

September 1, 2006

*339th*



# Fighter Group Association

Station F378 – Fowlmere, England

## NEWSLETTER

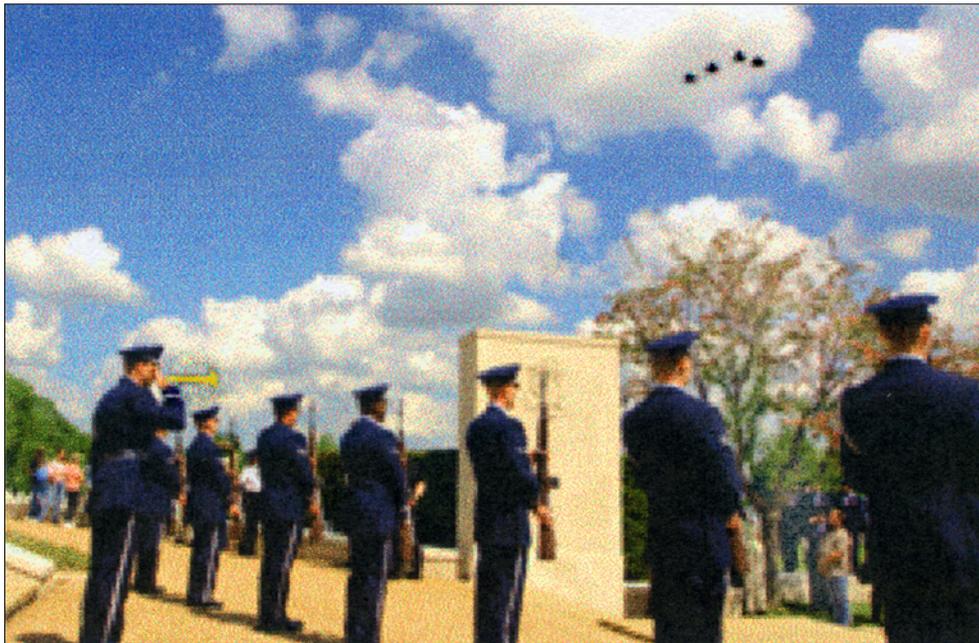
“The Lads from Fowlmere”



**Volume 26, Issue 3**

**Editor: Stephen C. Ananian**

# Memorial Day 2006



The RAF Lakenheath Honor Guard presents arms following a 21-gun salute and the playing of “Taps” during the Memorial Day Ceremony as a missing man formation flies overhead.

*(Photo by Airman Christopher Walkenhorst)*

**By Staff Sgt. Jeff Hamm, 48th Fighter Wing Public Affairs**

*From June 4th 2006 issue of Jet48 RAF Lakenheath's Weekly News Magazine*

As the final note of “Taps” sounded from a lone bugler, the roar of four F-15Es flying a missing-man formation swept over the crowd. Those in attendance stood still in what seemed somber reverence to the idea of the fallen brother-in-arms represented by the jets.

Sixty years ago, the Cambridge American Military Cemetery at Madingley was dedicated as the final resting place for more than 3,800 American World War II dead. On Monday, May 29, nearly 2,000 people attended the annual Memorial Day ceremony, sponsored by the U.S. Embassy in London, Headquarters 3rd Air Force and the 48th Fighter Wing. - - -

More than 200 volunteers from RAF Lakenheath participated in the planning and execution of the memorial service, from setting up chairs and *Memorial Day continued over*

communications, to acting as ushers and bearing wreaths. The event featured speeches from Mr. Hugh Duberly, the Lord Lieutenant of Cambridgeshire, and Mr. David Johnson, Charge d'Affaires A.I., U.S. Embassy.

"Today we remember those American Airmen who gave up their lives to protect freedom," Mr. Duberly said. "We have been privileged as Britons to have such staunch Allies who have stood up to defend what's right; it is an alliance that is once again playing a crucial



B-17 "Sally B" flies over Madingley

role in a different part of the world." Mr. Johnson echoed that sentiment. "England and America worked together in a rare partnership that continues to this day," he said. The crowd remained still as Mr. Johnson went on to talk about the sacrifices made by hundreds of thousands of members of what has come to be known as "The Greatest Generation."

"Whether we know each of their stories or not, all have left a legacy of courage," he said. "Wherever they touched ground, they're remembered for their decency and their greatness."

Of course not everyone who volunteered their service during the ceremony has a family member lain in the cemetery. Many RAF Lakenheath Airmen felt it was up to them to carry on the legacy of those who came before them. "All these young men who died for our freedom - sometimes I don't think they're properly respected anymore," said Senior Airman Andrea Hernandez, 48th Equipment Maintenance Squadron Aerospace Ground Equipment Flight.

Those in the crowd were afforded a few opportunities to stop and think, as many moments of silence and prayers were offered throughout the ceremony. There was a definite air of sobriety and thoughtfulness embracing the crowd as volunteers, members from the East Anglian military community, retirees, veterans, and the families of those lost in the war, as well as local British community members reflected on the sacrifices made by thousands of American service members thousands of miles from home. Perhaps Mr. Johnson best summed up those and feelings of grief and admiration in the final moments of his speech when he proposed why he thought everyone was there Monday. "We acknowledge a debt longstanding to an entire generation of Americans - those who fought, those who died, lived, grieved and moved on," he said.

As the F-15s continued on their course, and the distant sound of the modern day fighters was replaced by the heavy approaching WW II, B-17 bomber - a relic from a bygone era - it was hard not to see this bomber from yesteryear as the embodiment of the missing man returning for one final farewell to the many veterans and the families in the crowd who lost friends and loved ones in the surrounding lands, waters and skies.



# The 339<sup>th</sup> FGA Honors its Fallen Comrades

## Memorial Day with the 339<sup>th</sup> FG

By Peter Randall, UK reporter 339<sup>th</sup> FGA



Peter Randall

Once again, Martin Sheldrick represented the 339<sup>th</sup> FG, in the Memorial Day Ceremonies at the American Cemetery in Cambridge, Madingley. John and Laurina Harris were there as well, with granddaughter Chelsea as well as Nick and Julie King and yours truly.

Martin Sheldrick, as always, donated the beautiful wreath for the 339<sup>th</sup> FG. The wreath was made-up of red and white carnations, the 339<sup>th</sup> colours. This year I bought the 359<sup>th</sup> wreath and asked Nick King to lay it for the 359<sup>th</sup> FG. The wreath had three colour stripes, red, blue and yellow, to represent their three squadrons. Julie was there with Nick, - complete with new hair-do. It suits her very well - very sophisticated!

Being the UK, once again it rained, but fortunately not during the ceremony. However, we all had wet asses from the seating being exposed before being covered by butts! That's three years in a row on the trot. Before that I always got sunburn. Perhaps the seasons will get back in line for next year? No Mustangs flying this year but with the cloud base so low, they would have only been able to do a fly-by. Four F-15s from the 48<sup>th</sup> Tactical Fighter Wing at Lakenheath did the Missing Man and set off a lot of car alarms. Fly-bys were from a Spitfire (Griffon engine unfortunately, not Merlin) and a C-47 from the RAF Memorial Flight plus once again, the veteran B-17, "Sally B". Someone obviously found the insurance premium for that one!

Naturally enough, it started "hissing down" as I said goodbye to Nick and Julie so all in all - "a typical English bank Holiday!"



Martin Sheldrick displays wreath he had made to honor the deceased members of the 339<sup>th</sup> FG. Before placing at foot of the Wall of the Missing.  
Peter Randall



Memorial Day continued over



# We Thank You!

Right - Nick King and Peter Randall say Goodbye as the rain starts to fall once again.

Peter Randall.



Laurina and John Harris with granddaughter Chelsea pose with the 339<sup>th</sup> Wreath. Peter Randall



The cover of the Memorial Day Program P. Randall



Nick King and 339<sup>th</sup> FG wreath. Peter Randall

## You have our undying gratitude - -

Nearly every Memorial Day for sixty years, Martin Sheldrick has been the official Wreath Presenter for the 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group. He writes, "I am pleased to be representing the 339<sup>th</sup> at the Memorial Day Ceremony. Thank you for mentioning expenses, but I like to look upon my participation at Madingley as a contribution to the cause." - MARTIN

We thank Martin and all our British friends who year after year help us remember and honor our fallen comrades for their heroic deeds for mankind! They attend in foul weather or fair to assist us in paying our respects to those heroes for their ultimate sacrifices by being there at their graveside!

For the 339<sup>th</sup> FGA, S. C. Ananian Secretary





# From The Desk of Jim Starnes ■ ■

## We Are Slowly Aging!

By James R. Starnes,  
Staff Columnist, pilot 505<sup>th</sup>FS



The loss of two more "original pilots" of the 339<sup>th</sup> as reported in this issue (p. 15) gives one food for thought. Nip Carter and Jack Price were a couple of the best, and we will miss them. One of Dr. Fred Scroggin's photos shown below reflects the original brain trust of the 505<sup>th</sup>.



L-R Fred Scroggin, Donald Larson, George Knight (Asst. Operations), Joe Thury (Operations) and Medic Olan Whitney in the ambulance. Fred Scroggin

Don Larson was our original Squadron C.O. and after he was killed in action Joe Thury took over for the remainder of the war. None of them are alive today, but we will never forget their great contribution to the war effort. - "Doc" Scroggin was awarded the soldier's medal for heroism when he ran into a burning plane to remove the injured pilot, - Larson became an "Ace" on his final mission, - and Thury became one of the two top ground scorers of the European Theater by destroying 25 ½ enemy aircraft on the ground..

With the observance of Memorial Day 2006 many of us survivors reflected on the many losses we encountered, especially during the early part of our combat tour. First we lost Arch Luper to Flak on 8 May 44 while flying over a solid overcast in western Germany. 15<sup>th</sup> May saw Al Wyer go down over France after losing his coolant. On 19<sup>th</sup> May we lost Ridge O'Sullivan from a dogfight and James Crockett while strafing a train. And on 21<sup>st</sup> May we lost "Nip" Carter, Arthur Steier, Floyd Heneghan and Robert Mulvey, mostly to Anti-Aircraft fire while strafing. On 24<sup>th</sup> May we lost Joseph Wolfort and Harold Everett. Then on 29<sup>th</sup> of May we lost James Lynch and Gordon Perry when they missed England coming home. They flew out the English Channel until their fuel was used up - a navigational error with tragic consequences. Finally on 30<sup>th</sup> May we lost Paul Meyer and Ed Thistlethwaite to enemy aircraft. All fourteen of these losses occurred during our first month of combat!

One is reminded that we are a steadily declining breed of old timers.



*Jim Starnes*

# Life in the Military!



Dutch speaks at our Tampa Reunion.

## My struggle to return to fighters!

By Lt. Col. Lee "Dutch" Eisenhart, USAF Retired

*Dutch's speech as delivered at our Tampa Reunion*

I was born on May 17<sup>th</sup>, 1918 in Pennsylvania Dutch Country, Lehigh County PA. (thus the nickname "Dutch"), - Graduated AAF Advanced Flight Training, Single Engine at Marianna, Florida on March 1943 - Class 43C and was assigned to the 84<sup>th</sup> Dive Bombardment Group, 302<sup>nd</sup> Sqd., at Drew Field, Tampa, Florida, flying A-24s (the Douglass "Dauntless"). Later reassigned to the 339<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Dive) - - way out in the Boondocks!

We switched from A-24s to the A-25 Curtiss "Helldiver"; a larger, faster aircraft - but with lots of hydraulic problems. It had an electrically controlled propeller - when the battery was low, the prop would change to a flat pitch and of course, a high RPM! The aircraft then became uncontrollable! When this occurred, you had to get it on the ground in a hurry. - We moved to Walterboro SC, on July 3, 1943 to improved facilities - The following month, on August 20<sup>th</sup>, 1943 The Group was re-designated 503<sup>rd</sup>, 504<sup>th</sup> and 505<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadrons and we changed to the P-39, Airacobra. - New pilots with combat experience were added and the outfit was transferred to Rice Field, California on September 11<sup>th</sup>, 1943 for further training - on March 13<sup>th</sup>, 1944 we departed for overseas and arrived on April 5<sup>th</sup>, 1944 at Fowlmere. On September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1944 I completed my tour of duty having been promoted to Captain and flew my last combat mission on September 12<sup>th</sup>, 1944 (Bomber Escort, Ramrod to Magdeburg). I returned to the States where I was assigned as an instructor at Thomasville, Georgia, teaching fighter tactics in P-40s.

I was flying fighters, but unhappy; the "Brass" was excessively safety conscious and the caliber of training was poor. Here I was grounded for 3 months for being in violation of flying safety regulations. I appeared before the flying evaluation board; Article 104 and was one of the very few that was returned to flying status.

They reassigned me to Dale Mabry Field at Tallahassee Florida flying P-51s -**AT LAST!!** Although life was much more desirable, I nonetheless took advantage of the point system and was released from active duty August 1945. I was a civilian! I went back to school and enrolled at Penn State and on June 1948 graduated with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Agriculture. Upon graduation, I started a small dairy herd of "registered" Holsteins of my own on a rented dairy farm at Lake Ariel, Pennsylvania, which I later purchased. At nights, taught veterans who were in the "On the job training program" - a course in Agriculture.

In spring of 1953 a call went out for "pilot retreads" to Re-up for the Korean "Police Action". Signed up for a 2-year hitch. They sent me back to Marianna Florida for a sixty hour pilot refresher course. Upon completion, was assigned to Tyndall Field to the Ground Control

Instrument School (G.C.I. trainees need live aircraft in the air for interception practice on their scopes). I was flying Mustangs again; transition to the T-33s to acquire Jet-time. I unsuccessfully campaigned to get into Jet Fighters so I volunteered to go to Korea to fly them. They assigned me instead to a Mosquito outfit flying T-6s. (Darn!) So I extended my tour in Korea to get checked out in the F-86 (A Jet Fighter). I then returned to the States and was assigned to the training command as an instructor.

So - I went back to the Pentagon to protest!

So - - I was assigned to George AFB to fly F-100s. When I got there, very little flying was being done in F-100s so I volunteered my services to an instrument training squadron. Was assigned there for one year when I was again grounded (Double Darn!); it was alleged that I was buzzing in Pennsylvania (My home); - it took me one year to get back on flying status. - Served as the Group Personnel officer while grounded. Then volunteered for Saudi Arabia as an F-86 fighter, instructor for Saudi pilots. Upon arrival was switched to T-33 instructor! (More Darns and a Damn-it!) Requested release from active duty upon completion of one year in Saudi Arabia.

Six months later - - - request was **DENIED!**

Returned to states for a new assignment - instructor. - So back to the Pentagon again!

They allowed me an alternative assignment; SAC (Strategic Air Command) - I took it reluctantly - Flying KC-135s at Griffis Air Force Base, Rome, New York in 1960 -

**FIVE YEARS!**

Made frequent trips to Pentagon seeking single engine fighter assignment. Was offered "Counter insurgency" in Vietnam flying A-1-H "Sky Raiders" as an advisor to the Vietnamese Air Force - spent one year at Ben Hoa. Then back in the States; 1967 - got assigned as a Civil Air Patrol Liaison Officer to the Washington DC Capital unit.

After one year in the Capital, I became frustrated; too much politics involved.

Requested reassignment to Vietnam as a fighter pilot with the USAF - I was accepted **At Last!** (The replacement for my assignment in the Capital arrived) then my Vietnam assignment was cancelled. - Too many pilots were being lost on their second tour. Back to SAC and KC-135s at Pease AFB in New Hampshire.

It is sad to say I had lost my biggest fight! - **The fight to stay in FIGHTERS!**

Lt. Colonel Lee "Dutch" Eisenhart retired in November 1969. 



**Capt. Dutch  
Eisenhart Fighter  
Pilot**



**Actual size!**

## 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Lapel Pins

This polished pewter four-colored Cloisonné lapel pin is a thing of beauty! Only 7/8 of an inch in diameter it looks like a piece of fine jewelry.

The price is \$10 each plus \$2 shipping per order. They went so fast that I just ordered another batch. Just drop me a line with a check to the return address on this newsletter (back page). 

# The 339th's Last Strafing Mission!

By Stephen C. Ananian, *editor*

The members of the 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group owe German Paratrooper Hans Carl Wilhelm Gerlach and his comrade, our undying gratitude for his display of compassion and human kindness. We are indebted to them and wish to take this opportunity to thank them on behalf of the Preddy family as well as ourselves, his comrades. We thank you so very much!



Hans Carl Wilhelm  
Gerlach, Paratrooper

The 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group flew its last major strafing mission of the war on April 17<sup>th</sup> 1945. That day the Eighth Air Force destroyed 286 enemy aircraft, Our Group destroyed sixty-seven enemy aircraft on the ground and one ME 262 in the air; thus we became the Top Scorer for the day! Four planes of the 503<sup>rd</sup> FS were hit by Anti-Aircraft fire. Capt. Ray Reuter and Lt. Bill Preddy were shot down near Ceske Budejovice, Czechoslovakia by Anti-Aircraft fire, about 100 miles south of Prague, while strafing an airfield. The third aircraft hit by Anti-Aircraft fire returned safely to the UK and the damage to the fourth was insignificant.

We know of the heroic effort by a local resident to save 1/Lt. William Preddy's life. Bill Preddy, alive but mortally wounded, was carefully removed from his aircraft and taken by Jan Smejkal, a witness, in his horse-drawn cart for 5 Km to a medical aid station. Then another 10 Km. further to the nearest hospital for medical assistance (Sept. 2001 - p.8). Raymond Reuter's aircraft exploded and he was killed instantly. They are both memorialized in the Czech Republic as one of their liberators. Thanks to Joe Noah of the Preddy Memorial Foundation, I just received a letter written by the son of a German paratrooper, Hans Gerlach, who with a comrade, nursed 503<sup>rd</sup> pilot, Bill Preddy during those final moments in their attempt to save his life.

His son writes, "My father, Hans Carl Wilhelm Gerlach was born on October 11<sup>th</sup> 1923 in Hamburg, Germany's biggest harbour. He was trained in building ships, ship engines in particular, at "Blohm & Voss", one of Germany biggest shipyards. He helped build those famous German U-Boats and also worked in outfitting the Battleship "Bismarck" when it was birthed in Hamburg at the Blohm & Voss shipyard DOCK 22 before its last cruise. It seems a paradox that he had to join the Wehrmacht, as a Paratrooper and not the Navy."

"Hans Junior" tried to find out more about the US Pilot who in 1945 was also a patient where his wounded dad was being treated in the hospital at Ceske Budejovice. Finally, last month through the internet he succeeded while he was "surfing the Internet" to learn more about the P-51 War bird. "I found a Picture of a model airplane kit of Maj. George E. Preddy's plane "Cripes A Mighty" and immediately shivered! After that find, my heart hammered and

blood pumped and I searched the Internet for the name Preddy to find out more. Because George E. was a Major and I was looking for a Lieutenant Bill Preddy. Then I found the Preddy Memorial Foundation site." Hans Jr. writes, "Even the part of Bill's history of those days in April 1945 stated on the "PMF" site matched the story my dad had told me - "

"I have found the Pilot!" "You can't imagine that feeling!!!!

"The story of my father being in WW II as I knew it from childhood is as follows: - My father was a German paratrooper being part of the Wehrmacht being "reject" (deferred?) those days in 1945. My dad's units were coming from the south of Yugoslavia, from Greece where my father was stationed on Crete. After months of fighting, against the Russians and Tito's Yugoslavian guerrillas, my father was wounded near Belgrade - near a little town where the river Danube (Donau) and River Save come together."



Lt. Bill Preddy, KIA

"He was seriously injured by a Russian "Chatiousha" (rocket launcher) with shrapnel throughout his legs and ear (the shrapnel in his ear is still there!). After this hit he was lucky to be carried out of fire by comrades. The seriously wounded were just put on Trucks and transported back towards Czechoslovakia. They were transported over country roads with dust and potholes and under constant fire of Russian and US planes, to a hospital in Ceske Budejovice. Most of them didn't make it! My dad was one of the lucky guys that made it to the hospital and a chance to survive this disaster."

"The soldiers in the Ceske Budejovice Hospital were cared for by Wehrmacht medical personnel and especially catholic nurses. My father stated the nurses were very skilled and did all they could to save each and every ones life, under those circumstances. Sometimes, my father told me, the older nurses knew much more about what to do and did much better than the very young field doctors/medics of the German Wehrmacht. Very often the doctors had to watch and learn from the nurses. After weeks of suffering my dad began to do better so that he was able to get out of the bed and walk again. This was the time in April 1945 when Bill Preddy came into the hospital. (This part is something I hate to tell you but it's part of the things that happened in those days - I hope you understand what I mean)."

"My Dad told me that he stayed the whole day and most of the following night with the wounded US Pilot that unfortunately died in the early morning of that day (April 19<sup>th</sup>) because of his wounds. As I know from my dad, Bill came into their rooms the early morning (April 18<sup>th</sup>) and was cared for by the nurses - all they could under the circumstances of those days but he was just moaning and suffering from his serious internal wounds. It seemed that he never regained consciousness."

"As one nurse told my dad, the name of this Pilot was Leutnant Preddy, that he must have been smashed against the instrument panel when he crash landed and received serious internal injuries to his chest and lungs. Because of his injuries Bill had problems breathing and blood was coming from his mouth when he respired."

*Last Mission continued over*

"On the afternoon of the 18<sup>th</sup> the nurses asked around the other wounded soldiers in the ward for help caring for Bill - because they had so much work to do with all those wounded persons coming into the hospital. It seemed that even with the greatest effort of the nurses - Bill would not make it. According to my Dad, they did all they could to save his life!!!!!!!" Hans Junior tells us that his Dad, wounded himself, volunteered to help. They choose his Dad and one of his comrades to care for Bill. The two nursed him, gave him water and wiped the sweat and blood from his face. They were told if his condition worsened to call the nurses. They did this even though in fact Bill was the enemy! But he also was a soldier and a human as they were - and that made no difference."



Capt Raymond F. Reuter, KIA

"My dad and his comrade cared for Bill throughout the night, until Bill quietly died in the early morning of April 19<sup>th</sup>. As I already mentioned from my fathers knowledge, Bill never regained consciousness and as he also mentioned the nurses really did ALL they could but had no chance to save Bill's life because of his very serious wounds."

"Please accept our belated condolences for your loss."

Sincerely, Your friends in Germany, Hans Gerlach and family



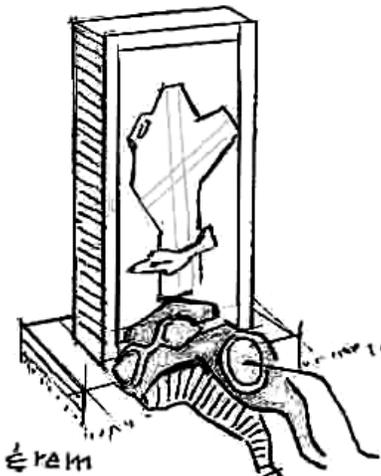
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## A Memorial Day Tribute!

(An edited excerpt from the Memorial Day program at Madingley)

In proud and grateful memory of those men of the 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group who from the friendly isles of Britain flew their final flight and met their God. They knew not the hour, the day, nor the manner of their passing. When far from home they were called to join that heroic band of airmen who had gone before.

May they rest in peace! 



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## 2006 DUES ARE DUE!

Your \$10 (tax-deductible) dues cover the cost of this newsletter.

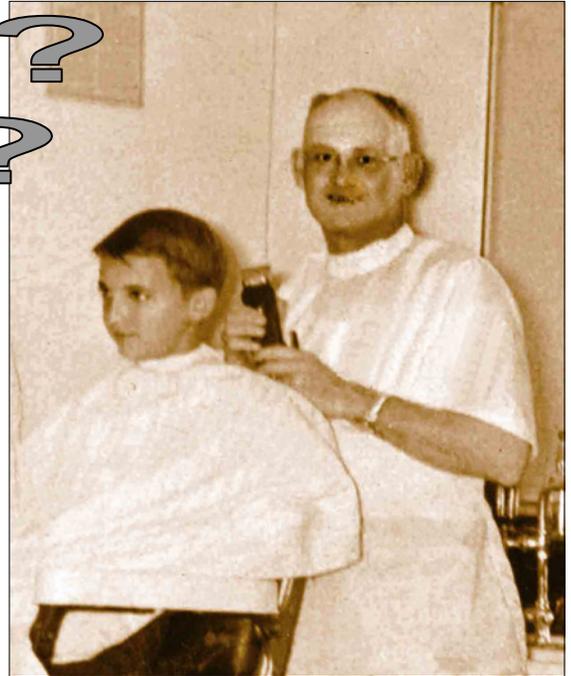
Newsletter Circulation – 467 – (430 USA, 37 Overseas)

# Haircut? Shave?



By Steve Ananian,  
Editor, Pilot, 505<sup>th</sup> FS

Our 503<sup>rd</sup> Medic, E. E. (E for Ellis) Shirey is a professional barber in civilian life. Since the conventional barber pole is symbolic of the bandage used in blood-letting, our "Medic" being a barber should surprise no one. He has been practicing his profession (cutting hair not blood-letting) in the state of Texas for seventy-one years. On August 1, 2005 he received a "Certificate of Appreciation" for holding the oldest barber license in the State.



A young man in Naples Texas gets a haircut from E.E. Shirey back in 1960!

On Monday Nov. 14, 2005 he was invited to attend the inaugural meeting of the Texas State Barber Advisory Board Meeting. Linda Connor, the presiding chair of the board, wrote "I wanted to personally invite you to attend this occasion because of your great contributions to the barber industry." (Please note it is the "Barber Advisory Board". I guess even in the Great State of Texas you can't tell a barber how to cut hair, - you can merely "advise"!)

Ellis, one of these days I'm coming to the Barber Shop in Naples Texas just to get a haircut from you! We will talk about WW II, Fowlmere, the great men of the 339<sup>th</sup> FG, British weather, Fish 'n Chips and of the days I still had hair for you to cut.

I miss the "Old Days", the shiny marble floors, the white porcelain, padded hydraulic barber chairs. The smell of "Witch Hazel", a barber pole in front of the Shop and the Shoe Shine Stand next door!

"E. E." - the barbers today may know how to cut hair, but the barber pole has gone and they just do not know how to hold a decent conversation! Most haven't even heard of Glen Miller, Artie Shaw or Benny Goodman. They know nothing of the pleasures of dancing close or the fine art of Jitterbugging! To add insult to injury, today's barbers are mostly women!

Ellis celebrated his 94<sup>th</sup> Birthday this past June. He was born on June 16, 1912.

Happy Birthday E. E!

One wonders if he is the oldest living Veteran of Fowlmere?



"Certificate of Appreciation" awarded E.E. Shirey



# Editor's Corner

## It just bothers me!

By Stephen C. Ananian, *editor, pilot 505<sup>th</sup>*



The June issue contained a true story by Roger Freeman about B-24 pilot Capt. Kenneth L. Gilbert, who was "Champion B-24 Pilot" during WW II according to that noted aviation historian.

Capt. Gilbert had flown 75 missions (three tours) and nearly 600 combat hours when he joined the 504<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron of the 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group flying fighters - Mustangs. Unfortunately he was killed in a training flight and crashed while attempting a low altitude "slow roll" over Fowlmere.

339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association member and military aviation archeologist, John Harris reminded me the other day that he had investigated that crash site and recovered among other things, the pilot's silver wings that Capt. Gilbert was wearing at the time of his death. At our Savannah Reunion John attempted to present the wings to the Eighth Air Force Museum at Pooler, Georgia. John was politely told that the museum did not have the room to properly display the wings of this bomber pilot of the Eighth Air Force that flew more bomber missions than any other airman!



Capt. Ken Gilbert, (Left Rear) and crew pose in front of their B-24 "Missouri Sue"

They had NO ROOM! This was the response from the museum that has a huge entrance wall, dedicated to a few men of the 15<sup>th</sup> Air Force - The Tuskegee Airmen! Why were they being honored? These men were never at any time a part of the Mighty Eighth! They fought in Italy! Their only Claim to Fame is an embarrassing statement from a Public Relations Officer that "They never lost a bomber!"

Do not misunderstand me. I have nothing but the utmost respect for the Tuskegee Airmen. As I do for any individual that has the skill, brains and superior physical capabilities to fly the Mustang! But the Tuskegee Airmen were not in the Eighth Air Force escorting bombers - flying 1,000-bomber missions almost daily! We lost many bombers and the men from Tuskegee would have suffered the same losses we did, - - - if they had been there!

The Museum has a room (they boast 1,500 square feet) dedicated to Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) who never flew a combat mission. Oh they looked cute - those little gals jumping off the wing of a P-47 in their perky flying suits - that was a treat that none of us men wanted to miss - but give me a break! Their deeds could not compare to this pilot's - who flew combat missions nearly every day - flying through anti-aircraft fire, attacking enemy fighters and the impossible weather of the British Isles.

Ken's first combat tour of 26 missions was completed in 29 days. That took courage, superior flying ability and heroism! He then, without a break, flew a second tour of combat flying 29 missions in 32 days. Flying over 11 to 12 hours a day, every day, in any weather, for a month! As a combat seasoned fighter pilot, it is beyond my comprehension.



Captain Kenneth L. Gilbert is congratulated by unknown officer on the completion of his tour of duty.

There should be a Capt. Kenneth L. Gilbert Memorial Hall set up at the museum with his accomplishments on display for the world to see!

We understand the politics of these museums, we are not naive. We saw the hubbub that was created in the Smithsonian on the dropping of the Atom Bomb! To distort the history and accomplishments of the members of the "Mighty Eighth" is unforgivable! Thank God we have the American Museum at Duxford. They are there to honor us year round and also on every Memorial Day. You can always count on the Brits!

John Harris finally gave the wings to Capt. Ken Gilbert's heirs who donated the wings to the VFW post in Rhode Island that bears Ken's name. The wings are displayed there in a large case with his pictures, press clippings and memorabilia for all to see!

There is no admission fee!

"Blue Skies"

*Stephen P. Anonim*



# I was just think'n - -

## About our first Sergeant

By Ron Miller, armorer, 505<sup>th</sup> FS

Joe Milla was our 505<sup>th</sup> First Sergeant - the most memorable aspect about him was his large size, his loud voice and that he seemed always bent upon the gesture to make his presence known to everyone.

Our living quarters were in the area designated as number "Five" - with Quonset huts, showers, etc. surrounding a huge dugout of brick walls and an earth mound piled to a height where occupants could remain standing and safe from - whatever. Our "air raid shelter"!

One night the Air Raid Alarm was sounded and Joe Milla went from hut to hut waking everyone, - shouting, "Everyone into the dug-out!"

I figured that if it were for real - he would worry more about his own hide instead of "howling" into each and every hut.

So I just turned over - remained in my sack soon to be again sound asleep. Come to think of it - never did hear the "All Clear."



Sweating Out A Combat Mission - by Ronald Edker Miller 6/27/44

Seems as though everyone has antiquity hurts and pains - Goes with the territory I recon. Oddly enough, we didn't worry much about it back there at Fowlmere. Nowadays it is a significant situation.

Aloha, RON



# We mourn our loss - - -

## DECEASED

**Walter T. Carter**, 503<sup>rd</sup> Pilot, Operations Officer, POW – passed away on June 14, 2006. “Nip” really hoped we could make it to the San Diego reunion since it was going to be here in California.



Walter 'Nip' Carter

Unfortunately his cancer of 20 plus years caused him to leave for “The Big Hanger” early. After the Cancer invaded his bones early this year & finally caused a rapidly growing brain tumor, he passed away rapidly and fairly peacefully at home with the wonderful assistance of Hospice Care. He was a proud military man!  
- Gail P. Carter (wife)

**Jack B. Price**, 503<sup>rd</sup> Pilot - My Dad, passed away on July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2006. “Off he goes into the wide blue yonder - - “

- Jack Price, Jr. (son)



Jack B. Price

Our condolences to all the families - - -



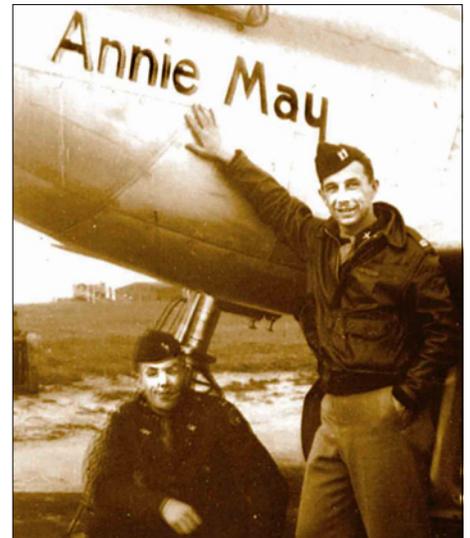
## The Mail Bag

We received this note from the niece of deceased 503<sup>rd</sup> pilot Bob Ammon.

*Dear Stephen, 4/06  
--- I found some pictures of our uncle Bob, Robert Ammon along with his plane – the “Annie May”. We assume they were taken in England and we don’t know who the other man is in the one picture.*

*Perhaps you could publish them in the next newsletter and someone might recognize who he is. We are looking forward to San Diego. My sister, Sussie & I plan to attend. Take care and we will see you all soon again.*

*Warmest regards, Louise Higbee*



Bob Ammon poses with unknown officer in front of his aircraft.

Anyone recognize the other officer with Bob?



I just received this email from a relative of Joe Wolfort, 503<sup>rd</sup> pilot, hit by AA fire, and seen to parachute safely – later reported KIA 24 May 44 (story p 5):-

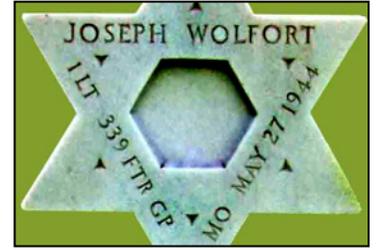
*Dear Mr. Ananian:*

8/10/2006

*I am a relative of one Joseph Wolfort, 1st Lt. 503<sup>rd</sup> who was KIA in May 1944. We have always heard stories about him, in fact my cousin named her son after him (Stephen Joseph Wolfort Morrissey, if you can spit that all out!). We have his service*

*Mail Bag continued over*

picture and that is about it. I was wondering if there was a way to find out if anyone in the 503<sup>rd</sup> remembers him and could tell me a little about him personally. Is there a way to email or broadcast this? I think it would be interesting to all our family. I have another cousin currently serving in the air guard flying F-15s. I'm sure he'd be interested as well.



Thanks for any help you could lend. Arthur G. Rosen

A photo by Peter Randall, of Joseph's grave at the Ardennes Cemetery was in our newsletter Vol. 25 #3. I added your name to our mailing list. Can anyone help??



Bill Raines, Control Tower, 505<sup>th</sup> writes: -

Hello Steve,

1 Jun 06

Many thanks again for the great 339<sup>th</sup> newsletter. I just completed reading. This past week I spent in the local Lancaster General Hospital as a result of a third mini-stroke. And that was the reason for declining to serve as 505<sup>th</sup> director. - - - My doctor advises no travel for now and no golf! The San Diego trip is uncertain at this time. I am glad you secured a fine replacement Dave Williams as director. It appears the 339<sup>th</sup> will carry on with replacements as time evolves. On the day Capt. Gilbert crashed I was watching from the tower, but never knew him or his great combat record. - - - I will miss all at the reunion. Had the good fortune to greet Bob Burns & wife as they left hotel in Tampa.

Say hello to all at the reunion in San Diego. I wear the black cap every day.

Regards Bill Raines

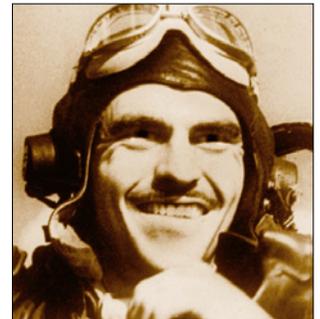
Bill – We all hope to see you in San Diego! STEVE



Joe Noah of the Preddy Memorial Foundation informs us:-

Dear Steve,

FYI, the George Preddy photo in the latest AFAA Album is of Lt. Deems Taylor, not George Preddy. The first AFAA Album had it right, but the second one got it wrong! Cheryl Dart had new stick-on photos made to correct the error, but she will send them only to owners of the Album who request them. So, please suggest owners of the Album write Cheryl Dart, Museum of Flight, 9404 East Marginal Way S, Seattle, WA 98108. or E-mail Address: [cdart@museumofflight.org](mailto:cdart@museumofflight.org)



Maj. George Preddy

Thanks, Joe NOAH Preddy Memorial Foundation

Wow! The leading Mustang Ace and they can't get it right?



## 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Caps!

This finely tailored cap with the P-51 of the 339<sup>th</sup> FG flying over the American Flag sewn on front! The same design as our lapel pins is sewn with real silver thread! A dress cap made to sell for over \$30 retail.

Beige caps are all sold out! Only a few Black Caps left!

While they last the price of \$17 includes shipping! Profits go to the 339<sup>th</sup> FGA. Just drop me a line with a check to the return address on this newsletter and tell me how many caps you want



# Roster Updates

Make the following additions or changes to your new mailing list: -

Change: -

**Donovan, W. J. Mike**, HQ – Finance Clerk,  
101 Chadwick St. Apt D2, Worcester, MA 01605-1254

**Grandy, Jr., Mrs. Rachel**, 504<sup>th</sup> -Widow of homing station operator  
76 Village Lane, Apt. #6, Groton, CT 06340

**Hammond, Sr., Charles W.**, 505<sup>th</sup> - Intelligence Officer  
615 Chestnut Ave., Rm. 207, Towson MD 21204-3779

**Manocchi, Mrs Zoe**, 504<sup>th</sup> -Widow of Fred, sheet metal repair,  
33 Wyngate Lane, Simsbury CT 05070-1020

**Saleem, Albert**, 504<sup>th</sup> - Pilot  
2 Jefferson Ave, East Islip, NY 11730

**Waters, Mrs. Barbara**, 504<sup>th</sup> -Widow of pilot,  
54 Foxcroft Run, Avon, CT 06001-2509

Add: - **Bellman, John M.**, 503<sup>rd</sup> - Son of Crew Chief Ray,  
4428 Vista Lane, Lynn Haven, FL 32444-3458

**Rosen, Arthur G.**, 503<sup>rd</sup> –relative of Joseph Wolfort pilot KIA,  
7131 Scully Road, Dexter, MI 48130



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## Donations

We thank the following members for their generous donations: -

\$25 Marjorie Guyton, \$100 Roland W. Smith Sr., \$30 Patricia Patrick, \$60 Jack B. Price, \$50 William J. Raines, \$20 Robert O'Brien, \$20 Anders Billing, \$50 Gary Weinhold, \$20 Edith M. Brown, \$40 Richard Sawicki, \$40 Patricia Solley, \$28 Richard Rohm, \$15 Con Hatfield, \$60 Rex Poutre, \$106 Bert Admire, \$25 Apgar Omartian, \$30 John C. Withers, \$80 E.E. Shirey, \$50 J. Andrew Mankie, \$40 Don Mankie, \$310 John Bellman, \$70 Connie Little, \$100 Robert Paul, \$30 Aram Hazirjian, \$75 Lee Eisenhart,



### 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association Board of Directors

**John B. Henry**, Commander and HQ Director,

**Thomas G. Sams**, President – **Lawrence J. Powell**, Vice President & Reunion Coordinator – **Richard G. Thieme**, Treasurer – **Chester Malarz, James R. Starnes**,

Permanent Members – **Charles Steffen**, 8th AFHS Unit Coordinator –

**Warren L. Olsen**, Ordnance Director – **Luther Francis**, 503rd Director –

**William Clark, Jr.**, 504<sup>th</sup> Director – **David Williams**, 505<sup>th</sup> Director –

**Joyce Eiswald**, Hospitality Room Coordinator

**Stephen C. Ananian**, Secretary and Editor- **Phone** (864) 288-2599

**Email:** - stephen.ananian@mindspring.com

# San Diego Awaits the 339<sup>th</sup>!



The Navy Blue Angels

Next month – Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup>

See June issue for complete details!

By Lawrence J. Powell, *reunion chairman*

If you haven't made your reservations please do so now! Call the **Red Lion Hanalei Hotel in San Diego**, 2270 Hotel Circle North, San Diego, CA 92108 at toll free 1-800-882-0858. The price for 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group members is \$101 per night plus tax. Take Taxi or "Cloud 9 shuttle" at a cost of \$11.50 per person each way from airport. For two or more Taxi service is probably cheaper! See June issue for complete details! Those with cars, hotel parking is \$1 a day! A reminder - for Airline travel or the Air Show be certain to have photo IDs, driver licenses or military IDs, also - remember your binoculars!

**Hotel Registration Deadline is September 21** - but do not depend on it! I suggest you make your reservations now lest you be left out! Remember, San Diego is a military town and we will be there during "Fleet Week". Hotels are jammed with all sorts of events! 

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## Reunion Tentative Schedule of Events

**Oct. 12<sup>th</sup> Thursday** All Units will Host Bar!

**12:00noon** – Registration at 339<sup>th</sup> Hospitality Room

**5:00pm – 6:00pm** Welcome meeting – Then on to the "Hospitality Room"

**Oct. 13<sup>th</sup> Friday** 505<sup>th</sup> will Host Bar!

**8:00am – 9:00am** - Board of Director's Meeting

**9:30am – 10:00am** - General Membership meeting

**11:30am – 6:00pm** – Miramar Air show with the Navy Blue Angels Stunt Flying Team.

**7:30pm** – Unit Dinners for 503<sup>rd</sup> & 504<sup>th</sup> at this Hotel! HQ, ORD & GRP are invited to join 504<sup>th</sup> Socialize and refreshments at "Hospitality Room "

**Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> Saturday** 504<sup>th</sup> will Host Bar!

**8:30am 1:00pm** – San Diego City Tour.

**7:30pm** – 505<sup>th</sup> Unit Dinner at this Hotel! Socialize and refreshments at "Hospitality Room"

**Oct. 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday** 503<sup>rd</sup> will Host Bar!

**Free** schedule All Day to socialize or whatever.

**6:00pm** - Cash Bar - followed by

**7:00pm** - **Banquet Dinner** - After dinner socialize at "Hospitality Room"

**Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> Monday**

**6:30am – 9:30am** - Farewell Breakfast Buffet

**12:00noon** Checkout. We say farewell - **"SEE YOU NEXT YEAR"** 

## The 339<sup>th</sup> Reunion Registration Form

Please fill in your Name

First \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_ Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Number attending \_\_\_\_\_

Please list additional guest names separately for Name Tags.

			<u>Number</u>	<u>Amount</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Registration Fee	\$15	each	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> San Diego City Tour	\$30	each	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Blue Angels Performance	\$55	each	_____	_____

### Sunday Night Banquet Dinner

<input type="checkbox"/> Fish	\$40	each	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Beef	\$40	each	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Chicken	\$40	each	_____	_____

### Monday Morning Farewell Breakfast

<input type="checkbox"/> Farewell Breakfast	\$22	each	_____	_____
---	------	------	-------	-------

Total \_\_\_\_\_

Make your checks payable to **the 339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association**

And mail with this completed form (or photo copy) to: -

**Richard G. Thieme**, Treasurer, 2732 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Sheboygan, WI 53081-6802

**Phone:** (920) 452-4780



## Unit Directors

**503<sup>rd</sup> Unit Dinner** - Fill out unit form below and mail with \$45 check made payable to: -

**Luther Francis**, 503<sup>rd</sup> Director, 29 Hillview Road, Gorham, ME 04038 **Phone:** (207)-839-8744

**504<sup>th</sup>, HQ & ORD Unit Dinners** - This year our CO, HQ & ORD are invited to join the 504<sup>th</sup> Unit Dinner. Fill out unit form below and mail with \$45 check made payable to: -

**William Clark, Jr.**, 504<sup>th</sup> Director, 109 Sherwood Oaks Dr., Waco, TX 76705-

**Phone:** (570) 689-4090

**505<sup>th</sup> Unit Dinner** - Fill out the form below and mail with \$45 check made payable to: -

**Dave Williams**, 505<sup>th</sup> Director, 301 Cheshire Drive # 47, Knoxville, TN 37919-5843

**Phone:** Work: 865-574-5769 - Home: 865-588-2074.



## Unit Dinners

First \_\_\_\_\_ Last \_\_\_\_\_ Unit \_\_\_\_\_ Number attending \_\_\_\_\_

(NAME above)

Number

Amount

Indicate number of each  Chicken \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$45 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Beef \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$45 per person \$ \_\_\_\_\_

TOTAL \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail this coupon (or photo copy) with checks to the appropriate unit directors listed above.



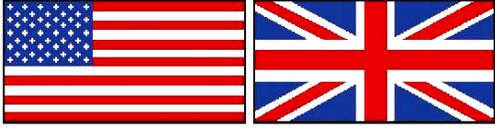
September 1, 2006

**339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, Inc.**

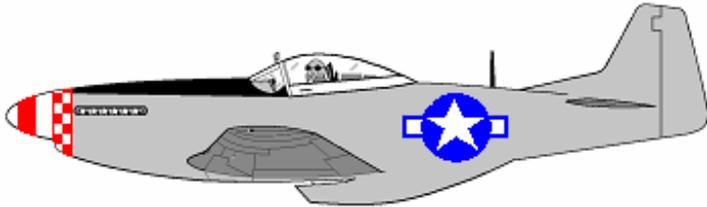
C/o Stephen C. Ananian  
4 North Orchard Farms Avenue  
Simpsonville, SC 29681-4866, USA



US  
POSTAGE



ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED



To: -

Clip here

✂ ----- MAILING LIST UPDATE FORM -----

Check your name and address on the mailing label. Make certain it is correct. If not, fill out this form and mail to the address below. If you wish to pay dues you may also use this form.

- Please accept my donation of \$10 for my dues for the 339<sup>th</sup> FGA. (Tax Exempt)
- Please add my name to the mailing list.
- Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ 339<sup>th</sup> Lapel Pins @ \$10 each plus \$2 additional for shipping  
(Number)
- Please send me \_\_\_\_\_ Caps @ \$17 each – includes shipping charges!  
(Number)
- Please mail me the 2006 Membership Roster (Mailing addresses).

**339<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group Association, Inc.**

C/o S. C. Ananian  
4 North Orchard Farms Ave.,  
Simpsonville, SC 29681-4866, USA

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

First Middle Last

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (if you wish) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_