Europe." Last year I sent Lambert a number of strafing photos, most of which were used in our group history book. He used 16 of them in his book, including two from Herv's gun camera film, and sent me an autographed copy. All 339th pilots whose gun camera film appears in the book have received a copy. I mentioned in my letter to Herv that we lost Dave Register in a tragic accident while helping a neighbor remove a large tree limb. It came down sooner than expected. Interesting extracts from his letters are printed on the next page.

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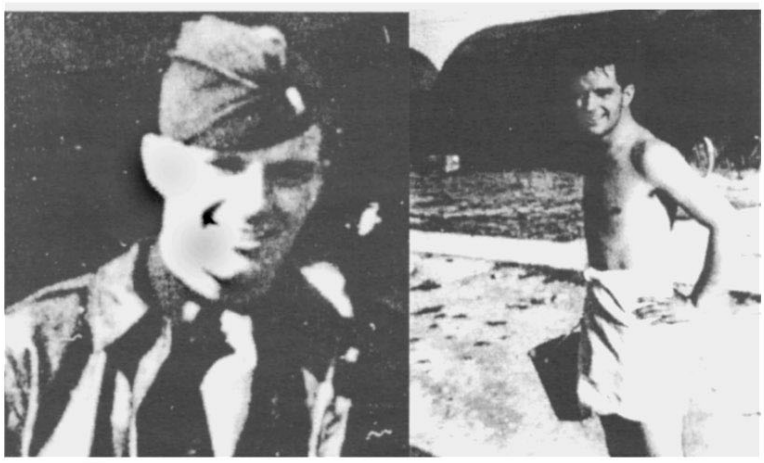
HERVEY STOCKMAN LETTERS



Hervey Stockman in uniform and without

Thank you so much for John Lambert's book "Low Level Attack." It will be a fine addition to my library. I glanced at it yesterday using my wonderful"Alladin" enlarger. This electronic device is a terrific invention which really facilitates my reading and writing. Without it I would be lost.
Take care of your eyes! Cataract surgery will help and hopefully that will be all that you need. Macular Degeneration is bad news. My retinas are too badly atrophied for any of the current procedures to apply. Sally and I visited Dr. Bressler at Johns Hopkins Eye Clinic to learn if there were any applicable options. There were not any, but maybe in five or ten years down the road. Keep Dr. Bressler and John Hopkins in mind if you need the ultimate second opinion.
The 339th association may never be able to replace your skills and devotion, but hopefully among our ranks there may be a volunteer with gusto and drive to take a swing at the job. You might be willing to help him get started.
I received a call from Cecil Byrd asking about a privately produced movie :Return With Honor." Jim, it's a first class production and I believe it is about to go public nationally. It is definitely worth a plug in the newsletter. Don't miss it if you have a chance.
(New Letter) I loved your "Cousin Weakeyes" letter but not the Dave Register tragedy. I have a globe willow in our backyard that periodically makes me cringe when old limbs I am cutting let loose early. Trees and old folks pruning them just don't seem to mix.
I found a photo taken at my parents place in Andover, NJ, just before we left Camp Shanks for England in Mar 44. Most guys went to NYC but Ed Thistlethwaite and I went to the farm for a last minute family reunion. My oldest brother Henry, a captain in Army Air Intelligence came; brother John came out from Columbia with a bevy of beauties from Minn. Ed's sister Dona also made it. Sally & I were engaged and she was on hand. The photo shows standing L-R one Minn. gal, Sally, Ed, another Minn. gal, Henry and Donna Thistlethwaite. Kneeling L-R Hervey, a Navy pal and brother John. A very typical snapshot of those days. Memories!!
Take care of that double vision!!
Get all the help the docs can provide.

As Hervey noted, my vision problem is that one muscle controlling my right eye has failed, leaving me with double vision. The right eye sees somewhat diagonally down and to the left or right. It is not correctable except that my prism glasses remove most of the down vision error.

Martha Mitchell wrote in April that their daughter Lee and grandson Neil went to the Kissimmee Mustang gathering. "In Neil's own words, it was awesome! Also they went by Savannah to the 8th AF Museum and took photos of the 339th memorial. It gave Lee more World War II connection with her dad, Raymond "Jack" Mitchell." Martha enclosed a news clipping from the Charlotte Observer entitled "Mom wore combat boots, and I'm truly proud of it." "In response to 'WWII generation deserved memorial', when I was growing up in the 50's, the worse insult one kid could hurl at another was "Yer momma wore combat boots." Fortunately for me, mine had. My mom was an Army nurse with the 38th Evac Hospital formed here in Charlotte during World War II. My dad was a P-51 pilot with the 339th Fighter Group and a POW. This combination gave me an appreciation for what World War II meant to their generation, to our country, and for our freedom. I'm glad for the time my son spent with his grandparents, since he seems to have an understanding of WWII that few 7th graders have. I guess this is why I find it hard to comprehend that there will be generations that won't have this direct knowledge of what WWII encompassed. Hopefully, this memorial will honor those who contributed to our common effort and will also make the emotional connection with the viewer that the Vietnam Memorial does. To the list of names on the Registry of Remembrances, I am honored to add 1st Lt Martha F. Mitchell, ANC, and Capt Raymond M. Mitchell." (Signed) Gregory Mitchell

The mini-reunion as guests of the Salute to Veterans over Memorial Day Weekend in Columbia, MO, was a great success. A few of our guys rode in the parade in a 1956 black Cadillac convertible and spent time in Dr. Wes Stricker's P-51. Wes and Sterling Conley wrote and sent photos. Two are shown here and more will be in the September issue. Wes wrote "You should have seen the twinkle in everyone's eyes when climbing back into a Mustang painted in 339th colors!"

Ray Creswell, Sterling Conley & Larry Powell in back seat of Cadillac. Sterling's grandson sits up front with the driver.

Clockwise from left: Larry Powell, Barney Farmer, Lova & Bill Perry, Clarence Shockley (standing), Ray Creswell, Sterling Conley, Beverly Conley (obscured) & Annie Conley.

Sterling Conley says he would not have missed this special treat for anything. Thanks , Wes!

Harry Howard

During April Harry Howard (505) sent an interesting letter with many enclosures of interest. An extract follows: "Sorry to read about your eye problems. I now have glaucoma and take a drop twice per day. Old fighter pilot vision is missing for sure.
The March newsletter was a sad one for me. Bert Conner called me on March 2nd as he always does. We talk about our "Lucky Day" 2 Mar 45 when we were shot down. I'm sure he did not know Slick Penrose had passed away on that day. What a fine gentleman we lost. I have been so proud to meet with our great group at our annual reunions.
Every year for the past five years I am invited to the local high school where our kids went, to talk of World War II to American Study classes. Also several other vets and retired people tell what it was like in the 40's. I am the only pilot to show up. I take my few mementos to show the young students. I wear my green uniform shirt with wings and 8th AF patch. Below my wings I show them the Purple Heart, Air Medal and my POW medal (I tell them that one nobody tried to win.) I show them my mom's gold star flag and the Nazi flag a sergeant gave me the day Patton's army came to liberate us (May 6.) I take off my 339th jacket and cap, and put on my cap, flight jacket and scarf I was wearing when shot down. I show them the planes I got to fly from big WW II fighter calendars I've saved. I show photos of fighters escorting bombers over Germany and tell them our group was one of the top groups in 8th AF (i.e., 100 German planes in 100 missions. I mention Stalag 11-A with flight commander Bert Conner in the next bed. We were among the luckiest pilots of many lucky men to return to the USA."
Harry enclosed a bundle of letters from students which the teacher forwarded to him after his presentation. Here is one sample: "I was in complete awe of your story of bravery and courage during a period of great desperation. I feel very lucky to witness your presentation and to see the "souvenirs" firsthand. I was especially amazed by your authentic pilot uniform and the Nazi flag. I've never seen articles such as those except in the movies.
I wondered – when you were in the German hospital, were you treated horribly? And when you were emancipated – how did you feel? Not many are fortunate enough to survive such an experience. I feel blessed to have heard your story. I believe that it was the hard work of your generation that created the peace and prosperity that my generation has the luxury of experiencing today. I agree with Tom Brokaw that you are among the Greatest Generation. With fond regards, (signed) Kelli Peterson (granddaughter of Peter and Mary Smith) "
Thanks, Harry, for sharing that with us and a special "Attaboy" to you for your effort to help the younger generation understand what happened during our lifetimes. It is not in the current school history books.

This month I received from Ms. S. Grant, teacher at Fowlmere Primary School, a letter and enclosures of prayers written by her students. Her letter reads "We wrote these prayers in November, and the children put a lot of thought into them. All the children are in years 5 or 6 (ages 9-11 years) and are pictured in the photo included. They were delighted to think that their prayers were being sent to you! I hope they are of some interest. Regards. (signed) Miss S. Grant." Many of the students also decorated the sheet on which prayers are written with flags of several countries, flowers, crosses, wreaths, airplanes and monuments. I will show their photo and a few examples of their prayers. A lot of thought did go into them!

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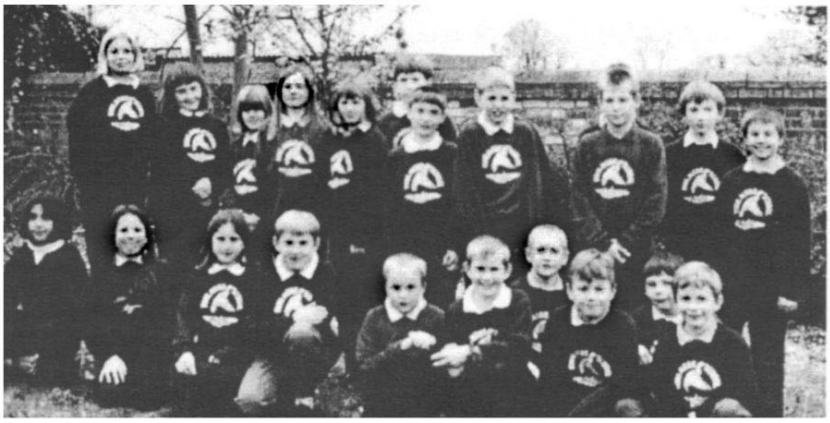

Dear Lord, Thank you for all the people in the war, Who fought or not, Who died or suffered, Give them peace and happiness, And let them be forever happy. Amen
Our father, who art in heaven, Give peace and happiness to those who died at war. Who gave their today for our tomorrow. Let them be forever in our hearts. Amen
Oh Lord, Give peace and happiness to those who died in the war. Make peace in the world so the beloved family will not have this horrible experience. Amen
Dear Lord, Help us to think of those who have fought in the war and who gave their lives for us. Amen Dear God, This is a prayer for the soldiers that suffered in the war. All the soldiers in the war, Thanks to you we are free, You may have guessed we won, I wish you lots of peace and happiness, And hope your lives are pleasant. Thanks to you ours are. Amen.
Dear God, Let us have peace on earth and let those who survived in the war to have a happy life. Amen
Thanks, Miss Grant, for sharing these with us. I will take the entire bundle of prayers you sent to our reunion in September for others to review. They are well done!

Reservation forms for the Harrisburg reunion are enclosed. Please sent the forms to our treasurer, Bill Guyton. Squadron dinner reservations should be sent to the unit director as listed on those forms. Hotel reservations should go to the hotel as noted on that form. Note the deadlines for sending in the reservations.

IN MEMORIAM

Since the last issue was printed, word has been received of five more losses. Squadron commander John Aitken died on 3 June after a long illness. POWs Roland Gousie (505) and Ridge O'Sullivan (504) were lost earlier this year. Ridge was one of our most faithful supporters and attended nearly every reunion despite his failing health. Last fall we lost Claybourne Wirt (503), according to a note from his widow recently. Crew chief Dave Register (505) and member of our Board of Directors was killed in a tragic accident helping a neighbor remove a large tree limb – which came down more quickly than expected. Please add these five names to the Deceased Roster in the June 1997 newsletter.

JUNE 99 ADDENDUM TO 339TH FIGHTER GROUP ASSN Roster dated March 1998

Change Owen Farmer to 1001 Mar Walt Dr. #230, Ft Walton Beach, FL 32547
Add Michael J. George P-51 owner 8 Fox Mill Lane, Springfield, IL 62707
Change Claire Harry to 403 Marsh Cove Lane, Ponte Vedra Beach, FL 32062
Change Lybi Hauss to Village by the Sea #212C. Pompano Beach, FL 33062
Change Danny Morris to 12 Crawford Ave., Stafford, Clays, Essex, England RM16 2AS
Change James Norwood to 331 Cemetery Rd., Eupora, MS 347744
Change Paul Reidy to 5 Church St. #C7, Sutton, MA 01590

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On 13 Feb 45 1st Lt Esteban A. Terrats was assigned to the 503rd, having been a flying instructor in the states after graduation. His extra flight experience should have served him well in combat. However, he entered the big air battle with about 50 German fighters near Magdeburg on 2 Mar 45. Esteban was last seen engaged with ME-109s and later was reported killed in action. He was the only 339th pilot who was a native of Puerto Rico. The group scored 14 aerial kills and destroyed 11 more aircraft on the ground. Terrats was the only dogfight casualty, but we lost Bert Conner and Harry Howard while strafing. We salute another of our heroes who gave their lives in aerial combat – 1st Lt Esteban A. Terrats.

SHORT BURSTS. . . We expect to see two of our 339th English friends in Harrisburg during September. John Harris joined us in Savannah last year and hopes to bring his wife along this time. Also expected is artist Nick King, who has prepared personalized drawings of 339ers with their aircraft on request. We hope the turnout of our own veterans is large and enthusiastic. . . Marcia Penrose (504) received many expressions of sympathy over the loss of Slick Penrose and appreciated the comments on Slick in the newsletter. She wrote in part "He truly loved everything about the 339th, and there was nothing he wouldn't try to do to be of help. Sometimes I can hardly believe this has all happened. We miss him so much and hope time will make one feel better. I love reading the newsletter – you do such a great job. Thank you for all the time spent and great contributions in behalf of all of us. With love, (signed) Marcia and Tom" Thanks, and we appreciate all Tom continues to do for our association. . . Similarly, Doris Stillwell (503) wrote thanking us for the many acts of kindness to Frank. He willed a large painting of his "Bengal Lancer" P-51 to Bloomfield High School in NJ. That Mustang had been purchased through the sale of war bonds by students of Bloomfield High. Frank joined the student body and gave a speech paying tribute to the wartime students for their patriotic efforts. They were proud to have "their" P-51 piloted by a native NJ flyer of exceptional skill and leadership. Doris wrote "In recent years the 339th was the only thing for Frank – he lived and breathed it. My sincere thanks for all you did for Frank." Frank became close friends with Pete Wilson of the 354th Fighter Group who retired as vice principal of Bloomfield High . . . Harrisburg will be our first reunion where we will not be assisted by a reunion chairman. President Sterling Conley has made many phone calls and confirmed much of the arrangements which had been made by Slick Penrose. We owe Sterling an extra tribute for his special efforts beyond the call of his regular duties on our behalf. He will likely be glad to pass the baton to his successor after elections this fall in Harrisburg. Many 8th AF group associations are ceasing to hold annual reunions separate from 8th AF Historical Society after 1999. We hope to continue to function on our own but are losing many key supporters. See you at Harrisburg!

This photo shows part of the interior of a Nissen Hut at Fowlmere as well as nine 505th maintenance personnel modeling their GI underwear. John Franz helped by identifying seven of them as follows: Lower left is Gustave Dahlstrom. Behind him is Vito Claps. The others are (L-R) (unknown), Ralph Patterson, Anthony Panka, Gabriel Cutri (back), (unknown), Anthony Frescella and Ronald Epstein. Pin-ups cover the wall above Ronald Epstein, and the corrugated steel interior can be seen elsewhere around the top.

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