339th FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION

STATION
F378
FOWLMERE
ENGLAND

NEWSLETTER

Volume 6, No. 4 December 1986 Editor: Jim Starnes

Our "Sentimental Journey" to England is now history. We had 114 stateside participants in addition to numerous British friends in attendance. In fact, we easily outnumbered large bomb group associations who made a similar trip this year in the face of phony media hoopla discouraging overseas travel. For many of us this was one last look at Fowlmere where we served with distinction during World War II.

This time, however, we did not relive the hardships, the long work hours in miserable weather or the tangible combat results of our missions over the continent, although we saw a sample of the terrible price paid for those results at the Cambridge American Military Cemetery. This time we enjoyed incredibly beautiful fall weather and an outpouring of hospitality from hundreds of British hosts who received us as though we were visiting royalty. For example, on arrival we were met by Col Hector Lewis, public relations officer for the Douglas Bader Wing, Confederate Air Force. He welcomed us and offered to assist in any way possible during our stay in England. Then in the University Arms Hotel lobby that first afternoon a British gentleman came over to some 339ers in bright red caps and said "I am checking out of the hotel but wanted you to know we remember and appreciate the job you did over here during the war." One of our British friends who overheard the remark said that was a most unusual thing for a stranger to do in England. However, it was only another example of the way we were welcomed and received during that fabulous week. We had newspaper items published before and during our visit, radio interviews broadcast and video tapes of the Fowlmere visits were made. You might say that the 339th Fighter Group was BIG NEWS in the Cambridge area that week.

In the photo coverage you will see some of our regular British 339th friends as well as other "Friends of the Eighth" who came out to support our activities. Association President Bill Bryan arranged for General John B. Henry to make a short speech nearly everywhere we went. At the beginning of one speech John remarked that he really didn't need the notes in his hand but that Jim Starnes has a poor memory and required him to write it all down. True, but he may have needed a reminder as to which speech was due at that particular place. All speakers kept it short this time and the schedule was maintained.

Perhaps the easiest way to report this reunion is to stay with the chronology of the trip. Our first afternoon, 19 Sep 86, was free to allow for naps in case of "jet lag", but a meeting was held that evening. After Bill Bryan's opening remarks and a few bars of the song "Sentimental Journey" from his tape recorder, original group commander John B. Henry spoke the following words of welcome: "It is my great pleasure to extend a warm welcome to each of you who has come to this year's reunion of the 339th Fighter Group Association. It is indeed gratifying to see so many make the lengthy trip to England for this very special and meaningful get-together. Not only will we spend time reminiscing with friends

and associates here on the ground where our wartime service took place, but we will also dedicate a monument on the site of the former Fowlmere airfield that will reflect our group's contribution to the war effort and forever serve as a memorial to the men and women of the 339th Fighter group and its supporting units.

I am sure that this will be an exciting time for you as you visit Fowlmere, gaze over the landscape and attempt to reconstruct the air base in your mind -- mentally locating your work place, your hard stand, your operations building, your barracks site -- and having done so, relive some of your accomplishments, trials and emotions of those trying times. As you relive those days you will realize that while you worked and fought in your selfless and dedicated manner you established a mutual respect and a friendship bond that was cast more in cement that you realized at the time. There was a mutual sharing of the daily sacrifice, hardship and uncertainty, and a reliance upon each other that established an extraordinary kinship. Usually such feelings are deeply instilled in people who have shared a grim experience like the one you endured while carrying out your part in man's most desperate fight against tyranny.

It is those sentiments that we hope to recapture by coming back to walk on the very ground where we experienced the most memorable and meaningful episode in our lives. Not only will we relive those experiences with those comrades who are present, but as we survey the site we will undoubtedly visualize the faces and forms of many who could not be here. During the years since the war each of us has longed to return to see the old air base site -- and several have done so in years past. Now others of us have made this "Sentimental Journey." May it be a happy time of reflection for you as you remember how it was. I am sure that after having done so you will go home with a feeling of warmth and gladness in your hearts.

Again a cordial welcome to each of you and many thanks for coming all this way. May your entire visit to England be a most pleasant one. I look forward to seeing more of you during the next few days as we enjoy the outstanding program that our hard-working planners such as Bill Bryan, Chet Malarz, Betty Wyatt and Jim Starnes have arranged. I'd also like to make special mention of Hervey Stockman who was the designer and architect of the fine monument that we will dedicate at Fowlmere tomorrow. I'm sure that all of us will enjoy the fruits of their dedication and labor. Thank you."

John B. Henry's speech was followed by one by our second group commander, Bill Clark. Bill recalled the contrast in our reunion weather with that we endured during the war, often requiring the assistance of our homing station operators, "Gaspump", to find Fowlmere after those missions in poor weather. He said he still marvels at the ability of our P-51s to hold together after maximum performance combat operations and occasional battle damage -- and bring us home to Fowlmere. Bill assured us that this will be one outstanding reunion and "Sentimental Journey" for everyone.

Saturday 20 Sep 86 was our big day at Fowlmere. We went by bus to Martin Sheldrick's Manor Farm, site of the 339th monument, for the dedication ceremony. Our British friends had arranged for an Air Force honor guard and band to participate in the ceremony. We were met by over a hundred local residents to observe the dedication. British air historian Alister Raby made some appropriate remarks and all unit commanders in attendance also made short speeches. The honor of unveiling the memorial plaque went to Hervey and Sally Stockman, our project officer for design and manufacture of the memorial. The two by three foot bronze plaque was mounted on polished granite by the Cambridge stone mason firm of Hibbitt & Son, and stands where a portion of the concrete taxiway remains. For those who do not have the earlier newsletter showing a large plaque photo, it reads as follows: (Above the airfield outline) "The 339th Ftr Grp 8th A.F. from April 1944 until October 1945 flew off the grass of Manor Farm to join our Allies in victory over Hitler's forces in Europe. To the American men and women of this unit the village of Fowlmere gave the hospitality and support that made of those trying times a fond memory. Here was our haven in that war." (Inside airfield outline) "This plaque is dedicated to all who served in the 339th Fighter Group and its supporting units and to their tireless providing of Mustang sorties launched from here in the Allied cause of freedom. God bless all who knew those times and this place 339th Ftr Grp Assn 1985"

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Dedication speaker Bruce Gravette

Dedication speaker Joe Thury

Dedication speaker John B. Henry

CAMBRIDGE EVENING NEWS, Monday, September 22, 1986

Reunion after 41 years for the Mustang aces

AMERICAN fighter aces met again for the first time in over forty years in a nostalgic trip to Fowlmere.

The men, who flew with the 339th Fighter Group of the US 8th Air Force, were based at the village during the last year of the Second World War.

For many, this was the first time they had been back to the area since they left in 1945.

They came to see the dedication of a memorial, on the site of the old taxiway — now Manor Farm, by the group's wartime chaplain, Dr Henry Opperman.

Eighty-year-old Dr Opperman flew from his home in Ontario, Canada to attend the ceremony.

Also there was the group's former commanding officer, Major General John Henry, 70, from San Antonio, Texas.

Maj-Gen Henry, who brought his wife Maxine on the trip, said: "It's very nostalgic.

"It was always my plan to come back to Fowlmere one day and now that I have I am very happy. This is a special day for all of us."

The war veterans also paid a visit to Fowlmere Primary School, where they donated £2,000 to build a new classroom as a practical reminder of their stay.

Henry and Sally Stockman unveil the memorial at Manor Farm, Fowlmere.

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Alister Raby, Martin Sheldrick, John B. Henry, Bill Bryan

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Memorial Dedication Speech By John B. Henry

Mr. Sheldrick, Mr. Raby, Distinguished Guests and Esteemed Members of the 339th Fighter Group Association: I consider it a distinct privilege to participate in this momentous ceremony in which we dedicate this plaque to all those devoted men and women of the 339th Fighter Group and its support units who served here during history's grizzliest war. My words this morning flow from a deep feeling of nostalgia. This sojurn here to the site of our former air base at Fowlmere is truly a Sentimental Journey as our illustrious Association President, General William Bryan, has so aptly labeled it.

This air station at Fowlmere, designated Air Station 378, has an illustrious history. It made a contribution to its country's service in two wars. During World War I it served as a flying field for the Royal Air Force. At the end of hostilities in that conflict it was returned to civil use. In the second World War it was used as a satellite of Duxford Royal Air Force Station and was occupied in 1940 by No. 19 Squadron of the Royal Air Force equipped with Spitfires. In the winter of 1943-44 it was expanded to accommodate a complete USAAF fighter group. There were two runways -- one was 4800 and the other 4200 feet in length. There was an encircling perimeter track which served as taxiway and access route to 64 aircraft hardstands and the operational areas of the three combat squadrons. The quarters and messing facilities were built to handle 1700 people. On April 5, 1944, the 339th Fighter Group equipped with Mustangs took up residence and became operational within three weeks. During its tenure of operations the group with the help of its fine support units covered itself with glory and distinction in combat,destroying 680 enemy aircraft in one year and reaping an impressive harvest of trains, tanks, trucks, airfield facilities and ammunition dumps. The group left Fowlmere in October 1945 and in 1957 most of the land was sold to farmers who have transformed it into the eye-appealing place you see here today.

The air base that stood on this land was our haven. Its placid setting -- its scenic beauty provided a friendly, soothing environment that is likened to the security and comfort of home. It WAS our home! We were blessed to have it as our refuge during those tumultuous and uncertain times. To be here and see it once more -- to scan the former air base from boundary to boundary and recall all that it meant to us -- raises an emotion of sentimentality that is overwhelming. Today we cannot fly from its green turf -- there is no aerodrome -- there are no aircraft to fly, no war to fight. We can only look, recall and enjoy our memories and nostalgia.

From this air base brave men of the 339th Fighter Group -- willing to risk their lives in defense of our nations -- rose to meet and conquer the enemy wherever he could be found, in the air or on land. In the pursuit of that cause their heroic accomplishments and the dedicated, tireless and unfailing efforts of those men and women on the ground who supported them were an inspirational and shining symbol to present and future generations. The radiant glow of their torch can never be extinguished. So much could be said about the joy and the sorrow, but today we say to all who served -- a salute in grateful tribute.

Our arrival here in April 1944 to join our British ally in the fight against our common enemy gave us great satisfaction. We felt good about doing our part to win that brutal war against tyranny. We were and are still grateful to those valiant British airmen who flew from this and other aerodromes during the Battle of Britain to fiercely engage the formidable Luftwaffe. Their brilliant successes in the face of overwhelming odds made it possible for us to operate from a base here in England. Their glorious and incredible story is well known and admired by all of us. Today we would pay a special tribute to those men of the Royal Air Force and of the 339th Fighter Group -- men of devotion and awe-inspiring courage who unflinchingly faced the uncertainties of war without regard for their own safety and paid the supreme price. Their sacrifice gave all of us a life of freedom which they never had a chance to live. We shall never take their gift lightly. We shall remember them always with our deepest pride and gratitude.

It is so pleasing to see this beautiful farm land returned to its original purpose -- that of serving the peaceful needs of mankind rather than serving as an instrument of war and destruction. Its restoration has preserved and enhanced the beauty and charms

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of this delightful English countryside and its historic significance. Let us hope that peace never fails so that this fascinating landscape and others like it will not have to be used in war again, ever.

In closing I wish to express on behalf of all members of the 339th Fighter Group Association our sincerest and deepest appreciation and thanks to Mr. Martin Sheldrick, the owner of this beautiful land, for his enduring patience, untiring efforts, gracious cooperation and generous approval which made this day and this ceremony possible.

Rita & Eddie Epp John Wasser

Herman Mondschein Ray Creswell Lee Eisenhart

Jim Starnes Jerry Graham Gabe Cutri

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From the Memorial Monument we proceeded to the Chequers Pub for a "sample" of their fine beverages and to present a few 339th mementos to the manager for display. The large sign above the Chequers entrance is a blue and white checkerboard on one side with the words "19 SQUADRON -- Spitfires 1940." On the other side is a red and white checkerboard with the words "339 FIGHTER GROUP 1944 Mustangs." On the right interior wall behind glass is a display of World War II photos of 339th personnel. Since the size of our group exceeded the interior capacity, we moved into the lovely garden outside the rear entrance. There a brief ceremony was held as John B. Henry made the presentation to Norman Rushton, the Chequers manager. Here is the text of that speech:

As base commander during the war I was not helpful to the proprietor of the Chequers or others like it. I was more concerned with our war effort each day, and pubs were a potential source of trouble. Our men sometimes overimbibed and got into disagreements with each other or offended some of our hosts over here. But all that is changed now that the Chequers has become headquarters for the 339th Fighter Group in England. In Texas we would call it our favorite watering hole. We are most happy to be here today to dedicate a few items of 339th memorabelia for display: a Tankard, a Calligraphy and a color photo.

Some of you may not know how the Eighth Air Force Tankard with my name engraved on it ended up at the Chequers. It was ordered from the 8th Air Force P.X. in Florida for presentation to me at the end of our John B. Henry Roast Program -- a part of our Oct 83 reunion in Houston, TX. The order on our 339th stationery was sent to the tankard firm in England. After it was engraved with my name, the manufacturer sent it to Fowlmere instead of the return address shown on the order. Upon its arrival Martin Sheldrick took possession of the tankard and wrote asking what should be done with it.

By this time the Houston reunion was over, and we decided to let the tankard remain on display at the Chequers. Also at that reunion former 339th unit commanders signed the calligraphy on display and it was mailed to Martin Sheldrick for the Chequers. Some may not be able to read it from a distance, so here is the message: "Whereas, the 339th Fighter group operated from Fowlmere Airfield during World War II and Whereas, the Chequers Pub provided important recreational and logistic support for our personnel during that period, Therefore, the 339th Fighter Group Association hereby expresses appreciation for vital services rendered by the Chequers Pub of Fowlmere, England, in 1944-1945."

The wartime photos on display inside were obtained from other sources, but I have another photo which we would like to add to your collection. It is a color print from a kodachrome slide showing part of the 504th Fighter Squadron flight line during early 1945. On behalf of the 339th Fighter Group Association I would like to thank the Chequers Pub for its longstanding support of our personnel and for perpetuating the memory of our service in Fowlmere during World War II.

Herman Mondschein John B. Henry Norman Rushton Mary Graham

John B. Henry Norman Rushton

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Phyllis & Frank Guernsey Bruce & Chris Gravette Bill Clark Jimmy Pappas Bill Clark Jr.

Our next stop was the delightful buffet lunch as honored guests of the Fowlmere Primary School P.T.A. prior to dedicating the school's new conservation garden. The number of parents, teachers and school children on hand for the lunch and dedication was remarkably large -- and their hospitality was of similar magnitude. There was no way that we could have expected such a cordial reception when you consider that most of the parents were born years after our service at Fowlmere. This heart-warming scene was our best chance to get acquainted with local area citizens.

After lunch we visited the schoolyard area where the conservation garden had been prepared using the 339th Memorial Fund grant of £2000. It had been neatly landscaped with flowers and a vegetable garden area. Among the purchases were a tool shed, greenhouse, brass sun dial and a weathervane which used a P-51 silhouette to show wind direction. That Mustang had 339th markings and the designation D7 A on the fuselage. Bill Clark made the dedication speech for us and the stainless steel plaque shown at right was unveiled. Mr. Ben Palmer, Chairman of Governors for the school, and Miss Deery, school principal, thanked the group for the funding of this most welcome addition to the school grounds. After the ceremony we talked to several local citizens. Leon and Mildred Corbin (504) asked several young mothers how they felt about the 339th group being there, the dedication of the airfield memorial monument and the school plaque. Mildred wrote "All were friendly and pleased. One lady to whom I had not spoken turned to me and said 'Let me tell you how I feel. I was a German Jew. My two brothers and father were killed in the war. My two sons (who looked to be around eight years old) will no longer have to be ashamed. Now they can know who they are.' Pointing to the plaque, she said "Because of this they can hold up their heads and be proud.'"

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Photos of Fowlmere School and newly landscaped garden area, including the weather vane in right center photo.

A fine 4" by 6" color photo of our air field monument is available for sale at the Fowlmere Post Office across the street from the school. We bought the entire stock and ordered a few more which were mailed to us in the states using Royal Air Force commemorative stamps.

From the school we returned to the air field site by bus and World War II G.I. vehicles shown in upper left photo. We were favored by a group of British enthusiasts for old G.I. vehicles who even wore authentic U.S. Army uniforms of that period. The owners gave us rides to various locations on the former base. We are grateful to John Mills and his colleagues for adding

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this touch of nostalgia. John Mills is shown wearing a first sergeant's uniform, whereas his wife wears an army nurse uniform. We were also treated by Martin Sheldrick to a hay ride on a long flat bed trailer towed by a tractor which took many of us around a portion of the old perimeter track and down the specially plowed long runway.

While at the airfield site a Rolls Royce aircraft engine representative, Herbert Watson, contacted me and said that some years after the war he saw the wreckage of a 339th P-51 which had made a belly landing 30 miles northwest of Hannover, Germany. He wrote down the designation "6N I" and serial number 44-14731 and asked if we could find out the circumstances for its being there. Review of our Missing Aircrew Reports revealed that it was left there by Larry Powell (505) on 14 Jan 45. Larry's exciting account of his experiences after hitting power lines while strafing a locomotive was printed in our Jun 82 newsletter. The account was duplicated and sent to Herbert Watson. He responded with a nice letter and photo taken at Fowlmere on 20 Sep 86 of me with David Lee, deputy director of the Duxford Aviation Museum. These two gentlemen are particularly interested in the wartime history of the Eighth Air Force.

At the University Arms Hotel that evening we held a short business meeting at which two important decisions were made. Although 1986 was an election year, members in attendance voted unanimously to retain the existing officers and directors for another year. It was felt that some units had too small representation for making such an important decision on leaders for the coming two years. It is a big "PLUS" for our association to have General Bill Bryan as president for another year. He has worked long and effectively to enhance the quality and content of our annual reunions, achieving results which would have otherwise been missed. We are grateful for his willingness to serve another year at the helm. Attendees also voted to hold the next reunion in a western state during September 1987. Chet Malarz accepted the job of reunion chairman to find a suitable place and negotiate our hotel requirements. We thank Chet for agreeing to work hard on another big reunion.

Several people announced that they plan to make every annual 339th reunion as long as their health permits. On that score we should note that some loyal supporters had to cancel their England reservations because of health problems. Ridge O'Sullivan (504) had a serious heart attack one week before the reunion. He especially regretted missing this one because of plans to go from England to Paris to visit Lucien Bolle, the French labor conscript who saved his life in a German hospital after Ridge was shot down on 19 May 44. This was also covered in Ridge's outstanding POW article "Das Ist Krieg" in our Mar 83 newsletter. Ridge is recovering nicely and hopes to make our next reunion. Others whose health required them to cancel out are Primo Zambardo (503) and Irv Shiner (HQ).

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The Sunday 21 Sep 86 trip to Duxford Aviation Museum (Imperial War Museum) was a great success. Of special interest were the aircraft and the historical writeups in the Eighth Air Force Hangar. During this visit several 339ers were interviewed for a local radio station broadcast that evening. The interviewer proudly pointed out that the Dusford P-51 had seven "Swastikas" on it and asked Bill Bryan how many were on his Mustang. Bill said "Eight" and the subject was changed. Our return to the hotel was delayed so we could see an acrobatic air show by the pilot of that Duxford P-51.

L-R Col Bill Clark with Generals Enoch Stephenson, John B. Henry, Bill Bryan and Dale Shafer.

L-R Maintenance chief John Franz, crew chief Gabe Cutri, crew chief Herman Sahl and flight chief Miller Hartman.

L-R Danny Morris, Gabe Cutri, Irene Chetneky, Betty Wyatt, Bruce Gravette, Chris Gravette, Jim Starnes, Herman Sahl and Bill Hurley.

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At the Churchill Suite in the University Arms Hotel that evening we enjoyed an excellent slide and movie program by Steve Gotts of the "Friends of the Eighth." It included an interesting account of bandleader Major Glenn Miller's service in England and his tragic loss in Dec 44 aboard a UC-64 Norseman enroute to Paris in bad weather. We thank Steve Gotts for his efforts to make our reunion in England such a success.

On 22 Sep we visited the beautifully maintained Cambridge American Military Cemetery to pay our respects to our fallen comrades. We were met by Superintendent Roland Prieur who provided a handout showing the location of 339th graves (which were marked by flags) and 339ers on the Wall of the Missing (bodies not recovered.) Through the Commander, Third Air Force, Bill Bryan had obtained an honor guard, a bugler to play "TAPS" and a flyover of two RF-4 Phantom jets during our memorial ceremonies. Each unit commander made a short speech, and group chaplain Dr. Henry Opperman made the following prayer: "Dear God, we stand here in this cemetery in which a number of our companions are buried -- young men who gave of themselves in World War II, as a sacrifice to eliminate the evils of oppression, hatred, despotism and tyranny. We honor them and remember them as companions -- their joy of life, their confidence, their laughter and their service. Now they are in your care -- in one of the mansions which you have prepared for them and for us. Life for them is in your heavenly home. For as you have said, 'He that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.' Amen"

John B. Henry's remarks at the cemetery: "It is a distinct honor to participate in this reverent ceremony in which we memorialize those of our group who gave their lives in the service of their country. We are indeed fortunate to have served with these brave men to whom we pay tribute today. Each was imbued with a strong sense of devotion and patriotism, and motivated by the belief that he was fighting on the side of right, justice and for the cause of human dignity.

The magnitude of their gift has no bounds by which it can be measured. They did not face death with the thought of being remembered in sadness or being accorded honors such as we convey today. They died to achieve a victory that has given us -- their fellow men -- a life of freedom which we should forever cherish and celebrate with deepest gratitude.

The purpose of this ceremony and the many others like it is to insure that these patriotic men of such great courage and their deeds are not forgotten. We regret their loss and are sadened because their young lives were cut so short. Those of us who are their beneficiaries should resolve unto ourselves to do all that we can to influence the course of affairs within our nation and carry on their fight so that the life of each of these brave men was not lost for naught. May we always remember their sacrifice and may those of us who live on come often to express the enormous pride and undying gratitude which we hold for them. May their souls be resting in peace with the Lord."

Jack Hild makes cemetery remarks

Dr. Opperman and Bill Jones place wreath

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Martin Sheldrick had obtained for us the wreath shown on the preceding page being placed at the central monument by our two 80 year old attendees, Chaplain Opperman and armament supervisor Bill Jones(505). After the ceremony we visited various cemetery facilities. With the kind assistance of Superintendent Prieur we determined the following 339th pilots known to have been missing in action were actually killed in action: James A. Baker (505), Charles W. Dowell (HQ), Anthony G. Hawkins (503), Waldon E. Howard (505), Raymond D. Mayer (503), Evergard L. Wager (505) and Joseph Wolfort (503). These names are in addition to the 62 names listed when we placed the memorial plaque at the Air Force Academy in Jul 84. There are perhaps another six or more who may have been killed in action whose status is unknown. When the number of pilots killed in England in training accidents is added to the known total of 69 Killed In Action, it is equal to the authorized pilot strength of the 339th when we deployed to England early in Apr 44. One can see that the 339th paid a terrible price for its participation in the war in Europe.

Wall of the Missing

Mary Williams & Jim Starnes

Named on the Wall of the Missing are the following pilots: Robert W. Bloxham, James L. Lynch, Gordon F. Perry and Russell W. Wilcox, all 505th. Buried in the cemetery are Elton J. Brownshadel (504), Allan F. Crump (503), Tom N. Jessup (505) and Arthur E. Tongue (505). Other 339ers buried there during the war were returned to the states at the request of relatives. Photo at right shows interior of Cemetery chapel with its beautiful mosaic tile domed ceiling above the altar.

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After an afternoon free for sight-seeing and shopping, we met that evening for our annual banquet, the final highlight of our visit to Cambridge. Bill Bryan described the banquet program as "Potpourri" -- a miscellaneous collection of activities rather than a single theme. After a few bars of "Sentimental Journey" on his tape recorder, Bill asked Chaplain Opperman to set the stage with a prayer. Dr. Opperman: "Heavenly Father, it is with gratitude in our hearts that we gather here to give thanks for the memories that are ours -- memories of the days we served our country -- memories of the comrades with whom we flew -- memories of the pleasant associations that were ours in the 339th Fighter Group, and the relationships that still bring us into reunions such as this. We deeply pay tribute to those of our comrades who no longer are with us, but whose personalities will always remain in our hearts. So, Gracious Lord, we invoke your blessing upon us -- upon the memorial plaque we have dedicated at Fowlmere, and upon our gift to the school. May your grace continue to be a reality in our lives as it has been in the past. Grant us your love and may it please you to be present with us and bless this fellowship. Amen."

Next item on the agenda was display of three P-51 models with 339th markings and accurate serial numbers by British model builder Bill Andrews, who prepared them from photos provided by air historian Danny Morris. Bill is shown with the models given to armorer Ken Willard (504) and pilots Dutch Eisenhart (504) and Jim Starnes (505).

We then presented a token of appreciation to three British friends -- Danny Morris, Alister Raby and Martin Sheldrick -- who have done so much in recent years to support our association. Each received a ceramic plate showing a P-51 with 339th colors, a limited edition production from a painting by Canadian artist Ross Tylor. The D7 B markings identify it as the aircraft of Enoch Stephenson (503) and later Luther Francis (503). The engraved display stand above reads "MARTIN F. SHELDRICK IN GRATEFUL APPRECIATION 339th FIGHTER GROUP ASSOCIATION 1986." (A few of these plates are available through "Plates 'N Planes". Contact me if interested.)

We then presented "Certificates of Appreciation" to those support personnel attending their first reunion. These were handed out by unit commanders to crew chiefs Al Hermanson (505) and Evan Mondl (504), chaplain Dr. Henry Opperman (HQ), homing station operator John Wasser (503) and armorer Gary Weinhold (504). That was followed by presenting certificates of appreciation to eleven 339th ladies attending their first reunion.

Several short speeches were made, including one by a real "pro", distinguished air historian and author (The Mighty Eighth, Mighty Eighth War Manual,US Strategic Bomber, Mustang at War)

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Roger Freeman. Shown seated at the head table during Roger's speech are (L-R) Lois and Martin Sheldrick, Ollie Bryan and John and Maxine Henry. Printed below is the final speech of the evening by -- you guessed it -- John B. Henry,

This evening we put finishing touches on three glorious days in Fowlmere and Cambridge. The day at Fowlmere was a red letter, banner day which will be remembered and cherished for the rest of our lives. I am sure that the events of that day left you with the same feeling of joy and warmth in your hearts that I have in mine. Your attendance in such significant numbers gave to our dedications at Fowlmere Saturday the fitting tribute, the reverence and dignity that they deserved. The same can be said for the esteemed citizens of Fowlmere who showed their appreciation in so many ways. We shall be eternally grateful to them and we shall not forget their outpouring of friendship and hospitality.

And now, on behalf of all members of the 339th Fighter Group Association I wish to take this, our last opportunity, to thank Mr. Martin Sheldrick and Mr. Alister Raby for all that they have done for us. Our debt to them is as boundless as was their response to and fulfillment of our every request and need. Never will we be able to repay you in kind -- but I assure you that you will forever be held in our highest esteem, admiration and gratitude. Through the memorial monument that you helped establish on the Sheldrick Manor Farm, we will always feel a bond.

In closing I wish to thank Mr. Roland Prieur for the warm reception and the excellent arrangements for our Memorial Service at Cambridge American Military Cemetery this morning. The beauty of the grounds and the chapel are awe-inspiring. We were most favorably impressed with your cordiality and the outstanding job you are doing as superintendent. Thank all of you for being here and I want to extend a special thanks to you ladies for coming along with your husbands to participate in the dedication and this reunion. Not only do you add charm and beauty but your support is keenly felt. Without further ado, LET'S DANCE!

The evening concluded with dancing to a band playing our kind of music, and we had some fine dancing couples like Evan and Vera Mondl, John and Frances Wasser. Others watched a video tape of the Fowlmere memorial dedication.

On Tuesday 23 Sep we visited the famous air museum at Hendon near London where our bunper sticker was added to the unit insignia display at the Hendon Snack Bar. This was another interesting part of our remarkable reunion program. Upon arrival at our 25 story Forum Hotel in London the group's scheduled activities ceased, and we became tourists enjoying the big city just like thousands of others. It was not an unusual sight to see bright red 339th caps around Piccadilly, Westminster Abbey or Buckingham Palace. Many of us took bus tours and enjoyed theater performances such as the musical "Cats." Attending a "Cats" performance was Anna Tower, who cama all the way from Hawaii to join in our reunion. After the London visit some visited Scotland and the continent. Andy Sirochman took a hovercraft across the English Channel to visit the village in France where he was saved from capture by the Germans after bailing out on 13 Aug 44, expressing gratitude to the French resistors.

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England Reunion Attendee List

Carl & Thelma Ashworth 505
Eugene & Anne Baietti 505
M/G Bill & Ollie Bryan 503
Irene Chetneky 503
Bill & Dorothy Clark & guests HQ
Carl Cloud 503
Gil Cohen 504
Bert & Shirley Conner 505
Leon & Mildred Corbin 504
Fred Cox ORD
Ray & Fritz Creswell 504
Gabe Cutri 505
Dutch Eisenhart 504
Eddie & Rita Epp 504
John Franz 505
Bob & Mary Frisch 503
Andy & Barb Gager 505
Jerry & Mary Graham 505
Bruce & Chris Gravette 504
Frank & Phyllis Guernsey 504
Miller & Madelyn Hartman 503
Howard & Lybi Hauss HQ
M/G John & Maxine Henry HQ
Al Hermanson & Meggie Mikkila 505
Jack & Lois Hild ORD
Jack Holloway & guest 505
Bill Hurley 504
Bob & Bev Irion 505
Bill & Katie Jones & guest 505
Bill & Norma Jones 505
Bill & Toni MacClarence 505
Chet & Mary Malarz 505
Jim & Betty McMullen 505
Hal Meyer HQ
Evan and Vera Mondl 504
Herman & Dorothy Mondschein HQ
Chaplain Henry Opperman HQ
Jimmy & Jackie Pappas HQ
Bob Paul 505
Rex Poutre 503
Ed & Pearl Purzycki HQ
Bill Raines HQ
Tom & Gloria Sams 503
Herman Sahl 503
M/G Dale & Susanne Shafer 503
Andy Sirochman 505
Jim Starnes 505
B/G Enoch & Louise Stephenson 503
Elmer & Dorothy Steven 505
Frank & Doris Stillwell 503
Hervey & Sally Stockman 504
Frank & Sunny Swinand 505
Dick & Emmy Thieme 505
Joe & Pat Thury & guests 505
Anna Tower 505
Herbert & Ruth Ward 505
John & Frances Wasser
Gary & Lee Weinhold 504
Ken Willard 504
Mary Williams Red Cross
John & Shirley Wilson 503
Jim & Pepper Woolery 505
Betty Wyatt & Philip 503
Jack & Rose Young 505

Tom Sams Mary & Bob Frisch

Ken Willard Lee & Gary Weinhold

Jerry Graham, Hal Meyer, Bob Irion & Bill MacClarence

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Vera & Evan Mondl

John Mills Sally & Hervey Stockman

Dale Shafer & Miller Hartman

Carl Ashworth Norma & Bill Jones

Rose & Jack Young Howard Hauss Steve Gotts John Mills Jack Holloway

Bill Bryan Henry Opperman

Ken Willard Eddie Epp Gary Weinhold

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Bill Andrews Gordon Morris Danny Morris

Dick & Emmy Thieme

Martin Sheldrick Chet Malarz

Elmer & Dorothy Steven

Anna Tower Dutch Eisenhart

Meggie Mikkila Al Hermanson Betty & Jim McMullen

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Betty Wyatt Lois & Martin Sheldrick Philip Wyatt

Irene Chetneky Andy Sirochman

L-R: Andy Gager, Vera & Evan Mondl, Herman Sahl, Gabe Cutri, Bob Paul, Fred Cox and Gil Cohen

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES By Bill Bryan 503

Fred Cox, Ordnance director, wrote me shortly after our return from England and started out with "Now that our 'Sentimental Journey' is over, it's time for 'Thanks for the Memories.'" I agree. I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks and appreciation to the many people who contributed to the creation of some very fond memories.

We in the 339th Fighter Group Association are a fortunate lot. Our two great Group C.O.'s, General John B. Henry and Colonel Bill Clark, are loyal attendees and tremendous contributors to our annual reunions. This year was no exception. Gen Henry was asked -- and willingly agreed -- to present remarks at five separate reunion affairs, Col Clark at four. Their comments were both timely and inspirational. John, Bill -- Thanks for the Memories.

Chaplain Henry Opperman attended his first reunion. What did we do? We put him to work -- three invocations and a wreath-laying ceremony. We even had RF-4s do a low level fly-by during his cemetery remarks. Chaplain Opperman, Thanks for the Memories.

I doubt that many reunion organizations have the support of their commanders to the degree that we do. Participating in the plaque dedication ceremony were Gen Dale Shafer, Col Bruce Gravette, Col Joe Thury and Jack Hild. They were also asked to participate in the Cemetery Ceremony and the wrap-up banquet festivities. All of them were absolutely super! Gentlemen, Thanks for the Memories.

And to our tremendous British friends -- Martin Sheldrick and his lovely wife Lois for such warm hospitality and the beautiful "home" for our memorial monument; to Alister Raby for his great assistance throughout the reunion and in years past; to Danny Morris for his continuing help to and interest in the 339th; to Ben Palmer, Miss Deery and the parents and children of Fowlmere school for the beautiful lunch and afternoon at the school; to Roger Freeman for his timely and humorous remarks at our banquet; to Gordon and Connie Richards and Dick D'Amato of Tamarac Travel for their assistance throughout the reunion; to John Mills and his friends for those G.I. vehicles of years past; to Steve Gotts for the great Sunday evening movies and slides; and to countless others who made our trip so great, Thanks for the Memories.

A special thanks to Roland Prieur, Superintendent of Cambridge American Military Cemetery, for his assistance and caring for a beautiful facility honoring our World War II heroes.

Let me mention a few more of our own special supporters: To Hervey Stockman, who deserves more recognition for authoring and the construction of our beautiful memorial plaque; to

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Betty Wyatt, who should have received more thanks for all her suggestions and assistance during various phases of our Sentimental Journey; to Chet Malarz and Jim Starnes for all their correspondence and hard work to plan and coordinate a reunion across a 3000 mile pond -- Herv, Betty, Chet, Jim -- you did a great job. Thanks for the Memories.

Finally, from my vantage point and the words of appreciation expressed to me, it appeared that practically everyone had a great time. Fred Cox is right -- our "Sentimental Journey" did turn into "Thanks for the Memories."

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A DAY WE WILL NEVER FORGET By Martin Sheldrick

For a few brief hours on Saturday, September 20, Manor Farm, Fowlmere forgot it was agricultural land and reverted instead to Station F 378, home of the 339th Fighter Group. On that day I was treated to an insight of those days over forty years ago when, instead of tractors and combine harvesters, the fields echoed to the roar of a very different type of machine. Today, with Duxford's Imperial War Museum not far away, the sight and sound of a Mustang is not uncommon, but for the people of Fowlmere back in 1944-45 the takeoff of a whole fighter group from the airfield in their backyard must have been deafening, but at the same time reassuring during those troubled times. One elderly lady described to me only a few days ago how she used to count the fighters as they took off on their missions.

During the run-up period to the reunion it became obvious to me that many people I spoke to felt very nostalgic and had treasured memories of those days. They were excited and proud to have a memorial dedicated to their "boys", or as one old lady put it, to "her children." Because of the large number of people who came along to welcome the American visitors, the day became a reunion within a reunion, as it brought together many former Fowlmere people, some of whom had traveled considerable distances.

It is impossible for me to accurately convey my feelings that day. I think I was bemused the whole time! Surely the visits to the Chequers and the school can best be described as slightly chaotic and a lot of fun! The hayride along the line of the main runway was a moving experience, clearly evoking memories both happy and tragic. During that day many kind words were said to me, my family and friends by both British and Americans in gratitude for all we had done to make the occasion such a success. This was pleasing, but for me the most rewarding part was to be able to watch everyone enjoying themselves with such spontaneous delight and warmth of friendship. I think the most poignant thing I heard was when a younger member of my family said to me, "I didn't realize until today the full significance of the old airfield." It was indeed a good day. Even the sun shone!

On the Sunday, a happy and interesting time was spent at Duxford where we were treated to a flying display by a P-51. I got the impression that all former 339th pilots were 'up there' doing the flying themselves! On the Monday, Lois and myself with several members of my family joined with our American friends for a moving wreath-laying ceremony at the beautiful Cambridge Military Cemetery. The reunion rounded off with a banquet, at which Lois and I were honoured in a manner for which we are truly grateful.

Time flies, and it is already a month since all those things took place. The photographs have been removed from the barn where we all enjoyed a cup of coffee and a good chat, and the "runway" has been planted with wheat for next year's harvest. Station F 378 is once again farm land. But Saturday, September 20, 1986 is a day none of us will ever forget.

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Martin Sheldrick had arranged for a professional to make a video tape of the memorial dedication and other Fowlmere events of that day. We reviewed it during the banquet and found it to be excellent quality. The tape is about an hour's duration, and Martin sent a copy to Chet Malarz with the above letter. Chet will make arrangements for professional duplicates of the video tape for anyone who desires a copy, and the greater the quantity we order, the lower the unit cost. Please let Chet know if you would like a copy. He estimates the price will be under $15 per copy if we order 30 or more. Drop Chet a note at 2405 Kings Point Drive, Atlanta, GA 30338.

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WHAT? ANOTHER 504TH MINI-REUNION?

(Summarized from letters by Ricky Boccardi, Carmen Grande, George Solley and Pat Strachan)

Apparently the planning on this one began at the Norfolk reunion in Sep 86 where everyone had such a wonderful time. Of course a number of attendees at this mini have never made a regular 339th reunion. Most knew they would not be able to go to England this fall. George and Pat Solley took the lead role because they have a week of condominium time at Wolfe Run-Treasure Lake near DuBois, PA. Carmen Grande and George Solley wrote to various 504th buddies as the time drew near, and they ended up with 17 attendees. The gang met 31 Jul-3 Aug 86 while many of us were contemplating the big England trip.

Attending this mini were Ricky Boccardi, Carmen & Helen Grande, Bob & Lillian Johnson, John & Carmella Meinen, John & Mary Sesco, George & Pat Solley, Bob & Pat Strachan, Ken & Terry Willard and Alex & George Zavoda. On Friday they had dinner at the Ski Lodge, then spent Saturday at the Solley condo, followed by dinner at the Country Club. It turned out to be an ideal setting for a mini-reunion, and they got together again on Sunday at the condominium. Carmen Grande wrote that the men"swapped stories, experiences and other nostalgic memories while the women talked whatever women talk about."(Really, Carmen, we cannot print that crap!) They had such a great time that they are already contemplating another one in 1987. Ricky Boccardi expressed the hope that men who cannot make it to our big reunion should try to make one near their homes. It is worth it!

Bob & Pat Strachan

Group photo: lower left John Meinen. 2nd row: Rick Boccardi Helen Grande, Carmella Meinen. 3rd row: Pat Solley, Carmen Grande, Mary Sesco. 4th row: George Solley, George Zavoda, Pat Strachan, John Sesco. 5th row: Alex Zavoda, Ken Willard, Terry Willard, Lillian Johnson, Bob Strachan and Bob Johnson.

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IN MEMORIAM

Word has been received on the passing of three more supporters. Assistant crew chief Ed Coffin (505) had a heart attack on 29 Jul 86 while at his favorite pastime, golf. Ed had fond memories of the 339th (he wrote on the First Combat Anniversary brochure "hottest outfit in the E.T.O. and 505th is the hottest squadron") and liked each newsletter. Wife Jane urged us to enjoy the England trip and throw a dart for Ed who loved British pubs. She enclosed the photo on next page and suggested that we enjoy remaining years to fullest. The ordnancemen lost two strong supporters, former tech sergeants Clare Mintline and Clyde Watson. WE lost Clyde in early Sep. He was co-author with Fred Cox of an article in our Mar 86 newsletter. Clare Mintline attended reunions in Denver and Norfolk but was unable to hold out for Fowlmere as planned, passing away 7 Aug 86. In his last weeks when times

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got real tough he remembered his service years and said those times were tough, too. His daughter Karin said please let the men know Clare died peacefully and remembered them to the end. We thank God that these three men enriched our lives with their comradeship. We will miss them. Elmer Steven reported that Mary Whiteing, Richard's widow, died in Aug 86.

Clare Mintline

Ed Coffin

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SHORT BURSTS. . . We welcome newly located pilots Harold "Stan" Kotora (505) and Bob Paul (505), armament supervisor Sproul Pinkerton (504) and control tower specialist Stanley Gordon (504). Stan was an outstanding artist whose pencil sketches at Fowlmere of his flight buddies were reproduced in the Mar 85 newsletter. He was located by Bob Paul, who was found only a month before our England reunion and still made the trip. Bob was one of our early 45 replacement pilots who scored six kills on the ground during his combat tour. Bob says that going back to Fowlmere and seeing everyone, including some British acquaintances, was one of the greatest thrills he has ever had. He wrote that he really choked up when he got off the bus at Fowlmere. Stanley Gordon phoned in his address after someone told him about our activities. He worked in control tower communications at Fowlmere. Stanley hopes to participate in future reunions. Sproul Pinkerton was located by Herky Corey (505) from a World War II listing by Ken Willard. Sproul sent in a check for $100 and the photo at right which shows (L-R) Sproul Pinkerton, Lt John James and Walter Crooks. He also sent group photos of armorers at Drew Field and Rice Field. He regrets not being found a few months earlier so he could have made the England reunion. Sproul wrote that while at Rice he and Ken Willard went to Los Angeles on three day passes. They missed the bus back and thumbed a ride to Desert Center. There they asked a truck driver if he was going to Rice. "Sure, hop in." After quite a while on the road Sproul said we should be in Rice soon. "Rice? Hell, I thought you said Blythe!" They got out at Blythe, caught a bus back to Desert Center and hitched a ride to base with dawn coming over the hill. Sproul says he feels lucky to have been in a great outfit like the 339th. . . Benton Kern (503) sent in a number of fine photos which will have to wait until the next issue. Benton was mess supervisor under Shorty Fulton and can tell some fine stories about food service problems. . . Mary Williams (Red Cross) also sent in an article from the Red Cross files at Fowlmere, including photos, which will have to wait for next time. Supply sergeant Bill Vaughan (505) sent in a hand-made Christmas 44 card prepared by intelligence sergeant David Shepard. Sorry there is no room for it here.

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.50 Cal. Ammo spells out the message as 503rd armament chief Jim Davidson and helpers get Hitler's Christmas gift ready. Perhaps someone can identify the others in this photo.

DECEMBER ADDENDUM TO 339th PERSONNEL ROSTER dated March 1986

GORDON, Stanley 504 28 Griffith Lane, Huntington, NY 11743
KOTORA, Harold J. "Stan" 505 736 Selbourne Road, Riverside, IL 60546
PAUL, Robert H. Jr. 505 9807 Inglemere Drive, Bethesda, MD 20817
PINKERTON, Sproul 504 RD 1 Box 492, Avondale, PA 19311

Change Bob Irion to read 8324 S. Willow Creek Drive, Sandy, UT 84092
Change Gabe Cutri to read 9191 Florence Avenue #20, Downey, CA 90241
Change Alister Raby to read 67 Tenison Road, Cambridge, England CB1 2DG

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